



First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia BC CHIEFS & COUNCILS UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2022



FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL MEMBERS:

West Coast Vancouver Island: **Hugh Braker**
Central Coast: **Rich Chapple**
North Vancouver Island: **John Henderson**
South Vancouver Island: **Larry George**
Lower Mainland: **In Progress**
Fraser Valley: **Ken Malloway**
Mid-Fraser 1: **Dawn Machin**
Mid-Fraser 2: **Richard Wimbush**
Upper Fraser: **Thomas Alexis**
Upper Skeena: **Stu Barnes**
Transboundary Columbia: **Shayla Lawrence**
Northern Transboundary: **In Progress**
Haida Gwaii: **Shawn Cowpar**
North Coast: **In Progress**

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Message from the Executive Director

ʔi ʔə ce:p ʔəw ʔəy ʔaí, Si:yém nə Siyeýe?

“Greetings: Are you all well, my esteemed friends (relations),”

As we move into the heart of the 2022 Salmon harvest season, returning migration is underway all along the Pacific Coast with varying degrees of strength and obstacles. The Skeena and West Coast returns appear to be providing solid opportunities for the Nations to replenish their communal needs.

With last year’s fires, followed by atmospheric rivers and floods leading to a large snowpack and cool wet spring in 2022, the Fraser stocks faced some daunting challenges in returning to spawning areas. Flow levels at the Fraser Canyon were around 8700 cubic meters per second, and forced early migrating stocks, like early Stuart, to hold in deep pools in the canyon as they were unable to get past the wall of water. Given that this is on the heels of other major events such as Atmospheric rivers, floods, fires and the Big Bar slide, and precipitous low returns – we are compelled to begin looking at a shift from all interest groups from **harvest management thinking** and their structures – towards shared notions of **protection, restoration, and rebuilding**.

Ultimately, scenarios such as this natural event, coupled with the broader issues of climate change, changing ocean conditions and other impacts, indicate to us that we, humans, are just now starting to accept that this is not an inexhaustible resource. The recent observed declines of wild Pacific salmon that have prompted strategic overtures by all levels of government to act, indicates the need for significant collaboration.



Accordingly, we have advised the federal and provincial governments that we have heard from BC First Nations that they do not need separate strategic plans, such as the PSSI or the provincial Salmon Strategy. We have heard from the nations that it is better to design **one Salmon restoration strategy** that we can all work on together. We have written to both ministers seeking a commitment to sign a formal accord committing all three levels of government to work collaboratively on a salmon restoration strategy, which would be consistent with their commitments to UNDRIP and DRIPA.

The FNFC has also launched the Salmon Action Dialogue series in partnership with the Pacific Salmon Foundation with the notion *that a strategy to protect and recover Pacific salmon will need to include ALL of us (First Nations Government/Leadership, both levels of government, and all other interest groups).*

By extension, salmon require water and habitat for survival. The FNFC has made significant progress in creating a provincial-level Water Table in collaboration with the Province of BC. A First Nation Caucus will aim to bring together best practices and expertise in different regions of the province and identify how BC First Nations can be situated in a meaningful role in meeting the DRIPA and UNDRIP intentions and meet reconciliation objectives.

Further detail can be reviewed by the sector reports in the following pages.

Thanks, and take care!



EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT UNIT UPDATE

Registration open for 2022 Fall Assembly: *Naut'sa mawt: we are all connected - one heart, one mind.*

The FNFC will be hosting the annual Fall Assembly this year in Musqueam Territory, on October 12th/13th. After two years of hosting the event online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are opting for the hybrid format, allowing the attendees to join us either in person or remotely. This year's Assembly is going to take place at the Musqueam Cultural Pavilion located at 4000 Musqueam Avenue in Vancouver.

The in-person participation will enable participants to discuss current issues both, in a Tier 1 and Tier 2 dedicated space. The in-person attendees will also have the opportunity to ask questions and inquire more on a range of topics presented by a variety of speakers. It has been a while since we all had a chance to meet in person and discuss issues that impact all of us. For those who decide to dial in remotely, we thank you for your support and hope to see you in person at our upcoming events.

To learn more about the event agenda and registration, visit: <https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/event/2022-fall-assembly/>

We look forward to welcoming you at the 2022 Fall Assembly!

STRONGER TOGETHER





FNFC's Role in Advancing First Nations Interests in the Protection of Wild Salmon

In 2006, First Nations from across BC gathered to build on previous work and discuss their priorities and aspirations related to fisheries and aquatic resources. Based on these discussions, in 2007, the BC First Nations Leadership Council (BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs) drafted the **First Nations Fisheries Action Plan**. A key priority was to establish a province-wide First Nations Fisheries Council to implement the Action Plan. As a result, the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC (FNFC) works **to build structure and process to enable BC Nations to speak in a coherent and cohesive voice on fisheries matters. To be clear, FNFC is not a rights holder and takes no position on specific issues, as this is the inherent right domain of self-governance by the Nations.** Our role at the FNFC, is to convene, elicit, and distill those perspectives and provide a forum for discussion to assist in program and policy analysis and advice to Government on the interests of the Nations.

FNFC works to achieve its mandate through a 3-year business plan model, developing appropriate structures and process among 200+ Nations, designing collaborative relationships among First Nations organizations to elicit priorities, and areas of shared concern. In 2011, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and FNFC signed an MOU to ensure connectivity between our organizations. More recently, given the many things that have transpired over the past decade, the FNFC and FNLC recognized the need to refresh our outlook to compliment UNDRIP, DRIPA and the Reconciliation agenda, the organizations met on May 30, 2022 to identify opportunities to strengthen our organizational relationship, and agreed that this original MOU should be updated.

One of FNFC's current strategic priorities is working to create a commitment for the protection and restoration of wild salmon from both the federal and provincial governments, and to seriously address the downward trend of salmon stocks in BC:

- Salmon stocks in BC are declining in productivity at an alarming pace since 1950 sockeye have declined over 94% and Chum and Chinook have declined 80%.
- There is no single cause of broad salmon population decline – a vast range of impacts, including climate change, industrialization, overfishing, etc. have led to this decline.

A gap exists in a unified and coherent collective Indigenous voice grabbing the attention of governments on this issue specifically. FNFC continues to see fragmentation among Nations as they pursue their unique interests and respective self-governing agreements with various levels of government. This is further compounded by the complexity of numerous First Nations regional organizations and further diminished by special interest groups.

As a solution to this challenge, FNFC tabled a resolution in 2020 at the respective FNLC meetings calling for support in the development of a cohesive voice to provide advice to both levels of government to honor the principles of federal UNDRIP and provincial Declaration Act commitments. This resolution was approved by all three FNLC organizations. This resolution has led to FNFC calling upon both the federal and provincial government to jointly develop a tripartite Accord with Indigenous rights holders to protect and restore wild





Pacific Salmon. Discussions of the process to develop a pathway to a shared approach to protection of wild salmon will begin in the fall of 2022.

PARTNERSHIPS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS UNIT UPDATE

Pacific Salmon Action Dialogues Next Steps

The First Nations Fisheries Council of BC and the Pacific Salmon Foundation have partnered to present the Pacific Salmon Action Dialogue Series (PSADs), with the goal to align and coordinate action for the conservation and recovery of wild Pacific Salmon. Four sessions have taken place so far, each one building off of preceding discussions. Session 5 will be launched later in the fall to provide a draft direction forward building off the work done during the sessions.

- **Session 1** (March 3, 2022) set the stage as our virtual launch event, where we examined the present salmon system.
- **Session 2** (April 27, 2022), also virtual, explored examples of multi-jurisdictional collaborative models, and what lessons BC can learn from them.
- **Sessions 3 and 4** (June 1 and 2, 2022) were a two-day event combining in-person and virtual participation. These sessions compared local collaborative models in BC, on the coast and in the interior, to identify key elements for BC to develop a collaborative framework for salmon recovery and conservation.

During sessions 3&4, nearly 100 participants convened for the two-day event, including delegates from the federal and provincial government, First Nations, Indigenous organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, legal, recreational fisheries, and commercial fisheries. In breakout groups, participants shared their takes on how to build a collaborative framework for salmon. One facilitation question of note was *“What are the first steps for creating a collaborative framework (e.g., at each level and by whom)?”*

Participants discussed existing structures and tools that can be leveraged once a common vision for salmon is established.

The PSADs team will use the responses to shape the next steps of the Dialogues. The goal is to map out complex conversations so that future sessions facilitate appropriate conversations at the appropriate scales. This strategy will ultimately support the development of an action plan for coordinated collaboration on salmon.

Videos and agendas from all four sessions are available here: <https://www.ohboy.ca/psads-archive>





DFO Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) Roundtable

On July 21, 2022, Minister Joyce Murray hosted a strategic roundtable with selected ENGOs (environmental non-governmental organizations), First Nations fisheries and aquatic resource management organizations, and academic institutions. In total, 18 participants attended the discussion, including the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC. FNFC was joined by other Indigenous organizations, such as LFFA, the UFFCA, and the Ha'oom Society. Minister Murray shared that a key pillar of the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) is collaboration and engagement, as partnerships will impact the effectiveness of the PSSI implementation. Reconciliation with First Nations is also a key objective of PSSI.

One of the messages that the FNFC brought to the discussion was the need for financial transparency of PSSI and BC SRIF. In 2021, the Government of Canada announced the \$647 Million ***Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative***, intended to guide a strategic and coordinated long-term response, over 5 years to restore Pacific salmon and salmon habitat, while contributing \$100 million to the renewal of the BC Salmon, Restoration, and Innovation Fund (BC SRIF).

The FNFC stressed the need to bring resources to the table in light of the wild salmon recovery. Additionally, FNFC questioned the utilization of the \$100 million committed to the renewal of BC SRIF as no specific, committed, nor ongoing resourcing external to DFO to address the decline of Pacific salmon, was identified.

FNFC also voiced that both levels of government need to work together with the First Nations to develop a tripartite collaboration to protect wild salmon. *We do not need three different strategies. Instead, we need to work together to restore the wild salmon in BC collaboratively.*

FNFC also introduced the concept of indigenous Protected and Conservation Areas, (IPCA's) to support the concept of establishing *Salmon Parks in critical areas to ensure the protection of Pacific salmon*. Salmon Parks are an Indigenous-led conservation initiative to protect and restore expansive areas of habitat surrounding key salmon conservation areas.

Across all participants attending the roundtable discussion, consistent messaging included two focal points:

- A shared and coordinated approach to ensure protection of wild salmon in BC needs to be formally established between First Nations, DFO, and the Province of BC.
- Redistribution of control, empowering watersheds and regions to coordinate and make decisions most appropriate for their salmon populations, is needed.

As a follow-up to the July 21st conversation, FNFC will continue to advance the idea of formalizing a tripartite salmon accord with the Province of BC and the federal government, supporting increased leadership and shared decision-making involving First Nations in order to protect wild salmon in BC.





Update to the Province of BC Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC (FNFC) and the Province of BC provides a framework for overcoming systemic barriers, coordinating intergovernmental relations, supporting communications, and exploring innovative approaches to support First Nations involvement in fisheries initiatives.

One of the original goals of the MOU was to facilitate a “one-window” approach for FNFC to work with multiple provincial agencies and departments, including: the Ministry of Forests, Land and Natural Resources (FLNR); the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (ENV); and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (AFF). In spring 2022, these ministries were restructured and a new ministry, the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship (LWRS), with a new mandate emerged. In light of this significant change, it has become necessary to update the MOU. Details of this update to come.

Province of BC and FNFC have finalized the 2022-2023 Workplan. Its priorities include protecting wild salmon, the co-development of a Coastal Marine Strategy, and the co-development of a Watershed Security Strategy by the newly assembled Water Table. The Water Table (Tier 2) and First Nations Water Caucus (Tier 1) have each met two times so far, details of which can be found in their own section of this publication.

POLICY AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT UNIT UPDATE

Transitioning Open Net-Pen Salmon Farming in BC

In July 2022, Minister Joyce Murray released the proposed discussion framework to guide the next phase of the federally mandated “responsible plan to transition” away from open net-pen salmon aquaculture in BC. This next phase will build on previous open net-pen Transition Plan engagement undertaken in 2020 and 2021. The release included the vision for the Transition Plan and outlined the objectives that will help guide the process. DFO also has committed to provide resourcing to First Nations to participate in the planning process.

The proposed vision for the Transition Plan includes a call to adopt alternative production methods that minimize or eliminate interactions between farmed and wild salmon while considering social, cultural and economic objectives. DFO is seeking feedback on the feasibility of the proposed vision and approach, options for implementation, and opportunities for partnership. The input and feedback received from First Nations, industry, local governments, stakeholders, and British Columbians during the engagement sessions will guide the development and implementation of the Open-Net Pen Transition Plan, expected to be finalized in spring 2023. FNFC will continue to support First Nations to bring strong, coherent messaging to influence Open Net-Pen Transition Plan development through a First Nations Coalition Working Group. First Nations must be present and supported at decision-making tables so that consent-based decision making is a key part of the





plan development. First Nations possess diverse interests and opinions of aquaculture and there must be an inclusive Open Net-Pen Transition Plan that balances the diverse opinions and interests of British Columbia First Nations. Feedback from previous FNFC facilitated meetings with First Nations highlighted the importance of respecting First Nations right to self-determination, and showed that transition may be different for First Nations in different areas. Participants stressed that transition must protect and accommodate First Nations interests and investments and emphasized the importance of indigenous engagement, particularly in areas where decisions will impact local communities.

FNFC is supporting First Nations engagement on the next phase of the development of the Transition Plan and will be facilitating four regional BC First Nation's workshops (Tier 1) this fiscal. These workshops will be held across BC to garner perspectives from as broad a range of First Nations as possible. FNFC is planning on hosting the meetings in the following regions: Vancouver Island, Mainland /Southwest, North Coast & North Interior.

For more information on Open Net-Pen Transition Plan regional workshops or other FNFC aquaculture initiatives, please contact Mike Gray – mike@fnfisheriescouncil.ca

First Nations Caucus Summer Session and Regional Meetings

In July, FNFC helped to facilitate an online meeting of the First Nations Caucus (FNC) where the Caucus members provided input on engagement and communication strategies to elicit input on negotiation topics for the upcoming Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) negotiations in 2026. We saw interest from the FNC members in helping build First Nations capacity to take a leading role in the formation of negotiation points. We also saw interest in increasing conversations and cooperation between Canadian First Nations and US Tribes.

The FNFC plans to continue working with the FNC on engaging with First Nations and the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC) throughout the leadup to treaty negotiations. FNFC also plans to continue to work with the FNC on strengthening collaborative processes which can support the development of coordinated efforts to increase First Nations management and negotiation capacity.

In the fall and winter, FNFC will work to help facilitate regional meetings with First Nations to increase community engagement and to hear about issues relating to the PST furthering our understanding of the topics and areas of concern prior to negotiations beginning. We are excited to meet with all our partners throughout BC and to hopefully build and strengthen our partnerships as well as to form new ones.





HABITAT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION UNIT UPDATE

The Launch of the Fueling Change Opportunities Paper

Over the last decade, disastrous wildfire events in BC have intensified the need to manage wildfire risk and impacts on ecosystems and human communities. The FNFC has heard concerns on this topic, especially at the Water Governance Roundtable events. Many First Nations in BC are interested in understanding and mitigating the impacts of natural disasters and emergencies accelerated by climate change on aquatic habitats and resources.

That is why early last spring, the FNFC Water for Fish Program launched the Wildfire and Aquatic Resource workshops. The workshops provided space for discussions on the connection between wildfires and aquatic resources in BC and explored what is needed to advance Indigenous-led initiatives in BC.

From the information gathered, the Water for Fish team developed an Opportunities Paper titled Fueling Change: Opportunities to Support First Nations in BC to Address Wildfire Threats and Impacts on Freshwater Health. The paper will be available for distribution in the fall and will provide a set of recommendations. For First Nations, it will focus on advancing technical activities related to wildfires and aquatic resources and on revitalizing traditional knowledge. For Crown government recommendation focus on how they can better support First Nations through increased financial capacity, changes in legislation and the development of co-developed and groups to further advance this topic.

First Nations Water Caucus and Water Table Meetings

FNFC is excited to announce the establishment and launch of the Provincial **First Nations Water Caucus** and **Water Table** to work in partnership with the province in developing water security and sustainability. The Initial launch meetings took place in person on June 27 & 28 in Vancouver. Subsequent online meetings took place in early August and in-person meetings for both the Caucus and Table are scheduled for mid-September.

The 15-member **First Nations Water Caucus** meetings bring together delegates from across BC to work together to advance First Nations priorities and interests around fresh water and aquatic resources. The Caucus works with Province of BC representatives at the Water Table to address legislation, regulation, land use planning, policies, programs and strategies that facilitate shared decision making and supports self-determination, and water governance. Province of BC representatives participate from across ministries including Ministry of Land Water and Resource Stewardship, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and Ministry of Health.





Some highlights and activities from the first meetings include:

- Building relationships between the First Nation delegates and the BC government representatives.
- Developing the Terms of Reference for both the First Nations Water Caucus and the Water Table.
- Identifying co-development process and how this will inform the co-development of that Watershed Security Strategy and associated action plans.
- Identifying processes for communication and updates to communities and opportunities for Water Caucus delegates to engage with First Nations across BC and elicit feedback on matters being addressed at the Water Table.

If you would like to receive regular updates regarding Water Caucus and Table progress, and learn about opportunities to engage, please send an email to Madison Rattai at madison@fnfisheriescouncil.ca with your contact information.



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