

Answers to Don Rosenbloom Questions By W.G. Duncan:

- 1. You provided the Commission on March 1st in oral testimony with a brief history of the Native Brotherhood of B.C. Do you wish to elaborate further in writing?**

Established in 1931 the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia (NBBC) is recognized as Canada's oldest active Native organization, and a senior BC fishing organization. The NBBC was formed in Port Simpson by a group of coastal villages solely for the betterment of Native people.

Over the years, the Brotherhood has been a very powerful voice on fisheries issues, and on many other concerns affecting the well being of BC's native coastal communities. As the organization grew so did its achievements. These included, for example, a better education system, the right to vote for Native people, improved medical care, better jobs and better living conditions at the canneries.

The NBBC has been and continues to be anchored by its Constitution that has objectives: 'to advance the social, spiritual, economic and physical conditions of its members, including higher standards of education, health and living conditions, and to cooperate with recognized organizations and Government departments which concern themselves with the advancement of Indian welfare'.

For decades the BC fishing industry was healthy and the NBBC was a strong and financially independent organization. In the mid fifties membership in the NBBC was in the thousands and the NBBC had many locals dotted all over the coast and in the major river systems. . The NBBC was the union representative for not only for it's fishermen but also for Shoreworkers and Tendermen at the numerous canneries who negotiated with processors for fair wages and fish prices.

Over the years the NBBC has had and continues to have some very successful initiatives and programs The following provides a few examples . Our very own publication - The Native Voice was established in 1946, the Native Fishing Association was established in 1985 and has worked in conjunction with Aboriginal Fishing Vessel Owners Association The NBBC played a key role in establishing the National Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. The NBBC also established a CRA approved Working Skills Institute.

To help illustrate the historic esteem that the NBBC was held, at Queen Elizabeth's Coronation in 1953, the NBBC was one of several Aboriginal leaders delegates invited to attend the Coronation; President William Scow attended on behalf of the NBBC.

- 2. You testified at the same hearing on March 1st, page 41, that as a result of the changes arising as a result of the Davis Report and the Mifflin Plan there has been a diminished first Nation involvement in the commercial fishery. You said:**

Over the years, that participation has
25 declined. You can thank the Davis Plan and more
26 recently Mifflin. But the new arrival on the
27 scene has been DFO through its programs. I mean,
28 they've always had the ATP program, and more
29 recently they're still in PICFI. But there's also
30 another player on DFO's camp, and that's AAROM.
31 And between these three initiatives, they're
32 buying up a lot of licences

Please expand on all aspects of your quoted testimony above, including the Davis and Mifflin Plans, and the programs referred to by you following that period.

To provide a “big picture” context for the comment on the Davis and Mifflin Plans, it has to be recognized that the struggle to maintain Aboriginal involvement in the commercial fishery has been directly related to Federal Government programs and policies which impacted the Aboriginal communities adversely. More specifically :

- *Fleet reduction programs such as as the Davis Plan and the Mifflin Plan significantly reduced Aboriginal fishermen on the coast*
- *The principal culprit was the lack of communication especially to coastal communities and a virtual misunderstanding of the Davis Plan licence criteria and the change in vessel criteria resulted in small scale First Nation fishermen been edged out of the industry and equally important , also resulted in fishing power concentration in fewer and fewer hands*
- *In the pre-Davis era there were large Native owned an operated fleets in places like Alert Bay and now the whole picture that has changed – there is a case study in a Report authored by Al Wood , former Director of Policy and Planning at DFO, previously introduced by the Heiltsuk.*
- *Through out the years the proportion of Native owned and operated has roughly stayed the same (in relation to fleet size – about 30-40%) the numbers of Native fishermen has decreased dramatically, and that has huge negative impacts on coastal First Nations*
- *The Davis and Mifflin plans increased the cost of fishing while impoverishing native communities that relied on the fishery*
- *These Plans have lead to the virtual elimination of the inshore “putter fleet” which had made a livelihood available to a great many First Nation fishermen all along coastal BC*

Attempts were made during the 1970s and the 80s to redress this situation; despite some short term successes, none of these efforts has increased Native participation in the fishery over the long term. A key element of these attempts was a DFO a program That is commonly referred to as the Mifflin Plan. This program which ended in 2000 resulted in a huge buyback of the

native fleet whereby approximately one half of all salmon licences held by Natives were bought up.

Since the mid-1990's there has been a collapse of fish production to record lows, as well as major decreases in wild salmon market prices. In response, government conducted a fleet reduction program that disproportionately affected First Nation fishermen. From 1996 through 2000, there was a major buy back of A and AI salmon licenses. The protected Native salmon licenses, N and F, that were not subject to buy back were heavily impacted by license stacking.

This downsizing resulted in an extremely serious loss of native jobs, income and fishing vessels. In the 1930's one job in ten in the fishing industry was Native; by 2000 it was one job in 180. In 1995 there were 839 Native seine, gillnet and troll vessels, there are now 435 including protected license vessels. Equally important, Natives were and remain highly dependent on operating company owned vessels. That fleet was also downsized to about half, with disproportionate impact on Native fishermen. On most counts Natives have borne the brunt of fleet reduction impacts. In response to fleet reduction, fish processing and fishing service industries have also downsized and consolidated, resulting in further loss of jobs and input to local economies. Another significant result of industry downsizing is that many communities are finding it very difficult to meet their food, social and ceremonial needs because of loss of commercial fishing vessels, gear and means of transportation.

Changes to Processing changed the fishery as well, with a similar disproportionate impact on both Native fishermen and their communities;

- *Automation centralized the canneries and reduced employment*
- *Small community processing plants disappeared*
- *In 1919 there were 97 canneries along the coast employing 9000 people*
- *By 1970 there were 15 canneries left operating – all but 3 were in the Skeena and the Fraser area- only 1500 jobs remained for native shore workers*
- *Now there are 3 only canneries left in whole of the province.*

Since the mid nineties DFO introduced a number of initiatives, starting with the Allocation Transfer Program (ATP). And then more recently introduced the Aboriginal Aquatics and Resource and Ocean Management Program (AAROM) and then came the Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (PIFFI). According to DFO records they have bought approximately 350 Salmon licences and expended just over \$37 million through these three initiatives. The major concern of these programs that there is a tendency to allocate licences to communities that have no fishing capacity (e.g . . . the sardine fishery) and these licences are been lost to up-river demonstration fisheries .

3. Provide information by way of personal knowledge or through studies in your possession the extent to which First Nations are involved in the commercial fishery and the trickle down effect into your communities.

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Commercial fishing today is still very important to coastal First Nations communities in various ways- income, employment, culture and traditions, thus importance continued involvement and participation for younger people by providing opportunities to get into the industry

That said, through the various DFO limited entry and buyback initiatives over the last 50 years Native participation in all commercial fisheries has been diminishing. The challenges facing the Native Commercial fishery in BC are a direct consequence of wider changes in the entire BC fishery. Fisheries employment is shrinking rapidly in remote coastal communities and this is seen to contribute significantly to patterns of social and economic breakdown.

From the 'big picture' perspective most coastal First Nations feel very strongly that with regard to fisheries - they have been 'trickled down' on mightily and from on high – by DFO. The fabric of many of British Columbia's Aboriginal communities is unraveling. These communities are being overwhelmed by a lack of capacity to meet the social and economic needs of their people, and the leaders are over extended trying to deal with processes like Treaty negotiation, capacity building and self government. Currently there is no integrated, cooperative and cost effective First Nation plan to reweave this fabric to ensure community sustainability.

From the NBBC point of view, the First Nation capacity to deal with the fisheries issue is simply not there in many key areas. Critical issues with respect to any future First Nation fisheries plan must take into consideration:

1. *Lack of capacity in the land/natural resource management and development areas;*
2. *High unemployment;*
3. *Few opportunities given the highly competitive nature of the business scene;*
4. *Growing populations and not enough access to resources such as fisheries;*
5. *Serious government policy constraints; and*
6. *Lack of cooperative, coordinated and cost effective First Nation driven 'big picture' economic and social development strategies.*

To cite one example - As First Nations move to treaty processes, which is seen is an avenue to regain access to fish resources, a strategic question must be addressed - will there be the skilled labour force available to regenerate employment and community based ownership?

In summary, from both a historic and current reality perspective, it is very evident that improved First Nation access to fisheries resources for economic and social purposes must be central to any viable First Nation coastal community renewal plan. It is also evident that there is a huge First Nation capacity "gap" with respect tot heir ability to develop and implement such a plan.

