



## Joint News Release

### **Nature Conservancy of Canada and PEI Mi'kmaq working in partnership to conserve significant offshore island**

**Alberton, PEI (November 9, 2022)** – The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq are partnering to protect a culturally and ecologically significant island on the northwestern shore of Prince Edward Island. Kwesawe'k (pronounced “gweh-sah-weck”), also known as Oulton’s Island, was first identified as a high-priority protection area by NCC in the 1980s. Located in Cascumpec Bay, this 85-hectare island provides important habitat for migrating waterfowl and small animals, like snowshoe hare and red squirrel. The island’s mature forest is a nesting ground for great blue heron, double-crested cormorant and bald eagle. The Mi'kmaq word Kwesawe'k translates to “end of the island cape” or “end of the headland.”

NCC has negotiated the purchase of the site and is launching a fundraising campaign to acquire, manage and care for the island for five years, in collaboration with the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq (PEI Mi'kmaq). After this time, it will be transferred to the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils, which is the joint forum that oversees and governs organizations that act in the shared interest of Abegweit First Nation and Lennox Island First Nation. The Epekwitk Assembly of Councils will continue to conserve and care for Kwesawe'k (Oulton’s Island) in perpetuity.

NCC is asking people, businesses and foundations to contribute to the acquisition of Kwesawe'k (Oulton’s Island). Donations will help protect this critically important habitat and support collaborative conservation efforts. NCC has made solid progress but still needs to raise approximately \$300,000 for this \$1.2-million project.

Since time immemorial, the Mi'kmaq have stewarded and maintained the health of what is now PEI. The area surrounding Kwesawe'k (Oulton’s Island) is home to important cultural and archaeological sites. NCC and the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq have been working together to care for the nearby conservation areas on the Cascumpec and Conway Sandhills since 2009.

People can learn more about this project, get involved and donate by visiting [natureconservancy.ca/oultionsisland](https://natureconservancy.ca/oultionsisland).

## Quotes

“Our people have always been guardians of the natural world, and we are pleased to continue that tradition while partnering with like-minded organizations such as NCC. Collaboration on conservation with Indigenous people is both valuable and essential for all. The Mi’kmaq have occupied Epekwitk for over 12,000 years, and our deep cultural roots and relationship to the lands and waters are forever entrenched. We look forward to protecting and conserving this important part of Epekwitk together for generations to come.” – *Darlene Bernard, Lennox Island First Nation Chief & Epekwitk Assembly of Councils Co-Chair*

“By partnering with the Epekwitnewaq Mi’kmaq, we can achieve meaningful conservation that supports their leadership and cultural connections to this unique region of PEI. We are honoured to share a vision for the continuing long-term conservation of this special place.” – *Lanna Campbell, NCC Program Director in Prince Edward Island*

## Facts:

- The island supports impressive salt marsh and freshwater wetlands ecosystems. The island also contains Wabanaki (Acadian) forest, which is predominantly characterized by jack pine, black spruce, white spruce and white birch.
- Cascumpec Bay/Alberton Harbour is also part of a globally recognized Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). KBAs are highlighted on a global scale for ecological integrity. The area is an important feeding stopover site for waterfowl, such as greater yellowlegs, great blue heron, semipalmated sandpiper, semipalmated plover, common merganser, black duck and bald eagle.
- Conservation achieved through collaboration with Indigenous Peoples is an important form of Reconciliation. The Epekwitnewaq Mi’kmaq and NCC are taking steps toward this shared goal. NCC has outlined goals around this in its [Indigenous Conservation Engagement Framework: Working together on the land](#).

## About:

### Nature Conservancy of Canada

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is the country’s unifying force for nature. We seek solutions to the twin crises of rapid biodiversity loss and climate change through large-scale, permanent land conservation.

As a trusted partner, we work with people, communities, businesses and government to protect and care for our most important natural areas. Since 1962, we have brought Canadians together to conserve and restore more than 15 million hectares, more than twice the landmass of New Brunswick.

NCC is a registered charity. With nature, we build a thriving world. To learn more about our work and how to contribute, visit [natureconservancy.ca](http://natureconservancy.ca).

## L'nuey

Established in 2019, L'nuey is an initiative that focuses on the advancement, implementation, and protection of the constitutionally entrenched rights of the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq (Mi'kmaq of PEI).

L'nuey's mission is to address both past and present imbalances between Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaq people in Prince Edward Island.

The work of L'nuey is guided by three responsibilities: Negotiations, Consultation, and Governance Development. In turn, each responsibility is supported by the capacity to professionally communicate its activities to the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq and public.

L'nuey is the evolution of many years of collaboration and hard work by the Abegweit and Lennox Island First Nations on shared interests and it will continue to build this foundation for an improved quality of Mi'kmaq life here on PEI, and ultimately self-government for the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq.

L'nuey means "*Belonging to or pertaining to the Mi'kmaq People as a whole*", and its tagline doubles as its mission: **Moving towards a better tomorrow.**

We encourage you to learn more about L'nuey – the PEI Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative, at [lnuey.ca](http://lnuey.ca).

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