

Guests Share Lessons for Developing Community Fisheries



Dawn Morrison displays one catch of the day.

Uu-a-thluk contractors and members from two Nuu-chah-nulth Nations welcomed guests from South Africa and Eastern Canada on July 25 and 26 as part of an exchange organized by the Coastal Learning Communities Network (CLCN). Based in Canada, the CLCN is working to revitalize Canada's coastal communities by empowering residents on three coasts.

Their programs include sharing lessons about natural resource management both nationally and internationally.

In this case, CLCN organized an exchange between residents of South Africa and Canada. As part of the exchange, Cathy Thomas and Naseegh Jaffer of South Africa spent time in Tla-o-qui-aht and Ucluelet territories sharing knowledge about non-industrial scale indigenous fisheries. Joining them on the tour was Sherry Pictou of Nova Scotia's Bear River First Nation, Alice Martin of the Mikisew Cree First Nation in Alberta, Dawn Morrison of the Secwepemc First Nation in British Columbia, and John Kearney, coordinator of the CLCN.

"Members of the exchange wanted to build solidarity between Canadian and South African harvesters to help jointly develop actions and policies that support coastal communities and non-industrial scale fisheries," said Norine Messer, Uu-a-thluk's capacity building coordinator. "The South African guests shared lessons about what they've been doing since apartheid ended and what tools have been successful."

After two days of touring, which included a youth-elder fishing trip and an excursion to Meares Island courtesy of Tla-ook Cultural Adventures, the guests gathered with their Nuu-chah-nulth

hosts and the public at Tofino's Darwin Café for a night of formal presentations and discussions. Uu-a-thluk intern, Damon Rampanen, shared the Ahousaht dinner song.

"The exchange included presentations about Nuu-chah-nulth fishing rights, along with information sharing between guests and First Nations," Messer said.

Sherry Pictou presented on the Marshall decision, warning Nuu-chah-nulth Nations about the dangers of being divided during negotiations with DFO. Carol-Anne Hilton of Hesquiaht spoke about moving forward towards an economic fishery based on Nuu-chah-nulth rights.

"We cannot go back to the way things were because we live in a new society. But the new system should recognize our food security and dignity."

—Cathy Thomas, fisherwoman, South Africa

Wearing a shirt that said "Fishers Rights = Human Rights," Cathy Thomas spoke about the protests and court actions led by South African fishers in the name of reclaiming indigenous fishing rights.

"We wanted the right to go to sea legally and catch what we felt we needed,

to sell, to eat, and to share," she said through a translator. "We cannot go back to the way things were because we live in a new society. But the new system should recognize our food security and dignity."

"Ironically the government of Canada is funding indigenous fisheries development in South Africa and pushing for non-industrial scale fisheries because they recognize the rights of traditional harvesters there," Norine Messer said when the visit concluded. "From my understanding, that's the opposite of what they're doing here at home."

For more information about the exchange, contact Norine Messer at norinemesser@hotmail.com or 250-745-4111.

The Coastal Learning Communities Network is working to revitalize Canada's coastal communities by empowering coastal residents through shared learning, collective action, and the embracing of indigenous approaches to natural resource management. Its members live on Canada's three coasts and along the shores of major freshwater bodies.

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Elder Ronnie George and Sherry Pictou of the Bear River First Nation.



Visitors joined Nuu-chah-nulth elders and youth for a fishing trip in Nuu-chah-nulth waters.