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Epekwitk's Mi'kmaq History Comes to Life Once Again for Aboriginal Awareness Week

Bedeque? Montague? As some Islanders may know, numerous PEI place names have a Mi'kmaq language origin. However, few people know what they mean.

Aboriginal Awareness Week (May 25-28) is a special time to raise awareness of our Epekwitk Mi'kmaq heritage and culture within PEI.

In recognition of Aboriginal Awareness Week, L'nuey and the Government of PEI are partnering once again to recognize Mi'kmaq place names across the province while celebrating Epekwitk's Mi'kmaq history. At ten locations across the Island, heritage signage has been installed to highlight locations with names that have a Mi'kmaq origin or that hold particular importance to the Mi'kmaq people. These signs have been installed in Bedeque, Cape Egmont, Kensington, Mill River, Orwell, Rice Point, Point Prim, Murray Harbour, Montague, and Souris.

Mi'kmaq place names are insights into the Island's geography and human history. Unlike many English language place names that have been transposed from locations in other countries or named after people, the Mi'kmaq names are rooted in a description of that specific location or highlight activities that would take place there.

Bedeque, for instance, has its origins in the Mi'kmaq word "Eptek," which means "it is hot." Montague, traditionally known to the Mi'kmaq as "Mente'ken", translates to "you (singular) strike it off with an instrument".

L'nuey will be promoting and sharing information about Mi'kmaq language, history and culture, and also recognizing those who work to advance reconciliation through various initiatives.

"We are proud to partner with the Government of PEI on this initiative once again. This will contribute to educating Islanders and visitors to Epekwitk and it serves as another step toward reconciliation - acknowledging the Mi'kmaq, who have traditionally occupied these lands since time immemorial," said Chief Junior Gould of Abegweit First Nation. "By including the rich history of the Mi'kmaq into PEI's culture and landscapes, we are recognizing a very important part of this Island's heritage. We are all treaty people. This history belongs to all Islanders."

"Through sharing these Mi'kmaq place names, our goal is to include Mi'kmaq culture in the Province's greater cultural identity," added Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nation. "Doing so will share a story that both Islanders and visitors may not know. Evidence shows the Mi'kmaq have been here for at least 12,000 years, and we are still here today. This week is an opportunity to improve all Islanders' understanding of the Mi'kmaq, shared provincial history and our relationship as treaty people."

"This initiative is an important step in the right direction to support our collective work on reconciliation. Including the Mi'kmaq names to identify Island communities gives Islanders the chance to reflect on the shared history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who call Prince Edward Island home. The significance of the Mi'kmaq words paints a clear image of what that community represents to the PEI Mi'kmaq," said Premier Dennis King. "Small actions like installing new community signs that include the Mi'kmaq language have a much deeper meaning and a longer lasting impact on all Island residents. It is our opportunity to learn and educate ourselves on how we continue to nurture the work that needs to be done to support Indigenous peoples in our province."

Due to COVID-19, L'nuey's activities are being held virtually. Be sure to follow L'nuey social media channels and platforms to view and participate in activities through photos, information and a special contest.

All Islanders are also encouraged to visit lnuey.ca to learn more.

Aboriginal Awareness Week has been recognized and celebrated across Canada since 1992 as an opportunity to create greater public awareness of the role of Indigenous People across the country.

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