



**ecotrust
canada**

DEEP ROOTS

Annual Report 2025



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Message from the Board

For three decades, Ecotrust Canada has been carefully and cooperatively deepening roots and relationships on British Columbia's North Coast. It's here, in the territory of the Ts'msyen Peoples, where we have our biggest organizational presence. This fall, we decided to celebrate that fact by bringing the staff and board together for a week in Prince Rupert. It was an immensely rewarding experience, filled with the beauty of the natural surroundings and the warmth of the people who graciously hosted us.

One of our first stops was to learn more about our deep investment in the region's coastal fisheries, including our partnership with the Area A Crab Association. It's one thing to track the numbers flowing through quarterly reports, and quite another to be standing on the docks, surrounded by the vessels of the fleet, learning how they sustainably manage this incredibly valuable fishery.

Equally tangible was the experience of visiting our urban farm-to-school collaboration with Prince Rupert's School District 52. In 2025, Ecotrust Canada worked with these schools to co-develop a suite of garden boxes and greenhouse sites to grow sustainable food with students and the community.

We celebrated our many circles of relationships at an open house at the Lester Centre for Performing Arts. Over 100 people joined, allowing the board and team to share food, stories, and inspiration with friends and partners of all ages.


Mission

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

Vision

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

The board set out by boat on a misty morning to an important cultural site for the Metlakatla Nation. Surrounded by the stunning beauty of a tranquil island, our community guides spoke of how the Nation would soon revive its cultural practice of seaweed mariculture. It was a powerful glimpse into the past, present, and future of Indigenous stewardship, and we all felt honoured to know that, in our own small way, Ecotrust Canada's partnership with the Metlakatla helps build an economy that provides for life.

We were grateful for the North Coast hospitality. One week is hardly enough time to pay tribute to the complex and deep roots that anchor our work in the region. Community is the heartbeat of everything we do, and spending quality time on school grounds, on the docks, and on the water drove this home. It's just the kind of inspiration to propel the next thirty years of impact. 



Alex Loeb
CO-CHAIR



Velma McColl
CO-CHAIR

○ Message from the President and CEO

Our mission, *to build an economy that provides for life*, is vital and urgent, but it also demands deep patience. This is work that requires thoughtful cultivation, a healthy appetite for exploring the unknown, and a willingness to learn from failure. Along the way, everything we do is nourished by the deepening relationships with people and place. These are the connections that grow quietly below the surface, sustaining the important action unfolding above ground. This is a garden of ideas, people, and projects that we have tended for more than thirty years.


The importance of cultivating the roots of change in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities cannot be overstated. In each of these communities is the information, wisdom, practice, and energy needed to reinvent whole systems. As the grinding rattle of an extractive economy pulls itself apart, it is from these communities that our most practical and meaningful alternatives for a vibrant, resilient economic life will emerge.

In a blog at the end of 2025, I reflected on a hard reality — no, we have not stopped climate change, reversed biodiversity loss, or transformed the global economy. I'm revisiting this point to emphasize the importance of what we have achieved. Our part in these existential struggles is to co-create with communities the capacities, relationships, and tools they need to cultivate their own future. In 2025, consider the following examples of how we partnered with communities through our five programs:

- **Community Fisheries:** we amplified the voices of independent fishers as they fight for policy reform that will unlock their entrepreneurial energy, allowing those with the most at stake in sustainability to lead fisheries management.
- **Climate Resilience:** launched the *Climate Resilience Network* for the Central Interior of BC, which is already strengthening forest-based communities through regional analysis, planning support, and access to funding.
- **Food Systems:** formed the *North Coast Food Hub* in Prince Rupert on Ts'msyen Territory, with plans for greenhouses, community markets, and education programs to grow a robust and resilient local food economy.
- **Indigenous Homelands:** we created the *Routes to Roots* project to support the return to Indigenous-led trading systems and youth-driven circular economies. This project is grounded in long-standing relationships and traditional governance in communities.
- **Community Energy:** working with 200+ rural, remote, and Indigenous households to complete home energy retrofits — including heat pumps—to reduce energy bills, greenhouse gases, and improve health for decades.



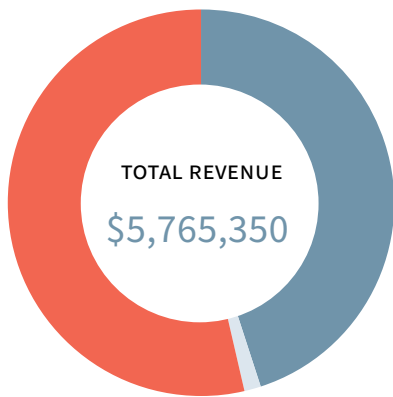
Partnering with communities also requires ongoing accountability within our own walls. In 2025, we advanced our reconciliation evaluation framework and our organizational learning agenda — the internal roots, if you will, that keep us accountable to our partners and the public.

All around us, the systems and structures that have been maintaining the status quo are weakening. The resulting transformation will be both disruptive and necessary. The roots we tended in 2025 are part of our larger investment to meet change with creativity and resilience, and to empower communities to meet the future on their own terms. After all, it may be from these very communities that the most hopeful new shoots of life will emerge. 

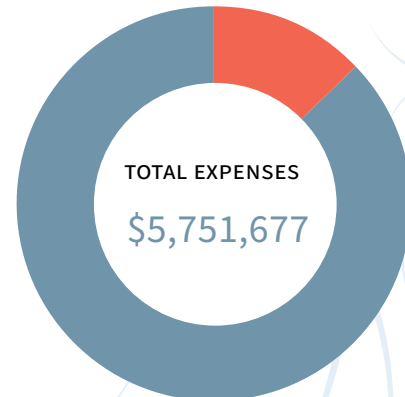
Chuck Rumsey
PRESIDENT AND CEO

2025 Financial Summary

Our 2025 Annual Report explores what it means to establish roots in a place — to do the work of building place-based economies that are connected to land and water, community, and the relationships that sustain them over time. Through stories and program highlights, we share the progress, challenges, and learning that shaped our work this year alongside rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. For detailed metrics measuring our progress and outcomes against organizational goals, please see our companion 2025 Impact Report.



- **Fee for Service:** \$2,939,426
- **Grants & Contributions:** \$2,774,746
- **Investment Income:** \$51,178



- **Programs:** \$5,007,300
- **Administration:** \$744,377

Expenses by Program		
Administration	\$744,377	13%
Fundraising & Business Development	\$155,319	3%
Climate Resilience	\$709,232	12%
Community Energy	\$717,940	12%
Community Fisheries	\$2,051,456	36%
Food Systems	\$848,440	15%
Indigenous Homelands	\$375,455	7%
Learning Agenda	\$149,457	3%
Total Expenses	\$5,751,677	100%
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$13,673	

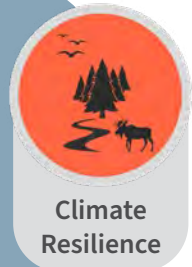
2025 Highlights



Community Fisheries

After years of coalition advocacy with the Fisheries for Communities Network, the Senate of Canada's Fisheries Committee committed in 2025 to a full review of Pacific fisheries licensing policy in 2026. On the water, Ecotrust Canada's monitoring programs enabled 862 fish harvesters in BC and across 13 First Nations to participate in sustainable fisheries.

In 2025, Ecotrust Canada supported the collection of baseline carbon data across 170,301 hectares of First Nations-led protected areas. This work gives Nuxalk Nation and Wilp Gwininitxw the evidence they need to secure long-term climate financing for their lands.



Climate Resilience



Food Systems

In 2025, Ecotrust Canada launched the North Coast Food Hub in Prince Rupert on Ts'msyen Territory. This school-centred initiative grew 476 kg of produce and is now supplying the school meal program that feeds 500 children across School District 52.

Reaching over 100 Indigenous and community organizations, funders, and policymakers across Canada, the Indigenous Housing Landscape Report, published in 2025 through the McConnell Foundation, provided the first comprehensive national picture of Indigenous housing supports, identified critical gaps, and offered advice on how fragmented efforts can be better coordinated.



Indigenous Homelands



Community Energy

Across remote and rural communities on Vancouver Island and in Prince Rupert, 296 participants enrolled in the Home Energy Savings Program. One hundred and sixteen household retrofits were completed, improving energy efficiency and comfort for households facing high energy costs and limited access to support. In Indigenous communities, 120 people across 50 households benefited from home retrofits, advancing energy security.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Community Fisheries

About the Program

We are committed to revitalizing sustainable, fair, and prosperous commercial fisheries on the Pacific Coast and providing innovative fisheries monitoring services and programs to First Nations and coastal communities.

Long-term Goal

To enable 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:

- Supporting communities and governments on the Pacific 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.
- Delivering tailored and innovative fisheries monitoring programming to rural, remote, and Indigenous coastal communities to enhance the sustainability of communities and the marine environment on Canada's Pacific Coast.
- Creating transparency around illegal, underreported, and unregulated fishing, and the way in which such activity is defined and enforced in Canada.



People Impacted by Our Work

The monitoring program directly impacted 862 fish harvesters and 30 locally hired fisheries monitors, and indirectly impacted the 25,862 community members in the places we serve.



Monitoring Programs Built for and by the Communities We Serve

The fishing season is demanding — monitors meet harvesters on the docks at odd hours, often as the sun is rising or setting, to validate and collect data on their catch. There is a need for monitoring service providers along the Pacific Coast of Canada who can deliver community-specific fisheries monitoring programs to ensure harvesters and First Nations can fish.


Ecotrust Canada is federally certified to provide at-sea and dockside monitoring services, and we are the only organization on the West Coast adapting our programming to meet the needs of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the unique needs of the coastal communities and First Nations we serve.

In 2025, we employed and trained 30 local community members as monitors across 11 fisheries in the three regions where we work: Prince Rupert, Haida Gwaii, and the West Coast of Vancouver Island. We served 860 fish harvesters, providing timely and accurate data to DFO and First Nations partners to support sustainable fishery management. This year, we worked with two new communities, Kitselas and Kitsumkalum First Nations.

In July, the salmon season opened in Prince Rupert, BC, and our team spent four days observing fishing activity aboard gillnet boats — recording species, fish condition, and what was released or retained. We also partnered with DFO on salmon stock assessments, contributing the kind of on-the-water, real-time data that informs evidence-based management decisions.



Our team was also at the docks, monitoring salmon caught by Indigenous fish harvesters for the North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society and the Metlakatla and Lax Kw'alaams demonstration fisheries.

New this year, our team took part in the Kitsumkalum River demonstration fishery in Terrace, BC, extending dockside monitoring services to a community and watershed that had never been part of our program. Demonstration fisheries provide Indigenous harvesters with additional economic opportunities and blend commercial fishing with food, social, and ceremonial harvesting in a single trip — restoring traditional practices that colonial regulations had forced them to separate. 



Haida Gwaii: A Collaborative Dockside Monitoring Program

Off the Northern BC coast, on the archipelago of Haida Gwaii, we celebrated a significant milestone with our partner, the Haida Nation. The collaborative dockside monitoring program between the Nation and Ecotrust Canada completed its first full year of training — a year spent building skills meant to last.

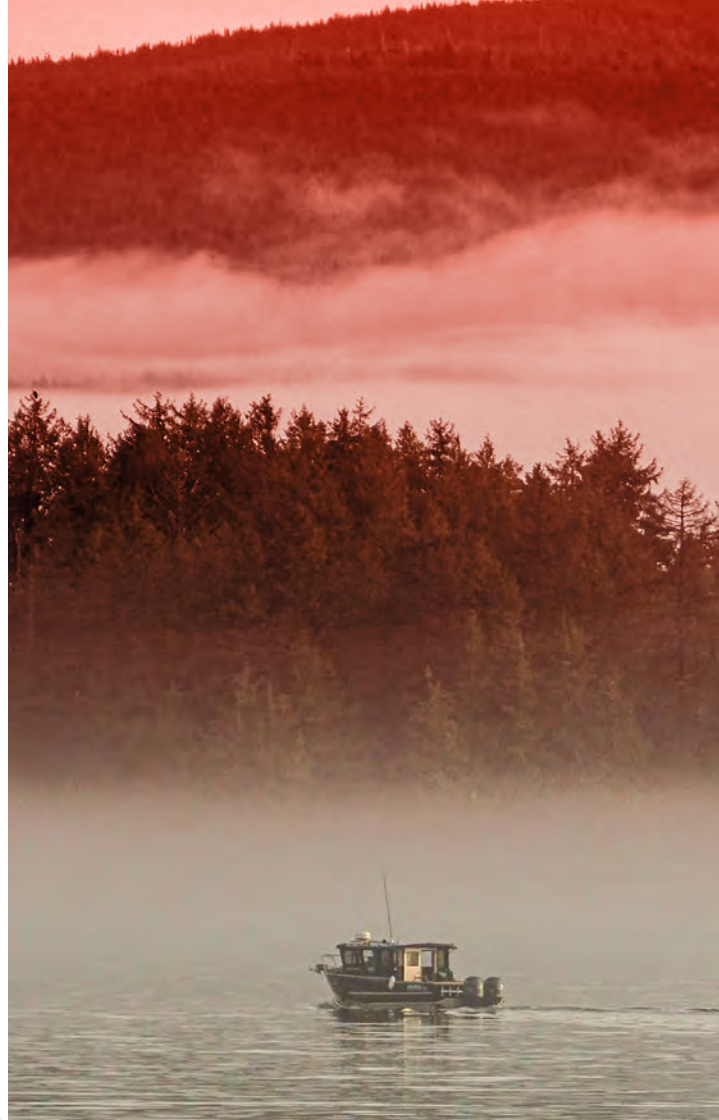
Twelve community members received training in salmon, halibut, and groundfish identification and sampling procedures through sessions held in Skidegate and Masset. Throughout the season, these newly trained monitors met fish harvesters at the docks, recorded their catch, and documented the total weight of each species.

This is more than a fisheries program; it is a capacity exchange designed to ensure that the knowledge, employment, and decision-making power over Haida waters rest with Haida people. This type of work goes beyond Haida Gwaii toward a broader goal of advancing community-based monitoring programs across First Nations communities along the Pacific Coast. 🌊

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“We’re inviting all residents on Haida Gwaii to get involved in future dockside monitor training. This collaboration is just one part of a much broader goal to re-establish thriving fisheries on the coast... it builds skills and ensures well-trained monitors, but it will also lead to healthy fish populations in the long run.”

— Yalh Kulh Jaadaas Laina Bell, Haida Nation





Sampling and Gear Recovery with Area A Crab Fishers

Between February and July, our North Coast team worked with Area A crab fishers to monitor their catch and support the long-term health of the Dungeness crab fishery in the Hecate Strait. A key part of this work involves softshell monitoring — assessing whether crabs have hardened sufficiently after moulting to ensure good meat quality and protect crabs during their most vulnerable phase. By testing the fishery before the season opens, fish harvesters play a direct role in stewarding the resource they depend on. This season, a charter vessel completed nine softshell sampling trips, sampling 8,203 crabs to assess hardness and inform the timing of fishery closures and openings.


During the closure, our team helped coordinate gear recovery in the Hecate Strait, the waters between Prince Rupert and Haida Gwaii. This annual initiative is spearheaded by Area A harvesters themselves. This year, they recovered 531 crab traps, returning 519 pieces of usable gear to the fleet and generating \$23,400 in buy-back fees to fund stewardship in the waters they harvest. ➤





Fisheries Policy

For small-scale fish harvesters and First Nations on BC's coast, access to commercial fishing is becoming increasingly difficult to attain. Decades of policy gaps have allowed licences and quotas to accumulate in the hands of distant investors and corporations, making it harder for local working harvesters and First Nations to stay in, or enter, the industry. As a result, the many economic and social benefits of fishing continue to be pulled away from coastal communities.


In 2025, our team worked closely with First Nations, harvester organizations, and allies to advance a made-in-BC approach to fisheries licensing policy. They travelled to Ottawa to meet with partners and participated in DFO-hosted workshops across BC as the federal government considers changes that will shape the future of Pacific fisheries. In a significant step forward, the Senate of Canada's Fisheries Committee committed in 2025 to review fisheries licensing policy in 2026 — a direct result of sustained advocacy by harvesters, Nations, and organizations like ours. 

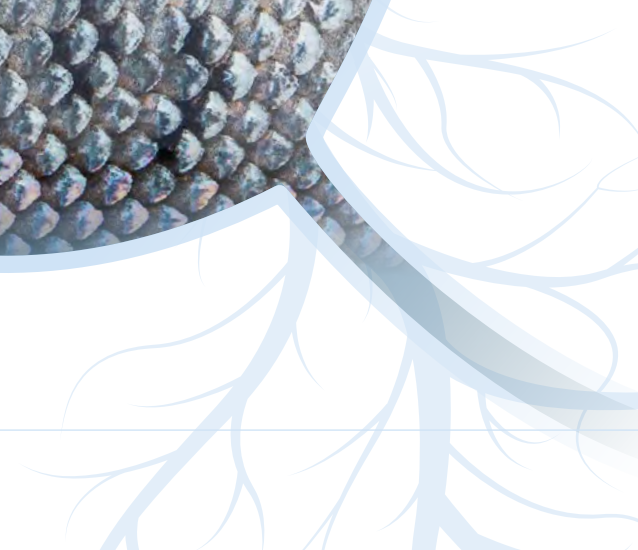




Using Technology to Tackle Fish Crimes Worldwide

Illegal fishing is estimated to account for up to 26 million tonnes of fish per year — undermining sustainable fisheries, threatening food security, and hitting small-scale harvesters hardest. It is also deeply entangled with organized crime: drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the smuggling of migrants.

Spyglass, Ecotrust Canada’s open fish crimes database created by Dyhia Belhabib, is built to change that. In 2025, the database grew to 12,000 tracked vessels and 80 enforcement entities and research institutions across 20 countries, who are now actively using it to support investigations. 





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Climate Resilience


About the Program

Our Climate Resilience program works in deep collaboration with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities to co-develop and implement strategies that safeguard the health of their lands and waters. Guided by community values, Indigenous laws, and ecological knowledge, we co-create innovative land and water stewardship models designed to protect intact natural ecosystems and improve management in degraded ones. These efforts address climate mitigation and adaptation, encourage economic prosperity, and protect cultural values and biodiversity.

What is Possible – Long-term Goal

Rural, remote, and Indigenous communities lead in natural climate solutions in the places they call home, stewarding their lands and waters while bringing about society-wide benefits for climate and biodiversity.

Over the next five years, our partnerships are proving the possible by:

- Working with community partners to support Indigenous sovereignty through land and water planning that upholds Indigenous law and governance to achieve climate and biodiversity goals.
- Enabling a planned transition toward the stewardship of natural forests and better management of secondary forests by creating innovative models that inspire sustainable economic opportunities and draw in long-term funding.
- Improving the ability of communities and nature to adapt to the effects of a changing climate through natural climate solutions. 




Carbon Fieldwork in Indigenous-Led Conservation Areas

Canada's forests and soils are among the most carbon-rich on earth. This year, Ecotrust Canada's Climate team ventured deep into two ecologically significant landscapes in BC to collect soil samples and determine how much carbon is stored in each area. With funding from the federal Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (NSCSF), we conducted carbon sampling fieldwork across 170,181 hectares of First Nations-led protected areas, generating much-needed baseline data.

In April, we travelled to the Great Bear Rainforest on the Central Coast of BC, where the Nuxalk Nation has purchased 181 hectares of private land to permanently protect it from logging and development. [Working alongside Nuxalk Coastal Guardian Watchmen](#), we dug soil pits and collected samples from ancient forests to build a concrete, data-backed picture of the carbon stored in soils that Indigenous stewardship has protected for millennia.

In June, we spent a week in the upper Skeena watershed, working within the Wilp Gwininitxw Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) — a vast 170,000-hectare territory managed under Gitxsan law. [This fieldwork built on a deepening relationship with Wilp Gwininitxw](#) and supported their successful federal NSCSF funding application.

The data belongs to the Nations. It supports their governance, strengthens their position in climate finance conversations, and adds a quantitative layer to what their Guardians have always known on the ground: that protecting these lands and waters delivers profound climate benefits, alongside the cultural, economic, and ecological values at the heart of their stewardship.

Canada's path to its conservation and climate commitments runs through territories like these. Ecotrust Canada's role is to make sure the Nations have the tools, data, and access to finance required to lead the way. 

People Impacted by Our Work

9,132 community members across 10 communities are developing natural climate solutions projects.



Launching the Central Interior Climate Resilience Network

BC's Central Interior holds some of Canada's most ecologically important forests — and some of its most urgent land stewardship challenges. Over a century of industrial extraction has diminished biodiversity, threatened traditional food sources, and deepened economic insecurity for the Indigenous and rural communities who call this region home.

In May 2025, Ecotrust Canada launched the **Central Interior Climate Resilience Network** — a five-year initiative aimed at shifting that trajectory. Rather than imposing external solutions, the Network brings together Indigenous communities with shared urgency but unique goals, connecting them to the regional analyses, land planning support, and funding pathways they need to lead conservation on their own terms.

By the end of 2025, seven Indigenous communities were actively engaged, three had submitted or were preparing natural climate solutions (NCS) funding applications, and two had identified concrete NCS project opportunities aligned with their land-use priorities.

The Network builds on more than 30 years of Ecotrust Canada's partnership with Indigenous communities — and on tools like carbontoolkit.org, now freely available to First Nations pursuing carbon financing. 🌱

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“The transition back to fully sustainable livelihoods in balance with a protected ancestral forest and rewilded plantation will take a long time, but that is the Maiyoo Keyoh's unwavering objective.”


— Jim Munroe, who speaks on behalf of the Maiyoo Keyoh, part of the Climate Resilience Network



Supporting 30x30 Commitments: Mapping What Matters

Canada has committed to protecting 30% of its lands and waters by 2030, but getting there requires knowing where to protect. Strategic, science-based guidance on which ecosystems matter most is largely missing. In 2025, Ecotrust Canada took a major step toward filling that gap.

Working with 28 experts from 13 organizations — including BC government, BC Parks Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society Canada, and First Nations representatives — we finalized a biodiversity mapping methodology covering 95 million hectares of BC across forest, wetland, grassland, and alpine ecosystems.

Slated for public release in spring 2026, these will be BC's first openly accessible, peer-reviewed conservation priority maps, giving governments, First Nations, and conservation partners the evidence base to make protection decisions that count. 





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Food Systems Program


About the Program

Our Food Systems program builds on the groundswell of food work already underway by local organizations. We bring our research, fundraising, facilitation, and harvesting skills to food systems projects on land and at sea. In partnership with First Nations communities, local schools, social change organizations, and municipalities, we are contributing to collaborative, sustainable, and innovative local food economies supported by regional food production and vibrant marketplaces.

What is Possible – Long-term Goal

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

Over the next five years, our partnerships are proving the possible by:

- Establishing the North Coast Food Hub, a school-centred system that integrates food production — from greenhouses, mariculture, and fisheries — with programming, distribution networks, and a community marketplace, while strengthening regional food governance and supporting the local economy.
- Supporting inclusive community leadership in BC's emerging seaweed farming sector through community-driven planning at regional and sector-wide levels that respects and advances Indigenous territorial stewardship in seaweed. 

People Impacted by Our Work

The North Coast Food Hub initiative impacted 1,850 students in School District 52, including over 500 children nourished through the school food program.



Growing Roots in Prince Rupert Schools: The North Coast Food Hub

In May 2025, Ecotrust Canada established the [North Coast Food Hub](#) in Prince Rupert, BC, on Ts'msyen territory. This community-driven, school-centred initiative is increasing access to healthy, local, culturally relevant food for students and families in one of BC's remote coastal cities.

Built on established and evolving partnerships, the Hub brings together School District 52, local government, and Indigenous and community organizations to turn food access challenges into lasting opportunities. In its first year, the Food Hub grew and harvested over 476 kilograms of produce, 80% of which was donated to seven community organizations, and secured \$298,000 in grants to expand the program's reach and infrastructure.

With new funding, the Food Hub team built outdoor garden beds at schools across the district, created a [food forest trail](#) next to Roosevelt Elementary, and began construction on three new greenhouses, with completion expected in spring 2026. Additional funding enabled the purchase of a new refrigerated van to deliver hot and cold meals to schools across Prince Rupert. The school district secured funding for a fish processing kitchen, adding capacity to procure and process local seafood for student meals.

By September, the first harvest from school and community gardens was incorporated directly into the school food program that serves over 500 children — an early and tangible milestone in connecting local production to student nutrition. That same month, the team co-hosted the Symposium event with the City of Prince Rupert and School District 52, where local growers, harvesters, and food artisans gathered to celebrate and shape the work underway. In November, students and volunteers planted over 1,300 garlic cloves across school sites.

Ecotrust Canada produced a draft [Community Food Action Plan](#) to help inform the City of Prince Rupert's

Food Strategy, drawing on academic research, partner collaboration, and a community workshop. The community-led plan was developed from academic research, community workshops, and with local partners. With the City of Prince Rupert, we held two community engagement sessions to share the plan and ensure local voices and lived experiences shaped the municipality’s future food strategy.

Food programming is growing across the school district. At Charles Hays Secondary, students started a garden club. At elementary schools, the team began developing one-hour greenhouse and garden learning sessions — weaving food lessons into the school day. A plant list was prepared for Wap Sigatgyet, the Ts’mSYEN Sm’algyax Language Authority, to introduce Indigenous language into the growing program.

In October, the program’s five-year vision was shared on a broader stage when the program manager, Dianne Villeséche, presented at the Public Health Association of British Columbia Food Summit in Prince George.

The North Coast Food Hub is taking root, and by fall 2026, we expect it to spread and grow. ➤

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“The resilience of a community food system impacts every person who lives in it. Dianne’s amazing work with her partners on the Food Hub is making big strides to get local and healthy food into schools and the community, with the potential for big impact in a town that has high poverty and food insecurity rates among children.”

— Myfannwy Pope, the City of Prince Rupert’s Director of Planning and Development Services.





Growing Seaweed, an Emerging Industry

Off the coast of BC, we are finding strategic ways to support community leadership in seaweed and shellfish cultivation. Our work in this field began with feasibility research in 2019 and has since evolved to include market research, fundraising, facilitation, and scallop harvest distributions with community members. From our office in Prince Rupert, we are supporting the Metlakatla First Nation in building a financially self-sustaining regenerative mariculture business in their ancestral waters.

By 2025, over six years of research and development had pointed to something new. Drawing on the learnings from farming scallops and kelp on ocean tenures, Metlakatla is pivoting toward farming pyropia — known locally as black seaweed, or la'ask — a species rooted in cultural harvesting practices. To support their shift, we have been working with Metlakatla to secure the infrastructure needed to establish the first dedicated black seaweed nursery on BC's North Coast, which Metlakatla has hired a full-time nursery manager to run. Together, we've also developed a community monitoring framework that has led to hands-on trainings for Metlakatla, dive surveys, water chemistry data collection, and the installation of monitoring equipment directly at black seaweed beds.

The year also brought new and expanded partnerships and relationships to the North Coast. North Island College, Cascadia Seaweed, and independent phycologists (a scientific expert in algae) are supporting the advancement of seed production research for Metlakatla First Nation's black seaweed farm. We also published [a guide to regenerative mariculture](#) in Northern BC to share our know-how more broadly and inspire more communities to explore opportunities in this emerging industry. The ocean holds enormous potential. This work is about ensuring that potential belongs to the communities that have always called these waters home. 



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Indigenous Homelands Program




About the Program

Though our program focuses on housing and homelands, at our roots, we are about community well-being. We cannot have a truly sustainable society if our culture, economy, and environment are not cared for. The Homelands program's vision is rooted in this holistic focus on well-being. We aim to break down barriers that prevent Indigenous community members from being able to return to and thrive in their homelands.

What is Possible – Long-term Goal

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 are proving the possible by:

- 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.
- Creating more sustainable circular economies by building regional housing supply chain networks.
- Enabling culturally based decolonial governance through innovations in land tenure and land management models. 



People Impacted by Our Work

1,500 community Nuxalk Nation members, the main community we've connected with for our initiatives.

Routes to Roots: Revitalizing Traditional Corridors of Exchange

In 2025, Ecotrust Canada launched [Routes to Roots](#) — a holistic reimagining of regional economies rooted in Indigenous trading traditions and the Nuxalk concept of [Stl'mstaliwa: the full human experience](#).

For generations, First Nations communities along BC's Central Coast and Central Interior thrived through interdependence — sustaining one another through shared resources, reciprocal trade, and culturally grounded governance. Colonization fractured these systems, displacing community-centred economies with Western models that prioritize individual gain over collective well-being. Routes to Roots is a response to decolonizing the system.

The pilot project, developed in collaboration with Nuxalk Nation, is building a framework for a self-sufficient regional supply chain network to keep material and human resources within the region. Central to the project is a commitment to youth, empowering the next generation to become skilled professionals, knowledge-holders, and leaders in a circular economy that honours their cultural roots.

The initiative creates space for First Nations communities to define self-leadership, self-determination, and sustainability on their own terms — fostering dialogue between Nations, reinvigorating non-monetary trade economies, and bridging Indigenous governance traditions with contemporary economic realities. It also works alongside local Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents and business leaders toward shared regional goals.

Designed to be replicable, Routes to Roots will produce an open-access supply chain toolkit and expand to a second region in year three. It is at once an economic strategy, a cultural revitalization, and a foundation for the kind of resilient, place-based prosperity that has always defined thriving Indigenous homelands. 

Mapping the Indigenous Housing Ecosystem

Indigenous housing in Canada is in crisis — and the institutions, organizations, and people working to address it are fragmented. Over 157,000 new homes are needed in First Nations communities alone, with “widespread issues like overcrowding, mould, and deteriorating infrastructure requiring immediate and strategic investment,” according to the [Assembly of First Nations](#). Yet, progress is slow and uneven. It’s this gap — between the scale of the crisis and the coherence of the response — that the [Indigenous Housing Landscape Report](#) set out to address. In 2025, Ecotrust Canada’s Indigenous Homelands team published a comprehensive analysis of key civil society organizations responding to this challenge across the country.

Commissioned by the McConnell Foundation, the report combined a grey literature review featuring 117 sources on the state of Indigenous housing across Canada and in-depth interviews with 10 thought-leaders to map civil society actors responding to the crisis across Canada.

Central to the report is that the sector is siloed and constrained by short funding cycles, bureaucratic slow-downs, and a disconnect between funders and on-the-ground realities.

The report reframes housing itself — not as shelter, but holistically as a foundation for healing, culture, and community well-being. Its recommendations call for Indigenous-led decision-making, long-term collaborative funding models, and cross-sector dialogue to shift from crisis response to lasting solutions. ➔

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“Education is huge. We need to educate our children on all things housing.”

— Housing Expert interviewed for the Indigenous Housing Landscape Report






Stepping Stones for Housing Education

The Democratizing Knowledge Initiative builds on the [Indigenous Housing and Governance Toolkit](#) (published in 2022). We are developing modules and knowledge materials to support First Nations in navigating housing and land tenure systems in an accessible, inspiring, and non-intimidating way for diverse learners.

In 2025, we hired three new part-time team members and connected with a core partner, the Nuxalk Nation, on the Central Coast of BC, in Bella Coola. Together, we are developing educational tools. The Homelands team has begun preparing graphics, the curriculum, and methodology for workshops and modules.

This initiative will be launched by the end of 2026, with a website dedicated to sharing all educational materials, including short videos, seven accessible toolkit modules, artistic illustrations and infographics, and interactive in-person and virtual workshops. We hope that it will continue to expand each year, as our partner communities define more priorities and needs to highlight in the modules related to land, housing, finances, and supply chains. 





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Community Energy Program


About the Program

Having access to affordable, clean energy should not be a luxury in Canada. Yet, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities often face energy costs that are up to three times the Canadian household average. A million households in Canada experience energy insecurity. This means that many families are suffering from high rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and mould-related illnesses caused by living in cold, poorly ventilated homes. Too often, people must choose between paying their utility bills and paying for life's other essentials. These households are more vulnerable to extreme heat and a changing climate. It should not be this way. Ecotrust Canada believes that new, clean technologies, combined with innovative policies and local expertise, can help eliminate energy insecurity in Canada.

What is Possible – Long-term Goal

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 are proving the possible by:

- Implementing home energy retrofits that advance energy security, health, and climate resilience.
- 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.
- Supporting community aspirations around place-based energy economies by providing resources, guidance, and capacity-building. 



People Impacted by Our Work

- In 2025, 296 participants enrolled in our free Home Energy Savings Program and 120 people (50 households) were positively impacted by retrofits in their homes, primarily households in on-reserve Indigenous communities.
- The BC Government announced a \$100M investment in ~8,300 heat pump rebates for renters and low-income residents. Ecotrust Canada has been advocating with our partners for the inclusion of heat pumps in the BC Energy Conservation Assistance Program since 2021 through research reports, regulatory submissions, and government meetings.


Helping Households Save More, Spend Less

In its second year, the [Home Energy Savings Program](#) grew from 155 to 296 participants. The program, free of charge, provides personalized support to households seeking to improve energy efficiency, reduce utility costs, address safety risks, access available rebates, connect with qualified contractors, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2025, we expanded service to new communities — Quadra, Cortes, Denman, and Hornby Islands, and the qathet region (Powell River) — while continuing to serve households in Prince Rupert and northern Vancouver Island.

A Story from Alert Bay

This spring, we took the ferry from the northern tip of Vancouver Island to meet with Jerry Olney in Alert Bay. Jerry welcomed us into his retrofitted home that his grandfather had built about 80 years ago. His experience is a powerful example of what our program has made possible.

With support from the Home Energy Savings Program, [Jerry secured over \\$23,000 in grants](#) for a new heat pump, insulation, and air exchange system. Before the retrofits, he was spending over \$4,000 a year on heat and electricity, but that dropped to \$1,800 after the upgrades. The numbers tell part of the story, but Jerry will tell you the biggest difference is being more comfortable at home. 



Celebrating a Major Policy Win, and Work Still to Do

In April, BC announced an expansion of its heat pump affordability programs to include more low- and moderate-income households, including renters — marking a significant step forward for energy equity in the province.

The BC government committed **\$100 million over two years to provide approximately 8,300 more heat pump rebates for the households that need them most.** Ecotrust Canada has been calling for the inclusion of heat pumps in the Energy Conservation Assistance Program since 2021. This expansion will reduce energy costs for low-income households and renters, helping them stay safe and comfortable in extreme weather and leaving more money for essentials like rent and groceries. But there is more to do.

“

“With the help from Michael at Ecotrust [Canada], he arranged for someone to come up [to Alert Bay] and throw a foot of insulation in the attic, insulate the walls in the basement, and he also arranged to have an HRV system, which will exchange fresh air from the outside to keep the air in the house from going stale.

With the help from Ecotrust Canada, I received the full grant of \$16,000 toward a central heat pump, \$5,500 for insulation in the attic, \$1,600 toward an HRV, and I’m very happy the way things turned out... I am far more comfortable.”

— Jerry Olney, Home Energy Savings Program Participant





In September, Ecotrust Canada, alongside twelve other organizations and elected officials from eight local governments, called on the BC Government to ensure that tenants have the right to cooling in their homes — and that building owners and stratas cannot unreasonably restrict them from doing so. As the 2021 heat dome demonstrated, extreme heat can be deadly, and renters continue to face barriers to installing life-saving cooling systems. That call has not yet been answered. We'll keep making it. 🏡



Home Energy Justice Forum

In May, over 110 policymakers and experts gathered for our second [Home Energy Justice Forum](#) to address energy insecurity affecting more than 250,000 households in BC. Discussions centred on three priorities: low-carbon home upgrades, affordable energy, and protecting people from extreme heat.

The forum produced concrete action items — regulating safe indoor temperatures in rental units, converting heating systems to heat pumps, and enshrining safe housing as a human right. Participants called for bold action that challenges structural inequities in how energy policy is made and who it reaches.

We captured this momentum in our published [Forum Proceedings Report](#). As researcher Jofri Issac put it: “When we talk about retrofitting, we are talking about transforming daily life, restoring dignity.” 🏡




Research: Building the Evidence for Change

In 2025, we published two reports that tackle energy insecurity across housing types that policy has often overlooked.

Our August report, [Manufactured Home Retrofits in BC](#), drew on interviews and input from residents and park owners from 50 manufactured home parks across the province. We found that these homes use 61% more energy per square foot than other housing types, and over 60% of residents identified restrictive park rules as barriers to retrofits. The report recommends a coordinated response across programs, regulations, and technical training — so that manufactured home residents are no longer left behind in B.C.'s clean energy transition.

In November, [Safe Temperatures in BC Rental Housing: Municipal and Provincial Policy Pathways](#) outlined concrete steps provincial and municipal governments can take to protect renters, including prohibiting unreasonable cooling bans and strengthening maintenance and efficiency standards. An accompanying action tracker will monitor progress on extreme heat policies across BC municipalities.

Together, these reports make one thing clear: the evidence exists — now we need the political will and community support to turn it into action that saves energy and saves lives. 





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