

# Indigenous Peoples and local communities, Traditional Knowledge, and Cultural Connections to the high seas



Photo: National Geographic



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**NEREUS PROGRAM**  
Predicting Future Oceans

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## ABNJ as the global commons

- All of humanity are stakeholders of the high seas
- This diversity of voices not reflected in UN negotiations
- Indigenous Peoples & local communities missing from debate

### Why?

- Community efforts often perceived as too limited in scale to matter globally
- Communities are concerned that focus on high seas may take support and funding away from coastal conservation

# A world of communities

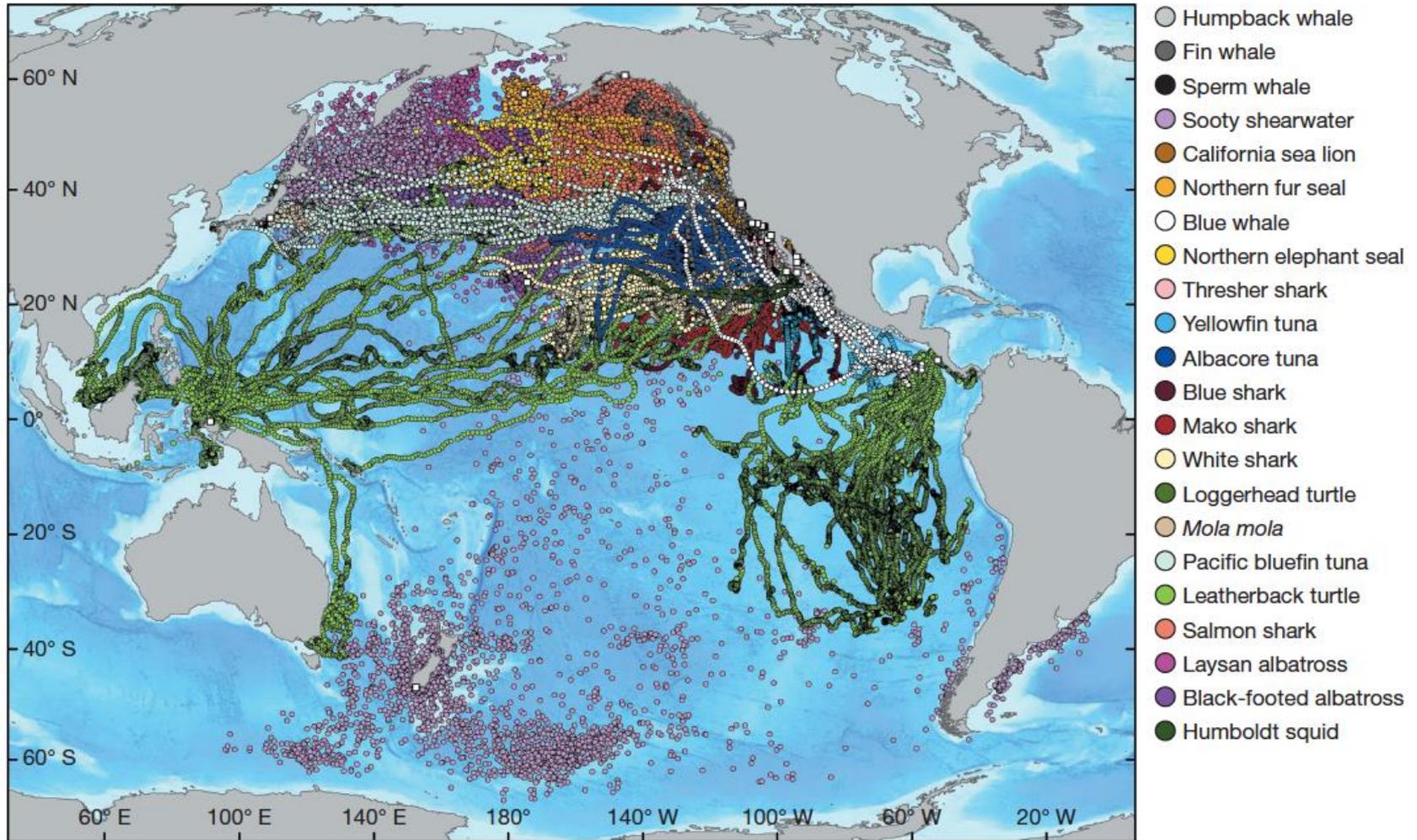


Global map of indigenous coastal communities

Cisneros-Montemayor, A and Ota, Y. et al. (2016) A global estimate of seafood consumption by coastal Indigenous peoples



# A world of connections



Many species that are culturally, socially or economically important to communities migrate offshore for large parts of their life cycles

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## Communities matter to ABNJ governance

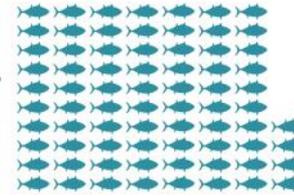
- Communities are primary custodians of many globally-significant migratory species and their habitats
- Life histories of these species may straddle jurisdictions and span entire oceans
- Communities are often the first to suffer if these species decline due to inadequate management in the high seas
- Traditional Knowledge and practices have relevance to global ocean governance
- Decisions about ocean governance affect food security and cultural identity of communities

# A global estimate of seafood consumption by coastal Indigenous peoples

Andrés M. Cisneros-Montemayor, Daniel Pauly, Lauren V. Weatherdon, and Yoshitaka Ota, 2016.

Coastal Indigenous peoples:

74 kg per capita



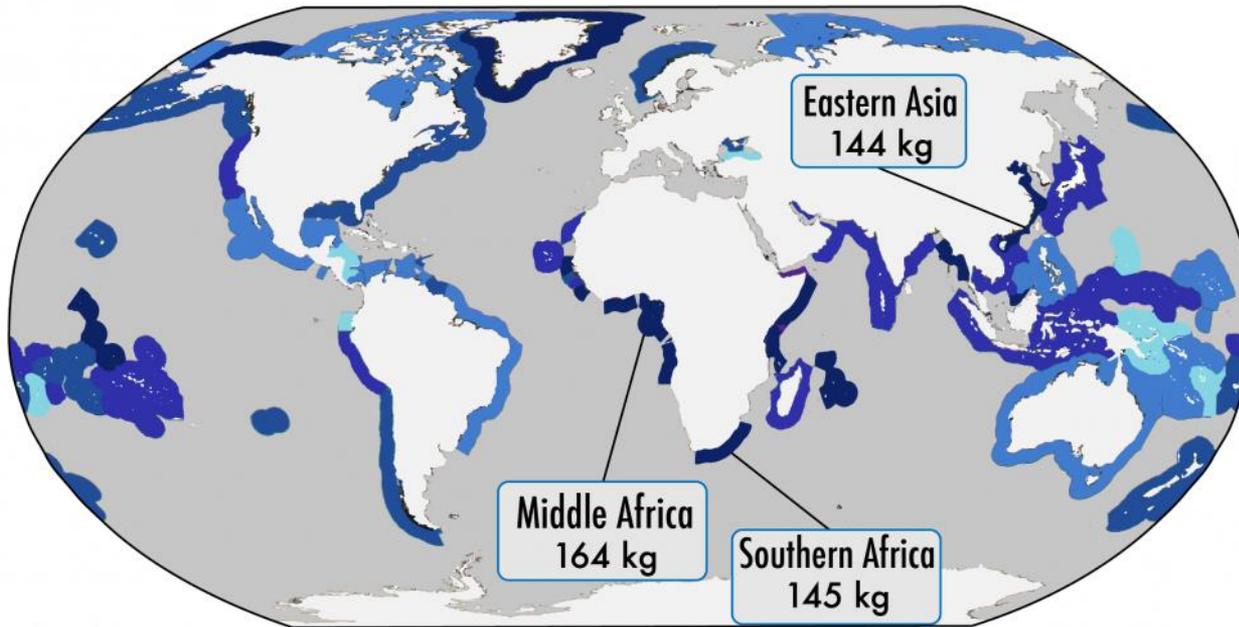
Global average:

19 kg per capita

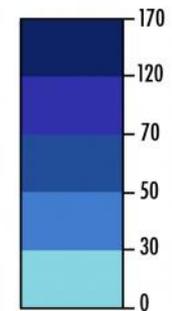


Coastal Indigenous Peoples database:

More than **1900** communities identified & **600** ethnic groups.



Fish consumption in kg per person per year:

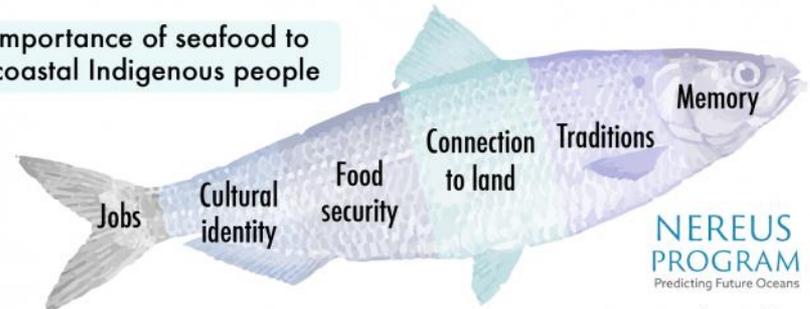


**2.1** million metric tonnes

Coastal Indigenous people's consumption of seafood per year



Importance of seafood to coastal Indigenous people



# Culturally significant migratory species



**Humpback whale** (e.g. Pacific Islands, Hawaii, New Zealand, Pacific Northwest, Arctic)

**Sperm whale** (e.g. Pacific islands, Hawaii, Pacific Northwest)

**Loggerhead turtle** (e.g. Gulf of California, Mexico, Northern Australia)

**Leatherback turtle** (e.g. Pacific Islands, Gulf of California, Central and South America)

**Salmon** (e.g. Pacific Northwest, Arctic)

**Yellowfin tuna** (e.g. Pacific Islands, Asia, Caribbean)

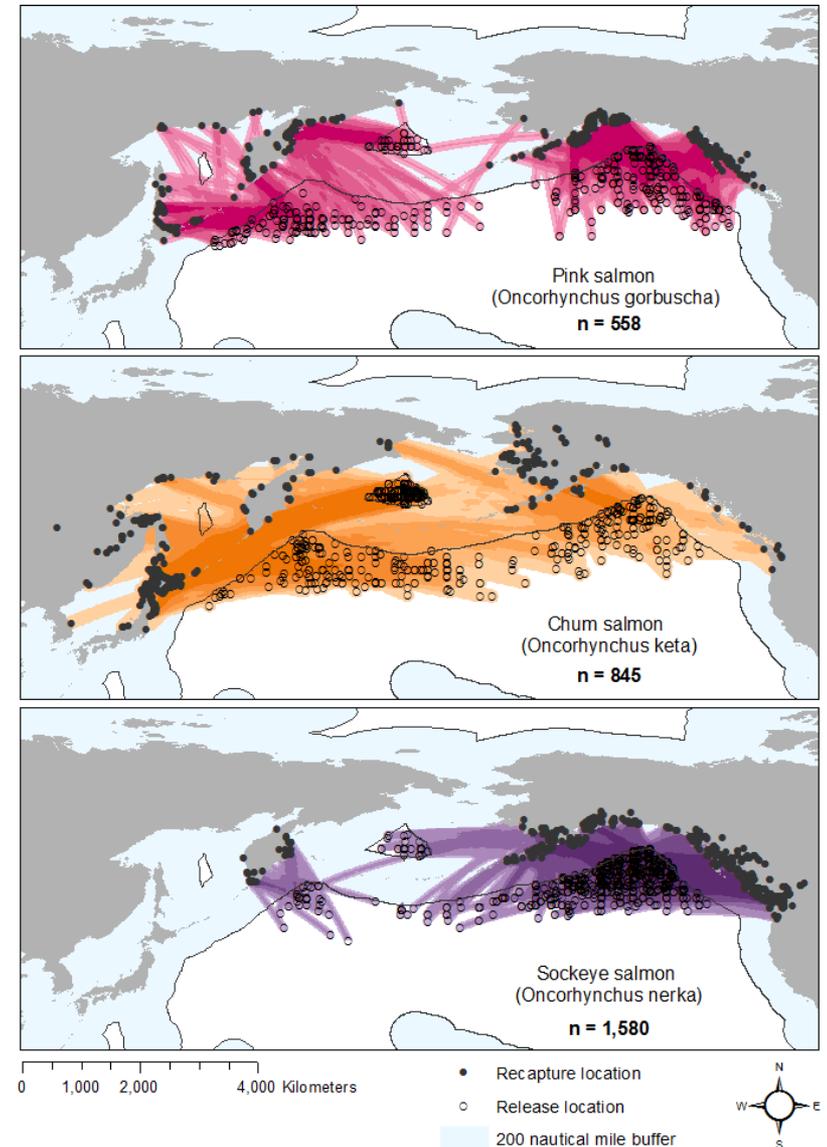
**Great white shark** (e.g. Hawaii, Northern Australia)

**Whale shark** (Central America, Asia)



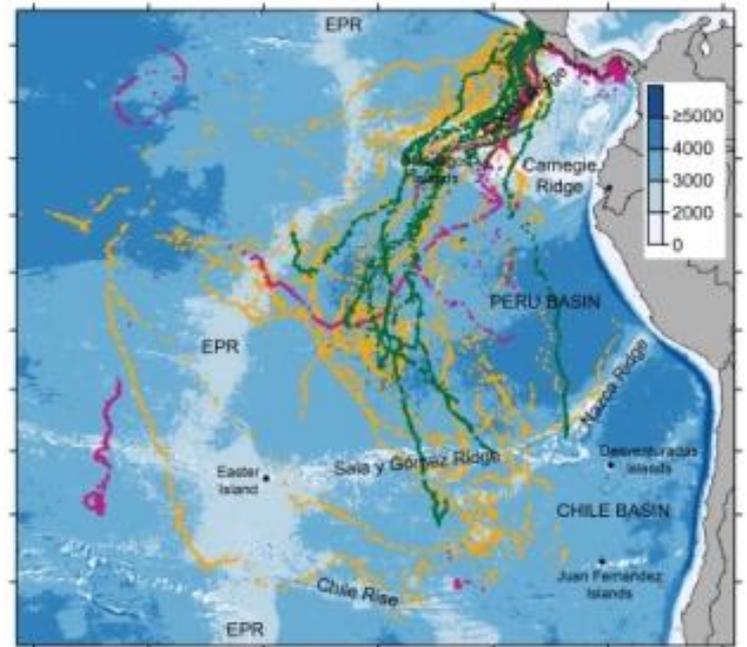
# Example 1: Pacific Salmon

- For millennia Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific Northwest have relied on the harvest of wild salmon for food security and culture
- Migrations link high seas with Indigenous Peoples and local communities
- Because of the connectivity between IPLCs and the high seas, IPLCs have an interest in the application of adjacency
- Need for cooperative governance



## Example 2: Leatherback turtle

- Western Pacific Leatherbacks visited 49 EEZs sovereign to 33 States during their migrations
- Traveled through “donut holes”, and made trans-Pacific migrations through areas beyond national jurisdiction
- Because the species and cultural and economic importance to IPLCs there is a role for consulting IPLCs in the application of adjacency
- Playa Grande, Costa Rica
  - one of the largest leatherback nesting sites in the world – species conservation and economic benefits locally
  - Greater than 40% mortality rate in the returning adult population over the last eight years



# Models for inclusive participation

- **Arctic Council:** Indigenous Peoples organizations have permanent participant status and work with scientists in assessment and monitoring of biodiversity & climate change
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** Attempts to incorporate traditional knowledge in identification of EBSAs
- **Collaborations between scientists & traditional knowledge holders:** Migratory species research, animal behaviour, ecology, climate change



Dr. Hoyt Peckham with Mexican fishermen at a ceremony marking the decision to retire the bottom-set longlines that were killing hundreds of turtles

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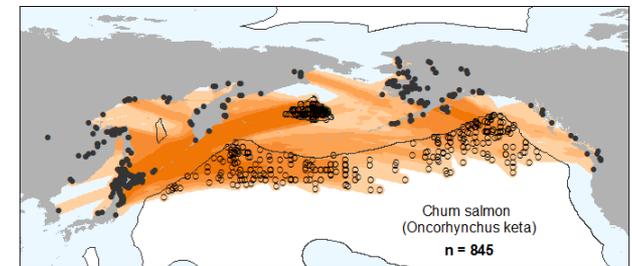
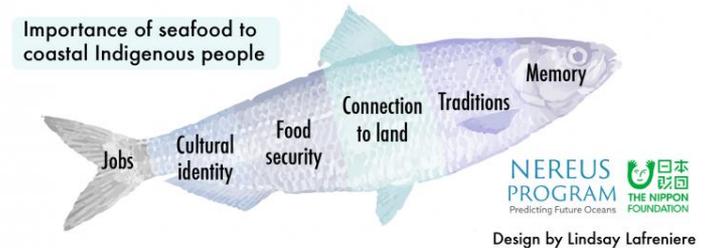
# Benefits of inclusive participation

- **Accounting for connectivity:** Linking conservation efforts at different scales, from coastal to offshore
- **Fostering innovation:** enriching the diversity of available approaches and solutions and broadening understanding of governance approaches (ecosystem approach, adaptive management, intergenerational equity)



# Take home messages

- Indigenous Peoples and local communities value and depend on highly migratory species
- The life histories of these species span entire oceans and are subject to threats and pressures beyond the control of any one entity.
- Traditional Knowledge can also help elaborate on principles that are of direct relevance for governance of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction.



# A world of communities



# A world of connections

