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Watching Malikewe'j

Malikewe'j may be off the beaten track, but for many Mi'kmaq people it is the center of the universe! Affectionately known as Mala, it is a tiny bit of paradise that has the unique distinction of being jointly owned by the five Mi'kmaq communities of Unama'ki.

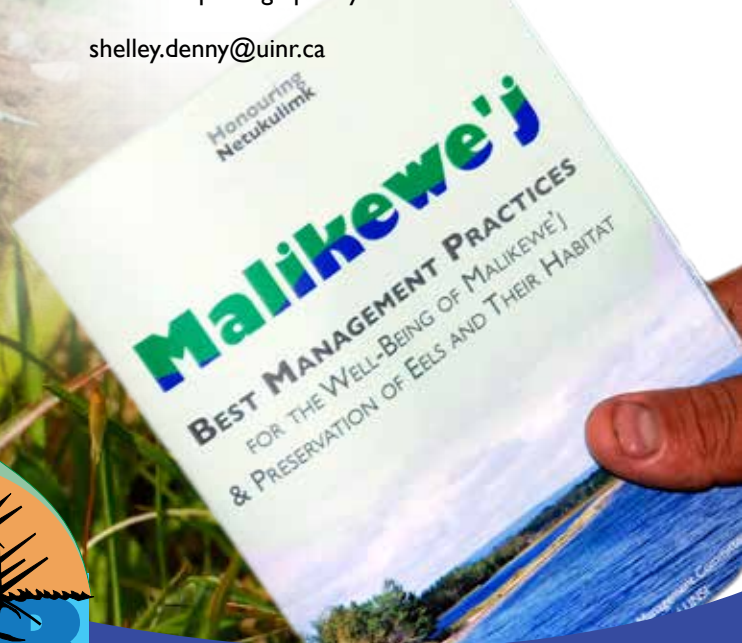
Steeped in history, today Mala has only a handful of year-round residents, but many people come to cabins and camps in the summer and fall. An annual Mass is held every summer.

This spring, UINR released the community-inspired "Best Management Practices for the Well-Being of Malikewe'j and Preservation of Eels and Their Habitat." You can download a free copy from the Library at our website: uinr.ca

A community lunch was held at the new Cookhouse followed by a ceremony to release and distribute these important community guidelines. Charlie Dennis hosted the event. There is an album of photos from the event on Facebook—UINRpage.

UINR does a lot of work in Mala, from water quality testing to a major project to preserve the community cemetery through erosion remediation. UINR has been hosting an annual Spring Cleaning and Community Ditch Clean-up where dumpsters are provided for the community's use and an army of volunteers scour the roadsides picking up recyclables and litter.

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NEWS²



Top: Unama'KIDS built bat houses, saw a presentation on bats and had a graduation party all rolled into a one-day event at the end of the school year!

Above: UINR's Commercial Fisheries Liaison Coordinator John Couture meets with Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Ted Potter and Wagmatcook Commercial Fisheries Manager Preston Bernard.



Above: We had lots of help at our Malikewe'j clean-up this year. Pictured are students from Waycobah school, guardians and UINR staff

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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.

Plamu-Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge: Atlantic Salmon in Unama'ki is the latest publication in our series on MEK.



Malikewe'j Best Management Practices is now available for free downloads. You can read all about it in this issue!



Eel Stewardship-Where Do We Go From Here?


is our report from a workshop we held to gather traditional knowledge on eels from our Elders and fishers.

AND DONT FORGET to visit UINRtv on YouTube to take a look at our new eel videos!




pjila'si

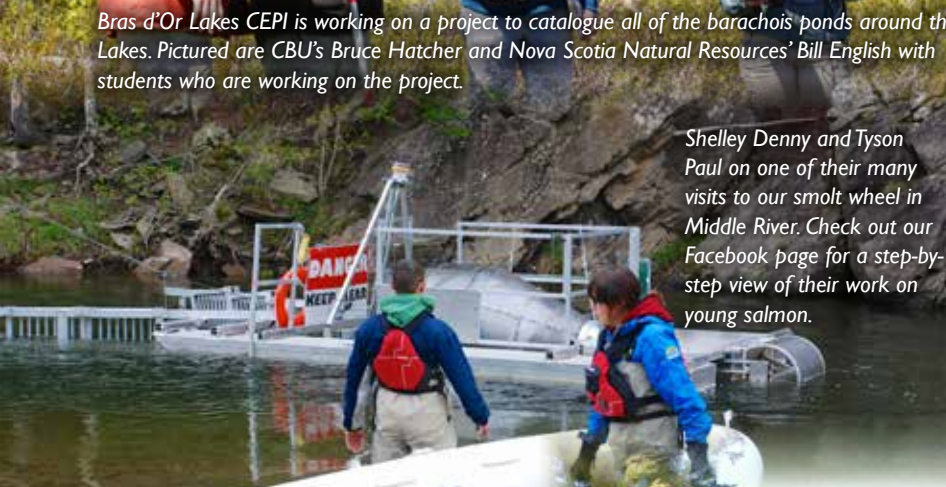
Welcome




UINR, Margaree Salmon Association and Atlantic Salmon Federation, with help from Unama'ki Guardians have been erecting signs along our salmon rivers to help identify salmon smolt.



Bras d'Or Lakes CEPI is working on a project to catalogue all of the barachois ponds around the Lakes. Pictured are CBU's Bruce Hatcher and Nova Scotia Natural Resources' Bill English with students who are working on the project.



Shelley Denny and Tyson Paul on one of their many visits to our smolt wheel in Middle River. Check out our Facebook page for a step-by-step view of their work on young salmon.



UINR's Mark MacPhail, Annie Johnson, Charlie Dennis and Lisa Young plant trees at Malikewe'j to help control erosion.

In our last issue I talked to you about the importance of partnerships at UINR and the many, many groups and individuals that we work with.

No community represents partnerships better than Malikewe'j—owned jointly by our five Unama'ki communities. The Best Management Practices we released this spring is a great example of cooperatively working together for the greater good of the community. Every Band Council signed off on the guidelines and people from every community contributed to the publication's content.

We just completed our third annual clean-up of the community and it is heartening to see both the progress that we've made and the help received from students, Guardians and community members. The people's dedication is best illustrated in the Denny family's commitment in building a cook house for the use of community at the annual Mass and other special events. We held the BMP release celebration there!

Through the spring, we have been working on a new video about UINR that we will be releasing this summer. We interviewed our staff and partners in the communities, various levels of government, our partners and supporters. It was really great to hear what an impact we're having. In this issue we start a new feature, "It's all about the partnerships," where we introduce the major partnerships that we are involved in. This issue we introduce you to Pitu'paq and the important things they do to keep the Bras d'Or Lakes clean through their work on water and wastewater.

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NR



OYSTER

garden

by Charlie Dennis

One day I was wondering what story I should write for the next Martin newsletter and I couldn't think of any. Writers block or something, they say. Anyway, the next morning a friend of mine hitched a ride to work with me and we always have nice chat on the way to the other end of the community.

Frank Gould (Be'k) told me about the last night's events. He talked about his sons going kaqpesawe'kijik (smelt fishing), and described how wet and cold they were when they returned. It brought lovely clear memories of my Dad and how he always took care of us after a night of smelt fishing in Bryden's Brook. I remembered how nice and warm the house was, with flames crackling and shimmering around the living room and how he cooked our fresh smelts that he enjoyed as much as we enjoyed catching them. The way Frank described last night's events with his two boys inspired me to tell this story...

I suppose I should start by explaining where Bryden's Brook is. When you're heading west at the end of Eskasoni boundary line, after about 1 km you come up to a brook of beautiful spring-fed water, which is called Bryden's Brook or Bryden Spring Water. For hundreds of years, residents from all around have been collecting nice spring water for drinking. The water is clean and clear and very safe to drink. I always thought that it was a brook that ran from the mountain, until one day I did some investigating and walked up the brook.

All of a sudden, after only a few hundred feet, the brook came to an end. I couldn't believe when all I could see of the brook was a hole in the ground and beautiful clear water bubbling from underground. It was a spring! I thought to myself, "No wonder the water was cold, and no wonder, even if it rained, the water always stayed the same level and cold from top to bottom."

Ever since I can remember, Bryden's Brook has been a place for young and old, all trying to catch the early run of Canadian Smelt.

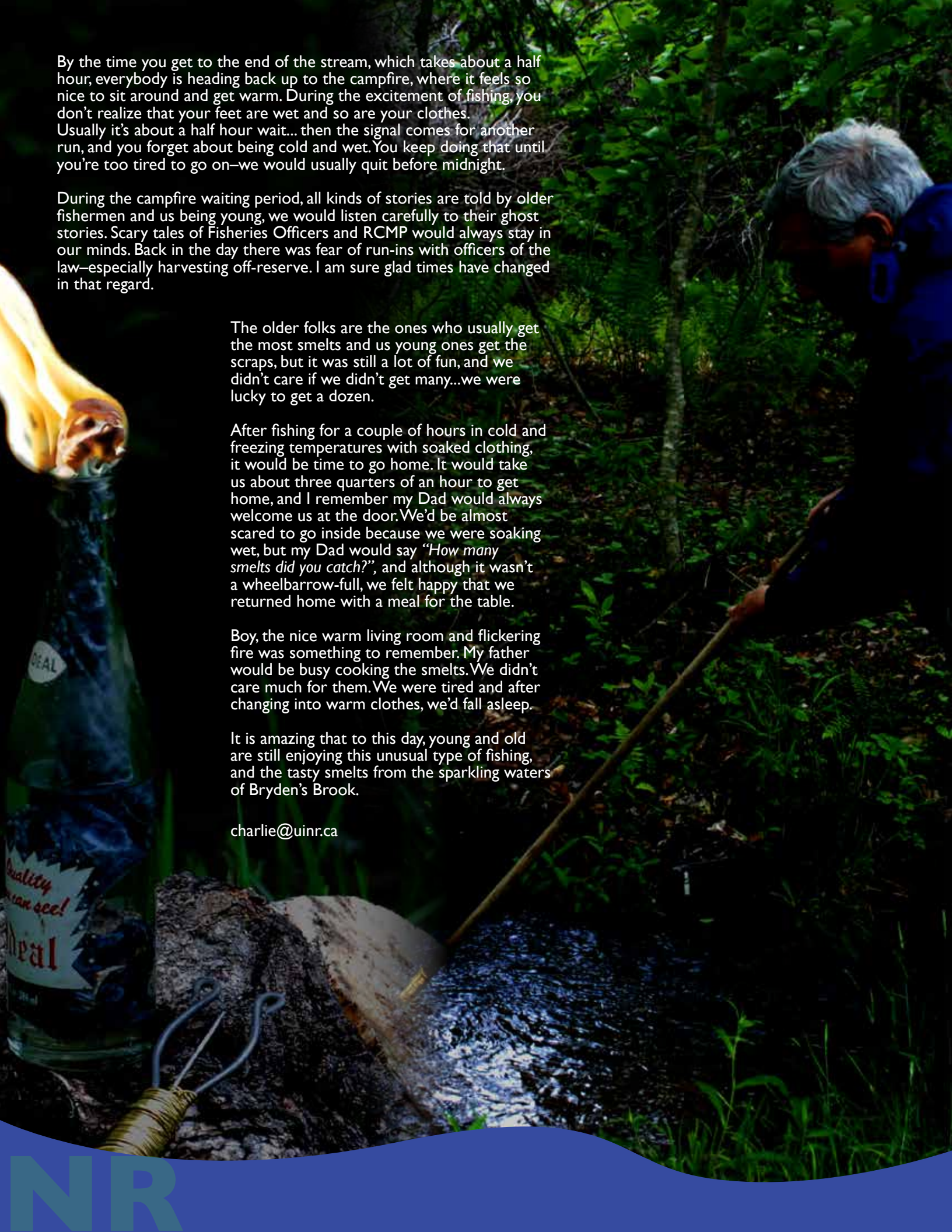
Smelt fishing is different from other kinds. Every spring, when the Spring Peepers start chirping and the ice starts to melt in Castle Bay Beach (which is now called Amaguadees Pond), this is an indication the smelt run is on. Smelts spend their winter in the Bras d'Or Lakes, but in the spring, run up brooks to spawn. The run lasts about two weeks, but Elders recommend to stop fishing after the first week because the quality of the fish is ideal then. After this, the fish is soft and tasteless. Smelts run in the night likely to avoid predators, including us humans. Towards the end of April and early May, you'll see torches and flash lights glittering along the banks. You might see a campfire and people trying to keep warm, waiting anxiously for some indication of the smelts making their first run, which usually begins as soon as the sun is settled in the west and everything is quiet.

Everyone has their torches off. Some use flashlights, some use old fashioned torches with kerosene and cloth as wicks to hold the light. In older days, people wrapped-up birch bark, similar to eel torches.

The spears we used looked like miniature eel spears. My mom would get mad at us because we would usually take the broom or mop handle to make them. And we would use coat hangers for the prongs.

Someone who is older and knows the run, figures out when the time is right. "Let's go!" is the word, and everybody scrambles to get on their feet and light their forms of artificial light. Once the "go" was given, everybody was jostling into position. Usually the old fishermen got the best locations in the stream, and traditional knowledge played a role in knowing the best places for smelts to gather. Us young fellows would wander to see smelts or try to recognize them in the half-blinding glare of the light. It takes practice and a couple of trips down the stream can teach you a lot.

Kaqpesaq

A photograph of a person with grey hair, wearing a blue shirt, fishing in a stream. They are using a long wooden pole. In the foreground, a green glass bottle of beer is partially submerged in the water, with a small fish (a smelt) visible inside the bottle's opening. The background is a lush green forest.

By the time you get to the end of the stream, which takes about a half hour, everybody is heading back up to the campfire, where it feels so nice to sit around and get warm. During the excitement of fishing, you don't realize that your feet are wet and so are your clothes. Usually it's about a half hour wait... then the signal comes for another run, and you forget about being cold and wet. You keep doing that until you're too tired to go on—we would usually quit before midnight.

During the campfire waiting period, all kinds of stories are told by older fishermen and us being young, we would listen carefully to their ghost stories. Scary tales of Fisheries Officers and RCMP would always stay in our minds. Back in the day there was fear of run-ins with officers of the law—especially harvesting off-reserve. I am sure glad times have changed in that regard.

The older folks are the ones who usually get the most smelts and us young ones get the scraps, but it was still a lot of fun, and we didn't care if we didn't get many...we were lucky to get a dozen.

After fishing for a couple of hours in cold and freezing temperatures with soaked clothing, it would be time to go home. It would take us about three quarters of an hour to get home, and I remember my Dad would always welcome us at the door. We'd be almost scared to go inside because we were soaking wet, but my Dad would say "*How many smelts did you catch?*", and although it wasn't a wheelbarrow-full, we felt happy that we returned home with a meal for the table.

Boy, the nice warm living room and flickering fire was something to remember. My father would be busy cooking the smelts. We didn't care much for them. We were tired and after changing into warm clothes, we'd fall asleep.

It is amazing that to this day, young and old are still enjoying this unusual type of fishing, and the tasty smelts from the sparkling waters of Bryden's Brook.

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Everything you wanted to know about eels...

If you ever want to know anything about eels...and by anything we mean everything—cooking them, eating them, harvesting them, traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge and scientific research...check out UINR's series of ten short videos on our YouTube channel: **UINRtv**

Together, the series tells what we know about the American eel in Cape Breton.

Produced in cooperation with Parks Canada, scientists from UINR, Parks Canada and Cape Breton University, fishers, cooks and Elders from around Cape Breton tell stories of the eel's fascinating life cycle, its place in Mi'kmaq culture and efforts being made to protect its habitat.



Lisa Young, Executive Director at UINR explains, "The videos look at everything from the commercial eel fishery, cooking and eating eel to traditional eel fishing and making eel spears."

Our declining eel population is a great concern and scientists are investigating reasons for this decline."

The videos are fast paced and feature seldom-seen footage of Donald Marshall Jr. cooking and preparing eel. Additional footage from George Marshall of Potlotek complement the production from videographer Madeline Yakimchuk of Gryphon Media Productions in Sydney, NS.

"This series of videos really brings the eel story to life," says Maria O'Hearn, External Relations Manager, Parks Canada. "Everyone should become better acquainted with this elusive fish. These videos will go a long way in increasing awareness of the eels' important role in our ecosystem on Cape Breton Island as well as the issues they face today."

"Given that the American eel lives in seven national parks in Atlantic Canada including Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Parks Canada is pleased to work with UINR on projects like this. It helps connect more people with the story of the eel, which will encourage the long-term protection of this threatened species."

UINRtv on YouTube



it's all about the partnerships Pitu'paq

The Mi'kmaq word that describes the Bras d'Or Lakes has deep meaning. "Flowing into oneness" is a loose translation and it perfectly illustrates how a watershed works.

Pitu'paq doesn't sound anything like you might think. Say Bee-dew-bah and you are on your way to speaking Mi'kmaq!

Joking aside, Pitu'paq takes its business seriously. The unique partnership of Cape Breton municipalities and five Unama'ki bands was formed in 2001 and is facilitated through Nova Scotia Environment.

The partnership participates in results-oriented projects, lends support to each partner's efforts, respects differences in perspective, all to ensure a healthy environment for generations to come.

Pitu'paq looks at things from the perspective of the Lakes. Originally its mandate was focussed on addressing outstanding issues of sewage from land based, boating and other sources. To that end, Pitu'paq developed ten commitments and ten reciprocal commitments which were signed by municipal and provincial governments. Substantial progress was made toward these commitments:

- Canada Shipping Act Designation preventing discharge of boating waste into the Bras d'Or Lakes,
- Certificate of status at point of sale
- Completion of the Bras d'Or Atlas,
- St. Anne's Mission sewage and waste program
- Climate Change Conference
- Fracking information sessions.

PITU'PAQ'S TEN SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

Dependence—Humans depend upon a healthy environment for many goods and services vital to our well being

Biophysical Limits—The planet has real biophysical limits in its ability to supply resources and absorb wastes

Living within the Carrying Capacity of the Planet—Living sustainably means living within the Earth's biophysical limits

Interdependence—What we don't do to protect the planet will have serious consequences for all species

Intergenerational Equity—Present generations have an obligation to meet their needs in ways that do not foreclose upon future generations

Intragenerational Equity—Present generations have an obligation to act in ways that do not prevent or impair others from meeting their needs

Ecological justice—Human actions should not endanger other species

Participation—Building a sustainable future requires participation from all sectors of society

Cooperation—Creating a sustainable society will require cooperation among many different participants

Addressing Root Causes—Successful solutions require efforts that address root causes of the problems

Pitu'paq's latest project reaches all the Mi'kmaq communities of Unama'ki and the adjacent municipalities.

The **Unama'ki Water and Wastewater Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Project** is a three-year project to access the resilience of water and wastewater infrastructure in the face of projected climate change impact. Often this infrastructure is shared between municipalities and First Nations communities. It is an ideal illustration of issues of mutual concern addressed by sharing challenges and knowledge and working together to develop a solution. A good example is Membertou and CBRM who share both water and wastewater services.

Using a protocol developed by Engineers Canada in cooperation with Natural Resources Canada—called the PIEVC protocol—ensures that community knowledge is weighted equally with scientific knowledge.

Wagmatcook and Membertou's research has been completed and, this year, Potlotek and Eskasoni will be studied and Waycobah and Malikewej are slated for 2014/2015.

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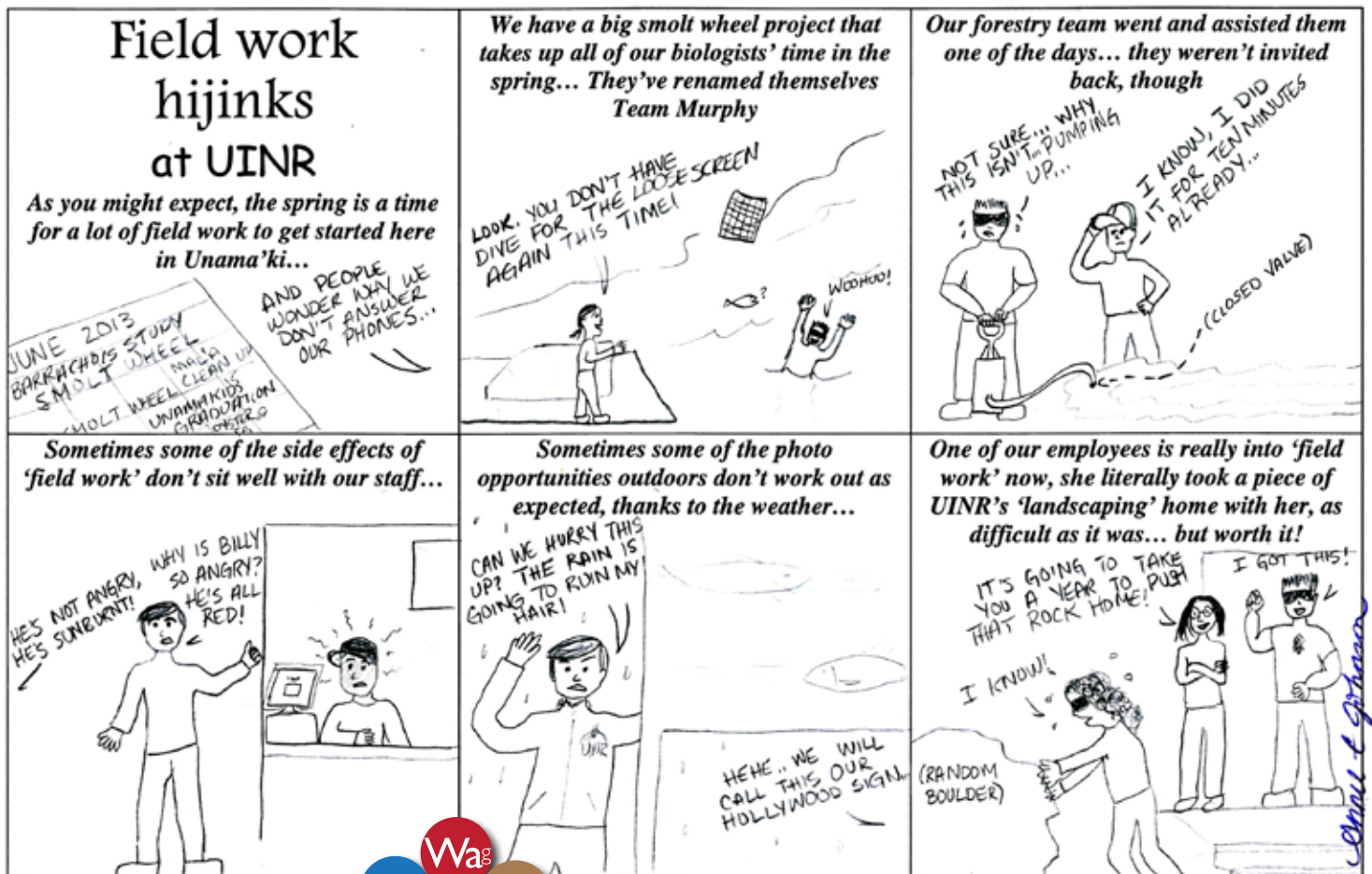
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