

John Carmichael recognized for 25 years of char monitoring



John Carmichael on the job on the Rat River near his traditional fishing camp. photo courtesy of Fred Carmichael and Miki Okane

Stakeholders presented him with painting and thanked him along with his family

by Eric Bowling
Northern News Services
Aklavik

A longtime fisherman and Elder was celebrated for his work in monitoring a species of Arctic char on Sept. 17 at the Nihtat Gwich'in Council building.

John Carmichael, of Aklavik, was the head Dolly Varden char (*Salvelinus malma*) monitor for 25 years, having started with the Rat River Working Group in 1995. His detailed notes on the health, age and demographics of the fish he caught, as well as of the water conditions, were taken at his traditional fishing camp near Big Eddy.

His work was such a great help that Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB) executive director Amy Amos said a number of groups involved in Arctic char research wanted

to honour him as he entered retirement.

"We have a working group of the various organizations at the local level, regional level and national level," she said.

"They come together every year and talk about the management of the char population. John helped collect data at his traditional fishing camp."

The ceremony was emceed by Inuvik Native Band Chief Robert Charlie and was attended by much of Carmichael's family, as well as his teacher, Lois Harwood, who flew up from Yellowknife to join the celebration. Family outside the territory joined by video and the ceremony maintained social distancing throughout, added Amos.

Carmichael was presented with a painting of an Arctic char by Gwich'in artist Ronnie Simon, based on a photograph by Colin Gallagher.

The Rat River Working Group is part of a larger Department of Fisheries and Oceans program dedicated to managing fish stocks in the Western Arctic through documentation of traditional knowledge.

It aims to provide fishers with the skills to collect and document scientific data from the fish they catch and compare it with traditional knowledge of fish stocks for researchers.

It is co-managed by the GRRB and the Fisheries Joint Management Committee, which is part of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation's Joint Secretariat.

Although declines in char stocks have been reported by community members in Aklavik and Fort McPherson since the 1980s, the Dolly Varden char was only listed as a 'Special Concern' under the Species at Risk Act in 2010.

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