

Newsletter

Aboriginal Aquaculture Association

National Aboriginal Fisheries Forum
Seize the Economic Opportunities

National Conference held in Nanaimo

Over 300 delegates from across Canada attended the National Aboriginal Fisheries Forum II (NAFII) in early October, the theme “Seize the Economic Opportunities”. The focus of this forum is to develop national strategies, networks and processes that contribute to successful aboriginal economic development in the aquaculture and fisheries sector.

A capacity crowd of more than 160 delegates attended the daylong Aquaculture session organized by the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association (AAA). The day’s presentations featured a number of aquaculture development opportunities and case studies.

There were a number of presentations from fairly new and young programs from the eastern half of the country. Included among those were Dawn Madahbee and Irene Altman, from the Waubetek Business Development Corp., in Ontario; Bobby Gould of the Waycobah First Nation in Nova Scotia; and Pete Kanasawe, of Buzwah Fisheries and the Wilwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve on the eastern end of Manitoulin Island, in Lake Huron’s Northern Channel.

Kanasawe who owns the hatchery with his father said that the Wilwemikong Band fully regulates the Buzwah Fisheries company, which began some years ago with just a handful of cages and a couple of fulltime employees – as well as two part-timers to help harvest the roughly 300,000 lbs. of rainbow trout a year being produced at that time.



Pete Kanasawe – Buzwah
Fisheries Ontario

NAFF II was held at the Vancouver Island Convention Centre in Nanaimo, BC. There were over 300 delegates registered along with over 40 presenters and 30 exhibitors.



Day long Aquaculture session draws capacity crowd at
NAFF II

The farm has now developed into a much bigger operation with 10 50-foot-square cages that produce some 14 cage full of fish a year, yielding close to one million pounds of fish a year.

The site is now much more sophisticated and has four cages that are fully submersible, and has four fulltime and three part-time personnel (during harvest time).

What's more, said Kanasawe, the fact that there can be considerable difficulty in getting qualified and trained people in to the remote site to do repair work, the farm worked to be as self-sufficient as possible. That's meant training and equipping personnel to do their own repair and maintenance work, an added benefit for them personally and individually and for the wider community at large.

Considerable emphasis was given during the day to the need for First Nations to have the opportunity to develop and exercise their own governance skills, knowledge, capacity and experience.

That includes in fisheries, and Kanasawe said in his case-study presentation that while the band permits inspectors from the Ontario Minister of Environment to come on-site and take samples of the sediment on the bottom of the lake under the cages for monitoring purposes, the band monitors and regulates the operation.

On various occasions during the day it was stressed that, even at fish farms which are owned and largely run by non-aboriginal companies, the First Nation of the area continues to be able to have the final say in what is done there and maintains the ability to shut down operations it feels is doing damage to the local environment.

That came out particularly in a presentation by Les Neasloss, a now-retired fish-farm employee who used to be a commercial salmon fisherman with the Kitsoo Xixais First Nation.

Neasloss said the agreement the Kitsoo Xixais developed with the salmon-farming giant Marine Harvest Canada brought substantial amounts of money and employment to the island community.



Chief Les Neasloss
Photo courtesy of Marine Harvest
Canada

Aquaculture provides meaningful employment for Quatsino First Nation Members

Chief Tom Nelson of Quatsino First Nation said that the aquaculture industry in the area has contributed to the well-being and internal pride of his community, with only seven members remaining on social assistance (5 of whom are unable to work).

Chief Nelson indicated that the band is exploring opportunities to diversify its aquaculture interests via shellfish or other finfish production. The Quatsino First Nation has taken over a lake rearing operation previously used to produce juvenile salmon for salt water grow-out.

So beneficial had the long-standing arrangement been for the islanders, said Neasloss, that the BC Ferries Corporation had finally put in a ferry dock and provided long-needed improved access to the nearest township of Port Hardy on Vancouver Island.

Neasloss said the First Nation employees on the fish farms were now earning about \$20 an hour under MHC supervisors, and the Kitasoo also have their own plant for processing the salmon from the farms.

But attention wasn't only paid to salmon. Numerous other species being raised aquaculturally were covered by the presentations, including sablefish, sturgeon, sea cucumbers, trout and various kinds of shellfish such as oysters, clams and geoducks.

For BC First Nations there were immediate opportunities available to partner with industry. Albert Yu's company Wen Lian Aquaculture has developed the necessary hatchery technology and is looking to provide seed to interested First Nations partners to develop grow-out operations with sea cucumbers. As well Linda Hiemstra from Sablefish Canada Ltd. described their partnership arrangement with Kyuquot First Nation. Sablefish Canada Ltd. is interested in exploring similar partnership arrangements with other First Nations with sablefish (black cod).

In her early keynote address to the aquaculture session, Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance Executive Director Ruth Salmon took the opportunity to suggest to the mostly-aboriginal audience at the forum that First Nations can play a vital role in the crucial revitalization of the aquaculture industry across Canada, which she said has basically "flat lined" nationally since the late 1990s – until very recently.

"Given the decline of resource-based



Ruth Salmon – CAIA Keynote NAFF II

industries," said Salmon, "this employment opportunity in the aquaculture industry has proven to be a revitalizing social and economic force for a number of small coastal communities - from Newfoundland to the west coast of Vancouver Island," said Salmon.

And she added that First Nations in various provinces have already started developing aquaculture businesses of their own, operating within their traditional territories.

"While BC First Nations lead the way," she advised, "aboriginal aquaculture is also occurring in Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. In the case of BC, fish farming operations occur within the traditional territories of at least 28 First Nations.

"In addition to farming operations, at least 15 BC FNs also have processing facilities within their territories. In total, 78% of BC's annual output of farmed salmon is produced within traditional territories."

Salmon stated that according to a report prepared last year for the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association the BC salmon-farming and processing sector presently employs more than 286 First Nations people in management, production and administrative positions.

Those people, she said, are calculated to be earning a total of nearly \$11 million in wages each year.

Bobby Gould, involved with trout-farming program on the Bras d'Or Lakes in Nova Scotia as part of Waycobah First Nations two Mi'kmaq Indian Reserves on Cape Breton Island, summed it all up.

“Given life style expectations, natural skills, competence and confidence of the Mi'kmaq peoples working in the inshore waters, this opportunity (of economic development through aquaculture for the overall betterment of First Nation peoples) cannot be lightly dismissed, especially when compared to other industries,” Gould told the audience at the forum.

In closing the day Chief Richard Harry, Executive Director of the AAA, encouraged First Nations to celebrate their successes in creating new economies and prosperity within their communities through aquaculture development.

He noted the tremendous change of attitude regarding aquaculture amongst First Nations compared with only a few years ago when there was considerable apprehension. “First Nations have embraced aquaculture as not only a means to bring employment and prosperity to their communities but also as a mechanism to induce change, foster co-management of aquaculture resources in traditional territories and to advance environmental stewardship through best practices”.

Chief Harry expressed his pride in the achievements of First Nations in aquaculture and thanked the presenters for unselfishly sharing their challenges and successes.



Special Thanks

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE NAFF II SPONSORS

The AAA is grateful to those that responded to our request for financial support for NAFF II.

We want to give special recognition to those companies representing the aquaculture industry, not only for the financial contribution but also for lending their support and expertise to the NAFF II conference Aquaculture session.

Grieg Seafood
Mainstream Canada
Marine Harvest Canada
Troutlodge
Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance
BC Salmon Farmer's Association
Creative Salmon
Sodexo
Investment Agriculture
Foundation of BC
Province of British Columbia

NAFF II Speakers & Presentations

CAIA- the Canadian Aquaculture Industry's Umbrella Organization

The Executive Director of the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance (CAIA), Ms. Ruth Salmon provided a keynote address with the following highlights;

Global estimates suggest that by 2030 an additional 40 million metric tonnes of seafood will be required and since the fisheries have largely reached their maximum sustainable capacity this demand will largely be filled through aquaculture production

With operations in every province from coast to coast, the \$2.1 billion Canadian aquaculture sector has the potential to expand production to help meet this growing demand.

There are specific opportunities for First Nations to enhance their participation in the sector by developing aboriginal ventures or via partnerships with industry players.

The keynote session concluded with a reaffirmation of the autonomy of each First Nation to choose whether or not to engage in aquaculture development within their communities.

Ontario; Waubetek's Fisheries and Aquaculture Strategy

Dawn Madahbee and Irene Altman of Waubetek Business Development Corporation described Waubetek's Fisheries Strategy – a newly developed plan to enhance First Nations participation in commercial and recreation fisheries and aquaculture in Central Ontario. The plan presents a roadmap for the 27 First Nations within Waubetek's service area to increase employment and prosperity based on sustainable utilization of aquatic resources.

B.C.; Integrated, Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA)

Dr. Stephen Cross discussed his pilot-scale Sustainable Ecological Aquaculture (SEA) System, a multi-trophic production site that raises sablefish as the principal fed aquaculture species as well as a variety of shellfish and aquatic plant species that extract residual nutrients from the water. This integrated system is gaining recognition as a balanced approach to sustainable aquaculture development

Ontario; Cage culture of Rainbow trout in Lake Huron

Pete Kanasawe described the Buzwah Fisheries' 10-cage operation which produces more than 800,000 pounds of trout annually and employs 7 band members – 4 full-time and 3 part-time. Future expansion plans are under consideration. DFO's science unit has worked extensively with Buzwah Fisheries (and other cage culture producers in Lake Huron) to monitor the effects of aquaculture production on the surrounding ecosystem and has found that, when managed properly, these operations are sustainable.

B.C.; Pentlatch Seafoods Ltd. is owned by the K'ómoks First Nation on Vancouver Island

General Manager Richard Hardy explained the history of Pentlatch Seafoods, a shellfish aquaculture company established by the K'ómoks First Nation. Taking a proactive approach, the development has succeeded and today more than 20 people are employed in the venture. Looking ahead, Pentlatch is ready to launch a geoduck production operation, however, it is awaiting a licence and policy changes from DFO to enable it to pursue this opportunity. Mr. Hardy noted that K'ómoks and other First Nations were working with the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association to engage DFO in a process to enable geoduck farming to move ahead.

B.C.; Ahousaht First Nation students learn about salmon farming

Wally Samuel and George Frank described the SMOLTS (Systematic Mentoring of Learning Technicians)

program for Ahousaht First Nation students, which has been established in a partnership between Mainstream Canada and the Ahousaht Nation. The program exposes students to a variety of positions with Mainstream's salmon farming and processing operations in an effort to develop skills and provide students with opportunities to see if employment within the aquaculture sector is something that they may wish to pursue. The program is now in its fourth year and 25 students are participating in various training programs involving hatchery, processing, cage site and mechanical repair programs.

P.E.I.; First Nations involved in many different Aquaculture Projects

Randy Angus from the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of P.E.I. presented an overview of Atlantic First Nations' engagement in various aquaculture operations including: oyster production (Eskasoni, Lennox Island, Waycobah), arctic char (Millbrook) and trout (Waycobah). Bobby Gould explained the partnership arrangement between Waycobah First Nation and Cold Water Fisheries for production of rainbow trout (steelhead) in the Waycobah territory. The farm consists of three cage culture production sites in eastern Nova Scotia – two seasonal sites and one year-round site. A pleasant surprise was the amount of different employment opportunities that spun-off from the fish farm investment, including net washing, repair, transportation and other services.

B.C.; The Kitsoo/Xai'xais First Nation is participating in environmental monitoring

Les Neasloss told the meeting that he has observed the salmon farming operations in the First Nations' Territories near the central coast community of Klemtu throughout the period since the farms were established a dozen years or so ago, and he noted that a local monitoring program has confirmed that the health of the surrounding ecosystem remains strong. Mr. Neasloss invited doubters to visit the community to see the healthy clam and urchin populations for themselves. Moreover, the terms of the partnership agreement with Marine Harvest Canada enable the community to terminate operations if environmental concerns arise. Today, 15-20 community members are employed on production sites and about 30 work in the processing plant.

B.C.; New species provide opportunities for First Nations

Many First Nations are interested in the production of Sablefish (Black cod). Linda Hiemstra from Sablefish Canada Ltd. described her company's partnership arrangement with the Kyuquot First Nation on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The partnership presently operates two sites in Kyuquot Sound and is developing a third site. Sablefish Canada is interested in partnering with other First Nations to develop similar operations in other territories.

B.C.; The farming of Sturgeon is also an opportunity in Canada that is of interest to some First Nations

Different species of sturgeon are being produced in tank farms on both the east and west coast of Canada. Justin Henry described Target Marine's sturgeon farming venture which is located on the Sunshine Coast just north of Vancouver. Target Marine began farming white sturgeon more than a decade ago and is now harvesting sustainably produced caviar for high-end niche markets around the world, and has already won awards for the quality of its products. While a female sturgeon takes a long time to produce caviar, income can be generated on an annual basis by the sale of meat from the fast-growing males in a population.

B.C.; Sea cucumbers- the next big thing in B.C. aquaculture?

Albert Yu from Wen Lian Aquaculture described his company's efforts to develop a sea cucumber industry in BC. The company has developed the necessary hatchery technology and is looking to provide seed to interested First Nations partners to develop grow-out operations to produce marketable products. The price of this product has increased considerably in recent years, as well Canada is seen by many Chinese buyers as a preferred supplier of seafood due to its pristine waters and an appropriate regulatory regime.

For more information on the presentations go to the AAA website:

<http://www.aboriginalaquaculture.com/national-aboriginal-fisheries-forum-ii-seize-economic-opportunities>

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR



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Images from NAFF II



Alejandra Hernandez & Valerie Lamirande
BC Salmon Farmer's Association Trade booth