

# Charting an Inclusive Future: A Discussion about Gender Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries Management in Canada

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## Abstract

In Canada, and across the globe, women make diverse and substantial contributions to small-scale fisheries, yet they face considerable barriers to equitable representation and participation in fisheries management and decision-making. Here we bring forward evidence and insights on progress towards gender equitable small-scale fisheries management in Canada, and identify where and how researchers, policy makers and practitioners could push to further advance gender equality. Increasingly, it is recognized that diverse, gender inclusive fisheries management spaces increase management legitimacy and effectiveness. Despite this recognition, fewer women than men progress from entry-level to managerial positions, with access to education and skills training as a barrier in some contexts. Domestic and care duties continue to fall unevenly on the shoulders of women, constraining their participation in management activities. Because of intersecting identities

that further disadvantage them, certain women and gender diverse peoples face even more barriers limiting their participation. And while there is evidence of efforts to emphasize gender inclusion and integration into fisheries governance in Canada, efforts must go beyond gender to embed an intersectional approach to understand and overcome barriers to advancing gender equitable and inclusive small-scale fisheries governance in Canada for the benefit of all.

## Positionality statement

The insights we present are drawn from a combination of personal experiences, published literature, and trusted media sources. Cailyn Siider is a fish harvester from Sointula B.C., a settler fishing community in the unceded, traditional, and ancestral land of the Kwakiutl, Mamalilikala, and 'Namgis First Nations. Through the summer months she fishes commercially out of Sointula and in the winter, works as community development director for the T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation and coordinator for the BC Young Fishermen's Network. Kirsten Bradford and Sarah Harper are both female fisheries scientists and settlers located on the unceded, traditional and ancestral land of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔ təməx<sup>w</sup> (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. Together, we uphold the voices presented in this work, while acknowledging that some of the topics expressed go beyond our own lived experiences and expertise. Where possible we have included direct quotes and pointed to sources to amplify the voices of women in fisheries, to whom we express sincere gratitude and respect.

## Introduction

Globally, women contribute significantly to small-scale fisheries, in terms of catch, value and overall livelihoods (Harper et al. 2020). Women's participation in and contributions to small-scale fisheries vary in response to ecological, economic, and socio-cultural contexts (Klieber et al. 2015), but

their visibility in the sector has been largely lacking despite mounting research in recent decades highlighting their contributions. In Canada, despite women playing significant roles in fisheries and in fishing communities, fisheries are still often considered a male domain with management and policies that continue to marginalize women in the sector. Increasingly, gender aware fisheries management is being emphasized as critical to improving livelihoods, decreasing poverty and improving sustainability (Kittinger 2013; Barnett & Wakin 2015). Gender aware management that represents the diverse set of actors is not only key to sustainability, it has also been linked to improved legitimacy and compliance in fisheries management agreements (Jentoft 2013; Turner et al. 2016). However, there is a disconnect between scholarship and practice in terms of integrating gender considerations into fisheries management and policy in Canada and elsewhere (Zhao 2013; Harper et al. 2017; Frangoudes et al. 2019). Recent efforts to implement The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (Food and Agricultural Organization 2014) offer a key opportunity to bring gender into focus with gender equality as a cross-cutting theme of these guidelines.



*Hauling Area A crab gear in the Hecate Strait. Photo credit: Chelsey Ellis.*

In Canada, women have and continue to contribute to small-scale fisheries across all three coasts in dynamic and diverse ways. However, there has been limited attention to the experiences of women in the sector. Most gender and fisheries research in Canada has focused on the Atlantic coast and context (Power 2000; Bavington et al. 2004; Neis et al. 2013). This work has highlighted a strong division of labour along gender lines, where women in Newfoundland and Labrador are concentrated in seafood processing work, often associated with the small-scale in-shore sector, while men are concentrated in the harvest sector (Neis et al. 2013). Past research in this context identified barriers to women's inclusion, access, and ability to secure equal workplace benefits as compared with men (Cahill & Maryland 1993; Power 2000; Neis et al. 2013). More recently, the Atlantic fishery has undergone a transformation where an increasing number of women now work on boats as harvesters, although often facing gender-related barriers and discrimination that limit work stability and security, and overall success in the industry (Too Big To Ignore 2018; 2021).

In the Pacific region, some work has highlighted the critical role of Indigenous women in the height of the industrial salmon industry working in canneries and the traditional role of Indigenous women in shellfish harvesting (Moss 1993; Jones 2000; See Box 1). Indigenous women and other racialized groups made up a large portion of the salmon cannery labour force during the industrialization and expansion of the British Columbia salmon industry in the early 1900s (Newell 1991). Stainsby (1994) identified that because of the gender division of shorework in BC, men had more autonomy on the job, access to preferential work and in most cases higher pay. Race, ethnicity, age and gender were all identifiers used to stratify the labour in fish plants and create a labor force that worked for wages below subsistence level (Muszynski 1996). More recently, Indigenous women along the Pacific coast have been highlighted for their efforts in reaffirming their roles as leaders and stewards of the land and sea, including playing key roles in fisheries management and decision-making (Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative 2020). Heiltsuk women on the Central Coast, were highlighted for the strength they brought to a recent conflict over the Pacific herring fishery,

drawing on their traditional and contemporary roles as matriarchs and life givers, to catalyze change and transform fisheries governance (Harper et al. 2018). These examples bring attention to the importance of recognizing the unique contributions by and roles of Indigenous women in fisheries management and governance, and ensuring they are supported in these roles as part of broader reconciliation efforts.

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**Box 1: Indigenous concepts of gender roles and responsibilities related to fisheries**

In many Indigenous societies, traditional gender roles and responsibilities are defined by the needs that shape the survival of the collective and often act in complementary ways (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jimnez 2016). In Kafarowski’s (2002) inquiry about women in arctic fisheries management, an Iqualuit women stated “*As Inuit, there’s no gender thing. If it was left up to traditional ways, women would be equals*” (Kafarowski 2002, p. 31). Western understanding of gender imposes a strong gendered division of labour and binary view, which does not exist in the same way across many Indigenous societies. The Inūpiat whale hunt, for example, emphasizes the interdependence of women and men where genders contribute different skills and knowledge that, while complementary, are inseparable from the hunt as a whole (Todd 2016). Example such as this, although limited, highlight the need for a more in-depth understanding of gender across the range of small-scale fisheries contexts in Canada, that engages with intersecting identities and concepts of gender, while also paying attention to the different ecological, economic, and socio-cultural circumstances that shape gendered realities.

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In Canada, the gender composition of fisheries decision-making is not representative of the population, although representation is poorly researched and documented (Black 2020; Fawkes et al. 2021). Within Fisheries and Oceans

Canada (DFO), as with many other sectors, there is an under-representation of women in senior positions. We know that management decisions made by a narrow reflection of the population limits the scope of understanding and ability to respond to increasingly complex challenges, conflicts, and opportunities (Di Ciommo & Schiavetti 2012). Barriers and biases keeping women from senior research positions, policy spaces, and decision-making tables allow for gender biases to occur and be maintained, resulting in incomplete research and potentially harmful policies and strategies (Fawkes et al. 2021). When considering equity, it is critical to look at gender diversity (men, women and non-binary peoples) and beyond gender to include other dimensions of a person's identity such as class, race, age, religion, economic status, and (dis)ability. Intersectionality, a term first introduced by scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, was developed as a way to identify how race, class and gender intersect in the lives and experiences of women of color (Crenshaw 1997). An intersectional approach that looks at multiple, intersecting identities, can reveal how various forms of social difference interact and compound one another to increase or decrease access to and control over natural resources (Crenshaw 1997; Reed & Davidson 2011; Staples & Natcher 2015). In the context of this work, an intersectional approach recognizes that the experiences of all women in fisheries are not equal, deepening our understanding of the complexities of individual experiences within management spaces (Crenshaw 1997; Ferguson 2021).

Understanding how small-scale fisheries management in Canada is gendered is necessary to create inclusive and equitable management. Recognizing this need, the following section illustrates the importance of including gender in small-scale fisheries management and the current barriers various groups of women face in participating fully in management spaces. We focus specifically on the gendered experience of women, due to the historic and on-going discrimination and inequalities faced by women. While this review focuses on the experience and barriers of women compared to that of men, we acknowledge that gender is about more than women, and that a full understanding of gender in small-scale fisheries must explore the power dynamics and relationships between men, women, and other gender identities.

We draw mainly on information and data sources that treat gender as binary, as gender diverse research and statistics are still quite limited. This is a limitation of this work, as it does not capture the full diversity of identities and experiences in fishing communities and management. Despite this limitation, we feel that the insights reflected here contribute towards understanding gender in small-scale fisheries in Canada, as a necessary requirement for promoting equitable and effective fisheries management approaches (de la Torre-Castro 2019).

## Why consider gender in Canadian small-scale fisheries management?

Fisheries management in Canada, as elsewhere in the world, has largely operated from a place of gender blindness, overlooking the contributions by women in the fisheries sector. This has led to policies that have negatively affected gender relations and household dynamics with impacts on the resilience of small-scale fishing communities (Neis et al. 2013). For example, the East Coast cod fishery closures in the early 1990s had gendered impacts, but the policies developed to respond to this crisis lacked any gender awareness (Neis et al. 2013). Processing sector employment declined much more drastically than harvesting jobs, and women, who made up the majority of the processing labour force, faced the greatest consequences with limited options for alternative livelihoods (Neis et al. 2013). For management to be effective, it is recognized that involvement and active participation and representation of the interests of all stakeholders is necessary for effective policy uptake and outcomes, yet management spaces are not always welcoming of women's voices and perspectives, especially women with multiple intersecting identities. Here we summarize why it is important to consider gender in fisheries management in Canada, focusing specifically on the experiences of women in small-scale fisheries – their activities, knowledge, and priorities – and how these impact leadership.

## Women's small-scale fisheries activities, knowledge, and management priorities

Gender norms that influence the roles and responsibilities within households and societies can lead to gender specific knowledge (Power 2000; Lavoie et al. 2019). As a result, women and men may acquire different knowledge that shapes their individual perspectives, needs and priorities in resource management and other areas of their lives.

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### **Box 2: Being a woman at sea and on land**

The experience of existing as a woman on the deck of a fishing boat or at sea is as complex as existing as a woman on land. Like replicating a seaworthy hull, the male dominated and patriarchal structures across communities are built of the same design. For many women, being at sea, commercial fishing can be an incredibly empowering experience, a time to lean into her own strength and resilience. A space in which she can temporarily forget about the world on land governed by misogyny. The fishing industry is a community in which I have both felt my most powerful, as well as my most disempowered.

I grew up on a dock where it is recognized and respected that women belong on boats as much as men. This environment isn't accidental but created by the matriarchal community in which these docks are anchored. The old timers wouldn't ask me when I would be getting married, but when I would be running my own boat. I have worked on boats beyond this dock where my gender has been regarded as part of my own complex identity in a way that is dignified and appreciated. I have existed on these boats in my full humanity. I have spent many of the most joyful times of my life on these boats with people who I consider family, often bound not through blood but by saltwater.

I have also spent time on boats where men decided to prove their power over me by groping me on deck, sexualizing me non-consensually, calling

me any name but my own. I have sat around galley tables where a newcomer to the boat greets and shakes the hand of every man at the table but whose eyes and handshake pass over me altogether, as though a ghost inhabited my seat rather than myself. I have been woken up by men trying to climb into my bunk. I have slept with a pocketknife beneath my pillow. I have listened to a crewmate, fully aware of me in earshot, tell his friend that if he wanted to, he could sexually assault me, there was nothing I could do and nowhere I could go. The man listening laughed and agreed - we were in the middle of Milbanke Sound. I have ignored or laughed some of these experiences off in the moment, unsure if this spectrum of aggression was worth the fight, an overreaction, or simply afraid to escalate the threat. In a bid to be accepted, I have stayed quiet, swallowing my anger, hiding my fear. I was eager to belong and scared to speak out. These boats made it clear that my voice was not welcome and that my body was not my own.

The men in these experiences will try set the tone that boats are a genderless space. What this truly means however, is that the standard for this space is a specific brand of masculinity and anything divergent is to be scorned. Women are welcome if they *“work like a man, think like a man, act like a man.”* This can become an unspoken rule that women in fishing can be forced to internalize in order to be included, welcome, and in some cases, not stick out in such a way that could lead to harm.

The positive experiences in the fishing community I grew up in far outnumber and outweigh those that followed. I only speak directly to my own experiences and the ways I have connected those to my understanding of gender-based power dynamics. I also acknowledge that I am a white, cisgender woman with social capital within the fishing community and a set of lived experiences which inform my perspective. I do not claim to speak for all women who fish, though I have listened to many experiences similar to mine over the offseason when we can build our own spaces of safety to reflect, commiserate, and share our stories. I do have moments of worry that these are my stories, my words may draw contempt from some peers and others in the fishing community. In making myself more quiet, smaller, in trying to fit into the limited spaces allowed by some men in the fishing

community, my hurt floods and my power ebbs. If we don't share our stories, though, nothing will change.

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The spaces in which women work, their roles and responsibilities, and experiences within fisheries and fishing households and communities, shape their ecological knowledge and management priorities. Management priorities should relate to all aspects of life including income, sustainability, safety and culture, and without understanding the lived experiences of all those involved in the fisheries sector, management outcomes can be compromised (Box 2). For example, in a management organization in the Arctic, female participants, who were identified as the primary family caregivers, brought forward management priorities related to intergenerational skill transfer and food security (Kafarowksi 2005). Examples from across the border in the Pacific region of the United States describe women involved in running family fishing businesses as having a deep understanding of how changes to the fishery impact the well-being and resilience of their families and communities (Calhoun et al. 2016). Management priorities for these women included safety related policy and skills training for navigation of the individual transferable quota system (Calhoun et al. 2016). Overlooking these gendered perspectives, knowledge, and experience narrows the scope of fisheries management and decision-making (Staples & Natcher 2015).

Focusing solely on certain roles and experiences in fisheries can exclude potentially valuable sources of information necessary for effective management and complex problem solving. In a study of gender and fisheries co-management in the Yukon, a female board member commented, "*When you look at like a traditional fish camp perspective, the majority of the work, anyways in my culture, is done by the women. And so you know we're the one cutting the fish, seeing the fish, doing all the work with them, hanging them, drying them, preparing them. Normally the men are catching the fish but it's that type of involvement ... me bringing that perspective of what it's like to have to run a fish camp... I think I bring a very different, and I think I bring more of an emotional perspective to the table*" (board member, interview 4 July 2013, Staples & Natcher 2015, p.

362). Gendered roles in the Yukon fishery result in different knowledge and social-ecological understanding of the system. In the Atlantic, Power (2000) argues that incorporating women fish processors' experience and knowledge of changes in species composition of catches, location of catches, and size of the fish is valuable for informing management. For example, it was the women processors that connected reductions in the size, volume and quality of cod catches arriving in their processing plants to an emerging stock decline and impacts of overfishing (Power 2000). With this knowledge brought into management spaces, a deeper understanding of the scope and scale of the problem might have been more easily identified.

### Impact of inclusive leadership

The meaningful participation of women in spaces that have previously been and continue to be male dominated, such as in many natural resource sectors, can lead to different forms of leadership and innovation (UNEP 2015). Women's contributions enrich management and lead to new ideas and solutions (Klugman et al. 2014). Gender inclusive management, across diverse natural resource contexts, have been linked to increased collaboration, collective action, and conflict resolution (Lauber 2001; Westermann 2005). For example, Staples and Natcher (2015) identified that when women were present on co-management boards, decision-making generally took longer, but women brought a more holistic approach, considering long-term outcomes and diverse perspectives, and discussions were more complex and respectful with improved communication and mediation. The presence of women was found to contribute to a more positive institutional setting where decision-making could occur effectively. Broadly, co-management boards were found to be more cohesive when women were present. Staples and Natcher (2015) suggest that this is due to women being more likely to invest in and maintain personal relationships.

A study in Nunavut regarding women's decision-making in arctic fisheries management identified similar sentiments about women's impact on leadership. A Pangnirtung community resident noted that "*It would be good*

*to see women and men working in the fisheries area because it is our livelihood, it is our culture, it is within us. And in order for a good community, good working together, you have to have that balance. I think it could be a lot stronger just because women are able to hear, listen and process in a holistic way, not just in money terms, but they are thinking of their children and their grand-children-to-be. They are thinking long-range and not just financial”* (Pangnirtung community resident, Kafarowski, 2002, p. 34). In a parallel study of hunter and trapper organizations in the Arctic, participants mentioned that when engaging in discussions about economic and environmental aspects of managing wildlife, female board members were more likely to bring forward questions about fostering traditional skills in youth, food security and initiating socio-cultural activities that focused on family (Kafarowksi 2005). Indigenous women have traditionally, and continue to have, critical roles within their communities and Nations in stewarding lifeways, such as water, and in being keepers of the knowledge associated with those roles with responsibilities for transmitting that knowledge. Their exclusion from resource management reflects, in many cases, a result of colonization and imposed systems and institutions. With movements of Indigenous resurgence and the reaffirmation of Indigenous rights and responsibilities, there are many examples of Indigenous women at the forefront of land and water protection efforts (Simpson 2017; Spice 2019; Pictou 2020).

The impact of women’s participation in natural resource management has been very positive but this does not reflect some innate ability of women in possessing important leadership skills such as cooperation and collaboration (Westermann 2005). Rather, this reflects a set of skills and characteristics that women have developed through gendered social norms that, for example, allow women to be emotional, less competitive, and better at mediation - skills that complement and act to balance the skill set that is prescribed to men. While these social norms may be shifting societally, these gender differences mean that leadership benefits from having all genders represented at decision-making tables. Governance spaces are not neutral and reflect the social norms and associated power dynamics that exist in society and must be understood within that broader context. The power that men and women

can exercise within management is just as much influenced by what happens outside of these institutions as what happens inside. Additionally, while these examples illustrate the benefits of increased participation by women in natural resource management, promoting inclusive governance requires more than just adding more women. Increasing participation alone does not address the root causes of inequalities or consider intersecting factors that produce inequalities. Including more women does not necessarily mean that the interests of women are considered (Datzberger & Le Mat 2018). Efforts are needed both within and outside management institutions to shift limiting gender norms and change existing power structures that currently limit participation by women in decision-making spaces, which requires efforts across the board.



*Restoration project on the heritage fishing vessel, Pacific Traveler. Photo credit: Chelsey Ellis.*

## Barriers to women's participation in the management of small-scale fisheries in Canada

*"I wish people knew that there were so many amazing women involved in fisheries and not just on the decks of boats, but on the beach and all the way up and down the line. Whether it's crafting policy or involved in advocacy or the academic community... research. The leadership of women in all aspects of fishing is so huge and people don't know.... I wish there was that visibility and recognition and appreciation for women in all aspects of fishing." (Cailyn Siider, BCYFN, 2021)*

Women, especially within racialized populations and/or already marginalized groups, face specific constraints to effective representation and participation in fisheries management.

### Unequal division of domestic labour

While women have for decades been participating in the workforce in equal numbers, domestic responsibilities still disproportionately fall on the shoulders of women (Guppy et al. 2019). In Canada, while men are eligible to take parental leave, women are more likely to take time off work to care for young children, while also disproportionately caring for elderly and sick family members (Mayer & Le Bourdais 2019). Caregiving duties are known in many contexts to be barriers to participation in management spaces. A study from Nunavut identified that support services, particularly childcare, are required to promote women's involvement in decision-making processes (Kafarowski 2002). In many Indigenous contexts in Canada, families are traditionally supported by extended family networks, but as more families participate in the wage economy demand for support services has increased, while supply has not kept pace. Lack of childcare, especially in rural areas, particularly affected fish plant workers looking to move to managerial positions and women aspiring to return to school (Kafarowski 2002). Similarly, a study from the Yukon, found that women were only able to participate on management boards if they had the full support of their family or access to alternative childcare support services (Staples & Natcher

2015).

## Education, training, and knowledge limitations

Limited education and technical training affect participation in fisheries management and confine people to lower ranked positions. While in Canada, access to education is much less restricted than in other countries around the world, barriers exist for certain populations. For example, in Nunavut, an absence of high school diplomas and limited training in natural resource management were found to prevent young women from applying to fisheries related work, while a lack of technical training has been linked to limited progression by women to higher managerial positions (Kafarowski 2002). Another study from the Yukon cited gender specific barriers in terms of skills and knowledge in limiting women's participation on co-management boards (Staples & Natcher 2015).

## Uneven power dynamics

Women also face barriers to effective participation in management due to gendered power imbalances across society and governance spaces. While there has been substantial progress in altering these power structures, inequities persist. Specifically, for Indigenous women, the patriarchal underpinnings of the Indian Act were instrumental to creating power relations that lead to dehumanization and exclusion of Indigenous women in leadership spaces (Pictou 2020).

In fisheries, women have often been excluded from management spaces because their roles in the industry are seen as inferior to their male counterparts, and because fisheries management has typically focused on fishing, with limited attention across the range of activities involved in fisheries from pre- to post-harvest. For example, on the Atlantic Coast, women have historically been excluded from fisheries decision-making since it was mostly men fishing, despite women doing much of the processing work. Within the processing sector, women were clustered in the lowest ranked and paid positions, and

rarely attained managerial or supervisory positions (Cahill & Martland 1993). Women were generally not represented on administrative bodies that made resource allocations or harvesting decisions, despite the outcomes having a direct impact on their work and lives. Women were also poorly represented in unions and often worked in non-unionized fish plants (Cahill & Martland 1993). Meanwhile in Nunavut and the Inuvialuit Settlement region, men hunt and trap while women fish. Hunting is awarded a higher social status than fishing, therefore, hunter and trapper organization boards are mostly male, despite having decision-making authority over all wildlife, including fish (Kafarowski 2005). There are several cases where women had to prove their knowledge and capabilities to their male colleagues, revealing that these uneven power dynamics persist, and continue to act as a substantial barrier to effective participation in management (Power 2000; Staples & Natcher 2015).



*Painting Area A crab buoys ahead of the start of the season. Photo credit: Chelsey Elli.*

These three types of barriers that women face in terms of participation

and representation in management make it clear that ensuring effective and equitable decision-making processes requires moving beyond creating opportunities to breaking down unhelpful gender norms that limit meaningful participation. To advance gender equality in management, existing uneven power dynamics must be addressed. The interaction between gender and other social dimensions have been shown to impact the knowledge, perspectives and concerns brought forward in management institutions (Reed & Davidson 2011; Staples 2015). Gender parity does not necessarily translate into gender equality, especially when women's participation is constrained by gender norms and relations that have long shaped whose voices are included, heard, and valued (Nunan 2020). Intersectional approaches can help to understand how different voices are valued in decision-making and what conditions contribute to all voices holding value (Staples & Natcher 2015).

## Canadian fisheries policy and recommendations for gender aware management

Canadian fisheries policy and management has started to emphasize gender aware and inclusive approaches, yet many policy and management efforts continue to operate without considering individual experiences and pre-existing power structures. Federally, tools such as Gender Based Analysis Plus (Box 3) train employees to assess how policies might affect women, men and gender diverse people differently. The Fisheries Act and the Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) also acknowledge the importance of considering women in decision-making. This points to important progress. However, to push for effective representation of and participation by women and other gender diverse individuals in fisheries management spaces, more work is needed to dismantle power structures and apply an intersectional understanding that looks at multiple, overlapping systems of power and privilege.

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### **Box 3: What is Gender Based Analysis Plus**

Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is a federal policy tool that has been operating in the government for more than 25 years. Since 1995, the Government of Canada has committed to implementing GBA+ across departments, including the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. GBA+ is a framework to analyze how policies, programs and initiatives may be differentially experienced based on gender and other identity factors (Black 2020). In 2015, an audit of the GBA+ program was undertaken, revealing that only some federal departments and agencies had implemented GBA+ and/or the tool was being applied inconsistently. The audit found that there was limited use of GBA+ because the tool was not mandatory (Fawkes et al. 2021). Following the audit, a five-year action plan (2016-2020) was developed which included mandatory GBA+ training for privy council office analysts who provide advice on policies and programs (Fawkes et al. 2021). Critiques of GBA+ suggest that the tool was established on a mainstream value system that is rooted within colonial systems (Boyden et al. 2021) and point to the need for an analysis tool that is relevant to Indigenous women and their worldviews. An initiative by the Native Women's Association of Canada is developing an alternate tool - Culturally Relevant Gender Based Analysis (CAGBA) - that aims to be inclusive of the cultural perspectives and historical experiences, past and present issues faced by Indigenous women such as the impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma (Native Women's Association of Canada 2007). A hybrid approach that brings together a deeper understanding of and engagement with intersectionality could improve the utility of GBA+ as a tool to promote gender equality in policy and program development in Canada. Implementing such a tool with greater consistency and accountability would also improve its effectiveness in delivering more equitable outcomes

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DFO adopted GBA+ in 2012 and established departmental guidelines and responsibilities within the framework. In the DFO 2019-2020 Departmental

Results Report there is a GBA+ section that highlights DFO's work to collect gender disaggregated data, noting that 10% of Indigenous commercial harvesters are women. Further, the report highlights how DFO began a partnership with the World Maritime University through Empowering Women for the United Nations Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development where they are contributing research to inform a strategy for gender empowerment in the sustainable governance of ocean spaces (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard 2020). In 2019, an amendment was made to the Considerations for Decision Making section of the Fisheries Act to include "*when making a decision under this Act, the Minister may consider among other things... the intersection of sex and gender with other identity issues*" (Statutes of Canada 2019). While this demonstrates movement by DFO towards gender aware management, reporting and integration of gender considerations has not been consistent.

Canada's Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) acknowledges gender consideration and the need to include women, but fails to use an intersectional approach, overlooking specific challenges, for example those faced by Indigenous women. The OPP is a 5-year plan released in 2016 that commits \$1.5 billion to protecting Canada's coasts and waterways for present and future generations. The OPP is managed by Transport Canada and was created to improve prevention and response to marine pollution incidents and to develop enhanced emergency response plans with Indigenous and coastal communities (Government of Canada 2020). While the OPP is not directly involved in fisheries management, as a federal policy aimed at ocean protection, it serves as an opportunity to analyze gender and environmental policy in Canada. The Native Women's Association of Canada reported on the gaps of the OPP, which included the absence of GBA+ in the plan and the lack of inclusion of Indigenous women in the decision-making process. The report acknowledges that the OPP mentions women and Indigenous peoples in a number of their initiatives, but nowhere do they specifically mention 'Indigenous women' (NWAC 2020). Indigenous women hold significant roles and responsibilities within Indigenous societies as protectors of water, so having no specific mention of Indigenous women

in this plan overlooks important traditional systems of knowledge and governance, while also dismissing the specific challenges that Indigenous women face, due to systems and values imposed through colonialism. This example of the OPP underscores the need for intersectional frameworks in the federal government's approach to fisheries and oceans conservation and management.



*Area A crab fishing in the Hecate Strait. Photo credit: Chelsey Elli.*

Policies and programs within Canadian environmental management are beginning to consider gender, such as the Fisheries Act and the OPP, yet sound implementation grounded in intersectional approaches is still lacking. There is a need to have diverse groups of people and women in fisheries management and decision-making positions so that decisions are made by voices that represent entire communities and sectors. Efforts to amplify these voices are appearing in various forums such as the British Columbia Young Fishermen's Network on the Pacific Coast, Strength of the Tides, an organization that shares the stories and experiences of women and gender diverse fisher people along the Pacific Northwest from California up to Alaska,

and on the East Coast through various organizations such as Fishing for Success. However, much more could be done at the policy level to consistently implement GBA+ and realize the gender equity and equality commitments that Canada acclaims to through its endorsement of the small-scale fisheries Guidelines, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other frameworks that support sustainable and just fisheries in Canada and beyond.

## Recommendations for advancing gender equitable and inclusive small-scale fisheries management in Canada:

- Work across institutions to dismantle systems of oppression, gender bias and social norms that limit equitable participation and representation.
- Center the voices and perspectives of Indigenous women in fisheries as part of advancing reconciliation and decolonization of institutions across Canada.
- Collect, analyze and make available fisheries sector data disaggregated by gender and other identity categories. This should be the responsibility of all federal, provincial, academic and/or non-governmental organizations tasked with fisheries research, management, and policy development.
- Employ intersectional approaches and gender analysis to understand barriers and ensure effective participation in management.
- Develop policies and programs that promote and facilitate spaces where women and other gender diverse peoples are supported and empowered to participate equitably in fisheries and management.

## Conclusion

Here we highlight why including gender considerations in the management of small-scale fisheries in Canada is both necessary and beneficial to communities and the ecosystems they are connected to, and what steps are needed to advance gender equitable and inclusive approaches. For effective participation and representation of all women in management spaces, an intersectional approach must be taken to tackle pre-existing power

asymmetries and the gender norms that reinforce them. Incorporating intersectionality will move away from the idea that all women fishers and managers have the same experience and can deepen our understanding of the complexities of individual experiences within management spaces. This is especially critical in Canada when considering the experience of Indigenous women in management spaces built on patriarchal and colonial frameworks. With the ongoing threat of climate change, declining fish stocks, and commitments to reconciliation, it is a critical time to reimagine management systems that are fully representative of entire communities and sectors, including all women.

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