



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **The Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqiyik / Wəlastəkwiyyik will work together to protect sacred areas within the Big Salmon River watershed**

The Mi'gmaq represented by MTI and Kopit Lodge and the Wolastoqiyik / Wəlastəkwiyyik in New Brunswick have signed a Declaration that states they will work together to protect the Big Salmon River watershed. The watershed will be known as *Sa' qewi-ilnuwey Awti* in Mi'gmaq and *Kulasihkutomonen Tan Wetapeksultiyoq/Kolasihkotəmanen Tan Wetapeksultiyək* in Wolastoqey.

“This watershed is important to both Nations and includes several sites of critical cultural and ecological significance and Indigenous artifacts dating back thousands of years have been found in this watershed,” said Chief George Ginnish of Natoaganeg.

Significant sites within this watershed include: a sacred Qaskusi / Kakskus (cedar) forest, archaeological sites including a Qalipu / Mokalipiyik / Məkalipiyik (caribou) ambush site of international historical significance, two repository brooks, up to thirty Plamu / Polamuwok / Pəlamowək (salmon) pools including an overwintering pool, and essential head water spawning and juvenile rearing areas.

The Big Salmon River flows into the Bay of Fundy near the endpoint of New Brunswick's famous Fundy Trail. The mouth of the river is protected by the Fundy Trail but habitat surrounding the headwaters is seriously degraded due to climate change and forest management. Fort Folly Habitat Recovery is working several initiatives as part of recovery efforts for the endangered Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic Salmon

“The salmon is culturally significant to both the Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqiyik. We have been working to protect and restore the salmon in this watershed and we are concerned the land management practices in that area will negatively impact the already threatened salmon population,” said Chief Rebecca Knockwood of Amlamgog.

As a part of the federal government's Pathway to Target 1 funding, the First Nations in New Brunswick have been trying to further protect these lands and it was felt this watershed would be an ideal Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). Indigenous Protected and

Conserved Areas (IPCA) are indigenous led conservation initiatives over lands and waters where Indigenous governments have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance, and knowledge systems.

“The Mi’gmaq and the Wolastoqiyik identified *Sa’ qewi-ilnuwey Awti* in Mi’gmaq and *Kulasihkutomonen Tan Wetapeksultiyoq/Kolasihkotamānen Tan Wetapeksultiyākw* in Wolastoqey as one of the first areas needing protection because current practices could threaten the salmon and sacred sites within this watershed. The provincial government has not made addressing our concerns around protecting lands and rights a priority, so we had to take matters in our own hands,” said Chief Ross Perley of Neqotkuk.

With the signing to the Declaration, the Nations are stating that there should be no Crown land use decisions without the prior written consent of the Mi’gmaq and the Wolastoqiyik / Wəlastəkwiyik on matters relating to land use including mining or mining explorations and commercial forestry / logging.

This does not mean the Nations are prohibiting New Brunswickers from visiting this area. In fact, the signing of the Declaration shows the Nations want these lands to be appreciated for generations to come. Visitors will be allowed to come, and the Nations may issue permits, subject to their own conservation rules, for recreational activities, hunting or fishing or harvesting.

“The Nations are reinforcing and reminding the provincial government that when our ancestors signed the Peace and Friendship Treaties, they never ceded the lands to the Crown. In fact, our ancestors wanted to ensure we had an important role in the stewardship of these lands,” said Chief Alan Polchies Jr. of Sitansisk.

“This Declaration is an act of our respective Nationhoods and our right to self-determination. To protect and advance our self-determination as Nations, the Federal and Provincial Crowns must respect and honour our constitutionally protected rights and this Declaration,” said Chief Gabriel Atwin of Pilick.

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### About MTI

Mi’gmawə’l Tplu’taqnn Incorporated is a not-for-profit organization created by the nine Mi’gmaq First Nations in New Brunswick. It represents eight of the nine communities on consultation matters. Its objectives include promoting and supporting: the recognition, affirmation, exercise, and implementation of the Aboriginal and Treaty rights; the right of self-determination; political, cultural, economic, educational, and social development; justice and

equity; wider respect and understanding and general awareness of its member communities and their Mi'gmaq laws, rights, values, traditions, customs and practices.

#### About WNNB

The Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick provides technical advice and support to the 6 Wolastoqey Communities in New Brunswick to ensure that the constitutional duty to consult owed to the Wolastoqey is being met and Wolastoqey Aboriginal and Treaty rights are being recognized and implemented.

#### About Kopit Lodge

Kopit Lodge is a community-based organization made up of members of the Elsipogtog First Nation, the largest Mi'kmaq First Nation in New Brunswick. In March 2015, Elsipogtog Chief and Council mandated Kopit Lodge to protect Mi'kmaq title, rights and Treaty rights on behalf of Elsipogtog. We have been engaged in ongoing efforts to carry out this mandate since that time.