

## “Fish Tales” by Dick Braun

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Fish stories – this is a good subject for Mennonites as most Mennos like to eat fish.

Some of my fish stories are about my family or extended family.

My great uncle Peter Loepky told me of how they loved to go fishing to the river. During threshing time they would hope that it would rain. This meant that they could take the horses and wagon to the river for a day or maybe they could stay night and fish for a few days. The river had a variety of fish like herring, goldeye, red finned sucker, eel (kavaop), sturgeon, later on now Jack and pickerel .

My grandmother said that all fish were eatable. I told her about the eel that we threw back after catching them in a fish trap. Next time there were eel in the trap I brought them home to her. She used the fish head for soup and the like. I like fish that taste very fishy. A few years ago a friend brought me some el and I prepared them and the grand children thought that they were delicious. – The fish trap that our neighbor and I set was in the river right by the yard of Isaac Guenthers and it so happened that one day there was a man In white coveralls who had found the trap. Well when we came there the trap was not usable anymore. It so happens that the Isaac Guenthers were the greatgreat grandparents to Katherine Penner.

During the 1930s the people in eastern Canada thought that they would do a good thing by sending fish to the hungry dried out prairie people. My grandfather Berg told me of how they received these fish— salted dried cod. They had no idea of how to prepare them and so most of them went to waste. Thinking back it may have worked ok if someone had taken the time to tell our people how to prepare these unknown fish that looked like giant shingles.

Kathy’s grandfather C.R.Driedger did a lot of fishing and mostly at the river. He got quit good at catching sturgeon. The biggest sturgeon he caught was 60lbs. He would clean these big or small fish and cut them up and bring them to the Warman Altenheim . The residents thought that they got a real treat. This would have been In the late 60s and early 70s. It was almost like feeding the 5000 but maybe it was only 50 or so people.

Mulets were a winter staple for many Mennonite families. This fish is a bottom feeder and most people think of it as the garbage of the lake or river. The Mennos were or are very happy to eat them. Before the days of freezers people would can lots of fish so it was a handy meal. Usually what happened was some one would go to Cold Lake with a truck and bring back a big load of these fish as they were very cheap and also easy to come by. In the late 1980s Joe Froese had the idea of going to the north with a 3ton farm truck and get a load of fish and sell them and the money would go to MCC.

Family gatherings at the river used to be a wonderful outing. Grandmother would be fishing with her bamboo pole and some of my uncles used drag lines and some would be sitting in the shade of the big maple trees that grow along the river and of course the kids would be playing in the water.

In Mathew chapter 4 Jesus tells the first disciples that he will make them fishers of men – german it says fishers of people or menschen something like Wilf talked about in his children’s story about him catching his friend while fishing. No Jesus was talking about fishing for human souls.