

International Ocean Institute - Canada

ALUMNI NEWS

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Independent Perspectives on Ocean Affairs

From the (Home!) Desk of the IOI-Canada Director

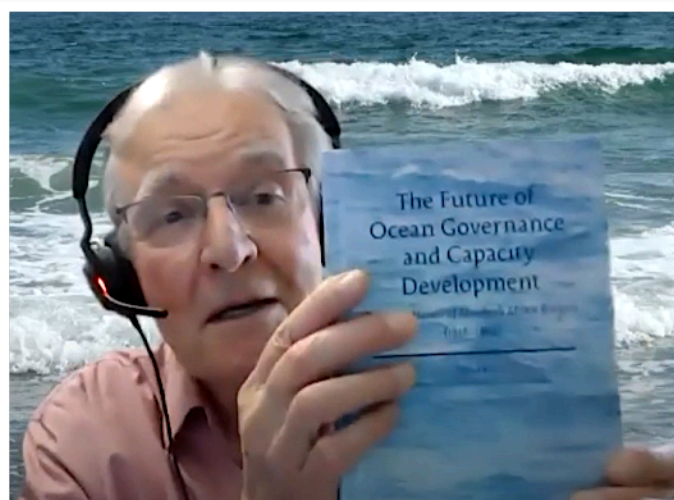
Michael Butler reviews the year 2020 as IOI-Canada was impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic

As you will have guessed, the planning and delivery of IOI-Canada's 40th annual Ocean Governance Training Program were brought to a resounding halt at the end of March by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This resulted in the cessation of all face-to-face tuition at our host, Dalhousie University. It was particularly disappointing because the delivery of the 40th program was planned to be a specially auspicious occasion. Anniversary celebrations were to be overseen by IOI's Honorary President, Dr Awni Behnam, who was scheduled to join us for the final week, as he had done for almost all of IOI-Canada's 8-week Training Programs since 1981.

The cancellation of the course was a great disappointment for all those associated with it, particularly IOI-Canada's staff, the lecturers, field trip personnel and last, but by no means least, the provisionally accepted course participants. Fortunately, we were able to cancel all of our reservations, including accommodations, without penalties.

As our alumni will appreciate, all of our training over four decades has been of the face-to-face (F2F) variety. So, with Covid rampant, we had to consider alternative delivery mechanism, however alien they might be. Many of you will remember the de-briefing sessions that we inflicted on you at the conclusion of the

Training Programs. An oft' heard suggestion was the request for a Refresher Course, so the idea of an online variant was born. In October we began planning a Refresher series of nine seminars to be entitled "Ocean Governance: Issues of Immediate Concern", very much a trial initiative (beta test) for IOI-Canada. An email was circulated to IOI-Canada alumni to determine possible interest in such a course. The response was immediate and positive and indicated the topics which would be of particular interest.

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Mike and his "outrageous" promotion of the EMB book during the online refresher course! Photo credit: IOI-Canada

News from the Philippines

Sandra Victoria R. Arcamo, Class of 1997, reflects on the IOI Course on Implementing UNCLOS and Agenda 21: Looking Back and Looking Forward



Sandy, participating online in the alumni refresher course from her home in the Philippines.

Photo credit: IOI-Canada

Looking back at the IOI 10-week course on Implementing UNCLOS and Agenda 21 in 1997, gave me the impetus to look forward to improved coastal and ocean management work in my country. As a junior fisheries officer working with the Philippines Fisheries Bureau, I was one of 22 participants from 18 countries. The course, with Dr. S. P. Jagota as Director, dealt with all aspects of the ocean from resources to rule of law. Most importantly we had the privilege of interacting with Professor Elisabeth Mann Borgese.

I was thrilled to be accepted by IOI-Canada with the hope of gaining expertise on responsible ocean management. It propelled me to look forward to substantially contribute to subsequent works on national sustainable marine resource management, environmental monitoring and management systems, subregional and regional ocean management, preparatory discussions on an international legally binding instrument on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, and blue economy.

Looking back, I found the course holistic as it included informal learnings. As an example, the seating arrangement in the classroom was akin to the UN where all members states have equal representation. Looking forward, it prepared me for successive multi-level discussions with coastal states on ocean management even having the opportunity to sit in the UN. During the first week of the course when most participants were still battling jet lag, one participant fell off the chair and there was dead silence not knowing how to react in an internationally formal setting, except Dr. Jagota who let out a smile. Mercifully, coffee break was announced and that was when all the stops broke loose, we all let out a good laugh over the incident and offered our sympathies to the fallen comrade who fortunately was unhurt.

Another one was the simulation exercise which I consider as a precursor to marine spatial planning exercises that I had to deal with within our maritime zones, and engagements with our neighboring coastal states. Our batch was multi-cultural, multi-disciplinary, and academically competitive. While doing the course take homework, World War III almost broke out between Countries X and Y in Glengary if not for a peace-keeping counsel led by a naval officer from an Indian Ocean island nation! The icing on our cake was that Dr. Jagota and the professors praised the batch for a well-presented result of the assignment.

Finally, an untoward incident brought to fore the spirit of global unity in adversity among batch 1997. We had the most calls from the Halifax Fire Department so far maybe because we Asians in the batch loved to grill and deep fry that trigger the smoke alarms in our apartments to go off. However, the biggest fire in Glengary happened in our apartment but the Fire Department did not make a home call that time. It was because our co-participants rushed to help us put the fire out and opened all the windows and doors to let the smoke dissipate even covering the smoke alarm near the kitchen!

I look back with fondness to IOI 1997 for all the lessons learned that motivated me to do better in what I do; my co-participants who made the course more

interesting and enjoyable; the many professors, faculty, and support staff especially Dr. Awni Benham, Robert Race, Madeleine Coffen-Smout, Darlene Manning, and Jennifer Riordan who were relentless in assisting us in our quest for more knowledge and making our stay in Halifax as comfortable as it could be. I look forward to facing more challenges bearing in mind readiness to tackle responsible ocean governance, stewardship, and sustainable use of coastal and ocean resources. I salute IOI and the people behind it for keeping the flame of responsible ocean management eternally burning!

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News from Nigeria, via Canada

Ndubuisi Augustine Nwafor, Class of 2018, took a leap of faith and continues his studies at Dalhousie

In early December 2017 one of my student mentees in the Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Mr Amarachi Remigius Dike, suggested that I should apply for an advertised training programme. Its title was "Ocean Governance: Policy, Law and Management" and scheduled to be held from May to July 2018 at the International Ocean Institute, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada. Coming from an International Commercial law background, I was not sure I needed such training. However, I had just been appointed an adjunct lecturer to teach both Carriage of Goods by Sea and Environmental Law at the Institute of Maritime Studies, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. I eventually applied and was offered a place in the 2018 IOI capacity training, where I received invaluable and lifelong vocational skills in ocean governance and science.

The recruitment process for the program was meticulous and seamless. IOI Canada is like one big



Nwafor upon his return to the Dalhousie campus in 2020.

Photo credit:
Ndubuisi Nwafor

family, and I received constant, personalized and warm assistance right from my preparations for departure from Nigeria to my arrival and settling in the beautiful Dalhousie University campus at Halifax, Nova Scotia. I met 19 other amazing participants drawn from about 10 countries across the globe. It was fun interacting, learning and embarking on the field trips together.

The programme lived up to its billing. Prior to the training, I had little knowledge about the oceans. The programme filled this gap as we were taught by some of the best teachers and practitioners from the ocean-related fields. Lectures were interactive and interesting, and our professors and instructors were both knowledgeable and accessible. The experience was unbelievable. I met leading minds that I look up to in the areas of Environmental Law and the Law of the Sea. I am glad because the program exposed me to a new area of scholarship in which I could engage with delight. I also made professional acquaintances that have positively impacted my current career in ocean plastic policy research.

It is therefore with sincere gratitude and fondness that I say thank you to the IOI organization for touching my life and the lives of other participants in such a special way. I have employed the skills I acquired at the IOI 2018 program in the course of my career. I have since made inroads in teaching,

research and publication, in the area of ocean governance. I am now in the final stages of an Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) Blue Charter postdoctoral fellowship (January -June 2020) at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies (SRES), Dalhousie University. The focus of my research is on ocean plastic pollution in Africa. Quite interestingly, Dr. Tony Walker, who lectured on the topic of Plastic and the Ocean during my training at the IOI in 2018, is now my Blue Charter project supervisor.

The IOI legacy persists in my life in many positive ways. I am truly grateful and will recommend IOI training for anybody interested in the common heritage of mankind – the Ocean.

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News from Fiji

Dilpreet Kaur, Class of 2005, reports on the effects of the pandemic in her country and the Pacific.



Dilpreet at one of her favourite spots by the ocean.

Photo credit:
Dilpreet Kaur

I attended and successfully completed the IOI-Canada training course at Dalhousie in 2005.

Even though it has been almost 15 years, I still remember the nervousness that I experienced on my first trip to the Northern Hemisphere and also my first trip so far away from home. But there was an instant bond formed amongst all course participants, lecturers and coordinators. I was fortunate to form lifelong friendships and still remain in contact with many of my fellow classmates to this very day!

Coming from a science background, the IOI course allowed me a platform to better understand the link between the science and governance of ocean resources. I recently completed the first IOI-Canada online Alumni refresher course which updated me on current developments pertaining to ocean governance – again very useful for my teachings in ocean resource management.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a history-altering event. Fortunately, Fiji is faring better than most other countries where the loss of human lives continues to rise exponentially. However, the pandemic has impacted Fiji's main blue economy sectors – tourism and fisheries. Border closures have resulted in the shutdown of tourism operations. Subsequently unemployment has forced many to migrate to their villages where they have taken up fishing as a source of income. This has consequently increased to some extent, pressure on the already depleted coastal resources. Furthermore, the suspension of fisheries observers in the Pacific region is anticipated to trigger an increase occurrence in Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The full impact(s) of these events will not be fully realized as the crisis continues to unfold. I believe that now more than ever, countries must work collectively to plan and implement effective short-term and long-term responses as a region.

We are a very resilient race and will overcome this pandemic eventually. In the meantime, as ocean ambassadors let's continue to do the good work that we do in conserving our ocean!

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First IOI Alumni Refresher Course 2020 – Ocean Governance: Issues of Immediate Concern

Sunil Shastri, Class of 1984, reflects on this online course, held November–December 2020

When Madeleine Coffen-Smout first wrote to me on 12 October 2020 to suggest the idea of an IOI Alumni Refresher Course, I thought, what a wonderful birthday gift to me to celebrate my almost 4-decade association with the International Ocean Institute which began with a chance introduction to our Founder Elisabeth Mann Borgese in December 1982 by Syed Zahoor Qasim, the then Secretary Government of India, Department of Ocean Development.

EMB along with Caroline Vanderbilt and Mecky Sammut seamlessly ensured my participation at the Class A 1983 Training Programme on the Management and Conservation of Marine Resources with special emphasis on Ocean Mining, co-directed by Reynaldo Galindo Pohl and Werner Gocht in Malta and Germany from 21 March to 27 May 1983 with funding from the Commonwealth Secretariat, among others, made memorable as I got married in Pune, India on 30 May just a day after I returned from Germany.

I also had the honour to meet EMB for the first time in Aachen and she asked me there and then to come to Canada in 1984 to attend The Class B Training Programme on Marine Resource Management with special emphasis on the Resources of the Exclusive Economic Zone, directed by Satya Pal Jagota at Dalhousie University from 18 June to 24 August 1984 with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, among others.

Thus, having found my passion for Pacem in Maribus in 1982, I consider these two programmes to be the foundation of my subsequent career first as a Consulting Ocean Engineer and then as a life-long researcher, academic and consultant in marine and environmental policy and resulting in making it my mission to continually work towards achieving better ocean and environmental governance, and as such, the idea of the Alumni Refresher Course came as nothing short of a very



Sunil engaged in online discussions during the 2020 refresher course.

Photo credit: IOI-Canada

pleasant déjà vu, thanks to Director Michael Butler and the entire IOI-Canada team.

Things moved rather swiftly from that point and by the end of October the programme entitled 'Ocean Governance: Issues of Immediate Concern' was rolled out with a focus on nine very timely and topical issues to be delivered from 16 November to 11 December by nine excellent experts, some of whom I had the pleasure of knowing for many years and the others I could not wait to hear from. The technical arrangements, eg, Zoom meetings, Google sharing, Facebook page, etc were all organised quickly and efficiently by the team who no doubt spent long hours to bring us this excitement at the end of what can best be described as a surreal year.

It would be interesting to recapitulate how varied yet interrelated the nine topics were – Why Do Small-scale Fisheries Matter for Ocean Sustainability? (Ratana Chuenpagdee), The International Decade of Ocean Action 2021-2030: Stepping Up to Meet Our Ambitions and Targets (Larry Hildebrand), Adaptation to Climate Change and the Ocean (Dan Lane), The



Dr. Awni Behnam during the refresher course – still contributing to IOI-Canada's training, 40 years on. Photo credit: IOI-Canada

Nexus of Threatened Marine Mammals and Commercial Fisheries (Sean Brilliant), Blue Economy, Ocean Governance and the Law of the Sea (François Baillet), Emergency Management in the Coastal Zone (Murielle Provost with David Griffiths), Maritime Security: Challenges, Obligations and Opportunities (Bob Edwards), Health of the Ocean (Peter Wells), Progress Towards a New High Seas Treaty (Susanna Fuller) – a veritable feast indeed for hungry minds of professionals dedicated to achieving better Ocean Governance. Consistently excellent delivery of rich content and considered responses throughout and the ensuing Q and A/Discussion time were the hallmarks of all sessions, bar none.

Kudos to Director Michael Butler for his patience in urging participants to ask questions and to make contributions, and giving everyone adequate opportunity to interact with the speakers and the co-participants. Special mention must be made of IOI Honorary President Awni Behnam, who, incidentally, was a lecturer at my Malta and Germany Programme back in 1983 and is my longest continuous link with IOI, for not only attending almost every session, despite other pressing engagements, but for also being characteristically provocative with his incisive analysis and commentary on all the issues of concern that were presented, and so many more.

As coincidence would have it, this First IOI Alumni Refresher Course 2020 was serendipitously also the

40th anniversary of the 1st Class A programme on Sea-Bed Mining, which was soon complemented by the Class B programme on EEZ Management, which, in turn, was followed by the Class C programme on Regional Development and Cooperation, drawing on elements of both Class A and Class B programmes and these three became part of the IOI's annual calendar of training programmes. Fortuitously, 2020 is also the 40th anniversary IOI's annual flagship publication the Ocean Yearbook which has become a standard and valuable reference work for those involved in education, training and research in ocean and environmental governance issues, with the range and depth of its contents.

Given the 'virtual' nature of the Course, I cannot but recall the idea of the IOI Virtual University, IOI-VU, an interim report for which was submitted 20 years ago in June 2000 by EMB, perhaps an idea whose time had not come then but this Pandemic has made it more than obvious that virtual education and training is the way forward and this Course can be seen as but a step in that direction and also as a 20th anniversary tribute to our Founder. Sophisticated use of the webinar technology that can combine delivery, interaction, assessment and feedback can provide an unmatched learning and teaching experience without distracting from the face-to-face experience at much reduced expense of time and money to the organisers, tutors and participants and an altogether reduced carbon footprint by eliminating any travel.

I sincerely hope that this Inaugural Course gets us all thinking on these lines and that we are able to develop a pragmatic blueprint to develop more and extensive packages not only for a range of short-term training programmes but also fully-fledged interdisciplinary Master's degree programmes in Ocean and Environmental Governance and I would be honoured to contribute my expertise and experience to make it happen.

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With support of our Senior Research Fellows and other loyal lecturers we prepared nine lectures, covering the topics most in demand, to be delivered on Zoom in November and December. The lectures were delivered synchronously and were also available asynchronously, to accommodate the timetables of all participants, located worldwide. We had the benefit of excellent IT support, that proved fundamental to the technical success of the program. Feedback from the course participants has subsequently confirmed the validity of the Refresher Series. For those who did not have the pleasure of participating on the course, it is not too late to do it via the self-paced learning option with lecture recordings and online materials. (The list of lecturers and their topics, the recommended background reading and the list of participants can be viewed on the IOI-Canada [website](#), so contact us if you would like to register and get access to the recordings.) We must admit that we were quite “outrageous” in our promotion of the Elisabeth Mann Borgese book of essays on Ocean Governance and Capacity Building. Prepared by IOI-Canada, this 2018 publication (by [Brill](#)) proved to be an ideal complement to the refresher course with all its essays openly accessible online for free download.

Like the training programme, the traditional IOI-Canada delivery on World Ocean Day, June 8 (or thereabouts) of the Elisabeth Mann Borgese Ocean Lecture was obviously not possible in an F2F format in 2020. Rather than “competing” with the plethora of webinars which the pandemic lockdown spawned, Ocean Week provided an opportunity for IOI-Canada to meaningfully support a global research program with which it is a Partner Organisation, namely Too Big to Ignore (TBTI).

Based at Memorial University, the research is focussed on Inshore Fisheries world-wide. TBTI presented a series of webinars and interactive activities throughout Ocean Week. The webinars, with multiple speakers, including practitioners located throughout the world, were offered synchronously and, subsequently, asynchronously via YouTube. IOI-Canada was pleased to publicize the series on its website and Facebook site. All of the IOI Training Centres and IOI-HQ were informed of this Ocean Week program, because of the topics’ relevance to the

Refresher Course by Numbers

9 sessions over **4** weeks

22 recommended readings and **37** questions to stimulate critical thinking

44 registered participants, despite very short notice and other commitments

Included alumni from all **4** decades of the training programme

Represented **30** countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, South America and the South Pacific

respective training programs. The socio-economic importance of Inshore Fisheries and their contribution to global food security has become increasingly apparent. I had the pleasure of viewing most of the sessions all of which can be viewed [here](#).

The delivery of face-to-face programs in 2021 does not look encouraging, given the persistence of Covid-19 and the limited availability of vaccines throughout the world. So, based on our recent experience, more online training is being considered including an extended Refresher Series of lectures for IOI alumni generally (not just IOI-Canada alumni), to be planned and delivered as a collaborative initiative of IOI-Canada and IOI-South Africa, at dates to be determined.

Meanwhile, a belated Happy New Year to you all, from the IOI-Canada team!

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Closing Remarks on the 2020 Refresher Course

Amy Aai Sheau Ye, Malaysia, Class of 2016, and some of her fellow course participants summarized their experience, as follows.

"I'm really glad to have the opportunity to revisit the IOI training experience... It is a privilege really to be part of this pilot online training. I really enjoyed the learning process and if one good thing has come out of the Covid-19 situation, I think it is the online classes which makes it so much more accessible to many others..."



Amy offering her closing remarks during the 2020 online refresher course.

Photo credit:
IOI-Canada

Other participant comments:

"The course was worth every moment. Each slide and presenter made the information and learning experience interactive and insightful."

"This course helped update my knowledge on high seas biodiversity, marine species biodiversity, small scale fisheries and governance issues. I carefully looked at best practices and at the importance of local community knowledge."

"Thank you for the opportunity for learning anew and for connecting with colleagues, friends and co-alumni."

"Awni is a walking and breathing encyclopedia!!!"



Registration deadlines are approaching for the online MA in Ocean Governance at the University of Malta, in collaboration with IOI. Contact <https://www.ioinst.org/training/m-a-in-ocean-governance/>



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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