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questions are welcome.
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Marten matchmaking



The dating pool for American Marten in Unama'ki just took a leap forward with the release in the Highlands of five animals that were recently trapped in northern New Brunswick!

Lending a hand in the matchmaking were UINR staff members, Clifford Paul and Blair Bernard, along with representatives from Parks Canada and Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources. "This is a monumental occasion," Clifford notes, "It is very fitting that Mi'kmaq have a hand in re-establishing this native species to Unama'ki."

A sprinkle of snow covered the ground when the plywood boxes that held the captured martens were unloaded. Three females and two males were checked over by a vet before computer chips were inserted under their skins so they can be identified in the future. Some were adorned with radio collars to allow staff to track their progress.

The shy and cautious martens waited until a quiet moment before peeking out of their plywood homes. Once they spied an opening, they scurried off to their new Highland homes.

Photo: Allena MacDonald

The American marten is native to Nova Scotia, but over the years, the population declined and, in 2001, it was added to the province's endangered species list. Trapping and human encroachment on their habitat have led to their demise.

About the size of a small house cat, the distinction ends there. Their cute, inquisitive faces and soft coat belies their ferocious nature. The marten is carnivorous and its predatory personality strikes fear in the hearts of its dinner-squirrels, chipmunks, voles and rabbits, all of which are plentiful in the Highlands.

A major concern was that Cape Breton martens might be genetically different than the mainland population. Extensive testing revealed that the entire Maritime marten population is basically the same genetically.

The plan is to release up to 50 martens a year over the next few years. It is hoped this will stabilize the population and that, in the future, the marten can be removed from the endangered list.

If our matchmaking is successful, you might be one of the lucky few to spot a reclusive marten in the wild!



Left: Clifford Paul releases marten



The Oyster Garden 10

A Story by Charlie Dennis

Tribute to Frankie Francis— Friend & Cousin

Continued from our Fall Issue...



In our Fall issue, Charlie Dennis described Frankie's many business ventures that varied according to season. In late fall, Frankie would fish for eels in the Lakes' mudflats, drawing from the knowledge he had picked up from the Elders.

After fishing for eels, and before the ice came, Frankie would grab his power saw and cut up wood for local contractors, or whoever would buy these eight foot, or three and a half foot pieces, and also pit timber when the coal miners were active. Just before Christmas, he would go after trees suitable for US or local markets.

Selling Christmas trees in Sydney at various parking lots was where the money was, especially when the woods were full of snow. "Have

I got a great deal for you!" was his motto, or, "I have been saving this special tree for you". They always paid the same price, was one of his favourite comments and he'd always chuckle about it. When the ice froze over the Lakes, he would fish for eels through the ice at the same time he would fish for cod, smelts, etc.

If the snow was not too heavy during the winter, he would take his power saw and cut pulp wood or even fire wood. In the spring when the ice was gone, he would go after eels that were still in the mud flats. The water temperature is key when the eels venture out of the mud before they migrate. The eels stay in the Lakes until the temperature rises and then venture into deeper waters where they were not accessible.

Torcing for eels during the night time was Frankie's favourite time. He could and would torch all night long! During times of plenty, he would sort enough for personal use and then take care of the people who were waiting to pay for the delicious product.



Packing and freezing was another of Frankie's tasks when people and special occasions called for it. Many different species were stored in his freezer; nothing went to waste, including moose meat, deer, etc.

When fishing for the summer was completed, picking blueberries in Maine was another source of income for Frankie, and when he got back from Maine, the local blueberries were ripe for picking. This would take up most of August. Before the oyster season began, there were tasks of preparation, fixing rakes, getting supplies, painting boats, taking care of outboard motor repairs, etc.

One of Frankie's enjoyment's was to attend traditional workshops and talking circles that the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources hosted. These were well attended by Elders from the five First Nations' communities in Unama'ki. Frankie loved to hear stories and to kid around with everybody, and to boast about what he knew of traditional knowledge. Frankie knew all the fishing areas, hunting areas, and he knew his wood land. At times, I would run into him at the doctor's office and you could write volumes and volumes of stories he had and all his explanations for various things.

Frankie would come over to my house and he would talk about natural resources, and he'd talk about the future for certain species, like the oysters and MSX. He would pick up information from Elders about certain parts of the Lakes that were nothing but oyster shells and no live oysters. He always talked about how interesting this was until he lost all his oysters on his lease in Crane Cove in Eskasoni.

Frankie was a walking encyclopaedia when it came to natural resources and will be missed by everyone, especially other Elders and his family. Frankie passed away July 4th, 2007.

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Lisa Pjila'si

The voice of UINR!

When you call UINR, the voice welcoming you is that of our new Administrative Assistant, Janice S. Paul. Hailing from Membertou, Janice brings a wealth of experience as Financial Controller with Membertou First Nation for over five years, and before that, in Customer and Small Business Services at the CIBC for three years.

"There is so much exciting work going on at UINR that I am always intrigued. The atmosphere and people here are wonderful. UINR is a great door to have come through!"

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Welcome Bethany!



Another new UINR arrival, Bethany Marie Denny, was born on 2 November to UINR's Research Assistant, Angela Morris, and Dion Denny. She weighed 3.6 kg (8 lbs 1 oz) and measured 48 cm (19 inches) long. Angela will be on maternity leave for the next few months. Looks like she'll have her hands full with Bethany!

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Another Winter is here, and while climate change has given us less snow and warmer weather, there's no change to the short days and long nights that come with the season. At one time, our people really benefitted from the deep snow. We were able to travel on it easily with our snowshoes and toboggans, while the bear, moose, and caribou that we hunted were slowed down. Nice to have some advantage! Did you know that toboggan is borrowed from the Mi'kmaq word "taba'gan?"

I would like to introduce you to Janice Paul, our new Administrative Assistant and to wish Mary Collier, our previous Director of Administration, best of luck in her new position with the Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office in Membertou.

We are very pleased to announce the initiation of a pilot project to train fully-licensed Mi'kmaq fisheries officers. After three years of training, they will be posted in Unama'ki and have full enforcement powers. We think that this pilot is the beginning of an expanded role for our people in natural resource enforcement.

UINR is working closely with the Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative—Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn (KMK) about concerns on the environmental impacts of the proposed Lake Uist hydro-electric project. While the project has passed municipal zoning changes at CBRM (despite First Nation's concerns), the project must undergo a complete environmental impact study before proceeding.

We are pretty pleased with the results of our moose tanning workshop. Unama'ki Mi'kmaq have re-learned traditional tanning skills and will be passing on this knowledge to others.

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While moose provide a fresh supply of meat, historically, the Mi'kmaq depended on moose for many things. Highly-prized moose hides were used for clothing, shelter; and drums, skins were used to make boats, hooves for rattles, and high density shin bones were carved and sharpened as spear tips.

To bring some of that ancient knowledge back into the Mi'kmaq communities, the Moose Working Group and UINR hosted a Moose Hide Preparation Workshop. Traditional hunter Danny Paul acted as host to 11 participants from Unama'ki who completed training in traditional tanning of moose hides.

Ojibway/Cree Elders, Walter and Doris Bonaire, provided instruction using traditional teachings. With much laughter and hard work, participants gained over 80-hours of instruction and are now certified to instruct their respective communities.

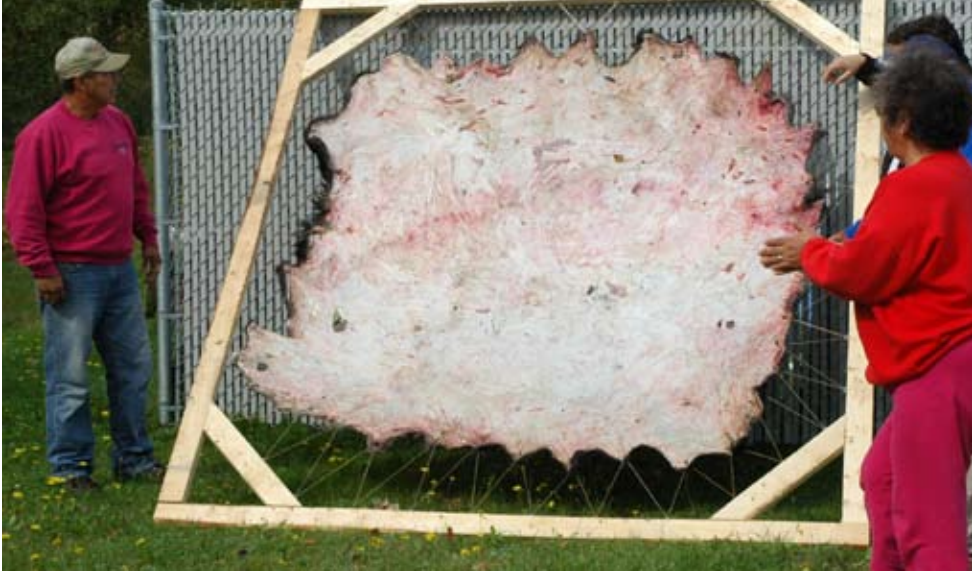
The workshop received visits from over 200 people including Elders, students, well-wishers, and the curious. Many commented that bringing back the ancient skill is the right thing to do.

"History was made while an important skill was brought back to our communities," participant Shaylene Johnson noted. "I took time from my classes to learn this ancient knowledge that has been so close to being lost to our people."

Ancient knowledge returns



Unama'ki Institute of



Shaylene is right. Mi'kmaq have been separated from the resource. "Prior to our landmark Supreme Court decisions, it was illegal for Mi'kmaq to hunt moose," Moose Management Initiative Coordinator Clifford Paul noted. "Traditional knowledge about moose was lost with each generation."



"A strong friendship was created in the training—so much so that they identified the need for future workshops to include outdoor survival, birch bark canoe-making, and even the establishment of a Mi'kmaq encampment for future training," Clifford Paul said. "This is the beginning of something special – something spectacular."

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Opposite: Through the hoop: Joe Googoo works on a fresh hide to make a drum. Instructor Walter Bonaire displays fine quality leather moosehide gloves. Scraper made from the high density shin bone of the moose. Graduates of the moosehide tanning workshop.

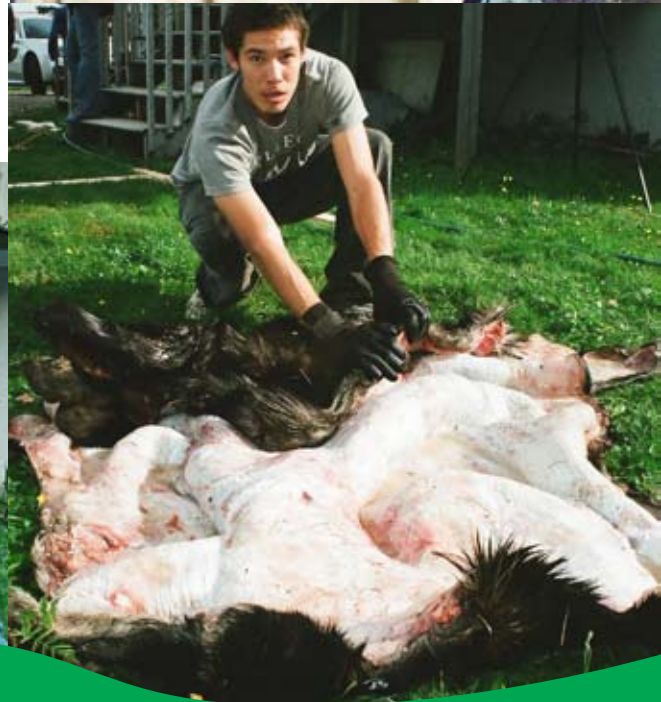
This page: Above: Instructor Doris Bonaire and John Lafford have a small hide framed and stretched. Walter and Doris explain the finer points of defleshing a hide with George Marshall.

Right: George Marshall just moosing around.

Peter Battiste smoothing the rough edges of a hide which is ready for tanning.

Moosehide Tanning Workshop host Danny Paul, Cameron Paul and John Lafford framing a hide

Below: Cameron Paul prepare a salted hide for rinsing.



f Natural Resources

Fishery officer pilot program



Two countries one forest

The following is from a speech delivered by Elder Albert Marshall in Montreal in November at the conference: Two Countries, One Forest.

The forests of the earth can be viewed from two different perspectives; one being an acknowledgment and celebration of the life given to the forests through the hard labour of the living earth, and one being a view which places value only on the products we humans manufacture from the forests. The first view is inherent in First Nation societies around the globe. The second is a Eurocentric view which predominates in current culture. When we speak of preserving our forests, from these two perspectives, we mean very different things. For someone outside First Nation culture and beliefs, a person means the preservation of the forest industry to serve the wants of people. When we speak from inside First Nation culture and beliefs, we mean the preservation of the forest to provide for our needs.

First Nation people understand the earth to be a living entity, indeed the living Mother upon whom we all depend. The trees work hard to gather their sap, to bloom, to let go of their spring life, and to live again when a new cycle begins. Therefore our economic perspective is based upon a principle not known in other economic systems: gratitude for this work. We understand our place to be one of dependence. We perceive our continued existence to be dependant upon another living being; our Mother the Earth. We recognize a responsibility to live in harmonious way with the life upon which we depend. Our learning then comes from the species around us, who teach us how to live in this harmonious way.

The Eurocentric perspective is quite different. It depends upon forgetting that the earth and forests live. Labour is thought to be the domain of human beings, who therefore bring value to an otherwise valueless entity by virtue of this labour. The place of humans is one of supremacy, and our dependence is upon sustaining an economy of greed. The responsibility is to do well in this economics of greed, to compete as it were, and therefore the teachers are other humans. The products we want, rather than the products we need, become our purpose when we relate to the forests.

In this way, when Europeans came to our land, they flooded our living forests; they cut away all life from our forests, they altered what our Mother the Earth naturally grew to suit their needs. And we, as a First Nation people, grieved for this.

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A new pilot program, a collaboration between UINR and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), has been put in place to train two Mi'kmaq DFO officers, who, upon completion of their training, will be assigned to the Unama'ki region to work with UINR on issues of concern to our Mi'kmaq communities. Training is anticipated to begin in January 2008.

UINR's Natural Resource Office Co-ordinator, Blair Bernard, identified eligible applicants from Unama'ki with the interest and qualifications to become DFO officers. To qualify, applicants had to demonstrate that they would meet the merit criteria of DFO's fishery officer training program.

Applicants had to meet stringent criteria to qualify, including two years of post-secondary education in a related field, or a combination of education, training and/or experience. Candidates had to demonstrate experience in renewable natural resources, habitat management, field research, or field assessment of resources such as fish, wildlife or forestry. Candidates were also required to have experience in legislation or by-law enforcement with a law enforcement or security agency, and field experience in providing outdoor services to fishers, hunters, or eco-tourists.

We also looked at the applicant's experience in commercial, aboriginal, or recreational fisheries and knowledge of fish species, biology and fishing methods, management, and surveillance of fisheries and fish habitat.

A knowledge of fisheries-related Acts and Regulations, and a general understanding of the Canadian judicial system, was also part of the selection criteria.

A candidate's abilities and suitability were also carefully considered before names were put forward for the program. We expect that the successful applicants will be chosen early in 2008. Watch the UINR Marten for the announcement.

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Oysters hit again

Still reeling from the MSX virus in Bras d'Or Lakes oysters, the species has received another blow with the discovery of Malpeque disease in the waters of St. Ann's Harbour and Orangedale.

There are no human health concerns related to Malepeque but, since 1915 when the first symptoms were recorded, there have been significant losses to oyster beds throughout the Maritimes. Stocks will eventually rebound as the oyster population develop a tolerance. The Bras d'Or Lakes were the last area in the Maritimes to be free of the problem.

Further testing has not found Malpeque in other areas of the Lakes.

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Hydro project raising concerns

Potlotek Elders say that if an ambitious hydropower plant proceeds, it will affect a traditional eel fishing area for this First Nation community.

Cape Breton Explorations Ltd.'s plan to erect up to 44 wind turbines has passed the Cape Breton Regional Municipality's zoning process. This approval includes pumping water from Lake Uist to a reservoir constructed a mile away in the bog on the top of the mountain. There was some opposition to the project expressed at the Council meeting that approved the re-zoning, and a First Nations' request to be included in the process was considered unnecessary. The re-zoning clears the way for the proponent to clearcut the area and do preliminary work on the project before environmental assessment.

There are concerns that depletion of Lake Uist could result in warming of the waters, leading to algae blooms and a possible anoxic state. Lake Uist is the headwaters for Loch Lomond Lake and Grand River, as well as many small brooks and streams.

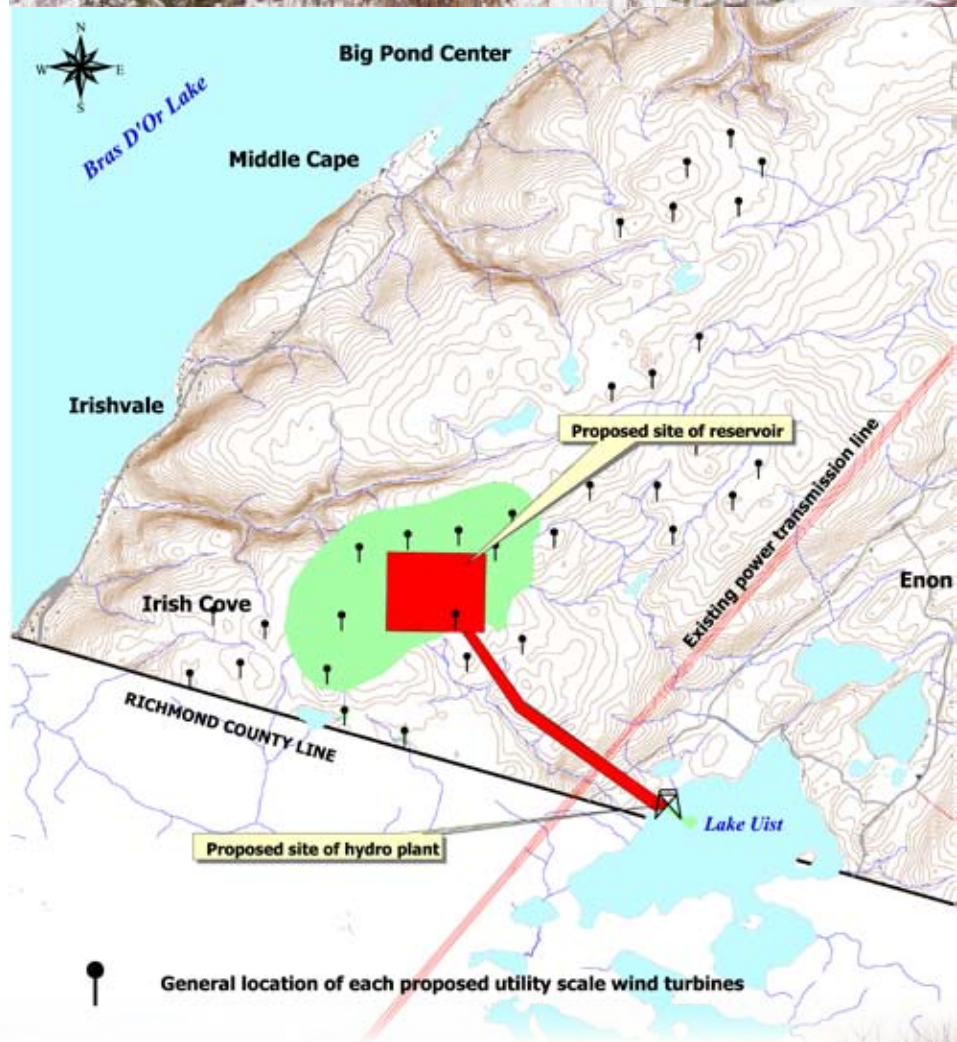
Residents have raised concerns that similar projects in the US have had serious consequences, one with repeated breakdowns of the penstock, and the other resulting in a major tragedy when a computer error caused the turbine to keep pumping water up to the reservoir even though it was full, resulting in a 25' wave that destroyed the forests below and flooded homes.

The site of the proposed reservoir is in a bog on the top of the mountain. It would be two kilometres long, one kilometre wide and about 75 metres deep—the largest "dug" lake in North America. Studies have shown that flooding in a bog area causes the release of a form of mercury, held in the bog, that could contaminate the entire waterway. Backflow is not uncommon with these systems, and could cause a substantial backflow into the Bras d'Or Lakes.

Power from this project will be sold to New England and other US markets and, while available for NS Power to purchase, the utility cannot presently use large amounts of power because of technology constraints.

First Nation's concerns, environmental realities, community members fears, and the impact on the adjoining Richmond County environment are issues of concern in the proposed development.

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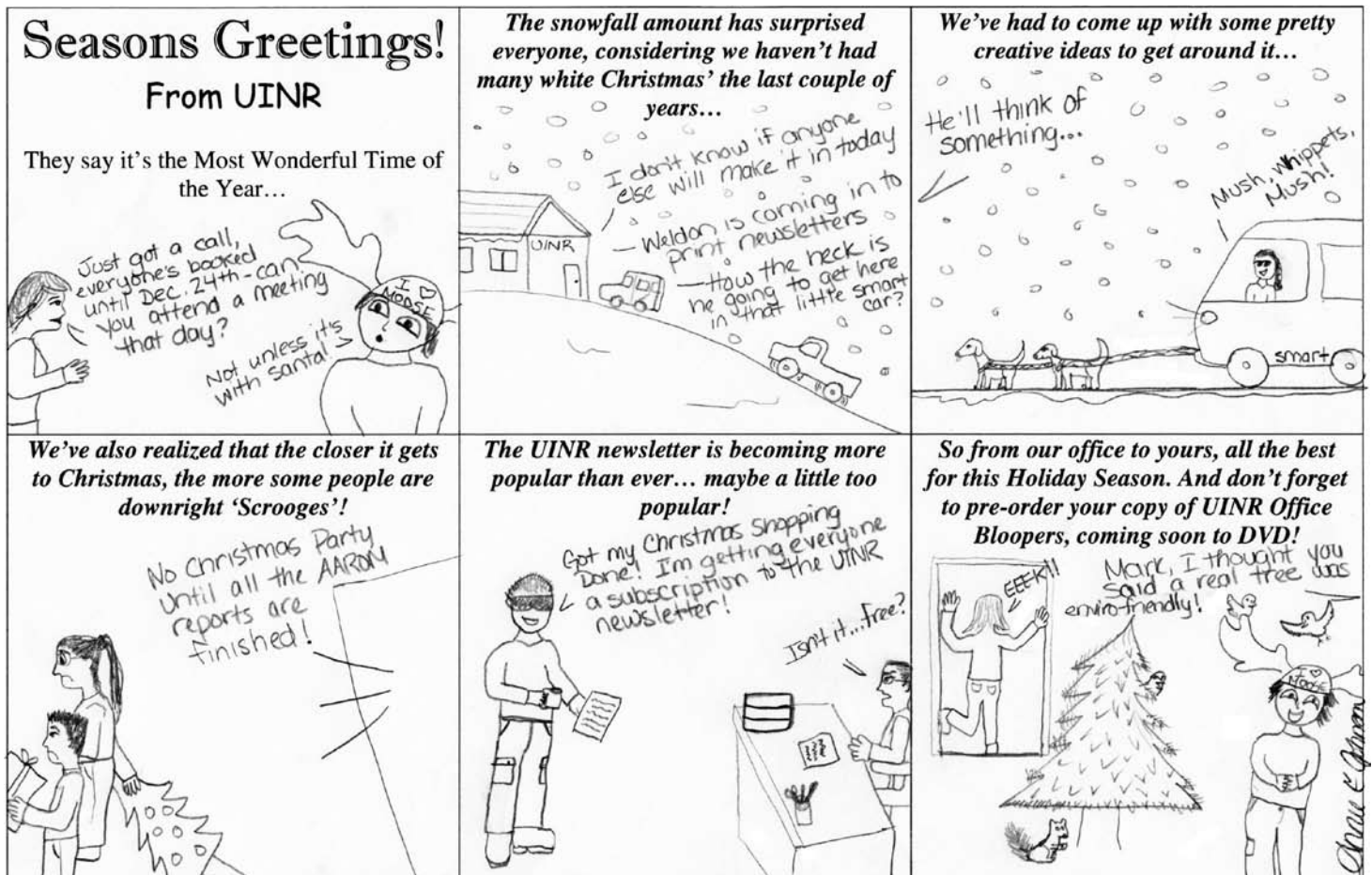
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