



# Developing and Implementing Mi'kmaw Ecology in Kespukwitk's Species at Risk

With support from the Government of Canada's [Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk](#) (Species at Risk Stream), Bear River First Nation (BRFN) led a two-year project from 2013–2014 to 2014–2015 to incorporate Mi'kmaw Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) in species at risk recovery actions and enhance the understanding of ATK and Mi'kmaw Ecology in the species at risk community.

## WHY THIS PROJECT IS IMPORTANT

The reserve lands of Bear River and Acadia First Nations span the [Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve](#) in southwestern Nova Scotia, a designated United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization heritage site. Given the abundance of species at risk in the area, Mi'kmaw communities want to participate more fully in species at risk work while increasing understandings among western science biologists of Mi'kmaw knowledge. This project addressed 10 species listed under the *Species at Risk Act*, including the Endangered Nova Scotia population of Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*). Isolated at the northeastern edge of the species' range, this population has fewer than 250 adults and is vulnerable to habitat alteration, collection of individuals, and road mortality.

## WHAT WAS DONE

Bear River Environment Office gathered Elders and other community members from Bear River and Acadia First Nations to share their knowledge of species at risk. The Bear River Environment Office then hosted sessions with species at risk biologists, government staff, and local landowners to share Mi'kmaw knowledge on ecology and BRFN Elders' and community members' diverse worldview. These sessions helped build relationships and make connections between ATK and western science. On October 24, 2014, Turtle Day celebrations took place to share the Mi'kmaw worldview and generate community awareness of species at risk. This project also trained assistants to work with the project manager to annually survey the land for target species at risk and their habitats and to identify threats such as all-terrain vehicle use and road crossings.



## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS PROJECT

- Strengthened capacity in Bear River and Acadia First Nations to perform species at risk surveys on reserve lands and promote a conservation ethic toward species at risk.
- Participated more actively in regional recovery actions with partner organizations.
- Shared Mi'kmaw ecology teachings and findings with recovery teams, biologists, and organizations to help incorporate Mi'kmaw knowledge and worldview into recovery strategies.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT

Mi'kmaw participation in species at risk recovery efforts was increased and relationships with biologists and others working to recover species at risk were strengthened.

### INVESTMENT: 2013–2014 TO 2015–2016

Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk Funds:	\$116,000
Partner Support Leveraged:	\$56,957
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$172,957</b>