



**COASTAL  
FIRST NATIONS**  
GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE

**ANNUAL  
REPORT 2020**

Protecting our Coast. Building our Economy.





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# OUR VISION

The **Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative** is an alliance of First Nations along BC's North and Central Coasts and Haida Gwaii. They include the Council of the Haida Nation, Skidegate, Old Massett, Metlakatla, Gitxaala, Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, Gitga'at, Kitasoo/Xai'xais and Wuikinuxv First Nations.

Our communities, traditions, cultures and governance structures are as unique and diverse as the abundant species that share these lands and waters with us. We all share a responsibility to care for this region. Known throughout the world as the **Great Bear Rainforest**, it has been our home for at least 14,000 years.

Collectively, we are committed to work together to build a **conservation-based economy** in our territories.

## GOVERNANCE

The Great Bear Initiative Society (GBI) operates under the direction of a Board of Directors that approves an annual strategic plan for the organization. It has one representative from each of the members of Coastal First Nations (CFN).

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jason Alsop** – President, Council of the Haida Nation

**Arnold Clifton** – Chief Councillor, Gitga'at

**Marilyn Slett** – Chief Councillor, Heiltsuk Tribal Council

**Doug Neasloss** – Chief Councillor, Kitasoo Band Council

**Harold Leighton** – Chief Councillor, Metlakatla Governing Council

**Sam Schooner** – Chief Councillor, Nuxalk Nation

**Donald (Duffy) Edgars** – Chief Councillor, Old Massett Village Council

**Billy Yovanovich** – Chief Councillor, Skidegate Band Council

**Danielle Shaw** – Chief Councillor, Wuikinuxv

**Linda Innes** – Chief Councillor, Gitaaxla

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

## CHRISTINE SMITH-MARTIN



### **Building Our Economy and Protecting Our Coast in a Changing World**

Our communities are at the heart of everything we do at the Coastal First Nations. It centres us as we navigate COVID-19 and continue our work to build strong coastal communities.

While we don't know what our future holds, we can be clear and resolved in our goals: building our economy and protecting our coast.

We are at a turning point. Today, we understand the clear disparities we face and experience in our daily lives and the need for transformative change. CFN's work can lead us to renewal rather than just recovery. Renewal means going beyond what we had prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to achieve our goals, we need open and transparent conversations about our work with leaders and communities.

An integral part of my job as CFN's Executive Director is to engage with our communities and leaders on all our projects. CFN will support communities as they pursue their collective and individual goals. When we listen to community voices, we know informed decisions will be made and supported. I have met with community members to discuss connectivity solutions in their communities, the Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRA) and many other CFN initiatives.

This year's annual report highlights how we work towards renewal through long-term solutions to our most pressing issues. As we do this work, we grow, we learn and we adapt.

The historic FRRA, for instance, provides opportunities and the flexibility for each community to choose its path. Some communities will venture into the economics immediately, some will choose to rebuild stock in their territories, and some will do both. The beauty of this agreement puts that choice solely in the hands of their community.

Commercial Fishing was a main source of income for many years for our communities. This agreement builds on that premise and works to restore that livelihood. Each community will buy commercial licences for access to commercial fishing opportunities. The recently announced signing of the amended FRRA includes a regional planning component over our community-based fisheries. Our people will have a significant say in the management of the oceans and have the ability to once again participate in the maritime economy.

As for CFN's efforts to ensure improved connectivity for Indigenous coastal communities, access to affordable high-speed Internet will be a gamechanger and is key to the success of all businesses within the Great Bear Region to reach the clientele they want around the world.

By leveraging the talents and resources of all sectors—public, private and philanthropic—we did what none of us could achieve on our own. By uniting the passion and commitment of donors, advisors, community leaders and non-profits, we are creating sustainable coastal solutions that will positively affect lives for years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Christine Smith-Martin**

Executive Director, Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## CHIEF MARILYN SLETT



### Planning for the Future

There has never been a more critical time to plan for the future for the Coastal First Nations. As we continue to navigate a global pandemic, climate change and biodiversity loss, we have developed a five-year strategic plan. In building this blueprint for the future, we remained true to our core values of building a coastal economy and protecting our coast.

Coastal First Nations prides itself on striving for excellence and has always introduced new ideas to improve the services we provide to our member Nations. The strategic planning process ensures that all our actions are deliberate and focused, and also creates accountabilities so that each member Nation takes ownership of the work being carried out.

The 2021-2026 Strategic Plan sets out our priorities for the next five years and contains concrete and meaningful initiatives that focus on protecting our environment and building our economy. Our work over this period will focus on five goals:

1. We work in unity as a collective of strong, independent Nations.
2. Our lands, waters, and all life forms are protected through the extension of our decision-making authority and stewardship responsibility over our territories.
3. Our work supports the wellbeing of our member Nations.
4. Through community engagement and communications, we are connected to our member Nations.
5. Our organizational structure, culture, and values, together with stable funding, allow us to align our actions with our vision.

These goals are based on input from our leaders, staff, project managers and stewardship directors. The plan is a living document that can and will be revisited and evaluated, and will remain open to new opportunities.

If there can be a positive take on these challenging times, it is witnessing the strength, determination and intentionality of leadership and staff as they support our Nations and each other. They did this with respect, integrity and compassion.

I am proud of the work of our staff who reimagined processes and embraced new practices to ensure our success over the last year and a half. And I am grateful to our board of directors for their steady stewardship and support.

We're proud of the work we've done with and for our communities this year—but we know how much more there is to do. In the year ahead, our work will continue to focus on building a conservation economy, increasing community engagement, standing up for our Aboriginal Rights and Title, and ensuring that protecting our lands, waters and resources remains a priority.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marilyn Slett'.

**Chief Marilyn Slett**

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





# PROTECTING OUR COAST

# LAND PLANNING

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Engage with the BC government, the forest sector and ENGO organizations to advance and complete the 2021 review of EBM implementation.**
- **Engage with the BC government to advance development of more flexible forms of protected and stewardship area legislation and agreements that also recognize a stronger governance role for First Nations.**
- **Make progress on forestry economic policy negotiations and agreements that will enable member Nations and their forest companies to maintain sustainable timber harvests and secure economic benefits from forestry activities.**

The North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii features an abundance of species and diversity, and vast land-based resources that have supported coastal communities for thousands of years.

To ensure these resources are managed responsibly and with future generations in mind, CFN-GBI's Land Planning program provides support to all member Nations in efforts to implement effective and strategic land-use planning agreements with BC.

Receiving a mandate from the 2006 Land and Resource Protocol, 2009 Reconciliation Protocol and the 2016 EBM Implementation Term Sheet, and a 2020 Reconciliation 2.0 MOU with BC, the Land Planning team focuses on implementation of existing land-use agreements, as well as negotiation and development of new agreements and commitments that will advance the role of CFN-GBI members Nations in lands and natural resource governance, stewardship and economic development.

The Land Planning team supports CFN-GBI Nations as they engage with the BC Government and others on EBM implementation, protected area planning, and ongoing Reconciliation 2.0 discussions. This work focuses on co-governance of lands and resources; a stronger, more proactive role for First Nations in protected area management and monitoring; and negotiating new forestry economic measures that will create new business development opportunities.

Over the past year, the Land Planning team worked with member Nation Stewardship Directors and Lands Managers to initiate and advance a comprehensive review of EBM implementation in the Great Bear Rainforest, complete a comprehensive review of land-based economic initiatives, finalize a new standards for identification of indigenous heritage sites and features, and advance forest economic policy discussions with BC and key forestry industry companies.

## STORY

# Protecting Birds on the North and Central Coast



The Pacific Coast is home to wide range of bird species—from bald eagles and ravens to rhinoceros auklets and endangered marbled murrelets. Over many thousands of years, these diverse species found niches along the coast's rocky shorelines and intertidal estuaries.

Recognizing that many invasive land mammals, such as rats, raccoons and other nest-raiding species, have ravaged birds in other ecosystems, First Nations along the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii have been increasingly concerned about the health of coastal bird populations.

To find out if invasive species are negatively affecting birds in their territories, the Kitasoo-Xai'xais, Metlakatla and Wuikinuxv Nations partnered with Birds Canada—a national non-profit group focused on bird conservation—on a three-year research project to learn more.

The collaboration started in 2019 with a grant from the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk, through Environment and Climate Change Canada, and involved early training for Coastal Guardian Watchmen to carry out the survey work. It also followed on the heels of an earlier research effort from Birds Canada, the Council of the Haida Nation and others to assess and manage threats to seabirds from invasive rats and raccoons on Haida Gwaii.

In one part of the project on the North and Central Coast, Guardians and Birds Canada researchers set up five remote cameras on the remote western side of Moore Islands—a small archipelago in the Hecate Strait, about 60 kilometres northwest of Klemtu. The motion-sensing cameras took thousands of images over the research period, snapping useful shots not just of local bird species but larger land mammals too, including a river otter and coastal wolf.

"We're always open to these kinds of collaborative research projects, especially if there are positive implications for stewardship," says Vernon Brown, who helped lead the project for the Kitasoo/Xai'xais Stewardship Authority. "Some bird species were historically a big part of our diet, and they're connected to our culture in many other ways. It's important that we understand how current populations are doing."

Although the survey results did not reveal any current threats from invasive species, researchers from the Nations and elsewhere recognize there are many other threats facing coastal bird populations, including climate change and microplastics—often ingested by birds higher up the food chain.

Ultimately, this type of collaborative research is one important step toward ensuring coastal ecosystems remain healthy and intact for birds and all other species.

# MARINE PLANNING

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Work with partners to advance the Renewed Vision for RFA implementation and strategic planning for the Oceans Protection Plan.**
- **Support public engagement related to the draft MPA Network Action Plan.**
- **Support capacity building within CFN member Nations to respond to marine incidents.**
- **Fully integrate the BC Government into the trilateral structures and processes of the RFA.**
- **Work with other governments and partners to ensure the federal Blue Economy Strategy—for building a sustainable blue economy—aligns with the goals and values of CFN member Nations.**
- **Continue to work toward long-term implementation of the Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast (MaPP).**

The Marine Planning team supports the collaborative efforts of CFN member First Nations as they work to ensure marine resources are sustainably managed for the benefit of future generations.

Over the past year, this involved coordination and facilitation support as the Nations implemented the Reconciliation Framework Agreement for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection (RFA)—an agreement initially between 14 First Nations and the Government of Canada to work together to manage, restore and protect the waters of the Pacific North Coast. In 2020, the RFA was amended to include BC and the Kwikwaka'wakw First Nation as partners, while further progress was made on achieving the long-term goal of advancing a more coordinated approach to managing and protecting ocean resources.

The Marine Planning team participated in ongoing discussions with Transport Canada regarding the Oceans Protection Plan to ensure that the next phase builds upon the progress achieved over the last four years and supports continued collaboration and ongoing of projects under the RFA.

The team also supported work to develop a Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) Marine Incident Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Framework, which establishes a collaborative approach for Nations, response agencies and organizations to come together during marine incidents. Discussions are ongoing around proposals to enhance First Nations' response capacity and financial requirements.

In 2020, CFN member Nations surveyed an additional 155 sites along the coast (despite the challenges posed by COVID-19), to inform the development of tactical Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources, bringing the total number of completed GRSs to 386. Online spill-response training in coastal communities, including Incident Command System (ICS) training and Basic Oil Spill Safety courses, complemented these efforts.

In ongoing collaborative efforts to create a Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network, CFN Nations participated in a series of workshops to develop a revised Network design scenario. With First Nations driving development of the trilateral co-governance model for MPA Network implementation, the Marine Planning team has provided leadership and facilitation of the Network planning process, including coordinating First Nations' input and supporting the development of a draft MPA Network Action Plan.



## STORY

# A Marine Protected Areas Network for the North Pacific Coast

For close to a decade, CFN member Nations have been working collaboratively with federal and provincial governments in long-term planning that aims to advance conservation, sustainable economic development and ecosystem-based management throughout the North Pacific Coast.

As part of their collective goals, planners have been engaged in an unprecedented effort to create a Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network that would protect the region's ecosystems and abundant marine life—including salmon, eulachon, herring and other culturally important species—while ensuring a variety of resource uses and activities that sustain coastal livelihoods.

This innovative MPA network is unique in many important ways. It's the first planning initiative of its kind to protect not only marine biological diversity, including some threatened and ecologically significant species and habitats, but also First Nations' cultural conservation priorities as well. It's also breaking new ground in terms of Indigenous co-governance, since the process has been co-led by First Nations from the beginning.

"This work will provide a model for other First Nations seeking to engage with governments in MPA planning," says CFN Marine Program Manager Steve Diggon, who is also the MPA Network Technical Team Co-chair. "Recognition of First Nations co-governance rights is a key aspect of the planning process, with each Nation establishing an agreement with Canada and BC that provides a framework for managing all MPAs within their territory."

The MPA network aims to preserve the ecological integrity and productivity of this vital marine region for present and future generations, which means protecting its ecosystems and marine life from ongoing threats, such as increased vessel traffic, expanded ports, extensive commercial and recreational fishing pressures, and climate change.

# COASTAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Complete and distribute the Coastal Guardian Watchmen Case for Investment public report, which explicitly outlines the benefits Guardians provide to the broader public from the perspective of a range of external partners.**
- **Complete the RMS web portal, allowing stewardship offices to more easily explore and access their data and conduct analyses to support informed decision making.**
- **Provide basic skills refresher training to Coastal Guardian Watchmen, while also advancing specialized skills in compliance monitoring and land-based cultural feature inventory monitoring.**



The Coastal Stewardship Network (CSN) aims to strengthen the stewardship capacity and authority of CFN member Nations through a range of efforts, including providing a platform for networking across stewardship offices; direct program support for Coastal Guardian Watchmen and other stewardship staff; facilitating stewardship training initiatives in coastal communities; and coordinating the Regional Monitoring System (RMS)—a standardized approach for collecting, managing and analyzing cultural and environmental data within coastal territories.

The CSN team provided support for remote networking and training opportunities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person meetings and events were impossible, and uncertainty and disruptions were common. This work included facilitation of monthly video conference calls, where Guardians were able to share stories and information, and discuss stewardship priorities. It also involved hosting the 12th CSN Annual Gathering (held online for the first time ever), which incorporated care package mailouts with Coastal Guardian Watchmen facemasks for the teams.

After in-depth conversations and workshops between CFN member Nations' stewardship leaders, the CSN produced the *Coastal First Nations Guardian Program – Strategic Plan*, released in July 2020, which articulates the shared goals and objectives of Guardian programs across CFN member Nations, and outlines strategic priorities for enhancing their work into the future. The CSN team also worked closely with Guardians and other RMS users to test a range of new features on the custom CoastTracker App, including enhanced cultural feature inventory and standardized boat and trap surveys, while hosting several technical training sessions online.

The Stewardship Technicians Training Program (STTP), a partnership between CFN and Vancouver Island University, moved online during the pandemic as well—offering courses well-suited to remote learning, such as leadership and communications skills, and a course in Indigenous culture and history. CSN also released a detailed report, called *Making a Difference*, which highlights STTP's positive impacts since it began in 2012. After an in-depth evaluation based on feedback through surveys, workshops and interviews with students, instructors and program coordinators, the final report showed STTP has done an excellent job building upon stewardship knowledge and skills within coastal communities.

Efforts to share stories about the important stewardship work of CFN member Nations continue. The CSN team produced a series of five videos that feature regional stewardship efforts across the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. The videos feature prominently on the CFN website and YouTube channel, and were shared extensively as part of a highly visible campaign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



## STORY

# Coastal Guardian Watchmen Support Coastal Communities

Coastal Guardian Watchmen are the eyes and ears of their Nations, working to protect the local culture, communities and ecosystems throughout their territories. For as long as these programs have existed, Guardians have also carried out many other frontline duties for their Nations, often going above and beyond their stewardship role.

This was especially true in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic brought much of society to a stand-still. With regular work and patrols either disrupted or put on hold, Guardians supported their communities in many other ways—from collecting groceries for community members, including food fish distribution, to checking up on Elders isolated at home and providing much-needed information updates for the entire community. For some Nuxalk Guardian Watchmen, it even meant taking on the very demanding role of working at an information checkpoint along the main highway into Nuxalk Territory.

Global pandemic or not, Coastal Guardian Watchmen have always been highly valued within each community, and they often draw upon their unique knowledge and skills as Guardians to transition into diverse new roles for their Nation.

Just ask Chantal Pronteau, a former Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Guardian who is now a full-time Language Project Supervisor, working to help document and ultimately revitalize the two language streams in her territory. "I just wanted to do more for my community and this seemed like a really great fit," says Chantal, who started the language work part-time in 2016 while she was still a Guardian. "I also wanted to learn from Elders as much as possible. I learned a lot from my grandmother, who passed away a little over a year ago, so it's definitely very important for me."

The pandemic really changed how the documentation work was done, forcing Chantal and other staff to conduct language recordings in virtual ways, using Zoom for example. She says the ultimate plan is to create a "First Voices" archive and eventually use it for a range of other applications, such as language training and education for other community members. Chantal says she's also considering other avenues for helping out in her community, specifically focusing on health and wellness.

"I loved being a Guardian, and I'm bringing what I learned from that experience into these new roles as well," says Chantal. "Documenting language is really just another form of stewardship; it's preserving our culture. Those places that I worked to protect as a Guardian have ancestral names, and that's part of what we're trying to protect now—not just the place itself, but the place names too."

# STEWARDSHIP DIRECTORS COMMITTEE

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Coordination and facilitation of quarterly SDC Zoom meetings (in-person depending on direction from the CFN-GBI Board regarding the COVID-19 pandemic) and monthly SDC Zoom conference calls.**
- **Host in-person workshops on specific topics/projects that need more in-depth discussions at a regional table.**

The Stewardship Directors Committee (SDC) was established to create a venue where Stewardship Directors and/or senior lands and oceans management staff from each Nation can come together with CFN Stewardship Program Managers and CFN Senior leadership to advance implementation of strategic land and marine use agreements.

In 2020, quarterly in-person meetings and monthly calls were changed to virtual Zoom meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through these meetings, the SDC continued to provide direction and support for regional initiatives that involve each of the Nations' stewardship/integrated resource offices. The SDC Program Manager works closely with other CFN-GBI Stewardship Programs to coordinate SDC discussions and carry out initiatives that align with the mandates received from the CFN-GBI Board.

The ultimate goal of regional stewardship initiatives is to support CFN-GBI member Nations to implement land and marine use plans and other regional agreements while supporting the strengthening of Nation-level stewardship staff capacity, including Guardian Watchmen, to manage and protect the lands and waters of coastal territories.

The SDC provides the opportunity for networking and collaboration among each community's stewardship office's directors and their staff on a regular basis. These monthly SDC Zoom calls provide a venue for Stewardship Directors and their senior managers to engage regularly with each other and provide direction to CFN-GBI stewardship program managers. The SDC also provides regular updates on discussions and stewardship work for the CFN-GBI Board.





## STORY

# Importance of Salmon Monitoring for Coastal Communities

A keystone species across the Pacific North Coast, salmon is the lifeblood of coastal economies, culture and traditions, having sustained First Nations here for thousands of years.

Five salmon species—chinook, chum, coho, pink and sockeye—help shape the entire coastal food web, from the open ocean to the freshwater streams and rivers that reach far inland, where bears and other terrestrial species bring this rich nutrient source deep within forested habitats.

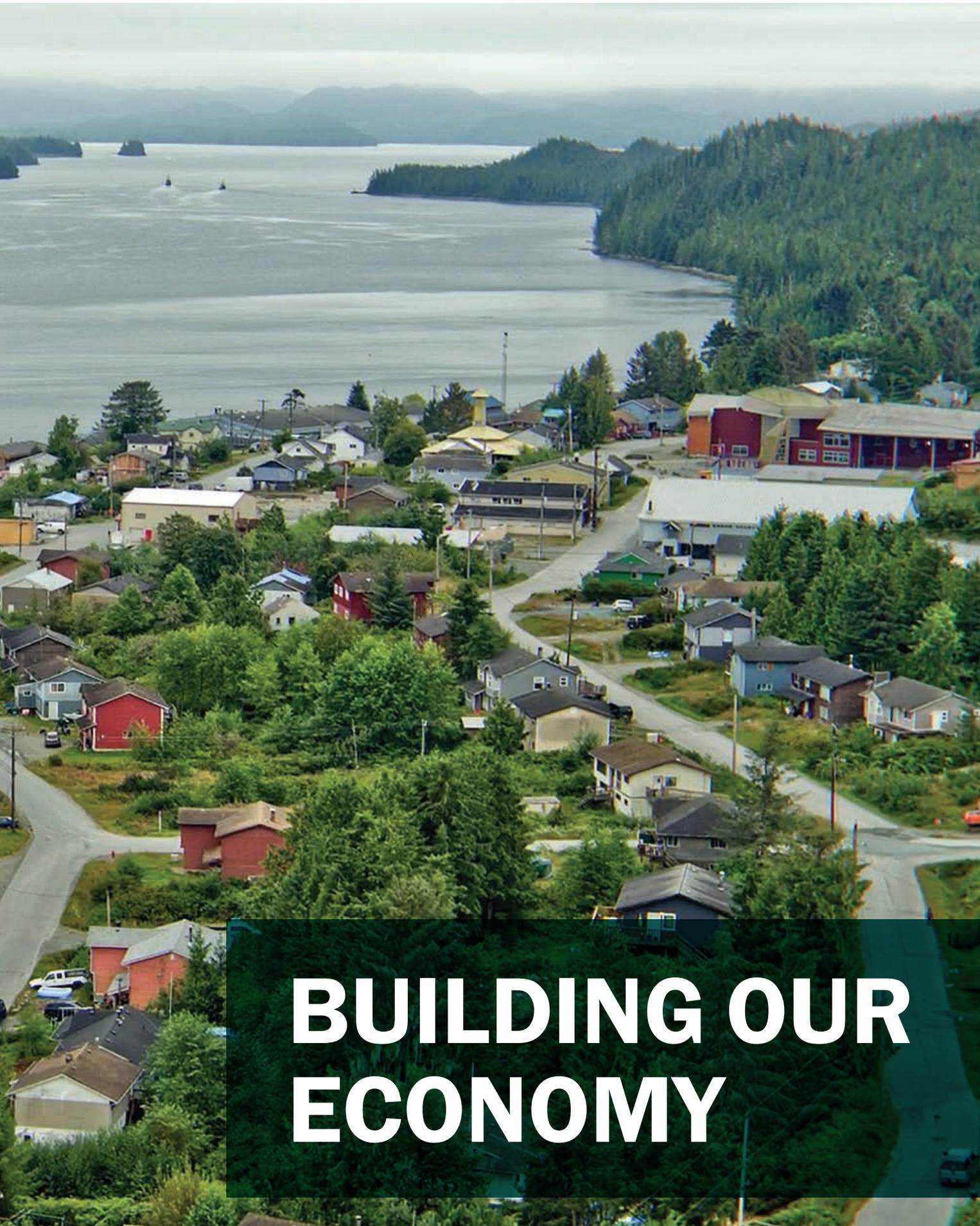
After a century of mismanagement, climate change and overfishing, salmon populations across the North and Central Coast are declining rapidly, with some returns at their lowest point ever recorded. “Basically, the bottom has dropped out of salmon abundance—in some areas, as low as 10 percent what they were just 15 years ago,” says Larry Greba, who leads Coastal First Nations’ fisheries program and has worked for years developing the Kitsoo/Xai’xais Nation fishery program.

With Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) not providing effective salmon assessments given reduced funding and resources, Greba says coastal First Nations have had to pick up the slack for salmon monitoring. “First Nations can collect this data more efficiently than anyone else,” he says, by tracking freshwater salmon survival in streams throughout the coast. “It’s essential to do this kind of intensive monitoring, which provides the baseline data needed to manage these fisheries into the future.”

Greba says fisheries technicians, Guardian Watchmen and other stewardship staff within coastal territories have been monitoring salmon for years using a range of strategies and techniques—including escapement and catch monitoring, juvenile salmon monitoring and genetic analysis based on DNA tissue samples. But he says these efforts must be enhanced and expanded to get a more comprehensive picture of current salmon populations and survivability.

It’s one thing to prioritize salmon monitoring, but the big challenge is implementing an effective, coast-wide monitoring program to help manage these important fisheries—especially given the recent historic signing of the Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRRA), which establishes a framework for co-governance of fisheries resources. As coastal First Nations take a lead role in managing salmon and other fisheries, maintaining effective monitoring programs that produce high-quality data is of critical importance.





# BUILDING OUR ECONOMY

# CONNECTIVITY

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Finalize the Super Digital Cluster Master Agreement with partners to secure funds to hire regional connectivity leads, launch CFN's Community Connectivity Network and identify projects for digital capacity development.**
- **Prepare 1:1 Nation engagements to support community digital planning, and work with communities to identify 7-Generations Partnership interests that address their priorities and meet mobile needs in anticipation for the Connected Coast (March 2023 completion).**
- **Prepare for the Implementation of the NRCAN Early Earthquake Warning System.**
- **Continue to secure speakers, attendees and the agenda for community digital workshops.**

The CFN Connectivity team continues to make progress on efforts to build a regional connectivity network across the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. Our goal is to ensure CFN member Nations have the tools and technologies in place to be leaders in the digital economy, and the capability to share their innovations, stories and learnings with others around the world. This work is helping to overcome the significant digital divide that rural and remote First Nations face across Canada.

Over the past year, the Joint Connectivity Working Group and Solutions Table—initiated through an MOU between the BC Government and CFN—has created new partnerships, secured funding and assessed the connectivity needs of communities through one-on-one community engagements. We continue to look for new funding opportunities, innovative training initiatives and access to new technology that will support coastal communities.

CFN's Connectivity team engaged Rogers Media in a new partnership that aims to build upon the digital skills and innovation leadership in coastal communities through enhanced connectivity. The partnership will support coastal communities in a range of ways, including improved and expanded connectivity for First Nations across western Canada, promoting community entrepreneurs through Rogers Shopping Channel, and providing media support for community storytelling—empowering youth voices through a range of media, including art, podcasts and Internet radio.

In November 2020, CFN and partner Future Cities/Evergreen Canada kicked off the 2nd annual 7-Generations Gathering—a virtual event that was part of Future Cities Canada's National Summit. CFN keynote speakers included Matriarchs Kii'iljuus Barbara Wilson (Haida) and Hilistis Pauline Waterfall (Heiltsuk), and a panel of community leaders who closed the National Summit with a dynamic session, called Reimagining Smart Cities through the Eyes of Coastal First Nations.

The Connectivity team was successful in securing a Canada's Digital Technology Super Cluster proposal for new funding that will support the development and training of connectivity leads in coastal communities. The team also secured funding from BC through the Northern Development Initiative Trust to provide last mile 50/10mbs connectivity upgrades and initiate a Marine Mobile Assessment, which will inform a Mobile Coastal Strategy to support communities on their mobile needs.



## STORY

# Connecting Our Coastline

Heiltsuk member Gary Wilson has experienced firsthand the challenges presented by limited Internet service in coastal First Nations communities.

In 2012, Wilson was completing his undergraduate program online while working in Bella Bella. When assignments were due, he found himself competing for daytime bandwidth access with the rest of the community. "I had no choice but to go to the office at 3 am to upload to the university platform, when nobody was awake, and the kids weren't gaming."

As a more extreme example, Wilson points to Klemtu residents who felt the impact of living without Internet in December 2018. Extreme storm winds blew down a tower, paralyzing payment systems and incapacitating administrative services.

Coastal First Nations is working to bring faster and more reliable Internet service to the coast to help communities deal with these challenges. Through the \$45-million government-funded Connected Coast initiative, CFN members will be among 44 coastal Nations to benefit from improved high-speed Internet service.

Wilson, CFN's former Director of Operations, is helping communities visualize their priorities for a new digital economy. Opportunities for the future, he says, are endless. The Heiltsuk Nation plans to include urban members in online language revitalization programs. Future opportunities include telehealth services, video-conferencing so Nations can reduce travel footprint, and attracting digital jobs and business to help young people stay in communities.

There are big implications for community safety as well. "We're always concerned about reaching people for emergencies like tsunami warnings, if they're out of cell range," Wilson says. "And in the case of marine emergencies, even if you have a good response plan, you still need reliable Internet access for it to be effective."

Improved service, which is slated for delivery next year, will reach remote coastal communities via a fibre-optic cable on the ocean floor – reaching from Haida Gwaii and Prince Rupert to the south coast, and around Vancouver Island. Canada and BC will cover the cost of delivering high-speed service to community shorelines. Then it's up to communities to decide how to plug in to bring service to individual homes.



# CLIMATE ACTION

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Renew the network funding for three more years.**
- **Develop a second cohort of Climate Action Coordinators.**
- **Renew the training plan for the next three years.**

The Climate Action Program supports CFN member First Nations as they work toward sustainability, including ground-breaking initiatives in clean energy, energy efficiency and climate change adaptation. Our team works closely with coastal communities to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and decrease carbon emissions, while simultaneously increasing clean energy production and enhancing local economies.

In 2020, Climate Action team collaborated with the Fraser Basin Council to develop, host and facilitate a Climate Adaptation Workshop series, which featured a range of climate-related discussions. Learnings from the workshop were documented in a new resource, which will be used to help guide future climate adaptation work in the Great Bear Rainforest.

CFN's Climate Action Network, which engages climate experts from each of the CFN member Nations, continues to advance conversations with BC Hydro, NRCan, and the Ministry of Energy, Low Carbon Innovation in an effort to secure the long-term funding that's required to support these important initiatives in coastal communities. Our team is also working with UBC Sustainability Scholar Joanne Nelson, from Lax Kw'alaams Nation, to advance research and analysis on other regional Indigenous capacity building initiatives and to develop recommendations for enhancing and expanding the Climate Action Network.

Our team hosted a Climate Leadership Table meeting to discuss long-term funding for clean energy and energy efficiency projects, as well as strategic planning gatherings and workshops to envision the next phase of the Climate Action Network.

We also provided important grant writing training, through Eco Canada, for interested Climate Action Coordinators, and we received preliminary funding approval for the UBC Sustainability Scholars program, which supports the work of graduate student researchers working with organizations on projects related to sustainability. We plan to have a graduate student conduct researching on other initiatives similar to the Climate Action Network working in other jurisdictions, in hopes of informing the next phase of the Network.



## STORY

# Working Toward a 100% Renewable Future

Energy efficient technologies, alternative energy sources and community partnerships are guiding the vision toward 100-percent renewable power on Haida Gwaii.

An energy partnership between Skidegate and Old Massett Village Council—Til Yahda Energy (TYE)—aims to expand and build clean energy projects on Haida Gwaii. With \$10.4 million in funding from Natural Resources Canada, TYE will also give the two communities ownership in the Island's hydroelectric generating station, with partners Atlantic Power and NRCan.

An expansion of the power facility at Mitchell Inlet will help reduce diesel dependency and allow the partners to sell hydroelectricity back to BC Hydro, according to Devin Rachar, Climate Action Coordinator for the Skidegate Band Council.

"We're trying to tackle the diesel problem together. As part of the ownership group, the communities will have some influence over the operations and the relationship with BC Hydro," says Devin. "It's important for both communities to have a role in energy production—where it comes from, how it's produced—to help guide the energy direction on Haida Gwaii."

The goal of reaching 100-percent renewable energy by 2023 was set in the "People's Clean Energy Declaration for Haida Gwaii," signed by the Haida Nation, Village Councils, Hereditary Leaders and municipal and regional governments in 2018.

Kevin Brown, Climate Action Coordinator for Old Massett, says climate change impacts, spurred on by carbon emissions, are evident on local food systems and weather. "There's lots of erosion—the sea is definitely rising. We haven't been able to get food fish from our primary rivers, or only very limited returns, so that's disconcerting for sure," he says. "The weather patterns and winds are changing, making it difficult for small boats to fish in Old Massett. It's also getting dryer."

An Island-wide energy plan, currently in development, will provide the roadmap to 100-percent renewable energy use on Haida Gwaii. According to the Climate Action Coordinators for both communities, the Skidegate Band Council has already completed a project to install heat pumps in almost every home, and Old Massett is working toward the installation of 200 new heat pumps in the community.

# FISHERIES RECONCILIATION

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Engaging with all CFN member Nations in strategic planning efforts to ensure effective implementation of key aspects of the FRRRA.**
- **Hire a new full-time bioregional coordinator position to help execute 10 collaborative governance sub-agreements.**

In 2020, Coastal First Nations and CFN member Nations signed an amended Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRRA) with Canada, which will bring the governments together in several important ways and help revitalize fisheries throughout coastal communities.

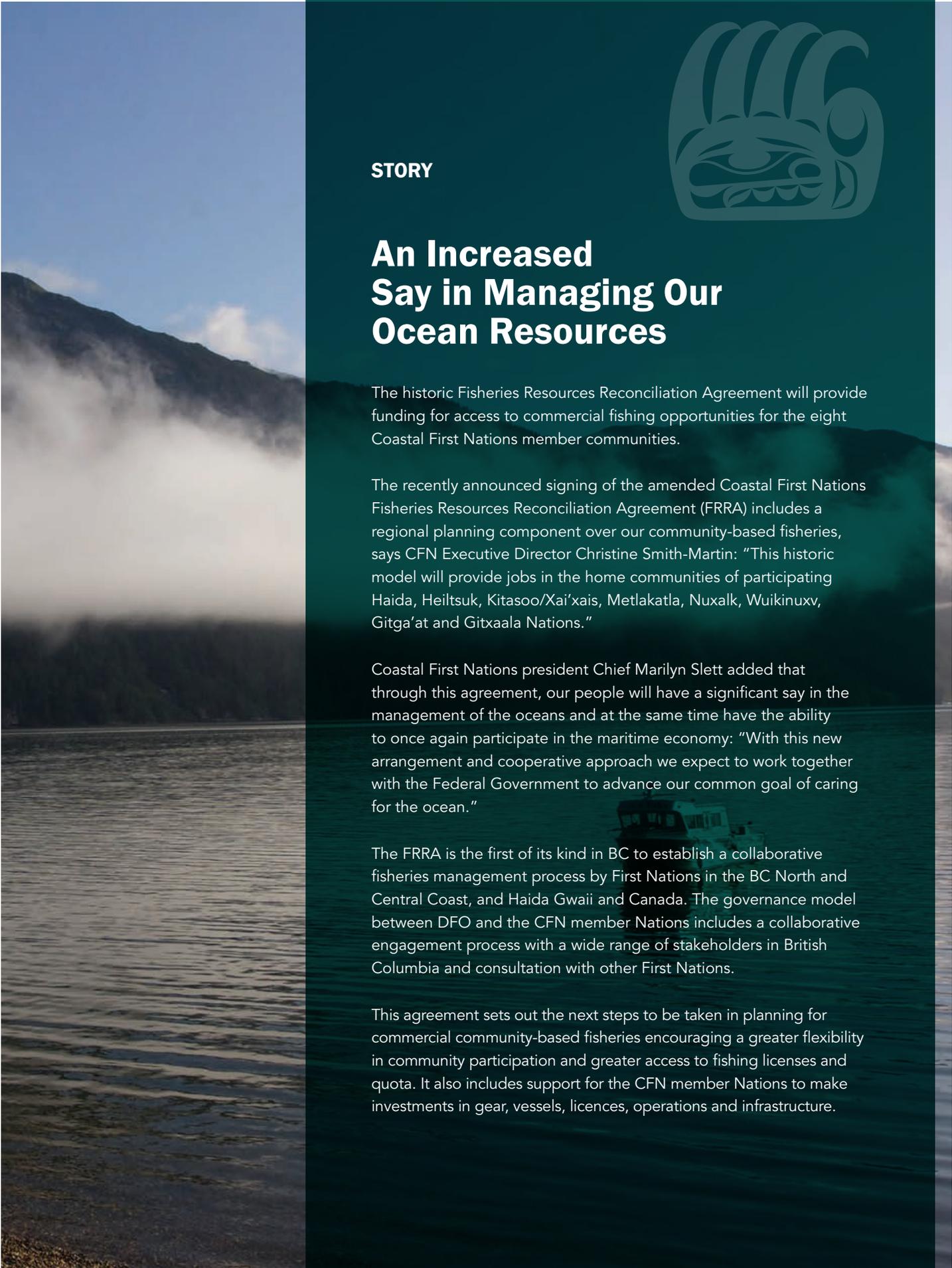
This historic agreement provides funding for access to commercial fishing opportunities for communities along the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii, and a community-based fisheries model that will provide fisheries jobs in the Haida, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Metlakatla, Nuxalk, Wuikinuxv, Gitga'at and Gitxaala Nations.

The FRRRA will give First Nations more control over fisheries management in their territories, including better access and oversight of quota and licensing. It will also ensure that coastal communities will benefit from commercial fishing through increased revenue, and new training and job opportunities. Beyond these local and regional impacts, the FRRRA establishes a true co-governance model for decision making that could provide a blueprint for other resource planning efforts.

Last year's amended agreement sets out the next steps that will need to be taken to prepare and strategically plan for commercial community-based fisheries. It also includes support for the CFN member Nations to make investments in gear, vessels, licences, operations and infrastructure.

The Fisheries team supports the implementation efforts of all CFN member Nations, and advances collaborative planning goals by facilitating bilateral discussions between Canada and the Nations as a group, and also between Canada and the individual Nations. This includes coordinating and supporting the flow of federal funds to participating Nations, which ensures the CFN Board will be involved with strategic planning for collaborative governance of fisheries for years to come.

CFN is managing implementation of the FRRRA until these funds have been transferred to a trust and until structures are legally established by the Nations to manage the economic components of the FRRRA.



## STORY

# An Increased Say in Managing Our Ocean Resources

The historic Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement will provide funding for access to commercial fishing opportunities for the eight Coastal First Nations member communities.

The recently announced signing of the amended Coastal First Nations Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRA) includes a regional planning component over our community-based fisheries, says CFN Executive Director Christine Smith-Martin: "This historic model will provide jobs in the home communities of participating Haida, Heiltsuk, KITASOO/Xai'xais, Metlakatla, Nuxalk, Wuikinuxv, Gitga'at and Gitxaala Nations."

Coastal First Nations president Chief Marilyn Slett added that through this agreement, our people will have a significant say in the management of the oceans and at the same time have the ability to once again participate in the maritime economy: "With this new arrangement and cooperative approach we expect to work together with the Federal Government to advance our common goal of caring for the ocean."

The FRRA is the first of its kind in BC to establish a collaborative fisheries management process by First Nations in the BC North and Central Coast, and Haida Gwaii and Canada. The governance model between DFO and the CFN member Nations includes a collaborative engagement process with a wide range of stakeholders in British Columbia and consultation with other First Nations.

This agreement sets out the next steps to be taken in planning for commercial community-based fisheries encouraging a greater flexibility in community participation and greater access to fishing licenses and quota. It also includes support for the CFN member Nations to make investments in gear, vessels, licences, operations and infrastructure.

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

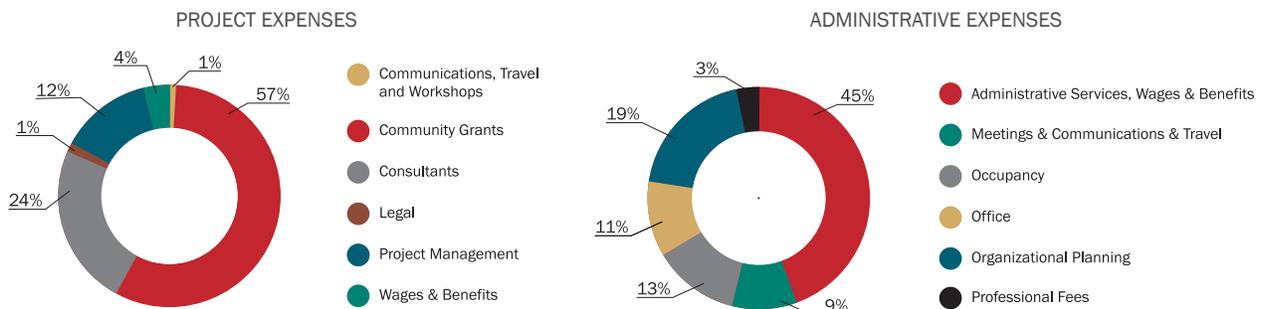
## Great Bear Initiative Society Statement of Financial Position

March 31	2021	2020
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash	\$ 5,546,952	\$ 1,969,614
Term deposits	2,154,628	4,144,355
Grants and other receivables	3,795,619	4,075,706
Prepays	11,500	32,683
	<u>11,508,699</u>	<u>10,222,358</u>
<b>Property and equipment</b>	<u>64,195</u>	<u>83,407</u>
	<u>\$ 11,572,894</u>	<u>\$ 10,305,765</u>
<b>Liabilities and Deferred Contributions</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 4,346,951	\$ 1,754,233
<b>Deferred lease inducements</b>	<u>35,583</u>	<u>39,428</u>
	<u>4,382,534</u>	<u>1,793,661</u>
<b>Deferred contributions</b>		
Expenses of future periods	7,126,165	8,428,697
Unamortized property and equipment	64,195	83,407
	<u>7,190,360</u>	<u>8,512,104</u>
	<u>\$ 11,572,894</u>	<u>\$ 10,305,765</u>
<b>Commitments</b>		
<b>Contingencies</b>		

## Great Bear Initiative Society Statement of Operations

For the year ended March 31	2021	2020
<b>Grants and contributions</b>	<b>\$ 15,481,678</b>	<b>\$ 10,598,498</b>
<b>Projects</b>		
Communications	21,420	93,045
Community sub-grants and distributions	8,098,515	2,489,840
Consultants	3,337,167	3,970,131
Curriculum and training development	170,190	30,356
Legal	182,181	435,703
Project management	1,648,675	1,411,592
Research and development	5,243	26,738
Supplies	65,338	19,954
Travel and workshops	112,446	665,904
Wages and benefits	549,184	349,773
	<b>14,190,359</b>	<b>9,493,036</b>
<b>General and administrative</b>		
Administrative services, wages, and benefits	585,625	615,884
Board meetings and travel	3,410	111,039
Communications	123,121	19,345
Insurance	9,696	7,215
Occupancy	167,874	167,466
Office	145,902	81,778
Organizational development and implementation	259,768	173,116
Professional fees	43,419	35,169
Amortization of property and equipment	35,554	14,068
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(35,554)	(14,068)
	<b>1,338,815</b>	<b>1,211,012</b>
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenditures before interest income</b>	<b>(47,496)</b>	<b>(105,550)</b>
<b>Interest income</b>	<b>47,496</b>	<b>105,550</b>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenditures</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

### Remunerations



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and honour our hereditary leaders, political leaders, Elders and community members who guide our work. They remind us that our collective responsibility is to ensure our lands and waters are managed sustainably, with future generations in mind.

## ***CFN-GBI would also like to thank our partners who support our work:***

Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

The Nature Conservancy

Nature United

MakeWay Charitable Society

Wilburforce Foundation

Coast Funds

Government of British Columbia

Government of Canada

BC Hydro

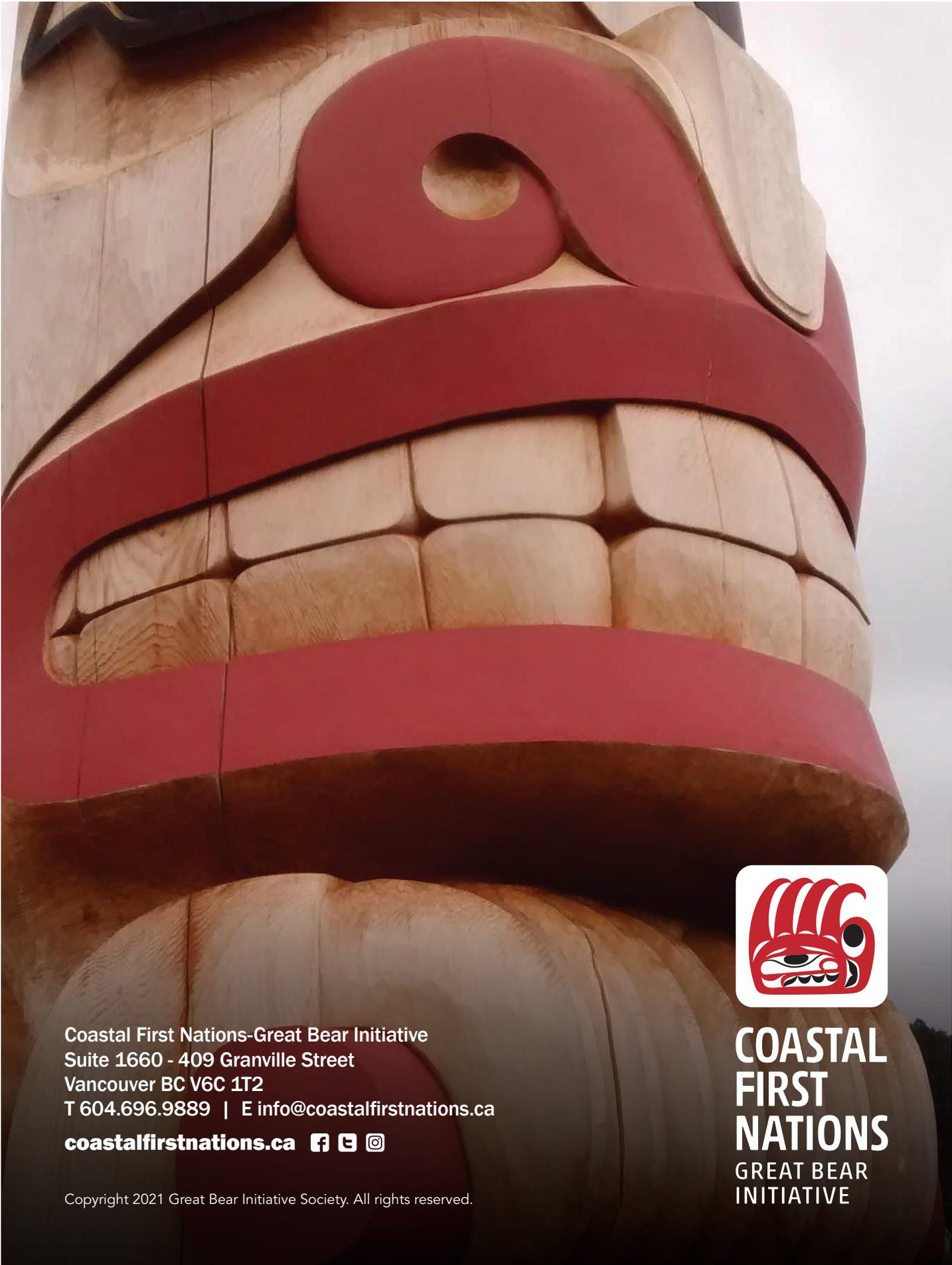
Microsoft Canada

Canada's Digital Technology Supercluster

LlamaZOO

TakingITGlobal





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