

A MESSAGE FROM MARILYN SLETT



2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative. This is also an extraordinary year where the world is facing a global health crisis. While it's not the time for in-person celebrations, it is important to reflect on just how far we've come together and to share our hopes as we look forward to our future. Join us in celebrating our 20th anniversary.

Celebrating Our Past

The lessons we have learned as an alliance of Nations from the past 20 years comes down to two things. First, think big! Along our 20-year journey, we did things no one else had done before and played an integral role in protecting our lands and waters, developing government-to-government relations and creating economic opportunities is extraordinary. Second, believe in your goals and vision! Over the years, we have demonstrated our resilience, overcome adversity together and learned from our mistakes.

It's About Our People and Partners

To our community members: Thank you for trusting us for many years. We are honored to have your trust and will continue to work hard to achieve our goals.

To our staff: We are grateful for the opportunity to work with talented, dedicated and passionate people every day.

To our partners and allies: Our leaders recognize the importance of establishing collaborative partnerships that bring extraordinary value to the work we do together. We thank our partners and allies for their commitment, expertise and skills in helping us move our agenda forward.

Shaping Our Future

The journey hasn't been easy nor is it over. It has taken courage, resilience, and boldness to get this far. Let's continue to be Coastal First Nations stronger together in shaping and defining a future where our communities are thriving.



Chief Marilyn Slett

Chief Councillor, Heiltsuk Tribal Council
President, Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative

COASTAL FIRST NATIONS SIGN OFF ON FISHERIES RECONCILIATION DEAL WITH CANADA



Eight coastal Nations have signed off on a major fisheries deal with Canada that aims to get First Nations fishers back on the water and help revive the commercial fishery. The Coastal First Nations Fisheries Reconciliation Agreement also promises to put Nations on an equal footing with Canada in stronger fisheries management of their territories.

All CFN member Nations approved the agreement in September which is awaiting ratification by Canada – including the Gitga'at, Gitxaala, Haida, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Metlakatla, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv.

"This is a good opportunity to regain control of and access to our fisheries for the benefit of all of our communities," says Heiltsuk Chief Marilyn Slett, President of Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative. "As we watch the struggles of Indigenous fishers on the East Coast, it's even more important now to have a reconciliation table and a collective of communities to develop fisheries agreements together. We're all marine communities, we depend on a healthy economy and we depend on sustainable fishery models."

"The Fisheries Reconciliation Agreement will not only give Metlakatla more control over the important fisheries resources in our territory through better access and oversight of quota and licensing," says Metlakatla Chief Harold Leighton, "but it will allow Metlakatla and its members to directly benefit from community-based commercial fishing through revenue generation and training and employment opportunities."

Coastal First Nations project manager Larry Greba says the agreement "is geared to the small community fisher who wants to feed a family through to the individual who wants to become a highliner in the commercial fishery. It's about getting people back onto the water and reviving the commercial fishery." The agreement also gives more management control to CFN communities and ensures the Nations and DFO jointly share fisheries decision-making.

The agreement will put coastal Nations on a government-to-government level with Canada in future consultation and other management processes. Nations will sit as equal partners with Canada to receive feedback and engage with the regional stakeholders they used to be categorized with.



Economic benefits to the communities include:

A Major Trust Fund: Canada will contribute funding to a major trust fund to support access to new commercial fishing opportunities. This will support communities in buying fishing licences or quotas and will finance the purchase and upgrading of vessels and gear.

A Nations-owned Fishing Corporation: A new for-profit fishing corporation owned collectively by the Nations will be created. The Nations have agreed to put 50 per cent of profits back into the company. The other 50 per cent will return to communities to fund resource stewardship, further expansion of access, the purchase of new gear and boats, upgrading fleets, and expanding local economic opportunities through ventures such as aquaculture or processing plants. Greba says the company will develop its own fleet of vessels and encourage experienced fishers with vessels and new fishers from CFN communities to join.

A Community-based Fishery: Each Nation will be able to access the new trust fund to support a community-based fishery at home. A "preferred means fishery" will be developed to allow for a set of rules and regulations that are more adapted to local needs than those of the existing commercial fishery.

A community-based fishery will be funded to acquire quotas, licences and traps that are prohibitive in cost for independent fishers. "Under the regular licencing regime, it would cost

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\$750-thousand just to buy one prawn licence,” Greba says. “This gives community members a fighting chance to fish during the year and be part-time or full-time fishers.”

The fishery will be designed to operate with smaller boats in waters close to home and offer flexibility on how fishing licences are used. For example, Nations could split the number of traps from one prawn or crab license among a number of fishermen with smaller vessels. It could also offer preferred areas of fishing so if a Nation has enough geoduck or sea cucumber quota, they could apply it to a defined area close to home – and reduce outside fishing competition.

As we watch the struggles of Indigenous fishers on the East Coast, it's even more important now to have a reconciliation table and a collective of communities to develop fisheries agreements together.

“For Heiltsuk, it’s about management and access, and a more sustainable model for managing a commercial fishery,” says Chief Slett. “We have a fish plant that is struggling to survive and we want to see it re-invigorated and we want to support our commercial fisherman to develop capacity.”



On the co-management side, the deal promises to put more control into the hands of the community and ensure that Indigenous traditional knowledge and the science data produced by Nations is utilized in fisheries management with Canada.

Decision-making will happen through bilateral discussions between Canada and the Nations as a group, and between Canada and the individual Nations. “We’ve identified through this process what items will be dealt with at the Nation, regional and sub-regional level,” says Greba. New annual collaborative governance funding will flow through Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative to the member Nations and their aggregate organizations.

The scope of the agreement is unprecedented in Canada in terms of the range of issues covered and the number of Nations involved, he says, but cautions it will take time to develop. “It will take two or three years to see this really take shape at the ground level, and to find and acquire the licences and quota at good value, so it won’t all happen right away.”



20 YEARS



CELEBRATING OUR MILESTONES OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative (CFN) is celebrating 20 amazing years together as a nine-member alliance of coastal Nations of the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. Since we first came together in 2000, we've worked to forge a new approach to building a sustainable coastal economy for our communities and stewarding our land and sea resources.

A Coast-Wide United Front

The Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative (formerly Turning Point) was envisioned two decades ago to assert First Nations leadership in creating a new conservation-based economy in our Traditional Territories.

By the late 1990s, the forest and ocean resources of our Traditional Territories were being rapidly depleted by heavy industrial logging and commercial fishing. Our region's economy had dwindled, jobs were scarce and our communities were struggling. Operating in isolation, First Nations had little access to resources in our Traditional Territories and little say in how they were managed.

It was clear a new approach was needed.

In early 2000, leaders from BC's Central and North Coast and Haida Gwaii came together in a first meeting to address the harmful resource extraction practices encroaching on their Traditional Territories. By June that year, they signed the [*Declaration of First Nations of the North Pacific Coast*](#). Three years later, in 2003, a coast-wide alliance was officially born.

Together, we established a network of Coastal Guardian Watchmen who protect our land and sea. And together, we launched the world's largest, Indigenous-led forest carbon project to fund economic opportunities in our communities.

Since that time, the CFN alliance has worked together to put in place a world-leading model of land and marine planning that incorporates Indigenous values and ecosystem-based management. Together, we established a network of Coastal Guardian Watchmen who protect our land and sea. And together, we launched the world's largest, Indigenous-led forest carbon project to fund economic opportunities in our communities.

As a coastal alliance, we've worked to build a clean energy future, support award-winning businesses, support stewardship offices in every community, and combine First Nations Traditional Knowledge with modern science and research.

CELEBRATING OUR MILESTONES OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS *(cont'd)*

Our efforts have been recognized at home and world-wide.

In 2016, Coastal First Nations received the Premiers Award for ecosystem-based management in the Great Bear Rainforest.

The Grizzly Bear Foundation recognized our Nations' work to advance the well-being of grizzly bears as a 2018 Grizzly Champion. In 2007, the World Wildlife Fund awarded CFN its global "Gift to the Earth" award for conservation of the Great Bear Rainforest. And in 2020, the Coastal Shellfish Corporation, started by CFN, received the coveted VanCity Sustainability Award from the BC Food Producers Association.

Follow our journey through the years as we celebrate our milestones as Coastal First Nations Stronger Together.

CELEBRATING OUR MILESTONES

2000

Declaration of First Nations of the North Pacific Coast signed by Coastal Nations

2001

Historic agreement introduces ecosystem-based forest management

2002

First Nations land-use planning process begins

2003

CFN signs protocol with BC to enhance aquaculture and commercial recreation opportunities

2005

Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network forms

2006

Strategic Land Use Planning Agreements protect ecosystems and Indigenous cultural heritage

2006

Conservancies created to prioritize First Nations' social, ceremonial and cultural uses

2007

\$120-million Coast Opportunity Funds set up for First Nations' conservation and economic initiatives

2009

CFN Reconciliation Protocol with BC gives Nations access to sell forest carbon credits

2010

1.9 million hectares of conservancies and biodiversity areas established

2010

Coastal First Nations oppose Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline

2011

Great Bear Carbon Credit Corporation launches world's largest, Indigenous forest carbon project

2011

Coastal Shellfish Corporation established

2011

CFN Clean Energy Action Plan initiated

2016

Great Bear Rainforest Act protects 85% of coastal rainforest

2016

Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline is rejected

2016

Coastal First Nations Marine Plans signed with BC

2017

CFN Reconciliation tables negotiate co-management of land and sea resources

2017

Grizzly bear trophy hunt banned in the Great Bear Rainforest

2018

Crude Oil Tanker moratorium upheld for BC North Coast

2018

Great Bear Essential Oils established

2020

Fisheries Reconciliation Agreement is underway

#CFNStrongerTogether

REMEMBERING PERCY STARR



Photo credit: Aquaculture North America

For almost half a century, Percy Starr led the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation as a Chief Councillor, General Manager and Hereditary Chief, and realized many remarkable achievements for his small, remote community. In 2018, Klemtu was saddened by the loss of a dedicated leader.

Eighty-one-year-old Nora Robinson is Percy Starr's last remaining sibling out of 11 children. She remembers her brother was only about 18 when the elders first approached him to ask him to become Chief. As a young girl, she overheard him tell their mother, "I don't want to be a Chief Councillor, I'm too young, I wouldn't know what to do."

"When he turned 19, the elders approached him again and this time, he said yes," Robinson recounts. Over the next 50 years, Starr would become deeply involved in leadership and management for the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation. "They saw in him something that was good, that was what they wanted," Robinson says.

Percy Starr is remembered for his many accomplishments, among them, the establishment of an aquaculture business, hydroelectric project, Klemtu's Big House and new ferry terminal, a fish processing plant and band store. "He fought hard to make those changes," says Robinson. "I am really proud of my brother."

As a consultant to the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation for 35 years, Coastal First Nations project manager Larry Greba considers Starr to be one of his primary mentors. "He really created a culture that motivated people. Percy brought out the best in people that were around him and people liked working for him," Greba says.

"He taught me a lot about politics and how to deal with people in government in order to get what you want. And Percy generally got what he wanted when he went into a meeting with anybody from government. He was very skillful."

In the late eighties, the Kitasoo/Xai'xais turned to salmon aquaculture to diversify its economy as an ailing commercial fishery went into steep decline. "Percy called me into his office one day and put down a document in front of me and said, 'Can you help me with this,'" recalls Greba. "It was a proposal to do a 100-ton salmon farm. The BC Aboriginal Fisheries commission at the time was supporting salmon farming back then. It was still very early in its infancy." As a commercial fisherman, Starr knew firsthand how salmon populations were depleting, so he helped initiate a community-run aquaculture enterprise that supplied jobs for 55 Klemtu families for five years.

Starr also worked to establish the Kitasoo Economic Development Corporation with CEO Ben Robinson to begin to build a sustainable coastal economy in Klemtu. He was instrumental in the revival of a community fish processing plant that had been the mainstay of jobs for the community before shut down in the late sixties. In 1996, he was awarded the Order of Canada for his effort to create a "prototype of sustainable economic development" in fisheries. "Percy was all about improving the lives and opportunities for his community. He was dedicated to that through his whole life," Greba says. "He was a unique individual and a very strong leader."

One of Starr's biggest accomplishments was the installation of a community-owned hydroelectric project to lessen Klemtu's dependency on expensive and harmful diesel generators. As one of very few Indigenous communities to develop their own micro-hydro system at the time, it was a major milestone for a small, remote community to realize such a costly and time-consuming project. This year, the Nation continues Starr's work in clean energy independence, with \$4.6 million in upgrades to the hydroelectric facility. Kitasoo/Xai'xais Climate Action Coordinator Barry Edgar says his great-uncle's work paved the way for a younger generation who face the impacts of climate change. "Percy Starr was a humble man, I had no idea my great-uncle received the Order of Canada," says Edgar. "He never made it known, nor did he hang the Order up in his home. It was stored away as his walls were filled with family photos."

"He was an important knowledge holder for our community and always made it a priority to attend all meetings, especially those that had to do with local resources. His passing came as a massive blow to local knowledge and at his funeral, there was not an empty seat in the room. We had individuals from all over, some flew in that day on a helicopter just to attend."

In 2009, Starr's lobbying skills secured an agreement between BC Premier Gordon Campbell and the federal government to co-fund construction of a new \$25-million ferry terminal at the end of Klemtu's only stretch of paved road. After lobbying for years to establish regular BC Ferry service, Starr also eventually secured year-round weekly sailings to the community which is only accessible by water and air.

2020 STRONG MINDS, STRONG NATION RECIPIENT GA'OW OODAA GRETCHEN LEWANDOWSKI



As a young girl, Ga'ow Oodaa Gretchen Lewandowski revelled in building mud castles and Lego structures, assembling bridges from spaghetti and constructing marble rollercoasters. As a student in mechanical engineering at the University of Victoria, she now has her sights set on designing hydrogen and other renewable energy systems to power small communities and larger urban centres.

"As a planet, we're on the path of completely demolishing any chances of reversing climate change if we don't switch over from fossil fuels," Gretchen says, "especially if big corporations continue to operate the way they do."

The 17-year-old recipient of this year's Council of the Haida Nation "Strong Minds, Strong Nation" bursary is from the Haida Staastas Clan and grew up in Nelson, BC. "Since I was a small child, I've always been interested in being outdoors and building things," she says. When she learned about engineering as a profession, Gretchen knew it was something she wanted to do.

"I felt that engineering was something that could help with the climate change problems happening in smaller communities and on a nation-wide scale," she explains. "I want to at least try to be a part of moving towards a green energy system."

By implementing alternatives to reduce the need for carbon-emitting fossil fuels and fracking, the aspiring engineer believes, "we could maybe stand a chance by 2050 of making sure we live on the planet for an extra hundred years."

As a young Haida woman, Gretchen feels her connection to the land and the need to preserve it are strengths she brings to the work of furthering human innovation. "Being Indigenous has made me more aware of how humanity has treated the earth as we have become more technologically advanced. Protecting natural habitats and ecosystems is definitely important to me."

As a woman in a male-dominated profession, Gretchen is calmly confident about what she has to offer. "It's all about perspective I would say. As a woman you look at the world in a different

manner because lots of systems weren't designed for you at the beginning. So bringing in a perspective of being moderately oppressed can help solve different problems – in fields like civil engineering, for example, or the design of buildings."

Gretchen remains hopeful about the future despite the widespread climate change impacts affecting communities worldwide. "I feel like the general knowledge of climate change is widely-known with Canadian youth, especially with the Fridays for the Future marches that were happening before COVID started."

"I think for our generation climate change is daunting, but we're prepared to deal with it."



Congratulations to other recipients of the 2020 Strong Minds, Strong Nation bursary, including *Crystal Young, Taylor Lund, Melva Collinson-Young, Olivia Wilson, Madison Brown, Shawnae Robinson, Camellia Brennan, Dawson Sterritt, Devan Boyko, Angel Brown and Gulkihlgad Yakgujanaas.*

MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE: REPORT HIGHLIGHTS SUCCESS OF STEWARDSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM



For thousands of years, coastal First Nations have carefully managed the cultural and natural resources within their territories. Today, these stewardship responsibilities are carried out through established programs within each Nation and aided by ongoing training efforts.

The Stewardship Technician Training Program (STTP), a partnership between CFN and Vancouver Island University, provides integrated technical and leadership training to meet stewardship needs throughout the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

Last year, the Coastal Stewardship Network — a program of CFN — began working with EcoPlan International to



undertake a thorough evaluation to assess STTP's impact and effectiveness. After a full year of in-depth analysis and gathering feedback through surveys, workshops and interviews with students, instructors and program coordinators, the results are now available!

The evaluation final report, *Making a Positive Difference*, shows that STTP has done an excellent job building upon stewardship knowledge and skills within coastal communities, significantly contributing to individual and community well-being in a range of tangible ways. The comprehensive report also identified a few key opportunities to enhance and improve the program even further.

To learn more about these findings, download the full report at: coastalfirstnations.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/STTP-FinalReport.pdf



Share Your Story Idea with *Stories From the Coast*

Coastal First Nations communities are filled with some of the most inspiring and interesting people you want to meet. Let us know about people, places and projects your communities are involved in! Share your story idea with us to win one of our styling CFN baseball caps in a draw every month.

Contact: Stories From The Coast | Editor – Bessie Brown | bbrown@coastalfirstnations.ca



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