



A Tale of PNCIMA

Once Upon a Time ...

... in a mythical fairytale land, there was an idealistic dream called PNCIMA that everyone believed in ... well, almost everyone.

In 1996, the Oceans Act directed DFO to develop a national Oceans Management Strategy based on three principles:

- Sustainable development
- Integrated ocean management, and
- The precautionary principle

As a result of this directive, DFO mapped out five Large Ocean Management Areas (LO-MAs), of which the Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area (PNCIMA) was one.¹ PNCIMA included the regions we know as the Queen Charlotte Sound, Hecate Strait, and Dixon Entrance, often referred to as the Central and North Coast of BC.

The PNCIMA Planning Process was jointly governed by the federal, provincial, and First Nations governments. This was one of the first times in BC that the three levels of government had joined together to govern an initiative of this magnitude.² All levels of government agreed to sign an MOU with the Moore Foundation for a private-public partnership that would provide \$8.3 million to support the planning process. This would provide capacity for engagement, independent scientific advice, and capacity needs for the duration of the planning process.³ However, at the beginning of September, 2011, the federal government unilaterally withdrew from the funding MOU with the Moore Foundation, effectively destroying any opportunity for meaningful participation in the process by communities and scientists.

Was There a Wolf?

In a series of lobby actions, Captain Stephen Brown requested that *"We are seeking federal*

*government support to ensure the development of marine transportation on Canada's North West Coast is not unnecessarily impeded by PNCIMA recommendations."*⁴ This was in spite of the fact that he was still sitting on the IOAC (Integrated Oceans Advisory Committee at PNCIMA) and apparently negotiating in "good faith" with the other parties at the table. Later, The British Columbia Chamber of Shipping posted the following comment: *"The Prime Minister's office announced this week that a contract between the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Tides Canada to accept \$8.3m of funding from the U.S. based Moore Foundation has been cancelled. The west coast marine industry has long advocated such a move in view of the serious conflicts arising between the activities of the Moore Foundation in funding groups opposed to the development of Canada's oil sands and related port projects including restrictions on tanker traffic."*⁵

In consultative or shared decision making processes, there has to be a commitment amongst the stakeholders that their concerns will be heard and addressed at some level in the planning process. However, if stakeholders can get their interests met outside the planning process, they have no reason to engage with it or, if they do engage, they have no incentive to participate in a constructive manner.³ Thus, the lobbying actions of the shipping industry were a serious breach of trust with the other stakeholders at the PNCIMA table, and ultimately signalled the end of the process, although a ghostly remnant of PNCIMA is still being put forward by DFO.

Woe are We ..

As a professional biologist, I am deeply concerned about the demise of PNCIMA on two fronts. Firstly, after years of conflict between different sectors, we finally had everyone sitting at the same table talking about how to best manage our marine resources. Building trust between sectors which have traditionally been in opposition takes time, commitment, energy, and financial resources. All of this has been thrown away because one sector broke the faith ... and it is unlikely that we will see a group like this come together again anytime in the near future. Secondly, the Moore Foundation funding was to provide the resources for an independent scientific advisory group. Now that this funding is no longer available, DFO has made it clear that there will be no independent science - everything will be sourced from "in house". This does not bode well for the integrity and objectivity of whatever remains of PNCIMA and the future of marine resource management on the North and Central Coasts.

Rebirth??

Shortly after the federal government pulled out of the PNCIMA funding arrangement, BC announced a new marine planning initiative,

called the Marine Planning Partnership for the North Pacific Coast (MaPP). MaPP is a partnership between the Province of British Columbia, Coastal First Nations, the North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society, and the Nanwakolas Council. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations is the lead provincial ministry. MaPP supports marine plans for Haida Gwaii, the North Coast, the Central Coast and North Vancouver Island.⁶

Will this regional planning process replace PNCIMA? This is yet to be seen, but maybe there is hope...

As biology professionals, we need to be aware of how changes in the winds of political whim can erode the resource management landscape. If we are truly committed to provide sound management and conservation of biological resources, how should we react to these changes? If the winds of change blow ill, can we speak up?

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¹Marine Planning for the North and Central Coast. <http://bucksuzuki.org/key-issues/pncima/PNCIMA%20Backgrounder%20FI%20NAL.pdf>.

²DRAFT: BC Communities and Stakeholders Shut Out of the PNCIMA

Planning Process by the Harper Government. <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/media/news/downloads/2011/PNCIMAFundingBackgrounder.pdf>.

³Edwards, D. Marine Planning on the North Coast. <http://www.qcobserver.com/Article.aspx?Id=5210>.

⁴Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada. Western Marine Community Coalition. https://oclc.ca/app/secure/orl/lrs/do/publicSummary?language=en_CA®Dec=660886&searchPage=publicBasicSearch&smdKy=1323802049053.

⁵COS Weekly News - 9 September 2011. http://www.chamber-of-shipping.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=819:cos-weekly-news-9-september-2011&catid=94:cos-weekly-news-archive&Itemid=74.

⁶Introducing MaPP. <http://mappoceanplans.com/beta/introducing-mapp/>.

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