



**COASTAL  
FIRST NATIONS**  
GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE

2021-2026

# STRATEGIC PLAN







# Acknowledgements

Thank you to the CFN-GBI Board of Directors, Staff, Stewardship Directors, and Project Managers who offered their time, wisdom, guidance, and insight to create this plan.

# Table of Contents

<b>4</b>	<b>Message from the President</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Message from the Executive Director</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>About the Plan</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
8	About Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative
10	Our Organization and Plans
11	Our Planning Context
<b>12</b>	<b>Our Accomplishments</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>What Guides Us</b>
14	The Declaration of First Nations of the North Pacific Coast, 2000
15	Our Vision   Our Mission
<b>16</b>	<b>Goals and Objectives</b>
17	Goal 1: Unity
18	Goal 2: Protection
19	Goal 3: Wellbeing
20	Goal 4: Connection
21	Goal 5: Alignment



## Message from the President

For over 20 years, the Great Bear Initiative Society (GBI) has been a leader and forward thinker in rebuilding a conservation-based economy on the coast, while at the same time protecting our environment.

This strategic plan, which was guided and supported by the CFN-GBI board of directors, represents a bold and clear plan that outlines where we're going and how we'll get there. The five strategic goals will keep us focused on our future direction, as well as our day-to-day work.

We have experienced massive change over the past 20 years, yet we have maintained a steadfast focus on working for our communities on issues such as land and marine use planning, stewardship, and other important issues. This is core to our success. It is who we are. Our work occurs in a rapidly changing environment and we ensure our strategic direction includes responding to change.

Our plan was developed with the intention of being a living document that could be revisited, evaluated, and open to new opportunities. What remains constant is that our work will continue to support our communities.

Each goal in our plan is based on input and feedback from our leaders, staff, project managers and Stewardship Directors. Thank you all for sharing your passion and insight—we heard you!

Our new strategic plan is different from our past plans. This will be our Action Plan to work together to build a stronger future. This plan will help us realize what is truly possible when we work together, connect with others who share our values, and commit to creating change.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my appreciation to all the people who contributed to the development of the Great Bear Initiative Society's strategic plan. This plan belongs to all of us. And it is up to each of us to make it a reality. As we like to say: We are stronger together!

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

**Marilyn Slett**

Chief Councillor, Heiltsuk Tribal Council  
CFN-GBI President





## Message from the Executive Director

As the new Executive Director, I am thrilled and honoured to join Coastal First Nations at such a critical moment in time. The organization's first five-year strategic plan represents an incredible opportunity to build on the outstanding work that has been achieved over the past two decades.

The plan is ambitious, future-focused and will allow us to embrace the enormous changes and challenges we currently face. This past year has brought us unprecedented and sometimes devastating challenges to our health and well-being as individuals and as a larger community.

COVID19 has dominated our daily lives and changed how we operate as an organization. What hasn't changed and won't change is our deep commitment to continue supporting our communities. Throughout the pandemic our board of directors, staff and program managers work has successfully continued.

I believe the future of Coastal First Nations and our communities is very bright.

As part of the Coastal First Nations leadership team, I am committed to advancing the goals and objectives in the strategic plan. The successful implementation of the plan will create new opportunities for our communities without destroying our lands and waters.

As Executive Director, I bring with me an extensive background in community and relationship building. I look forward to opportunities to collaborate with existing and new partners as we work towards our common goals.

Throughout my career I have learned that communities who focus on a goal together can achieve amazing changes. It will be an honour to work with the board of directors, staff and program managers to implement the strategic plan, to learn from all of you, and together set an even higher standard for the programs and services we provide to our communities.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. With your support, the Coastal First Nations will continue our work with high hopes, confidence, and integrity. We will always be mindful of our communities' vision and the importance of uplifting others along the way as we move forward.

**Christine Smith-Martin**  
CFN-GBI Executive Director





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# Welcome

The Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative (CFN-GBI) 2021-2026 Strategic Plan presents the Vision and Mission of the organization. This plan includes five high-level goals and a series of objectives for each. This plan will guide the work of the organization over the next 5+ years.

## About the Plan

This strategic plan was developed under the direction of the CFN-GBI Board of Directors with input from Staff, Program Managers, and Stewardship Directors. The plan came together piece-by-piece through an iterative process over the course of many virtual planning sessions, meetings, and one-on-one conversations, as well as through questionnaires and worksheets.

This plan provides a path forward for CFN-GBI over a period of 5+ years. The “+” has been included to indicate that the work carried out over the next five years will continue past that timeframe as we strive to achieve our long-term vision.

The plan includes a vision, an updated mission, and five high-level goals to guide the work of the organization. Each goal is supported by three to five objectives that will guide us in helping to achieve our goals.







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# Introduction

**In June of 2000, leaders from British Columbia’s North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii joined together to sign the Declaration of First Nations of the North Pacific Coast.**

The Declaration, amended and re-affirmed in March 2021, contains important commitments that outline how we work together. Through the signing of the Declaration, a coast-wide alliance was born. Today, over twenty years later, we remain committed to the Declaration, and to our alliance. Through this recent strategic planning process, we took time to pause and look inward; to celebrate the incredible and ground-breaking accomplishments we have achieved over the past twenty years, and to determine how we want to continue working together to ensure many more years of success.

## **About Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative**

Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative (CFN-GBI) is a unique alliance of Nations: Wuikinuxv, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xaixais, Nuxalk, Gitga’at, Metlakatla, Old Massett, Skidegate, Council of the Haida Nation, and Gitxaala. Each Nation has its own distinct culture, governance and territory located on British Columbia’s North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. Based on the inherent rights and leadership of these member Nations, CFN-GBI promotes community self-sufficiency and sustainable economic development. Together, we work to uphold our responsibility to support the wellbeing of our communities, and to protect the lands, waters, air, and all living species in our territories.

## Our Organization and Plans

Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative is governed by a Board of Directors composed of one representative from each of the ten member Nations. These leaders meet multiple times per year to provide direction and guidance on high-level goals and activities. The Executive Committee is a smaller group of leaders who meet regularly to review administrative issues and monitor project work.

CFN-GBI has a small core staff who support the Board in carrying out planning work, communications, project support, and administration. Project managers work in conjunction with staff to oversee and direct the work of CFN-GBI's many diverse programs and projects that aim to protect these unique and important territories, from seafloor to mountain top.

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***The Great Bear Rainforest is made up of 74,000 kilometers of rainforest and sea, stretching north to the Alaskan border and as far south as Vancouver Island. This region is made up of the unceded Traditional Territories of over two dozen First Nations who have been carefully stewarding these lands and waters for millennia.***

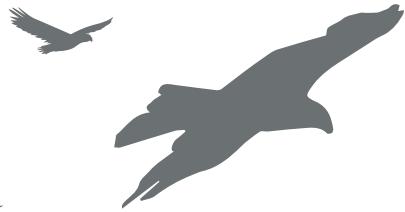
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## Our Planning Context

This strategic plan exists within the broader planning ecosystem of CFN-GBI, as depicted in the graphic below. Each plan aligns with the others, and varies in depth and detail.

### BIRD'S EYE VIEW



### TREE-TOP VIEW



### GROUND-LEVEL



# Our Accomplishments


Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative has accomplished an incredible amount in the past twenty years since the signing of the Declaration that first brought us together. There are so many people who have played a role over the years and we acknowledge their contributions in service of this incredible work. We are proud of what we have accomplished, and see these successes as a strong base for our future work.

## 20 YEARS COASTAL FIRST NATIONS GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE CELEBRATING OUR MILESTONES

<b>2000</b> Declaration of First Nations of the North Pacific Coast signed by Coastal Nations	<b>2001</b> Historic agreement introduces ecosystem-based forest management	<b>2002</b> First Nations land-use planning process begins	<b>2003</b> CFN signs protocol with BC to enhance aquaculture and commercial recreation opportunities	<b>2005</b> Coastal Guardian Watchmen Network forms	<b>2006</b> Strategic Land Use Planning Agreements protect ecosystems and Indigenous cultural heritage
<b>2006</b> Conservancies created to prioritize First Nations' social, ceremonial and cultural uses	<b>2007</b> \$120-million Coast Opportunity Funds set up for First Nations' conservation and economic initiatives	<b>2009</b> CFN Reconciliation Protocol with BC gives Nations access to sell forest carbon credits	<b>2010</b> 1.9 million hectares of conservancies and biodiversity areas established	<b>2010</b> Coastal First Nations oppose Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline	<b>2011</b> Great Bear Carbon Credit Corporation launches world's largest, Indigenous forest carbon project
<b>2011</b> Coastal Shellfish Corporation established	<b>2011</b> CFN Clean Energy Action Plan initiated	<b>2016</b> Great Bear Rainforest Act protects 85% of coastal rainforest	<b>2016</b> Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline is rejected	<b>2016</b> Coastal First Nations Marine Plans signed with BC	<b>2017</b> CFN Reconciliation tables negotiate co-management of land and sea resources
<b>2017</b> Grizzly bear trophy hunt banned in the Great Bear Rainforest	<b>2018</b> Crude Oil Tanker moratorium upheld for BC North Coast	<b>2018</b> Great Bear Essential Oils established	<b>2020</b> Fisheries Reconciliation Agreement is underway	<b>#CFNStrongerTogether</b>	

*"Our power working together underlines all of what we have achieved."* **CFN-GBI Staff Member**





The work we do as the Coastal First Nations - Great Bear Initiative is guided by the original commitments our leaders made in signing the Declaration of First Nations of the North Pacific Coast, and more recently by our work to articulate and update our vision and mission.

# WHAT GUIDES US



# Declaration of First Nations of the North Pacific Coast

## DECLARATION

The North West Coast is a rich, and precious part of the earth. Our Cultures arise from the connection of our people with these lands and seas.

We recognize that our life source remains under the direct threat of industry and from the cumulative impacts of humanity and attendant effects on the climate.

This declaration is our commitment to protecting and restoring the natural world and in doing so, retaining our cultures while designing sustainable economies.

We live with the consequence of any abuse of our territories and the greater perils of climate change.

We commit ourselves to stand together, support each other and work together to fulfill these commitments:

- To making decisions that ensure the well-being of [our lands](#) and [waters](#).
- To retain our cultures through our tradition, knowledge, and respect of nature.
- To be respectful of each other and to all life.

## PRINCIPLES

We recognize our responsibilities to future generations;

We will advance our influence through the affirmation of our Title and Rights;

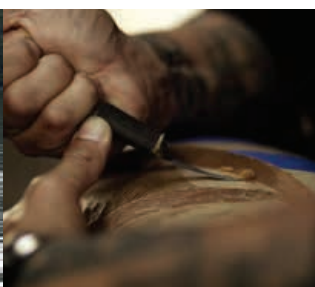
Our respect for nature will continue to guide our decisions;

We seek self-reliance and will design our economies to respect our life source;

We will share our experiences and support each other to mutual advantage;

We will respect territorial prerogatives and develop protocols to formalize interplay;

Our Nations will celebrate our cultural differences while honoring our family ties.







## Our Vision

Protected and restored ecosystems in our lands and waters, managed sustainably by member First Nations, enabling traditional and modern economies, improving the quality of life of the people in our communities, giving rise to healthy First Nations.

## Our Mission

We support the wellbeing of our communities by working collectively to protect our environment and to build a sustainable economy in our territories.

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*“Many First Nation voices are heard loud and clear when we speak as one.”* **CFN-GBI Staff Member**

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# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



# GOAL 1

**We work in unity as a collective of strong, independent Nations.**

## **OBJECTIVE 1.1**

We collaborate and coordinate across Nations on high-level priorities.

## **OBJECTIVE 1.2**

We recognize the independence of our member Nations and support their interests, rights and title.

## **OBJECTIVE 1.3**

Our Board Members are empowered and supported to articulate our organizational values, set the direction of the organization and act as informed spokespeople for CFN-GBI within their own communities.

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*“Member communities do not hesitate to show up for each other when advocacy or direct action is required, and deeper cross-community relationships have been helped along by having a common table.”* **CFN-GBI Staff Member**

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# GOAL 2

**Our lands, waters, and all life forms are protected through the extension of our decision-making authority and stewardship responsibility over our territories.**

## **OBJECTIVE 2.1**

We advance our governance and decision-making authority over lands and oceans through reconciliation and co-governance agreements and arrangements.

## **OBJECTIVE 2.2**

We support Nations' collaboration and capacity in advancing protection and stewardship of the lands, waters, and life forms in CFN-GBI territories.

## **OBJECTIVE 2.3**

We support member Nations' resilience and independence by supporting mitigation of, preparation for, and adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

## **OBJECTIVE 2.4**

We support member Nations in rebuilding sustainable fisheries and forestry.

# GOAL 3

## Our work supports the wellbeing of our member Nations.

### OBJECTIVE 3.1

We provide opportunities for support, training, education, and employment within member Nations.

### OBJECTIVE 3.2

We support conservation-based economic development in communities.

### OBJECTIVE 3.3

We support the communications and connectivity capacity of member Nations.

### OBJECTIVE 3.4

We measure the impacts of CFN-GBI on member Nations' wellbeing.

### OBJECTIVE 3.5

We collaborate with, and provide guidance to other Indigenous Nations, organizations, and international groups whose work aligns with ours, and impacts shared territories.

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*“We need to train our people in governance and leadership. We need to look at it as if our time in these seats is limited and we are just keeping them warm for the next generations. These generations need to be stronger than we are now.”*

**CFN-GBI Staff Member**

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# GOAL 4

Through community engagement and communications we are connected to our member Nations.

## OBJECTIVE 4.1

We engage with communities to ensure that the values, stories, and priorities of our member Nations inform the work of CFN-GBI.

## OBJECTIVE 4.2

We clearly express our organizational role, our values, and the values of our member Nations through our communications and branding.

## OBJECTIVE 4.3

We celebrate our successes and accomplishments.

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*“People on the ground have the info and the knowledge of what is happening.”*

**CFN-GBI Staff Member**

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# GOAL 5

**Our organizational structure, culture, and values, together with stable funding, allow us to align our actions with our vision.**

## **OBJECTIVE 5.1**

Our operations and programs are well-funded through stable revenue streams.

## **OBJECTIVE 5.2**

Our clear organizational structure, roles, and responsibilities ensure effective collaboration across CFN-GBI programs, projects, and sub-regional organizations.

## **OBJECTIVE 5.3**

We are a skillful, thriving CFN-GBI team, with trusting relationships, excellent communication, and the capacity to meet our organizational needs.

## **OBJECTIVE 5.4**

We incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and being into operations.

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*“This is an incredible organization with a lot of smart, kind-hearted, forward-thinking people.”* **CFN-GBI Staff Member**

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*“The world needs Indigenous people to lead.”* **CFN-GBI Staff Member**

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