

2025 BCCFA CONFERENCE & AGM May 26-28, 2025 Nanaimo, BC

Conference Summary Report

The BC Community Forest Association (BCCFA) welcomed nearly 200 delegates from across the province to our 2025 Conference and AGM in Nanaimo, the traditional and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

We are grateful to Khowutzun Forest Services for hosting the field tour on Day 1 and generously sharing their culture with the group. The morning of the field tour included a visit to the Khowutzun Heritage Centre, a stunning 6 acre riverside location.

The design and layout of the Centre feature the distinct Coast Salish characteristics of Qu'wut'sun, providing an unforgettable setting for the warm welcome from elders of the Cowichan Tribes, and a breathtaking song and dance ceremony.

Delegates then visited the Khowutzun Community Forest, where the field tour split into two groups. One station was hosted by members of the Cowichan Tribes, who shared their traditional knowledge around the use of cedar, a demonstration of cultural and medicinal plants, and the history of a bathing pool archaeological site on the Cowichan River. The other stop featured a commercially thinned block, which included presentations and discussion that highlighted benefits such as water retention, increased light to the understory, wildfire risk reduction, increased volume and growth release.

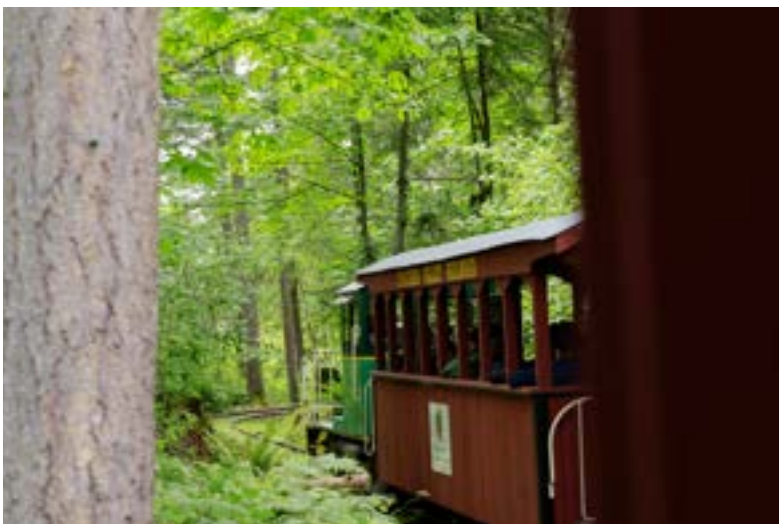
The final stop of the field tour was a visit to the BC Forest Discovery Centre, where the story of BC's forest industry is shared through exhibits, heritage buildings, and logging artifacts. Delegates were treated to a train ride and a guided tour through some of the fascinating exhibits.



Traditional song and dance to welcome delegates



Demonstration of cultural and medicinal plants



Day 2 was kicked off in a truly Good Way, with a welcome from Elder Lolly Good. Delegates were invited to get on their feet, pick up an instrument, and sing along with Lolly for a powerful and uplifting start to the day.



Welcome from Lolly Good



Session 1: Vancouver Island Community Forest Showcase Panel

The sessions commenced with a Vancouver Island Community Forest Showcase Panel, moderated by Molly Hudson (Cheakamus CF). Panelists included Erik Holbek (Barkley CF), Lone Brown (North Island CF), Steve Lorimer (Qala:yit CF), Chris Law (Alberni Valley CF) and Patrick Schmidt (Huu-ay-aht First Nation CF). Each of the presenters described the successes and challenges of operating as coastal community forests, exploring how the mission, goals and guiding principles laid out in their forest management plans translate into their governance and operations.



Robert McKellar with moderator Jason Fisher



Keynote speaker Dr. Jennifer Grenz

Robert McKellar of Harmattan Risk led a special session, “Understanding Political Risk: Preparing Community Forests for Uncertain Times”, encouraging delegates to consider the role of community forests in trade relations and the wider political environment. Moderated by Jason Fisher (FESBC), this session illustrated thought processes that can guide planning in troubled times, and provided tangible insights on current and future challenges.

Next, in her keynote session “Forestry Rooted in Reciprocity: Building Community Resilience”, Dr. Jennifer Grenz helped redefine what forests and forestry truly mean in the context of integrating ecological care, climate resilience, and community well-being into a new era of land management. She described the deep need for a reciprocal relationship with the land – beyond a transactional approach, to relational responsibility rooted in respect, gratitude and care. Drawing on historical ecology and Indigenous land use traditions, Dr. Grenz explored how we can transform the way we steward forests today, and can restore and build resilience by overcoming the divide between food producing systems and forest ecosystems.

The afternoon on Day 2 consisted of concurrent breakout sessions, featuring a wide range of topics and numerous guest speakers. Breakout 1, BC Forest Policy: Shaping the Future, included representatives from the Ministry of Forests, BCCFA, First Nations Forestry Council and BCTS Review Task Force, and sparked discussion on the policy initiatives driving change and the opportunities ahead for community forests. Breakout 2 was Innovative Silviculture Part 1: Practical Insights on Commercial Thinning, which focused on the implementation of innovative silviculture, including commercial and pre-commercial thinning, with a focus on practical, on-the-ground learnings. The third Breakout was Sticky Situations: Tackling Social Media, Misinformation, and Community Communication. This session explored the practical and personal strategies of several communications specialists in their work at the forefront of community engagement.



Policy: Lennard Joe, Melissa Sanderson, Jennifer Gunter, Matt Austin, David Elstone, Brian Frenkel



Thinning: Kevin Bollefer, Jordon Gabriel, Warren Hansen, Gillian Chow-Fraser, Derek Lefler



Communications: Skye Cunningham, Sara Zielemann, Yolanda Clatworthy, Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz

Breakout 4, Forest Landscape Plans (FLPs) and Community Forests, provided an update on the FLP pilots, how CFA holders are approaching their role and participation. Breakout 5 highlighted how the Robson & North Thompson Fibre Coalition is collaborating to strengthen regional manufacturing, create jobs, and promote sustainable forest management. The final breakout session, Bringing Burning Back: Integrating Prescribed Fire into Community Forest Operations, offered practical and locally informed steps that community forests can take to incorporate prescribed fire into their operations.



FLPs: Randy Spyskma, Ken Nielsen, Barry Snowdon



Fibre Coalition: Melissa Sanderson, Paul Rasmussen, David Patton, George Brcko



Rx Burning: Josh Macy, Kira Hoffman, Garnet Mierau, Erik Leslie, Hayden Leo



Deputy Minister Makenzie Leine and Jennifer Gunter with Sunshine Coast Community Forest representatives

The conference included a presentation of the 2025 Robin Hood Memorial Award for Excellence in Community Forestry. Sunshine Coast Community Forest (SCCF) is the well deserved recipient of this year's award, presented at the event banquet and awards ceremony by Deputy Minister Makenzie Leine.

SCCF has invested almost \$25 million since 2007 into its community, and is dedicated to long-term, sustainable forest management. Congratulations to all!



The 2024-2025 BCCFA Board of Directors (not pictured: Klay Tindall, Aurora Lavender)

The final day of the conference commenced with the 2025 AGM for BCCFA members. We are pleased to welcome new directors Molly Hudson, Erik Holbek, Coulter Roberts and Denise English.

Thank you to the directors who are now stepping down from the BCCFA board after completing their terms: George Brcko, Klay Tindall and Aurora Lavender. We are grateful for their dedication and commitment to the association.

The final session of the conference was a high-energy, laughter-inducing workshop led by Dr. Robin Freeman and James Whitehead, moderated by Garnet Mierau. The session provided “tiny tools” for practitioners to work with to initiate dialogue and support collaboration in community engagement. The hands-on workshop focused on boosting participation, strengthening decision-making, and fostering meaningful connections in the context of local land planning.



A very important pizza discussion, led by Dr. Robin Freeman and James Whitehead



Lots of laughs...!

Finally, delegates were offered an additional post-conference workshop, sponsored by the UBC Centre for Wildfire Coexistence, as part of its ongoing research partnership with the BCCFA and community forests. Dr. Lori Daniels, Dr. Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz and Dr. Sarah Dickson-Hoyle facilitated the session to foster regional knowledge exchange and a better understanding of whether and how fuel treatments meet diverse objectives.

Our team at the BCCFA extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of the delegates, speakers and exhibitors who joined us in Nanaimo for the 2025 Conference & AGM. We are especially thankful to our wonderful sponsors who helped make this event possible.

Each gathering inspires us and reinforces the courageous work being done by community forests throughout the province.



Delegates in regional groups for fuel treatment discussions.

[*Click here for conference presentations and more information.*](#)



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