



*The following statement is distributed on behalf of the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils (the Assembly)*

**For Immediate Release**

**Charlottetown, PEI – 25 January 2021**

### **Statement on the M. Birch litigation**

With respect to the statement of claim filed by Ms. Marilyn Birch on January 18, 2021, against the Assembly, Chief Junior Gould, and the Abegweit First Nation; the Assembly (Ms. Birch's former employer) did not terminate her employment or discriminate against her in any way. While steps were being taken by the First Nation and the Assembly to improve the programming and services being offered to the Abegweit community, Ms. Birch chose to resign.

At no time were the provisions of Ms. Birch's employment contract breached. Decisions were made only to improve the services being offered to the community based on the direction of the First Nation leadership. Allowing the First Nations to determine what is best for their communities is an essential cornerstone of First Nations taking control over the matters that affect them and is necessary as they continue efforts to move on from the paternalism that has plagued them for centuries and help them move toward self-determination.

All employees of the Assembly are considered a respected, trusted, and valued part of the process; however, their role is to serve the best interests of the First Nation communities based on the direction of the First Nation leadership, not the reverse.

While it is unfortunate that Ms. Birch has chosen to take legal action, the Assembly stands by the decisions taken to ensure the overall health, welfare, and safety of First Nation community members.

While the claim is without merit and will be vigorously defended, the Assembly thanks Ms. Birch for her years of service and wishes her all the best in her future endeavours.

There will be no further comment issued on this matter.