



**NATIONAL INDIGENOUS
FISHERIES INSTITUTE**
Indigenous Program Review
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**Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans
Management Workshop - St Johns Nov 10, 2017**

What We Heard

Tell us about your AAROM

Participants included an administrative Aquatic Resource and Ocean Management (AAROM) program as well as two other more traditional AAROM groups.

- “Our organization consists of a board of directors comprised of members each of respective first nations. It’s a six member board. We have staff at two offices. Data collection takes place in estuary and bodies of water adjacent to our communities. A lot of work is species and project based data collection research survey as well as traditional knowledge collection. We have commercial licences for Atlantic salmon, American eel, banded killifish, and wolfish. We also focus on habitat: Eelgrass, study of invasive species. Commercial species: lobster, snow crab groundfish, cod shrimp, welk, sea cucumber, tuna, swordfish.”
- Atlantic Policy Congress: *“Administrative AAROM allows us to provide regional platform on DFO policies. We are often first contact for communities. People misinterpret us as holding a treaty type role. Because of the renewed focus on indigenous communities by the Government of Canada it is trying to scramble for ways to deal with communities. Environment Canada, Transport Canada etc. I tell them, best thing to is work with AAROMs, but they have to bring resources with them.”*
- One participant focused on one specific project they undertook that was a success. It was an ocean learning project where they converted a fishing boat into floating school. They hoped it would allow some young people to look at the ocean for a career. The program was called Coastal Explorers and it was tied directly into the secondary school curriculum. It involved sharing elder stories, rational knowledge, and excursions in the marine environment. It also involves an app that shows the kids where they are going. Parts are still in the developmental phase. A majority of the funding has seasonality to it from May to October.

Barriers

- Participants discussed some of the barriers to success their organizations encounter. One such barrier is the lack of recognition by outside agencies of the body and function of their organization. They say, while marketing of who they are and what they do has

improved, citing what they call strong consultation with DFO, other outside agencies like fishery unions and the provincial government aren't as aware as they should be. Another participant pointed to racial tensions about the First Nations right to fish. They mentioned how they receive strong messages that first Nations should not get special access. These tensions were also spurred on by misinformation about exactly what rights First Nations had in regards to the fishery. Fishers were under the impression First Nations could fish mixed gear cod with mobile gear. They have heard threatening comments made about "getting rid of the Mi'kmaq.

- *"Two examples of opportunities we have passed up in terms of off shore. Call for proposal for marine survey bottom survey, we didn't have equipment or human resource pool. Coast guard spoke about opportunities. Servicing of aids to navigation."*
- Funding is a big barrier to organizations achieving their ambitions according to participants. More funding is needed for all programs, much more for oceans. Funding option: AFSAR, Habitat stewardship program, coastal restoration, try to pick up on ab or non ab programs. Funding for training and capacity very important. Two components, direct training like sending to course, other is hands on mentorship. Equipment capitalization very important.
- Post land claim we have been challenged in getting funding. Because programs don't apply to land claim orgs have to fund through INAC implementation of land claims in roundabout way. Pre land claim got funding through guardians program, now again through INAC.

Exercise One: Defining Services

- **Field Activities:** cleanup from fish farms. I.e: cleaning up gear, ropes, fish bags, trash on beach, habitat inventory monitoring, restoration of eel grass habitat, salmon counting fence
- **Resource Management Activities:** Data management, legal expertise on national and international governance, climate change, aquaculture, renewable energy, offshore wind energy, habitat protection, Species at Risk

What would you like to do?

"We need to do more ocean research. We are doing most of our research in the bay now. There is a tremendous cost to doing ocean research. We need technical capacity, larger vessels, equipment, and training."

- Participants mentioned emergency response as one of the biggest gaps in capacity their organizations face. One organization related the story of a vessel taking on water, the crew was saved but the vessel sunk. It was hard to find someone to salvage the vessel

and contain the fuel spill. There are not a lot of people that are available to do that so the organization felt there was an opportunity to fill the gap.

- One participant mentioned the need to align priorities with provincial priorities to access provincial funds. They commented how superclusters are coming to the region. It would be one of five throughout Canada. They felt if there are innovations in fisheries they want FN to have access to that and partnerships should be explored.
- One comment was that it is known the majority of protein in the future will come from aquaculture. Their organizations have been looking into offshore spherical fish farms.
- The administrative AAROM would like more access to capital, training and equipment.
- The administrative organization also mentioned the challenges dealing with national and international agreements. The word “Indigenous” was mentioned only once by Canada at the UN fisheries forum. They said Indigenous fisheries were on the cusp of becoming international. Soon nations will get into international governance because of upcoming treaties. Canada needs to advocate for indigenous nations and co-governance.
- Participants also mentioned they would love to have a communications officer. For instance they have no social media presence. Communicating with academia, industry. Specific NGO’s is pretty good. Legal review and communications are their big asks.
- One participant mentioned the hard time finding experienced staff for dealing with Marine Protection Area’s. MCT’s need people who have the right skill set. Masters or more experience. There are a lot of applicants but mostly people with little experience.
- Data collection was mentioned as something AAROMs would like to do more of. They say they are able to handle with skills but adequate funding is always an issue and a concern. *“Without having an expert in each field you are not doing the field justice. We don’t always have funding to have an expert in each field. We are not doing the work we would like to do.”*
- Habitat protection: One group has been doing habitat inventory monitoring but not a lot of protection. They say there are some gaps in skill sets in how to properly restore habitats.
- Participants also mentioned how they would like to do more habitat renewal. Their area has two major rivers and they have done surveys in one river, looking at where to restore spawning beds. But other than identifying the areas, they haven’t done much. They sent techs to Malaspina College (Now Vancouver Island University) fishery technician program. They have done freshwater habitat obstruction removal. They are looking to work with the Atlantic Coastal Action Plan to restore Eel Grass habitat.
- Species at Risk: Participant says they are well equipped to do work in Species at Risk, but the challenge is getting into a lot of SAR reviews.
- Participants stated a Joint Technical Working Group like in BC may be a model that can be copied to improve co-management practices.

- Participants say they would like to do more ocean marine research. They say inshore in-shore research is okay but there are lots of gaps in ocean research due to funding issues.
- One AAROM body brought up how they have tried to bring in revenue from commercial fishing and an environmental service contract as well as enforcement contracts and environmental monitoring. They say there are some needs on that side that could help like increased funding for commercial fishing, things to help us be better at pursuing other funding.
- One participant brought up an issue we have heard at other workshops. The issue of other federal departments asking AAROM groups to do work but not bringing any money with them.

Issue for Land Claim Groups

The group from Labrador raised an issue specific to their group as they are currently in a land claim. They have not been recognized because they lack evidence of pre-contact occupation. They stress there is need to further clarification around how they fit into the program.

- *“Wondering how AAROM fits in for groups in a land claim? We have two co-management boards. The challenge we had is we already interact with federal departments in natural resources. I see all of this happening through direct engagement rather than the indigenous program. None of our communities have spill response or emergency response. Not sure how this would fit in our existing self government structure.”*
- *“Legitimacy in terms of nation to nation is not the same for us because there is no archaeological record showing prior contact occupation of land. We are also not seen as treaty descendants because the treaty was made with Nova Scotia which at the time could not sign a treaty that could be recognized.”*
- *“We need to clarify the relationship between land claim groups and AAROM, where these issues are not addressed under agreements. Through direct negotiation. We are there to supplement where necessary but priority is to address through an existing structure. If you are in land claim you can have an AAROM. There are lots of gaps which AAROM can fill but the program is more of a project based approach.”*
- *“If elsewhere in Canada there is a group that has a modern treaty that is involved in an AAROM body, that would break down the barrier for the Labrador treaty group.”*

Relationships.

“The participation and decision making process is lacking. They are still telling us what they are going to do. It is not consultation.”

- Participants interact with the Regional Director General, Aboriginal Liaison, Oceans Program, Science, Resource management, Licensing as well as other departments like Environment Canada and Transport Canada. They report a particularly good relationship

with the DFO Aboriginal Division and the regional office They report there is not a lot of interaction with the province. It is a gap they feel needs to be filled.

- Participants noted how, despite the relationship being good with certain departments, one challenge is the frequent change in decision makers. They note how they constantly have to backup the discussion and educate new people.
- One participant expressed dissatisfaction with the provincial relationship related to climate change. “We were involved with Inuit Tapiriit Katanami (ITK) on climate change file. We had a discussion provincially on climate change but they always say they have no money. We want to fit into an INUIT climate change strategy.”
- *“We go to the Regional Advisory Process sessions and give input but it seems the sessions are driven by industry and unions. They make different assumptions about indigenous fisheries. It is a difficult table to sit at.”*
- *“We have conservation officers in the community. They do joint patrols with DFO enforcement during the food fishery. It helps the relationship and helps their officers understand what our fishery is.”*
- The administrative AAROM reports similar relationships with various offices within DFO and other departments. They do, however, point out a couple interesting details. They have found it is more effective to go directly to the RDG to get a response rather than the lower level regional offices. They also do not have a good relationship with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. *“It is horrible. Now indigenous Affairs says they will be the mediator. I tell every federal official now (Env Can, ACOA, Transport Canada, Service Canada, etc) we’ve had hunting delayed for months because of them. I would rather have federal departments come directly to us rather than INAC.”*
- One participant said they were surprised to find out that DFO Science was not receiving the good work they were doing. They pointed this out and say things have improved.

Do you see indigenous knowledge in decision making process?

“There is this vision of the noble savage. Academics see this as safe way to engage. I told Catherine McKenna to think of it as a system of knowing about something. It gives authority to invest in databases and GIS systems. Instead of collecting traditional knowledge, invest in traditional knowledge.”

- Participants reported mixed reactions to whether their indigenous knowledge is incorporated into the decision making process. One mentioned that they are starting to see it. The Oceans Marine Protected Area plan was to incorporate Inuit knowledge. It is a challenge to fit western science into traditional knowledge. A lot of people are struggling with it as traditional knowledge is verbal. One felt knowledge was not used even though DFO talks about it. They felt it was not incorporated correctly.

How do you evaluate performance?

“We look at adding value to partnerships with communities. We try to look at diversifying partnership and funding opportunities, other pots of money that should go to AAROM. We look at private funding and foundation funding. Delivering meetings, conferences, and workshop. Strategic plan is looking a priorities in species.”

Top Three Priorities

Top 3 priorities: increased capacity ie: emergency response, ocean research 2nd funding stability adequate funding 3rd: jurisdiction or co-management

- *“AAROM must be part of strategy of specific species research of innovation. Increased recognition of traditional knowledge, access to funding. Interpretation of language in land claims agreement.”*

Top 3 priorities: adding value, diversifying opportunities, delivering meetings, conferences, and workshops.

Do skills of team affect overall performance?

- *“That’s a given. We try to recruit people that have skills and training and try to recruit within our own membership. Would Professional standards improve performance? Yes.”*
- *“Professional standards? Depends on the task. Sometimes adhering to our indigenous standard is more important.”*

Wishlist

Participants were invited to state their wishlist for improving their programs.

- **Training wishlist:** Full Time Employees, specialized capacity for new areas ie: emergency response, adequate compensation, Occupational Health and Safety training, management structure
- **Wishlist:** long term sustainable funding, senior analyst, specifically in environment, biologist, GIS person.
- **Wishlist:** Need long term funding.
- **Wishlist:** Clear and concise communications. *“Chiefs get 200 e-mails a day. Understand main sources of data. When we go participate in meetings, we don’t talk treaty and rights based stuff, speak out when we need to, make space for women.”*
- One participant stated that one thing missing is to hear what government’s intentions are for the program.