



FIRST NATIONS
FISHERIES COUNCIL

The Charter

The Charter

Introduction:

The FNFC Charter process is a province-wide initiative designed to encourage the coordination of resources, capacity and expertise in advancing common First Nations' fisheries interests.

The Charter is a good-faith agreement to promote enduring relationships and constructive dialogue among First Nations for the purpose of developing adaptive and functional First Nation-to-First Nation processes. The Charter represents the foundation of a working relationship among the parties to align technical assets with the strategic elements outlined in the *First Nations Fisheries Council Strategic Plan (2015-2018)*, including: **protection of rights and sustainable fisheries, governance and management, enhanced economic performance and strategic outreach through effective communications.**

The Charter is not a legally binding document and does not interfere with any existing mandates, laws, agreements, treaties or policies. Further, the Charter does not create any financial obligations for any party, nor does the Charter limit or affect the ability of any party to pursue their respective operational or political mandates.

The Context:

In recent years, confronted by a competitive and adversarial fisheries sector as well as problematic environmental and ecological outcomes, First Nation communities have recognized the need for a strong, collective vision and strategy to address an array of regional and provincial fisheries issues. In 2007, following broad dialogue among British Columbia First Nations, the First Nations Leadership Council published the *BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan*. One of the priorities identified in the *Action Plan* was the establishment of the First Nations Fisheries Council, a province-wide organization that is supported by, accountable to, and has balanced representation of, British Columbia's 203 First Nations.

The First Nations Fisheries Council cannot implement the *BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan* in isolation as much of the required expertise resides with local and regional First Nations fisheries organizations. The Charter is intended to provide a foundation for cooperation in order to support common objectives of benefit to all First Nations in BC related to fisheries.

Where We Want To Be:

This Charter supports the following collective vision for the future of fisheries and aquatic resources and the people and communities that depend on these resources:

1. As a healthy environment represents the basis for all social and economic activities, First Nations are leaders in the long-term stewardship of natural resources.
2. First Nations in British Columbia have access to healthy and resilient ecosystems and species to nourish people and communities for food, social, spiritual, educational and ceremonial purposes.
3. Within the limits of healthy and resilient ecosystems and species, First Nations have the ability to exercise their right to determine the responsible use of their resources, which may include the following practices: economic, sharing, trading, subsistence activities and other opportunities.

4. Collaborative relationships and partnerships among First Nations are established that facilitate the meaningful engagement of the 203 First Nation communities in British Columbia with an interest in fisheries and aquatic resources.
5. First Nations, the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia jointly manage fisheries and aquatic resources as well as ecosystems and habitats in an accountable, transparent and equitable manner.

Strategic Elements:

The enactment of this Charter is guided by the four strategic elements set out in the FNFC Strategic Plan (2015-2018):

1. **Protection of Rights and Sustainable Fisheries:** Ensure the vitality and longevity of all fisheries in British Columbia and the communities and people that rely on these resources. First Nations Section 35(1) priority access is entrenched in case law, and is a foundation to ensure the sustainability of natural resources and the indigenous communities that rely on them for future generations.
2. **Governance and Management:** Build and foster increased First Nation technical, policy and science process capacity to meaningfully participate in joint management.
3. **Enhanced First Nation Economic Performance:** Support First Nations to have enhanced economic development opportunities related to the sustainable use of fisheries and aquatic resources.
4. **Strategic Outreach through Effective Communications:** Effectively communicate with all First nations through clear mechanisms that support the genuine engagement of all communities in British Columbia. .

Implementation

In order to continue to develop efficient, reliable and transparent First Nations governance and management of fisheries, the parties commit to work together collaboratively and to provide mutual support and cooperation as appropriate. Provided reasonableness and existing capacity in each organization, this will include the following:

- a) Meetings:
 - i. Upon request, First Nations Fisheries Council staff will attend specific meetings or assemblies of the _____;
 - ii. Upon request, a representative of the _____ will attend specific meetings or assemblies of the First Nations Fisheries Council; and
 - iii. At least once per fiscal year, First Nations Fisheries Council staff will attend a meeting of _____ to provide updates on First Nations Fisheries Council activities and to receive updates on priority topics from _____.
- b) Communications and Information-Sharing:
 - i. The First Nations Fisheries Council and _____ will engage in regular and ongoing communication and information-sharing regarding shared priorities, including providing copies of relevant correspondence and other materials to each other.
- c) Advocacy:

- i. The First Nation Fisheries Council focuses on fisheries matters at a strategic level, including consideration of legislative, policy and managerial issues that affect First Nations in BC. Upon request, the First Nations Fisheries Council will consider issues raised by _____ for advancement at a strategic level through the First Nations Leadership Council.

d) First Nations Fisheries Council Appointment Processes:

- i. In the spirit of building effective and efficient Tier 1, 2 and 3 fisheries governance and management processes, the First Nations Fisheries Council will work with the _____ to identify regional representatives for participation in specific Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 representative processes.

e) Review and amendments to this Charter:

- i. At the request of either party, the First Nations Fisheries Council and _____ will review this Charter document and consider any necessary amendments.

Signed this ____ day of _____, 20__

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL

On behalf of
