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**For Immediate Release**



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## **Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq to Celebrate Work Towards Nation Rebuilding at 2022 Nationhood Gathering**

The identity of the Mi'kmaq as a Nation is grounded in family roots and connections that have prevailed through time. It is through these roots and connections that the Lennox Island and Abegweit First Nations are working together to help determine the vision for current and future generations of the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq (Mi'kmaq of PEI).

The Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq will come together for the second-ever Nationhood Gathering on November 5 to discuss visions for the future and chart a new course of self-determination.

“As Treaty People, we want to live harmoniously with the larger community – in a way that allows us to maintain our distinct cultural identity and pursue the benefits of rights that belong to us,” said Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nation. “We believe this is the beginning of a new chapter in our journey toward true reconciliation, as our internal capacity within our communities has grown over the years and we the Mi'kmaq have the capacity to represent ourselves. Our self-determination, our self-governance is inherent and comes from within our communities when we come together and share our vision for the future.”

“We are not looking for any favors, we justifiably expect that our rights and aspirations will be respected. However, together, I believe we can create the foundations and structures required for self-government that will allow us to build a better system,” added Chief Gould of Abegweit First Nation. “We are determined, we are confident in our history and our traditions, we understand our inherent rights, and we will consistently act in a spirit that advances our interests.”

The first Nationhood Gathering was held on September 28, 2019. It served as the launch of L'nuey and provided the first opportunity for PEI Mi'kmaq to gather and engage in discussions on the protection and implementation of Mi'kmaq Rights and what the future should look like for the Mi'kmaq Nation in PEI.

The event was very positively received and feedback from participants included requests to have the event annually. Unfortunately, COVID-19 prevented the opportunity to gather in large groups in 2020 and 2021.

Similar to the first Nationhood Gathering, the second Nationhood Gathering includes facilitated table discussions to gather insight and guidance from community members regarding the vision for the future of the Mi'kmaq Epekwitnewaq (Mi'kmaq Nation of Epekwitk). Presentations have been organized to support thinking and discussions on the implementation of constitutionally protected Mi'kmaq rights, including self-government and what that could mean for the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq.

In addition to Nationhood visioning, there will be discussion about reconciling Mi'kmaq Rights for the future in Epekwitk (PEI) – how the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq can go forward with resolving outstanding Mi'kmaq rights issues with the rest of the Island.

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Additional background:

- Through the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils, L'nuey is governed by the full First Nations leadership of the province (Lennox Island and Abegweit First Nations Chiefs and Councils).
- The Assembly is responsible for the work of L'nuey, including negotiation and consultation processes. L'nuey serves and supports the Assembly in these processes.
- The Assembly is also responsible for the governance development work to support the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq's inherent right to self-government. L'nuey is the PEI Mi'kmaq Rights-based organization, which has the technical resources to serve the growing negotiation, consultation and governance development needs of the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq.
- The Assembly provides direction to the staff of L'nuey for the negotiation, consultation and governance development work.
- Any major decisions will be voted on by the Mi'kmaq of PEI. Additionally, the Assembly provides direction to the senior management of L'nuey and guides L'nuey in the execution of its mandate.