

Understanding what triggers, enables, and hinders cross-cultural collaboration in fisheries management

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Introduction

Fisheries systems are a common pooled resource (CPR), which Ostrom (1994) defines as “natural or human-made resources where one person’s use subtracts from another’s use.” For example, when one user catches a fish it eliminates another user’s chance of catching that fish. Fisheries often support a variety of user groups within one area and therefore partnerships, conflict resolution, respect, reciprocity and trust are all important characteristics of the relationship between the different user groups. As a consequence, the management of fisheries systems should occur as a collaborative plan where the various user groups can participate together for sustainable fisheries management.

There has been a shift away from national government management systems due to the fact that these types of management systems are based on positivist or Western science, which assumes control and predictability (Berkes, 2003). The improved understanding of complex ecosystems indicates that there is a limited ability to predict potential outcomes and, as such, alternative management systems are emerging (Berkes, 2003). Although Berkes (2003) has indicated that national government management systems use a positivist science background, this does not mean that Western science should be rejected altogether, but that the limitations should be recognized. By acknowledging the limits of Western science and coupling it with time-tested knowledge held by local resource users, sustainable and adaptive management systems can be produced (Berkes, 2003).

An example of an emerging collaborative management system is demonstrated by two fisheries management organizations on Lake of the Woods, Ontario, which work towards the sustainable use of commercial fisheries. The first is the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) fish and wildlife and the second is the Anishinaabeg of Kabapikotawangag Resource Council (AKRC) fisheries unit. AKRC was established out of a vision by the Chiefs of the seven First Nations surrounding Lake of the Woods to create and build capacity in areas such as social education, health, infrastructure and natural resource issues. By establishing AKRC as a governing body the First Nations were no longer reliant solely on the OMNR for data concerning Lake of the Woods. AKRC began conducting their own assessments of the lake and took on a more active role in fisheries management. As a result, AKRC has increased their understanding of the biology of Lake of the Woods, granting them with a capacity of knowledge regarding the lake similar to that of OMNR. At the same time, AKRC recognizes the importance of traditional ecological knowledge held by local resource users. The integration of Western science and local knowledge has allowed for opportunities of collaboration between the two organizations through the capacity created by AKRC in being able to discuss fisheries management issues with OMNR. The increased collaboration has further improved the sustainability of fisheries management on Lake of the Woods.

It is currently unclear as to what triggered the relationship between AKRC and OMNR and how this relationship works. Consequently, my research aims to gain a better understanding of the relationship that exists between OMNR and AKRC. My research will also aid both organizations in achieving the continued collaboration and capacity building needed to enhance the sustainability of fisheries management on Lake of the Woods.

Purpose

The purpose of my project is to understand the collaborative relationship between AKRC and OMNR in helping to achieve sustainable fisheries management on Lake of the Woods.

Objectives

- 1) To establish the history of the relationship between OMNR and AKRC, and document the projects on which they have collaborated.
- 2) To understand the contributing factors or situations that have enabled or hindered collaboration, as well as, identify existing barriers to future collaboration between AKRC and OMNR.
- 3) Develop recommendations for future collaboration between AKRC and OMNR and encourage capacity building between and within the organizations.

Methods

- 1) Using a snowball sampling strategy key players will be identified that were involved in the establishment of AKRC fisheries unit and their relationship with OMNR fish and wildlife will be assessed.
- 2) Review documents identified by key players in understanding the history of the collaborative relationship between AKRC and OMNR. The documentation will include background reports, project reports and other associated literature.
- 3) Using three different types of collaborative projects that will be identified through the relevant literature, a sampling strategy will be created to identify three to five projects,

agreements and/or initiatives between AKRC and OMNR that span a range of low to high collaborative involvement from both organizations. Key players involved in each project, agreement or initiative will be identified using a snowball strategy and interviews will be conducted. The interviews will focus on what enabled or hindered collaboration and potential barriers limiting future collaboration will be identified.

4) A sharing circle will be held with approximately 10 participants from AKRC and OMNR who were identified as key informants during the research to discuss what might help overcome any barriers limiting collaboration and/or what may facilitate further collaboration between the two organizations.

Relationship to the goals of the Common Ground Research Forum

The purpose of the Common Ground Research Forum (CGRF) is to understand and build capacity for cross-cultural collaboration and social learning for sustainability. CGRF along with the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) have four specific objectives. My thesis research fulfills the first objective, which aims to describe what triggers and shapes cross-cultural collaboration and social learning. My project also fulfills the second objective of the CGRF and CURA proposal, which is to explain social learning outcomes achieved through collaborative land use planning and their linkages with sustainable local and regional economies. My research will examine projects and initiatives where OMNR and AKRC have worked together within fisheries management on Lake of the Woods. As a consequence, I will be able to determine how collaborative land use planning encourages social learning and how sustainable economies can be created. The third objective of the CGRF is to increase the awareness of the benefits that cross-cultural collaboration can contribute towards local and regional sustainability. By

documenting the successes and progression of the relationship between AKRC and OMNR in cross-cultural collaborative fisheries management, I hope to encourage further cooperation between the two organizations and with other initiatives. The fourth and finale objective of the CGRF aims to enhance capacity for cross-cultural collaboration, social learning and planning for sustainability. As my research will document the relationship between AKRC and OMNR over time it will demonstrate how capacity has been built within both organizations and encourage further collaboration while increasing capacity, social learning and sustainability.

References

- Berkes, F. (2003) Alternatives to conventional management: lessons from small-scale fisheries. *Environments* 31(1).
- Ostrom, E. (1994). Institutional analysis, design principles and threats to sustainable community governance and management of commons. In R.S. Pomeroy (Ed), *Common property of coastal fisheries in Asia and the Pacific: Concepts methods and experience*. Retrieved from Google Scholar.