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Press Release

For Immediate Release

Qalipu participates in World Water Day outreach and education

Corner Brook, March 20, 2015—The Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation's Natural Resource Division was one of several presenters on hand at Corner Brook City Hall for this year's World Water Day. This annual day is designated to bring awareness to the importance of water in our lives and what we can do to protect our water resources.

A video featuring dueling crabs, an engaging dialogue about the great distances travelled by the young American eel before arriving in Newfoundland, and an opportunity to construct an eel grass habitat with pipe cleaners, beads and foam were some of the ways the Natural Resources Division captured the attention of some 200 students who passed through City Hall exploring exhibits.

Jonathan Strickland, Manager of Qalipu's Natural Resource Division, said the point of their exhibit was to bring awareness to the importance of the ecologically significant eel grass habitat found around the province in estuaries, or places where salt water meets fresh. He noted that there are many animals who rely on this habitat and human activity or the introduction of a new species can cause unintended consequences.

"Eels make an incredible trek through the sea, travelling thousands of kilometers on ocean currents to arrive in Newfoundland. When they get here they are still quite young, at the stage of life called *glass eel*. They make their homes in estuaries where eel grass provides a clean, safe environment for them to mature into *elvers*, before making the long journey back first through our rivers as *yellow eel* and finally back to the ocean as *silver eels* where they reproduce."

Strickland went on to emphasize the complexity of life cycles of water animals, like the American eel, and how a disturbance to just one part of their journey can alter their lives and their success as a species.

"What might happen if these young eels arrived in our Provincial estuaries to find that the eel grass habitats had been lost or destroyed? Their whole journey would be at risk." He said.

Steven Rose, Natural Resource Technician said that one of the threats to eel grass habitat could be the green crab species, classified as invasive in Newfoundland. He noted "This is a type of crab that quickly and easily reproduces to large numbers, and can change the habitat from lush grass to barren sand by uprooting eel grass as it digs around the bottom looking for food."

Rose said Environmental education and outreach will continue to be on the agenda at Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation as is ensuring ecological sustainability for future generations. Members are encouraged to keep an eye out for opportunities to be involved through participating in upcoming events hosted and co-hosted by the Qalipu Natural Resource Division.

To learn more about World Water Day Visit <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday>

Media:

Alison White
Marketing and Communications Coordinator
Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation
Tel. (709) 634-5163
Email awhite@qalipu.ca