

A sunset over a beach with several small fishing boats and a wooden pier in the water.

# Small-Scale Fisheries: Connecting Human Rights, Fishing Rights and Food Sovereignty

Sherry Pictou

Bear River First Nation

Tony Charles

Saint Mary's University

# Small-Scale Fisherfolk

- ...are also called: artisanal, subsistence, coastal, inshore
- ...operate close to shore, dependent on local multi-species resources
- ...work in a fishery integral to the coastal community & households
- ...are linked with other human activities on the coast
- ...are located around the world (but small-scale fishing in one country, e.g. Canada, may be seen as large-scale in another).



# Managing Small-Scale Fisheries

- Conventional fisheries management, dominant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, neglected people-centred approaches to small-scale fisheries.
- Conventional management tools of highly-regulated industrialized fisheries are often not suitable in small-scale settings.
- Recent approaches focus more on human dimensions, and social, cultural, political, and governance aspects of small-scale fisheries.



# 1. Human Rights & Fishing Rights

The word “rights” arises in two very different ways in fisheries:

- human, social and economic rights that can be affected by fishery management.
- rights defining who can go fishing, who can be involved in managing the fishery.



# “A Rights-Based Approach...”

FAO (2007) “A rights-based approach, in defining and allocating rights to fish, would also address the broader human rights of fishers to an adequate livelihood and would therefore include poverty-reduction criteria as a key component of decisions over equitable allocation of rights... and the protection of small-scale fishworkers’ access to resources”



# Human Rights Approach to Fisheries

- “recognizes that development efforts in fisheries should contribute to securing the freedom, well-being and dignity of all fisher people everywhere.” (World Forum of Fisher People, and International Collective in Support of Fishworkers).
- Kearney’s (2007) five ‘fishing rights’ (from Universal Declaration):
  - The right to fish for food;
  - The right to fish for livelihood;
  - The right to healthy households, communities and cultures;
  - The right to live and work in a healthy ecosystem that will support future generations of fishers;
  - The right to participate in the decisions affecting fishing.



# Human Rights in Fisheries

“Bangkok Statement” by Civil Society at the Global Conference on Small-Scale Fisheries (2008) expands on a human-rights based approach:

- Rights of fishing communities and indigenous people to their cultural identities, dignity and traditional rights, and to recognition of their knowledge systems;
- Rights of access of small-scale and indigenous fishing communities to territories, lands and waters on which they have traditionally depended;
- Rights of fishing communities to use, restore, protect and manage local ecosystems;
- Right of communities to participate in management decision-making;
- Rights of women to participate fully in all aspects of small-scale fisheries;
- Rights of fishing communities to basic services such as safe drinking water, education, sanitation, health and treatment services;
- Rights of all categories of workers in the fisheries, to social security and safe and decent working and living conditions; and
- Rights of fishing communities to information in appropriate accessible forms.

# Fishing Rights

- Fishing rights can take many forms...
- Management rights specify who is involved in decision-making...
- Who holds fishing rights, and how those rights are handled, makes a critical difference to community wellbeing, poverty alleviation, socioeconomic success, resilience.
- Fishing rights must connect with social, economic, human rights.



# Implementing Fishing Rights

- Fishing rights must mesh with human realities and management institutions, to boost sustainability.
- Imposing inappropriate fishing rights can cause inequity, raise conflict, lose community resilience.
- Territorial use rights (TURFs) and community-based rights often fit well with small-scale fisheries.
- Rights that have developed naturally over time, if considered sustainable and suitable by local fisherfolk, should be reinforced and supported....



## 2. Food Sovereignty and Fisheries

- The concept of food sovereignty was developed by Via Campesina, brought to public debate during the World Food Summit in 1996
- has become a major issue of the international agricultural debate, even in the United Nations bodies. It was the main theme of the NGO forum held in parallel to the FAO World Food Summit of June 2002.



# Why Food Sovereignty & Fish?

- Hunger
- Local Livelihoods/Food (displacement)
- Food Sovereignty linkages
- Mi'kmaq Bear River First Nation (Marshall Case) and Video “In the Same Boat (In Defense of our Treaties)”
- Aboriginal Food Fishery
- “Food Security, Food Self-Sufficiency, and Ethical Fisheries Management” (Neis, Jones, and Ommer).



# Local, National, International (Bear River First Nation, Canada, World)

- Indigenous and Canadians (Exploited within Exploiter Country: North America)
- Small Livelihoods (Food) not protected
- Indigenous Rights commodified (Canada refuses to sign the UN Declaration)
- “Imposition of Development on the Developed and Developing”
- Globalized Capitalism (Sebastjan Leban: Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy)
- Market Globalization, Ecological Disasters



# Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007

## Declaration of Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007:

- Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy & culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems...
- Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets...



...and subsequent Bangkok Statement on Small-Scale Fisheries Civil Society Workshop, Bangkok, Oct. 2008

# People's Food Sovereignty: Civil Society Forum parallel to World Summit on Food Security 2009

- No direct link with the FAO
- Final Declaration (Watershed?)
- Poor countries need the development, economic and policy tools required to boost their agricultural production and productivity...
- ([www.fao.org/wsfs/world-summit/en/](http://www.fao.org/wsfs/world-summit/en/))



# Conclusion:

## Fisheries, Development & Politics

- Governments in developing countries express support for small-scale fisherfolk, but their policies are not always compatible.
- The situation in Canada: Government opposes special support for small-scale fishers, and opposes international support too.
- New approach: shift away from 'fisheries department' handling all issues of small-scale fisheries to one that places coastal fisheries in the context of coastal communities, livelihoods, human rights...

