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GRAND COUNCIL OF MICMACS  
mí kmaqwey mawio'mí



Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*Msit Nokmaq*

Recently, in the face of unilateral legislative action by the Federal Government towards the Rights of Canada's First Nations. This was done without any consultation, consent, nor input of the peoples that will be affected by this action. The result has been frustration and a growing level of discontent by First Nations. There has been, and continues to be, many Mi'kmaq people from across all seven Districts of the traditional Territory of Mi'kma'ki that have been voicing their concerns and objections to the passage of the Omnibus piece of legislation. Our people are rightfully and legitimately demanding that our Aboriginal and Treaty Rights be respected and accorded all the protection and respect that our Rights have as part of the Constitution of Canada.

These Constitutional rights that form an integral part of the identity of all Mi'kmaq cannot be altered or impinged upon without the express knowledge and consent of the Mi'kmaq. The Mi'kmaq Grand Council supports and endorses the opposition to this attempted tinkering with our Constitutional Rights by the Federal Government and calls upon the Honour of the Crown to be upheld by Canada. We encourage all Mi'kmaq to embrace and hold dearly all of their Rights that they have under Mi'kmaq, Canadian, and International law.

In 1980, the late Grand Keptin Alexander Denny initiated a communication on behalf of the Mi'kmaq nation to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations claiming that "*Canada has and continues to deny our right to self-determination; Canada has and continues to confiscate our territory despite the terms of our treaties; Canada has and continues to deprive our people of its means of subsistence*". Sadly, the Canadian Government continues to show a disregard for our Rights.

The Mi'kmaq Grand Council has never relinquished our inherent sovereignty in our Covenant Chain of Treaties. We have always maintained that our Treaties governs and forms the basis of our relation with Canada and that Mi'kmaq want to live our lives in accordance with our teachings, treaties, and inherent rights. We have always rejected the imposed federal Indian Act as being inconsistent with our Rights as a Nation.

Despite the continued practice of our rights by our people, we continue to see our Treaties violated by Canada and provincial governments. For generations, if not centuries, Mi'kmaq have witnessed governments resort to questionable legislation in an attempt to deprive us of our sovereignty and treaty rights. They have attempted to destroy our traditional government of the seven districts and subjugate Mi'kmaq to their laws, and to forcibly assimilate our youth by their education. They have not succeeded. We are still here and stand united and strong as a Nation, with a full awareness of our inherent Rights.

**GRAND COUNCIL:**

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# grand council of micmacs mi'kma'wey ma'wio'mi



Both the Grand Council and Chief and Councils have continually struggled to strive for justice in a peaceful manner, by using diplomacy, the courts, lobbying, and constitutional reform to affirm our inherent and treaty rights. We have also tried to utilize the United Nations to affirm our Indigenous rights. We have won court victories at the Supreme Court of Canada, but the federal and provincial governments of Canada have refused to fully implement our constitutional rights.

Because of the passionate efforts of Chief Theresa Spence and the Idle No More movement, we are aware that the Prime Minister of Canada has agreed to a meeting with the Assembly of First Nations. This is a positive step, but we must stress that every Mi'kmaq continue to get and remain involved, educated, and aware of their rights and responsibilities as Mi'kmaq. Every Mi'kmaq has their own talents that we encourage you to use them for the betterment of Mi'kmaq people in a positive manner.

Mi'kmaq have seen and attended many meetings in the past with Canada. Most past meetings have not produced any meaningful improvement in the situation of our people. While the Grand Council is hesitant to believe that this single meeting will resolve the pattern of injustice that Mi'kmaq have been subjected to, we are hopeful that this will be a sincere first step towards adequately addressing our issues and concerns.

In the hopes that Canada is ready to move forward and honour our constitutional rights and to help move Mi'kmaq communities and families forward in a manner that is respectful of our unique constitutional status, the Grand Council asks the following of Canada:

- That Canada makes the implementation of Mi'kmaq treaties an integral part of the new strategy and relationship.
- That a Treaty attorney general for the Mi'kmaq be established in Atlantic Canada to protect our Constitutional rights and our human rights in accordance with the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples.
- That Canada acknowledges our Constitutional rights, including our commerce right to trade to ensure a prosperous livelihood for our communities and families.
- That Canada repeal those provisions in Bill C-45 that apply to our unrelinquished and reserved lands, waters, and environment and put an end to other legislation aimed at hindering Mi'kmaq access to our resources

Until our constitutional rights are implemented by Canada and the provinces, we ask that Mi'kmaq communities and families continue to unite in solidarity. This is not a time for division. Let us not undermine our unity with false notions and labels that are not based in our rights, culture, or language. We ask you to continue to be respectful and honorable in your actions. We ask all Mi'kmaq to continue to educate yourselves and others of our rights, responsibilities and values. Together we have built a positive momentum that will grow stronger as we endeavor to preserve, protect, and promote our Mi'kmaq Rights.

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The Grand Council of the Mi'kmaq will continue to advocate and protect the rights of the Mi'kmaq in all our Districts in conjunction with our Mi'kmaq elected leadership, and families. We are determined to work with all Mi'kmaq within the communities and different organizations that advocate for Treaty Implementation. In the months to come, the executive and Keptins of the Grand Council will increase our communication and activities with our Districts, communities and families to help assist in this historic moment in our continued existence as a Nation. We will continue to build upon this ongoing work to contribute to the betterment of our communities, families, and internal Government. We will continue to work in pursuit of a better life under the implementation of our treaties. Welali'ek

Respectfully on behalf of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council

X Ben Sylliboy  
Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy

X Andrew Denny  
Grand Keptin Andrew Denny

X Victor Alex  
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