



# mámuuk'staat

Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

MAY 2022



KA:'YU:'K'T'H' / CHE:K'TLES7ET'H'  
KYUQUOT / CHEKTLESETH

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**m̄amuuk̄staał** means “working together” in nuučaałt.

We chose it as the name of our Economic Development Strategy, because work is at the heart of the plan.

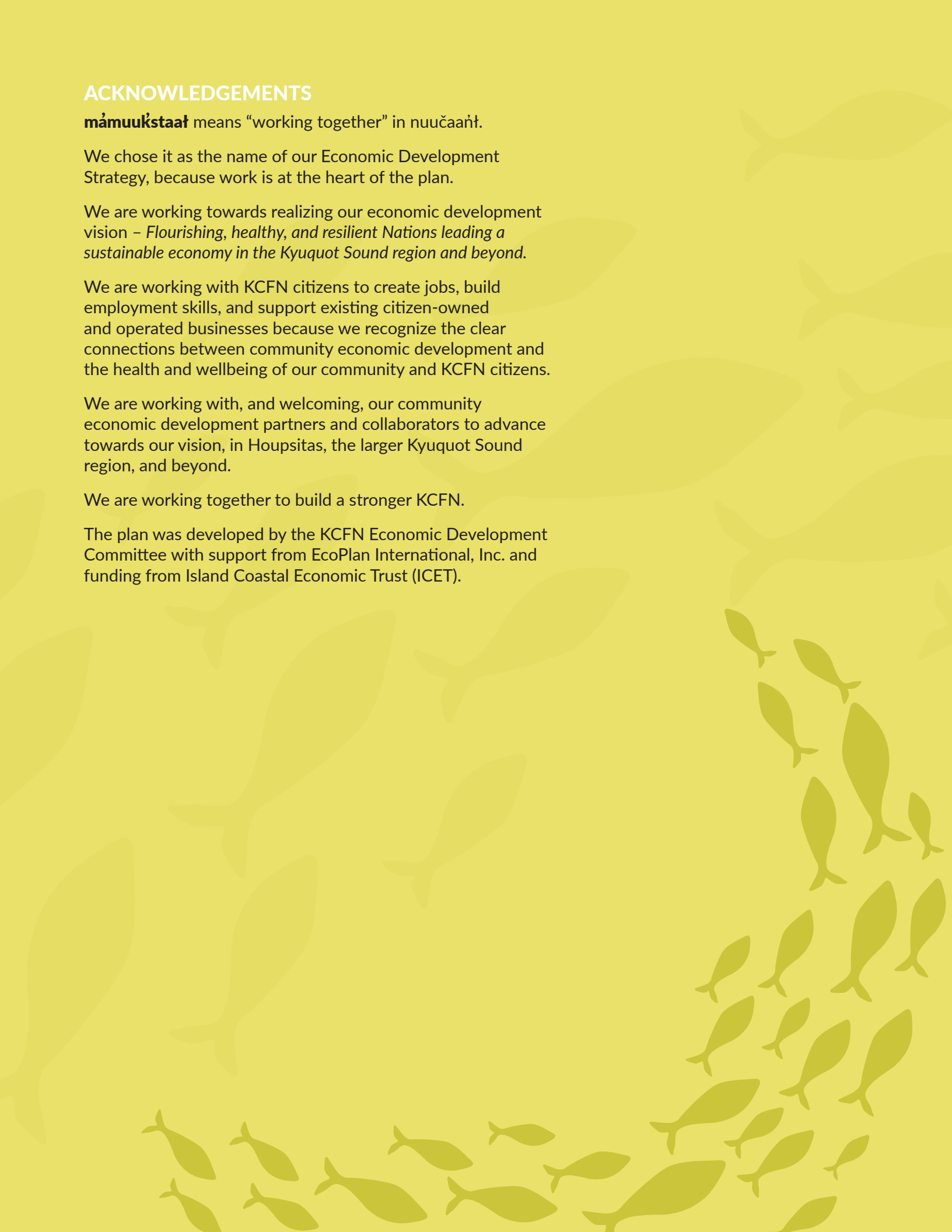
We are working towards realizing our economic development vision – *Flourishing, healthy, and resilient Nations leading a sustainable economy in the Kyuquot Sound region and beyond.*

We are working with KCFN citizens to create jobs, build employment skills, and support existing citizen-owned and operated businesses because we recognize the clear connections between community economic development and the health and wellbeing of our community and KCFN citizens.

We are working with, and welcoming, our community economic development partners and collaborators to advance towards our vision, in Houpsitas, the larger Kyuquot Sound region, and beyond.

We are working together to build a stronger KCFN.

The plan was developed by the KCFN Economic Development Committee with support from EcoPlan International, Inc. and funding from Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET).







# Executive Summary

*Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations (KCFN) developed this plan to provide a guiding framework for our ongoing community economic development projects in Houpsitas, on other KCFN Lands, and to support work for KCFN citizens not living on KCFN Lands, including citizens living in Campbell River.*

While KCFN is relatively small in numbers, we are involved in several business ventures, both as owner/operators and joint venture partners. In addition, we are engaged in several projects to improve and expand community infrastructure and services in our main community of Houpsitas. These projects will help support broader economic development initiatives at home and on neighbouring islands and communities, including Walters Cove where we own and operate businesses.

Our plan is a community economic development plan, meaning that it is rooted in supporting KCFN's journey towards independence and sustainability, for our people and our community. It is a plan that recognizes financial and economic independence and sustainability depend on the health our land and the wellbeing of our citizens, both of which are so strongly interconnected. We also see this plan as a component of reconciliation that our Nation, the Province, and Canada are only just beginning.

As a Treaty Nation, KCFN has unique powers, authorities, and resources that we can bring to bear on economic development. In the spirit of the Maa-nulth Treaty and our ancestral ways of living and knowing KCFN has legal certainty to the ownership of our Lands, which comes with the ability to sustainably manage our lands and resources, and align economic development with our culture, traditions, and values.

This plan is guided by our Economic Development Act enacted in 2014. The Act states our belief that a healthy and prosperous future requires KCFN citizens to pursue economic development opportunities both on and off our lands and that such economic development will foster a safer, stronger, and healthier community, and more financially secure, self-reliant and sustainable Nations.

Recognizing the important role of government in initiating economic development on a larger scale while maintaining independence from political influence, the Act also established an Economic Development committee as a standing committee to the Legislature to provide information and assist the Executive in fulfilling its responsibilities for economic development. It also mandates that economic development must be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, and that KCFN businesses must be guided clear and up-to-date business and operational plans.

Our plan is organized under a guiding Vision:

# Flourishing, healthy, and resilient Nations leading a sustainable economy in the Kyuquot Sound region and beyond.

Under the Vision, we developed seven guiding goals. Goals are statements of intent that describe a desired future state or success. They have been organized in a general order of importance to KCFN.

- **Community Health and Wellbeing** – Support projects that address and improve community health and wellbeing.
- **Education, Training, and Mentorship** – Provide education and support for KCFN citizens who are learning new skills, building capacity on the job, and developing leadership and management skills.
- **Culture** – Encourage projects that restore and celebrate KCFN culture and heritage while integrating language and culture into all aspects of economic development.
- **Business Retention and Development** – Improve performance of existing businesses, including KCFN citizen-owned businesses, and support Citizen entrepreneurship.
- **Employment** – Create more jobs for KCFN citizens across seasons.
- **Partner, Promote, and Welcome** – Raise the profile of KCFN and through cooperation and collaboration with regional community economic development partners.
- **Self-sufficiency** – Facilitate projects that improve the self-sufficiency of Hupsitas and KCFN.

The goals are organized under three high-level, interconnected strategy areas. Each strategy area uses a traditional nuučaan̓t name to describe it.



## ʔustʔit - Consolidate our Foundation

*Supporting and growing existing KCFN-owned and operated businesses and community economic development initiatives.*

ʔustʔit means “floor” in nuučaan̓t.



## tiičma - Strengthen our Heart

*Supporting Citizen health, safety, and wellbeing through skills development, employment, and business support.*

tiičma means “heart” in nuučaan̓t.



## ʔusaqinyuλ - Grow our Opportunities

*Expanding awareness of our Nations and KCFN businesses, growing collaboration with regional partners.*

ʔusaqinyuλ means “to speed up” in nuučaan̓t.

Each Strategy Area is made up of two or three community economic development Actions (projects, programs, policies).

The background of the page features a soft-focus photograph of a coastal town with a marina, nestled at the base of a forested mountain range. Overlaid on this image is a large, semi-transparent school of fish, swimming in various directions. The entire scene is bathed in a warm, golden-yellow light, creating a serene and natural atmosphere.

# Our Story

*We are the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' (pronounced Kie-YOU-cut and TSHEH-kleh-szet) First Nations. Our home is on the Pacific west coast of Vancouver Island. Our Territory stretches from Porritt Creek, north of Nootka Sound, to Solander Island at the tip of Brooks Peninsula; inland to the height of land and seaward to the point where you can no longer see land while standing in a canoe.*

Due to the drastic reduction in our populations, the Ka:'yu:'k't'h' and Che:k'tles7et'h' Nations amalgamated in the early 1950s and the Che:k'tles7et'h' took up residence on Kamils Island, immediately adjacent to the Ka:'yu:'k't'h' peoples community on Aktis Island. Both islands are in close proximity to Houpsitas. In the early 1970s, the Government of Canada relocated the remaining survivors of disease epidemics, residential schools, and government assimilationist policies to Houpsitas, our current community, located in Kyuquot, BC.

Together, we are the northernmost of 14 Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations. Like the other Nuu-chah-nulth Nations, the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations (KCFN) are confederacies, comprised of several chiefly families. Each of the chiefly families' names is associated with a stream, inlet, island, or other natural feature. Family names carry the suffix - 'h, which means "the people of." For example, Ka:'yu:'k't'h' (Kyuquot), are "the people of Ka:'yu:'k". In this way, our connection to the lands and waters of this region is evident even in our own tribal names.

MAP: KCFN Territories





In our oral tradition, there is a story about thlaathluktiinlth (Two Hundred Mouths), one of two beings who created the World as we now know it. According to our tradition, thlaathluktiinlth “came down” at the sea stack on the western entrance of Walters Cove, directly across the harbour from where we live now. Here he created the Qwowinasath – one of our chiefly families. The Qwowinasath thus became owners of Aktis Island, which was our main village site at that time. The other groups were then created at their respective rivers or sites.

For many generations, people here flourished, sustained by the abundant marine, terrestrial, and coastal resources of this region. Our people were, and still are, a saltwater people. Our ancestors fished for five species of salmon. Halibut and other ground fish, herring, abalone, sea urchins, mussels, clams, and other fish and shellfish were harvested from the many streams and inlets of the coast. Offshore, we hunted sea otter, seals, sea lions, and whales from ocean going cedar canoes. On land, we picked many berries and roots that made up an important part of our diet.

We were part of an extensive trade network, with routes weaving east through Tahsis and all the way to the east coast of Vancouver Island. Our dentalia shells, which were used as currency in early First Nations trading, have been found in locations across the continent and as far away as Mexico.

Our people traveled the ocean by canoe, made from the great cedar trees that once liberally graced these shores. From cedar wood and bark we also made baskets, clothing, and the great totems that recounted our family stories. Our houses, also made of cedar, were painstakingly disassembled and moved each summer when all of our local groups would share a summer village on Aktis Island. Throughout the year, our tribes would unite for feasts, potlatches, singing, dancing, and other communal practices.

With the arrival of European explorers in the mid-1700s, our traditional ways of life began to change. Many of our people died with the spread of diseases such as smallpox, tuberculosis, and measles. We lost the rights to our land and resources, and many of our people lost their traditional language when they were taken by the residential school system as children.

Great demand for our once abundant sea life also had a huge impact. Demand for otter pelts moved our people away from their winter villages and decimated our resident sea otter population. In the early 1900s, the arrival of large-scale commercial fisheries, whaling, and forestry industries further changed the landscape and our peoples’ way of living here.

Once, our people numbered in the thousands. Today, our numbers have decreased. We have about 600 citizens living both in Houpsitas, our last remaining village, and elsewhere. We remain determined to follow the path of our first ancestors, however – to live a life of self-determination, governed by our own ancestral law, and existing in harmony with the natural world of which we are part.



## MAA-NULTH TREATY

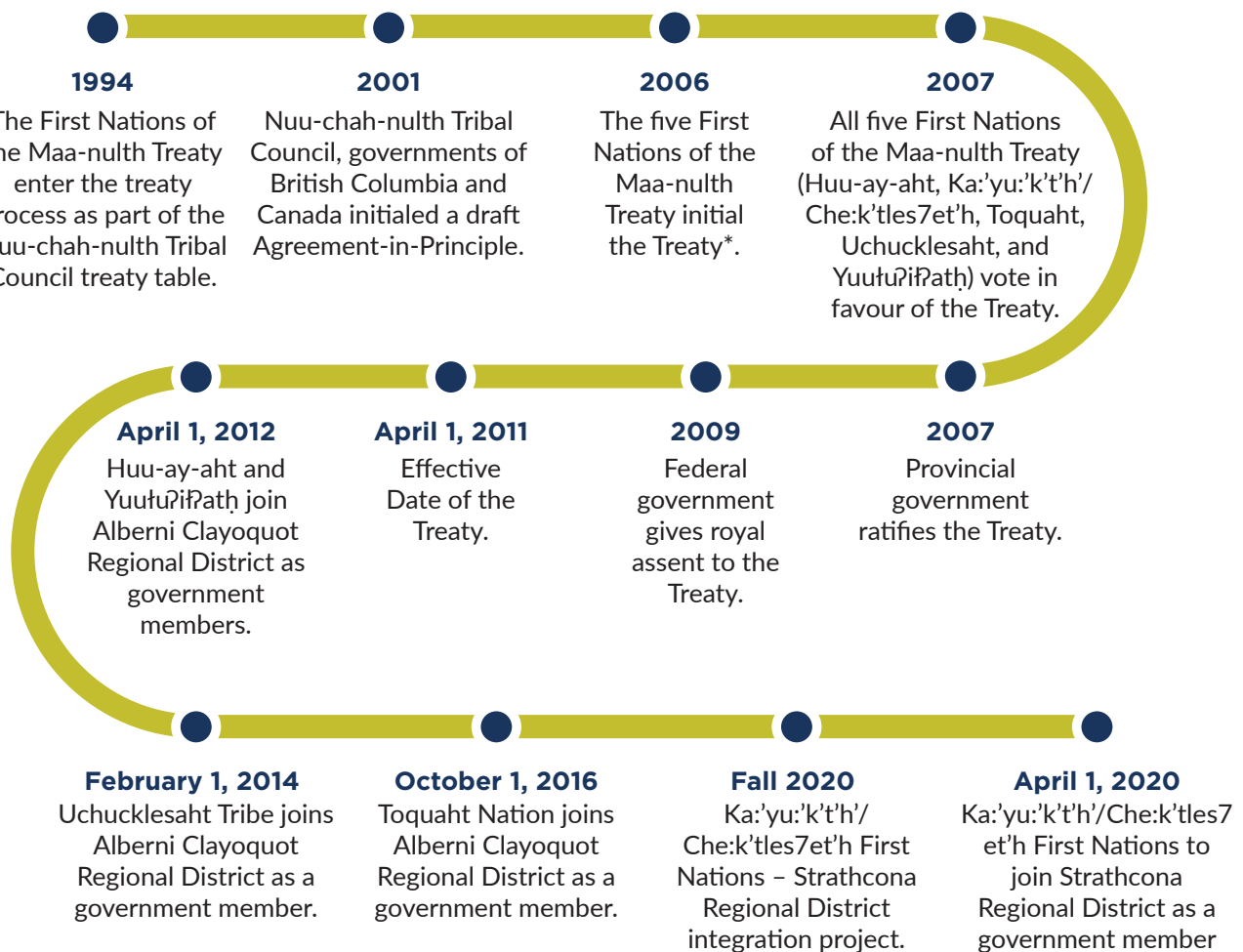
To understand community economic development in KCFN, it is useful to understand how the topic “fits” in the Maa-nulth Treaty. The Maa-nulth First Nations Treaty was negotiated as part of the BC Treaty Commission’s six-stage treaty process. This was a tri-partite negotiation involving the Federal Government, the Province of BC, and the Maa-nulth First Nations Treaty Society. The Maa-nulth Treaty is one of only a few modern-day treaties signed in British Columbia, and the first on Vancouver Island. It is also unique in that it encompasses a group of Nations, where other treaties (Tsawwassen, Tla’amin, Nisga’a) involve only one Nation.

The final Maa-nulth Treaty includes five Nations:

- Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’/Che:k’tles7et’h’ First Nations (Kyuquot Sound area)
- Huu-ay-aht First Nations (Bamfield area)
- Toquaht Nation (Ucluelet area)
- Yuuʔuʔiʔath̓ Government (Ucluelet area)
- Uchucklesaht Tribe (near the mouth of Alberni Inlet)

The Maa-nulth First Nations Treaty had an effective date of April 1, 2011. The timeline that follows marks some of the milestones in the process.

**FIGURE:** Maa-nulth Treaty Timeline



\* Six of the 12 First Nations negotiating as part of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council approved the Agreement-in-Principle. Five of these First Nations joined together to form the Maa-nulth First Nations Treaty Society.



## Maa-nulth Treaty and Economic Development

The Maa-nulth Treaty was intended to remove barriers to socio-economic prosperity by settling claims of Aboriginal rights to land and resources and self-government for the five Maa-nulth Nations. As a result of the treaty, KCFN has legal certainty to the ownership of our Treaty Lands, which comes with the ability to sustainably manage our lands and resources, and align economic development with our culture, traditions, and values.

The Treaty also allows for KCFN to access the capital value of our lands in order to secure financing, for residential and commercial construction, and infrastructure development. As well, KCFN is now able to benefit from the ownership of subsurface resources through fees, royalties, and charges to explore, develop, and extract resources. KCFN is also able to negotiate our own tax sharing agreements with Canada or British Columbia including for property taxes, personal income taxes, or transaction taxes, leveraging our land, resources, and ability to tax for accessing capital for investing in infrastructure and building equity.

Under our Treaty, we have developed several laws, or Acts, that guide KCFN governance. One of the most important of these for this plan is our *Economic Development Act*. As determined in our *Economic Development Act*, an economic development plan must be approved by the Legislature every five years. The Plan must include the following key components (which this Plan does):

- A statement concerning the strategic plan for economic development in KCFN for the following five years, and with regard to the mission and values, the goals and objectives to be achieved by KCFN and KCFN businesses. **Update:** A facilitated strategy and visioning session to be scheduled for early 2022.
- An overview of new business opportunities currently being researched, or which should be researched.
- A communications plan for how the economic development committee will inform KCFN citizens on the current status of economic development for the KCFN and its KCFN businesses.

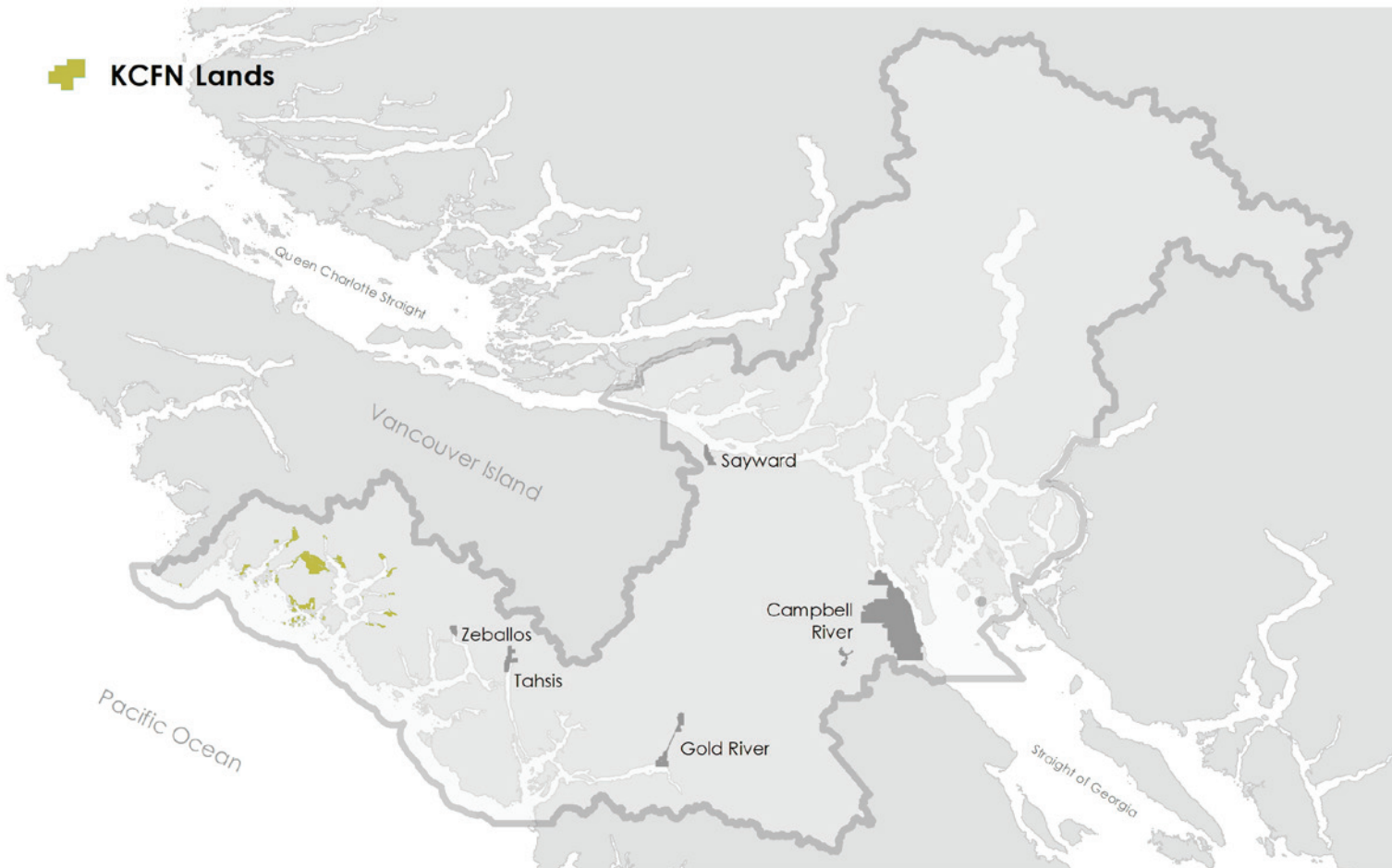
## KCFN COMMUNITY PROFILE

KCFN's sprawling territory is located on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island in and around Kyuquot Sound. Our 6,299 hectares of KCFN Lands represents a small portion of our traditional territories, illustrated on the following map, and includes both coastal and inland parcels. The village of Houpsitas, located on the outer coast across the water from a small community on Walters Island, is home to about 200 Citizens and KCFN administration. It is accessible by boat from Fair Harbour.

### KA:'YU:'K'T'H'/CHE:K'TLES7ET'H FIRST NATIONS

*KCFN refer to themselves as First Nations - in the plural because they are historically made up of two Nations that came together over time.*

**MAP:** KCFN Lands and Strathcona Regional District



Our community economic profile builds on published information and the knowledge of our community and staff. Some key socio-economic trends of our Nation are summarized here, as well as our key economic sectors.



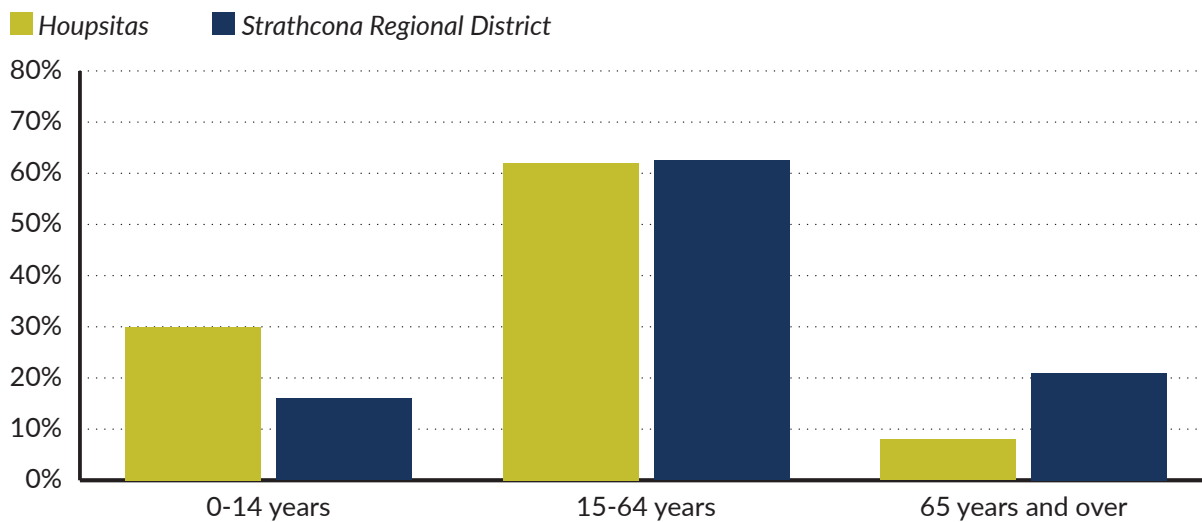
## Our People

Once, our people numbered in the thousands, living in a region rich in natural resources. Today, our people remain, but our numbers have decreased. Today, close to 600 KCFN citizens live both in our Traditional Territory and beyond. However, we remain determined to follow the path of our first ancestors – to live a life of self-determination, governed by our own ancestral law and existing in harmony with the natural world of which we are part.

Currently, our population totals about 600. About 30% of our population lives in Houpsitas, the only populated village in our Territory. The remainder of KCFN citizens live outside of our Territory, with the largest concentration of citizens (about 150) in Campbell River.

As of 2016, the average age of KCFN citizens was 30.6 years, with almost 30% of Houpsitas residents being under 14 years of age, and less than 10% of residents over 65. This is unlike the Strathcona Regional District, which has a smaller proportion of residents under 14 years of age than over 65.

**TABLE:** Population Distribution



## Our Economy

As Nations, our local economy has always been linked to the lands and waters and the many plants, animals, and fish that call them home. The foundation of our tradition and culture, our lands, and waters are also the foundation of our way of life including our economy.

KCFN believes that a healthy and prosperous future requires our Nations and its citizens to pursue economic development opportunities both on and off KCFN Lands and that such economic development will foster a safer, stronger, healthier community, and more financially secure, self-reliant and sustainable Nations.

### Employment

The unemployment rate of KCFN citizens participating in the workforce was about 30%<sup>1</sup>. For those who are employed, the top two industries were health and education, and 'other services,' as shown in the table.

**TABLE:** Employment by section in Houpsitas<sup>2</sup>

INDUSTRY	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Population 15 years and over	130	65	60
Health, education	20	0	20
Other services	20	10	10
Agriculture, resource based	10	10	0
Manufacturing, construction	10	0	0
Business services	10	10	0
Transportation, warehousing	10	0	0

Factors including low population, remote location, and difficult access play a part in the current, limited level of commercial activity and year-round employment opportunities on KCFN lands.

### ECONOMIC DATA LIMITATIONS

*Data on the economy of the area is limited. The relative lack of data was made worse during the demolition and moving of the administrative offices in 2009, which resulted in the loss and destruction of some research maps and reports that were prepared for KCFN over the years.*

<sup>1</sup> This number varies from 23.1% to 30.8%, depending on sources (i.e., Statistics Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> As is typical in small communities, Statistics Canada Census data is made inaccurate by random rounding, which, as explained by Statistics Canada, is "To ensure confidentiality, the values, including totals, are randomly rounded either up or down to a multiple of '5' or '10.'"



## Community Economic Opportunities by Sector

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### *Aquaculture and Fisheries*

Marine fish and shellfish are important resources to sustaining KCFN physically, economically, and culturally. In 2007, the Conditional Management Plan was developed with 60 licences to allow citizens to harvest shellfish in our Territory. Our Treaty also outlines two types of tenures/reserves: one for food, social, ceremonial (FSC) harvest on KCFN beaches, and the other for exclusive commercial shellfish operators. Under our Treaty, there is a Fish Harvest Agreement where Maa-nulth Treaty Nations will receive commercial licenses for salmon, halibut, rockfish, roe herring, sablefish, crab, and prawn. Based on review of the license inventory, KCFN has yet to receive access to crab, halibut, sablefish, geoduck, and prawns.

There is tremendous opportunity for aquaculture opportunities in Kyuquot, including exploring kelp and sablefish business ventures and improving salmon productivity. KCFN has already established good relationships with existing operations, including sablefish operators, that have the potential to become fulsome partnerships.



### *Forestry*

Since signing our Treaty, we have increased opportunity to pursue forestry opportunities. KCFN Forestry Ventures Limited Partnership is responsible for managing our Nations' forestry assets that include Treaty Lands, two Crown woodlot licences, a First Nations Woodlands licence, and other temporary tenures. Several family-owned and operated, small-scale facilities occasionally process locally harvested timber. The Treaty also provides that each Maa-nulth First Nation will be paid a share of annual resource revenues generated within that Nation's Treaty Areas for a 25-year period commencing on the Effective Date.



### *Tourism*

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of overnight visits to Vancouver Island was rising and demand for Indigenous cultural tourism was increasingly steadily. While the pandemic has temporarily halted visits to KCFN territory, there are many opportunities for KCFN in the tourism sector once travel is safe again. Up until 2020, KCFN has been very active in the tourism sector with our KCFN Marina and Campground Limited Partnership owning three separate businesses in our Territory, and several community members owning water taxi businesses and B&Bs. In 2019, we undertook a major renovation and expansion of our Fair Harbour Marina and Campground. We expect that once travel resumes, the expansions and renovation will attract more visitors the territory.

KCFN is also a part-owner of Qwayaciik Outfitters, which runs guided hunting trips, and will be selling one of the hunting areas that is not within our Traditional Territory. We work with BC Parks to manage six Parks and four Ecological Reserves in our Traditional Territory. Our remote location has attracted many visitors who are interested in fishing and adventure tourism, however these businesses are seasonal and provide limited income or jobs during the winter season.



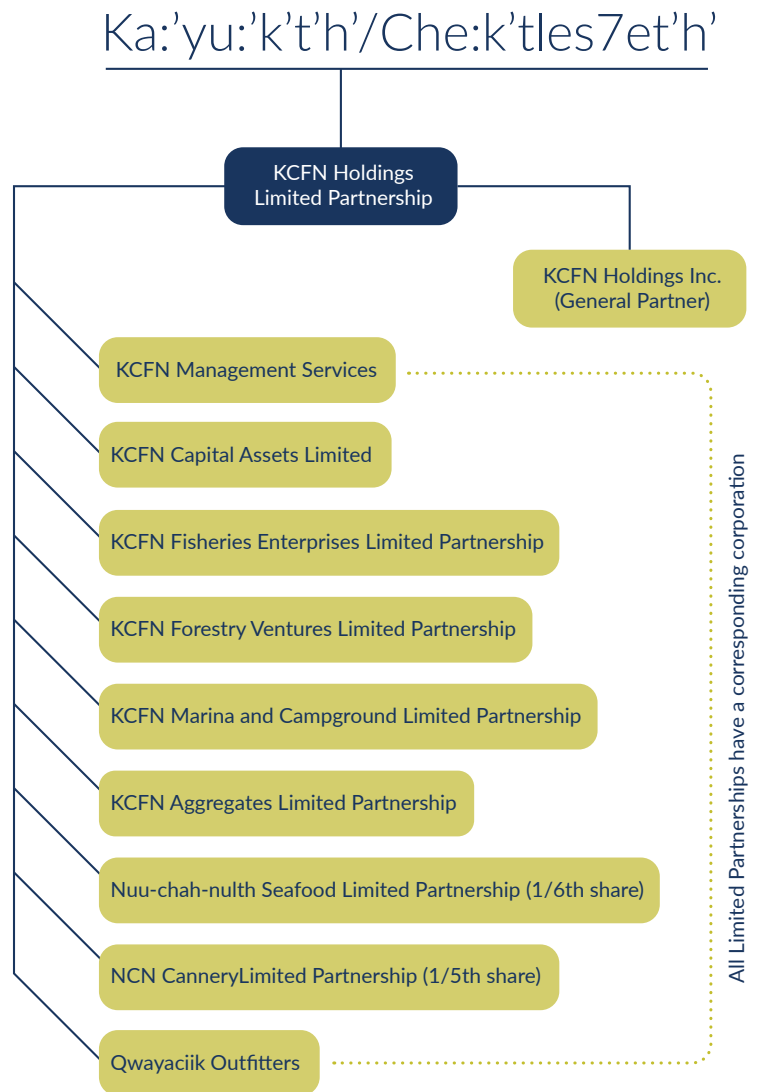
### *Traditional Economy*

KCFN continues to practice traditional aquaculture methods along with other hunting and gathering in the same locations our Nations have used for generations, both for personal use and for sale or trade. KCFN distributes traditional foods to citizens on and off reserve. There are several of KCFN citizens who are skilled artisans and produce or supplement their income with their craft.

## KCFN Group of Businesses

KCFN owns and operates a number of businesses. Most of our businesses are majority owned by a holding company, which then owns a number of limited liability companies, as shown in the following corporate organization chart. In addition to the businesses that KCFN owns, we hold shares or part ownership in several businesses, also shown on the chart. KCFN Holdings Co. Board reserves the right to review and recommended any changes to the structure for greater efficiency.

FIGURE: KCFN Businesses





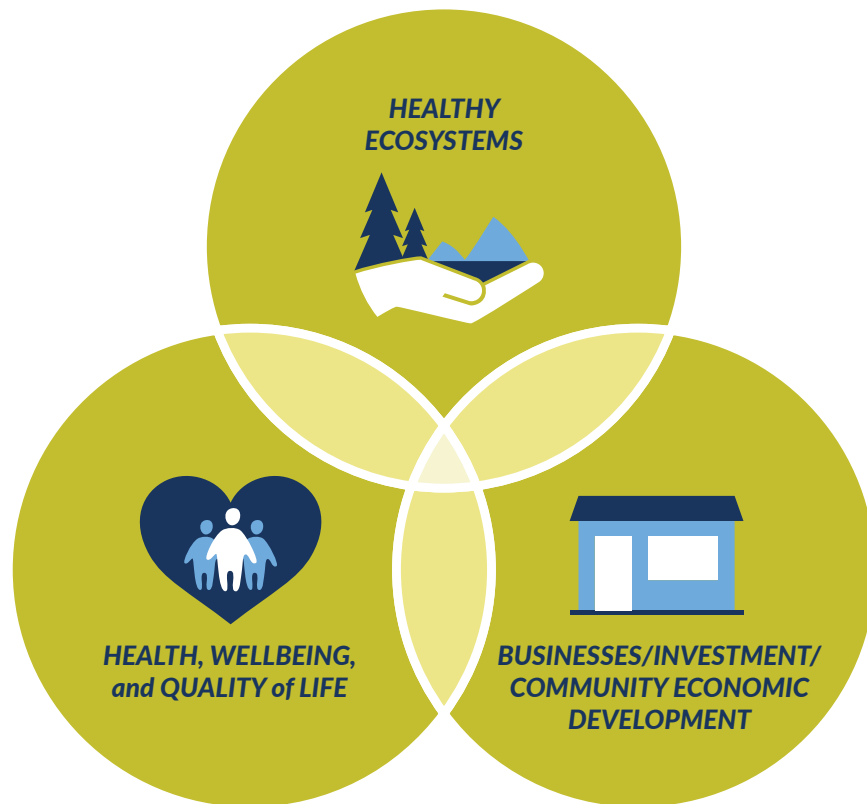
## A COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Our plan takes a community economic development approach, as opposed to a traditional economic development approach. A community economic development approach is about more than just profit margins and job creation; it is people-centred and focused on small and locally owned businesses. Best of all, it focuses on addressing community needs while incorporating social, environmental, and cultural values.

We recognize the integrated nature of community economic development and want our economic development plan to be rooted in our culture and community values. KCFN is already engaging in economic activity that promotes our resilience. This plan seeks to help achieve our goals, including improving our citizens' quality of life, ensuring we have a healthy community, and promoting economic reconciliation.

The graphic illustrates the key concept of this community economic development approach, showing how the quality of life and health of KCFN as people is linked to the health of our local economy, and how both depend on a healthy ecosystem.

**FIGURE:** *The Community Economic Development - Health and Wellbeing Connection*



In addition to health and wellbeing, our plan is guided by our commitment to our ongoing journey of reconciliation with BC and Canada, including economic reconciliation as we re-establish ourselves as:

***Flourishing, healthy, and resilient Nations leading a sustainable economy in the Kyuquot Sound region and beyond.***



## COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

Our community economic development plan is guided by several principles of effective local economic development from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities who produced a guidance document called *The Evolution of Local Economic Development in Canada*. These best practices are encompassed throughout.

- **Strong leadership with vision is essential**  
Leadership does not imply “one,” but a larger group that includes our elected legislative members, Ha’wiih, People’s Assembly, economic development committee, KCFN citizens, business leaders, and partners.
- **Partnerships and collaboration are key**  
KCFN have always been welcoming and collaborative. KCFN are relatively small Nations and may not have the resources to undertake all the initiatives this plan imagines, even as we continue to build our capacity. We recognize that collaboration and partnerships are important for successful community economic development.
- **A long-term focus and commitment are required**  
Fundamental actions may be needed now to see significant measurable change for decades to come. We recognize that maintaining momentum and interest requires monitoring and evaluation and celebrating the short-term successes. We also recognize that thinking and planning beyond legislative election cycles is key.
- **Transparent and accountable**  
Successful business development requires an open and accountable process where KCFN citizens are active participants.
- **Proactive**  
Successful projects are not ad hoc or reactive, but rather are proactive and help “set” KCFN’s community economic development agenda.



## VISION

Our plan is organized under a guiding Vision:

*Flourishing, healthy, and resilient Nations leading a sustainable economy in the Kyuquot Sound region and beyond.*

## GOALS

Under the Vision, we developed seven guiding goals. Goals are statements of intent that describe a desired future state or success.

- **Community Health and Wellbeing** – Support projects that address and improve community health and wellbeing.
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## STRATEGY AREAS

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