

## Developing sustainable fisheries management policies that respond to the needs of coastal communities of Newfoundland

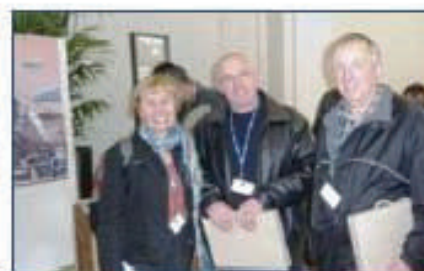
The overall goal of a one-year project involving the Town of Change Islands and researchers from three Canadian universities is to generate dialogue about how local knowledge can be used to develop sustainable fisheries and coastal management policies that respond to the needs of coastal communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Working with residents of the community of Change Islands over the past summer led to identification key issues that affect fish harvesters and others whose livelihoods depend on the marine environment. Together with local harvesters researchers are developing policy briefs for federal and provincial agencies on these topics in an effort to reshape policies to make them more responsive to the needs of Change Islands and other coastal communities. Maps that reflect local knowledge and placenames and an interactive, multimedia web site are also being developed to provide an opportunity for local residents, interested organizations and agencies, and others to learn about the distinct heritage and way of life of Newfoundland and Labrador fishing communities, and the role local knowledge can play in the sustainable use of coastal environments.

### Using local knowledge to manage coastal environments

Residents of coastal communities are primary stakeholders in fisheries management but continue to have little input into largely top-down, and often ineffective management strategies. Local people have valuable knowledge to share about the marine environment and the problems with current practices and regulations. New avenues for input exist in some regions through integrated coastal management efforts, but the project was based on a belief that fish harvesters and other coastal residents should have a louder voice in how local resources are managed.

With 32 fish harvesters and up to 35 people (in 2008) employed in a fish processing facility owned by the Town of Change Islands' Fishermen's Improvement Committee, the fishery represents a major employer in the town of 300 residents.

Given the importance of the fishery to the community Change Islands was an appropriate location for the project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Ocean Management Research Network and Canadian Fisheries, Oceans, and Aquaculture Management at the University of Ottawa. The project builds on a series of workshops and projects that have taken place on Change Islands since 2003. Change Islands has become a place where local residents, researchers, government representatives gather to discuss the future of coastal communities in Newfoundland and beyond as well as solutions for their long-term sustainability. Community mapping research began on the islands in 2008, with support from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and



Woodrow, Richards and Erinson at international meeting.

resulted in a detailed community map with over 200 new place names – demonstrating the importance and value of local knowledge. The current project is extending this community mapping work, moving from the shoreline to local fishing grounds.

Researchers Dr. Derek Smith, from Carleton University, Dr. Maureen Woodrow of University of Ottawa and seasonal Change Islands resident, and Dr. Kelly Vodden, Memorial University and MNL Research Associate, along with graduate students Bojan Furst, Ahmed Khan and Adèle Michon and undergraduate student Danielle Mills, have been working closely with the Town Council and local residents to document their knowledge and concerns and investigate potential solutions. Interviews and focus groups held in July and August 2009 and February 2010 identified several key issues related to fisheries management that threaten the viability of the local fishery. These include: over-



Mapping local place names. Photo by Bojan Furst