



**First Nations
Fisheries Council
of British Columbia**

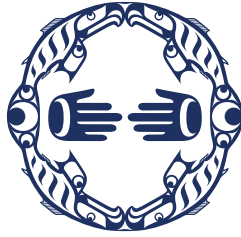
Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan

**Advancing First Nations Leadership, Sovereignty,
and Sustainable Aquaculture in BC**



September 2025





ABOUT THE FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL OF BC

Through the *BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan*, First Nations in British Columbia (BC) have directed the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC (FNFC) to support them in protecting, reconciling, and advancing their Aboriginal Title, Rights and Treaty Rights as they relate to fisheries and the health and protection of aquatic resources. FNFC's priorities are to develop effective governance mechanisms, form collaborative relationships among First Nations organizations, and work together to build a cohesive voice on fisheries and other aquatic resource matters.

FNFC is not a rights- and title-holding organization. FNFC's role is to provide information and resources, and support First Nations' positions where their collective interests align.

This document is built on fifteen years of engagement with First Nations across BC in varying capacities and contexts. It does not represent a consensus of First Nations perspectives on aquaculture. It is not prescriptive, nor does it speak on behalf of any First Nations rights holders. This document does not satisfy the Crown's legal duty of consultation.

FNFC acknowledges and thanks the First Nations participants that contributed their advice and feedback to this document during FNFC's 2024 Whole of Aquaculture Policy Forum.

FNFC also recognizes significant contributions from:

FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL OF BC

- Members of the **2023-2024 Aquaculture Coordinating Committee**
– *Strategic Guidance, Ground Truthing and Oversight*. With special thanks to **Don Simpson** for his expert review and editorial contributions
- **Stu Barnes**, Executive Director – *Strategic Leadership and Guidance*
- **Janson Wong**, Sr. Manager, Policy & Fish Management – *Direction Setting*
- **Mike Gray**, Manager, Aquaculture – *Direction Setting*
- **Felix Fan**, Coordinator, Aquaculture – *Direction Setting*

DANFORD CONSULTING

- **Taryn Danford**, Principal & Founder – *Author*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE FIRST NATIONS FISHERIES COUNCIL OF BC.....	i
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
II. INTRODUCTION	3
III. FIRST NATIONS WHOLE OF AQUACULTURE APPROACH	4
IV. A LIVING GOVERNANCE PROCESS FOR FIRST NATIONS-LED AQUACULTURE.....	6
V. REALITIES & OPPORTUNITIES IN FIRST NATIONS AQUACULTURE.....	7
a. Systemic Challenges to First Nations Aquaculture.....	7
b. Nation-led Solutions & Innovations.....	9
c. Applying the Whole of Aquaculture Approach	10
VI. WHOLE OF AQUACULTURE ACTION PLAN	11
VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	13
1. Strengthen Legislative & Policy Foundations.....	13
2. Preserve Culture & Enhance Community Health	14
3. Strengthen Environmental Stewardship & Climate Resilience	15
4. Expand Market Access & Promote Economic Sustainability	15
5. Secure Sustainable Funding & Build Capacity.....	16
VIII. CONCLUSION	18
APPENDICES OVERVIEW	19
APPENDIX A: CROWN IMPLEMENTATION ROLES	20
APPENDIX B: FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP IN IMPLEMENTATION.....	23
APPENDIX C: THIRD-PARTY STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS	26
APPENDIX D: FIRST NATIONS AQUACULTURE INVESTMENT FUND	31
REFERENCES.....	33

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan** sets out a coordinated and practical path to transform aquaculture governance in British Columbia (BC).

Developed by the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC (FNFC) through over 15 years of Nation-driven engagement, the Action Plan outlines how aquaculture in BC can become sustainable, inclusive, and First Nations-driven. It addresses long-standing policy fragmentation and exclusion by advancing a governance model grounded in First Nations laws, stewardship principles, and priorities.

At its centre are five interwoven objectives that define the structural changes needed:

- 1. LEGISLATION & POLICY:** Strengthen legislative and policy foundations to support Nation-led aquaculture governance
- 2. CULTURE & HEALTH:** Preserve culture and enhance community health
- 3. ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE:** Strengthen environmental stewardship and climate resilience to protect aquatic ecosystems
- 4. MARKET ACCESS & ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY:** Expand market access and promote sustainable economic development
- 5. FUNDING & CAPACITY:** Secure sustainable funding and build implementation capacity

These objectives are supported by **targeted policy recommendations** for implementation across all levels of Crown government, through joint leadership with First Nations. While legislative and regulatory reform lies with federal, provincial, and municipal governments, implementation requires shared commitment. First Nations will continue to lead the design and direction of aquaculture in their territories, while third-party stakeholders, including industry, environmental organizations, and academic institutions, must contribute through aligned investment, collaboration, and sustained engagement. The recommendations on the next page outline the specific actions required to advance this work.

First Nations in BC hold diverse perspectives and priorities in aquaculture, and the First Nations Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan was developed with the recognition that each First Nation has the right to exercise governance and their jurisdiction and authority for aquaculture activities in their territories, and engage in aquaculture development that aligns with their own laws, priorities, economic goals and commitments to economic reconciliation.

WHOLE OF AQUACULTURE ACTION PLAN: KEY OBJECTIVES & ASSOCIATED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

OBJECTIVE	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Strengthen Legislative & Policy Foundations	• Amend the <i>Fisheries Act</i>, associated regulations, and Conditions of Licence (COL) to reflect First Nations jurisdiction, authority, and culturally grounded standards. • Support Nation-developed COLs and streamline regulatory frameworks between Crown and First Nations governments. • Co-develop a federal Aquaculture Act with First Nations that reflects regional distinctions and integrates existing provisions from the <i>Fisheries Act</i>. • Establish a First Nations–led Solutions Table and framework to monitor implementation and evaluate outcomes.
2. Preserve Culture & Enhance Community Health	• Support First Nations-led aquaculture research, data sovereignty, and science-policy translation grounded in Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). • Promote stewardship-based aquaculture practices that restore traditional food systems, cultural connections, and nature-based environmental protection. • Strengthen Nation-to-Nation trade systems and food distribution networks as core strategies for food security and community health.
3. Strengthen Environmental Stewardship & Climate Resilience	• Expand First Nations Guardian/Watchmen programs to include aquaculture monitoring and enforcement roles grounded in First Nations legal systems. • Require site-specific habitat restoration plans co-developed with First Nations as part of aquaculture licencing. • Establish industry-funded regional restoration programs to remediate former aquaculture sites and achieve, at a minimum, net-zero ecological outcomes.
4. Expand Market Access & Promote Economic Sustainability	• Recognize First Nations’ rights under the <i>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</i> (UNDRIP) in trade agreements and ensure economic models uphold First Nations governance and priorities. • Promote Nation-led ownership and innovation through flexible licencing and investment mechanisms, including proposal-driven models. • Support First Nations participation across the aquaculture value chain through joint ventures, co-operative models, and value-added production. • Develop First Nations-led branding and certification programs to enhance market access and distinguish products by emphasizing sustainability and cultural integrity.
5. Secure Sustainable Funding & Build Capacity	• Establish a permanent, First Nations-governed Aquaculture Investment Fund, launched with a \$400 million endowment to support long-term, Nation-directed investments in governance, economic development, and community-identified priorities. • Expand grant, loan, and equity financing programs to support Nation-directed aquaculture infrastructure, staffing, and programming. • Embed First Nations employment incentives and workforce development into all investment strategies. • Provide Nation-specific training programs in aquaculture governance and operations.



II. INTRODUCTION

Aquaculture, in its broadest definition, plays a vital and growing role in British Columbia's (BC) economy, food systems, and climate strategies. BC's aquaculture sector remains a cornerstone of the provincial seafood economy with 2023 provincial data indicating BC generated over \$550 million in wholesale value through finfish and shellfish production (*Seafood and Fisheries Sector Snapshot*, Province of BC, 2023). Emerging industries such as seaweed and shellfish farming are expanding the sector's potential, supporting environmental restoration, carbon sequestration, and climate resilience, while opening new opportunities for innovation and diversification.

For First Nations, aquaculture is not merely an economic sector, it reflects long-standing governance, legal traditions, and stewardship of aquatic ecosystems. Guided by Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and their own laws and governance systems, First Nations in BC have successfully managed aquatic environments since time immemorial. Today, many First Nations are advancing aquaculture systems that reflect their laws, values, and priorities, contributing to a sovereign, sustainable, and self-determined future.

Yet systemic challenges persist. Aquaculture expansion has historically marginalized First Nations' governance, leading to environmental degradation, jurisdictional exclusion, and economic inequities. Crown decision-making has failed to recognize or implement First Nations' rights and authority, often privileging industrial-scale operations over Nation-led approaches.

Although recent policies — including the Salmon Aquaculture Transition Plan and the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative — acknowledge the need for First Nations involvement, they fall short of fully implementing co-governance or respecting First Nations' decision-making authority. Commitments to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), including through Canada's *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDA) and BC's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), remain largely unfulfilled. In practice, First Nations continue to be excluded from licencing, enforcement, monitoring, and decision-making, limiting their ability to exercise jurisdiction and protect their territories.

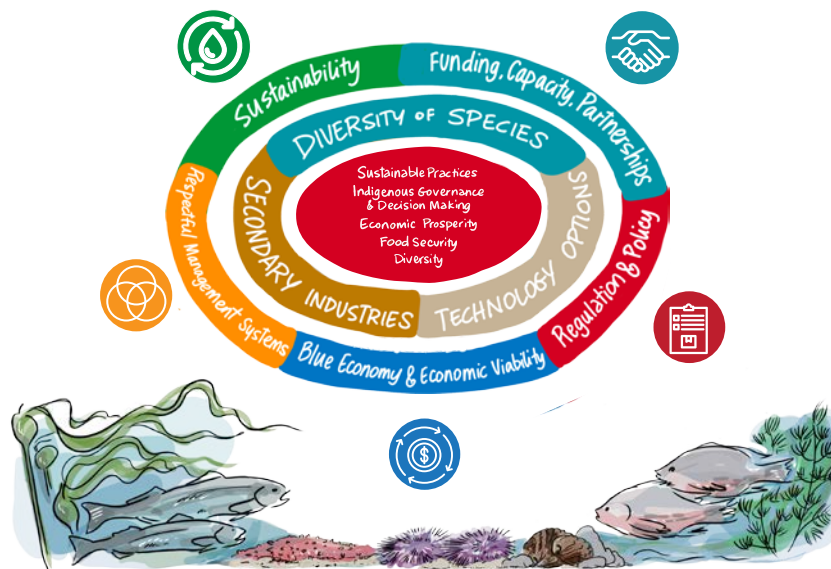
To address these longstanding issues, the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC (FNFC) has developed the **Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan**, a comprehensive, Nation-directed framework for transforming aquaculture governance, policy, and practice.

III. FIRST NATIONS WHOLE OF AQUACULTURE APPROACH

Transforming BC's aquaculture sector requires a fundamental shift that recognizes aquaculture not as a collection of isolated activities or species, but as an integrated system rooted in place-based governance, environmental stewardship, and sustainable economic development. The Whole of Aquaculture Approach responds to this need, offering a comprehensive framework for reform, grounded in First Nations leadership, laws, and priorities.

Developed with First Nations through 15 years of dialogue led by FNFC, this approach affirms that aquaculture must be governed as a whole system, one that extends beyond production to include restoration, cultural practice, knowledge transfer, collaborative partnerships, and the broader economies connected to aquatic stewardship. It recognizes that effective aquaculture governance must account for the full range of activities and relationships that sustain both ecosystems and communities and must be led by the Nations whose laws and rights are rooted in the lands and waters of their territories.

This vision stands in contrast to the current regulatory environment, which remains fragmented and reactive, divided across multiple agencies, disconnected processes, and species-specific frameworks. These silos delay decision-making, undermine sustainability, and continue to marginalize First Nations governance. A coordinated, whole-of-system approach is needed to replace these barriers with jurisdictionally grounded, coherent governance.



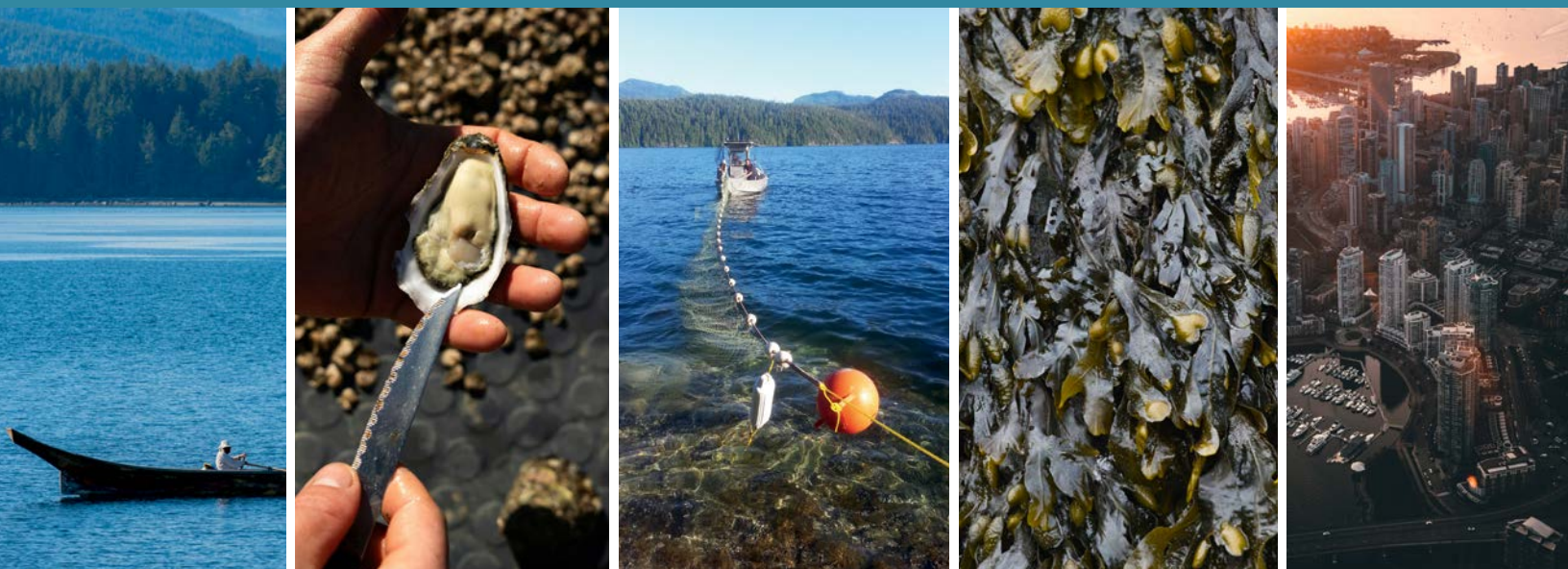
FNFC's Whole of Aquaculture Approach, developed and designed by First Nations in BC, offers a comprehensive framework for transforming aquaculture governance. It is grounded in principles that assert First Nations governance, protect ecosystems, promote sustainable economic development, strengthen climate resilience, and build respectful partnerships.

THE WHOLE OF AQUACULTURE APPROACH RESTS ON FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES:

- 1. First Nations Governance and Decision-Making:** First Nations must lead aquaculture management within their territories, ensuring their rights, title, laws, and stewardship principles are reflected in all decisions. This can include, where appropriate, space to support and uphold Nation-to-Nation traditional protocols and/or other forms of agreements that enable collaboration and building common understandings
- 2. Environmental Sustainability:** Governance must centre ecosystem health, weaving IK and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with Western science to support responsible management, habitat restoration, and enforcement.
- 3. Economic Growth and Innovation:** Expanding First Nations leadership in aquaculture creates opportunities for culturally grounded economic development and long-term sector viability.
- 4. Climate Resilience:** Adaptive strategies such as land-based systems, species diversification, and habitat restoration strengthen ecosystem and community resilience.
- 5. Collaborative Partnerships:** Advancing shared objectives will require respectful collaboration between First Nations and Crown governments, as well as with third party stakeholders.

Taken together, these principles define a new direction for aquaculture governance in BC, one that replaces fragmentation with coordination, and marginalization with recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction. They are practical conditions required to align aquaculture governance with First Nations laws, ecosystem health, and long-term economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability.

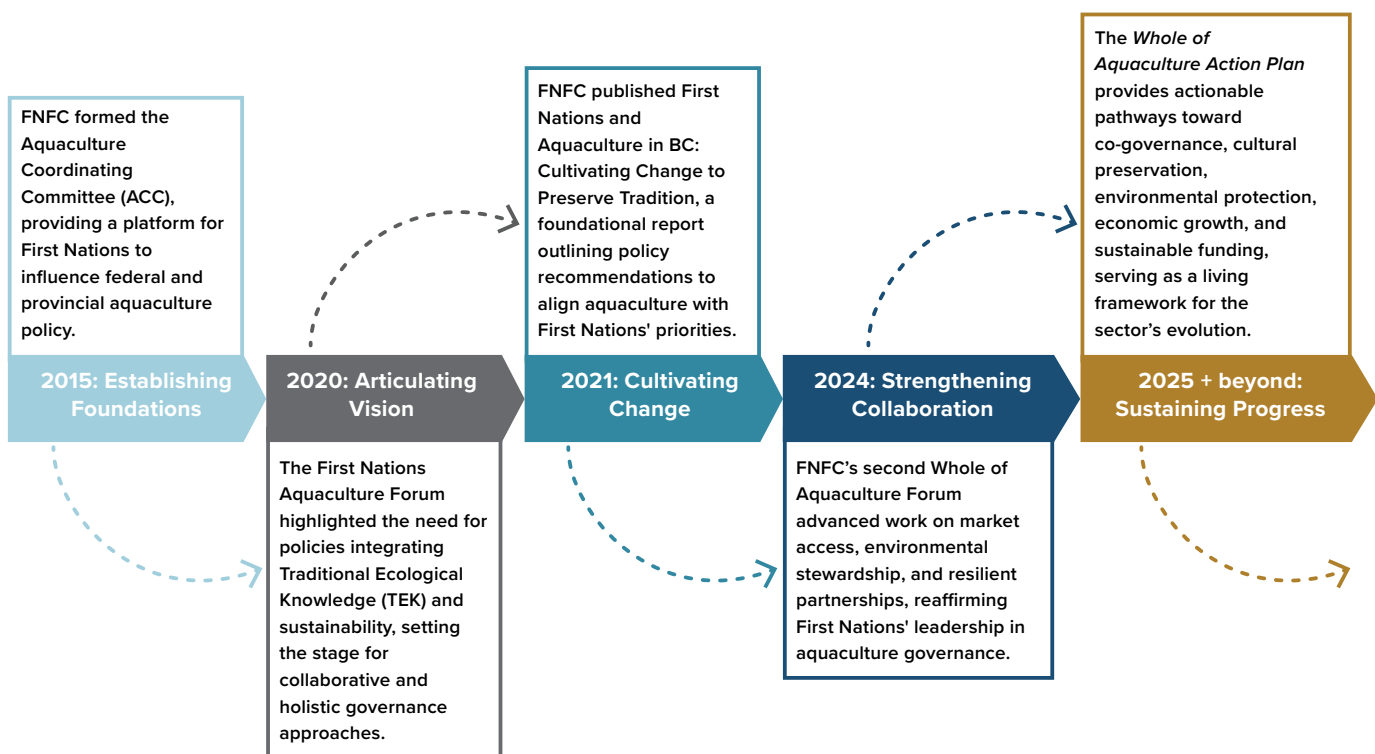
This foundation informs the governance pathway and strategic reforms outlined in the ACTION PLAN that follows



IV. LIVING GOVERNANCE PROCESS FOR FIRST NATIONS-LED AQUACULTURE

Since the 2009 Morton decision transferred aquaculture management in BC to Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), FNFC has worked to advance a coordinated, Nation-led approach to building a sovereign and sustainable aquaculture sector. This pathway reflects FNFC's commitment to aligning aquaculture decision-making with First Nations' rights, title, jurisdiction, and priorities. It is rooted in past progress but responsive to emerging challenges, shifting conditions, the continued assertion of First Nations governance, and evolving legal commitments, including the adoption of UNDRIP by both Canada and BC.

A CUMULATIVE PATHWAY: 15+ YEARS OF NATION-LED AQUACULTURE GOVERNANCE



By strengthening co-governance, capacity-building, and collaboration, this living process supports systems that are grounded in First Nations laws, stewardship responsibilities, and Nation-led economic development. It serves as both a vision and practical pathway, ensuring that First Nations' leadership, knowledge, and decision-making are embedded throughout aquaculture policy, operations, and implementation.

V. REALITIES & OPPORTUNITIES IN FIRST NATIONS AQUACULTURE

First Nations in BC face a dual reality in aquaculture: systemic barriers continue to limit their ability to fully exercise their jurisdiction and authority and lead sustainable initiatives, yet many First Nations are already driving solutions that reflect their stewardship values and advance food sovereignty, economic opportunity, and environmental protection. Together, these dynamics expose the structural constraints limiting First Nations' governance in aquaculture and illustrate the work already underway to overcome them. They make clear where reform is most urgently needed, and how supporting First Nations leadership in aquaculture can contribute to broader efforts toward economic reconciliation — while advancing governance, stewardship, and cultural resiliency grounded in First Nations law and knowledge.

a. Systemic Challenges to First Nations Aquaculture

Aquaculture in BC continues to be shaped by systems that have historically excluded First Nations governance and self-determination in resource management and economic activity within their territories. These systemic challenges create environmental and regulatory risks and limit access to the resources needed for First Nations to fully participate.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS: Aquaculture practices can create ecological harm when not aligned with First Nations stewardship principles or ecosystem realities.

- **Fish Health and Ecosystem Interactions:** Open water finfish aquaculture can be a contributing factor (e.g. sea lice transmission, pathogen spread, and genetic interactions) to the decline of wild Pacific salmon, a species foundational to many First Nations' cultural, ecological and food systems.
- **Escapement and Invasive Species:** Interactions between wild and farmed fish (escaped/contained), and the growing presence of invasive species (exacerbated by climate change) can impact wild fish stocks and ecosystem stability.
- **Habitat Degradation:** If poorly managed, some aquaculture operations can damage critical fish habitats including eelgrass beds and kelp forests.
- **Pollution and Waste:** Nutrient loading from fish waste, excess feed, and chemical use reduces water quality, leading to algal blooms, oxygen depletion, and reduced habitat quality.
- **Climate Change Impacts:** Ocean warming, acidification, and freshwater flow disruption increase disease risk and habitat loss for both wild and farmed species.

Systemic Challenges to First Nations Aquaculture, cont'd

REGULATORY BARRIERS: Crown governance systems continue to exclude First Nations from decision-making, undermining jurisdiction and legal recognition.

- **Lack of Co-Governance:** Crown agencies have yet to fully integrate First Nations' authority, including their laws and consent protocols, into decision-making processes related to aquaculture management.
- **Limited Recognition for Nation-to-Nation Protocols:** Many First Nations in BC have developed protocols and/or other forms of agreements that help to enable collaboration and shared understanding amongst neighbouring communities. Yet Crown governance systems tend to have limited recognition of Nation-to-Nation protocols, which complicates how First Nations work together on shared aquaculture governance matters.
- **Inconsistent Regulation:** Federal and provincial regulations fail to reflect regional and cultural distinctions, creating compliance barriers for Nations-led aquaculture.
- **Weak Legal Protections:** Although UNDRIP has been adopted, First Nations rights and mechanisms like Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) remain inconsistently applied.

CAPACITY & INFRASTRUCTURE BARRIERS: Access to infrastructure, funding, and markets remains uneven across Nations, limiting aquaculture development.

- **Realizing Economic Reconciliation:** Many First Nations continue to be excluded from participating in and benefiting from aquaculture development due to limited capacity and insufficient funding to meaningfully engage with partners
- **Logistical and Financial Challenges:** Remoteness, inadequate infrastructure, and limited funding for training or equipment undermine participation.
- **Restricted Market Access:** Limited access to capital, supply chains, and value-added infrastructure impedes the growth of First Nations aquaculture ventures.
- **Economic Feasibility:** Many emerging aquaculture species and technologies face unproven economics and undeveloped markets, creating risk for First Nations investment.

b. Nation-led Solutions & Innovations

Across BC, First Nations are advancing aquaculture initiatives rooted in their own governance systems, stewardship values, and community priorities — generating opportunities for food sovereignty, environmental leadership, and economic reconciliation.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE: Land-based systems, species diversification, and ecosystem restoration projects are supporting biodiversity and responding to climate impacts.

- **Land-Based Innovation:** Semá:th First Nation produces premium live tilapia for the domestic market from a closed-loop, land-based facility. They are also exploring aquaponics, using natural fertilizer from the fish system to grow plants in a fully integrated and sustainable model.
- **Ecosystem Restoration:** The United Kelp Cooperative, led by several coastal First Nations, is restoring marine habitats by cultivating giant kelp and sugar kelp in degraded coastal areas. These efforts support biodiversity, improve water quality, enhance carbon capture, and contribute to long-term habitat recovery.

STRONGER GOVERNANCE AND SHARED DECISION-MAKING: Legal agreements, restoration programs, and community-based oversight are embedding First Nations authority in site-level decision-making and environmental governance.

- **Revenue-Sharing Agreements:** Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation has developed long-term partnerships with industry that support local employment in salmon aquaculture, value-added processing, and stewardship-aligned operations.
- **Community Oversight and Restoration:** The Okanagan Nation Alliance leads salmon restoration efforts rooted in food sovereignty and cultural revitalization, while supporting other First Nations to design and implement their own restoration and management initiatives.

Nation-led Solutions & Innovations, cont'd

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION: Partnerships with third-party stakeholders are supporting Nation-led models through shared investment and operational alignment.

- **Industry Partnerships:** Huu-ay-aht First Nations are collaborating with sector partners to grow shellfish species such as oysters and scallops, and strengthen local hatchery, nursery, and processing infrastructure that supports long-term stewardship and economic development.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, MARKET ACCESS, AND ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION: Nations are developing revenue streams through diversified species, infrastructure investment, and value-added production.

- **Diversification:** Klahoose First Nation is advancing aquaculture operations that include oysters, clams, scallops, geoduck, and kelp, combining ecological sustainability with economic opportunity.
- **Value-Added Innovation:** First Nations-led processing and branding initiatives — such as Klemtu Spirit™ smoked salmon from Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation — are helping expand access to domestic and international seafood markets.

c. Applying the Whole of Aquaculture Approach

These Nation-led initiatives illustrate how the Whole of Aquaculture Approach can be applied in practice by integrating governance, stewardship, and economic development into a cohesive system. The success of these and many other First Nation projects show that aquaculture, when aligned with First Nations laws, stewardship values, and community priorities, can be a pathway to both ecological healing and economic self-determination.

The **Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan** builds on this foundation. It sets out the coordinated policy, legislative, and structural reforms required to scale these successes as a new baseline for aquaculture governance in BC.

VI. WHOLE OF AQUACULTURE ACTION PLAN

The **Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan** translates the Whole of Aquaculture Approach into concrete strategies to address systemic barriers and enable sustainable aquaculture development led by First Nations. By centring First Nations' jurisdiction, governance, stewardship, and sustained funding, the Action Plan provides the foundation for a sector that is sustainable, culturally grounded, and structurally inclusive. The Action Plan recognizes that First Nations hold diverse perspectives and priorities in aquaculture, and affirms that each Nation has the right to pursue the pathways that best reflect their governance, priorities, and circumstances.

The Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan advances a clear vision: a First Nations-led, sovereign, and sustainable aquaculture sector that supports cultural continuity, ecosystem health, and long-term economic opportunity. The Action Plan is intended to be a long-term roadmap towards a sustainable, prosperous and inclusive aquaculture sector for First Nations and all of BC. The Action Plan is ever-green, meaning that actionable steps and recommendations can be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure co-developed policies and programs can continue to support this over-arching vision.

THIS VISION IS ORGANIZED AROUND FIVE INTERWOVEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- 1. Strengthen Legislative & Policy Foundations:** Developing laws and policies that uphold First Nations' sovereignty, reflect their governance authority, and embed First Nations values and stewardship principles.
- 2. Preserve Culture & Enhance Community Health:** Embedding IK/TEK, food sovereignty, and intergenerational knowledge-sharing into aquaculture practices and governance.
- 3. Strengthen Environmental Stewardship & Climate Resilience:** Weaving IK/TEK and Western science to protect ecosystems, support climate adaptation, and advance First Nations-led environmental leadership.
- 4. Expand Market Access & Promote Economic Sustainability:** Ensuring equitable access to aquaculture markets, including opportunities across primary production, value-added processing, and secondary industries.
- 5. Secure Sustainable Funding & Build Capacity:** Establishing long-term, flexible funding models to support governance, training, and infrastructure, while embedding permanent co-governance structures.

WHOLE OF AQUACULTURE ACTION PLAN: PROPOSED MODEL FOR 5 KEY INTERWOVEN OBJECTIVES



FNFC's Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan outlines a sovereign, sustainable, and inclusive aquaculture sector, led by First Nations, grounded in their rights, laws and stewardship.

VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

For each of the five strategic objectives, the Action Plan sets out specific policy reforms directed to Canada and the Province of BC, in coordination with First Nations. These recommendations are designed to uphold First Nations jurisdiction, protect aquatic ecosystems, and support sustainable, culturally grounded economic development.

The Action Plan reflects the understanding that not all First Nations will choose to engage in aquaculture as developers, but all must be supported to exercise governance over aquaculture in their territories. To this end, the recommendations distinguish between governance and economic roles to ensure transparent, accountable implementation that respects Nation-determined pathways and priorities. **Implementation must be coordinated across all levels of Crown governments, led by First Nations, and supported by third-party stakeholders**, including industry, environmental organizations, and research institutions.

Implementation pathways for each recommendation are detailed in Appendices A, B, C, and D, which outline the respective roles of Crown governments, First Nations, and third-party stakeholders in supporting coordinated, effective, and rights-based implementation of this Action Plan.

1. Strengthen Legislative & Policy Foundations

Policy action is required to develop laws and regulatory frameworks that uphold First Nations' sovereignty, reflect governance authority, and embed First Nations values and stewardship principles in aquaculture.

- **Amend the *Fisheries Act*** to strengthen the recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction, authority, and FPIC in decision-making, while enhancing environmental protection and integrating IK.
- **Amend *Fisheries Act* regulations** to improve transparency in environmental monitoring and strengthen environmental and cultural standards.
- **Require aquaculture Conditions of Licence (COLs) to include documented governance arrangements** with affected First Nations, co-developed in accordance with each Nation's laws, consent protocols, and decision-making structures. These agreements must reflect Nation-determined approaches and may include (without prescribing) engagement protocols, operations agreements, or other Nation-determined governance models.
- **Recognize and support the development of Nation-specific COLs** that embed First Nations laws, values, and IK, and uphold culturally grounded standards for aquaculture operations.

- **Harmonize and streamline regulatory frameworks** across Crown and First Nations governments to remove administrative and bureaucratic barriers that limit First Nations aquaculture expansion (e.g. permitting, species diversification, and export certification).
- **Establish a First Nations-led Solutions Table** with majority First Nations representation and decision-making authority to guide aquaculture policy, implementation, market development, and dispute resolution. This governance body should streamline or replace fragmented forums, coordinate with regional networks, support implementation of the Action Plan, and hold Crown agencies accountable to timelines, commitments, and results.
- **Co-develop a federal Aquaculture Act with First Nations** in BC that reflects regional distinctions both provincially and across Canada (e.g., West Coast, Arctic, Atlantic), and integrates existing aquaculture provisions currently housed within the *Fisheries Act*.
- **Embed a First Nations-led evaluation framework** to measure implementation progress, including clear timelines, outcome indicators, and pilot projects, woven into all legislative, policy, and regulatory reforms advanced through the Action Plan.

2. Preserve Culture & Enhance Community Health

Cultural and community health outcomes in aquaculture depend on the full integration of Indigenous Knowledge, food sovereignty, and intergenerational knowledge-sharing across governance and practice.

- **Co-develop shared principles for science-policy translation with First Nations** to ensure clarity, accountability, and credibility in how research is selected, interpreted, and applied in aquaculture policy and public communication.
- **Advance First Nations-Led aquaculture research and data sovereignty** by supporting research institutions in collaborating with First Nations on culturally grounded aquaculture research to strengthen food security and access to traditional foods. Research programs should respect both Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) and FPIC principles, ensuring First Nations have full authority over research participation, priorities, knowledge use and transfer, and data sovereignty.
- **Encourage and support First Nations' stewardship-based aquaculture** (e.g., kelp farming, rock wall clam gardens, eelgrass restoration) to revitalize traditional practices, cultural connections, nature-based environmental protection, and restore access to traditional foods. This includes strengthening Nation-to-Nation trade systems and food distribution networks as key strategies for food security and economic resilience.

3. Strengthen Environmental Stewardship & Climate Resilience

Ecosystem protection, climate adaptation, and long-term sustainability require aquaculture systems that weave IK/TEK with Western science under First Nations-led environmental governance.

- **Expand First Nations Guardian/Watchmen programs to include aquaculture monitoring and enforcement roles** grounded in First Nations legal systems, ensuring compliance with COLs and environmental, cultural, and regulatory standards. Expanded roles should include year-round on-the-water presence, aquaculture-specific training, youth mentorship, and community-led regulatory and stewardship infrastructure to strengthen Nation-level capacity in environmental science and aquaculture governance.
- **Mandate the development of site-specific habitat restoration plans** with First Nations as a requirement for aquaculture licencing.
- **Develop industry-funded regional habitat restoration programs** (e.g., through increased licence fees) to remediate former aquaculture sites, including invasive species removal where applicable, and deliver net-zero ecological outcomes, with a preference for net-positive restoration.

4. Expand Market Access & Promote Economic Sustainability

Policy reforms must ensure equitable access to aquaculture markets for First Nations that choose to pursue aquaculture development, by supporting leadership across production, value-added processing, and secondary industries — and by advancing economic reconciliation through Nation-led ownership, innovation, and jurisdiction..

- **Recognize and uphold First Nations' rights under UNDRIP** in domestic and international trade agreements.
- **Incentivize a range of economic relationship models** between First Nations and industry, including full ownership, co-development agreements, and service contracts, that uphold First Nations governance, reflect Nation-determined priorities, and ensure equitable economic benefits from aquaculture operations in their territories.
- **Strengthen First Nations ownership of aquaculture supply chains and value-added processing** by:
 - a. **Facilitating joint ventures** between First Nations and industry to support sustainable aquaculture infrastructure, processing facilities, and business expansion.
 - b. **Exploring ownership models** (e.g., co-ops) that support collaboration and shared investment between First Nations.
 - c. Supporting the **development of value-added aquaculture products** (e.g., smoked and specialty seafood) to increase market competitiveness and access.

- **Develop First Nations-led branding and certification programs** to differentiate First Nations aquaculture products by highlighting sustainability, cultural integrity, and ethical sourcing.
- **Introduce a proposal-driven aquaculture licencing and investment model**, modelled on BC Hydro's Call for Power, to prioritize First Nations ownership and innovation. These models must include flexible mechanisms that reflect local governance, community priorities, and business capacity.

5. Secure Sustainable Funding & Build Capacity

Strategic investments are needed to support First Nations aquaculture governance and oversight functions, as well as economic development for First Nations choosing to engage in aquaculture production and trade. Long-term, flexible funding must enable both regulatory implementation and commercial readiness.

- **Establish a permanent First Nations–governed Aquaculture Investment Fund**, with an initial endowment of \$400 million — including a \$200 million federal contribution — to support implementation across all five strategic objectives.

The fund must provide long-term, flexible investment in both governance functions (e.g., licensing, oversight, monitoring) and economic development (e.g., production, processing). It should be structured as a permanent endowment fund, following Canada's Project Finance for Permanence model, and designed to generate stable annual returns (e.g., \$20 million/year at a 5% drawdown), indexed over time to reflect inflation and shifting priorities (see Appendix D for more details).

Designed, directed, and administered by First Nations, grounded in Nation-submitted costing and structured to deliver durable, community-defined outcomes this investment will also support the advancement of Canada's Blue Economy Strategy by creating jobs and opportunities for First Nations in BC and BC's coastal communities. The investment helps to build a sustainable, inclusive ocean and aquatic economy in BC, and to generate opportunities to diversify BC's seafood outlook to meet the global demand for fish and seafood proteins. Priority investments should include infrastructure, permitting and technical review capacity, workforce development, enforcement and monitoring, species diversification, food security, climate adaptation (e.g., diesel replacement), healing and wellness initiatives, compensation for reduced access to fisheries resources, and other First Nation-identified priorities.

- **Expand grant, loan, and equity financing programs** to increase access to aquaculture capital and support the development of Nation-led financial tools that enable self-directed infrastructure, staffing, and programming aligned with each Nation's governance.
- **Embed local employment incentives** into investment frameworks, ensuring aquaculture businesses prioritize First Nations hiring and workforce development.
- **Support First Nations' focused workforce training programs** in both aquaculture governance (e.g., monitoring, regulatory enforcement) and operations (e.g., production, processing), tailored to Nation-specific priorities.



VIII. CONCLUSION

The Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan provides a clear framework for building a sustainable, inclusive, and First Nations-led aquaculture sector in BC. It affirms that First Nations' sovereignty, leadership, stewardship, and Indigenous Knowledge must guide the governance, policy, and practice of aquaculture.

This plan calls on Crown agencies — federal, provincial, and municipal — to take immediate action to implement policy reforms that embed First Nations' rights, title, and priorities into governance frameworks. Legislative and regulatory change are needed to ensure First Nations have the authority, tools, and resources to lead aquaculture development in their territories.

Responsibility does not rest with Crown governments alone. First Nations, Crown agencies, and third-party stakeholders must work together to dismantle systemic barriers, co-develop solutions, and build a strong aquaculture sector for future generations. A First Nations-led Whole of Aquaculture approach strengthens the entire system — improving regulatory clarity, enhancing environmental outcomes, and increasing investment confidence and long-term operational stability.

First Nations will continue to assert their jurisdiction and leadership in aquaculture. Crown agencies and third-sector stakeholders must now align their systems and investments to reflect First Nations' authority. The Whole of Aquaculture Approach offers the roadmap, and the policy recommendations in this plan lay out the actions required.

Implementing these recommendations will enable Crown agencies to move beyond symbolic commitments and position BC's aquaculture sector as a global leader in sustainability, equity, economic reconciliation, and First Nations-led governance.

The recommendations in this Action Plan are actionable now and essential to the future of sustainable aquaculture in BC.



APPENDICES OVERVIEW

The following appendices outline proposed roles for Crown agencies, First Nations, and third-party stakeholders in implementing the **Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan**. These roles are offered as a framework to support coordinated action across jurisdictions, recognizing that each party brings distinct responsibilities, authorities, and constraints.

First Nations will determine their own priorities, timelines, and approaches for engaging with the Action Plan, based on their governance systems, community direction, and local contexts. No single implementation path is assumed or imposed.

Crown governments have a duty to implement structural reforms in partnership with First Nations, consistent with legal commitments under UNDRIP, DRIPA, and related frameworks. While the Action Plan offers guidance, implementation must be co-developed, flexible, and staged, with mechanisms for shared accountability and ongoing progress tracking.

Third-party stakeholders — including industry, academia, and NGOs — are encouraged to support First Nations-led implementation when invited. Their participation must respect First Nations jurisdiction, uphold FPIC and OCAP principles, and align with Nation-determined priorities.



Meaningful implementation requires sustained commitment, respectful collaboration, and the flexibility to adapt to varying capacities, governance contexts, and readiness across all parties.

The following appendices outline implementation approaches for each:

- Appendix A – **Crown agencies**
- Appendix B – **First Nations**
- Appendix C – **Third-party stakeholders**

Appendix D outlines the rationale, purpose, and proposed funding streams for a **First Nations Aquaculture Investment Fund** that aligns with the strategic objectives of the Action Plan.

APPENDIX A: CROWN IMPLEMENTATION ROLES

The table below summarizes **Crown** responsibilities for implementing the policy recommendations in each objective of the Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan.

A1. CROWN role for: STRENGTHENING LEGISLATIVE & POLICY FOUNDATIONS

- **Amend the *Fisheries Act*:** Co-develop amendments with First Nations to embed aquaculture governance, decision-making authority, jurisdiction, FPIC, and IK.
- **Amend *Fisheries Act* regulations:** Jointly revise regulations to ensure transparent monitoring and codify environmental and cultural protection standards.
- **Revise COLs:** Require all COLs to include governance arrangements co-developed with affected First Nations.
- **Support Nation-specific COLs:** Formally recognize and operationalize Nation-developed COLs that reflect Indigenous laws, values, and stewardship standards.
- **Harmonize and streamline regulatory frameworks:** Conduct a joint review of federal and provincial aquaculture policies with First Nations to eliminate administrative barriers and align permitting, species approvals, and export certification processes.
- **Establish a First Nations-Led Solutions Table:** Legislate and resource a Solutions Table with majority First Nations representation to coordinate aquaculture policy, licencing, implementation, and dispute resolution.
- **Co-develop a federal Aquaculture Act:** Launch a co-drafting process with First Nations in BC to develop a new federal Aquaculture Act that reflects regional distinctions and incorporates existing aquaculture provisions.
- **Embed a First Nations-led evaluation framework:** Support the development and integration of a First Nations-led evaluation framework, including timelines, indicators, and pilot projects, into all Crown aquaculture legislation, policy, and regulatory reforms.

APPENDIX A: CROWN IMPLEMENTATION ROLES

A2. CROWN role for: PRESERVING CULTURE & ENHANCING COMMUNITY HEALTH

- **Co-develop shared principles for science-policy translation:** Convene joint working groups with First Nations and academic institutions to co-develop principles that guide how research is selected, interpreted, and applied in aquaculture policy and public communication.
- **Advance research and data sovereignty:** Require all Crown and publicly funded research to be co-developed with First Nations and governed by OCAP and FPIC, with binding agreements that uphold Nation authority over priorities, participation, knowledge use, and data, including interpretation.
- **Support First Nations' stewardship-based aquaculture:** Work with First Nations to identify and remove regulatory barriers to stewardship-based aquaculture and facilitate inter-Nation trade by aligning licencing, permitting, and food distribution policies with Nation-specific governance systems.

A3. CROWN role for: STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- **Expand Guardian/Watchmen programs:** Co-design expanded Guardian/Watchmen roles with First Nations specific to aquaculture, including enforcement mandates, legal authority, and training models grounded in First Nations legal systems.
- **Mandate site-specific habitat restoration plans:** Require First Nations co-developed habitat restoration plans a condition for all new licences and renewals.
- **Develop industry-funded regional habitat restoration programs:** Amend aquaculture licencing to require industry contributions to regional restoration funds, and coordinate with First Nations to design and oversee program delivery, including site selection and invasive species removal.

APPENDIX A: CROWN IMPLEMENTATION ROLES

A4. CROWN role for: EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS & PROMOTING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

- **Uphold UNDRIP in trade agreements:** Include recognition of First Nations rights and decision-making authority under UNDRIP in all trade negotiations and renewals.
- **Incentivize a range of economic relationship models:** Develop Crown policy tools (e.g., licencing incentives, regulatory preferences, procurement models) that support flexible, Nation-defined partnership structures with industry, including full ownership, co-development, and service agreements.
- **Strengthen First Nations supply chain ownership and value-added processing:** Facilitate joint ventures between First Nations and industry, promote co-operative ownership models, and support value-added aquaculture development through legislation, clear permitting pathways, and targeted technical assistance.
- **Develop branding and certification programs:** Co-develop national standards with First Nations to certify culturally grounded, sustainable aquaculture products.
- **Launch proposal-driven licencing and investment models:** Create a licencing process prioritizing First Nations-led aquaculture, modelled on BC Hydro's Call for Power.

A5. CROWN role for: SECURING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING & BUILDING CAPACITY

- **Establish a permanent Aquaculture Investment Fund:** First Nations–governed fund capitalized at \$400 million, with a \$200 million federal contribution and additional provincial and partner support, structured using the Project Finance for Permanence model.
- **Expand grant, loan, and equity financing programs:** Expand and adapt public financing tools (e.g., grants, loans, equity programs) to increase First Nations' access to aquaculture capital and co-develop mechanisms that support the creation of Nation-led, self-directed financial models for infrastructure and program delivery.
- **Embed local employment incentives:** Integrate First Nations hiring and workforce development incentives into aquaculture permitting conditions and public investment programs, including grants, capital funding, and financing tools.
- **Support First Nations' focused workforce training programs:** Fund and co-develop Nation-specific training initiatives in aquaculture governance and operations, in partnership with First Nations, to build capacity aligned with community-identified priorities.

APPENDIX B: FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP IN IMPLEMENTATION

The table below summarizes the leadership roles of **First Nations** in advancing each objective of the Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan, including their involvement in governance, stewardship, economic development, and co-development processes.

FIRST NATIONS role for: **STRENGTHENING LEGISLATIVE & POLICY FOUNDATIONS**

- **Amend the *Fisheries Act*:** Engage in formal co-development processes to advance legislative amendments that uphold First Nations jurisdiction, decision-making authority, FPIC, and IK in aquaculture governance.
- **Amend *Fisheries Act* regulations:** Participate in joint regulatory review processes to ensure monitoring standards reflect Nation-determined cultural and environmental values.
- **Revise COLs:** Work through Nation-specific and regional processes to define governance arrangements for COLs based on affected First Nations' laws, protocols, and structures, and advocate for their mandatory inclusion.
- **Support Nation-specific COLs:** Develop and implement Nation-specific COLs through individual or collective processes and pursue formal Crown recognition and integration.
- **Harmonize and streamline regulatory frameworks:** Participate in formal co-governance processes to identify and address regulatory barriers, advance Nation-specific priorities, and align permitting and licencing with First Nations laws.
- **Establish a First Nations-Led Solutions Table:** Engage through regional and aggregate First Nations organizations to co-design and lead a governance body that coordinates Action Plan implementation, ensures regional alignment, and holds Crown agencies accountable to Nation-identified priorities.
- **Co-develop a federal Aquaculture Act:** Engage in co-development processes through structured First Nations governance mechanisms (e.g., technical working groups, leadership tables), ensuring that First Nations law, governance, and regional distinctions shape the content and structure of the Act.
- **Embed a First Nations-led evaluation framework:** Define evaluation criteria and timelines through Nation-led processes and regional coordination, and co-design mechanisms to monitor Crown implementation.

APPENDIX B: FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP IN IMPLEMENTATION

FIRST NATIONS role for: PRESERVING CULTURE & ENHANCING COMMUNITY HEALTH

- **Co-develop shared principles for science-policy translation:** Collaborate with Crown and academic partners — through Nation-specific and regional processes — to define research translation principles that reflect First Nations knowledge systems, cultural protocols, and governance structures.
- **Advance research and data sovereignty:** Engage directly and through representative bodies to establish binding research agreements with Crown and academic institutions that uphold OCAP and FPIC, assert Nation control over aquaculture-related priorities, data use, and interpretation, and shape how publicly funded research is conducted.
- **Support stewardship-based aquaculture:** Advance First Nation-led stewardship-based aquaculture and food distribution systems by engaging in aquaculture development, collaborating across First Nations, and participating in regulatory reform processes that reflect First Nations governance.

FIRST NATIONS role for: STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- **Expand Guardian/Watchmen programs:** Define enforcement roles, legal authority, and aquaculture monitoring priorities through Nation-led processes, and engage in co-design with Crown partners to align program structures with First Nations governance systems.
- **Mandate site-specific habitat restoration plans:** Lead the development of culturally and ecologically grounded restoration plans for aquaculture sites and participate in formal licencing processes to ensure they are required and enforced.
- **Develop industry-funded regional habitat restoration programs:** Participate in the design and governance of regional restoration programs, including identifying degraded sites, setting ecological targets, and overseeing program delivery in alignment with Nation values.

APPENDIX B: FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP IN IMPLEMENTATION

FIRST NATIONS role for: EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS & PROMOTING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

- **Uphold UNDRIP in trade agreements:** Engage in technical and leadership-level processes to ensure trade agreements uphold UNDRIP and recognize First Nations jurisdiction in aquaculture governance and markets.
- **Incentivize a range of economic relationship models:** Advance Nation-defined aquaculture partnerships (including ownership, co-development, and service models) and engage in joint policy processes with Crown to ensure tools reflect diverse First Nations economic approaches.
- **Strengthen supply chain ownership and value-added processing:** Lead infrastructure and processing initiatives and collaborate across First Nations and with industry to expand value-added production and co-operative investment models.
- **Develop branding and certification programs:** Co-develop branding and certification with Crown agencies to elevate First Nations aquaculture products through culturally grounded standards and sustainability benchmarks, under First Nations leadership.
- **Launch proposal-driven licencing and investment models:** Participate in design and evaluation of proposal-based licencing models and submit Nation-led aquaculture proposals aligned with local priorities, governance, and innovation.

FIRST NATIONS role for: SECURING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING & BUILDING CAPACITY

- **Establish a permanent Aquaculture Investment Fund:** Identify community-driven priorities and cost estimates to inform the design and oversight of a First Nations-governed fund that reflects intergenerational needs and supports both governance and development.
- **Expand grant, loan, and equity financing programs:** Work with Crown agencies to expand existing financing programs that support Nation-directed capital access, infrastructure, staffing, and program delivery.
- **Embed local employment incentives:** Define employment benchmarks with Crown agencies and advocate for hiring incentives and workforce development requirements in permitting and investment programs.
- **Support First Nations' focused workforce training programs:** Identify Nation-specific training needs and coordinate with Crown and institutional partners to deliver aquaculture governance and operations training aligned with community priorities.



APPENDIX C: THIRD-PARTY STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS

The table below outlines how **third-party stakeholders** — including industry proponents, environmental organizations, and research institutions — can support implementation of the Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan.

STAKEHOLDER role for: **STRENGTHENING LEGISLATIVE & POLICY FOUNDATIONS**

- **Amend the *Fisheries Act*:** Support First Nations and Crown partners by sharing data, legal analysis, or technical research to inform co-development processes, as invited.
- **Amend *Fisheries Act* regulations:** Contribute technical expertise and monitoring tools to support transparent and culturally relevant standards defined by First Nations and Crown governments, as invited.
- **Revise COLs:** Align organizational practices with COLs governance requirements established by First Nations–Crown processes; incorporate Nation-determined protocols into business or institutional operations where applicable.
- **Support Nation-specific COLs:** Align institutional/operational practices with Nation-developed COLs where recognized, and contribute to their integration by supporting research, advocacy, and First Nations-Crown processes, as invited.
- **Harmonize and streamline regulatory frameworks:** Participate in policy review and reform initiatives led by First Nations and Crown agencies by providing technical support, analysis, or consultation, as invited.
- **Establish a First Nations-Led Solutions Table:** Participate in advisory, observer, or technical support roles as directed by the Table's First Nations-led governance, ensuring transparency and alignment with implementation goals.
- **Co-develop a federal Aquaculture Act:** Contribute to technical working groups or research partnerships that support First Nations and Crown co-development efforts, as invited.
- **Embed a First Nations-led evaluation framework:** Share data, tools, and performance metrics with First Nations evaluation bodies, and participate in projects and reporting systems that reflect First Nations-designed indicators.

APPENDIX C: THIRD-PARTY STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS

STAKEHOLDER role for: PRESERVING CULTURE & ENHANCING COMMUNITY HEALTH

- **Co-develop shared principles for science-policy translation:** Contribute institutional expertise to joint efforts with First Nations and Crown agencies to define research translation principles, align protocols, and adapt dissemination practices to reflect First Nations knowledge systems.
- **Advance research and data sovereignty:** Establish binding agreements with First Nations that uphold OCAP and FPIC in aquaculture-related research and adapt internal policies to ensure Nations retain full control over participation, data ownership, and interpretation.
- **Support First Nations stewardship-based aquaculture:** Align funding, partnerships, and operations with Nation-led stewardship initiatives, and support distribution systems and technical needs in accordance with First Nations governance.

STAKEHOLDER role for: STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- **Expand Guardian/Watchmen programs:** Uphold Guardian/Watchmen authority in enforcement roles grounded in First Nations law, and contribute training, equipment, and data tools to support program implementation in coordination with Crown and First Nations partners.
- **Mandate site-specific habitat restoration plans:** Support implementation through technical assistance, ecological monitoring, and project delivery, as directed by First Nations and Crown licencing processes.
- **Develop industry-funded regional habitat restoration programs:** Fulfil financial obligations under restoration fund mechanisms and coordinate with First Nations to implement site-specific projects, including invasive species removal, in accordance with Nation-defined ecological priorities and oversight.

APPENDIX C: THIRD-PARTY STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS

STAKEHOLDER role for: EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS & PROMOTING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

- **Uphold UNDRIP in trade agreements:** Support UNDRIP implementation by advancing First Nations rights in sectoral trade initiatives and ensuring organizational practices uphold Nation jurisdiction in aquaculture governance and markets.
- **Incentivize First Nations economic relationship models:** Engage in partnerships that reflect First Nations governance and priorities, including co-development, service agreements, and shared ownership, and align business practices with Nation-determined terms.
- **Strengthen First Nations supply chain ownership and value-added processing:** Partner with First Nations to support infrastructure, processing, and value-added aquaculture initiatives, and contribute technical expertise, co-investment, and market access strategies under First Nations leadership.
- **Develop First Nations branding and certification programs:** Support certification systems that elevate First Nations aquaculture products based on cultural integrity, ethical sourcing, and sustainability.
- **Launch proposal-driven licencing and investment models:** Partner with First Nations in proposal-driven processes, align supports with community priorities, and respect Nation authority in project design.

STAKEHOLDER role for: SECURING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING & BUILDING CAPACITY

- **Establish a permanent Aquaculture Investment Fund:** Provide financial support, technical input, or collaborative design assistance, as invited, to help align the fund's structure, delivery, and outcomes with First Nations-led governance and long-term investment priorities.
- **Expand grant, loan, and equity financing programs:** Partner with First Nations and Crown agencies to adapt and deliver financing programs that reflect Nation-defined needs and co-develop access pathways that reduce barriers for First Nations applicants.
- **Embed local employment incentives:** Align hiring practices, procurement policies, and workforce development initiatives with employment benchmarks set by First Nations and supported through Crown incentive mechanisms.
- **Support First Nations' focused workforce training programs:** Co-develop and deliver aquaculture training with First Nations and Crown agencies, and offer placements, mentorship, and technical instruction aligned with Nation priorities.





APPENDIX D: FIRST NATIONS AQUACULTURE INVESTMENT FUND

To support a sustainable and inclusive future for aquaculture in BC, this Action Plan proposes the creation of a \$400 million First Nations–governed endowment fund, including a \$200 million contribution from the federal government. The remaining funding will be sourced through a combination of contributions from the Province of British Columbia, philanthropic organizations, impact investors, the aquaculture industry, Indigenous-owned enterprises, and other aligned partners committed to economic reconciliation and sector transformation.

Designed to generate approximately \$20 million annually (at a 5% drawdown), the fund will provide stable, long-term investment in First Nations-led aquaculture priorities. It will be directed and administered by First Nations, grounded in the principles of self-determination, economic reconciliation, and transformational sector leadership.

The fund will operate with clear governance, transparency, and reporting structures to ensure accountability to both First Nations and funding partners.

a. Purpose of the Investment Fund

This fund will serve as a cornerstone for implementing the Whole of Aquaculture Action Plan, enabling First Nations to lead the evolution of aquaculture in BC. It will unlock opportunities for innovation, sustainability, and long-term economic development, while supporting the infrastructure, capacity, and partnerships — from production systems and certification tools to trade networks — required to grow a thriving, resilient sector. Fund allocations will remain flexible to reflect changing priorities over time, based on Nation-identified needs.

b. Initial Priority Funding Streams

The fund will support work across the aquaculture ecosystem, with an initial focus on four strategic areas:

- 1. Species Diversification & Research:** Support for developing and scaling new aquaculture species through Indigenous-led research, innovation, and applied trials. This includes breeding programs, feed development, production technologies, and the removal of regulatory barriers that limit diversification and access to new opportunities.
- 2. Jobs, Skills & Capacity Development:** Investments in community-based training, skills development, and employment pathways across the aquaculture sector — from entry-level positions to technical, management, and governance positions. This stream supports long-term economic participation, youth mentorship, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- 3. Infrastructure & Support Ecosystems:** Investments in the infrastructure and services required to support a diverse and evolving aquaculture sector — including facilities for broodstock management and juvenile production, enhanced water treatment and storage systems, biosecurity upgrades, and logistics tailored to different species and value chains.
- 4. Marketing, Trade & Indigenous Branding:** Support for First Nation-led branding, certification, and market development to position Indigenous aquaculture products in premium and emerging markets. This stream strengthens value-added processing, trade readiness, and economic resilience, with a focus on cultural integrity, sustainability, and First Nations ownership.

c. Alignment with the Action Plan

The Aquaculture Investment Fund is a foundational tool for realizing the vision of this Action Plan. It supports progress across all five strategic objectives — from legislative reform and environmental stewardship to governance, economic reconciliation, and cultural revitalization. By enabling First Nations to lead with stability and flexibility, the fund ensures implementation is driven by First Nations priorities, governance systems, and long-term opportunity.

REFERENCES

- Advisory Council on Finfish Aquaculture. (2018). *Minister of Agriculture's advisory council on finfish aquaculture. Province of British Columbia*. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/fisheries-and-aquaculture/minister-or-agriculture-s-advisory-council-on-finish-aquaculture/maacfa-2017-docs/minister_of_agricultures_advisory_council_on_finish_aquaculture_final_report_and_appendices.pdf
- Area-Based Management Technical Working Group. (2020). *Proposal from the Area-Based Management Technical Working Group to the Indigenous and multi-stakeholder advisory body*. Fisheries and Oceans Canada. <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/aquaculture/publications/amb-twg-eng.html>
- Blats, K. (2022, April 20). *Regenerative ocean farming in Barkley Sound produces sustainable shellfish seed*. Ha-Shilth-Sa. <https://www.hashilthsa.com/news/2022-04-20/regenerative-ocean-farming-barkley-sound-produces-sustainable-shellfish-seed>
- British Columbia Assembly of First Nations. (2009). *BC First Nations statement of solidarity and cooperation on aquaculture*. British Columbia Assembly of First Nations. <https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BC-First-Nations-Statement-of-Solidarity-and-Cooperation-on-Aquaculture.-2009.pdf>
- Bussanich, R. (2014, March). *Freshwater aquaculture environmental impacts: Okanagan perspective* [PowerPoint slides]. British Columbia Assembly of First Nations.
- Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance. (2021). *Canada's blue economy strategy 2040: Canada's fish & seafood opportunity*. Fisheries Council of Canada. <https://www.seafoodopportunity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Canadas-Blue-Economy-Strategy-2040.pdf>
- Canadian Aquaculture Systems, Inc. (2006). *Getting started in aquaculture: A guide for Aboriginal economic development*. Aboriginal Aquaculture Association. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/532c61f8e4b0d901d03ed249/t/536d2206e4b09f6309b94104/1399661062769/GettingStartedinAquaculture_Planning_Guide_Booklet.pdf
- Coalition of First Nations for Finfish Stewardship. (2022). *The reality is: Salmon farming is a path to self-determination and reconciliation for many First Nations in coastal BC*. Coalition of First Nations for Finfish Stewardship. https://www.firstnationsforfinfish.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/FNFFS_report_web-2.pdf
- Cross, S. F. (2010). *Improving access to aquatic resources for First Nations*. Aboriginal Aquaculture Association. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/532c61f8e4b0d901d03ed249/t/536d21dde4b0627bab-c3c036/1399661021861/Improving-Access-to-Aquatic-Reources-for-First-Nations.pdf>
- Danford, T. (2021). *Turning the tide: Actions to implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act in the context of fish, fisheries, and aquatic habitats in British Columbia*. First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2021.06.07-FNFC_TurningTheTides_report-FINAL-1.pdf

Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries. (2022). *New Brunswick finfish aquaculture growth strategy: 2022–2030*. Government of New Brunswick. <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/10/pdf/Aquaculture/nb-finish-aquaculture-growth-strategy%202022-2030.pdf>

Environmental Assessment Office. (n.d.). *Free, prior and informed consent within the context of UNDRIP and environmental assessments*. Province of British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/environmental-assessments/environmental-assessment-revitalization/documents/free_prior_informed_consent_in_an_ea_context.pdf

Federated Co-operatives Limited. (2021, March). *Sustainable fish and seafood policy*. Federated Co-operatives Limited. <https://www.fcl.crs/wcm/connect/www.fcl.crs-14309/a6211105-27d1-4cf4-a494-cce62a81ee30/FCL-SustainableFishSeafoodPolicy-MARCH2021.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nzchHHH>

First Nations Aquaculture Working Group. (2009). *BC First Nations statement of solidarity on aquaculture: Joint resolution of British Columbia First Nations*. First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. <https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Joint-Resolution-of-British-Columbia-First-Nations.-2009.pdf>

First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. (2010). *First Nations views and priorities on a proposed federal aquaculture regulation for BC*. First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia.

First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. (2011). *First Nations perspectives on a management framework for aquaculture in British Columbia*. First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia.

First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. (2016). *First Nations and aquaculture in British Columbia: Cultivating change to preserve tradition*. First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. <https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/First-Nations-and-Aquaculture-in-British-Columbia-Cultivating-Change-to-Preserve-Tradition-Brochure.-2016.pdf>

First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. (2018). *Status and evolution of British Columbia's aquaculture debates*. First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. <https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Status-and-Evolution-of-BCs-Aquaculture-Debates.-2018.pdf>

First Nations Leadership Council & Province of British Columbia. (2018). *Joint agenda on implementing the commitment document: Shared vision, guiding principles, goals and objectives*. Province of British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/shared_vision_and_guiding_principles_final_26nov2018.pdf

First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. (2023). *Stemming the tide: Getting below the surface – An Indigenous framework for safeguarding wild fish, aquatic habitats, and First Nations communities through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. First Nations Fisheries Council of British Columbia. <https://www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/FNFC-Stemming-The-Tide.pdf>

Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2016). *Pacific region freshwater/land-based integrated management of aquaculture plan (FW/LB-IMAP), version 1.1*. Government of Canada. <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/40628243.pdf>

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2019). *Fish and fish habitat protection policy statement*. Government of Canada. <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/40971193.pdf>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2019). *Proposed Federal Aquaculture Act: Engagement sessions and written submissions summary report*. Government of Canada. <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/40986688.pdf>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2019). *State of salmon aquaculture technologies: Final report*. Government of Canada. <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/40864492.pdf>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2021). *Open-net pen transition plan in British Columbia: Initial engagement process – As was heard report*. Government of Canada. <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/40983778.pdf>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2022). *Engaging on Canada’s blue economy strategy: what we heard*. Government of Canada. <https://waves-vagues.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/library-bibliotheque/41030503.pdf>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2022). *The future of salmon aquaculture in British Columbia: discussion framework*. Government of Canada. <https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/consultation/aquaculture/bc-transition-cb/cadre-discussion-framework-eng.html>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2022). *What we heard: Phases 1 and 2 engagement summary – transition from open-net pen aquaculture*. Government of Canada. <https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/consultation/aquaculture/bc-transition-cb/heard-entendu-phase-1-2-eng.html>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2024). *Aquaculture production quantities and values, 2023*. Government of Canada. <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/stats/aqua/aqua23-eng.html>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (2024). *Draft salmon aquaculture transition plan for British Columbia*. Government of Canada. <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/sites/default/files/documents/draft-transition-plan-ebauche-eng.pdf>
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada. (n.d.). *Salmonid alternative production technologies: technical working group report and recommendations*. Government of Canada. <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/aquaculture/publications/sapt-twg-eng.html>
- Gardner Pinfold. (2016). *Aboriginal aquaculture in Canada initiative: National socio-economic analysis report*. Waubetek Business Development Corporation. <https://www.waubetek.com/upload/documents/aquaculture-tab-/supporting-documents/2015-2016-aboriginal-aqua-socio-econ-stu.pdf>
- Gerwing, K., & McDaniels, T. (2006). *Listening to the salmon people: coastal First Nations’ objectives regarding salmon aquaculture in British Columbia*. Society and Natural Resources, 19(3), 259–273. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920500460864>
- Greba, L. (n.d.). *Salmon farming and the K’ómoks First Nation: “The business of sustainability”* [PowerPoint slides]. K’ómoks First Nation.
- Hardy, R. (2014, March 25). *K’ómoks marine corporations and Pentlatch Seafoods* [PowerPoint slides]. K’ómoks First Nation.

- Harry, R., & Parker, M. (2014, May). *AAA and freshwater aquaculture opportunities in British Columbia* [PowerPoint slides]. Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Forum.
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty Workshop Collective. (2024). *Taking care of knowledge, taking care of salmon: Towards Indigenous data sovereignty in an era of climate change and cumulative effects*. *FACETS*, 9(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2023-0135>
- Indigenous Foundations. (2009). *Aboriginal fisheries in British Columbia*. First Nations and Indigenous Studies, University of British Columbia. https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/aboriginal_fisheries_in_british_columbia/
- Klahoose Shellfish Limited Partnership. (2025). *Klahoose aquaculture*. Qathen Xwegus Management Corporation. <https://www.qxmc.org/klahoose-aquaculture>
- Klemtu Spirit. (2025). *Smoked salmon by Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation*. <https://klemtuspiritsmokedsalmon.com/>
- Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance. (n.d.). *So you are considering investing in aquaculture?* [PowerPoint slides]. Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance.
- Masson, K., & Philcox, N. (2015). *Aquaculture partnerships: A guide for Aboriginal communities*. Aboriginal Aquaculture Association. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/532c61f8e4b0d901d03ed249/t/55c2317fe4b068d751040088/1438790015332/Aquaculture+Partnerships+Guide+FINAL+Aug6.pdf>
- Mazzocchi, F. (2020). *A deeper meaning of sustainability: Insights from Indigenous Knowledge*. *The Anthropocene Review*, 7(1), 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019619898888>
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food. (2023). *Seafood and fisheries sector snapshot 2023*. Province of British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/industry-and-sector-profiles/sector-snapshots/af_sector_snapshots_seafoodfisheries_2023.pdf
- Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. (2022). *BC coastal marine strategy*. Province of British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/coastal-marine-strategy/coastal_marine_strategy.pdf
- National Indigenous Fisheries Institute. (2018). *Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative: Discussion paper*. National Indigenous Fisheries Institute. <https://indigenousfisheries.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Institute-Pacific-Integrated-Commercial-Fisheries-Initiative-Discussion-Paper-October-2.pdf>
- Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative. (n.d.). *Aquaculture development program application guide*. Fisheries and Oceans Canada. <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/aboriginal-autochtones/nicfi-ipcni/doc/nicfi-ipcni-aqua-eng.pdf>
- Okanagan Nation Alliance. (2027). *Okanagan Chinook restoration program*. Okanagan Nation Alliance. <https://syilx.org/projects/okanagan-chinook-restoration-program/>
- Proboszcz, S. (n.d.). *Broughton migration gauntlet* [PowerPoint slides]. Watershed Watch Salmon Society.
- Proboszcz, S., & Orr, C. (n.d.). *Science submissions to the Cohen Inquiry* [PowerPoint slides]. Watershed Watch Salmon Society.

- RIAS Inc. (2015). *Economic opportunities for Aboriginal aquaculture in Canada*. Fisheries and Oceans Canada. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/532c61f8e4b0d901d03ed249/t/5644f103e4b0e17eb49d-2cf9/1447358723917/Economic+Opportunities+for+Aboriginal+Aquaculture+in+Canada+-+May+14+Final.pdf>
- Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. (2016). *An ocean of opportunities: Aquaculture in Canada* (Vol. 3). Senate of Canada. https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/POFO/reports/2016-06-22_POFO_AquacultureVolume3_Final_E.pdf
- Swift, B., & Grydeland, O. (2014, March 14). *Opportunities for B.C. First Nations in freshwater aquaculture* [PowerPoint slides]. First Nations Fisheries Council Aquaculture Forum.
- Trosper, R. L., et al. (2021). *Indigenous systems of management for culturally and ecologically resilient Pacific salmon (*Oncorhynchus spp.*) fisheries*. BioScience, 71(2), 186–204. <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biaa144>
- Urban, D. (2014). *Freshwater aquaculture: environmental considerations* [PowerPoint slides]. Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance.
- Urban, D. (2014). *Regulation of freshwater aquaculture in BC* [PowerPoint slides]. Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance.
- United Kelp Cooperative. (n.d.). *Restoring coastal ecosystems through Indigenous-led kelp cultivation*. United Kelp Cooperative. <https://unitedkelp.com>.
- United Nations General Assembly. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. United Nations. https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf.
- Uu-a-thluk. (2018). *Uu-a-thluk strategic plan: Building on our successes 2018–2023*. Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council. <https://uuathluk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Uu-a-thluk-Strategic-Plan-2018-2023.pdf>.





www.fnfisheriescouncil.ca

