



THIS ISSUE

Kataq: Journey of Our Eels

NEWS

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Welcome

Oyster Garden

Golden Awards

Every Fish Counts

It's all about

the people

Staff

Annie's cartoon



"The eel teaches us to respect our environment and understand our relationship with the world around us."

Shelley Denny



Angela Denny



Dozay Christmas



Barbara Sylliboy



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Kataq: Journey of our Eels

is a new children's book that tells the story of a Cape Breton eel from a Mi'kmaw perspective.

Kataq: Journey of our Eels is illustrated by well-known artist **Dozay Christmas** and is written by Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources' **Angela Denny** and **Shelley Denny**.

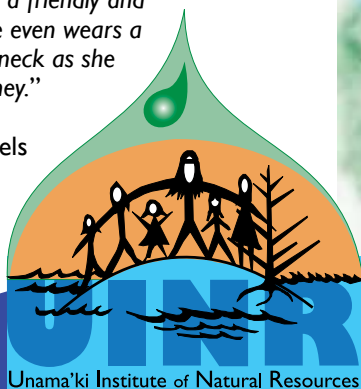
The book is in English with side-by-side Mi'kmaw translation by **Barbara Sylliboy**.

Shelley Denny explains,

"Kataq tells the story of an eel—from its birth as a tiny, leaf-like fry in the southern Sargasso Sea, to a mature silver eel who spent her life in the Bras d'Or Lakes. It is also the story of the importance of the eel in Mi'kmaw culture, tradition and day-to-day life."

The illustrations by **Dozay Christmas** are "appealing to children and adults alike. I was able to have the freedom in establishing a character to make our eel a friendly and expressive personality. She even wears a medicine bag around her neck as she takes us through her journey."

Kataq: Journey of Our Eels is a free download from the LIBRARY at uinr.ca. It is also available at libraries across Canada as an ebook download.



NEWS²

WWW

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Here's where we keep you up-to-date on new stuff online at uinr.ca

NEW in the LIBRARY at uinr.ca are three new publications.

Kataq: Journey of Our Eels that you can read about on the cover of this issue is now available as a free download.



UINR's Annual Report to our Board of Directors and partners also has a report on our activities over the year.



If you didn't get one of our 2013 calendars you can see what the fuss is all about and get an electronic version to look at on your computer or iPad.

We've made it easier for you to get directly in touch with UINR staff. There's an email link for everyone in OUR PEOPLE at uinr.ca



Be sure to "LIKE" our UINR Facebook page (facebook.com/UINRpage). It is THE place to go to see photos and keep current on everything we're doing at UINR.



If you are a Twitter user join the many people who follow UINR's tweets! #UINR

Training for Captains and First Mates

UINR held training for captains and first mates on the identification, handling and release of marine animals considered species-at-risk such as marine mammals, sharks, wolffish and sea turtles.

Elders, Canadian Sea Turtle Network, Marine Animal Response Society and World Wildlife Fund gave training to Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, Waycobah captains and crew.



Top: Training sessions in Eskasoni
Middle: Wagmatcook
Bottom: Membertou

Comings & goings

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Welcome **Nadine LeFort**, Mi'kmaq Environmental Learning Centre's Education and Outreach Coordinator. Nadine is coordinating the Unama'KIDS program, Nikani Awtiken summer camp and working on other education projects.

"For the past 10 years, I have been working on community-driven education initiatives. I love working with people to find lessons that really work in a community. I am thrilled to be working with MELC and am excited to see what 2013 will bring for Unama'KIDS and other projects."

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Partnerships.

If there is one word that best describes what UINR is all about, that's it! It's in almost everything we do.

UINR represents the five Unama'ki communities—Eskasoni, Membertou, Wagmatcook, Waycobah and Potlotek—and our Board of Directors is made up of a cooperative partnership of our communities' five chiefs. This is where it all begins and we just go from there!

Our Unama'ki Guardian Coordinator Keith Christmas works in partnership with the Guardians in your communities to identify opportunities and work together on projects of mutual interest and importance. John Couture, who we tell you all about in this issue, is UINR's Commercial Fisheries Liaison Coordinator and he works together with the commercial fisheries throughout Unama'ki.

UINR is an instrumental partner and active participant in Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative, Pitu'paq Partnership, Moose Management Initiative and Mi'kmaq Environmental Learning Centre.

We are very excited to be working with the Mainland's Mi'kmaq Conservation Group. We met this winter to get to know each other and identify projects that we can work together on. Stay tuned for some exciting news on this front!

I'm already running out of space here and we haven't even talked about our many partnerships in science and research, projects that we have underway with CBU, Parks Canada...

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Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative Senior Council 2013

UINR staff met with their Nove Scotia mainland counterparts—Mi'kmaq Conservation Group



Bras d'Or Lakes Cod

For hundreds of years one of the most important species of fish in the Bras d'Or Lakes for the Mi'kmaq was the Atlantic cod. Cod was a traditional food for the Mi'kmaq living on the beautiful shores of the Bras d'Or Lakes.

Prized for its flaky white meat and salty flavour, cod was a delicacy for all the residents along the Lakes' shores. When the first Europeans arrived it was so abundant that everyone believed it would last forever. Now we know too well that wasn't the case.

When growing up, I remember walking along the shores in Eskasoni trying to catch a meal for the day. It was tradition every Thursday evening before Friday when, under Catholic tradition, you weren't allowed to eat meat, it had to be fish. In those times, great care was taken to teach us ways to preserve seafood for the feast on Friday, especially during Lent. Whether dried, salted, fresh or frozen, cod was a traditional meal on Fridays.

In those days, we didn't have the luxury of fancy casting rods and reels. It was an eel pole or alder with some fishing line, but that's a different part of the story.

Usually a cod hook was passed down from generation to generation. We used a piece of speckled trout or bean pork for bait. As kids, our job was to keep a close eye out for a splash of the cod's tail or any movement in the water. That was a sign of a cod swimming near the shore to feast on minnows hiding in the eel grass. Once a cod was spotted, my father would come running and cast his line. Soon there would be a cod flapping on the shore!

This was the traditional way of fishing in the summer and part of the fall, before the ice came. As the water got warmer, you had to go to deeper water with a row boat and use an old lead jig.

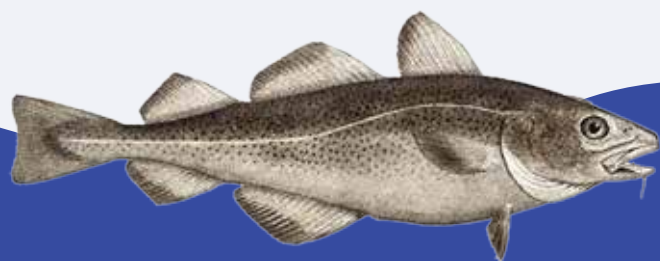
Beautiful cod were caught with this style of fishing and in those days cod were plentiful. Before the collapse of Atlantic cod stocks in the 90s there was a lucrative fishery in the Lakes, both for traditional and a sustainable commercial fishery.



In those days, if you wanted to make a living in commercial fishing, you could buy a license from the government. First Nations along the Lakes never fished commercially. Usually all the cod were salted and dried in the sun. There was a lot of bartering going on amongst Elders trading cod for other products. There was a lot of sharing among community members, with plenty of fish to go around.

During the winter, the Lakes froze and it was common to take a couple of hours to make a hole in the ice. One time you could drive a vehicle across the ice to your favorite fishing grounds.

Elders talk about people going to the fishing grounds by horse and sled. They would come back with loads of cod and other species like flounder. During the late 80s and early 90s people started complaining about the cod stocks, "Where are all the cod?" Fishers from Big Pond would travel for miles, walking and skidooing, searching endlessly for cod but having no luck. We would have conversations and exchange ideas where to go to catch cod. People complained a lot about the state of the fishery and soon they just gave up trying.



If you found a location where you caught some cod, it wouldn't take long for the rumour to spread. It didn't take long until the cod were gone-fished out!! In the 90s, the government decided to stop the commercial fishery in the Atlantic.

Before the cod collapsed in the Atlantic, First Nations and residents around the Lakes had already determined that the stocks were in trouble.

Over the past few years, we have heard many complaints from traditional fishers that cod have disappeared from the Bras d'Or Lakes. Ice conditions in the Lakes haven't been that great either.

Climate change has caused havoc in the way of life for a lot of traditional users of certain species, mainly cod. When the ice comes in certain bays or coves, people are still hoping to catch a valuable cod, but to no avail. "What is the future of cod in the Bras d'Or Lakes?" is the question all fishers are asking. Even anglers that fish for other species like trout or smelt are not seeing any signs of recovery.

Hopefully this story will keep us talking. Let us know if you see any sign of cod improving or any indication of juvenile cod increases. Recently I was speaking to Fisheries and Oceans about cod stocks in the Bras d'Or Lakes and in most cases scientists didn't realize that stocks were low. They reported that they received requests to reopen the recreational fishing in the Lakes and other area. My comments to them was to do consultation with First Nations and other users before going any further.

Hopefully, one of these days stocks will improve and we will be able to resume our traditional harvest as in the past. Time will tell.

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The first Golden Awards were presented this Spring to recognize outstanding achievements that have a positive impact by helping protect or restore the natural environment of the Bras d'Or Lakes' watershed.

Nominations were received from the public and voted on by members of the Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative's Management Committee.

Awards were presented to **Pat Bates, Amoeba Sailing Tours, NSCC Environmental Tech classes of 2012-2014 and Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association.**



Pat Bates was awarded the Golden Award for Individuals.

*"I am pleased to be honoured by receiving the **Golden Award** personally and on behalf of all members of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society."*

As Chairman of the Society, I have enjoyed the support of great board members but also people such as Chief Charlie Dennis, Dr. Albert Marshall, and Dr. Jim Foulds.

The challenges ahead are different than those past but nothing that committed, good people cannot overcome."

The crystal glass pictured above is one of a pair awarded to Golden Award recipient Pat Bates. The glass is designed by Island Crystal's Fred Curtis. Island Crystal is located in Albert Bridge, on the Louisbourg Highway.

Every Fish Matters

UINR, with partners, Atlantic Salmon Federation and Margaree Salmon Association, are working together on an educational project to identify salmon smolt, parr and brook trout and ways to protect their population and habitat.

Signs will be posted along salmon rivers in Unama'ki. Funding provided by Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation and The Government of Canada Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk.

Carefully release hooked brook trout, parr and smolt and return them to the water quickly. Maintain salmon and trout habitats by stashing your trash and treading lightly to prevent eroding of banks and spawning areas.

Use barbless hooks to make removal easier and cause less damage to the fish.



Brook Trout

Identifying Characteristics: Squiggly lines on the back, light 'halos' around coloured spots on back and sides, light spots on dark body. White leading edges on fins. The tail is not forked.



Salmon Parr

Identifying Characteristics: Similar markings to Brook trout but on a darker back with solid spots, no markings on the tail or fins. The tail is forked.



Salmon Smolt

Identifying Characteristics: Smolt are acquiring silvery colouration on belly with less spots and markings than parr or brook trout. Back is darker. Tail is deeply forked with darkening of the tips of the fins and tail.

it's all about the people John Couture

When John is not at a meeting, he's travelling to another meeting, and not just in Unama'ki either.

John Couture's role as **Commercial Fisheries Liaison Coordinator** at UINR has him attending industry, science and advisory committee meetings all over the Maritimes. If it's about commercial fishing and involves the interests of the five Cape Breton Mi'kmaq communities that UINR represents, John will be there!

Afterwards he reports back to the communities to discuss options, outcomes, changes, and updates on commercially fished species, invasive species, species-at-risk, pollution and changes in government.

A graduate of Sydney Academy, John studied at Cape Breton University and continues to learn new skills and ways to approach issues, people and projects.

John comes to UINR after a stint at Fisheries and Oceans Canada as their Aboriginal Program Coordinator, assisting communities fulfill their Aboriginal Fishing Strategy agreements. As a Licensing officer he provided advice to clients, managed license fees, issuance and tags. While Administrative Officer he managed accounts and projects, dealt with security, occupational health and safety issues

"Every day I learn from our community managers, chiefs and coworkers. With new service cuts our communities need to do new tasks on new time lines.

I want to be sure that Unama'ki is a leader."

john.couture@uinr.ca

"The most rewarding part of my work is getting out to the communities while sharing ideas and opportunities—making sure every community is aware."

Ten questions

Choose an animal native to Unama'ki.

Eagle, I could watch him soar all day.

Favourite season?

Summer.

What is the best part of your work?

Working on behalf of the five communities on fisheries matters/protocol/best practices.

Choose a quality you admire in others.

Honesty – builds trust and you know you don't have to watch your back.

Favourite beach?

Don't have one, parents on Mira River or in-laws on the ocean in Forchu.

Last thing you read?

Dean Koontz...anything and everything. Reading December Door.

What's for supper tonight?

I hope for bacon and cheese sandwiches with a large glass of milk.

What is your favourite website?

LOL...you know the answer—Facebook keeps me in touch especially when I am on the road!

What did you do in the last week

to help the environment?

Used a refillable cup for water instead of more bottles.

Chocolate or chips?

Why not both? Chocolate, then chips (salt and vinegar) OR could be chips and then chocolate!



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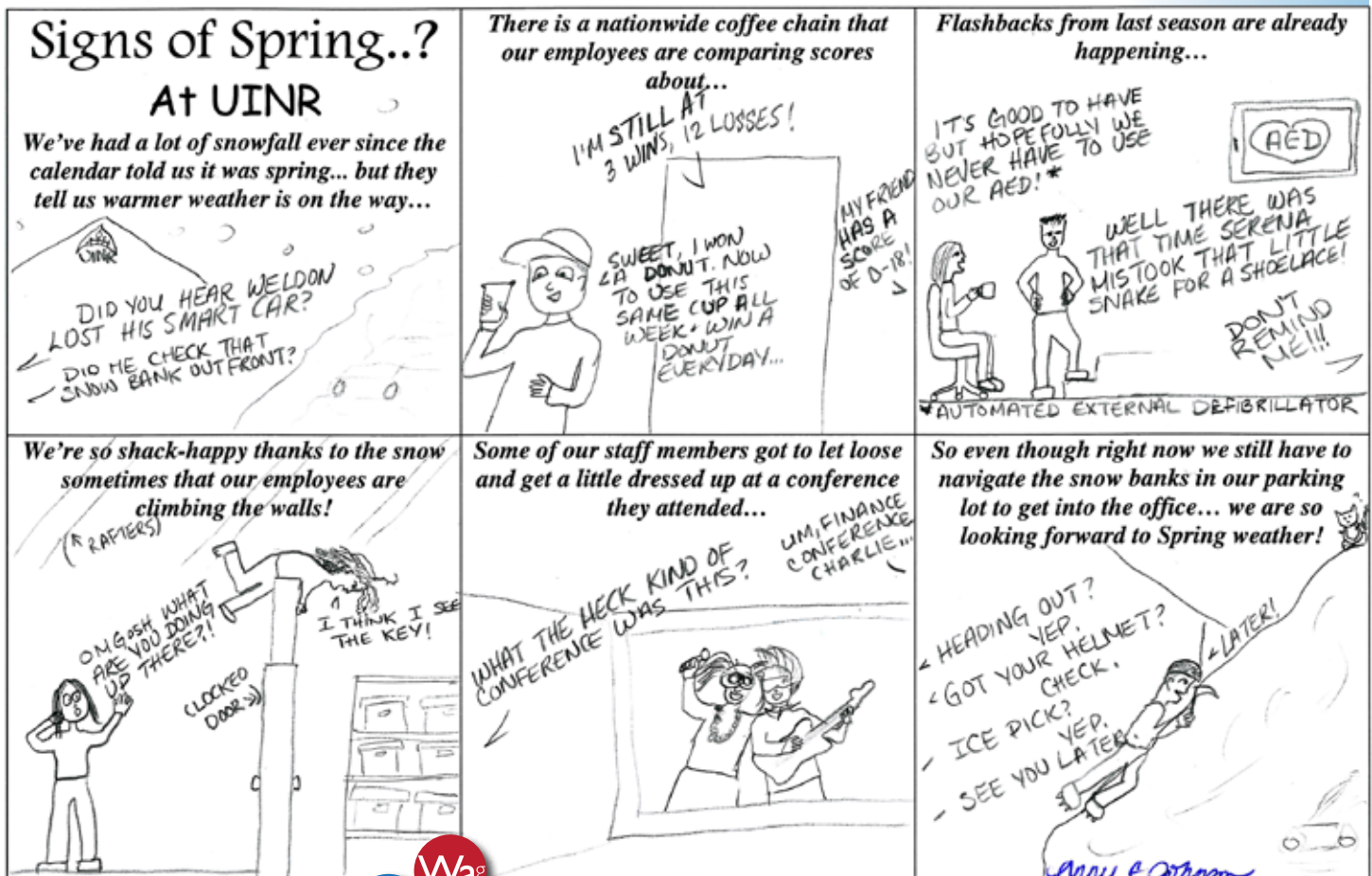
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