



## Nisga'a Youth Coast Watch

# **DRAFT**

## **Youth Community Action Plan**

For Protecting and Restoring Marine Species at Risk,  
Critical Habitat and Traditional Knowledge of Marine  
Resource Users

**January 2010**

**Partner groups:**



**Nisga'a Lisims Government**

- Nisga'a Fisheries & Wildlife Department
- Human Resources Department
- Communications Department
- Nisga'a Youth Advisory Committee

**Canada** 



**Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Environment Canada**



## INTRODUCTION

The Nisga'a Youth Coast Watch Community Action Plan (NYCW-CAP) complements the Recovery Strategy for Northern Abalone adopted by DFO under the Species at Risk Act.

Funding was provided by the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, Nisga'a Lisims Government and LGL Limited environmental research associates. This plan complements the Recovery Strategy for Northern Abalone developed by DFO.

In 2008, efforts to involve Nisga'a Youth with the recovery of marine species (e.g., Northern Abalone) and habitat at risk was initiated. In 2009, twenty-four youth from all Nisga'a Villages and Urban Locals participated in a 2-week intensive camp, and were introduced to several themes ranging from marine conservation, species at risk, biodiversity, to community leadership. This document is considered a work-in-progress, and details goals and activities identified from journals, mind map exercises, and open dialogue with Nisga'a youth (Ages 6-12).

Abalone was recognized as a sentinel species by Nisga'a Youth needing our protection, in addition to oolichan (eulachon), chum salmon and glass sponge reefs. The population of Northern abalone in BC declined dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s due to overharvest. The fishery was closed to all harvesting in 1990. In 1999 abalone was listed as a "Threatened" species, and in 2003 it was legally protected under the Species At Risk Act (SARA) which prohibits taking, buying, selling or trading of abalone. In 2009, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) designated abalone as "Endangered Species". While several marine species will be used as agents of this program, the abalone will be the Nisga'a Coast Watch keystone species for promoting best management practices, conservation and protection of marine resources in Northern BC and Nass Coastal Waters.

## Mission & Goals of Program

**The mission of NYCW is to create a supportive learning environment in which Nisga'a youth reach their fullest potential as capable, competent, and caring eco-citizens.**

### **Five goals for Nisga'a Youth Marine Stewardship & Outreach Development:**

1. Increased level of awareness with marine environmental problems;
2. Knowledge (experiential and scientific) about the marine environment;
3. Attitudes that foster concern for the marine environment;
4. Skills for dealing with environmental problems; and
5. Eco-action initiatives to make positive changes for themselves, family, community, environment, and resources.

The long-term goal of the NYCW-CAP is to restore the abalone population, and other marine species at risk, to a level that supports a community food fishery while engaging youth stewardship and active involvement.

## KEY ISSUES

- **Limited rural programs (or "vehicles) exist to empower Nisga'a youth towards careers in natural resource management-enforcement, and participate in outdoor education or environmental stewardship.** Since 2005, Nisga'a Lisims Government

has endorsed the pilot program “Youth Organizing Youth (YOY)”. This program enlists feedback from Nisga'a Youth in relation to community development plans. As the YOY program evolves, even more participation by youth-for-youth is needed for positive impact in behaviour and action to take root. Such as the willingness to accurately report fishing observations/catches, and discourage illegal activities (e.g. poaching).

- **Despite a 16-year ban on all harvesting of abalone, the population has not recovered.** In fact, scientific surveys indicate that the abalone population on the north coast is declining. Experts believe there are two main reasons why the population has not rebuilt:

**illegal harvest**

**Poaching is thought to be the #1 threat to the recovery of abalone in BC.** There has been a steady stream of occurrences involving illegal abalone sales in Prince Rupert, including the largest bust in BC history in February 2006: 2470 lbs of abalone. Even small harvests of abalone for “a feed” can add up, impacting abalone’s ability to reproduce.

**reproduction**

**If there are not enough male and female abalone close together during spawning, their sperm and eggs can’t meet, and no young are produced.** Even with a healthy “patch” of abalone, spawning success is unpredictable. But when depleted too much, reproduction is unsuccessful. Also, abalone are very slow to reach reproductive age.





**GOALS**

**The goal of the Nisga'a Youth Coast Watch Community Action Plan is to protect and rebuild the abalone population (and other marine species at risk) on the north coast to a level that will support food fisheries, and protect critical marine habitat.** The past 16 years of fisheries closures alone have not succeeded in rebuilding northern abalone. To be successful, we must use innovative ways to address illegal harvesting.

**APPROACH**





**The Nisga'a Youth Coast Watch Community Action Plan proposes to address these issues through Stewardship, Outreach & Education, Capacity Building and Leadership.** These key elements of the plan are detailed below.

**Stewardship**



-  Continue organizing and building a Nisga'a Youth Stewardship Group (enlist and seek growth of active youth membership).
-  Organize a youth environmental stewardship advisory committee, represented by: Nisga'a Lisims Government (Youth Advisory Council, Human Resources, Communications; Fisheries & Wildlife), and School District 92.
-  Revise, finalize, and adopt the Nisga'a Youth Coast Watch Community Action Plan (NYCW-CAP) by the environmental youth advisory committee.
-  Promote stewardship of abalone (and other marine species at risk) in

north coast communities by raising awareness and encouraging youth participation in Coast Watch.





Outreach & Education

-  School enrichment: Transfer traditional and scientific knowledge of species at risk (abalone), technological applications for species and habitat recovery, and principles of conservation biology to Nisga'a youth in School District 92.
-  Camps: Facilitate community workshops, field trips, youth eco-forums, and youth exchanges to promote Nisga'a marine issues at a regional and global scale.
-  After school activities: Promote youth outdoor education and practicum (i.e., marine stewardship camps, water park, signs, recycling program/center, garbage cans, ditch clean-ups, beach trails; interpretive programs; marine wildlife and fisheries monitoring).
-  Increase youth participation with communication campaign: web (blog), youth newsletter, letters to government; articles to press.

Capacity Building

-  Nisga'a Fisheries & Wildlife continue to facilitate youth mentorship program (Ages 15-30) for increasing youth employment opportunities and interest in natural resource management and protection.
-  Build a new generation of marine scientists-technicians while adding value to the worth of our elders, and Nisga'a women.

Leadership

-  Empower youth citizenship and proactive governance by meaningful representation of Youth, communicating for youth, environmental issues for consideration and decision-making by Nisga'a Lisims Government.
-  Youth Stewardship Group "Draft Strategic Marine Use Plan" based on their own inventory of traditional family practices and knowledge, maps of the Nass Coastal region (Google Earth), and interviews with experts (DFO and Nisga'a Fisheries & Wildlife).
-  Build a Trust Fund for Nisga'a Youth Conservation Group to promote sustainable marine practices and community education.
-  Increase youth participation with funding campaign: corporate sponsorship (Save-On Foods, hot dog sales & coupon booklets), Marine Bingo special event fund raising, auction-sell Nisga'a Fisheries merchandise (hats, shirts, jackets, cups, knives, calendars).



Logo design: **Clint Adams**, Prince Rupert

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