



2025



Capacity Building Department



Annual Report

Introduction

This annual report highlights the work of the Capacity Building Department at Ha'oom Fisheries Society.

We would like to begin by extending our sincere thanks to all five Nations members who participated in our programs throughout 2025. Your time, engagement, and willingness to share feedback have been invaluable. The insights and perspectives you shared helped us continuously improve our programs, adapt them to community needs, and ensure they remain practical and relevant.

We also extend our deep gratitude to our partners who made this work possible. In particular, we thank the Balance Co-Lab team for their collaboration, expertise, and commitment to the capacity building projects. This partnership strengthened our programming and expanded the opportunities available to fishers, youth, and families across the five Nations.



2025 was a year of growth, learning, and collective achievement for Ha'oom Fisheries Society (HFS) and the five Nations of Ahousaht, Ehlettesaht/Chinehkint, Hesquiaht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht. Guided by community priorities and grounded in nuchah-nulth knowledge, our work this year focused on strengthening fishing capacity, supporting youth, advancing food security, and strengthening the five Nations governance in fisheries.

All programs delivered in 2025 were offered free of charge to participants, ensuring equitable access to training, mentorship, and capacity-building opportunities across the Nations.

This report highlights key achievements from 2025 and outlines what lies ahead in 2026.

Capacity Building Department

Mandate & Approach

Mandate

The Capacity Building Department was created to implement HFS' Strategic Plan and advance its mission of planning, developing, and implementing opportunities that benefit current and future generations, while passing on culture, traditions, and knowledge.

The department's mandate is to implement the goal of omeek ("good fisher") by:

- Supporting fishers in accessing training opportunities and resources
- Ensuring a safe environment for fishers
- Bridging the gap with ḥaʔuupa (teachings/knowledge)



Community-Led Program Design

All of our programs come directly from what we hear in the communities. We don't create new initiatives or training programs unless fishers and community members tell us it's something they want or need.

We gather feedback through:

- One-on-one conversations with fishers and leadership
- Surveys
- Community meetings
- Pre-season and post-season meetings
- Board meetings and the five Nations Leadership Forum

What you share with us shapes everything we do, from safety training and mentorship to business support and food safety initiatives. If there's a program you'd like to see, please reach out to us. Your feedback guides our work.



How Our Programs Are Funded



All programs listed in this report are 100% funded through grants that are applied for and managed within the Capacity Building Department. These grants enable us to offer training, mentorship, and certifications at no cost to participants.

Equitable Distribution Across the Five Nations

Funding is distributed as equitably as possible across the five Nations. Our approach is to:

- Offer programs in all Nations whenever funding allows
- Respond to Nation-specific requests when a community asks us to focus on a particular project
- Offer the same or similar programs to other Nations afterward whenever interest is expressed

In some cases, funding limits the number of participants. For example, costly training such as the Occupational SCUBA Diver Certification cannot be offered to multiple participants in each Nation within a single grant cycle. In these cases:

- Calls for participation are open to members from all five Nations
- One or two spaces may be offered per year
- Future funding cycles aim to prioritize members from Nations not previously supported, to ensure fairness and equity over time

Funding Overview



This approach allows us to maximize impact while remaining transparent, fair, and responsive to community needs.

2025 Impact Snapshot

By the Numbers:

48

Youth

participated in science and microtrolling mentorship programs

90+

community members

engaged in food security planning

61

members

completed marine safety certifications (SVOP, ROC-M, MED-A3, Marine First Aid)

5

mentorship programs

in each community

2

members

achieved Occupational SCUBA Diver Certification

1

new Fisheries Business Support role

created to provide ongoing one-on-one support



2025 Program Highlights

1. Youth Microtrolling Mentorship Program

February–March 2025

The Youth Microtrolling Mentorship Program, running in February and March 2025, has been an incredible success. A total of 48 youth from across the five Nations participated in this hands-on science learning opportunity.

Under the guidance of Ha'oom biologists, youth:

- Learned the fundamentals of microtrolling
- Gained experience in salmon sampling and data collection
- Explored marine science careers and stewardship roles

"I really liked the microtrolling mentorship program! I loved being out on the water and catching fish while learning how it all works. I feel like I really understand fishing and taking care of the ocean. Can't wait to do it again!" Youth participant

Each week, youth participants had the chance to get out on the water and engage in valuable learning, gaining firsthand experience in the field while building an understanding of the importance of fisheries and marine stewardship.



2. Boat Repair & Engine Maintenance Training



In November, we hosted the first week of the Boat Engine Maintenance & Repair Training in Tofino for five Nations members.

The training is led by Clive Dadds, a certified boat mechanic with over 30 years of experience and now an instructor at North Island College.

Training Structure:

Day 1 - Classroom Session: Overview of boat systems, Maintenance planning & Initial vessel inspections

Day 2 - One-on-One Training (on participant's boat): Hands-on maintenance and troubleshooting & Personalized inspection and repair guidance

Topics Covered: Marine engine operation, Fuel system maintenance, Electrical systems & fire prevention, Hull & hardware inspection, Emergency equipment & onboard repairs.

3. Marine Safety & Certification Training

During Spring 2025, Ha'oom successfully organized and completed five courses of Small Vessel Operator Proficiency (SVOP), ROC-M (Radio), and Marine Emergency Duties (MED-A3) in each of the five Nations communities, as well as five courses of Marine First Aid training.

- 21 five Nations members have now received their SVOP, MED-A3, and ROC-M certifications to support their fishing activities!
- 40 five Nations members have now received their Marine First Aid Training!

All trainings were completely free and directly supported safe fishing activities.

4. Fisheries Mentorship Programs

- Five mentorship programs delivered this summer: one in each Nation, running 7-10 days.
- Open to all ages: Families were encouraged to attend together, with participants receiving \$100/day.

Activities Included:

- On-the-water training: 5 days of mentorship with five Nations fishers.
- Jarring and smoking workshops with five Nations knowledge holders.
- Community feasts: Each program ended with a feast for storytelling and celebration.

Participation Summary: We had a total of 80 participants across the five Nations!

- Tla-o-qui-aht: 20 participants
- Ahousaht: 27 participants - so many joined that we needed 3 smokehouses!
- Hesquiaht: 13 participants. Feast also featured elders teaching *λapčas*
- Mowachaht/Muchalaht: 13 participants.
- Ehettesaht/Chinehkint: 7 participants.

Special recognition to Vic Amos, who led a multi-day mentorship trip, an incredible experience for members.

5. Youth Knowledge Holder Circles

These circles connect youth with community knowledge holders to share traditional knowledge related to fisheries, oceans, rivers, stewardship, and the history of fishing rights. Each circle included 3-5 knowledge holders, shared teachings, storytelling, and discussion.

Circles were hosted in Ahousaht, Gold River and Port Alberni.

Upcoming locations:

- Zeballos
- Ty-Histianis



6. Mowachaht/Muchalaht Food Security Project

Project timeline: January 2024 to June 2025

In 2025, we successfully completed the Mowachaht/Muchalaht Food Security Project. In collaboration with Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation and Balance Co-Lab, the project focused on:

- Assessing community food security
- Developing a Food Security & Emergency Preparedness Plan
- Identifying gaps in cold storage and processing infrastructure
- Engaging 90+ community members through meetings, surveys, and focus groups

Phase 2 - Next Steps: We are now working to secure funding for cold storage infrastructure. This project continues to strengthen community resilience and emergency preparedness. If you would like to receive the full Food Security & Emergency Preparedness report, please contact Audrey Adelinet at audrey@haoom.ca

7. Fisheries Business Support Program

In 2025, HFS created a new Fisheries Business Support Program and established a dedicated Business Development Officer role to better support fishers.

Lauren Dean stepped into this newly created position. Through this program, Lauren is available to provide **one-on-one support to fishers** three days a week. She can assist fishers with:

- Writing or improving business plan
- Filling out loan and grant applications
- Choosing the right insurance for boat and business
- Applying for vendor licences or other fishing licences
- Finding training opportunities
- Adding eco-friendly and cost-saving ideas to your fishing business
- Sharing information about new markets and buyers

This new role is here to give real, hands-on support directly to fishers in the five Nations.



8. Empowering Indigenous Governance and Racial Justice through Nuu-chah-nulth Salmon Laws Initiative

Launched May 2025 - A four-year project for the five Nations

The five Nations are continuing negotiations with Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to strengthen the role of Nuu-chah-nulth laws and principles in how their rights-based fishery is implemented. To support this work, the five Nations, Ha'oom Fisheries Society, and the Balance Co-Lab have developed a four-year initiative called the Salmon Law Governance Project, which supports the Nations in their negotiations with Canada and in implementing their fisheries.

Objectives: Together with ḥawiiḥ, ḥakum, Elders, Knowledge Holders, and community members, the project aims to document ancestral laws and governance practices related to:

- Traditional laws and decision-making practices that guided who could fish, where, when, how much, and by what methods.
- Teachings on caretaking salmon populations, sustainable harvesting, and restoring decreased salmon runs.
- Traditional systems of distribution and responsibilities within the Nation(s).
- Perspectives on traditional governance structures and how decisions over shared resources were made and enforced.
- How Nations shared salmon resources with neighbouring Nations, and how they consulted and coordinated when decisions or resources overlapped.
- Explore how traditional decision-making structures can inform and shape new protocols for how DFO engages with the Nations on salmon conservation and fisheries management.

Project end goals:

- Co-develop a Legal Framework
- Negotiate with DFO in later phases
- Videography and Storytelling (The project will capture and preserve these traditional laws through videography)

9. Occupational SCUBA Diver Certification

In 2025, HFS supported and fully covered the costs for two five Nations members, Patrick Lucas and Darren Titian, to complete the Occupational SCUBA Diver Certification Course.



Looking Ahead: Strategic Priorities for 2026

Building on the successes of 2025, the Capacity Building Department will focus on the following strategic priorities in 2026:

Creating youth mentorship opportunities in fishing and marine roles

Supporting youth to have meaningful opportunities to engage in fishing, science, mentorship, and traditional knowledge.

Supporting Nuu-chah-nulth governance and laws in fisheries management

Continuing the Salmon Laws Initiative and other programs that support Nuu-chah-nulth governance, stewardship, and role in the fisheries.

Supporting fishers in their businesses and development

Expanding business and asset management training, one-on-one support, and access to grants.

Expanding community-led training delivery

Delivering more programs in each Nation based on feedback and community priorities, ensuring accessibility, safety, and cultural learning opportunities for all members.

Looking Ahead: 2026 Outlook

Youth Science Mentorship Program (Winter 2026)

This free program will run from January to February 2026 in Tofino, Gold River, and Zeballos, providing a unique opportunity to learn from HFS scientists and mentors while gaining hands-on experience in local science research projects. It is open to youth aged 12 to 30 from the five Nations.

Program Details:

- Work alongside HFS scientists and mentors
- Gain hands-on experience in real local research projects
- Build skills for school, careers, and community leadership

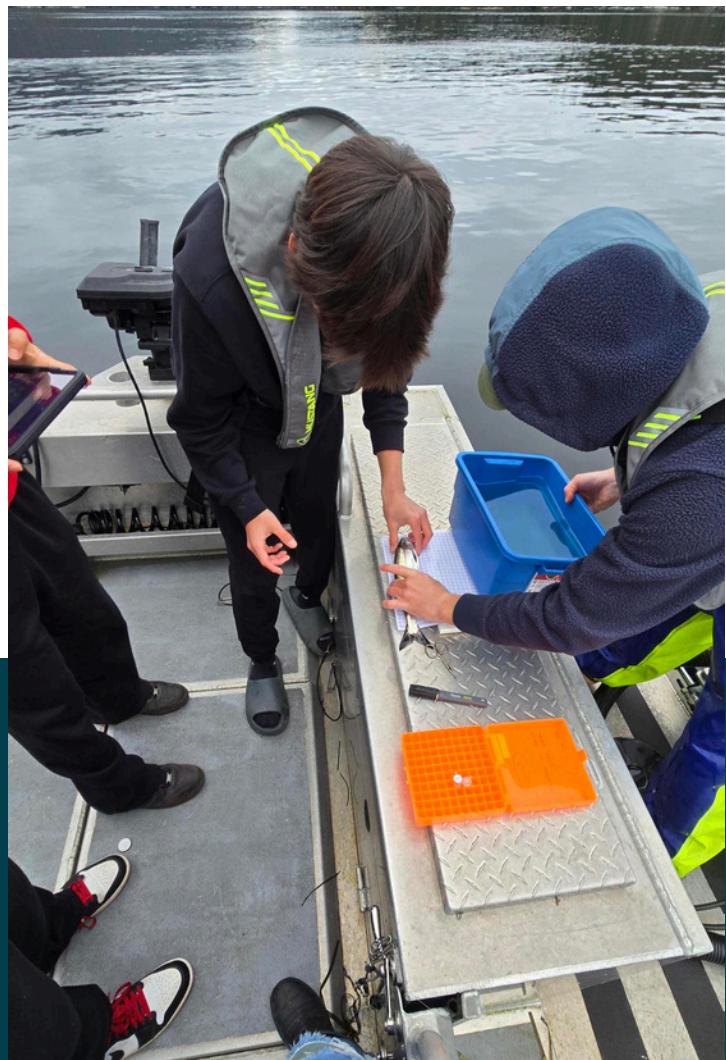
Program Dates & Activities:

- Jan 20–23 in Tofino: Microtrolling on the boat with our biologist
- Jan 27–30 in Tofino: Prawn surveys
- Feb 23–25 in Tofino (Activities to be confirmed)
- Mid-February (dates TBA), in Gold River & Zeballos: Youth Herring Surveys

Youth will receive an \$80 honorarium per day.

No previous experience needed, just curiosity and willingness to learn

Transportation Support provided as well as lunch and rain gear.



Boat Repair & Engine Maintenance Training (Winter 2026)



Coming in Winter 2026: This training will take place in Gold River, Campbell River, Port Alberni, and Ahousaht to provide more members with the opportunity to gain hands-on skills and personalized instruction.

Training Structure:

Day 1 – Classroom Session: Overview of boat systems, maintenance planning, and initial vessel inspections

Day 2 – One-on-One Training (on participant's boat): Hands-on maintenance and troubleshooting, personalized inspection and repair guidance

Topics Covered: Marine engine operation, Fuel system maintenance, Electrical systems and fire prevention, Hull and hardware inspection, Emergency equipment and onboard repairs

Five Nations Curtain

The Five Nations Curtain is a collaborative artwork representing the five Nations' fight for fishing rights and the central role of fisheries in the communities and organization.

Process:

1. HFS consulted with each Nation to receive approval and understand what the Nations wanted represented in the curtain, as well as their vision for the collaborative process.
2. Artist Selection: A call for proposals was issued within each Nation. One artist was selected per Nation.
3. Collaborative Design: Over the past four months, the five artists collaborated through a combination of iPad sharing and in-person meetings.

The curtain is currently being painted and will be **publicly revealed at a feast on February 7, 2026**. The design was first presented at the Five Nations Leadership Forum for leadership approval.

Fisheries Business & Asset Management Training

Developed by Balance Co-Lab specifically for the five Nations fishers, this program will combine practical business management tools with hands-on guidance tailored to the realities of the five Nations fisheries operations.

Purpose of the Training:

- Strengthen the financial and operational capacity of fishers
- Support long-term sustainability of fishing businesses and community livelihoods
- Provide tools to manage assets, plan investments, and track expenses efficiently
- Help fishers navigate funding opportunities, grants, and regulatory requirements

Key Training Topics Include:

- Business Planning & Strategy
- Financial Management & Bookkeeping:
- Asset Management
- Funding & Grants Navigation
- Operational Efficiency
- Regulatory Compliance

Delivery Format:

- Hands-on, practical workshops tailored to each fisher's operations
- Real-world case studies drawn from Five Nations fisheries experiences
- Developed with input from fishers to ensure relevance and practicality

Indigenous Seafood Conference 2026

Mark your calendars! The Indigenous Seafood Conference returns **February 3-5, 2026** in Parksville.

This conference is proudly co-hosted by the Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation (NEDC), Ha'oom Fisheries Society (HFS), and the Native Fishing Association (NFA).

The event brings together skippers and fishers from across our communities to connect, share experiences, and support one another. It's a welcoming space to discuss challenges, exchange ideas, and work together to strengthen local fisheries and Indigenous food systems.

Program Highlights:

- Skippers-only session focused on peer connection, sharing successes and challenges, building mentorship relationships, and exploring training opportunities.
- General sessions on topics identified by past participants, including regulations and policy, sustainability and environmental stewardship, marketing and selling fish, local food systems, certifications, fish-processing infrastructure, and access to fisheries.

Nuu-chah-nulth Salmon Laws Initiative

This Initiative will continue as a four-year project, with ongoing research and community engagement.

Project Progress

Nation Direction, Approvals, and Research Protocols

- Initial meetings have been completed with all five Nations, with each Nation providing direction and approval for how the project should proceed in their territory.
- Research protocols are being developed with each Nation to ensure all interviews, meetings, and documentation are conducted respectfully and appropriately.

Cedar Dawson, Salmon Laws Initiative Coordinator:

Cedar's role is critical for coordinating interviews, community meetings, and research activities. They will work closely with each of the five Nations to ensure traditional salmon laws are accurately and respectfully documented.

Community Liaison Positions

- Community liaisons are being hired in each Nation and they will act as the primary connection between the salmon laws project team and their communities. Their responsibilities include: Conducting interviews with elders and knowledge holders, Organizing community meetings and gatherings & Supporting community engagement throughout the project.

Weekly coordination meetings between HFS and Balance Co-Lab continue.

Next Steps for 2026:

- Conduct community interviews and community meetings with knowledge holders and elders
- Begin documentation of traditional salmon laws and governance practices

Summer Mentorship Programs, Safety Training & Certification Courses

Fisheries mentorship programs will return in Summer 2026, continuing to bring families together for hands-on fishing experiences and the sharing of traditional knowledge.

In partnership with Fish Safe BC, Ha'oom will also deliver safety training and vessel inspections in each community throughout the spring. These sessions will support safer fishing practices and help ensure vessels meet safety standards.

In addition, Ha'oom will organize additional SVOP courses and Marine First Aid training for five Nations members. These certification opportunities are designed to strengthen marine safety and encourage long-term careers in the fisheries sector.



Programs Contact – Meet Our Team

If you have any questions, would like to register for any of the training programs mentioned, or wish to share feedback, please contact the person responsible for the program below. Our team is here your participation and answer any questions.

Audrey Adelinet

Department Head
Development Manager
audrey@haoom.ca



Abigail Titian

- Boat Engine Maintenance & Troubleshooting Training
- Fisheries Mentorship Programs
- Upcoming Training Opportunities

To register or for questions, please contact Abigail at abigail@haoom.ca

Lauren Dean

- One-on-One Support to Fishers (business plans, training opportunities, grants, vendor licences and more)
- Fisheries Business & Asset Management Training

To register or for questions, please contact Lauren at lauren@haoom.ca



Programs Contact – Meet Our Team

If you have any questions, would like to register for any of the training programs mentioned, or wish to share feedback, please contact the person responsible for the program below. Our team is here your participation and answer any questions.

Cedar Dawson

- Nuu-chah-nulth Salmon Laws Initiative

If you would like to be involved in the project or have any questions, please contact Cedar at cedar@haoom.ca



Kayla Lucas

- Youth Science Mentorship Program

To register or for questions, please contact Kayla at kayla@haoom.ca

Lacey Adams

- Five Nations Curtain Project

For questions or more information, please contact Lacey at lacey@haoom.ca



Thank You

We are here to support you

To all our community members and partners, thank you for your trust, time, and knowledge. We are here to support you, and together we are building stronger, safer, and more resilient fisheries.



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