

## What We Heard

*“We struggle with the fact that our fishery guardians have done incredible work that has led to a lot of charges, but there’s no recognition. We need some credit. We lead the charges; we’re just not laying them.”*

### Getting to Know Community Fishery Guardian Programs

- Fishery guardian programs differ among communities: while one program is mostly about enforcement and monitoring, another is just starting to get into enforcement, and another is split 50-50 between technical and enforcement activities. The number of fishery guardians in each community and the activities they do also depends on the priorities of each region.
- One community’s fishery guardian program monitors all fisheries that take place in their territories: food fisheries, recreational fisheries and commercial fisheries. *“One year, we refused to sign an agreement until it included monitoring other fisheries. We were told to turn a blind eye on everyone else, but we refused.”*
- Another community has a memorandum of understanding with the Department to address liability concerns, while others assume the liability risks.
- Participants report that their fishery guardians are very active beyond fisheries, dealing with wildlife, forestry, parks, and other activities. They would like to see this reality recognized through the program.
- Participants also note that program funding generally does not cover a lot of gas (over \$75 per week) and that guardians use their own trucks, boats, and equipment – or these are supplied by the community. The costs of training and uniforms are also assumed by the community. Lack of program funding, which has not increased since the first agreement, was noted by all participants as impeding program progress.

### Technical Activities

- Fishery guardians collect data on the number of fish that are being caught, in addition to data on forestry and hunting. They also prepare graphs on data collected and fish counts. Guardians know how to set and check nets to collect data on a number of species – and are beginning to look at the migration patterns of some species to fill data gaps.
- Some communities have different departments for technical work, such as fisheries enhancement, stock assessments, habitat restoration, species at risk, and invasive species. *“We apply for all sorts of funding to clean up the rivers, to remove obstructions, and other activities, but these are done through different parts of our department.”*
- Participants would like to see more technical work undertaken by fishery guardians and Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy program technicians to enhance the state of fish stocks, including rehabilitation and restoration work.

## Monitoring and Enforcement Activities

*“If our people do something that is contrary to our agreement, our government does not stand for it. We will charge our own people. We’re capable and willing to do this.”*

- Fishery guardians monitor on rivers, as well as at sea and on land. Patrols are done on foot, by boat, and from ATVs and trucks. *“Our guardians are stewards – they’re the ‘eyes and ears’ on the land. They are knowledge holders regarding hunters, trappers, and fish harvesters.”* Guardians look at permits and ensure rules and regulations are being followed, but their role is restricted to ‘observe, record, report.’ This role is insufficient for some participants. *“All that work and we never know what happens. We can’t bring anyone up on charges.”*
- Participants want to extend their patrols, but they cannot due to lack of program funding. *“It’s our biggest gap. Lack of funding limits our ability to travel – the cost of gas means we can only cover a small area.”*
- Lack of provincial jurisdictional authorities is also an issue for participants because it limits the ability to monitor and enforce provincial fishing regulations. *“We do all we can with fisheries, but licensing is done by the Province, and that’s why cross-designation would help.”* Participants are equally concerned about the Province’s seeming lack of interest in working with Indigenous communities to address these concerns.
- Some participants are interested in assuming more enforcement authority under the *Fisheries Act* (e.g., fishery officer level) rather than ‘passing it on to the authority figure.’ They have no issue enforcing fisheries rules in their community: *“If they don’t fill out the forms, the members do not get a licence the next year.”* Several also voiced concern about the lack of enforcement presence by fishery officers and/or provincial conservation officers. *“This gap needs to be addressed.”* One thought the Department should work with the Province to establish more guardians to do this work.
- Participants are very concerned about the pressure being put on salmon, eels and other fish by anglers and the recreational fishery. *“It’s important to look at the number of anglers getting a recreational licence. They simply fill out a form with how many are caught and what does C&P do?”* The number of sportfishery camps, the lack of catch reporting, and the impacts of ‘catch and release’ on fish is also a shared concern. *“The Elders say it’s not normal. We call it ‘catch and torment.’ It’s not our ways and it’s not in our principles.”*
  - One participant recommended that a set of federal regulations be developed to cover the recreational fishing intensity and pressure on Newfoundland and Labrador’s rivers. *“We need to see the tabs cut down for anglers. We must also cut down on catch and release – and couple this will community education.”*
- The impact of escaped farmed fish in rivers is another concern shared by participants.

### Community Education and Awareness Activities

*“We need more of a Resource Technical Program for tourism, hunting, parks, and other resource activities because the guardians are doing everything – and Indigenous people expect them to know everything about these other activities.”*

- Participants actively educate and raise awareness about the work of fishery guardians in their communities, including in schools. *“We answer all sorts of questions: How many tags am I going to get for salmon or spring birds? We also talk about communal catch and find out what they want in the fishery.”* They also hold public consultations to explain why research is being done and then report back on it at annual assemblies and stewardship workshops.
- While fishery guardians are actively engaged in education and awareness activities in their community, they note that there is no education being done to outsiders about the rules. *“With increased development in Labrador, caribou are hunted without permits and angling without licences.”* One also stressed the importance informing the public about the authority of a fishery guardian. *“Many people think we cannot check licences because we’re not an officer. They also think that we’re not about to do anything about what they’re doing.”*
- Participants would like more community-friendly communications materials about the work of fishery guardians, protecting species, and following the rules to give to community members.

### **Understanding Relationships**

*“Our relationship with the aquatic resource and oceans management group is for habitat restoration, species at risk and invasive species.”*

- Participants all expressed that they had a good working relationship with the Department, with some calling their relationship ‘excellent.’ Fishery guardians do joint patrols with the Department’s fishery officers and some communities share equipment. Some also report having a good relationship with Provincial conservation officers, as well as non-Indigenous contract guardians. One noted the benefits of their fishery officer also being a band member.
- Participants want to do more joint patrols with the Department. They also want to play a bigger role in monitoring and enforcement and to be integrated into the broader enforcement plan. *“We need to be involved at the front end in developing monitoring and enforcement plans – and patrol plans.”*
- Participants support fishery guardians doing the inshore work, while Fisheries and Oceans Canada does offshore monitoring and enforcement. They also view their relationship with resource management, science, and their aquatic resource and oceans management group to be important for their work and the success of the program.

### Reporting Structures

- No formal reporting structure was noted by participants. Some fishery guardians report to their managers (or Aboriginal Fishery Strategy coordinators) and they report directly to the Chief and Council. Others report on enforcement activities to the community and the Department. All communities send monitoring data to the Department.

## Understanding Training and Future Training Needs

*“We need confident fishery guardians and that requires trained and up-to-date employees.”*

- Participants report that training is inconsistent and not funded through the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy program. *“There is no official certification and very limited emphasis on training through AFS. We have real trouble with this. It causes trouble with people coming on who are half-trained or have no training.”* They also report that fishery guardians were trained on the enforcement side 20 years ago at the Canadian Coast Guard college, and that there has been a 13-year gap since the last training.
  - One guardian said in 1992, they were told that after completing phases one and two, they would move up to be a qualified fishery officer in phase three. *“We never got to phase three.”* Others said some guardians have taken this progression path, as well as progressions toward peace officer (RCMP) and technical careers.
  - One community went to College of the North Atlantic to develop curricula for the technical side of fishery guardian work.
- Participants prefer local training, noting higher retention and success rates when guardians are locally trained. They also want specific foot patrol training, in addition to boat training, along with standardized first aid and wildlife first aid, and rigid-hull inflatable operator training.
- Participants want the Department to recognize and accept curricula and courses offered by local colleges or other accredited, post-secondary institutes as acceptable for fishery guardian training; perhaps, through a credit transfer protocol. They also recommend that a formal standard training protocol or structure be established to get fishery guardian status, including recertification for existing guardians. *“We hired a former fishery officer to train us, but that was still not accepted by the Department.”*
  - One fishery guardian remains at the ‘trainee’ level even though she completed a two-year program in college in fish and wildlife. *“Meanwhile, non-Indigenous fishery guardians do their one-week training course and walk away designated.”*
- Participants also support an Aboriginal set-aside to be put into the Department’s procurement of non-Indigenous fishery guardians to ensure training of fishery guardians in Indigenous communities.

## Improving the Aboriginal Fishery Guardian Program

*“What we envision for the future is a fully year-round funded ‘conservation guardian program’ that has cross-disciplinary responsibilities.”*

- Participants support an ‘Indigenous resource manager’ cross-disciplinary guardian program to realize efficiencies and secure full-time jobs within communities. *“Guardians are doing everything anyway – and we need a program that deals with a more holistic approach.”* They also prefer having multi-skilled fishery guardians to complete both technical and enforcement duties.
- Participants want the Aboriginal Fishery Guardian program to be an integrated part of the Department’s enforcement. They would also like to see more responsibility be given to the program by other federal and provincial agencies, especially for parks and wildlife.

A few participants noted the importance of this collaboration for overlapping land claims in Labrador.

- Participants want recruitment and retention strategies and sufficient program funding to pay proper wages to fishery guardians. *“It’s hard to recruit young people with these salaries.”* They also want a wage scale for guardians and a benefits package. *“We need to provide incentives so people stay in the job.”*
- Participants prefer fishery guardians to be Indigenous people from the community, noting the need across the province to attract youth to these jobs. *“This is part of the green industry and economy. We need to take advantage of creating new positions like this.”* They would like the program to have sufficient funds to hire more guardians and to build full-time employment in their communities.
- Participants support more frequent training to improve team capacity and operational efficiency. They also want the program to have more emphasis on species recovery, in addition to conservation and protection.
- Overall, participants want *“more effort should be put into this program: training, enough funds, and the authority to do our jobs.”*

#### Measuring Success

- Participants measure program success through the retention of fishery guardians, their contributions to the health of fish stocks and the return of endangered species, and their training, skills and knowledge.

#### **Other Federal Guardian Initiatives**

- A few participants want clarity about how Indigenous Program Review of the Aboriginal Fishery Guardian Program relates to the federally funded Indigenous Guardian Initiative; especially, as communities are being contacted to attend guardian-related events for both. *“It’s very confusing when you look at this initiative and that one. Governments should be clear about these programs.”*

#### **Concurrent Departmental Fishery Guardian Program Activities**

- While the Aboriginal Fishery Guardian Program is undergoing review, one participant met with the Department a week before the workshop to enhance their community’s current protocol to deal with minor incidents.
- Participants also report that the Department’s Conservation and Protection Program is organizing some new fishery guardian training for guardians.