



**COASTAL  
FIRST NATIONS**  
GREAT BEAR INITIATIVE

# ANNUAL REPORT **2023-24**

Protecting our Coast. Building our Economy.





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# WHO WE ARE

The **Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative** is an alliance of First Nations along the 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.

## 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.

## MISSION

Based on the inherent rights and leadership of member First Nations of Coastal First Nations, protect and conserve the environment and work in partnership with all levels of Government, NGOs and others to create a new conservation-based economy within the respective Traditional Territories.

## GOVERNANCE

The Great Bear Initiative Society is a non-profit society under the Societies Act of BC and operates under the direction of a Board of Directors, with one representative from each of the member First Nations and First Nation organizations. The Board approves an annual operational plan and budget for the organization. Our members include Wuikinuxv, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo Xai'xais, Nuxalk, Gitga'at, Gitxaala, Metlakatla, Old Massett, Skidegate, and Council of the Haida Nation.

The Board of Directors meets quarterly to review progress and provide direction on activities. An Executive Committee (our Society's officers - President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary) also meets regularly to review administrative issues and monitor project work.

CFN has offices in North Vancouver and Vancouver, where a team of core staff support the Board of Directors with the following:

- Strategic project planning
- Program administration
- Communications and outreach
- Assistance in developing economic strategies
- Community capacity-building
- Financial management

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

**Bruce Reece** – Chief Councillor, Gitga'at Nation

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

**Robert Nelson** – Chief Councillor, Metlakatla Governing Council

**Marcia Robinson** – Councillor, Gitxaala

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

**Tihmtimut Samuel Schooner** – Chief Councillor, Nuxalk Nation

**Abúk Danielle Shaw** – Chief Councillor, Wuikinuxv Nation

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

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

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Káwáził Marilyn Slett** – President

**Abúk Danielle Shaw** – Vice-President

**Gaagwiis Jason Alsop** – Treasurer

**Bruce Reece** – Secretary



# CEO'S MESSAGE

## CHRISTINE SMITH-MARTIN



### **Funding a Sustainable Future on the North Pacific Coast**

In June 2024, CFN member First Nations, along with other governments, funders and industry partners, celebrated a landmark \$335-million investment for stewardship, conservation and sustainable economic development in the Great Bear Sea (see page 11)—a historic initiative that will help preserve our home environmentally, economically, culturally and socially.

The Great Bear Sea initiative is supported by an innovative funding model known as a Project Finance for Permanence (PFP), which provides long-term financing for Indigenous-led marine stewardship and conservation to accelerate the transition to a sustainable economy.

Our leaders pioneered the world's first PFP almost two decades ago with the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement—a monumental achievement that has protected more than 3 million hectares of coastal temperate rainforest, while creating new jobs and businesses, supporting community and cultural programs, and diversifying the regional economy.

Just as land and sea merge into one coastal ecosystem, these initiatives operate in tandem, protecting and sustainably managing the entire Great Bear region for all future generations. Taken together, these collaborative efforts protect a combined 45,000 square kilometres of land and marine ecosystems, including many threatened and endangered species, and advance the global fight against the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis.

It's true that creating more protected areas is a vital step forward in meeting these global challenges, but protected areas must also be accompanied by policies that support sustainable livelihoods for those who live there. As with its land-based counterpart, the Great Bear Sea PFP will support Indigenous-led governance, adaptive conservation and ecosystem-based management, and new jobs and extensive skills training needed to implement those programs, including compliance and enforcement, monitoring and stewardship by Indigenous Guardians.

This 2023-24 Annual Report highlights our latest success in the Great Bear Sea, along with the many other achievements our leadership, staff and partners have achieved over the past year.

Thank you all for your dedication in building a conservation-based economy. Our collective efforts in the Great Bear region are making an enormous positive difference in coastal communities, and providing a blueprint for successful conservation planning worldwide.

Together, we are building a bright and healthy future for all CFN member Nations!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Martin".

**Christine Smith-Martin**  
CEO, Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative

# Introducing the Great Bear First Nations Foundation

Over the past year, representatives from CFN member Nations have been working together to create the Great Bear First Nations Foundation (GBFNF).

GBFNF will operate under the direction of a Board of Directors appointed by the Great Bear Initiative Society, supporting our vital work to promote the health, wellbeing and community resilience of First Nations on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

To support CFN member Nations in caring for coastal ecosystems, the Foundation will foster learning, environmental stewardship and sustainable resource management, and help preserve the cultural heritage and ecological richness of the Great Bear region. By advancing these collective goals, GBFNF will also be preserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable practices that will inspire and benefit communities worldwide.

Please stay tuned as we share more information and developments about the Great Bear First Nations Foundation in the coming year. Your support for the Foundation will be an investment in the future of CFN member Nations and the Great Bear region, and a commitment to global environmental stewardship and cultural preservation.

Join us in making a difference! Together, we will ensure the Great Bear Rainforest and Sea remains vibrant and thriving for all future generations.

For more information on how you can support the GBFNF vision, please contact Development Manager Penny Naldrett at [pnaldrett@coastalfirstnations.ca](mailto:pnaldrett@coastalfirstnations.ca).







## STORY

# A Night to Remember: Inaugural Great Bear Gala

In October 2023, CFN hosted the first ever Great Bear Gala—a chance to celebrate decades of hard work and recognize the hard work and dedication of outstanding leaders and partners.

Representatives from CFN member Nations joined provincial and federal government representatives, industry and foundation partners to reflect on our shared values, goals and responsibilities in keeping coastal communities healthy and thriving.

The gala was held at the Polygon Gallery in North Vancouver, located on Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), sə́lilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), and xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) territories, hosted by Global BC news anchor Sophie Lui. A representative from the Squamish Nation, Joelle Johnston, welcomed the guests, and Spakwus Slolem (Eagle Song Dancers) exercised the protocol and laws of their canoe culture, sharing songs and dance.

CEO Christine Smith-Martin spoke about CFN's collaborative success over the years—supporting Coastal Guardians, clean energy projects, stewardship offices, the first-of-its-kind carbon offset program, which provides economic incentive to preserve ecosystems, and more.


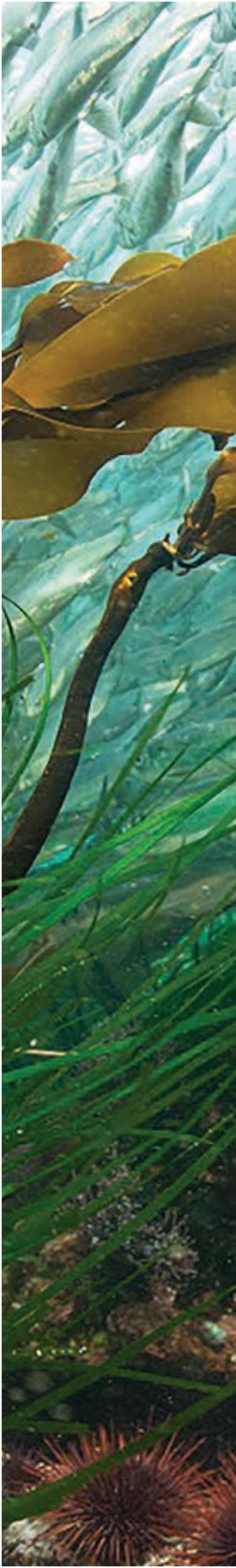
“This gala is an opportunity for us to recognize and honour those who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and support, and achieved remarkable accomplishments in their work with CFN and coastal communities,” said Smith-Martin at the event. “These trailblazers have set high standards for themselves—we applaud their outstanding contributions and pay tribute to their commitment to protect our coast and revitalize our coastal economy.”

Leadership Awards were announced for Harold Leighton, former Chief Councillor of the Metlakatla First Nation, Hereditary Chief Gidansda Guujaaw, the late Philip B. Lind, a longtime supporter of CFN, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and Global BC.

After dinner was served and awards were given, a live auction featured several prizes—including one-night Victoria getaway for two, a four-night stay at the Spirit Bear Lodge in Klemtu, a two-night getaway at the Crest Hotel in Prince Rupert, an all-inclusive stay at the Haida House in Haida Gwaii, and a stay at Shearwater Resort and Marina, in Hałtzaqv territory.

CFN is grateful to Rogers Communications, our Presenting Sponsor for the gala, as well as the many other sponsors and supporters who made the evening such a success!





## STORY

# Funding a Sustainable Future in the Great Bear Sea

On June 25, coastal First Nations, provincial and federal governments, and philanthropists announced the Great Bear Sea Project Finance for Permanence—a collaborative funding initiative involving \$200 million from Canada, \$60 million from BC and \$75 million from philanthropic investors.

Coined the “Great Bear Sea” and also referred to as the “Northern Shelf Bioregion,” the marine region extends from northern Vancouver Island to the Canada-Alaska border. It is one of the richest and most productive cold-water marine ecoregions on Earth, home to abundant marine life, including herring, salmon, whales, dolphins, seabirds, kelp forests—all of them impacted by climate change, biodiversity loss and critical population declines.

Abúk Danielle Shaw, Chief Councillor of the Wuikinuxv Nation, has experienced first-hand the impacts of unfettered commercial activity, government mismanagement of resources that ignored First Nations’ authorities and expertise, and a rapidly changing climate. “With the impacts of commercial fisheries, climate change and warming waters, we’ve been fighting an uphill battle,” says Shaw. “There’s a lot of work to just build up these stocks again. So being able to have a seat at the table, when it comes to these kinds of decisions... helps to make sure we’re moving in the right direction.”

Shaw says each Nation has been working to formalize plans that feed into the Great Bear Sea Marine Protected Area Network (MPA Network), a variety of protected areas that operate cohesively at various spatial scales, and with a range of protection levels, to fulfill ecological aims more successfully in an integrated way, rather than individually.

The Great Bear Sea project will provide funding for collaborative implementation of the MPA Network Action Plan and the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP)—two initiatives representing more than a decade of work between First Nations, other governments, and many other stakeholders (including commercial fishing, tourism, energy and other sectors).

Gaagwiis Jason Alsop, President of the Council of the Haida Nation, believes the investment in the Great Bear Sea is critical for the food security and sustainability of his people and culture, but he says it’s important to acknowledge and recognize the people who came before.

“We wouldn’t be here without our ancestors, our Elders, those who shared their knowledge and wisdom into helping us determine what areas are most important right now for protection,” he says. “This is all built on that history, that knowledge and the work to get to this point and take it to the next step.”





# PROTECTING OUR COAST

# OUR LAND

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Following the BC election, engage with a new government with the goal of aligning existing and developing new land stewardship strategies and initiatives.**
- **Coordinate work and discussions that support the capacity of member Nations to undertake effective collaborative and joint decision making.**
- **Through wide-ranging collaborative discussions, identify key issues and opportunities affecting the coastal forest sector, including the key elements of a recovery strategy.**
- **Develop terms of reference and a workplan for the GBR North Timber Supply Review.**
- **Initiate joint studies to assess capacity issues and identify investment gaps related to:**
  - **the capacity of existing regional transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of member Nations, and**
  - **the readiness of member Nation communities to respond to climate change through adaptation and mitigation.**

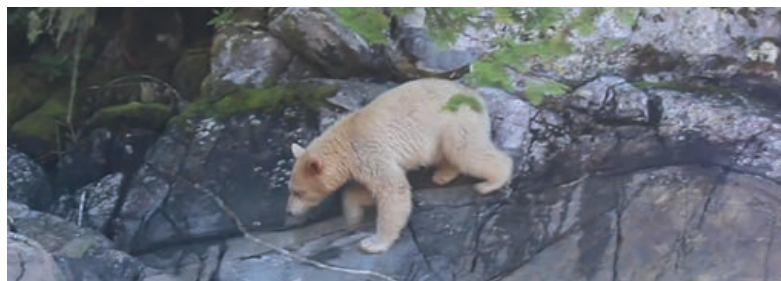
The CFN Lands program provides a venue for Lands Managers and Stewardship Directors of CFN member Nations to work collaboratively with each other and engage with other governments, industry, environmental organizations and others to improve land stewardship.

Key goals include achieving effective implementation of ecosystem-based land stewardship, improving community wellbeing through conservation-based economic opportunities, and protecting the cultural and ecological values of member Nations' territorial lands.

We aim to advance existing agreements that recognize the responsibilities and rights of CFN member Nations to protect and sustainably manage their lands and resources, including shared decision-making arrangements and participation in government-to-government forums related to land stewardship. We also work to secure new agreements, including new policy and legislation, that advance Indigenous governance and co-governance of lands and resources and economic opportunities, such as carbon credits, tourism and forestry.

## Impacts

- Advanced implementation of the amended 2023 Great Bear Rainforest Land Use Order.
- Provided support to finalize and begin implementing the new CFN-BC Regional Accord.
- Ensured Crown initiatives like the "Old Growth Strategic Review" and amendments to greenhouse gas regulations address the interests of member Nations.
- Continued to facilitate regular internal meeting and discussions and external communications and engagement with senior BC staff and key industry and environmental stakeholder organizations.
- Coordinated participation and involvement of member Nation staff and representatives in government-to-government technical and policy working groups.



## STORY

# Land-Based Youth Program Shaping Lives



The summer SEAS program (Supporting Emerging Aboriginal Stewards) incorporates land-based education, cultural knowledge and professional skill development to support youth in coastal communities. Ever since the program began in Kitsoo Xai'xais territory in 2012, Klemtu has seen positive results in the number of participants pursuing higher education and investing in stewardship roles and other career paths that benefit the Nation.

Vernon Brown, Kitsoo Xai'xais SEAS program coordinator, has been involved with the program for the last decade. An essential part of the program, he says, involves cultural knowledge like storytelling, identifying cultural sites and features, information about berry-picking spots, habitation sites, fishing areas, medicinal plants, harvesting seasons and practices.

"We help fill the cultural void, especially at their age," says Vern while taking a cohort of the program out to visit different sites and harvest devil's club. "Klemtu was one of the communities really impacted by residential schools, the potlatch ban, we lost so many songs, stories and dances. But we have our territory, the Chieftainships are still there. If you're not involved in any dance groups or potlatching, this is a great way to reintroduce yourself to your own culture."

While connecting the youth to their culture through land-based education, the program also focuses on capacity building, professional skills development and survival skills. Youth get a chance to go on a four-day canoe portage trip up one of the rivers in their territory with survival outdoor education specialist Rye Green. "It's critical at their age," Vern explains. "You can do a lifetime's worth of learning within the short week out on the land."

Vern says it's important to bring the right people in to meet the students, to teach them how working professionals got to where they are today and what it takes to nurture their own career paths and futures. Many former SEAS participants are now working for their Nation—in language programs, research departments, as Guardians or guides, or off to college or university to further develop their skills and education. Investing in youth is investing in the wellbeing and future of the whole community.

Robbie Duncan, the Kitsoo Xai'xais SEAS program assistant coordinator, says the program has helped him get out of his shell and opened his eyes to the territory. "The only time I had been out on the boat before the program was for fishing or seaweed harvesting," Robbie says. "I didn't really pay attention. But this program opened my eyes, my horizons, and made me more comfortable on the territory."

Robbie says learning on the land helps him remember what he's learning; rather than hearing about how to do something, you learn how to do it physically. "It's different," he says. "It's effective and it stays with you forever."



# OUR SEA

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Support implementation of the PFP, and the collaborative governance, establishment and management of the MPA Network and individual sites.**
- **Continue collaborative work to implement the MaPP Initiative and the RFA.**
- **Further develop and enhance the marine response regime for the Great Bear Sea, including operational guidance and support for sub-regional incident response plans and enhancing community capacity to respond to incidents.**
- **Advance a major new collaborative workstream with Transport Canada and Coast Guard Canada to inform risk-based preparedness across the Great Bear Sea.**



The CFN Marine team supports the efforts of coastal First Nations in leading marine planning efforts within their coastal territories, including working collaboratively with other governments and partners, and providing leadership, coordination and policy support on numerous initiatives. This includes the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP), implementation of the Reconciliation Framework on Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection (RFA), implementation of Ocean Protection Plan (OPP) initiatives, and advancing the Great Bear Sea Marine Protected Areas Network and Project Finance for Permanence (PFP).

## Impacts

- Launched the Great Bear Sea PFP initiative, which will provide substantial long-term funding for collaborative MPA Network implementation, management and stewardship.
- Facilitated the development of collaborative governance agreements, signed by First Nations, Canada and BC, for the coordination of the MPA Network and establishment and governance of individual MPA sites.
- Increased capacity of MPA Network partners through technical coordinators who oversee programmatic aspects of Network implementation.
- Ongoing regional coordination to First Nations MPA Network partners on all aspects of MPA Network implementation, including engagement and communications support.
- Developed MPA Network Monitoring Framework as a first step toward the MPA Network Monitoring Program, Strategy and Plan.
- Coordinated MaPP Nations' input to BC's *Coastal Marine Strategy*, published July 2024.
- Collaborative NSB Regional Framework for Marine Incident Preparedness, Response and Recovery (NSB Framework) was endorsed by RFA Nations, Canada and BC.
- Progress made in developing four sub-regional marine incident response plans.
- Co-developed policy recommendations with Transport Canada and Canadian Coast Guard on Emergency Towing for BC waters, endorsed by the RFA Executive Committee.
- Worked with BC and First Nations to develop and test the Alertable Spill Notification system to improve hazardous spill notifications to First Nation communities.
- Published several papers at international conferences showcasing the marine response work by First Nation communities.





## STORY



# New Spill Notification System for Marine Emergencies

A new system is now alerting First Nations on the North Pacific Coast when oil and other hazardous chemicals are spilled within their lands and waters.

The system leverages the technology of Alertable, the app used by many local governments to send critical alerts to residents, businesses and visitors for extreme weather events such as floods and fires, as well as for community notices such as water advisories. The collaborative effort to create the new system was coordinated by CFN, and involved 12 First Nations and BC's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

With the new system, First Nations governments are able to define their geographic areas of interest for receiving notifications, and community members can sign up to receive real-time notifications by phone, text, or email when incidents occur.

This approach replaces a manual method, which often resulted in notification gaps and delays. The old system required Ministry staff to determine which First Nations should be notified and to triage the highest priority spills for notification. Notifications were made by phone to numbers only answered during business hours, and responders relied on contact databases that required ongoing maintenance.

"Spills pose a constant and unpredictable threat to marine environments and species, including critical food sources for coastal communities," says CFN's Marine Program Manager Steve Diggon. "It's imperative that First Nations receive timely and accurate information about marine spills so that they can respond quickly to protect these vital resources."

# COASTAL STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

## Upcoming Priorities

- Review the *Coastal Guardian Watchmen Strategic Plan*, which guides the work of the CSN team. From this review we will ascertain if we must update or create a new strategic plan to keep us moving forward.
- Undertake an external evaluation of the Coastal Stewardship Network program to determine where our strengths and weaknesses lie and prioritize accordingly.
- Redesign the Stewardship Technicians Training Program delivery model to bring costs down, train more people and increase flexibility.
- Deliver Cultural Feature Inventory training refresher workshops.
- Deliver a Leadership workshop series, and a QGIS (spatial mapping) workshop, to increase capacity within the Stewardship Offices.
- Host the next CSN Annual Gathering.
- Optimize the *CoastTracker* app, an essential component of the Regional Monitoring System that Guardians use to collect data when on patrol.

The Coastal Stewardship Network (CSN) provides programming and support to Guardian programs and stewardship offices of CFN member First Nations.

CSN support involves providing opportunities for networking and collaboration; training and professional development; coordinating the Regional Monitoring System (RMS), a set of digital data collection tools used by the Nations to monitor coastal regions; and raising awareness of the stewardship work undertaken by CFN member Nations.

## Impacts

- Hosted the 2023 CSN Annual Gathering in Haizraqv Territory, Bella Bella, the first in-person gathering since before the COVID pandemic.
- Together with Vancouver Island University, delivered a successful Stewardship Technicians Training Program to 16 participants from CFN member Nations.
- Completed the Training Strategy document, which will guide the CSN's efforts to support Stewardship Offices and Guardians in the coming five years.
- Created a revamped and updated web portal, called *CoastViewer*, one of three digital data collection tools of the Regional Monitoring System, and introduced the tool to stewardship staff via numerous online and in-person trainings.
- Attended badge ceremonies and the Premier's Awards for the BC Parks, Nuxalk, Kitsoo Xai'xais Nations pilot program -- a collaborative compliance and enforcement program with 11 Guardians who now carry Park Ranger authorities in their territories under BC's *Parks Act*.





**STORY**

# **Guardians Learn About Archaeology at First In-Person Gathering Since 2019**

At the 2023 Coastal Stewardship Network Annual Gathering (May 15-19), Coastal Guardians from across the North Pacific Coast met in person for the first time since 2019, after settling for “virtual” gatherings following the COVID pandemic.

The highly anticipated event was the first ever to be held in Haítzaqv Territory. After an opening ceremony and dinner at the Gvúkva’áus Haítzaqv Big House, which included welcome addresses from Heiltsuk Stewardship Director Kelly Brown and Conservation Manager William Housty, the next three days featured a range of hands-on activities, including visits to cultural sites and important harvesting areas, and an engaging drum making exercise.

On the third day of the gathering, Guardians spent a full day with respected archaeologist Qíxítasu Elroy White, who operates Central Coast Archaeology from his home in Bella Bella. Qíxítasu began the day with a presentation, providing some background for the Guardians on his unique “Mhúxvit approach” to archaeology, which unites his Haítzaqv cultural and ancestral learnings with his professional training as an archaeologist.

During the morning’s presentation, Qíxítasu highlighted the importance of cultural and ancestral teachings for the Guardians’ stewardship work. “Your work is directly tied to your Indigenous laws,” he said. “As Guardians, you all have connections to your local places and territories, and those are ties that external academics just don’t have.”

The day’s activities and topics—including visits to Haítzaqv cultural sites, drones and discussions about engaging youth—clearly resonated with the Guardians, who often work with youth and other community members in a wide range of roles that go beyond stewardship.

Qíxítasu says this kind of holistic approach to the work, whether it’s about archaeology or stewardship, is what makes it far more meaningful and more effective too.

“This is intergenerational work that must be done responsibly,” he tells the Guardians, as they gather in the shade from a massive culturally modified cedar tree. “That’s why it’s so important to collaborate with other Nations as well, and to always be open to learning from each other.”

# WILD SALMON

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Review and document the state of the main facility elements for each hatchery upgraded in Phase 1, and any remaining work needed to be completed.**
- **Provide technical support to troubleshoot any small issues for the six upgraded hatcheries in Phase 1.**
- **Provide technical support to the hatchery programs via virtual communications and/or on-site visits during key fish culture activities.**
- **Work towards developing customized operations manuals for each of the six upgraded facilities.**
- **Provide a fish health skills training course for community hatchery staff in 2025, and support each Nation's program to develop a long-term customized training plan.**
- **Continue bi-monthly Collective Nation Table calls that provide a space to share successes and challenges of hatchery operations, and plan to include a space for guest speakers to present on fish culture best-management practices and answer questions.**

The lifeblood of coastal First Nations' economies and culture for thousands of years, salmon help shape the food web of the entire North Pacific Coast—from the open ocean to freshwater rivers that reach far inland. CFN member Nations put the highest priority on protecting and rebuilding wild salmon populations in coastal territories.

Through its Wild Salmon program, CFN is helping to advance salmon enhancement and restoration efforts across the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii, including completing upgrades to community hatcheries in four coastal communities.

## Impacts

- Provided technical and coordination support to four CFN member Nations to complete infrastructure upgrades and repairs (utilizing project budgets) to six community hatcheries for Phase 1 of BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund project.
- Hosted bi-monthly Collective Nation Table calls to support the collaboration and communication between infrastructure projects and the sharing of technical expertise.
- Provided Technical support to Central Coast Nations' Salmon Enhancement Programs programs for broodstock collection and fish culture activities.





## STORY

# Marine Protected Areas: The Future of a Sustainable Coast

*In this edited article, originally published in The Globe and Mail, CFN CEO Christine Smith-Martin describes why the Indigenous-led effort to create the Great Bear Sea MPA Network is an inspiration for the world and a blueprint for effective marine stewardship into the future.*

My home is a very special place. Born and raised in Lax Kw'alaams, 40 kilometres north of Prince Rupert, I am Tsimshian on my father's side and Haida on my mother's, and those roots leading back to Haida Gwaii have always been close to my heart. My identity is tied to this extraordinary place on the North Pacific Coast.

My home may feature some of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world, but it is still susceptible to negative impacts from overfishing and climate change. In the past few decades, unsustainable levels of harvesting have eroded the foundations of these coastal waters. Declines in keystone species such as salmon, herring and eulachon threaten the health of the entire marine food web and the security of the families who depend on it.

That is why First Nations across the North Pacific Coast are working together, along with federal and provincial governments, to build the Great Bear Sea MPA Network—a robust network of marine protected areas stretching from Northern Vancouver Island to Haida Gwaii.

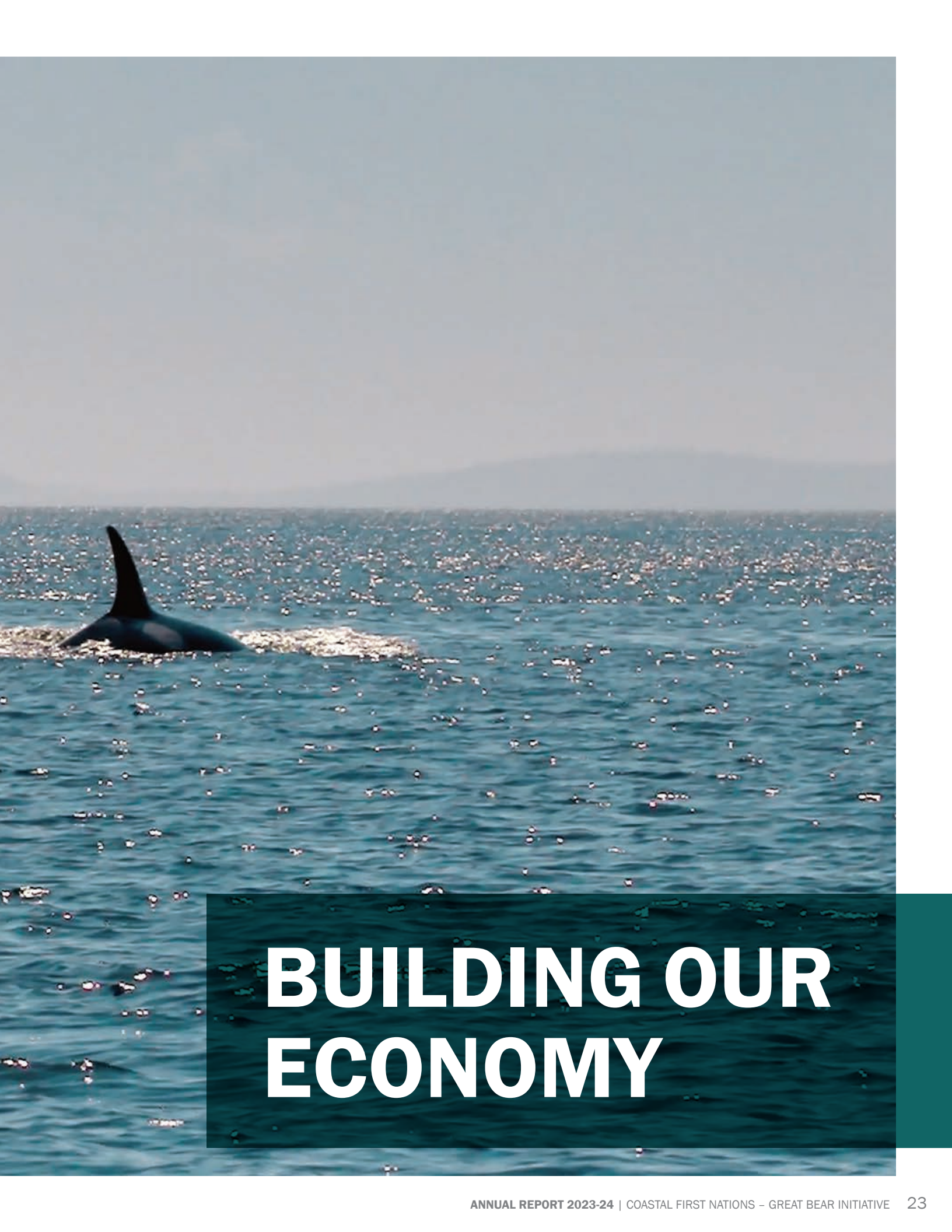
It's an ambitious goal, to be sure, but we know it's attainable. We have already created a precedent and proof-of-concept with the collaborative Great Bear Rainforest agreements, which have protected three million hectares of ancient temperate rainforest.

Using an innovative financing model that supports both land stewardship and community well-being, the GBR agreements laid the foundation for sustainable and diversified regional economies for coastal communities, creating new jobs and businesses that deliver continuing benefits directly back to our people. Now, that same model will bring holistic management principles to our marine environments—the true breadbaskets for our communities.

Covering more than 30,000 square kilometres, the Great Bear Sea MPAs will restore critically important marine habitats and conserve biodiversity; enhance ecosystem resilience against climate change; preserve sites of high value for sustainable tourism and recreation; and benefit local communities socially, culturally and economically.

This is reconciliation in action, and because everyone benefits, we believe this model of Indigenous-led conservation will continue to be an inspiration for the world.





# **BUILDING OUR ECONOMY**

# CLIMATE ACTION

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Advance funding application proposals and confirm funding for the next three years.**
- **Advance heat pump maintenance training in collaboration with Coastal Heat Pumps and the British Columbia Institute of Technology.**
- **Introduce an Elder-in-Residence for the ICAN program.**
- **Launch a pilot mentorship program in January 2025.**
- **Advance existing funding application with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and identify more funding opportunities for the program.**
- **Conduct a program evaluation for the Resilience Climate Adaptation Network to demonstrate success to partners, communities and prospective funders.**

CFN's Climate Action Network supports member First Nations as they work to achieve their energy and climate related goals, including clean energy, energy efficiency, energy planning and climate change adaptation related work.

This support includes the Indigenous Climate Action Network (ICAN) program as well as community-based Climate Action Coordinator and Regional Coordinator positions, and training and peer-network supports to enable successful delivery of community led projects.

## Impacts

- Planned and attended the ICAN Summer Retreat in Haítzaq (Heiltsuk) Territory with Climate Action Coordinators and a Regional Coordinator.
- Supported ICAN members in attending training events and conferences throughout the year.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Fraser Basin Council.
- Built capacity within the ICAN team by hiring a Network Lead in April 2024.
- Composed a steering committee and held multiple Steering Committee meetings to seek advice on high-level programmatic questions.
- Provided mentorship and resources to Regional Coordinators through one-to-one support, a climate resource database to support learning, monthly coordinator meetings, and mentorship for special projects, such as a webinar series.
- Contributed to the FNLC Climate Leadership Agenda to support a case for peer-to-peer climate networks and capacity-building work within the First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda in BC.







## STORY

# Haida Team Wins Clean Energy Award

Til Yahda Energy (TYE) received the “Community of the Year” award at the 2023 Clean Energy BC conference in Vancouver for their collaborative efforts to get off diesel on Haida Gwaii.

Nang Hl K’aayaas Sean Brennan, TYE’s implementation manager, says one of the more recent clean energy projects on Haida Gwaii is a two-megawatt solar-farm project at the Masset airport—expected to reduce diesel usage by 8.5 percent, and reduce carbon by 1,750 tonnes per year and diesel by about 670,000 litres per year.

Brennan says the solar farm is one step towards realizing TYE’s goal of reducing diesel emissions by 100 percent by 2030. “If we achieve our goals, we would reduce diesel emissions in BC by about 51 percent,” he says.

Ganaay Billy Yovanovich, Chief Councillor of the Skidegate Band Council, says the solar farm project is Haida-owned, which isn’t always the case with energy projects in First Nations, and that has played a huge role in making the solar farm a success.

“It’s just the first phase of many more phases to get to 100 percent renewable,” he says. “Getting into this, we knew solar wouldn’t be the only solution to all our energy demands, but we had to establish relationships with BC Hydro and other funders. We have that now. To do all of Haida Gwaii is doable in our lifetime, we’re going to see that.”

Kwaa Tsaaps Patrika McEvoy, elected councillor for the Old Massett Village Council and TYE board member, played a huge role in ensuring energy sovereignty. “My goal would be for us to be our own Haida energy power authority, so that we don’t have to ask anyone for permission,” she says. “Whatever we do on Haida lands and waters, with our resources, we’re all making those decisions and not having to ask anyone else for permission to do that.”

McEvoy says renewable energy solutions align with Haida values and are a solution to the increasing impacts of a warming climate. “We see the impacts of climate change on Haida Gwaii,” she says. “The environment is changing, the climate is changing, you see it in our medicines, our berries, our salmon.”

Brennan says a shared vision for a cleaner future on Haida Gwaii has brought all three Haida entities together. “All three of us—Old Massett Village Council, Skidegate Band Council and the Council of the Haida Nation—are working together because we have this common goal,” he says. “That’s generated a lot more support.”

# FISHERIES RECONCILIATION

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Advance the development of a Mandate and Dispute Resolution mechanism.**
- **Conduct the FRRA 3-year review, with recommendations brought to Bioregional Management Council and Joint Executive Committee by February 2025.**
- **Continue the work of Community Based Fisheries (CBF) sub-committee to create the management tools and processes to support this new fishery.**
- **Identify and advocate for policy reforms needed to support FRRA implementation and realization of its outcomes.**
- **Develop additional CBF pilots for implementation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada using access acquired by Coastal Nations Fisheries.**

Through the Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRA), finalized in 2021, CFN member Nations began a collaborative process with Canada that aims to achieve transformative change in the collaborative governance of fisheries resources. Beyond advancing collaborative governance, the agreement also includes economic opportunities through creation of the Coastal Nations Fisheries Limited Partnership to support growing access to all commercial fisheries in the region, and a new Community Based Fishery (CBF) to enable greater community participation in small-scale commercial fisheries.

To advance the collaborative governance dimension of the agreement, CFN's Fisheries team is building innovative mechanisms to support the Nations in implementing the FRRA, providing ongoing support for the Bioregional Management Council, Joint Executive Committee, and various sub-committees working together to implement the agreement.

## Impacts

- Hosted an in-person CBF monitoring workshop to refine the vision and principles of an Indigenous-led monitoring framework, and started developing approaches that align with those principles.
- Successfully convened the Joint Executive Committee in February 2024 and received direction to establish a Steering Committee and senior working group to support the development of a Dispute Resolution Mechanism and the FRRA 3-year review.
- Secured funding to help develop CBF tools, such as management planning templates, monitoring and data management approaches.
- Developed two pilots for First Nations to implement their CBF, including plans to operationalize more next year.





## STORY

# Setting the Table for Marine Conservation

In February 2023, CFN hosted an important feast to “set the table” for the three levels of government, partners and allies committed to finding sustainable ways to preserve and protect the coast.

Prepared by Nuxalk chef Nola Mack, the dinner was held at the Bill Reid Gallery in Vancouver, and gave all attendees, including representatives from First Nations governments, the province and federal governments, a chance to share food, stories and ceremony. The event celebrated and acknowledged all those who have paved the way for sustainable conservation across the coast, and set the stage for all levels of government to find new ways to work together for sustainable marine management for generations to come.

The Marine Protected Areas Network will draw on the strengths of many initiatives CFN has been involved in since its inception — from successful financing models and economic growth, stewardship departments, guardian watchmen programs, co-collaborative ecosystem-based conservation projects and more. The Plan will focus on marine management, driven by the communities who have been stewarding their territories for thousands of years.

After guests feasted on a one-of-a-kind Indigenous fine dining experience, Chief Ian Campbell of the Squamish Nation and his wife Shamantsut Amanda Nahanee led a blanketing ceremony, blanketing Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Joyce Murray, BC Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Nathan Cullen and Chief Councillor of the Heiltsuk Nation, Káwáził Marilyn Slett.

The ceremony represented three levels of government—the federal, provincial and various First Nations governments—coming together with a shared commitment to sustainable Indigenous-led marine management on the coast.

“We really want all three to remember that blanket you have on and the commitment we’re making to each other. When those times are tough, when you go back and people are questioning you, you remember all these people here, you remember these communities. Remember why we’re doing this work that we’re doing,” says CFN-GBI CEO Xaad Xyaalaa Christine Smith-Martin. “We give it in good spirit. We give it so that in those tough times, you can grab that blanket and wrap it around you. It’ll give you the strength to continue on this journey, because we are going to be successful in this, we are.”

# PARTNERSHIPS & INNOVATION

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Ongoing work to operationalize and maintain the Early Earthquake Warning System in CFN member Nations after submitting a comprehensive 10-year funding proposal.**
- **Continue to support existing initiatives that provide health and wellness services throughout CFN member Nations.**
- **Work toward Phase 3 of the development of the Makerspace Project in Old Massett, which will focus on infrastructure.**

CFN's Partnerships & Innovation program is creating new partnerships with organizations—including Microsoft Canada, Rogers and other technology leaders and community partners—who support our long-term goals and shared vision of a conservation-based economy.

We are building the future we want for our communities and youth, while protecting coastal ecosystems and preserving our self-determination. Local knowledge is integral to the long-term success of these efforts, which are Indigenous-led, co-developed, and inclusively designed to support community priorities and solutions.

## Impacts

- Completed Phase 2 of the *Makerspace Project*, including a Feasibility Study and a series of hands-on workshops led by Haida artist Christian White designed to engage community members and enhance their cultural design skills.
- Expanded Taking IT Global's *Connected North* program to Gitxaala and Gitga'at communities, marking a significant advancement in digital connectivity, and increased access to educational resources and communication tools.
- The Early Earthquake Warning System is now active, designed to detect seismic activity and provide advance alerts to communities in the event of an earthquake.
- Partnered with the Northern First Nations Alliance to support their legacy project of a Substance Use Withdrawal Facility, Mobile Outreach, Land-based Treatment and Aftercare Supports for people struggling with mental health and addictions.



## STORY

# Unlimited Technological Potential for Coastal First Nations



One year ago, CFN joined technology partners and allies to form the Coastal First Nations Connectivity Network, which is improving connectivity and opening doors to new possibilities for communities.

The Connected Coast Network is a flagship project that will run subsea fibre along BC's entire coast and around Vancouver Island, to connect more than 139 communities, including over 40 Indigenous communities. As the project progresses, CFN has been working with technology partners and community members to explore new technology-based opportunities.

Kihlyahda Christian White, a renowned Haida artist and carver from Old Massett, sees many potentially positive outcomes with improved connectivity in his community. He joined CFN's Connectivity Team to visit and explore new technologies from companies like Microsoft, LlamaZoo, Songhees Innovation Centre and local Makerspace communities in Victoria.

White says advancements in connectivity will help to protect the authenticity of Haida art and artists, and will create many new opportunities for community members. White says one of the biggest issues for Indigenous artists is cultural appropriation of Haida art from people with little to no connection to Haida culture, protocols and community. "We've seen other people benefitting from our people... we don't even really know where they are, and they're selling things on the internet," White says. "Each artist develops their own style... to have their artwork exploited by other people... it's almost like you can't keep up to it."

Improved connectivity means artists can create, market and sell their own work online and more easily address any fraudulent claims to Haida art. The development of new technology spaces in the community will also help address difficulties of ordering materials and getting work printed and produced.

Joseph Nash, Director of IT and Project Management for the Nuxalk Nation, says he was inspired to network with CFN's technology partners, because Canada doesn't have an "IT" or digital minister, which means it's hard to access support for technology projects in community.

After connecting with Microsoft in person, Nash says he and his team have been able to access funds to develop an app that will feature Nuxalk language and values for community members—an educational tool that reminds Nuxalkmc of their values and societies. The app will feature Laaqwmays, a Nuxalk language educator and speaker who has experience running a radio show, creating films and engaging with his community. All of the information shared will be "vetted through the ancestral governance team," Nash says.

The possibilities with Indigenous-led technology are endless. With high-speed connectivity now becoming a reality throughout the coast with the completion of the Connected Coast Network, this is a transformational moment. Quality access to digital technology will support entrepreneurs, generate new streams of wealth and help build a healthy coastal economy.

While there have been many important steps taken so far, there is still a long way to go. CFN continues to advance community-focused technology partnerships, based on the principle of reciprocity, to support a future where anyone, anywhere, is empowered to connect and create.

# SHORELINE CLEANUP

## Upcoming Priorities

- **Expand cleanup areas and increase participation, targeting additional shoreline.**
- **Assist in developing a youth leadership program focused on environmental stewardship and cultural education.**
- **Implement enhanced waste disposal and recycling protocols for post-cleanup processing.**
- **Collaborate with Elders to integrate traditional ecological knowledge into cleanup and restoration strategies.**
- **Pursue partnerships to secure funding for further infrastructure improvements along coastal habitats.**

The Shoreline Cleanup program is dedicated to preserving and protecting coastal habitats by organizing large-scale marine debris cleanups along CFN member territories, ensuring safe and effective debris removal and responsible disposal practices. The program actively engages youth, encouraging participation in all cleanup activities. In addition, it offers a variety of other opportunities, including cultural rediscovery camps, initiatives for food security, connecting with Elders, and efforts to build or renovate coastal infrastructure.

## Impacts

- Coordinated numerous shoreline cleanups across CFN member territories, including shorelines identified as culturally significant, and recycled debris at local facilities whenever appropriate.
- Partnered with several organizations, including Ocean Legacy Foundation, Rugged Coast and the Wilderness Tourism Association, to expand cleanup reach and resources.
- Engaged youth participants in hands-on environmental stewardship activities.
- Completed renovations to support long-term coastal preservation efforts.
- Introduced a new system for tracking and reporting marine debris to increase transparency and awareness.



## STORY

# Heiltsuk Youth Clean Their Shores



Heiltsuk Hereditary Chief láliyasila Frank Brown, a mariner all his life, says his people have lived and died on the water and always understood the ocean as a sacred and vulnerable place.

“We have an ancient maritime history and culture,” he says. “Our people have been here since the last time the climate began to warm up... the difference is that now we’re dealing with man-made climate change and the residue of the western society’s marine debris that’s impacting us.”

Brown remembers the novel and exciting feeling of coming across glass balls floating in the water, having made the long journey from Japan where they once served as fishing floats. As the years passed, the odd glass ball was replaced by floating plastic, styrofoam and an alarming amount of marine polluting the waters. No one experiences the impacts of climate change and pollution more than those who spend their lives on their lands and waters.

Brown is Senior Advisor to the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, a leader in the Pacific coast-wide ocean-going Indigenous canoe resurgence and the executive producer and co-curator of the Sacred Journey traveling exhibit. He recently took part in a two-day shoreline cleanup initiative in Heiltsuk territories, where youth aged 12 to 15 and community members teamed up with partner organizations to remove up to 5,000 pounds of marine debris — fishing gear, nets, rope, polystyrene floats, plastic bottles, and more from their beaches.

Brown, who is also founder of Yuwala Marine Charters, transported the youth-led delegation to Striker Bay, Thompson Bay, and other beaches throughout their territories. The debris they collected, if left, would pose a significant threat to the North Pacific Coast’s delicate ecosystem, potentially entangling wildlife or breaking down into microplastics, where it can no longer be separated and is absorbed into everything around.

The Heiltsuk shoreline cleanup initiative was a part of a larger project supported by BC’s Clean Coast, Clean Waters Initiative Fund. Since 2020, The initiative has removed 215 derelict vessels and cleaned up more than 2,100 tonnes of marine debris from more than 6,400 kilometres of shoreline.

Brown says that’s a significant amount of plastics and harmful materials removed, but it is sadly just a drop in the ocean. “It’s important to realize the ocean isn’t limitless like humans once thought,” he says, emphasizing how important it is for young people and children to be involved in this cleanup work and see the impacts of pollution for themselves.

It’s going to take everyone, Brown stresses, the private sector, First Nations governments, other governments, to start prioritizing the health of the ocean and cleaning up the mess that’s been made. “It will take us all working together to clean up natural places, so it will be there for the inheritance of all humanity,” he says.



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## Statement of Financial Position

March 31	2024	2023
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash	\$ 6,699,106	\$ 11,585,105
Term Deposits	14,782,600	7,207,380
Accounts Receivable	4,545,761	3,506,859
Prepays	38,643	144,801
Property and Equipment	8,491	26,273
	26,074,601	22,470,418
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	4,001,368	1,915,878
Deferred lease inducements	3,558	14,233
	4,004,926	1,930,111
<b>Deferred Contributions</b>	22,069,675	20,540,307
	\$ 26,074,601	\$ 22,470,418



## Statement of Operations

For the year ended March 31

2024

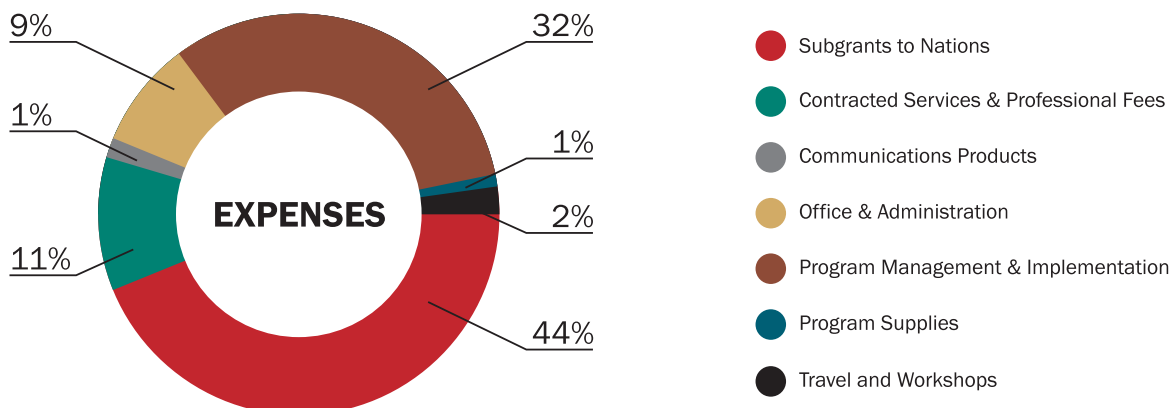
2023

### Revenues

Grants and Contributions	\$ 17,877,807	\$ 15,641,388
Interest Revenue	644,879	197,118
Rental Revenue	6,532	12,750
	<u>18,529,218</u>	<u>15,851,256</u>

### Expenses

Subgrants to Nations	8,235,612	7,074,211
Contracted Services & Professional Fees	1,987,373	1,358,078
Communications Products	176,636	93,534
Office & Administration	1,709,763	2,047,213
Program Management & Implementation	5,928,820	4,838,415
Program Supplies	158,820	140,504
Travel and Workshops	332,194	299,301
	<u>18,529,218</u>	<u>15,851,256</u>
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ -	\$ -



## 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.*







**Ksm Wüts'iin**

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