



PLAMU FIRST.

PLAMU FIRST 2024 | CONFERENCE OVERVIEW REPORT
April 2025

Prepared by:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
2. INTRODUCTION	5
3. OVERVIEW	5
3.1 Purpose.....	5
3.2 Objective.....	5
3.3 Format.....	6
3.4 Participating Organizations.....	7
3.5 Plamu First Planning Committee	7
4. OPENING REMARKS.....	8
4.1 Chief George Ginnish.....	8
4.2 Bud Bird	9
5. PLAMU FIRST 2021	11
5.1 Overview.....	11
5.2 Assessment.....	12
5.3 Moving Forward.....	13
6. SETTING THE STAGE	13
6.1 Collaborative Leadership	14
6.2 Trust Building.....	14
6.3 Etuaptmumk	14
6.3 The Power of Language.....	15
6.4 Base Camping.....	16
7. PANEL 1: THE SHARED VALUE OF PLAMU IN 2024	17
7.1 Panel 1 Speakers	17
7.2 Panel 1 Roundtable Questions.....	17
7.3 Panel 1 Takeaways	17
8. PANEL 2: WHAT BARRIERS DO WE FACE?	18
8.1 Panel 2 Speakers	18
8.2 Panel 2 Roundtable Questions.....	19

8.3 Panel 2 Takeaways	19
9. PANEL 3: LET’S TALK CO-MANAGEMENT	20
9.1 Panel 3 Speakers	20
9.2 Panel 3 Roundtable Questions	20
9.3 Panel 3 Takeaways	21
10. CONCLUSION.....	22
10.1 Next Steps	22

1 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This conference would not have been possible without the dedication and collaboration of numerous individuals and organizations. We extend our gratitude to all participating organizations and planning committee members, listed below, whose efforts were instrumental in bringing this event to life. A special thanks also goes to the roundtable facilitators and note-takers, composed of planning committee members and Anqotum Resource Management staff, for their invaluable contributions.

A tremendous amount of thanks goes to Plamu First Facilitator, Tom Mann of Thomas Mann Consulting LTD. Tom's ability to organize, steer and facilitate presentations and round table discussions was outstanding. In the wake of the conference, Tom worked tirelessly on lens/concepts for the conference overview and strategic plan.

This conference was dedicated to the memory of Peter Joseph Cronin (1952-2023), former president of the New Brunswick Salmon Council and true champion for Plamu conservation. His contributions to Plamu First 2021 echoed throughout Plamu First 2024 in its entirety.



In memory of Peter Joseph Cronin (1952-2023)

2 INTRODUCTION

Plamu First 2024, held from April 22–24 at the Rodd Miramichi in Miramichi, New Brunswick, brought together members of the wild Plamu community to advance a collective action plan focused on salmon conservation.

The conference aimed to refine the goals of the Plamu First Five-Year Strategic Plan developed in 2021 and reinforced the importance of collaborative leadership for sustainable resource management. Through guided discussions, participants identified shared objectives, addressed key challenges, and outlined actionable steps for the future. This report offers an overview of the conference, highlights key takeaways, and outlines next steps for conserving the Miramichi River ecosystem.

3 OVERVIEW

3.1 Purpose

Plamu First 2024 served as a follow-up to Plamu First 2021. The conference reconvened partners and collaborators to share updates, reaffirm shared values, and refine their objectives. Building on the work started in 2021, participants assessed and adjusted the five-year plan for protecting and enhancing Plamu populations through ecosystem-based management in the Miramichi watershed. Discussions focused on reviewing progress, identifying necessary modifications, and strengthening conservation strategies.

3.2 Objective

Plamu First 2024 was designed to build on the foundation of Plamu First 2021, incorporating its key elements to develop a realistic, time-sensitive, and accountable strategic plan. The Plamu First 2024 | Five-Year Strategic Plan (2025-2030) aims to:

- Use the strategic imperatives established in 2021 as a baseline to address urgent challenges in the Miramichi River watershed.
- Establish an Indigenous-led watershed leadership structure with clear timelines.
- Collaborate to protect, conserve, and restore Plamu populations in the Miramichi River watershed.

Plamu First 2021 established a set of recommendations, but further structure and alignment were needed to support implementation. Plamu First 2024 built on this foundation, focusing on developing a more actionable and results-driven strategy.

With a sense of urgency, participants engaged with speakers, presentations, and panel discussions to ensure their efforts were not starting from scratch but rather addressing key themes:

- **Shared Values:** How can we prioritize and tackle the most pressing issues?
- **Barriers and Challenges:** What obstacles must be overcome?
- **Leadership of the Miramichi River Watershed:** What governance structure is needed to ensure long-term success?

3.3 Format

Plamu First 2024 was structured into three sections, each addressing a key conference theme: shared values and goals, known barriers and challenges, and the development of a cooperative management framework. Each section featured a speaker panel followed by roundtable discussions, providing 48 participants the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, practice active listening, and collaborate on solutions. Roundtable discussions were prompted by providing each roundtable with a set of four questions.

Figure 1: Speaker Panel



Figure 1: Speaker Panel – As part of Panel 1: The Shared Value of Plamu in 2024, Charlie Bjorndal (Mi'gmawé'l Tplu'taqnn Incorporated) presents findings from an Indigenous Knowledge Study conducted on the Miramichi watershed.

A collective check-in allowed attendees to channel their shared passion for Plamu conservation into constructive, widely endorsed action items. A crucial element of these discussions was the inclusion of Etuaptmunk in the development of a new collaborative management system. For conservation efforts to succeed, the mandates of the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Government of New Brunswick (GNB) must integrate Indigenous knowledge as an equally valued and legitimate scientific and data-driven approach alongside non-government organization (NGO) perspectives.

To foster dynamic and results-driven discussions, participants were reassigned to different groups for each roundtable session. Each group had a facilitator and a notetaker to capture key insights, commitments, and proposed timelines. Attendees were encouraged to be open, forthright, and respectful in sharing their perspectives, ensuring productive and inclusive dialogue.

3.4 Participating Organizations

Plamu First 2024 brought together First Nations organizations, government agencies, academia, and NGOs, all focused on Plamu conservation in the Miramichi watershed. The following organizations were represented:



3.5 Plamu First Planning Committee

Plamu First 2024 would not have been possible without the dedication and support of the following individuals:

- Butch Dalton (Miramichi Salmon Association)
- Dan Cain (Miramichi Salmon Association)
- David Roth (Canadian Rivers Institute)

- Debbie Norton (Miramichi Watershed Management Committee)
- Ethan Augustine (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)
- Jim Ward (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)
- Jodi MacIntosh (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)
- Joseph Augustine (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)
- Joe Palmer (Miramichi Salmon Association)
- Kevin Davidson (New Brunswick Salmon Council)
- Nathan Wilbur (Atlantic Salmon Federation)
- Neville Crabbe (Atlantic Salmon Federation)
- Pam Ryan (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)
- Richard McGuigan (Miramichi Salmon Association)
- Serge Collin (Atlantic Salmon Federation)
- Siobhan Curry (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)
- Tom Mann (Thomas Mann Consulting LTD)
- Tommi Linnansaari (University of New Brunswick)
- Vanessa McLaughlin (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council)

4 OPENING REMARKS

4.1 Chief George Ginnish

Natoaganeg First Nation Chief | North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council Chair

Chief George Ginnish has served as an elected leader for 40 years, joining the Natoaganeg First Nation Council in 1984 and becoming Chief in 1986. He has also held key leadership roles, including board chair of the North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council and co-chair of Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn Incorporated. Chief Ginnish is a strong advocate for truth and reconciliation, as well as rights recognition for all Mi'kmaq in New Brunswick. He is an expert at fostering understanding, community dialogues, and promoting healing and resolution.

“Plamu is essential to our culture. As traditional stewards of the land and rivers and as rights holders-the preservation of the Plamu is a key priority for our People. From our presence in this territory from time immemorial, it was a marvelous and abundant source of food and survival for our people.

For over 300 years the right for Mi'gmaq communities to fish commercially has been secured under the Covenant of Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1725 (ratified in 1726),

1749 and 1760. Our people hold Aboriginal and Treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, (1982) to fish for food, social, ceremonial and commercial purposes within Mi'gmaq Territory. The courts have also held that the Mi'gmaq have Aboriginal rights to fish, which are inherent rights and independent of the Treaties.

The Marshall decision in 1999 recognized the continued authority of our 18th century Peace and Friendship Treaties between the British government and Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqey Peoples. The Supreme Court of Canada required the federal government to respect First Nation Treaty rights within the East Coast fisheries.

The United Nations Declaration Law (2021) could be a remedy that expressly and directly sets out the responsibility of governments in relation to Indigenous rights. This would include their obligation to take active steps to implement the United Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples including to consult and cooperate in good faith in order to obtain free, prior, and informed consent for the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories or other resources. However, we have in this session, the opportunity to work together to establish a model, a collaborative model, to take concrete steps to what I believe is a common goal, restore the Plamu to its historic relativity to the river, and to all of us.

Plamu First 2024 presents the opportunity for the gathering to discuss, as collaborators, how to best serve our king of fish in their uphill climb.”

4.2 J.W. Bud Bird, PC, OC, ONB

Champion of the Plamu

Bud has been a lifelong advocate for Miramichi salmon conservation, having served as past president and Chair Emeritus of the Miramichi Salmon Association, as well as a director of the Atlantic Salmon Federation. He recognizes the importance of building strong, direct relationships between the business and government sectors and First Nations in the province. Over the past 20 years, Bud has led numerous initiatives aimed at improving these relationships and fostering greater engagement.

“As we all know – but always worth repeating – the wild Atlantic salmon, Plamu has been a treasured resource in the Miramichi River watershed from the time mankind began to emerge on these lands. It was a mysterious creature among nature’s many blessings; emerging from such small eggs laid in gravel bars each fall, less than two years later disappearing from the river as very small smolts, then returning in the spring, two, three, or four years after that again as much larger mature fish. With that inexplicable cycle

repeating itself century after century to the present day. Truly a magical process beyond human imagination.

There are many challenges that confront our mutual wonderment and attachment to the Plamu, the growth of the commercial fishing industry converging on the Greenland fishery, the advent of the growth of the striped bass species, other bass species, have left us after 15 years still searching for the resolve to complete the leadership and management action that we all know is needed.

All this adds up to the proposition that, from the northwest Miramichi, less than 5% of its smolts are surviving to reach saltwater. Can we imagine how few of these smolts will ever return as adult spawning salmon to this wonderful river?

I am grateful for the guidance of our First Nation partners, who will bring collective knowledge and experiences in the areas of meaningful engagement and their history of the watershed. Now is the time. If not us and the organizations that we belong to, gathered here in this room, then who?"

Figure 2: Chief George Ginnish and J.W. Bud Bird, PC, OC, ONB



Figure 2: Chief George Ginnish and J.W. Bud Bird, PC, OC, ONB – Leaders in Plamu conservation offer opening remarks at Plamu First 2024.

5 PLAMU FIRST 2021

5.1 Overview

The inaugural Plamu First 2021 was held from March 16-18, 2021, with 48 attendees participating in the three-day virtual event. This was a First Nations-led event designed to foster collaboration and partnership with all major stakeholders invested in addressing the current crisis facing the Plamu population.

The goal of Plamu First 2021 was to develop a five-year plan focused on protecting and enhancing the wild Plamu population through ecosystem-based management in the Miramichi watershed. In collaboration with local First Nations, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Government of New Brunswick, the Miramichi Salmon Association, the Miramichi Watershed Management Committee, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the New Brunswick Salmon Council, and academia, a plan with strategic imperatives was developed.

Figure 3: Plamu First 2021 Opening Prayer



Figure 3: Plamu First 2021 Opening Prayer – Metepenagiag Elder, Betty Jane Ward gives an opening prayer via Zoom at the Plamu First 2021 conference.

The 2021 Plamu First Report can be found at:

<https://www.plamufirst.ca/s/Plamu-First-2021-Conference-Report.pdf>

5.2 Assessment

Kevin Davidson, representing the New Brunswick Salmon Council, played a key role in the planning of Plamu First 2021. At Plamu First 2024, he presented the 2021 Plamu Report, evaluating the progress on the strategic imperatives outlined in the 2021 five-year plan. These Imperatives focused on local leadership to restore the wild Plamu population and protect the Miramichi watershed through an adaptive conservation plan that balances social, cultural, and economic benefits.

The goal was to exhaust all possible measures to increase the Plamu population and achieve meaningful co-management of Plamu by 2023. To support this, strategic action elements were established. The collaborators identified the need for sustainable funding to ensure all parties have the resources to support ongoing programs and increase research capacity for engaging rightsholders and stakeholders.

Kevin assessed the progress on each of the six strategic imperatives, providing star ratings (★):

1. Improve Collaboration and Coordination: Enhance coordination and communications to more effectively harness skills and knowledge.

★★★★☆

2. Address Known Priority Threats: Mitigate and alleviate the threats that are currently known to negatively affect the salmon population in the Miramichi watershed, by 2024.

★★

3. Widen Awareness of the Crisis: Ensure greater awareness of the cultural, social and economic value of Atlantic salmon and the escalating threats to the survival of the species.

★★★★★

4. Address Data Gaps: Identify and close the key data gaps mitigating the development of effective and efficient solutions to enhance watershed management and salmon recovery.

★★

5. Enhance Habitat Conservation, Restoration and Protection: Ensure the Miramichi watershed maintains a healthy and sustainable ecosystem with enough carrying capacity for all terrestrial and aquatic species.

★★★

6. Conduct a Priority Threat Assessment: Ensure greater awareness of the cultural, social and economic value of Atlantic salmon and the escalating threats to the survival of the species.

★★★

Figure 4: Improved Collaboration and Coordination



Figure 4: Improved Collaboration and Coordination – Miramichi River conservation groups come together to carry out the Miramichi Smallmouth Bass Eradication project, a priority identified at Plamu First 2021.

5.3 Moving Forward

The consensus at Plamu First 2021 was that, to address the strategic imperatives, alignment and accountability among collaborators are essential. At Plamu First 2024, it was reaffirmed that developing leadership via a co-governance model is crucial for directing action on the strategic imperatives and ensuring long-term success.

6 SETTING THE STAGE

Facilitator Tom Mann guided the discussions at Plamu First 2024 with a briefing that set the framework for addressing the challenges facing the Miramichi watershed and wild Plamu. He highlighted the importance of key foundations for productive collaboration. These included collaborative leadership, trust building, the significance of language, and the concept of base camping – elements framed as essential touchstones for working together.

6.1 Collaborative Leadership

The practice of collaborative leadership has proven successful in helping First Nations, governments, and non-government organizations build respectful and productive relationships. Through this initiative, leaders work together to dispel myths, build trust, and open new pathways for tackling tough issues. This approach forms the foundation for the proposed First Nations-led Collaborative Leadership Council, which aims to develop new approaches to decision-making, governance, and planning, ensuring ongoing and long-term collaborative action. Sustainability is embedded in this model to create permanent change in governance processes, operating systems, and decision-making structures.

Moving forward, the objective for all collaborators should be to strengthen partnerships and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information. This will enable them to make collaborative decisions, aligned with shared values, and addressing the challenges facing the Miramichi watershed. Reconciliation will further strengthen the governance model for the watershed.

6.2 Trust Building

Mutual trust is a critical requirement for governance, values, and effective collaboration. For trust to be established, it must be earned through trustworthy practices and engagement. Building trust should be a priority, with the collaborators taking responsibility for creating an environment of transparency and openness. Effective communication, using mutually agreed-upon channels, is essential for fostering understanding and trust, while also respecting different cultures, traditions, and perspectives.

Trust allows for the removal of barriers to communication, including managing dissenting views, and addressing concerns as they arise. With trust, effective collaboration becomes possible, ultimately leading to public trust that supports proactive actions recommended by the collaborative leadership model. The sharing of information and transparency will help mitigate mistrust, creating a stronger foundation for decision-making and collective action.

6.3 Etuaptmunk

Etuaptmunk (Two-Eyed Seeing) is a Mi'kmaq principle that emphasizes the value of integrating both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. As Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall explains, Etuaptmunk involves learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledge and from the other with the strengths of Western knowledge – and using both eyes together for the benefit of all.

In the context of the conference, this approach was presented as a guiding principle for integrating Indigenous laws, knowledge systems, and scientific data into collaborative decision-making, especially in the conservation of the Miramichi River ecosystem. Embracing Etuaptmunk ensures that diverse

perspectives are respected and that solutions are grounded in a holistic understanding of both traditional wisdom and modern science.

Figure 5: "Two-Eyed Seeing" (Etuaptmumk in Mi'kmaw)

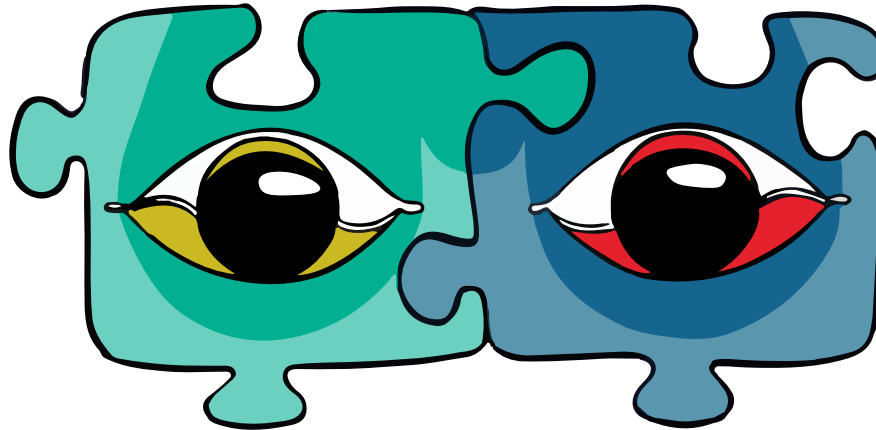


Figure 1: "Two-Eyed Seeing" (Etuaptmumk in Mi'kmaw) – Illustrated by N. M. Burton, in A. J. Reid et al., Two-Eyed Seeing: An Indigenous Framework to Transform Fisheries Research and Management (Fish and Fisheries), 2021.

6.4 The Power of Language

To move forward, individual and organizational ethics must be reconsidered within the landscape of cultural difference, recognizing that the language we use varies between partners. Common values were expressed during both Plamu 2021 and 2024, but what constitutes common sense can differ greatly from person to person, shaped by different frames of reference.

Language plays a significant role in these differences, with three distinct language constructs existing within the conversation:

1. **First Nations:** Traditional knowledge, the First Nations Principles of OCAP®, Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* the 1999 Marshall decision, the United Nations Declaration Act, and science.
2. **Government:** Federal, provincial, and municipal legislation, regulations, departmental policies, strategies, and science.
3. **Non-Government Organizations:** Conservation language, often tied to external funding sources, including memorandums of understanding, mission statements, and the language of protection and restoration.

Understanding these language differences is critical to fostering dialogue. Rather than focusing on what we do not agree on, the aim should be to celebrate the common values that unite us and work from those to find solutions. Engaging in this way can help move discussions forward productively.

Figure 6: Meaningful Discussion as a Three-Legged Stool



Figure 6: Meaningful Discussion as a Three-Legged Stool – A depiction of how First Nations, government, and NGOs can overcome language differences and come together for meaningful discussions.

6.5 Base Camping

In addressing complex challenges like the conservation of the wild Plamu, it is crucial to approach the work step by step. Just as climbers ascend mountains by acclimatizing at base camps along the way, collaborators must move forward thoughtfully and steadily, building trust and understanding as they go.

The process of base camping emphasizes the need to take time to adjust to new perspectives, build relationships, and align on shared goals. It is about creating a solid foundation for collaboration by respecting the diverse experiences, values, and expertise each participant brings to the table. Just as each base camp serves as a preparation point for the next phase of the journey, each stage of collaboration requires reflection and readiness to move forward together.

This approach ensures that as challenges are tackled and decisions are made, there is mutual respect and understanding at each stage of the process. It also reinforces the idea that meaningful, long-term change takes time and requires patience as participants continue to engage and work toward a common goal.

7 PANEL 1: THE SHARED VALUE OF PLAMU IN 2024

7.1 Panel 1 Speakers

- **Charlie Bjorndal, Director of Indigenous Knowledge Research**
Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn Incorporated
The Miramichi Watershed: Importance of Salmon (Plamu) – Findings from an Indigenous Knowledge Study to determine the status of Miramichi River fisheries from the Mi'kmaq perspective
- **Charlie Marshall, Fisheries Policy Analyst**
Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs Secretariat
Wild Atlantic Salmon & NASCO – An overview of APC's work on the Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy and Strategy
- **Lyndsay Jay-Keating, Biologist**
Miramichi Salmon Association
Miramichi River Branch Smolt Estimates in the context of the current state of Atlantic salmon – An assessment of salmon population trends on the Northwest and Dungarvon branches of the Miramichi River
- **Mark Hambrook, Vice-President**
Miramichi Watershed Management Committee
Overview of Atlantic Salmon Stocking on the Miramichi – The history, current capacity, and potential of the Miramichi Salmon Conservation Centre's annual fry-stocking program

7.2 Panel 1 Roundtable Questions

- Why is Atlantic salmon important to you?
- What do we (and our organizations) share in common regarding Atlantic salmon preservation?
- What else do you (or your organization) need to advance Atlantic salmon preservation?
- What further capacity can your organization contribute to these shared objectives?

7.3 Panel 1 Takeaways

- *The salmon has always brought people together and continues to bring us together in this crisis.*
- *We need to rally around the species.*
- *We need to be committed together to capacity-building for the next seven generations.*

- *The watershed needs us to break out of our silos. We must understand the sense of urgency.*
- *We all share responsibility in our role, and we share the crisis. We want a solution.*
- *Plamu are a species that is natural to our river, and we do not want it destroyed. It is part of our Atlantic identity.*
- *We need capacity to address the challenges that must go beyond interest only.*
- *Stewardship and sustainability are keys to the future of salmon.*
- *Rights holders and stakeholders are not the same. We have different roles.*
- *Habitat restoration.*
- *Looking forward to future generations.*
- *Striped bass is one of the threats.*
- *A value we all share is conservation.*

8 PANEL 2: WHAT BARRIERS DO WE FACE?

8.1 Panel 2 Speakers

- **Karl Phillips, Postdoctoral Fellow**
University of New Brunswick and Canadian Rivers Institute
To what degree is the striped bass success story compounding other barriers to Atlantic salmon recovery? – An overview of smolt-tracking research and how the results relate to striped bass predation in the Miramichi River
- **David Roth, Postdoctoral Fellow**
University of New Brunswick and Canadian Rivers Institute
“Truck & Transport” Smolt in the Miramichi River: Estimating the Effects of Smolt Transportation from Different Vantage Points and Management Perspectives – An outline of an upcoming project to transport Plamu smolts to the Miramichi River estuary as a means to increase survival and returns
- **John Bagnall, Fisheries Committee Chair and Past President**
New Brunswick Salmon Council
Plamu II Presentation – An assessment of current scientific data relating to Miramichi Plamu, striped bass populations, and stocking capacity, with an emphasis on data gaps

- **Ethan Augustine, Anqotum Resource Management Senior Biologist
North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council**

Invasive Smallmouth Bass in the Miramichi – An overview of smallmouth bass as a threat to the Miramichi River ecosystem, efforts to contain them, and next steps

8.2 Panel 2 Roundtable Questions

- What other barriers to Plamu preservation do you see? How do you prioritize them? Address them?
- How do we leverage a process to build trust, strengthen trust, strengthen relationships, advance ongoing efforts, and develop new initiatives?
- Is your commitment to a pathway forward one that includes clearly defining our common interests, identifying obstacles to progress, and dispelling myths with fact-based dialogue of mutual respect?
- What data deficiencies do we face relating to all species and why cannot the data be brought to the table to benefit all shareholders?

8.3 Panel 2 Takeaways

- *There is lots of data. One issue is access to the data – it is not housed in one location.*
- *Of all we have seen today, the UNB/CRI studies were interesting, as predation by striped bass does not line up with DFO's science. There is a big gap to inform fishery management decisions.*
- *How do we leverage a process to build trust?*
- *Just because it was done a certain way in the past does not mean it has to be done that way now.*
- *Meaningfully listening to each other's perspective is a good place to start.*
- *One data gap appears to be that we have no idea what is coming into the river on a yearly basis.*
- *Can we not eliminate redundancies in data and establish a centralized database?*
- *We are cheating ourselves out of the value of sharing data and resources.*
- *We have lost touch with the environment. No one wants to give anything.*
- *Modern consumer culture – no one wants to sacrifice to solve the issue.*
- *It is a pity that rivers are so often boundaries between jurisdictions.*
- *We need our people monitoring the river, as eyes and ears on the water, providing continuous knowledge and advocating for Plamu.*
- *We need a better understanding of DFO's processes, including the funding management process.*
- *If our wants are divided, then no one will get what they want.*
- *Coordination is a big challenge. Coordinating would give us a louder voice.*

9 PANEL 3: LET'S TALK CO-MANAGEMENT

9.1 Panel 3 Speakers

- **Joseph Augustine, Anqotum Resource Management Field Technician
North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council**
Gaspereau Trap Escapement Toolkit – A look at efforts to develop a Gaspereau trap that allows the escapement of other fish species, a project that was conceptualized at Plamu First 2021
- **Nathan Wilbur, Vice President of Regional Programs
Atlantic Salmon Federation**
Coldwater enhancement put into practice: Considerations, challenges, lessons learned – Insights into cold water Plamu habitat, research-action gaps, and collaborative enhancement efforts
- **Butch Dalton, President
Miramichi Salmon Association**
Let's Talk Co-Management – A review of best practices for co-management and the potential of the already established Miramichi Watershed Management Committee
- **Josiane Goguen, Fish & Fish Habitat Protection and Ecosystem Management Biologist
Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Gulf Region**
Integrated Watershed Management Planning (IWMP): A roadmap to building a comprehensive and collaborative IWMP – An explanation of IWMPs and how they can lead to successful watershed co-management

9.2 Panel 3 Roundtable Questions

- What does co-management of the Miramichi River watershed mean to you?
- Is the status quo enough, or is there a better way to work together? How can you (and your organization) contribute to a better way?
- What are the next steps to tailor a process to ensure ongoing and long-term collaborative action, achieving co-management of Plamu advancing accountable responsibilities, timeframe, and approaches to meaningful co-development, codesign, and co-delivery within a year?
- In the next five years, what do we need to maximize solutions to our common issues? What should we have seen change in the Miramichi River watershed by 2029?

9.3 Panel 3 Takeaways

- *A balanced watershed is made up of conservation groups, industry, First Nations, and all levels of government.*
- *The governance model requires more First Nation involvement overall.*
- *The governance model must be designed to secure long-term funding dedicated to the protection of the watershed governance model and to strengthen its lobbying role.*
- *Why does the Pacific Coast get funding for salmon, and we do not? Compared to the Pacific salmon initiative, we seem to be a poor cousin.*
- *DFO wants to align their Gulf programming.*
- *There are a number of threats, including bycatch issues, gaspereau trap, salmon mortality, and coldwater habitat. There are a lot of other things that can make a difference.*
- *There is a lot of apathy from the general public related to the value of the watershed.*
- *Talking is good, but we get in our own way. We need more action.*
- *A barrier to action is cohesiveness – a stream of funding.*
- *Establishing a five-year strategy or plan will, hopefully, secure long-term resources.*
- *An ecosystem approach might be better than the species approach as it would give the opportunities to be able to spread resources out, and into focus as well.*
- *Capacity is built when organizations partner-we must optimize our resources and the assets we have such as the hatchery.*
- *The Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk is an example of a two-year project that can have a tie into other projects, for eligibility for other types of grants to secure needed resources.*
- *Leveraging programs with collaboration from in-kind support from partners – by doing that, we build trust and create success stories.*
- *All parties must be at the table and find different ways to do things through improved understanding and collaboration.*
- *Our goals must be driven by an accountable leadership model with funding streaming towards the right pockets of programs among the funding partners.*
- *Regular touchpoints in developing relationships, so funders are always aware of the needs of the local groups.*
- *We need good relationships and better alignment.*
- *Co-management should encompass all species, valuing the total ecosystem.*
- *A two-eyed seeing approach is a must.*
- *We need an Indigenous champion.*

10 CONCLUSION

Throughout the Plamu First 2024 Conference and post-conference debriefings, the concepts of co-management and self-governance were central to the discussions. It was emphasized that the Peace and Friendship Treaties envisioned a co-governance model, where two peoples from different cultures could share resources in a manner culturally appropriate to each community.

The integration of Indigenous laws and customs, particularly Etuaptmunk, emerged as crucial to sustainable resource use. By incorporating Indigenous principles and knowledge into the decision-making processes alongside scientific data, we can strengthen the current First Nations-Led Collaborative Leadership Council structure. This approach aligns with conservation principles already in use by the Fisheries and Oceans Canada and offers an opportunity for deeper collaboration.

Despite the optimism surrounding new initiatives, history shows that many projects begin with high expectations but face unforeseen challenges that hinder progress. However, after the Plamu First 2024 conference, there is renewed hope and commitment to a shared path forward.

10.1 Next Steps

A new platform is needed to enable effective collaboration between government, First Nations, and non-government organizations, facilitating informed decisions and establishing true co-management for the Miramichi watershed. The foundation for the First Nations-Led Collaborative Leadership Council is laid out in the Plamu First 2024 | Five-Year Strategic Plan (2025-2030). The shared goal among all groups is clear; what remains is the establishment of a structure to effectively implement this vision.