

Purpose of the Plenaries

The plenaries were an opportunity for participants in the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy and Aboriginal Fishery Guardian programs to comment on what the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute heard during Indigenous Program Review engagement about how these programs could be improved. This includes by confirming that the Institute captured the views of program participants (and others) correctly, and by adding other information for the Institute to reflect in its Program Review Phase Two final report.

What We Heard

Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation regarding program objectives, lack of funding, administration and reporting, and Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy agreements. They also did not have any additional comments or changes regarding the conclusions presented on the technical activities, training, or food and culture slides.

Economic Components

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, noting that they were unaware that other Nations with Allocation Transfer Program licences had to pay management fees for those licences. *“We don’t pay those in the Atlantic.”*
 - There was also some discussion related to licence retirement activities in the Pacific and elsewhere.
- One requested that the wording be adjusted in the first sub-bullet to be clear that Nations want to define ‘moderate living.’ *“We should be defining it, not DFO.”*

Relationships

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with one asking that a sub-bullet be added at the end to indicate the need for networking opportunities amongst Nations.

Priority Access and Rights

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation.
 - Some Nations are working together to get Aboriginal Rights as ruled in Supreme Court decisions respected in law. *“We need to protect our rights first before*

precaution starts. It's conservation, then rights. We want this embedded in regulations."

- Protecting the importance of food, social and ceremonial fisheries in the precautionary approach through the 'Sparrow Line' was a diagram shared during workshops by one of these Nations. It has been posted on the Institute's website alongside other plenary materials.
- There was some discussion about protecting the rights of First Nations communities from organizations that do not represent these communities. *"DFO made that mistake in a policy in the 1990's and they don't want to admit it or correct it."*

Co-management

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with one adding that First Nations *"are only asked for help when the species is in trouble."*

Initial Conclusions

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, including the top three aspects of a renewed program for First Nations and how Indigenous communities will measure the program's success.

Aboriginal Fishery Guardian Program

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation regarding historical intent, funding and support, and filling the gap, and did not have any further comments or changes.

Program Objectives

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, but one stressed the importance of distinguishing between Indigenous communities in Newfoundland from those in Labrador in the notes with regards to 'being part of the Conservation and Protection enforcement plan.' *"One size does not fit all in our region."*
 - There was some discussion about how one community's fishery guardians became involved in the Department's enforcement plan. *"We facilitated a group with C&P, contract guardians, and our guardians so we could utilize the assets of the full enforcement group."*

Technical Activities

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, including that some fishery guardian programs are more focussed on technical work, while others do more enforcement-related work. *"Our guardians feel more comfortable with the technical and assisting on natural resources for the AAROM."* One wants their fishery guardians to be less involved in technical work.

- Several shared stories about their past involvement in enforcement activities. *“We will charge our people if they’ve done something that is against our laws. It’s based upon the decision of our community.”*

Resource Guardian

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, including that fishery guardians may do search and rescue. One also uses their guardians to monitor and protect cultural sites.
 - A few discussed their participation and training in search and rescue through Canadian Coast Guard auxiliary activities. One said this activity was arranged through their aquatic resource and oceans management group. *“We’re covered under their insurance and they pay some fuel.”* Another said they were getting funding this year for a new patrol boat under the community small boat program. *“We’re very active in RAMSAR.”*

Training Needs

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with one asking for cultural training (two-eyed seeing) to be added to a bullet.
 - One said they had to search to find what training may be available for their guardians and thought this information should be more readily available to communities. *“We’re being proactive trying to find training and it’s frustrating.”*
 - Another said funding set aside for training in the past did not go to communities. *“The Department set aside \$15 million back in 1999 for training, but none of it went to communities.”*

Relationships

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation. One noted that joint patrols with fishery officer had never been available in their region. *“They always said it’s an insurance issue – liability.”* Another said they were offered a vessel by the Department, but with changes in staff, they are no longer certain if it is still available.
 - There was agreement that some have issues with their province regarding authority to enforce provincial regulations and legislation, as opposed to federal legislation. *“We’re designated as a peace officer and allowed to enforce all federal regulations, but we need buy in and support from both the federal and provincial governments to enforce any legislation.”*
 - One asked for networking opportunities to be added to the three bullet. *“We don’t have any connections when it comes to learning from other Nations other than this workshop.”*

Authority and Recognition

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with one noting the connection with priority access and rights. *“Preferred method, preferred means, preferred location.”*

Filling the Gap

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, with one noting how important the *Fisheries Act* designation of fishery guardians is to their community.

Some Confusion

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation and there was some discussion about the Indigenous Guardian pilot program. One community that does not have a fishery guardian program is not sure if they do want guardians. *“I’m not sure after hearing everything in the room today.”* Another confirmed that refresher training was being offered in March.

Initial Conclusions

- Participants agreed with the conclusions captured in the presentation, including that the fishery guardian program should be separate from the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy.
 - There was some discussion about the career progression paths, with one noting that a lot of guardians do not want to go the fishery officer route. *“We have two or three Native fishery officers but most of their work is related to non-Natives.”* Another thinks succession planning must be emphasized to ensure the guardian program is revived in communities.
 - A few support collaboration amongst Nations, including through aquatic resource and oceans management groups, to train guardians to deal with different natural resources. *“We sat down with government officials and talked about this, and they agree, but no one has done anything about it.”*

Next Steps

Participants expressed support for the conclusions presented during the plenaries and they asked about the timeline for Indigenous leadership to review.