

FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

COMMUNIQUE

January 2025



STRONGER TOGETHER

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Convene - Elicit - Distill



ABOUT FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL OF BC

Fisheries and aquatic resources are foundational to First Nations' communities, culture, well-being, identity, and way of life. We work to protect aquatic resources and habitat and help First Nations build a strong, coherent voice on Pacific fisheries and aquatic resources by:



Facilitating strong province-wide collaboration



Building and maintaining First Nations capacity



Amplifying the voices of rights holders

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT UNIT	4
This unit supports strategic work that cuts across multiple FNFC teams.	
Message from the Executive Director	
2024 FNFC Annual General Assembly (November 4 & 5, 2024)	5
CORPORATE SERVICES UNIT	8
This unit supports finance, technology, and human resources to keep operations on track.	
Employee Handbook	
Compensation Review	
New Additions to the FNFC Team	9
ISF/FNFC Save our Salmon Golf Tournament	10
POLICY & FISH MANAGEMENT UNIT	12
This unit focuses on aquatic resource sharing, management and economic opportunities as per Themes 2, 4 and 5 of the First Nations Fisheries Action Plan.	
FNFC Aquaculture Coordinating Committee Updates	
Legislation and Fisheries Policy	14
Strengthening Salmon Management and Collaboration	16
HABITAT & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS UNIT	18
This unit focuses on safeguarding habitat and responding to threats as per Theme #3 of the First Nations Fisheries Action Plan.	
Restoration Priority Planning Engagement and Knowledge Sharing Forum	
The Watershed Security Fund's Grants Program	19
PARTNERSHIPS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL UNIT	21
This unit focuses on building connections with governments as per Theme #1 of the First Nations Fisheries Action Plan.	
Marine and Coastal Management	
First Nations Salmon Recovery Forum	22

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT UNIT

Message from the Executive Director

“Am.ma Sa’ (Good Day),”

As the year comes to an end and with the many learnings just since my first quarter in the seat as ED, I have seen and felt so much support from my colleagues and the fisheries community that I now feel more settled in my role. I have been welcomed at many meetings with generous acknowledgements and been able to freely share FNFC’s ongoing plans for the fiscal. My participation and the ability to develop relationships with community partners excites me as it reassures that the upcoming fiscal year will be even more successful. I value and push my goal of always being able to increase engagement with our Tier 1 partners, fostering strong collaboration with FNFC, one community, one Nation at a time.



The November Annual General Assembly in Kelowna this fall was a testament to the privilege I have to spend time with so many leaders from other Nations. Some traveling from as far as Mainland Mi’kmaq to support us in person. Others, personally inviting me to their communities to listen and share information. This is one of my personal goals; is to answer to those invitations to chat in-person or virtually. So I can not only listen and learn where communities currently stand in terms of their ability to sustain fish stocks and what impacts the environment has had to force changes in their way of life, but to get these stories out to call on our network to find sustainable solutions.

We’re nearing the end of the development of a 5-year strategy plan to build off the previous 3-year plan, which will be shared with everyone by the beginning of next fiscal. We presented the draft at the Annual General Assembly and with the feedback, incorporated First Nation priorities into the final draft. I am excited to act on and dive deeper into the work we have started so I thank you for the warm welcome as ED and look forward having you reach out to me with any expertise and sharing your time to involve FNFC in relevant projects that will eventually benefit us all.

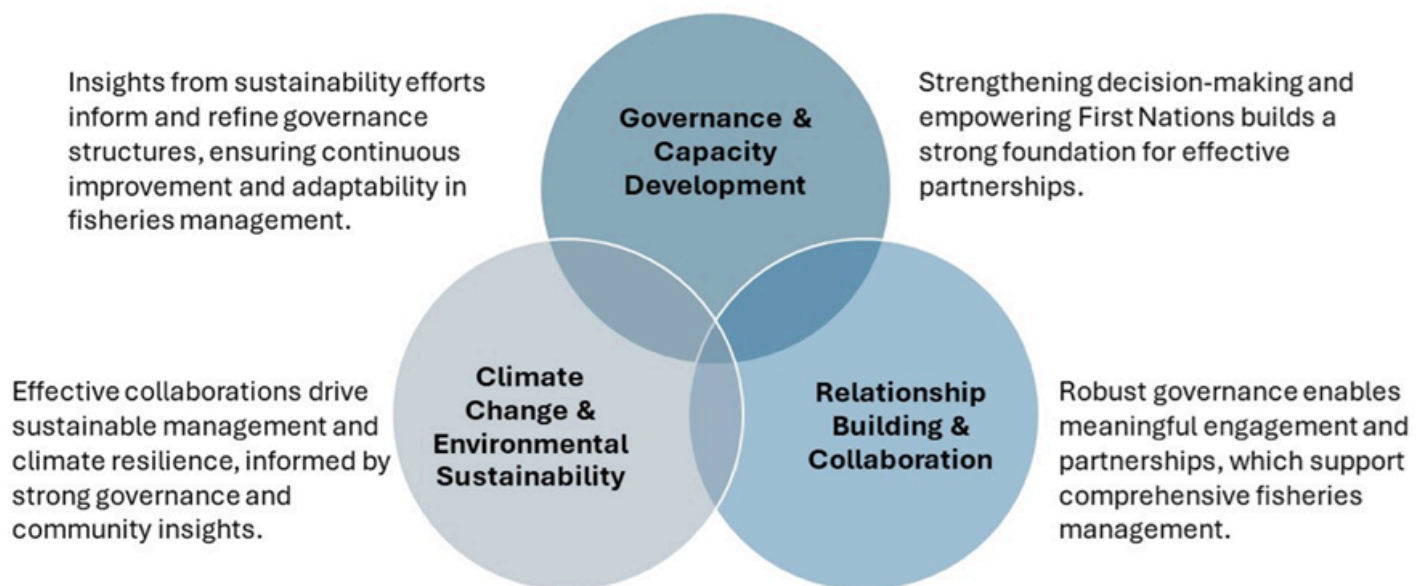
Regards,

Stu Barnes
Executive Director

2024 FNFC Annual General Assembly

Theme: 20 Years Since *“Our Place at the Table”*

FNFC experienced its largest turnout at the Fall Annual General Assembly, held on November 4th and 5th in Kelowna. This year, we introduced new approaches to our traditional two-day event, with the first day dedicated exclusively to Tier 1 participants. This enabled a space for open dialogue and relationship building among BC First Nations. Stu Barnes introduced FNFC’s new strategic plan for 2025–2030. This five-year plan, a departure from the traditional three-year cycle, is designed to better align with FNFC’s growth and evolving priorities. The plan is anchored by three pillars that will guide us in answering a fundamental question: How can we best support First Nations in BC? These pillars underscore our commitment to protecting, reconciling, and advancing First Nations' Aboriginal Title and Rights, as well as Treaty Rights, in relation to fisheries and the health and protection of aquatic ecosystem.



On the second day, we welcomed Tier 1 participants alongside representatives from the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and our Tier 3 partners, including REFBC and PSF. There was the opportunity to hear from DFO and ask questions on their work in managing Canada’s waters and their partnerships with First Nations. A collaborative Tier 3 panel on co-developing the Watershed Security Fund discussed FNFC's efforts in building capacity for First Nations to restore and manage their waters.

Following lunch, a tradeshow was held to provide networking opportunities and to showcase works from each of the different sectors within FNFC.



FNFC Tradeshow on Day Two of the Fall Assembly

2024 marks 20 years since the First Nations Panel on Fisheries completed the report, *Our Place at the Table: First Nations in the BC Fishery*. To commemorate this important work, we invited the panel to reflect on its legacy, review progress made on its recommendations, and explore future opportunities for collaboration between First Nations, governments, and public stakeholders.

Members of the First Nations Panel on Fisheries included Nang Jingwas Russ Jones, Maz Toh Marcel Shepert, and Madiagam Gyamk Neil Shepert (who passed on April 9th, 2020). To honour the invaluable contributions of these individuals in advancing First Nations' fisheries, Stu Barnes presented the FNFC Excellence award on behalf of FNFC recognizing their work.



We sincerely appreciate all the attendees who joined us for our Fall Assembly and hope to see you again at our 2025 Assembly. We'll be in touch as the date approaches!

Corporate Services Unit

Employee Handbook

To effectively communicate FNFC’s policies, values, and expectations throughout the organization, FNFC will be updating the employee handbook with the assistance of MNP LLP. The updated handbook will provide FNFC employees with a practical guide to HR policies as well as reflect and honor our organization’s unique culture.

The goal is to provide a user-friendly summary of our HR manual and to deepen our connection with the culture that defines our workplace. The handbook will be a comprehensive guide for employees that aims to provide clarity. This project among others, is one of FNFC’s efforts to support a healthy workplace environment.

Compensation Review

To ensure a fair and equitable employee compensation program that is aligned with the organization’s vision, mission, and values, FNFC is utilizing MNP LLP to provide a comprehensive compensation review. The review includes a discussion of FNFC’s overall compensation strategy and goals, with a focus on establishing a clear compensation philosophy. The goal is to clarify the organization’s overall direction with respect to total compensation now and in the future.

The review covers an overall market analysis of FNFC jobs and their associated duties to ensure employees are paid equitably based on internal practices and external market data, identifying gaps and presenting short- and long-term recommendations. The output will be a salary structure that is based on market research and FNFC resources that can be clearly communicated to the employees.

To do this, MNP will be liaising with FNFC’s senior management to determine the organization’s overall compensation philosophy and updated current job descriptions.



New Additions to the FNFC Team

Over the last several months, we've added a few more staff to the FNFC Team!

Theresa Nguyen – Coordinator, Habitat & Environmental Protections



Sara Carbone – Coordinator, Habitat & Environmental Protections



Antonio Graydon – Coordinator, Partnerships & Intergovernmental Relations



Will Crolla – Manager, Policy & Fish Management



Feel free to reach out to make an introduction to our new staff and congratulate them on joining FNFC!





ISF/FNFC Save our Salmon Golf Tournament

Join us at our annual golf tournament!

Get ready for an exhilarating day on the green at the **Indigenous Stewardship Fund's 2025 Golf Tournament**, which is FNFC's charitable entity, happening Monday, July 21st, at the picturesque University Golf Club. This event promises an unforgettable day of excitement, community, and a shared commitment to protecting our aquatic ecosystems. Whether you're a passionate golfer or just love having a good time with great people, this is the event you won't want to miss!

What's in Store for You?

Prepare for a day packed with energy and enjoyment! The ISF/FNFC Save our Salmon Golf Tournament is an event designed for everyone. The scenic layout of the University Golf Club sets the stage for a dynamic tournament where you'll have the opportunity to network, have fun, and make a real difference in the conservation of salmon habitats and aquatic life. Plus, we've got a few surprises lined up to keep the day exciting for both golfers and non-golfers alike!

Banquet & Prizes: A Celebration You'll Remember!

After a thrilling day on the course, join us for a delicious buffet dinner, where you'll have the chance to relax, indulge, and swap stories with fellow golfers, industry professionals, sponsors, and environmental advocates. The excitement doesn't end there! We'll be hosting an exclusive auction with some truly remarkable items up for grabs, plus fantastic prizes for top golfers and lucky draw winners.

Why Sponsor?

Looking to elevate your impact and get noticed? By becoming a sponsor for the Save our Salmon Golf Tournament, you're directly supporting the Indigenous Stewardship Fund's crucial conservation initiatives. Your sponsorship helps us protect and restore salmon populations and maintain the balance of our aquatic ecosystems. Not only will your brand receive prominent exposure throughout the event, but you'll also be recognized for your dedication to environmental stewardship in front of a diverse and engaged audience.

How to Get Involved?

Golfer or Sponsor? We'd love to have you join us! To get involved, whether you want to participate as a golfer or become a sponsor, please reach out to **Kristy Kam**, ISF Program Manager, at **kristy@isfund.ca**.

For more information about the Indigenous Stewardship Fund and our ongoing work, visit us at isfund.ca or catch the action from our past tournaments at our [YouTube channel](#). If you'd like to make an additional impact, consider supporting our cause with a donation at isfund.ca/donate/online.

Don't miss your chance to be part of something special—join us on July 21st for a day of golfing, prizes, and making a real difference for our salmon and aquatic ecosystems!



POLICY & FISH MANAGEMENT UNIT

FNFC Aquaculture Coordinating Committee Updates

Advancing Aquaculture governance and policy

The FNFC Aquaculture Coordinating Committee (ACC) has been working on key initiatives to strengthen First Nations' role in aquaculture governance and policy.

Strengthening First Nations' Role in Aquaculture Licensing

First Nations have long raised concerns that DFO's aquaculture licensing conditions do not fully reflect their environmental priorities, knowledge systems, or governance rights. In response, the ACC, in collaboration with Mandell Pinder LLP, developed a discussion paper to explore how First Nations can establish their own Conditions of License (CoLs) to better align with their values.

This discussion paper found that while First Nations have inherent rights to manage their resources, these rights are not fully recognized in Canada's legal framework. The Fisheries Act gives the Minister broad control over aquaculture licensing, making it difficult for First Nations to establish enforceable CoLs on their own. Despite these challenges, First Nations are exploring ways to assert greater authority over aquaculture licensing, including:

- Pushing for legislative changes to create space for First Nations-led licensing frameworks.
- Negotiating agreements with DFO or industry to ensure First Nations' priorities are reflected in licensing decisions.
- Using the duty to consult to influence aquaculture policies in their territories.

FNFC and the ACC are working to advance these priorities and will share updates as this work progresses.

Ensuring First Nations Leadership in Hatchery Planning

The ACC recently met to review and provide feedback on DFO's Hatchery Adaptation Strategy—a DFO led plan aimed at improving salmon hatchery operations in BC. While the strategy presents some positive steps, the ACC raised several concerns, including:

- Lack of meaningful First Nations involvement in developing the strategy.
- Insufficient recognition of Indigenous rights and governance authority.
- A limited role for Indigenous knowledge.

Salmon are central to the cultural, social, and economic well-being of First Nations, who have long been stewards of wild salmon through conservation and protection efforts. Despite this, the approach outlined in the discussion paper continues to rely on consultation rather than true shared decision-making. While the strategy outlines a phased approach to hatchery adaptation, it does not commit to integrating First Nations leadership into pilot projects or implementation. Without clear co-governance structures, First Nations remain in an advisory role rather than as decision-making partners, failing to align with UNDRIP and DRIPA commitments.

FNFC is engaging with DFO to push for concrete commitments that move beyond consultation and ensure First Nations have leadership roles in hatchery decision-making at every stage.

For more information or to provide input, email **Mike Gray** at mike@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.



Legislation and Fisheries Policy

FNFC Policy Forum & Salmon Allocation Policy (SAP)

FNFC Policy Forum 2025

FNFC hosted a Policy Forum in October 2024, convening First Nations in BC to discuss the Salmon Allocation Policy (SAP) and the UNDA Action Plan, focusing on Actions 36 and 37 on day 2. First Nations participants contributed to discussions on specific recommendations for a new SAP, and measurable steps to advance UNDA Action Plan measures 36 and 37. We are hosting a second set of Policy Forums in February 2025, to re-engage with First Nations and elicit feedback on drafted recommendations, building from the feedback and advice from the earlier sessions.

FNFC's 2025 Policy Forum will be on February 18th & 19th at the Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport.

Topics will include:

- An update and refined recommendations for the SAP review.
- Review of draft recommendations to bring federal legislations, regulations and policies to be consistent with UNDRIP and other Reconciliation commitments.
- Consider options to further spaces for First Nations, First Nations-Governments, and First Nations-Governments-Stakeholders collaborative spaces that respects First Nations' jurisdiction and authority.

Further details and registration for the 2025 Policy Forum can be found [here](#).



Salmon Allocation Policy Update

The 1999 Salmon Allocation Policy is DFO's operational guidelines for the allocation of Pacific salmon amongst First Nations, commercial, and recreational harvest groups. In 2018, as a result of the Ahousaht decision, the policy was found to be an unjustified infringement of five Nuuchahnulth Nations' (Ahousaht, Ehattesaht, Hesquiaht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht) Aboriginal rights to fish and sell fish. Specifically, the SAP accords priority to the recreational fishery over the five Nations' rights-based sale fishery for Chinook and Coho salmon. As a result, DFO was mandated to undertake a review and update of the SAP to correct the infringement by early 2025.

The SAP Working Group and FNFC developed a series of recommendations to DFO in 2024 to collaboratively review and discuss at Tier 2 (First Nations – DFO) and Tier 3 (Multi – Party Working Group) engagements. As discussions continue into 2025, there is a push to confirm recommendations for the new policy, and where there are areas of agreement amongst participants in the review. At the Policy Forum, we will share updates on the status of discussions and updated proposals being considered.

For more information about current policy initiatives, please refer to the FNFC website or contact **Janson Wong** at janson@fnfisheriescouncil.ca.





Strengthening Salmon Management and Collaboration

Advancing First Nations' priorities through partnerships, relationship-building, and PST preparations

Salmon Coordinating Committee

The Salmon Coordinating Committee (SCC) has been actively advancing First Nations' priorities in salmon policy and management. This year, relationship-building has been central to achieving the SCC's objectives, beginning with fostering collaborative management among First Nations to address gaps in current processes and strengthen Nation-to-Nation bonds.

Tier 3 relationship-building has also been a focus, with the SCC initiating collaboration with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB). Additionally, conditional support has been secured for re-establishing the Economic Coordinating Committee, emphasizing the critical importance of Food, Social, and Ceremonial (FSC) fisheries for First Nations.

A significant initiative includes partnering with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to revise Section 4.1: Indigenous Fisheries in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP). This revision, set for completion in 2025, aims to better reflect First Nations' values and perspectives. Concurrently, the SCC has been engaged in discussions on Commercial Harvest Transformation through the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI), advocating for increased license allocations and place-based management to address concerns about diminishing fishing access.

Pacific Salmon Commission

With the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) set for renewal in 2028, re-negotiations are scheduled to begin in the coming years. The Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) will meet in Vancouver from January 12-17, 2025, to begin preparations for formal negotiations starting in 2026. To support this process and ensure First Nations voices in BC are heard, the FNFC and the First Nations Caucus are co-hosting a series of workshops in collaboration with regional organizations. These workshops aim to discuss the Treaty's purpose and scope, gather input, and inform First Nations about the PST negotiation process while addressing key regional concerns.

The initial round of workshops will include:

- Tier 1 Discussions: Direct engagement with First Nations Caucus Commissioners, Panel, and Technical Committee members to explore concerns and gather feedback.
- Tier 2 Presentation: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) staff will outline their role in the Treaty process and address questions.

These workshops mark the start of an ongoing, iterative process to involve First Nations in the PST negotiations. The First Nations Caucus aims to provide regular updates to First Nations throughout this negotiation cycle, ensuring that their input and feedback inform the Canadian delegation's positions.

Currently scheduled workshops:

- January 20th: Skeena First Nations/co-hosted with SFNTC
- February 5th: Nuuchahnulth/co-hosted with Uu-a-thluk
- February 21st: Lower Fraser First Nations/co-hosted with LFFA
- Upper Fraser First Nations: Date & Location TBD
- Central Coast First Nations: Date & Location TBD

In addition to these efforts, the First Nations Caucus is preparing to formalize a MOU with the US Tribal Caucus. This MOU, reviewed by Mandell Pinder LLP, is nearing finalization and signing, which will occur during the PSC meeting in Portland from February 9-14, 2025. It will strengthen cross-border collaboration, ensuring that Indigenous interests and cultural values remain central to negotiations and are reflected in the renewed Treaty set for ratification in 2029.

HABITAT & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT

Restoration Priority Planning Engagement and Knowledge Sharing Forum

In 2019, the Fisheries Act was amended to include extended protections to all fish and fish habitat. In an effort to develop new regulations, policies, frameworks, and guidance required to implement the extended protections of the Fisheries Act, DFO launched the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program (FFHPP). The implementation of the FFHPP is supported by a multi-wave engagement framework, with Indigenous Peoples and key stakeholders, that began in 2021.

In Wave 2 of FFHPP engagement, there was discussion around a Framework to Identify Fish Habitat Restoration Priorities. As a result, next steps were determined by DFO to develop regional restoration priorities. The Regional Restoration Priorities Plan in the Pacific Region is currently being developed by DFO's Restoration Centre of Expertise (RCE).

In 2024, FNFC and DFO's RCE staff hosted 7 combined Tier 1 and Tier 2 engagement sessions to gather feedback on the draft Restoration Priorities Plan for the Pacific Region. Sessions were held both in-person or virtually across various regions of BC.

Summary reports from these sessions have been developed and were sent to participants for review prior to being sent to DFO's RCE team.

FNFC and DFO's RCE staff will be hosting two additional engagement sessions to provide Tier 1 participants with the opportunity to review the second draft of the Restoration Priorities Plan. This updated draft will incorporate the feedback that was collected during the previous engagement sessions. These additional sessions will be held virtually in March 2025.

As a result of feedback and discussions at engagement sessions FNFC will also be hosting a Knowledge Sharing Forum in the lower mainland of BC from March 6-7, 2025. This session will provide a space for Tier 1 participants from across BC to gather and discuss topics of interest relating to fish and fish habitat. A survey was sent out to Tier 1 individuals to gather feedback relating to what topics and formats (e.g., Tier 1, 2, 3) they would like to see at this event. Additional information along with registration information for this event can be found [here](#).

The Watershed Security Fund's Grants Program

An inaugural year of granting to support the advancement of watershed resiliency in British Columbia.

The First Nations Water Caucus (Water Caucus) brings together up to 15 First Nations regional and technical delegates from major watersheds across British Columbia to discuss and identify shared strategic priorities and interests related to fresh water and watershed security.

On March 6th, 2023, the Province of BC announced a \$100 million endowment to establish the Watershed Security Fund (the Fund). The Water Caucus - with FNFC as the secretariat – and the Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC), are working together to create the initial structure of the Fund, provide the interim stewardship, and to support the co-development and co-governance of the Fund that will be transferred to a permanent entity in the long term.

In the first year of its granting program, the Watershed Security Fund will be awarding \$7-\$10 million dollars, generated from investment returns on the initial endowment and a \$5 million contribution from REFBC. The Grants Program is being administered across two intakes and will support projects that make actionable progress on ecosystem health in ways that prioritize reconciliation, healthy communities, climate resilience and sustainable economies.

The Grants Program's first application intake took place in June 2024. 131 applications were received, totaling \$33 million in asks. Due to funding limitations, 26 applications were approved, totalling ~\$5 million in awarded grants. Funded projects spanned across British Columbia and covered all project themes including:

- Monitoring & Assessment
- Land & Water-based Learning, Knowledge Sharing
- Watershed Collaboration, Planning & Governance
- Nature based Infrastructure
- Watershed & Ecosystems Restoration
- Watersheds & Food Systems

Applications for the granting program's second intake opened between November 12th and December 11th, 2024, with application approvals and grants being awarded in spring 2025. For the second intake, 160 applications were received, totaling more than \$40 million in asks.

Going forward, the Watershed Security Fund will be focusing efforts on increasing sources for the Fund through Federal, philanthropic and corporate contributions so that more critical watershed work can be supported. As well, the Water Caucus, FNFC and REFBC will be focusing time on the co-development process of the permanent entity that will hold the Fund long-term.



Please contact **Madison Rattai** at madison@fnfisheriescouncil.ca if you are interested in learning more about the First Nations Water Caucus or the Watershed Security Fund.

PARTNERSHIPS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS UNIT

Marine and Coastal Management

Implementing B.C.'s Coastal Marine Strategy

Working with First Nations to Implement Tier 1 Priorities in the Coastal Marine Strategy

In July 2024, the Province of B.C. released the first province-wide strategy on marine and coastal management, the B.C. Coastal Marine Strategy (CMS). This is an exciting step in coordinating the efforts across many jurisdictions to better manage B.C.'s unique coastline. On September 12th, FNFC supported and attended a celebration of this significant step. The event was hosted by CPAWS and West Coast Environmental Law and FNFC supported the attendance of several Indigenous youth speakers – Crystal Lewis, Kevin Good, and Hanna Gentes.

FNFC played an active role in the development of the CMS. FNFC also worked to convene B.C. First Nations to provide their input throughout the development of the strategy – supporting leadership, technical, and community engagement sessions. FNFC co-wrote the intentions paper, bringing forward perspectives heard through engagement with B.C. First Nations and supported First Nations' review of early drafts of the CMS. The resulting strategy has 9 goals, 24 actions, and over 110 activities. Considerable effort is now needed to begin planning how to prioritize and implement the activities listed. FNFC will work with First Nations and the Province of B.C. in 2025 to strategically plan and identify activities to advance in the coming years. FNFC will also work with First Nations to identify which activities must be co-implemented and find good ways to work together moving forward.

FNFC will hold in-person and virtual engagement options throughout the Winter to begin Tier 1 discussions on the implementation of the Coastal Marine Strategy. We are looking forward to finding creative ways to include the voices of Indigenous youth in this next phase of work. We hope to re-engage with participants from the CMS Indigenous Youth and Young Professionals Summit held in 2023 and welcome new voices into the process.

FNFC will continue to explore innovative ways to engage with Nations and communities on the CMS and identify linkages to existing tables on coastal restoration to increase the impact of the CMS.





First Nations Salmon Recovery Forum

Salmon Leaders Gather for First Ever Tier 1 Salmon Recovery Forum

On December 2nd, 2024, FNFC hosted the first ever First Nations Salmon Recovery Forum at the Vancouver Convention Centre. This Forum served as a Tier 1 pre-conference to the Pacific Salmon Foundation’s BC Salmon Recovery and Resilience Conference, which FNFC helped support. Over 80 salmon experts from BC First Nations, Yukon First Nations, and Indigenous fisheries organizations convened to connect and discuss Tier 1 priorities before the larger conference began.

The Forum began with a land welcome from Musqueam councillor and former FNFC Executive Director Jordan Point, as well as some opening remarks from current FNFC Executive Director Stu Barnes. Sessions covered topics such as “Kinship and Reciprocity: Our Relationship with Salmon,” reports from watershed scale recovery efforts, and the importance of collaborative relationships to save wild Pacific salmon.

A top priority for this forum and the larger conference was to share the “Made in BC” Model for Salmon Recovery with the broader salmon community in attendance. The proposed model, developed by the FNFC in partnership with the PSF, builds on lessons learned from Washington State’s 3-scale integrated model, successful watershed co-management examples in BC, and engagement with Indigenous salmon leaders, government departments, and non-governmental organizations.

BC has various watershed-level and regional organizations engaged in salmon recovery efforts, but there is a lack of coordination and distribution of funding. Integrating these pre-existing entities into a 3-scale BC-wide model while integrating the existing Trilateral Accord oversight would make the most of existing resources and streamline recovery efforts.

At the final session of the Tier 1 Forum, Tom Rutherford, Executive Director of the Cowichan Watershed Board and author of the BC model report, presented on the BC Model. Two days later, Rutherford presented again at the closing plenary of the full conference to an audience of several hundred. This was followed by a panel discussion which included Tom Rutherford, Stu Barnes, lawyer Brenda Gaertner, PSF CPO Jason Hwang, PSSI Senior Director Sarah Murdoch, and WLRS Assistant Deputy Minister James Mack. The model was well-received and sparked over 200 virtual questions.

Given the high demand for further discussion, FNFC and PSF are currently planning a follow-up event for winter 2025 to engage with those who did not have their questions answered at the conference.





FNFC Communique - January 2025