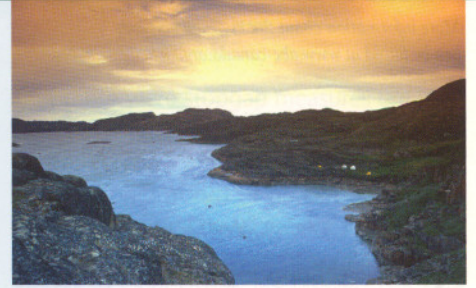


These ravenous cod are prone to eating one another and just about anything else that crosses their path.

panoramas

Ogac — A Fish Story

Cannibal cod dominate three Nunavut Lakes



If ever a picture was worth a thousand words, then the photos here portraying a most unusual fish story require very little embellishment, if any.

Cod, that "oh so tasty," but sadly endangered species of saltwater fish we Canadians so love to rave about have been found languishing in the cold and unlikely inland depths of Ogac Lake, located on the coast of the southernmost arm of Nunavut's scenic Baffin Island. Not just any codfish mind you. Relative to their "endangered species" Atlantic cousins whose harvest is now under moratorium, these cod are nothing short of giants coming in at well over a metre in length and weighing over 30 kilograms and more. Little is known about how these "out of place" northern cod came to be in the Arctic, although theories including major geological or marine tide events are all being considered.

Ogac is the Inuktitut word for cod. Knowledge of their existence in the lake and similar landlocked saltwater bodies of

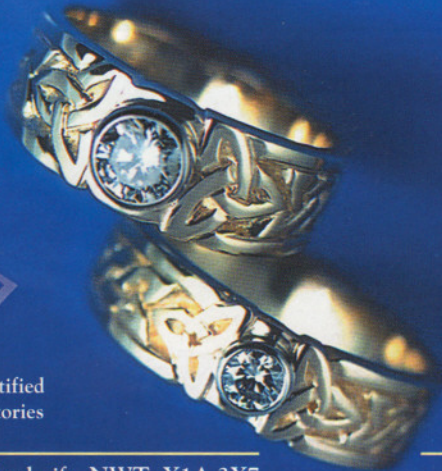
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Above: Michael Mipeegaq releases a large cod at Ogac Lake.
Top: Dalhousie University Field Research Camp near Turiujarusiq.

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Dalhousie Professor Jeff Hutchings with a large cod from Ogac Lake.

water farther north — Lakes *Qasigialiminiq* (used to be seals*) and *Tariujarusiq* (kind of salty*) — on the west coast of Cumberland Sound is not new to the Inuit who have hunted and fished Baffin Island for thousands of years. Inuit hunters willingly shared their knowledge of the other lakes with Dalhousie University (Halifax, Nova Scotia) biologist Dr. Jeff Hutchings and doctoral student, biologist Dave Hardie, when they came to Ogac Lake last summer to study the origins and evolution of these anomalous denizens of the deep.

What is known is that these ravenous cod, limited as their food sources are in their landlocked habitat, are prone to eating one another and just about anything else that crosses their path, including spiny sea urchins ... and in one instance, at least, devouring an unsuspecting loon — whole! 🐟

*Loosely translated Inuktitut meanings.

above&beyond, CANADA'S ARCTIC JOURNAL, would like to thank David Hardie for so generously sharing pictures of Dalhousie University's Baffin research.



Dalhousie PhD student David Hardie measures the strong temperature, salinity, and oxygen layers in Qasigialiminiq.

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