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Press Release

For Immediate Release

Aboriginal leaders of Newfoundland and Labrador meet with Minister Tootoo, discuss future of fisheries in the province

Corner Brook, NL—Chief Brendan Mitchell of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation was in St. John's Monday to meet with the Honourable Hunter Tootoo, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, to discuss opportunities and challenges surrounding commercial fisheries, aquatic research and enforcement in the province. Chief Mitchell was one of five Aboriginal leaders in attendance along with Chief Mi'sel Joe, Miawpukek First Nation, Anastasia Quepee, Grand Chief of the Innu Nation in Labrador, Sarah Leo, President of the Nunatsiavut Government and Todd Russell, President of the NunatuKavut (formerly the Labrador Metis Nation).

This was the first time all aboriginal leaders of the province were together for a joint meeting with the Federal Government. For this reason, many are calling it not only a historic moment, but also a moment that demonstrates the renewed relationship between the Federal Government and Canada's aboriginal people.

Minister Tootoo said meeting with aboriginal leaders on these issues is essential in helping to inform his position as the new Minister of Parliament responsible for this area.

A round-table discussion followed introductions, giving each of the leaders an opportunity to bring forward their issues and concerns regarding the fishery in the province.

On behalf of the Qalipu First Nation, Chief Mitchell took the opportunity to raise concerns regarding the need for increased funding to the Aboriginal Fishery Guardian Program. This program, now nearing the end of a five year contribution agreement, provides inland fisheries enforcement, and environmental stewardship, in central and western Newfoundland. The program, while successful, has not seen an increase to funding in over twenty years, something Chief Mitchell said he would like to see addressed as there is a need for greater representation, especially in central Newfoundland.

Chief Mitchell noted, "We have a valuable working relationship with the Miawpukek First Nation through our MAMKA (Mi'kmaq Alsumk Mowimsikik Koqoey Association) partnership. We would like to see renewed funding to this initiative which would allow us to continue our research and community engagement."

Mr Tootoo commented, "I was pleased to meet with Chief Mitchell of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation as well as the other Aboriginal leaders and discuss important issues of mutual interest. We are committed to forging a renewed and productive relationship with First Nations."



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