

Newsletter of the Nanwakolas Council

AWEENAK'OLA



APRIL 2014 ISSUE 2

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A Tide of Change

Our second issue of “Aweenak’ola,” the Nanwakolas Council newsletter, brings you two stories about powerful changes taking place in the Nanwakolas member Nations’ territories.

First, there’s the story of the successful campaign led by the K’ómoks First Nation, with support from the Nanwakolas Council and participation from the We Wai Kum and We Wai Kai First Nations, to protect the H’kusam Forest, near Sayward. The H’kusam Forest Management Agreement creates a management regime that will enable the First Nations, forestry workers, and the public to better understand the traditional forest management practices of First Nations peoples.

We also cover the marine planning process that has been underway for British Columbia’s Central and North Coasts. Exciting work has been done by the Nanwakolas member Nations and others over the last three years to develop comprehensive marine plans. These marine plans will guide decision-making by the First Nations and the provincial government on future use and management of this vitally important part of our environment.

Stories like these illustrate not only the good work that is being done, but how vital that work is to moving forward and being a force for positive change in the way in which First Nations are involved in the management of their lands, resources and waters. The Nanwakolas member Nations are leading the way in taking management into their own hands, and we are proud of their achievements. It’s just the beginning: we know we will keep coming together to move forward for the benefit of our future generations.

We would like to take this opportunity to make you aware of recent developments. First, we welcome to the Nanwakolas Council the Wei Wai Kum First Nation, which became a member Nation in September 2013. Second, we have recently moved our Campbell River office and are now located on the Wei Wai Kum Reserve at 1441 16th Avenue. Please stop by to take a look.

If you have ideas on where else we should distribute the newsletter, or you would like us to email it to you, please contact us at info@nanwakolas.com or call Coral Duncan at 250.286.7200.

In the meantime we hope you enjoy this issue, and wish everyone a warm and happy spring and summer.

Dallas W. Smith, President, Nanwakolas Council

If a Tree Falls—Standing up for the H’Kusam Forest



“Once everyone realized Stewart Hardy was serious when he said he would lie down in front of the logging trucks, that’s when the process to protect H’Kusam Forest started in earnest,”

*K’ÓMOKS FIRST NATION CHIEF COUNCILLOR
ROBERT EVERSON.*

Everson is talking about elder and former K’ómoks councillor Stewart Hardy, who led efforts over many years to prevent commercial logging in the precious H’Kusam Forest and to protect it for the benefit of future generations.

Logging companies had been trying to log the forest, which is just south of Sayward on Vancouver Island, for decades. But H’Kusam contains outstanding specimens of culturally modified trees (CMTs) and intact stands of old-growth cedar, traditionally used for building canoes, houses and totems, and for clothing, masks and medicinal purposes. “Stew Hardy and others had been saying ‘No means no’ to them for years,” says Chief Everson. “He meant it when he said

he was ready to lie down in front of the bulldozers. That’s how important this forest is.”

Efforts to protect the forest finally paid off in January 2014, when K’ómoks, along with Wei Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum First Nations, signed an agreement with the provincial government to manage the H’kusam Forest—pronounced “kew-sum”—in a way that will see its unique cultural and natural values protected forever. “Special forests like H’Kusam are vanishing so fast,” says Everson. “I’m really happy to know this one has been saved.”

A little history

Forestry company Macmillan Bloedel started showing an interest in the area in 1991. The company commissioned an archaeological survey which located nearly 200 CMTs and assessed them as “highly significant,” since they were the last known stand of such trees on Northern Vancouver Island, and called them a “priceless” illustration of the First Nations’ continuance connection to the site.

It wasn’t surprising therefore that First Nations vigorously opposed any logging plans for the area, noting that when CMTs are cut, irreplaceable traditional knowledge is lost forever with the trees. Not only

do the stories of individual trees vanish, but so do related artifacts found on the forest floor, as well as the evidence of overall traditional First Nations forestry management techniques. When the surrounding forest is cut, it becomes impossible to observe patterns of tree selection, falling methods and extraction techniques. “You lose it all and you can never get that back once the trees are down,” says Everson.

Despite that, and the fact that the First Nations were adamant no logging would take place, says Nanwakolas Referrals Office Manager Art Wilson, Macmillan Bloedel and its successors over the years, including most recently Western Forest Products Ltd. (WFP), continued to submit logging plans to the provincial government that included H’Kusam.

A change of heart

Finally, says Wally Eamer (Terrestrial Planning Coordinator for Nanwakolas Council), a strong desire on the part of both the provincial government and the forestry company to form and maintain productive relationships with the First Nations became the basis for mutual agreement by all the parties to find a way forward.

“That was the main trigger to starting discussions towards how to protect H’Kusam,” says Eamer, “as well as of course the fact that K’ómoks put their foot down and kept saying no.” The other very important factor was that K’ómoks (who led the discussions for the three First Nations, with support from Nanwakolas staff) recognized that it was important to try and address WFP’s interests.

“The fact is that we have finite resources here on Vancouver Island and in B.C. generally,” says Everson. “We can’t just extract all the resources without losing them forever and logging companies—and mining and any other resource industries—need to understand that, and that our Aboriginal rights and cultural values attached to those resources have to take priority. At the same time, they need to be able to carry on their

business. So part of the key to successfully protecting H’Kusam was to work collaboratively with WFP and the province to find a way WFP could still do that.”

The key was ensuring that WFP could log somewhere else, with no net loss of business. “Working with WFP to permit it to log in other areas that don’t have the same sensitivities really helped the company out, and made it easier to get to an outcome here that worked well for everyone,” says Eamer.

A mutually beneficial outcome

There’s more to the agreement than the protection of a special area of forest and a trade-off for the forestry company, however. “This agreement is going to be beneficial to all British Columbians in a number of ways,” says Eamer. “Not only will the forest be managed to preserve its unique cultural features, it is going to be a source of large cedar for Big Houses, poles and canoes, used as an educational tool, and may also become a popular tourism destination.”

The forest will be used, among other things, to teach First Nations youth about traditional forestry management and for harvesting of cultural materials for traditional uses. It will also be training ground for young forestry workers generally, who will be brought to H’Kusam to learn about CMT and Aboriginal forestry practices. K’ómoks is also hopeful that tourists will be interested in coming to the forest to learn about cultural history and natural values.

“I’m very happy with the outcome,” concludes Chief Everson. “It was very helpful to have Wei Wai Kum and Wei Wai Kai standing with K’ómoks as we led the way to ensure this forest in our territory is saved for everyone. Having the support of Nanwakolas was also important: their staff know how the provincial government system works and have experts with good connections in the forestry industry. They were able to help WFP see the light, and we are all better off now because of that.”



“Finally, a strong desire on the part of both the provincial government and the forestry company to form and maintain productive relationships with the First Nations became the basis for mutual agreement by all the parties to find a way forward.”

WALLY EAMER (TERRESTRIAL PLANNING COORDINATOR FOR NANWAKOLAS COUNCIL),

A Powerful Tide: Coming Together on Marine Planning



“When I was young, everywhere you looked you would see families doing what the kids are learning to do again now. The things we were taught, our values, about survival, are being taught to the kids here. They are doing what our people have done for aeons. It’s awesome. It makes my heart sing to see all this cultural teaching going on. There is so much pride in seeing the kids learning and carrying on the activities of their ancestors. It’s uplifting for the spirit, and it touches my heart.”

NAKWAXDA’XW HEREDITARY CHIEF THOMAS “TK” HENDERSON, HETLAMAS MARINE PLANNING AND SEAWEED HARVESTING COMMUNITY FIELD TRIP, MAY 2011

The Big Picture

Have you heard about marine planning? If you haven’t, that’s probably not surprising. Land use planning has dominated resource management in British Columbia since the mid-1990s. Over the last three years that’s changed, though: First Nations and the provincial government are now co-leading a marine planning process for Northern Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii and the Central and North Coasts.

It’s been a long wait, but for the *Nanwakolas* member Nations it looks like it’s been worth it. In June, a marine plan for Northern Vancouver Island is expected to be completed by the provincial government and *Nanwakolas* Council: the outcome of two years of intensive collaborative work by the two parties, building on the values and concerns of the seven *Nanwakolas* Nation communities involved in the process.

“I’m really excited about the possibilities the plan represents,” observes Tlowitsis First Nation member Emily Aitken, who was closely involved with the Tlowitsis community planning process. “All this

“Although the federal government chose not to participate, through MaPP the Nations could focus on a very broad range of marine issues all the same, working with the provincial government,” says *Nanwakolas* Marine Planning Coordinator John Bones. “Foreshore, the intertidal zone, beaches, the near foreshore, these are all matters that the province deals with and directly affect First Nations’ interests. It may not have been very productive to have their participation anyway. The federal government wasn’t willing to discuss issues such as tanker traffic, fisheries management or creation of protected areas, and these are matters of great importance to the First Nations, of course. They will still have to be dealt with, but the First Nations will do so in a different way.”

work that has gone into the plan is going to be very relevant to our future as communities and First Nations peoples.”

How it came about

John Bones, Marine Planning Coordinator for Nanwakolas Council, helps explain the backstory: “When the land use planning process started, the First Nations insisted that there needed to be a planning process for marine resources as well. Marine and land use planning are integrally connected and you simply can’t do one without the other. And they insisted that they be co-leaders of such planning, and not treated merely as stakeholders.”

It took quite a few years of insisting, but in 2008 the provincial government revised its planning policy to work jointly and proactively with First Nations on future planning. In 2011, with funding generously provided by the [Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation](#), the Nanwakolas Nations helped create the [Marine Planning Partnership for the North Pacific Coast \(MaPP for short\)](#), a partnership between eighteen First Nations and the provincial government for the development of marine plans.

By the end of last year, utilizing part of the Moore Foundation funding, each of the Nanwakolas Nations

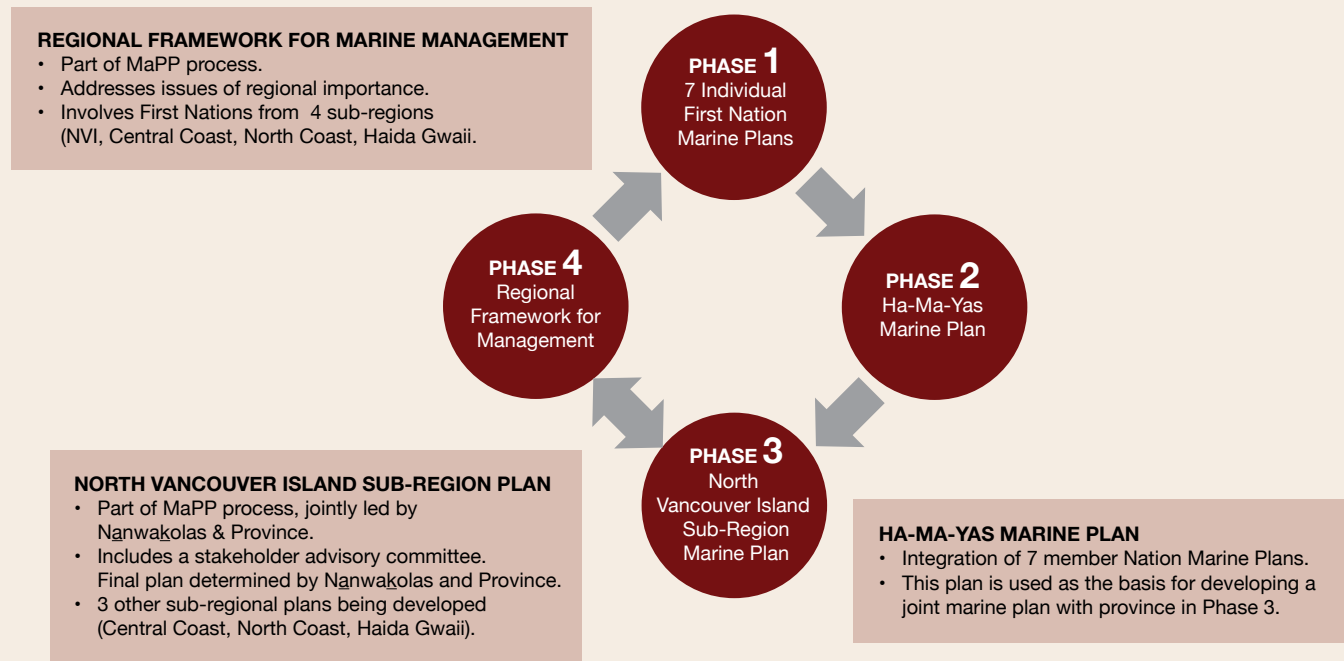
had completed their own comprehensive individual plans for their own marine areas, and a document called the Ha-Ma-Yas Marine Plan had been created to integrate the individual documents into a regional plan reflecting their collective vision, common values and principles for marine management (a summary of the Ha-Ma-Yas will be available at www.nanwakolas.com in the near future.)

The Ha-Ma-Yas was then used to develop the joint provincial/Nanwakolas Northern Vancouver Island plan with the provincial government. The views of third party stakeholders like recreational fishing guides and kayak tour operators were also gathered, with the final content of the NVI plan determined by Nanwakolas and the provincial government.

The NVI plan, when complete (which should be by June of this year), will set the scene for future decision-making on use and management of the Northern Vancouver Island marine environment. Ultimately, along with three other sub-regional plans, it will become part of a regional framework for marine management.

Locally, each Nanwakolas Nation will use their own detailed marine plan to inform their discussions with the provincial government and tenure holders seeking their agreement on use and management of marine

MARINE PLANNING – 4 PHASES



THE HA-MA-YAS MARINE VISION

The marine vision is sustainable management of marine uses and activities that return us to economic prosperity, good physical and spiritual health, vibrant and safe communities, and balance between modern and traditional cultures.

Sustainability will be achieved under the return of management of the marine environment to our authority, so that we are again the stewards of our traditional territories. Under our stewardship, the deterioration of the marine environment will be reversed and it once again sustains the abundance and diversity of species for our membership of today and of future generations.

In this way we will continue to benefit from the marine resources the Creator has provided, apply our ancestral teachings and pass these on to the next generations.

All economic and conservation proposals will follow our protocol procedures, benefit our people, and any subsequent activities will be carried out in a way that shows respect for our cultural values, and maintains our marine ecosystems in a healthy and productive state. Development will respect our need for continued access to critical marine areas for food, social, and ceremonial uses.

We will continue to follow our ancestors in pursuing our rights of self-government and recognition of title and rights over the lands, water and resources throughout our traditional territories.

resources in their areas (have a look at the last issue of [Aweenak'ola](#) to read about referrals and how Nanwakolas works with the member First Nations in the referrals process). The Ha-Ma-Yas marine vision will guide the Nanwakolas Nations as they come together to discuss issues of common regional interest.

So what is a marine plan?

MaPP describes marine plans as guiding “the creation of sustainable economic development opportunities, supporting the well-being of coastal communities, and protecting the marine environment.”

The NVI plan includes scientific information about the oceanography of northern Vancouver Island, including things like water temperatures, climate, and tides as well as the biology of the marine habitat; data on marine wildlife, plants and birds; a description of socio-economic conditions in the region, including population, employment and economic infrastructure, and marine use patterns; governance information; and a vision for ecosystem-based management of the marine environment.

The plan also sets out specific management regime for uses of and activities in the marine environment of Northern Vancouver Island; like Ha-Ma-Yas and the individual Nanwakolas Nation plans, it isn't about who owns the resource, it is about how best to manage and protect it for future generations. All the plans make that clear, as well as the fact that none of them are intended to affect anyone's Aboriginal rights and title.

A community-led process

Nanwakolas Council and the Nanwakolas member Nations recognized from the beginning that the starting point for the NVI plan should be a community-led planning process to develop the individual Nanwakolas Nation plans (and subsequently the Ha-ma-yas plan).

Each of the seven Nations created a four-person community planning team, or CPT, to meet with their respective communities, gather information and discuss the issues. Working with the community leaders and with technical support being provided by Nanwakolas Council staff members, the CPTs held 135 meetings in total and participated in numerous field trips to verify the information being provided (to watch a video of Chief Tom Henderson talking about seaweed harvesting on such field trip, for example, go the Marine Planning subpage at www.nanwakolas.com). The CPTs and Nanwakolas staff then worked with each Nation to put together their individual marine plans.

Emily Aitken was a member of the Tlowitsis CPT. “The community work was probably the most important part of the process to me,” observes Aitken. “It was very empowering for people to be able to express their thoughts and have their say on what should be in the Tlowitsis plan. That's meaningful, because when people feel their views have been included in the plan they will stand by it.”

Aitken says what she learnt was that the “old ways” of doing things simply made sense. “We—modern society generally—haven't been taking good care of the planet. But when we go back and learn about how it was done in the past, it's very cool. It was very

logical to conserve the resources, and take advantage of the seasons and knowledge gathered over hundreds of years to look after the marine environment in a way that will keep it clean and safe and producing enough for future generations.”

Melissa Quocksister is a K’ómoks Councillor, assistant treaty negotiator, and a community engagement specialist. Quocksister, who was a member of the K’ómoks CPT, had a similar experience to Aitken. Quocksister says: “It’s a matter of balance. In order to ensure we will always have something to harvest, always have the opportunity to practice our cultural traditions and preserve our spiritual values, we need to protect the resource by conserving it as well.

She adds: “Our community was very pleased with the plan and were actively involved in writing it. We are going to make it public because it is a very educational document, and very powerful. We want everyone to know and understand what is protected, and why they can’t do anything to detract from that.”

Quocksister was disappointed the federal government didn’t participate, but says that for K’ómoks, the plan will also be a useful guide in their treaty negotiations with both the federal and the provincial governments. “Although the plan was created outside the treaty process, we made sure it lines up with what we intend to see in our treaty, and vice versa.”

What’s in a typical Nanwakolas Nation plan?

Each of the individual Nanwakolas Nation plans is unique to its community. But the Ha-ma-yas reflects what all of them have in common: the First Nation’s vision, values and teachings about the marine environment; cultural history and background; the impact of newcomers on traditional ways of life and the links to the current socio-economic status of the First Nation; key marine issues and concerns, including protection and respect for marine and cultural resources; and the First Nation’s specific management direction for marine resources in its area of responsibility and governance.

Nanwakolas Marine Planner Scott Harris says that from his point of view as a technical support resource to the communities, the process of developing the plan content was incredibly important, with many benefits going beyond the plans themselves: “We videotaped the field trips, for example, and captured the stories on DVD as a permanent record of the background to the plans. The films belong to the communities, so the stories can never be lost.”



*EMILY AITKEN, TLOWITSIS FIRST NATION
COMMUNITY PLANNING TEAM MEMBER*

Both Aitken and Quocksister believe that the technical support provided by Nanwakolas Council staff was vital to the success of the process. “Nanwakolas really helped us with capacity,” says Quocksister. “We really appreciate that without their help to do this it may not have happened.”

There is an additional bonus, says Aitken, in that the content of the plans will also be very useful to the work that Nanwakolas staff do in assisting the Nanwakolas Nations to deal with referrals. “That is going to be a great benefit,” says Quocksister. “The volume of referrals in the marine area is huge. I don’t know what we would do without that resource. It would be a nightmare.”

United we stand

Emily Aitken says that she likes the regional approach reflected in the Ha-ma-yas plan. “It’s much more powerful and credible to have a strong collective voice in working with third parties and governments. It would seem that governments and other interested parties prefer it because it is easier to deal with one united voice than many different ones, so it is a win-win for everyone.”

Aitken says working together also helped everyone realize how much they needed each other. “Learning that the other First Nations have very similar values and connections to the environment was very beneficial in helping us realize the power and value of unity in working to protect our marine areas. Just the same way everything in the environment is connected and interwoven, and can’t be treated separately, we’re the same. We’re connected to each other.”

Working together on Ha-ma-yas helped bring the seven Nanwakolas Nations together and build a stronger relationship than ever before between them, believes Scott Harris, who helped coordinate the discussions: "Initially none of the individual plans were shared. Everyone talked about their interests instead. But there was so much in common that by the end of the day, everyone wanted to share their plans with each other because of the level of trust they had built with each other. That's part of the beauty of having a framework like Nanwakolas Council to work within. "Nanwakolas" literally means a "place where we go to find agreement" and this process is a great illustration of how well that works in practice for the First Nations. It would have been much more difficult without it."

"I don't believe in working in silos," agrees Melissa Quocksister, who says she is happy the Nations have been able to complete complementary plans this way. This remarkable process of working from community level up towards a regional joint plan that reflects the values and goals of each of those communities, say Bones and Harris, is one that is unique and of great interest to other Indigenous communities on the west coast. Nanwakolas staff recently spoke to Indigenous communities from California, Oregon and Washington to present the model to them and were overwhelmed by the reaction: "They wanted to know everything about how this was done. They were very excited."

"Through this process, we are participating in something incredibly important," concludes Emily Aitken. "We've given ourselves permission again to be stewards of our lands and waters. That's part of who we are and our cultural way of being."

Other News

- Conservancy management planning being undertaken by the Nanwakolas Nations was featured in the October newsletter of Coast Opportunity Funds, "The Talking Stick", which is available on the Coast Funds website, www.coastfunds.ca/node/292.

Please Get in Touch

Please don't hesitate to let us know how you like "Aweenak'ola," and what else we could do with it to make it more informative, interesting and useful to you. If you have photo or story submissions, ideas on where else we should distribute the newsletter, or you would like us to email it to you whenever it comes out, please contact us at info@nanwakolas.com or call Coral Duncan at 250.286.7200.

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AWEENAK'OLA

The Nanwakolas Council is comprised of seven member First Nations whose traditional territories are located in the Northern Vancouver Island and adjacent South Central Coast areas of British Columbia.



Nanwakolas Council
1441 16th Avenue
Campbell River, BC V9W 2E4

Campbell River Head Office
Tel: 250.286.7200 Fax: 250.286.7222

North Island Office
Tel: 250.949.7234

Email: info@nanwakolas.com
Web: www.nanwakolas.com