

# Salmon Voices: Indigenous Peoples and the Fish Farming Industry

Rachel  
Carson  
Center

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**Conveners:** Dorothee Schreiber (RCC), Camilla Brattland (University of Tromsø), Stine Barlindhaug (Fram Center, Tromsø), Per Klemetsen (University of Tromsø)

**Participants:** Otto Andreassen (NOFIMA), Marianne Balto (Sami Parliament of Norway), Stine Barlindhaug (Fram Centre, Tromsø), Katie Beach (Central Region Biologist, Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council), Camilla Brattland (Centre for Sami Studies and Norwegian Fisheries College, University of Tromsø), Bob Chamberlin (Chief, Kwik'wasutinuxw First Nation), Jørgen Christiansen (Marine Harvest Norway), David Frank (Ahousaht First Nation), Per Klemetsen Hætta (Centre for Sami Studies, University of Tromsø), Håvald Hansen (Sami Trade and Development Centre), Ross Hinks (Director of Natural Resources, Conne River Mi'kmaq First Nation), Bjarne Johansen (Sea Sami fisherman, Tana), Kjell Magne Johnsen (biologist at the Tana Salmon River association), Angelika Lätsch (University of Tromsø), Fred Metallic (Gespegewaq Mi'kmaq Resource Council), Isaac Metallic (Gespegewaq Mi'kmaq First Nation), Steinar Pedersen (Rector, Sami University College), Liss-Ellen Ramstad (Sami Parliament of Norway), Paul Robinson (Ahousaht First Nation), Wally Samuel (Ahousaht First Nation), Dorothee Schreiber (RCC)

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## Introduction

The “Salmon Voices” workshop took place in Munich, Germany on the 7-8 October, 2011 and was organized by a team of academic staff from the University of Tromsø, the Norwegian Institute of Cultural Heritage Research, and the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich.

The aim of the workshop was to explore how salmon farming affects indigenous communities in Canada and Norway. Coastal British Columbia is currently a region where clashes between the aquaculture industry and indigenous communities are among the strongest in the world, but it also provides interesting examples of collaboration between the industry and indigenous communities. Finnmark is currently not yet experiencing the environmental impacts of fish farming to the same degree as is the coast of British Columbia, though recent outbreaks of disease on aquaculture sites suggest that this may be changing. Both in the context of a rising ocean temperatures and the Nor-

wegian government's aquaculture policy, an increase in aquaculture production in the north of Norway is expected. Other northern peoples, such as the Mi'gmaq in eastern Canada may soon be facing a similar northward expansion of the industry. New sorts of conflicts between the capture fisheries and fish farming are likely to result from the many new ecosystem-level changes, including shifting migration paths for wild salmon and changing disease dynamics on the fish farms, likely to accompany climate change in the ocean. At the moment, the Sami Parliament in Norway is following a protocol for consultation and dialogue with the Norwegian government on salmon management issues, while indigenous nations in Canada are either seeking recourse for environmental damage through the courts, or are appealing to federal government ministries to consider their aboriginal rights in the regulation and licensing of salmon aquaculture sites. Still other Canadian First Nations are choosing to negotiate directly with the fish farming companies operating in their territories. By inviting members of coastal Sami communities and First Nations leaders and fishermen from British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, the organizers created a platform for the first-ever transatlantic indigenous dialogue on the issue.

### **Workshop proceedings**

The primary purpose of the two day workshop was for the delegates to share their experiences of a globalized salmon farming industry, and to initiate a network of indigenous community members that can endure into the future. The industry (represented by Marine Harvest), indigenous governments (represented by the Sami Parliament, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and members of the fisheries and environment departments of First Nations bands in Canada), and individual salmon fishers and researchers were represented. The academic presentations included historical accounts of wild salmon fisheries among the Sami (by Steinar Pedersen), biological and societal impacts of the salmon farming industry (by Katie Beach and Otto Andreassen (NOFIMA)), as well as Mi'gmaq perspectives on the industry (by Fred Metallic).

The discussions focused on questions of environmental impacts and indigenous rights, whether or not to negotiate directly with the industry, national salmon management policies, and indigenous traditions and knowledge. The presentations revealed both positive and negative experiences with the industry among the indigenous communities that had direct interactions with salmon farming, and a critical and alert attitude from the representatives that had a more distant relation with the industry and its impacts. A simple webpage that contains links to the program, names and bios of the participants, and news articles was set up for the workshop and can be accessed at <http://site.uit.no/salmonvoices>.

### **Outcomes**

A written report containing the presentations and a summary of the workshop's concluding discus-

sion will be produced and published by the Rachel Carson Center early in 2012. As a preliminary report, a short summary is provided here. During the workshop, relationships between indigenous peoples and the salmon farming industry fell roughly into three categories:

*“Zero Tolerance”:* Indigenous peoples with negative experiences and ongoing conflict with the salmon farming industry

Fish farms in the Broughton Archipelago are located in relatively narrow inlets and in close proximity to traditional clam beaches and fishing spots, as well as wild salmon migration and holding areas. According to fishermen and other local indigenous experts, the tidal flows and local currents and circulation patterns allow waste from the farms to accumulate in shallow areas and on beaches; this poses particular problems for the sensitive intertidal zones in the area. In addition, the farms in the Broughton Archipelago are situated directly on the migration routes for wild salmon, allowing for the transfer of sea lice from the farms to passing pink and chum salmon smolts. The First Nations represented by the Musgamagw-Tribal Council, along with other First Nations, such as the Homolco of Bute Inlet, have appealed to Norwegian authorities to consider the state of the wild salmon in relation to the fish farming industry. These First Nations consider that fish farms have been placed in places to which they hold aboriginal title, without their consent, and that the industry is a threat to the wild salmon in the area. Bob Chamberlin represented the Musgamagw Tribal Council and spoke of his peoples’ history of engagement with environmental groups, industry-NGO “dialogue” tables, and provincial environmental assessment processes—none of which led to results that were acceptable to the leaders of the communities.

*“Cautious acceptance”:* Indigenous peoples with mixed experiences, who have entered into agreements with the salmon farming industry

Fish farms are scattered throughout the Ahousaht Nation’s territory in Clayoquot Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. After an initial phase of conflict and direct action against the fish farming industry operating in their territories, and after an extended negotiation process, the Ahousaht entered into a protocol agreement with Pacific National Aquaculture (now Cermaq), in which they agreed not to oppose the placement of fish farms in their territories in exchange for recognition by the company of their hereditary chiefs. From the perspective of Ahousaht, the agreement is aimed at limiting environmental impacts and contributing to employment on the Ahousaht Nations’ territory. The Ahousaht established a fish farm committee, which says that it will allow the fish farming on Ahousaht territory until they find reason to disallow it.

Representatives from Ahousaht explained that extremely high unemployment rates, brought about as the result of their exclusion from the wild commercial fisheries, had been alleviated by the hiring of Ahousaht staff by the fish farming company. The fish farm committee members are proud of the agreement they have negotiated and work with a biologist at the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council to monitor sea lice and the health of the coastal environment near the aquaculture sites. They see that legal precedents on consultation and accommodation have given force to the rights they are exercising through the protocol agreement.

Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland also allow fish farming on their territory, but are experiencing decreases in the wild salmon stocks of two rivers that the wild salmon migrates to past the fish farms. Salmon migration routes are mapped and in conflict with the salmon farms. The representative from Conne River believed that the industry was probably going to be operating in his community's waters for some time to come, and that it therefore needed to be held accountable for escaped fish and for impacts on the wild stocks.

*“Precautionary action”:* Indigenous peoples who do not have intensive fish farming in their close proximity but who are critical of and experience salmon farming as one of the threats towards wild salmon.

The number of fish farms is still low in the Canadian Maritimes and in Finnmark. Concern for environmental impacts, however, is growing, both among river fishers and sea salmon fishers. Sea salmon fishers in Finnmark are currently severely regulated by state fisheries authorities. That, as well as an increase in sport fishing tourism, has the effect of greatly constraining the traditional sea salmon fishery. The impact of fish farming on indigenous access to salmon is therefore cumulative. Fishers have observed that wild fish seem to shy away from fjords and areas where the salmon farms are. Salmon farming is now on the increase in Finnmark, and the concern for increase in sea lice problems and diseases in wild salmon is growing. Based on this concern, the Sami Parliament participates in consultations and dialogue with the Norwegian salmon management authorities and can raise objections to coastal zone plans where aquaculture conflicts with traditional fishing and spawning grounds for wild fish.

### **Common ground**

Despite their somewhat differing interpretations of the economic and environmental impacts of the salmon aquaculture industry, the participants (1) shared a common concern for the future of the wild salmon as an inextricable part of who they are as indigenous peoples, (2) expressed a strong desire to work on a global level with indigenous community members on emerging issues in salmon aquaculture, and to speak with a united voice on those issues, and (3) talked about a clear need to

work, simultaneously with their international efforts, at the local and regional levels in order to get a mandate from indigenous community members for continued, collaborative work internationally.

### **Follow up**

The workshop was successful in launching an international collaboration that we hope will continue into the future. The representatives were pleasantly surprised by the extent of the commonalities in indigenous approaches to wild salmon and wild salmon management globally. They also saw the historical and ongoing colonial relationships with the nation states in which they live as a common basis of experience. Proposed central themes to be followed up in the future were several: to what extent indigenous groups and the salmon farming industry can agree on common standards and protocols for companies wishing to operate in indigenous territories, preparedness for future ecological changes and indigenous rights issues, using the UN Declaration as the basis for local indigenous rights movements, implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples standards in local contexts, and developing international standards for recognizing indigenous authority and rights wherever fish farms operate. The role of traditional knowledge in research and policy making as singled out as an important topic for future research, and the Sami Parliament has recently initiated a project that will explore how an independent indigenous knowledge foundation might support Sami people's rights and resource-based livelihoods in negotiations with resource industries, and how such an organization might be expanded to serve indigenous groups elsewhere. First Nations from Canada also wanted to work internationally to make traditional knowledge matter by sharing, and drawing on, the knowledge and experience of other salmon peoples. The newly established local salmon management body in Tana, Norway, offered to take the lead in organizing a follow-up conference in Tana, Norway in 2012 so that the dialogue and learning might continue within the indigenous communities themselves.

**-- Camilla Brattland (University of Tromsø) and Dorothee Schreiber (RCC)**