



A Community Story from Quadra Island

## Heriot Bay Wharf Upgrades Boost Aquaculture Productivity



# Meet Victor McLaggan.

“Shellfish farming is great...until your lantern burns out,” quips Victor McLaggan, a 62-year old oyster and clam grower on Quadra Island. “You have to keep your eyes on those propane mantles.”

Since he was first introduced to shell-fishing with his neighbour, toting their Coleman lanterns off the beaches of Cortes Island, Victor and his wife Kathy have been avid aqua-culturists. No sooner did the couple move out from Ontario to the Discovery Islands, did they trade in their life working the soil for a life pulling from the sea. It was the 1980s, and BC's shellfish industry was still in its infancy.

“(Back then) it was such hard work. Kathy and I wanted to quit so many times,” said Victor, who has since set up two Quadra-based businesses, Vic's Oysters and Outlandish Seafoods, a local processing company that distributes shellfish from Tofino to St. John's, with 'a few gaps in between'. “Before the changes, we would deliver our haul two or three times a week, bringing in around two tonnes each time. But then we had to unload everything by hand, onto our truck, as fast as we could. Finally, one summer, it just got too much. We had to hire two guys to help us.”

After the Heriot Bay Wharf facilities got its upgrades, including the loading wharf and crane, ocean farmers like Victor and Kathy saw an immediate benefit.

“It was friggin' awesome,” says Victor. “We could just pull in, use the crane to quickly move out our product and it was done. We were able to increase our volume to six totes of shellfish at three tonnes each. We increased our gross by 20%.”

Alongside the increase in shellfish production, Victor says he has seen a few new shellfish operators start up and more visitor boats mooring along the Wharf. He says during prawn season, it gets even busier down at the Wharf, but overall people are very pleased with the improvements.

“We're all so happy with what has been done. It's made our lives much better, because it allows us to consider expansion instead of contraction,” says Victor. “As they say: 'build it and they will come'. We really hope this will make the shellfish business more attractive to the younger generation. All we need now is a hotdog stand!”