

2020/21 Report

Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance



CCIRA





CCIRA

Table of Contents

Working Toward a Sustainable Future: Message from President Rich Chapple	2
About CCIRA CCIRA Declaration	
Stewarding our Coastal Territories	4
Central Coast Nations CCIRA Board and Staff	
Fisheries Management for the Future	6
Toward a Marine Protected Areas Network	8
Enhancing Marine Emergency Response across the Central Coast	10
Positive Solutions to the Salmon Crisis	12
Financial Summary	14



Working Toward a Sustainable Future

The Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance (CCIRA) is built upon a solid foundation of ancestral knowledge and applied science. We work with knowledge keepers and leaders throughout Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv communities to collectively ensure a sustainable future for the people of the Central Coast.

As you'll see from the stories in this report, CCIRA is committed to ensuring Indigenous self-determination over Central Coast territories. Much of our work is focused on collaborative planning tables and supporting long-term negotiations for co-governance and Nation-led resource management, and the balance is about contributing to coastal communities' field research and monitoring projects.

Despite a very challenging period of uncertainty and disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Coast Nations spearheaded landmark agreements, planning structures and frameworks, including ongoing efforts with the Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast (MaPP), the Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (pages 6-7), the Reconciliation Framework Agreement for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection, and a Marine Protected Areas Network (8-9) for our coastal waters.

As these transformative resource planning efforts progress, CCIRA's integral role has become clearer than ever. Working closely with Guardian Watchmen, the Central Coast stewardship offices, and other key partners and researchers, we're helping to bridge the gap between high-level plans and the hard work of implementation. For example, after years of applied research and data collection, our Nations are taking positive steps to protect vitally important marine species, such as Dungeness crab and salmon (pages 12-13). And building on our collective commitment to protect and safeguard these waters, CCIRA is helping to enhance regional response systems throughout Central Coast Nations (pages 10-11).

We are proud of our role in moving from the vision of each Nation's marine plans to the concrete action needed to make them successful. We remain committed to sustainable resource management throughout Central Coast communities.

Sincerely,



Rich Chapple, CCIRA President





About Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance (CCIRA)

CCIRA was established by the Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv Nations to uphold the laws of our ancestors and ensure sustainable use and stewardship of the natural and cultural resources that have sustained us for millennia. Our responsibility is to sustainably manage our territories, ensuring our lands and waters provide for today's needs without compromising the needs of future generations.

CCIRA DECLARATION: Foster a strong working relationship with our four Nations and through a common voice ensure our ecosystems return to a healthy balance, while respecting our cultures, advancing our peoples' well-being, and enhancing our economies.





Stewarding our Coastal Territories

Along the Central Coast, land and sea merge into an ecologically unique and biologically diverse coastal ecosystem. The Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv Nations have thrived in this ancient temperate rainforest for thousands of years, intricately connected to the region's abundant natural resources.

For more than a century the Central Coast Nations watched as unsustainable resource management policies and practises imposed by other governments depleted forests, fish stocks and other coastal resources, and threatened our collective future. Today, we are working together to revitalize our coastal systems.



Heiltsuk Territory

Featuring lush rainforest, and extensive nearshore and offshore waters, Heiltsuk Territory contains an abundance of land and marine species, which have sustained people here for countless generations.

Learn more at: heiltsuknation.ca

Kitasoo/Xai'xais Territory

With a vibrant mix of land and marine areas, Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Territory includes many windswept island groups and narrow channels. Deep valleys, long fjords and glaciated peaks are typical of the eastern portion of the Central Coast. Learn more at: klemtu.com

Nuxalk Territory

From the rugged coastline, Nuxalk Ancestral Territory extends deep inland to the glaciated peaks of the Pacific Coast Range Mountains. It includes vast watersheds that drain several large rivers and streams via deep valleys and fjords. Learn more at: nuxalknation.ca

Wuikinuxv Territory

Wuikinuxv Territory features lush forested regions, as well as extended deep valleys and massive coastal mountains that feed into a significant lake network, teeming with abundant fish and other aquatic species. Learn more at: wuikinuxv.net

CCIRA Board Members

Earl Newman
Heiltsuk Nation

Jeremiah Robinson
Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation

Blair Mack
Nuxalk Nation

Danielle Shaw
Wuikinuxv Nation

Your CCIRA Team

Tristan Blaine
Field Technician

Rich Chapple
President

Alejandro Frid
Science Coordinator

Cindy Hanuse
Administrator

Nicole Kaechele
Marine Implementation
Coordinator

Desiree Lawson
MaPP Implementation
Coordinator

Gord McGee
Marine Planner

Madeleine McGreer
FRRRA Implementation
Coordinator

Jane Posner
Accounting & Finance

Vicki Sahanatien
Director, Marine Planning
& Conservation

Jean-Phillip Sargeant
Marine Response
Coordinator

Charlotte Whitney
Director, Fisheries
Management & Science

Kyle Wilson
Applied Quantitative
Biologist



Fisheries Management for the Future

In 2019, Central Coast First Nations signed an historic agreement with other coastal First Nations and Canada's Federal Government to help revitalize sustainable fisheries throughout the North Pacific Coast.

The landmark Fisheries Resources Reconciliation Agreement (FRRA) is a major step forward in co-governance and the future health of coastal fisheries, which is fundamental to our cultural and economic well-being. After decades of unsustainable management, this framework will enable Central Coast Nations to take back control of these integral fisheries resources and contribute to managing them sustainably for all future generations.

The primary goal of the FRRA is to provide a framework for collaborative decision making in fisheries management; it will guide everything from the science and research that informs early planning, to active resource management efforts through compliance monitoring and enforcement. Nation-based resource stewardship staff and managers will carry out these concrete actions, but how that happens will depend on a host of factors, such as each Nation's priorities and the health of the marine ecosystems and species.

The FRRA also aims to revitalize economic opportunities in coastal communities by supporting a significant increase in commercial fishing access for First Nations, including the development of a commercial Fishing Corporation owned and managed by the Nations with devoted funds that new fishers can use to purchase or improve vessels and gear.





A ground-breaking example of collaborative governance, this effort is challenging and complex. Though there is still much to accomplish, clear examples of collaborative governance in the spirit of the FRRRA are visible in the Central Coast Nations' efforts to manage and enforce closures in important locations for harvesting Dungeness crab, a culturally significant species for Central Coast Nations.

After observing and documenting declines in catches of Dungeness crab within Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv territories, Nation leaders engaged with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to create new collaborative management measures, which included closing key fishing locations in 2021 to improve access for FSC crab fishers into the future.

Central Coast Nations will continue to work with DFO to manage and monitor crab abundance and ensure compliance of the existing crab closures, while considering if the Nations' crab needs are being met over time – now under the context and structures of the FRRRA. Crab, salmon, herring, geoduck, and halibut are all species which will be included within this Agreement.

As a pilot species for collaborative governance, including from the earliest stages of data collection and research to understand catch numbers and population dynamics, the effort to manage Dungeness crab serves as an excellent example of evidence-based decision making and provides a glimpse into the future of more sustainable and collaborative fisheries management.



Toward a Marine Protected Areas Network

Leaders of the Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Nuxalk and Wuikinuxv Nations are committed to protecting culturally and ecologically important marine areas. After a century of intense commercial fishing and ineffective fisheries management, our coastal resources are depleted. Marine heatwaves and climate change exacerbate the decline of marine species, habitat and ecosystems.



Central Coast Nations continue to co-lead the planning process to establish a Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Network for the Northern Shelf Bioregion, along with federal government, BC government and 13 other First Nations. The future marine protected areas will restrict some activities, such as commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture and forestry, in order to protect invaluable cultural and ecological values.

Building on more than eight years of applied and collaborative research, CCIRA and our research partners identified important “biological hotspots” throughout the Central Coast, which helped determine where protection should be strategically located in order to maximize biodiversity conservation. Combining science with Indigenous knowledge and understanding of key regions of cultural significance, these recommendations made substantial contributions to the design of the MPA Network.

Working with marine planners from each Nation, CCIRA created a rationale treatise describing why a MPA Network is one of the best approaches to reverse the significant declines of marine life in Central Coast territories, and to mitigate the negative cultural, social and economic impacts on coastal communities. The Nations have presented their rationale to the MPA Network partners and will use it as an education tool as the planning process continues.

The MPA Network will preserve marine biological diversity by reducing the impacts of threats, such as increased vessel traffic, expanded ports, and increased commercial and recreational fishing pressures. MPAs will also support the future of coastal fisheries by restoring depleted marine species to healthier population levels, being a source for species migration into non-protected areas, and by increasing ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change and other environmental changes.

MPAs will contribute to marine habitat and ecosystem recovery. Along with the integrated marine use planning and sustainable fisheries management already underway, the MPA Network will play an essential role in supporting Nations’ traditional marine management practices and cultural harvesting into the future.



Enhancing Emergency Response on the Central Coast

With thousands of kilometres of rugged coastlines, the Central Coast's waterways are home to abundant marine life and numerous traditional harvesting areas.

These marine ecosystems and culturally significant areas are invaluable to our Nations, and they are at-risk from shipping accidents and fuel spills. Past marine accidents, such as the *Nathan E. Stewart* and *Queen of the North*, show that catastrophes can occur far from large ports where federal and provincial marine emergency response capacity exists. We also know that even relatively small-scale spills can have lasting negative impacts on coastal communities and livelihoods.

For Central Coast Nations, increasing response preparedness and capacity at the local level is imperative because First Nations' mariners, Guardian Watchmen and other community members are often the first on scene at marine accidents. Timely and efficient response to any incident can mean the difference between a minor clean-up and a devastating event that can lead to loss of life or lasting economic and environmental impacts.

Over the past year, Central Coast Nations increased engagement with both federal and provincial government agencies in efforts to advance more effective marine response capabilities to protect coastal territories. The efforts included collaborative initiatives aiming to prevent marine accidents and spills, while developing First Nations' response capacity for when incidents do occur.





Signed in 2018 by First Nations and the federal government, the Reconciliation Framework Agreement for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection, or RFA, helps guide the collaborative response planning, which involves multiple organizations from First Nations and federal and provincial governments.

As part of the planning process, each Nation initiated the development of local Geographic Response Strategies. Elders, harvesters and other community members provided critical input for identifying Areas of Concern (AOC) where increased response capacity and protections are needed. Community workshops held in Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Rivers Inlet and Klemtu resulted in 271 AOCs being identified in the Central Coast.

The AOCs were determined using a range of criteria, including ecological or cultural sensitivity or vulnerability to spills, proximity to shipping traffic or large ports, and access to resources and staging areas. The Nations' stewardship staff are completing the field work and writing the Geographic Response Strategies for each AOC, and this work will continue to 2022.

Community-based and regional response planning efforts to enhance response capacity are necessary to minimize the effects of spills on the Central Coast. CCIRA will continue to assist and facilitate communities to develop, complete and implement the response plans.



Positive Solutions to the Salmon Crisis

A keystone species of coastal ecosystems, salmon are a critical food source and vital part of the culture, social structures and economies of Central Coast Nations.

Salmon populations have been declining along the Pacific Coast for decades, and abundance of this critically important species is now at an all-time low within most of the Central Coast's salmon-bearing rivers. In recent years, our communities have been unable to access salmon as a reliable and abundant food source, which is a threat to long-term food security and access for food, social or ceremonial (FSC) purposes.



The causes of this urgent crisis are varied and complex, but we know the main factors: climate change, overfishing and habitat degradation. One thing is absolutely clear: we must act now to protect and restore salmon populations for the sake of our cultures, environment, economies and future generations.

In addition to the widespread collapse in salmon returns, another challenge is a decline in salmon escapement monitoring. As a result, the full extent of population declines has gone largely unmonitored and underreported, due to a lack of capacity to carry out this work effectively, and it has been difficult to demonstrate the extent of the decline using existing management frameworks and assessment approaches.

Over the past year, CCIRA focused on immediate action to minimize the negative impacts of this crisis on Central Coast communities and work towards restoring salmon populations. Central Coast Nations' stewardship staff and leadership have been instrumental in pushing DFO to implement commercial fishing closures that are more in line with the precautionary approach, and the Nations and CCIRA have secured funding to develop better fisheries catch information and implement salmon habitat restoration activities.

While there is much more to do, the Nations are committed to working collaboratively to better understand salmon population abundance through better research and monitoring, and sustainably manage salmon fisheries into the future via the collaborative governance structures of the FRRRA. Supporting salmon to return in greater abundance is not just a matter of restoring and sustaining populations, but also ramping up the essential research and monitoring efforts that will inform decision-making.

Central Coast Nations have been stepping up to fill the monitoring gap in many ways through stream walks and FSC catch monitoring, but there is much more to do. Thanks to support from the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) and other resources including fisheries reconciliation funding, Central Coast Nations are investing heavily in catch monitoring and habitat restoration. These efforts will steadily improve our understanding of salmon populations in the coming years while building capacity and structures for collaborative management and governance.

Along with key partners, such as Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative and others, Central Coast stewardship leaders are working to identify priorities and next steps in what will surely be a long-term effort of restoring salmon stocks. Salmon restoration and sustainable management will remain a high priority for CCIRA for the foreseeable future.

Financial Statements

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2021	2021	2020
Financial Assets		
Cash	\$ 1,027,818	\$ 1,172,412
Accounts Receivable	979,838	473,957
Due from Related Party	-	65,604
	<u>2,007,656</u>	<u>1,711,973</u>
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	135,533	109,054
Deferred Revenue	957,036	741,552
Due to Members	172,652	200,127
Due to Related Party	363	-
	<u>1,265,584</u>	<u>1,050,733</u>
Net Financial Assets	742,072	661,240
Non-Financial Assets		
Prepaid Expenses	4,740	5,157
Accumulated Surplus	<u>\$ 746,812</u>	<u>\$ 666,397</u>

Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus

Year Ended March 31, 2021

2021

2020

Revenue

Grants & Agreements	\$ 2,639,551	\$ 2,529,911
Interest Revenue	2,483	12,971
Service Contracts	26,005	0
	<u>2,668,039</u>	<u>2,542,882</u>

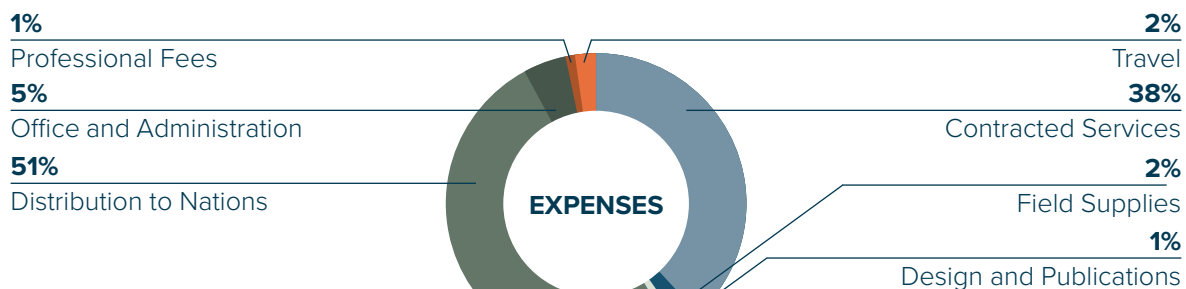
Expenses

Contracted Services	\$ 990,203	\$ 777,046
Field Supplies	60,246	13,805
Design & Publications	11,543	5,832
Distributions to Nations	1,317,500	1,289,276
Office and Administration	122,325	123,804
Professional Fees	24,274	26,252
Travel	61,533	215,811
	<u>2,587,624</u>	<u>2,451,826</u>

Annual Surplus 80,415 91,056

Accumulated Surplus - Beginning of Year 666,397 575,341

Accumulated Surplus - End of Year \$ 746,812 \$ 666,397





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