

Peju COD in the Bras d'Or Lakes



In 2012 UINR held workshops in Membertou to collect Mi'kmaq ecological knowledge on Peju, Atlantic Cod. Participants included a balance of Elders, current harvesters, and Mi'kmaq fishery guardians.



Some things learned were:

- Cod is one of the species that is found throughout the Bras d'Or Lakes in all seasons, but is primarily harvested in the fall and winter seasons because flesh is firm and they have fewer parasites.
- During the spring and fall, cod moves closer to shore and is harvested using bait.
- In the winter cod is jigged through the ice.
- A cue that signals the time to harvest cod is when leaves begin to change colour in the fall.
- Presence of smelt, herring, and capelin signal cod harvesting is approaching.
- Cod is more abundant and easier to catch at dusk than during the day.
- During rainy months cod move to deeper and cooler waters in Bras d'Or Lakes.
- Examples of food found in stomachs of cod are sticklebacks, mummichog (minnows), mackerel, smelt, gaspereau, silversides, green crab, trout, small eels, and mussels.
- Cod eat eggs, larvae, and juveniles of many other fish species.
- Predators of cod are eagles, seals, and porpoises.
- Cod is used in stews and soups, and added to other dishes to increase protein.
- Cod is also baked, boiled, and used in chowders and fish cakes.
- Cod tails are used as lobster bait.
- Historically cod was harvested en route to St. Anne's Mission in Potlotek and traded for potatoes, produce, meat, and other necessities.
- Traditionally cod under 24 inches (61 cm) was returned to the water.
- Cod population in the Bras d'Or Lakes has drastically declined.
- Increase in seals is believed to have contributed to decrease of cod in Bras d'Or Lakes.



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