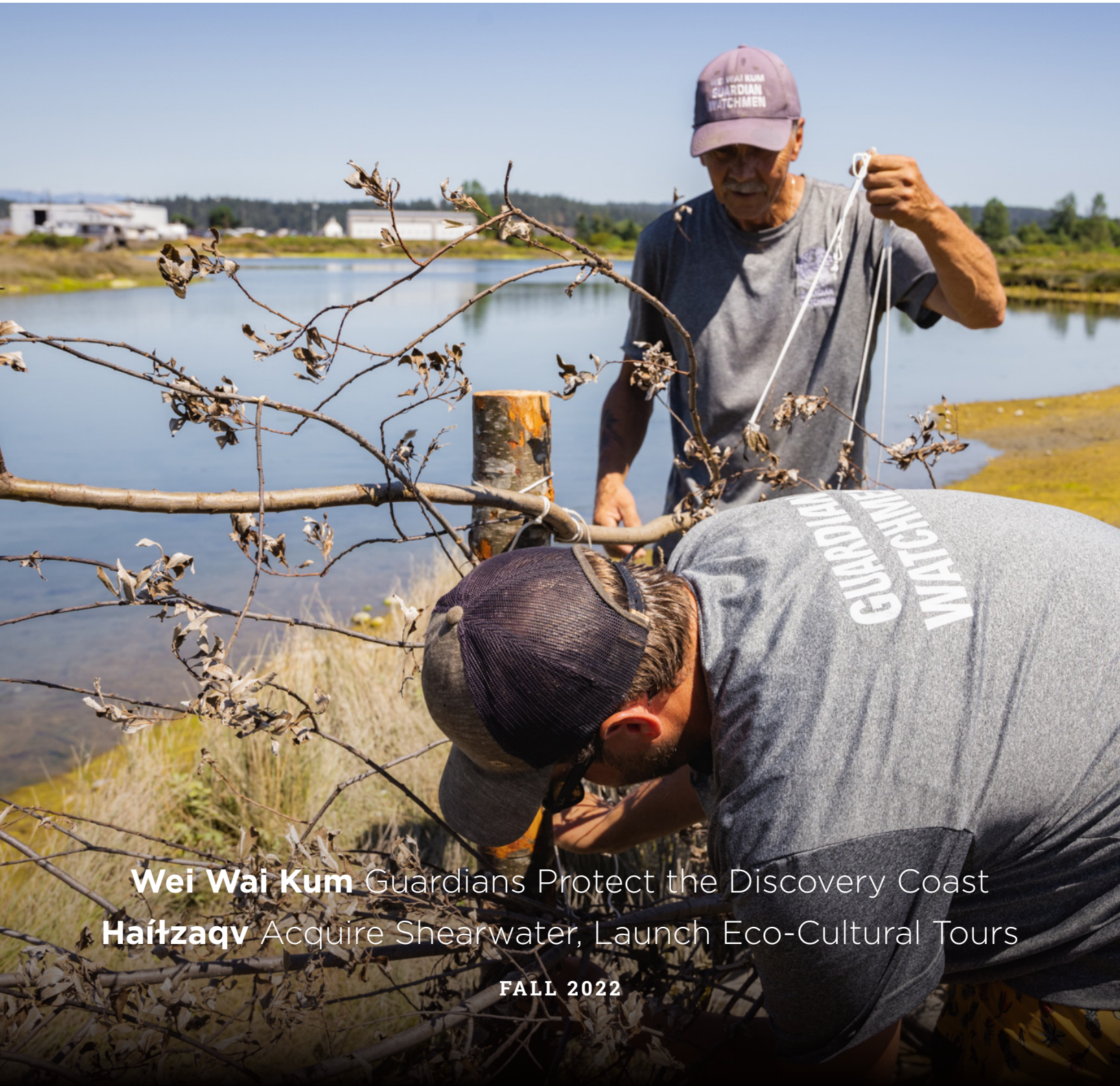


TALKING STICK

A GREAT BEAR
RAINFOREST
PUBLICATION



Wei Wai Kum Guardians Protect the Discovery Coast
Haítzaqv Acquire Shearwater, Launch Eco-Cultural Tours

FALL 2022

Updates from Coast Funds

Welcome to the fall 2022 edition of Talking Stick, a magazine that celebrates First Nations' stewardship and economic development projects in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii.

This issue features the **Wei Wai Kum Guardians**, who work to monitor and protect their Nation's land and marine territories. In just three years, they've acquired a boat and equipment, tripled the size of their team, and grown their capacity to monitor cultural and ecological sites.

Under the leadership of Karl Smith, the Guardians are gathering data and observations that help the Wei Wai Kum manage their territory and make informed choices about development and resource use.

We've also worked with the **Haítzaqv** to share a story about **Shearwater**, a resort and marina the Heiltsuk Tribal Council purchased in 2021, using funds from reconciliation agreements with the federal and provincial governments, as well as financing with Coast Funds.

As the new owners of Shearwater, the Haítzaqv are adapting the resort's business model to reflect their traditions and stewardship values – and creating a more

authentic experience for guests who want to learn about their culture and territory.

At Coast Funds, we're proud to support First Nations in achieving their goals for economic development and stewardship. This fall, our board of directors will meet to review our progress to date and develop a strategic plan to guide our work over the next three years. It's an exciting time – with many opportunities ahead.

Through the Talking Stick, we are honoured to feature the stories from First Nations along the coast. If you have a story (or photograph!) you'd like to share and publish, please reach out to our editor at talkingstick@coastfunds.ca.

Eddy Adra
CEO

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FALL 2022

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COVER

Using willow and alder, Guardians build a fence to keep geese from salmon habitat.

PHOTO BY

Deirdre Leowinata / Coast Funds

OPPOSITE PAGE

Wei Wai Kum Guardians track the density and health of bull kelp, an important indicator species.

PHOTO BY

Deirdre Leowinata / Coast Funds

In the Steps of Our Ancestors

Through their Guardian program, the Wei Wai Kum are applying traditional knowledge and Western science to carry out their stewardship responsibilities in a modern way.



LEFT

In just three years, the Wei Wai Kum have grown their Guardian program from three to nine members, who work to monitor, restore, and protect the Nation's territory.

PHOTO

Deirdre Leowinata / Coast Funds

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, the Wei Wai Kum people have drawn their strength from the abundant resources in their territory – salmon, herring, clams, berries, cedar – and, in turn, have carefully managed these resources to sustain ecosystems, communities, and their way of life.

Through their Guardian program, now in its fourth year of operation, the Wei Wai Kum are reviving traditional stewardship practices and using scientific techniques to monitor their territory, conduct research, restore salmon habitat, and maintain an active presence on their lands and waters.

“

How can you manage your territory... if you don't have current information?

As their First Nation's “eyes and ears,” the Guardians gather information – map data, ecosystem indicators, observations, and photos – to support Chief and council in making informed decisions about resource and development applications. With so much of the data on their territory gathered by outside groups with their own interests, it's important for the Nation to have access to objective data they can trust.

“How can you manage your territory – how can you be a steward and caretaker? – if you don't have current information on what's happening out there now?” says Chris Roberts, elected Chief Councillor of the Wei Wai Kum First Nation.

Karl Smith, a Wei Wai Kum member with a background in fisheries and biological consulting, has grown the Guardian team from three to nine members. As Guardian Watchmen Manager, he designed the program from its roots: securing a boat and equipment, scheduling work, and securing partner funding.

“People ask what our job is,” Karl says. “From what I see, [Guardians] are a blend of DFO officer, conservation officer, natural resource officer, and Coast Guard officer – set up for the needs of First Nations.”

This summer, the Guardians have been hard at work surveying archaeological sites, monitoring the health of bull kelp forests, tracking salmon, and restoring critical habitat in the Campbell River estuary.

To carry out this important work, they've built relationships with other First Nations, Crown agencies, conservation groups, and funders. Along the way, they've earned respect for their hard work, thoughtful approach, and leadership in the community and beyond.

FOR THE FULL STORY, VISIT [COASTFUNDS.CA](https://coastfunds.ca) AND SEARCH **WEI WAI KUM GUARDIANS.**





Welcome to Shearwater

By acquiring Shearwater, the Haíłzaqv have regained ownership of an important part of their territory and are unlocking new economic opportunities for their members.

ABOVE

The Shearwater acquisition includes a 63-acre resort and marina, as well as a marine workshop, restaurants, laundromat, sea taxi service, and more.

PHOTO

Evangeline Clifton

LAST YEAR, THE HEILTSUK

Tribal Council made a generational investment to purchase Shearwater: a 63-acre resort, marina, and collection of businesses located on Denny Island, across the water from the Ha̱tzaqv community of Wáglísla *Bella Bella*.

Denny Island has always been a cherished part of Ha̱tzaqv territory. Before contact with Europeans, the Ha̱tzaqv lived on the island and families managed traplines, harvested and processed salmon, and traded goods. In recent decades, Denny Island has supported canneries, an air force base, and a sport-fishing resort.

When the resort's former owner, Craig Widsten, announced his plans to retire, the Heiltsuk Tribal Council saw an opportunity to regain an important part of their territory and create employment and training opportunities for their members.

To finance the purchase, the Tribal Council used funds from reconciliation agreements with the Governments of Canada and British

Columbia, along with money from their allocation within Coast Funds' economic fund.

"When you think about how it was Crown land, sold to the Widsten family, and then how the Ha̱tzaqv purchased it back using Ha̱tcištut [reconciliation] funds, it really is a full circle story," says Megan Humchitt, Chairperson of Shearwater Resort.

As the new owners of Shearwater, the Ha̱tzaqv are creating a new kind of tourism experience that highlights their people's history and deep connection to the lands, waters, and wildlife in their territory.

With travellers on the move again, opportunities abound at Shearwater. Through the acquisition, the Heiltsuk Tribal Council has created new job opportunities and partnered with Vancouver Community College and Quadrant Marine Institute to offer on-site training and financial support for Ha̱tzaqv members who want to earn trades certifications and build their careers.

"Our community is super excited about this acquisition," says Káwáził Marilyn Slett, elected Chief Councillor of the Heiltsuk Tribal Council, in a video of the community's celebration of the Shearwater purchase.

"It's much more than buying a company...it's employment, it's economy, it's tourism through a Ha̱tzaqv lens and helping to share our story."

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT [COASTFUNDS.CA](https://coastfunds.ca) AND SEARCH **SHEARWATER.**



BELOW

The purchase agreement was signed on June 30, 2021 and, on the following day, the community celebrated "Heiltsuk Day" with a ribbon-cutting, dances, speeches from hereditary and elected leaders, and a flag-raising ceremony.

PHOTO COURTESY
Heiltsuk Tribal Council





Coast Funds Announces New CEO: Eddy Adra

Coast Funds' board of directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Eddy Adra as its Chief Executive Officer.

To recruit for this important role, the board oversaw an extensive and careful search process, working closely with a recruitment agency that works with First Nations.

Eddy has been an integral member of the Coast Funds team since 2018 and served as Director of Finance and Chief Financial Officer before stepping into the role of Acting CEO in the spring.

"Eddy is a proven leader and brings a strong record of service to First Nations and deep knowledge in

the areas of conservation finance, governance, and operations," says Dallas Smith, Chair of Coast Funds' board of directors.

In his four years at Coast Funds, Eddy's leadership on financial management, fund diversification, and values-aligned investing has helped grow our capacity to deliver funding, support fundraising, and offer valued services for First Nations in the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii.

"I'm humbled and honoured to lead the team at Coast Funds," Eddy says. "From Guardian programs to renewable energy to generating sustainable economic development opportunities, First Nations are

leading the way to a better future. I'm excited to lead with a strong team working to support First Nations' goals for stewardship and economic development."

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT
[COASTFUNDS.CA](https://coastfunds.ca) AND SEARCH
EDDY ADRA.

ABOVE

As CEO, Eddy Adra leads a team that manages \$110-million in financing for First Nations' stewardship and economic projects.

PHOTO

Coast Funds

BACK COVER

Sea stars are important predators in marine ecosystems, eating the sea urchins that, when unchecked, can devour kelp forests.

PHOTO

Andrew S Wright



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