

SUBMISSION TO THE COHEN INQUIRY

August 25, 2010

BY ROD NAKNAKIM

1 THE QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

There are two questions that this submission is to address for the Commission and they are:

- **What is your vision for the sustainability Fraser sockeye?**
- **How can Fraser sockeye be effectively harvested?**

2. MY BACKGROUND

I am 62 years old and a member of the Cape Mudge Indian Band located on Quadra Island, BC. I grew up on the Cape Mudge Indian Reservation until I was 18 years old. Aside from going to University for some 10 years and living in Vancouver for another 10 years I have always resided in and round the Campbell River area.

From the age of 8 years to 18 years, I spent every summer with my grandfather Harry Assu fishing salmon on his seine boat. For all intents and purposes I was headed to become a commercial fisherman owning my own seine boat. This came to a sudden halt when my grandfather found out I had the opportunity to attend law school at UBC. I got called to the BC Legal profession in 1978 and have practiced since. The last year I salmon seined was in 1985. I have always referred to myself as a fisherman that happens to be a lawyer. My present activities are largely taken up being the Chief Negotiator for the Laich-Kwil-Tach Treaty Society which represents the three Laich-Kwil-Tach Nations.

I must say the largest influence in my life has been my grandfather Harry Assu.

3. THE BACKGROUND OF THE LAICH-KWIL-TACH PEOPLE

- The Laich-Kwil-Tach people are fishers of the Johnstone Straits
- They have been involved in the salmon fishing industry since it started.
- I grew up when the fishing industry was in its hay day;
- There were approximately 60 seiners operated out of the Cape Mudge Band and the Campbell River Band in the fifties, sixties and seventies;
- Today, there are less than a dozen seine boats owned by the Laich-Kwil-Tach;
- Much of the decline of the Laich-Kwil-Tach fleet is due to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Policies;
- the Davis Licensing plan; the decision to only harvest 30% of the stock for the last decade and a half;
- Fishing is front and centre part of the Laich-Kwil-Tach culture and these DFO management plans are killing our culture and well being;

4. LAICH-KWIL-TACH DEPENDANCE ON THE FRASER RIVER SOCKEYE

- The Laich-Kwil-Tach have always depending on passing stock and particularly the Fraser River sockeye for a livelihood;
- They had fish traps set up to catch the passing stocks; an example is on the north end of Johnstone Straits in Blinkinsop Bay which is hundreds of years old;
- Another example is their main reserve and village of Cape Mudge on Quadra Island where there is no river and yet we had access to fish 12 months of the year, especially in the summers and falls when the Fraser River sockeye and chums were running;
- The Laich-Kwil-Tach tribes have 12 reserves all strategically placed for access to the marine resources; these reserves were small and most of them had little value other than providing access to the marine resources;

5. WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FRASER RIVER SOCKEYE?

- The Laich-Kwil-Tach people believe that conservation is the first principle that must be honoured; the Laich-Kwil-Tach depend on the return of the sockeye for their livelihood and culture; it is a true life style they live today;
- The Laich-Kwil-Tach fishers took the lead in instigating the ribbon boundary system in Johnstone Straits so that conservation measures could be met and yet there still could be a commercial fishery;
- All other sectors on the coast and up river must do the same, that is take conservation measures on the grounds so conservation measures can be met.
- The Vision of sustaining the Fraser River sockeye must include allowing the fish to be caught up and down the coast to maintain the coastal culture especially for the First Nations people;

6. HOW CAN FRASER SOCKEYE BE EFFECTIVELY HARVESTED?

- The DFO policy has been changed over the last 15 years to only allow harvesting by the commercial fleet to be at 30%;
- DFO has been criticized for this policy because this policy has lead to over spawning on the grounds up the rivers;
- I believe this criticism to be true as my grandfather said this would happen if too much fish went up the river;
- In a recent interview on CBC Radio, August 18, 2010, Dr. Carl Walters, a professor at UBC's fisheries centre, is quoted as saying the DFO policy should be changed to fishing 80% of the run big or small as opposed to the 30% they are implementing now.
- I agree with Dr. Walters

Rod Naknakim



Rod Naknakim

From: Richard Harry [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 24, 2010 3:33 PM
To: Rod Naknakim
Subject: Fw: Dr. Carl Walters on CBC

From: Brenda McCorquodale
Sent: Friday, August 20, 2010 9:40 PM
To: 'Regional First Nations Fisheries Organizations'
Subject: FW: Dr. Carl Walters on CBC

Transcript of a radio interview on CBC with Dr. Carl Walters on Wed about the disbanding of the Cohen Commission's scientific panel. I looked today on the website and didn't see anything yet posted about the panel being disbanded. This is from the Fishnet Listserve.

Brenda

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FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL

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SOURCE: CBC R-1 (Vancouver)	PROGRAM: ON THE COAST
DATE: AUGUST 18, 2010	TIME: 17:18
REFERENCE: 1808DOC1	LENGTH: 5 MINUTES

SOCKEYE SALMON FISHERY

STEPHEN QUINN (Host): Well, the Cohen Commission opens its doors tonight for its first public forum. It's investigating the decline of nine million sockeye salmon in the Fraser River last year. But yesterday the Pacific Salmon Commission estimated that this year's sockeye run will exceed 14 million salmon. Dr. Carl Walters is a professor at UBC's Fisheries Centre. He was part of the scientific advisory panel with the Cohen Commission and he's been good enough to join us in the studio this afternoon. Good afternoon.

DR. CARL WALTERS (University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre): Good afternoon.

QUINN: Thank you for being here. Now, I used the term was because that panel in fact was disbanded yesterday, was it not?

WALTERS: That's right.

QUINN: And what happened there?

WALTERS: There were too many complaints about panellists having past contacts with government people, like me. I've advised the government on harvest management for sockeye and other special interests. I think it was felt they'd do better to do their reports and have a peer review by completely independent people.

QUINN: Before though the panel was disbanded, what recommendations did you make?

WALTERS: Well, before and during disbanding the panel I very strongly recommended that we get out for the public what appears to be a catastrophic failure in the management of the sockeye population of the Fraser. The lower bound for the estimate of how much harvest value has been lost because of management over the last 15 years is about 100 million dollars, and the best estimates are a lot higher than that. And this year is very typical of what's been happening for the last 15 years. We have probably at least ten million Adams River sockeye coming in this year. We've had large summer and early summer runs that should have been harvested at rates of 60 to 70 or even 80 percent. It looks like the harvest this year might be less than 30 percent of those runs. Those fish are going to go to waste. DFO policies over the last 15 years have involved very conservative harvest rates and attempts to build spawning stocks to ridiculously high levels based on the historical data that we have about performance of those populations. So, I think this is a horrible situation.

QUINN: Is that...

WALTERS: They should be fishing.

QUINN: Is that partly why we're seeing the spike this year, why we're seeing so many sockeye this year?

WALTERS: No. This is just a little bit above the forecasts that, that was made before the year based on average performance of the dominant Adams River run. We forecast about seven million. It's possible, actually it could be much higher than ten million. But I don't think that's going to materialize.

QUINN: What happened last year when the numbers were so low?

WALTERS: There was extremely poor marine survival of the fish. Studies done out in the Georgia Strait during 2007, when they went to sea, showed very low numbers of fish made it through the Georgia Strait, and those that did had very poor growth. And there were several species that had that same poor growth pattern. So, we think it just was a one-off bottleneck in the survival during their life in the ocean.

QUINN: Any reason for it?

WALTERS: No. It was the strangest ocean that anybody's ever measured in the sense that the surface water was very warm and there was just a very thin surface layer where the production of the ocean would be occurring in the Georgia Strait that year, unprecedented in the last 50 years.

QUINN: What is it about the salmon run that makes it so hard to predict, because year after year everybody seems to get it wrong?

WALTERS: Well, the basic problem is that they've got a lot of eggs. They produce a huge number of eggs and only a tiny percent survive. And just a small change in that tiny percent means a big change in the number of fish. So, actually when you look at the survival rates, they're not all that variable. But it's the numbers get amplified by the small variability.

QUINN: So, you say fish are going to waste. People should be out there fishing right now and you've been studying salmon populations in the Fraser River for decades. What needs to happen? What does the DFO need to do differently?

WALTERS: They basically should move from what they're trying to implement now, I think called the fixed escapement policy, where you try to get the fish on the spawning grounds up to a target before you harvest. The historical measurement policy that worked very well through most of the twentieth century involved taking the same percentage of the fish every year, like 80 percent whether it was a big run or a little run. Fishermen always got to fish whether it was a good year or bad. And that worked very well. Spawning runs went up and down some, but stayed very productive. And they need to return to that policy. They need to make allowances for recent loss of fish because of goofy migration patterns up the river and mortality. But they still should be harvesting every year at much higher rates than they are now.

QUINN: Dr. Walters, thank you so much for being here. We really appreciate it. It's good to talk to you. Dr. Carl Walters, a professor in the Fisheries Department at UBC.

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