

MEDIA RELEASE

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Maw-lukutijik **Saqmaq**
Assembly of Nova Scotia
Mi'kmaq Chiefs

DFO Relying on Third-Party Information to Make Decisions

There have been statements in the media which incorrectly state that Potlotek First Nation plans to begin their Spring Netukulimk Livelihood season in March. In these statements, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) claims that their decision on how to proceed with Livelihood Fishery was moved up because Potlotek was going to be in the water mid-March.

These claims are false, a clear deflection by the Minister, and could create division between Mi'kmaq and non-Indigenous commercial fishers.

Potlotek finalized their 2021 Netukulimk Livelihood Harvesting Plan in February, and while the plan was formally passed through a Band Council Resolution last month, it has yet to go the Assembly of Nova Scotia of Mi'kmaq Chiefs for their approval, before being provided to DFO.

“DFO just put a target on the backs of our community harvesters,” said Chief Wilbert Marshall, Potlotek First Nation. “Our community plan outlines our authorized harvesting dates, which are for late Spring - not March. No one at DFO had the opportunity to see our 2021 Plan yet, so there was no way for them to be able to say when we were going to start our Spring season.”

The statement made by Minister Jordan's office, as reported yesterday, would had to have come from outside Potlotek First Nation and from someone who was not a part of building their community plan. The Minister thereby is making decisions based on rumors, rather than confirming information with a Chief or through any of the existing discussion avenues with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, that should have been used.

“This only further shows how little Minister Jordan and DFO want to respectfully engage the Mi'kmaq. Now they are using gossip and unofficial information to inform public policy decisions. This is disgraceful and harmful to how the Crown operates,” said Chief Marshall.

Potlotek's Community Netukulimk Livelihood Plan states that harvesters will only be authorized through this year's plan to fish in LFAs around Unama'ki and that the fishing season “...will be closed from the December New Cold Moon (December 14, 2020) until the New Flower Moon (May 11, 2021)...”.

While DFO may try to say otherwise, no harvesting is authorized under Potlotek's plan until mid-May – which is a decision based upon traditional and contemporary Mi'kmaq science.

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