

# Sespite'tmnej

Let's **protect** eel & salmon habitat



**Protecting** eel and salmon habitat  
in **Wagmatcook**, Unama'ki



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Traditionally the Mi'kmaq people are the **caretakers** of Mi'kma'ki—the land, the water that surrounds us and flows beneath the earth, the air we breathe and all that depend on it for existence.



Because of our special relationship to life-giving Mother Earth we treated the land, water and air with **respect** and were concerned for its well-being. This concern continues today.

Clean water and healthy habitats are essential to the survival of our traditional fish species like **plamu** *salmon* and **kataq** *eels*, **kaqpesaq** *smelt*, **atoqwa'su** *trout*, **mntmu** *oysters*, **kaspelaq** *gaspereau* and plants such as **qata'skwl** *eel grass*. It is also important for other plants and animals that we cannot see or eat, but are important food for these species.

Middle River and Nyanza Bay are home to all these species. It is very important that we treat our land and waters properly. **We are all connected.** Here are some things you can do to protect our land, water and air.

**Sespite'tmnej** means let's be concerned.

**Contact Wagmatcook Public Works  
BEFORE clearing land. 295 2598**



Leave a naturally-occurring 20 m (66 ft) buffer zone of trees, shrubs, grass and groundcover to hold soil in place to minimize erosion and reduce the effect of surface water run-off. It protects water from accidental leaks from furnace oil, sewage, gas and oil. Buffers are important for wildlife and provide shade and food to fish.



If your land is on a hill or slope there is a greater chance for erosion. Create a buffer wider than 20 m.

To **minimize erosion** leave trees and fallen natural debris along the shoreline. Plant trees, shrubs or other groundcover rather than installing rock or concrete walls to absorb the energy of the water.

Leave boulders, gravel and natural debris in streams to **provide shelter** for fish. Remove only non-natural items like tires, bicycles and other garbage.

Use curved pathways to the shore so there is no direct run-off into the water. **Share paths** with your neighbour instead of creating many along the same shoreline.

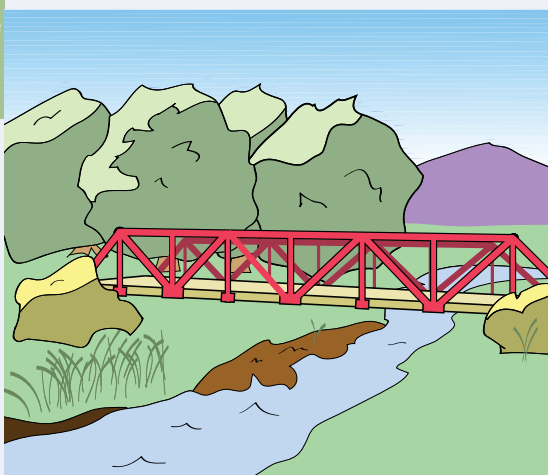
Protect medicinal and **sacred plants** and trees.

Use silt fences to redirect run-off and debris during construction. **Plant** native grass, shrubs and trees as soon as possible.

Build homes or cabins at least 1.25 m (4.1 ft) above the **high water mark** to protect your home from sea level rise and storm surges.

Use lined fire pits instead of open fires. Download a recommended fire pit design from [uinr.ca/library/publications-reports/](http://uinr.ca/library/publications-reports/).

Refrain from setting grass fires. Grass fires **contribute to erosion** by destroying ground cover.



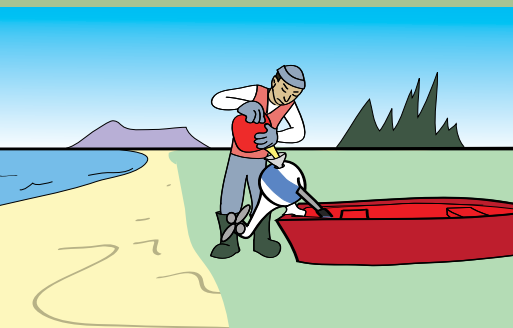
**Build bridges rather than using culverts. Leave the riverbank untouched. Keep heavy machinery and all motorized vehicles away from streams and river banks.**



Follow Nova Scotia provincial regulations for installing **septic systems** if building cabins or homes. Sites should be assessed by a Health Canada Environmental Health Officer. The system should be at least 30.5 m (100 ft) from any water source. For more information refer to [gov.ns.ca/nse/water/docs/onsitesewageconstruction.pdf](http://gov.ns.ca/nse/water/docs/onsitesewageconstruction.pdf)



When approaching land, lift outboard motors and land boats in areas with less eel grass. Eel grass is important to many fish species, including eels.



Fill fuel tanks and mix oil for boats on land and away from the water.



Report oil spills and environmental emergencies immediately by calling 1 800 565 1633 and Wagmatcook Public Works 295 2598.

Take all household **hazardous waste** like aerosol cans, pesticides, fuel, fertilizers, kerosene, bleach and other cleaning products to Green Island Recycling Ltd., 345 Gulf Crescent, Sydport Industrial Park 564 8104, for FREE disposal.

Use **garbage and recycling** bins. Take advantage of your community's curb-side recycle collection for FREE disposal. Sort recyclables according to Victoria County guidelines. Guidelines can be found online at [victoriacounty.com/blue-bag-recycling-information.html](http://victoriacounty.com/blue-bag-recycling-information.html).

Take fluorescent bulbs to Home Depot for FREE disposal.

Invest in backyard compost bins or take food waste and used paper towel to Baddeck Transfer Station, 440 Old Margaree Road 295 2026, to compost.

Cell **phones** and batteries (including smart phones) can be taken back to a local mobility store for recycling.



Take paint cans (with paint), spray paint cans, all batteries and refundables to Baddeck Recycling Depot 440 Old Margaree Road 295 2026.

If your vehicle is stopped for more than two minutes, turn off your engine. Exhaust contributes to acid rain and climate change.

Take advantage of annual curb-side **spring clean up**.

Remember to pile items in areas away from water.



**Tow old or abandoned vehicles to a salvage yard. For FREE pick up, call Don's Auto I 888 588 0888.**

Leaks from furnace **oil tanks** contaminate soil and water supplies. Maintain your tank by looking for damage, rust or signs that it has moved. Remove leaves and other debris and protect the oil supply line from the weight of snow and ice. If moved, level the tank immediately. Left-over **furnace oil** can be dumped back into your tank.

Install heating **oil tanks** according to CSA B139, Installation Code for Oil-Burning Equipment (latest edition). For more information on maintaining, choosing, or installing your tank, contact Wagmatcook Housing and Public Works Office at 295 2598.



Use environmentally friendly, phosphate-free and bio-degradable cleaning products including laundry detergents, soaps, shampoos and conditioners. Phosphates contain phosphorous. Too much phosphorous can cause **algae blooms** blocking sunlight for aquatic plants. When blooms die, they use up oxygen in the water and cause fish kills.



**Take medications back to the pharmacy for FREE disposal instead of putting them in garbage or flushing down the toilet. When we eat fish we can be exposed to the drugs in their tissues. Medicines can also affect fish reproduction.**





**Plant** native grasses, shrubs and trees. Use alternative and eco-friendly methods for maintaining lawns instead of fertilizer and pesticides. Fertilizers contain nutrients which can cause algal blooms in our waters.

Tires and left-over furnace and motor oil can be taken to a local garage for **FREE disposal**.

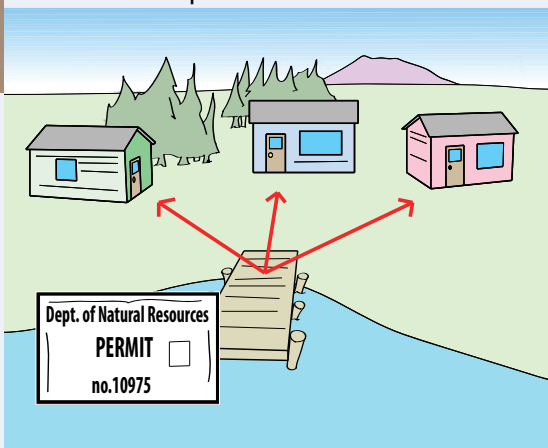
Refrain from **burning** garbage, tires and pressure-treated lumber. Harmful chemicals eventually reach water through rainfall.

Use a high-pressure wash to clean boats or gear to remove **invasive hitchhikers** like tunicates and seaweeds before using them in the Bras d'Or Lakes.

**Prepare or freeze fish, lobsters or other species caught in other areas rather than holding them in the Bras d'Or Lakes. This reduces risk of introducing parasites, viruses or diseases into the Lakes.**

If possible **donate** electronics—computers, cables, TV's, VCR's, radios—to a local charity, or take them to Baddeck Recycling Depot, 440 Old Margaree Road 295 2026 for **FREE disposal**.

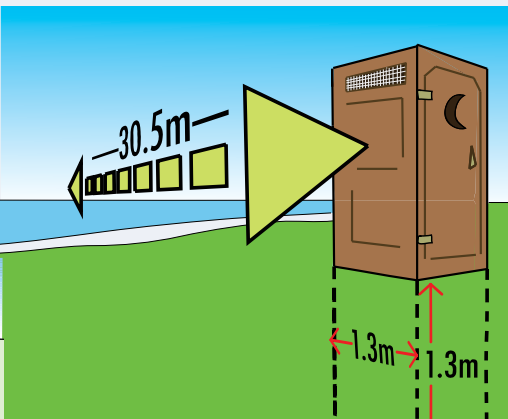
Go to [acestewardship.ca](http://acestewardship.ca) for the full list of accepted electronics.



**Permits** from the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources are needed before installing any type of wharf. Fines can be given for installing wharves without a permit. Applications can be picked up from your local NS DNR office. For more information, refer to [gov.ns.ca/snsmr/paal/dnr/paal066.asp](http://gov.ns.ca/snsmr/paal/dnr/paal066.asp)

To reduce impacts to eel grass and the shoreline, share a **wharf** with your neighbor or use the community wharf. Consider putting in a removable wharf if it is necessary to have one. Use fish-friendly lumber and make sure that all materials are prepared in areas away from the water.





Ensure **outhouses** are at least 30.5 m (100 ft) from the water, including freshwater sources. Pits should be 1.3 m (4 ft) deep and 1.3 m (4 ft) wide.

Practice **water conservation**. Collect rainwater to water plants. Wait for a full load to run dishwashers and washers. Take showers instead of baths. Fix leaks.

Only human waste and toilet paper should be **flushed**. Anything else can cause lift station breakdowns, sewer malfunctions and back-ups leading to overflows and release of untreated sewage.

The Bras d'Or Lakes are a **non-discharge zone** for boating sewage and dangerous chemicals. Pump out sewage at a dumping station in Dundee, St. Peter's, Grand Narrows, Whycocomagh, Baddeck and Kempt Head.

Bonfires can add garbage to the river when it floods. Take garbage home with you and recycle what you can.



Use proper needle disposal. Needles and blood sugar lancets are an environmental and **health hazard**.

Only take **gravel** from approved gravel pits. Leave gravel on sandbars and beaches so they will be less vulnerable to sea level rise.



Show ways to protect aquatic habitat to the next generation.

UINR acknowledges support of  
its partners in this project:



Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative  
Environmental Planning Initiative  
recognizes the importance of  
protecting aquatic habitats  
and is working toward the same goal  
with our municipalities.



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**Canada**

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**UINR—Unama'ki Institute  
of Natural Resources**

is Cape Breton's Mi'kmaq  
voice on natural resources  
and the environment.

UINR represents the five Mi'kmaq  
communities of Unama'ki in  
forestry, marine science research,  
species management, traditional Mi'kmaq  
knowledge, water quality monitoring,  
and environmental partnerships.

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