



Malikewe'j

Understanding the Mi'kmaq Way

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Written by Nadine Lefort with Charlie Dennis

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for sharing stories of their special relationships with Malikewe’j.

We appreciate your time, guidance, knowledge, and generosity. Wela’lioq.

Annette Bernard

Muin Bernard

John Tiny Cremo

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Cora Dennis

Florence Dennis

Helen T Dennis

Steven Dennis

Angela Denny

Joan Denny

Joel Denny

Shelley Denny

John F Doucette

Sam Doucette

Cornelia Francis

Leon Francis

Nanora Googoo

Joe Googoo

Judy Googoo

Marjorie Gould

Beverly Jeddore

Noel Joe Gould

Alice Joe

Derek Joe

Andrew Johnson

Annie Johnson

Cecelia Kabaty

Rene Lavoie

Nancy MacDonald

Carolyn Milliea

Anthony Morris

Brian Sheppard

Annie Elizabeth Stevens

Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy

Tom Sylliboy

Janice Paul

Joey Paul

Lance Paul

Percy Paul

Tyson Paul

Charles Blaise Young

Melinda Young

Tuma Young

Victoria (Flo) Young

Dedication

*We would like to dedicate
this publication to the
Mi’kmaq Grand Council,
who oversee the well-being
of our communities and
our resources, and to our
Mi’kmaq communities
who are committed to
preserving Malikewe’j
the way it was intended to
be preserved*

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Introduction

Malikewe'j is a model of the Mi'kmaq Way.

Malikewe'j has traditionally been, and continues to be, an important area for hunting, fishing, and gathering. Resources remain plentiful and, both resources and the place itself, are managed in a cooperative way that ensures long-term sustainability. This is the "Mi'kmaq Way".

Grand Council traditionally met in Malikewe'j. It played a significant role in managing resources, overseeing this Mi'kmaq Way throughout Mi'kma'ki.

This booklet discusses the special cultural and spiritual relationships we have with Malikewe'j. We look for guidance from the Mi'kmaq Grand Council in its traditional roles, and from resource management practices at Malikewe'j for lessons on how we can move forward to re-establish the Mi'kmaq Way as caretakers of this land.

The Mi'kmaq Environmental Learning Centre (MELC) is a community organization whose mission is to provide leadership and share knowledge on local natural resource management based on traditional values and perspectives. Established in 2010 as a tribute to Mi'kmaq Elders, MELC is sharing this report of traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge on Malikewe'j and environmental management.

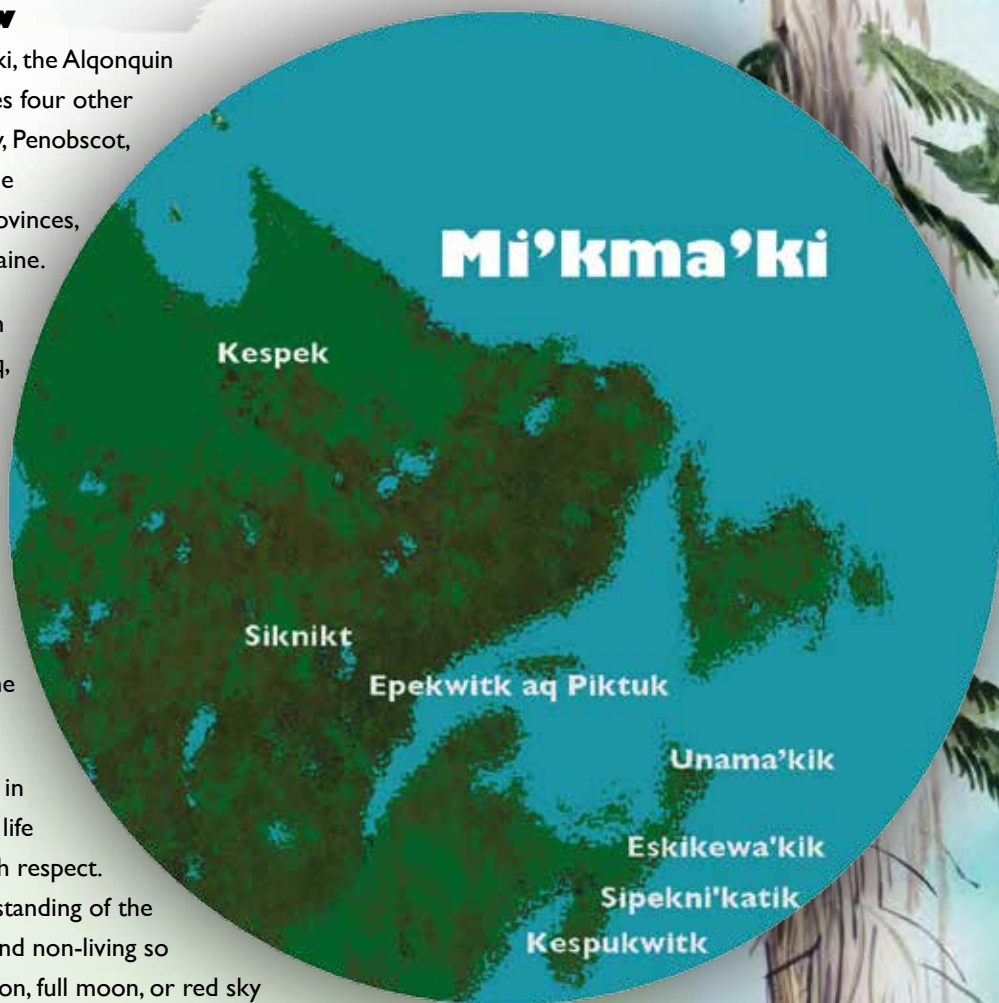
Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR) represents the five Mi'kmaq communities in Unama'ki on natural resource issues. UINR contributes to an understanding and protection of the Bras d'Or Lakes' ecosystem through research, monitoring, education, management, and by integrating Mi'kmaq and conventional ways of understanding, known as Two-Eyed Seeing. Responding to community and Elders' concerns, UINR works to protect Malikewe'j and preserve its heritage.

Mi'kmaq World View

The Mi'kmaq are part of Wabanaki, the Algonquin speaking confederacy that includes four other Nations; Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki. Mi'kma'ki (land of the Mi'kmaq) includes the Atlantic Provinces, eastern Quebec, and northern Maine.

Mi'kma'ki was traditionally held in communal ownership. As Mi'kmaq, we were the caretakers of the seven districts of Mi'kmaq and we strived to live in harmony. This belief remains strong in our culture today. Land and its resources were not commodities that could be bought and sold but were considered gifts from the Creator.

We view the world and all that is in it as having spirit. We consider all life equal to our own and treat it with respect. We developed an intimate understanding of the relationships between the living and non-living so that each plant, animal, constellation, full moon, or red sky tells a story that guides our people. These beliefs affect the manner in which we treat the natural world for sustenance and survival. Animals and plants are not taken if they are not needed. All spirits are acknowledged and respected as relatives and are offered tobacco, prayer, or ceremony (or combination) when taken. No part of an animal is wasted. All parts that cannot be used are returned to the Creator. This concept is described by the Mi'kmaq word, Netukulimk.





Boom Island

**Bras d'Or
Lakes**

Malikewe'j



Malikewe’j

Malikewe’j is a community on the southwest shore of the Bras d’Or Lakes. Governed by the five Mi’kmaq Chiefs in Unama’ki, Malikewe’j is almost entirely surrounded by water; the Bras d’Or Lakes on its eastern, southern, and northern shores and the River Denys Basin on its west. The forest, an Acadian-Boreal forest, is rich with gifts of wildlife, plants and trees, and the surrounding water is filled with aquatic life.



Throughout history there were many names given to this area. The English call it Malagawatch, the French referred to it as Mirligueuch, and we call it Malikewe’j which has several possible meanings. Some say it means “the place where barrels were made,” a reference to work the French did there. Others say it means “the place of Mary,” named after the original chapel and Catholic Mission of the 1700s. Others say it means “a triangular piece of land that juts into the water,” referring to the shape of the land projecting into the Bras d’Or Lakes.

Today, many of us simply call the place Mala.

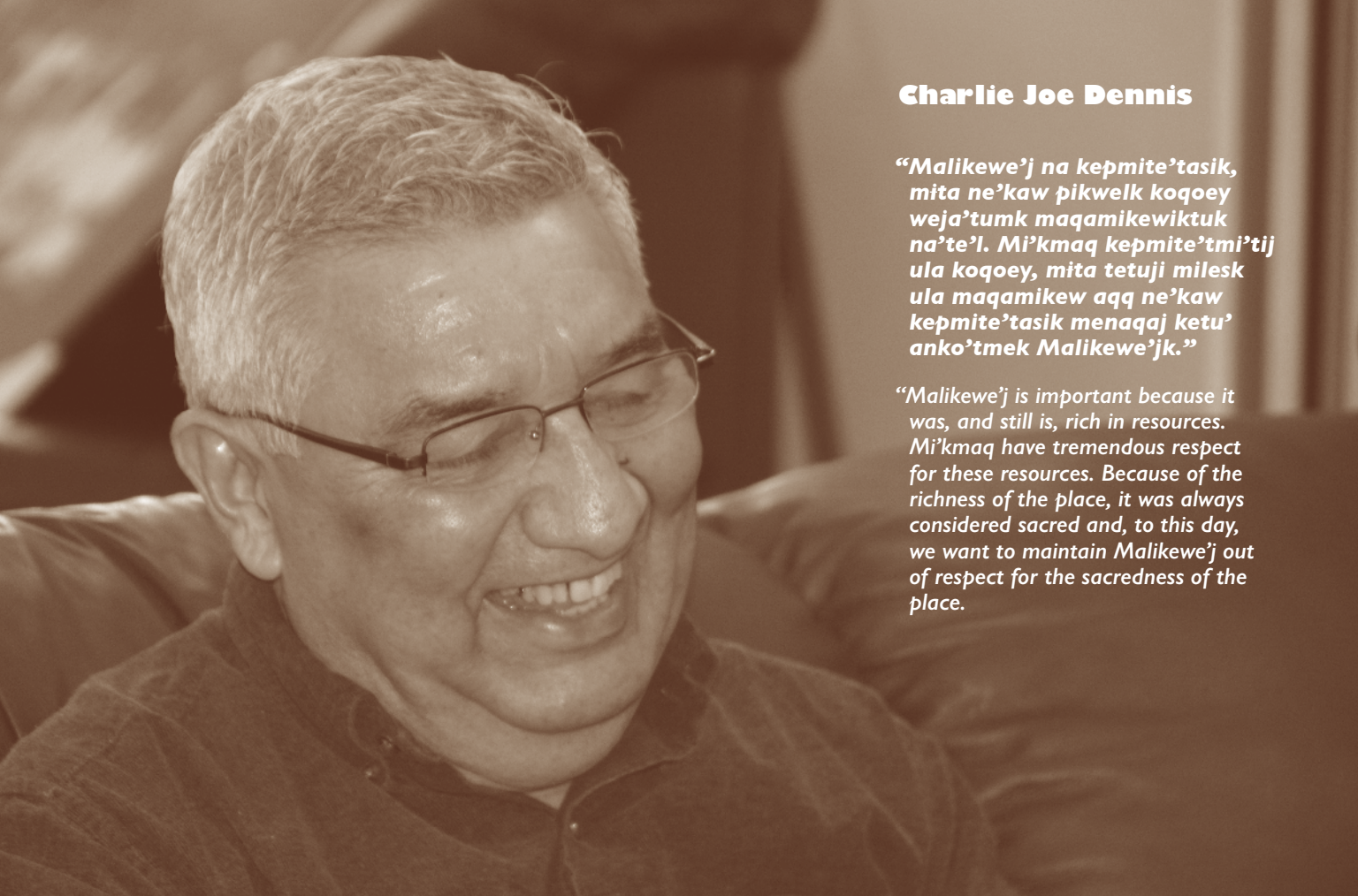
The area of Malikewe’j is not large; the reserve measures 661.3 hectares but it is an ecologically important component of the Bras d’Or Lakes’ ecosystem and of great significance to Mi’kmaq heritage.



Malikewe’j has always been rich in natural resources. It was an especially popular wintering camp place because of its abundance of available food during the cold months. Some people lived here year-round.

Malikewe’j was designated a reserve in 1834, however, after Centralization in the 1940s, Mi’kmaq were forced to leave Mala and move to other reserves. Some families stayed behind but lost their homes, the school, and church in their community. Today, several families, many the same ones that stayed during Centralization, reside in Malikewe’j seasonally. It continues to be a place of hunting, fishing, and gathering, as well as a place of retreat where people return for spiritual solidarity.





Charlie Joe Dennis

“Malikewe’j na kepmite’tasik, mita ne’kaw pikwelk koqoey weja’tumk maqamikewiktuk na’tel. Mi’kmaq kepmite’tmi’tij ula koqoey, mita tetuji milesk ula maqamikew aqq ne’kaw kepmite’tasik menaqaj ketu’ anko’tmek Malikewe’jk.”

“Malikewe’j is important because it was, and still is, rich in resources. Mi’kmaq have tremendous respect for these resources. Because of the richness of the place, it was always considered sacred and, to this day, we want to maintain Malikewe’j out of respect for the sacredness of the place.”

“Me’ ne’kaw pikwelk koqoey weja’tumk maqamikewiktuk Malikewe’jk. Switte’, sinumkwaq, takli’jk, l’nui-npisunn, waisisk, mn’tmu’k, e’sik, kaqpessaq, atoqwa’su’k, alanjik. Ktupj kataq kaqi-tepiejik na’tel, aqq kelu’k etl-loqte’knikemk.

“There are still so many resources at Malikewe’j. Sweet grass, cranberries, geese, ducks, herbal medicines, wildlife, shellfish, smelts, trout, herring...if you want eels, you can still get a feed. Good trapping...”

L’nu’k ketantu’tip koqoey wije’wmi’titl telipunqekl. Pikwelk koqoey etlikwek aqq kisi-ktantmumk. L’nu’k ketantu’tip koqoey ta’n tel-nuta’tij, katu kisi-pkwatu’tij wije’wmi’tij telipunqek kelu’k mena’taqumk. Mu weji-kaqte’mi’tikip koqoey pasik ta’n tel-nuta’tij koqoey. Malikewe’j mawi-alsutmi’tij nankl l’nue’kati’l Unama’kik aqq me’ ne’kaw mawi-apoqnmatultijik teli-anko’tmi’tij, mu newte’jk wutan weji-kaqa’tuk koqoey.”

“People harvested according to the traditional seasons. Things were available and easily harvested. People occasionally harvested out of those seasons if possible and necessary but, otherwise, they harvested what was readily available. That was a healthy approach to resource management...there was no over-exploitation. Malikewe’j is shared by the five Unama’ki nations and the values of sharing continue; there is no overexploitation by one community.”

Historical Significance Of Malikewe'j

Traditionally, Malikewe'j was significant because of its resources. A year-round abundance of food and materials for shelter and clothing meant that our ancestors could live quite comfortably, without the threat of running out of resources.

Because of the way it juts out from the rest of the land into the water, Malikewe'j was a common stopover place. People travelling from one side of the Bras d'Or Lakes to the other often stopped to camp, sometimes for several weeks, before continuing on their journey. There was also a portage route through the area, a passage from Whycocomagh to Denys Basin where people would carry their canoes to avoid a 50-65 km journey by water around the peninsula.

In the 1700s, Malikewe'j was central to Mi'kmaq governance. Grand Council met there annually to make decisions about resource management in the seven districts of Mi'kma'ki.

French settlers and Christian missionaries moved to Unama'ki during the 1600s and 1700s. Mi'kmaq slowly began to convert to Christianity initiated by Grand Chief Membertou in 1610. Many people followed the Grand Chief's example, adopting the practices of Catholicism but not giving up Mi'kmaq spiritual beliefs.

St. Anne, Patron Saint of the Mi'kmaq people, is honoured on the feast of St. Anne in late July. When an early church was built there in 1725, an annual Mission was held in Malikewe'j, but later that century moved to Potlotek, where it continues today. We still honor St. Anne there through prayer, feasting, and celebration.

A cross, altar and monument were erected in 1985 to recognize the historical significance of several people in the discovery and restoration of the land. We hold an annual outdoor mass, and continue to preserve the land and cultural significance of Mala.



Veronica (Flo) Young

***“Ewi’kayap Malikewe’jk 1969ek,
katu ki’s sa’q tujiw i’-atqatmap
na’tē’l ke’sk mna’q ewikawanek.
Ki’s sa’q asua’si tett.***

*“I built a cabin in 1969, but I was
there long before that. I have always
been here.*

***“Mala weljewiaq ela’timk naji-
atlasimik, ma’ tami se’k
we’jitu’n tel-wantaqtek aqq
sankewe’k staqa Malikewe’jk.***

*“Mala is a perfect place to relax,
there’s peace and quiet that you can’t
find anywhere else.*

***Ki’s sa’q, i’-ktankipnik alanjik. Ne’pe’kipnik a’qatayik “ton”
na’kwek. Pikwelk koqoey eyk ktantun. Ketankitipnik mn’tmu’k,
loqte’knika’tiek, meknmek welima’qewey msiku kisna l’nui-npisunn,
mewisultiek, eltuekl stoqne’l kna’taqne’l aqq pa’skite’ka’tiek.
Wije’wmek telipunqek ketantuek koqoey. Kekkue’k ta’n tujiw
ketanuj mn’tmu’k, ketantumk l’nui-npisunn, kate’kemk kisna
e’sue’kemk...na’t-koqoey etek tl-lukwen newtipunqek.***

*“In the old days, I used to fish herring. I would catch half a ton in a day! There
was always something to harvest. We raked oysters, did some trapping, picked
sweetgrass, picked berries or medicine, made wreaths, made baskets... “There
was a certain time of the year for everything. It was time to fish oysters or time
to pick medicines, or catch eels, or get clams...there was always something to
do.*

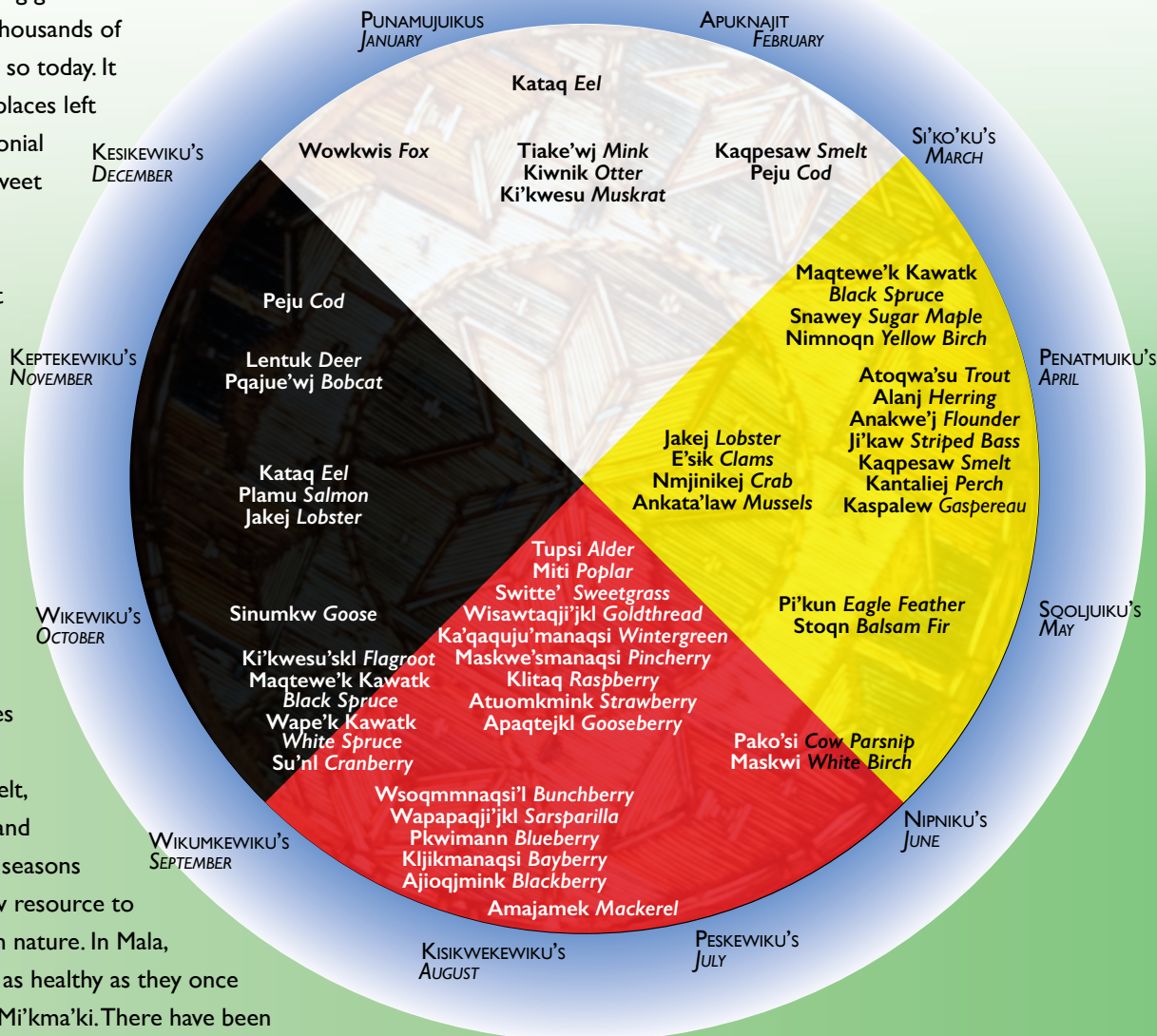
***Eltuekl stoqne’l kna’taqne’l,
ketankitjik mn’tmu’k,
loqte’knika’tiek kisna
pa’skite’ka’tiek...Mala
ala’toq msit koqoey...we’kaw
skite’kmujk. Katu piluey
a’tukwaqney nekmowey...”***

*“We made wreaths, raked oysters, did
some trapping, made baskets...“Mala
has everything...even ghosts. But that’s
another story...”*

Resources At Malikewe'j

Malikewe'j has been a communal hunting, fishing, and gathering ground for our people for many thousands of years and remains so today. It is one of the few places left where our ceremonial plant, switte' or sweet grass, thrives, as do many of our medicinal plants. It is also one of the few places where oysters live and reproduce prolifically and predictably year after year. Its warm, protected waters act as a nursery for many other species including mussels, eels, mackerel, smelt, herring, flounder, and cod. The changing seasons always bring a new resource to harvest; a gift from nature. In Mala, the resources are as healthy as they once were throughout Mi'kma'ki. There have been some changes to population numbers and to species in the area but, overall, Malikewe'j animal and plant populations are healthy and continue to support resource harvesting.

Follow the calendar's months to see when plants and animals are harvested at Malikewe'j.



Charles Blaise Young

“Ta’n teli kesatm niknen, na teli kesatm Mala.

Amskwes elieyanek mu tetuji-ksatmuap, nutqweyap aqq awnasqamiksiap. Kesatmap eliey naji-mila’tiskey katu mu nike’. Kepmite’tm nike’. Mawi ksatm poqtisukwi walipot-iktuk aqq naji-kwitamey. Mala me’ ne’kaw sankewe’k. Kesatm eym tett. Kisi-atlasmi aqq sankeweyi.

“Mala is a home away from home. When I first went, I wasn’t really into the place—I was young and reckless. I liked being there, but for parties, but now, it’s different. I have a deep respect for it now. I love to go out in a boat and go fishing. Mala still has that quiet feeling. I love being here.

“Mala ekina’maqapnik nijink aqq nuji’jk teli-ktantekemk, tel-kwitamemk aqq tel-waqma’tu’n koqoey ne’patu’n. L’pa mu koqoey naji-klu’ktnuk aqq ankamj kuji’jk ketana’tijik kaqpesaq aqq esma’tijik kitpu’k. L’pa wsiskuaq nemitu’n ta’n tetuji-wulqatmu’tijik...Mala eymu’tiek.

“I taught my kids and grandkids hunting and cleaning and fishing techniques in Mala. There’s nothing like watching your grandkids catching smelts and feeding them to the eagles. The look on their faces...Mala gives that gift to us.

“Kesatm eym Mala aqq elp kesalkik wskwijinu’k wikultijik Mala. Msit wen welta’sit wjit ta’n koqoey mesnk. Weleyatultimk aqq menaqajewo’ltimk Mala. Pejita’jik wenik mita wel-sankewe’k eymumk Malikewe’jk. Weleyatultijik wenik aqq welo’tmi’tij maqamikew, staqa nuta’q tlo’ltinenu.

“I love the place, but I also love the people in Mala. People are really grateful for what they have. There is a neighbourly love and kinship. People are there for peace and quiet. People are respectful of one another and of the land, the way it should be.

“Mu kelu’ktnuk ewlo’tmumk maqamikew aqq ta’n koqoey wejiaq maqamikew-iktuk. L’pa tela’sik msit tami, katu pewatm Malikewe’j menaqewo’tasiktn. Nemitumk koqoey pilua’sik. Nuta’q ula maqamikew aqq ta’n koqoey wejiaq maqamikew-iktuk menaqajewo’tasiktn.

“The abuse of land and species is a terrible thing. It’s all around us, but I want to see Mala being protected. We’re seeing many changes that are not always obvious. We need to make sure the area is maintained and that the resources are healthy.”



Protecting Mala

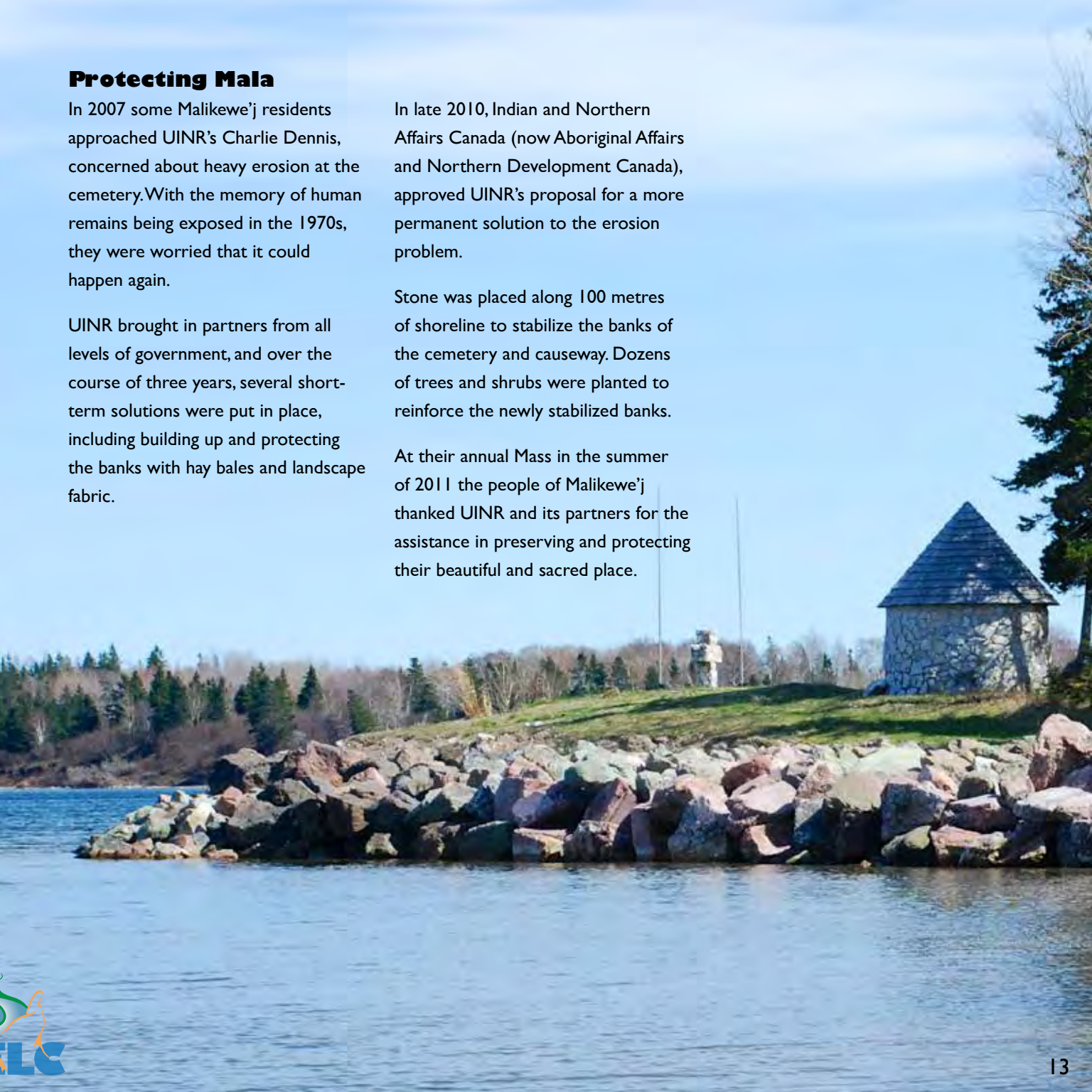
In 2007 some Malikewe'j residents approached UINR's Charlie Dennis, concerned about heavy erosion at the cemetery. With the memory of human remains being exposed in the 1970s, they were worried that it could happen again.

UINR brought in partners from all levels of government, and over the course of three years, several short-term solutions were put in place, including building up and protecting the banks with hay bales and landscape fabric.

In late 2010, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (now Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada), approved UINR's proposal for a more permanent solution to the erosion problem.

Stone was placed along 100 metres of shoreline to stabilize the banks of the cemetery and causeway. Dozens of trees and shrubs were planted to reinforce the newly stabilized banks.

At their annual Mass in the summer of 2011 the people of Malikewe'j thanked UINR and its partners for the assistance in preserving and protecting their beautiful and sacred place.



Snapshots From Mala



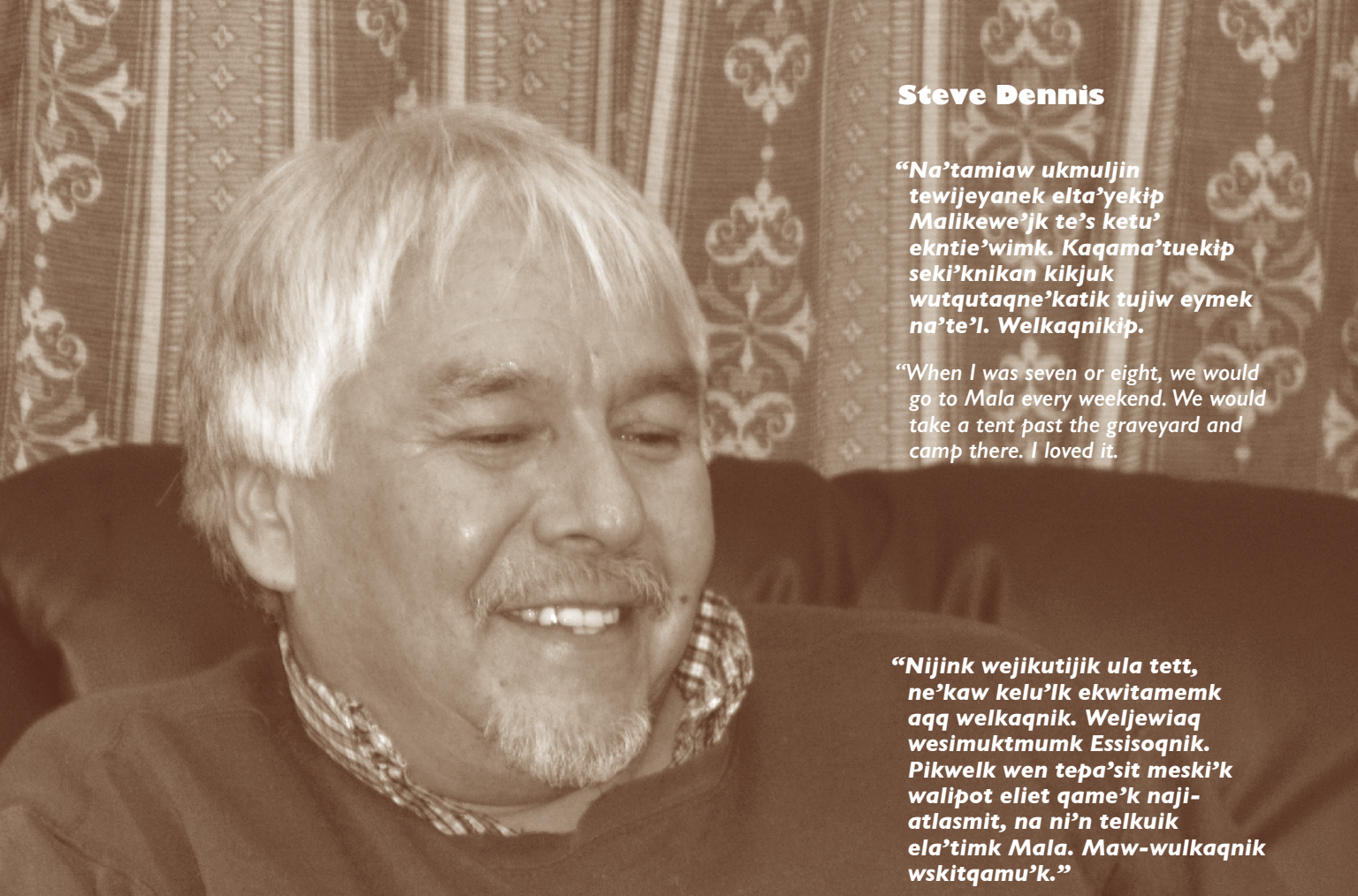
Masel.





1957

1961



Steve Dennis

**“Na’tamiaw ukmuljin
tewijeyanek elta’yekip
Malikewe’jk te’s ketu’
ekntie’wimk. Kaqama’tuekip
seki’knikan kikjuk
wutqutaqne’katik tujiw eymek
na’tel. Welkaqnikip.**

**“When I was seven or eight, we would
go to Mala every weekend. We would
take a tent past the graveyard and
camp there. I loved it.**

**“Nijink wejikutijik ula tett,
ne’kaw kelu’lk ekwitamemk
aqq welkaqnik. Weljewiaq
wesimuktmumk Essisoqnik.
Pikwelk wen tepa’sit meski’k
walipot eliet qame’k naji-
atlasmit, na ni’n telkuik
ela’timk Mala. Maw-wulkaqnik
wskitqamu’k.”**

**“Kisikweyanek aqq ki’s-malie’wianek apaja’siap aqq eyumu’tiekip
wenji’kuo’mji’j \$40 teltelmap. Na nutmay ula wenji’kuo’mji’j mu
alsutmuksip ta’n wen netui’skmip. Apaji-msnmanek nsulieweym,
elieyap kisikui’skw ta’n ketloqo alsutk aqq wetnu’kwalsiap
pkwatelmn. Katu kisikui’skw mu wesua’tukip nsulieweym, telimip
elui’tmasin mu tmta’n miti kaqamit kwijmuk wenji’kuo’mji’jk.**

**“Later, when I got married, I moved back and stayed in an old cabin that was
sold to me for \$40. Turned out that the cabin wasn’t for sale. After I got my
money back, I tried to pay it to the old woman who apparently owned the
cabin. She told me she didn’t want the money but asked me to promise I
wouldn’t cut the tree outside the cabin.**

**“My kids grew up here, the fishing
was always good, and it was a great
getaway from the reserve. Lots of
people get on those big cruise ships
to take them to the other side of the
world. Mala feels like that to me. It’s
a perfect getaway.”**



Harvesting has always been an important part of Mi'kmaq culture and netukulimk remains at the heart of Malikewe'j. We have been taught how a single animal can provide a wealth of resources (including shelter, clothing, tools, crafts, medicines, and food) and we have an inherent right to access and use resources in a sustainable way.

Netukulimk

The concept and tradition of netukulimk (ned-oo-gu-limnk) is the central philosophy of traditional Mi'kmaq management. It is a philosophy of care and respect for the land. Resource management that aligns with netukulimk honours the integrity, diversity, and productivity of our environment, both for present and future generations.

Netukulimk is a culturally-rooted concept of responsible co-existence and interdependence with Earth's resources and each other. It is best described as the use of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for the self-support and sustainability of the individual and the community at large. Netukulimk is about achieving adequate standards of community nutrition and economic well-being without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity, or productivity of the environment.

Mi'kmaq culture is based on long-term vision being mindful that decisions made today should have a positive effect on the next seven generations. Conservation and management of resources has been, and continues to be, an important part of our culture. The concept of netukulimk is still very much alive at Malikewe'j.

The practice of netukulimk was a collective responsibility and the Grand Council played a role in overseeing the long-term balance of ecosystems and Mi'kmaq culture.

Tom Sylliboy

“Na’tamiaw 1970-ek mawi-amskwes wejeyap Mala, ukmuljin tewijeyap aqq elwiwe’wkip nklamuksis Tana’s. Ela’timk Mala teli-ksua’tuap staqa amaltia’kwemk, mu kaqi’sk elta’wekip, katu ta’n tujiw elta’yek naji-tko’tmekip alame’s aqq kisikweyanek kis-kina’masiap ta’n tetuji kepme’k ula maqamikew wjit Sante’ Mawio’mi aqq poqji keknuite’tmap.

“The first time I remember going to Mala was around 1970 when I was seven or eight years old with my Uncle Tanas. Going to Mala was like a picnic—we didn’t go very often, but we went to attend mass and as I grew older, I learned the significance of the Grand Council meeting site and the place became even more important

“Wjit Sante’ Mawio’mi, Mala etl-mawita’snik aqq mawaknutma’tisnik. Wesku’tasiksip ta’n tett tli-ktanteketen aqq ta’n tujiw aqq ta’n te’sik wen kisi-wsua’tew kulaman ma’ ktmaqsita’sinuk tami. Pilua’sik nike’ koqoey wjit Sante’ Mawio’mi, kiskuk nikana’tu’tij alasutmaqney katu ne’kaw ekina’mua’tijik knijannaq ta’n tetuji kepme’k Mala.

“Grand Council...Mala was considered a gathering place for them and they would sit together to discuss where, when, what, and how much to harvest to make sure they will be sustainable. The role has changed quite a bit and now the Grand Council plays more of a spiritual role. They still pass on the importance of Mala to younger generations.

“Msit koqoey tel-lukutiek Sante’ Mawio’mi na wjit kikmanaq.”

“Everything we do with Grand Council is for our people”

Traditional Role Of Grand Council

Grand Council (also known as Santé Mawiómi) is the traditional, senior level of Mi'kmaq government. Grand Council titles are hereditary and usually passed down to the Grand Chief's eldest son. Composed of representatives from the seven district councils of Mi'kmaqui, district chiefs, called captains or Keptinaq, traditionally made decisions that influenced land allocations and the resources throughout Mi'kmaqui. Present-day Grand Council continues to play a role that oversees the Mi'kmaq, however, its role has shifted from a political role to religious guidance.

People traditionally lived all over Mi'kmaqui and moved their homes and small communities when they felt they could better access resources in other areas. According to Grand Captain Alex Denny, the Grand Council gathered annually to discuss any important issues. The Grand Council determined who should live where in each region which then determined the health of the surrounding ecosystems. This ensured that while people needed to harvest resources for their families' well-being, no one place would be overharvested.

"From the time of the coming of the white man—from around 1610...the role of the Grand Council has changed. See, the role of the Grand Council was political. The Grand Council was in charge of land, allocating territorial rights to different "clans"... Each clan would live in different areas. They had 7 districts. Each clan had their own chief... The Grand Council was in charge of different clan chiefs. Once a year they would meet... prior to Chapel Island they used to meet at Malikewe'j—each tribal head would come down and tell them, you know,

"Well, we didn't have a good year this year, in the salmon, the moose. The caribou were not that plentiful in our area. I'm wondering if we can move somewhere else." The Grand Council was in charge of allocating different territories and knowing where the people were, because of their constant fights with the Mohawks and other nations throughout Canada and eastern United States.

"When the white man arrived, they found this Grand Council impregnable. After the missionaries had penetrated...they started changing the role of the Grand Council from it being a political thing into it being religious. Membertou was the Grand Chief.

"The thing that really broke the Grand Council was the establishment of the so-called Indian Act chief and councils. They began to rule. Everything the Grand Council said, the Government of Canada ignored."

Although their role has shifted, the Grand Council is still very much respected. They are still seen as guides for the Mi'kmaq Nation, ensuring long-term sustainability for the place and for Mi'kmaq culture.

—Grand Captain Alex Denny, Cape Breton's Magazine.



Joe Googoo

“Na’tamiaw 1961ek kisna 1962ek amskwes elieyap Mala. Wjit ni’n Mala na ta’n tett etli-pkwatekeyap. Mima’juaqnm weja’tuap na’tē’l. Esnoqneyap, ekwitameyap wjit peju’k, mn’tmue’keyap aqq me’ koqoey piluey pkwateken. Tlia’j puni-pkwatekeyanek me’ i’-lieyap. Pikwelk etek na’tē’l welapesimk.

“The first time I went to Mala was around 1961 or 62. For me, Mala was always a place of livelihood. I made my living there. I was a lumberjack, then a cod fisherman, an oyster fisherman, and so on. Even when the livelihood died down, I kept going there. There was still lots offered to me.

“Te’s eliey Mala nkutey nike’ naji-atlasmimk. Atlasmimk wjit L’nu’k. Mu wen kisna mu koqoey lukwaqna’luluk tett. Kisi-pkwatuan me’ lietes Mala pesqunatek te’siska’q tewijeyan. Ni’n aqq Judy.

“Every time I come here, it’s like I’m on vacation. Vacationland for Natives. Nothing bothers you here at all. I’ll always come back here, even if I’m 90 years old, I’ll be here if I can. With Judy.

“Teli-pkitawsiek ne’kaw loqte’knikeyek, ketantekeyek aqq ekwitameyek. Paqsipkwi-ksatmek tett.”

“For our whole lives, we always trapped everything, hunted, fished. We love it here.”







Andrew Johnson

***“Nike’ eliey Mala mita
wantaqtek, aq kaqi’sk
mikwite’tis tan tel
welkaqniskipnek. Aq jiptuk
paqa’staqtestike’tis...”***

***“When I come to Mala now, it’s
for the memories and the peace
and quiet. And I might throw in
a line...”***

***“Ne’kaw keknuite’tm Mala. Telo’tm nkutey nmitki. Elukewkip
Charlie Francis 1960’sek etl-esnoqna’tiekip tett. Na’sik ta’n koqoey
maw-wl-mikwite’tm na eymap Mala 1980’sek. Newtiskekipunqek
eymap, newtuka’lukey, loqte’knikey aqq ketantekey kesik.
Kesatmap wikianek tett aqq kesatmap amal-aknutmaq wenik ta’n
ketu’ jiksituujuk. Pikwelkl a’tukwaqnn kisaknutmuk wjit Mala.”***

***“Mala has always been important to me. It always felt like home. I spent all of
my time there in the 60s cutting pulpwood with Charlie Francis, but what I
especially remember about Mala was the time I spent there in the 80s. I spent
most of the decade there, on my own, my winters spent trapping and hunting.
I loved being there and loved telling good stories to anyone who would listen.
There are so many stories about Mala to tell.”***

Concerns

There have been several concerns about Malikewe'j brought forward by residents and concerned Mi'kmaq. Erosion, natural resources, and cemetery maintenance have been on the top of residents' lists.

Erosion

The soils of Cape Breton, and Malikewe'j in particular, are susceptible to erosion. This characteristic, combined with prevailing southerly winds, make Mala susceptible to greater occurrences of natural erosion. By developing land too close to the Bras d'Or Lakes, as in the case of many of the cabins in Mala, erosion speeds up.

UINR addressed the need to control erosion and mitigate further erosion by planting native species of trees and plants along the ridge by the cemetery. This has strengthened the banks and will help mitigate further damage. UINR continues to monitor the area to ensure erosion is under control, as much as possible.

Another way it addressed erosion is by developing Best Management Practices with the Union of Nova Scotia Indians to inform Mala residents on ways to treat and mitigate further erosion.

Natural Resources

Fish and Wildlife

While most people agree that fisheries and wildlife resources have not been overexploited in Malikewe'j, there have been some changes to the populations in the area. For example, there are fewer cod because of the general decline of the species' populations and, because of this decline, habitat is available for striped bass, whose population has grown in the past decade. Some species, like eel and oysters, are still in the region, but in different sites and in smaller pockets.

There was a lucrative cod fishery in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, and a significant eel and oyster fishery, but today, there are no commercial fishery initiatives. People fish in the Bras d'Or Lakes around Malikewe'j, but it's a recreational fishery these days.



Logging

There was a concern brought forward in the 1970s that there were no limits on cutting pulp wood. There was an agreement to limit cutting and now there is no commercial cutting in the reserve. People just cut small amounts for their needs.

Mining

In 2008, there was seismic testing in the area. Large deposits of potash were discovered and there was potential for a mining operation. Elders and residents voted this idea down, claiming that the impacts of mining could be devastating to Malikewej'. There is currently no mining exploration.



Traditional Medicines

Residents are quite confident that traditional, medicinal species' populations are healthy. The numbers and the size of the patches are the same as historically and, with appropriate harvesting techniques, will continue in the future.

There was concern expressed that people may not know the proper way to collect medicines. They were happy that people have an interest in traditional medicines but they want to make sure that everyone knows how to harvest species sustainably.

Cemetery

The cemetery was established in the 1725 when the original church was built, however, the area is considered a traditional burial ground and there are likely more people buried there than gravestones suggest. In the 1980s, concern was expressed that the grounds were eroding and human remains were being washed away.





Another concern is that people buried here are not properly recognized. A cross, altar, and monument were erected in 1985 to recognize the historical significance of people buried at Mala, and there will be a new monument erected in 2014 to represent the significance of these people and our relationship with Mala itself.



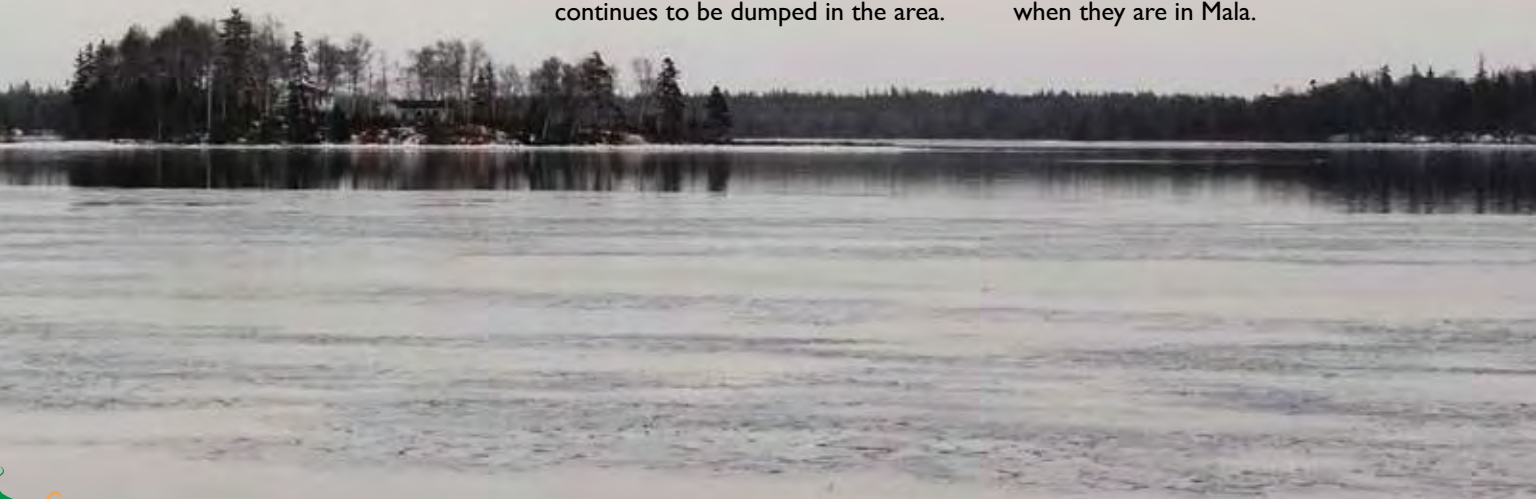
Garbage and Recycling

There have been many complaints about garbage dumped in and around Mala. For many years this went on without any waste management. UINR's response was to inform residents on proper disposal of recyclables, compostables, and garbage. UINR also coordinates an annual Mala CleanUp to clear out garbage that continues to be dumped in the area.



Water Quality

While there is an abundance of natural resources in Mala, the one resource it lacks is fresh drinking water. Due to its placement in the Bras d'Or Lakes and its soil type, wells dug and drilled there tend to bring up brackish water. This issue is not one that will have a simple solution and, for now, residents will have to bring in their drinking water when they are in Mala.



Mi'kmaq Efforts To Regain Role As Caretakers

In 2010-11, residents and others concerned for the well-being of Malikewe'j came together to develop solutions to issues that are facing their community.

In collaboration with Mi'kmaq communities and the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, UINR developed Best Management Practices, or BMPs, as guidelines to reduce impacts to the environment at Mala. The BMPs are voluntary and do not infringe Mi'kmaq Rights and Title.

Some of the main topics covered under the BMPs offer suggestions on how to manage:

- Sacred Environments
- Lot Size and Placement
- Clearing of Land
- Erosion Prevention
- Wells
- Well Maintenance
- Outhouses and Septic Systems
- Cabin Construction
- Heating
- Waste Management
- Hunting, Fishing, Trapping Suggestions
- Gathering.

Because of the attentiveness of people who care about Malikewe'j, issues continue to be brought forward. People are taking responsibility for Mala as they have in the past, and those who oversee natural resource management, both Grand Council and UINR, are paying attention. We all want to see Mala remain a healthy community. By following Best Management Practices and observing values of netukulimk, Mala will remain the important hunting, fishing, and gathering place that it has always been and will continue to hold a special place in our hearts, and the hearts of future generations.



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The goals of MELC are to collect and preserve traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge on environmental sustainability, create and deliver educational programs to promote and share Mi'kmaq traditional knowledge, and partner with other groups sharing the desire to promote environmental sustainability for the benefit of future generations.

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