

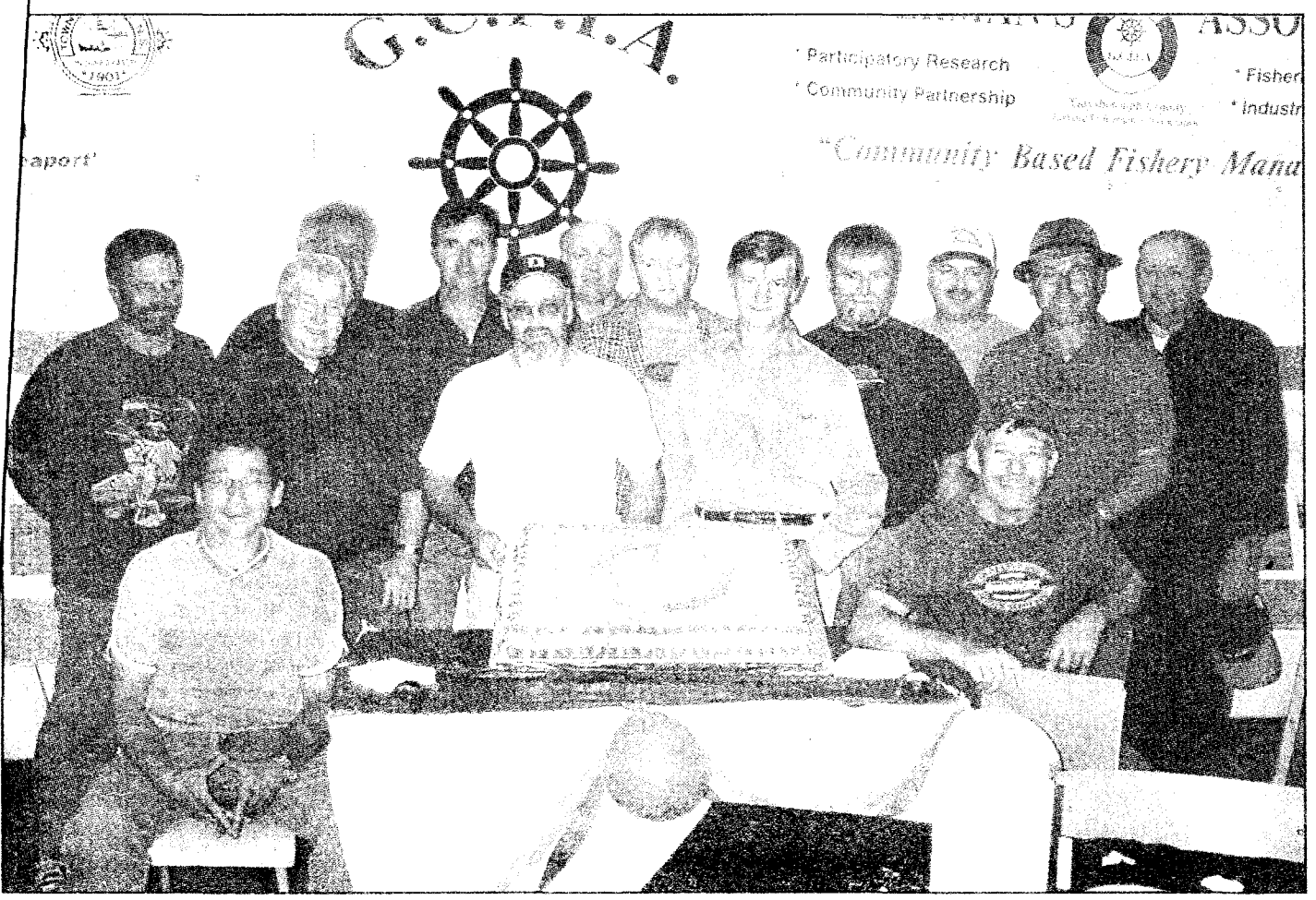
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Journal photo

Members of the Guysborough County Inshore Fisherman's Association celebrated 30 years last week with a day long session at The Canso Fire Hall. Capping off the day was a beautiful cake made by Margaret Samson of Little Dover.

"First, the town will receive well in excess of...

FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION Celebrates 30 years

BY ALLENA MACDONALD

Fishermen taking control over their own livelihoods with a proactive approach to sustaining the inshore fishery in the county was the theme, as members of the Guysborough Inshore Fisherman's Association, and their guests, marked their 30th Anniversary.

The day long event was held in grand style last Wednesday at the Canso Fire Hall.

Guest speakers and presenters included Department of Fisheries and Oceans representative Greg Peacock, Whitehead fisherman Eugene O'Leary, Port Felix Lobster Fisherman Duncan Bellefontaine, GIFA Community Research Co-ordinator Ginny Boudreau, Guysborough County Regional Development Authority representative Patricia Rhynold, and Greg Roach from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Also on hand to offer their congratulations were Cape Breton-Canso MP Rodger Cuzner and Guysborough Eastern Shore MLA Ronnie Chisholm. Representative from all four municipal councils in

the county were also on hand as well as research partners from the Afton First Nations community.

The Association has spent a great deal of time over the years developing and implementing support systems for its 134 members.

Mike Newell has been the president of the Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen's Association for the past 18 years.

Newell says the Association is an important communication source for the fishermen.

"With the downturns, and the downloads by DFO and cut-backs in government services, it's hard for the information to get out to the individual fishermen. With the Association, the fishermen have a place they can call. We can do research to find out what's going on," he says.

Getting the most current information related to regulations as well as new industries such as oil and gas is essential, he says.

The Association training projects keeps the fishermen up to date and gives them the knowledge that they need to keep them fishing, he adds.

The big change over the past three decades, Newell says, is that government and scientists are now giving the fishermen more credit for knowing their business.

"The problem was that the biologists and scientists never believed that the fishermen understood the eco-system in which they worked. In reality, the fishermen know quite a bit about where they work, and what goes on and what effects what."

"Now the scientists are starting to believe that the fishermen do know what they're talking about."

DFO is starting to listen, he adds, because the fishermen have the research and information to back up their positions.

"They more or less have to start listening to us."

Newell says projects such as the intern program which have been undertaken by the Association will hopefully move that knowledge and experience forward.

"Hopefully they'll be the managers and the biologists of the future, and they'll remember working with the inshore fishermen and take our point of view when they make deci-



Above: Dept of Fisheries rep Greg Roach, MLA Ronnie Chisholm and Fisheries Association president Mike Newell share a laugh the anniversary celebration.



Right: Port Felix lobster fisherman Duncan Bellefontaine shares his research findings.

sions."

Newell says there are challenges facing fishermen in the future.

"A lot of emphasis is being placed on oil and gas, and how that affects the fishery. It seems like the fishery is being put on the back burner ... oil and gas is more glamorous, I guess, and there's a lot of things going on with things such as the Clupe-

Over the past couple of seasons, fishermen did samplings of larvae around the coast of Guysborough county.

Bellefontaine, one of the researchers, says a lot of change was recorded over the two years.

The hatching and settling patterns, the research found, has a great deal to do with the temperature of the water.

industry seem to go hand in hand in Guysborough County," she says.

Throughout the years, courses covered a wide range of topics from technical, mechanical, business, taxation, harvesting, first aid, safety, and more recently, computers.

Greg Roach says the public sometimes loses sight, or doesn't realize the value of the fishing

Chisholm. Representative from all four municipal councils in

knowledge that they need to keep them fishing, he adds.

fishermen and take our point of view when they make deci-

there's a lot of things going on with things such as the (liquefied natural gas) and how that's going to effect the fishery."

Eugene O'Leary did a overview of species management, which outlined the need for change in some areas to ensure the sustainability of the industry.

"That means that everyone has to work together. We've been working as individuals. Politicians have been trying to get elected. Bureaucrats have been doing their jobs. The Native people have been looking for their rights. The fishermen have to make a living. And nobody's been thinking about the fish. Nobody's been thinking about the fishing communities and there's where I have a problem."

Training young people in all areas associated with the fishery including government, bureaucracy and science.

"If we can get these people learning from us, then they'll have a different perspective of what's going on. They won't be learning it through DFO management, or from Ottawa. It will be coming from on the water, learning exactly how things are, and I think that'll make an awful difference in how things are looked at."

The direct information will have a positive impact decision making, O'Leary says.

The Association has forged new paths for research in the fishery. The importance of the research was highlighted during several presentations.

Over the past number of years, the GCIFA has begun doing research projects.

Duncan Bellefontaine outlined the results of one of the current project which involved determining the hatching and

has a great deal to do with the temperature of the water.

Bellefontaine says that the colder water this year resulted in a later process for the lobster, and predicts a reduction of juvenile stocks in the next three to four years.

The particular research project is also peaking the interest of other Association around the province, Bellefontaine notes.

Doing their own research means the results are more valid in the eyes of the other fishermen.

"Because we're not getting it from outside sources. We're actually seeing the results ourselves, first hand."

Ginny Boudreau says the project is one of several which provides important information to the fishermen, who are on the front lines of conservation.

"Conservation is the way to go," she says. "But we want to chose our own measures based on what is best for our area."

Information gathered, she says, can be used for a base for a management plan for the fishery.

"We've already proven that we can do credible research," Boudreau says, adding that getting the research published was a difficult task when the work first began, but the GCIFA has established its research as valuable and solid.

Education and training has also been a goal of the Association over its three decade history, and it has always been a practice for fishermen in the county, even prior to the creation of the Association.

Pat Rhynold says there are records as early as a 1907 night school course on instrumentation of navigation.

sometimes loses sight, or doesn't realize the value of the fishing industry in Nova Scotia.

Fish is the leading export product in this province, with an annual value of \$1.2 million.

Nova Scotia is the leading fish province in Canada.

"It is a vibrant industry. It is not an ancient industry. It is successful in Nova Scotia because of its diversity," Roach says.

He says the industry has to better promote itself to ensure younger people have interest.

"The fishery is a very successful industry. It is a lucrative career."

Roach commended the Association for its work over the years. He says it is recognized as a strong voice for inshore fishermen in Guysborough county.

Ronnie Chisholm says the day was informative and educational.

He says the inshore fishery is a lifeline in the county worth almost 7 million dollars per year, and the county is fortunate to have an active association.

"You're looking after the long term sustainability of the industry."

The celebration includes displays, presentations and a lunch was worthy of any fancy star restaurant. It was provided by Sister's Cup N'Half Catering Services, and followed a fish theme, starting with a salad and fresh steamed mussels, followed by a first course which included crab coquille, shrimp alfredo, lobster tails, stuffed mushroom caps, ginger glazed vegetables, and baked rice. Homemade pies followed. At the end of the day, the birthday cake made by Margaret Sampson of Little Dover, was served.

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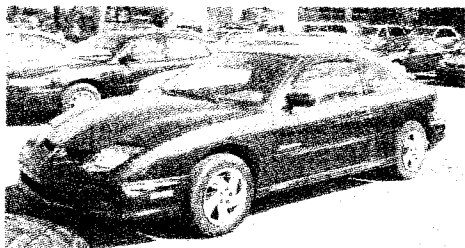
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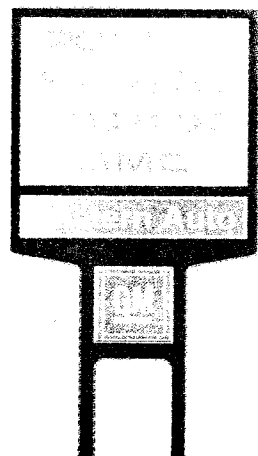
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