

Transforming the Governance of Canada's Oceans and Coasts from the Bottom Up

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From offshore fishing banks to rugged shores, pristine beaches to biodiversity-rich estuaries, Canada's dynamic oceans and coasts help to define this country. However, our oceans and the coastal communities they support are exposed to diverse and multiple unprecedented changes (see Chapters 3 and 4). Coastal communities in many parts of Canada are under significant stress (Ommer 2007). Collapsed resource stocks (Charles 2001), changing climatic conditions (Cheung, Watson, and Pauly 2013), unsustainable economic development activities (Ban, Alidina, and Ardron 2010), and the concentration of access rights away from small-scale or community-based enterprises (Ecotrust Canada 2004, 2009, 2018; Silver and Stoll 2019) are just a few of the drivers of change that undermine the health and well-being of coastal ecosystems and communities (Stocks 2016; Dolan et al. 2005; Ommer 2007). Canada's success as an ocean nation requires that we do better.

Communities and their role in shaping our coastal and ocean spaces have been the focus of diverse projects and research initiatives internationally and across Canada's three oceans (Charles et al. 2020; Berkes 2015). These initiatives have led to valuable insights about priority issues and concerns confronting coastal communities and their interactions with marine systems. Key issues include the influences of climate change; the degradation of coastal resources, livelihoods, and economic security; outmigration of youth; health challenges; access to resources; and a sense that coastal communities are too often disconnected from governance processes (Charles 2012; Ommer

2007; Stephenson et al. 2018). While past research has focused on vulnerability of, and declining conditions in, coastal communities, attention is increasingly shifting to the strategies through which communities are proactively fostering change and deliberately seeking *transformations* toward sustainability (Armitage, Charles, and Berkes 2017; Bennett et al. 2019; see also Chapter 11).

We define transformation here as deliberate efforts to encourage fundamental change when existing conditions (economic, social, and ecological) are untenable (see Walker et al. 2004). Actions to deliberately transform ocean governance can be taken by governments and communities. Here, we focus on efforts by communities and community-supporting actors to transform ocean governance from the bottom up. Such transformations typically involve a shift in how communities govern themselves and their interactions with the ecosystems upon which they depend. Governance includes the structures and processes through which communities, societies, and organizations make decisions about our ocean and coastal resources. Relationships of power (e.g., between communities and higher-level government agencies) are central to governance and opportunities for collective action (Blythe et al. 2018; Bennett et al. 2019; Temper et al. 2018).

Transformative change, especially when it emerges from the bottom up, is hard to define, sensitive to external influences (political, biophysical) beyond a community, and difficult to sustain. Despite the challenges in applying the concept (see Blythe et al. 2018), a transformation lens