



SPECIAL REPORT 2025

Connecting B.C. Forestry's Indigenous Past to its Indigenous Future



Forest Enhancement
Society of BC



BC FIRST NATIONS
**FORESTRY
COUNCIL**





Message from First Nations Forestry Council

LENNARD JOE, CEO

**Henté? nsk^west Suxwsxwels.
Tut he Nla'kapamuxkn.**

Hello everyone, my traditional name is Grizzly-Man. I am from the Nla'kapamux Territory.

Nskíxze? t Barbara Joe nee Swakum, he nsqácze? Percy Joe.

My mother who has passed is Barbara Joe ne Swakum and my father is Percy Joe.

Yé tək síłq̓t̓ ?émit he tmixw x̓wuy' kn q̓wincút.

Today is a good day to speak about looking after the land.

húm'èt cúkw, Kwuk^wscemx^w.

This was what I had to say, thank you.

Today, First Nations are leading.

We are bringing back cultural fire to restore the land.

We are training our youth, building our businesses, creating good jobs for our people, and generating lasting benefits for our communities.

We are showing that stewardship and commerce can walk together.

We can care for the forest and use its gifts wisely.



Throughout the publication, discover the transformational work on the landscape to mitigate wildfire risk, build forest resilience, and enhance wildlife habitat with projects receiving investments by the Forest Enhancement Society of BC.



Wildfire Risk Reduction Project



Fibre Utilization Project



Fibre Utilization Project



Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project



Wildfire Risk Reduction Project



Fibre Utilization Project



Wildfire Risk Reduction Project



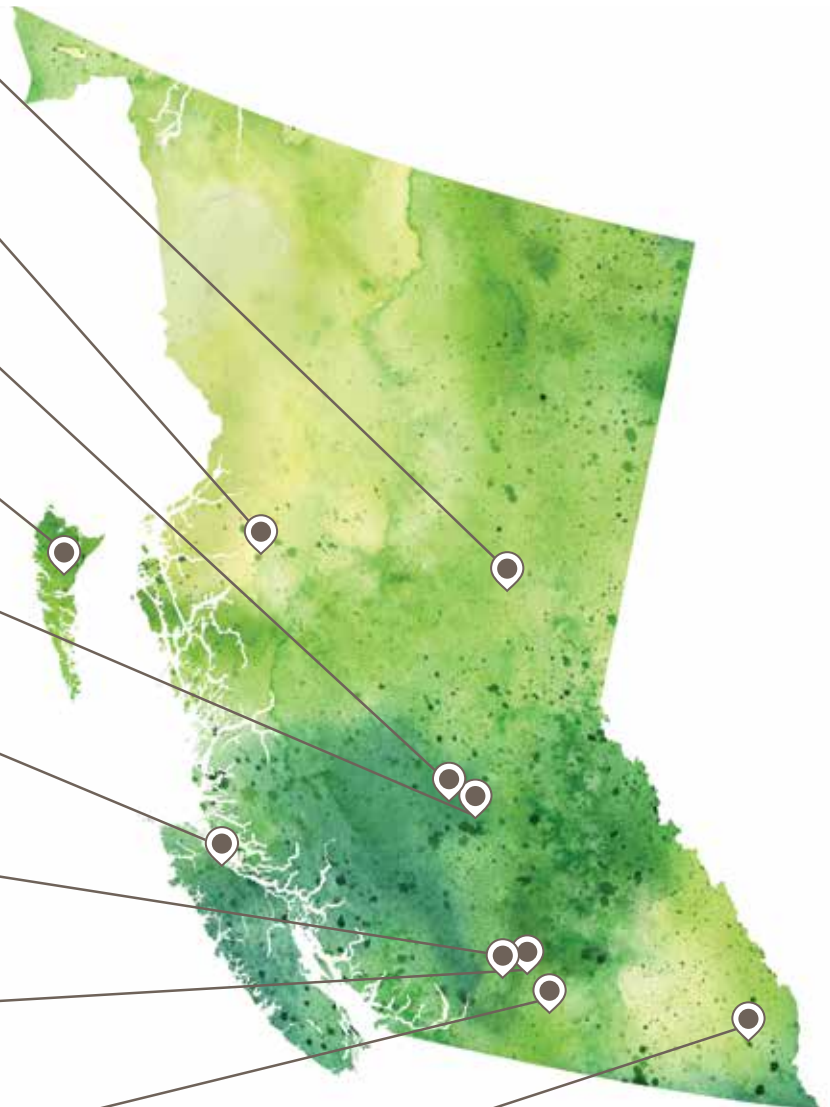
Fibre Utilization Project



Wildfire Risk Reduction Project



Wildfire Risk Reduction Project



For more on 400+ projects invested in across B.C., visit www.fesbc.ca











Each day, I'm reminded that forestry tells a bigger story— one of reconciliation, shared prosperity, and deep respect for the land. In the work of the Forest Enhancement Society of BC and the First Nations Forestry Council, you see the true power of partnership: forests restored, communities strengthened, and First Nations' leadership honoured on the lands we all call home.

RAVI PARMAR

Minister of Forests and Deputy Government House Leader



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**Forest Enhancement Society
of BC** and connect with
us at www.fesbc.ca



Learn more about the
First Nations Forestry Council
and connect with us at
www.forestrycouncil.ca

Ntityix Resources LP project site near West Kelowna, B.C. | Photo Credit: Tiffany Christianson Photography



Welcome to a Special Report by the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) and the First Nations Forestry Council highlighting some of the exciting and innovative FESBC-funded forestry projects being led by Indigenous Peoples across British Columbia.

Like this report, many of the projects you will read about are collaborations between people and groups with different backgrounds who are connected by a common purpose: **to make the most of what we take from the forest landscape and give back by investing in the long-term resilience of B.C.'s forests.** The First Nations Forestry Council was invited by FESBC to collaborate on this special publication, released in time for the **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**, as a way to share and celebrate

the progress being made toward inclusive, sustainable forest stewardship in the province.

We express gratitude to the Forestry Council's Strategic Advisors, experienced forest professionals representing distinct First Nations and regions across B.C. They provide **culturally informed, regionally grounded expertise on a wide range of forestry issues**, helping to ensure the Forestry Council's policy work, program development, and advocacy reflect the priorities and realities of First Nations on the ground. Their role is an important extension of the Forestry Council team and reflects the kind of **Indigenous leadership and community-driven approaches** featured in the projects supported by FESBC.





An aerial view of a Ntityix Resources LP project | Photo Credit: Living with Fire video

Returning Cultural Burns to a Parched Okanagan Landscape

Long before settler colonialism, syilx Okanagan people would regularly conduct low-intensity controlled burns, carefully planned to maintain and replenish the health of the land and the tmix^w (all living things). **Viewing fire as a medicine**, this method of burning forests and grasslands, known today as prescribed, controlled, cultural or traditional burns, also limited the threat of wildfires blazing out of control.

But with colonialism came the gradual suppression of fire from the landscape, as settlers in syilx Okanagan territories favoured reactionary wildfire-suppression strategies. This approach came at a cost, leading to an extreme buildup of dry fuels and vegetation cover in fire-prone areas that have resulted in unhealthy forests more likely to burn uncontrollably.

All those factors, combined with drier conditions brought on by climate change, have led to the devastating wildfires experienced in recent years, further causing a decline in animal population. Thankfully, many organizations have been leading proactive wildfire risk reduction work to help better protect communities. One such organization is **Ntityix Resources LP (Ntityix)**, owned by **Westbank First Nation (WFN)**.

In addition to caring for the forest, the many values it holds, and for those who enjoy it, Ntityix believes they also have a responsibility to their neighbours who may be affected by the activities that occur in the forests they manage. Their wildfire mitigation projects

within Westbank First Nation's community forest, for example, have shown to be effective in reducing those impacts. Earlier treatments in the Glenrosa area, including pruning tree branches and creating more space between trees, kept the flames of the 2021 Mount Law wildfire from reaching the top of tree canopies to further spread into community neighbourhoods. This work ultimately limited the wildfire's growth, helping firefighters maintain its intensity by keeping the flames on the ground.

"When the fire came through the area, the intensity of the fire just dropped. The 'roar' went out of the fire as soon as it hit the area we had treated, immediately showing us how impactful the work we were doing was," explained Dave Gill, Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and General Manager of Forestry at Ntityix.

Similar groundwork helped save even more homes in the 2023 McDougall Creek wildfire, which burned through 8,000 hectares of WFN's community forest. And like the Mount Law wildfire, **Ntityix's previous fire mitigation work in Rose Valley Regional Park enabled firefighters to effectively contain its spread**, dropping flames in the forest canopy down to the ground.

"We call it mitigation because we can't prevent a fire from starting," noted Peter Kascak, a mentoring forester at Ntityix. *"A fire is going to start—it's just going to happen. But what we can do is create a situation where it could be of less intensity."*



Charles Kruger, a technician with Ntityix Resources LP, stands near a burning slash pile under his watch in the Glenrosa area in Westbank First Nation in syilx territory on March 20, 2025
Photo Credit: Aaron Hemens

Charles Kruger, of syilx Okanagan and Sinixt ancestry, joined Ntityix as a technician in early 2025, and shares his knowledge of fire with the rest of the crew.

By March, Kruger and other Ntityix technicians burned slash piles in the WFN community forest, again in the Glenrosa area. This part of the WFN community forest was identified as a critical priority due to its proximity to private property lines within a wildland-urban interface. The piles consisted of accumulated forest debris, as well as smaller trees and pruned lower-hanging branches, collected during Ntityix's mitigation work in the spring of 2024.

And while burning the wood piles at the wrong time could spark a grass fire, the March day's moist conditions proved to be effective. Once the dozen or so remaining slash piles had burned,

the years-long effort to increase the fire guard between the Glenrosa community and the nearby forest was complete.

Kruger takes a lot of pride in the work he does at Ntityix, working to protect people's homes and lives. But if fire is to be reintroduced to the ecosystem—and used as good medicine like it once was—he said that **fire should be treated with more respect by people in the Okanagan Valley.**

"It could save your life in the cold months. It could also hurt you if you don't know what you're doing," he remarked. "Respect that fire. It can hurt you, it can scar you—just respect the fire, which we do, and utilize it."

Top: Slash piles—which consist of accumulated forest debris, surface and ladder fuels—burn in a forestry area that had undergone wildfire mitigation work in 2024, in the Glenrosa area in Westbank First Nation in syilx Okanagan homelands on March 20, 2025

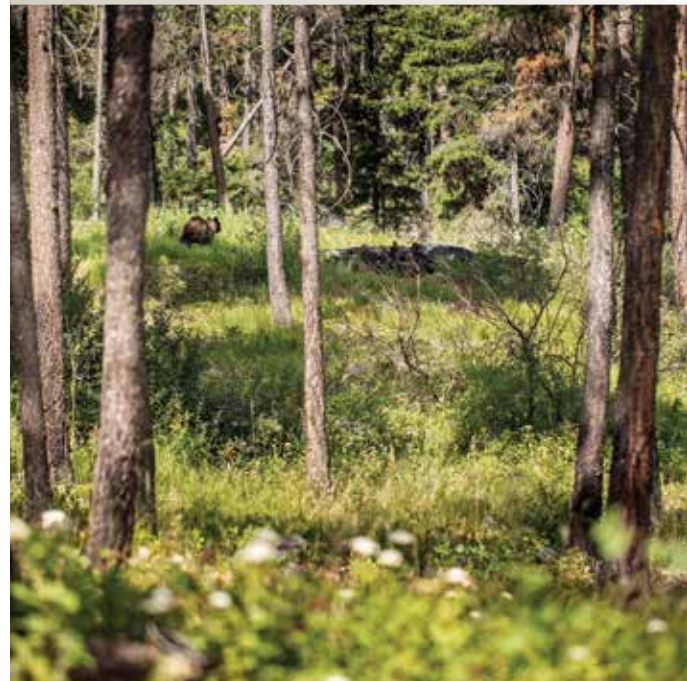
Photo Credit: Aaron Hemens

Middle: Ntityix Resources LP project site near West Kelowna, B.C.

Photo Credit: Tiffany Christianson Photography

Bottom: Mic Werstuik, CEO of Ntityix Resources LP during a tour with the FESBC Board of Directors

Photo Credit: Tiffany Christianson Photography



Support from FESBC, with funding from the Ministry of Forests, has also been instrumental in the success of Ntityix's ongoing wildfire risk reduction efforts. This partnership has enabled the treatment of approximately 300 hectares around the communities of West Kelowna and Peachland over the past decade, with more projects planned for the near future.

"The Forest Enhancement Society of BC is pleased to support local people doing great forestry work around their communities. The work being done by Westbank First Nation and Ntityix is a great example of managing forests to improve wildlife habitat, foster better ecosystem health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce wildfire risk for residents while also creating economic opportunities by using the logs and biomass generated by their activities," said Jason Fisher, Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and Executive Director of FESBC.

As communities across B.C. face wildfire threats, the work of Ntityix is a powerful example of effective and culturally informed forest management.

The video **'Living With Fire'** showcases Ntityix's extensive and impactful work to mitigate wildfire risk to communities. It emphasizes the significance of ongoing wildfire risk reduction efforts and highlights the role of Indigenous leadership and traditional cultural practices in forest management.



Scan the QR code to watch the 'Living with Fire' video and see the work done by Ntityix Resources LP.

Story credits:
Aaron Hemens, IndigiNews



Keenau Saunders, a technician with Ntityix Resources LP, ignites a slash pile with a drip torch in the Glenrosa area in Westbank First Nation in syilx Okanagan homelands on March 20, 2025 | Photo Credit: Aaron Hemens

SPECIAL FEATURE | Restoring Balance: Indigenous Youth at the Heart of Wildfire Resilience

Fire has always played an important role in keeping our forests healthy. For generations, **First Nations have used cultural burning to care for the land, reducing fuel, supporting biodiversity, and renewing ecosystems.** These practices reflect deep knowledge and respect for the natural world.

Today, as B.C. faces more frequent and intense wildfires, that knowledge is more important than ever. And there is good news: **First Nations are leading the way in bringing fire back into balance.**

Across the province, Indigenous youth are stepping forward with purpose. Through training programs and mentorship, they are learning how to carry out cultural burns safely and effectively, combining the wisdom of their Elders with modern fire science. They are building the skills to reduce wildfire risk and strengthen the health of our forests for generations to come.

Cultural burning is a proactive and powerful solution. These small, intentional fires clear excess fuel, protect cultural values, and help prevent larger, more destructive wildfires. Just as importantly, they build community, reconnect people with the land, and create space for leadership to grow.

This is a new chapter rooted in cultural strength, resilience, and innovation. **First Nations are not only restoring traditional practices, they are shaping the future of wildfire management in B.C.** With the right support, Indigenous youth are ready to lead this work, building careers that honour both their heritage and their vision for a safer, more sustainable future.

Together, we have an opportunity to restore balance to our forests, reduce wildfire risk, and support the next generation of leaders.

The land remembers fire. And through Indigenous leadership, we are remembering how to live in balance with it once again.

Mitigating Wildfire Risk Along Highway 39: A Collaborative Approach to Community Protection

As the sole evacuation route for the community of Mackenzie—and with a critical telecommunications line in its right-of-way—Highway 39 was identified as a high priority, first in the 2017 Community Wildfire Protection Plan and again in the 2022 Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan for wildfire risk reduction. In 2018, work began on a wildfire mitigation project along the highway corridor, supported by a \$1 million investment from FESBC and \$350,000 from the McLeod Lake Mackenzie Community Forest (MLMCF), co-owned by the McLeod Lake Indian Band and the District of Mackenzie. Initial efforts focused on developing fuel management prescriptions and implementing limited treatments in high-risk areas along the corridor.

Four years later, the MLMCF launched a new phase of mitigation work to address remaining high-risk zones. For three years, crews conducted mechanical and manual thinning and pruning, fibre recovery of pulp logs and grinding hog fuel, as well as burning of debris along Highway 39. **In total, 91.6 hectares were treated, reducing the risk of a compromised evacuation of the communities in the event of a wildfire.**

"Wildfire risk reduction is critical to our communities, and community forests are uniquely positioned, in most instances, to help deliver this work. FESBC is a very important and positive force to this end," said Dan Boulianne, Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and General Manager, McLeod Lake Mackenzie Community Forest. "Simply put, we would only have achieved a fraction of this progress without their support. FESBC and PricewaterhouseCoopers staff provided excellent support and guidance, helping our community

forest and the District of Mackenzie succeed in deploying this funding effectively and achieving our wildfire risk reduction goals."

Much of the work involved **fuel reduction treatments** in mature forests with conventional harvesting equipment such as skidders and bunchers. The MLMCF was intent on recovering as much fibre as possible for use in local biomass facilities, with some remaining unrecoverable debris burned on-site.

With treatments completed on most of the high-risk mature forest fuel hazards along the highway, the MLMCF has been shifting its focus to younger plantations, conducting early treatments to influence stand structure and prevent similar fuel loading and wildfire susceptibility in the future.

In keeping with this focus, the project included thinning a younger plantation using a specialized machine known as the **Malwa Combi**, which combines a harvester and forwarder in one. The MLMCF partnered with **A.M. Anderson Ventures**, the Malwa's owner, and **Spectrum Resource Group** to trial the machine and assess the best combination of mechanical and manual treatments to meet prescription goals. The results proved the Malwa Combi to be an effective tool in this application, as thinning, processing, log recovery and debris piling were completed with minimal site impact, complemented with manual thinning and debris burning.

Ultimately, the MLMCF aims to assess the effectiveness of specialized equipment to achieve thinning objectives and, where feasible, establish cost and productivity benchmarks for future wildfire mitigation efforts.



A specialized machine known as the Malwa Combi, which combines a harvester and forwarder in one
Photo Credit: Mac Anderson





Left: Shulus Forest Enterprises crews burning fuel debris piles in Steffens Estates area | Photo Credit: Ernie Mclvor
 Right: Burke Nesjan, Skeetchestn Natural Resources Corporation Operations Manager, along with Craig Shintah, Forestry Supervisor and Ernie Mclvor, Crew Boss from the Lower Nicola Indian Band Development Corporation during a tour with FESBC
 Photo Credit: Tiffany Christianson Photography

Indigenous Practices Integrated in Wildfire Risk Reduction: Empowering Solutions for Generations

In the Steffens Estates subdivision, approximately 17 kilometres north of Merritt, crews from Shulus Forest Enterprises LP of the Lower Nicola Indian Band Development Corporation led wildfire risk reduction treatments to help reduce wildfire risk to communities, enhance forest resilience, and maintain critical wildlife habitat features, all while generating important economic benefits, and employment opportunities for Lower Nicola Indian Band members.

With assistance from Forsite Consultants Ltd. and funding support from FESBC, the project thinned out trees to allow more sunlight to enter the forest. Crews also trimmed branches and cut down smaller trees to reduce ladder fuels—the kind of conditions that can allow a fire to spread from the forest floor and climb up a tree. Finally, they cleaned up debris on the ground to help reduce how intensely a fire could burn in the area.

The results? **Wildfire risk has been reduced, critical infrastructure and transportation corridors are better protected, and job opportunities for Band members have increased.**

“The majority of Indigenous employees we have out here at site are at one with nature. To them, it’s not about what we take, especially as it relates to harvesting; it’s about what we leave,” shared Don Gossoo, General Manager of Lower Nicola Indian Band Development Corporation.

For FESBC, supporting projects like this is key to empowering local Indigenous groups to build capacity and help address long standing deficits in leading and participating in active forest management, while further enhancing forest resilience.

Shulus Forest Enterprises LP crews are a great example of Indigenous-led forestry doing important work.



Scan the QR code to watch a video of Lower Nicola Indian Band crews at work.



Post-treatment area after
the clearing, piling, and
burning were completed
Photo Credit: Aaron Lee



Shuswap Band Tackles Wildfire Risk Reduction with a Goal to Carry Out Future Cultural Burning

Juniper Heights, a residential area adjacent to the Shuswap Band Reserve near Invermere, in the East Kootenay region of B.C., has historically had wildfire risk reduction treatments conducted on the landbase. The area was experiencing a shift in vegetation resulting in increased fuel loads, or combustible materials, significantly increasing the risk of a more intense wildfire. Covering approximately 80 hectares, the area was an ideal candidate for fuel mitigation treatment to increase wildfire resilience and better protect the community.

This project came to fruition through the hard work and the vision of the **Shuswap Band**, who have worked tirelessly to increase their workforce capacity to tackle this important work. At the forefront of these efforts is **Kenpesq't Forestry LP** (Kenpesq't), a forestry company owned by the Shuswap Band. With funding investments from FESBC, Kenpesq't began treatment work in Juniper Heights initially with the **manual cutting of small and immature trees, hand piling branches and forest debris, and burning the piles to eliminate the forest fuel from the sites**. The project was completed in April 2025 when burn pile locations were grass seeded with the intent to minimize the proliferation of invasive plants in the exposed soil.

"The Shuswap Band is proud to take part in this vital, Indigenous-led initiative in partnership with the Province of British Columbia and Kenpesq't," said Shuswap Band

Chief Barbara Cote. *"By focusing on proactive and preventative measures, this program strengthens our collective efforts to mitigate the risks of future forest fires. It also provides a meaningful cultural learning experience that not only supports our community but contributes to the safety and well-being of the wider public, while ensuring the protection of all of our wildlife and plants for future generations."*

As a result of the project, there is a reduction in fuel loading within the Wildland Urban Interface near the community of Juniper Heights and there is now an opportunity for future cultural and prescribed burns, **utilizing Indigenous forest management practices** to maintain this environment in perpetuity. Additionally, these treatments serve to enhance wildlife habitat for species including bighorn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk.

First Nations continue to play a vital leadership role in the forestry sector of B.C. This project exemplifies the importance of Indigenous People's knowledge and historical cultural practices in land management. Implementation of these principles help to achieve environmental, cultural, social, and economic benefits.



KENPESQ'T





SPECIAL FEATURE

Forestry has Always Been Part of Our Way of Life

Long before the industry took shape as we know it today, First Nations were managing the forests with deep respect, cultural knowledge, and long-term thinking, protecting wildlife, nurturing the land, and sustaining our communities.

By the 1990s, machines replaced manual labour in B.C. forestry, increasing output from a few to dozens of loads daily. This industrialization largely left First Nations on the sidelines. At that time, very few Nations had a seat at the table. Decisions were made about our forests, our territories, and our futures without our consent, though often said to be made with "our best interests in mind." There were no meaningful roles for First Nations in forest planning, governance, or stewardship.

And yet, we persisted. Our people continued to advocate, organize, and assert our rights, pushing back against exclusion and pushing forward toward recognition. Over time, the conversation began to shift. Today, especially since the passing of DRIPA in 2019 and the modernization of forest policy in 2021, we are entering a new phase.

One that moves beyond the fight for inclusion and begins to honour our inherent responsibilities as caretakers of the land.

This shift takes time. It is a deep change in thinking, from fighting for rights to working together for sustainable change. First Nations are leading cultural burns, advancing fuel and wildfire risk reduction strategies, training the next generation of foresters, and building strong forestry businesses that support our communities. The stories featured in this publication, from Stuwix, Ntityix and McLeod Lake to Williams Lake, Atli, Taan Forest, and others, reflect that transition. **They show how Indigenous leadership and community-driven approaches are helping bring forestry back into balance.**

We are working toward a future where First Nations are not just participants in the forest sector, but full partners. A future where we co-manage the lands and waters of our territories in accordance with our own laws, protocols, and teachings. Where our young people build careers grounded in both traditional knowledge and Western science.



FESBC Board of Directors tour led by Ntityix Resources LP
Photo Credit: Tiffany Christianson Photography



Where fibre is used wisely, ecosystems are restored, and wildfire risks are reduced not only for First Nations, but for all British Columbians.

We carry a responsibility not just to our Nations, but to the health of the land and to future generations. We manage forests for both stewardship and commerce, just as our ancestors did when they traded along routes like the oolican grease trail. Strong forestry businesses and healthy forests go hand in hand because true stewardship requires investment, and good forest management results in both sustainable jobs and resilient ecosystems.

Today, we have the opportunity to return to land-based decision-making that reflects the distinct values and knowledge of each Nation. British Columbia is beginning to adopt a more distinction-based and Nation-based approach to forest land management, moving away from the one-size-fits-all policies of the past. We must ensure that this shift leads to operationally feasible programs in which First Nations are not only included, but integral to the solutions.

The First Nations Forestry Council and the Forest Enhancement Society of BC share a common goal: to advance forest stewardship that is inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven.

Through our respective efforts, both organizations are contributing to the transformation of how forestry is practiced in this province.

This publication is a celebration of that transformation. It is also a call to keep going, to continue investing in Indigenous knowledge, in forest stewardship, and in the people who have always called these lands home.

As you read these stories, I hope you are inspired by what is possible when reconciliation is matched with action and when forest management is shaped by both tradition and innovation.

K^wuk^wscemx^w | Thank you,

Lennard (Sux^wsx^wwels) Joe
CEO
First Nations Forestry Council



Empowered Stewardship: Williams Lake First Nation's Approach to Holistic Forest Health

Williams Lake First Nation's (WLFN) **Chimney Fuel Reduction project** is an excellent example of multiple organizations working toward a common goal. The project was made possible with funding from FESBC and Natural Resources Canada, driven by WLFN's desire to **better protect their community from wildfires and improve ecosystem health.**

Located on the outskirts of Williams Lake, the project area is adjacent to previously treated blocks. The treatment included a thin from below selective harvest where smaller trees were removed to favour the growth of healthier and more dominant ones. **To date, WLFN has treated 1,400 hectares in the Williams Lake and surrounding area, improving the health and resiliency of the stand, from a wildfire perspective.** Working with BC Wildfire Service, they continue to carry out prescribed understory burns to reduce fuel loads and rejuvenate the understory. A new burn plan is in development, with the next cultural burn scheduled to occur in 3-5 years.

Embracing their environmental responsibility and showing a strong commitment to forest stewardship, WLFN is working to ensure that projects minimize their carbon emissions and create forested areas that align with good forest management practices and the Nation's cultural values. WLFN has used the biomass generated by this project to support local businesses. Minimizing the burning of waste in these projects avoids the release of harmful smoke particulate and greenhouse gases.

The results speak for themselves. **WLFN is showing how Indigenous-led wildfire risk reduction treatments can avoid waste to reduce the carbon footprint, support green energy facilities, create forestry jobs and make meaningful contributions to the economy of the Cariboo all while making communities safer from wildfire.**

"We are thankful for the support we receive from FESBC. We have greatly improved the safety of our community while contributing to its economy. Being led by First Nations, we have managed for multiple values, such as increasing the abundance of culturally important plants. These treatments have many benefits that will be realized for many years to come," said John Walker, Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and Stewardship Forester, Williams Lake First Nation.



Grinding operation process during a project in the Tulameen area.

Photo Credit: Kate Colman,
Director of Marketing,
Klassen Group



Getting the Most out of B.C.'s Challenged Wood Fibre Base

In today's environment, the bioenergy, bioproduct, and agriculture sectors all require a reliable and creative fibre supply. The forest sector in B.C. is characterized by annual allowable cut reductions and mill closures primarily due to the effects of the mountain pine beetle and spruce beetle infestations, wildfires, and a reduced land base for timber harvesting. **Stuwix Resources Joint Venture (Stuwix), a First Nations-owned and operated fibre management company, is rising to the challenge through an innovative bush grinding program that optimizes forest fibre delivery and use.**

Stuwix is operated by a management committee made up of representatives from eight First Nations Bands located in the southern interior of British Columbia: the **Lower Nicola, Coldwater, Nooaitch, Shacken, Upper Nicola, Cook's Ferry, Siska, and Upper Similkameen Indian Bands.** With a vision to promote both healthy ecosystems and healthy independent communities, the company integrates Indigenous practices into forest management at every level.

With support from FESBC, Stuwix and the Klassen Group partnered in 2021 to find a solution to **utilize 80,000 cubic meters of fibre annually by grinding it—fibre that would normally go up in smoke.**

"FESBC funding has allowed us to reach out into areas to grind that we normally couldn't service,

thus providing faith to the licensees that we will get the job done," said Derek Mobbs, Value Stream Leader, Fibre, Klassen Group.

The program aligns with Stuwix's core values: full utilization of the forest, reduce open burning and improve stewardship of the land. Over the years, the teams have improved their efficiency, in part due to enhanced road infrastructure and logging standards made possible through collaboration with the licensee's planning department, which can now more readily rely on these fibre recovery services.

As a result of this work, Stuwix's members and shareholders benefit from **reduced slash burning, lower carbon emissions, and meaningful job creation.** The program directly employs twelve local workers, with many more supported through indirect employment.

Together, Stuwix and the Klassen Group are creating a win-win solution that benefits both the environment and the economy, and their partnership supports responsible forest stewardship, effective fibre utilization, and sustainable employment opportunities within the Timber Supply Area.





An example of wood waste salvaged after harvesting operations to be used to create bioenergy | Photo Credit: Tiffany Christianson Photography

SPECIAL FEATURE | Unlocking Value: Exploring the Potential of Biomass in the Value-added Forest Products Economy

When low-value fibre is generated from forest management activities, the material is often burned to reduce fire risk. Once called 'waste', this biomass is increasingly being used, supporting a diversified value-added forest products economy. **By establishing new or supporting current biomass facilities located in rural B.C., we can help sustain forestry jobs, generate useful products and green energy, reduce negative health and climate outcomes associated with burning this material, and, in some cases, we can reduce treatment costs.**

"In British Columbia, biomass for heat is cost competitive with other heating choices," noted Jason Fisher, RPF, Executive Director of FESBC. *"Having more district heating systems like*

the ones located in Prince George and Alkali Lake, and supporting investment in new pulp and paper mills where materials from tree thinning practices are part of the long-term fibre supply, can be a good way for our province to embrace biomass."

Today, the utilization of biomass generates a myriad of benefits. Using biomass from logging operations can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Burning a single 50-cubic-metre slash pile releases about 45 tonnes of greenhouse gases, including 240 kilograms of harmful particulate matter. Converting biomass into biochar provides a valuable soil amendment that locks carbon in the ground for decades while enhancing soil health.



As we contemplate a new trade reality with our neighbours to the south, it's good to note that most biomass-based products such as energy, pulp and paper, and wood pellets are used domestically or exported to markets outside of North America. Biomass can also bolster our energy ambitions, as 1.2 tonnes of biomass consumed at one of B.C.'s 13 commercial biomass energy facilities generate up to 1 megawatt of consistent and reliable baseload power. When we properly account for the societal benefits of using biomass instead of burning it, the business case for investing in the transport of this otherwise uneconomical material becomes clear.

More biomass could be made available from investments in restoring damaged stands, developing landscape level fuel breaks, and actively managing our young forests. Regional

plans identifying available biomass can be a step toward helping support rural communities in building heating and energy systems. Planning for the recovery of biomass can also help the business community in investment decisions related to manufacturing facilities, including pulp mills. Increasing knowledge can drive the demand for biomass that will be made available from future forest management activities. In this circular relationship, **demand for biomass enables more forest investments which support biomass-based businesses.** If we can support this cycle, then we can realize many of the societal benefits that the forest industry has provided for the past century and extend them into the next.

Jason Fisher

RPF, Executive Director
FESBC

Brian Watson

RPF, Operations Manager
FESBC

FESBC BY THE NUMBERS



426 **PROJECTS**
Invested in
Across B.C.

\$336 **MILLION**
Approved Funding
for Projects



Approximately
2.7
MILLION TONNES of CO₂e
Avoided Emissions



9
MILLION CUBIC METRES
Wood Waste Utilized



\$256 **MILLION**
Contribution to Gross
Domestic Product (GDP)

FIRST NATIONS
Involved in
FESBC Projects **72**

24
THOUSAND
Hectares
Rehabilitated

18
THOUSAND
Wildfire Risk Reduction
Hectares Treated

12
THOUSAND
Hectares Prescribed
/ Surveyed



Taan Forest Honours Haida Values to Enhance and Protect Natural Habitat for Wildlife in Haida Gwaii

Between 2018 and 2021, Taan Forest Limited Partnership (Taan Forest)—a subsidiary of Haida Enterprise Corporation (HaiCo), wholly owned by the **Council of the Haida Nation**—utilized over \$1.6 million in investments from FESBC to support **ecological restoration of riparian and other key wildlife habitat areas in Haida Gwaii**.

One major project restored close to 185 hectares of riparian area along the Yakoun River. These areas along the river, also referred to as benches, are identified as red and blue-listed ecosystems under the Haida Gwaii Land Use Objectives Order and contain protected areas for fish habitat.

Another similar project focused on spacing trees and pruning the lower branches in dense conifer stands to create and enhance forage habitat for the **northern goshawk (Stads K'un)**, the national bird of Haida Gwaii and a threatened subspecies. Crews from local communities, including Old Massett and Skidegate, helped carry out this work.

At the time, activities included spacing trees farther apart, creating snags or standing dead trees, and the introduction of coarse woody debris to mimic the natural processes of riparian areas. The change in tree density attracted wood-boring insects and allowed sunlight to promote ground-level vegetation like berries. This resulted in increased food for animals such as birds and squirrels that Stads K'un prey upon.

All these projects had a goal to create structures for key species of wildlife on Haida Gwaii. Years later, this vision continues to be realized.

"It is always exciting to re-visit habitat restoration areas completed through FESBC's Habitat Restoration Funding to see the objectives of the program becoming a reality. While the long-term objectives include Stads K'un and marbled

murrelet nesting habitat, in the short term, objectives such as increased use by songbirds, sap suckers, woodpeckers and squirrels are what we've been seeing," said Jeff Mosher, Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and Chief Forester, Taan Forest. *"Our hope with the increased use by smaller birds and mammals is we will start to see increased use of the area for forage by raptors such as sharp shinned hawks and Stads K'un."*

In addition, as part of the habitat restoration work along the Mamin River funded by FESBC, **a den was created in 2022 using a large cedar stump uncovered during the forest management treatments**. This served as a stop-gap habitat feature in the area, as all large cedar trees suitable for denning had been cut during logging operations over 25 years ago. The den was used by bears during the winter and spring of 2023, and annually since.

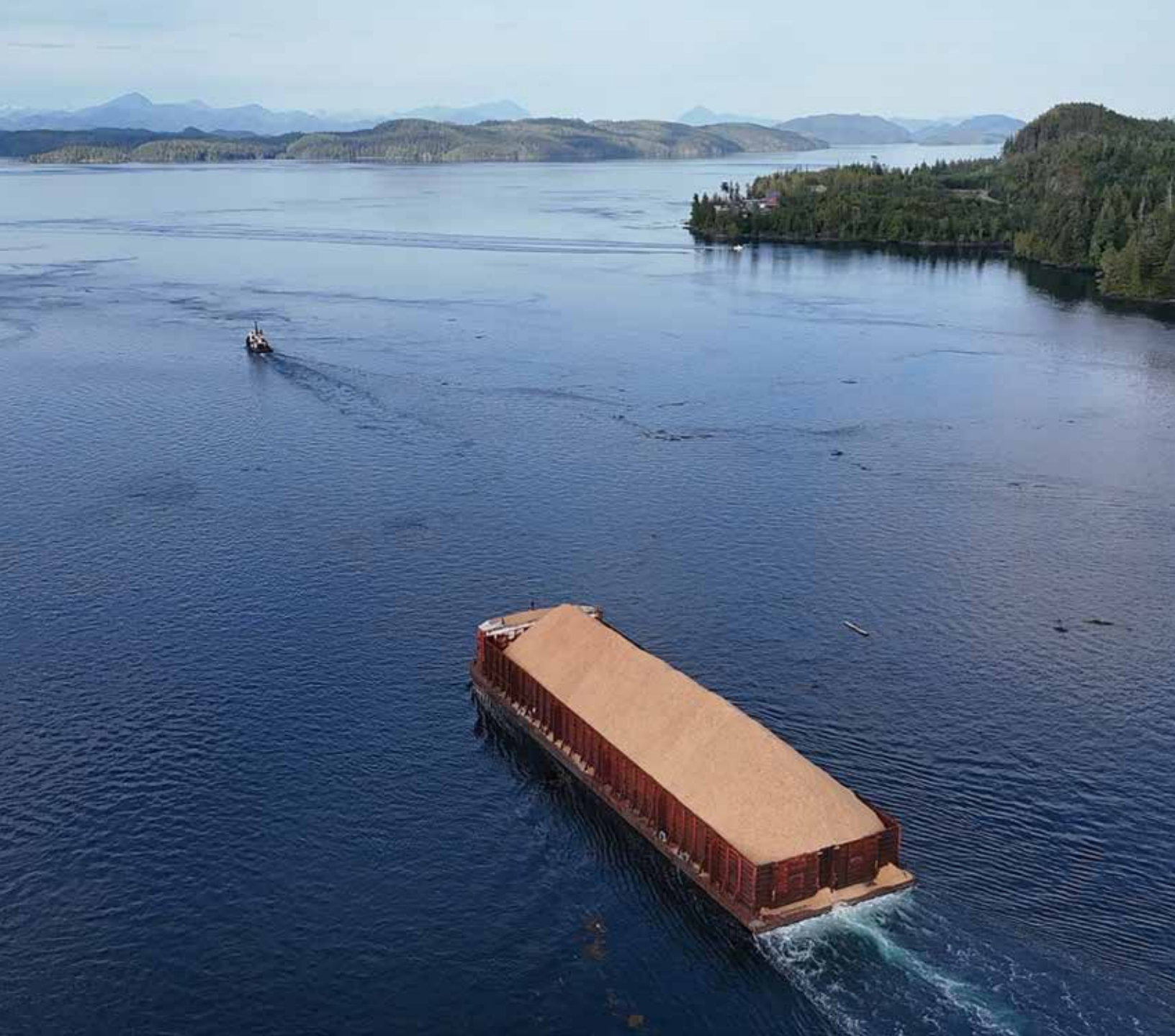
"Without the FESBC funding, none of this would have been possible. It's significant towards reconciliation with the Nation and to restoring areas impacted by historic logging," added Mosher.



Scan the QR code to watch the final stages of the bear den creation.







Atli Chip Barge | Photo credit: Warren Roberts (Wahkash Contracting Co-owner), Manager of Atli Chip plant

First Nations-led Waste Wood Salvaging Projects on Northern Vancouver Island

Atli Resources LP, a 'Namgis First Nation-owned company, is redefining what forest stewardship looks like. After successfully recovering over 100,000 cubic metres of fibre between 2023 and 2025, equivalent to approximately 2,000 truck loads, the company has plans to deliver more

by the end of this year. This sustained effort, with funding support from FESBC, will ensure that less wood fibre goes to waste, leading instead to **substantial environmental benefits and community development opportunities** including local employment.



Warren Roberts from Wahkash Contracting and Doug Mosher, RPF, COO of Atli Resources tour Forest Minister Ravi Parmar around the Atli Chip site
Photo Credit: Atli Resources LP

Wood fibre residuals, which includes low-value logs typically left to pile and burn or rot, are collected and chipped at the Atli Chip facility in Beaver Cove, located just southeast of Port McNeill on Vancouver Island. Thanks in part to funding investments from FESBC, the fibre is sent to Domtar pulp mills in Howe Sound and Crofton—**helping salvage fibre that would otherwise be beyond the feasible economic range to transport.** This utilization work further reduces the buildup of forest fuels and significantly cuts down on greenhouse gas emissions, as well as smoke and ash, with the fibre not burned in slash piles.

For Jonathan Lok, CEO of Atli Resources LP and a long-time resident of northern Vancouver Island, this increased utilization of forest residuals is a key aspect of a forestry sector that is transforming in real-time. *“The momentum behind Indigenous-led planning, management, and ownership opportunities in the forest sector is creating a valuable culture shift,”* he said. *“We see our work contributing directly to the sustainability and health of the land. With FESBC’s support, we are extending the reach of our positive environmental, social, and economic impacts.”*

The benefits from these projects extend beyond the immediate environmental impact and are expected to enhance primary and secondary employment, as well as boost local economies.

Last year, the operation of the chip plant and related salvaging activities created **25-30 full-time, ongoing jobs.** The ripple effects were tangible, as the influx of workers led to increased demand for local services, prompting contractors to invest in new forestry equipment. Moreover, the project helped forest regeneration by clearing the way for new seedlings, enhancing the sustainability of forest management practices.

Atli Chip, jointly owned by Atli Resources LP, along with the local logging company **Wahkash Contracting Ltd.** and **Domtar**, played a critical role in the project’s success. The initiative was further supported by local contractor **Estero Peak Contracting Ltd.**, along with contributions from **Western Forest Products.**

The project is a powerful example of First Nations leadership and collaboration and showcases how Indigenous-led partnerships can lead to major achievements toward more sustainable forestry. Looking ahead, Atli Resources LP remains committed to expanding its environmental, social, and economic impacts through continued wood fibre salvaging projects.

Sustainable Forest Management Efforts in Northwest B.C.

From wetter coastal zones to drier interior areas, Northwest B.C.'s diverse forests create challenges and opportunities for wood utilization. **NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd. (NorthPac)**, which owns a licence in the Kispiox Timber Supply Area (TSA) and jointly manages licenses owned by the Lax Kw'alaams Band, Tahltan Nation Development Corporation, and Haisla Nation, **has a vision of maximizing wood recovery as part of sustainable forest management.** FESBC funding is helping make that vision a reality.

Since first being approved for FESBC funding in 2021, **NorthPac has transported over 150,000 cubic metres of pulp logs and wood residuals for utilization.** Recently, NorthPac and Coast Tsimshian Resources LP (CTR) relocated a chipper from Terrace to Smithers, where it will primarily chip logs harvested from the Kispiox TSA for pulp mills in B.C.'s interior. The wood chips will be transported from Smithers to Prince George by truck, while pulp logs will be sent by rail from Terrace.

NorthPac is using innovative harvest methods to manage multiple landscape resources. On Tree Farm Licence 1, north of Terrace, CTR is thinning second-growth forests to increase long-term site yield, support diverse wildlife, and reduce wildfire risk. In the Kispiox TSA, some cut blocks are designed to retain distributed small patches and seed trees, resulting in a forest that better emulates natural fire disturbance, further providing seed sources, additional cover for wildlife, and future large woody debris, which is important for biodiversity. A range of advanced equipment, including tether bunchers

and tether forwarders, which are able to operate safely and productively on steeper slopes, support these approaches.

Indigenous involvement is integral to forestry operations in Northwest B.C. Every road permit and cutting permit application undergoes review by the affected First Nations, ensuring their input guides operations.

"The involvement of Indigenous communities in forestry projects is paramount to ensure sustainable development and economic empowerment. Through collaboration with NorthPac and FESBC, we are strengthening our stewardship of the land while creating opportunities for meaningful participation and benefits for our people," said Kelly Sampson, Director of CTR.

NorthPac projects positively impacted the Terrace Community Forest's operations to help them increase fibre utilization and reduce burning slash piles of harvest residuals, which lowers the emission of greenhouse gases, and create local employment opportunities.

Between November 2024 to March 2025, NorthPac also completed a salvage project in the Fort St. John TSA, where wildfires had damaged several approved cutting permits. **FESBC investments helped with the incremental cost of delivering pulp and hardwood that would have otherwise been wasted.** Over 45,000 cubic metres were recovered, equivalent to over 900 truckloads of logs, and the project helped reduce the risk of future wildfire in the area.





An extremely dense post-wildfire pine regeneration requiring brushing to promote a healthy, resilient future forest | Photo Credit: CCR

Building Forest Resilience in the Cariboo Chilcotin

West of Williams Lake, along Palmer Lake Road in the Cariboo Chilcotin region, a new chapter in the life of the forest is unfolding. Central Chilcotin Rehabilitation Ltd. (CCR), a joint venture of T̓sideldel First Nation, Tl'etinqox Government, and Yunesit'in Government, is applying the lessons it learned from its Pressy Lake fibre utilization pilot project to another large-scale forest rehabilitation opportunity.

Eight years after the devastating Plateau wildfire of 2017, damaged forests that could not be salvaged to produce lumber have regenerated at high densities and with high vertical fuel loading, presenting future challenges for land managers. **CCR applied what it had learned from its previous experience reclaiming damaged stands in the Pressy Lake area to treat or remove the standing fuels in the Palmer Lake area, salvaging the wood before it falls and increases fire risk, while also reducing or thinning out the stocking levels in the understory.**

In the planning process, CCR strategically designed buncher and skidder trail patterns for machines to roll over small trees with the intention to space out new growth while harvesting burnt trees. The approach at Palmer not only reduces competition among seedlings but also allows for meaningful

recovery of pulp chips and biomass for pellet and energy plants in areas that would not usually be considered for this work because of distance to biomass facilities.

"We are creating productive resilient forests through innovative operational approaches," said Daniel Persson, Registered Professional Forester (RPF) and CCR's Forestry Superintendent. "By treating the site in a smart and strategic way, we're creating longer-term value, not just for First Nations communities and industry, but for the environment, too."

Once the burnt trees are harvested, the logs are sorted based on overall condition, getting the right recovered fibre to the right biomass facility. **The burnt bark and charred fibre go to Drax, where it's processed into pellets for bioenergy, while the core, or solid wood of the burnt tree that are still in decent shape, are chipped and sent to Cariboo Pulp & Paper for use in pulp production.**

With funding investments from FESBC, as well as collaboration with the Federal Government and local Forest Districts and other industry partners, CCR has taken on high-impact projects like Palmer.

Unlike the mixed-species forested area at Pressy Lake, the trees in Palmer are overwhelmingly fire damaged pine, which has simplified sorting and reduced downtime for crews.

"We've learned a lot from the Pressy Lake project," shared Joe Webster, Operations Manager for Tsi Del Del Biomass. "That project required more sorting due to fir, spruce, and pine mixes. With Palmer being 100% pine, we can operate more efficiently and focus on quality fibre recovery."

The Palmer project is proving to be more than a technical success; it's an investment in more resilient forests for the future. But at its heart, it reflects CCR's commitment to Indigenous-led stewardship, environmental resilience, and community well-being.

Through CCR's innovative forest rehabilitation practices, the Indigenous business partnership is transforming areas post-wildfire into opportunities to restore ecosystems, recover fibre, and build economic and environmental security for the people who call the territory home.

As Percy Guichon, CEO of CCR and elected Councillor of Tsideldel First Nation, noted, *"We want to leave behind a legacy, a resilient forest that not only sustains our people but supports wildlife and future generations. We're helping Mother Nature recover, and that's something we're proud of."*



**Scan the QR code
to watch a video of
CCR's Palmer Project.**



Wood has already been bunched and skidded—it is ready for loading | Photo Credit: CCR





Message from FESBC's Executive Director

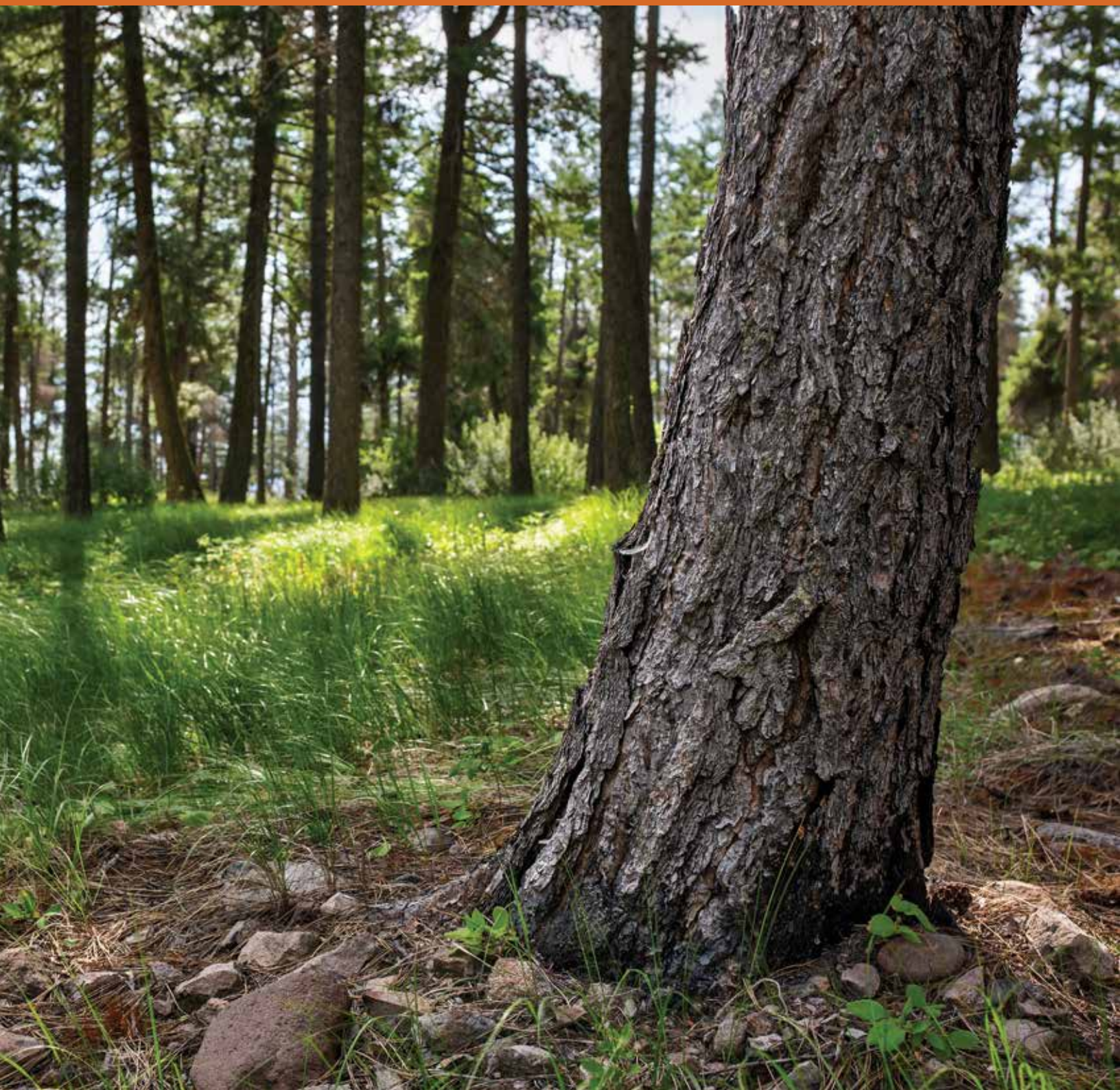
JASON FISHER

British Columbia is known for its forests. They are a part of our history and our future. Forests help clean our air and water, provide us with food and medicines, give us places to relax, live, and play, and help build and sustain our standard of living. What makes working with the Forest Enhancement Society of BC so rewarding is the ability to work with a team, collaborators, and proponents who value all these roles that forests play. We work together to invest in the resilience of the forest for generations to come.

Thanks to the First Nations Forestry Council and Chief Executive Officer, Lenny Joe, for joining with us to celebrate these examples of Indigenous-led projects that are pointing us toward the future of forestry in B.C.

Back Cover Photo Credit: Tiffany Christianson Photography & Inside Back Cover Photo Credit: First Nations Forestry Council





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