



PRESS RELEASE

Ecotrust Canada's statement on Mi-kmaq lobster fisheries

October 22, 2020, Vancouver, BC – With respect to the current crisis around the Mi-kmaq lobster fishery, we want to express the following:

- Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy First Nations on the East Coast are engaged in a just struggle to overcome 300+ years of dispossession and systemic racism that has denied them access to fisheries and other resources in their traditional territories.
- Ecotrust Canada recognizes and respects the rights of these First Nations to harvest seafood for food, social, ceremonial, and commercial use. Their right to fish and carry on a moderate livelihood fishery in their traditional territories are affirmed in the Constitution and in Supreme Court decisions and must be recognized and respected by all Canadians.
- We were horrified by the violent and racist attacks on Mi'kmaw fish harvesters that have taken place over the past few months — the federal and provincial governments must act immediately to end the violence and to ensure that criminal behaviour is prosecuted.
- The federal government must expedite negotiations to establish agreements with the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy peoples on their moderate livelihood fisheries and support the establishment of Indigenous governance of those fisheries.
- We recognize the complexity of this situation and the emotions surrounding it for all fishing communities and harvesters. Seafood has provided numerous economic, social, and cultural values to First Nations for millennia and to Canada's coastal communities for generations. Today, people living on our coasts continue to rely on seafood for local food security, livelihoods, and to maintain their cultural connection to the sea.
- As Indigenous fisheries continue to develop and new governance systems take shape, Indigenous and non-Indigenous fish harvesters will continue to live and work side by side in their communities and on the water, and they will continue to act as stewards of shared ocean resources and habitats. Open dialogue and shared understanding are a critical part of the path forward to achieving a peaceful and fair resolution. Governments must support new processes to facilitate respectful dialogue and cooperation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous fisheries leaders, and to ensure their perspectives and concerns are understood and considered.

About Ecotrust Canada

Ecotrust Canada is an enterprising charity that works with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities toward building an economy that provides for life. We work with fish harvesters, First Nations, and coastal communities to ensure that the benefits of fisheries flow to the people on deck, on the dock, and in adjacent communities. We also work with our community partners to strengthen local capacity for monitoring, management, and stewardship of local fisheries.

For more information:

Shannon Lough – Communications Manager, Ecotrust Canada | T: 250-624-4191 | shannon@ecotrust.ca