



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

For Immediate Release



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Statement by the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils on the passing of Keptin John Joe Sark

The Epekwitk Assembly of Councils wishes to extend condolences and sympathies to the family and many friends who are grieving the loss of Keptin John Joe Sark.

John Joe was well-known as a prolific Mi'kmaq rights advocate who fought fiercely for what he believed in.

In 1985, he was honoured by the Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaq Nation who nominated him as Keptin of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Following this, he was elected unanimously by Keptins of the Mi'kmaq Nation, with a lifetime nomination, as Keptin of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council.

As a representative of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council, Sark lobbied provincially, nationally, and internationally for rights and recognition, and had audiences with the Pope on the subject of residential schools, as well as premiers and prime ministers.

He was involved in drafting the United Nations' Declaration of Indigenous Peoples of the World, and was co-producer, executive director and artistic director of the film "Spirit World – The Story of the Mi'kmaq". He also wrote books on the history of the Mi'kmaw people and the Peace and Friendship Treaties, and he used his expertise to encourage accurate portrayals of Mi'kmaw history.

"Keptin John Joe was an extraordinary man who fought hard for decades for the rights of the Mi'kmaq and worked tirelessly to educate people on our true shared history," said Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nation. "He was revered as an advocate, educator, author, father, and friend to many, and we will miss him dearly."

"John Joe Sark's role as a spiritual leader for our people has built a lasting bridge of understanding between cultures," said Chief Junior Gould of Abegweit First Nation. "In his role as guardian of the spiritual and cultural integrity of the Mi'kmaq people, he fought to have offensive stereotypes removed from schools and institutions in Prince Edward Island, his legacy will live on through the many impacts he made."

"John Joe fought for Mi'kmaq rights for many years and because of his passionate and outspoken work as a trailblazing advocate we now have resources dedicated to protecting and implementing Mi'kmaq rights. In honor of his ceaseless dedication, we will continue to defend and advance Mi'kmaq rights for our generations to come," added L'nuey Executive Director Jenene Wooldridge.

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