



PRESS RELEASE

Innovating for food security with the Northwest Food Systems initiative

November 10, 2020, Prince Rupert, BC – For the past four years, Ecotrust Canada has engaged and worked in the Prince Rupert community through the North Coast Innovation Lab, a place-based initiative that brings capacity, resources, and solutions to local organizations. In particular, we've collaborated with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society on exploring the possibility of urban agriculture projects. Through this process, we've discovered a common theme — the need to strengthen food access and food security.

This year, after experiencing how the COVID-19 crisis exposed cracks in the sea- and agri-food supply chain in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, Ecotrust Canada pivoted its innovation lab to steer more directly toward finding sustainable solutions for food systems. The *Northwest Food Systems Initiative* is a pilot project with the City of Prince Rupert that will build more local food access, literacy, and security for social and economic resiliency in Prince Rupert and the Northwest BC region. This month, the initiative received critical support from the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) — Strategic Initiatives Fund (SIF) program to bring the following two project activities and objectives to fruition in 2021.

First, the initiative will establish the *Kaien Island Urban Farm*, a demonstration farm based on a vacant lot in downtown Prince Rupert. This will be a space for local growers, workshops to increase food literacy, donations to local food programs, and research activities to inform policymakers and planners.

To scale up the urban farm, the second activity will involve building the *Northwest Food Network* across Northwest BC. This network will be based in Prince Rupert and will facilitate sea- and agri-food trade and procurement in the region. The network will aim to build local, resilient, food economies by creating more employment, trade agreements between communities, and increasing domestic demand for food products.

City of Prince Rupert Mayor Lee Brain: *"When Ecotrust Canada came to the City to assist with finding funding for this project, we felt it was a good fit in supporting two key goals that we've identified in recent community planning efforts – the revitalization of our downtown, and supporting broader aims of food security for our region. With their capacity and experience, we believe they are well positioned to deliver a project with lasting community impact."*

Alexie Stephens, Ecotrust Canada's Program Manager of the Skeena Region at Ecotrust Canada: *"After listening and learning from the Prince Rupert community through the work of the North Coast Innovation Lab, it became apparent that food security is a priority for the people who live here. We're excited to work with the City of Prince Rupert, and to have the support from NDIT for Northwest Food Systems initiative, which is another step toward building local, resilient, economies in this region."*

About Ecotrust Canada

Ecotrust Canada is an enterprising charity that works with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities toward building an economy that provides for a healthy and resilient natural environment; sustainable and abundant energy, food, and housing; prosperous and meaningful livelihoods; and vibrant cultures and inclusive societies. We call this approach **building an economy that provides for life**. Our on-the-ground work and systems approach is entrepreneurial, partnership-based, and relentlessly practical. ecotrust.ca

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