

What We Heard: September 13, 2017

- There is a lot of interest in understanding the realities of the market and commercial fisheries productivity issues – including the costs of getting the product to market (e.g., handling, transportation, fuel, etc.).
- Nunavut has a number of existing commercial fisheries development activities that should be explored by the Institute. Kitikmeot Foods plant in Cambridge Bay (one of Nunavut Development Corporation's holdings) is a good example because they are working along the same artisanal/commercial model – taking local fisheries and bringing to other markets. The Nunavut Development Corporation is also investing a lot of money in marketing and working to address the challenge of a steady supply. The Institute would equally benefit from understanding the Alaska-Arctic Bay exchange whereby dry goods are exchanged in turn for hunting of caribou and muskox.
- The Institute should talk with different communities and the Government of Nunavut's Economic Development and Transportation officers because there are differences between communities. There is also a difference between practice and policy, in terms of the present practice to subsidize transport/fuel costs of country food, but the policy does not necessarily have the 'buy local' policy. 'Processed' products, such as smoked char and other specialty products were also reported to be too expensive for local sale. It was thus recommended that the Institute bring this information to the attention of the Territorial government.
- There were questions about (and interest in) the benefits of a marketing campaign in helping to create more of a market for char; especially, a target market – and to getting the product to industries, such as the cruise ship industry.
- Economic development officers are conscious of the need to get results for the investment – and they asked how long the actual 'break-even' point would be for profitability in commercial fisheries. They also pointed out the realities of many remote areas that pay extremely high freight rates.
- Economic development officers asked if there were examples of companies getting into the value-added businesses, such as transportation, to retain profits in order to assess this option locally.
- Marketing at the local level is supported by the room. They see value in a locally sustainable fishery. They also noted the problems in lack of funding to build an industry – even though the fish are readily available. In addition, they agreed that quality control could pose issues, pointing to the need to bridge gaps with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.
- Participants were pleased to be engaged in the development of a program. They are curious about who will be delivering the product, to whom and how. For example, there was interest in the eligibility for funding for the spouses of Inuit persons and/or companies that hired Inuit employees. There was also interest in the ownership structure of fishing enterprises developed through the program.
- Participants all agreed that having the Institute participate in the *Northern Lights* conference in Ottawa at the end of January would be the forum to engage groups from Nunavut, Northern Quebec and Labrador.