

Dear Community member,

You have likely been following the media coverage concerning the Plan B highway construction project in the Bonshaw area. As your Mi'kmaq leaders, we would like to provide some insight on the project, as pertains to the Mi'kmaq in PEI. At the outset of the project, as with all projects initiated by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, the Department was legally obligated to, and did consult with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy, on behalf of the Mi'kmaq Governments of Lennox Island and Abegweit. As you are aware, we recently signed a consultation protocol with the Federal and Provincial Governments which lays out a clear process to consult with PEI First Nations on projects such as this. Our MCPEI consultation unit undertook its due diligence. This involves a process based on research; including historical usage of the area, oral history, archaeological information, as well as measuring the impacts to Mi'kmaq resources such as animal and fish harvesting. The consultation unit then examines the research from both a resource and legal point of view. Other than evidence of traditional animal and fish harvesting in the Bonshaw area generally the research did not reveal that the proposed construction would impact on the traditional land and resource uses or rights by the Mi'kmaq . In actuality, the replacement of a bridge structure that was part of the project was likely to enhance fishing access. There was nothing in the research to suggest that there was any traditional harvesting of medicinal, decorative or ceremonial plants within the area in question. As the legal, traditional, historical and territorial leaders of Prince Edward Island, it is important we act in a responsible manner. Therefore, through the consultation process we protect Mi'kmaq rights and base our decisions on thorough research outlining traditional land and resource use and practices of the PEI Mi'kmaq . Our decisions are not based in the court of public opinion. We recognize members of our communities may object to the planned construction. Some have even participated in the ongoing protest. That is their individual right as a citizen of this province and we respect that. However, the official position of the PEI Mi'kmaq Leadership, as it pertains to the construction of the Plan B project, is as follows: We were consulted. We undertook our due diligence. While we did not "approve" of the project as has been stated in the media, the fact is that we did not formally object to it. This is because the comprehensive research did not reveal that the proposed construction would impact on the traditional land and resource uses by the Mi'kmaq in that area, or that Mi'kmaq rights would be infringed.

Yours in Spirit,

Chief Bernard

Chief Francis