

Ignite a Culture Change as a Mission of Government

Recommendations to Improve Federal Fisheries and Oceans Programs released today by the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute

May 22, 2018 – The first report on the review of Indigenous fisheries programs calls on Fisheries and Oceans Canada to take a number of practical steps to improve its programs, while igniting an internal culture change to improve its relationship with Indigenous people and groups across Canada.

“We’ve come to the point in our relationship where we are ready for the next level,” said Jordan Point, Executive Director of the First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia and a member of the Board of the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute. “This means co-management of fish and aquatic resources at the nation-to-nation level.”

The report makes recommendations to improve three programs: the Atlantic Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative, the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative, and the Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management Program. Recommendations range from administrative adjustments, such as annually updating and making accessible consistent program guidance materials, to making key changes, such as reflecting Indigenous definitions of success in program outcomes. They also challenge the Department to invest in relationship-building and to tackle the difficult issues.

“We want commercial fishing enterprises to grow and diversify as a result of these recommendations,” said Lina Condo, Fisheries Business Development Advisor at Ulnooweg Development Group and Board member.

“As a priority, we also want to make sure that communities who have been left out of these programs have a chance to participate and build their capacity to succeed,” added Bob Chamberlin, Board member and elected Chief Councillor Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis First Nation.

Recommendations put forth to improve aquatic resource and oceans management groups are particularly progressive; calling on the Department to make a shift to a shared capacity model by recognizing that Indigenous groups and communities are best placed to deliver technical services. It also challenges government to start using the Indigenous science, data and knowledge it is funding through this program.

“The Department has created the ideal opportunity to have partners literally ‘in the field’ in the majority of the areas where it has a core, mandated responsibility to protect, conserve and manage aquatic and other resources,” said John G. Paul, Executive Director of the

Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat. “It’s time to unlock the value of this network.”

Recommendations were based on the input of more than 200 Indigenous program participants who were engaged in one of 10 workshops held between October 4, 2017 and February 7, 2018. Another 85 representatives of communities and groups in the North were also engaged in the development of the Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative.

“Being part of the review of existing programs is an opportunity for new programs for Inuit and other Indigenous communities in the North to be designed from best practices,” said Jeffrey Maurice of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and Board member. “While our programs will reflect our unique realities, they can always benefit from the lessons learned elsewhere.”

The final report of phase one of the Indigenous program review is the result of a collaborative approach being taken by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute to develop a joint vision for the future of these programs. This co-development, co-design, co-delivery approach is a reflection of the Government of Canada’s commitment to ensure that its programs and initiatives meet the needs and expectations of Indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast.

“We expect these recommendations to be addressed at the highest levels and across all regions and sectors of the Department,” said Mr. Paul.

“I am looking forward to reviewing the report and to seeing the results from phase two of the program review,” said Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard. “I appreciate all of the work being done by Indigenous partners and the Institute to bring their views together on how to improve these programs. Our collaboration is another important step on the path to reconciliation.”

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The National Indigenous Fisheries Institute is a technical organization that is promoting program design and development consistency across Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s Indigenous programs. The Institute and the Department are collaborating to review programs as announced by the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard in October 2017.