

**The
Oyster
Garden
Kiju' Tells
Her Story**



The Oyster Garden

Kiju' Tells Her Story

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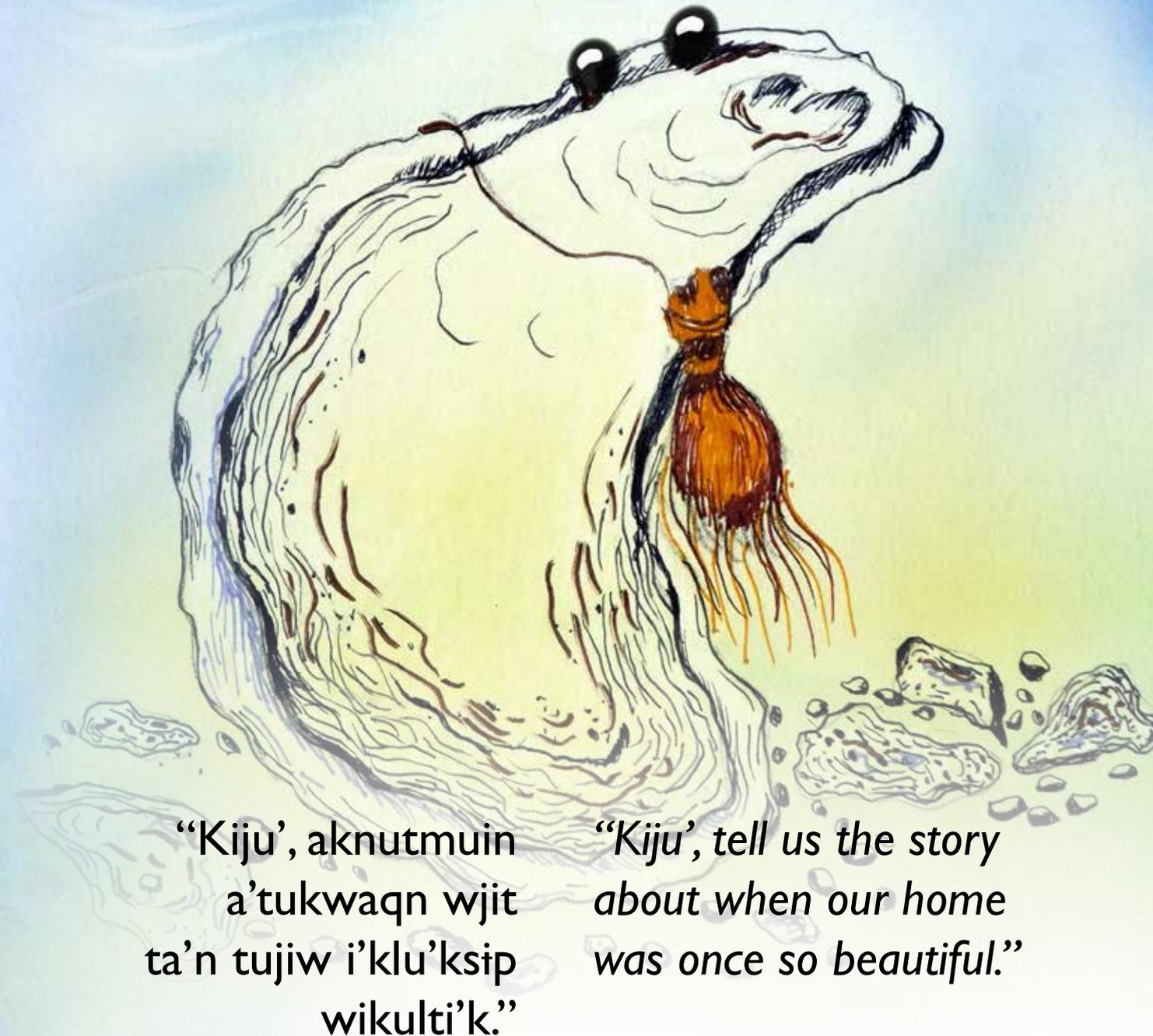
Published by Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources

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Ula wi'katikn mikwite'Imknt
Charlie Joe Dennis,
nitapinaq, nuji-kina'muetaq
tel-maliaptmumk Pitu'paq

*In Loving Memory of
Charlie Joe Dennis,
Friend, Mentor, and
Caretaker of the Bras d'Or Lakes*



“Kiju’, aknutmuin
a’tukwaqn wjit
ta’n tujiw i’klu’ksip
wikulti’k.”

“Kiju’, tell us the story
about when our home
was once so beautiful.”

Ki's sa'q na, natamiaw
newiskekipunqekl ki's pemiaql,
keskmna'q kaqikwewanek aqq
mn'tmue'ka'tijik poqji-tlui'tuitikek
mawi-msikilte'w!

Nkutey kilew, atel
weskwijinuianek telkilap nkutey
newte'jk atuomk.

Ali'kweyap mi'soqo we'jitanek
ta'n weltek wikin.

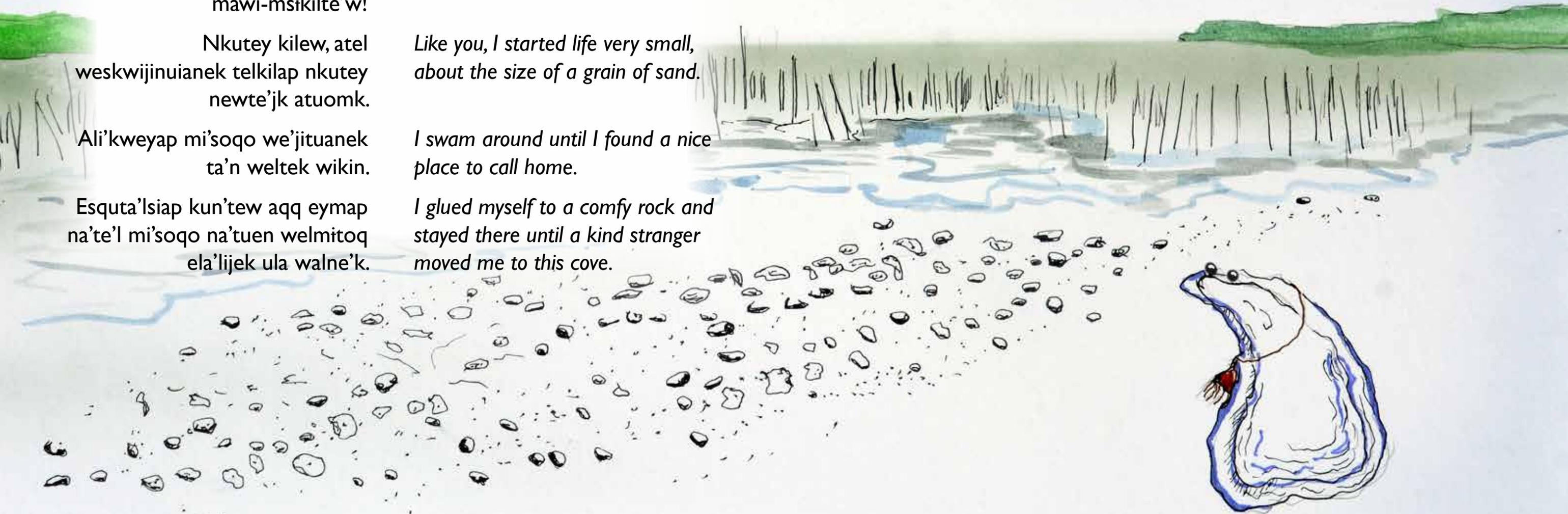
Esquta'lsiap kun'tew aqq eymap
na'te'l mi'soqo na'tuen welmitoq
ela'lijek ula walne'k.

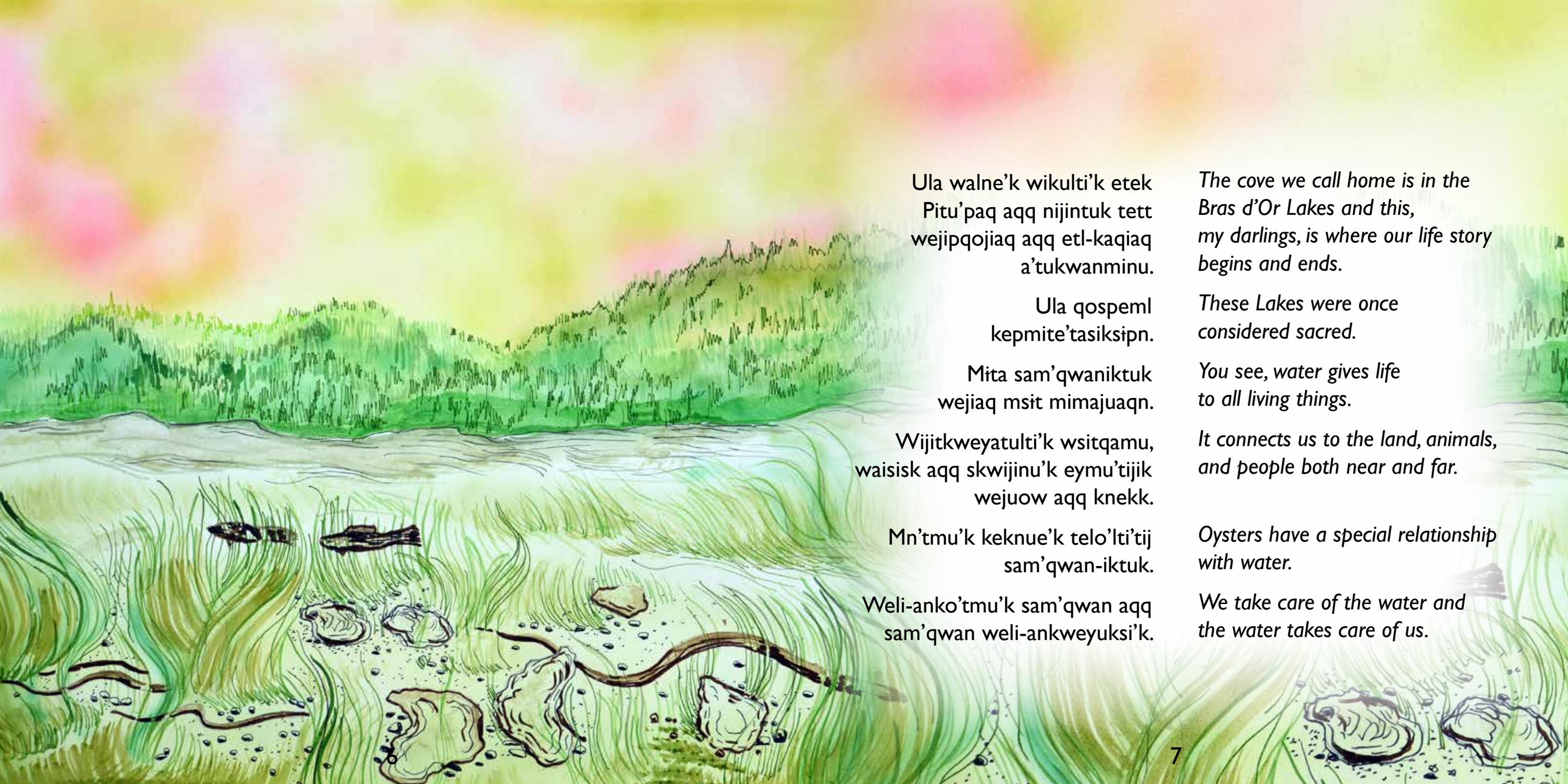
*Well, it was a long time ago, about
20 years, long before I grew into
what the oyster fishers call a Jumbo!*

*Like you, I started life very small,
about the size of a grain of sand.*

*I swam around until I found a nice
place to call home.*

*I glued myself to a comfy rock and
stayed there until a kind stranger
moved me to this cove.*





Ula walne'k wikulti'k etek
Pitu'paq aqq nijintuk tett
wejipqojiaq aqq etl-kaqiaq
a'tukwanminu.

Ula qospeml
kepmite'tasiksipn.

Mita sam'qwaniktuk
wejiaq msit mimajuaqn.

Wijitkweyatulti'k wsitqamu,
waisisk aqq skwijinu'k eymu'tijik
wejuow aqq knekk.

Mn'tmu'k keknu'e'k telo'ti'tij
sam'qwan-iktuk.

Weli-anko'tmu'k sam'qwan aqq
sam'qwan weli-ankweyuksi'k.

*The cove we call home is in the
Bras d'Or Lakes and this,
my darlings, is where our life story
begins and ends.*

*These Lakes were once
considered sacred.*

*You see, water gives life
to all living things.*

*It connects us to the land, animals,
and people both near and far.*

*Oysters have a special relationship
with water.*

*We take care of the water and
the water takes care of us.*

Ula walne'k ne'wt wikultisni'k
pikwelki'k mn'tmu'ki'k, telui'tmi'tip
skwijinu'k mn'tmue'kati.

Telitpitawsi piamiw kijipituimtlanaq
te'sijik nijink.

Ki's sa'q i'pikwelkipni'k
mn'tmu'ki'k Pitu'paq.

Melkikna'tiekip aqq tajiko'tiekip
aqq weli-anko'tmekipn qospeml.

*This cove was once home to a whole
community of oysters which people
call a cluster or oyster bed.*

*In my lifetime I have had millions
of baby oysters.*

*At one time oysters were plentiful in
the Bras d'Or Lakes.*

*We were strong and healthy,
caretakers of the Lakes.*

Me' katu kelu'kip eymu'tiek!

Elqanatek qospem weli-
melke'kip aqq etekepnn pikwelkl
kun'tewapskl, kunta'li'jl aqq
atuomk ta'n kisqatmu'titaq
mn'tmu'jk.

Stoqnamu'kl qata'swkl
pitoqikekipn mi'soqo ika'q
wskittuk sam'qwan.

Pesikwa'si me' nemituann
pemamkutekl qata'skwkl kla'qij
alto'kutikl aqq na'ku'set saputasit

And oh, how beautiful it all was!

*The Lake's bottom was firm with lots
of pebbles, gravel, and sand for my
little oysters to settle.*

*The eel grass was tall, green, and
reached to the surface.*

*If I close my eyes I can still see the
rows and rows of eel grass swaying
gently, the light shining through its
tall blades.*

Sam'qwan waqamapua'qip
aqq paquipk, mu awsami-
wiskipoqtuk aqq mu awsami-
pils'e'ktuk.

Aqq tetpaqpitek sam'qwan.

Sankewo'tiekup weli-aqu'tekl
walne'kl aqq tajiktuke'kl, wel-
lukwatmek ntlukwaqnen,
maliaptmek sam'qwan.

Nijantutk, ke'sk etl-malqutmoq
apje'jkl saqliaqewe'l, waisisij'j aqq
jjuji'jk - waqama'tuoq sam'qwan.

Kilu'nu awsami apje'jk wen
nmitun ke'sk mna'q ewe'wmuk
kikjapimkewey, katu mu
wela'lukwi'tik mimajuinu'k aqq
pilue'k waisisk mu jikla'tasinuk
sam'qwan-iktuk.

Te's panta'tu'k sike'saqnawminal
mijisultinenu na tepiaq sam'qwan
waqma'tuk kisi-wjua'lan tapusilijik

*The water was clear and calm, not
too salty, not too fresh.*

And the temperature was just right.

*We lived peacefully in our little
sheltered coves and shorelines
doing what we do best, taking care
of the water.*

*While you are eating those tiny
little plants, animals, and bacteria,
my darlings, you are also cleaning
the water.*

*Our food is too small for people to
see without a microscope, but it can
be unhealthy to humans and other
animals when it is not removed from
the water.*

*Every time we open our shells to
feed we can clean enough water to
fill two bathtubs in a day.*



Mn'tmu'k na elt wiklkik
 aqq welapemujik.
 Kaqisk malqumuksi'kik nmjinikejk,
 kiwnikk, kitpu'k aqq
 pilue'k jipji'jk aqq waisisk.
 Mimajuinu'k malquma'tijik
 mn'tmu'k ki's pikwelkl
 pituimtlnaqnipunqekl.
 Elita'sualuksi'kipnik aqq
 menaqaj ankweyuksi'kipnik aqq
 apoqnmuksi'kipnik wulikutinu.
 Pem-jajikita'tij malquma'tijik
 mn'tmu'k, menaqaj teleywa'tisnik
 aqq mu awsami-ktana'tikisnik.

*Oysters also happen to be very
 tasty and nutritious.
 We are often eaten by crabs, otters,
 eagles, and other birds and animals.
 Humans have been eating oysters
 for thousands of years.
 They relied on us and took great
 care to protect us and help us grow.
 They would walk along the shore
 snacking on oysters, careful not to
 take too many.*



Eykik wenik walipot-iktuk
nmlawita'jik aqq ewe'wmi'titl
meknawemkewe'l menikwalanew
mn'tmu'k elqanatek tujiw
iloqama'tijik ketloqo tepkiln
wsua'tasin.

*Some people would take their boats
and, using long rakes, carefully scoop
us up from the bottom, checking
each one of us to make sure we
were ready to be taken.*

*Awsami-apje'jij, na apaji-
pqwaseke'tijik kiswa ela'la'tijik
mn'tmue'katik ta'n tli-kwenanen.*

*If we were too small, they'd put us
back in the water, or take us to an
oyster garden, a nice home where
they watched over us.*

*Mimajuinu'k apoqnmua'tijik
wli-kwektn sike'saqnawminal.*

*Here, humans helped us grow
beautiful, rounded shells.*

*Menaqaj teleyuksiekip
kulaman tajiko'ltitesnen.*

*They took great care to see
that we stayed healthy.*

*Na'taqamto'kutiek
apaji-pqwaso'lusiek.*

*If we were washed up on shore,
they put us back in the water.*

*Elita'sualuksiekipnik wjit
mijipjewey aqq pkwataqatinew,
api's ketu' Nipialasutmamk.*

*They depended on us for food
and income for their families,
especially before Christmas.*

*Na tujiw maw-klu'sultiek aqq
mawi-mko'tultiek.*

*This was when we were at
our plumpest and worth
the most money.*



El'ma'luksie'k aqq
wissukwaluksie'k, kisatalulti'tij il-
we'wmi'tipn sike'saqnawminal.

Iko'tu'tipn sike'saqnawminal
ki'klikwej wilu'aq kulaman
wa'wl mlke'tal.

Skwijinu'k ika'tu'tipn
sike'saqnawminal ika'taqn-iktuk
kulaman klu'ktitew maqamikew
aqq saqliaqewe'l wulikwetal.

I'-iko'tu'tipn sike'saqnawminal
kiwto'qiw wenju'su'naqsi'k aqq
ta'n qata'skwl etikwek.

Sike'saqnaw-iktuk wejitu'tipn
pekitnmatimkewe'l.

Ti'amuey mikeken
ekwija'tumkis sam'qwan
wiaqa'tasikl sike'saqnawminal
kulaman nqamasiatew sapun
menikwatmumk.

*If they took us home to eat, they
made sure to recycle our shells.*

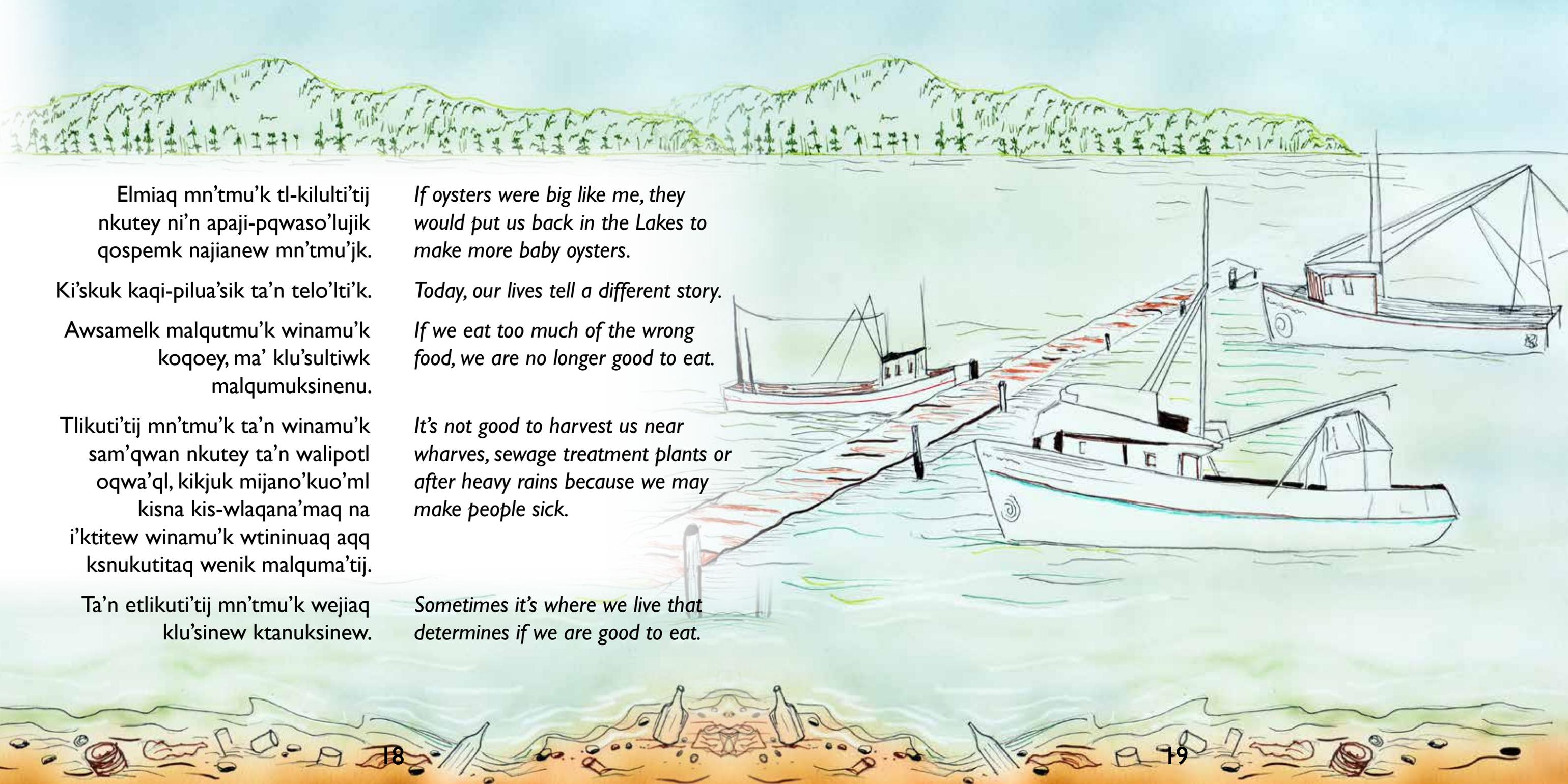
*They added our shells to their
chickens' feed to make their
egg shells hard.*

*People also used our shells in their
gardens to make the soil healthy,
and help plants grow.*

*They used to spread our shells
around apple trees and
sweetgrass beds too.*

*Our shells also made great
smudge bowls .*

*Moose hides were soaked in water
mixed with our shells to help remove
the hair from the hides.*



Elmiaq mn'tmu'k tl-kilulti'tij
nkutey ni'n apaji-pqwaso'lujik
qospemk najianew mn'tmu'jk.

*If oysters were big like me, they
would put us back in the Lakes to
make more baby oysters.*

Ki'skuk kaqi-pilua'sik ta'n telo'ti'k.

Today, our lives tell a different story.

Awsamelk malqutmu'k winamu'k
koqoey, ma' klu'sultiwk
malqumuksinenu.

*If we eat too much of the wrong
food, we are no longer good to eat.*

Tlikuti'tij mn'tmu'k ta'n winamu'k
sam'qwan nkutey ta'n walipotl
oqwa'ql, kikjuk mijano'kuo'ml
kisna kis-wlaqana'maq na
i'ktitew winamu'k wtinuaq aqq
ksnukutitaq wenik malquma'tij.

*It's not good to harvest us near
wharves, sewage treatment plants or
after heavy rains because we may
make people sick.*

Ta'n etlikuti'tij mn'tmu'k wejiaq
klu'sinew ktanuksinew.

*Sometimes it's where we live that
determines if we are good to eat.*



Kiskuk mu te'si'k mn'tmu'k
Pitu'paq nkutey amskwes.

Pekisitasikl mn'tmue'l ksnukwaqnn
ta'n eymu'tiek menaqnewa'luksiekl
aqq kesnukwa'luksiekl.

Pikwelk mn'tmu npitew ke'sk
mna'q kiaiaq mn'tmu'jk.

Etekl ta'n i'pikwelkipnik toqo nike'
pem-kaqiejik kiswa ketmaqsenejik.

*Nowadays we are no longer
plentiful in the Lakes.*

*Oyster diseases were brought to
our waters making many of us
very sick and weak.*

*Many of us will die before we have a
chance to make more baby oysters.*

*Once we were everywhere in
the Bras d'Or Lakes, now we live
in only a few areas.*

Ta'n tett welikutiekip nike' siskuik.

Qata'skwl pemi-ksika'sikl.

Sam'qwan pemi-naji-epetek.

Najelk kispesan na mu tepi-
salawe'nuk sam'qwan.

Pemi-ajelkik ewi'ka'tijik qasqe'k.

Waqamta'sik maqamikew kisa'toq
mjikapu lijuikt n walne'k.

Metue'k kisatalultinen
mjikapuiktuk.

*Our favourite places are getting
muddy and soft.*

Eel grass is disappearing.

The water is getting warmer.

*More rain is making our water
less salty and too fresh.*

*There are more homes and people
along our shores.*

*Clearing of the land is causing
waste and dirty water to run off
the land into our coves.*

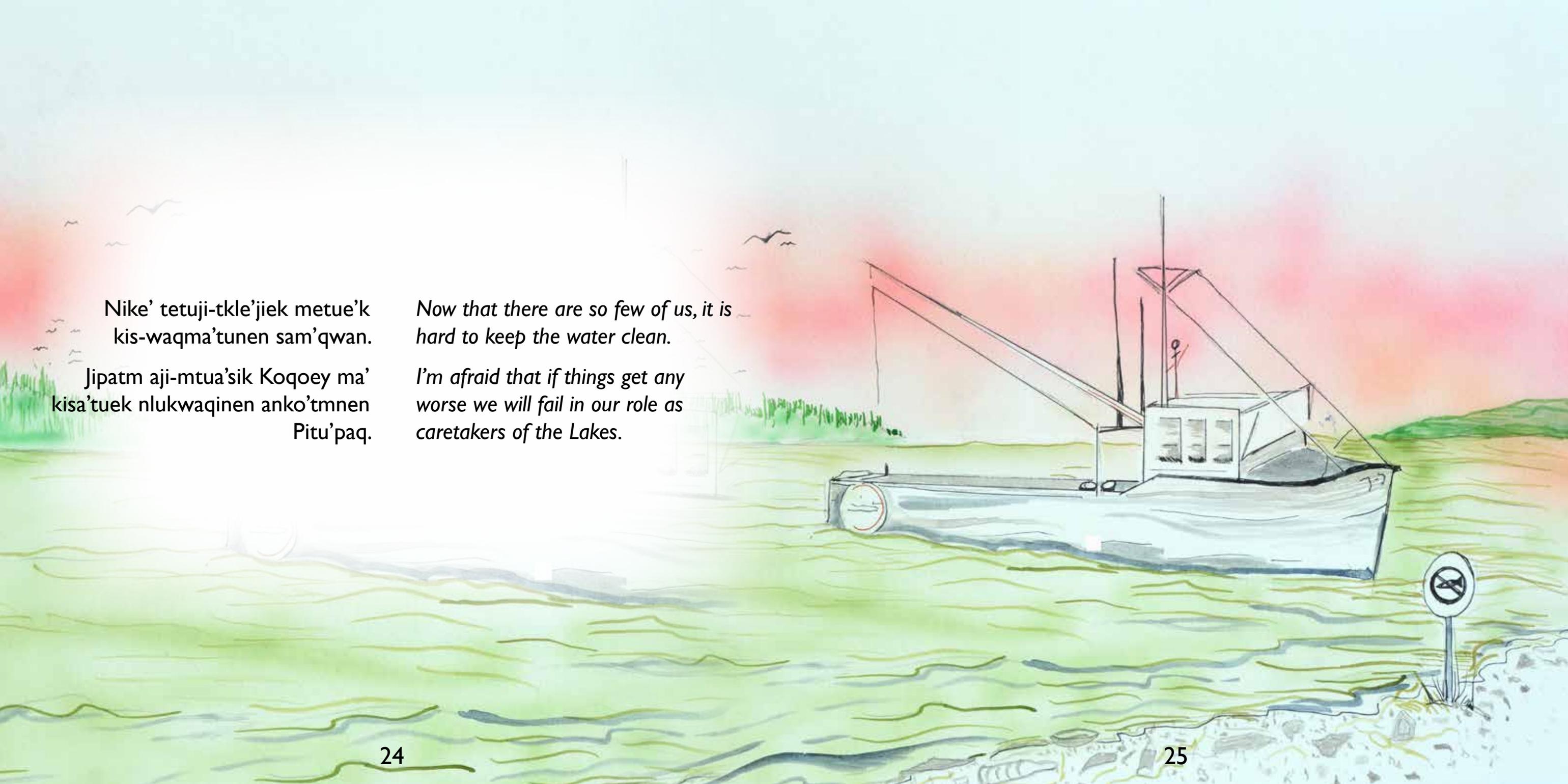
*This dirty water makes it harder
for us to feed.*

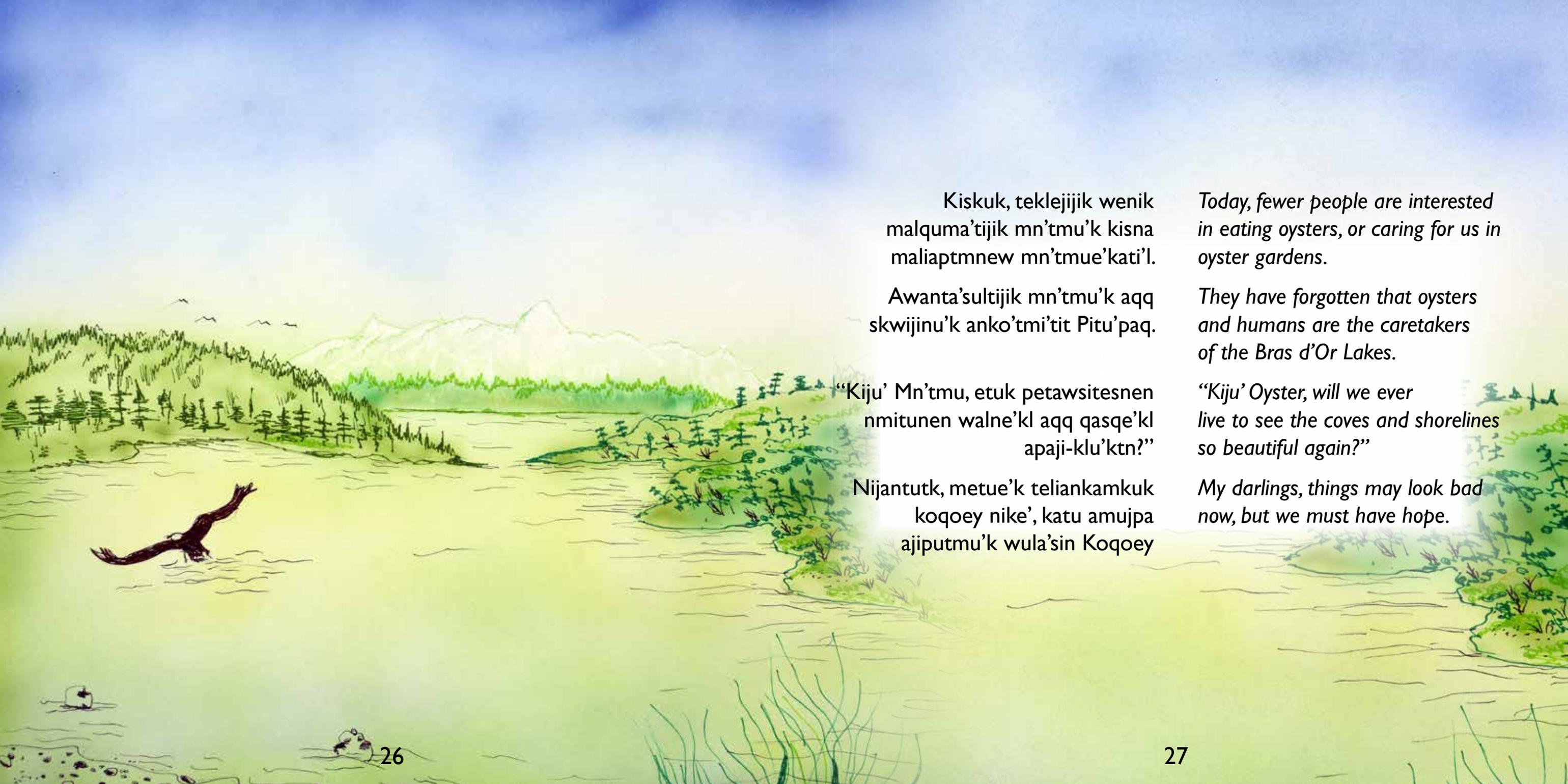
Nike' tetuji-tkle'jiek metue'k
kis-waqma'tunen sam'qwan.

Jipatm aji-mtua'sik Koqoey ma'
kisa'tuek nlukwaqinen anko'tmnen
Pitu'paq.

*Now that there are so few of us, it is
hard to keep the water clean.*

*I'm afraid that if things get any
worse we will fail in our role as
caretakers of the Lakes.*





Kiskuk, teklejijik wenik
malquma'tijik mn'tmu'k kisna
maliapmnew mn'tmue'kati'l.

Awanta'sultijik mn'tmu'k aqq
skwijinu'k anko'tmi'tit Pitu'paq.

“Kiju’ Mn’tmu, etuk petawsitesnen
nmitunen walne’kl aqq qasqe’kl
apaji-klu’ktn?”

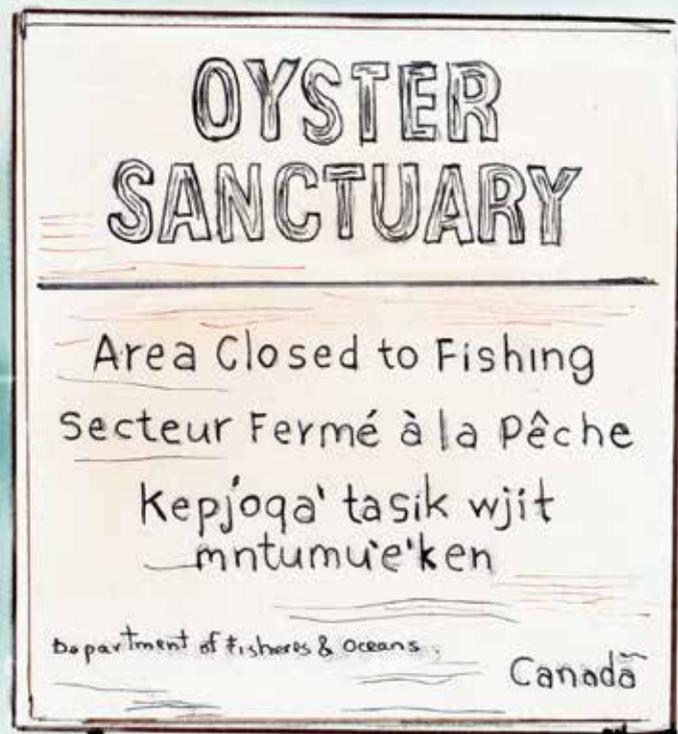
Nijantutk, metue’k teliankamkuk
koqoey nike’, katu amujpa
ajiputmu’k wula’sin Koqoey

*Today, fewer people are interested
in eating oysters, or caring for us in
oyster gardens.*

*They have forgotten that oysters
and humans are the caretakers
of the Bras d’Or Lakes.*

*“Kiju’ Oyster, will we ever
live to see the coves and shorelines
so beautiful again?”*

*My darlings, things may look bad
now, but we must have hope.*



Poqji-pikwelu'k.

Pemi-aji-kna'ti'k aqq
kis-matnmu'kl ksnukwaqnn.

Eykik me' wenik sespite'lma'tijik
mn'tmu'k aqq apoqnmuksi'kik
we'jitunenu ta'n tlikutitesnu,
nkutey mn'tmue'kati'l ta'n etli-
ankweyut mn'tmu'k.

Katu sam'qwan ta'n eymu'k
amujpa naji-klu'ktitew.

Me' pikwelk nu'taq maliaptasiktn.

Nuta'ykik wenik aknutmuanew
wikmawaq aqq witapuaq wjit
mn'tmu'k, kulaman waqmo'taq
maqamikew aqq sam'qwan.

Maw-lukuti'k kisi-wli-anko'tmnenu
Pitu'paq.

Our numbers are starting to grow.

*We are getting stronger and
fighting the diseases.*

*There are some people who still
care about oysters and are helping
us to find homes to grow,
like oyster sanctuaries.*

But our water needs to be healthier.

There is still more that can be done.

*We need people to share our story
with their family and friends, so they
will keep our land and waters clean.*

*Together we can be caretakers of
the Bras d'Or Lakes.*

Tyson Paul is a Mi'kmaw born in Eskasoni First Nation and is a fluent Mi'kmaw speaker.

Tyson attended CBU Science and Environmental Studies programs before joining UINR in 2009 as Research Assistant. Tyson has worked for Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission and Agriculture Agrifoods Canada in PEI.

He works as UINR's Environmental Monitor on the Emera Maritime Links project.

Tyson lives Potlotek First Nation with his girlfriend Pauline and son Jacen, with another baby on the way.

Shelley Denny is a Mi'kmaw originally from the community of Potlotek, Nova Scotia. Always fascinated with water and the plants and animals that live there, Shelley pursued an education in biology. After graduating in 2005 with a Masters in Science from St. Francis Xavier University, she began her employment with Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources.

At UINR, she continues to conduct research and gather traditional knowledge on Bras d'Or Lakes species, especially those that are important to the Mi'kmaq for food, social or ceremonial purposes.

Shelley lives in Eskasoni with her husband Levi and three children Cayden, Levi Jr. (Big Guy) and Isabel.

Growing up **Emma Garden** spent hours fishing and exploring the Shubenacadie River behind her family home. This interest in rivers led to a career in water resources. After finishing her Masters and working for a year at a conservation authority in Ontario, Emma returned home to Nova Scotia.

At UINR Emma specializes in rivers and their ecology, and gives technical and field support for aquatic research projects. She spends much of her time developing a better understanding of juvenile Atlantic Salmon and their habitat in rivers around the Bras d'Or Lakes.

Emma is a certified taxonomist and identifies aquatic bugs from rivers all over the Maritimes.

Angela Denny, a Mi'kmaw from the Eskasoni First Nation in Cape Breton, lives and works along the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes. She is married to Dion and they have a daughter, Bethany and a son, Morris.

After graduating from Cape Breton University in 2006 with a Bachelor of Science Degree she began a full-time position at the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources as a Research Assistant. She works with biologists, natural resource users and Elders, playing an important role in the collection of traditional knowledge.

Many hours are spent in the lab, in the field and in various Mi'kmaw communities conducting research. Her research has led to the development of booklets, posters and best management practices to help others understand the importance of protecting our environment.



Arlene Christmas (Dozay)

spent much of her life cultivating a passion for art. Growing up in western New Brunswick on the Tobique Reserve, Dozay is the middle child in a large family.

At eighteen, she left the banks of the Tobique River to pursue a formal education at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Although she always displayed an interest in art, her initial intention was to pursue a career in education.

It wasn't until her third year at NSCAD that Dozay decided to switch to the fine arts program and pursue a full-time career as an artist.

Dozay has created and displayed her work at galleries and exhibits across the Maritimes, Ontario, Europe, Australia and the United States.



Barbara Sylliboy is a Mi'kmaw educator from Eskasoni First Nation. She is employed with the Eskasoni School Board as a Mi'kmaw Language Curriculum Developer for the Ta'n L'Nuey Etl-mawlukwatmumk/ Mi'kmaw Curriculum Development Project.

Barbara is a fluent Mi'kmaw speaker and writer and, in her spare time, has worked on the translation of various government documents and the stories *Work in Our Time* on the Cape Breton CAP site.



UINR has other publications on oysters and other topics including: **Environmental Stewardship, Natural Resource Management, Traditional Mi'kmaw Knowledge.**

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voice on natural resources
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UINR represents the five Mi’kmaw
communities of Unama’ki in
forestry, marine science research, species
management, traditional Mi’kmaw
knowledge, water quality monitoring,
and environmental partnerships.

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