

Natural Resources Directorate

Listuguj, Gespe'gewa'gi, Fall 2024

Grand Entry Into The Market Listuguj Sasqale'sq

Listuguj Fisheries employees, lead, David Martin, and 2nd lead Cody Guitard and four other colleagues depart Listuguj every Tuesday at 6 am to perform Aquaculture. The drive to Carleton takes around 40 minutes and another one-hour boat ride to the Listuguj Large Lease Site where our scallop farm is located.

This has been their routine for the past 5 years but today is special. By the end of the day, they will harvest 240 scallops, between the sizes of 11cm to 13cm. The harvested scallops are placed in coolers at 40 to 50 scallops per cooler. The live scallops are then carefully packed in boxes and kept cold at a temperature of 4 °C, moist with soaked paper towels and absorbent pads -they use seawater taken from the farm site- and covered with three ice gel packs. The next morning at 6:00 am, they prepare the scallop order and drive to La Taniere, a distinguished restaurant in Quebec City. François-Emmanuel Nicol, the multi awards winner Chef and co-owner of the restaurant had compliments for the quality of the Listuguj scallops. "Our guests appreciated the scallops, we were able to keep them alive all week, the quality was impeccable, and we told the guest, how special it was for us to have live scallops. We serve them with wild oxalys (wood sorrels) and sea buckthorn (berries) We kept the roe for a sauce for later in the fall."

For Mr. Nicol and his restaurant, it is the first time working directly with a First Nation supplier. 'It has been a pleasure to work with Listuguj. The quality of the products is impeccable and our communication has been great. It is an honor for me to have access to those precious scallops. I hope that this is the beginning of a great relationship. Our goal with La Tanière is to share the culinary culture of Québec with the world. The contribution and knowledge from the Listuguj Mi'gmaq community are important. I feel privileged to have your trust working with your scallops".

The scallops industry in Canada, particularly in the Atlantic provinces, is a critical component of the seafood sector. As of October 2023, scallop aquaculture in Canada, particularly in regions like Prince Edward Island Newfoundland, and Labrador, has been gaining traction due to increasing market demand and sustainability practices. The country's scallop farming primarily focuses on the Atlantic sea scallop and production levels have been gradually rising, with thousands of metric tons harvested annually.

In Listuguj, in April 2019, a business plan was developed for commercial development and although it was met with some setbacks, the Natural Resource Directorate (NRD), and the scallop team have worked for several years to increase its scallop production as it takes 3-4 years to build a commercial inventory. In 2023, a small market test of our scallops was done and received a positive response.

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"This project has been a long time in the making, and through hard work, determination, and team effort of our crew and NRD management we are proud that we were able to turn a research and development project into what we envision for 2024/2025 the beginning of a profitable endeavor for NRD/ LMG," said Maureen Isaac, Program Manager at the NRD.

This work is labor intensive and requires planning, structuring, tracking, and managing seed and scallop outgrows. It also requires knowledge of different pieces of equipment.

"There is a lot of work that goes to bringing a product to market. However, with a renewed commitment, 2024 marks our first official scallop sales. By the end of October, we will wrap up our season and take inventory of marketable scallops for 2025. We are optimists because our current calculation is approximately 100,000 scallops"

For Denny Isaac, Associate Director of NRD, this project is promising. "Our directorate is always looking for ways to diversify our fisheries, access to more species, advance our fisheries' governance and community capacity, by re-affirming our rights to help the community creating new jobs and new expertise".



www.sasqalesq.ca

From Listuguj to the World

Marketing a new product is always an uncharted adventure with inherent challenges like distance to markets, developing infrastructures, transportation for live products, or establishing our brand name.

Felicia Mitchell was hired by the NRD to bring Listuguj Sasqale'sq to the market, in her first year, the NRD managed to get the interest of a distinguished client.

NRD - What were the challenges for branding our scallops?

Felicia Mitchell - I started in this new role as the Business Development Advisor in mid-May and, part of my duties are to champion the Listuguj Scallop aquaculture sales, which is a brand-new learning experience for me. It required a lot of cold calling local restaurants and fish markets with either no responses, some said they were only interested in scallop meat, or they already had inventory. Our product is whole live scallops still in the shell and beautiful roe.

NRD - Once you found a buyer, what was the challenge of delivering the scallops?

Felicia Mitchell - We had the incredible honour of making our first transaction with a high-end restaurant in downtown old Quebec. The major issue was securing a reputable transportation service to deliver our time-sensitive live scallops. So, to establish a good relationship with the restaurant, we decided to deliver in-house with our harvesting team to ensure the freshest product from sea to table.

NRD - How was the feedback from the buyer about the quality of our scallops?

Felicia Mitchell - The co-owner/chef has had very positive remarks, saying they were in perfect condition, loved working with them, and would like to continue as a client!

How we started

Listuguj Scallops is a community-owned scallop farm dedicated to sustainable scallop farming. Our team is committed to providing high-quality scallops while preserving the environment. We take pride in being an Indigenous product and strive to uphold the traditions of our community.

It started with a study from a biological perspective; a 4-year pilot-scale growth study that began in 2014. This study demonstrated that the lease site off Carleton-sur-Mer is highly suitable to support the commercial development of cultured sea scallops. The operations were temporarily impacted by the pandemic and resumed in 2019.



HOW OUR SCALLOPS AQUACULTURE WORKS

Scallop production begins by collecting larvae from adult scallops when they spawn. As the larvae grow to become baby scallops, they are transferred to large nets or cages and suspended in the deep ocean water, where they remain for three to five years. The job of Dave Martin and his colleagues is to raise and lower the cages so that the scallops remain at a constant 4-degree temperature, to monitor water quality and repair broken structures. The scallops do the rest. Most of the Canadian production of farmed scallops occurs in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec.

Our team has had training on the theory of scallops and at-sea training. The process begins by collecting seed with seed collectors deployed at our leased sites (Listuguj has three leased scallop sites). Each year these collectors are emptied and transferred to cages. In year two, they are transferred from cages to 12mm mesh lantern nets, and in year three they are moved to 21mm mesh lantern nets where they remain until

they are harvested for sale. Typically they can be harvested for market in year 4, when their size reaches around 7-8 cm. If the market wants larger scallops we would need to allow another year or two before harvesting but the longer we leave them in the water, they become more of a mortality risk due to the elements.

Our team has worked hard to maintain our site. This includes not only transferring scallops but also cleaning the collectors and lantern nets. Currently, we have team leader Dave Martin his first mate Cody Guitard, and 2 contracted laborers, Tammy Duguay and Nathan Duguay. We will require additional laborers at the end of the season for seed sorting work. Our team has learned that this work is very labor intensive and requires dedication and commitment to Listuguj becoming a successful contender in the aquaculture market and getting our name “Listuguj Saqale’sg” to become a well-known brand in scallop markets.

Mawi Paqtapeg, a “large body of water”

Chaleur Bay, Gespe’gewa’gi, has become a prime location for aquaculture. Its unique shape and geography create a series of tidal currents that bring oxygen and nutrient rich waters from the Gulf of St. Lawrence into the bay, supporting the growth of a diverse range of marine life, including salmon, lobster, and mussels.

The Bay’s favorable conditions also support sustainable aquaculture practices, allowing for environmentally-friendly farming methods that benefit both the local economy and the marine ecosystem.

