

## For Immediate Release- 10/23/2020

Bear River First Nation  
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### **Bear River First Nation and Kespu'kwitk Stewardship Call for Unity and Discussion Concerning Actions in St. Mary's Bay.**

*Bear River First Nation addresses all parties involved in fisheries dispute in the attached letter of concern and request input.*

*Bear River First Nation, Nova Scotia - Bear River First Nation and other communities in the Kespu'kwitk district that is comprised of Acadia, Annapolis Valley, and Bear River First Nations feel it is important that all parties involved in the dispute that is taking place in their area of St. Mary's Bay be made aware of the views and concerns they have for their communities.*

Early on Friday Morning, Bear River First Nation drafted a letter to all parties involved to express their views and concerns on what is taking place in the Kespu'kwitk District. Prior to the events now taking place neither the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, DFO officials, nor representatives from Sipekne'katik reached out to the Bear River First Nation or any other Kepu'kwitk Communities.

*"The Kespu'witk communities were in the front lines of the unrest that immediately followed the Marshall decision in 1999. Our communities worked tirelessly to build bridges and repair relationships with non-Mi'kmaq fishers and communities. Our children go to school with one another, we share communities with one another and often our families are connected to one another. All that work over the past decades is quickly being eroded by others who will soon leave this area, leaving us to pick up the pieces. As such, Bear River First Nation expects respectful dialogue with the Crown, our fellow Mi'kmaq communities and the non-Mi'kmaq fishery pertaining to the lobster fishery in St. Mary's Bay. To date, this has not taken place."*

Chief Carol Potter has addressed all parties involved in the unrest in her letter.

The three-page letter goes into detail of the unity and friendship that the treaties represent and the views and concerns of the communities that reside in the area, after being left out during the initial dialogue.

Bear River First Nation calls on all parties involved to develop an interim understanding for a defined period of time that allows all Mi'kmaq communities to participate in a meaningful way. Our community members are currently suffering the backlash of events we have no control over and are denied safe access to resources that are rightfully ours. This cannot be allowed to continue.

***Boilerplate:*** *The full letter in its entirety is expected to be expressed by any media as this is the views and concerns of Bear River First Nation. All parties involved are addressed in the address portion of the letter.*

**Kespu'kwitk pronunciation:**

**Contact Information:**

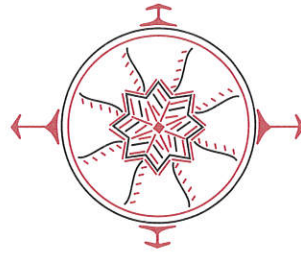
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# L'S+TKUK MI'KMAW FIRST NATION

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October 23, 2020

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan  
Minister's Office  
200 Kent Street  
Station 15N100  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6

Chief Michael Sack  
Sipekne'katik First Nation  
522 Church Street  
Indian Brook, NS B0N 2H0

Chief Gerald Toney  
Annapolis Valley First Nation  
29 Toney Blvd.  
Cambridge, NS B0P 1G0

Chief Deborah Robinson  
Acadia First Nation  
10526 Highway #3  
Yarmouth, NS B5A 5J7

Chief Sidney Peters  
Chief Terrance Paul  
Co-Chairs  
Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs  
75 Treaty Trail  
Millbrook, NS B6L 1W3

**Re: Bear River First Nation Fisheries Statement and Kespu'kwitk Stewardship of St. Mary's Bay**

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The Bear River First Nation feels it is important that all parties in the current dispute are fully informed and aware of the views and concerns of our community and the Kespu'kwitk district that comprises the Bear River, Annapolis Valley and Acadia bands. Prior to the events now taking place in our area, neither the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, nor DFO officials nor representatives

from Sipekne'katik First Nation reached out to the Bear River First Nation, nor any other Kespu'kwitk community, respecting access to and management of lobster resources in St. Mary's Bay. We are encouraged by subsequent contacts we have had with DFO and the Minister and hope they regularly continue.

St. Mary's Bay is located squarely within the Kespu'witk district. The Bear River First Nation is the nearest Mi'kmaq community in this area. Our community has fished St. Mary's Bay as a traditional fishing ground since time immemorial. We currently fish St. Mary's Bay for both communal commercial and food, social and ceremonial purposes, although over the last few weeks, our fishers have been forced out of this area due to the ongoing dispute. Bear River is currently developing a community-based livelihood fishing plan and because St. Mary's Bay is our traditional fishing grounds, it will be included in that plan.

Bear River First Nation members, as Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, have constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights to fish for food in St. Mary's Bay and Treaty Rights to fish for a livelihood in St. Mary's Bay. The Supreme Court has long established this fact. All discussions, plans or potential Crown decisions that affect the lobster fishery in St. Mary's Bay directly impact the rights of our members.

The Kespu'witk communities were in the front lines of the unrest that immediately followed the Marshall decision in 1999. Our communities worked tirelessly to build bridges and repair relationships with non-Mi'kmaq fishers and communities. Our children go to school with one another, we share communities with one another and often our families are connected to one another. All that work over the past decades is quickly being eroded by others who will soon leave this area, leaving us to pick up the pieces. As such, Bear River First Nation expects respectful dialogue with the Crown, our fellow Mi'kmaq communities and the non-Mi'kmaq fishery pertaining to the lobster fishery in St. Mary's Bay. To date, this has not taken place.

Having stated that Bear River First Nation has recognized Treaty rights to the lobster fishery in St. Mary's Bay, we also strongly feel that we have Treaty responsibilities. Our community has always maintained that we fully accept our responsibility as stewards to the land and resources in our area. We are very concerned that we are not part of any discussions that involve the health and sustainability of resources in our own backyard. Bear River First Nations' obligations of stewardship are obligations we owe to the Creator. This has always been the Mi'kmaq way.

We also know and embrace the fact that the Treaties are ones of Peace and Friendship. Provisions of those Treaties speak to the promise that we as Treaty partners will always seek legal redress for our disputes. That is what the Mi'kmaq did and continue to do. In a much greater way, what the Treaties stand for is the acceptance that we share this land and the ability of each community as Treaty Peoples, both Mi'kmaq and European, to live in peace and security. This proposition is the foundation of this Province.

As stated earlier, Bear River First Nation is developing a livelihood fisheries plan for our community. We are doing so in cooperation with our fellow Kespu'kwitk communities and the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. When ready, we will look to implement that plan and St.

Mary's Bay, as our traditional fishing area, will be part of that plan. We will request DFO acceptance and cooperation in the operation of that plan.

Further, with respect to the overall stewardship of the resources of St. Mary's Bay, the Bear River First Nation demands that a co-management process be developed between Canada and the Kespu'witk communities to monitor access and allocations in St. Mary's Bay to ensure that our bands can fully protect and enjoy our traditional harvest areas. We will look to Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs' support for our communities to take on this vital role for the well-being of us all.

Bear River First Nation has spoken with Minister Jordon and is encouraged that a way forward is being sought. We look forward to continuing the dialogue in the coming weeks in the hopes of finding a peaceful resolution for all parties recently affected.

It is hard to see how any way forward can be developed at a point in time when so many are intent on escalating the situation on St. Mary's Bay. Bear River First Nation calls on all parties involved to develop an interim understanding for a defined period of time that allows all Mi'kmaq communities to participate in a meaningful way. Our community members are currently suffering the backlash of events we have no control over and are denied safe access to resources that are rightfully ours. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Respectfully:



Chief Carol Dee Potter  
On behalf of Council

- c. BRFN Council  
AFN Regional Chief Paul Prosper  
Janice Maloney, Executive Director KMKNO  
Angie Gillis, Associate Executive Director CMM