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**ASSEMBLY OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ CHIEFS**

***Speaking Points:***

***EMRIP 10<sup>th</sup> Session***

July 13, 2017

*Chief Andrea Paul*

*afternoon*  
Good ~~morning~~ everyone and thank you for the opportunity to speak today!

My name is Chief Andrea Paul and I am the elected leader of Pictou Landing First Nation, one of the 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The traditional homeland of the Mi'kmaq is known as Mi'kma'ki – and today we are divided between the jurisdictional boundaries of the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Quebec.

*Today I*  
Here at the UN, I am representing the 13 Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia as one of the members of the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. The Assembly works collaboratively on common issues that impact our people and have been working on the implementation of our Treaty and Aboriginal Rights.

The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, centuries ago, signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with visitors to our traditional territory. In these Treaties, the Mi'kmaq Nation never surrendered, ceded, or sold the Aboriginal Title to any of its lands in Nova Scotia.

In 1999, we fought for the respect and acknowledgement of our Treaty Rights and took our case to the Supreme Court of Canada with the successful *Marshall* Decision.

This decision allowed for real dialogue to begin and for the development of the Framework Agreement - better known as the Made-In-Nova Scotia Process - which was signed in 2007, bringing together the Federal, Provincial and Mi'kmaq governments in a negotiations process, created by the Mi'kmaq.

We have set a precedent in Canada - refusing to negotiate or agree to anything that does not recognize our self-determination as a Nation. As a result, we have changed how the negotiation processes in Canada will operate - Canada is now looking at Nation-to-Nation tables across the country.

We have also developed the *Terms of Reference for a Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Consultation Process*. Our Consultation Process was the first time that any First Nation group in Canada was able to obligate governments to consult in a formal and official way.

While we have had much success, we still have a long way to go to ensure true recognition of our Nation-to-Nation relationship.

We are constant advocates that the Mi'kmaq are the rightful owners of our culture resources and heritage.

Most recently, we began formal consultation on the Federal government's decision to close the Parks Canada Collection Lab in Nova Scotia, with plans to relocate all the artefacts to their national facility over 1,300km away. This would entail moving OUR Mi'kmaq artefacts from our region, completely across the country.

The Mi'kmaq collection that exists within Parks Canada's facility includes items made by our ancestors, which are significant, non-renewable and sacred parts of our cultural property. We are committed to seeing them remain within our traditional territory.

On another note, I am pleased to be able to speak on health concerns on behalf of our Nation. As the Lead Chief of the Health Portfolio for the Assembly, there are a number of major issues that we've been faced with, but a couple that I would like to highlight today.

Changes were being made to the Province's child welfare reform and we had to fight to have a voice in those amendments. Through our work, more than 25 amendments have been made to Nova Scotia's *Children and Family Services Act* and to their child welfare regulations and policies that directly impact the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.

From my own home community of Pictou Landing, a mother, Maurina Beadle, had been providing care for her severely disabled son, Jeremy, until she suffered a severe stroke in 2010. Our community stepped in, getting Jeremy the home care he needed and when we asked the federal government to reimburse those costs, they refused. They said that the only option was to place Jeremy in an institution, far from home, at a cost to taxpayers that, in the end, would exceed our in-home care option.

Maurina argued using Jordan's Principle -which is used in Canada to resolve disputes regarding the payment for services provided to First Nations children - and in a landmark ruling by the Federal Court, Canada was ordered to reimburse of the costs associated with caring for Jeremy at home.

This was a proud moment for our community, for Indigenous children's advocates across Canada, and most importantly for Maurina and Jeremy.

While we are winning major battles nationally, we are still working to fight racism in our health care system locally.

We have language barriers – still to this day – in our hospitals and clinics which can lead to late diagnosis of health issues and confusion for people who may not completely understand what they are being told by health care professionals.

We are looking into establishing our own health authority – one developed specifically for our own people.

For Indigenous peoples in Canada, our suicide rates continue to be the highest in the country,

we lack adequate housing,

some of our communities continue to have problems with access to clean drinking water

and we are viewed as a social policy issue.

This MUST change.

We need to be respected as a true equal party at the table, this means NOT undermining our processes, our ways, and our beliefs.

We need to be included in any decisions that impact our people.

There must be a new perspective on the fiscal relationship, to ensure that we have the economic capacity and the resources in place to support our people.

Yes, we still have a long way to go, but we are proud of how far we have come.

We will continue to fight for our Rights, the protection of our lands, our resources, and most importantly our people.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. We'lalioq.