

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Livelihood Traps Returned in Cape Breton

Today 196 traps that were seized from Mi'kmaw livelihood harvesters in Fall 2020 were finally returned by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

The traps were seized by DFO's Conservation and Protection Branch (C&P) during the fall fishery and belonged to Mi'kmaw Harvesters authorized under Community Netukulimk Livelihood Fishery Plans from both Potlotek and Eskasoni First Nations.

"We have been demanding that these traps be returned since the moment they were taken by C&P," said Chief Gerald Toney, Fisheries Lead for the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs. "While we know that there is still a long way to go with the Government of Canada's acknowledgement and recognition of our Constitutionally protected Right to fish for a moderate livelihood, today is a good day for our harvesters."

While the Netukulimk Livelihood Fishery is managed by the Mi'kmaw communities, all fishing gear, equipment and supplies are purchased and owned by those harvesters who are undertaking and exercising their Supreme Court affirmed Treaty Right.

"Seeing the gear be returned today to our community harvesters is a bit of relief," said Chief Leroy Denny, Eskasoni First Nation. "Our people are fishing to better their lives and the lives of their families – and they have ever right to do so. DFO stopping that, instead of working with our communities to support that, is shameful."

C&P supposedly seized the traps under the *Fisheries Act* and *Regulations* and the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs are unsure of what messages will be conveyed to harvesters by DFO with the return of this gear.

"This is exactly why we have filed a case against DFO on the *Fisheries Act*," said Chief Wilbert Marshall, Potlotek First Nation. "This Act has continued to infringe on our Treaty Right to fish for moderate livelihood and our harvesters just want to earn a living."

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