



**Community Conservation
Research Network**

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Failure to Involve Coastal Communities Can Lead to Failure in Marine Conservation

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The International Marine Conservation Congress in St. John's heard today a call for governments, businesses and other organizations to ensure a strong role for local and indigenous coastal communities in decisions about marine resource use and marine conservation. This was the message of Dr. Tony Charles, Director of the Community Conservation Research Network (CCRN), a worldwide network of researchers from universities, indigenous bodies and nongovernmental organizations.

Dr. Charles notes that from the Network's research, it is clear that communities, when suitably supported, can play a fundamental role in conserving the ocean while providing sustainable jobs. On the other hand, he warned that resource and economic collapses are possible if decisions are made without involving coastal communities.

"The well-being of coastal communities is linked to the health of marine ecosystems, and vice versa" says Dr. Charles, who is also Director of the School of the Environment at Saint Mary's University in Halifax. "A healthy ocean is crucial for coastal communities, as well as for national economies. At the same time, keeping our oceans healthy takes conservation efforts, and coastal communities can play a major role. But if community initiatives are not supported, if community knowledge is not recognized, then both the economy and the environment are worse off."

Following four years of intensive study, the CCRN research team has found that in too many situations, local and indigenous communities keen to protect and manage their ecosystems, resources and livelihoods have not received the authority and support to do so. Dr. Charles urges governments to revise their laws and policies to empower communities, as a key route to better economic and conservation results.

Dr. Charles also has a positive message about the value of building collaborations among people around the world. In that way, the CCRN has been able to compare a wide range of community experiences in marine conservation, and to produce important directions for communities, governments and others. The results of the global network can help to guide governments and coastal communities on the changes needed to empower communities, enhance their coastal and marine environments, and make local economies sustainable for decades to come.

Community Conservation Research Network

The CCRN includes over 70 researchers, together with community and government partners, located or working in Canada, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, South Africa, The Gambia, Tanzania, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, Uruguay, Bolivia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Jamaica, and the Netherlands. Based at Saint Mary's University, in Halifax, Canada, the CCRN is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, and by the network's partner organizations. For more information, see the CCRN website www.CommunityConservation.Net.

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