

Fishing people

A few thoughts in the wake of the WHAT'S COMMUNITY? discussion

(Posted on FISHFOLK, 2002)

In February, 1997, Dr. Michael D. Travis, a Fishfolker, published in COMMERCIAL FISHERIES NEWS an excellent article entitled: "What did he say? Language differences compromise fisheries communication". A quote: "Never assume that you and another are actually speaking the same language even if you are using the same terms". Another quote: "...never borrow the other culture (or discipline-MB-Y) language unless you intend to use it in exactly the same manner". [Mike, you still with us?]

Now, to "community". I sort of vaguely recall that several years ago we discussed the term on the List. Somebody said that a community is a group of people living within a given area, and I said that IMO community is more than that, and that such a group without some additional bonds, common interests, and mutual relations, is not a true community.

Today I think, we were both right. If one is talking in terms of geography, for example, the former meaning is probably correct. My point of view is that of community development, resource management, etc., hence my term has the latter meaning.

When I'm talking about fishing communities within the larger domain of fisheries management, I see a group of people who live, more or less in one area, whether separately or mixed with others, non members of the fishing community. My group consists of fisherfolk themselves, that is practicing fishermen and their families, fish dealers and processors, local netmakers, servicemen employed in boat, engine, and other equipment repair and maintenance, owners and employees of bars and restaurants frequented by members of the community, fishing vessel chandlers, and whoever else is involved in matters that stem directly or indirectly from the fishing trade. A fishing community would have also its specific local institutions, such as fishermen's club, association, etc.

All we got to do when we use a trans-disciplinary or trans-national term is to define it and, thus, save semantic arguments. MB-Y