

Is there a place for youth in  
fisheries communities?  
A multiple perspectives discussion

Workshop Synthesis Report

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**Prepared by: Nicole G. Power**

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Community-University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA), Memorial University  
St. John's, NL A1C 5S7 Telephone 709-864-7551 [www.curra.ca](http://www.curra.ca)

## **Introduction**

The workshop titled “Is there a place for youth in fisheries communities? A multiple perspectives discussion” took place on September 30, 2012, between 10 am and noon. It was organised by Nicole Power and was part of the *Rebuilding Collapsed Fisheries and Threatened Communities International Symposium* held at Norris Point, Newfoundland. The objectives of the workshop were to bring together stakeholder organisations, community representatives, researchers and youth to discuss the place of young people in fisheries communities and to consider multi-and inter- generational strategies for rebuilding fisheries communities. The workshop combined short presentations by CURRA researchers, an international researcher and the executive director of the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board (PFHCB) and a roundtable discussion. Other participants included local youth and community members, graduate students, researchers, and a representative from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This report aims to summarise and synthesize the discussion that took place.

## **Emerging themes**

CURRA youth researchers, Kate Dupré and Moss Norman, reported that young people in NL do not see fisheries as a viable career option, even though some

young men in more rural and remote communities would like to work in fisheries. Instead, young people see fisheries as something that happened in the past, relevant to past generations. Young people also tend to see fisheries as relevant for their community, but not for their families and less so for themselves. At the same time, young people tend to recognise that fisheries have made life in their communities unique. And, while youth working in rural environments experience higher stress levels, they perceive higher community support which may mitigate negative health impacts.

Mark Dolomount from the PFHCB started a discussion about possible reasons for young people’s negative perceptions of fisheries and their lack of involvement in fish harvesting. The following barriers facing young people entering fish harvesting and other fisheries-related work were identified in the workshop discussion.

- 1) The high cost of enterprises and licenses impedes entry of young (or new) people. The group discussed possible reasons why fathers decide not to transfer enterprises and licenses to their children, despite the existence of an intergenerational tax exemption. Heavy investment by families into new fisheries (e.g., crab, shrimp) in the years following the moratorium may

constrain their ability to transfer enterprises/ licenses; selling to non-family members may reflect a retirement strategy.

- 2) The group discussed the tendency for parents (as well as teachers and others in the community) to discourage young people from entering the fishery. Young people are encouraged to invest in education. However, with limited employment opportunities matching their training/ education, they decide to leave their home communities. There is also a belief (held by young and old alike) that a better life exists outside their communities. Young people learn in school curriculum that the NL fisheries have been a failure, that they have been overfished and there is no future in the industry.
- 3) The group discussed the stigma attached to seasonal work and fisheries work as discouraging young people from entering the industry. Examples of such stigma can be found at many levels (e.g., family, education, media, political). In addition to negative appraisals of the fishery coming from their family and the education system, media coverage of the hardships and conflicts in the industry and the dominant political discourse on the need to rationalise the

industry (“too many fish harvesters chasing too few fish”) may have the effect of discouraging intergenerational succession.

- 4) An unintended consequence of professionalization and new training requirements for fish harvesters has been a movement of young fish harvesters to other sectors where their credentials/ qualifications are recognised (e.g., transshipment).

A number of concerns were raised by workshop participants in response to the question -- what kind of future fishery would work for communities and youth?

- 1) There was concern about the (potential) impacts on communities of the allocation of individual (transferable) quotas that essentially separate fish from geographical place. In particular, participants voiced concern that ITQs do not require that people harvesting the fish come from local communities and that ITQS may lead to increased concentration of fish quota outside of local communities.
- 2) Concerns were raised about recent federal government attempts to make changes to the owner-operator fleet separation

policy, and what this would mean for the future of the small boat fishery and communities (i.e., would it mean an increase in corporate concentration of quota located outside communities?). This led to a discussion of the question: who owns the fish (individuals, communities, the state or companies) and who benefits or should benefit from the fishery?

- 3) In response, the group discussed a third concern related to creating a more equitable fishery. The fishery continues to contribute substantially to the province economically and in terms of employment. However, concern was raised about the degree to which the wealth of fisheries is increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer fish harvesters and processing companies, and the role that trust agreements play in this process. Government and industry discourse of rationalisation may serve to reinforce this concentration by focusing on reducing the number of fish harvesters and plant workers and overlooking the impacts of increased fishing effort and use of new technologies (e.g., vessel, gear, equipment) on the resource, and the ways in which individual workers are embedded in families and communities.

- 4) Related to issues of equity was a concern regarding approaches to fisheries policy that focus on individual workers (fish harvesters, plant workers) versus an approach that sees individuals as embedded in families and communities that shape and constrain their decisions, options and responses to regulations and restructuring. For example, fish harvesters, most of whom are men, may make decisions to stay or leave the industry and their communities in part in relation to family members' options for local work. Changes to fisheries regulation and restructuring, or other factors, may alter the options for fish harvesters and their family members in different ways. A related question is, what has been the impact on men's, women's and young people's options of the shift from family or household based fisheries to a more business-oriented ownership model based on the implementation of IQs or ITQs?

Siri Gerrard described the Norwegian strategy of implementing a youth quota to address intergenerational succession in fisheries. When a boat quota system was introduced in the Norwegian fishery, young people were no longer able to sell fish to the fish plant as they had traditionally done. In the 1990s the Minister of Fisheries allowed young

people between the ages 12 and 25 to register to catch and sell fish during the summer season. The youth quota is part of the national recreational quota and is not taken from quota allocated to professional fish harvesters. Young people fish with their fathers, grandfathers or other relatives, not as regular crew, but as registered youth fish harvesters. Some municipalities have organized a youth fishing project by hiring a skipper and his boat for registered youth fish harvesters to catch their quota. The youth that enter the youth fishery tend to be the ones who have access to resources (e.g., boats, equipment, knowledge) through their family. About 25% of youth fishing is done by young women. While the impact of the youth quota on recruitment into the industry is uncertain, it seems to be having other far-reaching effects, for example on the development of fisheries identities among youth, the production and transfer of local knowledge, strengthening contact between generations, and political support for youth fishing.

Participants discussed what a youth quota in the NL context might look like. A number of challenges were identified.

- 1) Support for the youth quota would be required at multiple levels including the family, community, education, industry,

and provincial and federal governments.

- 2) Questions were raised regarding which species and fleets would be involved. If the youth quota is to come out of the allocation for the recreational cod fishery, then baseline data may need to be collected on recreational cod landings.

A number of other policy-making directions and specific strategies were identified as important steps in efforts to rebuild fisheries communities where young people would want to stay and work, particularly in fisheries-related jobs.

- 1) A plan to rebuild healthy and vibrant fisheries communities should consider both the economic and social impacts of industry restructuring and changes to policy and regulation. Healthy fisheries communities depend not only on a healthy, largely male, harvesting industry but include options available to women and youth in fisheries households.
- 2) More work needs to be done to examine how to create more and more diversified jobs related to low volume fisheries that focus on value added, secondary processing; niche marketing;

fisheries-related tourism; and food security/local markets.

- 3) There is a need for a regulatory and cultural context that supports workers involved in seasonal employment and occupational plurality.
- 4) School curriculum should incorporate content on local and international fisheries, employment options in fisheries, and related environmental, cultural, political and social issues.
- 5) A decentralized fisheries science and management regime may provide fisheries related employment attractive to youth.

## **Conclusion**

More research is needed to examine strategies to attract young people to fisheries-related work, and the impact of regulatory changes and restructuring on youth recruitment and retention and on the vibrancy of the fisheries communities.

The workshop discussion focused largely on harvesting work and not processing work, and did not tease out some of the differences between the work experiences of crew and skippers. These limitations shape the content of this report.

## **Participants**

Nicole Power, Moss Norman, Kelsey Draper, Mark Dolomount, Viviana Ramirez, Kimberly Orren, Johanna Decker, Kara Gerrow, Kristen Lowitt, Alain Fréchet, Shelly Blackmore, Siri Gerrard, Kate Dupré, Emily Thomas, Maureen Woodrow, Joanie Cranston

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