



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

We All Take Care of the Harvest (WATCH)



ABOUT THIS PROJECT

We All Take Care of the Harvest (WATCH) is an FNHA pilot project that addresses seafood safety, security and sovereignty in the context of climate change. The purpose of the project is to help coastal communities and their members decide if and when their seafood is safe to harvest.

WATCH aims to:

- help communities access timely safety information about seafoods and harvest areas
- enhance the ability of communities to plan for and manage climate impacts that affect seafoods
- promote seafood security and sovereignty for coastal First Nations

Join WATCH!

We are looking for coastal communities and community members to become involved. If you would like to participate, please contact the [WATCH Project](#) on fnha.ca.

There are three ways to participate in the WATCH Project:

As a Pilot Community – As a pilot community, you would work to co-design seafood and climate research with help from FNHA and BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) staff. You would develop tools, plans, communication materials and a monitoring program that supports community members in knowing whether their seafood is safe to harvest and eat.

As an Advisor – As an advisor, you would contribute your knowledge about seafood or the marine environment, and would share and learn with the project team. You would participate in monthly meetings and in the June WATCH gathering.

As a Member of the Community of Practice – As a member of the Community of Practice, you would receive quarterly WATCH newsletters and an invitation to participate in the June WATCH gathering.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

WATCH was created in response to concerns that were raised by communities at a seafood safety workshop in 2016. The Marine Biotoxin Workshop was held by the FNHA, the BC Centre for Disease Control and the BC government.

The focus of the workshop was a long-lasting phytoplankton bloom that appeared off the coast of BC in 2015. The bloom produced domoic acid, a neurotoxin that causes Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning (ASP). The toxin accumulated in shellfish as well as plankton-eating fish, such as anchovies and sardines, and made its way through the food chain into other seafood such as crabs, marine mammals and birds. At the time, much of the West Coast was closed to shellfish harvesting.

At the workshop, First Nations community members identified a number of concerns. The most critical of these was the need to know when and if shellfish were safe to harvest. (For a complete archive of this workshop, see [Marine Biotoxin Workshop](#) on the BCCDC website.)

PROJECT PHASES

WATCH is comprised of two overlapping phases – a Planning Phase and a Monitoring Phase.

The **Planning Phase** (ending March 2022) will include:

- information sharing and gathering activities designed to deepen our understanding of the factors that influence seafood safety and are expected to shift with a changing climate
- the development of mapping and other tools, risk management and climate adaptation plans, as well as communication products to support safety and health-related decision-making

The **Monitoring Phase** (ending March 2023) will include:

- the creation of programs that monitor plankton and detect biotoxins at or near harvest areas

PROJECT APPROACH AND PARTNERS

WATCH is a Pilot Project

WATCH is an exploratory project to develop and fine-tune an approach to a seafood and climate change that all coastal First Nations can adapt for their own purposes. Communities will therefore be involved in developing the approach, both in the Planning Phase, as well as in the Monitoring Phase.

WATCH is a Network

At the core of the WATCH Project is a Project Team, supported by a First Nations Advisory Team and External Advisory Team. To broaden the reach of the project, the WATCH Network includes two Communities of Practice.

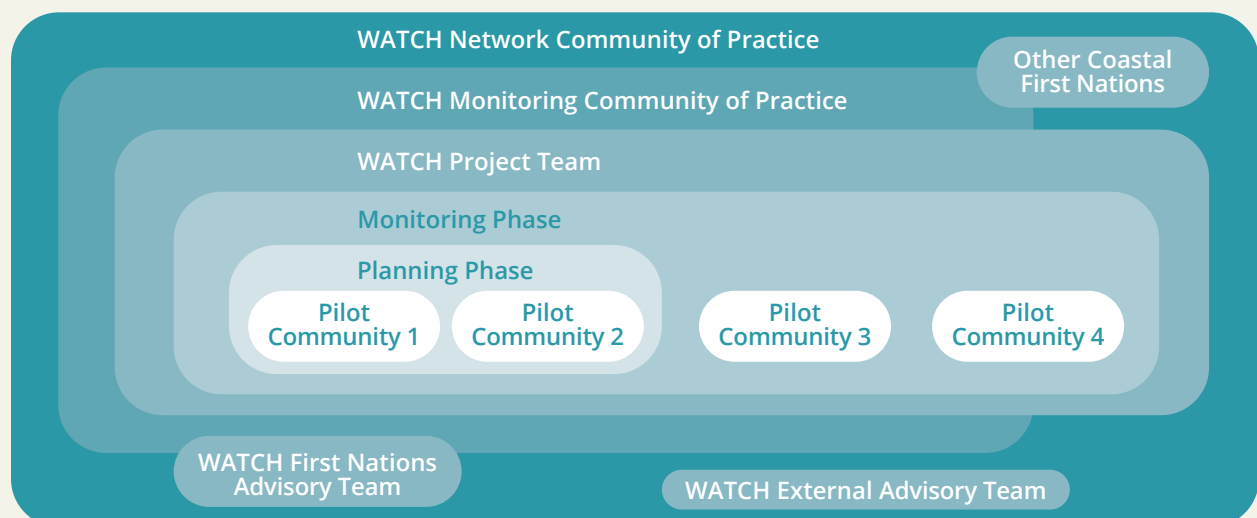
The **Project Team** will include First Nations community representatives (for example, community-based coordinators, champions, researchers and monitors from two to four communities), supported by FNHA and BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) staff as well as dietary and plankton expert consultants.

The **First Nations Advisory Team** will include advisors selected by the Project Team from interested Indigenous fisheries and aquatic organizations and Guardian programs.

The **External Advisory Team** will include advisors recruited by the Project Team – subject matter experts in climate, shellfish, biotoxin, and so on, regulators, representatives of monitoring programs and commercial and aquaculture industries.

The **Network Community of Practice** will include members of all teams and others who indicate interest.

The **Monitoring Community of Practice** is a technical group to help facilitate monitoring activities and expand monitoring programs into other communities.



WATCH IS COMMUNITY DRIVEN

Although funding associated with WATCH requires a focus on biotoxins in shellfish, toxigenic phytoplankton, and the dynamic environmental factors influencing these (sea surface temperature, for example), WATCH is not restricted to these. The project will identify and work to address other seafood and climate issues of importance to participating First Nations communities.

WATCH IS A PROJECT OF FNHA'S ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

WATCH is a project of FNHA's [Environmental Public Health Services \(EPHS\)](#) and is closely related to EPHS' Food Safety, [Environmental Contaminants](#) and [Climate Change and Health Adaptation](#) programs as well as the [Local Environmental Observer \(LEO\) Network](#).

WATCH PARTNERS

WATCH was developed in partnership with the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#). It is funded by Health Canada [HealthADAPT program](#) and the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Infectious Disease and Climate Change Fund](#).



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority



**Public Health
Agency of Canada**

**Agence de la santé
publique du Canada**

FIND OUT MORE

For more about this project, see fnha.ca/watchproject or contact the project team at: watch-project@fnha.ca

