

# Restoring the five Nations Salmon Laws & Collaboration Protocol Project

## Project Overview | May 2025 – May 2029

### About the Project

The *Restoring the five Nations Salmon Laws & Collaboration Protocol Project* is a four-year initiative dedicated to documenting, revitalizing, and affirming traditional Nuu-chah-nulth salmon laws and governance practices for the five Nations of Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Hesquiaht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, and Ehattesaht/Chinehkint. The project will be implemented in partnership between **Ha'oom Fisheries Society** and the **Balance Co-Lab team**. The intention is for the five Nations to lead and own the project at every step. Ha'oom and Balance Co-Lab will support implementation in alignment with each Nation's vision and direction.

This project is funded by Law Society of British Columbia's Racial Justice Grant. The racial justice grants support organizations and groups that work to change or reform laws and policies that affect the day-to-day lives of Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities.

### Project Objectives

Together with Elders, knowledge holders, and community members, the project aims to document traditional laws and governance practices related to:

- Salmon Fisheries Management  
Traditional laws and decision-making practices that guided who could fish, where, when, how much, and by what methods.
- Salmon Conservation and Rebuilding  
Teachings on caretaking salmon populations, sustainable harvesting, and restoring depleted stocks.
- Monitoring and Compliance  
How Nations historically monitored salmon fisheries and ensured community compliance within their *Ha-ha-houlthee*.
- Internal Allocation  
Traditional systems of distribution and responsibilities within the Nation, including:
  - Sharing of fish between community fishers, food fish programs, and economic harvests.
  - Roles of the Ha'wiih, hereditary leaders, and community members in allocation decisions.

- Governance over Shared Resources  
Perspectives on traditional governance structures and how decisions over shared resources were made and enforced.
  - Inter-Nation and Intra-Nation Coordination  
How Nations:
    - Shared salmon resources with neighboring Nations.
    - Consulted and coordinated when decisions or resources overlapped.
    - Made internal decisions.
  - Five Nation Protocols  
The project will explore how traditional decision-making structures can inform and shape new protocols for how DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) should engage with the Nations on salmon conservation and fisheries management.
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## **End Goals**

- Co-develop a Legal Framework  
Once traditional laws have been documented, each Nation will work with the project team to co-develop a legal document outlining their salmon laws and preferred collaboration processes.  
This legal framework will be used to advocate for DFO recognition and integration of these laws into their management systems.
  - Negotiate with DFO  
In years 3 and 4 of the project, we will begin negotiations with DFO to:
    - Recognize and implement traditional salmon laws.
    - Adopt the new collaboration protocol developed by the Nations.
  - Videography and Storytelling  
The project will also capture and preserve these traditional laws through videography. All videos will be owned by the Nations and used as they see fit to preserve and pass on cultural knowledge and heritage.
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## **Community-Driven Approach**

We are committed to a fully community-driven process. To ensure the project reflects the five Nation's values and vision, we are going to:

1. **Schedule Meetings**  
Meet with each Nation's leadership to:
  - Introduce the project and project team
  - Present the draft workplan and incorporate feedback and direction
  - Ensure the project aligns with your Nation's goals
2. **Seek Permission and Direction**
  - Request authorization to carry out interviews in the communities

- Discuss protocols for respectful engagement
  - Ask for input on what should be captured in the video work
  - Invite the five Nations guidance in shaping the project's legacy
3. **Form a Research Advisory Council**
- Invite each Nation to appoint Elders and knowledge holders to a Research Advisory Council. This group will guide the research to ensure it upholds Nuu-chah-nulth laws, values, and protocols.
- The RAC will act as an approval body and review the research methods' appropriateness to ensure the research is aligned with the communities' needs and values.
  - The RAC will co-develop research methods (e.g., workshops, interviews, videography); Research agreements, data management & privacy protocols.
4. **Hire Community Liaisons**
- Paid role within each of the five Nation to facilitate community engagement that will:
- Bridge communication between researchers and the community
  - Ensure cultural protocols and ethical practices are followed
  - Represent community interests in shaping and guiding the research
  - Provide cultural context and prevent misrepresentation
  - Support relationship-building and coordinate engagement
5. **Submit Ethics Review to University of Victoria**
- Submission will be based on guidance from the RAC on cultural protocols, consent, data ownership and co-development of key aspects of the research where appropriate
  - Additional community-specific ethics processes or approvals required
  - Balance CoLab team is open to meetings to discuss the application in detail and build understanding

### **Project Coordination Contact**

We've hired a dedicated Project Coordinator to ensure the work stays aligned with the five Nations' direction:

Charlene Miller

*Salmon Laws Project Coordinator*

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