

## What We Heard

*“Iqalukuttiaq means a “good place to fish.”*

- Participants included experienced hunters and trappers and commercial fish harvesters in communities across the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut, along with regional wildlife board members. During the session, they explained the realities of fishing in the North and the isolation between the 24 communities in their region.
- Participants also shared their concerns and aspirations regarding future commercial fishing activity – and discussed how the new program could help communities meet their unique needs.
  - Some stressed the importance of country food programs and food security as a priority ahead of commercial activities. They pointed to the expense of running community freezers with the cost of fuel, and the need for a fuel subsidy program to offset these costs, as well as the cost of food distribution. One said funding through the territorial government’s economic and tourism development program was insufficient to properly run the program. *“There’s also no more community-share program.”*
  - Others see value in a commercial fish freight subsidy for local companies to bring products to other communities in the region and to take products south. One participant explained the unique issues that local harvesters experience using air freight to get their product to Winnipeg for processing: the weather in autumn can sometimes prevent air transport to arrive at scheduled times – or airlines do not want to go to the camps at all, so fish harvesters don’t complete their harvests. Also, if it gets too cold too early, the fish traps freeze or wind knocks them down, which makes the fishery more difficult. *“Sometimes, we have to wait a week or more for air freight and, sometimes, we only break even as a result.”*
    - To address this issue, some participants would like to explore how processing could be done in the region or the potential for getting larger vessels to bring the product to larger centers rather than using air transportation.
  - With regards to current commercial fish production, some participants are interested in exploring niche markets for their products, such as shrimp and char, using certification and quality branding strategies. *“Clients are looking for good quality fish and they want to know where the fish comes from.”*
  - Others want core funding for business development so they can start a commercial enterprise and assess the viability of the business. One would also like assistance with business applications.
- Participants report that more research is needed to understand the state of fish stocks in marine and freshwater sources in the region, including char, cod and whitefish,

along with sea mammals, wildlife and birdlife. They prefer that this research utilize both western science and traditional knowledge methods.

- One noted the benefits of the seven-year agreement between Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Hunters and Trappers' Organization to monitor Arctic char in the ocean. *"This is a one-of-a-kind model, which provides good employment for monitoring."*
- While acknowledging that there is a regional marine training consortium in Nunavut, and that some training has also come from Baffin, participants point out that this training takes place in Eastern Nunavut and they would like more training in their region. Some also see a need for outreach efforts to be made to encourage youth to take the training. *"Fishermen are aging in the region and we need a way to get more youth into the industry."*
  - One recommended that future fisheries training follow the example of the local guide training and cover fisheries operations management training.
- For future engagement activities, a few participants reminded the Institute that information must be available at least in Inuktitut and, for this region, Inuinnaqtun is preferred.