



2025-2026

ANNUAL REPORT



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LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CO-SCIENTIFIC DIRECTORS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dr. Siddika Mithani
BOARD CHAIR



Dr. Fanny Noisette
CO-SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR



Dr. Brent Else
CO-SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR



Dr. Jamie Snook
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEOPAR is led by an interdisciplinary Executive and Scientific Team who provide ongoing leadership in collaboration with the Board of Directors.

A Message from MEOPAR LEADERSHIP

This past year has been one of expansion for MEOPAR. In our second year of Strategic Science Fund (SSF) support, we moved from building the foundations of a renewed national network to running it at full stride — funding bold science, growing partnerships, and connecting people across Canada’s ocean research ecosystem.

MEOPAR distributed more than \$5 million in research funding this year, which was amplified by \$21.8 million in matched and leveraged contributions from partners across academia, industry, government, and community organizations. MEOPAR’s ability to direct significant additional funding to support ocean science, speaks to the trust our partners place in MEOPAR as a national convener, and to the discipline of our team in translating funding into results

| LOOKING AHEAD

The year ahead will test and extend what we have built. We will advance the next phase of SSF programming — including continued Expedition Funding, community-led research, and a renewed focus on Living Labs. We will deepen strategic partnerships, diversify revenue, and continue to align MEOPAR’s work with Canada’s national priorities: the blue economy, climate resilience, sovereignty and maritime capacity, and reconciliation.

Above all, we will remain focused on what MEOPAR does best — bringing people and expertise together, creating opportunities for collaboration, and translating ocean science into impact for Canadians and coastal communities.

To our partners, funders, researchers, Communities of Practice, Indigenous and coastal community collaborators, staff, Research Management Committee, Scientific Directors, and Board of Directors — thank you. This report is your story as much as it is ours.

MEOPAR Leadership

Board of Directors | Executive Director | Co-Scientific Directors.



ABOUT US

AN INDEPENDENT CANADIAN NETWORK FOR OCEAN SCIENCE

MEOPAR is an independent, not-for-profit organization bringing together expertise from across Canada's regions and sectors to advance ocean research and development.

For over a decade, MEOPAR has united Canada's ocean research community, bringing together universities, government agencies, industry partners, and communities to fund bold science, strengthen national capacity, and translate research into real-world impact. MEOPAR has cultivated a strong national role, distributing funding to foster collaborative research, support knowledge sharing and strengthening professional capacity in the ocean sector.

Since 2024, MEOPAR has been supported by \$37.3 million in federal funding through the Strategic Science Fund (SSF). MEOPAR's priorities are closely aligned with Canada's national goals and international ocean science objectives, ensuring our strategy addresses the most pressing challenges facing our oceans today.



PURPOSE STATEMENT

Recognizing the ocean as essential for culture, sovereignty, livelihoods and well-being, MEOPAR enables leading-edge interdisciplinary ocean research, fostering collaborations and providing funding and support for marine scientists and ocean-connected communities.

YEAR REVIEW (AT A GLANCE)

2025-2026

Here's where MEOPAR's funding went in 2025-2026, and who it reached.

THE FUNDS

\$5.0M+

distributed for research.

\$1.6M+

distributed for knowledge mobilization.

THE PEOPLE

90+

People across career stages accessing sea time.

20+

Indigenous Youth Interns supported through the Clear Seas partnership.

13

Communities of Practice (CoPs) funded.

128+

Individuals with projects funded through MEOPAR programs.

12

New Knowledge Mobilization projects launched.

9

Early Career Researchers supported directly through an Early Career Researcher (ECR) Award.

THE REACH

2,000+

members reached.

140+ New Datasets across CIOOS regional catalogues.



MEOPAR FUNDS

Communities of Practice (CoP) Fund **\$1.68 M**

- CoP networks drive progress in critical areas, by bringing people and organizations together to share knowledge, exchange expertise, address common challenges, and develop practical solutions.
- 1.68M has been committed to support 13 CoPs for the 2025-2028 period.

Expedition Fund (EXF) **\$1.25 M**

- The Expedition Fund provides the resources necessary to turn scientific questions into real-world observations at sea.
 - Over **90 people got to sea this year** through the Expedition Fund EXF, supporting researchers from the Arctic to the Antarctic and along Canada's three coastlines.
 - EXF offers up to 1.25M in funding each year.

Early Career Researcher* (ECR) Award **\$1.6 M**

- This vital support is given to researchers (inside and outside of academia) who are within five years of their first independent research appointment – supporting early career investigators in establishing independent research programs in Canada and becoming local or thematic leaders.
- **\$1.6M has been committed to support 9 researchers from 2026-2028.**

Community-led Research (CLR) Fund **NEW!**

- This fund allows Indigenous and local organizations to lead the research that matters to their specific regions, needs and priorities.
- Seed Fund: **\$638K** → went to **26 projects**
- This fund supports early-stage relationship-building, co-design and planning of collaborative, community-led projects.

Multi-year CLR Fund **NEW!**

- This fund supports the implementation of longer-term community-led research projects with established partnerships that generate local or broader impacts and foster networks of participation across Canada's coastal communities.
- The fund was launched this fiscal year, and funds will be awarded in the **spring of 2026**.

Knowledge Mobilization (KM) Fund **\$571 K**

- This fund supports the reciprocal flow of knowledge between researchers and knowledge users, translating ocean science into engaging and accessible formats.
- **571K has been committed to support 12 projects for the 2025-2026 period**

Early Career Researcher (ECR) is a researcher within five years of the date of their first independent research-related appointment.

PARTNERSHIPS



MEOPAR committed **\$1.2M over three years to this eight-country initiative** addressing critical knowledge gaps in blue carbon ecosystem dynamics, resilience, and management, with Canadian organizations partnering on 16 of the 24 projects submitted.



MEOPAR Partnered with the **Carbon to Sea Initiative** to advance ocean alkalinity enhancement (OAE) research in Halifax, Nova Scotia, contributing **\$543K to support seven Canadian-led projects.**



BEACONplus

MEOPAR represents Canada as part of a **17-organization, 10-country consortium** supporting and extending the All-Atlantic Network of Coastal Resilience Beacon Sites.



INDIGENOUS COASTAL INNOVATION CHALLENGE

MEOPAR supported **11 projects** through this partnership, advancing Indigenous-led coastal innovation and climate resiliency.



MEOPAR supported **seven Canadian researchers to participate to a two-week Antarctic expedition**, in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Navy and Chilean universities.



Pacific Marine Science Alliance

MEOPAR committed **\$150K to launch a new three-year partnership** aimed at building national scientific capacity and presence in Canada's Pacific and western Arctic regions.

YEAR REVIEW

CIOOS

In 2025, MEOPAR supported the establishment of the National Coordination Office for the Canadian Integrated Ocean Observing System (CIOOS), strengthening the organization's capacity to serve as Canada's central hub for accessible ocean data.

\$100K

For each of the three Regional Association.

140+

New datasets added across regional catalogues (exceeded targets).

100+

Datasets updated.

12+

New partners including Amundsen Science, DataStream, Transforming Climate Action (TCA) and CanWIN.

\$1M

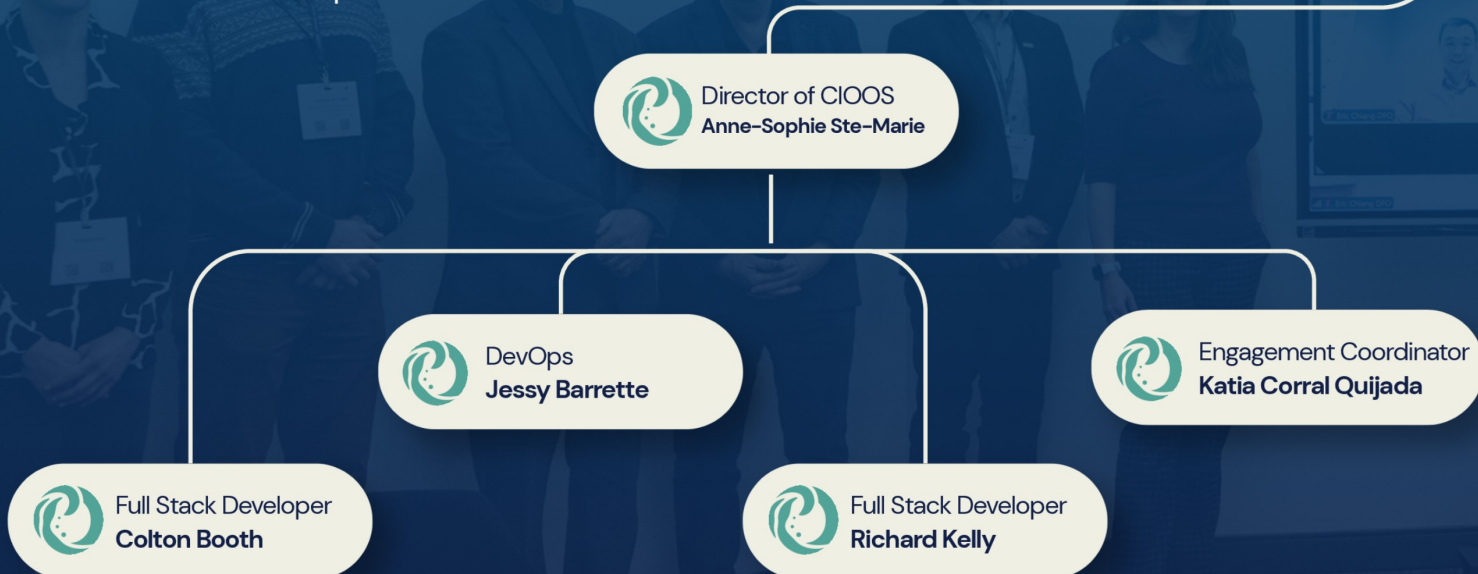
In new funding from the Digital Research Alliance of Canada to fund a new National Data Spaces Pilot Program.

BUILDING THE CAPACITY TO DELIVER IMPACT

Since receiving Strategic Science Fund (SSF) funding in 2024, MEOPAR's team has grown to accommodate a growing vision for Canada's collaborative ocean future. Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen the people, systems, and partnerships that underpin our national research network and enable us to deliver on our mandate.

MEOPAR's finance, programs, communications, operations, and CIOOS teams form the foundation for an impactful research network that advances federal priorities.

As MEOPAR's programs and partnerships expand, so does the capacity required to support researchers, foster collaboration, mobilize knowledge, and translate ocean science into meaningful impact. This year, our organizational investments focused on strengthening our team, improving internal systems and processes, and building the infrastructure needed to support a growing national network and deliver on the objectives of the Strategic Science Fund.





RESEARCH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (RMC)

In addition to a dedicated staff team, MEOPAR relies on a diverse and knowledgeable research management committee to support the quality, relevance, and integrity of MEOPAR's science, training, and knowledge mobilization activities.

The RMC is chaired by MEOPAR's two co-Scientific Directors, Dr. Fanny Noisette and Dr. Brent Else. The RMC conducts assess project proposals against evaluation criteria; recommending projects for awards.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility (EDIA) Reviewers:

To support equitable and inclusive funding decisions, MEOPAR engages external EDIA reviewers. These reviewers bring specialized expertise and lived experience to the assessment of proposals, helping to ensure that EDIA and Truth and Reconciliation considerations are evaluated consistently and meaningfully. Their independent assessments complement the scientific, technical, and knowledge mobilization expertise of the Research Management Committee (RMC), supporting fair, transparent, and informed funding decisions.

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY SUPPORTS CANADA'S OCEAN RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM.

BOARD COMMITTEES



Our Board of Directors

MEOPAR is guided by an eight-member Board of Directors, chaired by Dr. Siddika Mithani, with Susan Hunt serving as Vice Chair. The Board sets strategic direction and oversees organizational strategy, finances, risk, and accountability. The Board works through four standing committees – Finance, Audit and Risk Management; Governance; People Policy and Compensation; and Strategic Science and Advisory.

1

Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee

Provides oversight of the MEOPAR's financial health, audit processes, risk management, internal controls and compliance. The Committee helps ensure MEOPAR's finances are responsibly managed, budgets and financial reports are reviewed, risks are identified and mitigated, and legal and reporting obligations are met. Through this work, the Committee strengthens transparency, accountability, and responsible oversight of MEOPAR's resources.

Committee members: Tom Beaver (Chair), Susan Kennedy, Dr. John Osler

2

People Policy and Compensation Committee

Oversees people-related strategy, policies, compensation, and risk. The Committee helps ensure strong leadership, fair and responsible compensation, succession planning, and alignment between MEOPAR's workforce practices and organizational goals. It also monitors key areas such as culture, EDIA+ (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility+) employee relations, compliance, and workplace policies.

Committee members: Susan Hunt (Chair), Dr. Siddika Mithani, Lerato Chondoma

3

Strategic Science Advisory Committee

Provides expert guidance to the Board on MEOPAR's science strategy, research priorities, and emerging science trends. It helps ensure MEOPAR's programs are scientifically rigorous, fair, transparent, and aligned with its mission, while supporting long-term planning, performance measurement, and connections with national, international, coastal, and First Nations research communities.

Committee members: Dr. Guillaume St-Onge (Chair), Dr. Jason Goldsworthy, Dr. John Osler

Non-voting members: Dr. Brent Else (Co-scientific Director), Dr. Fanny Noisette (Co-scientific Director), Dr. Jamie Snook (Executive Director)

4

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee helps maintain strong governance practices across MEOPAR by supporting board development, succession planning, policy oversight, and continuous improvement in board effectiveness.

Committee members: Dr. Jason Goldsworthy (Chair), Tom Beaver, Lerato Chondoma, Susan Kennedy

Together, the directors bring decades of leadership across ocean science and marine research, engineering and ocean technology, Indigenous and Northern business, higher education, inclusion and community partnership, federal science and regulation, and financial governance – including former federal deputy minister at two national agencies, audit and finance executives, research institute directors and industry leaders drawn from coastal communities across Canada.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST SSF OBJECTIVES

Entering its second year under the Strategic Science Fund (SSF), MEOPAR continues to execute a mission-critical mandate: advancing Canada's ocean science through **four strategic objectives**. These objectives serve as our roadmap, ensuring that our research, collaboration, and innovation remain directly aligned with national priorities and the evolving needs of the Canadian marine sector.



OBJECTIVE 1

STRENGTHENING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR DECISION-MAKING AND ADAPTATION

OVERVIEW

This year, MEOPAR advanced ocean science through significant investments in data and collaboration. This included **over \$1.6M to support 13 Communities of Practice, \$783K for ocean alkalinity enhancement research, and a \$1.2M commitment to international Blue Carbon initiatives.**

By funding critical research and strengthening data infrastructure, MEOPAR is bridging the gap between complex ocean science and the practical needs of decision-makers and coastal communities.

IN DETAIL

Canadian Integrated Ocean Observation System (CIOOS)

In 2025, MEOPAR supported the establishment of the National Coordination Office for CIOOS, strengthening the organization's capacity to serve as Canada's central hub for accessible ocean data. During this fiscal year, MEOPAR awarded **\$100K to each of the three regional associations**, CIOOS Atlantic, CIOOS Pacific, and the St. Lawrence Global Observatory (SLGO), to advance regional observing and data management activities.

CIOOS has a new website and strategic plan, explore more at cioos.ca / plan.cioos.ca





PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

From Data to Decision: A New Tool for BC's Coastal Communities

Ocean acidification and declining oxygen levels pose a growing threat to British Columbia's shellfish industry and coastal ecosystems. To address this, CIOOS Pacific soft-launched a first-of-its-kind information service (oa.cioospacificlabs.ca) that integrates real-time sensor data and regional ocean models into one accessible tool. Developed through close collaboration with shellfish growers, Indigenous communities, and government agencies, this tool transforms complex oceanographic data into practical, actionable information. This initiative serves as a model for how open data infrastructure can be co-designed with end users and directly support economic resilience and climate adaptation in coastal communities.

This continued investment enabled several significant milestones, including:

Expanded Data Access

Added over **140 new datasets** to regional catalogues, significantly increasing the breadth of available ocean information.

Innovative Monitoring

Developed tools integrating real-time sensor and model data to monitor ocean acidification and hypoxia, including Nautilo, developed by the St. Lawrence Global Observatory, to display real-time conditions in the St. Lawrence River.

Growing Networks: CIOOS was represented at key international forums, including Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) Regional Alliances Council.

New Partnerships

Engaged a **dozen new partners** across academia, industry, and government, and established new national and international partnerships, including Amundsen Science, DataStream, Transforming Climate Action (TCA) and CanWIN.

Inclusive Capacity Building

Delivered highly successful training sessions, with a **98% participant satisfaction** rate, and prioritized Indigenous data sovereignty through specialized training across all regional associations in First Nations OCAP principles.

Strategic Vision

Led the development of a **new Strategic Plan for 2026–2031** to ensure long-term excellence in ocean data services.

Ocean AI Innovation

Brought together 137 participants from 65 organizations across 12 countries through the first *Understanding and Predicting the Ocean Using AI* workshop, advancing collaboration and knowledge exchange on AI applications in ocean science.

OBJECTIVE 1

STRENGTHENING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR DECISION-MAKING AND ADAPTATION

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (COP)

Communities of Practice (CoPs) act as collaborative networks that bring together academics, practitioners, policymakers, and community organizations to advance specific marine challenges. MEOPAR awarded \$1.68M to support 13 CoPs, from 2025–2028, including 10 newly established groups. These CoPs rapidly reached 333 new members, growing MEOPAR's existing CoP network to 1,240 members. The six CoPs funded in MEOPAR's previous funding cycle hosted 38 events, reaching an average of 215 attendees each.

By funding these specialized networks, MEOPAR fosters the exchange of knowledge between scientists and community leaders, strengthening Canada's capacity for decision making, and ensuring Canadian ocean research remains integrated, collaborative, and responsive to emerging environmental shifts.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Charting Canada's Path on Ocean Acidification

The Ocean Acidification Community of Practice recently published a landmark report: "Ocean Acidification in Canada: The Current State of Knowledge and Pathways for Action." This report synthesizes current scientific understanding and provides a framework to help integrate ocean acidification research into government policy and decision-making.



DIRECTED RESEARCH PROGRAM

Through its Directed Research Program, MEOPAR supports targeted scientific initiatives to tackle critical ocean issues.

- **Ocean Alkalinity Enhancement (OAE) Joint Learning Opportunity**

In partnership with the Carbon to Sea Initiative, MEOPAR **co-funded nine projects focused on ocean alkalinity enhancement research**, an emerging nature-based climate solution. Funded projects will support research on the potential impacts of OAE on plankton communities, assessment of trace metal responses, the integration of First Nations knowledge systems, the development of near-field sensing tools and methodologies, and the incorporation of OAE into climate-focused storytelling and knowledge mobilization efforts. These projects involve essential fieldwork in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to explore how this method can help stabilize ocean chemistry. Research is being conducted at Bedford Basin and/or at the Planetary Technologies ocean alkalinity enhancement site at Tuft's Cove.

MEOPAR
CONTRIBUTED

\$543K

to support the **seven Canadian-led** projects

- **Pacific Marine Science Alliance (PMSA): 3-year partnership**

MEOPAR has **developed a three-year partnership with the PMSA**, with the goal of building national scientific capacity and presence in Canada's Pacific and western Arctic region, focusing on developing a shared research program capable of delivering innovative solutions to critical ocean challenges. In the first year of this collaboration, a Canadian delegation of PMSA representatives visited several universities and marine stations in Chile leading to the establishment of a collaborative project known as the Pacific Rim Initiative for Sustainable Marine Systems (PRISMS). This initiative aims to bring together researchers from engineering, science, and social science to advance marine research that addresses the urgent challenges facing Canada's and the world's oceans.

- **Looking ahead at Canada's Ocean Future: Aligning research with National needs**

MEOPAR **worked with the Canadian Council of Academies (CCA) to engage with the diverse ocean science community** and identify future research priorities. The CCA engaged the ocean community across Canada via an online survey, in person community discussions hosted in Vancouver, Trois-Rivières, and Halifax and online webinars. These insights shaped the questions that will inform the final report on mobilizing ocean research in Canada.

OBJECTIVE 1

STRENGTHENING THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR DECISION-MAKING AND ADAPTATION

STRATEGIC INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

MEOPAR plays a key role in the global ocean science community by supporting large-scale international research. This year, MEOPAR collaborated on **two international initiatives with JPI-Oceans**, a platform that funds transnational research and innovation for healthy seas and oceans.

MEOPAR **funded a Research Associate** to work closely with the international team developing the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) report. MEOPAR **recruited four Canadian experts** to contribute to the report, investing in the study of critical climate drivers.

- The report is designed to offer direct policy recommendations and translate complex scientific findings into usable information for decision makers.
- The writing team includes experts from nine European countries and Canada.

MEOPAR has **committed \$1.2 million over the next three years to support a joint call for Blue Carbon research** that addresses critical knowledge gaps related to the dynamics, resilience and management of blue carbon ecosystems. This Call supports research that contributes to climate mitigation and adaptation and sustainable management of blue carbon ecosystems, while informing relevant policy within the national and international levels. **The partnership is led by JPI-Oceans and supported by eight nations** (Ireland, Germany, Greece, Malta, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom and Canada), representing an interdisciplinary effort to facilitate the exchange and generation of knowledge and best practices on blue carbon.



MEOPAR ensures Canadian expertise contributes to global solutions for ocean health.

OBJECTIVE 2

INCREASING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, COASTAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE, AND MARINE ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION

OVERVIEW

This year, MEOPAR supported over 50 projects to expand economic opportunities, strengthen coastal resilience, and protect marine ecosystems. By prioritizing community-led research and making science more accessible, research is both inclusive, locally driven and relevant. Our strategic focus remains on empowering Indigenous and coastal communities to lead climate adaptation efforts, bridging the gap between scientific discovery and practical, real-world resilience.

IN DETAIL



KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

Knowledge Mobilization MEOPAR's Knowledge Mobilization (KM) Fund supports projects that translate ocean knowledge and science results into engaging, accessible formats. This year, MEOPAR launched its second KM Fund and awarded \$571K to 12 new projects designed to bring science to life through diverse mediums. These include innovative initiatives like trilingual educational tools and interactive web apps that provide real-time coastal hazard information.

12 projects were funded in the first round of the Knowledge Mobilization Fund, six produced impactful knowledge mobilization outputs in this fiscal year.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Immersive Virtual Journeys into Kelp Forests

Led by the Pacific Marine Science Alliance (PMSA) The Kelp Rescue Initiative is making the ocean visible to everyone through cutting-edge technology. By using virtual reality (VR) headsets, the project provides immersive 360° underwater experiences, allowing people to dive into healthy kelp forests and see restoration sites firsthand. This initiative has reached over 1,250 people, from students in classrooms to Indigenous Elders. By combining storytelling with VR technology, the project highlights the vital role kelp forests play in climate resilience and community livelihoods, engaging audiences in ways traditional research cannot.



COMMUNITY-LED RESEARCH (CLR) FUND

To ensure ocean research is equitable and inclusive, MEOPAR has launched new programs that allow Indigenous and local organizations to lead the research that matters to their specific regions. In response to this need, MEOPAR launched two new funds.

- **Community-led Research Seed Fund**

This fund was designed as an early-stage opportunity to support relationship-building, co-design and planning of projects. Through the CLR Seed Fund, MEOPAR awarded \$638K to 26 projects in their early stages of development. These funds allow communities to build the necessary relationships and planning required before large-scale studies begin.

\$638K

to 26 projects

- **Community-led Research Fund**

This multi-year fund supports the implementation of longer-term community-led research projects with established partnerships that generate local or broader impacts and foster networks of participation across Canada's coastal communities. MEOPAR received 58 proposals and will announce the funding recipients in the summer of 2026.

By shifting the leadership of research to the communities themselves, and focusing on a partnership-based model, MEOPAR is helping to strengthen local stewardship, food sovereignty, climate adaptation and community participation in ocean decision-making.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)

Of the 13 funded CoPs for 2025–2028, eight directly advance Canada's priorities of economic opportunity, coastal resilience, and marine ecosystem protection. Examples include the Canada Network for Offshore Wind Research CoP, which fosters innovation and knowledge sharing to expand economic opportunities; the Indigenous-led Resilient Regions through Reconciliation CoP, which strengthens coastal community resilience through reconciliation and Indigenous knowledge; and the National Kelp Ecosystem Learning and Practice Alliance CoP, which protects marine ecosystems by co-developing regional kelp action plans grounded in science and local priorities.

STRATEGIC INTERNATIONAL AND TARGETED RESEARCH

MEOPAR is expanding its impact through high-level partnerships and international collaboration.

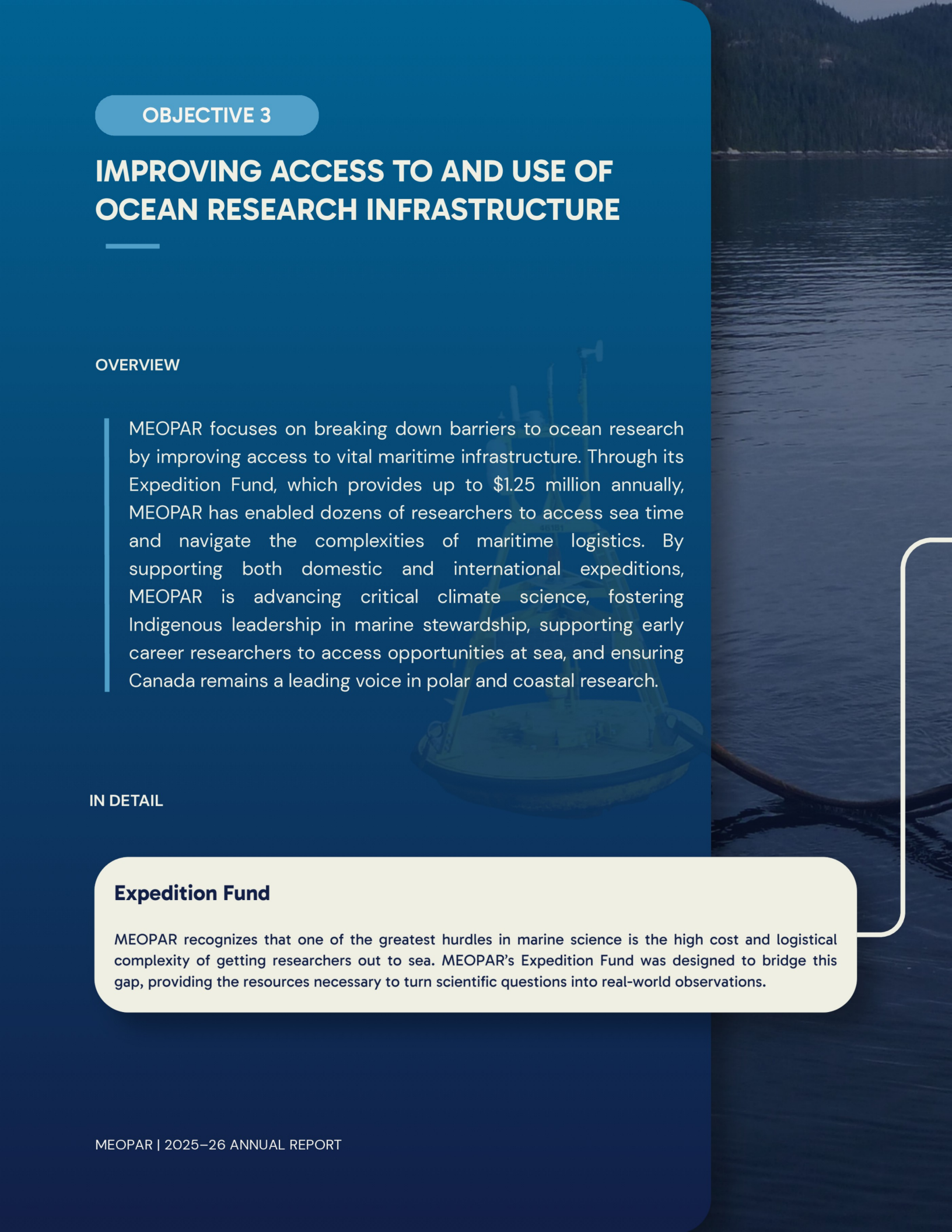
- **Global Cooperation and Canadian leadership** : Through funding received from Horizon Europe's BEACONplus project, MEOPAR joined a 17-organization, 10-country consortium to support and extend the All-Atlantic Network of Coastal Resilience Beacon Sites and strengthen community-driven coastal resilience efforts.
- **Indigenous Innovation:** MEOPAR partnered with the Ocean Supercluster to support 11 Phase I projects under the Indigenous Coastal Innovation Challenge (ICIC), advancing ocean health and climate adaptation in coastal communities while supporting Indigenous-led climate resiliency initiatives.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Lobster Pathways

Led by the *Esgenoôpetitj First Nation Fisheries Science Department*.

To ensure sustainable management of marine resources, research must be rooted in local knowledge. "Lobster Pathways" is designed to build long-term, climate-resilient stewardship of lobster populations. This project brings together fishers, Elders, youth, and scientists to co-design research activities. By ensuring that the community's priorities and cultural values guide the scientific process, the project creates a roadmap for culturally grounded and scientifically rigorous ocean management.



OBJECTIVE 3

IMPROVING ACCESS TO AND USE OF OCEAN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

MEOPAR focuses on breaking down barriers to ocean research by improving access to vital maritime infrastructure. Through its Expedition Fund, which provides up to \$1.25 million annually, MEOPAR has enabled dozens of researchers to access sea time and navigate the complexities of maritime logistics. By supporting both domestic and international expeditions, MEOPAR is advancing critical climate science, fostering Indigenous leadership in marine stewardship, supporting early career researchers to access opportunities at sea, and ensuring Canada remains a leading voice in polar and coastal research.

IN DETAIL

Expedition Fund

MEOPAR recognizes that one of the greatest hurdles in marine science is the high cost and logistical complexity of getting researchers out to sea. MEOPAR's Expedition Fund was designed to bridge this gap, providing the resources necessary to turn scientific questions into real-world observations.

This fiscal year, the Strategic Support Horizon successfully funded six expeditions, providing sea time to 90 individuals, including nine early-career researchers and 26 highly qualified personnel. Funded expeditions in this fiscal year were led by five universities and one First Nation organization. These expeditions investigated diverse topics including the effects of marine noise on sensitive species in the Salish Sea and carbon fluxes in the St Lawrence Estuary. It also supported Indigenous test fisheries and trained Indigenous youth in marine monitoring skills. The projects funded under the Expedition Fund actively support federal priorities such as Climate Science 2050, Oceans Protection Plan, and Blue Economy Strategy. These projects contributed to meaningful steps towards Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action as Indigenous communities and businesses are supported in their ocean science objectives.

MEOPAR launched three Horizons to help researchers access time at sea.

MAJOR EXPEDITIONS HORIZON

Designed to enable Canadian researchers to prepare a complex, often multi-year, expedition.

STRATEGIC SUPPORT HORIZON

Designed to support Canadian leadership and multidisciplinary collaborations on expeditions.

RAPID RESPONSE HORIZON

Designed to respond quickly to an unexpected event.

6 EXPEDITIONS

90 PEOPLE

To access sea time

9 ECR

Early Career Researchers

26 HQP

Highly Qualified Personnel



THE SECOND CANADIAN ANTARCTIC RESEARCH EXPEDITION (CARE)

In March 2026, MEOPAR supported a high-profile expedition to the South Shetland Islands in the Antarctic.

This mission was a collaborative success, involving the Royal Canadian Navy and Chilean Navy. By chartering the Chilean icebreaker *Almirante Viel*, participants were able to conduct joint naval training and scientific investigation simultaneously. MEOPAR supported Canadian academic researchers who worked together with counterparts from the Canadian government, including National Resources Canada (NRCan) and the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), as well as two Chilean academic institutions. Beyond the immediate data collected by the seven MEOPAR funded researchers on board, this partnership demonstrates Canada's ongoing commitment to polar science and supports Canada's strategic efforts to participate fully in the Antarctic Treaty.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Testing the Future of Fisheries in the St. Lawrence

As climate change causes species to move into new territories, scientists are increasingly working with local communities to understand how these shifts affect livelihoods. One such case involves new populations of lobster in the St. Lawrence estuary where MEOPAR funded a research project to investigate a test fishery. The test fishery was approached as a collaborative effort: researchers worked hand-in-hand with the Tourelle Fishermen Association and the Wolastoqiyik Wampanoag First Nation to plan and analyze the research. By involving local fishers and Indigenous leaders directly, the project successfully gathered vital data on whether lobster fishing is viable in these changing waters, while building trust and shared knowledge between scientists and the community.



THE RAPID RESPONSE HORIZON SELECTED TWO PROJECTS FOR FUNDING (\$130K).

One to investigate the effect of storms on the biogeochemistry of the St. Lawrence and another to examine change after a predicted seafloor eruption off the Pacific Coast.

PLANNING FOR THE MAJOR EXPEDITION HORIZON HAS BEGUN.

MEOPAR received seven letters of intent under this fund. Full proposals will be submitted in Fall 2026 (with projects expected to start in April 2027).

OPTIMIZING RESEARCH VESSEL ACCESS

MEOPAR works through the National Research Vessel Task Team (NRVTT) to coordinate how academic researchers can access different types of ships. Through monthly meetings and three plenary sessions, MEOPAR facilitated the group increasing research vessel access in Canada.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Empowering the Next Generation of Indigenous Marine Leaders

MEOPAR supported a Mi'kmaq and Inuit-led expedition in the southern fjords of Newfoundland that brought together 21 youth and 20 mentors, including Elders and scientists, aboard the R/V Polar Prince. During this week-long program, youth gained hands-on experience with advanced scientific tools, such as underwater remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), CTD deployments, and eDNA sampling techniques. By providing direct mentorship from experts and role models, the project helped strengthen the identity and leadership of Indigenous youth, reinforcing their vital role as stewards of their traditional marine territories.

OBJECTIVE 4

DIVERSIFYING, DEVELOPING, AND BROADENING DEPLOYMENT OF CANADA'S OCEAN-RELATED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION TALENT

OVERVIEW

This year, MEOPAR focused on **supporting the next generation of ocean leaders, investing \$1.6 million through its Early Career Researcher (ECR) Awards** to support nine investigators across academic, Indigenous, and non-profit organizations. Alongside these awards, hands-on field expeditions, funded projects and Indigenous-led internship programs are helping bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, ensuring the future of ocean research is inclusive, diverse, and deeply connected to local knowledge.

IN DETAIL



Supporting Future Leaders (Early Career Researcher Awards)

MEOPAR provides vital support to researchers who are establishing their own independent research programs and ramping up to become leaders in their field. These awards support early career researchers who are within five years of their first independent research appointment, inside or outside academia.

AWARDED

\$1.6M

to support
nine ECR

This year, MEOPAR awarded **\$1.6 million to nine early career researchers** across diverse organizations, including **seven academic institutions, one First Nations organization, and one non-profit**. By supporting these investigators at a critical juncture in their careers, MEOPAR is fostering a new wave of leadership that is representative of Canada's diverse social and cultural landscape. It also empowers non-faculty organisations to carry out research with a more placed based focus.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Reviving Ancestral Mariculture in Gitga'at Territory

Led by *Spencer Greening, Gitga'at Oceans and Land Department*. This project seeks to document ancestral mariculture (aquaculture) practices and the living knowledge of marine stewardship within Gitga'at Territory. By establishing a baseline of these traditional systems, the research aims to revitalize historical ways of living to create greater abundance, climate resilience and cultural continuity. This work demonstrates how Indigenous-led research can provide essential frameworks for the sustainable management of coastal ecosystems in a changing climate.

MEOPAR SUPPORTS HANDS-ON LEARNING THROUGH FIELDWORK

Scientific theory becomes practical reality in the field. MEOPAR's removes financial barriers by covering the travel and logistical costs associated with accessing ship-based training opportunities

BERTH AWARDS

24 HQP

This year, 24 HQP received support through Berth Awards, allowing them to participate in vital fieldwork from the North Pole to the Antarctic Peninsula. These opportunities have proven transformative; participants reported that these experiences strengthened their technical skills, expanded their professional networks, and provided their first opportunity to apply academic training in real-world settings.

- 4 were funded to train at the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS) in collaboration with Canadian Associates of BIOS. (Two summer interns & two week-long expeditions through the Sea Experience in Shipboard Oceanography (SESO) program).
- 3 were funded to participate in the 10-day Saroma Sea Ice School 2026, in collaboration with the [BEPSII](#), [Clce2Clouds](#), and [CATCH](#) working groups.
- 6 were funded to participate in the six week-long Canada Sweden Arctic Ocean 2025 field school to the North Pole, in collaboration with the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat.
- 9 Canadian female researchers and Indigenous Elders were supported to participate in the three week Breaking Boundaries at the Bottom of the World expedition, in collaboration with [Sea Women Expeditions](#).
- 2 were supported to participate in the three-week Marine Renewables 2025 Expedition on the Scotian Shelf, in collaboration with Natural Resources Canada.

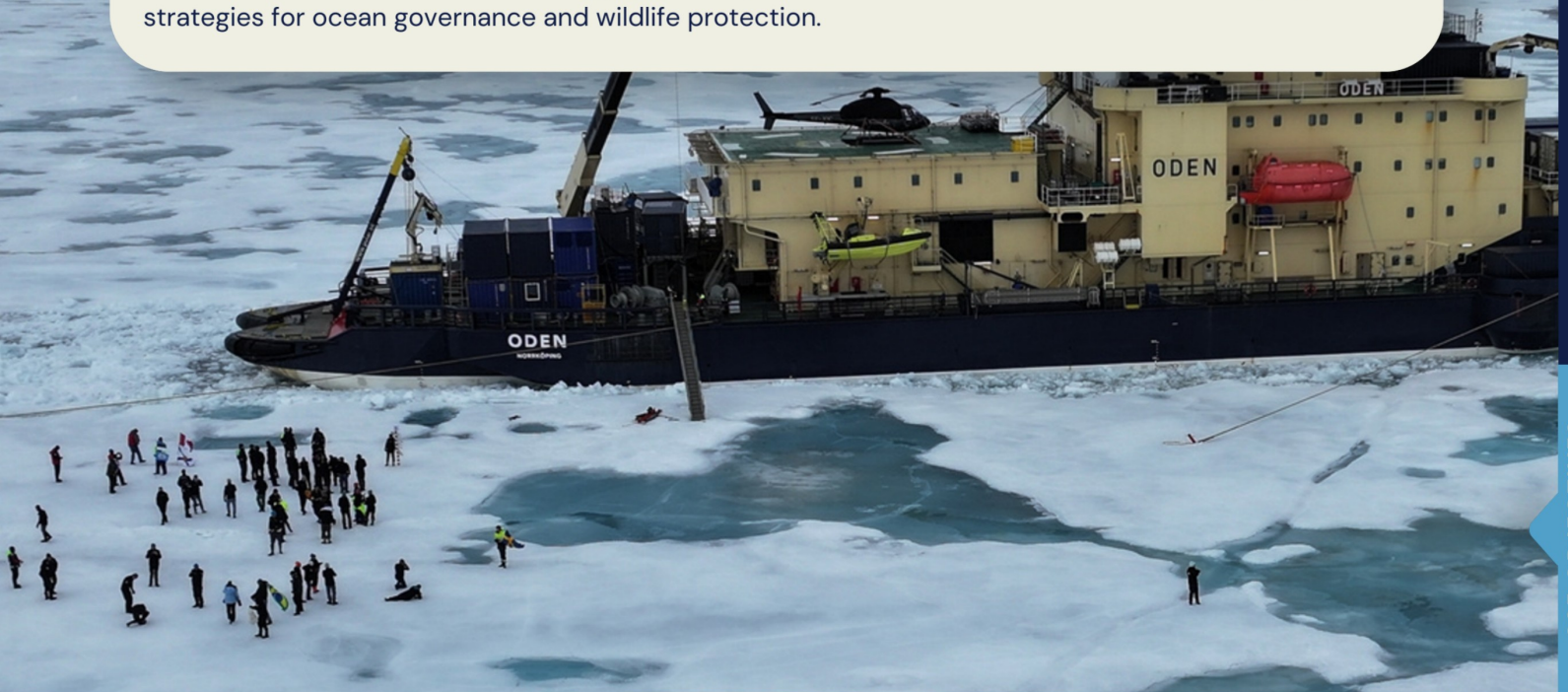
The most significant outcomes of this experience were driven by the immersive, vessel-based learning environment and the relationships built through direct, applied engagement at sea. **Chelsea Karbowski**, [Marine Renewables 2025 Expedition](#)

This project has had a transformative impact on my career as an early-career Arctic researcher. Through the formal research school curriculum, expert-led seminars, and daily collaboration with scientists at various career stages aboard I/B Oden, I gained rigorous theoretical grounding in polar ocean science alongside rare, hands-on fieldwork experience. **Florence Beaudry**, [Canada-Sweden Arctic Ocean 2025 Expedition](#)

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Indigenous Youth Internship: Integrating Knowledge for Whale Protection on the BC Coast

Clear Seas Partnership – led by Stephany Clouatre-Groleau student at the *British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)*. Protecting marine life requires a multi-faceted approach that respects both modern data and traditional wisdom. This research project explored how Indigenous Knowledge and Western science can work together to reduce "whale strikes"—collisions between vessels and whales—along the British Columbia coast. By engaging with Knowledge Keepers and coastal guardians, the project examined how traditional ecological knowledge can inform vessel navigation and marine conservation. This collaborative approach helps create more inclusive and culturally grounded strategies for ocean governance and wildlife protection.



INCLUSIVE PATHWAYS IN MARINE RESEARCH (CLEAR SEAS PARTNERSHIP)

MEOPAR is committed to diversifying ocean-related careers by creating meaningful opportunities for Indigenous youth. Through a partnership with Clear Seas, MEOPAR supported 20 Indigenous youth internships over the past year.

These four-to-six-month internships allow youth to conduct maritime research that integrates traditional knowledge with modern science. By connecting community-based monitoring and conservation science with industry collaboration, this program is building research capacity within Indigenous communities and ensuring that the next generation of marine stewardship is led by those with deep, ancestral connections to the sea.

OUR NATIONAL IMPACT: ADVANCING CANADA'S OCEAN FUTURE

MEOPAR serves as a vital connector in Canada's ocean research ecosystem. In our second year under the SSF fund, MEOPAR continues to fulfill its mandate of advancing Canada's ocean science. Each of MEOPAR's core programs work towards our scientific objectives, aligning with Canada's most pressing national and international goals. In addition, MEOPAR advances federal priorities in key areas:

MEOPAR AS

MEOPAR DRIVES ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND THE BLUE ECONOMY

MEOPAR drives economic prosperity and the blue economy by investing in programs that build shared expertise, local capacity, and integrated collaboration across Canada's ocean sector. Through MEOPAR's Communities of Practice and Community-led Research funds, MEOPAR strengthens coordination and support local leadership for economic and stewardship priorities across the blue economy. These programs are strengthening a more integrated, resilient, and inclusive blue economy across Canada.

MEOPAR SUPPORTS GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The ocean is the primary regulator of Earth's climate, and Canada plays a critical role in understanding its shifts. MEOPAR elevates Canadian ocean science both locally and on the world stage by supporting access to ship-based research through its Expedition Fund and by developing strategic international partnerships, including collaborations in the Antarctic and transnational research with JPI-Oceans on Blue Carbon and the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC). Through these efforts, MEOPAR ensures Canadian expertise remains at the forefront of global initiatives to mitigate climate change and protect marine biodiversity.



A MULTIPLIER



MEOPAR ADVANCES EQUITY, RECONCILIATION, AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The future of ocean science depends on a diverse and inclusive workforce. MEOPAR is actively building the next generation of marine leaders by:

- **Supporting Indigenous and Community Leadership:** Through community-led research funds, as well as evaluation criteria that prioritize EDIA and truth and reconciliation, MEOPAR supports the braiding of knowledge systems through indigenous and community leadership in ocean research.
- **Investing in Talent:** By funding early-career researchers and highly qualified personnel, MEOPAR is ensuring that Canada remains a global leader in ocean science, attracting and retaining the best talent in the world.

MEOPAR STRENGTHENS SOVEREIGNTY AND MARITIME CAPACITY

Through unique partnerships with the Royal Canadian Navy and other maritime agencies, MEOPAR provides the scientific tools, knowledge and observational data necessary to support national security and sovereignty. These collaborations demonstrate how scientific innovation can directly support the protection of our maritime borders and the safety of those who work upon them.

\$21M +

MEOPAR acts as a force multiplier for federal investment. By leveraging significant contributions from academic, industry, and non-profit partners, including over \$21 million in matched and leveraged funding this year, we maximize the impact of every dollar provided through the Strategic Science Fund, ensuring a high return on investment for all Canadians.



OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Ocean science is most effective when it is inclusive, diverse, and accessible to all Canadians.

MEOPAR is committed to embedding the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Truth and Reconciliation into every aspect of our organization, from how we govern, to how we fund ocean research and communicate its results.

EDIA IN ACTION

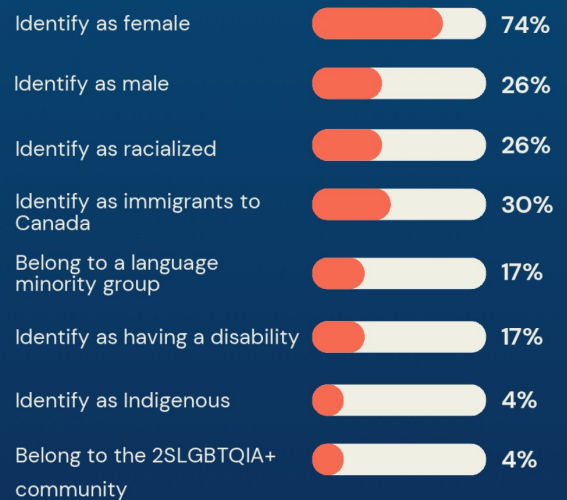
Recognizing the influence of peer review on funding outcomes, MEOPAR broadened its reviewer pool through the targeted recruitment of guest reviewers and EDIA experts to support fair, transparent, and equitable decision-making.

- **Created more inclusive funding calls:** MEOPAR's calls for proposals now require applicants to describe how EDIA and Truth and Reconciliation principles are embedded in project design, partnerships, and accountability. These sections are evaluated by EDIA experts aside of the scientific merit of the proposals.
- **Developed Resources:** A webinar on inclusion and reconciliation, fund-specific information sessions, FAQs, guides, bilingual resources and individualized responses helped applicants navigate funding opportunities. See MEOPAR's webinar: [Dive in! Exploring Inclusion & Reconciliation in Proposals](#).
- **Introduced funds that support community-led research:** Two new funds supported Indigenous-led and community-led projects focused on local priorities and benefits for coastal communities.
- **Prioritized inclusive hiring:** Recruitment practices aim to reduce bias, use structured screening, support accessibility, and strengthen representation in interview pools.
- **Progressed EDIA policy and strategic planning:** MEOPAR engaged EDIA and HR consultants to review existing policies and support the development of a draft EDIA policy and three-year strategic roadmap.



Diverse ocean science is supported by a diverse team*

* 74% provided voluntary self-identification data.



MEOPAR is committed to continuously improving its EDIA and Truth and Reconciliation practices. MEOPAR will continue to monitor self-identification data, strengthen inclusive recruitment, funding and governance, and act on recommendations across its operations.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

MEOPAR ensures equitable access to its programs, services, and communications for English- and French-speaking communities across Canada. Guided by the Official Languages Act, we continue to strengthen bilingual engagement and improve accessibility across all aspects of our work.



Bilingual communications

All external communications are available in both official languages. Core content is professionally human translated to ensure quality, consistency, and alignment with MEOPAR's French terminology guidelines.



Accessible funding programs

Applicants can apply for funding, communicate with staff, sign agreements, and submit project reports in the official language of their choice. Our online application platform (SurveyMonkey Apply) is fully bilingual.



Inclusive events and webinars

Webinars are offered in both official languages whenever possible. When bilingual delivery is not feasible, MEOPAR provides live French translation through Wordly's real-time transcription service, with recordings and supporting materials available in both languages.



Supporting Francophone engagement

MEOPAR continues to strengthen relationships with French-speaking researchers, organizations, and partners across Canada through bilingual outreach and engagement activities, including participation in events in Québec.



Advancing bilingual ocean data

CIOOS offers all communications, data tools, and programming in both official languages. Through its St. Lawrence Regional Association, the St. Lawrence Global Observatory (SLGO), CIOOS provides the Francophone community in Canada with full access to ocean observing resources and services in French, including data tools, documentation, and outreach.



MEOPAR'S FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE IN 2025–2026

MEOPAR's financial performance in 2025–2026 reflects a year of strong program delivery, responsible stewardship, and continued growth in both SSF and non-SSF funding streams. Total revenues reached \$9.35 million, driven primarily by SSF support of just over \$8.09M, alongside \$1.23M in non-SSF partnership and project revenue. Expenses for the year totaled \$9.23M, resulting in a positive surplus of \$115,692, demonstrating disciplined financial management and careful alignment of spending with program priorities.

The organization fully delivered its SSF allocation for the year, with expenditures distributed across research, knowledge mobilization, networking, and operations.

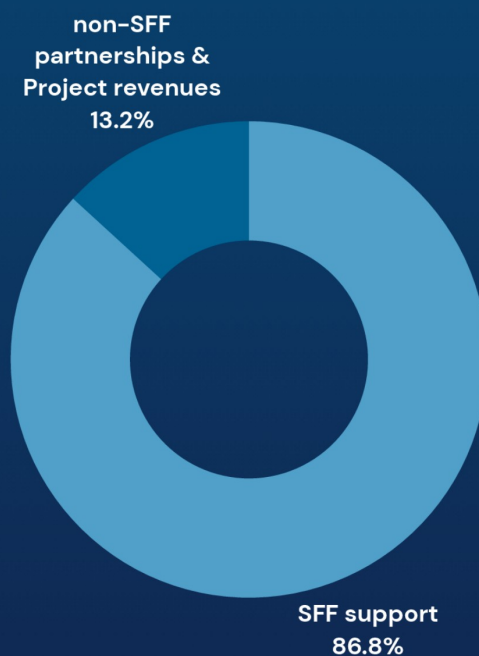
Research remained MEOPAR's largest investment area, totaling \$5.0 million, reflecting the breadth of activities undertaken—from CIOOS national coordinating office operations and support for regional associations, postdoctoral fellowships and strategic international research initiatives to Expedition Fund grants and directed research partnerships.

Knowledge mobilization accounted for \$1.66M, supporting projects that translated ocean science into tools, training, and community-focused initiatives.

Networking and communications expenditures reached \$385,210, enabling national workshops, partner engagement, and community events, while operations and administration totaled \$1.35M, supporting salaries, HR systems, IT infrastructure, travel, and professional services.

Total funds distributed to Ultimate Recipients this fiscal year was \$5,000,419.

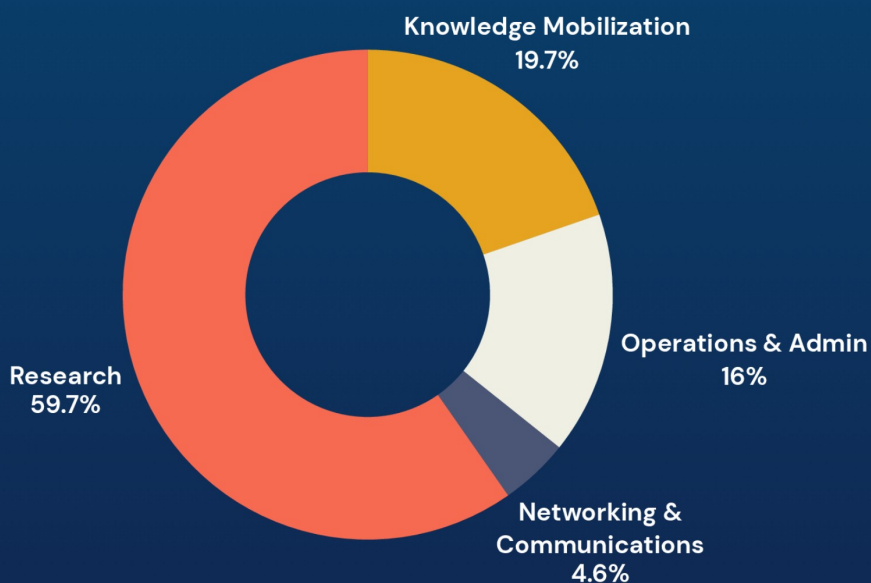
Total Income
\$9.35M



MEOPAR's financial performance was further strengthened by its ability to attract and leverage external funding. Partner contributions within SSF funded projects reached \$21.8 million this year, an exceptional level of leveraging that underscores MEOPAR's role as a trusted national delivery partner. Non-SSF revenues also reflected a diverse funding base, including support from federal departments such as Polar Knowledge Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, industry partners, and collaborations with notforprofit organizations and research alliances.

Overall, MEOPAR ended the year financially stable, with full SSF program delivery, diversified revenue sources, and a positive surplus. The organization's ability to manage a growing funding portfolio, while maintaining strong controls and delivering high impact national programming, positions it well for continued success as SSF enters its third year.

Total Expenses
\$8.09M



**MEOPAR's financial statements for the year were audited by Doane Grant Thornton LLP, who issued a clean opinion confirming that the statements present fairly, in all material respects, the organization's financial position.*

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, MEOPAR's Strategic Plan provides a strong framework for turning our vision into action and strengthening our contribution to Canada's ocean future.

In the coming year, we will advance the next phase of Strategic Science Fund programming, including continued Expedition Funding, community-led research funding, and a renewed focus on Living Labs that test ocean solutions in real life settings. We will deepen strategic partnerships and explore new opportunities for growth and revenue diversification.

Together, these efforts will strengthen MEOPAR's ability to support impactful research, foster collaboration, mobilize ocean knowledge, and build the partnerships and capacity needed to address challenges of national importance.

As Canada's ocean science landscape continues to evolve, MEOPAR will remain focused on bringing people and expertise together, creating opportunities for collaboration, and strengthening our role as a trusted connector across the ocean research ecosystem.



**A Living Lab is an interaction space where a variety of actors (e.g. end-users, communities, companies, public agencies, universities, research institutions) form people-public-private partnerships to collaborate on creation, prototyping, validating, and testing of social innovations, new technology, services, products, and systems in real life contexts (Definition modified from Westerlund & Leminen, 2011).*



A COORDINATED CANADIAN APPROACH TO OCEAN
RESEARCH, RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION



Steele Ocean Sciences Building · 6375 Edzell Castle Circle, 2nd Floor · Halifax, NS B3H 4J1
meopar.ca · info@meopar.ca

