

Purpose of these Plenaries

The plenaries were an opportunity for participants in the Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management program and the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative to comment on what the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute has heard to date about how these programs could be improved. This includes both confirmation that the Institute has captured the views of program participants (and others) correctly – and any additional feedback participants would like the Institute to reflect in the Indigenous Program Review – Phase One final report.

What We Heard

Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management Program

Funding

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with one adding that longer-term, block funding is strongly supported.

Reporting

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - One emphasized how much the inconsistent 'language' changes made during the process causes unnecessary work.
 - A few others noted the subjective nature of reporting – and the need for the reporting function to be aligned with Schedule 5 task descriptions.

Decision-making and Indigenous Knowledge

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - They discussed in more detail the importance of Indigenous knowledge being captured in Fisheries and Oceans Canada's decision-making processes – and better appreciated by the Department.
 - More than one participant expressed the urgent need for progress to be made in this area. *"We've been talking about this for 20 or 30 years now, but it still seems like we're at the first step of explaining Indigenous knowledge to [the Department] and why it is of value."* They were also pleased to see the emphasis on investing in Indigenous knowledge systems.
 - At the same time, participants strongly supported a shift in the role of Indigenous people and groups at the decision-making table to one of equals.

Services, Service Aspirations and Technical Needs

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - One participant recommended that agreements be reviewed more thoroughly to include the service aspirations and technical needs of groups – and not simply be rolled-over from year to year.
 - Several supported adding environmental assessments into the list of true/holistic co-management of fisheries and resources elements, along with the transfer of knowledge from these assessments, as results are not often reported back to Indigenous groups or communities.
 - Participants would also like the concept of ‘shared capacity’ to be emphasized more broadly as emergency response, science and research, data collection and catch monitoring are being done by Indigenous community members and groups today, and should complement the work of (and not be duplicated by) Fisheries and Oceans Canada. *“We find our guys are out there passing by Conservation and Protection or other catch monitors and we start to question why and how funds are being spent like this. The work of Aboriginal Fishery Officers, biologists, and others is complementary.”*
 - In addition, there was discussion about the need for the aquatic resource and oceans management program to be able to help groups maintain the technical capacity developed through other programs that are now sun-setting.

Relationships

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - A few would like to see ‘building relationships with other users on the water’ added to the list so groups can find ways to deal with issues that arise related to the recreational fishery, as well as with shipping, oil and gas, and tourism.
 - There was also discussion about the program links to truth and reconciliation. *“Fisheries and Oceans Canada is still working in silos like resource management, without linking their work to the objectives of the federal government and its principles on Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples.”*

Definitions of Success

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation but they wanted to ensure that this would not be considered a priority order list – as several thought ‘healthy fish and ecosystems’ would be the first priority.
 - One thought ‘increased access for First Nations’ should be added to the definition of success. Another thought ‘Tier 1 coordination’ was a necessary success factor.
 - There was a lot of discussion about what defines a real and meaningful role in aquatic resource and oceans management decision-making. For example, one participant saw the structure of the process along a spectrum from advisory to management and decision-making. In this context, they felt groups were more

heavily involved at the advisory end and that they needed to move more into collaborative decision-making roles.

Initial Conclusions

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - In support of the initial conclusions related to relationship-building activities, one participant said: *“Indigenous folks cross into the other world that is [the Department’s] – and they want [the Department] to now step into their world.”*
 - With regards to performance management metrics, participants suggested that it may be time to look at the objectives of the program to ensure that they reflected Indigenous definitions of success. At the same time, they wanted to ensure that the overarching goal and objectives of the program remain clearly focussed.

Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative

Program Design

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - There was some discussion about the need to put more emphasis on the benefits to communities through the program. *“We need a set of program metrics to measure the benefits to communities – not just enterprise profitability.”* One participant also wanted to ensure that the program’s design did not incite competition amongst communities.
 - In terms of the aggregation issues, a few wanted to add how this requirement resulted in communities getting left out of the program. At the same time, several participants wanted to know whether new entrants were being considered by the Department as a result of Program Review.

Funding, Applications and Reporting

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation. For example, there was support to try a unified application process – and strong support to align funding to business timelines.

Business Development

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with one participant specifically requesting that any reference to high- or low-value fish in the presentation be amended as high- or low-economic value. *“All fish are valuable to Indigenous fisheries.”*
 - There was a lot of discussion about the role of the business development team and their views about profitability and sustainability, which seem focussed more on buying more access as opposed to employing and otherwise benefitting Indigenous people. *“We are pushed to lease our licences to get the bottom line at the expense of putting our guys to work fishing.”* One participant suggested that

two licences and funding streams could be considered through the program to achieve both objectives. Another wanted to see these elements more clearly linked to program metrics.

- A few participants emphasized the need to know the services offered by, and the budget of, the business development team. *“We’re told, ‘We’re free’ but they’re not free, they’re getting funded by the program that was set up for us.”* Another wanted to see the team be more engaged with communities, similar to what takes place in Atlantic Canada.

Diversification and Diversification Programs

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.

Marketing, Market Access and Access to Capital

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - One wanted to see access to resources added to the capital needs of enterprises.

Training Needs

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - One supported how training funding in the past year was less focussed on ‘certifications’ because it allowed enterprises to offer more practical training, such as learning how to better work with engines.

Relationships and the Need for Co-management

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - There was some discussion about the value (and use) of the CFE Hub, with most participants seeing more value come out of informal, face-to-face interaction and networking among commercial fishing enterprises. *“The hub is useful in terms of the maps and for contact information.”*
 - Participants also support connecting resource management and stock assessments more closely to the program – as well as government-to-government co-management (which was discussed during the aquatic resource and oceans management program plenary).

Keys to Success and Definitions of Success

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - Discussion was especially focussed on the benefits to communities being the true measure of success. *“Commercial fishing enterprises are the instruments of the communities. Sometimes it seems like [the Department] and the Business Development Team are just trying to get us to meet the needs of the program – not the enterprises or the communities that they serve.”*

- Participants would like to see the program support more capacity-building and/or training to help enterprises report out on community benefits and successes at the community (as opposed to enterprise-wide) level. *“I’ve found ways to keep my fisheries people employed year round doing stock assessments, logistics and other activities. I want to be able to capture these metrics.”* Several others have achieved similar successes in their communities, but they don’t see these successes being reported out through the program.

Initial Conclusions

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
- In terms of program adjustments, one suggested that a fund similar to business development source funding could be added to invest specifically in people.