

Aboriginal Aquaculture Association
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B.C. Aboriginal Aquaculture Workshop
November 28th - 29th, 2005
Nanaimo, British Columbia

Workshop Summary Report

To promote aquaculture development that supports First Nation communities, culture and values

Introduction

The Aboriginal Aquaculture Association (AAA) organized and sponsored a workshop held in Nanaimo, B.C. on the 28th and 29th of November, 2005. This was the second such workshop held in 2005. Like the previous one held in Campbell River in April, it was designed to obtain further direction and feedback from the First Nation delegates regarding their priority issues, to discuss current issues, challenges and opportunities in aquaculture development. The workshop was an opportunity to continue to build on the network of First Nations and to provide information of a technical nature to those who share a common interest in pursuit of aquaculture development that supports First Nation communities, culture and values.

The workshop was well attended with representatives not only from First Nation communities but First Nation business, industry and government. The workshop discussions were wide ranging. The needs and required actions that were identified by the delegates are outlined below as is the role and involvement expected by the AAA in meeting those needs. Many of the same priority areas and issues raised at the April workshop were once again identified. These have been grouped into common thematic groups and are compiled below.

Aboriginal Leadership and Direction Setting in the Development of Aboriginal Aquaculture.

First Nation leaders recognize the potential that aquaculture development can have for First Nation communities. Discussions continued on how to move aquaculture development forward. All too often First Nations feel they have been left behind, left on the outside looking in. First Nations believe that by working together, with the cooperation of government they can make progress. Care must be taken to ensure that aquaculture development meets the interests and needs of First Nations. First Nations must be the driving force behind development.

Networking

Many delegates to the workshop reiterated the importance of networking and expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to come together and learn from each other. Providing the opportunity to network is seen as an important function of the AAA. Delegates recognize that networking can play an important role in encouraging cooperative development amongst First Nations, identifying areas where they could work together (economy of scale), develop strategies to address the community and media perceptions of aquaculture development.

General Information Compilation & Dissemination

Delegates again stressed the importance of having access to reliable information that could be trusted. This was seen as key with assisting with the decision-making process and with promoting aquaculture development within their communities. The AAA is seen as the body that would facilitate the compilation and dissemination of information.

Again there were a number of critical information areas that must be addressed on a priority basis including; markets, the best opportunities for species development, new technologies, funding, regulatory requirements and technical and management expertise. The AAA will continue to provide a coordinating role to compile and deliver quality information to Aboriginals to help assure that they not only have access to information, but the right information. The Association will also serve as a mechanism to bring Aboriginal groups together in support of aquaculture development.

The AAA will continue to coordinate regular meetings of members and other relevant stakeholders involved in aquaculture development to discuss current issues, challenges and opportunities, and to share technical information with respect to aquaculture development. The AAA will maintain a website to facilitate access to objective information of particular relevance to Aboriginals regarding:

- Technologies for sustainable aquaculture development
- Market situation and outlook
- Consumer attitudes
- Policy & regulatory issues
- Cultural and traditional values

The recent delegation to the AquaNor Conference and Exhibition in Norway was highlighted as an example of a positive information and fact-finding experience. The delegation saw first hand cooperative aquaculture development, they heard of new technologies and practices that have been supported by research. It provided much valuable information that the delegates could bring back to their communities and consider when making decisions regarding aquaculture development.

Delegates to the workshop continue to be frustrated by the media handling of issues regarding aquaculture development. The AAA was identified as a body to take a lead in

countering this kind of press by providing First Nation communities, the general public and media with accurate information and working to develop a pro-active strategy to address this issue.

AAA Provide Support and Assistance – Extension Services

The AAA was identified by the delegates as playing a role in assisting First Nation communities with the planning and implementation of development initiatives. The AAA was seen as working with individual communities or groupings to facilitate the planning and development process. Examples were identified where there is immediate interest to investigate the potential for development.

Extension services provided by the AAA could include;

Business and technical support in regard to preliminary assessment and project planning, start-up and initial operations; preparing applications and proposals for funding, regulatory permits, authorization; sourcing expertise in targeted areas of need.

Capacity Building – Training & Education

There is a strong need for increased capacity among First Nation communities that want to pursue opportunities in aquaculture. Such capacity building is needed in the areas of training and skills development.

Funding for the AAA

The delegates again raised the question about long term funding that is needed to enable the AAA to provide the assistance and support that has been identified as priorities by the workshop delegates. It was stressed that the AAA is an important organization that is supported by many First Nation individuals and organizations, and that if it is to be successful in promoting aquaculture development it must be properly resourced.

An update was provided to the delegates regarding the AAA recent work in this regard. The AAA has continued to pursue funding partnership arrangements between the federal and provincial governments.

Environmental Sustainability

At both workshops the delegates emphasized the importance of ensuring that aquaculture development is environmentally sustainable and based on First Nation values and traditional use of aquatic resources. The historical use of seafood as a food source for First Nations must be respected, and watershed and estuary protection must be incorporated in the planning and operation of aquaculture facilities.

Additional Agenda Items - Technical & Information Sharing

The agenda included a number of areas of discussion where the Association wished to provide information or receive feedback in specific areas.

Species at Risk

There was general discussion regarding the Species at Risk Act (SARA) and its potential impact on First Nation communities.

- Sea Otters. They represent a threat to First Nation shellfish aquaculture development. First Nations should be involved in the management of this and other Listed Species (abalone, for example), as well as species not listed, but of importance to First Nation aquaculture potential (Geoduck is one example).
- First Nations Traditional Ecological Knowledge should be considered and incorporated in the management of these species.
- Abalone. Current policy prohibits First Nations (and others) the sale of Listed Species. This policy must be changed.
- There is some funding available from INAC for the recovery of Listed Species.
- There is a new First Nation committee established to deal with Listed Species (NACOSAR).

AAA Web Site

Tracy Johnston of Maxim Digital Solutions was brought in to discuss the development of the AAA website and to obtain feedback from the delegates around priority areas. A number of suggestions were made regarding the contents and structure of the Associations web site. As outlined earlier in this report the dissemination of reliable information was identified as being an important function. The Website is seen as a vehicle to assist with this.

The delegates brought a number of suggestions and recommendations forward. In all instances delegates were seeking increased access to information and an ability to network and share information.

Tenure Application/CEAA issues

An overview of the tenure application process was reviewed with the delegates. The tenure application process currently is overwhelming. It is a costly program currently suffering from lengthy delays. Discussions resulted in identifying a need to lobby for a more streamlined process.

Shellfish Seed Availability

This was identified as a major constraint to many First Nations that are involved with, or want to pursue opportunities within shellfish aquaculture. Much of the seed used in B.C. today comes from the United States, at a high cost to growers. The delegates discussed the potential for First Nations to work together to address this issue.