

*Summary of Belonging to Lake Nipissing: Knowledge, Governance, and Human-Fish Relations,*  
PhD Dissertation, 2017

Nicole Latulippe, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario

The findings of this research address the first core FishWIKS research question - **How and to what extent are different knowledge systems incorporated into fisheries governance and processes by indigenous nations in Canada at national, regional and local scales?**

**A brief introduction on the specific issue being addressed**

NFN is restoring and strengthening the language, culture, laws, and other elements of its knowledge system. Nipissing is regarded as a leader in First Nations fisheries because it regulates its traditional and commercial fishing activities according to community-derived law, the NFN Fisheries Law and Regulations. Community fishing activities are not restricted to those negotiated within a state-led framework, i.e. Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licence. Rather, community members, staff, and political and cultural leadership routinely engage in knowledge gathering and transfer activities that feed into community-based decision-making processes, and into a distinct, adaptive fisheries program.

**Why it was important to address this issue**

The fisheries program at NFN includes the use of Western scientific knowledge on an everyday basis in terms of monitoring, assessment, and decision-making. Western and Indigenous knowledge systems are not or diametrically opposed; the community draws on many types of knowledge. Key is that the community is in charge of decision-making/governance. Fisheries governance and law at NFN is driven by community interests, values, and priorities.

**What are the key findings from the research?**

The pertinent question at NFN is not how Nipissing Anishinabek knowledge can be “incorporated” or integrated into dominant fisheries governance frameworks – this could become another version of Indigenous knowledge extraction. After 150 years of being marginalized from the lake economy, harassed and criminalized for practicing inherent- and treaty-based harvesting rights (while the use, management, and benefit of fish resources were transferred to provincial and non-Indigenous commercial interests on Lake Nipissing), the current concerns and

priorities at NFN far exceed Western and state-led frameworks for Aboriginal fisheries. The primary concerns at NFN do not include how to participate further in the dominant resource regulatory regime – the community already manages its fisheries and works cooperatively with neighbouring jurisdictions and with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry on annual fisheries stock assessments and monitoring.

Rather, research findings at NFN align with Pottawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte’s writing about **Indigenous knowledge sovereignty**, a two-pronged strategy that involves: 1) practices that strengthen the use and transmission of knowledge internally, and 2) the removal of external policy and jurisdictional roadblocks to putting this knowledge into practice on traditional lands. So, while the Nipissing people are doing important work to restore their related knowledge, governance, and legal practices, NFN’s treaty partner needs to meaningfully support these initiatives, honour the original spirit and intent of the historic treaties (not extinguishment documents), stop infringing on inherent rights, and give effect to Nipissing jurisdiction over entire traditional territories (which includes the waters).

**What are some of the main policy implications arising from the findings**

In terms of policy options, this could include prioritizing the Indigenous fishery in resource allocation planning; upholding Nipissing law and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent; and implementing the recommendations from the Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry in partnership with First Nations, which are meant to avoid violence in land- and resource-based conflicts stemming from treaty violations and the poverty and frustration experienced by First Nations in Ontario (e.g. effective public education, deal expeditiously with land and treaty grievances, implement treaty-based resource benefit sharing, harmonize laws, etc).

Support for this research was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Partnership Grant #895-2011-1007.