



# NEWSLETTER

## Aboriginal Aquaculture Association

March 2019

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### Aboriginal Seafood in the Market Place

Congratulations are in order for **K'awat'si Shellfish**, a Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw owned and operated shellfish aquaculture company, for the recent launch of their premium brand of farmed "GwiGwi" oysters! The K'awat'si team's commitment, determination and patience has produced a small "deep-cupped" and "smooth-shelled" oyster big on flavour and highly prized by the upscale oyster market.



K'awat'si Shellfish is also growing Pacific Scallops at their remote farm site in Treadwell Bay located in the protected park lands of the Ug'wiwa' Cape Caution Conservancy, where water is pristine and undisturbed by human activity. K'awat'si scallops should be available to restaurants, foodservice distributors and select retailers within the next 6 to 12 months.

**We Wai Kai Nation** On the inside of Vancouver Island, the We Wai Kai First Nation has been busy marketing their farmed oysters to local and export markets. The Nation had previously been active in

farming Pacific Scallops until a major hatchery-related quality issue with the scallop seed viability caused a complete die-off of their considerable scallop inventory. This has not deterred the Nation from pursuing other types of shellfish aquaculture as they now are selling sustainably farmed oysters.



Also making news is the Toquaht Nation owned and operated **Barkley Sound Shellfish** who have recently started selling their farmed Pacific Scallops to local restaurants on the West Coast of Vancouver Island and as far away as Winnipeg Manitoba!

Their high-quality scallops are being distributed through Outlandish Shellfish Guild on Quadra Island. General Manager Noah Plonka is currently adding an additional five submerged scallop longlines to their farm in Toquaht Bay. This will increase the supply of scallops as well as create jobs and sustainable revenues for his community.



## First Nations making headway in Geoduck Aquaculture

There is finally some good news for Aboriginal geoduck aquaculture development in BC. The very first geoduck aquaculture tenure and license, since the inception of the Integrated Geoduck Management Framework (IGMF) has been granted to a First Nation!



This is not only historic as it is the first license and tenure granted since 2010 but also because it is sited in a DFO defined red area, which historically has been some of the best geoduck growing areas.

The DFO Framework provides policy guidance for the integrated management of both wild and aquaculture geoduck fisheries in British Columbia and was released in 2017. The IGMF shellfish aquaculture siting matrix allows access to First Nations, who have reserves lands adjacent to the red area, to a maximum of 10 hectares. These licenses are considered non-transferable and are still subject to a commercial harvest prior to aquaculture licensing.

This event has been many years in the making. In 2014 the AAA submitted a response document to DFO on their draft Pacific Region IGMF- 2013. The response was based on information collected over five years as its member First Nations met to discuss the development of geoduck aquaculture development in BC. First Nations in BC have been engaged in planning and development efforts to enter into geoduck aquaculture as a means to generate meaningful employment in First Nation communities and to help pave the way to greater economic self-sufficiency.

The AAA worked closely with the Toquaht First Nation to identify suitable ground for aquaculture development and then assisted the Nation in applying for and submitting an aquaculture tenure application. A qualified & experienced dive team was engaged, and a survey completed. Congratulations to Tyee Anne Mack and her Aquaculture Manager Noah Plonka, the future in clam, oyster, scallop and now geoduck aquaculture is looking bright for this West Coast Nation.

More good news for First Nations and geoduck aquaculture as the We Wai Kai First Nation was successful in getting their existing shellfish aquaculture tenure & license to include geoduck. This is the first geoduck aquaculture amendment to be granted by DFO to a First Nation since the IGMF. This amendment will allow We Wai Kai to pursue geoduck aquaculture on a portion of their shellfish culture tenure. Congratulations to the We Wai Kai First Nation!

Several other First Nations have identified tenure sites that hold potential for geoduck aquaculture and, with the support of the AAA, have made applications for License of Occupation and Aquaculture.

Richard Harry the President of the AAA states "While First Nations are making progress on the implementation of the IGMF more needs to be done to ensure First Nations can fully realize the benefits of geoduck aquaculture. The Framework isn't perfect, it's a working document. We will be working with First Nations and DFO to make the necessary changes to the framework to reflect changing realities. A good start would be to find ways to provide First Nation access to wild stocks during development. This will go a long way to provide them with the much-needed working capital to support new development."



## PICFI Aquaculture Development Source Funding Program

The AAA is pleased to announce that several First Nations have successfully secured PICFI Aquaculture Development Source Funding for their aquaculture development initiatives this fiscal year. The funding is an extension of the existing DFO Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (PICFI) program but directed towards aquaculture activities as DFO recognizes the growing importance of aquaculture and its foundational role in supporting the sustainable production of seafood and the measurable socio-economic benefits it creates for First Nations in Pacific Region.

The AAA was active in helping a number of First Nations secure a considerable portion of the \$1.2 million dollars of funding granted in 2018-2019 with projects that were "shovel ready" with deliverables that put animals in the water and created jobs. The successful application projects included the expansion of an existing "proof of concept" West Coast scallop farm, the conversion of a "string" oyster farm into a seaweed and raft-based scallop farm, as well as improving the performance at a North Coast shellfish hatchery and infrastructure improvements for an Interior based RAS fish farm.

"The AAA continues to work closely with our clients providing support on implementation of their ADS projects providing technical and hands on support" states Daniel Rabu of the AAA "The Federal Government's support for aboriginal aquaculture development is great and funding programs such as AACI and PICFI ADS are key to future growth for First Nations engaged or wanting to engage in aquaculture however, it is a concern for many First

Nations that the funding must be accompanied by business development & management support, in the field guidance and follow-up in order to be fully effective as capacity challenges remain a real obstacle for Nations".

The ADS is a new DFO program and given the AAA's extensive experience from delivering the Aboriginal Aquaculture in Canada Initiative (AACI) project fund put forward recommendations to DFO for their consideration with respect to the ADS application process. Key amongst the recommendations is around the timing of the call for proposals and notification to the successful applicants. *"It is important that projects can get started early in the fiscal year to take advantage of the weather in the spring and summer months"* Marguerite Parker of the AAA. *"As well we encourage DFO to work closely with the proponents to address any licensing and regulatory issues in a timely manner so as not to delay projects unnecessarily."*

The AAA would also like DFO to consider expanding the program to allow individual Aboriginal applicants to apply and be considered. There are very limited programming options available to them and none that are specific to aquaculture. *"There are service providers to the sector and aspiring Aboriginal entrepreneurs that would benefit from support"* says Parker.

The annual PICFI ADS funding will be available in 2019-2020 in the amount of \$1 million to be divided between all successful project applications. The application deadline is April 15, 2019. The fund is available to First Nation communities; one does not need to be a member of a PICFI – Commercial Fisheries Enterprise to eligible for funding. Give the AAA a call to see how we can assist you in putting your application for ADS funding in place.

For more details on the PICFI ADS visit the AAA website where a PDF of the application can be found.

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## DFO License Renewal in the Spotlight

DFO has contacted the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association regarding the many expired aquaculture licenses currently on file for renewal for shellfish aquaculture tenures held by First Nations in BC.

As one of the many conditions attached to Crown land leases & licenses of occupation, one that is most critical in maintaining good standing is that all aquaculture tenures must be licensed and current with the outstanding fees.

DFO licensing officials have asked the AAA to help them facilitate the process of renewing aquaculture licenses as they wish to avoid having to terminate leases. Even if a shellfish aquaculture tenure is not being utilized to produce shellfish or is in a "dormant" state, the site must be licensed by DFO in order to meet conditions of license.

The AAA is available to assist Nations in preparing license renewals and has done so for several Nations already. Give us a call at (250) 286-9939 or send us an email at [info@aboriginalaquaculture.com](mailto:info@aboriginalaquaculture.com) and we will help you get started on renewing your aquaculture license.

## Our Offices Have Moved

The Aboriginal Aquaculture Association has moved to its new offices at 664 Head Start Crescent on the We Wai Kai First Nation Quinsam Reserve land in Campbell River.

Our mailing address continues to be 1400B Drake Road, Campbell River, VoW 7K6.



Marguerite Parker & Daniel Rabu in Snaw'naw'as Territory



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Phone: 250-286-9939

[info@aboriginalaquaculture.com](mailto:info@aboriginalaquaculture.com)

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