



NI'N AQ NO'KMAQ

ME AND MY RELATIONS: UPDATE FOR EPEKWITK MI'KMAQ

We are pleased to provide you with an update on the engagement we've conducted for Ni'n aq No'kmaq - Me and My Relations. The Ni'n aq No'kmaq process will determine WHO can exercise Mi'kmaq rights on Epekwitk.

We are defining for ourselves who is Mi'kmaq, because only the Mi'kmaq of Epekwitk can say who is Mi'kmaq.

This process is not about access to dollars, but instead focuses on who can hunt, fish and access resources in this province as a Mi'kmaq Rights-holder.

We launched this work on July 27th. Due to COVID-19 limitations, we held a virtual town hall. After this session our plan was to have personal interviews with community members.

The feedback from this session:

- reinforced the need for one-on-one communication;
- skepticism if this process will be really community-driven;
- the importance of communication in general – getting information out to community members and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to have their voice heard.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in the summer and fall, the Engagement Team of Julie Pellissier-Lush, Richard Lush and Jamie Thomas set out to conduct online and in-person conversations.

Conversations focused on the following nine questions:

1. If we could design a future for our people, what would that picture look like to you?
2. What do you value as Mi'kmaq? What are our priorities?
3. What does it mean to you to be Mi'kmaq?
4. Who would be the beneficiaries of Mi'kmaq rights and title on Epekwitk?
5. How far back should someone be able to claim Mi'kmaq ancestry?
6. Who should be part of the decision-making process? Who determines who should be accepted by the Mi'kmaq?
7. If you live on PEI and are Mi'kmaq, but are not from one of the two bands, should you still be eligible to benefit from Mi'kmaq rights?
8. Is there anything you don't understand regarding the work of the Epekwitk Mi'kmaq process?
9. Is there anything you would like to share about this process?

As of the first week of December 2020, over 200 interviews have been completed. Here are some of the statistics so far:

- 60% off reserve (including out-of-province);
- 40% on reserve;
- 60% are Lennox Island band members;
- 40% Abegweit band members;
- 65% are female;
- 35% are males;
- 4.5% no response for an interview
- 4% denied a request for an interview

The most engaged age demographic are our Elders – as our knowledge-keepers, we are prioritizing these conversations, while taking all the necessary precautions to protect their health and safety during this pandemic.

Thank you for allowing us into your homes and providing your input on this very important topic. We will continue to conduct interviews this winter. To ensure everyone's safety these will be done online or by phone.

Our goal is to complete this round of discussions by March 2021. This does not mean this work is complete. We will be coming back and reporting on all the information we have collected and asking more questions on areas that need clarification.

Tune in to our report next month where we give you an update on what we've heard so far in response to the questions asked.

If you would like to participate in this round of interviews or have more questions, please contact Julie, Richard or Jamie. You may contact them directly or through the general inquires email at info@lnuey.ca