

International Ocean Institute - Canada

ALUMNI NEWS

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Independent Perspectives on Ocean Affairs

Still Building on the IOI Experience after 20 Years

Somaly Chan, Class of 1998, became a leader of environmental programs in Cambodia

I was one of IOI-Canada's course participants back in 1998, and I can say now that only after I returned to work at the Ministry of Environment in Cambodia did I fully recognize the importance of the program. At the time I was a junior officer at the Department of Environmental Education in Phnom Penh where environmental issues and policy-related matters were far away from my understanding.

Fortunately, IOI offered me a golden opportunity to improve my understanding not only for better management of environmental affairs within my country, but also for dealing with conservation issues at national, regional and global levels. Although much time has passed since, the knowledge and experience gained during my stay in Halifax are still fresh in my mind. Although the course was only ten weeks long, the lessons have influenced my work in a very productive way for the last 20 years. My job responsibilities grew from ordinary staff member to policy expert after I finished the course. I gradually applied the knowledge gained from the IOI program. Without the foundational knowledge of marine biodiversity resource management or the law of the sea, I might not have been able to transform my position from environmental education staff to biodiversity conservation and management expert.

A year after I completed the course I was promoted to chief of the communication and publication office. In 2008, I was appointed director of the new Biodiversity Department after I got involved in development of Protected Areas Law in Cambodia. I use all my energy and my course experiences to lead the department, and we have made significant progress in policy and strategy matters and

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Somaly Chan, representing her country at a United Nations biodiversity conference.

Photo credit: IISD



News from Guyana

Mikhail Amsterdam, Class of 2017, applies his lessons in ocean governance at home

Through its training program the International Ocean Institute has over several decades provided quality engagement, theory and practical experiences to students. I had my first real experience with the concept of ocean governance as a participant of the 37th annual IOI training program in Canada. Truth be told, the concept was new to me. But the many experts and practitioners who delivered the program generated interest and curiosity for marine affairs long after I completed the course in Halifax.



Mikhail is expanding his knowledge in ocean governance and marine spatial planning.

Photo credit: Mikhail Amsterdam

I later attended the University of Liverpool and successfully completed the graduate course on Marine Planning and Management. It helped me to enhance my understanding and to create solutions for my country, Guyana, and by extension the region, with regard to ocean governance.

I think the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has not progressed with huge strides in marine spatial planning (MSP) and ocean governance. Consequently small island developing states (SIDS) face underdevelopment of their marine resources and experience spatial conflicts between users, management and the environment. While the region depends heavily on its marine resources for economic and social development, regional ocean governance remains highly fragmented and

uncoordinated. So far, only eight CARICOM nations have participated at some level in MSP, while six of those are still in the pre-planning stages. The notion of ocean governance is often lost on individuals who have never experienced or depended directly on the myriad of resources that the ocean provides. Yet, it is a simple reality that most interact in one way or another with marine space. Creating a good ocean governance framework is central to the development and sustainability of our region and its resources.

I aim to broaden my understanding of ocean governance further and assist in the creation of good practices to manage the region's marine spaces in a coherent and sustainable manner and with equal opportunity for all. As Team IOI-Canada prepares to celebrate its 40th year of training students in Ocean Governance, Policy, Law and Management, I wish to congratulate you all on this success and the global impact it has created.

Last but by no means least, I urge you to continue fostering the vision, ideas and principles of Elisabeth Mann Borgese, Alva Myrdal, Krishan Saigal and others, as they have truly created the foundation on which "new ocean leaders" are building.

Mikhail Amsterdam
 Managing Director, AgriCore Guyana
 Georgetown, Guyana
 Email: agricore.guyana@gmail.com

News from Cameroon

Chi Napoleon Forpah, Class of 2010, supports water resource management nationally and internationally

For my career as Watershed Task Group Coordinator in Cameroon, the IOI-Canada course in 2010 was a commendable stop-over of sorts. It can be likened to the wintering of water birds from Europe along the Transatlantic Flyway at the Wouri Estuary in Cameroon, where they replenish their energy to sustain their flight to South Africa and back to Europe again year in year out. My mission in participating in the course has



Chi at a field site working on the water hyacinth management project.

Photo credit: Chi Forpah

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materialized in several ways. For example, the 2007 coastal water bird survey of the Rio del Rey, which was managed by our Watershed Task Group, resulted in the area being designated as an international Ramsar site in 2008. It is currently receiving support from UNEP as a marine protected area.

Furthermore, through our Task Group, I was co-opted from 2013 to 2016 by the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Water and Energy. As a representative of civil society I contributed to developing an Integrated Water Resources Management Master Plan for the Congo river basin. It was managed by the International Commission for the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha basin (CICOS) with members from Cameroon, Gabon, Angola, Congo Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. This experience added to my expertise in national and regional water resources management.

In 2017 I was nominated Cameroon's Regional Representative for the World Wetlands Network (WWN). Our water hyacinth management project on invasive species in the Wouri Basin of Cameroon has earned a national reputation as a privileged partner. Last year, the Task Group also contributed to the

creation of the Douala Edea National Park which is the first marine park in Cameroon.

Our book on coastal water birds in Cameroon has contributed to the ratification of the African Eurasia Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) which was proclaimed into law in 2019. Inspired by course work on fisheries, our Watershed Task Group received project funding for 2019-2021 from the UNDP's Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Program to support our focus on the Blue Economy.

*Chi Napoleon Forpah
Coordinator, Watershed Task Group
Douala, Cameroon
Email: nforpah@yahoo.fr*

News from Tanzania

Cretus Joseph Mtonga, Class of 2018, relays his recent experience with ocean governance issues

Attending IOI Canada training program has benefited not only my career as an ocean expert and but also my country, Tanzania, in the Western Indian Ocean region. Through the program I gained crucial knowledge about the complexities of ocean governance. I interacted with prestigious lecturers and networked with fellow classmates from around the world working in various ocean governance initiatives. I went back to my organization

Cretus, presenting a report in Halifax during the IOI training program.

Photo credit: IOI



A Message from the IOI-Canada Director

After a very successful anniversary year, 2019 was a time for recovery and reflection.

You will all recall that the year 2018 was the 100th anniversary of the birth of our founder Elisabeth Mann Borgese. With the loyal assistance of many people and organizations, we celebrated in appropriate style with three public lectures, a portable exhibit and a book of essays, entitled *The Future of Ocean Governance and Capacity Development*, now freely available online at [Brill](#). All of this information is also available on our [IOI-Canada website](#).

This coming year, 2020, will be the occasion for another major milestone: the delivery of the 40th annual Training Program by IOI-Canada from May 20 to July 17. We anticipate a number of international guests and the presence of IOI's Honorary President, Dr Awni Behnam.

My request to the IOI-Canada Alumni: can you please suggest an event that would reinforce the significance of the 40th program but would not exhaust our limited financial resources. As an incentive, perhaps I could encourage submissions with the offer of a hard copy of the EMB book of essays to the alumnus/a who submits the successful idea that is duly implemented. Thank you!

On behalf of IOI-Canada, may I wish you all a very successful 2020, and hopefully see some of you in Halifax!

Michael Butler
Director, IOI-Canada
Email: michael.butler@dal.ca

where we had several ongoing programs. I was able to upscale and connect more stakeholders, including international entities like WWF and IOC-UNESCO, in our marine programs. We scaled up our mangrove restoration program through media-based initiatives via newspapers, radio and television. The program restored over 30,000 mangrove trees and managed to reach over 2 million Tanzanians through television, exhibitions, awareness and education programs.

This year, we managed to co-organize for the first time in Tanzania the celebrations of the World Ocean Day (WOD) and facilitated ocean-related dialogues with different stakeholders from academia and the government of Tanzania. We are getting positive feedback day after day and the responses from community have been encouraging.

During the IOI 2018 Canada training program a number of us launched an Awareness for Responsible Ocean Governance Network. We wanted to unite the Alumni of the IOI Canada program from the Western Indian Ocean

region countries in order to contribute more in the region. We plan to organize workshops, raise awareness, and create dialogues regarding better ways to protect the ocean. We all believe that some of the challenges are at the local level and that if communities can be educated about the ocean they can be the key solution to ocean problems.

We are working closely with the West Indian Ocean Governance Exchange Network on a project financed by the German government. The project includes research groups working on conservation, habitat protection and marine spatial planning. The possibility of a new post-graduate program and curriculum on ocean governance was also discussed.

There is a lot that needs to be done in the region!

Cretus Joseph Mtonga
Executive Secretary of Aquafarms Organization
and Chairperson for AROGN
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Email: josephcretus@gmail.com



Informal group photo of the Class of 2019 at the Dalhousie University Club, following the closing ceremony of the annual IOI-Canada training course. Photo credit: IOI-Canada

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developed an action plan for biodiversity and ecosystem management in Cambodia. I also got involved in the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to which Cambodia is party, and I was selected as COP Bureau representative for Asia and Pacific Region from 2009 to 2010.

In 2015, I was promoted to Deputy Secretary General for the National Council for Sustainable Development in charge of biodiversity and ecosystem management. My responsibilities include the development of national policies, strategies and plans related to biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as implementation of the UN convention on biological diversity and its protocols including Cartagena Protocol and Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefits-sharing. My office also has to ensure that Cambodia's positions are brought into the international arena, that we mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services within relevant sectors and that we reach our Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

IOI, Dalhousie University, and Halifax still evoke good memories – even after 20 years. Canadian food, culture, society are still fresh in my mind. The friendship and the support from my fellow course participants, our course advisor, lecturers as well as IOI staff members still fill me with emotion.

I am seeking opportunities to hear from old friends and colleagues to communicate with them. Last year 2018, I had a chance to visit Halifax. Dalhousie University remained the same, educating students, while I imagined to have a get-together of our class of 1998 and meet my classmates, professors and colleagues again.

Somaly Chan
Deputy Secretary General of the National
Council of Sustainable Development
Ministry of Environment
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
 Email: somalychan.ca@gmail.com

ENDNOTES

IOI-Canada course video

This past summer, IOI-Canada intern and course assistant **Andrew Williamson** recorded and produced a video with participants of the 2019 course. You may access the video [here](#).

Whitley Award Winner

Congratulations to **Vatosoa Rakotondrazafy** (B'13 alumna) from Madagascar, for winning one of the [2019 Whitley Awards](#).

5th China/ASEAN Academy on Ocean Law & Governance

IOI-Canada assisted with the delivery of the fifth Academy from November 11 to 29, 2019 at the National Institute for South China Sea Studies (NISCSS) in Hainan. IOI-Canada alumni from China were key in organizing the event, and there were a number of IOI-related speakers, including the IOI-Canada Director and Chair of Board who were also co-Course Directors.

IOI-HQ Alumni Portal

This is IOI's private, online community platform created exclusively for the Alumni of the global IOI network as well as faculty and friends. The portal is password-protected. Membership is free. You may access the portal [here](#).

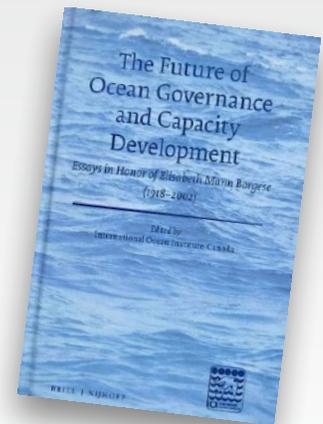
Mowachaht / Muchalaht First Nation

2019 marked the second year of members of Canada's First Nations participating in the IOI-Canada training program. Irine Polyzogopoulos, Communications & Development Coordinator at the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council in British Columbia described the journey of Kadin Snook who participated in this year's program.

For details of his experience and how the training feeds into *Uu-a-thluk*, a new approach to managing aquatic resources, click [here](#).



Download the IOI-Canada 2019 Course Report at internationaloceaninstitute.dal.ca



Full OPEN ACCESS for 'The Future of Ocean Governance' at <https://brill.com/view/title/36420>



Some guidelines for ALUMNI NEWS contributors

Articles and news items of various kinds by and for IOI-Canada alumni, friends and affiliates are welcome at any time and should be sent to the editors at ioi@dal.ca.

ALUMNI NEWS welcomes and will accommodate short feature articles, approximately 500 words in length, with useful links and illustrations that fit the modest space available on these pages. Small news items and notices for upcoming events will also be considered.

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