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Dené Nation Stands in Support of the Mi'kmaq People in Asserting their Treaty Rights within their Traditional Territory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – October 28, 2020] – Since mid-September of this year, the Mi'kmaq peoples located in Nova Scotia have faced assault on their persons and property by non-Indigenous locals, due to the Sipekne'katik First Nation launching their self-regulated lobster fishery. The launch of this self-regulated lobster fishery is well-within their constitutionally protected Treaty right to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood. The Dene Nation stands with the Mi'kmaq Nation, the rightful Treaty holders, and supports the exercise of their Treaty rights within their Traditional Territory.

“The landmark Marshall ruling by the Supreme Court upheld the Mi'kmaq's Treaty rights to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood however, the court's legal jargon has been rightfully criticized as unspecific,” said National Chief Yakeleya. The ruling was unspecific on the definition of moderate livelihoods to prompt the federal government towards a long-term solution, as legal experts have explained, and for two decades the federal government has made almost no progress on resolving the issue. “It's time for the federal government to step up to the plate and honour the Mi'kmaq's Treaties with the full honour of the Crown, once and for all. As of today, all of the actions we have seen are far from honourable.”

Since tensions began to escalate in September, violent confrontations have led to arrests, fishing equipment has been destroyed, a lobster pound has been burned to the ground, and there have been many accusations of inaction by police in the area to calm the escalating tensions.

“While I appreciate commitments from the Prime Minister on this issue, there is escalating violence with peoples' lives and livelihoods at stake. This is an emergency that requires immediate action, not more empty promises from Ottawa. This situation is far from isolated as we're also seeing a spike in Indigenous and non-Indigenous confrontations across this country. Canadians are looking for a signal from their leadership. What is the signal going to be from the Prime Minister? Action and accountability? Or another 150 years of racism, violence, and misunderstandings against our people for just trying to live off of the land, as we always have?” concluded Yakeleya.

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