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**For Immediate Release**



**Charlottetown, Epekwitk (PEI) – 2 November 2022**

### **Government Leaders in Epekwitk Gather for Smudging Ceremony at Province House**

The Mi'kmaq leadership, Parks Canada, and Government of Prince Edward Island joined for a ceremony at Province House earlier today, intended to acknowledge the colonial history associated with the building.

This included a smudging ceremony led by Mi'kmaq Elder Methilda Knockwood Snache as a way to cleanse the energy of Province House while being rebuilt, and a brief tour of Province House, which gave attendees a chance to view progress of the conservation initiative led by Parks Canada.

There was a symbolic offering from the Mi'kmaq that will be placed in the walls of Province House for generations to come. A bundle of four sacred medicines (sage, cedar, tobacco, sweetgrass) was prepared in a woven basket handmade by Keptin Jim Bernard, and will be cared for by Elder Methilda until it's final placement within Province House at a later date.

Parks Canada President and CEO Ron Hallman offered some remarks following the ceremony, acknowledging that the colonial discussions and decisions that took place at Province House both excluded and impacted Indigenous peoples. He also highlighted the important collaborative work that Parks Canada is undertaking alongside Indigenous partners to explore the stories of Province House and what this place represents. Mr. Hallman expressed gratitude for the opportunity to join as Elder Methilda reset the energy of Province House and the way the ceremony will help ground the work moving forward, in the spirit of hope and reconciliation.

“It is important that as we write a new shared history moving forward, as we rebuild the foundation of a National Historic Site, we must also rebuild the foundation of our relationships with one another, from Government to Government and Nation to Nation. The intention of the ceremony today is to cleanse the negative energy that is present in Province House and create a new energy that is founded on mutual respect and recognition moving forward.”

*Darlene Bernard*

*Chief of Lennox Island First Nation, Co-Chair of the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils*

“Parks Canada affirms its commitment to working with the Mi’kmaw people to understand the broader, more inclusive history of this place. And we will be very proud to work in collaboration with our Mi’kmaw partners in reframing the narrative and sharing the complete story and the full significance of Province House with Canadians.”

*Ron Hallman  
President and CEO, Parks Canada*

“The smudging ceremony today at Province House shows the Government’s commitment to advance reconciliation. We are happy to collaborate with the PEI Mi’kmaq,” said

*Dennis King  
Premier and Minister Responsible for Indigenous Relations.*

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