

# Mirroring the Ecosystem

by **STEPHANIE JOHNSTONE-LAURETTE** /// EAC Staff

When you hear the title Moose Management Coordinator you might assume a role that is specific to natural resource management, someone out in the woods gathering data on *Alces alces andersoni*. But for Clifford Paul of the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR) this role goes much deeper. Paul shared some insight into the scope of moose management in Unama'ki (Cape Breton) and how his work weaves into supporting the local ecosystems as well as the Mi'kmaq communities across Unama'ki.

*(The following is an abridged version of the interview with Clifford Paul, conducted by Stephanie Johnstone-Laurette for the EAC's 2019 Green Jobs Calendar.)*

## Tell us a bit about your organization/business, and what your day-to-day work looks like.

UINR is the environmental voice for Unama'ki. We partner with the government and other agencies with similar goals to us. I work in such a way so that I stay true to the Mi'kmaq values that are instilled in me. I help manage the moose (tiam) in Unama'ki. I follow both a traditional path and a Western scientific path. I use this Two-Eyed Seeing approach which blends the strengths of each of these into a moose management plan.

My office is in the field, basically. But I also provide education on the Mi'kmaq approach to ecosystem management, with a focus on moose management. You'll see me out in the community, teaching everyone from the top level RCMP all the way to the Mountainview grade two classroom through the Two-Eyed Seeing model. I'm not only a student of Two-Eyed Seeing, but a practitioner.

## How do you see your work supporting the green economy in Nova Scotia?

My work overlaps with many different sectors. It helps the green economy by sharing with others and impacting how they see the environment. I talk to young people that are considering their careers in natural resource management or green energy, I tell them that careers like this can become pigeon-holed. But an ecosystem does not operate that way. There is a relationship between every member of an ecosystem, between the insects, the plants, the animals, the bears, the berries. I can't just be a moose manager and make moose management decisions. There are relationships between everything that occurs within an ecosystem—our work should mirror that.

## What part of your work are you most excited about?

What really gets me going is when we hunt or fish and bring the food back to the communities. That's not only my work, that's my life. I'm a traditional harvester. I hunt for the community, the Elders, and provide food for those that, on their limited income, find it hard to meet their basic needs.

I provide, and I teach. It's the satisfaction of seeing a young person being involved in the hunt and then have them share it with the Elders. To me that's more successful than taking a course and getting a certificate. The legacy is not going to be an academic paper on a wall, for me, the legacy that is the change that has been made in the hearts and minds of the people. So my focus is on education, showing the way, guiding the next generation. The legacy is in the change.

I've been working hard for 12 years to bring change, and this only happened because of working with the communities. I wasn't the change, I was the conduit for change. There's lots of conversations, and that's what brings about the change. When we first went around to the communities to build a moose management plan, community members moved from saying "They should do this" to "We should do this. We're the ones that will assert our rights and our responsibilities." This has led to a strong moose management plan that involves the whole community. It's about stewardship and being connected, and it works.



photos: UINR

## How did you find your path to this work in Nova Scotia?

After many years in the workforce I went back to school and took the integrated science program at what is now Cape Breton University. Chief Terry Paul placed me on two committees with Parks Canada, one of these was for moose management. At the time the hunting was bad. It was a really bad relationship with Mother Earth, it was a really bad relationship with the families, and it was dangerous.

One day my cousin dropped by and mentioned the UINR moose management job to me and said, "They're calling your name, you should apply, they need someone to help make change." Later my brother said he had a dream of me doing good things with moose. He said I better apply. So I got an interview, I answered with my heart. And I got the job—it's spectacular!

## Do you have any advice for others looking to pursue similar work (or green jobs) in Nova Scotia?

I'd love to see more people get involved in stewardship, but also to promote the model of traditional ecosystem management, ensuring a broad spectrum of ideas, input and awareness. The Mi'kmaq are not linear thinkers, we think in waves and patterns of flux and motion. A perfect fit for ecosystems, which do the same. We ask if the work I'm doing today is going to positively impact the next seven generations? Are my ancestors seven generations back going to be proud of me?

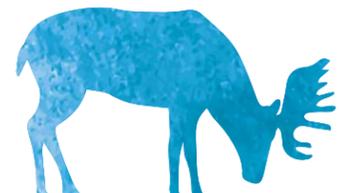


## What do you think the Nova Scotia government could do to further support and expand green jobs in our province?

The NS Government is commanded by law to work with the Mi'kmaq, to work close with our leadership. We must be seen not only as a partner, but an ally. The government must establish significant relationships with the Mi'kmaq and set examples for the rest of the country.

## What else would you like to tell us about your work, and why you think it's important?

I'm just one, but at UINR we're a team. We use a holistic approach to keep each other informed and support each other. We have guidance from our Elders and from our youth. I'd love to see other agencies and government to do the same. If people learned from that model they could achieve greater things. At UINR that's how we do it. We're all conduits of change.



**Stephanie Johnstone-Laurette** is the Youth Active Transportation Coordinator for Eastern NS; she works and plays in Unama'ki (Cape Breton) and loves when she's lucky enough to see a tiam (moose).