



Youth Elder Council

Gaspereau Study

New On Board

Shrewd Shrew

Tui'knek

Marten Comeback

Charlie's Welcome

What's Up With Our  
Water?

What Are We Drinking?

Allison's Big News

Moose Management

Traditional Leadership

The UINR Marten is  
published quarterly by  
the Unama'ki Institute  
of Natural Resources in  
Eskasoni, NS

Subscriptions are free  
and copies may be  
downloaded from  
[www.uinr.ca](http://www.uinr.ca)

Comments and  
questions are welcome.  
Email us at [info@uinr.ca](mailto:info@uinr.ca)

## Mi'kmaq Youth Elder Council Planning Session

Youth and Elders from across Nova Scotia met in Antigonish this spring to explore the possibility of forming a Youth Elder Council. The day began with presentations by Kwilmuk Maw-klusuaqn (KMK) on its mandate to address land, resource, and governance issues with the federal and provincial governments. In the afternoon, Laurie Suitor from UINR and Charles 'Junior' Bernard talked about using the medicine wheel as a possible governance model for the council and some of the many initiatives that could grow out of a Youth Elder Council.

The remainder of the day was spent discussing the pros and cons of setting up a council, and identifying some of the challenges and opportunities. Many of the youth felt a reluctance to share their views in front of the Elders, fearing that their "modern" world view would not be met with approval, and mindful of the cultural insistence on respect for elders. The Elders expressed a sense that the younger generation has lost respect for traditional understandings of family and daily spiritual life. They have some despair in their attempts to reach young people whom they perceive as having been taken away from their culture by a foreign school system and by a language that lacks an inherent understanding of community.

All agree that they must begin building bridges over the differences and find ways to connect. At this workshop, it was determined that the best approach would be to have youth and Elders meet regularly but separately, then come together for joint meetings on an established schedule, perhaps four times a year or more. Each group should be asked about specific issues, and provide input on them, then come together to share their thoughts and approaches. A regular meeting of the two councils was recommended as a way to exchange information. Many felt that there was some apathy among Mi'kmaq youth and something would have to be done to reach them and sell them on the importance of participating. Watch for more from this initiative.

[laurie@uinr.ca](mailto:laurie@uinr.ca).



Elaine Gould, Sister Dorothy Moore, Laurie Suitor (UINR),  
Youth Participants



## Shrewd Shrew!



In our last issue (Spring 2006) we introduced you to the Species at Risk of extinction in Unama'ki. Missing from those photos was the Gaspe Shrew (*Sorex gaspensis*). At press time we were still unable to come up with an illustration of this elusive creature that lives in the Cape Breton Highlands. No one we contacted had a photo and the closest we came was a stuffed specimen! Finally, we were able to track down an illustration and the rights to print it from the kind folks at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa.

The Gaspe Shrew is only found in Cape Breton Island, Gaspé Peninsula, and New Brunswick and if you go looking for one (get a photo for us!), check out rock outcrops and steep slopes. Fires and clear-cutting are the major threats to Gaspe Shrews.

For more information on the Gaspe Shrew and other Species at Risk, go to [www.uinr.ca/speciesatrisk](http://www.uinr.ca/speciesatrisk) and follow the links.

## New On Board

Welcome back to Lisa Young, our Director of Administration, who has returned after a year-long maternity leave. Allison McIsaac will be away on maternity leave until next February. Angela Morris has been hired through a BEAHR internship grant and Georgia Pacific funding as a Research Assistant. She graduated from CBU with a Bachelor of Science this May. Laurie Sutor, our Intergovernmental and Partnership Advisor is on a three-month medical leave. Lorraine Marshall joins UINR as Community Drinking Water Quality Monitor and Sanitary Shoreline Survey Technician.

## Gaspereau study



Angela Morris samples scales from Bras d'Or Lakes gaspereau. Her work is part of an ongoing monitoring of the stocks in the Lakes. The gaspereau fishery in Unama'ki is monitored and regulated. This year's management plan includes a reduction in fishing time with a goal to reduce the catch by 20%. The objective is to increase the percentage of repeat spawners and to broaden the age classes taken by fishery.

[angela@uinr.ca](mailto:angela@uinr.ca)



## Tui'knek

Albert Marshall

On a bright sunny afternoon in June of 1955, the Canso Causeway opened to the general public. There were hundreds of people applauding on both sides of the Strait. The Strait was known to the Mi'kmaq as "Tui'knek." The pomp and festivities were deafening. Among the group were some Mi'kmaq, huddled together to watch the proceedings. Within the small group, there stood a Mi'kmaq man 45 years of age. He wasn't applauding but instead was very introspective as he watched along with the others. Finally, he spoke and the words he spoke had no meaning at the time but, because our teachings come from each other and from Elders, one man did take the prediction seriously and revealed it only a few years ago when the Elders met in Eskasoni at the Talking Circle.

This man who is now about 70 years old, recalled the words spoken by the Elder that bright June afternoon of 1955. He said, "I heard this Elder say, 'In 50 years the District of Mi'kmaq'i will not have eels. There will be no more eels because the causeway has closed the main artery for eel migration.'" This Elder who spoke these words has now passed on. He lived in We'koqma'q, Inverness County. The words he spoke in 1955 are now being realized by both the Mi'kmaq and the general population. The wise man was Roddie Gould.

The moral of this observation:

Aboriginal science and the world views and philosophies from which they are derived, provide models, lessons, meanings, and possibilities on what it means to participate with nature, rather than attempting to dominate nature. Our lessons are carefully delivered by our Elders since they have learned through many years of exploring, searching, and conclusions.

[albert@uinr.ca](mailto:albert@uinr.ca)



# Marten comeback<sup>3</sup>

Early records estimate that over a thousand marten lived in Unama'ki in the late 1800s. For many years considered to be extinct here, we now know that there are considerably less than 100 martens in Unama'ki. A combination of over-trapping and loss of forest habitat forced the remaining marten into remote areas of the Highlands and Victoria County. The population has been isolated from the mainland for some 10,000 years.

The Nova Scotia Marten Recovery Team has partnered with industry, scientists, stakeholders, and government agencies and may soon begin releasing 30–50 marten over the next three years in an attempt to re-establish and provide some genetic diversity to the native population. Initial releases will take place near wilderness areas and the Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

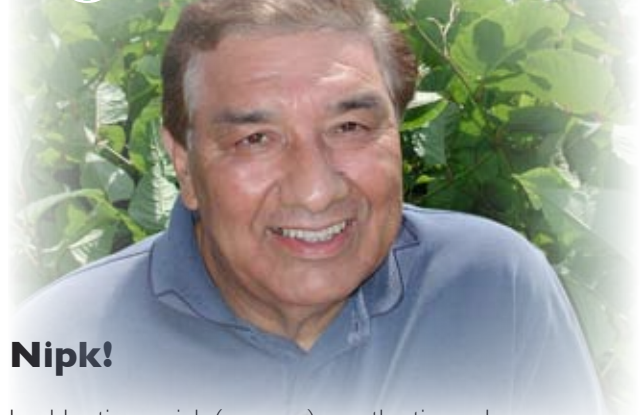
The American marten (*Martes americana*) has chocolate brown fur and orange coloured throat and chest. Its long slender body, short limbs, broad feet, and sharp claws make the marten well adapted for climbing trees and travelling across the forest floor. In winter, the soles of its feet are densely furred allowing for easy movement through snow.

Analyses of marten habitat in northern Cape Breton indicate that, currently, there are at least 30 patches of suitable habitat. An additional 25 home ranges, through forest succession, are possible by the year 2030.

The project will be evaluated through the different stages of capture, transport, holding, and release to determine if changes in protocol are necessary after each year of release, and two, five, and ten years after releases have been completed. These evaluations should look at: whether the target of 90–150 translocated animals was met, whether mortality rates were acceptable, if released marten helped to link the separate sub-populations, if the population is increasing into lowland areas, and if there is an indication that there is a free-living, viable population of marten on Cape Breton Island two, five, and ten years after release.

For details on this project go to [uinr.ca/marten](http://uinr.ca/marten)

## Charlie Dennis Pjila'si



### Nipk!

In older times, nipk (summer) was the time when our families travelled to summer camps along the shores to gather fish, shellfish, roots, and herbs to supplement our summer diet. These traditions are still important to us and, at UINR we continue to work on ensuring that these resources will be there in the future for our children. Much of our work is directed at protecting traditional Mi'kmaq natural resources, from plamu (salmon) to tiam (moose).

In this issue, we report on our initiative to make sure that plamu are part of our future. CSI Cape Breton (Collaborative Salmon Initiative) is holding its first workshop with the aim of bringing together important stakeholders to work towards developing a management plan for this dwindling species. I am also sitting on a recovery team that is looking at re-establishing the American marten and lynx populations in Unama'ki.

Since our last newsletter, we have been busy contributing to a number of important conferences and events. We were presenters at the International First Nations Community Planning Conference in Membertou. The Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs hosted the well-attended event and presentations were given by Shelley Denny, Albert Marshall, and Shelley Porter from UINR. We also had a presence at the Traditional Leadership for Future Generations Conference in Antigonish and the Acid Rain Mitigation workshop in Bedford. We are proud to be presenters in the International Moose Conference in Baddeck this June.

Speaking of moose, our Moose Management Initiative Coordinator, Clifford Paul, will be out visiting your community over the summer to get your ideas on how we should approach the many issues around moose management in Unama'ki. Be sure to come out and give us your feedback.

Have a great summer!

[charlie@uinr.ca](mailto:charlie@uinr.ca)



# the oyster Garden 4

A Story by Charlie Dennis

## Alfred MacKay

All-around fisherman  
from Big Harbour Island  
Malagawatch

I met Alfred back in the 1970s when I was buying oyster from the public fishery in the fall. Alfred lived southeast of what we call Malagawatch Reserve. In order for him to get to his home, he had to drive through the Malagawatch community on a daily basis. So everyone got to know Alfred and his family. Alfred was a well-known fisherman and he fished all year round—lobster, cod, oyster, herring, etc. Alfred had tremendous experience with all the fishing stocks and every inch of the Bras d'Or Lakes.

As I said, I met Alfred when I tried my hand in the buying and selling trade of oyster from September 15 to November 30, and for years he would sell oysters to me, and just like those of my old friend, Gabriel, his oysters were excellent. Alfred was a real good friend of Gabriel's, and for hours they talked about the good old days. I just loved listening to the two of them talk about how plentiful the fishing stocks were.

One of the stories I remember was about the abundance of lobster in the Bras d'Or Lakes. Alfred would tell me that when he fished for lobster he would set all his traps within the River Denys Basin and he wouldn't bother going into the main lake. He would say there were so many lobster he wouldn't be able to squeeze one more in the trap. Well, of course, as the years went by, things changed. If you look at the Lakes now, you wouldn't think it has changed. But the population of lobster and their habitat has certainly changed, causing major concern.

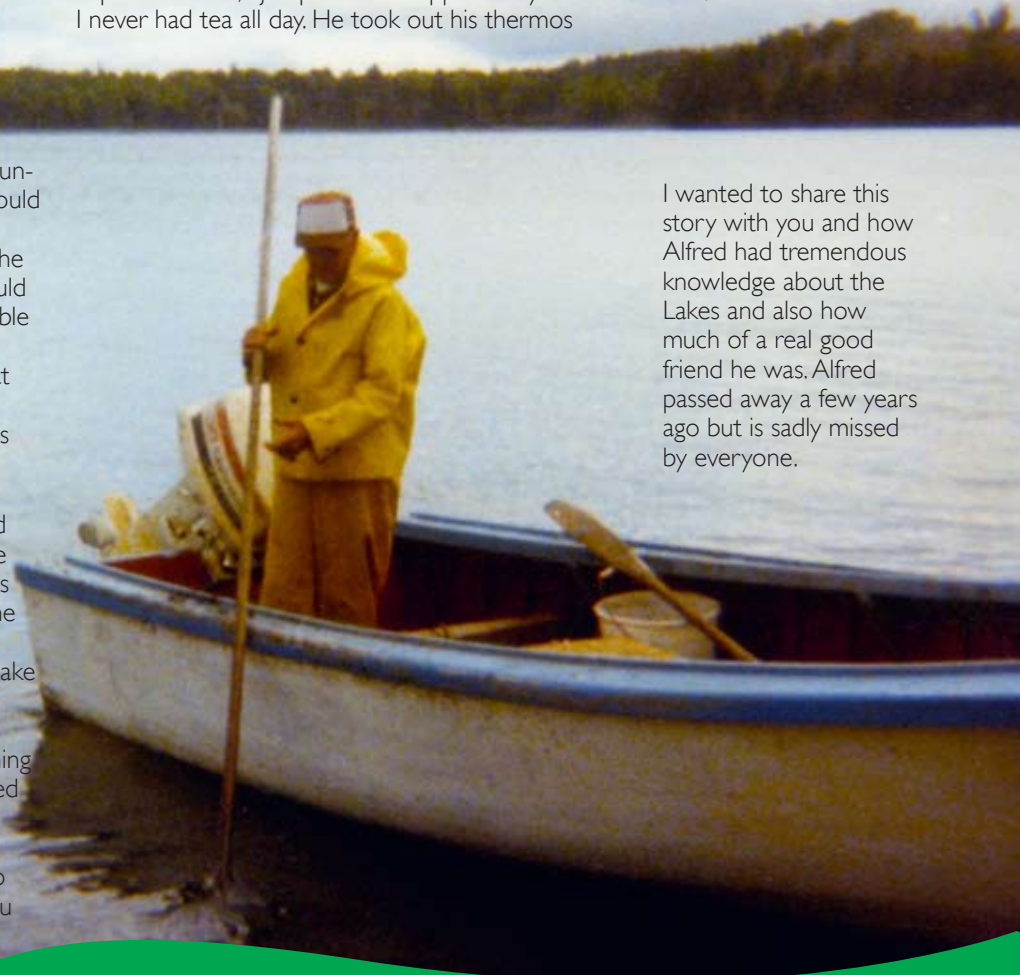
Alfred and Gabriel would talk about trying to find a market for the lobster because, I guess from the way they talked about it, lobster was a poor man's food. Markets were very poor then because of the abundance of lobster every where. I remember Alfred saying that he couldn't get his children to take lobster sandwiches to school because it was well known that it was a poor man's food. Alfred told Gabriel that sometime he had to quit being a fishing boater because of the poor market. He mentioned that one year people were putting lobster in the fields for fertilizer. I was thinking what a sight that would have been, seeing all those lobster going to waste. Just imagine, if you had all those lobster; you would be laughing all the way to the bank!

I remember one time when I was fishing oyster in the Basin, it was getting to the point where the sun was setting and it was time to head for the camp in Malagawatch and rest for the night. Any how, as I was heading home from River Denys, I saw a boat and somebody fishing on MacLean's Island. Recognizing the boat by its colours and shape, it had to be Alfred's. So, not wasting time, I turned my boat to head for the island. Sure enough, it was Alfred raking away. He was glad to see me and we chatted a bit. My curiosity got me wondering why he had all these huge rocks piled on his boat. I couldn't resist and asked him what was going on. He looked at me and chuckled. "Well, Charlie," he said, "if you took a look at the bottom, there's oyster between those rocks and rakes are too wide. So I figured if I took away all those rocks I would be able to get access to those oyster now and in the future. Once I have enough rock, I take them to shore. See my pile over there?" I took a look at the shore and saw a pile of rocks and I couldn't believe the size of the rocks and also the huge pile. He must have spent the whole day raking, maybe longer. This tells you how tough Alfred was.

My final story with Alfred, I just have to tell. We chatted for a while and he asked me if I would like a cup of tea. Well, I jumped at the opportunity because I never had tea all day. He took out his thermos

bottle and filled the cup right to the rim. Alfred apologized that he didn't have any milk for the tea and I said that was okay. He mentioned that the tea might be a little cold but that was fine with me. Knowing that it was cold, I took one gulp and swallowed it all. As the tea went down my throat, I could feel the heat slowly going down and bang, it landed in my stomach. It was black rum and in a short while I found myself warmed up and soon I was raking those rocks with Alfred. Well, of course, everybody back in the Malagawatch camp was concerned because of my being so late. Everybody thought I had found a huge oyster bed and that I would show up with a boat full of oyster.

I wanted to share this story with you and how Alfred had tremendous knowledge about the Lakes and also how much of a real good friend he was. Alfred passed away a few years ago but is sadly missed by everyone.





Katie McEwan, Freddy John Isadore, Annie Clare Isaac, Vince MacLean, Dr. Grannie/Dr. Margaret Johnson

# Traditional Ecological Knowledge



## CEPI Workshop

*"When I was a kid I walked through eelgrass beds. They are great nurseries. You would see a lot of minnows, pinfish, and eels and watch them swim away. I want to talk to youth to let them know that eelgrass beds are important nurseries. Eelgrass has decreased a lot. It is different today."*

*CBU video crew tapes discussion*



shelley.porter@uinr.ca

Fifty Elders from Mi'kmaq and other Unama'ki communities met for two days in a workshop to contribute traditional ecological knowledge to a "two-eyed seeing" approach for the Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative.

The workshop included traditional music, ceremonies, and extensive discussions on the natural history of the Lakes. The Sarah Denny Cultural Centre in Eskasoni played host to the collaborative effort of UINR, DFO, and CBU's Integrative Science Program.

Clifford Paul and Murdena Marshall were among the facilitators for the event. UINR staff, along with Jason Naug and Penny Doherty from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans were also on hand to facilitate and assist. The sessions focused on Land: Animals and Plants; Water: Salt and Fresh; and Climate and Significant Areas.

Among many of the changes noted was the change in plants around the Lakes. Gooseberries, raspberries, wild strawberries, and blackberries were once abundant but have declined. Potential reasons for the decline in berries were discussed including climate change, acid rain, and the escalation in development of houses and land. It was also noted that mint and hazelnuts have declined.

The loss of plants has had an impact on the Aboriginal community. Elders noted that plants are very important for ceremonial purposes. For example, sweetgrass is used for opening prayers. Plants are often used to make medicines and salves but now it is difficult to find the plants. Elders expressed concern not only about the loss of plants in the area, but also about the loss of traditional knowledge about plants.

The second day ended with a unanimous endorsement by the Elders to have Albert Marshall represent the Elders in matters relating to the environment. This endorsement is a recognition of Albert's passion and knowledge on issues relating to the environment and his deep traditional knowledge.

Bras d'Or Lakes  
**CEPI**  
Collaborative Environmental  
Planning Initiative



## What's Up With Our Water?

Global warming and its impact on the Bras d'Or Lakes is the issue that led to a project that will see UINR's Natural Resource Officers documenting salinity, temperature, and oxygen in the Lakes.

The Hydrographic Monitoring Program is targeted at areas in the Lakes that are inhabited by oysters, but the project gives us useful information to help evaluate impacts on other species. The information adds to our growing body of historical data documenting changing marine environments in the Bras d'Or Lakes. It helps in our research on invasive species and species at risk in the watershed.

UINR is responsible for both the program's supervision and collection of the data. The weekly sampling and measurements will be carried out by the Unama'ki Natural Resource Officers, under each community's Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy Agreement. Data is housed at UINR and shared with all participating communities and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography through the current SIMBOL (Science for the Integrated Management of the Bras d'Or Lakes) initiative.

Please help us to identify sources of oysters in your community for MSX sampling. These sampling periods are during the late spring and mid-fall.

Multiple sampling stations will be monitored in all 5 Unama'ki First Nations communities:

Potlotek (11 Stations)  
Eskasoni (13 Stations)  
Membertou (6 Stations)  
Wagmatcook (14 Stations)  
We'koqma'q (13 Stations)



## What are we drinking?

Join our student news team as it explores where Unama'ki's drinking water comes from and how it is monitored. The students interview community experts that work to ensure their drinking water is clean and safe.

In this new educational DVD from UINR, we learn what safeguards are in place in Unama'ki First Nations communities—Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q.

Mikmaq scientists, technicians and elders are interviewed by our junior reporters in an informative news report format.

[lorraine@uinr.ca](mailto:lorraine@uinr.ca)



**Lorraine Marshall**

Community Drinking Water Quality Monitor  
and Sanitary Shoreline Survey Technician



Clifford Paul,  
UINR Moose Management  
Initiative Coordinator

Welcome readers of the UINR Marten to the moose section of our newsletter. I am pleased to let you know that progress is underway in the Moose Management Initiative. A series of meetings with Mi'kmaq communities and their Chief and Councils are planned over the next several months.

To facilitate community involvement in this initiative, coordinator Clifford Paul and members of the Kwilmuk Maw-klusuaqn Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative team are visiting with the leadership of our communities to promote discussion and awareness of issues around the moose hunt.

We have met with a number of Chiefs and Councils to get their direction on the best approach to start discussions in the communities and we will start meeting with our members over the next few weeks. Information and feedback gathered at these meetings will give us clear and concise guidance from start to finish for the drafting of a Moose Harvest Management Plan. We are seeking your ideas, suggestions, and innovative ways to ensure that the Mi'kmaq people become the main benefactors of the moose harvest without compromising the integrity of the herd or the rights of our people. This work is just starting and everyone who wants to be heard will be provided an opportunity to participate.

No decisions have been made. We are seeking consensus with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Together, we will determine what the priorities are. The Mi'kmaq people are in control of this process and we have the opportunity to have a say in how the moose herd is managed. We must protect this resource for our grandchildren and future generations. The work is just starting and we must take a slow and thoughtful approach.

Feedback, so far, has been very positive. Discussions around moose management issues have been prominently held in several communities with common goals being expressed at each meeting.

Issues of sustainable hunting, Mi'kmaq rights, and conservation have been openly discussed. Again, I must emphasize that the process of visiting every Mi'kmaq community in the province allows for community-driven directives on moose management issues.

For more information please contact: Clifford Paul, Coordinator, Moose Management Initiative, at 902 379 2163.

clifford@uinr.ca



## Allison's big news

Pjila'si! We all welcome Allison McIsaac's new daughter Michelle to Unama'ki. Michelle was born in Ruijin City, Jiangxi Province, China on May 28, 2005. Her Chinese name, given by the orphanage, is Hong Quan Jin, and her Canadian name is Michelle Jin McIsaac. Allison adopted Michelle this April when her family visited the city of Nanchang, China. There were 11 other baby girls adopted from the same orphanage on that day.

Here's what Allison has to say, "Michelle is a healthy, active and funny little girl who is adapting quite well to Cape Breton life. She officially became a Canadian citizen in May. She has an older brother, Sammy, who she adores (and vice versa) and who will no doubt grow up to torment him. We are a very lucky family."

Allison is on a nine month leave and will be back to work next February.  
allison@uinr.ca

### Meeting dates:

Feb 25 Acadia Community Meeting Milton  
May 18 Potlotek Chief and Council  
May 26 Bear River Chief and Council  
June 19 Millbrook Elders  
June 27 Annapolis Valley Chief and Council

Meetings are planned in your community.

Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources  
Moose Management Initiative

of Natural Resources

# Traditional Leadership



The Traditional Leadership for Future Generations Conference was held in Antigonish in May to educate youth about traditional leadership and to encourage positive thinking and goal achievement. There were both Elder and youth speakers—the Elders sharing their traditional knowledge while youth spoke of everything from traditional dancing to overcoming drugs and alcohol to achieve truly great things. Conference coordinators asked the Grand Council to recommend youth in its communities to attend the conference, and Annie Johnson from UINR was honoured to be among those chosen.

While not all youth attending were picked by the Grand Council, the results were amazing. Annie explains: “A lot of native youth today get a lot of flack for being into drugs, alcohol, being disrespectful and misguided. Never before have I attended a youth conference with so many respectful young people. The vast majority of youth at the conference were polite, helpful, talkative, and respectful of not only the Elders, but also the speakers and ceremonies that took place over the weekend.”

“The drum group from Afton was impressive, with over a dozen drummers. The atmosphere of the conference was very comfortable, casual, without losing sight of what needed to be done. While the Grand Council always seemed to me an honourable, but intimidating, presence, it was a pleasure to be able to sit and have lunch with them. In fact, the first conversation I had with a Grand Council member there turned into a true ghost story – but that’s a whole other article for another time.”

annie@uinr.ca



P 902 379 2163  
F 902 379 2250  
info@uinr.ca  
www.uinr.ca



www.uinr.ca

# UINR Staff

<b>Charlie Dennis</b> Executive Director	charlie@uinr.ca
<b>Blair Bernard</b> Natural Resource Officer Coordinator	blair@uinr.ca
<b>Weldon Bona</b> Director of Communication	weldon@uinr.ca
<b>Rhonda Denny</b> Administrative Assistant	rhonda@uinr.ca
<b>Shelley Denny</b> Biologist & Research Coordinator	shelley.denny@uinr.ca
<b>Annie Johnson</b> Finance Assistant	annie@uinr.ca
<b>Mark MacPhail</b> Director of Forestry	mark@uinr.ca
<b>Albert Marshall</b> CEPI Elder Advisor	albert@uinr.ca
<b>Lorraine Marshall</b> Community Drinking Water Quality Monitor & Sanitary Shoreline Survey Technician	lorrainet@uinr.ca
<b>Angela Morris</b> Research Assistant	angela@uinr.ca
<b>Clifford Paul</b> Moose Management Coordinator	clifford@uinr.ca
<b>Shelley Porter</b> CEPI Coordinator	shelley.porter@uinr.ca
<b>Laurie Suitor</b> Intergovernmental Relations & Partnership Advisor	laurie@uinr.ca
<b>Lisa Young</b> Director of Administration	lisa@uinr.ca



Dialogue on Plamu/Atlantic Salmon in Cape Breton will be held June 28 and 29 in Wagmatcook. Watch our next issue for a report on this important workshop.

cepi@uinr.ca

PO Box 8096  
Eskasoni  
NS B1W 1C2