



BC YOUNG FISHERMEN'S NETWORK

GATHERING REPORT 2023

2023 BC Young Fishermen's Gathering Report

The 2023 BC Young Fishermen's Annual Gathering rose from its pandemic hiatus with the energy and vigor of a king tide. Having not been held since January 2020, the 6th annual collaborative celebration of commercial fishing's next generation on the West Coast returned with a refreshed sense of buoyancy and hope in the midst of turbulent times.

"If I thought fisheries are going to stay the way they are now forever into the future, I wouldn't stay. But I think there is a lot of opportunity for change, and that's why my generation has been staying around because we love the lifestyle."

— James Lawson (West Coast Now)

The event took place over three days from March 22nd-24th, 2023, at the Maritime Heritage Centre in Campbell River, BC. 80 attendees from across the industry came together to share knowledge and skills, network, and experience a renewed sense of community among new entrants, seasoned harvesters, industry experts, and association representatives alike.

Harvesters of salmon, halibut, lingcod, tuna, geoduck, urchins, crabs, prawns, and more gathered to share their experiences, expertise, and learn from each other. Many harvesters present are in the first half of their careers in the industry and had the opportunity to receive guidance from seasoned fishers with decades of experience on everything from how to fiberglass their boat, to how to obtain a tuna license.

The gathering spanned two days of presentations and conversations on topics such as fisheries management, business planning, marine safety, science, sustainability, Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, policy, and the future of fishing. Participants had the opportunity to connect with young harvesters and industry members from across the province.

Overall response from the gathering was incredibly positive. The event served as a reignition opportunity to raise industry and public awareness of the presence and continued commitment of the BCYFN to serving the growth and success of the next generation of the BC fleet. Furthermore, it served to reinforce a collective sense of resilience and buoyancy felt within the industry, and to drive home the importance of bringing a creative, solutions-oriented mindset to the challenges we face.

"They're (young people) not moaning about the past. They're looking at the opportunities going forward ... That gives me a lot of hope."

— Mark Urwin (West Coast Now)



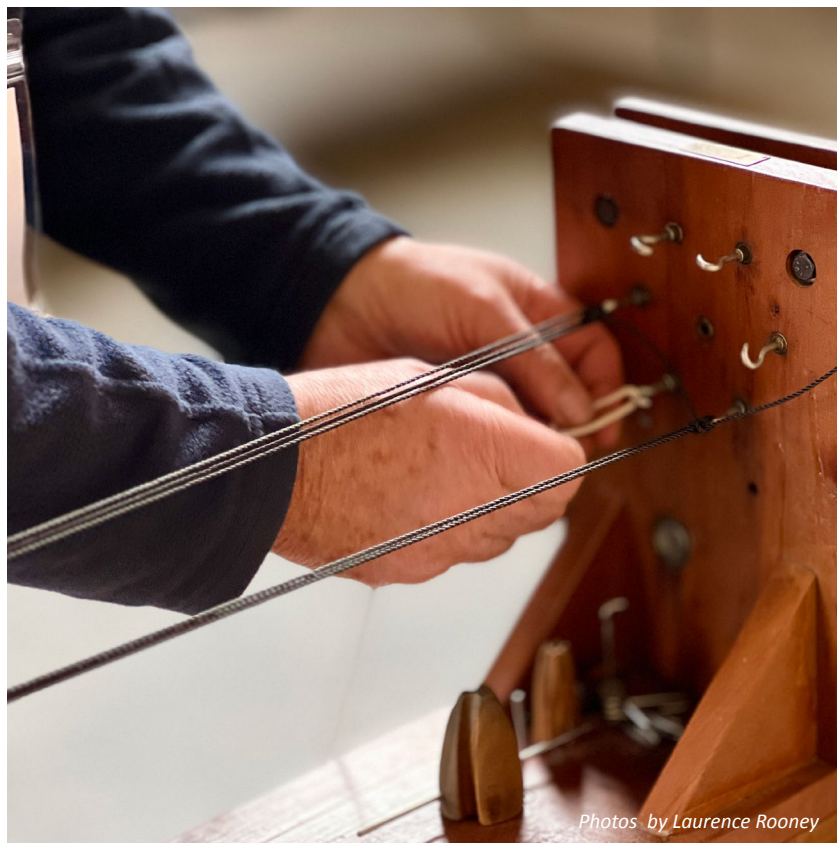




Photo by Hannah Fiegenbaum

Our 'Why'

What is the BC Young Fishermen's Network?

The BC Young Fishermen's Network (BCYFN) is a supportive space for the next generation of BC's fishing fleet. The points by which we navigate our work are community building, education and support, and public awareness. Our high-level effort is to foster learning and networking among young fish harvesters by creating connections to the people and resources they need to succeed. We believe that supporting new harvesters also means supporting well-being of individuals and our coastal communities. The direction of the BCYFN comes from a volunteer steering committee of young harvesters across the coast and across fisheries. As a "fisherman to fisherman network" we can dial into the ever-shifting needs of those in the industry and remain agile in changing times.

Moving forward under the direction of the BCYFN Steering Committee, our next phase is to develop opportunities with a focus on offering tangible, skill building education and support that those in the first half of their careers in the BC fishing industry need most. In conjunction, we are also working to access opportunities that will ensure that every harvester in British Columbia is familiar with the BCYFN as a productive, positive, and welcoming resource space.

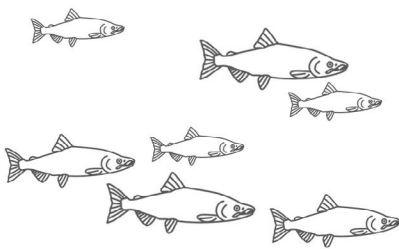
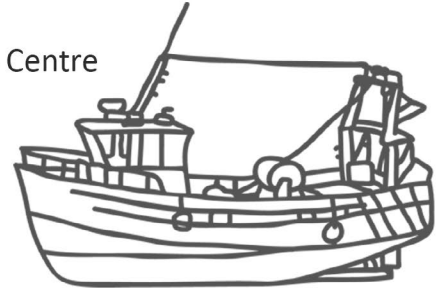
The BCYFN is a project of the TBuck Suzuki Environmental Foundation, which provides the backbone of support for the Network.

Our Impact



GATHERING 2023

March 22nd-24th, 2023
at the Maritime Heritage Centre
Campbell River



80 PARTICIPANTS
came together to
teach and learn

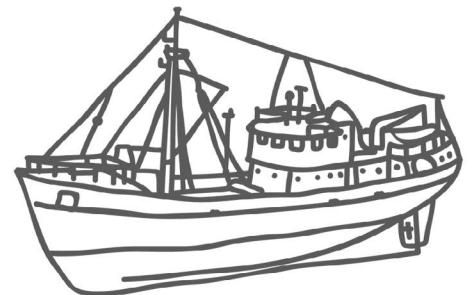


42 FISH HARVESTERS
brought their questions and expertise



11 FISHERIES
were represented

19 ORGANIZATIONS
joined to participate



2023 Gathering Program

March 22nd - The Match Eatery

Shore Leave Networking Night

The Gathering kicked off with a night of catching up with old friends and networking with new ones at the Match Eatery in Campbell River. About 45 attendees came out to connect over snacks, drinks, and stories before diving in for two days of conference programming.

March 23rd – Maritime Heritage Centre

Welcome

Welcome Address | *Trish Whetstone, coordinator of the B.C. Young Fishermen's Network*

Opening Remarks and Land Acknowledgement | *Jim McIsaac, Executive Director of the T Buck Suzuki Foundation*

Opening Remarks | *Lesley Chapman, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture – Industry Advisor, Seafood*

Introduction | *Melissa Collier, Owner of West Coast Wild Scallops and Steering Committee Member*

Kickoff Speech

Creative Solutions for the Future of Fishing | *Mark Urwin, Harvester and co-founder 46 South Fish Co.*

Fisheries Update Sessions

This session brought together harvesters and industry experts to provide info on a handful of the various BC fisheries to young harvesters, people newly exploring their opportunities in the industry, and for those already involved to find out what's new in other fisheries outside of their focus.

Introductions | *Trish Whetstone, coordinator of the B.C. Young Fishermen's Network*

Sessions |

Mike Atkins, Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association

Chris Sporer – Pacific Halibut Management Association

Megan Eadie – Area A Crab

Melissa and Joel Collier – West Coast Wild Scallops

Grant Dovey - Underwater Harvesters Association

A Buoyant Future: Collaborating to Reach Our Common Goals

Fisheries in BC are facing some dicey waters, but by approaching our collective challenges from a creative, solutions-oriented mindset we can bring a positive and hopeful perspective to the vision of our industry's future. In this panel discussion we'll hear about the power of our greater network and how we can support each other to rise together.

Moderator | *Sonia Strobel, CEO and Co-Founder of Skipper Otto*

Panelists |

James Lawson, President of UFAWU-UNIFOR

Melissa Collier, Owner and Harvester of West Coast Wild Scallops

Dawn Webb, Organizer for UFAWU-UNIFOR

Jim McIsaac, The Canadian Independent Fish Harvesters Federation.



Lunch & Historic Boat Tours

Attendees were invited to climb aboard the fishing seiner that once adorned the back of the Canadian 5-dollar bill. Museum guides offered interpretive walk-throughs of the original B.C.P. 45, restored to her former glory, throughout lunch.

BC Fisheries Management 101

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada joined us for a comprehensive session packed with information on their management framework and processes, as well as an overview of their lost fishing gear management strategies.

Presenters |

Ge Li, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Maureen Finn, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Gear Up!

Workshop Leaders |

Tim Hobbs, Redden Net Co Ltd.

Participants got their hands on traps, navigation tools, safety staples, and all manner of gear with tips and tricks from seasoned pros.

Reudi Pletscher, Knot Master

Participants had the opportunity to dive into the rope and knot niche with splicing, intricate knotwork, and rope making machine demos.

Fish Safe MythBusters

Safety at sea is the #1 priority: True or False? The experts from Fish Safe BC delivered a lively session of busting through marine safety myths and facilitated questions, discussions, and, of course, audience participation with a rousing hypothermia prevention demo.

Presenters |

Harolf Wulff, Fish Safe BC

Ralph Roberts, Fish Safe BC

Out of Sight, but Not Out of Mind: Helping Fishers Reclaim Lost Gear in BC and Beyond

Caitie Frenkel and Megan Eadie presented their research on solutions to lost gear management, clean up and prevention. Their findings were followed by a panel discussion with founders of The Ocean Legacy Foundation on current strategies and efforts to reclaim lost gear locally and globally.

Presenters |

Caitie Frenkel, Sustainability Director of T Buck Suzuki

Megan Eadie, former Sustainability Director of T Buck Suzuki

Ashley Tapp, founder of The Ocean Legacy Foundation

Jeremy Browne, founder of The Ocean Legacy Foundation

Money Talks - Financing your Fishing Business with BMO *Gathering Sponsor*

Participants heard from a fisheries financing specialist with a wealth of knowledge on business planning, lending options, growth management, and financial literacy tools.

Presenter |

Katie Carter, Relationship Manager, BMO Bank of Montreal



Reception and The Fishermen's Gathering Feast

As seafood harvesters and providers with extraordinary pride and heart in our local bounty, we wanted to honour the fishers, farmers, foragers and food artisans local to Campbell River throughout the event.

Attendees enjoyed a wind down from the day's sessions with time to connect and debrief over handcrafted beverages from Wild Coast Cocktails made with ingredients from local Comox Valley farms.

The Gathering Feast, along with all of the delicious goodies enjoyed throughout the event, were hand made by the fun loving and creative style of Amber Assu, Executive Chef of The Good Wife Gourmet. All of Ambers tasty creations were sourced locally from family-owned farms, local foragers, butchers, and cheesemongers, including the sockeye salmon featured at the Feast, which was caught in Area 13 by local Indigenous hereditary chief Brian Assu and processed into filets and lox at St. Jean's Cannery.

March 24th, 2023 – Maritime History Centre

MPA Updates from the Marine Planning Team

The development of Marine Protected Areas are impacting the future of how we fish. Much has changed since the Marine Planning Team presented their work in coordinating an industry-wide response to the proposed Northern Shelf Bioregion MPA Network at the 2020 BCYFN Gathering. This presentation offered an update on the current state of MPA development and allowed for group discussion on strategies and solutions to potential impacts to the industry.

Presenters |

Mike Atkins, Marine Planning Team

Grant Dovey, Marine Planning Team

Developing BC's First Coastal Marine Strategy

Participants had the opportunity to hear about the details of managing this complex initiative between overlapping areas governing marine activities, conservation efforts, and ocean-based industries. The Government of BC spoke on the development of their Coastal Marine Strategy that will look at the full picture of ocean ecosystem health and community well-being, took questions and heard ideas and opinions from harvesters.

Presenter | *Stephen Hextall, Policy Analyst with Government of BC, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.*

Native Fishing Association: Business Growth and Opportunities

The Native Fishing Association fosters and supports the success of First Nations people in the commercial fishing industry. Attendees learned from NFA business experts on opportunities for strengthening the current and next generation of Indigenous fishers with everything from their micro loans program, to training opportunities, to accessing licenses and quota.

Presenters |

Fiona MacRiald, Native Fishing Association

Natasha Marshal Gallic, Native Fishing Association

Chelsea Lesner, Native Fishing Association



Insuring your Fishing Business

Harvesters heard from long-time BC fisherman and marine insurance provider Keith Chauvel of Pacific Coast Fishermen's Mutual Marine Insurance. Being a Fishermen for Fishermen company, Keith shared important information and considerations specific to the needs of harvesters to keep their businesses secure and agile.

Presenter | *Keith Chauvel - Managing Surveyor and Treasurer, Mutual Marine Insurance*

Empowering Indigenous Women in BC's Fishing Industry

This panel gave participants the opportunity to hear the powerful voices of Indigenous fisherwomen investing in themselves and their fishing businesses. Harvesters Natasha Marshal Gallic, Linda Thomas, and Mercedes Marshall shared the importance of aligning traditional knowledge, community and collaboration. They examined ways to create space and opportunities for Indigenous women to lead the next generation by example so that they can continue taking on powerful roles in the West Coast commercial fishing industry.

Moderator | *Sonia Strobel, CEO and Co-Founder of Skipper Otto*

Panelists |

Natasha Marshal Gallic, NFA

Mercedes Marshal, Harvester

Linda Thomas, Harvester

Parting Words

Melissa Collier, Owner of West Coast Wild Scallops and Steering Committee Member

Trish Whetstone, Coordinator of the BC Young Fishermen's Network



Photo by Laurence Rooney

Future of the BC Young Fishermen's Gathering

Since the inaugural BC Young Fishermen's Gathering in 2017, the BCYFN has captured the interest and engagement of harvesters, government, businesses, researchers, and representatives from non-profits up and down the West Coast and across Canada.

As the first in-person gathering after a two-year hiatus, the 2023 event had a strong focus on re-establishing the Network as a community and providing opportunity for sparking as well as reigniting relationships. About half of the attendees were returning, while the other half were first time participants. This shows the depth of relationships that have stuck through the years, and that our efforts to increase public awareness of the BC Young Fishermen's Network are being heard.

We hope to continue to amplify the Gathering's status as a space for celebrating seafood and the cultures, traditions, businesses, and communities intertwined in the vocational lifestyle of fishing. While we are encouraging the building of supportive relationships and growing our fishing community, we are also critically examining the Network to assure it is serving the needs of harvesters in B.C.

Based on early feedback, we are looking ahead to next year and plan to incorporate more skill-based sessions including finance and grant writing workshops, marketing roundtables, and deckhand-specific workshops. There was also interest in having more time and space devoted to questions and dialog between harvesters, allies, and regulators. In concert with the BCYFN Steering Committee and Network members, we look forward to bringing more refined content to the 2024 Gathering while leaving harvesters feeling buoyed, energized, and supported as they head out on the water.



With Gratitude

This Gathering would not have been possible without the vibrant community of new and seasoned fish harvesters, community members, association representatives, and allies that came back together to celebrate this bright reignition of the Network.

Special thanks to our event sponsors and donors:

The British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture

The Native Fishing Association

The Bank of Montreal

MNP Accounting, Business Consulting and Tax Services

We extend our appreciation to Leslie Chapman, The BC Ministry of Agriculture's Industry Advisor on Seafood for taking the time to join us to show her support and engage with members of the seafood community. We would also like to thank Stephen Hextall, Policy Analyst to the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Wild Salmon Branch (Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning Division of the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship) for his presentation on developing BC's Coastal Marine Strategy and for lending a listening ear throughout the two days of the gathering.

Many thanks to our Kickoff speaker, Mark Urwin, for bringing a collaborative, creative, and positive approach to the challenges and opportunities that our future presents. We deeply appreciate the time and support dedicated by all twenty-eight presenters and educators who participated.

Much gratitude to our organizing committee for their time, direction, and uplifting humor in the midst of chaos in the pulling together a spectacular event in short order;

Trish Whetstone – BC Young Fishermen's Network Coordinator

Hannah Fiegenbaum – T Buck Suzuki, Communications Director

Melissa Collier – Steering Committee Member, Harvester

Jim Gibbins – Steering Committee Member, Harvester

Chelsea Ellis – Steering Committee Member, Harvester

Thank you to Hannah Fiegenbaum for exercising her social media prowess and delivering an all-star marketing campaign at lightning speed; Jim Gibbins for his bold ideas and for being the jovial energy welcoming attendees to the space; Chelsea Ellis for having our backs, connecting us with the



right people at the right times, and cheering us on from up north; and to Melissa Collier for her kind guidance, sound wisdom, and for diving in anywhere and everywhere needed without hesitation.

A monumental thank you to T.Buck staff Alaina Pyde, Caitie Fenkel, and Jim McIsaac for stepping up to assist whenever needed.

Many thanks to Jasper Broer and his team at the Comfort Inn for patiently and professionally handling a hundred and one changes, updates, and 11th hour swap arounds for our group.

Special thanks to Sheri Hayward of the Maritime Heritage Centre for welcoming us to the museum, her professionalism, local connections, over and above service, and fine-tuned eye for detail.

Not enough that can be said of Amber Assu and her team at Good Wife Gourmet Catering! Thank you for keeping us nourished, hydrated, and caffeinated throughout, and for keeping the organizers laughing.

Gratitude to Wild Coast Cocktails for delivering dazzling drinks that brought joy to our gathering feast.

Finally, we extend exponential gratitude to the Gathering participants for taking their time to join us and for their engagement and energy.

Stay In the Loop!

Four places to find BCYFN online:

- Instagram @BCYoungFishermen
- Facebook page @bcyoungfishermen
- Facebook group: BC Young Fishermen's Network
- Newsletter: Sign up on our website, bcyoungfishermen.ca



Ministry of
Agriculture

