

Purpose of these Plenaries

The plenaries were an opportunity for participants in the Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management program and the Atlantic 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, but they would also like a point to be added that groups want to be involved in the budget development process for the program. *“We should be at the budget decision-making table and to be able to suggest what we think this program needs to support in terms of the budget.”*

Reporting

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.

Decision-making and Indigenous Knowledge

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - Participants strongly supported a shift in the role of Indigenous people and groups at the decision-making table to one of equals with the Department, and they would like to have advisory meetings separate from those with stakeholders.
 - They would also like to see more emphasis put on the need to build the communications and information-sharing capacity of First Nations to respond to increasing demands.
 - Participants discussed in more detail the importance of Indigenous knowledge being captured in Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s decision-making processes – and being better understood by the Department. *“The government is training Indigenous knowledge and its systems like buzzwords. There is a whole values systems embedded in Indigenous knowledge – and we would like to see these values embedded throughout fisheries management plans.”* Indigenous knowledge was also viewed as the link to achieving sustainable fisheries.

Services, Service Aspirations and Technical Needs

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - One participant suggested adding ‘new ways of collecting data’ to the higher-level science/data studies bullet and linking these concepts to the development of a new way to assess fish stocks.
 - Another thought the international scope of some of the work undertaken by aquatic resource and oceans management groups could also be reflected in this list. *“It’s important to understand how partnerships with sister communities in the U.S., for example, augment our level of capacity. We need to meet with Indigenous counterparts in the U.S.”*
 - There was strong support to maintain flexibility in the types of services that groups could offer. Some pointed out, for example, that this ensured groups could meet both the priorities of communities and the priorities of governments. *“There should be a wide range of options.”*
 - Participants think groups should have more control over the science and data studies related to food, social and ceremonial fish – as well as the stocks of import to their commercial fishing enterprises. There was also support for more program focus on marine science and capacity-building, as well as interlinkages with species at risk.

Relationships

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with a few suggesting that international relationships be added to reflect group participation in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, for example, and other international decision-making bodies.
 - A few pointed to the ‘informal networks’ that aquatic resource and oceans management groups have in the region as a potential model for collaboration. Groups also participate in a science symposium every year.

Definitions of Success

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, but thought Indigenous jurisdiction in the marine environment should be added.

Initial Conclusions

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - In support of the initial conclusions related to relationship-building activities, one participant stressed the importance of awareness-raising with other federal departments about the value and expertise of aquatic resource and oceans management groups. *“The Department should be our advocates – to ensure funding opportunities are brought to our attention.”*

Atlantic Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative

Funding and Reporting

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - There was some discussion about the continued need for the program to fund capacity-building. For example, participants noted how important increasing management capacity – and ongoing hiring and training of staff – is to keep up with expanding fisheries.

Business and Relationships

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - There was some discussion about the fisheries management system, with participants reporting that the lack of high-speed Internet in communities caused issues. A few also said that it took too long to enter data into the system and that some of the forms needed to be improved or updated. *“If you tab on the Fisheries Management System, the page reloads rather than going to the next field.”*
 - A few participants thought the program should consider other business expertise options, such as bringing in expertise on under-exploited or emerging fisheries.
 - With regards to commercial fisheries liaison coordinators, participants supported amendments being made to the aquatic resource and oceans management program before April to incorporate the role of these coordinators for communities that wanted to use their expertise. *“We’d like to see flexibility within the deliverables of the contribution agreement for fisheries liaison coordinators.”*

What We Heard: Gaps

- As was discussed during the aquatic resource and oceans management plenary, participants strongly supported a shift in the role of Indigenous people and groups at the decision-making table to one of equals with the Department. To that end, they would like to have advisory meetings separate from those with stakeholders.