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

Indigenous Awareness Week (May 23-27 this year) is a special time to raise awareness of Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq (Mi'kmaq of PEI) heritage and culture.

In recognition of Indigenous Awareness Week this year, L'nuey and the Government of Prince Edward Island are continuing to partner to recognize Mi'kmaq place names through the signage initiative across the province, while celebrating Epekwitk's Mi'kmaq history.

Keskamkek? Mekwapnkwejk? 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 six 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 Cascumpec Bay, West Point, Lennox Channel, Canoe Cove, Vernon River, and Morell River. This brings the total number of Mi'kmaq place name signs installed across PEI since 2020 to 35.

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.

Cascumpec, for instance, has its origins in the Mi'kmaq word "Keskamkek," which means "the place where the sand vanishes from sight." West Point, traditionally known to the Mi'kmaq as "Mekwapnkwejk", translates to "the place where, in dawn, the face (bank) is red".

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

"This week provides an opportunity for emphasis on sharing our Mi'kmaq language, culture and traditions, and celebrating who we are as Indigenous people," said Chief Junior Gould of Abegweit First Nation. "We have vibrant and thriving Mi'kmaq communities here that are being recognized and celebrated for our culture, history, and contributions to society. I am proud to see more Mi'kmaq place name signs being raised across Epekwitk and look forward to more similar initiatives so we can pass this knowledge to our younger generations who will carry it forward into a better future."

"We are pleased to see the continuation of this important partnership with the government in highlighting placenames that have a Mi'kmaq origin or a special meaning to our people," said Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nation. "These names give an understanding of how our ancestors lived their lives and viewed the world, and it's significant that we take the time to recognize what they mean and why they matter, especially during Indigenous Awareness Week. I hope that all Epekwitnewaq (Islanders) will take time to acknowledge and learn about the history we all share as residents on this beautiful Island."

“Honouring and raising awareness of Indigenous history and heritage is an essential part of the important work of reconciliation. Recognizing Mi’kmaq place names across Island communities provides necessary historical and geographical context to Prince Edward Island, this special place that is now home to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people,” said Premier Dennis King, Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs. “These Mi’kmaq place names honour our past and remind us that history still impacts our lives today. These signs provide us all with an opportunity for us to work together with Mi’kmaq people to build a more equitable future in our 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 (Islanders) are also encouraged to visit lnuey.ca to learn more.

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For further information contact:

Sean Doke
Media Relations Officer
L’nuey
sdoke@lnuey.ca
902-330-4420