

For Immediate Release

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Community Forests Across British Columbia Continue to Deliver Local Benefits

2026 Indicators Report highlights \$129 million in economic activity, local jobs, wildfire resilience, First Nations collaboration, and investment in B.C. communities

British Columbia – Throughout the province, community forests are demonstrating what locally led forest stewardship, rooted in community values, can deliver across British Columbia. The BC Community Forest Association (BCCFA) has released its *2026 Community Forest Indicators Report: Measuring the Benefits of Community Forestry*, highlighting the economic, environmental, social, and cultural benefits generated through community forestry.

“British Columbia currently has 62 Community Forest Agreements issued by the provincial government, with more than 100 First Nations and rural communities involved,” shared Jennifer Gunter, Executive Director of the BCCFA. “This year’s Indicators Report draws on data from 37 of our member community forests, which represent 77% of our operating members. It’s been exciting to see the data coming in from all corners of the province, as it really tells the story of the forest stewardship our members are taking on as well as the outcomes directly benefiting communities now and into the future.”

The report shows that community forest participants generated more than \$129 million in economic activity in the reporting year and made significant cash and in-kind contributions to support local priorities. A total of 1,833 people earned all or part of their income through community forest activities. Relative to the amount of timber harvested, these community forests generated approximately 74% more forestry, logging, and support services than the industry average.

Since 2014, the BCCFA’s Indicators Report has sought to measure the impact of community forestry through 18 indicators, examining key outcomes such as employment, economic activity, community contributions, public engagement, and wildfire management. Together, the indicators provide a province-wide picture of how community forests are contributing to healthy forests, resilient communities, and strong local economies.

“The numbers in this report tell a provincial story, but the impact of community forestry is distinctly, and proudly, local,” said Gunter.

Local examples featured in the 2026 Indicators Report

In the Cariboo, the Eniyud Community Forest, a partnership between T̓sideldel First Nation and Tatla Lake area communities, completed more than 127 hectares of fuel management treatments along Bluff Lake Road and near Tatla Lake. The work employed nearly 30 people while improving wildfire resilience.

In the Thompson Okanagan, the Lower North Thompson Community Forest Society invested in a downtown property that will provide space for a medical clinic, including an additional \$120,000 contribution to help support healthcare recruitment and retention. The Westbank First Nation Community Forest highlighted an area that was partially harvested in 2022, which helped reduce fire intensity during the 2025 Munro Lake wildfire

and provided a defensible area that BC Wildfire Service used to help stop the fire's spread on one flank. As a result, the majority of the trees in the area survived the fire.

In the Kootenays, the Nakusp and Area Community Forest found a new market for hemlock sawlogs that were not being used by other regional mills. The community forest now supplies the fibre to Kalesnikoff for use in its mass timber and prefabricated modular products.

On the Sunshine Coast, community forestry is supporting priorities ranging from recreation to Indigenous-led learning. The Sunshine Coast Community Forest supports a three-year, land-based learning initiative led by Talaysay Tours that brings together Indigenous knowledge, forest science, art, language, mentorship, and workforce training.

Community forests in northern B.C. are featured for their investment in the next generation of forests and foresters. The McLeod Lake Mackenzie Community Forest supports the Williston School Ecology Program, including development of a wildfire module for Grades 11 and 12 students, while the Tumbler Ridge Community Forest reinvests operational revenues into enhanced silviculture and land-based improvements beyond regulatory requirements.

“Across the province, community forests have invested \$1.33 million of their own revenues into wildfire risk reduction efforts,” said Gunter. “They have secured another \$6.9 million in external wildfire resilience funding, treated 856 hectares to reduce wildfire risk, invested nearly \$875,000 in recreational assets alongside 1,553 volunteer hours, and planted more than 6.1 million trees.”

First Nations leadership continues to be central to community forestry. More than half of B.C.'s community forests are either held by or operated in partnership with First Nations. Among respondents, 65% are wholly or partly owned by First Nations, and 68% reported taking additional action to strengthen relationships with First Nations.

“Community forests show what becomes possible when people have a meaningful role in the forests surrounding their communities,” Gunter shared. “Across B.C., we are seeing local knowledge, First Nations leadership, strong partnerships, and long-term stewardship translate into jobs, healthier and more resilient forests, and investments from forest management operations that stay in communities.”

The report comes as the Community Forest Program enters its next chapter, with updated provincial goals outlined by the Ministry of Forests that recognize local stewardship, First Nations relationships, wildfire and climate resilience, sustainable fibre supply, innovation, community benefits, accountability, and safety.

About the BC Community Forest Association (BCCFA)

The BCCFA represents community forests across British Columbia. Established in 2002, the association supports its members and promotes community forestry as a model that places local people at the centre of decisions about the management and stewardship of local forests. Community forests generate economic, environmental, social, and cultural benefits while supporting First Nations leadership, local employment, wildfire resilience, recreation, and long-term community priorities.

Since 2014, the BCCFA has produced its Community Forest Indicators Report to measure and communicate the benefits community forests deliver across the province. Through 18 indicators, the report provides credible, province-wide information about community forestry's contributions to local economies, employment, forest stewardship, wildfire resilience, community well-being, and relationships with First Nations. The report helps BCCFA, its members, governments, and other partners understand the impact of community forestry and identify opportunities to strengthen the program.

Learn more and read the 2026 report at www.bccfa.ca