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**What the National marine Fisheries Agency can do to build a better Partnership with the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people of S.E. Alaska**

Establish a common understanding of order between the National Marine Fisheries agency and the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian coastal communities.

Said another way, our job is to define what sharing of the marine resources means to each of us, and what percentage of differences can we live with? Sounds like we're talking about finding balance?

- We all know the Natives of S.E. Alaska have lived the life and lifestyle of making a living off the ocean resources from time immemorial; this does not change from generation to generation.
- We all know and agree that the State and Federal waters off Alaska are our customary and traditional subsistence use areas for fishing, hunting, and gathering.
- Because of these two facts, we know we have many things in common with the National Marine Fisheries agency.

Yet, there are natural differences that we need to understand in order to establish a long-term relationship.

1. The National Marine Fisheries has a National and International Public Focus, whereas in Southeast Alaskan villages, and in relation to the Natives, the focus is different.
2. The Native people of Southeast Alaska have a way of life to preserve, promote, and perpetuate which is thousands of years old.
3. The Native people of Southeast Alaska have cultural and intellectual property rights protection issues with western society.

4. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have our Native language preservation issues, not acknowledged by federal agencies in their relationship to our people.
5. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have traditional and ecological issues with western society.
6. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have “subsistence” or in Tlingit, (Haa atxaayi) issues with western society.
7. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have “Native commercialization” and “exploitation” of our culture issues with western society.
8. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have commercial fishing issues with western society.
9. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have extra-territorial boundary issues with the Federal Government and the National Marine Fisheries.
10. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have migratory bird, harbor seal, and sea otter issues with western society.
11. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have copy right and patent issues with western society regarding our Native culture, medicinal plants, written documentation, media, and other forms of communication used by State, Federal agencies, western society, and our Native way of life.
12. The Native people of S.E. Alaska have co-management issues with the State, Federal Government, and the National Marine Fisheries.
13. The Native community focus is on preserving, promoting, enhancing, and perpetuating our ancestor’s ancient way of life.

The Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people have always stated that they should have a self-determined role in managing the resources from which they make a living. Yet, understanding “How the Federal Government and the National Marine Fisheries works are not always easy.”

The National Marine Fisheries representation is very public and impersonal, and the Native community purpose is very private and personal.

There are probably as many “Rules of Engagement” as can be imagined, and as many interpretations. Given this statement, we need to ask ourselves, “If

this is true, “**How does the National Marine Fisheries build better Partnerships with the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian of Southeast Alaska?**”

- The most important thing is to understand that we are different people, living in western society in similar ways, but different, different nations.
- Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people are also similar in many Native ways, but, we are also different people, different nations.
- Our individual and Clan identity is still very established in the Native society.
- Recognize that our traditional lands and control of the ocean resources is just as strong in our Native minds and hearts as was prior to western society coming to Alaska.
- Understand that we live in western society and many of our Native people honor America, but, as Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people. However, many don't think of themselves as Americans, they are given a Tlingit, Haida, or Tsimshian name, they belong to a certain House and Clan, and they have their own Crests.
- Understand that preserving, promoting, enhancing, and perpetuating our Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian way of life for our children and grandchildren is like the air we breath, the life blood flowing to and from our hearts, the focus of our minds, the sounds we dream of hearing, our great grandchildren smiling when they are looking back in time as they call our ancestors names to share the same Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian food and culture we share today.
- Understand that our Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people are in a constant state of BECOMING. Becoming our Ancestors and Becoming our Grandchildren. In our society there is no separation of generations like in western society. This existence is described in our culture by Haa Shaagoon. Everything we do has continuity and perpetuity.

We know that many of you have heard and understand these things. I encourage you and your associates to continue to take the lead and offer opportunities that we can share.

The Native community in S.E. Alaska acknowledges the social, political, and legal aspects and programs of the Federal Government and National Marine Fisheries.

Why? Look at the ocean boundaries and resources you control which affects every aspect of our lives. There are clear reasons why we should work to develop successful partnerships; we want to succeed as Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people in our own land, off our own waters. We share with you what some of this means so that you can understand the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people of S.E. Alaska;

### What do successful Indian Nations have in Common?

1. Sovereignty-“genuine decision-making control”
2. Exercising sovereignty in a meaningful way
3. Capable Institutions of self governance
4. Capacity to run them-stable political institutions and policies; fair and effective dispute resolution mechanisms; a separation of politics from day-to-day business management; and a bureaucracy that gets things done.
5. Have governing Institutions that possess “cultural match”  
Institutions are legitimate to the people they serve.
6. Must match cultural norms
7. Tribes must seize control of our own futures, govern ourselves on our own terms, and do so with capable institutions of self-government that matches our unique culture.

### How would we measure success?

1. Effectiveness; significance; transferability; and sustainability

### Common Themes of successful Programs

1. To achieve exemplary Tribal resource management, tribal governments have to be willing to challenge the status quo.
2. Knowing when to say, “It’s time to fix this problem”
3. Tribes need to learn to say, and develop that “Take Charge Attitude”,” learn to fix problems which affect them by changing the way things are done.”
4. Partnerships are Critical
5. They pool technical resources; exploit common advantages; create a single powerful voice in public policy formation.
6. Importance of shared goals and objectives; need to strive for the same thing; developing common processes, because we know we will not always agree, so, clear processes are important; an acceptable means for resolving disputes.
7. Examples are MOU’s; MOA’s; statements of relationships, these help reduce financial burdens; share resources.
8. Productive partnerships require deep and long-term commitment to COOPERATION. (negotiate rather than litigate) Sit down with our partners; listen to one another; and develop our own solutions.
9. The most successful resource management programs are those that don’t just get the job done, but they set themselves up to do the job really well, really well.
10. Set high goals; Possess credible expertise; have clear evaluation and monitoring techniques; most important, pay attention to Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Culture!

We have no choice, we shouldn’t ignore the obvious, and the National Marine Fisheries Agency and Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people need to

become partners. A partnership of equals, committed to shared use and responsibility of the ocean and resources we have jointly inherited from our ancestors. We have a stake in one another's existence.

This is the right deal to make, we are the right people, regarding the right issues, this is the right time, and the Pacific Ocean off Alaska is the right place to make our common stand for the future. We will do this for our grand children.

We have lots to offer one another. After all is said and done, let's work to find our common-ness and learn to celebrate and share it together, and "we will build better partnerships for future generations."

Having stated who we are and what opportunities of partnership we offer, we also need to state;

- In regards to the issue of socio-economic impacts taking place in our communities in the sea food industry, we are resource rich and cash poor. We believe that many of the State and Federal sea food management programs and projects are successful and generating an abundance of resources, but, when we look at the Denali Commission Distressed Community list we see that the majority of our communities are very poor and have no sustainable economy.
- In regards to the issue of ecological issues, we have concerns that the State and Federal Environmental and Pollution laws do not always match, nor do they apply equally to the full 200 mile exclusive economic zone off Alaska. There are loop holes which allow half hearted compliance within the State three mile limit and outside the three mile limit to the 200 mile limit. In Federal waters we ask who is monitoring the high seas where the majority of our sea food species migrate too and from. We don't see the necessary International presence which affects these waters. An inshore example of a point source of pollution is the cruise ships which come to Alaska.
- In regards to commercial fishing issues we want to dispel State of Alaska and their cooperating Federal agencies which say our commercial fishing industry in Alaska is over capitalized and needs industry and fishermen cut-backs and buy backs. This is a political position of the current political party in control. They have not defined over-capitalization; they have not documented scientifically

or economically that over-capitalization is taking place in our sea food industry. The truth is, the State of Alaska and sea food industry has failed to step up to the challenge of the changing market requirements and customer demographics; they have failed to step up to the challenge of modernization of the sea food plant equipment and product packaging for current consumers; they have failed to participate in the new marketing channels of our sea food competitors; and they have consistently funded out-dated sea food processors from the Lower 48 which markets farmed sea food products at the expense of our wild products caught in Alaska.

- In regards to ‘Open Ocean aquaculture’ especially in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska this opportunity has not been addressed by Alaskans. But if you look at our opposition against Salmon, sablefish, and halibut farming in Alaskan waters it will reflect our opposition on Open Ocean aquaculture farming as well. The number of problems that we can point to right off are;
  1. The redesignation of uses and user groups in the 200 mile EEZ of Alaska adds another layer of internal conflict and competition to our already declining sea food markets.
  2. The cost of entering this opportunity will be beyond the economic capacity of the State of Alaska, individual communities; and our Tribal members. This will be a case of national and international companies getting richer and our village members getting poorer. We are already experiencing this in our wild sea food product industry, why would we support it in the sea food farming industry?
  3. The issue of State based management control of the Open Ocean Aquaculture adjacent to their shores is open to question, considering many States, including Alaska’s poor track record of not working with our rural villages, and not recognizing our Tribal Sovereignty Rights in Alaska is a real problem to the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people.
  4. All of the social and economic factors of Alaska have not been addressed or used in Trade deficit calculations which are being used as a driving force behind open ocean aquaculture.

- Haa atxaayi (Our Food) in Tlingit, known in western society by the regulatory word, “subsistence.” Our food is our way of life, our total being and existence as Tribes in Alaska. Our food is directly connected to Haa Shaagoon, who we are as Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people. The only true way of knowing this is to live our life with us. But just to show a small list food of which we are speaking of in Southeast Alaska subject to the environment of which the National Marine Fisheries affects we list the following;

- Abalone → Shrimp
- Migratory Sea birds → Smelt
- Bird eggs
- Bull Head
- Clams
- Cockles
- Crab
- Eel
- Eulachon
- Flounder
- Halibut
- Herring
- Herring eggs
- Herring oil
- Mollusks
- Mussels
- Octopus
- Red snapper
- Rock fish
- Sable fish
- Salmon
- Salmon eggs
- Scallops
- Sea cucumber
- Sea Urchin
- Seal
- Seal oil
- Sea weeds



All of these foods are exposed at various stages of their life to the open ocean of State waters and the 200 mile EEZ. The value and importance of these foods to our Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people is beyond measurement in U.S. dollars. The loss of these foods would be cultural genocide of our people.

Conclusion:

With this brief document we believe that NOAA and the National Marine Fisheries Service should take some forward thinking action; and

1. Establish a Tribal Liaison Branch of NOAA and the National Marine Fisheries to help coordinate with Native American Tribes of Alaska and the Lower 48.
2. Review all NOAA and National Marine Fisheries Service programs, grants, and projects to determine which have a direct affect on Native American and Alaska Native Tribes for impact and/or participation.
3. Review all NOAA and National Marine Fisheries Service training and education programs to include Native Americans and Alaska Natives.
4. Look at which programs and projects can be immediately converted to co-management contracts with Tribes, or partnered with MOU's.
5. Work with Tribes on designation of Ocean Stewardship programs, and designate Tribal Economic Zones within the 200 mile EEZ off Alaska shores.

We believe that this is a beginning and ask that you take our recommendations to the decision-making bodies of your organization to address our Tribal role and address specific Tribal inclusion, participation, and communication plans with the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people of Alaska.