

ecotrust
canada



STRATEGIC PLAN

2023

2028



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03 Proving the Possible



05 Our History



09 Vision, Mission, Values and Principles



11 Our Theory of Change and Underlying Assumptions



12 How We Work



15 Reconciliation, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



17 Strategic Priorities



28 Organizational Priorities



31 Measuring Our Impact




Proving the possible

We live in a time where life seems perched on the narrow edge of a tipping point. On one side, we sense a further descent into crisis — climatic, ecological, institutional, financial, and political. Along the other side, we feel a wave of change gathering, ready to lift us up into a world of new relationships and expanding possibilities for a more regenerative and equitable world.

We believe that Ecotrust Canada can play a critical role in tipping away from crisis and toward a more equitable, just, and sustainable world. We also believe that our organization's most vital contribution to catalyzing this uplift is to show how a better world is possible *here and now*.

Ecotrust Canada and its partners are ready to prove that place-based economies — economies that intentionally connect people to the places they call home — can thrive. In doing so, these economies will provide for a healthy and resilient natural environment; sustainable and abundant energy, food, and housing; prosperous and meaningful livelihoods; vibrant cultures; and inclusive societies.

In practical terms (and we do consider ourselves a relentlessly practical organization), *proving the possible* means partnering with communities to create on-the-ground solutions that demonstrate how place-based economies can succeed. Further, we assert that by creating tangible, real-world examples, our successes (and failures) will inform and inspire change across communities, regions, continents, and even the world.



THIS IS ECOTRUST CANADA

Over its 28-year history, Ecotrust Canada has taken on different forms, approaches, and modes of working. However, that work has always been characterized by fundamental throughlines and qualities that have come to define who we are, including:

- We invest in *doing*, then showing — our calling card has always been to **undertake projects on the ground** as a way of *proving what is possible*.
- We assert that radical, practical **change to economic systems** is required to create a sustainable, just, and vibrant world.
- We amplify the power of **people in place**, to develop **place-based economies**, specifically for rural, remote, and Indigenous communities in Canada.
- We have learned that the bedrock for change rests in creating **lasting, reciprocal relationships** with community partners, with special attention paid to the importance of **reconciliation** with Indigenous Peoples.

As we prepare for the next five years, this strategic plan takes its inspiration from this history and these learnings as we seek to redefine and sharpen our approach, programs, and systems to *prove the possible*.

Our History

➔ 1995 Ecotrust Canada becomes a registered Canadian charity

In 1995, Ecotrust Canada received charitable status, marking the beginning of its journey toward building resilient economies in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

➔ 1995 GIS Technology to map data

Ecotrust Canada trained and mentored Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation in Tofino to the Haida in Masset to use GIS technology to map data that included scientific, economic, and traditional Indigenous knowledge. By facilitating “information democracy” these communities could make informed decisions about their possible futures.

➔ 1996 Huchsduwachsd Nuyem Jeas, or the Kitlope Heritage Conservancy established

With support from both Ecotrust Canada and Ecotrust (US), the Haisla First Nation was successful in creating Huchsduwachsd Nuyem Jeas, or the Kitlope Heritage Conservancy, protecting one of the world’s largest unlogged coastal temperate rainforests.

➔ 1998 Coastal Loan Fund

For 10 years, Ecotrust Canada ran a bold experiment by lending capital to businesses focused on building wealth, human well-being, and environmental health. The [Coastal Loan Fund](#) extended 87 loans worth \$10.7 million to entrepreneurs in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. Clients were able to leverage an additional \$40 million in loan capital, and approximately 900 jobs were created.

➔ 2007 Climate Smart

Ecotrust Canada piloted a program that provided easy-to-use technology and training to small businesses and non-profits to track their carbon use and find ways to reduce it. In 2010, we launched Climate Smart, designed specifically for the small-medium sized business community. [Climate Smart](#) has since become its own social enterprise, and worked with over 40 partners, 1,000 businesses, and represented 85,000 employees.

➔ 2008 Cheakamus Community Forest, the first carbon offset project in BC

Ecotrust Canada worked on alternative approaches to forest management with the Lil’wat and Squamish First Nations, and the Municipality of Whistler on a 33,018-hectare Crown forest tenure around Whistler. This led to building an economy based on more sustainable harvesting methods in the [Cheakamus Community Forest](#), and the creation of more community wealth through the sale of carbon offsets.

→ 2008 **ThisFish**

To build more transparency about where our seafood comes from, we launched a traceability pilot program in 2008 that generates unique codes harvesters use to identify their catch and seafood products. It was a success with more than 1,000 harvesters registering into the system. Ecotrust Canada ended the pilot program in 2017 and launched [ThisFish](#), a for-profit social enterprise that continues to expand its software traceability program in Canada and around the world.

→ 2010 **Fisheries Monitoring**

Since 2010, Ecotrust Canada has served a unique role as federally designated [fisheries monitoring organization](#). This designation allows us to work with fishing communities up and down the BC coast, where we provide at sea, and dockside, monitoring and training. Our clients include the Five Nations Fishery with Ha'oom Fisheries Society, and the Five Nuu-chah-nulth Nations on Vancouver Island. Our work is designed to ensure the ongoing sustainability of fisheries while also supporting marine stewardship and cultural objectives of these communities.

→ 2016 **Atlas of Cumulative Landscape Disturbance in the Traditional Territory of Blueberry River First Nations**

Ecotrust Canada and David Suzuki Foundation worked with the [Blueberry First Nations to develop an Atlas](#) that shows that the Province of BC has not only continued industrial development in the area, but has done so at an accelerated rate, despite its knowledge of the worsening cumulative effects on the Nation's Traditional Territory. In 2021, the Nation won a precedent setting Treaty Rights Case against the Province of BC.

→ 2017 **Heat Pump Project with Haílzaqv Nation**

Helped provide fundraising initiatives and coordination to retrofit around 300 homes in Wáglísla (Bella Bella, BC), where some homes were spending up to \$5,000 a year on energy costs. The [Heat Pump Project](#) has helped move most homes in the community off inefficient heating systems, like oil furnaces or baseboard heaters, saving homeowners around \$1,500 a year in utility costs — and eliminating over 1,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases each year.

→ 2017 **Operated the North Coast Innovation Lab out of Prince Rupert, BC**

The NCIL was a place-based initiative for people who are invested in the future of Prince Rupert, BC, on Coast Ts'msyen Territory. The NCIL connected graduate students from all over Canada to work with community partners as project coordinators, and together they [explored the potential boundaries for social innovations](#), such as transforming an empty greenhouse into an edible garden for food security, or exploring different methods of regenerative ocean farming.

➔ 2019 **Launched Teem Fish, a social enterprise where data empowers local fisheries**

What started out 8 years ago as a way for Ecotrust Canada to meet the needs of a BC fishery partner for a cost-effective Electronic Monitoring system, has grown into a new social enterprise – [Teem Fish Monitoring Inc.](#) This is the fifth for-profit entity that Ecotrust Canada has launched, where we enable our strategic initiatives to grow outside the confines of the charity and to scale impact by entering the marketplace.

➔ 2020 **25 Years celebrated with a new logo, brand, and website**

Ecotrust Canada launches its new mission and website, building on its 25-year history of partnering with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities to create economic solutions that advance social and ecological well-being. In March, we [launched our new mission statement](#) — building an economy that provides for life — with our four initiatives Climate Innovation, Indigenous Homelands, Community Energy, and Community Fisheries.

➔ 2021 **Launched the Regenerative Ocean Farm pilot with Metlakatla First Nation**

In 2021, three partners came together, Metlakatla First Nation, Ecotrust Canada, and GreenWave, to launch a pilot [Regenerative Ocean Farm](#) building off an already existing scallop farm that was no longer in operation. We planted two long lines in the farm's first year and harvested 1,560 lbs of kelp. Seeing the potential, we have expanded, growing more kelp, and are working with local retailers to obtain licensing to distribute scallops to community members and markets in Prince Rupert, BC, on Coast Ts'msyen Territory.

➔ 2022 **Indigenous Housing and Homelands Toolkit**

In 2022, we launched the digital [Indigenous Housing and Homelands Toolkit](#) designed to support First Nations in meeting their housing and homelands governance needs in ways that are culturally appropriate and meaningful to their communities.

➔ 2023 **Fisheries For Communities Gatherings**

In 2018, 2020, and 2023, Ecotrust Canada and its partners facilitated [three Fisheries for Communities Gatherings](#) in British Columbia. Over 120 First Nations leaders, industry associations, NGOs, academics, policy experts, and federal politicians attended each of the gatherings to discuss solutions to ensure the many values of BC fisheries flow to the people on the water, on the dock, and in adjacent communities. These three Gatherings, and the Fisheries for Communities grassroots movement, have led to federal fisheries policy reviews and 20 recommendations put forth by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, as well as an increased provincial oversight when the BC government created the new cabinet position of Parliamentary Secretary of Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2020.

OUR NEXT FIVE YEARS

In this strategic plan, Ecotrust Canada has rearticulated its vision, mission, values, principles, and theory of change. While the changes are important, they remain deeply rooted in Ecotrust Canada's 28 years of working experience.

This plan commits us to a suite of strategic programs that represent a deepening commitment to our current areas of focus in:

1. Community Fisheries
2. Climate Innovation;
3. Food Systems;
4. Indigenous Homelands, and;
5. Community Energy.

We believe that solutions in these realms hold immense potential for unlocking transformative change toward building an *economy that provides for life*.

In terms of our organizational priorities, we are undertaking three significant commitments in this plan:

1. embedding a comprehensive Reconciliation Framework into every aspect of our work;
2. implementing a learning agenda to underpin a new impact evaluation framework; and
3. improving our organizational health, specifically the well-being of the people who work for, and support, Ecotrust Canada.

Vision, mission, values and principles

Since our last strategic plan, our language around vision and mission has been refined and clarified to more precisely differentiate between the two. We have also aspired to be more concise. Meanwhile, the board and staff have worked over the last year to craft new language that describes our values and principles, which were not explicitly articulated in our previous strategic plans.

➔ Vision

Vibrant human and natural communities are connected and supported by thriving, just, and sustainable place-based economies.

➔ Mission

Proving it's possible to build an economy that provides for life.



Values

Trust • Courage • Curiosity • Justice • Kinship • Accountability

Principles

Drive practical and meaningful change on the ground with communities.

We go beyond theory, research, and advocacy. Our hallmark is that we engage with communities to build, evaluate, and propagate applied economic solutions in place.

Collaborate with integrity.

Our success depends entirely on forming trusted, robust, and reciprocal relationships with our community partners.

Put justice and equity at the centre.

We are successful only when our projects enhance diversity, inclusion, equity, and fairness, and when environmental and human rights are protected and advanced in tandem.

Recognize that human and natural systems are interconnected.

We acknowledge the inextricable link between people and nature, and actively work to strengthen the unique connections between people and the lands and waters they call home.

Undertake reconciliation as an action.

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is not a means to some other end. It is a practice and way of living and acting day-to-day through all our work.

Ensure knowledge belongs to communities.

Ensure that our work is deeply informed by community knowledge, while always being sure that this knowledge is retained and owned by communities.

Be accountable.

Through all our work, we are accountable to our partners, funders, and each other. We will be transparent in our goals and objectives and will strive to evaluate and learn from our successes and failures.

Our theory of change and underlying assumptions

Our theory of change is bold and based on assumptions that deserve to be tested. In fact, our intention through this strategic plan is to make the testing of our theory as central to our work as the mission itself.

➔ **If**

economic activity is centred around reciprocal and equitable connections between people and the places they call home,

➔ **Then**

place-based economies can develop that are prosperous, redistributive, and regenerative.

&

➔ **If**

we can prove that these place-based economies can thrive and are a viable alternative to an extractive, exploitive, and colonial economy,

➔ **Then**

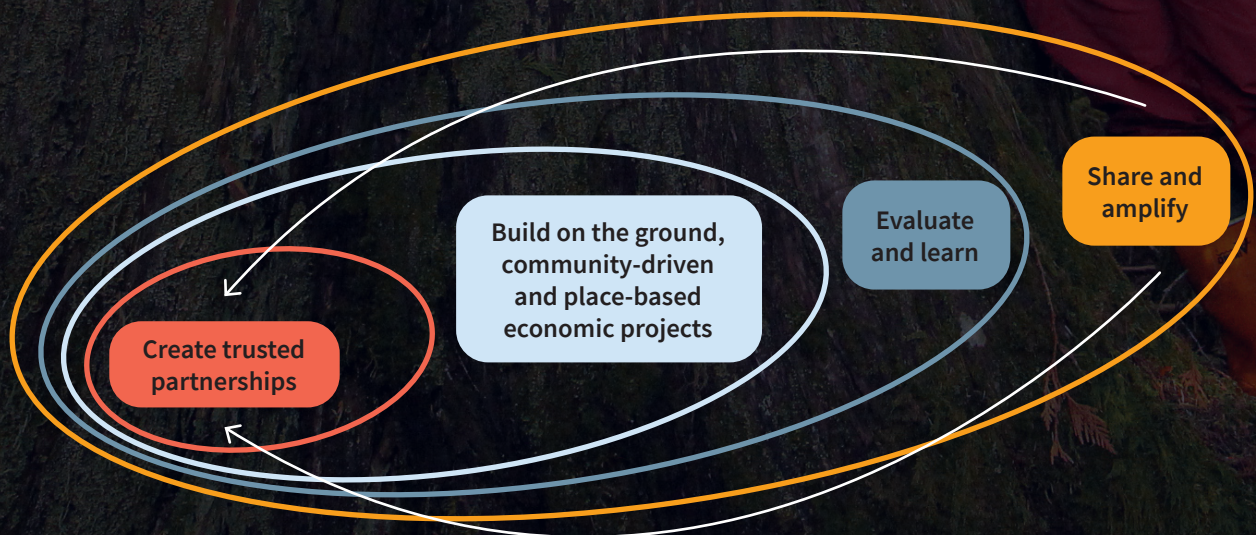
the power of these examples, and the relationships formed in bringing them into existence, will create a wave of change in the policies, institutions, and capital that is necessary to usher in an era in which *all* economies are structured to provide for life.

How we work

Based on our theory of change and the associated assumptions, our approach consists of the following four elements:

- 1** We build trusted partnerships with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.
- 2** We co-create innovative economic solutions through on the ground projects, programs, and enterprises, and help successful experiments become lasting, community-driven solutions.
- 3** We evaluate, adapt, and share our results.
- 4** We amplify our shared successes by:
 - expanding our network of relationships to build consensus, energy, and capital for expanding innovations;
 - replicating successful projects with more communities;
 - advancing enabling public policy;
 - building learning resources and tools; and
 - connecting capital and finance to community solutions.

Throughout these steps, our work is constantly iterative. For example, our on-the-ground projects will inform policy change, and our efforts at policy change will inform our projects in place. Through these kinds of feedback loops, our intention is to amplify our local projects so that they continually improve while ensuring local impacts reverberate outward into wider circles of influence.



Assumptions underlying our theory of change

Assumption #1: “Place-based” economies are more prosperous, redistributive, and regenerative than economic systems that are based on the privatization and extraction of common, local resources.

By centring an economy on a place — a physical community or biophysical region in which people live — as opposed to distant financial markets, the nature of how an economy creates value and how that value is distributed changes.

Shared commons and shared wealth: A place-based economy is one in which the benefits arising from the use and development of locally shared lands and waters (often referred to as *commons*) remain local and are shared by the community. This stands in contrast to an extractive or colonial economic model in which local resources are privatized by external developers (and supporting governments), extracted, and then exported, often leading to degraded natural environments and loss of future opportunities for local people. If a place is instead managed with care and wisdom by the people who call that place home, natural wealth can be sustainably enlarged and shared in a way that benefits local communities, which then opens the door for further sharing of wealth across a region, nation, or even the world.

Respecting Indigenous governance: Across the lands and waters of what is now known as Canada, colonial economies have dismantled and destroyed Indigenous economies, hand in hand with the destruction of Indigenous political, social, and cultural lives. Place-based economies can be used as a path for reconciliation and can be structured to specifically regenerate Indigenous governance over the economic development and stewardship of lands and waters.

The power of place-based management and stewardship: Quite simply, the people who care the most about a place are the people who live there. Further, people in place are the ones most attuned to the health of the lands and waters that surround them. Not only are they present in the here and now to witness what happens day to day, but they may also benefit from generations of knowledge passed down to them about their home. So equipped, local people have demonstrated time and again their commitment to care for their lands and waters to ensure that economic activity sustains, rather than diminishes, the well-being of future generations.

Assumption #2: “Proving the possible” at the edges can trigger systems change across the whole.

We are often asked how we expect one non-profit, working in a handful of communities across Canada, to live up to the lofty ambition of wholesale change of our economic system. Our answer always starts with — *it's not just us* — it's our partners, and their partners, and so on; and every year, the coalition of people and communities that step up to prove *there is another way* expands ever wider. There are other factors behind our optimism as well.

Edge effects – rural, remote, and Indigenous communities: It is along the fractured edges of Canada's economic landscape that Ecotrust Canada works with partners to plant the seeds for systems change. Specifically, we work with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities where communities have long been exploited by an economy focused on extraction and commodification. These are places where new economic innovations are badly needed, in high demand, and most likely to create measurable change. While these places may be far from the centre of national and global economic activity, they are also the source of the raw materials that are necessary to feed that economy. As such, these places should have an outsized influence on how economies function at broader and broader scales. In other words, change at the edge could have a highly leveraged impact across the whole of the system.

The power of example: While the call for wholesale economic change is loud, the immediate echo back is, *What are the alternatives? The current system is the only way to keep our jobs, build and heat our homes, and put food on the table.* Ecotrust Canada begs to differ. There are countless alternatives waiting to be discovered, or perhaps re-discovered. What's required is that we make the effort to innovate and learn what works and what doesn't, sharing our experience as we go. By proving there are many workable economic approaches to life, we further chip away at the crumbling edifice of an economic system that has thrived for centuries on the narrative that there are no alternatives.

Building relationships to scale our Impact: Developing lasting, place-based economic solutions depends on building successful partnerships with communities. In turn, with every innovation, there is the potential to broaden the scale of those partnerships and, thus, our impact. By continuing to form trusted, reciprocal relationships, we generate the knowledge and energy needed to co-create new solutions in new geographies. We also build the power necessary to change government policies and attract capital, all of which can catalyze change across hundreds of communities, rural and urban alike.

Reconciliation, diversity, equity, and inclusion

FRAMEWORK FOR ADVANCING RECONCILIATION

Ecotrust Canada is committed to strengthening our relationship with Indigenous communities based on respect, humility, and reciprocity.

We acknowledge that we must take responsibility for our own ongoing process of reconciliation, which includes immediate and ongoing education; critical reflection; seeking and acting on feedback; and changing practices, policies, and organizational structures. We acknowledge our responsibility to create a culturally safe environment within the organization and in our partnerships as we do this work.

Together, we have defined a [Reconciliation Framework](#) to support the structural, policy, and everyday changes that we will make at our organization to advance reconciliation. The Framework contains the context, commitment, definitions, and an action plan with the goals on the following page.

WE WILL ACTIVELY DECOLONIALIZE BY:

- committing to a rigorous and ongoing process of education with our staff and board to understand and appreciate the past, present, and potential future impact of colonialism;
- advancing economic relationships and outcomes that support different understandings of well-being for humans and non-humans alike; and
- practicing full transparency, co-creation, and/or equitable sharing of resources with communities when positioning for financial donations.

WE AIM TO CONTRIBUTE TO DECOLONIZING BY:

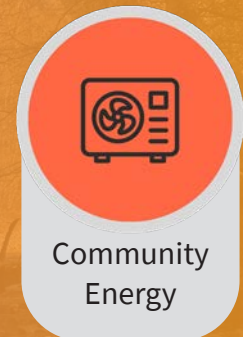
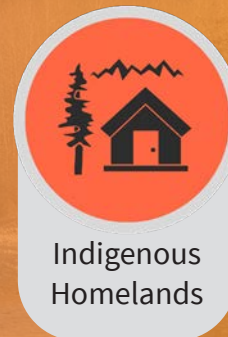
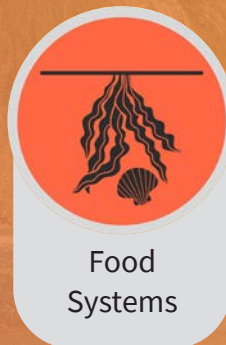
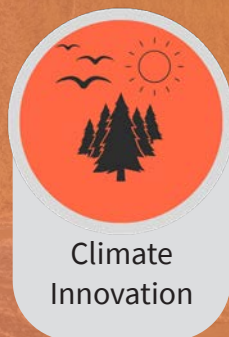
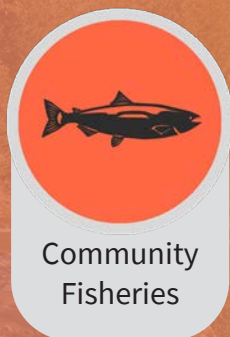
- supporting partner Nations and communities as they build authority to govern their lands and waters, and to reclaim what is their right;
- supporting Nations and communities in co-creating learning resources and tools that strengthen rights and title and practicing of the Nation's laws, jurisdiction, and protocols; and
- creating a process of co-creation with our Indigenous partners that prioritizes the expression of community-defined aspirations, principles and values, outcomes, and evaluation.

WE WILL ENCOURAGE INDIGENIZATION BY:

- creating an environment within the organization that is culturally safe and encourages many ways of knowing to come together; and,
- re-imagining and revising our internal policies around staff and board recruitment/retention to create more space for Indigenous people to join our team and thrive in their roles.

Strategic priorities

Consistent with the evolution in program priorities that has occurred over the last five years, Ecotrust Canada will pursue its mission through five priority areas:



These may seem like disparate areas of focus with the potential to be strategically cumbersome for a small organization such as ours. However, the breadth of these issues is just wide enough to allow us to approach the diversity of economic challenges and opportunities that rural, remote, and Indigenous communities are facing day-to-day. Indeed, tackling the economic dimensions of livelihoods, energy, food, housing, and climate change is ever-present for our community partners. Over the last five years, we have learned that these are issues on which our organization has much-needed expertise to bring to the table and where our projects can demonstrate a measurable impact. Finally, we have discovered that these issues are not as disparate as they might seem. We increasingly seek opportunities to combine our expertise on projects that take advantage of programmatic synergies.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Community Fisheries

WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Resilient fisheries systems on all coasts, where marine resource use meets the social and economic needs of society, without compromising ecological integrity or the ability of future generations to thrive.



Over the next five years, our partnerships will prove the possible by:

- 1 Supporting communities and governments on the West Coast of Canada to create a regulatory environment where the benefits of fisheries contribute to the well-being of fish harvesters, First Nations, and coastal communities.
- 2 Delivering tailored and innovative fisheries monitoring programming to remote and Indigenous coastal communities to enhance the sustainability of communities and the marine environment on Canada's Pacific Coast.
- 3 Creating transparency around illegal, underreported, and unregulated fishing, and the way in which such activity is defined and enforced in Canada.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Community Fisheries



Fisheries monitoring

When the seas are calm and the sun is shining, the work is extremely enjoyable, making the tougher days worthwhile when you are dealing with rough seas, mountains of paperwork, a salty crew, pinching crabs, wet clothes, and stinky rain gear. Such was my time on the Sea Harvest, mostly enjoyable with a splash of rough seas. The first three days were calm, with partly sunny skies and brilliant sunsets. There was lots of laughter, great food, and long backbreaking hours. Knowing bad weather was on the horizon, the skipper and crew worked their way through the gear as quickly as possible. My job was to sample one-sixth of the total number of traps hauled, which involves collecting and recording data such as sex, shell hardness, injuries, mating marks, size, and other observations, including recording and identifying by-catch species. This trip was just one of countless that Ecotrust Canada has provided in service of the Area A Crab Fishery over the past 13 years. Our purpose is to provide sustainable and economically viable services for the fisheries that support coastal communities, and it's all part of our vision of community-built solutions that result in more regenerative and equitable economies.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Climate Innovation

WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Canada lead natural climate solutions projects on their lands and waters to create immense climate benefits, while also conserving biodiversity and providing sustainable livelihoods for the community.



Over the next five years, our partnerships will prove the possible by:

- 1 Ensuring communities have transparent and adaptable tools that allow them to assess the appropriateness and feasibility of carbon finance projects.
- 2 Cooperating with communities to enhance capacity for developing natural climate solutions projects.
- 3 Supporting the development of specific, community-led carbon finance projects.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Climate Innovation



Natural climate solutions

We join our partners on the banks of the Kebsquasheshing River to witness the birth of Wahkohtowin Development's third wiigwaasi jiimaan. The anglicized translation of the Ojibwe wiigwaasi jiimaan is "birch bark canoe," but the more apt meaning that our hosts have instilled in us over the last ten days of the canoe build is "spirit-carrying vessel".

Today, the meaning of these words is palpable. Our partners had a vision of the shores of the Kebsquasheshing lined with canoes, as it once was. Today, as the three Wahkohtowin-built canoes move through the water, it is easy to see their vision is coming to life. At this launch, we are surrounded by powerful spiritual and cultural voices, who are also political and economic leaders, with a holistic vision of revitalization for their communities.

That vision, like the canoes, is born out of the forests that surround us. The privilege of being invited to experience this ceremony, comes from a decade of partnership with these people, working to turn their stewardship of forest carbon into a lasting benefit for their communities, and the rest of the world.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Food Systems

WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Collaborative, vibrant, and innovative local food economies built by and for communities, supported by local and regional food production and marketplaces that are resilient and sustainable.

Over the next five years, our partnerships will prove the possible by:

- 1** Demonstrating that regenerative ocean farming is viable and sustainable on the West Coast of Canada.
- 2** Re-establishing the infrastructure, facilities, and partnerships necessary to revive a regional mariculture economy for BC's North Coast.
- 3** Supporting specific place-based Indigenous food sovereignty projects and initiatives.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Food Systems



Regenerative ocean farming

We come off the boat with our fellow crew from the Metlakatla First Nation, and we are all exhausted, covered head to toe in seaweed, but that can't hide the big smiles on our faces.

Our muscles ache with the labour of harvesting about 5,000 lbs of kelp, which will soon be processed into delicious seaweed products — powder, mini flakes, large blades, and frozen. All of this will feed the community, our friends and family over the coming year. It feels great to have a livelihood on the water, to grow food for your community, and to contribute to cleaning the marine environment at the same time.

It also feels great to partner with local processors on the North Coast of BC. We're keeping the benefit of the harvest here. While the Regenerative Ocean Farm is still a small operation, it's growing slowly, sustainably and in a way that the community can grow with us. That's what we love about it!



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Indigenous Homelands

WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Community members from remote First Nations can return to and thrive on their homelands in ways that honour their social, cultural, and environmental well-being.



Over the next five years, our partnerships will prove the possible by:

- 1 Facilitating long-term community-led housing and infrastructure projects that are climatically and culturally relevant and that focus on the diverse social needs of community members.
- 2 Creating more sustainable circular economies by building regional housing supply chain networks.
- 3 Enabling culturally based decolonial governance through innovations in land tenure and land management models.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Indigenous Homelands



A holistic focus on well-being

Clyde is pointing out the areas that could use the most “beautification,” while Carrigan is noting the many (oh so many) housing and land projects underway. We’ve just come in after driving around in Clyde’s pick-up truck, seeing the changes in Four Mile and downtown since last month. It was a pickup truck filled with ideas. “Here, we could do this.” “Oh, stop here!” “Here, look at this.” And every block or so, there was a story — of a totem pole. A cemetery. A bench. A big-house. The college. The yet-to-start-up restaurant. And the oolichan grease project. Clyde drops us off and heads to his Ancestral Governance office. Carrigan and I fill up our cups of tea and head into her office in the basement, overlooking Acwsalcta, the Nuxalk school. The whiteboard is already full from our morning brainstorming session — arrows, diagrams, scribbles. But we’ll find more room; we always do. We are deep into distilling the ideas and visions of department managers and council members — asking what a more culturally relevant, unified, and organized governance system could look like for the Nuxalk Nation. For both of us, it doesn’t feel like work. We’re inspired. After all, this is what we do on the Homelands team.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Community Energy

WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Energy justice is achieved in Canada where everyone has affordable access to essential home energy services while living in comfortable, healthy homes. This transition will also catalyze a future in which communities use localized, climate-safe, and resilient energy systems.



Over the next five years, our partnerships will prove the possible by:

- 1 Implementing home energy retrofits that advance energy security, health, and climate resilience.
- 2 Enabling public policy change that addresses barriers to energy justice by improving energy access, affordability, and home energy retrofit resources for the households that need them most.
- 3 Supporting community aspirations around place-based energy economies by providing resources, guidance, and capacity-building.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Community Energy



Home energy justice

After six months of intense preparation, it was incredibly rewarding to watch the room fill up on the morning of Canada's first-ever Home Energy Justice Forum on Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Territories in Vancouver, BC. I was surrounded by over 80 attendees from across industry, academia and government, and those with lived experience of energy insecurity. It was an incredible meeting of minds and hearts, bringing together folks from diverse backgrounds to find ways to keep our homes healthy, climate resilient, and affordable to heat and cool.

Together, we charted practical steps toward energy justice in British Columbia, where low-carbon home retrofits, energy affordability, and extreme heat resilience are increasingly seen as critical and intersecting policy issues.

The Forum left us with clear steps forward, calls to action — like the phasing out of fossil fuel appliances and more comprehensive supports for low-income households to retrofit their homes — and a deeper sense of commitment to each other in our mission to pursue home energy justice in our communities.

Organizational priorities

In the previous five years, Ecotrust Canada has gone through a substantial restructuring, accompanied by significant growth in the size of our team. In the five years to come, we will focus on ensuring that we support this team by becoming one of Canada's top employers. This means adopting sector-leading employee compensation and benefits, enhancing transparency, cooperation, and unity among people and programs, all while ensuring a physically, emotionally, and culturally safe workplace.

A safe, rewarding, equitable, and fulfilling workplace

CULTURAL SAFETY ACTION PLAN:

Ecotrust Canada has committed to developing a Cultural Safety Action Plan — a document designed to serve as a living practical guide for daily operational practices, the flagstones upon which we make our way toward a more just, equitable, anti-racist, anti-colonial society. We've structured our actions around the following areas of focus that speak to three specific stated organizational values:

1. Kinship and accountability
2. Truth and justice
3. Curiosity and courage

We aspire that our daily actions will be guided by our values and genuine commitment to reconciliation and anti-racism in our organization. We recognize the role and accept the responsibility that Ecotrust Canada has in advancing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and contributing to reconciliation, anti-colonialism, and anti-racism.

FIVE-YEAR GOALS:

1. Implement our Cultural Safety Action Plan
2. Continue to revisit and update the Cultural Safety Action Plan annually

A FLEXIBLE WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a trend already underway for Ecotrust Canada — increased flexibility for staff regarding where they perform their duties. As of 2022, most of our team works primarily from home, and those homes are increasingly spread across Canada. In the five years ahead of us, we will seek to further encourage such flexibility by ensuring staff have adequate supports for in-home office work, as well as access to remote working locations outside of the home as needed.

Another aspect of flexibility relates to the timing of the work week. In 2023, Ecotrust Canada implemented a four-day work week (4DWW). The 4DWW is an increasingly common approach that organizations are taking to improve work/life balance for staff. Studies increasingly point to increased employee satisfaction and productivity resulting from a shortened work week.

FIVE-YEAR GOALS:

1. Ensure all employees have access to the equipment and support they need, including a home office stipend to successfully support working from home.
2. Where employees have circumstances that make working from home difficult, provide resources to secure alternative space and equipment needed to do their job.
3. Implement a four-day work week.

A COMPETITIVE BENEFITS PACKAGE:

Over the last five years, Ecotrust Canada has focused heavily on competitive wages as a primary means for attracting and retaining talent, and while our current benefits package is competitive with charities of similar size and scope, additional improvements are needed. Through the lifetime of this strategic plan, Ecotrust Canada's combined compensation and benefits offering should be a clear leader among our peers.

FIVE-YEAR GOAL:

1. Modernize employee benefits such that, in combination with the above goals regarding a flexible workplace environment, Ecotrust Canada is once again publicly recognized as a top organization to work for in Canada.

Board Development and Renewal

Over the last five years, Ecotrust Canada's board has been an essential pillar around which the organization has been rebuilt. We have been well served by the board's deep experience with non-profit management as well as our legacy of finance and business innovation. Equally valuable has been the sector expertise the board brings as it relates to our strategic priorities. These strengths will continue to be critical to the future of the organization as with a new strategic plan comes the opportunity for renewal.

As this plan describes, our work is defined by, and catalysed through, our partnerships with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, and the organization will greatly benefit from having more voices and perspectives from these communities represented at our highest level of guidance and decision-making. Above and beyond the practical benefits of having more community perspectives on the board, Ecotrust Canada's commitment to reconciliation, diversity, equity, and inclusion also creates the impetus for the organization to promote these values within its governance structures.

FIVE-YEAR GOALS:

1. Launch a process of board renewal that re-engages existing board members and creates a pathway for expanding the size of the board.
2. Increase board membership among individuals with meaningful and current connections to rural, remote, and Indigenous communities in Canada.
3. Creating a framework for bringing Indigenous viewpoints into the organization's governance system and increasing Indigenous representation on the board.
4. Increase board diversity.

Measuring our impact

Given that *proving the possible* is core to our mission, Ecotrust Canada has an obligation to provide evidence that our strategies are having the desired impact of creating place-based economies that are thriving, just, and sustainable. To address this critical need, we are developing an Ecotrust Canada Learning Agenda. As of the release of this strategic plan, the framework is still in the early stages of development and will be subject to ongoing testing and improvement over the next five years. The overall structure and process are discussed below.

Ecotrust Canada Learning Agenda

Concurrent with the implementation of this updated strategic plan, our team, board, and community partners will be co-developing a unified framework for evaluation, decision-making, and telling our story. The Learning Agenda will be designed in a way consistent with our commitments to reconciliation, Indigenous ways of knowing, and sustainability.

The Learning Agenda will be a living document designed to be flexible in response to changing circumstances and will complement Ecotrust Canada's strategic plan and Reconciliation Framework. The Learning Agenda will support,

- ongoing decision-making by identifying key accountability and reporting requirements for the whole organization;
- identifying a set of prioritized questions to address organizational information needs;
- outlining data collection and evaluation activities to support those needs across the organization and within each program area; and
- creation of a coherent, cohesive, organization-wide approach for how we describe progress toward fulfilling our mission.



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