



## **BCCFA 2026 Conference Notes – Session 8**

**Session:** The Big Ideas Panel

### **Panel**

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- Dan Macmaster, RPF, Forest Manager for the Osoyoos Indian Band and the West Boundary Community Forest
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**Moderator** Jason Fisher, RPF, Executive Director, Forest Enhancement Society of BC

### **Session Description**

The Big Ideas Panel brings together innovative and forward-looking leaders who are challenging conventional approaches and offering bold ideas for the future of forestry.

The goal of this session is to support forward-looking thinking on potential directions for forestry by bringing together leaders who are challenging conventional approaches and exploring new ideas.

The session will encourage participants to consider emerging opportunities, question assumptions, and engage with bold perspectives

### **Session Summary**

The Big Ideas Panel explored the future of community forestry and the broader transformation underway in BC's forest sector. Panelists shared perspectives on local decision-making, stewardship, leadership, innovation, and the evolving role of forest



managers in addressing increasingly complex environmental, social, cultural, and economic challenges. The discussion emphasized that the future of forestry will depend less on centralized decision-making and more on empowering communities, Indigenous Peoples, and local practitioners to shape outcomes that reflect local values and priorities.

A central theme was the importance of bringing decision-making closer to the land and the people most directly connected to it. Community forests were highlighted as effective models for local governance, stewardship, and innovation because they are uniquely positioned to manage for a wide range of community interests, including water, wildlife, recreation, cultural values, wildfire resilience, and economic development.

Panelists also discussed how the role of forest managers is changing. Today's practitioners must be skilled not only in technical forestry but also in communication, collaboration, relationship-building, and navigating diverse perspectives. Increasingly, forest managers serve as facilitators and translators between different interests, knowledge systems, and community expectations.

The discussion reinforced the importance of values-based management, where economic objectives support broader environmental, social, and cultural outcomes rather than driving decision-making. Community forests were recognized for their ability to reinvest revenues into local priorities and long-term stewardship goals while maintaining accountability to the communities they serve.

Panelists encouraged participants to focus on desired outcomes for the landscape and communities first, then determine how best to navigate existing regulatory frameworks. Innovation, adaptive management, and local leadership were repeatedly identified as essential ingredients for meaningful change. Wildfire risk reduction was also highlighted as a core forest management responsibility that should be integrated into long-term planning rather than treated as a standalone project.

## Key Takeaways



- Community forests demonstrate the value of local decision-making and community-based stewardship.
- Strong relationships are often more important than individual ideas in creating lasting change.
- Forestry is increasingly a people-centred profession that requires collaboration, communication, and relationship management.
- Economic viability is important but should support broader environmental, social, and cultural objectives.
- Wildfire resilience, ecosystem health, community well-being, and economic opportunity can be pursued simultaneously through good forest management.
- Innovation often comes from focusing on what is right for the land rather than waiting for permission to act.
- Adaptive management, continuous learning, and openness to new perspectives are essential for addressing complex forestry challenges.

### **Notable Themes**

The panel consistently returned to the idea that forestry is fundamentally about managing relationships—between people, landscapes, communities, and values. Participants emphasized that successful forest management depends on understanding local priorities, embracing diverse perspectives, and building systems that support long-term resilience rather than short-term outputs.

### **Overall Reflection**

The session served as a forward-looking discussion about what community forestry can contribute to the future of BC's forest sector. It reinforced many of the conference's broader themes, including local leadership, stewardship, reconciliation, wildfire resilience, and adaptive management. The conversation highlighted the growing influence of community



forests as examples of how forestry can successfully manage multiple values while maintaining strong connections between communities and the land.

## More Details

### Main Topics Discussed:

#### 1. Local Decision-Making and Community Forestry

- The importance of shifting decision-making closer to communities and the people who live, work, and steward the land.
- Community forests as vehicles for local governance, innovation, and long-term stewardship.
- Recognition that local values such as water, wildlife, culture, recreation, community safety, and economic development are best understood and managed at the local scale.
- Growing influence of Indigenous Peoples and community forests in shaping the future of forestry in BC.

#### 2. The Evolving Role of Forest Managers

- Transition from primarily technical forestry roles toward relationship management, communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution.
- Increasing importance of understanding Indigenous rights, climate change, wildfire risk reduction, recreation, community interests, and ecosystem values.
- Concern that increasing administrative requirements are reducing opportunities for practitioners to spend time on the land and apply creative problem-solving.

#### 3. Balancing Economics with Values-Based Management



- Discussion of the "quadruple bottom line" approach: environmental, social, cultural, and economic outcomes.
- Economics should support community mandates rather than drive decision-making.
- Community forests are uniquely positioned to reinvest revenues into local priorities and long-term stewardship objectives.
- Governance structures help ensure economic decisions remain aligned with community values.

#### 4. Moving Beyond Permission-Based Forestry

- Encouragement to focus first on desired outcomes for the land, then determine how to navigate regulatory requirements.
- Community forests have significant flexibility and opportunity to demonstrate innovative approaches.
- Trust, local leadership, and action-oriented management were identified as key ingredients for meaningful change.
- Wildfire risk reduction should become a core component of forest management rather than a grant-funded side project.

#### 5. Learning, Perspective Shifts, and Adaptive Management

- The importance of continually challenging assumptions and remaining open to new perspectives.
- Stories shared about how interactions with Elders, community members, and youth have changed participants' understanding of forestry.
- Recognition that forestry is ultimately about managing landscapes and values, not just managing timber.

### Key Takeaways



- Strong relationships are often more important than individual ideas when creating lasting change.
- Forestry challenges are complex systems problems that require integrated, locally driven solutions.
- Community forests are increasingly demonstrating successful alternatives to centralized decision-making.
- Today's forest managers are becoming translators between diverse interests, values, and knowledge systems.
- Economic viability remains important but should be used to enable broader environmental, social, and cultural goals.
- Good forest management can simultaneously support community resilience, wildlife habitat, wildfire risk reduction, and economic opportunities.
- Innovation often comes from acting on what is right for the land rather than Action Items
- Explore opportunities to further integrate wildfire risk reduction into long-term forest management planning.
- Continue strengthening relationships with Indigenous Peoples, local governments, contractors, and community stakeholders.
- Identify opportunities to reduce administrative burdens and increase time spent on-the-ground.
- Consider ways to communicate future landscape outcomes rather than focusing

### Questions & Follow-Ups

- How can community forests further expand local decision-making authority within the provincial framework?
- What policy changes are needed to reduce administrative complexity and support innovation?
- How can wildfire risk reduction become a stable, long-term component of forest management funding and planning?



### **Important Details/Quotes**

"Relationships trump ideas."

"If we need to change the results, we need to change the system."

"The further away you are from the information, the less you know."

"We are managers of relationships, risks, values, and uncertainties."

"It's a people job."

"Good forest management leads to good outcomes from a community, wildlife, and wildfire perspective."

"If you're not changing your mind and learning, then you're not doing the right job."

### **Notetaker's Thoughts/Observations**

For me, the discussion highlighted the importance of trusting local knowledge and focusing on desired outcomes for the land rather than becoming constrained by process and bureaucracy. The recurring theme of forestry as a people-centred profession resonated.

### **Connections to Other Sessions**

- Reinforced discussions around wildfire resilience and the need to integrate wildfire risk reduction into standard forest management practices.
- Aligned with broader conference themes of local leadership, adaptive management, and landscape-level resilience.

### **Resources Mentioned**

- BC Forest Safety Council mental health resources.



- Forest Landscape Planning (FLP) processes and examples, including Merritt and Okanagan Indian Band involvement.
- Clayoquot Sound planning examples and land-use objectives.
- Community Forest Agreement (CFA) evolution and policy initiatives related to administration and pricing.