

MEDIA RELEASE



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2024

Assembly Provides Strong Message to Minister on Elver Fishery Closure

On Friday, March 15, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs (Assembly) met with Minister Leboutheillier, who oversees Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, to discuss the closure of the elver fishery and plans for the upcoming Unama'ki & Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN) Treaty Rights Protected (TRP) Spring lobster fisheries.

The Assembly demanded greater respect for our nation and emphasized the federal government's duty to uphold the Honour of the Crown, our Treaties, and our Section 35 Rights.

"We are equals. We are Rights holders. We are taking steps towards self-determination, and we will continue to invite Canada to understand the process of how we will get there and to recognize that they also have a role and a responsibility in this," stated Chief Sidney Peters, Co-Chair for the Assembly.

For the past three elver seasons, Chiefs of the Kespukwilt district have worked together to ensure that the TRP plans created by our harvesters could serve as a blueprint for livelihood access. The plans were developed by our harvesters and approved by Kespukwilt Chief and Councils. These TRP Plans have been accepted and authorized by DFO and are based on sustainable practices, traditional knowledge, modern technology, and previous harvest data and reporting.

A TRP elver proposal was submitted in December of 2023 for the 2024 season. This proposal was an effort by eight First Nations, working together under one plan to increase conservation and sustainable management practices. However, we were left in the dark about the closure despite those efforts. The Prime Minister of Canada must address this disrespect from his minister and the department she represents.

Due to this decision, authorized Mi'kmaq community harvesters now face losses in excess of an estimated \$18,000,000. Minister Leboutheillier stated she was aware of the economic impact on our communities; she now must face the consequences of those actions by means of compensation for those losses.

Following discussions on the closure, Chief Wilbert Marshall, Co-Lead of Fisheries for the Assembly, discussed plans for upcoming Unama'ki & PLFN TRP Spring lobster fisheries.

"Our plans show that we want to ensure the long-term sustainability of our resources. We have prioritized the environment's health and respect the balance of the marine ecosystems," said Chief Marshall. "Through these plans, we assert our right to govern and manage our own fisheries resources. But we need increased involvement in decision-making processes, including the co-design and implementation of management measures."

The Assembly continues to be firm that DFO must respect its reconciliation obligations by working honestly and transparently alongside the Mi'kmaq to ensure the proper management and sustainability of our resources and respect for Mi'kmaq Rights.

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For more information contact:

Communications Team

Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office

902-843-3880 / tdunne@mikmaqrights.com