

# Annual Report

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2023



COASTAL NATIONS

— FISHERIES —

100% INDIGENOUS OWNED



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## Message from the Board Chair: K'unya Laurie Bevan

In 2019, leaders from coastal First Nations and Canada's Federal Government signed the Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRRA), later amended to its current form in 2021.

The FRRRA is the first of its kind in BC to establish a collaborative fisheries management process between Canada and First Nations in the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. The historic agreement, which ultimately led to the creation of Coastal Nations Fisheries, provides funding for access to commercial fishing opportunities and the livelihoods they provide for families. The community-based fisheries model, combined with Nation-led commercial fisheries, will provide stable jobs in the home communities of participating Gitga'at, Gitxaala, Haida, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo Xai'xais, Metlakatla, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv Nations.

The FRRRA is a prime example of reconciliation in action, or as I call it, reconciliACTION. It is a major step forward in co-governance and shared decision-making that ensures shareholder Nations will play a lead role in revitalizing coastal fisheries and in rebuilding depleted fish stocks throughout our territories. The FRRRA is a much-needed paradigm shift in fisheries management. It establishes a new co-governance framework that will benefit our shareholder Nations, and all Canadians, while showing the world that we can manage our fisheries resources differently and better.

As First Nations people we have all spent time on the ocean and along the shoreline to harvest the food that has sustained us for millennia. As children we watched and learned as our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles walked the beach to dig clams and cockles, check the rocks for mussels, chitons and octopus, waded out with dipnets to catch crabs, and set nets and cast lines to catch salmon. We listened to their stories of when the ocean was plentiful and how when the tide was out, the table was set.

Our people have always known that keeping the ocean and river ecosystems healthy is key to preserving our culture, food security and economic self-sufficiency, which is why it is essential to integrate Indigenous knowledge into fisheries' decision-making.

All of the shareholder Nations are committed to working together collaboratively on a Nation-to-Nation, government-to-government basis to develop effective strategies for the management, conservation and use of fisheries resources. As one of three Haida representatives on the inaugural Board, and as the only woman, I am deeply honoured to play an important role in this work.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bevan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**K'unya Laurie Bevan, Haida**  
Board Chair, Coastal Nations Fisheries



## Message from the CEO: Paul Paterson

One of the key messages I'd like the people of the eight shareholder Nations to know and understand is that Coastal Nations Fisheries (CNF) is your company. From the ground up, CNF's creation story has the leadership and people of the Nations at its centre. I am constantly amazed and deeply respectful of the foresight of all the people who have contributed to creating this 100% Indigenous-owned fishing company—*your company*.

Over the last 18 months, CNF has become an active participant in BC's coast-wide fishing industry and a significant holder of licences and quota. CNF is developing a reputation as a company that keeps the commitments it makes and is a reliable participant in the marketplace.

We have also worked in support of shareholder Nations in developing their community-based fisheries (CBF), including acquiring fishing access, specifically licences and quota. As well, through the collaborative governance process with Canada, we are working with Coastal First Nations and others to create the space and flexibility necessary to implement the innovative approaches and the tools necessary to successfully operationalize the CBFs.

I look forward to what we can accomplish together over the coming years and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with all of you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PP'.

**Paul Paterson**  
CEO, Coastal Nations Fisheries

# Who We Are

Coastal Nations Fisheries (CNF) is a transformative fishing company on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii of British Columbia, collectively owned by eight First Nations—Gitga’at, Gitxaala, Haida, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo Xai’xais, Metlakatla, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv.

# Vision

Vibrant and prosperous fisheries, sustainably harvested and managed, by our coastal shareholder Nations.

# Mission

To support shareholder Nations in the revitalization and stewardship of community-based fisheries and the development of a thriving boat-to-table, Indigenous-owned and sustainably operated commercial fishing company.

# Purpose

The eight shareholder Nations have come together to exercise their ancient inherent rights and responsibility to self-determination and self-governance. This includes breathing new life into each Nation’s jurisdiction, authorities, responsibilities and laws, as well as revitalizing and implementing their respective legal systems, customs and traditions.

Through their alliance, the Nations honour each other’s holistic and integral relationship with the marine environment. Each Nation is committed to preserving healthy ecosystems that, in turn, support their communities through sustenance and contribute to economic wellbeing and social, cultural and spiritual practices

# Shareholder Nations

First Nations on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii are working together to revitalize fisheries across their territories.

These shareholder Nations are partners in Coastal Nations Fisheries Limited Partnership and each operates its own community-based fishery, with CNF providing support in acquiring vessels and equipment, accessing licences, and quota and training.

Gitga'at



Gitxaala



Haida



Heiltsuk



Kitasoo Xai'xais



Metlakatla



Nuxalk



Wuikinuxv



# Governance

Coastal Nations Fisheries consists of a Board of Directors and Operations Team who work together to provide transparent and accountable management of CNF and its operations.

## Board of Directors

With representatives from each shareholder First Nation, the Board of Directors ensures CNF fulfills its mandate and is accountable to the interests of these Nations in all activities.

**K'unya Laurie Bevan**  
Board Chair (Haida)

**Ken Cripps**  
Board Vice-Chair (Kitasoo Xai'xais)

**Frederick Anderson**  
Board Member (Wuikinuxv)

**Jeromy Andy**  
Board Member (Nuxalk)

**Kevin Carpenter**  
Board Member (Heiltsuk)

**Wah Goot'm Haida Kyle Clifton**  
Board Member (Gitga'at)

**Nang Jingwas Russ Jones**  
Board Member (Haida)

**Ryan Leighton**  
Board Member (Metlakatla)

**Donald B. Simpson**  
Board Member (Haida)

**Michael Uehara**  
Board Member (Gitxaala)

## Operations Team

Working closely with the Board of Directors, CNF's Operations Team ensures all funds are invested wisely and provide a sufficient return on investment for shareholder Nations.

**Guy Dean**, Vice President – Partnerships and Acquisitions

**Sandra Manow**, Executive Assistant and Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) Lead

**Paul Paterson**, Chief Executive Officer

**Aaron Sinclair**, Chief Financial Officer

**Tasha Sutcliffe**, Community Based Fisheries Lead



## Building a Successful Commercial Fishing Company

Fishing the diverse and abundant waters of the North Pacific Coast has supported shareholder First Nations for thousands of years—a constant source of sustenance, culture and livelihoods for coastal people.

For the past several decades, coast-wide commercial fisheries have given far too little back to the people who depend on them most. Developing an Indigenous-owned commercial fishing company in this region is long overdue, and a critical step in ensuring marine resources will sustain shareholder Nations into the future.

A key imperative for the CNF commercial fishing company is to make fishing once again a stable form of employment for citizens of shareholder Nations—not by replicating unsustainable industry models, but by being a sustainably operated company that reinvests profits back into coastal communities.

A year into this collective effort, we have made great progress in rebuilding the conditions that will increase commercial access and fisheries revenue for all shareholder First Nations. Our goal is to uphold the inherent right of each Nation’s citizens to derive economic benefit from commercial fishing, while prioritizing stewardship and promoting fishing practices that balance ecological health with economic prosperity.

That means working closely with community members like James Lawson, a career fisherman who belongs to the Raven Crest of Heiltsuk. James partnered with CNF to harvest our geoduck quota on his vessel, “Nakut,” and brings his vast wealth of knowledge and experience to the work. “I have been supporting myself through commercial fishing since I was 13 years old, starting on half share, and continue to fish to this day,” he says. “I decided to be a fisherman like my father and his father before him.”

James’ extensive and varied fishing experience reflects his lifelong connection to coastal waters—from working as a skipper in a salmon seine, and harvesting herring by gillnet and seine, to harvesting prawns and urchins by scuba dive and geoducks by surface-supplied dive. He is also the current elected president of the United Fishermen & Allied Worker’s Union (UFAWU-Unifor) and has been outspoken about the need to improve conditions for coastal fishers for years.



“You will struggle to find more passionate wardens of the sea than those who have invested their lives into it,” James told members of the Fisheries and Oceans Committee, during his address to Parliament in 2018.

That’s the underlying truth at the heart of the CNF commercial fishing company—a recognition that increasing access and opportunities for citizens of shareholder Nations to be successful in the commercial fishing sector is more than just an end in itself.

When fishers from shareholder Nations can make an honest living in fishing, it naturally leads to a range of other positive benefits, including improved economic, social and community wellbeing. It also leads to healthier coastal ecosystems and fisheries over time,

because those who live here have the most to gain by keeping it healthy.

Building a successful commercial fishing company is a foundational pillar of CNF, along with ongoing support for Nation-led community-based fisheries.

As we continue to grow our operations and establish new partnerships with coastal fishers like James and others, our priorities will always reflect the needs of shareholder Nations. That means creating the conditions that help community members participate more fully in the coast-wide fisheries sector while continuing to access to new markets and opportunities.

James Lawson, skipper and Heiltsuk Nation citizen, brings home the geoduck.





## Supporting Nation-Led Community Based Fisheries

The primary goal of a community-based fishery (CBF) is to increase shareholder Nations' access to, and benefits from, fishery resources by revitalizing their small boat fleets and by playing a central role in sustainably managing their fisheries.

Developed and managed by each shareholder Nation in collaboration with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), the CBFs will be based on the needs and priorities of each individual Nation, tapping into a stewardship ethic and local knowledge base that goes back thousands of years. It also means active involvement of local fish harvesters, and an emphasis on collaboration, shared responsibility and sustainable practices that will ensure long-term viability of fisheries into the future.

Guided by key priorities identified in the FRRA, Coastal Nations Fisheries is committed to supporting each shareholder Nation in building and successfully

running their CBF—from facilitation of initial planning and implementation efforts to ongoing operational, training and capacity support. Key to implementing shareholder Nations' community fisheries is CNF's role in purchasing the licences and quota specific to the needs of individual Nations. As each Nation develops and implements their CBF strategic plan, CNF targets their efforts to securing access—licences and quota—to the priority fisheries identified in those plans.

CNF also supports the fisheries and stewardship offices in each Nation as they develop their community-based fishery in a way that increases economic opportunities while ensuring area fish populations are sustained for future generations. This includes support for developing policies, programming and processes necessary for Nations to manage and monitor their CBF effectively.

At the bioregional scale, CNF provides technical support for the Community Based Fishery Sub-Committee—a group of representatives from each shareholder Nation and DFO, tasked with assisting in the strategic development and implementation of the CBFs, as per the FRRRA. The committee’s main priorities are well underway, including processes and programming for licensing, data tracking, management planning, and fishing flexibilities that will support the CBF objectives.

CNF is also supporting a number of business development programs, such as the co-development of a vessel and gear loan and grant program in

partnership with the Native Fishing Association and Vancity Credit Union, which will support current and new fish harvesters to re-enter or start a fishing career, or to upgrade an existing vessel or gear. The primary intent of this program is to reduce barriers for fish harvesters aiming to access the capital necessary to buy or refit a fishing vessel, or to purchase the gear required for their target fisheries.

By implementing the strategies set out here, CNF will continue to serve the Nations and their fisheries interests in improving both ecosystem health while also realizing economic benefits and community wellbeing.





## Organizational Values

*We acknowledge the hereditary and elected leaders, Elders and citizens of our shareholder Nations, whose goals and values will always guide our work.*

### Community

We hold community wellbeing in high regard. As people, we must share with each other and support one another.

### Honour

In caring for the land, water and all lifeforms that sustain us, we extend our care to the people who depend on these coastal waters.

### Respect

We all must act and carry ourselves in a way that respects all our relations, both human and non-human, by ensuring reciprocal relationships and practices of respect.

### Knowledge Sharing

We must foster opportunities for knowledge transfer between Knowledge Holders and our youth, who will inherit and become stewards of our territories.

### Reciprocity

If we take care of the land and water, the land and water will take care of us. We must practice reciprocity by giving more than we take.

### Interconnectedness

We recognize that our land, water, air, non-human relations, language, culture and people are all one ecosystem.

### Responsibility

Our ancestors left us healthy lands and seas to nourish and support ourselves. It is our collective responsibility to ensure we provide the same security for future generations.

### Seeking Wise Counsel

We will seek out and apply wisdom from many sources, including from our Chiefs, Matriarchs, Elders, Knowledge Holders and the lands and waters that sustain us.

# Financial Summary

CNF's first full year of operations generated a profit of \$2,282,712, which was distributed according to the FRRR as follows:

## Stewardship: \$342,406 (15%)

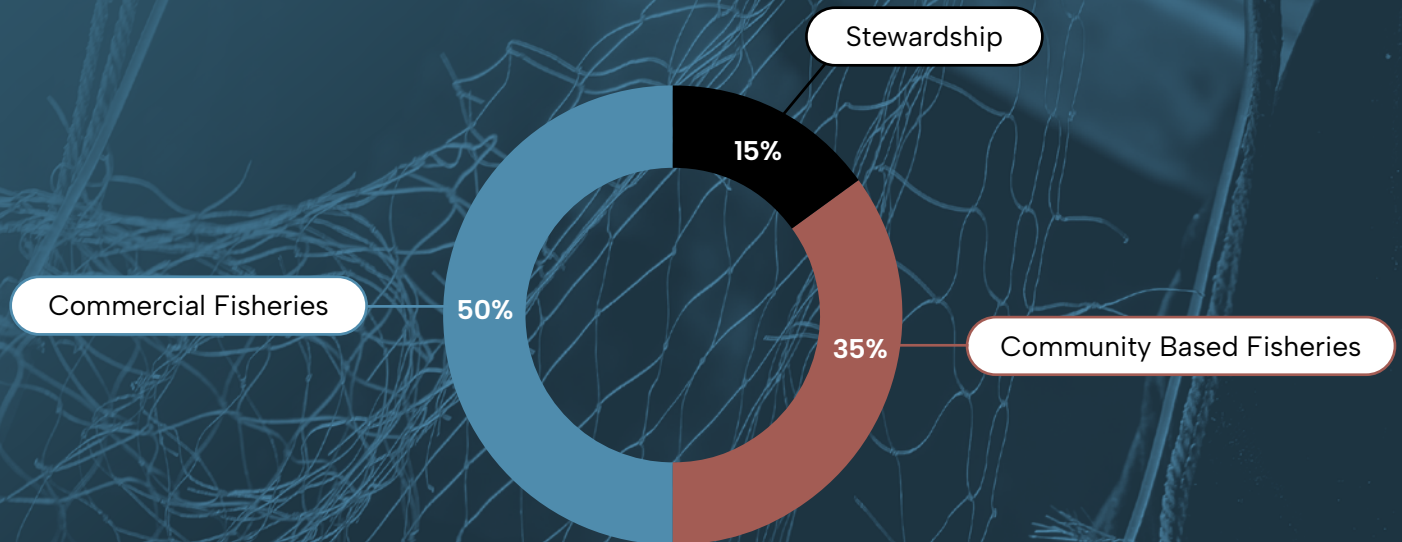
Distributed to Coastal First Nations–Great Bear Initiative on behalf of the Nations for Stewardship initiatives.

## Community Based Fisheries: \$798,949 (35%)

Distributed to the Trust for reinvestment in the respective communities segregated funds for Community Based Fisheries.

## Commercial Fisheries: \$1,141,356 (50%)

Distributed to the Trust for reinvestment in the respective communities segregated funds for Commercial Fisheries.





# Contact

Visit the CNF website and sign up for our e-newsletter to learn more.



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