



**First Nations  
Fisheries Council**  
of British Columbia

# **First Nations in BC and Marine and Coastal Management:**

## Capacity, Collaboration, and Opportunities





# INTRODUCTION

**The First Nations Fisheries Council of BC has heard from First Nations in BC that marine environments, ecosystems, habitats, and resources are sacred. In accordance with their inherent and constitutional rights, First Nations must be meaningfully engaged in marine governance, planning, management, and decision-making processes.**



## **FNFC FACILITATES THIS ENGAGEMENT BY**

- 1 Convening First Nations**
- 2 Eliciting their regional interests and concerns and providing analysis where needed**
- 3 Distilling and communicating common priorities and objectives**

**In these ways, FNFC strengthens First Nations voices as they advance their rights and interests related to the use, management, and protection of marine resources and environments.**

# ACTION PLAN AND FNFC MANDATE

FNFC receives its mandate from the *BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan* (2007), which highlights the following goals:

- » **Support the development of a BC-wide, First Nations–based collaborative management framework that recognizes and respects First Nations jurisdiction, management authority, and responsibilities.**
- » **Support First Nations to build and maintain capacity related to fishing, planning, policy, law, management, and decision-making at various scales.**
- » **Advance and protect rights related to fisheries and aquatic resources.**

**First Nations in BC recognize the need for collective strategies to safeguard and restore ocean habitats and ensure that marine resources continue to sustain health, economies, cultures, and way of life for current and future generations.**

Supporting First Nations communities in advancing their interests related to marine protection and management links directly to the Action Plan’s third theme, *Safeguarding Habitat and Responding to Threats*, which calls for First Nations to work together to:

- » **Undertake analysis and develop strategies for integrated oceans management.**
- » **Improve information sharing between First Nations on ecosystem protection and threats.**
- » **Develop standards for incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into plans and practices.**
- » **Work with government and industry to assess threats to marine species and habitats.**



photo by Frank Busch

# OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE OCEANS PROTECTION PLAN

In 2016, the Government of Canada launched the national \$1.5 billion *Oceans Protection Plan (OPP)*, a major component of which is to build meaningful Indigenous partnerships for effective marine and coastal management.

While Indigenous engagement processes are evolving elsewhere along the coast of BC, to date there has been little collaboration among First Nations communities in the South Coast region, where participation in marine processes has occurred primarily through direct bilateral relationships. Through the OPP program, FNFC is working to support the development of broader collaborative processes for South Coast First Nations and federal government agencies with responsibilities related to OPP implementation.

## FNFC OBJECTIVES

- » Develop governance structures that support the collaborative management of marine environments in BC coastal regions.
- » Support First Nations in advancing Indigenous Knowledge, laws and values in marine and coastal management.
- » Enhance capacity and access to resources to support First Nations-driven marine initiatives.
- » Support First Nations engagement in oceans research and scientific processes.



# FNFC COLLABORATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Through the *Commitment to Action and Results Accord* (C2AR), FNFC is collaborating with Transport Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Canadian Coast Guard to support First Nations engagement on OPP policy and program design initiatives.

The C2AR guides the collaborative working relationship between FNFC and OPP federal government agencies, and is based on the principles of respect, inclusiveness, flexibility, sustainability, stewardship, and accountability.

**This emerging relationship seeks to unite and coordinate participating communities and organizations, both within and external to the opp process, to support first nations in:**

*Setting cohesive and collaborative regional priorities*

*Informing both government and First Nations decision-making processes to protect marine ecosystems in the South Coast region*

*Advancing First Nations rights and interests with respect to the marine environment and aquatic resources*

## CURRENT FNFC OCEANS COORDINATING COMMITTEES

To advance *BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan* goals for marine environments, three coordinating committees are supporting South Coast First Nations engagement in marine management, policy, and program planning related to three streams. The committees are also identifying areas of shared interest and concern among participating communities, as well as key components of Indigenous marine and coastal values.

1

**MARINE RESEARCH AND SCIENCE—  
*Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Initiative***

with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)

2

**SHIP MOVEMENT AND VESSEL MANAGEMENT—  
*Cumulative Effects of Marine Shipping (CEMS) Initiative***

with Transport Canada

3

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE—  
*Recovery from Environmental Emergencies from Ship-Source Oil Spills Initiative***

with Environment and Climate Change Canada

# FUTURE OUTLOOK

OPP presents new opportunities for First Nations coast-wide to meaningfully engage in some elements of marine protection and management, and to develop new collaborative partnerships and processes with government agencies and stakeholder groups. Longer-term planning must move toward integrated approaches beyond the scope of current OPP processes.

*First Nations throughout BC rely on migratory species such as salmon, which are vulnerable to impacts on both marine and freshwater environments. First Nations therefore require collaborative, inclusive, and holistic approaches to marine conservation and management, and processes that support ongoing development of First Nations governance, capacity, and leadership.*

The longer-term vision for this work is to support First Nations in developing proactive, Indigenous-led approaches to conservation, ecosystem-based management, appropriate governance structures, and policy and program design that:

- A** Advance provincial and federal government commitments to UNDRIP and the BC Declaration Act.
- B** Reflect province-wide interests in protecting marine environments.
- C** Are rooted in Indigenous Knowledge and traditional laws.
- D** Empower First Nations to advance their shared objectives, priorities, and inherent and constitutional rights related to marine management and protection.

photo by Caleb Kastein

