

Tetpaqiewanej Jakejk

Let's Take
Care of
the **Lobster**



Lobster is a shared gift. Before the commercial **jakej** (lobster) fishery, Mi'kmaq harvested lobster for food using spears, traps, swimming and diving.

In the past we harvested lobster from all areas in Atlantic Canada. Today each of our five Mi'kmaq communities in Unama'ki have access to lobster in eastern Cape Breton (LFAs 27,29-30) and the Bras d'Or Lakes

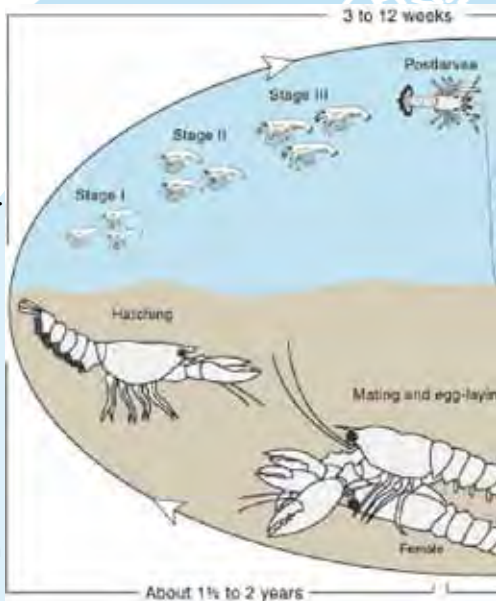
(LFAs 27-28) under our Aboriginal Fishery Strategy (AFS) agreements. Each community is responsible for negotiating their own agreements and are different in location of the fishery, seasons, catch method and trap allocation.

While Mi'kmaq have Aboriginal and Treaty rights to harvest resources as usual, we also have the responsibility to ensure nature's gifts are not abused or wasted. We have a responsibility to make sure the integrity, diversity and productivity of these gifts are there for future generations. This responsibility is an integral part of our culture and way of harvesting.

The actions in this plan show our concern for sustaining this gift and illustrate a way to work responsibly toward keeping this gift and all it needs to survive for a long time.

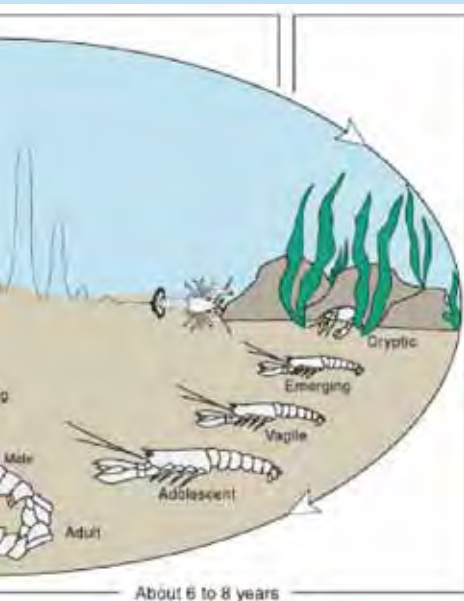
This plan was developed with FSC lobster fishers, Elders, members of the Grand Council and knowledgeable community members to address concerns with the AFS agreements' conservation provisions. This plan is voluntary and should be used to complement the conservation conditions in your AFS agreements. In the absence of AFS agreements, these guidelines can apply to the Unama'ki food, social and ceremonial lobster fishery in your community.

Lobster as a gift



Tetpaqiewanej Jakejk
Let's Take Care of

Life of a **Lobster**



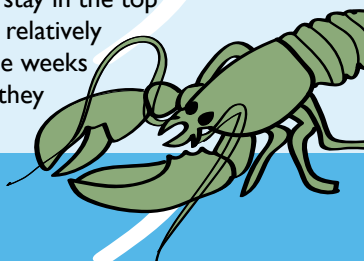
The lobster we eat are quite old. It takes eight to 10 years with many moults (shedding of shell and growing a new, larger one) to become the size that we take in our fisheries. Moulting takes place in the summer when water temperatures are warmer. A lobster may moult as many as 20 times throughout its life, but not as frequently when it reaches sexual maturity. After they

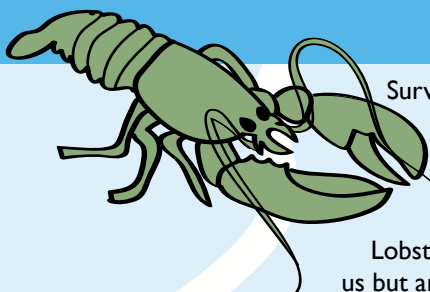
are sexually mature, males may still moult every year, but females moult every second year. When the female moults, a male lobster of similar or larger size will flip her on her back and mate. Sperm stays inside the female for several months and possibly even several years. He offers her several days of protection while her shell hardens. After she leaves, he may mate with more females and she may occasionally mate with another male.

Most females lay eggs the year after mating. Eggs are fertilized outside the female when eggs are transferred to the underside of her tail. They remain glued to her body for another 9 to 12 months. She protects her eggs by keeping her tail curled up under her, but she may lose half of them from diseases, parasites, predators or handling from fishers. Small females produce several thousand eggs while larger females produce several tens of thousands of better quality eggs.

Hatching usually happens June through August when water temperatures warm. The female lifts her tail and thousands of larvae float to the surface and stay in the top metre of water. Here they have a relatively short larval phase of three to nine weeks followed by a short stage where they sink to the bottom.

**in Mi'kmaq means
of the Lobster.**



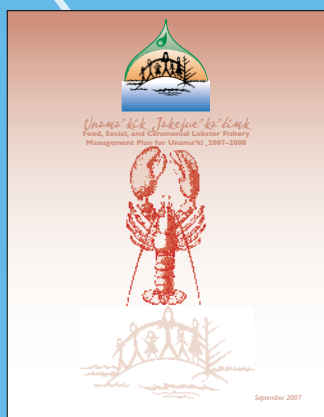


Survival of young lobster is very low. Only two in 10,000 eggs become adults.

Lobster is food for many of us but are also a food source themselves. Young lobster hiding in gravel and cobble are food for groundfish like cod and flounder, wolf fish, dogfish and small crabs. They eat the same things adult lobster eat—fish eggs, sea urchins, copepods, snails, limpets and marine worms. Most people think lobster are scavengers but they actually prefer live food.

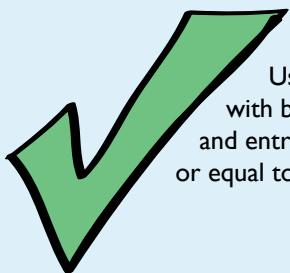
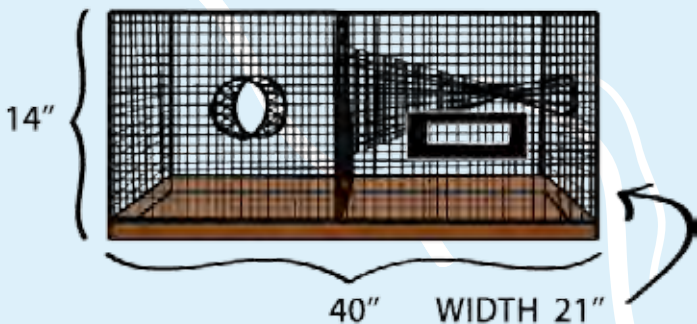
Adult lobster don't have many predators. Humans are their main predator. The commercial fishery takes tens of thousands of tonnes of lobster every year. The largest fishing season is in the spring from May to July, however a smaller fall fishery also takes place. The difference between these two fisheries is lobster quality. In the fall, lobster may look larger but they have not grown enough to fill their shells. They are also easier to catch, putting them at risk for overharvesting. Lobster taken during the fall fishery are the same ones that would have grown to fill their shells in the spring.

Adult lobster live in areas where they can make themselves a home. Areas rich in large rocks like cobble and boulders act as shelters. Sometimes people create habitat for them. Lobster continue to grow until they die. The largest lobster caught in Nova Scotia was 40 pounds and one metre long.

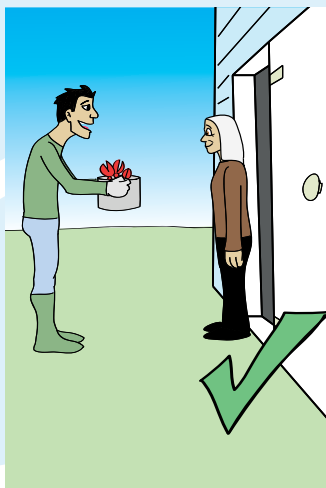


For more detailed information read **Unama'kik Jakejue'ka'timk Food, Social, and Ceremonial Lobster Fishery Management Plan for Unama'ki** at uinr.ca

You can make a difference.

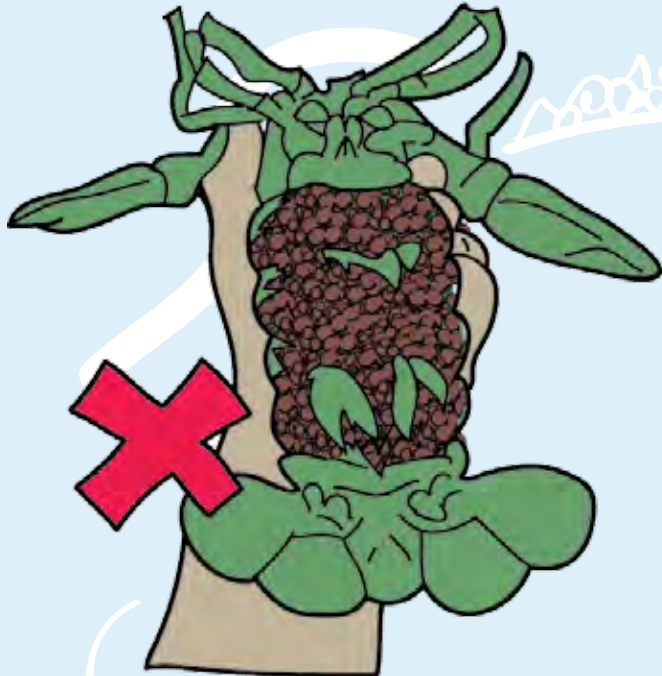


Use standard **traps** equipped with biodegradable escape vents and entrance hoops smaller or equal to 153 mm (6 inches).



Take only what you need. Share your catch with Elders or other community members, especially if you can't store or cook the lobster.

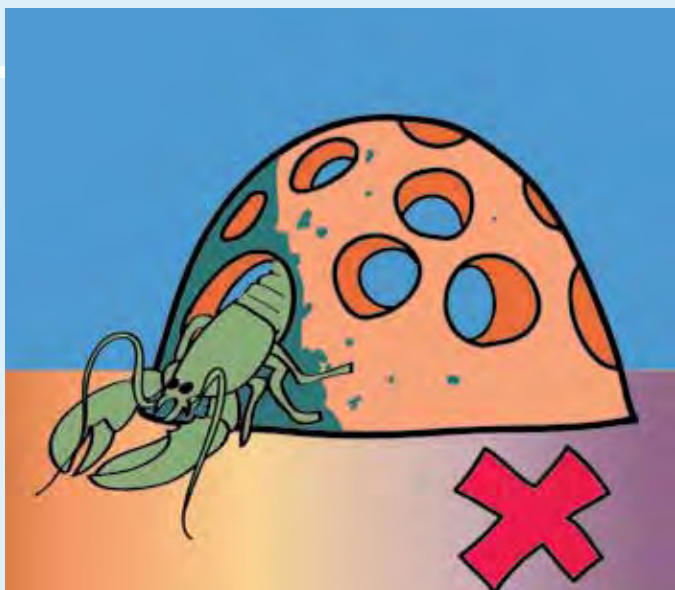
Holding or storing lobster caught in other areas increases risk of introducing invasive species, parasites, diseases or bacteria into the Bras d'Or Lakes. Cook all lobster caught outside of the Lakes.



Lobster with eggs are considered **sacred**.
Return them to the water.

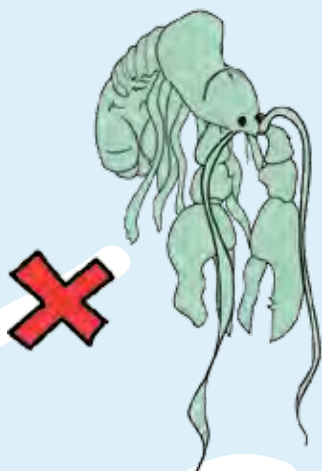


Carefully and gently return females with eggs.



Some areas have invested in artificial lobster **habitats**. Refrain from fishing in these areas.

These include sites off Eskasoni (LFA 28), River Bourgeois (LFA 29) and New Campbellton (LFA 27). A map of the areas and buffer zones can be found in Appendix C of the Unama'kik Jakejue'ka'timk Lobster Management Plan at uinr.ca



Soft-shelled lobster have mated and the females will have eggs under her tail in the spring.



Return soft-shelled lobster carefully and gently to the water. They don't have the protective covering of a hard shell.



Minimize your **environmental** footprint:

- Obey garbage laws by not dumping garbage into the water.
- Take care to secure items in your boat so they do not fly out when steaming or hauling.
- Prepare fuel on land.
- Use slipways to put your boat into the water to keep from harming other marine habitats.
- If you use a vessel with a sewage holding tank, obey sewage dumping laws in the Bras d'Or Lakes by using a sewage pump-out station.

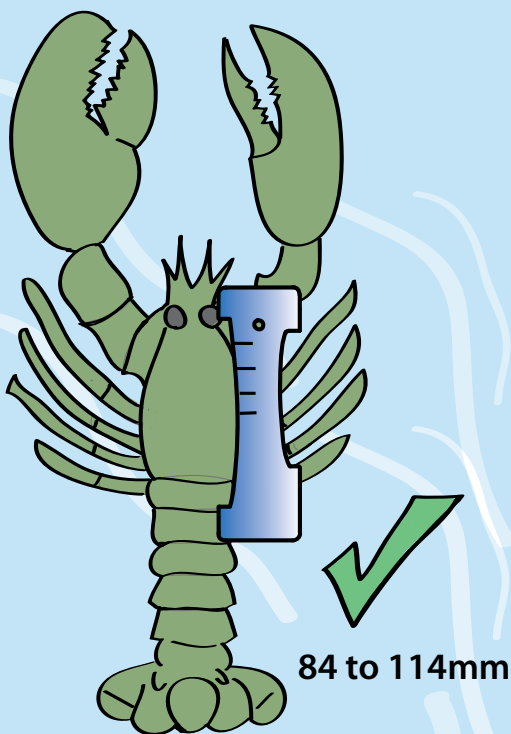


To prevent lobster from being wasted, protect them from wind and rain.

Handle gently and treat with respect

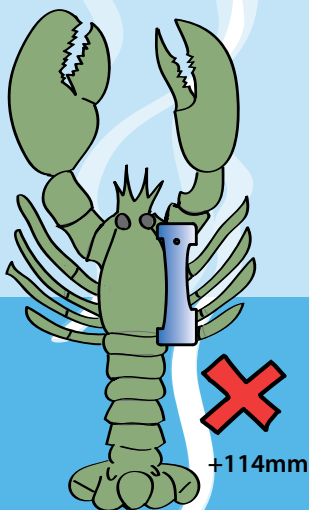
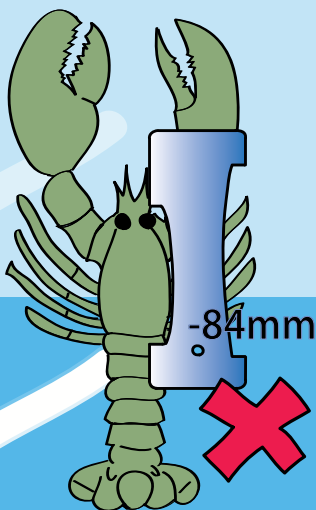


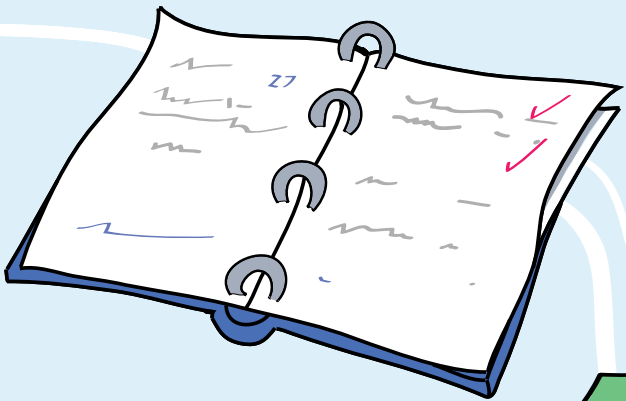
**Remember to wear life preservers
and carry a boat safety kit
on board at all times.**



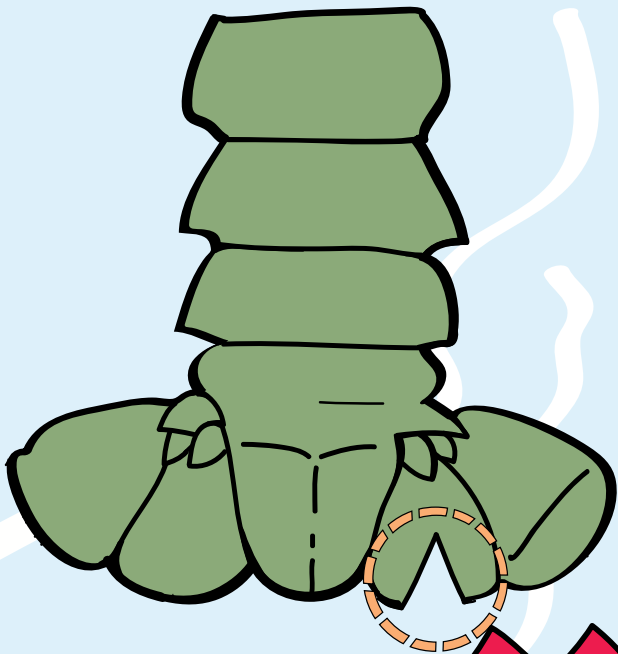
Follow your AFS lobster fishing **conservation** measures.

To protect lobster population only keep lobster within the size range of 84 mm to 114 mm carapace length. This lets smaller lobster have a chance to reproduce before entering the fishery and leaves larger female lobster with more and better quality eggs and male lobster to mate with them.





Keep a record of your catches.



Return v-notched lobster to the water.
They are known egg producers.



**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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Illustrations by Chris Andrews

Life cycle of the American lobster
from [www.osl.gc.ca/homard/en/
schema-cycle-de-vie.html](http://www.osl.gc.ca/homard/en/schema-cycle-de-vie.html)

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