



# Evaluation of the Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Programs

## ABOUT THE PROGRAMS

The Indigenous commercial fisheries (ICF) programs are three grants and contributions programs within Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) Fisheries and Harbour Management Sector. They provide Indigenous communities with funding to access commercial fisheries and build capacity to fish and to operate commercial fishing enterprises (CFEs).

### Atlantic Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (AICFI) Annual budget \$11.02M

Launched in 2007, AICFI supports 34 Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy First Nations in the Maritime provinces and the Gaspésie region of Quebec.

CFEs are established at a one-community to one-CFE ratio.

### Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (PICFI) Annual budget \$22.05M

Launched in 2007, PICFI supports Indigenous groups and communities in Canada's Pacific region.

To allow the maximum number of First Nation groups to participate, CFEs were established at the aggregate level rather than at an individual band level.

### Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (NICFI) Annual budget \$7.0M

Launched in 2019, NICFI supports Indigenous communities that are ineligible for AICFI and PICFI.

NICFI was set up with implementation models to address food security needs and other unique contexts of communities in northern and central Canada.

## ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted between April 2020 and February 2021. The objective was to provide senior management with information for decision-making and learning that could be used to improve the ICF programs or other programs within the department. The evaluation included an assessment of the collaborative approaches (i.e., co-design, co-development and co-delivery) being used to deliver the programs and evidence was gathered through a literature review, data analysis, interviews and a document review. Documented findings from the Indigenous Program Review (IPR), conducted by the National Indigenous Fisheries Institute in cooperation with DFO from 2017-2019, were a key source of evidence.

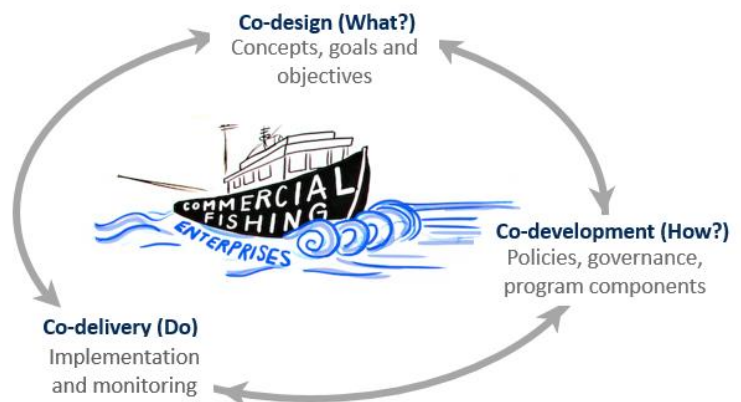
## KEY FINDINGS

**The ICF programs are aligned with federal and departmental priorities and are meeting many of the needs expressed by Indigenous communities.**

The programs contribute to the government's reconciliation agenda and the department's mandate to manage fisheries sustainably. Flexibility and responsiveness have allowed the programs to meet different community needs and stay relevant as needs have evolved over time, particularly as CFEs have grown and built more complex business operations.

**DFO works with Indigenous participants and organizations and other stakeholders to co-design, co-develop, and co-deliver the programs.**

It was difficult to define co-design, co-development and co-delivery, however common goals were identified: to deliver programs that meet the needs of both DFO and the Indigenous communities being served; and, to conduct joint decision-making.



Source for boat image: National Indigenous Fisheries Institute, Indigenous Program Review Phase One: Tanya Gadsby, The Fuselight

Indigenous persons or organizations are represented in the main governance structures, for example, the program management committees and application review boards.



**Four success factors or principles are contributing to effective co-design, co-development, and co-delivery.**

1. Employing flexibility in program delivery
2. Using a ground-up, grass-roots approach
3. Allowing for joint decision-making at different program levels
4. Supporting meaningful engagement through open dialogue

**The business development teams (BDTs) were found to be one of the most effective structures in applying co-design, co-development and co-delivery.**

The effectiveness of the BDTs can be attributed to several factors including they operate on the ground, at arm’s length from DFO and in confidentiality related to CFE business. Further, they are led by and/or include members from Indigenous organizations, typically with established relationships and involvement with community members.

Some challenges were identified regarding the PICFI BDT, including a lack of clarity about its roles and responsibilities and concerns about its limited knowledge of Pacific coast fisheries. These issues may be partially attributed to the BDT being fairly new to the Pacific initiative (2015 compared to 2007 for AICFI) and to a high turnover in BDT members in recent years.

**As of March 2020, 174 Indigenous communities were participating in the programs through 67 CFEs.**

Between 2016-17 and 2019-20, the programs signed a total of 592 agreements with Indigenous groups. The number of groups participating in PICFI is much higher than the number of CFEs because communities partner with others to create the enterprises.

Programs have put in place measures to address known barriers to participation related to geography, language and cultural or social barriers. For example, in addition to materials being provided in French and English, they are translated to Inuktitut for NICFI.

**Participation in 2019-20**

AICFI	33 CFEs
	33 Groups
PICFI	25 CFEs
	118 Groups
NICFI	9 CFEs
	23 Groups

AICFI	Fishing operations: <b>1,971</b> trained
	Business management: <b>89</b> trained
PICFI	Fishing operations: <b>1,878</b> trained
	Business management: <b>165</b> trained

**The programs are building the capacity of Indigenous communities, preparing them for employment in the commercial fishing industry, and resulting in community benefits.**

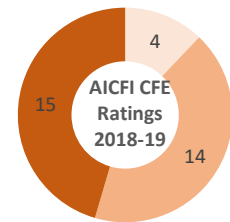
Between 2016-17 and 2019-20, a total of 4,103 people received fishing operations and business management training through the AICFI and PICFI programs. However, the evaluation noted inconsistencies with respect to how the training was applied: AICFI’s training has been accessible only to Indigenous participants while PICFI’s training has been accessible to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

The ICF programs have supported employment in participating communities and have resulted in other community benefits, including infrastructure improvements, support for other community priorities such as social programs, and increased food security.

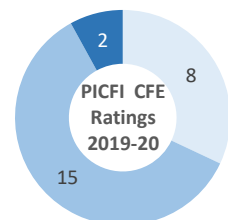
**Both AICFI and PICFI commercial fishing enterprises are moving towards sustainability, which is measured through a business capacity ratings system.**

Every year, AICFI and PICFI measure the level of sustainability of CFEs through a business capacity rating system, and there has been a steady progression towards sustainability for CFEs from both programs since they were first established. The system is not yet in place for NICFI. Currently, four of 33 AICFI CFEs and eight of 25 PICFI CFEs have below-sustainable ratings; 15 and two CFEs have reached a sustainable rating for AICFI and PICFI, respectively.

Differences between AICFI and PICFI ratings can be explained by a number of contextual factors including that Pacific CFEs did not receive much of their access to the fisheries until approximately 2012-13, which delayed the full operation of CFEs that had been established. Also, CFEs in the Maritimes began to build capacity through DFO’s Marshall Response Initiative which predated AICFI.



Below Passing Sustainable



Below Passing Sustainable 2



**Some challenges identified in the evaluation are in the control of the program and others are not.**

The collaborative approaches are found to be a strength of the ICF programs, but while they help build relationships, they require significant time and effort to maintain. Given the number of stakeholders involved, maintaining effective communication can be difficult. Some challenges raised during the evaluation are outside of program control such as the high cost of fishing access, obstacles caused by new or provincial regulations, and changes to CFE leadership.

**Program results align with how Indigenous communities define success for the programs, however, there are some gaps.**

The Indigenous commercial fisheries programs are achieving measures of success as defined by Indigenous participants. They are resulting in benefits for communities such as access to fisheries, meaningful community employment, and greater food security. However, some gaps exist: some of the jobs supported are only seasonal, and youth are not necessarily staying in communities to work the fisheries. Further, many communities would like more involvement in the co-management of resources. While no longer an objective on the ICF programs, co-management continues to be an issue the department is focused on, and it is identified as such in DFO's IPR Action Plan and Reconciliation Strategy.

The IPR action plan outlines DFO's commitments to address the IPR recommendations; its full implementation is essential for the programs to continue to improve outcomes for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

**The ICF programs are having a positive impact on Indigenous communities, however, the programs are not able to fully report on results due to some limitations with their performance data.**

Data limitations uncovered by the evaluation include: inconsistencies in how the data are being collected across the three programs; gaps in data sets; and, a lack of clarity about the methodologies being used to generate some of the information used.

**Within the context of the ICF programs, relationships between DFO and Indigenous Peoples are described as good, or improving as a result of the programs.**

The ICF programs work with Indigenous communities to increase their capacity to operate CFEs. Through this work, the programs have helped improve relationships between DFO and Indigenous communities. However, relationships with Indigenous Peoples extend beyond the commercial fisheries programs and there is still much more work to be done to improve them.

Source: National Indigenous Fisheries Institute, Indigenous Program Review Phase One: Sam Bradd, Drawing Change



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Fisheries and Harbour Management:**

1. Clarify the policy regarding participant eligibility for the training offered through the Indigenous commercial fisheries programs and ensure that this policy is documented and applied consistently across the three programs.
2. In consultation with the Head of Performance Measurement, and relevant Economics, Analysis and Statistics divisions (i.e., in NHQ and Pacific Region), review and update the performance indicators for the Indigenous commercial fisheries programs. In addition, it is recommended that standard methodologies be put in place to monitor, track and accurately report on the performance of the three programs.
3. In consultation with the Head of Performance Measurement, clarify accountabilities and key milestones for the implementation of the Indigenous Program Review action plan as related to the commercial fisheries programs; and determine how progress on the action plan will be integrated into departmental reporting on key priorities through, for example, the Road to Results.