

CHAPTER 6
MARINE STEWARDSHIP &
CANADA'S OCEANS AGENDA IN
THE WESTERN CANADIAN ARCTIC:

A ROLE FOR YOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

Stewardship is a term being used increasingly by resource industries, government agencies, and community activists to describe their philosophy of resource use. Most stewardship literature focuses on the care, protection, and monitoring of terrestrial resources. Over the past decade, however, Canada has moved to assume management responsibilities for an exclusive economic zone encompassing 2.9 million square kilometres of estuarine, coastal, and marine waters. The *Oceans Act* (1997) outlines objectives for the management of Canada's ocean resources. Canada's Oceans Strategy (Government of Canada 2002a) is the policy being used to guide implementation of the Act. It identifies an important role for stewardship in fulfilling Canada's marine management obligations.

Implementation of Canada's Oceans Strategy along the western Arctic coastline in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region is being led by a co-management group called the Beaufort Sea Integrated Management Planning Initiative (BSIMPI) Working Group. During its first year of operation the Working Group identified the need to involve Inuvialuit youth in their work as a priority. There is a relatively small number of people involved in co-management processes in the North. Those who do participate tend to be of middle age or older. There remains very little time to involve and train the younger generation to assume these responsibilities.

The purpose of this research was to develop a strategy that will foster increased Inuvialuit youth interest and participation in ocean stewardship activities. A qualitative approach was used to conduct the research. The lead author of this chapter, a young person herself, conducted all the fieldwork for this research. She found that most youth were interested in talking to her about many aspects

of stewardship. These discussions were supplemented by further interviews with resource managers, elders, teachers, parents, and others. Together they provided a coherent and in-depth understanding of the training, educational, and other stewardship opportunities available in the various communities. Youth also expressed their views of these opportunities, and what opportunities they would like to have made available to them. Key findings include evidence that: (a) few opportunities are available to the 1,700 youth in the region; (b) youth share the community's view that they are ill-prepared to assume resource management responsibilities from their elders; (c) youth feel they are being shortchanged in terms of the quality of formal education they are receiving and in terms of being taken on the land in order to gain the skills and knowledge possessed by their elders; and (d) youth want to play meaningful roles in their society.

This chapter outlines a strategy for addressing the research findings and identifies BSIMPI as having a key role to play in promoting the knowledge gathered from this study in ways that will encourage the larger community to assume responsibility for its implementation.

STEWARDSHIP AND CANADA'S MARINE RESOURCES

Stewardship is a term being used increasingly by resource industries, government agencies, and community activists to describe their philosophy of resource use (Laynard and Delbrouck 1994; Environment Canada 1996; Biodiversity Convention Office 2001; Government of Canada 2002c; CAPP 2003). Consistent across the range of definitions used by these groups is an ethic of caring for the earth and assuming responsibility for preserving, protecting, and even restoring the environment. Included in some perspectives is responsibility for protecting the country's economic and social fabric as well as the environment (CAPP 2003). The notion of stewardship is commonly understood to include an obligation to ensure a healthy environment for present and future generations (CWS *et al.* 1995; Laynard and Delbrouck 1994; Knight and Landers 1998; Lerner 1993). Implicit is the acknowledgement of individual and personal responsibility for positive action. Government and industry both claim to seek to engage citizens and endorse business practices that protect the natural environment while enhancing the quality of life (CAPP 2003; Government of Canada 2002b). The Government of Canada, the provinces, and the territories, through Canada's Stewardship Agenda, recognize stewardship as a key conservation tool and are committed to further supporting and encouraging stewardship activities (Government of Canada 2002c). The research undertaken for this chapter was funded by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and provides evidence of a genuine attempt to involve northern youth in the national stewardship agenda.

Stewardship activities typically include advocacy, conservation, monitoring, research, fundraising, and working co-operatively with other stakeholders and interest groups. Lerner (1993) noted that individuals who become involved in these activities tend to be humanistic intellectuals such as teachers, social workers, other service professionals, and students. She describes these people as resourceful,

high-minded, self-sacrificing, and socially conscious individuals. They become involved in stewardship activities because they have concerns about an issue and perceive that it will not be addressed to their satisfaction by government or others. In many cases individuals and community groups are more effective in addressing issues than government might have been, since they can respond to circumstances more quickly, are independent of constraints characteristically imposed on government agencies, and tend to have a more intimate knowledge of their local landscape characteristics (WC0 1998; Lerner 1993).

People who become involved in stewardship activities enjoy a range of benefits. These benefits include learning more about their natural environment, meeting other people with similar values and interests, having fun, and taking pride in having contributed to the well-being of their community and the natural environment. Once people become involved in stewardship activities they tend to stay involved. Reasons for this include the shared feelings of solidarity, strength, camaraderie, and empowerment associated with their efforts. Communities benefit directly from their citizens' efforts and indirectly by a growing capacity for self-reliance (CWS *et al.* 1995; Lerner 1993).

Most stewardship literature focuses on the care, protection, and monitoring of terrestrial resources (Dallmeyer 2003; Knight and Landers 1998; Lerner 1993). Over the past decade, however, Canada has moved to assume management responsibilities for an exclusive economic zone encompassing 2.9 million square kilometres of estuarine, coastal, and marine waters. Almost one-quarter of Canada's total population lives in these coastal regions. The management complexities associated with these additional responsibilities are illustrated by the numerous ocean-related conventions to which Canada is a party. These include shipping, fisheries, biodiversity, pollution, climate change, anadromous stocks, and safety of life at sea (Government of Canada 1997).

The *Oceans Act* (1997) outlines economic, social, and environmental objectives for the management of Canada's ocean resources (Government of Canada 2003). Canada's Oceans Strategy (Government of Canada 2002a) is the policy that is being used to guide implementation of the Act. It identifies an important role for stewardship in fulfilling Canada's marine management obligations. Specifically, it recognizes that involving Canadians in the stewardship of their marine resources is key to its implementation. In this document, stewardship is defined as "acting responsibly to conserve the oceans and their resource for present and future generations" (Government of Canada 2002a, 20).

MARINE STEWARDSHIP IN CANADA'S WESTERN ARCTIC *The Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR)*

The Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) is located in Canada's western Arctic (see Figure 5.1). It includes the northern portion of the Mackenzie Delta, the Beaufort Sea, Banks Island, and the western portion of Victoria Island. The Inuvialuit, a group of Inuit, largely inhabit the area. (See Table 6.1 for a summary of population numbers in the ISR communities.)

Table 6.1
INUVIALUIT SETTLEMENT REGION COMMUNITY POPULATION NUMBERS

Community	Total population	Inuvialuit population	Inuvialuit under age of 29	
			Population	% of Inuvialuit population
Aklavik	700	350	179	51
Inuvik	3,200	1,200	624	52
Paulatuk	270	270	154	57
Sachs Harbour	120	120	65	54
Holman	400	400	212	53
Tuktoyaktuk	940	940	526	56
Total	5,630	3,280	1,760	54

There are also Gwich'in First Nation people in Inuvik and Aklavik, and non-native people in Inuvik. The small communities in this region offer few employment and/or entrepreneurial business opportunities. The traditional economy of the ISR includes marine subsistence hunting and fishing. The Inuvialuit have for centuries harvested a variety of whales, seals, and marine fish for food for household consumption. Harvesting occurs on the sea, sea ice, and the seashore. Substantial benefits are associated with sharing food, retaining long-standing cultural practices, and integrating young people into work roles and the community including reducing the need for a cash income. The private sector cash economy includes marine shipping, marine-related arts and crafts, marine-related tourism, research, and significant offshore oil and gas potential (G.S. Gislason & Associates and Outcrop Ltd. 2003).

Subsistence harvesting is evident in all the ISR communities, but is strongest in the smaller communities that have few wage employment opportunities (Ayles and Snow 2002). The area is governed by a comprehensive land claims agreement titled the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) entered into by the Government of Canada and the Inuvialuit and signed in 1984. It recognizes Inuvialuit rights to specific surface and subsurface lands. Monetary compensation and participation in resource development, harvesting, and management arrangements are also covered in the agreement (Notzke 1995; Government of Canada 1984).

Marine and freshwater resources in the ISR are managed through two administrative structures: those created by federal legislation and the co-management arrangements created under the IFA (Muir 1994). In the ISR, co-management is an institutional arrangement between the Government of Canada and the Inuvialuit. It outlines the specific roles, rights, powers, and obligations of parties to the co-management arrangements as they pertain to the management of renewable resources (Berkes *et al.* 2001; Government of Canada 1984). The Inuvialuit have an advisory role only concerning development of non-Inuvialuit lands in the ISR (Notzke 1995).

Communities of the ISR

Of the six communities in the ISR, two are inland (Aklavik and Inuvik) and four are coastal (Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Holman and Tuktoyaktuk) (see Figure 5.1). The community of Aklavik is located in the Mackenzie Delta. Wage employment in the community is largely associated with the local government and the oil and gas industry. Inuvik is located on the western branch of the Mackenzie River. It was built in the 1940s as a regional centre to replace Aklavik. This community has most of the wage-employment opportunities in the ISR. It is also home to Aurora College and the Aurora Research Institute (ARI). Subsistence hunting, fishing, and harvesting continue to be important in community life (Ayles and Snow 2002).

The community of Paulatuk is located at the mouth of the Hornaday River. Subsistence harvesting is the main activity as there is almost no cash economy. Paulatuk is the gateway to Tuktoyaktuk National Park and has become a focus for mineral exploration. The community of Sachs Harbour is located on Banks Island. It is the smallest community in the ISR. Aklavik National Park headquarters are located there. The only non-governmental employment opportunities available in the community are through tourism, sport hunts, and the commercial harvest of muskoxen. The community of Holman is located on the west coast of Victoria Island. It is a very traditional community known for its printmaking artwork. Seal hunting played a large role in the economy of Holman until the anti-sealing movement caused a downturn in the market. This community has very close ties with the eastern Arctic. The community of Tuktoyaktuk is situated on the coast of the Arctic Ocean. The only deepwater port in the region is located here, and the area is the focus of onshore and offshore oil and gas exploration. Though Tuktoyaktuk is a coastal community, its subsistence harvesting activities extend inland into the Mackenzie Delta (Ayles and Snow 2002).

The total population of the six communities is approximately 5,600. Of this number, about 3,300 are Inuvialuit. Over half of the Inuvialuit population is under twenty-nine years of age (see Table 6.1).

Implementation of Canada's Oceans Strategy in the ISR

Implementation of Canada's Oceans Strategy along the western Arctic coastline is being led by a co-management group called the Beaufort Sea Integrated Management Planning Initiative (BSIMPI) Working Group. During its first year of operation the Working Group identified the need to involve Inuvialuit youth in their work as a priority. Members realized that their long-term obligation for the careful and responsible management of marine resources in the region would soon depend on the active involvement of the younger generation.

The need to involve youth in regional management responsibilities was a concern shared by others. Community leaders had observed almost ten years earlier that a small pool of middle-aged qualified and willing northerners who sat on resource management committees and councils were getting older and

would need replacements in the near future. Though they recognized that a logical choice for replacements was the next generation, they perceived that youth lacked interest in assuming this role (Notzke 1995). Inuvialuit elders have more recently expressed concern that youth lack the necessary skills and knowledge to assume resource management responsibilities assumed by the Inuvialuit under the IFA. They note that there has been a loss of connection between young people and the natural environment. Elders fear that this loss has resulted in a lack of knowledge of the land, a loss of culture, and an unwillingness to assume responsibility for the natural environment (NRTEE 2001). Steps taken to try to address these concerns have been few and they have had very limited success.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to develop a strategy that will foster increased Inuvialuit youth interest and participation in oceans stewardship activities in the ISR. The specific research objectives were:

- To assess and evaluate trends related to the level of Inuvialuit youth participation in oceans stewardship activities;
- To identify components of a successful Inuvialuit youth oceans stewardship strategy;
- To draft a strategy for increasing Inuvialuit youth participation oceans stewardship activities in the ISR.

This chapter summarizes the research findings, documents a proposed strategy to engage youth, and concludes with lessons learned and implications for the future.

Research Methods

The researcher is a young person. As a result, northern youth considered her a peer, saw her as a role model, and wanted to spend social time together. The level of communication and mutual understanding possible was thus enhanced by her age. A qualitative approach was used to conduct this research, as the subject matter does not lend itself to quantitative analysis. All six ISR communities were included in the study in order to capture any differences between coastal and delta communities. The research methods included a preliminary site visit, participation, youth focus groups, and expert interviews. A young Inuvialuit beneficiary was hired as a research assistant. The assistant introduced the researcher to the Inuvialuit communities, culture, and most importantly to other youth. Ninety-one individuals participated in the study. This included Inuvialuit youth (between the ages of fourteen and twenty-nine), elders, parents, past and present high school teachers, and local resource managers.

A preliminary site visit to the communities of Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk was conducted in July 2002. The purpose of this visit was to prepare for the fieldwork by obtaining a scientific research licence from the ARI and to begin meeting with people from with the various communities. Primary information

was collected while visiting the six communities between November 2002 and January 2003.

Participation was used to build relationships with people in the communities. While conducting the research, I lived with different families and participated in the family's daily activities. These included things like washing dishes, preparing food, watching television, snowmobiling etc. The families I lived with also gave me advice on the Inuvialuit culture. I used this information to guide how I conducted subsequent interviews and focus groups. I spent many of my evenings and weekends socializing with local youth. This allowed me to develop numerous friendships and acquire a depth of knowledge and understanding that would not have been possible if I had relied only on focus groups and formal interviews.

The purpose of the focus groups was to gain insight into Inuvialuit youths' perspectives, perceptions, motivations, and understanding of the concept of oceans stewardship and management. I facilitated focus groups in the five high schools in the ISR. Though the community of Sachs Harbour does not have a high school, the youth from this community were included in the Inuvik focus group. When large groups of students were involved a teacher and/or my research assistant helped with the facilitation.

I conducted interviews with Inuvialuit elders, parents, past and present high school teachers, local resource managers, including government people and Hunter and Trapper committees (HTCs), as well as with youth environmental stewardship program administrators from outside the ISR. These interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions.

I transcribed, coded, and categorized the information I had gathered after I had completed the fieldwork portion of my research. Next I conducted a content analysis to extrapolate themes and patterns. I organized the information for further analysis using Atlas.ti software. Finally, I synthesized and evaluated my findings. After preparing a summary report, I returned to the ISR communities to present my findings to the research participants and the communities at large. This verification of findings occurred between 2 May and 28 May 2003. This step helped to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of information, findings, and conclusions of the study (Leedy and Ormrod 2001; Grenier 1998).

INUVALUIT YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN OCEANS STEWARDSHIP

When I approached Inuvialuit youth about this research, most were interested in talking with me about many aspects of stewardship. Taken together, these discussions provided me with a coherent and in-depth understanding of the training, educational, and other opportunities available. I also learned what the general views of youth are in regard to these opportunities and what opportunities they would like to have made available to them. Perhaps most significant was the clear expression of a desire to learn and a wish to assume meaningful roles in their communities.

Inuvialuit youth share the community's lack of confidence about their capacity to take over from their elders. The roots of their lack of confidence are evident



Oceans Day parade, July 2002, youth banner, Tuktoyaktuk, NWT.
Photo by Michelle Schlag, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 2002.

and stem from chronic feelings of abandonment by their community and the larger society. They note a lack of opportunity to learn the traditional values and customs of their grandparents' generation, a lack of expectations that they will be productive citizens, a lack of role models to inspire them, and being given an inferior education as factors that have limited their active involvement. Combined with the serious social ills that are common in many homes, the result has been low self-confidence, little initiative, and a low quality of life.

Opportunities and Limitations

There are few opportunities in the ISR for youth to get involved in oceans stewardship either through 'formal' (e.g., scientific research, laboratory work, monitoring), or 'traditional' oceans activities (e.g., resource use – hunting, fishing, harvesting). Participating in traditional activities is problematic for a number of reasons. Cost is one factor. Large families is another. Often there simply is not room for all to be taken on the land. Time on the land also conflicts with classroom requirements. As well, community leaders are often not aware of the interest youth have in participating. Further, the number and type of opportunities available vary by community. Most 'formal' opportunities are available in Inuvik, Aklavik, and Tuktoyaktuk, while most 'traditional' opportunities appear to occur in the smaller communities of Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk, and Holman. Current stewardship opportunities available to youth include the

Fisheries Joint Management Committee (FJMC) Student Mentoring Program, The Tariuq Monitoring Program, scientific research, "Oceans 11" – a new Arctic marine science curriculum, "Oceans Day" festivities and workshops, cultural camps, and informal traditional activities (*i.e.*, going out on the land and ocean with family). The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the Inuvialuit Government are involved to different degrees in most of the oceans stewardship programs in the ISR. Parks Canada (PC) offers stewardship programs for younger children in the ISR and supports the FJMC Student Mentoring Program by providing work placements for participants. At present there are no other oceans stewardship programs in the ISR administered by other federal, territorial, and municipal government agencies, nor non-governmental organizations. Current opportunities are described more fully below.

The FJMC Student Mentoring Program is run annually in partnership with the DFO. It is designed to give students an introduction to fisheries science and resource management. This program has been running in the community of Inuvik since 1996. Given the technical nature of most jobs in this field, the program is intended to encourage youth to continue their schooling so that they can become the future scientists and resource managers of the ISR (FJMC 2001). The program provides participants with summer jobs in which they are given placements with resource managers and scientists in different agencies in the ISR and at the DFO Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg. The program typically attracts three to four students from Inuvik. Students from the other ISR communities have previously participated in the program. In recent years, however, the program has focused on youth in Inuvik.

The Tariuq Monitoring Program is a community-based pilot project funded by the DFO through its Oceans Program. The program operates in the communities of Tuktoyaktuk and Aklavik. Participants include representatives from DFO, the Hunters and Trappers (HTC), elders' and youth committees. Program participants monitor fish abundance and health, as well as water temperature. The objective of this program is to provide baseline information that will allow researchers to monitor changes in coastal and anadromous fish over time (BSIMPI 2002). Students who participate in this program learn to apply monitoring techniques, which are helpful in assessing fish populations, an important component of the freshwater and marine ecosystem.

Youth occasionally have an opportunity to assist with scientific research. When working for research scientists, young people can learn a variety of skills such as sampling and monitoring techniques, conducting interviews, and helping to organize and facilitate meetings. These infrequent opportunities are open to youth from any of the ISR communities, depending on where the research is being conducted.

The Oceans 11 Arctic marine science curriculum was developed by the DFO Oceans Program in recognition of the need for Arctic science and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) curriculum material. The Departments of Education of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon participated in the



Sachs Harbour, Banks Island, NWT, in summer. Photo by Fikret Berkes.

development of these materials. The course was piloted to grade eleven students in Inuvik, Holman, and Paulatuk in the winter of 2003. If deemed successful by the Beaufort Delta Education Council, it will be expanded and offered in Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk in the near future.

Oceans Day is a national event intended to celebrate and remember the importance of oceans to Canadians (DFO 2003). Oceans Day celebrations and activities have been hosted by the DFO and community organizations in the ISR for the past two years. These events have included specific activities for youth. In 2002, a youth retreat was held in Tuktoyaktuk. Three youth from each of the ISR communities were brought together for this event. They learned about the ocean ecosystem and oceans-related careers. During Oceans Day 2003 in Aklavik, youth were taken camping. The community responses over the past two years have been so positive that the event will likely be held annually, and with greater support from local management agencies.

The Community Corporations and/or Brighter Futures run cultural camps in all six communities. The Community Corporations try to improve the social, cultural, and economic well-being of beneficiaries in each ISR community. Brighter Futures, developed by Health Canada in co-operation with First Nation and Inuit communities, is a program designed to improve the mental, physical, and social health of children, families, and communities (IRC 2003). The goal of these camps is to teach youth respect for the land and ocean, to help them develop a sense of connection to the land, and to pass on TEK to younger generations. Between ten and twenty-five youth from each community are taken out on the land each summer. During this time, they are taught traditional hunting,

fishing, harvesting, and food preparation skills. Some of the communities also offer cultural camps in the winter. In this way youth learn about seasonal difference on the land. Many youth said they would like to spend more time out on the land with their families. However, families are typically large and this often means only the very young can go because of limited equipment and high costs of supplies. In addition, going out on the land can mean missing tests and exams and no allowances are made for this at school (Youth and Parents, pers. comm. 2002/2003).

In addition to the very limited number of opportunities to become involved in oceans stewardship, youth lack awareness of those that are available in their home community or in other ISR communities. Even on those occasions when they learn of a program and want to get involved, they don't know whom to contact. Youth are also not aware of oceans-related careers. Consequently, they do not consider pursuing careers as, for example, biologists, fisheries officers, or resource managers. Though scientists and ocean managers are present in the ISR communities, they are not visible. Many are from southern Canada and are not integrated into the Inuvialuit community. Youth, in turn, are not given information about their work, or about its importance to their community (Youth, pers. comm. 2002/2003).

Further complicating access to information about stewardship opportunities is poor communication between agencies, groups, and the schools. This lack of collaboration has led in some instances to turf wars and competition for a small pool of youth participants. It has also caused concern among leaders of educational institutions. The perception is that agencies prefer to offer their own programs rather than working collaboratively to provide the best opportunities to youth (Resource Manager 2002). Schools typically are not consulted on program developments to ensure that they meet the needs of the school and youth. Instead, educators are often approached with ready-made programs, which may not fit with the school curriculum or the school year. For example, while the schools are asked to promote and suggest students for the FJMC Student Mentoring Program, the program is inconsistent with the school year in the coastal communities, and therefore, youth from these communities are excluded from participating (Teacher, pers. comm. 2002).

Opportunities to become involved in ocean-related activities are obviously too limited, recognizing that there are over seventeen hundred Inuvialuit youth who might wish to participate. Interest and enthusiasm appear to be strongest among those who live in the coastal communities. Youth in these communities spoke of a personal relationship to the ocean that is the result of living next to it every day. This relationship was not as evident among youth in Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, as they did not mention having a connection to the ocean. Some youth from Inuvik said that they had not even seen the ocean. Nonetheless, almost all opportunities to participate in formal oceans activities are based in the communities of Inuvik, Aklavik, and Tuktoyaktuk.

A Role for Education

Educational standards in the ISR are low and getting lower (Teachers and Resource Manager, pers. comm. 2002; Vodden 2001). Even at current levels, local resource management professionals are commenting that high school graduates lack the capacity and proficiency to demonstrate basic skills such as reading and writing. There are also concerns that educational institutions in the ISR are under pressure to increase their completion rates and are modifying programs and advancing students who lack basic literacy skills (Resource Managers and Teacher, pers. comm. 2002). Inuvialuit youth recognize that they are receiving an inferior education. They want to be given a higher quality of formal education.

Youth who do attend school get little support or encouragement from their families or communities to continue (Youth, pers. comm. 2002). Parents told me that they sometimes feel alienated from the educational system. They commented that they might not encourage their children to attend school regularly and graduate because they themselves have not graduated from high school. Alternatively, they may have had bad experiences in school when they were children (Farrow and Wilman 1989; Parent, pers. comm. 2002). In Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, this indifference is reinforced by the fact that people can often make a decent living without a formal education.

Another underlying concern shared by youth, elders, and parents is most strongly felt in the smaller coastal communities. This concern is that even if youth do become educated, there will be no local job opportunities available to them (Youth, Elders, and Parents, pers. comm. 2002/2003; Purich 1992). The assumption that youth will have to relocate to find employment, or end up underemployed or unemployed if they remain in their home community, is consistent with Condon's 1987 findings. Alternatively, elders and parents do not see a formal education as important for youth who want to be active in traditional ocean activities and local co-management processes. Rather, it is felt that their time would be better spent on the land than in school (Elders, pers. comm. 2002/2003).

The need for positive role models in their own age group was stressed repeatedly by youth (Youth, pers. comm. 2002/2003). Role models are important because youth look to their communities for examples of success. Youth would be encouraged to make better choices by having the chance to see that other young people like themselves have made good lifestyle and career choices (FedNor 1994; City of Calgary 2002). Inuvialuit youth also want mentors who could help them learn about oceans-related career possibilities in the ISR. At present they feel they are not getting the information they need to make good decisions (Youth, pers. comm. 2003).

A Role for Traditional Knowledge – A Long Tradition of Stewardship

Aboriginal people have typically adapted their needs to the capacity of the surrounding environment and have had a relationship of reciprocity and balance with other living things (Booth and Jacobs 2001). Lerner (1993) observes that many

Aboriginal people have an in-depth knowledge of the environment. Aboriginal people are acting as stewards, she says, when they have a personal relationship with the land and animals, and when they use hunting, fishing, and harvesting methods that demonstrate respect for the environment. Aboriginal people were able to harvest animals and fish without depleting resources by using specialized equipment (*e.g.*, Chisasibi Cree used certain gill net sizes to catch specific age and species of fish), and by having control over which species are harvested, when they are harvested, and what size is harvested (Lerner 1993).

The Inuvialuit have historically been stewards or caretakers of their coastal and marine resources. Much of their present knowledge has been passed down over time from one generation to the next generation (Inuit Tapirisat Katami 2003). They have tried to maintain a balance between sustainable resource use and conservation based on their experience, traditional knowledge, and respect for their environment (Fast *et al.* 2001, 184; McDonald *et al.* 1997). The deeply held connection that many Inuvialuit continue to have to coastal and ocean resources leads them to be concerned with protecting their natural environment for future generations (NRTEE 2001).

It is largely elders who hold the traditional knowledge of the ISR at the turn of the twenty-first century. There is general agreement among elders, community leaders, parents, teachers, and youth that this knowledge is not being passed on to the present generation. This loss of knowledge has many implications for the future of this region. By spending time on the land, youth develop an ethic of respect and a sense of connection to the land, the ocean, the animals, and each other. They also develop a strong sense of place through experiencing the land on a daily basis. The ethos of caring for the community, working together for the common good, becoming self-reliant and confident of one's abilities, as well as developing leadership skills and knowing the land, can only be acquired through personal experience (FJMC 2000). This generation's ability to use and maintain ocean resources for food and to sustain its cultural values and traditions will directly affect its quality of life (Fast *et al.* 2001). Youth are going to inherit the Earth, and they must be equipped to take care of it for future generations.

Elders are highly respected and knowledgeable members of the community. They have the responsibility to teach youth about the importance of the ocean, and to pass on the community's body of traditional knowledge and shared values (Elder, pers. comm. 2003). Parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children learn to respect the ocean and that they learn the traditional knowledge of their elders (Parent, pers. comm. 2002). The Inuvialuit consider respect for wildlife and the environment as being essential to understanding their place in the world. Elders believe that problems arise out of a lack of respect (Elders and Parents, pers. comm. 2002/2003). Industry, government, and community groups such as the hunters and trappers committees are also seen by youth, elders, and the committees themselves as having a responsibility to teach youth about ocean ecology and management.

All study participants recognized the importance of youth acquiring traditional knowledge if they are to be stewards of the ocean. Inuvialuit elders felt that TEK is extremely important because one cannot be a good manager or caretaker of the ocean without that knowledge. Though most participants thought that it would be ideal for youth to possess both traditional and formal skill sets (competency in reading, writing, and Western science), many elders felt that youth could gain competency in formal skills without graduating from high school (Elders, pers comm. 2003).

A Role for Local Resource Management Professionals

Resource management professionals (*i.e.*, government staff) in the ISR tended to have a pessimistic attitude toward youth. Many see youth as a lost cause and have concluded that there is no point in trying to involve them. Past efforts to involve youth have proven disappointing and there is not an inclination to continue trying. Some felt that it would be more beneficial to target a younger age group and work with them to instill an ethic of social responsibility to protect the environment (Resource Managers, pers. comm. 2003). Youth told me that they are aware of the negative attitudes of resource management professionals and said that this attitude can be a barrier to their participation. In some agencies attitudes varied among staff, with some more willing than others to take the initiative to involve youth. Many resource management professionals fail to recognize the value and importance of involving youth and simply see it as 'slowing them down.' Some resource management professionals expressed that they felt obliged to involve youth but personally were not interested working with them (Resource Managers, pers. comm. 2003). Youth are aware of the negative attitudes toward them held by some professionals in the region. This further lowers their self-esteem and adds to their sense of hopelessness (Youth, pers. comm. 2003).

In sum, many youth said that they often feel abandoned and forgotten. Youth in communities other than Inuvik expressed that they feel forgotten by other Canadians and abandoned by their own people in Inuvik, where their government is based. Their communities are isolated, and they too feel personally isolated from other Inuvialuit and the rest of Canada (Youth, pers. comm. 2002). Youth in the communities other than Inuvik felt especially abandoned because of the lack of opportunities available to them. Some even felt as if they were being punished for staying in their home communities, where opportunities are very few (Youth, pers. comm. 2003).

THE WAY AHEAD: A STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING INUVIALUIT YOUTH IN MARINE STEWARDSHIP

The proposed strategy for engaging Inuvialuit youth in marine stewardship outlined in this section is based on the research findings. The proposed strategy identifies key activities that need to be undertaken in the communities. Implementation of this strategy will require the collaborative efforts

of the BSIMPI, community leaders and members, educators, elders, and local resource managers. The strategy addresses all six Inuvialuit communities and focuses on the issues of participation, the need for expanded and development of new programs, better communication, the need for higher educational standards, and the urgent need to take youth on the land for extended periods. The strategy also outlines roles for BSIMPI, educators, HTCS, elders, local resource managers, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC), and industry. What is being proposed requires a new way of thinking and doing things related to youth. If it is fully implemented youth will rise to the challenge of being tomorrow's resource managers. The benefits achieved will exceed their active participation in marine stewardship.

Strategy Components

1 Continue to participate in existing opportunities

Youth should continue to participate in existing marine stewardship opportunities as described earlier. Existing opportunities should be regularly evaluated by both program administrators and participants to ensure that they meet the needs of youth and the administering organization. Where possible, existing programs such as the FJMC Student Mentoring Program should be expanded to provide opportunities to engage youth in all ISR communities.

2 Develop new stewardship opportunities and encourage participation

Youth, in collaboration with local resource managers, should develop new opportunities for participation. This process should be facilitated by a Marine Stewardship Youth Coordinator. The goal here is to strive to create and fill this position with a youth. The idea has been discussed by the FJMC in the past and they would agree. Ideally, the position would be filled by someone who has previously participated in some of the programs. New opportunities should provide youth with hands-on, participatory experiences that are both interesting and challenging (Youth, pers. comm. 2003; FedNor 1994). Youth should be involved in program design to ensure that opportunities are interesting and attractive to youth. Youth should also be provided incentives and recognition for their participation in stewardship (Environmental Program Administrator, pers. comm. 2003). These measures will increase the likelihood of youth staying involved in stewardship programs.

3 Increase youth awareness of stewardship opportunities

Increasing awareness of stewardship opportunities and how to get involved is critical to the success of a strategy to engage youth in oceans stewardship. Currently, only individual program providers tend to have information about their program. One-stop shopping to access information would be helpful because youth are less likely to seek out information if they must go to a number of different locations. Information should be located in convenient places easily accessible to youth, such as schools and youth centres (FJMC 2000). It is very

important that a concerted effort be made in the smaller coastal communities to increase awareness of opportunities. A variety of media, such as television, newspapers, newsletters and Web sites, could be used to inform youth about opportunities. Involving youth in the design and development of promotional materials will help ensure their effectiveness (FedNor 1994).

4 *Improve communication between groups*

Currently, there is a fragmented approach to providing stewardship opportunities to youth due to a lack of communication between agencies, groups, and schools. A fragmented approach increases the likelihood of duplication and gaps of programs (NRTEE 2001). Better cross-communication between these groups when developing programs will help ensure that there is no duplication of opportunities and that gaps will be filled. This approach will also help ensure that programs are relevant to course curriculum and that they are consistent with the school year. A coordinated approach requires that groups work collaboratively to make certain that youth are provided with the best opportunities possible, and that competition for the same pool of youth participants is reduced. The appointment of a Marine Stewardship Youth Coordinator would be a very positive step. This coordinator would be responsible for collaborating with interested parties, developing new initiatives, and promoting existing and future programs.

5 *Offer youth a high quality formal education*

Schools in the ISR need to improve their standards, and Inuvialuit youth should be encouraged to complete their formal education and pursue post-secondary education. Educational institutions must have rigorous academic standards to ensure that youth have the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in stewardship and take on leadership roles in their communities (NRTEE 2001). Watering down and modifying programs results in a system that does not adequately prepare youth for life in either the North or the South (Castellano *et al.* 2000).

The schools should aim to teach youth about ocean ecology, governance, and the importance of the ocean to the Inuvialuit culture through a variety of initiatives. Such initiatives include guest speakers, marine-related projects and science fairs, attending marine related conferences, offering the Oceans 11 curriculum in Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk, and providing marine-related extra curriculum activities where there is sufficient student interest.

6. *Increase youth capacity in traditional skills and knowledge*

Inuvialuit youth must also increase their capacity in traditional skills and knowledge. Youth gain these skills and knowledge through experiencing the land and ocean first-hand and learning from family and elders. Therefore, more on-the-land and ocean programs should be offered. The skills and knowledge gained will help provide youth with an understanding of the environment and

respect for the land and ocean, and help develop a sense of connection to the earth. It is important that opportunities offered to youth be culturally relevant. Youth need to understand how what they are doing and learning is relevant to them and the Inuvialuit culture. On-land programs could begin to compensate for the decline in traditional methods of handing down TEK.

Strategy Implementation – The Roles and Responsibilities

BSIMPI has a key role to play in implementing this strategy for engaging Inuvialuit youth in marine stewardship. Along with other interested parties, this group will be responsible for promoting the knowledge gathered from this study in ways that will encourage community leaders, elders, educators, resource managers, and others in identifying ways to make the changes needed to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy. BSIMPI is the ideal group to carry out these functions because it represents a cross-section of interested parties in the ISR.

Educators are responsible for teaching Inuvialuit youth about ocean ecology and management. The Oceans 11 course is a take-off point for this and could be used to good advantage in assuming this responsibility. The schools should also make an effort to ensure that stewardship opportunities are available to youth from all six ISR communities.

Members of HTC should play a much greater role in teaching and engaging youth in marine stewardship at the local level. The HTCs acknowledge this responsibility and suggested that they could invite youth to attend HTC meetings, host workshops, and conduct school presentations to teach youth about marine stewardship and the importance of the marine environment to the Inuvialuit (Resource Managers, pers. comm. 2002/2003).

Elders' committees also have a very important role to play in implementing this strategy. Elders have the responsibility to pass on their knowledge of the land and animals on to younger generations. Some suggested initiatives elders' committees could pursue to engage youth in marine stewardship include hosting field trips to take youth out on the land and teach them traditional skills and knowledge, and conducting workshops in the community on marine-related issues and traditional skills. The Oceans 11 curriculum has an experiential component that brings elders into the classroom and takes youth into the community to meet with elders. This curriculum is being implemented in four of the Inuvialuit communities in 2003–2004.

Local resource managers have perhaps the most important role in implementing the strategy because they currently provide the majority of marine stewardship opportunities to youth. This group includes DFO, PC, Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (RWED), and the FJMC. Each of these agencies has taken steps to engage youth in resource management activities. They are capable of doing much more. The FJMC should expand its Student Mentoring Program to include all ISR communities. Agencies should make regular school presentations and host or sponsor community events such as Oceans Day to raise the profile of oceans and awareness of the work of that

organization. These agencies can also provide competitive summer employment opportunities, assist youth in attending marine related conferences, and involve youth in scientific research.

The IRC, including its community corporations and brighter futures programs, has a crucial role to play in the implementation of the strategy. The IRC can show leadership in supporting existing stewardship opportunities and in developing new initiatives to engage youth. The IRC, as the umbrella governing body in the ISR, must take steps to ensure that youth in the ISR receive a high-quality education. The IRC also has a responsibility to encourage youth to complete and pursue post-secondary education.

Industry has a role to play in the successful implementation of this strategy. Youth have stated that the low skill requirements and relatively high wages for some industry positions can discourage them from completing or returning to school. Industry should therefore pursue initiatives that encourage youth to stay in school and complete their education (Youth, pers. comm. 2002/2003). This can be achieved through hiring policies that encourage youth to complete their education and pursue a post-secondary education, providing scholarships to support students' pursuit of post-secondary education, and conducting presentations at schools about marine stewardship and the benefits of staying in school.

LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

There are a number of important lessons to be learned from this research. Perhaps the most important is that a great opportunity to involve Inuvialuit youth in marine stewardship is being missed. Youth in the region have expressed a desire to be involved in stewardship activities and to learn more about the marine environment. To date, there have been limited opportunities for youth involvement. There have also been important lessons learned regarding formal and informal education. It is evident that higher education attainment levels leads to a better quality of life. This includes access to increased income and being able to make better life choices (City of Calgary 2002; NRTEE 2001; Castellano *et al.* 2000). Another lesson learned is that most ISR youth are not being given the chance to spend time on the land even though they want this very much. Spending time on the land allows youth to acquire traditional knowledge, develop moral values of respect for the earth, self-confidence, and a sense of pride and connection with their culture. Acquiring this knowledge will allow youth to become not only better stewards of the land but also leaders of their communities.

This research focused on Inuvialuit youth. The findings regarding education and engaging youth are similar to research findings about Aboriginal youth in Nunavut and northern Ontario (Makokis 2000; FedNor 1994). Although a northern Aboriginal example was used, many of the findings may be applicable elsewhere in Canada. Continued research on engaging youth in stewardship activities in other Aboriginal and northern communities is needed.

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