



Centre for
Seafood Innovation



BC SEAFOOD BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

CELEBRATING SPRING 2023 GRADUATES





The Vancouver Island University community acknowledges and thanks the Snuneymuxw, Quw'utsun, Tla'amin, Snaw-naw-as and Qualicum peoples on whose traditional territories we teach, learn, research, live and share knowledge.





Debra Hellbach, Manager,
Vancouver Island University
Centre for Seafood Innovation



Centre for
Seafood Innovation

WELCOME

I am thrilled to introduce the inaugural BC Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) program and its first graduates. This important initiative helps independent fishers and farmers in British Columbia.

The SBA program was established through a collaborative effort between the VIU Centre for Seafood Innovation, the BC Commercial Fishing Caucus, and with valuable input from industry and First Nations representatives. Our primary goal is to assist small-scale harvesters in maximizing the value of their harvests.

The significance of this endeavor cannot be overstated. Small-scale harvesters play a vital role in the socio-economic fabric of BC. Unfortunately, their declining numbers are having a profound impact on coastal communities. Fisheries employment in BC has plummeted by 67%, exacerbating the situation. BC's underperforming aquaculture sector further affects employment, income, and social well-being in Indigenous and coastal communities.

Supporting our fishers and farmers is an imperative task. Seafood production, including value-added foods, presents tremendous opportunities in British Columbia, and is typically overlooked in settler discussions on food security. These opportunities include sustainable protein production, socio-economic well-being in coastal communities, food sovereignty in Indigenous communities, and overall economic development. We must challenge the prevailing statistic of exporting 90% of our seafood while importing 80% from less pristine locations.

The Seafood Business Accelerator empowers entrepreneurs to achieve their goals. Personally, I have witnessed the remarkable progress of each SBA participant and their unwavering dedication to making a positive impact on our world.

With immense pride,

PARTICIPANTS

- 5 Ian Bryce & Lynne Yamanaka
- 6 Andrew Dryden & Kala Mackintosh
- 7 Bretton Hills
- 8 Lawrence Anderson
- 9 Sophie Viswanathan
- 10 Reg Moody
- 11 Georgia Pears
- 12 Dafne Romero
- 13 Natasha Marshal Gallic
- 14 Masa Vahldieck
- 15 Nathan Gawalko
- 16 Victoria Lake & Mica Verbrugge
- 17 David Nikleva
- 18 Fraser MacDonald & Kathryn Robinson
- 19 Arlene & Gus Brown
- 20 Leona & Tom Humchitt



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SEAFOOD BUSINESS
ACCELERATOR PROGRAM & OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS









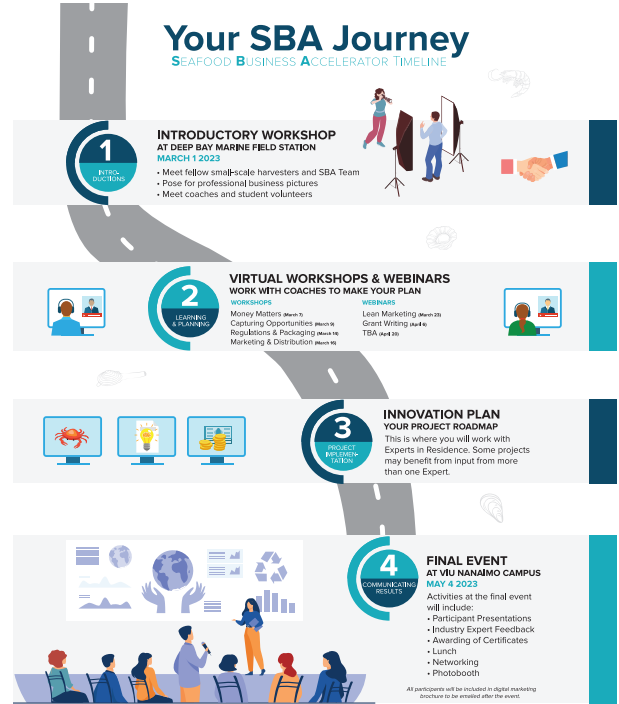
Olivia Alexander, SBA Coordinator,
Vancouver Island University
Centre for Seafood Innovation

About the SBA Our goal is to propel independent harvesters towards greater profitability & sustainability, empowering seafood entrepreneurs to achieve lasting success.

The Seafood Business Accelerator differentiates itself through its seafood-focused approach, delivering food industry training, coaching, business advice, and personalized support from seasoned experts. The program fosters enduring connections and a network of supporters.

Through webinars, workshops, and guidance from seafood professionals, participants acquire the knowledge and skills essential to thrive. Business coaches and experts provide tailored assistance for individual projects. By program completion, participants possess a comprehensive understanding of the food supply chain. They develop their own Innovation Plan and, in many cases, prototypes that can be presented to potential investors or community decision-makers.

The Seafood Business Accelerator presents a unique opportunity for seafood entrepreneurs to strengthen their business acumen, establish valuable connections, and create tangible assets propelling them towards success. Our commitment ensures participants receive the necessary resources and support to realize their aspirations and ambitions.



SBA Innovation Plans can be presented to potential buyers, investors, or financiers to quickly help them understand projects.

Georgia Pears **SEAFOOD BUSINESS ACCELERATOR**
INNOVATION PLAN

PROJECT FOCUS
Challenge: Oysters offer incredible health benefits, but these benefits are not accessible to all palates and diets. By transforming the meat into a capsulized form, almost anyone can benefit from it. The primary challenge is determining if local supply and processors can meet consumer expectations for this type of product.
Solution: Georgia's primary goal is to determine the viability of a capsulized local oyster product. As these needs are met, partnerships and networks can be developed to build the venture.

MARKET RESEARCH
An enthusiastic market for this product has been found in a variety of networks and social media circles. Research and competition analysis has helped identify consumer expectations around quality, results, and price point.
REGULATIONS
The final product will need to meet the requirements of Canada's Natural Health Product Regulations. This process is being explored under the advisement and guidance of experts in the field.

TARGET MARKET
The target market for natural health supplements is large, well-established and growing. The product has particular interest from the pro-metabolic health community and those following keto and paleo diets.
FUNDING
The project is currently self-funded, but innovation grants and private funding may be sought out to scale the business beyond the start-up stage.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
A private lab has been hired to determine best practices for drying oysters and to analyze nutritional composition. This product is an ideal waste diversion for oyster farms as cosmetic damage doesn't impact the nutritional value of the product. Georgia has partnered with a local oyster farm for an initial supply. More partners will be brought on as production increases.
DISTRIBUTION
Distribution could occur on a local level through the new company itself based on needs and capacity. Relationships with larger distributors will be an important consideration to increase the reach of the business.

MARKETING ACTIVITIES
Initial marketing will target the interested niches identified in market research.
To differentiate in a very competitive market, marketing will focus on local sourcing, the natural product aspect, and the unique nutritional composition of oysters.

BUSINESS SYSTEMS & OPERATIONS
Business systems will be crucial to track inventory, sales, and distribution of the product. Once product details and requirements are determined, an appropriate business system will be acquired.
MILESTONES AND/OR NEXT STEPS!
• Obtain a Natural Health Products licence
• Finalize lab results for oysters
• Determine need for equipment and facilities
Continue to connect with producers and experts.



Ian Bryce & Lynne Yamanaka **Natural Gift Seafoods**

www.naturalgiftseafoods.com

recognized as 'Sustainable' by the Vancouver Aquarium's Ocean Wise and 'Best Choice' by the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Programs. Ian has been harvesting the bounty of the west coast from Oregon to Alaska for over 17 years with hard work and satisfying growth. His vessels spend at least 6 months of every year on the ocean where a combination of technology and the necessary 'natural gift' of fishermen must merge to sense the world below.

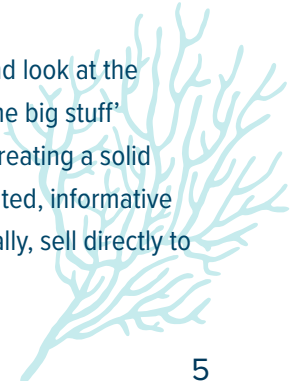
Natural Gift Seafoods produce meals for half a million people annually yet sometimes there is a sense that they are being lumped in with pirates and drag-netters. Transparency and sustainable practices are priorities. As awareness of supply chain fragility and the importance of supporting community food systems grow, they are also focusing on streamlining distribution channels and sourcing biodegradable packaging.

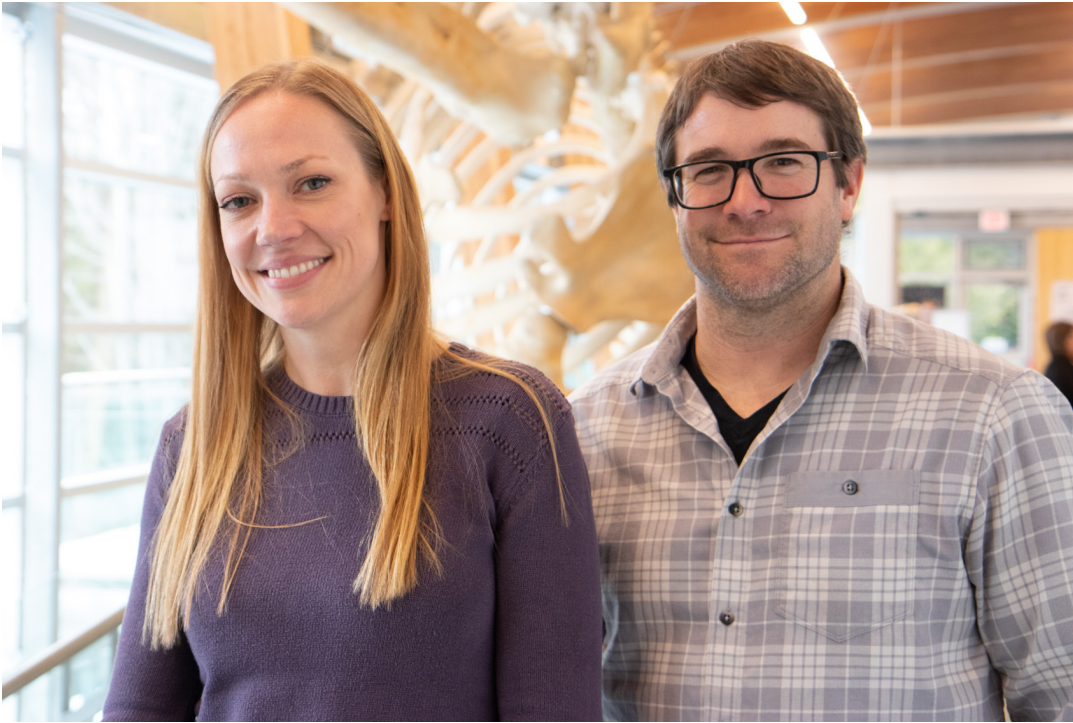
When asked about the future Ian responds, "We are ready to pass along a well-run business to our boys. The Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University, is helping us to face certain weaknesses and direct our energy towards true priorities." He is connecting with other small-scale harvesters facing their own challenges and has an opportunity to share knowledge and reach out to those at more initial stages of growth. "We recognize some of their struggles," he explains.

The SBA has given Ian a chance to sit back and look at the business as a whole. Confident that he has 'the big stuff' working he will use the program to work on creating a solid play book, accounting strategies and an updated, informative website. "We direct our marketing efforts locally, sell directly to restaurants and feed people good food."

Natural Gift. Those words struck a chord with Ian Bryce many years ago when he was admiring the shipwrights building trollers in Prince Rupert. The words resonated and eventually became the family-owned Natural Gift Seafoods. He explains, "It's truly a gift from nature to feel deeply enough about what you're doing to be successful at it... what's on the surface tells a story about what's underneath." His two fishing vessels **NERKA#1** and **NATURAL GIFT**, have been in the commercial fishing industry for 50 years and are currently skippered by his two sons, Kingsley and Alistair.

Ian is proud of both his fish and the high standards the fishery holds them to as one of the greenest and cleanest in the world — certified by the Marine Stewardship Council. About 15 years ago, surprised that little North Pacific Albacore Tuna was available locally, they began to focus mainly on premium hook-and-line troll-caught tuna and lingcod. Their fish have been





Andrew Dryden & Kala Mackintosh Evening Cove Oysters

www.eveningcoveoysters.com

It is against the odds that Andrew Dryden finds himself owning 8 oyster tenures (shoreline and deep-water farms) ranging the east coast of Vancouver Island from Cortes to Saltspring. As a first generation oyster farmer who grew up in the interior of BC he wasn't privy to intergenerational knowledge and the learning curve has been steep.

After graduating from the Fisheries and Aquaculture program at Malaspina College, now Vancouver Island University (VIU), with a focus on shellfish and a memorable practicum on an oyster farm, Andrew was hooked on the industry. In his early 20's he had his parents co-sign for a waterfront property and he remembers there was not a lot of faith in his success from the shellfish community. "We gave you about 6 months before you would fail," confessed one of the big four processors on the island years later.

Evening Cove Oysters has been in production for twenty-three years. "And one thing that keeps me interested," explains

Andrew, "is that in the last 5 years oysters have gone from commodity to sexy." A whole culture has risen up around the branding of oysters. Restaurants have them as a regular menu offering. An oyster shucker can cost over \$20. There is something 'cool' about oysters, and this is in addition to the health benefits and sustainability of the bivalve. Demand is increasing.

"It's an exciting time. Our struggle now is growing

enough to be profitable." And coming full circle, feeling the support of his alma mater, he joined the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University. Evening Cove Oysters has the capacity to grow more, they have the ability to process more, they have the sales and now they need to put it all together with strategic guidance to scale-up.

Another interesting by-product of this program that Andrew has discussed with other participants is the potential benefit of getting their challenges heard by the right people. Regulations are a challenge in most industries but for small scale harvesters that are trying to grow, it can break momentum entirely. "If the final program showcase at VIU brings industry stakeholders and politicians into the room... just that makes the whole program worthwhile," he tells me.

Andrew is at the stage of his business where he feels ready to take on partners to have a sounding board for progressive ideas and for growing a recognizable brand. He credits his general manager, Kala Mackintosh, who provides a huge amount of support and they are both clearly passionate about their product, "Oysters are a green, environmentally sustainable product, and we whole-heartedly believe oyster farming contributes to both food security and regional economic development."



Bretton Hills

Ondine Oceanfarm

www.ondineoceanfarm.ca

market as well. Flash-freezing increases shelf-life, provides distribution flexibility and reduces waste. It also allows for quick and efficient shucking with the goal of making oysters more accessible to families who would otherwise choose less sustainable proteins due to convenience. “I would love to see oyster go from wild west, fringe, to a staple food,” she explains.

Bretton saw an opportunity with the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University for resources and support. She is absorbing all the information the program offers through experts in market research, business planning, processing, food safety, product development, packaging, online marketing, grant writing and more. Everything Bretton is learning through the SBA helps as she works towards building a shared use processing facility for small scale farmers along the Sunshine Coast, many of whom are aging and are in need of a financially secure way of exiting from the industry. The prohibitive costs of factory space and machinery would be shared, amortized over time and there is already demonstrated interest.

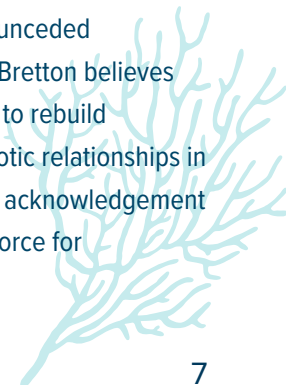
Agricultural farming has seen a revolution of young agrarians, small-scale farming, biodynamic farming and she would love to see that happening on the water. But currently, “Only crazy people are willing to put up with the seemingly insurmountable challenges, there is just so much risk,” she tells me. “We’re cracking and despite the opportunities, without support, the books don’t reflect success.” Bretton intends to do everything she can to support small scale ocean harvesters and has recently joined the BC Shellfish Growers Association board.

Ondine Oceanfarm is located in Blind Bay on unceded territory of the Tla’amin and Sechelt Nations. Bretton believes regenerative ocean farming is an opportunity to rebuild sustainable coastal habitats and utilize symbiotic relationships in nature to promote biodiversity. From the land acknowledgement on her website, “We intend this farm to be a force for reconciliation.”

Bretton Hills is a force, hoping to move mountains in terms of bringing oysters to the center of the plate. Facing a future of sitting in an office as a food security consultant in Alberta she instead chose a risky and challenging lifestyle on the wild west coast as an oyster farmer.

Ondine Oceanfarm was established in 2020 on the Sunshine Coast. Understanding that shellfish and seaweed aquaculture are two of the most sustainable food sources Bretton began to focus on the intersection of some of her values; social justice, food security, environmental sustainability. From her website, “... regenerative ocean farming began with a passion for the ocean, food security and a desire to make the world a more equitable place. I deeply believe that people should be able to have simple, dignified work that pays well and nourishes their community.”

Ondine Farms prioritizes making shelf-stable products through flash freezing and canning, although they do cater to a fresh





Lawrence Anderson
**Nautilus Underwater
Consultants / PUHA**

www.puha.org

being sold at farmers markets and specialty seafood shops, but also to chefs who bring new flavors, ideas and combinations to the general public. After successfully testing the uni-butter at recent seafood shows in Boston and Barcelona he feels confident that the product will appeal to all palates, especially the sophisticated foodie. He hopes to have an official launch party at the B.C. Seafood Festival in June.

With a raised awareness of supply chain fragility and the knowledge that supporting local in turn supports socio-economic conditions, Lawrence is using his harvesting experience, new marine science and indigenous knowledge to feed people in exciting ways. “We have the population to support innovative seafood ideas,” he explains.

A large part of success is in marketing and communication which is why the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University feels like the right place to be. Lawrence wants to understand the whole process including supply chain, product development, packaging, promotion, labelling and distribution. He believes the opportunity to converse with other small-scale harvesters and share knowledge, challenges and ideas will improve conditions in coastal communities. He wants to build a local supply chain community to support stronger domestic markets.

The future of tide to table feels exciting and full of opportunity to expose Canadians to new seafood species and value-added products. With support from the SBA innovative ideas become more accessible. Working with Vancouver Island University and having the support of industry professionals is precisely what will encourage entrepreneurs to proceed to with confidence. “I want to put the sea in sexy,” he ends with a laugh.

Lawrence Anderson has been in the seafood harvesting industry for over 30 years. Working within the Pacific Urchin Harvesters Association (PUHA), Lawrence is an advocate for the wild harvest of urchins. He finds himself predominantly marketing to Asia where the majority (95-98%) of these spiny creatures are exported and he wants to change that.

Product development and experimentation is exciting to Lawrence as his priorities shift towards keeping things local and in turn expanding North American palettes from the traditional prawns and salmon. Food security has become a necessary buzz word as Covid revealed systemic weaknesses in global food supply chains.

Lawrence is working on variations of a product called uni-butter, an urchin/butter formula used in pasta sauces, bisques, scrambled eggs, crab or prawn dip, or as an exotic finish to a special steak. He envisions this versatile gourmet product



Sophie Viswanathan Fraser Valley Sustainable Seafood

www.fraservalleyseafood.com

resilient fish. Sockeye salmon are much more delicate and difficult to farm but are more valuable and desirable to consumers. Trout sales have essentially financed the ground breaking and innovative inland sockeye research at FVSS.

Fraser Valley Sustainable Seafood's sockeye salmon is available fresh from December through March or frozen at any time, while the trout is available fresh year round. Both are grown in natural spring water and fed a 100% natural diet with no chemicals, additives or vaccines. Currently the fish are gutted and sold whole, or head-on-gutted, commonly known as HOG. Packaging is whittled down to bare essentials as they encourage customers to bring their own coolers. Restaurant delivery is provided in coolers with very limited single use plastic involved.

The team know they are going against the grain and breaking conventions but are driven by a desire to bring fresh and healthy fish to their community without additional strain on the oceans. The longer term mission is to create a shareable knowledge base of how to successfully farm inland salmon and make healthy seafood options available to an ever growing population. "We are still small and want to grow slowly and carefully," Sophie explains. This is part of the reason she is participating in the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University. She wants to make good decisions with the support of industry experts, and explains the team intends to keep this a heart driven business.

The future is exciting with many long and short term goals. There are conversations about adding new species like fresh water char, introducing the Japanese slaughtering style of ikejime, environmental tourism, educational workshops and hosting farm to table dinners as soon as this summer. There is a lot of love and passion on the farm that they hope to convert into a sustainable, franchisable system to feed people good food while moving towards a more circular economy.

Fraser Valley Sustainable Seafood (FVSS) is the first and only producer able to raise freshwater sockeye salmon to a commercial food fish. With a lean team of four they are working hard to carefully scale up and master the delicate conditions required to farm inland salmon. Dr. Lawrence Albright is Professor emeritus from Simon Fraser University, an aquaculture specialist with a passion to offset the pressure on dwindling ocean stocks, Richard Henly is a visionary who purchased the property in 1999, his wife Sophie Viswanathan is an environmentalist with a masters degree in environmental education, and Anqi Yuan who recently completed her masters at Simon Fraser University in Biology with a focus on Aquaculture. They all wear many hats to keep the farm running around three main tenets; sustainably farmed, locally produced and unbeatable freshness and flavor.

Fraser Valley Sustainable Seafood farms both rainbow trout and sockeye salmon which complement one another. Trout have been farmed since the 1950's and are a delicious and



Reg Moody Independent Harvester

negotiator for the Gladstone Reconciliation Office where he worked to defend aboriginal rights.

Reg is now seeking alternatives, ways to stimulate the fishing industry, one of which is kelp harvesting. It is with the support of Coastal First Nations (CFN) that he is participating in the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University.

He is finding a lot of value in the SBA program and says, “the grant writing webinar was incredible!” The discussion on packaging was also crucial as he is thinking about transport costs and how powdered kelp, with sustainable packaging could save so much on transport from a remote community. “The SBA is a wonderful approach for building expertise and knowledge, a great sounding board, and the network could make a huge difference in our success.”

Reg is well connected and wants to diversify his business operations. Of particular interest is First Nation to First Nation trade. He is also interested in export, Reg has been granted a kelp license for 50 tons of wild harvest and already has a contact in Northern Europe showing interest.

Reg hopes to break new ground and develop a viable fishery with the kelp. The decline of fish stocks has been very difficult and the constant fear of oil spills or other environmental disasters remains. “I’ve spoken about my experience with the SBA to a number of people here in Bella Bella. Hopefully we’re trailblazing and can get more people networking and doing what we are doing.”

Reg Moody-Humchitt is a member of the Heiltsuk Nation. This traditional territory is on the central coast of BC around Bella Bella and includes many islands, inlets and valleys. The economic circumstances of many indigenous coastal communities are challenging. The people need to be able to earn a living harvesting a traditional resource which is often their only source of income. It is a very important element of cultural pride.

Reg works with a variety of seafood including halibut, crab, prawns, clams and spawn on kelp (SOK). SOK has always been particularly significant in their community, as it is the first fresh food of the year and is highly nutritious. Traditionally the Heiltsuk collected vast amounts of SOK for trade and barter. It was the keystone in the very important Gladstone case that affirms one of few aboriginal commercial rights in Canada. During a hiatus from the fishing industry Reg was assistant



Georgia Pears

Mother of Minerals

Oysters Everyday

sources of vitamins and minerals. She looked for an oyster supplement, but was disappointed with the quality of options available. “I couldn’t find anything from Canada, and I live in Oyster Country!”, she exclaims.

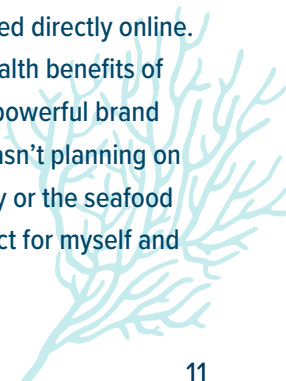
Georgia is in the initial stages of research and development with support from the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University. The connections and the collective experience have so far been invaluable. She aims to put a Canadian made oyster pill on the market for all the benefits it offers anyone, not just those with a mineral deficiency. “And why can’t I?” she declares, this simple question is followed with, “that is one of the benefits of coming into the industry as a newbie — naivety.”

Most people have a mineral deficient diet, claims Georgia, and could benefit from oyster supplements. But there are additional benefits to producing oyster pills such as using unmarketable oysters or other shellfish, and using currently discarded shells. Ideally there would be an element of up-cycling in the final product, which besides being Canadian made, would help to differentiate her.

Looking towards the future Georgia imagines the oyster pills to be available in health food stores or purchased directly online. Her excitement about the abundance and health benefits of this bivalve are infectious and developing a powerful brand story for her craft product is important. “I wasn’t planning on going into the natural health product industry or the seafood industry - I just personally wanted this product for myself and my family!”

Georgia Pears grew up on the West Coast, plunging into the cold Pacific for oysters, and shucking them off the swim grid of her family boat. She refers to oysters as a complete food, packed with vitamins and minerals. She tells me with a smile, “These beautiful and nutrient dense shellfish not only clean the atmosphere, the coastal waters and prevent shoreline erosion, they are the greatest and most bioavailable source of zinc in the world, they are abundant, and have been around since before the dinosaurs. They truly are a super food.”

Georgia is passionate about the health industry and believes food can heal. Previously practicing law, she shifted her focus to her three daughters and continuously thinks about the world they are to grow up in. While pregnant with her third daughter, she started to learn about how ineffective synthetic vitamins were, and wanted to improve their nutrition through food sources. Oysters were top of the list as one of the richest food





Dafne Romero

North Pacific Kelp

www.northpacifickelp.company.site

They joined the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University with the intention to review current operations and refine their focus on managing growth and profit. They are very happy with the quality of the program and say, “the SBA gives as much as you are prepared to take.” Bruce Wallinger, seafood marketing and business strategist and SBA expert advisor, “has shared some crucial suggestions.”

Dafne purchased a freeze dryer technology from UBC, “Freeze drying technology is the way to go,” they say. “Nutritional value, pigmentation, flavour, texture, shelf life - it really got my attention and now I’m creating ‘plant-based vegan seafood ready to eat products’ - that’s what I’m launching with the SBA program.” Dafne is currently developing Sea Veggie Mix which contains a strong component of kelp powder that maintains its nutritional value through processing.

Like many other small-scale harvesters Dafne struggles under the many regulations and certifications needed for getting into the bigger markets. And of course their remote location up the west coast adds to transportation costs. But despite this, Dafne prioritizes sustainable packaging decisions which, “may be detrimental to my finances, but not detrimental to my soul.”

“I think it is fantastic that the seaweed industry is waking up - we just need to watch it isn’t industrialized and end up being destructive,” they tell me. Dafne is interested in expansion but not at the cost of the environment, they want to focus on value added products, to use bio technology and to put the planet first. They are hoping that given our global climate crisis we will respond with humble connection, mitigation in a responsible way. They are planning a new website to share research, reports and analysis over time. Dafne teaches children on the islands about the beauty and power of kelp. They have a stewardship program and will be working with marine science students, teaching about biomass and species, “I want to learn from the journey of research, get more knowledge to make good decisions.”

Dafne has a very deep respect and connection with kelp. They moved to Haida Gwaii in 2009 and say, “kelp has been following me my whole life!” Dafne used to forage kelp with their grandmother in the state of Michoacán, Mexico. They lived in various countries but felt an immediate welcome by the people from Haida Gwaii where they produce a variety of kelp-based products under the name North Pacific Kelp Wild Foods. Despite long gloomy days on the islands they feel a spiritual connection, not just with the islands but with the kelp itself.

Dafne has 4 polygons of kelp. All wild, no farming. They are very invested in understanding the ecological stressors, learning and sharing about this sea vegetable through intensive research and time spent underwater. A better understanding of invasive species, survival rates and bryozoan growth will all contribute to their primary focus of restoration. Dafne feels a calling to get to know this plant as well as possible - this was reinforced by covid.



Natasha Marshal Gallic miᑕaat Community Supported Fisheries

project. Natasha is finding the support she needs with the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) program offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University. As an avid student, she is encouraged that this program is offered through an established university. She loves the ideas and energy in the program and is making sure to get as much value as possible using tools and strategies from the panel of experts while refining her business plan in an indigenous context.

As a business leader Natasha noticed a gap in the support available to community members away from home (commonly referred to as members living “off-reserve,” Natasha is changing the narrative). She experienced this challenge herself when trying to source quality, traditional food while studying on the mainland, away from her island community. She wants to create a proactive, efficient and equitable model of seafood distribution to support the health of indigenous communities and their away from home population.

Natasha Marshal Gallic has big ideas on top of big ideas. From Tseshah First Nation in Port Alberni, she grew up in a fishing family and was on the water as a child watching the fish and learning the ropes and ethics of a water-based industry. Natasha eventually became a deck hand, purchased her own boat, added a custom-built boat and later hired her own daughters. She is proud to call herself a fisherwoman.

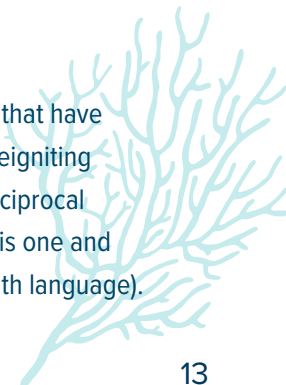
But it doesn't stop there, Natasha has extensive education and is using it to create visibility and claim space for indigenous role models. She has completed SFU's Indigenous Business Leadership Executive MBA and sits on various councils and boards supporting her community, her heritage and female empowerment.

As she continues in academia towards her PhD, Natasha is working on 'the first indigenous woman owned community supported fisheries company in the world.' miᑕaat (Sockeye salmon) Community Supported Fisheries (MCSF) is her passion

Natasha is gathering intel from the SBA with the goal of transferring knowledge to support community minded business strategies in her own community. She plans to share the knowledge and resources she has gained with her people to help them capture more value from their harvests.

Natasha is passionate about reviving and passing on indigenous values of community, equality and humility in a return to a decolonized way of doing business. She aspires to be both an inspiration and role model. “It is possible to follow your dreams as an indigenous woman in whatever field or area you have a passion for,” she explains, “and I want people to know that.”

She intends to take the indigenous teachings that have been passed down and bring them forward, reigniting the importance of balance, community and reciprocal relationships. *hishuk'ish tsawalk* - everything is one and interconnected (translated from Nuu-chah-nulth language).





Maša Vahldieck Best Coast Kelp

Maša is finding support with the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University. “I’m at the beginning of my venture, there is so much I don’t know and lots of barriers,” she says, but the benefit of a program like this is that “it puts me in touch with like-minded people, making connections in the spaces we want to play in.” Masa feels the SBA is innovative and pioneering, she is specifically looking for knowledge of the supply chain - the point of harvest to the point of sale.

And there is one more particularly interesting end point for kelp. A base for bio plastics. This is also in line with circular economy principles. “We need to find ways to design better products that last longer, that can be reused and refilled,” she says, “but if a package must be single use, we need to develop products that can be dealt with at home rather than complex waste management systems – think consumable soft packaging.” Exciting research is being done in this area around the world. BC has an abundance of natural capital that when harnessed responsibly can develop local economies and solutions for some of our most pressing issues.

Maša is passionate about bringing the greatest minds, creatives and small-scale farmers and harvesters together to understand how we might be able to use ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem. “I’m really keen to understand how we can turn this kelp industry into a flourishing local regenerative economy that encourages the small players.” Seaweed and kelp are called the lungs of the ocean for multiple reasons – one of which is that a local seaweed industry can breathe life into our ecosystems, economy and climate targets.

Maša Vahldieck is a circular economy consultant working with governments, businesses and NGO’s in Canada and internationally, all while sailing and working from her sailboat along the BC coast. She is a solo sailor who has a deep relationship with the ocean around Vancouver Island. Maša is bringing the principles of a circular economy to her regenerative kelp micro-farming concept focusing on co-cultivation and diverse end market development. Her goal is multi-pronged, ranging from improving ocean health and biodiversity to developing local food sources to novel waste-free packaging alternatives

Disturbed by the fact that we import seaweed and kelp into a country that has the most coastline in the world and leaving huge ‘food’ prints, she has begun preliminary research and partnership building with a focus on an inclusive and regenerative future.



Nathan Gawalko

Old Habits

www.oldhabitsfermentationco.com

wood barrel fermentation and other variations will all continue to round out the flavour profiles of his product line.

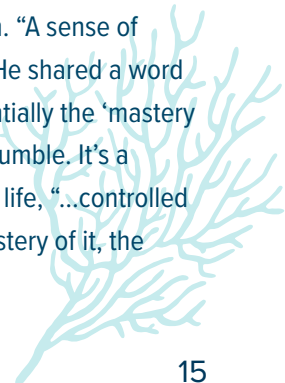
Creativity, expression, the visual side of life is important to Nathan. His is a culinary background but life growing up in a big city meant a constant stream of makers and masters, entrepreneurs and boundary breakers. According to Nathan, Old Habits Fermentation Co. is the only commercial manufacturer of traditionally made fish sauce in North America. While creating a community around him, Nathan intends to enjoy the intersection of authentic product development, creative expression and connecting with humanities' age-old fermentation practices.

The Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University is opening doors for him to meet other entrepreneurs and develop supportive connections in the seafood industry. Nathan intends to get as much value as possible through the various experts in market research, processing and food safety, product development, packaging and grant writing.

Linking story to product feels important to him. "A sense of pride and craftsmanship is vital," he explains. He shared a word - shokunin - Japanese in etymology and essentially the 'mastery of one's profession' no matter how grand or humble. It's a concept to work towards. Fermentation is like life, "...controlled decay, it's a living evolving thing, I like the mystery of it, the discovery of it."

Coming Soon! Nathan Gawalko's Old Habits Fermentation Co. fish sauce is gaining flavour day by day. A Torontonion living in Victoria bringing gathered experience of artistry, flavour, ideas and connection to his rendition of the worlds' first condiment. A tribute to 2000-year-old fermentation practices. Respect to the masters and makers.

Nathan has been working in various restaurants of varying prestige around the world, never forgetting the humble nature of individual elements required to make good food. Old Habits fish sauce is rumbling into existence with two and three-year batches already in progress. The first batch will contain wild roe herring caught in the Salish Sea off Vancouver Island. Herring immediately mixed with local sea salt and left to ferment for a minimum of one year, resulting in a mild, briny and slightly sweet sauce. But the opportunity for culinary creativity only begins there as pacific pink shrimp, winter herring, experimenting with





Mica Verbrugge & Victoria Lake Canadian Seafood Processing

www.eatcanadianseafood.com

An ecosystem in its own right. How Mica Verbrugge and Victoria Lake are able to manage all the moving parts of Effingham Oysters, Canadian Seafood Processing (CSP) and Dock+ is hard to imagine. It began with Effingham Oysters, which Mica purchased with a partner when a great offer came up 10 years ago. The oceans' bounty and local talent keeps him on his toes and Mica has been expanding and moving forward ever since. In 2018 Victoria Lake joined the adventures.

Port Alberni is beautifully situated on a deep-water fjord, remote and natural -- the ideal location to bring coastal community together and overcome financial barriers with a shared processing facility. The challenges of federal regulations and the limitations of not being in direct control of processing product compelled Mica and Victoria to support a proposal to the BC

Food Hub Network. The proposal was to refurbish a moth balled fish plant into a food hub. This resulted in the creation of Dock+ in 2019. Effingham Oysters is one of five anchor tenants at Dock+, owned by the Port Alberni Port Authority.

The couple created Canadian Seafood Processing (CSP) in 2020 to expand their horizons. Operating a Canadian Food Inspection Agency licensed facility, CSP supports local fishers and harvesters including all kinds of finfish, crustaceans and shellfish. They also offer cold storage and live tanks for shellfish and crabs. The seafood products are marketed all over the world and locals can order online with pickup by appointment.

As they expand, oysters remain their bread and butter. Their market is mainly high-end, in-shell, destined for raw oyster bars with around 95% being sent south to California. Similar to other BC farmers they say the demand is growing and seems insatiable. Access to supply, labor and regulatory hurdles limit production.

After the challenges of a pandemic, as they reconnect and rebuild community, Dock+ provides shared use infrastructure which is an enormous step towards the idea of stronger together. With the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University, Mica and Victoria will focus on new product development, branding and marketing for an ever-expanding oyster market.

Producing more oysters doesn't strain the environment but rather feeds the ecosystem including coastal job creation, domestic food security and supporting indigenous reconciliation. As they shorten supply chains and reduce food insecurity Mica and Victoria are prioritizing sustainability and working on environmental monitoring to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship in all aspects of their relationship with the ocean.



David Nikleva Below Sea Level Oysters

David Nikleva has been living on Cortes Island working with shellfish for over 35 years. He is owner and manager of Below Sea Level Oyster Co. where his main focus is on oysters but his attention is also on buying and selling clams. His original interest in marine biology was a natural segue into the practical application of shellfish farming.

Below Sea Level Oyster Co. farms, harvests and sells to a federally registered processing plant. David spent his early business start-up years juggling oyster farming with teaching about it; First Nations Shellfish training program, Fishery

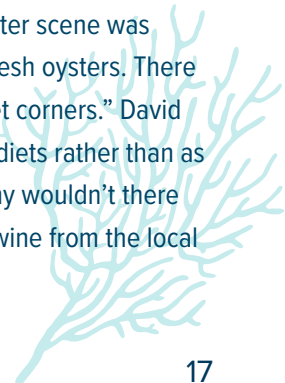
Guardian training program through aboriginal fisheries strategy, consulting with Chemainus First Nations, and teaching at what was then Malaspina College. He is now a full-time, independent farmer and is working on new brand and marketing strategies.

There are numerous challenges in the shellfish industry, justifiable regulations around health and safety chief among them. Less justifiable, are the lengthy processes for licensing and amendments. David has been waiting four years for an amendment to his shellfish management plan. “With such a lengthy lag time between idea and putting it into practice, it is difficult to move forward and keep up with change. Makes you wonder how we are going to attract new entrants to an industry so hamstrung regulatory wise.” He wants to put a rack system on the beach and has other ideas for adapting to climate change challenges such as investing in an intertidal power pump to spray oysters down if there are high temperatures and low waters.

David began his career in aquaculture at Malaspina college which has since become Vancouver Island University (VIU). And now with decades of experience in both ocean farming and teaching about it he has returned via the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at VIU. His focus is not only to refine his marketing plan, but to access industry experts around grant writing, packaging and supply chains and position himself for sustainable food production and coastal job creation.

Similar to other oyster farmers he holds a deep belief in the health benefits oysters offer both to our bodies and the coastline. Full of protein, micronutrients and calcium they also work to filter and clean the surrounding water, create barriers to protect estuaries and reduce erosion.

“It feels early in shellfish aquaculture here on the west coast,” David tells me and references the east coast settlers and Chesapeake Bay in the early 1900’s. “The oyster scene was impressive, the bay absolutely thriving with fresh oysters. There were carts and stands selling oysters on street corners.” David would like to see oysters as part of everyday diets rather than as a specialty item in expensive oyster bars. “Why wouldn’t there be an oyster bar everywhere you went...and wine from the local vineyard for a natural pairing.”





Goodfish Seafood Co's primary fisheries are albacore tuna and spot prawn, "these are the ones that I think have the strongest resource management and also the most predictable and reliable access," says Fraser. From their website, 'Our commitment to sustainability starts with the consideration of how and what we fish....' Fish prices have been steadily increasing and Fraser believes, "there is a crazy amount of opportunity right now for people that want to get in and are committed to putting in the years to learn."

Fraser MacDonald & Kathryn Robinson GoodFish Seafood

www.goodfish.co

Fraser McDonald has an exceptional entrepreneurial drive. He grew up in Parksville on Vancouver Island with the fishing industry making waves in front of his family home. As a teenager he began to see the growing financial autonomy of his friends working on boats and he joined the ranks of deckhand, fishing out of Ucluelet. After harvesting a bit of everything and working with many different fishing families Fraser began skippering a boat. He then bought his own boat and eventually Goodfish Seafood Co. was launched.

Fraser's interests include marine engineering and shipyard work where he has spent many years learning and teaching colleagues and friends to expand both their knowledge base and confidence. He refers to this as the office work of fishing. Fraser knows with Goodfish Seafood Co's steady growth it is time to implement systems and begin to download his knowledge.

Fraser joined the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University with the intention to focus on the business and administrative side of things but also to work on a canned seafood line. Access to the food hub in Port Alberni and use of the retorting machine for commercial sterilization and experimentation on sample runs was an unexpected opportunity revealed through the SBA program.

Fraser recalls stumbling through many industry challenges and when Goodfish Seafood Co. was established he planned to seek out education and use any resources offered. "The SBA came at a good time as we had just launched our website and wanted a slow roll out." "Maintaining principles of consistent quality and traceability are vital," Fraser continues, "and you only get one chance to do things for the first time."

Goodfish Seafood Co. wants to make Canadian seafood accessible and affordable. They are hoping to use sustainable packaging right from the start and found the SBA packaging webinar especially informative. "At any level of business I think there is much to be learned and I whole-heartedly recommend this program to anyone."



Arlene & Gus Brown

Independent Harvesters

Gus and Arlene Brown are seasoned Bella Bella seafood harvesters. They have done it all and made choices over the years based on both demand and licensing limitations or allowances. Gus comes from a long line of fishermen and feels fortunate to have made a living from the fishing industry for most of his life. Currently Gus is focusing on Spawn on Kelp (SOK) and remembers as a boy with his father putting in cedar boughs to carry the spawn.

Gus refers to the licenses or 'wish list' they would like to have for their community, ranging from salmon, sea cucumber, herring and prawns. He managed the community license program for 3 or 4 years and says things are getting more and more difficult due to overfishing, "there was such abundance back in the day, the central coast was one of the healthiest, but such damage has been done and many have gone home or retired." Although Bella

Bella is the only community on the coast that still has a fish plant up and running, it is underutilized "The big fleet that was built back in the 70 and 80's is gone. All the aluminum boats have gone to Alaska or south to Mexico."

Gus joined the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University with support from Paul Paterson, CEO for Coastal First Nations (CFN) who are looking for ways to stimulate the fishing industry. Gus was initially focusing on his SOK harvesting but is also very interested in getting involved with the kelp itself. He feels that it might be a great way to wrap up a career on the ocean as he gets older. He has heard the world market speaking very highly of kelp farming and has been gathering intel over the past year.

Gus stands for aboriginal rights recognition, economic development, youth initiatives, improved communication between council and membership and much more. With years of experience in the industry and working through various trends, Gus sees the importance of using western science and weaving it together with the indigenous ancient stories and histories. Seafood is a vital part of their culture and they are working hard to preserve and enhance the celebrated Great Bear Rainforest.





Tom & Leona Humchitt Heiltsuk Wawadi Kelp

Leona is a community champion who recently completed the Indigenous Business Leadership Executive MBA at SFU and the UBC Graduate Certificate in Aquaculture. She is a proud member of Hailzaqv (Heiltsuk) Nation in Bella Bella which is an isolated community on the central coast of BC. Leona is the Climate Action Coordinator and past Economic Development Officer. She is a grandmother and has four daughters and one son with her husband Tom who was a seasoned fisherman.

Leona and Tom are seeking alternative opportunities and ways to support other First Nation members as the wild harvest fishing industry becomes ever more challenging. They recently registered the business Heiltsuk Wawadi Kelp as their next venture. Wawadi means 'safe harbour' and relates to elders having tied their canoes to bull kelp to stay safe during storms.

Leona has a deep interest in kelp as an income generator for her community. She has concerns about the long-term sustainability

of wild harvest and wants to explore opportunities for integrated multitrophic aquaculture (IMTA) for First Nations communities. Her idea is to set up her own IMTA business and then support other First Nations entrepreneurs.

Leona was the first of a group of Heiltsuk Nation members to enroll in the Seafood Business Accelerator (SBA) program offered by the Centre for Seafood Innovation at Vancouver Island University. They joined the program with a common objective: to discover avenues for business development within their community amid various challenges and transformations in the evolving seafood sector.

Leona is specifically working to obtain a license for wild kelp harvest and then intends to work on product development of the kelp which may include fermented foods and medicinal products. Selling wild kelp and associated products will bring in proceeds to finance their new company focused on integrated multitrophic aquaculture.

As a proud mother and grandmother Leona works passionately today for their better tomorrow.

Seafood Business Accelerator COACHES & EXPERTS

Each Seafood Business Accelerator participant (SBAer) is assigned a business coach who works with the participant to focus in on an achievable project using an SBA Innovation Plan canvas as a guide. This single page roadmap helps SBAers home in on what they want to work on and with whom.

SBA Coaches and Experts work as a team to help move participants' plans forward. Subject matter experts are brought in as needed.

Brady Calancie
Business Coach

Bonnie Chomica
Marketing & Social Media

Salik Hasan Aslam
Market Researcher

Melanie P. Loureiro
Graphic Designer

Greg McLaren
Marketing & Branding

Josephine Olivier
Photographer & Writer

Mehrnaz Roudsari
Food Scientist

Ellie Scott
Product Development Chef

Sonia Strobel
Alternative Distribution Models

Matt Vissers
Business Coach

Bruce Wallinger
Seafood Marketing

Sean Xia
Food Safety Regulations







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