



EDUCATING FOR SUSTAINABLE SEAS

Diving into the Ocean Decade

Ocean Decade Focus Group for Educators

August 18, 2021
1:30 to 3:00pm EDT

Summary Report

Session Overview

As part of the programming from the NAME-CaNOE 2021 Conference 'Educating for Sustainable Seas: Diving into the Ocean Decade', a 'roll-up your sleeves' design session was co-hosted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Canadian Ocean Literacy Coalition (COLC) for formal and informal educators. This session provided an opportunity for participants to learn more about the Ocean Decade (formally referred to as the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development; 2021-2030) and to co-identify ocean education priorities in Canada, potential actions, and pathways to build ambition and amplify engagement with diverse education stakeholders across Canada to generate support for the Ocean Decade.

The session was facilitated by Andi White (Senior Advisor, DFO; andrea.white@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) and Diz Glitero (National Lead, COLC; diz@colcoalition.ca) and moderated by Patrick Wells. Approximately 15 active participants from academia, non-governmental organizations, and the federal government contributed to the discussions.

Discussions built upon key ocean science priorities, actions, and unique Canadian contributions that were identified during the national Ocean Decade Workshop that was held virtually on May 12-13, 2021, particularly those that were identified as part of the breakout group that addressed Ocean Decade Outcome #7: "An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean" (Figure 1). An inspiring and engaging ocean is defined in the Ocean Decade as one where society understands and values the ocean in

relation to human wellbeing and sustainable development, through ocean literacy approaches, formal and informal educational awareness raising tools, and measures to ensure equitable access to the ocean.

Priorities

- ❖ Meaningful and active engagement of Canadians
- ❖ Effective and creative communication strategies and methods
- ❖ Strengthen ocean education and training
- ❖ Making connections and increasing accessibility
- ❖ Increase support and use of social sciences

Priority Actions

- ❖ Implement Canada's Ocean Literacy Strategy
- ❖ Establish positive relationships with Indigenous Peoples
- ❖ Create micro-grants and financial support for grassroots projects
- ❖ Develop educational resources
- ❖ Increase youth engagement

Figure 1. Proposed priorities and actions identified at the Canadian Ocean Decade Workshop (May 12-13, 2021) that are particularly relevant to Ocean Decade Outcome #7: An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean.

What We Heard

Session participants worked their way through a series of specific questions that aimed to advance ideas about how educators can contribute to the Ocean Decade. Not captured in the summary below was the concept that sustainable development implies growth but not necessarily improved/enhanced conservation. How can we consider this idea in the context of the Ocean Decade and make progress towards shared objectives? In addition, it was noted the concept that 'science = truth' is being increasingly challenged and that communication focused on equity and respect, and perhaps not on 'science', would result in increased cooperation, uptake of ideas, and broader participation in initiatives?

Considering the ideas outlined in Figure 1 as a baseline, participants confirmed that an increased focus on accessibility, diversity, and inclusion are priorities; an inspiring and engaging ocean is one where 'everyone' feels welcome, included, and listened to. Efforts to include emotional learning and empathy education are necessary to address feelings around ecological grief, but also hope. In addition, enhancing relationships with Indigenous Peoples and engaging youth were highlighted as priorities for the Ocean Decade.

When pressed to describe how we might implement these priority ideas/actions and to identify some tangible next steps, participations indicated the following:

- Postsecondary Master's program(s) focused on ocean education
- Curriculum development specific to ocean education (Kindergarten to Grade 12), including access to and collaborations with curriculum producers.
- Funding for small rural schools (coastal and inland) that may not have resources or access to develop ocean education activities. These might be achieved through non-formal education organizations that could support the efforts of schools.
- Creation of opportunities for youth and Indigenous storytelling.

In order to make measureable progress on inspiring our citizenry to care about the ocean in Canada, we will need to identify what progress, and ultimately success, looks like and we need to confirm indicators that will help us measure positive (or negative) impacts. A key consideration to achieving an inspiring and engaging ocean will be the forging of collaborations and connections between different members of the ocean community, particularly projects that include both natural and social scientists as well as initiatives that not only aim to connect coastal Canadians with their communities and the ocean, but also to non-coastal communities, through ocean literacy efforts and intergenerational discussions. In addition, recruitment of recognizable role models and spokespersons in social and mainstream media will be essential to engaging and inspiring all Canadians about the ocean.

Session participants were all members and/or leaders within the ocean education community which provided a unique opportunity to hear from them directly re: what would be most useful to help support the ambitions discussed. The following ideas were highlighted as the most pressing:

- National and regional communities of practice (bilingual)
- Funding opportunities
- Mechanisms to leverage and share contacts, content, and successes
- National events to participate, learn, network, and engage.

Next Steps and Ways to Get Involved

The outcomes of this session will be considered in the broader context of developing a Canadian 'blueprint' for the Ocean Decade and will more specifically inform initiatives and activities spearheaded by the Canadian ocean literacy and ocean education communities in Canada. Stay tuned for more information and check out the official Ocean Decade and DFO Ocean Decade websites regularly for updates and resources (links below).

You are also encouraged to read the [Canadian Ocean Literacy National Strategy](#) and to join an Action Team. Action Team #3, focused on strengthening ocean education may be of particular interest. To learn more and join, visit: <https://colcoalition.ca/get-involved/>

Useful Resources

- [Ocean Decade – Official Website](#)
- [Ocean Decade Implementation Plan Overview](#)
- [DFO Ocean Decade website](#)
- [Canadian Ocean Literacy Coalition](#)
- [Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Ocean Literacy Portal](#)
- [Framework for Ocean Literacy in the Ocean Decade](#)
- [Ocean Decade Laboratory #7: An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean](#)

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