

4TH NATIONAL AAROM MEETING FINAL REPORT

We respectfully acknowledge the unsundered, unceded, unreleased traditional territory of the Hupačasath First Nation, and the traditional keepers of their land since time immemorial or ?iiqh-muu. We want to thank you for allowing us to gather on your lands.

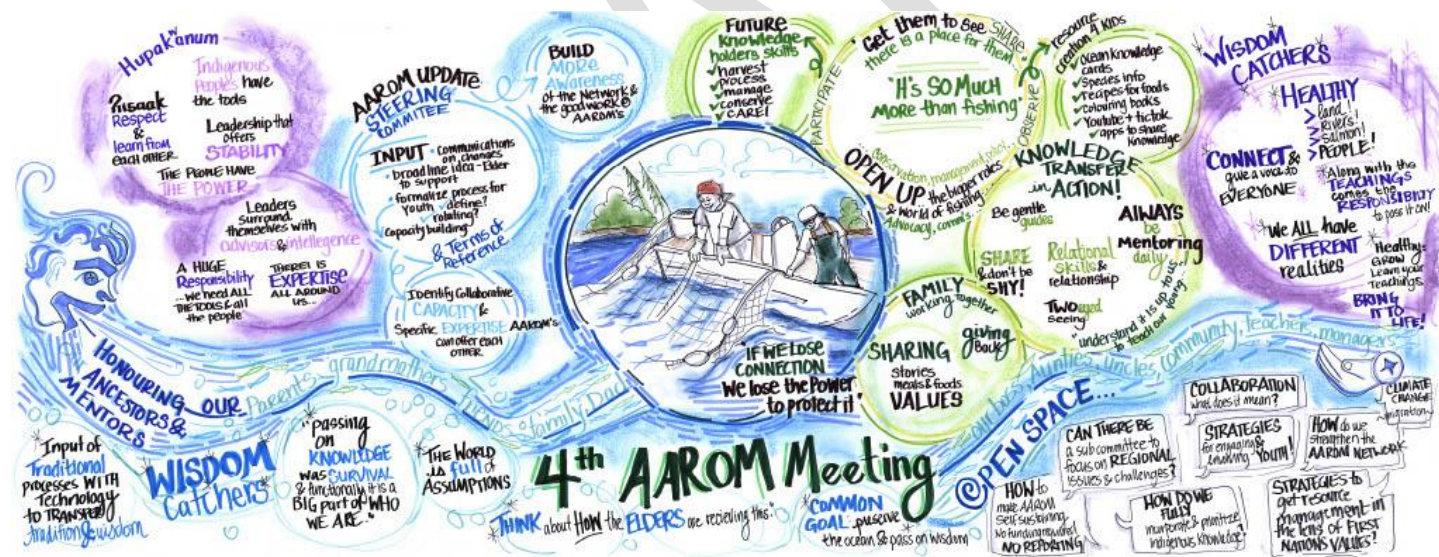
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Graphic Recordings



Graphic Recording of Day 1 - Created by Kelly Poirier (White Raven Consulting)



Graphic Recording of Day 2 - Created by Kelly Poirier (White Raven Consulting)

Summary

The National AAROM Meeting is an action-oriented, operational meeting that brings together executives of Indigenous organizations participating in the Aboriginal Aquatic Resources and Oceans Management program (called AAROM departments), along with AAROM program officials from Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), to share information and collaborate on joint initiatives. It provides a unique opportunity for leaders and staff of AAROM groups to meet their peers from across Turtle Island, to discuss together their successes, challenges, and aspirations as they travel down a common path, and to seek out opportunities for growth and meaningful collaboration. Each meeting is co-designed, co-developed and co-delivered by a Steering Committee comprised of members from AAROM departments and DFO program staff. The previous three national meetings and a virtual meeting series were held between February 2019 and September 2022.

Five years into the renewal of Indigenous Programs, there has been a significant transformation in the organizational structure and processes, marking a period of innovation and implementation in response to the review recommendations. Observed is a renewed focus on fine-tuning existing processes, improving communication, and guiding new opportunities for partnerships. Central to this transformation has been the establishment of the Capacity Development Team (CDT) and the Indigenous Training and Skills Development (ITSD). These new structures have been instrumental in streamlining operations, enhancing collaboration, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The CDT, comprising members from diverse fields, has been pivotal in driving innovation and fostering a holistic approach to capacity-building. On the other hand, the ITSD has been crucial in the development of training opportunities and initiatives for Indigenous communities. This has not only improved the overall operational efficiency but also opened new avenues for collaboration, growth, and development.

Hosted by the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC) in the incredible territory of the Hupačasath, the Fourth National AAROM Meeting was held over a three-day period between April 15th and 19th, 2024. At the head of (Alberni Inlet), where the Tsu-ma-uss (Somass) river connects Klekhoot (Sproat), Moo-hoolth (Great Central) and Ah-toosh-nit (Elsie) lakes to the Pacific Ocean. The rich cultural history of the territory is deeply rooted in fisheries and aquatic resources it protects and supports. With deep connections to the Alberni Valley and the Tseshah First Nation, the facilitation services offered by White Raven Consulting inspired possibilities and potential alongside the host organization through a respectful and culturally sensitive approach. Participants were comprised of 66 in-person and 4 virtual attendees, from all regions. To foster communication and the exchange of knowledge, the meeting was designed to optimize collaboration among participants. This was reflected in the utilization of various facilitation techniques during the sessions such as the *Open Space Technology* and the *World Café Method*, enabling participants to engage in small-group discussions on their preferred subjects. With the intention of ensuring continuity from the Third National AAROM Meeting in Dettah, Chief Fred Sangris and Chief Ernest Betsina from the Yellowknife Dene First Nation were extended an invitation to attend and participate.

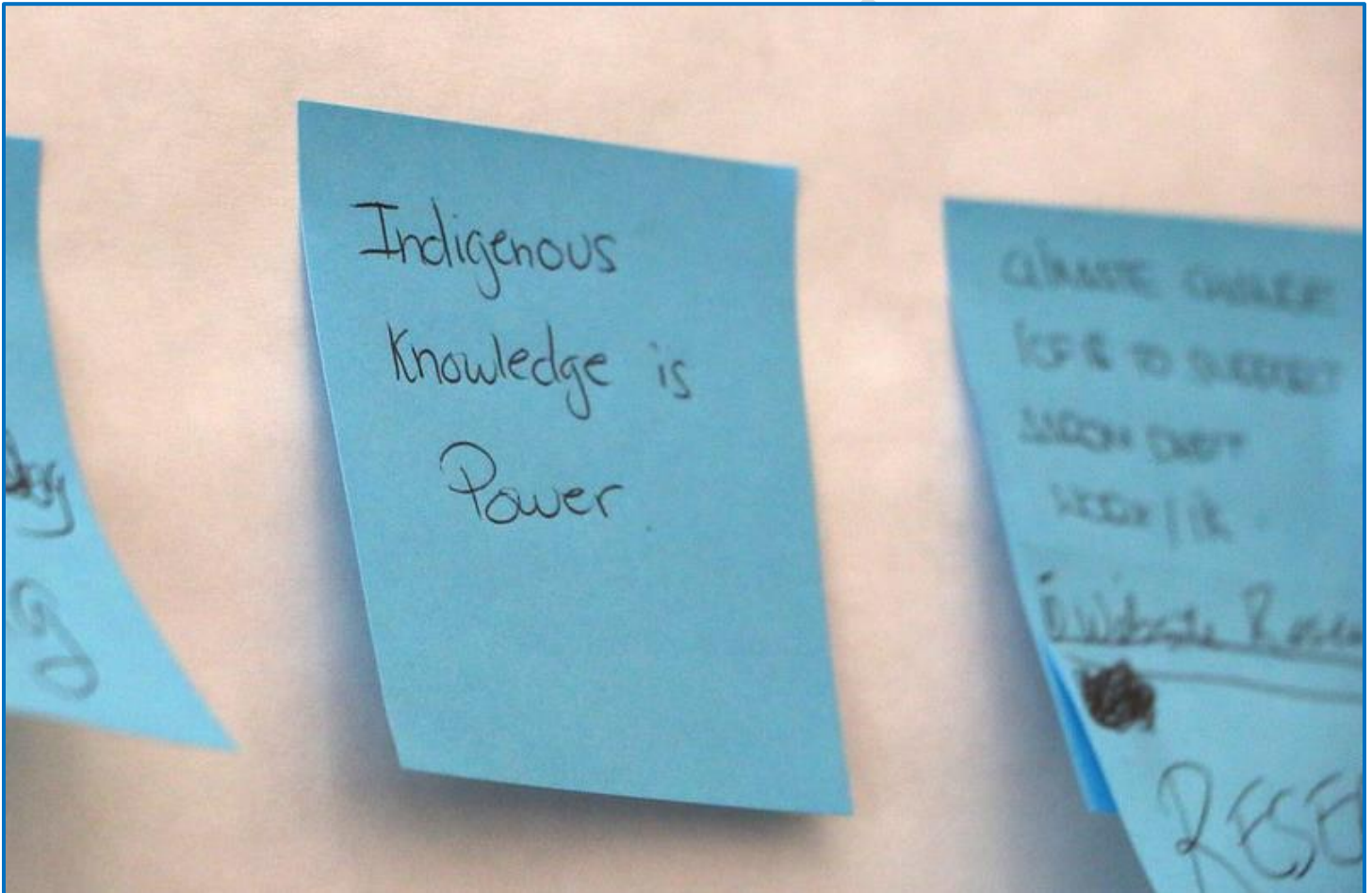
Cultural Components

The inclusion of cultural components from the host community, the Hupačasath First Nation, played an integral part of the Fourth National AAROM Meeting. Rich in ceremonies, marked by festivities and entertainment that include song, dance, competitions, and theatrical performances, attendees could truly immerse themselves and experience the culture through; teachings and traditional knowledge shared by Elder Cliff Atleo and Chief Councillor Brandi Lauder; a performance by Haahuupayak Elementary School students; and food staples commonly cooked in local Indigenous homes.

Conclusion

With four iterations under its belt, the National AAROM Meeting serves as a significant platform for the collaboration and knowledge exchange among Indigenous organizations participating in the AAROM program and AAROM program officials from Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Its objective is to create a platform to discuss successes, challenges, and aspirations, and to seek out opportunities for growth and meaningful collaboration. Its structure ensures a transparent yet continuously innovative approach to the way the AAROM program is

delivered via, inter alia, the identification of action points and provision of updates on their implementation. This process, carried out through iterative meetings, facilitates a natural cycle of responsibility and accountability. Recent transformations in DFO's Indigenous Programs, including the establishment of the Capacity Development Team (CDT) and the Indigenous Training and Skills Development (ITSD), have been instrumental in streamlining operations, enhancing collaboration, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The 4th National AAROM meeting held in April 2024, hosted by the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council (NTC), was a successful example of this collaboration and knowledge exchange, utilizing various facilitation techniques to optimize participant engagement. Attendees originated from diverse generational backgrounds, which not only enriched the variety of viewpoints, but also the depth and significance of the discussions. Consequently, the National AAROM Meeting thus plays a crucial role in the continuous growth, development, and collaboration between Indigenous organizations and DFO.



Message saying: "Indigenous Knowledge is Power" written by attendee during a facilitation activity. (Picture by Irine Polyzogopoulos).

Introduction

About this report

This report provides a high-level summary of discussions held at the 4th National AAROM meeting, on Hupačasath First Nation territory, along with a synthesis of potential future action points for the AAROM network and the AAROM Network Steering Committee. During this event, graphic recorders captured many of the themes, ideas, and stories shared by participants. Some of their graphic recordings are included here, along with a few event photos. All of these materials, including this final report, have been shared with meeting participants and can be found on the [AAROM.ca](https://aarom.ca) website.

The National AAROM Meeting

The National AAROM Meeting brings together executives of AAROM departments with DFO for an action-oriented and operationally focused meeting that aims to help advance the individual and collective priorities of the AAROM network across what is now known as Canada. Its specific objectives are to enable Directors of AAROM departments to:

- Discuss operational and capacity-building challenges & solutions
- Share knowledge & expertise
- Build partnerships and shared solutions
- Develop tools & practices to help strengthen the AAROM network
- Receive updates and provide feedback on the AAROM program and co-delivery partners (e.g., AAROM Network Steering Committee, Capacity Development Team, and Indigenous Training and Skills Development)

The annual National AAROM Meeting emerged in response to the findings and recommendations of the Indigenous Program Review (IPR) which engaged all AAROM-funded organizations and was led by the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute (NIFI). The first IPR report (2018) highlighted:

- The significant capacity built by AAROM departments and suggested further opportunities to grow the network and diversify activities/services.
- The need to support networking between AAROM departments to share information, advance collaboration and promote the network.

IPR also set a new standard for collaboration between DFO and Indigenous groups. The National AAROM Meeting is an ongoing example of this, as it is co-developed, co-designed and co-delivered via a Steering Committee comprised of Indigenous executives from AAROM departments and DFO program officials. Each meeting also provides a unique opportunity for an AAROM department to step forward to host and co-deliver the National AAROM Meeting within its communities.

The AAROM Network Steering Committee

According to its revised Terms of Reference (presented at the 4th National AAROM Meeting), the Steering Committee will:

1. Serve as a forum to co-design and co-deliver the annual National AAROM Meeting, which includes raising awareness about the purpose, objectives, and process for the Meeting.
2. Support and encourage collaboration and communication across the Network of AAROM departments, including co-developing and/or advising on initiatives that can benefit the AAROM Network.
3. Promote the AAROM Network externally, including supporting better relationship and collaboration between AAROMs and DFO.
4. Provide advice and support for continuing renewal and improvement of the AAROM Program.

The 4th National AAROM Meeting

The Nuu-chah-Nulth Tribal Council (NTC) hosted the 4th National AAROM Meeting on unceded, unsurrendered, unreleased Hupačasath traditional territory beside the city of Port Alberni, BC from April 15 to 17, 2024. The meeting and its agenda (appendix 1) were co-developed by NTC and the AAROM Network Steering Committee and was informed by outcomes and action areas from previous national and virtual meetings. These topics included:

- ❖ AAROM Hub Website
- ❖ Indigenous Knowledge Systems/Traditional Knowledge
- ❖ Capacity assessment framework & support (Capacity Development Team) & Indigenous Training & Skills Development (ITSD)
- ❖ AAROM Innovation and Collaboration Fund (ICF)
- ❖ Developing HR capacity (tools and resources)
- ❖ Youth-Elder knowledge transfer
- ❖ Networking and mentoring
- ❖ Communication strategy

Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, Hupačasath First Nation & Tseshah First Nation

Acknowledging the land, water, culture, and language of the host community

[Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council \(NTC\)](#) is a not-for-profit society that serves its members in three keyways: program & service delivery, political advocacy, and centralized administration. It provides a wide variety of services and supports to fourteen Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations with approximately 10,000 members. The 14 Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations are divided into three regions:

1. **Southern Region:** Ditidaht, Huu-ay-aht, Hupačasath, Tseshah, and Uchucklesaht
2. **Central Region:** Ahousaht, Hesquiaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, and Yuu-cluth-aht
3. **Northern Region:** Ehatesaht, Kyuquot/Cheklesah, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, and Nuchatlaht

Facilitators: White Raven Consulting

Dawn Foxcroft, taaʔisumqa, and Kelly Poirier, čiiʔilumqa, of White Raven Consulting and Tseshah First Nation provided facilitation services for this event, including lending valuable advice during the early planning phase. They aimed to seamlessly incorporate Nuu-chah-nulth values, traditional knowledge, and cultural sensitivity, and brought a deep understanding of communications, paired with an original and fresh approach to encourage open sharing and discussion of experiences, ideas, and information among the participants. With deep connections to the Alberni Valley, unceded Tseshah First Nation ha-houlthee (traditional territories), White Raven Consulting inspired possibilities and potential alongside the NTC through a respectful and culturally sensitive approach, creatively connecting their deep pride in ancestral teachings.

Fisheries (Uu-a-thluk)

Uu-a-thluk is the aquatic resource management department of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. The word Uu-a-thluk means "taking care of" in our Nuu-chah-nulth language. Uu-a-thluk works closely with First Nations, governments, communities, businesses, and environmental organizations to promote and support the sustainable management of ocean and freshwater marine resources on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

The department supports Nuu-chah-nulth participation in the harvest of fish and shellfish, in keeping with Nuu-chah-nulth traditional practices and principles. They work with the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations to monitor and gather scientific data about aquatic ecosystems on Vancouver Island's west coast. Past projects have included gathering information about chinook populations, monitoring sea lice and conducting crab surveys.

It is responsible for the communication about marine resources and coastal ecosystems on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Uu-a-thluk organizes the Council of Ha'wiih Forum on Fisheries. The forum brings Nuu-chah-nulth Ha'wiih (Hereditary Chiefs) and representatives, and other governments and organizations together to work on initiatives related to ocean resource management. **Uu-a-thluk** also plays a lead role in Joint Technical Working Group meetings. They provide career-based training programs, internships and mentorships, as well as summer camps to teach kids about marine science but also present career workshops and events to help Nuu-chah-nulth people in remote communities find jobs and develop careers in aquatic resource management and ocean foods harvesting.



Wooden sign decorated with traditional art for the Hupačasath Hiits Hisimyityuk House of Gathering (Picture by Irine Polyzogopoulos).

Cultural Components

Held at the House of Gathering, situated within Hupačasath First Nation territory, the integration of cultural elements to the 4th National AAROM Meeting was prioritized. Their inclusion was not merely symbolic, but a fundamental aspect of the meeting, reflecting the commitment to creating a space of understanding, respect, and inclusivity. Rich in ceremonies, marked by festivities and entertainment that include song, dance, drumming, and theatrical performances, participants had the opportunity to truly immerse themselves and experience the culture.

The meeting opened with a welcome from Chief Councillor Brandi Lauder and a prayer in Nuučaañuł from Ahousaht Elder wickaninnish Cliff Atleo who also shared with the room traditional knowledge, such as the story and importance of the ɥuupukʷanum (the traditional Nuu-chah-nulth governance toolbox). Furthermore, local Elders shared stories, knowledge, and perspectives through their participation in various meeting sessions. As a fundamental component of traditional gatherings, the food provided to attendees was carefully prepared by the Kuu-us Cafe, a local Indigenous café that pays tribute to the staples cooked in Indigenous homes throughout the West Coast. Simultaneously, participants had the opportunity to attend a performance by the students of the Haahuupayak Elementary School, featuring intricate masks, dancing, singing, and drumming. Moreover, the practice of gift-giving was also integrated, with local Sockeye being presented to the Elders, facilitators, and meeting participants for their contribution. Likewise, the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council was presented with a commemorative plaque in acknowledgement of their tremendous effort in hosting the 4th National AAROM Meeting. By embracing cultural elements, we fostered a holistically welcoming environment while also honouring Hupačasath ancestors, contributing to the success of the meeting.

DAY 1

Prayer/Opening/Welcomes:

Brandi Lauder, Chief Councillor for Hupačasath First Nation, opened the meeting with a warm welcome to all. Ahousaht Elder wickaninnish, Cliff Atleo, shared with attendees a prayer in Nuučaan̓uł and the importance of the ɥuupukʷanum, the traditional Nuuchah-nulth governance toolbox. By opening the two-day meeting in such way, Indigenous knowledge and inclusion were effectively positioned as central aspects of the gathering.

Session 1: AAROM Update

AAROM National Program Update

The presentation delivered by Steven Purvis, DFO, provided a national overview of the activities and outcomes of the AAROM program in 2023-24, including the recent evaluation of the AAROM and AFS programs, potential future trends in federal funding and programming, as well as the program framework now in place to support ongoing capacity development. The action plan resulting from the evaluation will aim to improve internal communication, training, performance measures, and service standards, as well as strengthen the monitoring of internal operational resources. These actions and others will also support implementation of [UNDA recommendations #38 and #39](#). The AAROM program continued to provide core funding to support 34 Indigenous technical and regional/national organizations (77% of these through 5-year funding agreements). The session also highlighted the implementation of capacity development initiatives, including new program structures and ongoing capacity development support. This session also addressed the AAROM Innovation Collaboration Fund, highlighting its support for 24 projects totaling \$2.3M. There has also been notable growth in collaborative projects, resulting in 4 projects for \$1M and involving 17 AAROM departments.

AAROM Innovation & Collaboration Fund (ICF) priorities identified for 2023-24 were:

- Human Resources;
- Operational Infrastructure;
- Communications & Governance;
- Regional Research, Planning & Coordination;
- Develop New Services & Partnerships;
- Indigenous Knowledge;
- Engaging Youth.

The AAROM departments continue to resonate with these priorities and have expressed their support for carrying them forward into the upcoming year of the fund. As we approach a federal election and the possibility of a change in government, there is a growing sense of anxiety about the predictability of future funding across the Network. Other key considerations included high inflation, technological change, and security.

Action Points:

1. DFO to assess and, where possible, strengthen its performance reporting of the AAROM program to AAROM departments, as to ensure sustained transparency and accountability in program decision-making and results.
2. Undertake a review of the reporting procedures for AAROM contribution agreements and streamline where possible.

AAROM Hub Website

Tanya Condo, MWIFMA, and Malia Tremblay, DFO, summarized the achievement milestones for the [AAROM Hub website](#) since its inception and updated on the successful implementation of recommendations made at the

3rd National AAROM Meeting. This included the co-design and co-delivery of technical-level virtual workshops on the tools and functionality of the Hub website to foster further awareness and utilization. Moreover, through a survey, workshop participants provided important feedback and suggestions (e.g., identified potential constraints in the Extranet utilization due to account access issues, and proposed enhancements, such as the creation of a page to share AAROM Innovation & Collaboration Fund projects). The surveys highlighted a strong desire among the AAROM Network for social media participation to enhance awareness of current initiatives, funding opportunities and the spotlight of various AAROM projects. Over the coming year, different avenues for implementation of recommendations will be explored by the AAROM Hub website team and developers.

Action Points:

3. Explore avenues to create social media presence for the AAROM Hub website on popular platforms.
4. Review and update the Extranet access list.
5. Insert nationally relevant events in the AAROM Hub calendar.

World Café

Introduction

Following a World Café approach, participants broke into small teams to discuss the issues or questions emerging from the AAROM program update and AAROM Hub website presentations. Each round began with a question, followed by small-group discussions then participants rotated groups between each round. The discussion prompts encouraged participants to reflect on what they had heard, the thinking it stirred in them, and how it might shape or impact the way they work with or in their communities.

The resulting conversations centered on several key themes such as the adequacy and availability of funding, human resource development and staff retention, intergenerational knowledge sharing and cultural inclusion. As groups anticipate financial instability due to factors such as inflation, program phase-outs and restrictions in vital funding allocation, they wish to see further information and transparency from DFO. The discussion also focused on the importance of engagement, respect, cultural understanding, education, and continuous learning. The role of education in Indigenous projects, the importance of communication, cultural inclusion, and intergenerational knowledge sharing are vital. The necessity of involving Elders and youth in projects, building relationships within Indigenous groups, and balancing human and technical elements in collaborations were also discussed.

What is stirring about what you heard and how it will help you do YOUR work in your community?

During this discussion, participants identified significant concerns linked to funding and the ability to maintain long term core operational capacity, including staff. These concerns extended to rising inflation, anticipated budget cuts, changes in government and how all these factors may adversely impact access to the funding necessary to sustain existing activities and service delivery. It was also noted that reductions in travel provisions are not favorable for relationship building with DFO. In light of anticipated inflationary pressures and predicted federal budget cuts potentially restricting access to vital resources, AAROM departments expressed an interest in learning more about which programs are slated for phase out and the manner in which the remaining funds will be allocated. In addition to these concerns, multiple aspects of the discussions underscored the imperative of upholding transparency and monitoring of fund allocations via reporting systems. Also highlighted was the interest in funding initiatives pertaining to climate change, along with the escalating importance of training in the realm of cyber security. It was further noted that the value of the services provided by AAROM-funded organizations surpasses the financial support they receive from AAROM.

What did we hear and learn that helps us to bring some good work into OUR projects and communities?

This discussion prompt led to conversations on the importance of engagement, respect, and exploring new avenues for work and collaboration. Key themes included cultural understanding, continuous learning, and cultural sensitivity. The role of educational systems in supporting Indigenous projects and the critical role of

communication in partnerships were discussed. Meaningful cultural inclusion was acknowledged as a process that takes time and effort. Intergenerational knowledge sharing was emphasized, with Elders playing a significant role as repositories of wisdom. Projects should involve Elders and youth from the start, with a focus on passing traditional knowledge to future generations. The discussions further emphasized the necessity for the government to exhibit respect towards First Nations during the process of establishing relationships. This process necessitates commitment and time to build trust. Empowering others to share ideas fosters inclusivity. Learning is a shared journey, with great ideas often emerging from collective sharing. The strength in kinship, the need for adaptability, and the importance of balancing the human element with technical work in collaborations were also underscored. Participants similarly pinpointed the necessity to utilize the resources, strategies, and platforms available more effectively to the Network. At the same time, focusing on progress, rather than perfection, is key. Ensuring flexible support for strategic planning, communications, and culturally centered projects through the AAROM Innovation and Collaboration Fund (ICF) was an important insight. Continuous improvement, awareness, and utilization of the AAROM Hub website was underscored as a valuable contributor in achieving network goals related to engagement, transparency, and the sharing of knowledge or information.

Action Points:

6. Advocate for ways to maintain relationship building between DFO and program participants despite travel cuts.
7. Enhance awareness of AAROM-adjacent funding opportunities by improving communication.

Storytelling

Capacity Development Team - *What is keeping us up? Pressing issues?*

Clayton Coppaway, the [Capacity Development Team](#) Lead, provided an overview of the CDT team, mandate, objectives and achievements in its first year of implementation. The content highlighted their partnerships, the support they have provided to the development and piloting of a Resource Management Officer Training (RMOT) course along with other capacity tools and resources available.

During conversations, the participants mentioned their concerns towards ongoing political issues and the potential instability of funding in the future. They revealed that the current political climate has sometimes put AAROM departments at the receiving end of community members' dissatisfaction towards issues that are unrelated to the work they execute. Moreover, they highlighted the frequent contemplation of succession planning, the prospective direction of their organization, and the impact of their work. Along with high staff turnover and the challenge to align initiatives with community needs, attendees expressed concern over the isolation of work and its possible negative effect such duplication and lower quality. They have identified the need to secure additional resources and opportunities that can strengthen employee retention, as well as help further indigenize their organizations. A potential funding reduction would cause significant challenges with staff retention and negatively impact organizational capacity to undertake and successfully complete vital annual projects and activities. The prevalence of funding concerns articulated a clear need for further transparency and reassurance on the stability, predictability, and longevity of AAROM funding. There was a strong emphasis on increasing awareness of funding opportunities and effectively leveraging funds obtained through AAROM. The importance of improving capacity, strategic planning, and management structures was underscored, along with the sharing of best practices for management, governance, and sovereignty. Overall, the discussion highlighted the importance of strengthening the capacity of AAROM departments to ensure their long-term survival and success.

Action Points:

8. Support the CDT in the development of material specifically designed for organizational strategic planning.



Clayton Coppaway, CDT Lead, presenting on the work of the Capacity Development Team during its first year of implementation. (Picture by Irine Polyzogopoulos).

Indigenous Training and Skills Development - Training Needs and Next Steps

Torrye Wheaton, the [Indigenous Training and Skills Development](#) Hub Lead, spoke to the ongoing work of the ITSD which encompassed the creation and trial run of the Resource Management Officer Training (RMOT) course, as well as its collaboration with the CDT.

An open discussion followed on the technical and training requirements across the AAROM Network and attendees were also encouraged to propose next steps for the ITSD. Key consideration identified when planning and designing training included: holding training in community or virtually, where possible, given difficulties related to travel time, transportation, childcare, and time away from family and community supports; and making sure course duration as well as daily start and stop times are appropriate given participant needs and other responsibilities. Additional mental health and wellness training in fishing communities and help to create a safe and inclusive environment for both male and female fishers would also be necessary. A problematic lack of young and adequately trained at-sea observers was also noted. As Artificial Intelligence continues to expand its role in our society, there was a call to be at the fore front of this recent technology and it was suggested that organizations make use of these tools strategically such as to fulfill various educational and human resources needs. During this session as well as throughout the meeting, it was noted that more can be done to support AAROM departments in addressing their training needs, including easy access to training plan templates and the provision of advice and information on qualified training and training providers. In addition, some AAROM departments also expressed an interest in both providing and participating in training opportunities which would be based on established courses.

Action Points:

9. Explore how the AAROM program can support AAROM departments as they develop and share the tools, strategies and best practices needed to promote a more inclusive, respectful and supportive work environment for all.
10. Promote the identification and exchange of training services and courses across the AAROM Network.

DAY 2

Session 3: AAROM Network Update

During this session Chelsey Karbowski, DFO, and Evan Carroll, M Carroll Consulting, presented on steps taken to renew and reaffirm the purpose and objectives of the AAROM Network Steering Committee to better serve the needs of the AAROM Network and appropriately respond to a changing operating context. Over the last year, the Committee has engaged AAROM Directors to seek feedback and direction on its role and mandate going forward so as to support these changes, challenges and opportunities based on a shared vision. These contributions were captured in the updated terms of reference, which were distributed for review before the meeting and then up for discussion and feedback during this dedicated session. This ensured the Network could share their thoughts, questions, and suggestions. Committee members provided further clarity where needed.

Five years into program renewal, a review of the Steering Committee foundational material was necessary given the evolution of its role within the AAROM Network, as well as the emergence of new challenges. This expanded role includes involvement in AAROM Network communication, advising on national priorities, and fostering partnerships. While it remains a non-decision-making body that guides AAROM program design and delivery, it will be necessary for the Committee to emit decisions around its own functions and reestablish clear parameters on its role in supporting the Network. The updated terms of reference provide increased clarity around its purpose, resources, non-decision-making authority, and meeting schedule. Feedback received touched on membership and the inclusion of Elders. The session was appreciated by attendees and deemed informative, however participants recommended additional time dedicated to updates on upcoming meetings, events, or activities relevant to the Committee.

Action Points:

11. Review feedback and include suggestions made by meeting participants to the updated Terms of Reference.
12. Send Terms of Reference for final approval of the Steering Committee and distribute them to the AAROM Network.

Session 4: Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange

Introduction

During this session, local community members spoke on their experience with intergenerational knowledge exchange. They shared their perspectives and highlighted the importance of language and respect in the process of knowledge transfer. A subsequent portion offered to participants dedicated space to discuss their thoughts on knowledge sharing and honouring their ancestors. These conversations revolved around the importance of knowledge transfer, leadership, and trust in the next generation. Participants were also asked to reflect on what type of mentor they wish to be.

How will you ensure knowledge is passed down? What kind of ancestor will you be?

The conversations focused on the significance of sharing knowledge, fostering leadership, and instilling a culture of trust in the upcoming generations. Recognizing what is vital to the survival and blooming of Indigenous communities and organizations, significant emphasis was accorded to the sharing of knowledge across multiple generations, the provision of mentorship, and the planning of succession. The roles of protector, supporter, and

guide were underscored, along with the significance of safeguarding and sharing traditional knowledge. Attendees identified the idea of “leading by example,” being approachable, and encouraging the curiosity of others as crucial factors to the successful transfer of knowledge. Also emphasized was the need to incorporate language, storytelling and Two-Eyed Seeing into work and community involvement. Participants expressed a great desire to be generous with their knowledge and time but stressed the need to first become knowledge holders. The significance of engaging with Elders, securely documenting traditional knowledge, and educating the younger generation is stressed. The utilization of new technology was proposed to enhance the engagement of the new generations and encourage community involvement. Participants recommended the establishment of deliberate spaces for community gatherings around waterways and the employment of diverse mediums to share traditional events, arts, and modern tools such as videos.

Action Points:

13. Investigate how the AAROM program can further promote and support intergenerational knowledge sharing, mentorship, and succession planning across the AAROM Network.
14. Promote the utilization of new technology to enhance engagement with new generations.

Session 5: Open Space Technology – Participant Directed Agenda

Introduction

The *Open Space Technology* approach allows attendees to hold the discussions they desire through participant-identified discussion topics. The objective is to collect various perspectives for participants to identify their recommendations. The AAROM Network Steering Committee and DFO program authority will subsequently review these recommendations for potential implementation. The topics discussed during these two sessions included among others communication, funding, collaboration, intergenerational knowledge sharing, succession planning, mentoring and decolonization.

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *Knowledge Transfer and Exchange.*

The knowledge transfer and exchange discussion revolved around partnership-based knowledge exchange, protocols, regional differences, employment turnover and succession planning. Participants discussed partnership-based knowledge transfer to foster mutual learning, growth and understanding which involves sharing and exchanging information such as community profiles and other relevant information as to also support succession in partner organizations. Acknowledged was the importance of understanding and respecting the geographic and cultural differences that may influence knowledge transfer processes. They mentioned the various challenges they face with the employment turnover in the department. To ensure a smoother transition and prone the continuity of relationships, it was suggested to implement a process that assures adequate transfer of knowledge between DFO representatives. They also highlighted the necessity for establishing protocols, including methods and procedures, to guarantee an effective yet respectful transfer of knowledge. In fact, the discussion underscored the importance of valuing grassroots members with experience and knowledge, acknowledging their vital contribution to the process of knowledge transfer and exchange.

Recommendations:

1. Establish regionalized cultural sensitivity training requirements (e.g., DFO).
2. Co-develop respectful data/knowledge transfer protocols.
3. Co-develop best practices in relationship building and maintaining community relationships (CDT, First Nations, AAROM, Steering Committee, DFO).

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *Best Practice and Recommendations to Create, Develop and Deliver an Integrated Co-Management Plan Case Sea Cucumber Fishery in the Gaspé.*

The best practices and recommendations for creating, developing, and delivering an integrated co-management plan for sea cucumber fishery in the Gaspé include adopting a corporate management approach instead of co-management, as exemplified by Parks Canada. True co-management was defined by participants of this discussion as surrendering parts of your rights for collective management of the fisheries. They also stressed the need to place *Netukulimk* (the careful use of resources to ensure sustainability and prosperity) and *Etuaptmumk* (2-Eyed Seeing) at the heart of practices thus incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and processes at every stage of the fisheries management plan, as suggested by Albert Marshall's fisheries cycle. However, participants noted that approaches, opinions, and visions may vary between nations and regions. In fact, this aspect needs to be considered, as it could lead to personality clashes.

Recommendations:

1. Create an outline of the necessary actions to move forward with the co-management plan.
2. Identify areas where knowledge gaps exist and establish a research plan to mend these.
3. Create a species-specific space that allows groups to clearly state their commitment and interest in their management.
4. Determine the specific roles and responsibilities for each party involved in the co-management plan, including assessment, area management, monitoring, and analysis.
5. Tailor the co-management process to suit the unique needs and circumstances of each First Nation/region.

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *Communication*

Many of the participants in this discussion directly support communication activities, either part-time or full-time, within their respective organizations. Having adequate support, including funding, was seen as a common challenge, along with the tendency to undervalue the importance of communications in achieving the objectives of their organization. Not only does this result in limited access among employees, including technical and science staff, to effective communication tools and practices, it can create significant communication gaps both internally and externally. This can impact the effective exchange of information, but also relationship building, with essential audiences, which mainly comprise communities, fisheries departments, scientists, project partners, and funders such as DFO/government. Solutions were proposed to improve communication, including the use of mass emails, newsletters, and websites but also networking, establishing protocols, creating a mobile application, and producing informational video content that is short and casual. As suggested during this discussion, the AAROM Hub website serves as a pivotal point for networking and information sharing. Of all different avenues available to organizations, social media was highlighted as an effective platform to reach the broadest audience. The concept of reverse mentoring was discussed, along with the idea of creating a communications community of practice within the AAROM network. It is suggested that a strategic plan should include a focus on communication.

Recommendations:

1. Facilitate access to communications training to effectively utilize emerging platforms.
2. Identify options for supporting ongoing exchange of knowledge/skills and overall network for communication practitioners.

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *Salmon*

It is important to note that although the written information provided by the participants of this discussion was brief, they indicated important concerns regarding the decline in the Atlantic salmon population and the overall management of the salmon population. While the conversation was largely biology-oriented, the group discussed management challenges common to both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. A key issue identified was the absence of international harvest agreements and data-sharing mechanisms for Atlantic salmon among countries. This stands in contrast to the Pacific, where the Pacific Salmon Treaty provides a coordinated framework for managing salmon populations across international boundaries.

Recommendations:

1. Create accountability for mortalities.
2. Consistent monitoring of temperature and juveniles.

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *Denial or Resistance to Accessing Resources. Stories about Overcoming.*

Although certain topics of discussion and suggestions put forth by the participants exceed the purview of the AAROM program, we will contemplate how these can be executed on a scale specific to the program.

The participants of this discussion have experienced a long history of resistance from colonial institutions towards Indigenous harvesting of natural resources. They explained that although First Nations' harvesting rights are now recognized by the Crown, the resolution of multilateral conflicts that emerged from the denial of these ancestral rights too often implies an arduous litigious process for communities. While they emphasized a significant lack of trust towards enforcement bodies, they identified the cause to be a clear history of favoritism towards the

commercial industry, often at the expense of Indigenous rights holders. In the interest of fostering healthier interactions with the apparatus of enforcement, participants conveyed a need for a restructuring of the system, its values, and the way it operates. As part of the implementation of this new approach to enforcement, it is critical to focus not only on reconciliation, but also on understanding and respecting the ways of the First Nations.

Recommendations:

1. Provide opportunities to AAROM program participants to easily obtain further information on legal cases and events such as the Listuguj Salmon raids (1981), R. v. Marshall (I & II) and Moderate livelihood (2020).
2. Investigate how can the department further permanently support First Nations in the assertion of ancestral rights and self-governance in Fisheries on an AAROM program specific scale.

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *Re-establishing our Way of Life (pre contact), Inherent Rights, Treaty's Section 35, Indigenous Culture.*

Participants discussed the role language as a fundamental element of Indigenous identity and survival. As a result of the forced replacement of Indigenous languages with colonial languages, a clear inequality among individuals is identified. They also discussed the implementation of traditional/ancestral laws such as self-governance, harvesting and reclamation. While they recommended the implementation of measures that respect the Indigenous ways of governance, particularly regarding land, participants flagged deep-rooted racism as a significant obstacle that hinders the ability of the government to make meaningful changes. The importance of addressing and adapting to the swiftly evolving environmental consequences of climate change was underscored. This includes tackling issues like the bioaccumulation of substances such as methyl mercury. Despite the potential cost, people are encouraged not to fear the changes necessary to institutions to address the ever so changing environmental context. The conversation also touches on societal greed, the divide between rich and poor, and opposition to hydro development, including the treatment of protesters by the police and the environmental mess left behind.

Recommendations:

1. Recognize and honour the inherent rights of all Indigenous peoples and their ways of life through meaningful approach to UNDRIP/Reconciliation implementation.
2. Ensure genuine execution of the government's *Duty to Consult* and respect the objections raised by Indigenous communities towards initiatives and/or projects.
3. Elevate Indigenous voices speaking to the care of natural resources.

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *How to Understand Various AAROM Agreements and Best Practices.*

The discussion between participants focused on the various ways organizations employ their AAROM contribution agreement to achieve their aquatic resource management goals, acknowledging distinctions between AAROM core funding and additional contributions secured through the AAROM Innovation and Collaboration Fund (ICF). There was a consensus that the core funding supports managerial and administrative capacity to enable project planning, fieldwork, and infrastructure development, while the ICF offers a beneficial avenue to further supplement the work carried out. A number of organizations rely on other program funding to directly conduct fieldwork, with the bulk of their AAROM contribution funding focused on simply maintaining their core operations. Participants also highlighted the fact that the program aids overall capacity by supporting broader objectives, including those related to consultation and negotiation, but flagged challenges with the administrative burden created by reporting requirements. They suggested expanding the eligibility of projects to incorporate those that extend beyond the confines of band-level initiatives. Highlights of the conversations also included the level of collaboration and partnership between organizations on AAROM project work.

Recommendations:

1. Review core AAROM funding workplans and identify areas for further flexibility.
2. Determine solutions to gaps in internal communication between DFO programs.
3. Further investigate the implementation of a community coordinator role that engages with communities without necessarily reporting on the details.

Session 1 - Discussion Subject: *Decolonizing AAROM*

The conversation held on the decolonization of the AAROM program underscored several components, including the necessity to execute substantial and tangible actions rather than measures that are merely symbolic or performative in nature. The participants of this discussion flagged inconsistencies in the implementation of the program across regions as they have noticed varying degrees of control and flexibility in the way it is delivered. It was proposed that the frameworks and programmatic processes be reviewed and adapted to bolster the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' commitment to Reconciliation. When discussing the Salmon Allocation Policy Review, the participants recognized the success of the methodology employed by the department and advocated for its duplication in other applicable areas. They also identified ongoing issues with decolonization initiatives and their rare viability when confronted with the test of time and personalities. In response to this, they recommended the implementation of formal agreements and solid policies co-developed with First Nations that allow decolonization efforts to outlast the electoral cycles.

A committee was created to review and streamline all administrative processes and requirements related to contribution agreements, reporting and requisition for payments for collaborative programs such as the AAROM program.

Recommendations:

1. Review and revise the clauses that allow for ministerial discretion in AAROM Contribution Agreements.
2. Review and identify areas of the approach used in the update to the *Salmon Allocation Policy* (SAP) that could be applied to the AAROM program.
3. Create a process that enables program participants to identify yearly AAROM priorities.

Session 2 - Discussion Subject: *Strategies to Get Resource Management into Lens of First Nation/Stewardship.*

It is noted that limited written material was provided for this discussion subject. Participants spoke about capacity building in the sphere of resource management. Identified was a need for further community-based education opportunities on inherent rights and traditional values governing community. Also suggested was the reimplementation of the *Netukulink* way of life, a traditional Mi'kmaq practice characterized by utilizing only what is necessary as to ensure nothing is wasted. Receiving these gifts from Mother Earth is considered an honour which forms the foundation of the enduring connection between human beings and the natural environment, a connection that persists to this day.

Recommendations:

1. Invest funding in the creation of spaces for First Nations dialogue.
2. Put capacity in the hands of communities that are most closely integrated with the resources (ITK capacity, legal capacity, technical capacity).
3. Create formal opportunities for education on personal accountability.

Session 2 - Discussion Subject: *Why is AAROM agreement reporting so painful?*

Although it was recognized that AAROM's reporting requirements are straightforward compared to other federal funding programs, participants rapidly highlighted a shared view. They believe that the most time-consuming elements mandated by an AAROM agreement offer minimal benefit to both the agreement holder and the program authority. This suggests a disconnect between the expectations of the established reporting framework and the actual outputs and/or knowledge organizations are generating for themselves and their communities. The participants expressed that the department must strike a balance to achieve meaningful and effective reporting. Questions were raised about the productivity level of the current reporting format and obligations but also about an identified inconsistency in reporting requirements across the department and through the turnover of DFO employees. Suggested was the diversification and digitalization of the approach and tools for reporting, including the possible use of the AAROM Hub website.

Recommendations:

1. Review the reporting requirements established by the Directive on Transfer Payments – Appendix K, IACMF, Contribution Agreements, etc.
2. Review and optimize applicable elements of the Schedule 7 reporting.
3. Engage in an open dialogue with program participants to identify their program expectations.
4. Further develop tools and approaches that support reporting.

Session 2 - Discussion Subject: *Tell us about a time you solved a capacity issue?*

The dialogue primarily centers on the management of human resources, with particular emphasis on the employment of Indigenous individuals. Key challenges identified encompass recruitment complexities, talent attraction, workforce adaptation, and employee retention. As a proposed resolution for staffing issues, the utilization of the DFO interchange is suggested which would expedite the hiring process for Indigenous individuals. To attract talent, suggestions include the adjustment of employment descriptions opportunities, offering competitive salaries, and extending flexible work arrangements to employees. The conversation on the adaptation underscored the importance of comprehending and addressing the requirements of the modern workforce, which may include offering appealing benefits such as ample vacation time and flexible working arrangements. Strategies for employee retention were also deliberated upon, with one proposition being the diversification of funding and revenue channels through the establishment or promotion of professional services beyond the AAROM core funding and workplans.

Recommendations:

1. Review the interchange process and streamline where possible.
2. Be mindful of poaching staff/stripping capacity from AAROM or communities.
3. Think about/outside the box with how you build your revenue/ funding stream
4. Map out/document that innovative approaches to diversifying funding/developing revenue streams
5. Develop better options for capacity sharing

Session 2 - Discussion Subject: *Collaboration – What does it mean?*

The discussion primarily focused on the notion of collaboration. Inquiries were made regarding the true essence of collaboration and the criteria for determining worthy collaborative endeavors. The importance of finding common interests, rather than common objectives, is highlighted. The participants of this discussion table recommend contemplating ways to achieve mutual benefits to identify shared goals. They underscored the importance of maintaining transparency and sincerity with oneself and other participants in the collaborative process. It is noted that an equal level of benefits is not always a prerequisite, provided there is honesty and transparency. Conclusively, the conversation underscores the significance of a shared understanding concerning the measurement of success.

Recommendations:

1. DFO to lead the co-development of a standardized understanding of collaboration throughout the AAROM network.
2. Support the creation of an evaluation framework.

Session 2 - Discussion Subject: *How to Engage Youth – Strategies and Ideas.*

The conversations at this table primarily revolved around youth engagement and related potential opportunities. The dialogue encompassed topics such as scholarship opportunities, youth in foster care programs and high school age camps as potential avenues for involvement and establishing connections to the Land. Participants also discussed possible tools to reach and engage the youth of today such as social media platforms and partnerships with post-secondary institutions. The emphasis was placed on introducing them to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and opportunities in science, while underscoring the need for equitable remuneration. The concept of summer students and interns gaining practical fieldwork experience was also explored. The conversation suggests finding a community advocate to facilitate buy-in and highlighted the significance of assisting youth in securing future employment opportunities.

Recommendations:

1. Identify a community advocate to assist in gaining support.
2. Provide practical technical experiences and opportunities.
3. Commit to providing reference letters for young people who work or volunteer with us, aiding their applications for scholarships, jobs, and schools.
4. Create videos that explain the benefits and reasons for youth participation.

Session 2 - Discussion Subject: *How do we fully incorporate and prioritize Indigenous Knowledge?*

The discussions focused on the relationship between the AAROM program, its participants and DFO in terms of Indigenous Knowledge. It highlighted various Indigenous Knowledge projects currently underway and available funding opportunities through various NGOs. Identified was the definite need for a framework that prioritizes this knowledge and the Indigenous means of success over what the Crown may perceive as political objectives. It is acknowledged that while progress is underway, the Government of Canada must continue its effort to elevate the voices of Indigenous people truly and meaningfully. The discussion commends the flexibility that the AAROM program usually offers for reporting but also highlights a lack of flexibility regarding deadlines and deliverables in the Pacific region. This point is reinforced by a participant's account of a situation where they had to plead with the program officers for flexibility following the loss of a crucial community member. Moreover, participants urged the department to raise its minimal expectations towards sensitivity training for DFO employees.

Recommendations:

1. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) should collaborate with other departments on integrating Indigenous Knowledge.

2. There should be an increase in training on Indigenous knowledge and cultural awareness for DFO employees. This training should be mandatory, conducted in-person, and facilitated by Indigenous contractors.
3. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should be implemented.

Session 2 - Discussion Subject: *Climate change – Adaptation*

The discussion focused on the climate change crisis, especially in the northern regions, and the importance of incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into research. There is a recognized gap in understanding the impacts of climate change on marine environments, leading to calls for government-funded Traditional Knowledge studies to help indigenous communities match the capabilities of other scientists. The argument put forth is that while scientists rely on theory, indigenous communities rely on knowledge, as demonstrated by the impact of sea lions and sea otters on fish and their spawning. Additionally, the Environment and Climate Change Canada's Climate Change and Adaptive Fund is seen as a potential resource, especially for food security. The concept of a 'tipping point' was also discussed, exemplified by the Georg R. caribou herd's moss habitat being replaced by trees. Participants also discussed disputes with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans over issues like salmon catch and release and the introduction of new species were also highlighted.

Recommendations:

1. Further funding opportunities for studies on climate change that enable Indigenous Knowledge to be incorporated to western knowledge.
2. Continue to support meaningful collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.
3. Adapt AAROM workplan to incorporate climate change initiatives.

DAY 3

Excursions

On the last day of the meeting, attendees had the opportunity to partake in one of two excursions: a bus journey to visit Toquaht, Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ, and Tla-o-qui-aht hahahuuḥii (Ucluelet/ Tofino), or a boat trip to Bamfield. The group journeying to Bamfield aboard the MV Frances Barkley for the day witnessed a variety of wildlife, including whales who frolicked in the Alberni Inlet as the trip came to an end. This offered attendees a captivating conclusion to the three days of gathering.



Rebecka Morgan, NTC Program Coordinator, and Alison Wale, Uu-a-thluk Capacity Building Coordinator, enjoying a boat ride to Bamfield aboard the MV Frances Barkley. (Picture by Irine Polyzogopoulos)

Conclusion

The AAROM Network Steering Committee will evaluate each action point outlined in this report, determining their feasibility for implementation. Additionally, the Committee will review the recommendations put forth during the *Open Space Technology* session, identifying those that can be transformed into actionable steps, tailored specifically to the AAROM program.

Summary of Action Points:

1. DFO to assess and, where possible, strengthen its performance reporting of the AAROM program to AAROM departments, as to ensure sustained transparency and accountability in program decision-making and results.
2. Undertake a review of the reporting procedures for AAROM contribution agreements and streamline where possible.
3. Explore avenues to create social media presence for the AAROM Hub website on popular platforms.
4. Review and update the *Extranet* access list.
5. Insert nationally relevant events in the Hub calendar.
6. Advocate for ways to maintain relationship building between DFO and program participants despite travel cuts.
7. Enhance awareness of AAROM-adjacent funding opportunities by improving communication.
8. Support the CDT in the development of material specifically designed for organizational strategic planning.
9. Explore how the AAROM program can support AAROM departments as they develop and share the tools, strategies and best practices needed to promote a more inclusive, respectful and supportive work environment for all.
10. Promote the identification and exchange of training services and courses across the AAROM Network.
11. Review feedback and include suggestions made by meeting participants to the updated Terms of Reference.
12. Send Terms of Reference for final approval of the Steering Committee and distribute them to the AAROM Network.
13. Investigate how the AAROM program can further promote and support intergenerational knowledge sharing, mentorship, and succession planning across the AAROM Network.
14. Promote the utilization of new technology to enhance engagement with new generations.

APPENDIX 1



WELCOME TO THE 4th NATIONAL Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management (AAROM) MEETING!



April 16-17, 2024 - Port Alberni, British Columbia
Hosted by the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council at the
Hupačasath House of Gathering

OVERVIEW:

The annual National AAROM Meeting is an action-oriented operational meeting that brings Indigenous Executives of AAROM departments with Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Indigenous programs staff to share information and collaborate on joint initiatives. The meeting is co-designed and co-developed by a joint Indigenous-DFO Steering Committee.

PURPOSE:

- To provide a space that fosters collaboration by the sharing of information and development of joint tools and solutions for the network of AAROM departments.

OBJECTIVES:

- For Directors of AAROM departments to:
 - Build partnerships;
 - Discuss operational challenges and solutions;
 - Share knowledge and expertise; and,
 - Develop tools and solutions to help strengthen the AAROM network.

Monday, April 15, 2024 – Meet and Greet Best Western Plus Hotel, Barclay Ballroom

7:00pm to
9:00pm

Meet and Greet

Day 1 – Tuesday, April 16, 2024

All activities are held at the Hupačasath House of Gathering,
located at 5500 Ahahswinis Drive

9:00am – 10:00am

Prayer / Opening / Welcome

10:00am –
10:15am

Framing and Flow of the whole gathering and the day

10:15am –
10:30am

Introductions

10:30am – 10:45am	Break
10:45am – 11:15am	AAROM Update - AAROM National Program Update Presentation - AAROM Hub Website Presentation
11:15am – 12:00pm	World Café (discussion)
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm – 1:30pm	Session 1: Storytelling
1:30pm – 2:15pm	Small Group Discussion
2:15pm – 2:30pm	Break
2:30pm – 3:50pm	Capacity Development Team and ITSD Presentation (Indigenous Training & Skills Development)
3:50pm – 4:15pm	Wisdom Catchers Reflections
4:15pm – 4:30pm	Closing

Day 2 – Wednesday, April 17, 2024 All activities are held at the Hupačasath House of Gathering, located at 5500 Ahahswinis Drive	
9:00am– 9:30am	Prayer/Opening/Welcome/Housekeeping
9:30am – 10:00am	AAROM Network Update
10:00am – 11:00am	Session 2: Moderated Panel – Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange
11:00am-11:10am	Break
11:10am-12:00pm	Small group discussion
12:00pm-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00-pm-3:30pm	Session 3: Open Space Technology** - Participant Directed Agenda What is Open Space Technology **
3:30pm-3:45pm	Wisdom catcher reflections
3:45pm – 4:30pm	Next steps & Closing Remarks

Day 3 – Thursday, April 18, 2024	
7:30am - 5:00pm	Excursions

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