In 2004, Integrative Science personnel were beginning to contribute to a newly formed collaborative process for environmental management in Cape Breton – a process known as “CEPI” for “collaborative environmental planning initiative”. As part of the Integrative Science contributions, Canada Research Chair Cheryl Bartlett asked artist Basma Kavanagh to create a playful, innovative visual to encourage people to think holistically and to consider the power of transformative learning.

The visual focus chosen was to show how the Island of Cape Breton could be seen to shape shift into a frog, an animal that is both a cultural symbol of transformation and a biological manifestation of transformation: the life journey of a frog is from the tadpole stage in a water environment to the adult stage capable of life both on the land and in the water and finally back again to the water for reproduction.

We felt that a frog would be all the more appropriate because of the known vulnerability of this type of organism to environmental change and to pollutants.

Additionally, frogs are a key eco-reference for the Mi’kmaw people because one of the moon cycles within the year is known as Sqoljuiku’s, for “frog croaking time”, which approximates to the month known as May (see activity “Mi’kmaw calendar” for additional explanation).
The visual that Basma created to show the transformation of the Island of Cape Breton into a frog is shown below. Personnel in Integrative Science were delighted when Basma’s visual was featured on the charter created to formalize CEPI. It was signed by all Mi’kmaw chiefs in Unama’ki – Cape Breton plus various municipal, provincial, and federal government officials. It is also shown below (and enlarged on the next page). The last page in this document features the hand-out that Integrative Science personnel distributed broadly, both within CEPI and in other educational and/or collaborative venues.
CAPE BRETON – UNAMA'KI

... showing our Island as the living organism "Frog" to remind us that healthy life requires healthy water, land and air and that transformation and interconnectedness are essential understandings in our collaborative human journey.

Artwork by Basma Kavanagh