

Consultation Newsletter Wolastoqey Nation

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Issue 8



WNNB Office

The Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick (WNNB) provides technical advice to Wolastoqey leadership and Resource Development Consultation Coordinators (RDCC's) in resource development consultation matters that relate to the implementation and exercise of Wolastoqey constitutionally protected rights. WNNB also acts to protect and promote traditional lands, ceremony, cultural practices, and language. WNNB consists of:

- Consultation Director: Shyla O'Donnell (Shyla.Odonnell@wtci-nb.ca)
- Administrative Assistant: Brett Collins (admin@wtci-nb.ca)
- Ethnohistorian: Dr. Jason Hall (Jason.Hall@wtci-nb.ca)
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- Forestry Advisor: Angie Paul (Angie.Paul@wtci-nb.ca)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Coordinator: Deana Sappier (Deana.Sappier@wtci-nb.ca)
- HR/Finance: Sandra Polchies (Sandra.Polchies@wtci-nb.ca)
- Fisheries Biologist: Dr. Colin Curry (Colin.Curry@wtci-nb.ca)
- Atlantic Link Liaison: Stone Bear (Stone.Bear@wtci-nb.ca)

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WNNB is currently in the process of hiring an archaeologist and has a job competition for a Marine Scientist/Ecologist. Please visit our website for more details at:

www.wolastoqey.ca

Things We Do

The WNNB staff is always working hard to serve our member community's best interests.

Some of the project we are working on include:



Forestry



Strategic Rights Plan



Fisheries



Climate Change



Environmental Reviews



Traditional Land Use Studies

Wolastoqey Makwahahtin (A Maliseet Special Gathering)

On February 27, 2018, WNNB and the Wolastoqey Tribal Council Inc. (WTCI) hosted the first Wolastoqey Makwahahtin. The event included:

- Keynote speaker Waneek Horn Miller who discussed overcoming trauma experienced during the Oka Crisis to make it to the Olympic water polo team.
- Indigenous Services Canada Regional Director General Chris McDonell, who reiterated Canada's commitment to improving relationships with First Nations
- The importance of reviving Wolastoqey language by Imelda Perley and Andrea Bear Nicholas
- A Chief's Panel to answer community questions
- Introductions to the organizations and its employees, and
- Facilitated sessions: (1) Community Engagement (2) WTCI services – what do you want to see?



What we heard:

Although the report is just underway, some of the messages that we heard yesterday include:

- More presence/involvement in the communities
- An email registry should be set up to receive information regularly
- A variety of engagement options: door to door, meetings, social media, elders and youth involvement
- Enhanced website / phone apps

Throughout the coming year, we will be working on the recommendations from our members. Woliwon/Wəliwən for your advice!

In addition to the participants and presenters, we would also like to thank the facilitator Darrah (Pine) Beaver for her work, as well as the drummers and youth dancers who keep our culture strong.

WNNB / WTCI

What's the Difference?

We are often asked - what is the difference between WNNB and WTCI? It can be confusing because we share the same office, the same director, some core staff (e.g., finance) and the same email domain. However, the mandates of the organizations are quite different.

WNNB provides technical advice in consultation matters that relate to the implementation and exercise of our constitutionally protected rights. Therefore, we look at those issues that may affect land and natural resources, archaeology and commercial interests relating to resources, such as forestry and commercial fisheries.

The board of directors includes the Chiefs of Madawaska, Tobique, Kingsclear, St. Mary's and Oromocto.

WTCI's role is to provide capacity building opportunities for its member communities. They do this by providing program and service delivery in support of each communities' representative voice, while respecting their unique needs. This includes the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) program, which links training to labour market demand to ensure that our communities can fully participate in economic opportunities.

The board of directors includes the Chiefs of Madawaska, Kingsclear, St. Mary's and Oromocto.

National Engagement on the Recognition of Indigenous Rights

The Government of Canada has committed to review its laws, policies and operational practices to ensure that constitutional commitments made to Indigenous peoples are respected.

An engagement process includes:

- Accelerating progress toward self-determination, with a focus on nation and government rebuilding and rights recognition
- Legislation to anchor Canada's relationship with First Nations in rights recognition and develop tools for the recognition of Indigenous governments
- Elements of new policy, based on the distinct needs of First Nations to replace the current Comprehensive Land Claims and Inherent Right to Self-Government policies
- Creating two new departments that can better serve the distinct needs of First Nations

In the *Engagement Towards A Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework*, there are 22 questions on ways to support Indigenous peoples, e.g.:

- How can the Government of Canada improve the implementation of historic treaties and resolve historical grievances?
- How would you define the role of Provinces and Territories have in recognizing and implementing the inherent and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples?
- Who should determine who is an Indigenous nation and who is not?

The complete list of questions can be found at:

<http://www.metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Engagement-Discussion-Guide-draft-eng.pdf>

Members can directly respond to the questions through the website link, or they can send their answers to our staff to compile at: admin@wtci-nb.ca

Where to report deformed/diseased wildlife

Are you a hunter/gatherer or a member that has come across deformed or diseased wildlife? Did you know that you can report your find to the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative?

Their regional staff can advise you on the next steps or discuss options for carcass submission. The carcass allows them to investigate the cause of death, screen for diseases and parasites and gather information.

The Atlantic region head office is located in PEI at the Atlantic Veterinary College and can be contacted by phone at 902-628-4317 or email: atlantic@cwhc-rscf.ca

For more information, please visit their website at:

http://www.cwhc-rscf.ca/report_submit.php

Community Update

There was a community meeting held with regards to the Mactaquac Fish Passage. The first engagement was held at Kingsclear in February 7, 2018. The following topics were addressed;

- Review of Wolastoquey input thus far
- Current recommendations and gather additional feedback
- Process and steps to follow

This was then followed by a focused workshop at the WNNB Annual General Assembly. Once a final proposal on species for passage has been developed, it will be provided to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) for further comment, because increasing the number of species passed at Mactaquac will require changes in how DFO operates passage structures such as the fish lift and trucking operations.

For further information about the process, or to provide feedback on our work to date, please contact WNNB's Fisheries Biologist, Dr. Colin Curry, colin.curry@wtci-nb.ca.

SARA - Short-nose Sturgeon – *Acipenser brevirostrum* – SARA status, schedule 1 – special concern

Basic Description

The Short-nose sturgeon reaches little more than 1 meter long and is armored with 5 rows of bony scutes (plates). It has thick leathery skin that is olive green to brown with a white belly. It also has a set of four barbells on the underside of its head above its mouth for identifying food. However, the Short-nose Sturgeon is often misidentified as a juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon, as they share many of these characteristics along with their local distribution. However, there are tell-tale differences such as length at maturity, mouth width, and nose length and taper.



Pictured above to the left a mature Atlantic Sturgeon in profile, and pictured right a mature Short-nose Sturgeon in profile. Notice the differences in length and taper of nose (Pictures courtesy of Austin Paul).

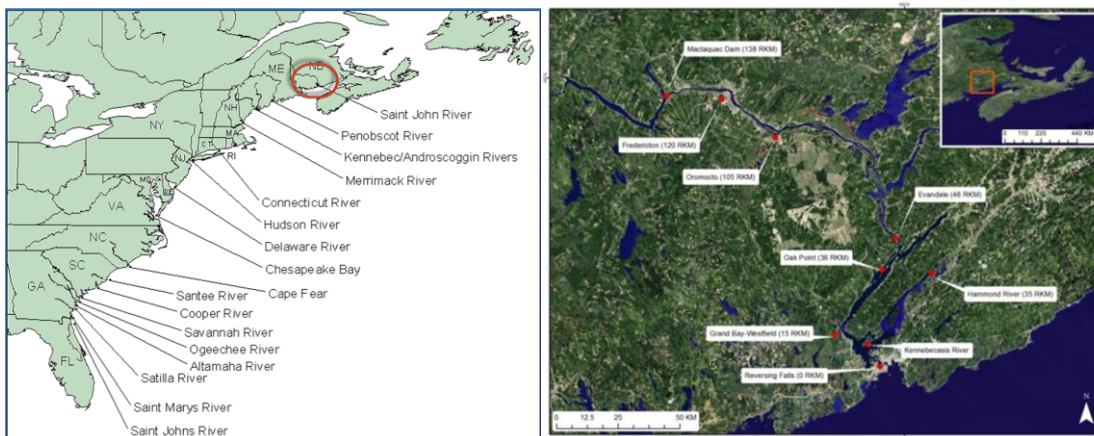


Pictured above to the left mature Atlantic Sturgeons, and pictured to the right a mature Short-nose Sturgeon. In these photos you can notice the difference in length of the adult Sturgeons with Atlantic reaching lengths of up to 4m plus (12 feet long). The Short-nose Sturgeon reaches an approximate maximum adult length of 1.25m (3-4 feet). Also you can see the short-nose and wide mouth characteristic of the Short-nose Sturgeon on the right. Photos courtesy of Austin Paul and Allan Francis.

Habitat and Behavior

They are bottom feeders that enjoy small crustaceans, insect larvae and in particular soft shelled clams. It lives in excess of 60 years. Often people refer to them as dinosaurs, this is because they are from a family line dating over 100 million years old, and are quite literally prehistoric. They are known as tough fish with stories of survival on shore for periods of days, as well as surviving for days after being gutted.

Adult females outnumber males by approximately double. Sexual maturity in our river is estimated at 18 years of age for females and 12 for males, with females spawning once every 3 years. For populations further south maturity is reached at a younger age. Spawning Shortnose Sturgeon can produce anywhere from 27,000 – 208,000 eggs with the larger numbers coming from the larger older females. When laying eggs they sink and stick to rocks and gravel. They hatch into larvae where they are carried by the currents downstream for 9-12 days, at which point they become juveniles capable of swimming and hunting on their own.



Pictured above to the left is the North American distribution of Short-nose Sturgeon with natal rivers listed. On the right is the Canadian distribution of Short-nose Sturgeon, the lower Saint John River (both photos taken from the DFO Short-nose Sturgeon management plan document). The lower Wolastoq River (Saint John River) is the only known habitat for Short-nose Sturgeon in Canada. While Short-nose Sturgeons are known to have limited migrations into the marine environment, populations tend to remain distinct and limited to their natal rivers. It has two known critical habitat areas within the Wolastoq; the adults over-winter near the Kennebecasis River, and travel up river around mid to late May near the Mactaquac dam to breed. According to the Management Plan document, population estimates haven't occurred since the 70's, but there has likely been no appreciable decline in the last 25 years.

Threats

No significant immediate threats to the Short-nose Sturgeon, however there are a number of potential threats that warrant further investigation. Some potential threats are:

- The Mactaquac Dam – built in 1967, at which point limited potential habitat of Short-nose sturgeon. Historically sturgeons were well known to occur above the dam before it was built. Some flow regimes created by the dam also thought to be associated with mortality at the larval life-stage of the Shortnose Sturgeon.
- Current and potential land use – industry, urban development (Fredericton, Saint John among others), military (CFB Gagetown) and agriculture can all lead to varying levels of pollution and eutrophication (nutrient loading which can cause low dissolved oxygen levels) due to their effluents (discharges) into the river system.
- Pollution – because of their long lives and bottom feeding habits many contaminants bioaccumulate. Ex. Mercury, DDTs, PCBs, and PAHs
- Commercial by-catch – some mortality associated with commercial by-catch of Atlantic Sturgeon and others with gaspereau who share a common spawning run time.
- Invasive Species – Muskellunge “Muskie” are voracious predators, and while adults are large and robust, juvenile sturgeons may fall prey to this introduced species

What's being done?

Listed within the Management Plan (written in 2016) are 3 broad strategies:

- 1) Research, Monitoring and Assessment - This is by far the most important as information gaps abound concerning the Sturgeon. Questions concerning population numbers, where other critical habitat are, population extent in tributaries, effects of eutrophication, effects of gillnet capture, effects of the dam on flow regimes, etc. are all unknowns. With the recent Mactaquac Aquatic Ecosystem Study (MAES) awaiting finalization (because of the Mactaquac Dam decision) hopefully some of these answers will be had, although further research will undoubtedly be needed.
- 2) Protection and Management - While it is on schedule 1 of SARA, because of its designation of “special concern” it doesn’t receive the individual protections of fish like salmon. However, in 1978 a size limit of minimum 120cm for retention of sturgeon (both Atlantic and Short-nose), effectively removed it from commercial and food fisheries. There are 2 “food, social and ceremonial” (FSC) licenses for Sturgeon (Atlantic and Short-nose) held by Wolastoqiyik organizations along the river. Further provincial and federal regulations limit habitat degradation by setting a standard for effluents and water quality.
- 3) Stewardship, Outreach and Communication – Several pamphlets and posters are made available by Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR ex. what this is), and through Habitat Stewardship Programs (HSP) which are both federally funded programs. Additionally many federal, provincial and educational institutions are constantly putting out information.

****What we can do –** As individuals we can practice best water quality standards, monitor individual catches, by-catch numbers and locations, also catch and harvest “Muskie”. As communities we can look to initiatives that push for better wastewater systems to limit effluent, and monitor water quality standards. As a Wolastoqey nation we can pressure stronger effluent standards for industry and government. Also as a nation we can attempt to secure government funding such as Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR), Environmental Trust Fund (ETF), and Indigenous Community-Based Climate Monitoring Program to ensure greater Wolastoqey wide involvement in monitoring, education and planning.

Cultural and Ecological Importance

There are 2 food, social and ceremonial (FSC) licenses for Sturgeon on the Wolastoq river, however, they set limits to gear type, fishing method, seasons fished, and daily bag allowances which make our annual retention levels relatively low. Historically we harvested Sturgeon for meat, oil, roe (eggs) and leather. Their eggs (roe) are currently considered a delicacy known as caviar.

Because of their bottom feeding nature and their long lives they act as a good indicator of water quality and health (be it good or bad). This is due to bioaccumulation associated with heavy metals, chemicals, other pollutants and contaminants in sediments and other bottom dwelling species.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter and would like more information, please contact your community RDCC.

- Madawaska – Russ Letica (506-735-1744) email: leticaruss@yahoo.com
- Tobique – Jamie Gorman (506-273-5544) email: matewas@gmail.com
- Woodstock – Amanda McIntosh (506-325-3570) email: amanda3mcintosh@gmail.com
- Kingsclear – Natasha Sacobie (506-363-3028 ext. 143) email: natashasacobie@kingsclear.ca
- St. Mary's – Timothy Plant (506-459-2200 ext. 126) email: timothyplant@smfn.ca
- Oromocto – Fred Sabattis (506-478-4929) email: tamagun@rogers.com
- Oromocto (Assistant RDCC) email: zcroftonmacdonald@gmail.com