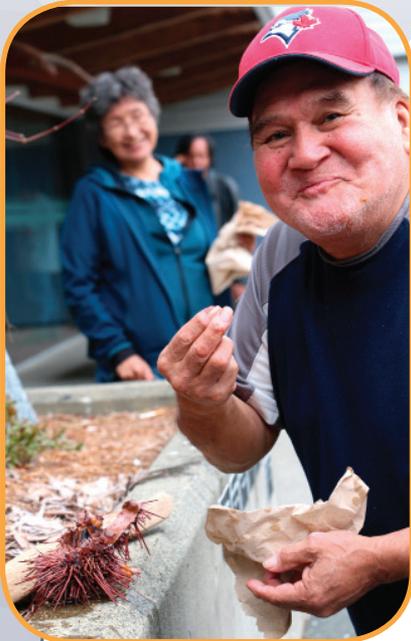


# Building confidence by building *tučhta*: how Gathering Our Voices boosts Indigenous youth

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*tučhta* are used to hunt *tučup*, which members of the Council of Ha'wiil Forum on Fisheries were treated to at the February 27-28 forum courtesy of Ehattesaht/Chinehkint First Nation.

There are now 19 more Indigenous youth in BC who know how to make a *tučhta* (traditional three-pronged spear) as a result of Uu-a-thluk's recent Gathering Our Voices (GOV) workshop.

Led by Aline Carrier (Uu-a-thluk Capacity Building Coordinator), Joshua Charleson (Uu-a-thluk Fisheries Technician) and Tina Halvorsen (Uchucklesaht Fisheries Technician), the workshop took place on March 20 at the Best Western Barclay in Port Alberni, as part of the week-long GOV event.

"I just wanted the kids to get excited about fisheries," said Charleson, when asked what his goal was as a GOV workshop leader.

GOV is an annual event organized by the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) that provides Indigenous youth across Canada

the opportunity to connect with other Indigenous youth and elders, while strengthening the connection to their culture.

The event typically attracts 1,000 participants in the 14 to 24 year-old age bracket. This year's event, which took place from March 18-22 on Tseshaht and Hupacasath territories, featured workshop topics ranging from drum and paddle making to animal skinning techniques, and even surfing.

Nineteen youth delegates attended Uu-a-thluk's workshop which focused on all things ocean-related.

Delegates learned about underwater ecosystems, the importance of salmon in Indigenous communities, the Nuu-chah-nulth principle of *hišuk?iš čawaak* (everything is connected; everything is one) and the job opportunities that await them if they decide to pursue a marine-based career.

As part of the workshop, the youth were treated to a *tučhta*-making demonstration which included a cedar weaving component. This was followed by the opportunity to make *tučhta* themselves through a hands-on learning activity.

"I was surprised at how quickly the students learned and was happy to see everyone with their finished rope in hand," said Halvorsen, referring to the cedar weaving activity she led.

Woven cedar rope is used in the creation of *tučhta*, which are used to spear hunt *tučup* (sea urchins). The rope is wrapped around three wooden spikes at the end of a wood pole, securing them into place.

The youth used eight-foot cedar strips that Halvorsen had pre-woven in preparation for the workshop when making the *tučhta*, and then practiced creating their own foot-long rope from soaked cedar strips.

When delegates asked what other purposes the rope can serve, Halvorsen reminded them of its many uses including in traps, headbands and jewellery.

According to Halvorsen, Charleson and Carrier, the Uu-a-thluk workshop content appeared to resonate with the youth.

"At least five of them were interested to learn more about the training opportunities available to them to improve their position in the industry," said Carrier, referring to a portion of participants who already work fisheries-related jobs.

Carrier's job as Capacity Building Coordinator for Uu-a-thluk is not only to assist in building skill sets within Nuu-chah-nulth-aht for marine-based careers, but also to foster an interest in the sciences from a young age.

Like the three-pronged *tučhta*, Uu-a-thluk approaches its goal of inspiring Nuu-chah-nulth youth to pursue marine-based careers through multiple efforts including summer science camps, classroom presentations and special events like the recent GOV workshop.



*"Makes me look forward to graduating and doing the things I plan to do...makes me feel confident."*

– 2018 GOV Youth Delegate, [gatheringourvoices.ca](http://gatheringourvoices.ca)

Uu-a-thluk summer science camps are hosted in collaboration with University of Victoria's Science Venture program, and bring inspiring and fun activities right to Nuu-chah-nulth children and youth's doorsteps. Carrier is in the process of liaising with individual Nuu-chah-nulth Nations to coordinate the 2019 camps.

BCAAFC and the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society have announced details for next year's GOV event. The 2020 gathering will take place from March 16-20 on the traditional territory of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops, BC). For more information, visit [gatheringourvoices.ca](http://gatheringourvoices.ca).

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GOV youth delegates learned how to make *tučhta* during Uu-a-thluk's workshop.

