



October 31, 2017

Mi'gmaq respond to CAST's Open Letter to DFO

NATOAGENEG - The Collaboration for Atlantic Salmon Tomorrow (CAST) issued a media statement dated October 25, 2017 entitled 'Wild Atlantic Salmon at a Crossroad'. The Mi'gmaq of New Brunswick disagree with much of the content in that media release. "The release contained some erroneous information and failed to mention a number of relevant and important facts," stated Chief George H. Ginnish of Eel Ground First Nation and co-Chair of Mi'gma'el Tplu'taqnn, which represents the Mi'gmaq in New Brunswick on many legal and constitutional issues.

Chief Ginnish set out some of the most serious of the errors made by CAST. "The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is legally required to consult with First Nations when it contemplates making a decision which might affect Aboriginal or Treaty rights", Chief Ginnish said. He pointed out that the Mi'gmaq hold court recognition and affirmation of both Aboriginal and Treaty rights concerning salmon. He said the Mi'gmaq should have been consulted when CAST's project was first brought to DFO and well before any small salmon were collected by CAST to raise as adults and to then be released into the Miramichi River. "DFO unlawfully issued permits and failed to consult us on any of this planning," he said and continued that "we Mi'gmaq have lived along the Miramichi River for many thousands of years and have intimate knowledge of the river, its tributaries and salmon. But none of that was considered by either CAST or DFO in the planning, issuing of permits or implementation. The fact that not a single person engaged a First Nation during the development of this project is unacceptable".

Chief Ginnish also pointed out that salmon are one of the most important and nutritious sources of food for the Mi'gmaq which could not be replaced. "Many of our people are simply too poor to afford alternatives. CAST is literally experimenting with our people's food without any consideration as to how we would interact with these experimental fish.

Further, there have been concerns raised by a number of organizations and scientists which doubt the premises CAST has relied upon. Apparently DFO scientists are also raising concerns," Chief Ginnish said.

The Mi'gmaq have made it consistently clear since we first learned of this experiment what is required, and what changes must be made, for our support of and consent to this project. To date, the conditions have not been met and we cannot consent to this experiment taking place on our river."

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