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For Immediate Release

Charlottetown, PEI – 24 May 2022

Celebrating Epekwitk's Mi'kmaq Heritage and Culture during Indigenous Awareness Week

Indigenous Awareness Week (May 24-28) is a special time to raise awareness of our Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq heritage and culture on PEI.

Formerly known as “Aboriginal Awareness Week,” this special week was first introduced in Canada in 1992. This year, the name has been changed to reflect current understandings, terminology and to be more inclusive overall.

In recognition of Indigenous Awareness Week 2022, L'nuey and the Government of PEI are continuing to partner to recognize Mi'kmaq place names through our Signage Initiative across the province while celebrating Epekwitk's Mi'kmaq history.

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

At ten new 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 Belfast, West River, Bayview, Belle River, Cardigan, Murray River, East Point, Beech Point, Miminegash and Port Hill. This brings to 29 the total number of Mi'kmaq place names/signs installed across PEI since 2020.

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.

Miminegash, for instance, has its origins in the Mi'kmaq word “Elminikej,” which means “let us carry something animate on our shoulders.” Cardigan, traditionally known to the Mi'kmaq as “Wapuktujj'jk”, translates to “little white woods place”.

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

“The Mi'kmaq place names throughout Epekwitk give insight to a history that we all share as Islanders,” said Chief Junior Gould of Abegweit First Nation. “By including the rich history of the Mi'kmaq into PEI's culture and landscapes, there is a great deal that we can learn about this Island through knowledge of these place names and what they mean.”

Stay up to date with L'nuey's initiatives through our social media platforms: Facebook ([L'nuey PEI](#)), Instagram ([@lnuey.ca](#)) and Twitter ([@lnueypei](#)).

“We are proud to continue this important partnership with the province in the spirit of language revitalization and reconciliation. Names given by our ancestors for certain locations provide insights into the Mi’kmaq world view and our Mi’kmaq language,” added Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nation. “These place names are very descriptive and rooted in natural and human history, in geography, and they provide a window into how we traditionally went about our daily lives. The Mi’kmaq have occupied Epekwitk for at least 12,000 years, and we are still here today.”

“The province is pleased to see the continuation of this important initiative of installing signs of the Mi’kmaq names of Island communities. Through these signs, Islanders learn more about Mi’kmaq language, culture, and history in PEI, as the names describe a specific location or activity that happened there. My government is proud to continue strengthening its relationship with the Mi’kmaq while committing to celebrate and preserve their language, as identified in the Speech from the Throne,” said Premier Dennis King. “As Islanders, it is important we take the time to learn and educate ourselves during Indigenous Awareness Week. We will continue to support Indigenous people by advancing initiatives and programs in the province.”

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 and social media posts. All Epekwitnewaq (all Islanders) are also encouraged to visit lnuey.ca to learn more.

The Epekwitk Assembly of Councils held its Second Annual Reconciliation Recognition Awards ceremony on May 20 where this year’s four recipients were announced at the event leading up to Indigenous Awareness Week 2022. More information can be found at lnuey.ca.

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