



October 20, 2020

Dear members of the Sipekne'katik First Nation,

The Global One Health Network Executive Committee calls on the federal government to intervene, recognize the traditional fishery affirmed by Canada's Supreme Court, and to stop the violence of commercial fishermen. As a Network, we affirm our support for the Mi'kmaq fishers of Sipekne'katik First Nation who are facing significant levels of racist violence from Nova Scotia commercial fishermen in their attempts to earn a moderate livelihood through lobster fishing, a legal right originating in the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed with the British Crown and affirmed in 1999 by the Supreme Court Marshall decision.

At stake are the abilities of an Indigenous People to alleviate poverty by fishing in the modest and sustainable manner that they have been doing for thousands of years. Given the disproportionately negative health outcomes faced by Indigenous Peoples across Canada, it is vital that sovereignty over food resources, an essential component of the right to health be upheld to the fullest extent. Access to traditional food sources is a right affirmed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and by Canadian settler colonial law, and it is a fundamental criterion for overcoming health and social inequities stemming from historical and ongoing racist colonial policies and actions. We therefore call on the federal government to immediately recognize and protect the Mi'kmaq fishers' right to a moderate livelihood through lobster fishing,

The events in Nova Scotia are a repeat of centuries-old denial of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their Treaty Rights and their legal rights under the Constitution of Canada. Twenty-one years ago, the landmark Marshall decision affirmed that Mi'kmaq People had a right to achieve a "moderate livelihood" through fishing, to alleviate the impoverishment they have faced since being forced from the fishery by commercial interests for over a century. After that decision, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans criminalized the attempt of the people of Esgenoopetitj First Nation to sell lobster, forcing them into a narrow licensing system that ignored the rights affirmed in Marshall. For twenty-one years since then, Mi'kmaq First Nations have sought to negotiate for the right to a traditional fishery, practiced on a sustainable scale. Ultimately, they have begun to practice their own modest licensing system and have provided seven fishers with 40 traps each. In response, commercial fishers have launched a campaign of racist violence against Mi'kmaq fishers, and the RCMP have proven ineffective, standing by while this horrific violence ensues. We therefore call on the federal government to ensure the safety and security of Mi'kmaq people as they exercise their legal treaty rights.

Wel'aliq, Meegwetch, Niawan, Nya:weh ko;wa, Thank you

Handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is 'Labonté' and the second is 'Hélène Carabin'.

Dr. Ronald Labonté and Dr. Hélène Carabin

Co-leads of the Global One Health Network

<http://global1hn.ca/>