

TALKING STICK

A COAST FUNDS
PUBLICATION



Restoring a Scallop
Farm with Andrew
Llewellyn

Haida Researchers Race
to Protect Endangered
Stads K'un

2026

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COVER

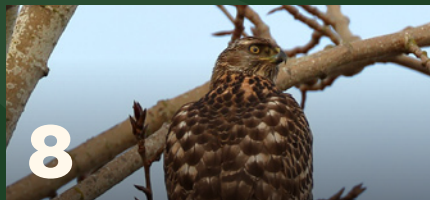
On the coast of Prince Rupert, BC, Metlakatla First Nation is turning a retired scallop farm into a regenerative ocean farm for pyropia (seaweed).

PHOTO

Troy Moth



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Message from the CEO

Photo: Andrew S Wright

WELCOME TO THE 2026 EDITION OF TALKING STICK MAGAZINE. This refreshed edition is packed full of our latest stories, interviews, project updates, and stunning photography. Like always, *Talking Stick* will continue to highlight the stories you know and love, covering First Nations' stewardship, sustainable development, and community well-being.

Paying homage to our roots, we use the original *Talking Stick* logo on the front cover and throughout the magazine. The late Curtis Wilson, a Kwakwak'awakw artist, designed the logo and also created Coast Funds' logo in 2008. His art continues to inspire and ground our work for the Nations we serve every day.

In this edition, we focus on the **people within the communities we serve** - the good news stories that highlight the growth, progress, and resilience of First Nations on the Great Bear Coast. You will hear from Elders, community leaders, Guardians, scientists, and artists.

Some of our best stories from recent years have made their way into this edition, covering topics such as upgrades to ǂá'isla **Haisla Nation's** Gizuá Market and **Haida** researchers protecting the endangered stads k'un, to new finance mechanisms

'**Wuikinuǂv Wuikinuxv First Nation** and Coast Funds are exploring to support salmon stewardship in 'Wuikinuǂv territory.

In this edition, we also share a new miniseries - profiling people who have left big impressions on our team over the course of the year. We are grateful to **Elder Sim'oogit Baxk'ap Chief Jacob Nyce, Andrew Llewellyn, and Khasalus Kolten Grant** for sharing their stories with us.

These stories are just a small sample of the many amazing things happening on the coast.

With arms raised and open, we are grateful to work with First Nations on the coast and to share their stories with readers near and far.

And as always, if you have a story you'd like to share, please reach out to our communications team by emailing talkingstick@coastfunds.ca.



Eddy Adra
CEO
Coast Funds

Great Bear Rainforest Economic Summit

First Nations celebrate success at the Great Bear Rainforest Economic Summit, reflecting on 15+ years of investment in the conservation economy.

IN OCTOBER LAST YEAR, First Nations economic development leaders gathered in Vancouver for the Great Bear Rainforest Economic Summit. The Summit celebrated 17 years of collective investment in sustainable businesses, infrastructure, and economic development on the coast.

Participating First Nations have been working together since before the signing of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements (2006), which protected sensitive forests in their territories. As an outcome of the Agreements, First Nations secured \$60 million

for an Economic Development Fund, administered through Coast Funds, that has delivered over \$61.4 million (2008 to 2024) for Nations' economic priorities.

Throughout the day, First Nation leaders reflected on how their projects have sparked positive change in their communities, by creating new jobs, generating revenue, strengthening partnerships, and creating new opportunities in sectors like eco-cultural tourism and sustainable fisheries.

"What the [economic development] funds have done is give us the idea that there's opportunities out there. It was very exciting and it gave me a lot of hope for our future," said Chief Darren Blaney, from Homalco First Nation, which has invested in cultural tourism and stewardship. "I think there's a lot of opportunities for us to look at other areas of business that will help us to keep growing."

"On the coast, First Nations have demonstrated how

Dallas Smith, Gitxaala Hereditary Chief Nees Ma'Outa *Clifford White*, and Homalco Hereditary Chief Darren Blaney. Photo: Georgie Lawson / Coast Funds





I think the future is going to be so bright.

Git Hayetsk Dancers.
Photo: Georgie Lawson / Coast Funds


economic development can be grounded in cultural values and traditional governance and stewardship practices,” said Patricia Sayer, former Director of Economic Development at Coast Funds. “At the Economic Summit, [we reflected] on that progress, hearing from a new generation of leaders who are ready to build on that success.”

Delegates also heard from economists and researchers from CPA BC, UBC Faculty of Forestry, First Nations Business Development Association, Export Development Canada, and VLW Financial Management on the trends shaping the broader economy in BC and Canada: trade uncertainties, technological change, and a renewed focus on homegrown strengths.

Between 2008 and 2024, First Nations used the Economic Development Fund to leverage \$61.4 million to contribute a further \$808 million to provincial GDP.

Beyond presentations and panels, Summit delegates had opportunities to learn from one another, strengthen relationships, and collaborate on their visions for the next phase of economic development on the coast.

“I think the future is going to be so bright and, economically, we are setting the table for [the next generation],” said Chief Councillor Samuel Schooner, Nuxalk Nation. “We can be as creative as we want to be, not restricted to [conventional] funding standards where it’s created in an office in Ottawa.”

After the Summit, Coast Funds’ partners, funders, and board members joined First Nations leaders for a celebration dinner featuring a ‘fireside’ chat between Dallas Smith (Tlowitsis), Chief Darren Blaney (Homalco), and Hereditary Chief Nees Ma’Outa *Clifford White* (Gitxaala) on the legacy of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements and how relations between First Nations, Crown governments, and funding partners have evolved in recent decades. 

FUND IMPACT

Coast Funds commissioned an economic impact analysis, which shows that, over 17 years, First Nations’ investment in their economies, supported by the Economic Development Fund, has generated:

- » **\$808 million** in added value to BC’s GDP
- » **\$331 million** in household income
- » **\$1.77 billion** in gross economic output

Download the findings at:
bit.ly/conservation-economy

An Afternoon with Sim'oogit Baxk'ap Chief Jacob Nyce

Knowledge keeper and respected Elder Sim'oogit Baxk'ap Chief Jacob Nyce lives in Gitwinksihlkw on Nisga'a lands, where he continues to advocate for salmon and his people's inherent right to protect their lands and waters.

Can you share a little about yourself?

My name is Jacob Nyce and I was born 1929. I became Chief after my brother passed. The chief name is passed down generation after generation. I was given the chief name Sim'oogit Baxk'ap. Baxk'ap tells the story our relatives going up the beach, when the volcano happened. They swam across the lake. There was 10 of them, "k'ap" is 10 in our language. That's why they took that name, the Chief name.

What has influenced you to advocate for the protection of salmon and food security for your community?

I remember one day – day after day – we had so much salmon. My brother complained so my mother went in her room, came back out. Showed all the money she had. She told him, "We got no store here. We can't eat money." Because we couldn't buy [food]. Then she explained about the animals that eat fish, especially the bear. "See how fat they are, all they eat are salmon." My brother never complained again after that. Salmon is the food that keeps our people alive before [European] contact. That's all they eat, salmon.



"If you don't prepare yourself," my dad used to say, "You're not going to make it through the winter. You're gonna starve." That was a warning when I was growing up. As I grew up, I listened. I always listened.

How did you become a commercial fisherman?

I started fishing when I was 14. Coming out of residential school and summer holidays, I learned quite a bit from my father. One of the days we had our net out and the water would just move. Seeing bubbles coming up, he would say, "Son, see those bubbles? All the fish down there." He said, "when the tide changes, they're going to come up and we're going to catch them." I fished for a long time, 61 years. I traveled the whole coast of British Columbia. Twice, I went around Vancouver Island.

Why are salmon so important to your Nation?

People cannot live without salmon, even today. One of my daughters is teaching her daughters how to prepare it, dry it, and smoke it. Because you see what's happening – not only to us – the world's going to get into food shortages. The population is expanding. The food that gets me by is starting to run low, starting to cost more. Salmon is a gift of God.



Above: Family photographs on the walls of Elder Chief Jacob Nyce's home in Gitwinksihlkw. Left: Elder Chief Jacob Nyce and his pet dog. Photos: Chelsey Ellis / Coast Funds



Racing to Protect Stads K'un

Stads K'un (Northern Goshawk).
Photo: Brian Bemmels

Haida surveyors and stewardship staff, along with biologists and researchers, are racing to identify and protect critical old growth forest habitat for the last remaining stads k'un.

STADS K'UN ARE ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION, their survival threatened by habitat loss, invasive species, and centuries of industrial logging.

"I like to imagine these birds as kind of prim and proper and relatively picky," says Jonas Prevost, a Haida citizen and stewardship technician, who has spent the last many seasons searching for signs of stads k'un. "They are hard to please, because they want the best: the biggest trees, the best foods, the nicest house."

Stads k'un, the national bird of Haida Gwaii, is a forest-dwelling hawk that's evolved over thousands

of years, adapting to thrive in the dense old growth forests that once covered the islands of Haida Gwaii. Genetically distinct from mainland goshawks, stads k'un reproduce more slowly and breeding pairs require large territories for foraging and nesting.

"We're talking 14,000 years in isolation, so there are no genetic crossovers," says Jonas. "They're not going to fly across Hecate Strait and go to Canada to visit the [other goshawks.]"

Since 2000, the Council of the Haida Nation's Heritage and Natural Resources Department (HNRD) has conducted surveys, sending field workers into the forests to check known nest sites and gather

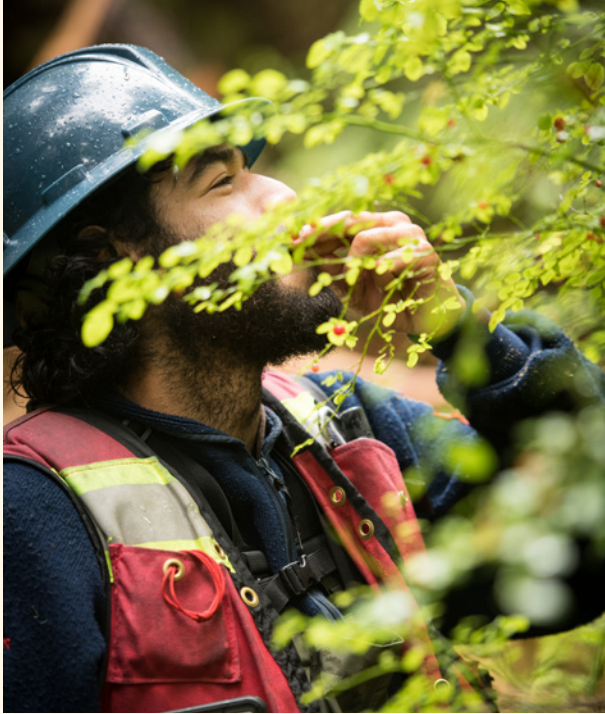


Photo: Talon Gillis

“

I like to imagine these birds as prim and proper.

information on the birds' behaviour, habitat needs, and interactions with other wildlife. Using this data, the Haida Nation works with the Province of British Columbia to designate legal reserves around nest sites, protecting valuable stads k'un territory from logging and other activities.


"The Haida House of Assembly resolution gives our department the mandate to protect our national bird, stads k'un," says Kung K_ayangas *Marlene Liddle*, Director of Lands Stewardship at HNRD. "To deliver on that mandate, the technical working group is drafting a recovery strategy and identifying foraging habitat."

"Stads k'un are an amazing bird to study, helping us understand what First Nations talk about when they say everything is interconnected," says Kiku Dhanwant, a biologist contracted by the Haida Nation who has lived on Haida Gwaii for decades. She says that the goshawks require larger protected areas that include old growth forest or mature second-growth forests with habitat suitable for nesting and foraging.

"We've found 31 nesting sites which, over time, have received some protection for the breeding area, but not the foraging area yet," Kiku says, noting these protections are limited.

One path forward is through Canada's Species at Risk Act. If the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), an independent group

of scientists, designates a species as 'endangered', then provinces are required to develop a recovery plan and strategy, which could include further steps to protect habitat. If the federal government believes that a province's measures are insufficient, they can step in.

Right now, COSEWIC lists stads k'un as 'threatened,' though the committee will meet soon to review the evidence on stads k'un (and other threatened species) and determine whether to designate the species as 'endangered.' 

31 nests

recorded on Haida Gwaii



For the full story, visit coastfunds.ca and search **Stads K'un**.

Xá'isla Nation's Gizuá Market

Xá'isla Haisla Nation is transforming the iconic Sunrise General Store, creating new economic opportunities in Xá'isla Kitamaat village.

YÁQWA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, Xá'isla Nation's economic development corporation, is carrying out a series of extensive renovations of Gizuá Market, previously known as Sunrise General Merchandise.

Located in Kitamaat village on Xá'isla Haisla territory, the market and restaurant space will offer upgraded amenities for Xá'isla's community and visitors.

Since acquiring the store in 2024, yáqwa has invested in renovations that will embrace a "new market

concept" while honouring the history of the original space and aiming to meet both the traditional and contemporary needs of the community.

As part of the rebrand, a new name for the store was proposed to the community.

"Gizuá, which means 'sun' in Xá'isla language, received positive feedback from the majority of those who completed the survey," stated yáqwa in a community update.

yáqwa Development Corporation is committed to creating economic opportunities that support the Nation's path to self-sufficiency. Wholly owned by Xá'isla Nation, yáqwa is pursuing and developing opportunities that generate strong financial returns, create meaningful employment, and build skills for Xá'isla members, ensuring that economic growth aligns with the community's priorities.

"It is a very exciting time for yáqwa Development Corporation as we focus on developing economic opportunities, including Gizuá, that deliver long-term prosperity and benefits for Xá'isla Nation today, and for generations to come," said Lisa Grant, Manager, Business Development.

"As we build on Sunrise's rich history, we look forward to building opportunities through Gizuá for Xá'isla-led businesses and members to grow and prosper through the selling of their merchandise and employment."

Renovations will be staged in a manner to avoid disrupting service at Gizuá Market. Once the market is updated, yáqwa will begin renovations on the restaurant space, which is expected to conclude in 2026. 🦅

Gizuá Market before renovations.
Photo: yáqwa Development Corporation





Photo: Andrew S Wright

Revenue Tools for Salmon Stewardship

Can new conservation finance tools, like a salmon impact bond, unlock funding for salmon stewardship in 'Wuikinuǰv *Wuikinuxv* territory?

'WUİKINUǰV NATION PARTNERED WITH Coast Funds and the Conservation Finance Alliance (CFA) to assess the feasibility of conservation finance mechanisms that could generate long-term revenue for the Nation's salmon stewardship priorities.

With salmon populations in a state of decline, finding ways to support the communities who care for the delicate ecosystems that salmon migrate through has never been more important.

"Lands and waters can only be as strong and healthy

as those who sustain them," said former Chief Councillor Danielle Shaw, who directed the project team alongside Stewardship Director Andra Forney and Salmon Reconciliation Coordinator Raven Walkus. "New long-term financing options can help our community continue to protect and manage salmon for food, livelihoods, and future generations."

Using seed funding and project support through the CFA's 2025 Incubator, the project has undergone a multi-staged process, starting with a series of visioning sessions with 'Wuikinuǰv stewardship and salmon restoration staff. The visioning sessions explored how stewardship, revitalization, traditional rights, and responsibilities interconnect, and aimed to define community priorities.

'Wuikinuǰv Nation and Coast Funds will determine the feasibility of three outcomes-based finance models that can support the Nation to access sustainable funding for stewardship. This includes

'Wuikinuǰv youth at culture camp.
Photo: Raven Walkus / 'Wuikinuǰv Nation



assessing mechanisms like Deshkan Ziibi Conservation Impact Bond, the Raven Indigenous Outcomes Funds, and Coast Funds' own internal mechanisms.

The project comes at a time when the 'Wuikinuǰv are making strides to restore their salmon and related cultural connections in their territories after the impacts of modern fishing practices, canneries, forestry, and – in more recent times – climate change.

'Wuikinuǰv people have stewarded their territories for millennia.

The 'Wuikinuǰv Nation's abundant territory extends from Koeve River to Cranstown Point. Today, the Nation hosts a reserve community at the head of Rivers Inlet stretching along the Wannock River into Wuikinuǰv Lake.

Salmon are vital to maintaining numerous healthy ecosystems and are an important part of 'Wuikinuǰv's food security, as well as the social, cultural, and economic well-being.

Historically, Wannock River had a prolific sockeye salmon run that rivaled runs on the Skeena and Nass rivers. The collapse of the sockeye run resulted in devastation to the ecosystem and impacted 'Wuikinuǰv peoples' ability to stay and feed their community.

Investing in programs that restore salmon stocks could expand 'Wuikinuǰv Nation's opportunities to build a sustainable economy and healthy ecosystems, supporting the community's return to their territory and the continuation of




Lands and waters can only be as strong and healthy as those who sustain them.

'Wuikinuǰv Big House.
Photo: Raine Playfair / Coast Funds

their long-lasting cultural traditions.

While the Great Bear Sea PFP is a significant step to supporting the growth of First Nations' stewardship programs, there are still many financial gaps to fill.

With diversified financing, 'Wuikinuǰv Nation is reasserting its rights to self-determination and its inherent responsibility to manage the lands, waters, and life in its traditional territory.

With the first stage of feasibility assessment concluding in spring 2026, 'Wuikinuǰv, with support from Coast Funds, will be seeking new partners to secure long-term funding for salmon restoration in their territory. 

WHY THESE TOOLS?

Conservation finance mechanisms, like impact bonds, can provide a way for socially responsible investors to support conservation and make a modest return on their investment. Importantly, this mechanism is designed to finance a shared objective; the community defines the outcomes and indicator criteria that support repayment of the initial investment.

Coast Funds is continuing to explore this concept through informal engagements with First Nations, philanthropic partners, and Crown governments.



Ts'msyen Nations Pilot Fishery

Photos: Troy Moth

On the North Coast, Ts'msyen fishers are trialling a more flexible approach to commercial fishery management, blending commercial fishing with food, social, and ceremonial fishing.

WHETHER HARVESTING SALMON TO feed a family or to sell to a commercial processor, fishing is fishing. That's the thinking behind an innovative demonstration fishery on the North Coast that supports Ts'msyen *Tsimshian* fishers to blend commercial fishing with food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) fishing.

On deck of the *Irenda*, Mitch Dudoward gets ready to offload the remaining week's catch of sockeye. This catch, which brings in revenue to offset the high costs of fuel, gear, and maintenance for Mitch's boat, is part of the dual commercial fishery coordinated by the North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society (NCSFNSS).

"Both my kids grew up on the boat with me," he says. "It's great having family aboard and teaching them what I was taught by my dad – the different spots and the different tides."

In addition to the 215 sockeye he's sold to Aero Trading, Mitch caught extra fish – "bycatch" – including coho, chinook and steelhead, which, as a First Nations fisher, he can now keep for FSC purposes. The NCSFNSS demonstration fishery also allows First Nations fishers to use the type of vessel and gear they're most comfortable with.

"For thousands of years, [Ts'msyen] people went out and caught fish to trade and share with their families



For the full story, visit coastfunds.ca and search **Ts'msyen Fishers**



The dual fishery gives more autonomy to the Indigenous fishers.

and store food," says Angela Addison, Executive Director of NCSFNSS. "They would have just called it fishing – they wouldn't have separated it."

With the arrival of Europeans, fishing on the Skeena and other parts of the coast grew to an industrial scale, with thousands of boats and fishers competing to harvest salmon for the dozens of canneries operating at the turn of the century. To manage the demand for salmon, the Canadian government introduced fishery licenses, which became progressively more complex. At the same time, colonial laws limited traditional Indigenous fishing methods, like weirs, dip nets, and stone traps, that allowed for selective harvesting.

"Indigenous people were not allowed to fish for commercial gain or trade, plus FSC at the same time, and that made their fishing practices very inefficient," Angela says. "[Indigenous fishers] would have to separate their commercial and food fish activities, which meant two trips instead of one."


Working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), NCSFNSS established a pilot Indigenous demonstration commercial salmon fishery in 2016 and repeated the program in 2018, 2019, and again

in 2024. Using a special license, Ts'msyen fishers are allocated some of the harvest share from the regular commercial salmon fishery, and have more flexibility for boat and gear types.

"The dual fishery gives more autonomy to the Indigenous fishers to manage their fishery themselves," says Angela. "They know how much fish they're allowed to catch. They're given an allocation. And then they have the autonomy to decide how to catch it."

That flexibility has been key to restoring Ts'msyen fishers' ability to fish for economic and food purposes at the same time, without competition from non-Indigenous commercial fishers.

"What's different about this is that I'm not fishing amongst the whole fleet," Mitch says.

For the NCSFNSS team and the fishers they work with, the dual commercial salmon fishery goes beyond a single catch – it's about supporting First Nation fishers to have the same access and flexibility as non-Indigenous fishers, so they can efficiently meet their family and community needs. 

Restoring a Scallop Farm with Andrew Llewellyn

Andrew Llewellyn has been working with Metlakatla First Nation as they prepare to restore a former scallop farm in Prince Rupert, BC. The project will use a holistic monitoring framework that tracks the impacts of regenerative ocean farming.



Please tell us a little about yourself.

My name is Andrew Llewellyn. I was born and raised in Prince Rupert, BC. I'm coastal First Nations [Gitxaala Nation]. I've been fortunate enough to be working most of my life on the water, or [in] water related activities, from fishing, beach cleaning, and shellfish and kelp farming.

What has your role involved with helping out Metlakatla First Nation?

I was hired as a farm worker in general labour before Coastal Shellfish closed its business. I started working my way up to Hatchery Technician, then Hatchery Assistant Manager, and also working in algae production. We reached a point when we were no longer breeding and hatchery work stopped, so I got moved to boat work at the farm.

I was fortunate enough to work in so many positions that I have a good understanding of scallops, how they breed, and the work required to get to harvest. Hopefully the skills I learned will be applied towards future projects with Metlakatla First Nation.

When you're not working on the ocean farm, what do you do in your free time?

I like picking up hobbies, things I can do with my hands. Most of all, just enjoying the outdoors. If I'm not on the water, I like to be in the bush harvesting food and medicine. Our beautiful coast has a lot to offer.

Why are regenerative ocean farms important?

Food security done in a sustainable way, no feed or fertilizers. I think regenerative ocean farms are an underutilized way of farming. If done right, it will benefit us and the environment.

Metlakatla First Nation accessed \$250,000 in conservation funds from Coast Funds in 2024 towards the development and implementation of a holistic monitoring framework for the Nation's regenerative ocean farm. Metlakatla's regenerative ocean farm will sustainably grow pyropia (seaweed).



Andrew Llewellyn, employee of Metlakatla First Nation, working on the restoration of a retired scallop farm.
Photos: Troy Moth / Coast Funds

River of Abundance

A day at Nisga'a Nation's test fishery

1



Photos: Chelsey Ellis / Coast Funds



PHOTO INFORMATION

- 1. A view from the Gitwinksihlkw suspension bridge overlooking Fishwheel 2 on K'ali Akxim Lisims Nass River. Until 1995, the 400-metre-long footbridge was the only way to access the village.
- 2. A spaghetti tagged sockeye salmon. Some tags use radio telemetry to collect geospatial data about a fish's age when returning to spawn, migration patterns, and en route mortality.
- 3. The fishwheels are set up on a moving pontoon that is anchored to neighbouring rocks along the riverbank. Depending on location and productivity, some wheels require daily maintenance.

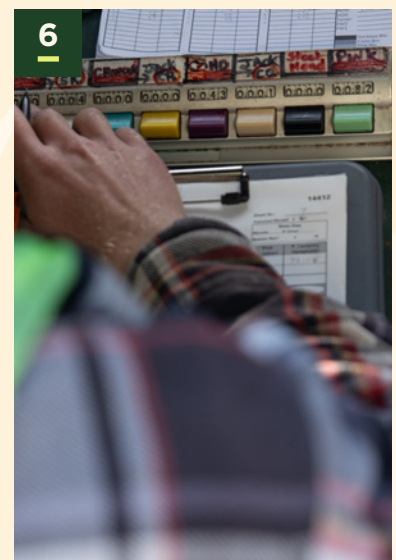
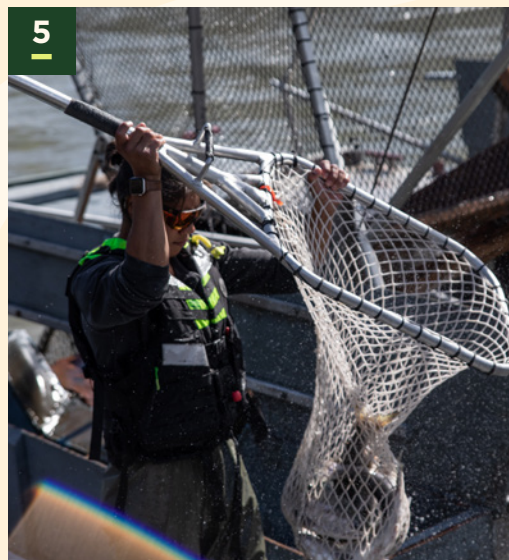




4. Seven of the 25 fishwheel staff. From left to right: Anthony Stewart, Christopher Griffin, James Griffin, Tim Angus, Ben Gonu Jr, Richard Azak, and Branden Azak.

5. Nisga'a technicians collect salmon from the fishwheel for assessment and counting.

6. Biologist James Griffin logs population data for weekly stock assessment reports. This helps predict future salmon populations and determine food, social, and ceremonial allocations.



7. Known as the 'River of Abundance,' K'alii Aksim Lisims Nass River is famous for its significant runs of five species of Pacific salmon and steelhead. The Nass River is the third largest river in British Columbia after the Skeena River and Fraser River.

7





Setting a Global Standard

Photo: Andrew S Wright

In Canada, four Indigenous-led project finance for permanence (PFP) initiatives are setting a global conservation standard by securing lasting protections for their lands and waters.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS PLEDGED up to \$800 million to protect Canada's lands and waters. Using the project finance for permanence (PFP) model, Indigenous groups are securing lasting protections for sensitive ecosystems and long-term financing to sustain stewardship, Guardian programs, conservation efforts, and community-led economic development.

Each PFP is designed to meet the unique conservation and community needs in the terrestrial and marine ecosystems they protect.

GREAT BEAR SEA (BC) In 2024, 17 First Nations alongside Crown governments and philanthropic

partners, signed the Great Bear Sea PFP closing agreements. Securing \$335 million in initial funding for marine stewardship and economic development, First Nations expect to use the funds to support the creation of more than 3,000 new jobs and 200 businesses in marine stewardship, transportation, renewable energy, sustainable fisheries, eco-cultural tourism, and local manufacturing and processing.

"Our communities are contributing a lot of our own resources, while balancing other priorities," says 'Wuikinu'xv Nation's former Chief Councillor Danielle Shaw. "This is one piece of a very complex puzzle."



For the full story, visit coastfunds.ca and search **Indigenous-Led PFP.**



This is one piece of a very complex puzzle.

OUR LAND FOR THE FUTURE (NWT)

In 2024, 22 Indigenous Governments, Crown governments, and private donors combined funds to secure \$375 million. The fund will support 10 years of Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship, including the establishment of new protected and conserved areas, Guardian and stewardship programs, language programs, and cultural revitalization.

“We are a part of the land, and the land is a part of us,” says Dahti Tsetso, CEO of the Northwest Territories Our Land for the Future Trust. “In Indigenous culture, we honour that connection in our entire way of thinking.”


SINAA (NU) In 2025, Qikiqtani Inuit Association (representing 13 Inuit Nations and groups), the Government of Canada, and philanthropic partners, along with the Aajuraq Conservation Trust Fund Society, signed the SINAA agreement, securing \$270 million and establishing new and enhanced environmental projects and

Inuit governance of Qikiqtani lands and waters.

“The most important thing is that it’s us, as Aboriginal people, running our own conservation,” says Olayuk Akesuk, President of Qikiqtani Inuit Association.

The funds will support conservation, Inuit employment, and Inuit-led governance in the Qikiqtani Region.

OMUSHKEGO WAHKOHTOWIN: A PATH FORWARD (ON),

led by the Mushkegowuk Council, is fighting to protect the world’s Breathing Lands. Nine Nations have agreed to take part in a feasibility study endorsed by Parks Canada. The Mushkegowuk Council has requested further engagement from Crown governments. 

WHAT IS A PFP?

Project finance for permanence (PFP) is a model for structuring large-scale conservation investments to support lasting protection of ecosystems together with community well-being and economic sustainability. PFPs assemble upfront financing from multiple sources (e.g. public, philanthropic, industry), securing ecological protections, sustainability plans, policy, and regulatory measures in a single ‘closing’ process.

As an outcome of the Great Bear Rainforest agreements in 2007, First Nations established what has since been recognized as the world’s first PFP – which included the creation of Coast Funds to administer \$120 million for Nations’ investments in a conservation economy.

Khasalus Kolten Grant on Being an Artist

Khasalus Kolten Grant is a multidisciplinary artist with family ties to the Musgamagw Dzawadaenuxw, Kwakiutl Tlowitsis, Squamish, and N'Quatqua St'at'imc Nations. His latest mural, located in Coast Funds' office, draws on his deep connection to culture and family.

What has been the greatest influence on your decision to becoming an artist?

I got into it because of my great-grandmother, Tlakwagilaogwa *Emily Baker*. She was in hospice in North Vancouver, on her way to cross over. She was a very stoic and powerful woman... I went to go see her with my mum. As soon as I walked in the room, she sat up, and she stared me right in the eyes, maybe like 15 minutes went by. My mom nudged me, and she's like, 'Are you ready to go?' We had been sitting there for an hour and a half. That's how fast the time went by. I gave [my great-grandmother] a kiss on the forehead and left.

For a few days, I was thinking about everything that she did for all of us. Everything that she carried – all the knowledge. She was such a prestigious and humble person. That was all the things she taught us growing up. And all I could think of was, 'How am I going to pass this down to my children?'



You shared that you have had many great teachers. What are some important steps you took to learning to carve and paint?

My uncle, Klathe Bhi – I used to weed his garden as a little kid – I went down and knocked on his door and I told him I wanted to carve... I wanted to do a mask. And he's like, 'Well, you got to find some wood, and you got to find a knife.' I tracked down a knife, and I tracked down a piece of wood. I don't think I stopped after that.

I'd watch my uncle. He would help me through things, and then I'd also help him. That's part of the apprenticeship. Fortunately, I have a lot of uncles that carve, so I had a lot of help along the way. A lot of good teachers.

What compels you to create?

Being an artist, it's more than just drawing on a paper, painting it, and making the sale... You've got to know what that mask is for, what the purpose is, what it means and where it came from.

Carving has been in my family for over 12 generations... my family always took great pride, and we have never stopped potlatching, we've never stopped creating. It's in my DNA.

Learn more: khasalus.ca



Khasalus Kolten Grant in front of his mural, *Undersea Kingdom: Thinking Outside the Box*.
Photos: Georgie Lawson / Coast Funds

Innovation Rooted in Community and Culture

Haíłzaqv Nation is using innovative technologies – like AI video capture and monitoring – to restore ecological balance to their territories.

HAÍŁZAQV HEILTSUK NATION HAVE RELIED on sockeye salmon to support their community and culture for thousands of years. Each year, technicians install a temporary weir across the Koeye River to collect information about salmon returning to spawn.

The weir, which operates like a series of fence panels, was designed based on images and archeological evidence of traditional sockeye salmon weirs to guide and capture fish. The sockeye salmon are then counted with the assistance of underwater cameras installed inside passthrough boxes along the weir.

Koeye River weir.
Photo: Grant Callegari / Hakai Institute



In the past, Haíłzaqv technicians would manually count and identify the salmon – a slow and difficult process that took hours from their busy days.

Today, the team is using AI machine learning to complete real-time fish counts and species recognition, allowing team members to make culturally and ecologically supported harvesting decisions.

“The fish weir is one of the coolest things I’ve ever seen,” said Jeremy Jorgenson, Salmon Weir Team Lead in a video by First Nations Technology Council. “It makes me incredibly proud of my ancestors and proud of the team that work together to train AI to help us collect the data that we do.”

The solar-powered, satellite-connected AI monitoring system was a direct response to rapidly declining sockeye salmon populations and reduced monitoring programs by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

“If we know that our salmon returns are really good, we can create a harvesting plan where we can bring sockeye back to the community and share with as many households as we can,” said Jeremy. “That’s a great feeling.”

In 2025, Haíłzaqv’s AI monitoring system was awarded the Innovative Community or Organization Award by the First Nations Technology Council.

The prestigious award recognized more than a decade of innovative conservation research by the team members who work the Koeye River weir. 🍷

Opening New Doors

COAST FUNDS HAS GROWN ITS TEAM, building capacity to deliver new funding through the Great Bear Sea PFP and to enhance services to participating First Nations. We are pleased to welcome:

- Aimee Nygaard** Development Manager
- Eau-Vive Heppenstall** Senior Director, Programs and Partnerships
- Hide Ozawa** Director, Communications and Engagement
- Jessi Goss** Executive Administrator
- Logan Griffiths** Communications Specialist
- Landon Gilmour** Finance Manager
- Raven Stierle** Stewardship Funding Specialist
- Siddhi Mhatre** Finance Administrator

To accommodate the growing team, Coast Funds has moved into a beautiful office in downtown Vancouver that is proudly open to participating First Nations and partners. The space, which is purposefully designed to

encourage connection and creativity, can be used for collaborative working, meetings, and presentations.

For more information about renting a meeting room, email Coast Funds at info@coastfunds.ca

Learn more about our team members:
coastfunds.ca/about/who-we-are

Coast Funds team members visited the Museum of Anthropology in 2025. Photo: Ilea Mattice / Coast Funds





COAST FUNDS

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Find out more at:

coastfunds.ca



Our offices are located on the shared territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.