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Press Release

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Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation collecting Aboriginal traditional knowledge and raising awareness on Species at Risk

February 10, 2015—Corner Brook, NL— On Monday evening members of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation (QMFN), and stakeholders interested in environmental stewardship, met at the Day's Inn in Stephenville for the first of four sessions being held across the island. The focus of the presentation and discussion based forums, being hosted by the QMFN Natural Resource Department, is Species at Risk in the province and Aboriginal traditional knowledge about those species.

Scott Caines, Natural Resource Technician for Qalipu, welcomed participants and began the session by introducing his team and talking about their role as environmental stewards.

"In the past year Qalipu has moved from a primarily aquatic-based research focus to include terrestrial, or land-based, species and habitats." Said Caines, "our presentation included reference to some of those aquatic species such as American eel and banded killifish, and also included several land based species that are at risk and in need of further research, public awareness and a commitment to protect."

The presentation looked at facts based on federal research on Species at Risk in the province including statistics on declining populations, their habitats, as well as global threats. Local disturbances were also discussed and participants were invited to share their experience and what we can do as individuals to protect species and their habitats.

Perry Young, Park Ranger at Sandbanks Provincial Park for the past 14 years, reinforced the message. "There once were six or eight nesting pairs of piping plover on our beaches. The outcome of those nests were a healthy number of plover fledglings, or immature plovers, which thrived on our beaches before migrating south. This past year we had one nesting pair and their eggs were destroyed by minks. We have done our part as individuals not using ATV's on beaches and dunes, and keeping our pets on leashes. Now it seems that minks are the problem. This is an issue worthy of our attention."

There were several local fish harvesters on hand at the session who discussed the importance of American eel populations and maintaining sustainable fisheries. Louis MacDonald, a Qalipu member from St. George's who has been involved in the fish industry in aquaculture, harvesting and sales for more than twenty years, notes that green crab populations could be affecting the ecologically significant eel grass habitat.

"The population of green crab has exploded in the past year or two," Says Macdonald, "we need to know how this will affect the future of our fishery. It's reassuring to see Qalipu working together with industry to manage these issues."

Caines was pleased with the turnout at the Stephenville session and hopes to see all those interested in ecological stewardship at their upcoming sessions in Corner Brook, Grand Falls and Gander. To register please contact Scott Caines at Tel. 1 (709) 634-1500 or Email scaines@qalipu.ca.

Media

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