

## **STATEMENT**

### **IN SOLIDARITY WITH MI'KMAQ LOBSTER FISHERS**

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CUPW stands in solidarity with the Mi'kmaq lobster fishers asserting their treaty right to fish for a moderate livelihood. CUPW also condemns the hurtful and hateful actions by some non-Indigenous fishers and their allies. Indigenous people are asserting their legal and traditional rights to fish, should not be met with violence and hate.

Reconciliation with Indigenous people and communities is needed now more than ever if we are to build a society based on fairness, equality, and justice. And reconciliation requires us to respect treaties, understand the context of situations, and stand against oppression and violence.

Indigenous people took care of these lands for many years and welcomed many settlers. In response, the settlers stole their lands and resources, sent their children to residential schools, and denied Indigenous people basic rights.

The Sipekne'katik First Nation people are fighting for the right to fish, as set out in treaties their ancestors signed with the British 260 years ago. CUPW recognizes that all Mi'kmaq people have the right to fish for a moderate livelihood. This is protected by the treaties and affirmed by the Supreme Court in the 1999 Donald Marshall decision. Treaty rights are also enshrined in Canadian law through the constitution.

Supporting the Mi'kmaq people who are fighting for justice and the right to live in dignity is part of our work to create a world where we are all equal. It is part of reconciliation, which means building a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and following the 94 calls to action that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released in December 2015.

We need to acknowledge the past injustices that settlers imposed on Indigenous people and recognize the present-day impacts of that colonization. We need to oppose those injustices. We need to work on healing past injustices and move forward towards a better future for everyone. It is in this spirit that CUPW expresses our solidarity with the Mi'kmaq lobster fishers.

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**HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:****1. Donate Money**

- **Frontlines:** e-transfer to 752frontline@gmail.com
- **Sipekne'katik First Nation:** e-transfer to monicah@sipeknekatik.ca (*paypal also*).

**2. Mail, email, or call your Federal elected officials** and tell them you support the Mi'kmaq and you want the Government to take steps to protect the Mi'kmaq fishers and to oppose and violence against the fishers or criminalization of the Mi'kmaq fishers.**3. Participate in an action** – supporters are organizing events in many locations.**4. Learn More**

For non-Indigenous members, part of reconciliation is our responsibility to educate ourselves and gain historical perspective. Conflict over fisheries has been affecting the region for many years. Learn about the Burnt Church crisis, for instance, that raged between 1999 and 2002.

**Learn about Clearwater** – the company not only traps lobster to excess with government approval,

but it also does this outside of fishing seasonal parameters. Its CEO is the wealthiest man in Nova Scotia.

This demonstrates quite clearly the colonial basis of our legal system, the lack of government commitment to really engage in reconciliation, and it flies in the face of conservation and sustainability.

The Supreme Court of Canada acted irresolutely in the matter of Treaty Rights to fish for Indigenous people and helped to create a situation where neoliberal alliances between government and corporations would flourish.

And what of conservation and sustainability? Clearwater fishes irresponsibly by using 6,500 traps, exponentially more than what a Mi'kmaq livelihood boat would have (50). But Fisheries and Oceans Canada says nothing.

**MORE BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

<http://mikmaqrights.com/negotiations/working-groups/fisheries/>

<https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/the-facts-behind-mikmaw-fishing-rights/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/mi-kmaw-sipekne-katik-self-regulated-fishery-nova-scotia-1.5734646>