

Ecotrust Canada 2018-2021 Strategic Plan

INTRODUCTION

For over two decades, Ecotrust Canada has been distinguishing itself as a leading NGO in designing economic alternatives that benefit people in the places they call home.

The strengths of the organization are many, including a passionate and skilled staff; a board with exceptional experience and influence; a strong track record of success; healthy and trusted relationships with community partners and First Nations; and an institutional DNA that puts a premium on innovation and delivering real world solutions.

In 2017, the Ecotrust Canada board recognized that the organization was at a pivotal moment in its history. The external environment had changed significantly with new governments at the federal and provincial level and a growing recognition that rural and Indigenous communities are economically and strategically important due to the growing global demand for extraction of natural resources especially from Canadian forests and fisheries combined with the increasing pressure to mitigate and adopt to climate change.

The board completed a new strategic plan that would re-invigorate Ecotrust Canada as an impact-driven organization that addressed these issues. This required sharpening its strategic focus and designing a well thought-out plan to deliver solutions, at scale, that create thriving and resilient local communities and a healthy and sustainable environment.

THE PROBLEM

Canada is home to diverse ecosystems, bountiful natural resources and vibrant cultures and communities. But the current economic system is failing to support local communities and is degrading our natural resources. Many communities have seen their incomes decline, jobs disappear, their ability to utilize resources to support themselves impaired, and their culture eroded. At the same time the health of the environment on which we all depend is also being diminished and threatened.

This failure largely stems from three root causes:

- The control and derived benefit of natural resources is not fairly distributed with and among local communities.
- Full value of natural systems and resources is not recognized.
- Most of us cannot imagine a credible alternative system.

THE SOLUTION

To address this problem, we need to create new economic systems that:

- Recognize the full value of natural systems and resources.
- Empower local people to share equitably in the management of natural systems and resources, and to enable them to benefit from the sustainable development of these resources.
- Inspire belief that new economic systems are possible.

This will create thriving and resilient local communities and a healthy and sustainable environment.

THE APPROACH

To create new economic systems, Ecotrust Canada will:

- Develop on-the-ground examples to prove the possibility of new economic systems that empower local communities and recognize the value of ecosystem services.
- Work with policy makers to extend the proven principles of these models and to create strong networks among communities that create the conditions needed to adapt and adopt new economic approaches.
- Tell stories of economic innovation to inspire belief that a better economic system is possible, achievable and necessary.

A focus on rural and remote communities

Ecotrust Canada continues to place an emphasis on working in Canada's rural and remote communities because:

- 30% of Canadians live in communities with less than 30K people
- They are an important source for Canada and the world for food, fiber, minerals, energy, and other vital raw materials
- 60% of Canada's export economy is derived from this geography
- A significant proportion of Indigenous people live in rural communities and so are a critical locus for Reconciliation actions
- They are a place of great importance and uncertainty with regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The Ecotrust Canada board chose to focus on three Strategic Initiatives that address systemic problems of natural resource management and development, requiring change from the local to national scale: **Community Fisheries; Forest Carbon, and Indigenous Housing and Energy**. Each can be a powerful component of local economic success where change will drive new possibilities and will embed environmental sustainability and social equity into more resilient economic systems.

Community Fisheries Initiative

For the first time in over 30 years, there is a significant opportunity to address the many challenges facing community fisheries in Canada. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Dominic LeBlanc, has proposed a historic revision to the Canadian Fisheries Act to clarify his department's responsibilities for both resource conservation and optimal social and economic outcomes.

This revision and the changes in policy and regulation that may follow, provide a unique and time sensitive opportunity to influence and adapt the licensing and quota system in Canada to ensure fair and affordable fisheries access for First Nations, active fishermen, and coastal communities.

Ecotrust Canada uses its trusted relationships with commercial fishermen, First Nations and industry groups, built over 20 years of supporting fishing communities, to inform its

evidence-based policy recommendations and actions. To pursue transformational policy changes and practical fisheries development, Ecotrust Canada will build more developed and ambitious partnerships with industry groups, NGOs and community organizations in BC and across Canada.

Community Fisheries Initiative Outcomes:

1. **Resilient, equitable and prosperous local economies** by ensuring that fisheries licensing policy supports independent fish harvesters, First Nations, and the revival of rural fishing communities and that local fisherman have access to the assets and capital (human, financial, technical) they need to operate successful businesses.
2. **Indigenous Reconciliation** by ensuring Indigenous communities have the right, and ability, to co-manage fisheries and to catch a fair share of all species in their territorial waters.
3. **Healthy fish stocks and coastal waters** as local governments (indigenous and non-indigenous) and primary producers are actively and fully engaged in management and decision-making, and all share a common interest in maintaining a healthy and sustainable resource.
4. **Local benefits to local communities** by establishing local processing business strategies that increase local employment opportunities and optimize the full value of the seafood supply chain locally.

Forest Carbon Initiative

Canadian forests are the world's largest terrestrial storehouse of carbon, having acted in the past as a massive sink for global atmospheric carbon. As the world continues to warm, and both natural and human disturbance of forestland increases, Canadian forests are now swinging from being one of the world's carbon safety nets to becoming a significant contributor of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Forest Carbon Initiative is focused on dramatically accelerating and intensifying forest carbon management by forest-based communities in Canada. Our work in this area to date has focused on creating carbon offset projects for individual communities. Going forwards, this Initiative will emphasize scaling impact by creating a network of Indigenous-led and community-based forest carbon managers, integrating carbon management activities with Indigenous forest guardian programs, pooling carbon resources and benefits between communities, and enabling provincial and federal climate policy and funding.

Ecotrust Canada's Forest Carbon Initiative provides a unique opportunity to more fully realize the true economic value of forests by accounting for their contribution to mitigating climate change. By realizing this value, in concert with shaping government climate action policies, this Initiative will bring new and significant revenues to communities from, and for, sustainable forest management activities.

Putting Indigenous communities in the lead further leverages and enhances their emerging rights regarding management of natural resources. As this Initiative scales, it will help communities across Canada adapt to climate change effects such as catastrophic wildfires, while at the same time supporting Canada's ability to meet its provincial, national, and global climate obligations.

Forest Carbon Initiative Outcomes:

1. **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation** as more greenhouse gases are removed from the atmosphere and stored, and communities become at lower risk to being disrupted or destroyed by wildfire
2. **Indigenous Reconciliation** by directly engaging Indigenous communities in forest carbon management as owners and managers of forest carbon and the benefits that accrue from its management, as well as forest guardians.
3. **Healthy lands and waters** by engaging local communities more directly in forest management and maximizing the opportunities to manage forest carbon that promote biodiversity protection and ecosystem health.
4. **Resilient, equitable, and prosperous local economies** since carbon adds new economic value which make forest management and harvesting more prosperous for communities.

Indigenous Housing and Energy Initiative

Indigenous people in Canada fall behind the general population on almost every conventionally-measured socio-economic indicator, including education, income, employment, and housing. Housing, because of its link to the economic, social, and cultural well-being of a community, is perhaps one of the most obvious indicators of this challenge.

The standard model of residential construction is failing Indigenous communities, leading to severe overcrowding of homes, disrepair, health issues and cultural degradation. The

problem is exacerbated by reliance on sources of heat – diesel fuel in particular - that are carbon intensive, environmentally hazardous, and expensive to import into remote communities. High heating costs perpetuates socio-economic inequity keeping Indigenous families trapped in a cycle of energy poverty.

Addressing this housing crisis requires both short-term action to improve the housing situation now, as well as long term action to fundamentally transform the system of Indigenous housing in Canada.

A community-driven approach to housing that builds on the experience, knowledge, value and assets that are already present in communities is needed. One that supports local decision-making and self-determination, that is culturally responsive, and that creates an enabling environment for successful Indigenous housing economies.

This Initiative seeks to empower Indigenous communities, with a focus on their reserve lands, to end energy poverty, improve living conditions, create meaningful livelihoods, and build dignified, culturally inspired and sustainable housing.

It will accomplish this by supporting Indigenous communities in developing the skills and capacities, value-added processing businesses, and economic linkages needed to take control of energy and housing projects. This will ensure that culturally appropriate housing assessments are carried out, local people are employed in the repair, retrofit, and construction of housing, and where feasible, local materials are used in new housing and infrastructure projects.

Indigenous Housing and Energy Initiative Outcomes:

1. **Resilient, equitable and prosperous local economies** as increasingly diversified, lasting, and “green” livelihood opportunities are created, energy poverty is reduced, and social enterprises are created, and economic linkages and cooperation between communities is strengthened.
2. **Indigenous Reconciliation** as communities take a direct role in building for themselves an increasing supply of sustainable, culturally appropriate, healthy and dignified housing
3. **Climate Change Mitigation** by switching home heating systems from diesel to carbon friendly technologies and by increasing heating efficiency in homes.
4. **Healthy lands and waters** through the adoption of ecosystem-based management for the forests that provide a vital source of building materials for home construction.

Ecotrust Canada is an enterprising non-profit

We are innovative, entrepreneurial and skilled at using the tools of the marketplace to advance our mission:

- We earn over half of our revenues with fee-for-service work
- We start for-profit social enterprises to advance our efforts
- We support communities and local entrepreneurs in launching new businesses
- We build new economic activity that builds sustainable and resilient local economies
- We create and employ technology to support community goals
- We create and deliver new financing models to support local economies
- We speak from our experience as mission-driven system entrepreneurs

MOVING FORWARD

The Initiatives described above build on Ecotrust Canada's 20 years of experience working with Canada's rural and remote communities in creating tangible, on-the-ground change.

Each Initiative focuses on supporting the creativity, aspirations, energy, knowledge, and skills of those communities to demonstrate how a new economic relationship between themselves, and the natural systems and resources that surround them can be created and sustained.

Each initiative seeks to propagate local successes across regional, and national scales by building effective networks and partnerships and by supporting the creation of enabling public policy.

And finally, each Initiative focuses on creating local economies that are more resilient, equitable and prosperous, which in turn, leads to additional, and mutually reinforcing outcomes including the advancement of Indigenous reconciliation, healthier ecosystems, and climate change mitigation.

This is the impact Ecotrust Canada seeks to make, and in 2018 Ecotrust Canada began its transition to becoming an organization that could fulfill these ambitious goals – an

organization that is financially resilient and confident in its leadership. Feedback from partners, funders and supporters has been very positive.

We invite you to join us in this journey to create thriving, resilient local communities and a healthy and sustainable environment.



Ecotrust Canada is an enterprising non-profit powered by the vision of people and nature thriving together. We develop innovative economic solutions that enable rural and remote communities across Canada to lead in the management and benefit from local resources – from forestry to fisheries to housing and energy. Our on-the-ground work and systems approach is entrepreneurial, partnership-based and relentlessly practical. Learn more at www.ecotrust.ca