

## **BCCFA 2025 Conference May 27 2025**

### **Breakout Session: The Robson-North Thompson Forestry Coalition**

#### **Approach: Strengthening the Local Forestry and Wood Products Sector**

**Session Description:** Learn how the Robson & North Thompson Fibre Coalition is collaborating to strengthen regional manufacturing, create jobs, and promote sustainable forest management. This session will highlight the Coalition's focus on local log processing, value-added products, and collaboration to optimize fibre use and drive regional economic growth.

#### **Speakers**

- Melissa Sanderson, Assistant Deputy Minister of Timber, Range and Economics Division
- David Patton, Operations Manager, BCTS Kamloops
- George Brcko, General Manager Wells Gray Community Forest
- Paul Rasmussen, Facilitator of the Robson-North Thompson Forestry Coalition and Owner of Magnus Natural Resource Services Ltd.

**Moderator** – Paul Rasmussen

**Notes compiled by** - Rachel Pekelney

#### **Main Topics Discussed**

- Coalition model for supporting local fibre flow and manufacturing
- Grassroots approaches to forestry sector collaboration
- Simpcw First Nation partnership and Indigenous leadership
- Fibre supply, licensing categories, and value-added processing
- Policy, regulatory support, and barriers
- Creating long-term employment and local economic development
- Tools and frameworks: business directory, inventory, marketing platforms

#### **Key Takeaways**

- Collaboration is essential to address fibre flow, local manufacturing, and employment challenges.
- Grassroots initiatives like the Robson-North Thompson Coalition offer more flexibility and local relevance than top-down approaches.

- Regular communication (bi-weekly calls), a shared mission, and clear terms of reference have been foundational to coalition success.
- Indigenous partnerships, especially with Simpcw First Nation, bring valuable perspective, leadership, and trust.
- There is an urgent need to stabilize fibre supply and improve connectivity between small-scale producers and manufacturers.
- Regulatory support and funding programs are aligning to help support these initiatives, but consistent data and engagement are still lacking.

### **Action Items**

- Finalize coalition's terms of reference and share among members (Clearwater, March 2025).
- Create an online fibre marketing platform and business directory to improve fibre flow visibility.
- Conduct grassroots-level surveys and engagement to understand the needs of small-scale mills.
- Support policy conversations on local processing and managing fibre gaps.
- Host pilot projects to test new models for local fibre allocation and manufacturer collaboration.

### **Questions & Follow-Ups**

- What is the percentage of value-added change over the past five years?
- How can we better survey and include small mills in provincial planning?
- What are effective mechanisms to ensure predictable fibre supply for new enterprises like biochar plants?
- How can government and BCTS better support local and Indigenous-led initiatives through policy?
- Who qualifies as part of the value-added sector and how do we ensure inclusion?

### **Important Details/Quotes**

- "We care about everyone in our community, we want everyone to thrive, businesses to thrive and our forests to thrive." – Simpcw
- "Sell to small manufacturers first, then to the bigger guys."
- "The social log" – finding the right log for every customer, including local ones.
- Bi-weekly calls and coalition membership from 5 community forests provide consistency.
- Tools discussed: Timber Trader platform, fibre inventory, online marketing tools.

### **My Thoughts/Observations**

- There is clear momentum toward more community-based forestry management.
- Simpcw's involvement shifted the conversation toward inclusion and values-based decision making.
- Stabilizing local fibre flow is central to regional resilience and job creation.
- There's a growing sense of urgency about small and medium manufacturers being left behind.
- The initiative shows how collaboration between government, First Nations, and community forests can yield scalable, lasting solutions.

### **Connections to Other Sessions**

- Ties closely with the "Sticky Situations" session on trust-building and community engagement.
- Echoes themes from sessions on fibre access, value-added strategy, and First Nations collaboration.
- Also connects with extension-related conversations (e.g., Fuel for Thought) and practical implementation of local solutions.

### **Resources Mentioned**

- Timber Trader online marketing platform
- Fibre Forum in Terrace, BC
- Ministry of Forests value-added initiatives
- BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund support programs and upgrades
- Coalition communication tools (online group page, bi-weekly calls, facilitation)

### **Feedback/Suggestions**

- More discussion on measurable outcomes would help track success and justify funding.