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## Lend a hand or a fin to science

### Philippe Morin Northern News Services

Inuvik (Dec 11/06) -The Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board is looking for some fins, to help learn about Inconnu, Whitefish and Barbot populations in the NWT.

Nathan Millar, who is a field biologist for the GRRB in Inuvik, even said the Board will pay \$5 per fin - provided it was caught this year, somewhere in the Gwich'in Settlement Region.



Nathan Millar, a field biologist for the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board in Inuvik, holds up an Inconnu fin which was given to his research program. - Philippe Morin/NNSL photo

"We've put up signs in Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik, McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, and also in the Sahtu," Millar said, adding the program is now in its second year.

He explained the fins are wanted for genetic research, for a project which will help biologists better understand hereditary differences between fish populations in the NWT.

As Millar explained, fish populations are similar to caribou populations, in the sense they can be divided into regional groups.

Therefore, just as caribou can be broken down into herds - such as the Bathurst or Bluenose-West, which have unique traits - fish can be divided into populations which might have hereditary differences.

An Inconnu caught in the Arctic Red River might breed differently than one caught in the Peel river, despite being the same species.

"There can be a lot of differences," Millar said. "The question we face is do we need to take that into consideration, or should we treat them as one body."

As fins are collected from the Gwich'in Settlement Region, Millar said they will be catalogued, dried, and sent to Dalhousie University

in Halifax.

When they arrive, he said biology professor Paul Bentzen will help to break down their cells into a soup of elements, to isolate and examine their genetic material.

It is a complicated process, Millar said, which involves some interesting lab equipment such as microscopic glass beads which stick to DNA strands.

"We don't have those kinds of facilities in Inuvik,"he said.

But while the science might be hard to explain, Millar said he's received a good response from people in communities who appreciate the program's intentions.

He said last year's program collected about 600 fins, and this year's samples are also steadily coming in, though more are needed.

"I like to get people involved in the study, and people understand it's to improve management,"he said.

Interested fishers can bring their fins to local Renewable Resource Boards, or Hunters and Trappers' Associations throughout the Gwich'in Settlement Region.

They should remember where and when the fish were caught.

