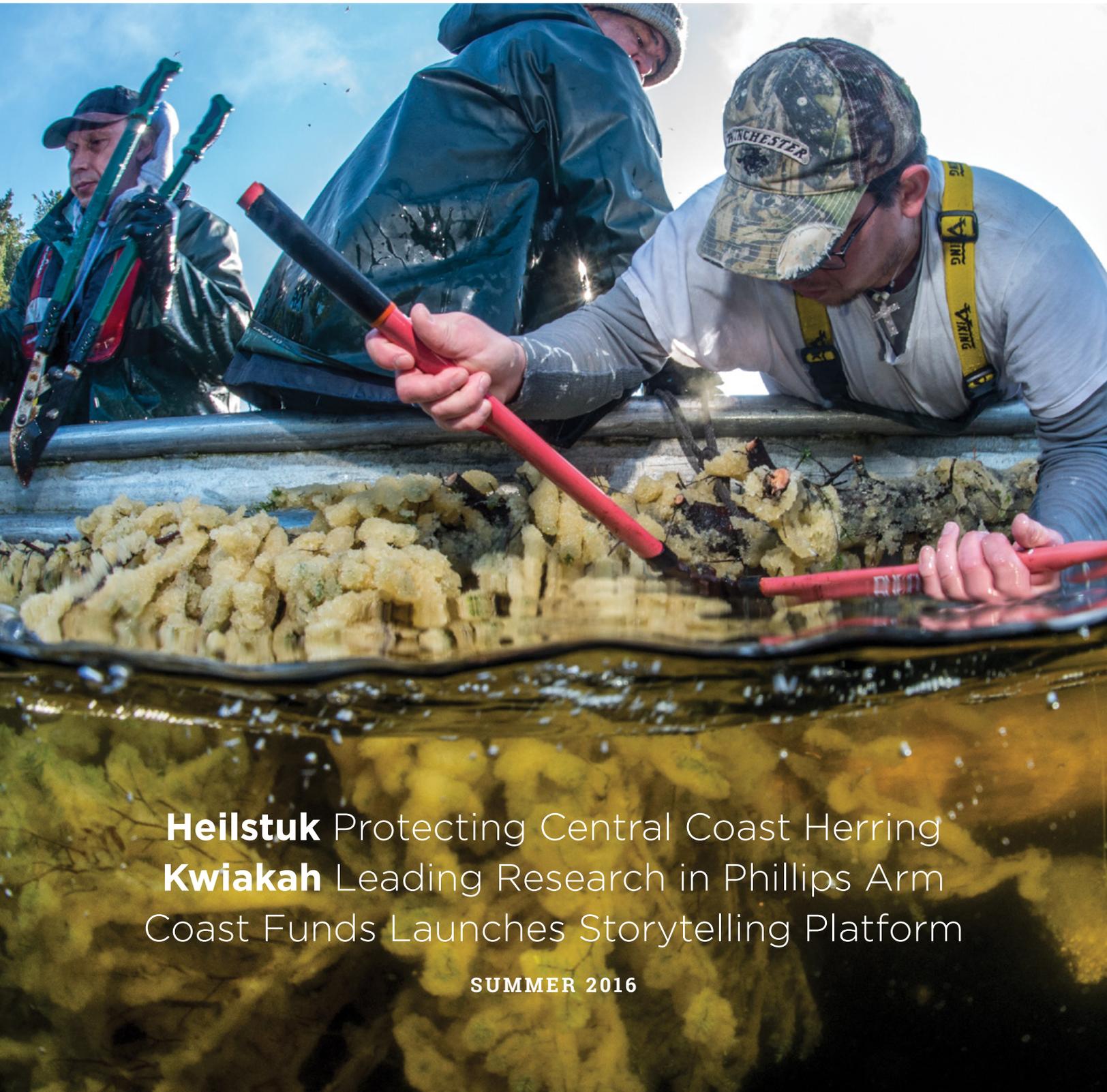


# TALKING STICK

A GREAT BEAR  
RAINFOREST  
PUBLICATION



**Heilstuk** Protecting Central Coast Herring  
**Kwiakah** Leading Research in Phillips Arm  
Coast Funds Launches Storytelling Platform

SUMMER 2016

# Updates from Coast Funds

## Welcome to the new

**Talking Stick!** Published in communities throughout the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii since 2011, the Talking Stick explores conservation science, stewardship, sustainable development, and community well-being initiatives led by First Nations. In an effort to go deeper into the inspiring stories we're privileged to share, we've launched a new storytelling platform online: [www.coastfunds.ca](http://www.coastfunds.ca).

Every story featured in the Talking Stick is now available online with much more: in-depth interviews, videos, community well-being outcomes, and direct contact with storytellers. We invite you to explore the new website where First Nations are sharing lessons, best practices and exciting new stories that continue to unfold across the coast.

## Economic development

**funding continues.** On behalf of our Board, we thank every community and business leader who spoke with us over the past year as we engaged with First Nations regarding the economic development fund. We're

pleased to announce that we received unanimous encouragement from communities to continue offering economic development funding beyond June 2017.

This fall, we will develop a new strategic plan based on the insights we gained from communities. Our new strategic plan will be released in early 2017.

We are honoured to present the stories First Nations are sharing in this issue and online. If you would like us to publish your story, please reach out to us at:

[talkingstick@coastfunds.ca](mailto:talkingstick@coastfunds.ca).

### Darcy Dobell

Communications Committee Chair

### Brodie Guy

Executive Director

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SUMMER 2016  
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### COVER

Spawn-on-hemlock harvesting in Heiltsuk territory.

### PHOTO BY

Ian McAllister / Pacific Wild

### OPPOSITE PAGE

A school of herring swim in the central coast.

### PHOTO BY

Ian McAllister / Pacific Wild

### FOLLOWING PAGE

William Housty

### PHOTO COURTESY OF

Heiltsuk Integrated Resource Management Department



# Protecting Central Coast Herring

The Heiltsuk Nation is leading stewardship efforts to help herring stocks recover.

**PACIFIC HERRING ARE EXTREMELY** important to the Heiltsuk Nation. “It’s a keystone species here,” explains William Housty, Board Chair of the Heiltsuk Integrated Resources Management Department (HIRMD). “It’s always been really important to us and we started to notice a dramatic decrease in the herring stocks over the last decade.”

Herring have sustained the coastal First Nations of British Columbia for thousands of years and are a critical species for the socio-ecological systems of the central coast. The Heiltsuk have traditionally relied on herring for food, social, and economic purposes. Herring are also crucial for supporting the biodiversity of the Great Bear Rainforest — a significant decrease in herring stocks would drastically impact the ecology of the entire coastal region.

For these reasons, decreases in herring stocks raised alarms for the Heiltsuk Nation. In response, they decided to lead research to determine the abundance of

**We took it as our mandate that we needed to look after the herring stocks and to close the commercial fisheries that were slated to open the next year in our territory.**

herring in their territory. “We learned from this that the stocks aren’t nearly as healthy as they used to be and we need to be really careful going forward in terms of management,” explains Housty. “We took it as our mandate that we needed to look after the herring stocks and to close the commercial fisheries that were slated to open the next year in our territory.”

In March 2015, the Heiltsuk issued a tribal ban throughout their marine territories that prohibited industrial herring fishing in order to help herring stocks recover. The Heiltsuk’s own fishing licenses were suspended to comply with the ban.

Commercial fishing operators did not follow suit, however, and moved ahead with industrial-scale herring fisheries in Heiltsuk territory. In an effort to protect this important resource, Heiltsuk met with senior management with the Fisheries and Oceans Canada at their office, advocating that the government close commercial herring fisheries in the Nation’s territories and initiate resource management discussions.

“After all the protests, we had the regional manager agree that we needed to sit down together and create a joint management plan,” says Housty. The result is a new joint management plan for herring in the central coast and a victory for the Heiltsuk in their efforts to protect and recover herring stocks. For the 2016 season, the Heiltsuk developed a plan with Fisheries and Oceans Canada with a lowered harvest rate from 10% to 7% of



available stocks and a full closure of the herring sac roe fishery in Spiller Channel – one of the most important spawning grounds for the herring.

The plan also specifies that a Heiltsuk observer be on all fishery boats during the herring harvest in acknowledgement of the Nation’s right to environmental stewardship. It also closed several areas to commercial harvest that are important for herring spawn-on-kelp (where herring lay eggs on seaweed) harvest sites in order to further the recovery of stock in specific marine systems.

“We’ve been able to really change the face of how the herring are managed in our area,” says Housty. “Rather than it turning into conflict every spring when the herring come, we’ve been able to sit down and look at the actual size of the stocks and what’s actually plausible in terms of the commercial fishery, food fishery, and the zero kill spawn-on-kelp fishery.” **TS**

VISIT [WWW.COASTFUNDS.CA](http://WWW.COASTFUNDS.CA) & SEARCH [HIRMD](#) TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HEILTSUK’S CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP.



# Restoring Phillips Arm through Research

The Kwiakah Nation is working to safeguard their territory in Phillips Arm – a spectacular inlet in BC's South Coast.

At the head of Phillips Arm is ʔNacinux<sup>W</sup> (Phillips Estuary) Conservancy, containing marine environments that support a high level of biodiversity and important marine habitats.

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ABOVE  
Ancient fish trips in Kwiakah territory.  
COURTESY OF  
Nanwakolas Council Society.

**THE KWIAKAH NATION HAS DEPENDED** on the resources in PNacinux<sup>W</sup> since time immemorial and is committed to protecting the sensitive marine environments within their territory. “These resources are so important to us,” explains Chief Steven Dick of Kwiakah Nation. “The entire area is incredibly significant to our Nation.”

In order to make sustainable land use decisions, Kwiakah has prioritized research so that they have sound data on aquatic species in their territory and how marine environments were being impacted by resource development. “There has been quite a bit of industrial activity in Kwiakah territory, but no information measuring the abundance of species and how they have been affected by industrialization of the watershed,” explains Frank Voelker, Band Manager and Economic Development Officer. “We can’t make decisions about development without having that research — somebody has to be looking out for the environment or it gets pushed aside.”

As a small Nation with only 22 members, Kwiakah faced capacity challenges in conducting the research needed to manage resource development in its territory. “We don’t receive as much funding because we are such a small Nation in terms of population size,” says Chief Steven Dick. “But we still have a fairly large territory to protect, and we will always find a way to do that.”

## **We can’t make decisions about development without having that research — somebody has to be looking out for the environment or it gets pushed aside.**

Kwiakah has overcome this challenge by forging strategic partnerships in order to maximize their stewardship efforts. “We’ve made a great deal of effort to partner with other groups for our programs, because we just don’t have the capacity to do that in-house,” explains Chief Steven Dick. “We need to work together with other groups to be able to do certain types of projects. We have been quite eager and progressive in creating these types of connections and partnerships to get that work done.”

Partnering with Ecofish Research Ltd. is one example of these rewarding partnerships. Kwiakah and Ecofish worked together to conduct an aquatic resource assessment, which provided an overview of the status of marine species in Phillips Arm. “We provide the best advice and information possible to the Nation so they can support their decision making — that’s our role,” explains Morgan Hocking, Senior Fisheries Biologist at Ecofish.

Kwiakah Nation and Ecofish continued the partnership with a more in-depth study on eelgrass and clam health. “This research helps to establish baseline data to measure potential impacts from industry,” says Hocking. “It was also a great opportunity to integrate knowledge from community members and train First Nation technicians during data collection.”

The aquatic assessments and baseline surveys will help ensure the Nation has the information they need to make resource management decisions in their territory. “It’s really important that we have these baseline surveys so we can know what’s happening moving forward,” confirms Voelker. “It will help us engage with industry and plan for the territory effectively.”

For Kwiakah, developing strategic partnerships was a key component to ensuring the protection of the unique aquatic environments in PNacinux<sup>W</sup> Conservancy. “We want to make sure that development in this area is balanced,” says Voelker. “We need to make sure it’s not just industry, the Kwiakah Nation, and government benefitting — the environment needs to be a beneficiary too.” **TS**

VISIT [WWW.COASTFUNDS.CA](http://WWW.COASTFUNDS.CA) & SEARCH **KWIAKAH** TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NATION’S WORK IN PHILLIPS ESTUARY.

# Introducing New Faces at Coast Funds

In April, North Coast Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society nominated Bruce Watkinson to Coast Funds' board of directors. Bruce is a member of the Gitxaala Nation and has been his Nation's fisheries manager and marine program coordinator for many years. Previously, Bruce has been appointed as a Member of Coast Funds since our inception, and in moving to his new role on the board, North Coast Skeena has appointed Robert Grodecki as their new Member.

Also in April, Coast Funds' board appointed Brodie Guy as our new executive director. Brodie has been with Coast Funds since 2013 and has worked in First Nations communities on the coast for over eight years. Since assuming this leadership role, Brodie has recruited two key members who we're proud to introduce to you in this issue.



**Miranda Fleming**  
Executive Administrator

Miranda joins us from New Relationship Trust where she has many years of experience working with First Nations across BC, administering project funding. Miranda is Swexemx and a member of Lower Nicola Band and holds a Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Studies from Royal Roads University.

In her new position, Miranda works closely with our Board, funders, and First Nations leaders on all aspects of Coast Funds' governance. She also works closely with Nations to support conservation programs and research projects.



**Ashley Hardill**  
Manager, Project Investment

Ashley comes to Coast Funds having recently completed her Masters from SFU's Resource and Environmental Management Program. Ashley is a chartered accountant, and has worked on development of social and micro-enterprises internationally with Engineers Without Borders Canada where she was their Manager of Finance.

In her new position, Ashley is taking a leading role working with Nations to foster economic development projects towards completion of the economic development fund.

**Bruce Watkinson**

North Coast-Skeena Representative





# COAST FUNDS

Inspiring stories are unfolding in the  
Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii.

FIND OUT MORE AT:

**[coastfunds.ca](http://coastfunds.ca)**