



FSMC's Chinook Recovery & Rebuilding Initiative (CRRI) Dialogue | Nov 28-29, 2022

Summary Report & Recommendations



The Government of Canada is committed to renewed relationships with Indigenous peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. We recognize that fisheries, oceans, aquatic habitat and marine waterways are of great social, cultural, spiritual and economic importance for Indigenous peoples in Pacific Region, and because of this, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has an important role to play in advancing reconciliation.

— **Reconciliation in British Columbia and the Yukon,
Fisheries & Oceans Canada**

“We are salmon people — these are our relatives.”

— **Anonymous,
Fraser & Approach Salmon Forum, January 2023**

“A foundational premise of CRRI is that more technical collaboration and inclusion of Indigenous interests is required to reverse Fraser Chinook population declines and to protect and enhance biodiversity going forward.”

— **CRRI Project Overview**

Background: About CRRl

The Chinook Recovery & Rebuilding Initiative (CRRl) was launched in 2022 by the Fraser Salmon Management Council (FSMC) with BC SRIF funding. The objective is to advance rebuilding of Fraser River Chinook salmon populations by providing resources and supports promoting a stronger technical role for indigenous groups in collaborative planning, delivery and evaluation of such work. Building on earlier and current work, CRRl serves as a convener, facilitator, coordinator and technical resource to support indigenous efforts and aspirations to play a leading role in a new collaborative approach to Chinook rebuilding. CRRl seeks to connect indigenous groups, government and non-government organizations, academics and others interested or involved in Chinook rebuilding. By the time CRRl concludes in March 2024, it hopes to lay the groundwork for a new collaborative model to support long-term work on Chinook rebuilding.

CRRl will **not** directly deliver rebuilding projects. CRRl will also not attempt to develop a Chinook rebuilding framework or indigenous plan for such, although it will support others to do so if the need is identified.

Other key CRRl work to date includes:

1. An initial survey assessing levels of existing indigenous agency involvement in Chinook recovery work and interest in collaboration.
2. [Context & Opportunities for Collaboration in Fraser Chinook Rebuilding](#): A background document summarizing past and current work, programs and opportunities relevant to Southern BC Chinook conservation.

For more on the CRRl project, visit frasersalmon.ca/CRRl

Event Overview

Our first formal CRRl engagement was a 1.5 day, open invitation, in-person/virtual hybrid meeting in Kamloops Nov 28-29, 2022. There were over 80 attendees representing indigenous communities from Vancouver Island to the Fraser headwaters, IRMAs (Indigenous Resource Management Agencies), consultants, DFO, BC and non-governmental organizations.

The objectives included introducing the CRRl project, seeking advice on where to focus our limited time/resources to strengthen the indigenous technical role in collaborative Chinook rebuilding and to start building a shared understanding of the context, challenges and opportunities for collaborative planning and delivery of work to promote Fraser Chinook recovery and rebuilding.

- [Link: CRRl Fall Dialogue - Event Details](#)

The agenda was designed to help indigenous and non-indigenous interests get to know each other, learn about some of the work already underway, and better understand interests,

aspirations, needs and opportunities for collaboration. It featured presentations on key DFO programs, such as the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) and Salmonid Enhancement Program (SEP), on indigenous-led work throughout the Fraser River and Vancouver Island, and on related Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) programs and activities. Live SLIDOs sought participant input on 3 key questions and the final open roundtable dialogue sought to identify priorities for next steps.

What We Heard | Key Messages

- Indigenous groups are already deeply involved in leading localized projects and programs to support Southern BC and Fraser Chinook rebuilding within their territories. Most of this work is collaborative, providing valuable examples of effective models, along with highlighting existing capacity/opportunities to build on, and lessons for deepening collaboration.
 - Sub-regional IRMA (Indigenous Resource Management Agency)/AAROM bodies play a key leadership role in planning, coordinating and supporting this work, demonstrating significant and growing technical capacity.
 - Each presenting group had taken a unique approach to Chinook rebuilding in terms of scope, scale and focus, in response to local conservation priorities, indigenous interests, opportunities and capacity.
 - There is a wide range in terms of where indigenous groups are currently at, but they indicated strong interest in being more involved in all aspects of Chinook rebuilding, given the right opportunities and supports to address capacity, resource and planning needs.
- DFO's PSSI initiative could offer important new opportunities to support collaborative Chinook rebuilding, with resources and supports identified under each of the 4 pillars and PSSI functioning as a portal to support access and integration. By connecting DFO, indigenous and other resources for a true partnership focussed on collaborative Fraser Chinook rebuilding, the PSSI portal can show the path to advancing Canada's Reconciliation commitments, demonstrate DFO's key role in implementation and the kind of mechanisms needed to make it happen. With this potential in mind, Indigenous participants expressed disappointment about being left out of PSSI planning to date. PSSI staff however stressed that collaboration would be critical to their success going forward, given the importance of quick wins within the next 2 years to make the case for longer-term federal investments.
 - Many attendees urged the need to start acting immediately to stem alarming population declines. "Less talk, more action!" as one SLIDO response put it bluntly. There is convergence between this sense of urgency and DFO's need to show clear, timely PSSI results.
 - Others stressed, however, that Chinook rebuilding will not be achieved by quick fixes and that rushing in without clear goals and coordination could do more harm than good. Some groups described investing many years in planning before work could even begin. Others stressed the need for a comprehensive planning

framework to avoid investments that are ineffective or even counter-productive. Clearly, long-term commitments, funding and structures will be required to support the necessary work.

- Also noted were key science gaps. Some relevant science work is happening within DFO, academia and elsewhere, but without an overall framework outlining what is needed, what work is already underway and by whom, and where the gaps/priorities are.
- The identified need for both urgent action and long-term programming also suggests the potential for a 2-pronged approach: i.e. identifying immediate “no brainer” opportunities while laying a foundation for longer-term change.
- Collaboration at all levels and between indigenous groups, levels of government (4G), non-government organizations, industry, academics, community interests were repeatedly emphasized as essential to successful Chinook rebuilding. Many speakers cited the Big Bar slide response as an effective model that demonstrated clear benefits, which we should seek to build on or replicate. The importance of partnership with the Province was repeatedly emphasized, and PSF’s presentation also demonstrated the valuable resources and capacity that non-government partners can bring to strengthen collaborative rebuilding efforts. The work of the Pacific Salmon Commission, particularly the PSC’s Chinook Technical Committee, and of well-established collaborative initiatives to rebuild US Chinook populations, especially in the Columbia, were also noted as key resources to call upon.
 - First Nations speakers stressed repeatedly that they envision a future role that’s about far more than delivering local projects. Implementing Canada’s UNDRIP (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and reconciliation commitments requires new ways of working together that truly reflect the idea of shared responsibility. That means collaboration from the very earliest stages of designing new programs and policy initiatives, and it calls for a difficult but ultimately valuable “culture shift” within DFO. This challenge was emphasized with regard to PSSI and SEP planning: The expectation going forward is: Co-Design, Co-Development and Co-delivery.
- Identified gaps include the lack of a migratory-scale planning framework to guide and coordinate local and sub-regional efforts — i.e. ensuring that everyone is rowing in the same direction. This involves setting clear overarching goals and identifying broad priorities for where to focus projects and how best to support them. Many of those who just want to go out and start making a difference “on the ground” identified the need for such guidance
 - A related concept was having FSMC, as a migratory route-scale AAROM body, secure added technical capacity to provide planning and coordination support for regional and local IRMA technical staff who are often already fully subscribed.
 - More networking and opportunities to exchange information and learning on best practices and lessons learned would also be helpful.

- DFO and PSF presentations highlighted several opportunities and/or sources of support and resources for First Nations. These included DFO's PSSI, SEP program renewal, new Fish Stock provisions, supports for AAROM collaboration and several PSF programs.
 - With so many new DFO initiatives currently underway — e.g. Mark Selective Fishing (MSF) pilots, SEP renewal, new Fish Stock Provisions — there were also concerns about being able to keep track of them all and about the lack of a clear over-arching framework to ensure various efforts aren't working at cross-purposes.
 - Potential opportunities and broad benefits of habitat-focussed work were highlighted by DFO and indigenous presentations. While attendees indicated significant interest in accessing SEP for indigenous-led projects, DFO and others warned enhancement would play a limited role and cannot address most long-term Chinook recovery and rebuilding needs.
 - Planning for a future of climate change, extreme weather events and the importance of water management were emphasized as integral to Chinook rebuilding work: e.g. UFFCA leadership on water baseline/change monitoring tools; how ONA is using such tools for real-time water management; reclaiming flood plains to improve habitat and flood resilience; the key provincial role in water management; new PSSI emergency response program; and integration of community stewardship and emergency response planning.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The CRR I Steering Committee met January 25 to review the detailed feedback received and to discuss recommendations and next steps, which are outlined below.

I. **New FSMC Fraser Chinook Rebuilding Technical Committee**

The CRR I Steering Committee recommends that FSMC seek a mandate and resourcing to provide/support a new migratory route-scale technical structure that includes regional AAROMs and that is closely linked to the FSMB's planned work to advance Fraser Chinook rebuilding. Resourcing and terms of reference for the proposed technical body should be developed and approved over the coming year so that it is ready to take over from CRR I when the project concludes in March 2024. The proposed body:

- Will require additional FSMC staff capacity to lead/coordinate the work of the proposed body (new science staff).
- May be established under the Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement (FSCMA) as a FSMC technical subcommittee.
- Should include Tier 1 and Tier 2 roles, with Tier 2 expanded to include the Province and other partners.

- Should meaningfully engage and collaborate with other relevant capacity and resources (e.g. PSF, NGOs, CTC, academia).
- While Fraser Chinook rebuilding would be the initial focus of this new technical table, FSMC should consider building in potential to expand the future scope to include all Fraser salmon.
- Should consider coordination and cross-support with similar indigenous-led work in other watersheds (e.g. work led by Okanagan Nation Alliance, Island Marine Aquatic Working Group).

The CRRI Steering Committee notes that a parallel governance process will be required to support the proposed technical process and recommends that FSMC seek appropriate advice on such, since that is outside the scope and capacity of CRRI.

2. Migratory route-scale Fraser Chinook recovery planning framework

The CRRI Steering Committee recommends that FSMC, DFO and the Province commit to co-design and co-develop a collaborative Fraser Chinook rebuilding and recovery framework to support both long-term rebuilding and urgent triage activities. The proposed planning framework would include clear goals for recovery and rebuilding. It should be developed collaboratively with indigenous interests, NGOs, academics and others committed to those objectives, with an emphasis on supporting new and existing partnerships.

To support this initiative, CRRI will begin to identify, map out and source foundational work needed for such a framework. Examples of work that CRRI can begin, or support others to undertake, in the coming year include:

- Inventory of current on the ground projects; opportunities and lessons learned
- Survey of Fraser First Nations to identify local priorities, needs and capacity, including Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TEK).
- Inventory of current and relevant past technical research (by DFO, indigenous-led, technical consultants and academia).
- List of known technical gaps: What we know we don't know but need to answer to establish a rebuilding framework)
- Research to document lessons learned from most relevant models, e.g. Columbia.
- Hosting/facilitating dialogues that bring parties/partners together to begin mapping out a planning approach and structure for developing the proposed Chinook rebuilding framework.

Next steps for the CRRI Steering Committee will include broadening its working partnerships to identify priority work for its 2023/24 work plan.

3. PSSI/CRRRI as a mechanism for implementing Reconciliation

The 2019 Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement reflected a landmark commitment to reconciliation. DFO and the FSMC, with its 76 Fraser and Approach signatory First Nations, now also have a clear mandate in place to work collaboratively on Fraser Chinook rebuilding as a top priority. While PSSI promised major resources to support Pacific salmon conservation and rebuilding, considerable questions remain about what that means and how it will be achieved, particularly with regard to Fraser Chinook. But with PSSI's emphasis on conservation, transformative change, partnerships and collaboration, we believe it offers a key mechanism to help DFO and FSMC begin to implement the UNDRIP and reconciliation commitments reflected in the FSCMA.

The CRRRI Steering Committee therefore recommends that DFO's PSSI staff work with the CRRRI project team and partners, using a PSSI/CRRRI interface to coordinate and integrate DFO and non-DFO work/investments/resources to support Fraser Chinook rebuilding.

We also believe this PSSI/CRRRI interface could be a useful template to demonstrate the long-term value of maintaining a DFO "portal" like PSSI that can gather and integrate Departmental resources and leverage them through external partnerships to support the ongoing, focussed work required to resolve complex challenges facing Pacific salmon.

Proposed next steps:

- CRRRI Project coordinator will work with PSSI staff to establish the Tier 2 process and resources needed to support CRRRI's work to advance recommendations 1 and 2 above.
- The scope of required supports may include DFO resources from Science, Stock Assessment, SEP, Habitat, Fishery Management (migratory-route scale) and other branches, as needed.
- In moving forward, the CRRRI project team will coordinate with and support the work of the Fraser Salmon Management Board.

Our sincere thanks to the CRRRI Steering Committee, to all who participated and contributed to the 2-day Kamloops Dialogue, and for the subsequent work to compile this report and recommendations. We look forward to building and expanding on a great start!

Marcel Shepert, CRRRI Project Coordinator

Acronyms & Definitions

AAROM	Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management
CRRl	Chinook Rebuilding & Recovery Initiative
CTC	Chinook Technical Committee
FSC	Food, Social and Ceremonial
FSMB	Fraser Salmon Management Board
FSMC	Fraser Salmon Management Council
FSCMA	Fraser Salmon Collaborative Management Agreement
IRMA	Indigenous Resource Management Agency
JTC	Joint Technical Committee
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PSC	Pacific Salmon Commission (www.psc.org)
PSF	Pacific Salmon Foundation
PSSI	Pacific Salmon Strategic Initiative
SEP	Salmonid Enhancement Program
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
UNDRIP	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People