

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Artwork unveiling at Confederation Building a misrepresentation of Indigenous identity

Newfoundland and Labrador Premier John Hogan unveiled new artwork yesterday at the Confederation Building in St. John's, recognizing members of the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC). The ceremony, attended by Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation Minister Scott Reid, Labrador Affairs Minister Lisa Dempster, and NCC representatives, was labelled as a celebration of Indigenous identity.

The event misrepresents the legal status of NCC and undermines the legitimacy of Indigenous governments, organizations and entities. The Nunatsiavut Government and the Innu Nation condemn this decision and call on Premier John Hogan and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to stop distorting Indigenous representation in this province.

The Nunatsiavut Government and the Innu Nation do not recognize the NCC as an Indigenous governing body or its members as an Inuit collective capable of holding section 35 rights. NCC's members are not Inuit, and their claim to Indigenous identity has never been validated through any formal federal recognition process. Their assertions to section 35 rights have been rejected multiple times by the Government of Canada. NCC is also not recognized by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), or any Constitutionally-recognized Inuit treaty organization across Inuit Nunangat.

Any recognition of NCC undermines the rights of those whose identities and land claims have been affirmed through decades of struggle and negotiation. Yesterday's event was a step back for reconciliation, which cannot be achieved through misrepresentation. True reconciliation must be rooted in legal clarity, historical truth, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous governments whose rights are Constitutionally protected.

"This is not simply about art," said Nunatsiavut President Johannes Lampe. "It's about truth. When governments choose to misrepresent who we are and what we've fought for, they erode the very foundation of reconciliation. Labrador Inuit have worked hard for many years to have our rights recognized. True reconciliation requires honesty, accountability, and collaboration with legitimate Indigenous governments and organizations."

“We are disappointed that the Province continues to ignore the concerns of legitimate Indigenous peoples in Labrador and across Canada. It is not the role of the Province to act as a surrogate for a group making false claims to be Indigenous. That’s not promoting reconciliation – that’s promoting colonialism,” said Grand Chief Simon Pokue.

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