ecotrust canada

DEEP ROOTS

Impact Report **2025**

Contents

Executive Summary

In 2025, Ecotrust Canada's five programs worked alongside rural, remote, and Indigenous communities to build some of the foundational elements that place-based economies require, such as relationships, data, governance capacity, and physical infrastructure.

Together, our programs:

- **Enabled 862 fish harvesters across 17 First Nations to participate in sustainable fisheries, and supported the Senate of Canada's Fisheries Committee commitment to a full review of Pacific licensing policy in 2026.**
- **Directed $42.9 million in federal conservation funding toward Indigenous-led land protection, and conducted baseline carbon fieldwork across 170,181 hectares of First Nations-led protected areas.**
- **Launched the North Coast Food Hub, growing 476 kg of produce, now integrated into a school meal program feeding over 500 children across School District 52.**
- **Completed 143 home energy retrofits across 9 communities and helped secure a $100 million BC Government commitment for heat pump rebates for renters and low-income households.**
- **Published the first national civil society map of Indigenous housing supports, and completed year one of Routes to Roots — a community-governed circular economy initiative with Nuxalk Nation.**

Not everything unfolded as planned. Three NSCSF funding applications submitted in February were unsuccessful. The seaweed sector work required a significant process redesign after early engagement revealed that First Nations leadership needed to guide it before it could move forward. The Indigenous Homelands program deliberately narrowed its partnerships, moving from breadth toward depth, focusing on one community, which doesn't register as growth in most impact frameworks but does reflect a more honest understanding of what durable change requires. These are part of the record too.

How We Measure Impact

This report links our activities to outputs and outcomes across short, medium, and long-term horizons, allowing us to focus on material impact rather than attempting to measure everything.

Each program section includes: annual goals and five-year targets; output goals and progress; short-, mid-, and long-term outcome progress; key learnings; and a cumulative 2021–2025 outcomes table. Where baseline data is still being developed, we say so because we believe that transparency about measurement limitations is part of the framework.

Last year, we included our five shared Impact Pathways as part of our reporting. These include Relationship Building, On-the-Ground Projects, Knowledge Systems, Capacity Sharing, and Policy Innovation. In practice, we found that these categories added a layer of classification without meaningfully sharpening our analysis or learning. So, this year each program again reports directly against its own goals and cumulative outcomes. We remain committed to the community leadership, reciprocal relationships, and systems-oriented thinking those pathways represent.

What We Learned

A few themes emerged across program learnings in 2025.

Pacing matters as much as planning. In climate work, seaweed sector engagement, and homelands programming alike, we encountered situations where our process was moving faster than community readiness or priorities allowed. The adjustment in each case was to slow down, add in-person presence, and let community governance shape what comes next.

The Homelands program's shift to a single deep partnership with Nuxalk Nation and the Food Hub's pivot from pilot farm to school-embedded system represents a similar move to depth over breadth. The evidence of outcomes and impacts this kind of work produces might be messier and slower to accumulate, but we think it is more likely to point toward something lasting —we are strengthening our roots by growing deeper

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a year of implementation and consolidation as biodiversity maps move to public release, greenhouses are built and begin growing more food in Prince Rupert, Routes to Roots enters its community governance phase with the Nuxalk Nation, and the Senate's fisheries review begins in Ottawa. The roots are there, and our work is to nourish them.

Community Fisheries Program

The Problem

Policy

The cost of seafood is on the rise as value and demand are increasing worldwide, including in Canada. However, in British Columbia, commercial fish harvesters and First Nations are making less money off their catch at the dock, while the costs of operating a fishing boat are growing. For decades, small-scale, community-based fish harvesters have been replaced by large corporate fleets, threatening coastal communities and the sustainability of West Coast fisheries. Currently, policy and legislation do not protect small-scale harvesters and Nations from this, and we're trying to change that by working with those directly impacted.

Unlike Canada's East Coast, BC has no policy requiring fishing licence and quota holders to be boots-on-the-deck harvesters or First Nations. Anyone—domestic or foreign, connected to fishing or not—can buy and sell licences and quota. This has led to speculation and consolidation, with fishing access accumulating in the hands of a wealthy few.

Between 2010 and 2022, BC's commercial fishing sector saw a 10.7% decline in its workforce, with harvesting jobs alone falling from over 5,000 to around 4,500.* By 2019, 40% of BC harvesters were 55 or older, signalling a succession crisis with too few new entrants able to afford the cost of buying in.** In 2019, just 38 entities — 1.6% of licence holders — controlled 26% of BC's 6,563 fishing licences, while the 78% of holders with just one or two licences held only 36%.***

Corporate concentration and foreign investment have driven up costs. A 2020 survey found that over half of harvesters cannot afford licence and quota costs and cannot access sufficient licences to operate.**** This trend comes at the direct cost of coastal communities and the long-term sustainability of BC's fisheries.*****

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* *R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., BC Commercial Fishing Sector Labour Market Study, prepared for the BC Commercial Fishing Caucus and Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, April 2024, p. 15.*

** *House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, Foreign Ownership and Corporate Concentration of Fishing Licences and Quota, December 2023, p. 29.*

*** *House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, Foreign Ownership and Corporate Concentration of Fishing Licences and Quota, December 2023, p. 24.*

**** *Bennett, N. et al., Fishing for a Future: Understanding Access Issues and Wellbeing Among Independent Fish Harvesters in British Columbia, Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia, 2020, pp. 28–29.*

***** *How we define "Sustainable" or "Sustainability": Ensuring the social, cultural, economic and ecological well-being for fish harvesters, First Nations, and rural coastal communities.*

Community-Based Fisheries Monitoring

Ecotrust Canada partners with communities and Nations to build a monitoring model rooted in local hiring, training, and capacity sharing. This approach strengthens regional economies, is cost-effective, and improves stewardship in that responsibility is held by the people who know and care for the waters.

Fisheries monitoring is a complex service that involves meeting the requirements of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and First Nations for their specific fishery and reconciliation needs. There is a need for monitoring service providers available on the Pacific Coast of Canada who are able to deliver community-specific fisheries monitoring programs to ensure harvesters and First Nations can fish. Across British Columbia, there are 19 commercial fisheries and 4,022 commercial fishing licence holders (active and inactive) (*DFO data from 2023*) that require monitoring.

Illegal, Underreported, and Unregulated Fisheries

Illegal fishing and other forms of crimes committed by and onboard fishing vessels at sea affect ecosystems, people, and their communities. IUU fishing is estimated to account for up to 26 million tonnes of fish per year, valued between USD $10–23 billion, and undermines sustainable fisheries management worldwide. The lack of transparency, inconsistent enforcement, and limited accountability for large-scale operators enable fish crimes to persist, disproportionately harming small-scale harvesters and coastal communities.

Theory of Change

IF Ecotrust Canada delivers community-designed fisheries monitoring while advocating for policies that keep fishing licenses out of the hands of distant investors and corporations,

THEN fish harvesters, First Nations, and coastal communities will have the sustainable livelihoods, ecological stewardship, and decision-making power needed to thrive for generations,

BECAUSE when the barriers of corporate concentration and inadequate monitoring programming are removed, fisheries can be stewarded by those with the greatest stake in their long-term health — proving it's possible to build an economy that provides for life.

Cumulative Outcomes 2021-2025

Community-Based Fisheries Monitoring

Between 2023-2025, the number of fish harvesters that utilized Ecotrust Canada's DFO-designated monitoring programs grew from 535 to 862 — a **63% increase over three years**. This growth reflects the **expansion of our programs from 9 to 13 First Nations across three Pacific Coast Regions** and one river system, including Haida Gwaii in 2024, and Klemtu and Kitsumkalum First Nations in 2025.

Fisheries Policy Advocacy

Since 2018, Ecotrust Canada has supported the Fisheries for Communities Network, providing facilitation and administrative support for three national gatherings in 2018, 2020, and 2023 that brought together fish harvesters, First Nations leaders, and federal and provincial politicians to build consensus around Pacific Coast fisheries policy reform. Members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans attended these gatherings and subsequently conducted two formal inquiries into Pacific fisheries licensing — releasing reports with recommendations to the Government of Canada in 2019 and 2023.

By 2025, this sustained coalition advocacy had contributed to two concrete policy outcomes: a provincial owner-operator and fleet separation policy change embedded in BC's Coastal Marine Strategy, and a federal commitment from DFO to conduct community consultations on Pacific fisheries licensing modernization with specific attention to Indigenous engagement. In 2025, the Senate of Canada's Fisheries Committee committed to a full review of fisheries licensing policy in 2026.

Illegal, Underreported, and Unregulated Fisheries

In 2019, Ecotrust Canada launched Spyglass, an open online database to track data on vessels and various types of fish crimes worldwide. Prior to this, enforcement entities outside Canada lacked comprehensive access to a dedicated fish crimes database for research and investigative purposes. By 2024, Spyglass was tracking 10,000 boats globally, and enforcement personnel, reporters, and NGO staff in 20 countries were trained in approaches to identify fish crimes. By 2025, 80 enforcement entities and research institutions are actively using Spyglass to support investigations.

Learnings

Through program delivery in 2024–2025, we continued to observe that delivering small-scale community fisheries monitoring requires continually balancing the needs and priorities of First Nations, harvesters, and coastal communities with the requirement to meet Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) expectations under the ASOP and DMP policies and the Fisheries Act. In small, remote contexts, this requires ongoing coordination to ensure programs remain locally relevant while consistently meeting regulatory standards, with clear roles and strong governance.

Every year we engage in several (4 in 2024 and 7 in 2025) formal post-season reviews with the government bodies, fisheries and the people we serve, where we receive specific feedback in terms of program delivery and areas for improvement. One aspect of this is around processes for engaging with DFO, Nations and fisheries associations in program delivery.

Every year we learn new and different things, but due to the confidential nature of work, we can't share specific information or details; we can say that we continued to strengthen our upfront program planning and coordination processes, such as working earlier with DFO and First Nations partners to confirm program design, roles, and reporting structures. This included further reinforcing internal controls and documentation to support clear, consistent program delivery.

Community Fisheries Impact Chart

Goal #1: Community-Based Fisheries Monitoring

Our Monitoring Work: Deliver tailored fisheries monitoring programming to rural, remote, and Indigenous coastal communities to enhance sustainable practices and management along the Pacific Coast of Canada.

Goal Target by 2030

By 2030, Ecotrust Canada will be providing fisheries monitoring services for 18 small-scale fisheries, giving First Nations and coastal communities more say in the protection and management of local ocean resources, while supporting Nations to build their own federally designated fisheries monitoring companies/organizations.

Annual Goal

- Deliver federally designated fisheries monitoring services through dockside and at-sea observer programs in 3 Pacific Coast regions (Prince Rupert, Haida Gwaii, and West Coast of Vancouver Island), serving 860 fish harvesters across 12 small-scale fisheries and 17 First Nations.
- Employ and train at least 25 fisheries monitors (100% are local community members; 50% retention rate) by the end of 2025.

People Reached

- 892 (862 harvesters + 30 fisheries monitors and video analysts).
- Indirectly: 24,094 residents living in the coastal communities we work in (12,300 Prince Rupert, 4,500 Haida Gwaii, and the 8,178 West Coast of Vancouver Island).

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Provide dockside and at-sea observer services for 12 fisheries and 860 harvesters.
- Employ and train 25 community members (100% local with 50% retention rate from previous year).
- 6 at-sea biosampling and softshell survey trips conducted for Area A crab.
- Conduct 4–5 days of gear recovery.

- Provide timely and accurate data to DFO and clients to assist in fishery management.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Provided dockside and at-sea monitoring services for 11 fisheries in 3 Pacific regions, and 862 harvesters served.
- 30 community members employed and trained (100% local)
- Collaborated with 2 new regions with our monitoring program.
- 4 at-sea biosampling trips and 9 softshell sampling trips collecting data on 8,203 crabs.
- Conducted 7 days of gear recovery.
- Recovered 531 crab traps, returning 519 usable gear to the fleet and recycling the rest; Area A collected $23,400 in buy-back fees for stewardship.
- Conducted 4 days of salmon observation on salmon fishing boats.
- Timely and accurate data provided to DFO and clients to assist in fishery management.
- 2 crab biosampling classes with 40 high school students.

Current Outcome Progress

- In 2025, Ecotrust Canada's DFO-designated monitoring programs enabled 862 fish harvesters across 11 small-scale fisheries and 17 First Nations to participate in the fishery in compliance with federal fisheries management requirements.
- Thirty local community members were employed and trained as fisheries monitors, all recruited from within the communities they serve, contributing to local economic sustainability in Prince Rupert, Haida Gwaii, and the West Coast of Vancouver Island.
- Now in its fourth year, Ecotrust Canada's partnership with Charles Hay Secondary School's marine science program in Prince Rupert reached 40 Grade 11 and 12 students with place-based fisheries science education. The course instructor noted that students are already entering the fishing industry through roles with stakeholders they met through the program.

Goal #2: Fisheries Policy Advocacy

Our Policy Work: 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.

Goal Target by 2030

Research, analysis, and advocacy work with harvester organizations, communities, and allies leads to federal implementation of owner-operator and fleet separation policies tailored to the unique needs of BC fisheries.

Annual Goal

Advocate for fisheries licensing policy reform through research, coalition building, and government engagement by conducting at least 12 meetings with federal and provincial politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa, publishing at least one op-ed, and co-creating a comprehensive policy roadmap with First Nations, harvester organizations and allies by the end of 2025.

People Reached

4,500 commercial fish harvesters in BC. Indirectly: coastal First Nations and rural fishing communities along BC's Pacific Coast, represented through the Fisheries for Communities Network, a coalition of 15 partner organizations co-led by Ecotrust Canada and T. Buck Suzuki Foundation.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- 1 workshop with First Nations, federal government, fish harvesters, and fisheries allies to align priorities.
- Support maintenance of 1 network website
- Conduct 10 meetings with key policymakers and allies.
- Achieve 2 media mentions.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- 1 workshop held with First Nations, federal government, fishermen, and fisheries allies to align priorities.
- 3 media articles published.
- 13 meetings federally + 6 meetings provincially.
- 1 op-eds produced (1 produced, 0 published).
- Attended all 4 workshops in BC as the federal government considers potential changes that could shape the future of our fisheries.

Current Outcome Progress

- Seven years of sustained coalition advocacy continued to yield concrete policy outcomes. At the federal level, DFO continued its consultations on extending owner-operator policies to Pacific fisheries throughout 2024–2025, with specific attention to Indigenous and broader community engagement. In 2025, the Senate of Canada's Fisheries Committee committed to a full review of fisheries licensing policy in 2026.

Goal #3: IUU Fisheries – Spyglass & Global Enforcement

Goal Target by 2030

Combat IUU fishing globally by expanding the Spyglass database to 20,000 criminal fishing activity records, training 200 enforcement personnel and researchers across 30 countries on database usage and IUU identification, and producing 15 research reports or publications that support enforcement actions or policy changes targeting large-scale IUU operators by December 31, 2030.

Annual Goal

Combat IUU fishing by expanding the Spyglass database from 9,000 to over 12,000 criminal fishing activity records, and training 30 people across 3 countries on database usage and IUU identification by December 31, 2025.

People Reached

180 (including unique Spyglass visitors, training participants, and workshop attendees)

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Spyglass fish crimes database updated and accessible for research and enforcement — target: 500 new data entries.
- Deliver 2 regional workshops/training sessions with enforcement entities.
- Conduct field and OSINT investigations in 5 countries.
- Produce 2 publications, media features, or public education materials.
- Achieve 5 media mentions or speaking appearances.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

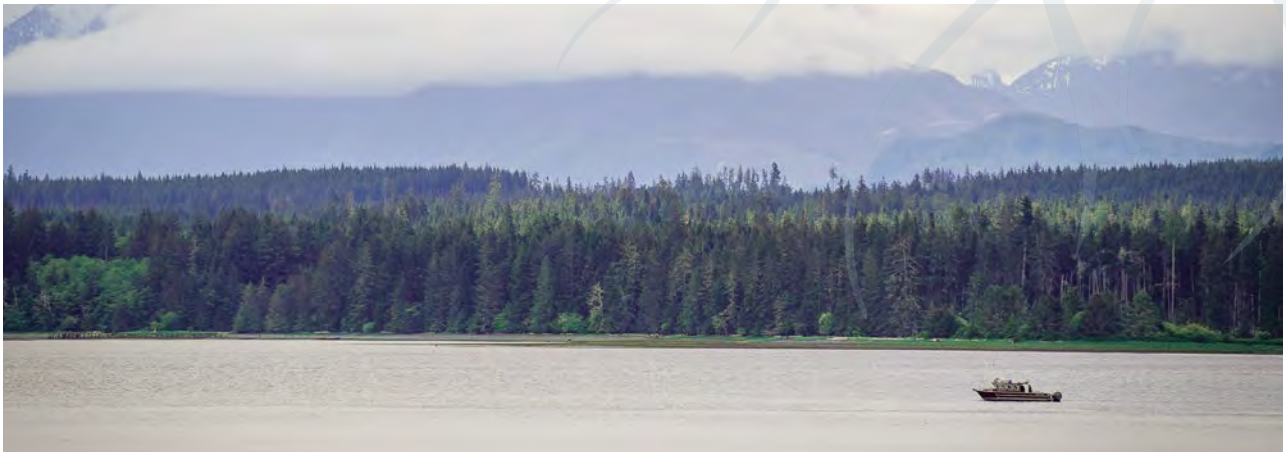
- Spyglass database updated with 3,000 data entries (2024 baseline: 9,000).
- 1 book chapter on ocean governance and fish crimes published and one peer-reviewed paper on AI and natural resource extraction.
- Presented at 10 conferences and workshops.
- Mentioned in 2 major news outlets.

Current Outcome Progress

- In 2025, Spyglass continued to be used as an active investigative tool, contributing to court cases and the detection of suspicious vessels and ownership networks in Southeast Asia and West Africa.
- A peer-reviewed paper on AI and natural resource extraction and a book chapter on ocean governance and fish crimes were published, contributing to the growing body of knowledge available to enforcement entities and researchers worldwide.

Comparing Outputs 2021–2025

OUTCOME GOAL	OUTPUT	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Local community members directly engaged/hired in monitoring work	# of local community members recruited, trained, and employed	21	25	30	28	30 community members employed and trained (100% local)
Increased engagement by communities on policy issues	# gatherings # joint reports, media, submissions # government meetings	1 (Future of Salmon Gathering) 1 (Blue Economy Strategy) 1 (Network meeting with BC Government)	0 1 (Network website launched) 1 (Testimony to federal government)	3 (Fisheries Gathering, 2 Basic Income workshops) 4 (Proceedings, academic paper, report for federal government, policy recommendations for BC) 14 (testimony, 8 meetings with province, 5 with federal officials)	0 6 (4 media articles and 2 op-eds) 16 meetings with politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa	1 workshop in November 3 media articles 16 meetings with federal and provincial politicians and bureaucrats
Increased transparency of illegal, underreported, and unregulated fisheries	# of data entries in Spyglass	7,400	7,400	8,000	9,000	12,000



Climate Resilience Program

The Problem

Natural ecosystems are Earth's best "carbon capture and storage" devices and repositories for nature's future adaptive capacity. Unfortunately, extraction and exploitation have greatly diminished these finite systems at a perilous cost to local communities and global climate stability and biodiversity. Meanwhile, our current short-sighted and exclusionary economic system, underpinned by Crown government policy, continues to enable the progressive degradation of what is left. Faced with degradation of their lands and waters, communities find themselves in an impossible bind to maintain the status quo, since they too depend on revenues from industrial extraction to support employment, health, education, and housing needs. Indigenous and rural communities have the land base and the motivation, but often lack the tools, capacity, and access to financing to act.

Canada's protected and conserved areas currently cover only 13.8% of terrestrial land and 15.5% of marine areas — well short of the 30% target that Canada committed to under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by 2030. A recent CPAWS study found that existing protected areas already contribute $10.9 billion to Canada's GDP, support 150,000 jobs, and hold carbon stocks valued at $51.1 trillion based on federal social cost of carbon estimates — with ecosystem services in national parks and marine conservation areas alone valued at $156 to $588 billion per year. Yet, Canada remains well short of its own climate and biodiversity commitments, and the window to act is narrowing.

Theory of Change

IF Ecotrust Canada works alongside rural, remote, and Indigenous communities to co-develop land and water care models guided by community values, Indigenous laws, and ecological knowledge,

THEN communities will lead natural climate solutions on their own terms, stewarding their lands and waters while breaking free from dependency on industrial extraction,

BECAUSE when the systemic barriers to community-led stewardship are removed, thriving ecosystems and thriving local economies stop being a contradiction— proving it's possible to build an economy that provides for life.

Cumulative Outcomes 2021-2025

Over five years, Ecotrust Canada's Climate Resilience program has moved from building foundational relationships to delivering funding, data, and planning support to Indigenous communities pursuing natural climate solutions (NCS).* The most significant outcome is federal investment unlocked. Four Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (NSCSF)** applications Ecotrust Canada co-developed with First Nations were successful in 2023, **directing $42,960,335 toward Indigenous-led conservation in British Columbia**—with three additional applications submitted in February 2025.

On the ground, the Climate team conducted carbon measurement field work across 181 hectares with the Nuxalk Nation in the Great Bear Rainforest and measured carbon storage in the Wilp Gwininitxw Protected Area, 170,000 hectares in the upper Skeena watershed. This is data that communities now own and can use to verify that protecting these lands provides significant climate benefits, in addition to cultural and ecological benefits. By the end of 2025, Ecotrust Canada had supported 10 Indigenous communities across Ontario and BC in actively developing NCS projects—with seven communities engaged in the newly launched Central Interior Climate Resilience Network alone.

Climate tools that did not exist in 2021 are now in use or nearing launch: the First Nations Carbon Toolkit (carbontoolkit.org), the Natural Climate Solutions Toolkit (ncstoolkit.org), the Improved Forest Management GHG Calculator, and the first biodiversity conservation priority map for BC, which is targeted for public release in late 2026.

* *Natural climate solutions (NCS) are deliberate human actions to mitigate or adapt to climate change through land use or land management changes.*

** *The Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (NSCSF) is a $1.4 billion, ten-year fund administered by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), a department of the federal government. The fund aims to reduce annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 5-7 megatonnes (Mt) by 2030, and is focused on three mitigation natural climate solutions: avoided conversion, restoration, and improved management of ecosystems.*

Learnings

Over the past two years, we observed that some Indigenous communities had experienced shallow, “checkbox” consultation from external organizations, processes that did not reflect meaningful involvement or Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). This made communities understandably cautious about new NGO partnerships, and we came to understand that our application-focused model was sometimes moving faster than community readiness or priorities allowed.

In response, we made two deliberate changes in 2025. We launched the Central Interior Climate Resilience Network in May — shifting from one-off, application-driven engagement to a sustained regional model that centres relationship-building alongside funding support. We also restructured our direct engagement to align our pacing with community timelines, attending 8 in-person visits in 2025 to support that shift.

Climate Resilience Impact Chart

Goal #1: Biodiversity Priority Mapping

Creating provincial and territorial-scale conservation maps to identify the highest-value ecosystems for protection and restoration across BC, supporting 30x30 commitments and Indigenous-led land stewardship.

Goal Target by 2030

By December 2030, publicly accessible biodiversity priority maps will be complete and in active use by at least 10 First Nations and 3 government or conservation bodies, and at least 5 First Nations will own territorial-scale biodiversity priority maps developed under First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP).

Annual Goal 2025

By December 2025, complete the Phase 1 conservation science workshop, finalize the mapping methodology subject to peer review, and establish the data governance framework for Phase 2 territorial mapping.

People Reached

28 participants representing 13 organizations, including government agencies, Indigenous partners, conservation organizations, and academic institutions.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Present project at Conservation Science workshop (Phase 1 milestone).
- Finalize mapping methodology at the provincial scale with external peer review.
- Produce conservation priority maps at 1-hectare resolution for forest, wetland, grassland, and alpine ecosystems.
- Design Phase 2 pilot workshops with interested First Nations communities.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Presented at workshop (November 25, 2025)—key Phase 1 milestone to clarify conservation principles and formalize mapping criteria. 28 participants attended from 13 organizations; 62 experts were invited.
- Engaged 28 experts across biodiversity science, conservation planning, climate modelling, government, and Indigenous knowledge to review.
- Received feedback on proposed approach's alignment with 30x30 targets and broader conservation.
- Established 2026 timeline for peer review and provincial priority maps.
- Phase 2 pilot workshop design underway.

Current Outcome Progress

- In 2025, Ecotrust Canada completed the scientific and collaborative groundwork for a publicly accessible biodiversity prioritization tool for BC. The November 2025 Elements of Effective Conservation Science workshop produced expert and government review of the proposed mapping methodology, with BC Parks Foundation confirming that a provincial biodiversity layer is a central goal of their Biodiverse Areas Identification program — signalling early alignment with key conservation bodies.
- Conservation priority maps covering 95 million hectares are on track for public release in spring 2026, with two First Nations participating in Phase 2 of the territorial mapping project in summer 2026.

Goal #2: Central Interior Climate Resilience Network

A five-year regional initiative, launched May 2025, is catalyzing Indigenous and rural communities in BC's Central Interior as stewards of their forests and watersheds, with access to climate finance and NCS opportunities.

Goal Target by 2030

By December 2030, at least 10 Central Interior First Nations communities will be actively engaged in the Network, with at least 5 NCS projects funded and in implementation, protecting or restoring a minimum of 50,000 hectares of high-carbon ecosystems.

Annual Goal 2025

By December 2025, formally launch the Network, engage with at least 5 Interior First Nations communities, and support at least 3 NSCSF funding applications on behalf of the communities.

People Reached

Seven Indigenous groups in BC's Central Interior actively engaged through the Network.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

Launch the Central Interior Climate Resilience Network.

- Build relationships with 3 Interior First Nations through community meetings and open houses.
- Support NCS funding applications for Network member communities.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Launched the Central Interior Climate Resilience Network in May 2025, publicly introducing the initiative in a blog.
- Held 20 virtual meetings with community partners to discuss potential NCS projects.
- Applied for $272k through multiple sources of funding to create biodiversity mapping tools to support Network communities (4 applications). 162.3K confirmed funding in 2025.

Current Outcome Progress

- The Central Interior Climate Resilience Network is in its first year, and early results suggest the regional model is generating momentum. Two member communities have identified at least one concrete NCS project opportunity aligned with their land use priorities, and three communities have submitted or are actively preparing NCS funding applications as a direct result of Network support. **The Network also secured $162,300 in confirmed funding in 2025 to develop biodiversity mapping tools for member communities**. While the Network is still building its foundation, these early outcomes demonstrate that it's already catalyzing access to climate finance and NCS opportunities in the region.

Goal #3: Supporting First Nations in Accessing NCS Funding

Co-developing competitive applications with First Nations in Ontario and BC to ensure Indigenous-led natural climate solutions are developed and funded through programs like the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund.

Goal Target by 2030

By December 2030, Ecotrust Canada will have co-developed a minimum of 15 competitive NCS funding applications with First Nations in Ontario and BC, resulting in at least $10 million in government, private and public funding directed to Indigenous-led conservation projects.

Annual Goal 2025

By February 2025, co-produce and submit 3 competitive NSCSF applications with First Nations partners in Ontario and BC by the federal deadline. By December 2025, conduct baseline carbon sampling field work with at least two funded First Nations partners in their protected areas.

People Reached

6 First Nations across Ontario and BC engaged in NCS application development (2024–2025)

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Conduct baseline carbon sampling field work in partnership with Wilp Gwininitxw and Nuxalk Nation in their respective project areas.
- Meet with applicant organizations to conceptualize project ideas.
- Co-write NSCSF applications with First Nations communities.
- Co-develop NSCSF project budgets.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Three high-quality, competitive NSCSF applications co-produced with First Nations—submitted by the February 2025 deadline.
- Conducted carbon soil sampling across 181 ha of Nuxalk Nation private land in the Great Bear Rainforest alongside Nuxalk Coastal Guardian Watchmen, producing baseline carbon data owned by the Nation.

- Conducted carbon storage measurement across the Wilp Gwininitxw Protected Area (170,000 ha, upper Skeena watershed), building on their successful NSCSF application.
- Travelled to Ontario to deepen relationships and held in-person working sessions.
- Attended the Indigenous Lands Symposium in Bawating (Sault Ste. Marie, February 2025) to meet with partner Wahkohtowin Development—and network among the 270 attendees focused on Indigenous sovereignty, Indigenous Protected Conserved Areas, sustainable forestry, and stewardship financing.

Current Outcome Progress

- The most significant outcome of this work to date is the **$42,960,335 in NSCSF funding directed to Indigenous-led conservation in BC, secured through four successful applications co-developed with First Nations in 2023**. Three additional applications submitted in February 2025 were unsuccessful.
- Successful NSCSF funding enabled **baseline carbon sampling across 170,181 hectares** in two First Nations-led protected areas. Lab analysis of the samples revealed the carbon content of each, which was used to estimate total carbon storage across each project area. This baseline data is now owned by each Nation and positions them to pursue future opportunities, including potential carbon offset projects.

Goal #4: NCS Toolkit & GHG Calculator

Open-source tools that give Indigenous communities and the public the knowledge and capacity to design, evaluate, and finance natural climate solutions on their own terms.

Goal Target by 2030

By the end of 2030, the NCS Toolkit (ncstoolkit.org) will have been used by at least 50 Indigenous communities across Canada to support NCS project design or funding applications, and the Improved Forest Management GHG Calculator will be used by at least 20 communities.

Annual Goal 2025

By December 2025, complete community piloting of the NCS Toolkit with at least 3 communities, incorporate feedback into a publicly accessible version, and complete core methodology for the GHG Calculator with a contractor secured and tool development initiated.

People Reached

The toolkit is not published yet. 20 First Nation technical staff and communities accessed the toolkit and calculator tools during piloting phase.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Complete NCS Toolkit modules and gather community feedback through piloting.
- Finalize GHG Calculator methodology for Improved Forest Management.
- Begin tool development for the GHG Calculator.
- Work closely with ECCC through meetings to review toolkit progress and desired outcomes.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Built the ncstoolkit.org website
- ncstoolkit.org has been accessed by 1,990 unique users across 9 provinces and 1 territory during pilot.

- Developed and gathered 8 case studies from Indigenous-led NCS projects across Canada.
- Completed finalized methodology for the Improved Forest Management GHG Quantification Tool, including a biodiversity emphasis component.
- Conducted 3 meetings with ECCC to develop shared desired outcomes and tool design framework.

Current Outcome Progress

- The NCS Toolkit and GHG Calculator are still in development. Outcomes will be reported once the tools are publicly accessible.

Comparing Outputs 2021–2025

OUTCOMES	OUTPUT	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Increased stewardship by Nations: technology, practices & tools developed	Software, platforms, toolkits, protocols, land stewarded	5 (2 workshops, 1 toolkit outline, 2 presentations)	3 (discussion paper, presentation, study)	7 (1 First Nations Carbon Toolkit website, 6 reports)	1 draft NCS Toolkit; 1 GHG Calculator in progress	1 biodiversity mapping Phase 1 workshop complete Collected carbon data from 2 forests (170,181 ha)
Established pathway for communities to consistently access public & private funding	Applications / projects co-developed; funding awarded	3 (2 letters of support, 1 webinar, 1 Project Idea Document)	2 (1 PIN builder, 1 project document template)	6 (4 NSCSF applications successful; 1 PIN Tool; 1 Biodiversity program application successful)	3 drafted NSCSF applications with First Nations submitted (Feb 2025)	3 NSCSF applications submitted (Feb 2025 deadline) Central Interior Network launched
Increased community engagement in NCS across regions	# communities engaged; # meetings & events	Early-stage relationship building	Regional outreach beginning	Multiple First Nations in Ontario & BC engaged	9 First Nations directly; 13+ indirectly; in-person Ontario visit	Supported 10 Nations in BC and Ontario

Food Systems Program

The Problem

North Coast Food Hub

Rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Canada have faced generations of disruptions to their food systems. Places like Prince Rupert — a remote city of 14,000 residents on BC's north coast — have seen colonial policies and externally-driven resource extraction erode rich food traditions and cultural connections to the land and sea. These same forces have left lasting economic consequences, such as high food costs and fragile supply chains that limit access to healthy, culturally appropriate food. Systemic income inequality continues to drive hunger and nutritional disparities.

In Northern BC, where much of our current Food Systems work is located, 1 in 6 households (16.6%) experience food insecurity (BCCDC, 2023), while Prince Rupert's child poverty rate reached 25.9% in 2023 — more than 1 in 4 children — compared to the provincial rate of 16.7% (First Call BC Child Poverty Report Card, 2025, using Statistics Canada data).

Another challenge is the unpredictable rainfall. Prince Rupert receives, on average, 2,619 mm of rain a year. The coastal region faces shorter growing seasons, ocean warming, and declining fish stocks, which are disrupting both traditional foodways and small-scale agriculture. These environmental changes threaten long-term food security, cultural continuity, and local resilience.

Community-Led Regenerative Mariculture

On BC's North Coast, First Nations have practiced mariculture for thousands of years, yet commercial ocean farming in the region remains underdeveloped. Despite accounting for a significant share of BC's coastline, the North Coast hosts only about 6% of the province's tenured shellfish aquaculture sites (ScienceDirect). While mariculture poses considerable economic potential for BC's coastlines, significant gaps in infrastructure, seed access, market pathways and comprehensive policy make it difficult to sustain seaweed and shellfish operations and generate stable employment in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

In the current regulatory and market environment, many vital points of the mariculture supply chain, decision-making, and regulatory pathways are centralized in major urban hubs. These risks increase corporate control of the

supply chain as the sector matures and limit the agency of coastal communities to meaningfully co-develop an emerging sector that could otherwise be a force for community economic development that simultaneously bolsters local food systems.

In a 2019 study, 35% of coastal BC First Nations adults reported food insecurity (PubMed Central). For communities where seafood is both a primary protein source and a foundation of cultural identity, the barriers to safely harvesting and selling shellfish and seaweed exacerbate these challenges. At the same time, wild seaweed harvesting beds along the coast are becoming increasingly sparse. Ecological indicators for safe shellfish harvesting are becoming more unpredictable, threatening both cultural harvesting traditions and the nutritional security that marine foods provide.

Theory of Change

IF Ecotrust Canada supports community-led food production, builds local stewardship capacity, and convenes communities around food systems on BC's North Coast,

THEN rural, remote, and Indigenous communities will have greater access to food from their own lands and waters, nourishing richer food traditions, economies, and cultural connections that colonial policies and extractive economies have eroded,

BECAUSE communities that control their own food production, distribution, and monitoring are less dependent on fragile external supply chains — and better positioned to build the thriving, place-based food economies that provide for life.

Cumulative Outcomes 2021-2025

North Coast Food Hub & Community Food Planning

A Community Food Action Plan was developed and shared in 2025 after a multi-year, community-driven planning process involving SD52, Royal Roads University, the City of Prince Rupert, and PHABC. The plan is informing the City of Prince Rupert's first Local Food Strategy.

The 2025 North Coast Food Hub grew from our learnings with the 2021–2022 Kaien Island Urban Farm pilot, which demonstrated the viability of urban food production in Prince Rupert — growing 140kg of produce in its first year and 240kg in its second, with 80% donated to community organizations. When the farm ended its downtown site in 2022, we moved the infrastructure to local schools. The partnership model with School District 52, which began in 2021, evolved into the school-centred Food Hub. Produce grown has since increased from 240kg (2022) to 476kg (2025). Locally grown food is now integrated into the SD52 school meal program, which serves meals to over 500 children. This is a systemic change that did not exist at this scale before this work began.

Community-Led Regenerative Mariculture

Since 2021, Ecotrust Canada's partnership with Metlakatla First Nation has helped restore conditions for Indigenous-led mariculture farming on ocean tenures in BC's North Coast — creating jobs, increasing community food access, and building stewardship capacity in waters.

By 2024, the farm had generated employment opportunities for 10 crew members on the water, and distributed 11,000 scallops to Metlakatla members — increasing access to healthy seafood. A further 57,000 scallops were sold commercially, demonstrating the economic potential for a First Nations-led regenerative ocean farm on BC's North Coast. We helped secure $250,000 for community-led marine monitoring, strengthening Metlakatla's capacity to steward their waters.

By 2025, evidence gathered through over six years of R&D enabled Metlakatla to make an informed strategic decision to pivot toward black seaweed (la'ask) — a cultural and nutritional food source with growing global demand. This shift is resulting in the first dedicated black seaweed nursery on BC's North Coast with a full-time nursery manager, and the launch of trials that position Metlakatla as a potential leader in an emerging sector.

Learnings

Regenerative Mariculture:

In 2025, we formed a partnership with Pew Charitable Trusts and Ecotrust (US) to support the sustainable and inclusive growth of the emerging seaweed farming sector in British Columbia and Alaska. A central focus of the work in BC is achieving a community-led workplan to create a shared vision for building momentum and power across the sector. We initially planned on building this through research, direct outreach, and a series of engagements across the coast.

However, through our initial outreach and first engagement at the Haíłzaqv Kelp Symposium (35 attendees), we received feedback that strong leadership from First Nations' representatives are needed to guide this process. As a result, in 2025 we began forming an Indigenous Steering Committee to guide workplan development and emphasized collaborating with other convening organizations across the sector to build upon previous work.

Food Systems Impact Chart

Goal #1: North Coast Food Hub & Community Food Planning

Our **North Coast Food Hub Work**: A community-driven, school-centred initiative bringing together SD52, Indigenous partners, local government, and community organizations to transform food access challenges into community economic development opportunities through growing spaces, community markets, and educational programming.

Goal Target by 2030

By 2030, Prince Rupert and the North Coast will actively implement a community-driven food action plan with participation from at least 500 residents each year. School-centred growing spaces will produce food year-round, and locally grown produce will supply at least three community organizations while supporting the local economy.

Annual Goal 2025

By December 2025, launch the North Coast Food Hub as a community-driven, school-centred food initiative that grows at least 450 kg of local produce, delivers at least 10 food literacy workshops, holds at least 2 community engagement sessions to advance the Community Food Action Plan and inform the City's Food Strategy, and mobilizes at least $300,000 in investment toward local food infrastructure and economic development.

People Reached

The program directly impacted 1,850 students in School District 52, including over 500 children nourished through the school food program. Indirectly impacting: 14,000 residents of Prince Rupert who benefit from strengthened local food systems.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Launch North Coast Food Hub in Prince Rupert.
- Hold community engagement sessions to share the Community Food Action Plan.

- Build outdoor garden beds across SD52 schools.
- Begin construction of 3 new school/community greenhouses.
- Secure funding for food infrastructure, including a refrigerated van.
- Harvest from school gardens and incorporate into the school food program.
- Co-host food-related event with the City of Prince Rupert and SD52.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Launched the North Coast Food Hub in May 2025.
- Held 2 community engagement sessions (August) to share the Community Food Action Plan and inform the City of Prince Rupert's Food Strategy.
- Co-hosted a Symposi-Yum event (September) with the City and SD52 to raise awareness and gather local feedback.
- Built over 50 outdoor garden beds at 4 school sites across SD52.
- Over 476 kgs of produce grown and incorporated into the school food program.
- 3 new greenhouses in the construction phase, expected to be ready for planting by Spring 2026.
- Secured $298,000 in infrastructure grants and purchased a refrigerated van for produce pick-ups and meal delivery.
- High school students started a garden club.
- Prepared vegetable/plant list for Wap Sigatgyet (Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority) to support language integration.
- Hired a full-time Greenhouse and Garden Coordinator (July).

Current Outcome Progress

- Following two community engagement sessions, the Community Food Action Plan is being adopted by the municipality as a guiding framework for local food systems planning — embedding community priorities directly into City policy and establishing an ongoing collaborative relationship between residents and the City of Prince Rupert.
- Students are experiencing a meaningful new connection to where their food comes from. The first harvest from school gardens — 476 kgs — was incorporated directly into the school food program, deepening student engagement with food and nutrition, and helping to shift how the school approaches local food sourcing for the future.

Goal #2: Regenerative Mariculture

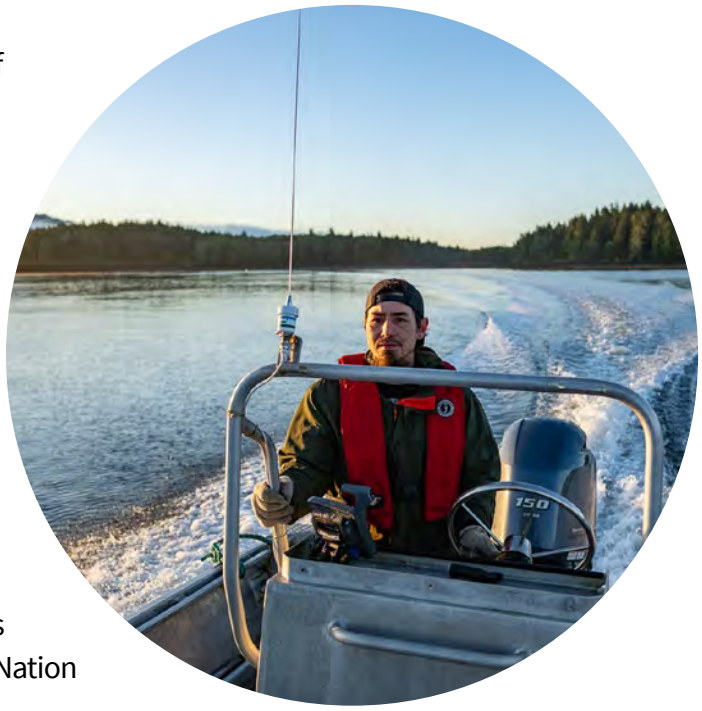
Our **Regenerative Mariculture Farming Work**: Supporting Metlakatla First Nation in securing the infrastructure, tools, and information to build a viable, sustainable, and meaningful Regenerative Mariculture Farm.

Goal Target by 2030 (must be SMART)

By 2030, Prince Rupert will be a home and launch point for mariculture research and production on the North Coast through a North Coast Land and Sea Food Hub. Farm, nursery, and lab operations will be financially self-sustaining, support monitoring training for 10 staff, produce reliable black seaweed seed, employ at least 5 community members seasonally or full-time, and support Metlakatla First Nations seaweed distributions to community members. Access to the lab, expertise, monitoring training and mariculture expertise, and seed is provided to X# of North Coast Communities, including 3-5 First Nations for mariculture and Food, Social, and Ceremonial purposes.

Annual Goal

By December 2025, we support the establishment of Metlakatla First Nation's black seaweed nursery in Prince Rupert with at least 5 live cultures in active trials; fundraise to hire 1 full-time Nursery Manager; help deliver 3 scallop distributions to Metlakatla members; finalize a community mariculture monitoring framework with Metlakatla First Nation; complete 2 training sessions for Metlakatla Aquatic Resources staff and Guardians; establish baseline monitoring at 4 sites.



People Reached

57 (40 people through community engagements, 10 people through interviews, 7 staff receiving trainings and work). Indirectly reached 1,000 Metlakatla First Nation members.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Support 5 black seaweed nursery technique trials in partnership with Metlakatla First Nation and North Island College.
- Support the build-out of the Prince Rupert nursery facility, reaching 300 square feet of operational growing space.
- Support 2-4 community distributions of seafood to Metlakatla members.
- Secure $300,000 in new funding to support nursery operations and farm infrastructure.
- Document baseline monitoring data collected across 4 active seaweed sites.
- Support the facilitation of 2-3 community engagement sessions with Metlakatla members around monitoring findings and black seaweed stewardship.
- Co-develop 2-3 funding proposals to support expanded food safety monitoring capacity.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Published a guide to regenerative mariculture farming in Northern BC (January), exploring how this emerging industry can support ocean health and food systems.
- Supported the hire of a locally-based Nursery Manager.
- Secured a temporary nursery space and initial equipment; secured funding and located infrastructure for the build out of a long-term nursery in spring of 2026.
- Small-scale live black seaweed cultures established and initial trials commenced by Metlakatla First Nation.
- Formed a new partnership with North Island College and Metlakatla First Nation to advance black seaweed seed production trials.
- Sponsored 4 University of Alberta engineering students designing deep water pyropia farming systems for a capstone project.
- Developed a community mariculture monitoring framework with Metlakatla and partners.
- Completed 1 community engagement session and conducted direct outreach with Metlakatla members to inform monitoring framework.
- Supported 1 drop cam training session for Metlakatla Aquatic Resources staff and Guardians.
- Fundraised for a dive survey, water quality monitoring by Metlakatla, and installation of ongoing monitoring equipment at black seaweed beds.
- Initiated partnership with Environment and Climate Change Canada to procure a lab and equipment for fecal coliform monitoring in 2026.

Current Outcome Progress

This program is in its early R&D phase, and most significant outcomes are expected to materialize between 2026 and 2030 as nursery trials mature, commercial production scales, and monitoring data sets grow. However, early indicators of change include:

- The hiring of a dedicated Nursery Manager employed by Metlakatla First Nation has created a locally-held technical role focused on black seaweed seed production, research and monitoring — reducing the community's reliance on outside expertise.
- Biotoxin closures prevented the harvest and community distribution of scallops in 2025, but they will resume in January 2026, providing direct, if modest, improvement to local food access.
- The strategic pivot to black seaweed, informed by years of R&D, has attracted new knowledge-sharing partnerships and positioned Metlakatla as a potential first mover in ocean-based pyropia farming outside in North America.
- Metlakatla Aquatic Resources staff and Guardians can independently conduct underwater monitoring using drop cameras — reducing reliance on external contractors.
- Baseline data is being collected at black seaweed beds, creating a data set necessary to understand the influence of climate change and human activities on wild seaweed over the long-term.

Goal #3: Momentum Building in the Seaweed Sector

Goal Target by 2030

By 2030, our goal is that the regulatory environment in the seaweed sector is balancing safeguards and supports for a sustainable sector. Growth and benefits are captured and co-led by First Nations and coastal communities. There is collective power among seaweed actors, stakeholders, and First Nations collaborating to build a sector representative of their priorities and values as they overlap and vary across regions. Inclusive and sustainable policy is advancing regional leadership and priorities while preventing corporate capture and environmental harm.

Annual Goal

By December 2025, we will have formed relationships with First Nations, sector stakeholders, and government representatives to lay the foundation for creating a community vision workplan and policy advocacy plan for the seaweed sector in 2026.

People Reached

35 attendees at the Haíłzaqv Kelp Symposium.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- 3-5 meetings with government representatives.
- 1-2 seaweed sector convenings.
- Direct outreach with First Nations and sector stakeholders.
- Participate in consultations for Interim Aquatic Plants Policy development.
- Support Ecotrust (US) in forming an Indigenous Academic Panel to develop protocols for braiding Western and Indigenous science and data management in the seaweed sector.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- 3 meetings with government representatives to identify mechanisms to support evolution of seaweed policy.
- Presented at the Haíłzaqv Kelp Symposium.
- Attended the International Seaweed Symposium in Victoria, BC (May) to learn about global trends.
- Participated in a workshop at the International Seaweed Symposium designed to identify gaps and opportunities in monitoring in the seaweed sector.
- Developed Terms of Reference to form an Indigenous Steering Committee to guide visioning work in the seaweed sector.

Current Outcome Progress

- Still in the early stages, we expect to report outcomes in 2027.

Comparing Outputs 2021–2025

OUTCOMES	OUTPUT	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Increase in food grown, processed, and sold locally	Seaweed & shellfish production; Food Hub activities	0 long lines; 0 harvested	12 long lines; 707.6 kgs harvested	15 long lines; 4,536 kgs kelp; 1,200 scallops available	11,000 scallops distributed; 57,000 sold; 4 kelp pilots; shared 100 people	School garden harvest 476 kgs; 1,300 garlic planted
Reduced/ improved environmental impact from ocean farming	Ghost gear removal	0 removed	42,000 kg removed	52,640 kg removed	36,000 kg removed	10,000 kg removed
Increased regional capacity in community food systems	Workshops, events, and engagements	0 workshops	8 total (6 gardening, 2 seed saving)	5 total (3 Food Justice, 2 shucking)	7 total (4 food planning/ justice, 2 shucking, 1 ROF presentation)	3 community engagement sessions (2 community food open spaces and 1 mariculture engagement); 1 food event; 1 regional presentation; 1monitoing training; 1 summer job; 2 contract positions; 1 full-time job

Indigenous Homelands Program

The Problem

The National Housing Strategy Act declares that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law. Yet the data tells a different story for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

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.

17.1% of Indigenous people in Canada have inadequate, unsafe, or crowded housing — vs. 5.7% of non-Indigenous people.

A 10–15–year waitlist is the average for Indigenous community members to receive new or adequate housing.

These statistics represent more than a housing shortage. The Indigenous housing crisis is deeply entangled with systemic barriers to employment, supply chains, governance, and leadership — barriers that make it nearly impossible for community members, particularly youth, to be able to return to their ancestral lands and immerse themselves in their culture.

Theory of Change

IF Ecotrust Canada works alongside Nations to strengthen decolonial governance, land stewardship, circular economies, and holistic housing as interconnected conditions,

THEN community members — especially youth — will be able to return to and thrive on their homelands, sustaining their culture, language, and living connection to their lands across generations,

BECAUSE when the systemic barriers to exercising Indigenous sovereignty are dismantled, communities can build thriving, just, and sustainable place-based economies that provide for life.

Cumulative Outcomes 2021-2025

Over five years, Ecotrust Canada's Indigenous Homelands program has gone from building relationships with a small number of Indigenous communities helping to facilitate their housing strategies, to scaling deep as we focus on one key relationship with the Nuxalk Nation as we co-develop governance tools, launch a pilot circular economy model, and begin to address the systemic roots of the Indigenous housing crisis across BC and Canada.

- First Nations communities across Canada have access to the **Indigenous Housing and Homelands Toolkit** to support them in housing and lands governance, particularly on Aboriginal title lands, modern treaty lands, and other emerging jurisdictions in British Columbia. The toolkit has been available since 2022, and we are currently updating the modules and expanding the tools.
- Our partner, Nuxalk Nation, now has a **community-based economic development strategy** that considers economic, cultural, social, and environmental well-being — a governance capacity that did not previously exist in this form.
- Nuxalk Nation community members are exploring revitalizing traditional trading corridors and governance systems as a foundation for economic well-being — reactivating cultural practices and relationships disrupted by colonial systems through year 1 of the **Routes to Roots initiative**. A Community Needs Assessment has been completed, and a community-governed Steering Committee is being launched to collectively envision the first stages of the project from the ground up.
- Civil society actors, funders, and policymakers working on Indigenous housing across Canada have a clearer, shared understanding of where supports exist, where gaps are critical, and how fragmented efforts could be better coordinated — enabling more informed, collaborative action. Ecotrust Canada's Indigenous Housing Landscape Report, published through the McConnell Foundation, has become a reference point for cross-sector conversations about how government, Indigenous leadership, and civil society can work together more holistically to address the Indigenous housing crisis.

Learnings

The Indigenous Homelands Team scaled our approach in 2025, moving from partnerships with 5 Nations (2021) to a deeper, multi-year commitment with one Nation. We learned that relying too heavily on a single community representative to lead engagement can create bottlenecks, overburden that individual, and risk limiting the diversity of voices shaping the project, particularly in its early stages. In response, we completed the first stage of a Community Needs Assessment in 2025 and are now aIn 2026, we will formalize a working group structure, with a longer-term goal of incorporating a youth council to ensure intergenerational representation.

Indigenous Homelands Impact Chart

Goal #1: Indigenous Housing Landscape Report

Goal Target by 2030

By December 2030, the Indigenous Housing Landscape Report will be used by at least 15 civil society organizations and funders to improve coordination on Indigenous housing solutions, and Ecotrust Canada will have contributed to at least 3 measurable shifts in national housing policy or funding priorities that align with Indigenous community needs.

Annual Goal 2025

By September 2025, officially release the Indigenous Housing Landscape Report — the first comprehensive national civil society map of Indigenous housing supports — and present its findings to at least 3 funders, or policy actors.

People Reached

Over 100 civil society actors, funders, and housing advocates across Canada reached through the Landscape Report. Online, 157 views with 50 file downloads.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Complete research, interviews, and systems mapping for the Indigenous Housing Landscape Report.
- Publish the report publicly in both English and French.
- Present findings to key funders and policy actors.

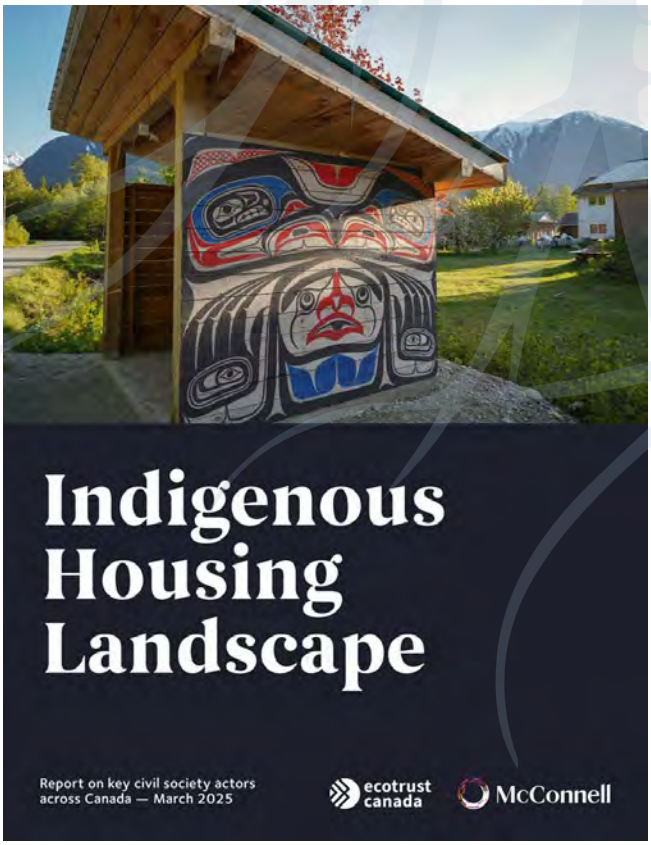
Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Indigenous Housing Landscape Report officially released September 2025.
- Report included extensive research, interviews with thought leaders, a systems map, and actionable recommendations for shifting from housing crisis to housing solutions.

- Indigenous Homelands Program Director, Ashli Akins, published a blog summarizing key findings (June 2025): "Breaking down silos and the need for collaborative action in Indigenous housing."
- Formal presentation to funders and policy actors postponed until 2026.

Current Outcome Progress

- The first comprehensive visual map of civil society actors addressing Indigenous housing needs across Canada is publicly available, giving funders, policymakers, and civil society a common reference point. Uptake and its influence on cross-sector collaboration will be tracked through 2026 through online analytics, and we plan to co-host a webinar.



Goal #2: Creating Learning Opportunities for Indigenous Housing Knowledge

Goal Target by 2030

By December 2030, at least 3 First Nations will have incorporated the Democratizing Knowledge Initiative into their public education, with community members reporting that the learning modules are supporting efforts of self-determination and sovereignty in housing and homeland-related projects.

Annual Goal 2025

By December 2025, hire 3 staff members to move forward on the Democratizing Knowledge Initiative, establish one community as the primary partner for the development of this work, and complete first draft of text for 2 modules.

People Reached

2025 was focused on development, and 0 community members have been involved at this phase.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Begin drafting or updating the text for 7 modules in plain language.
- Develop initial design concepts.
- Hire 3 new team members.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Finished the text, plain-language edits, 2 illustrations, infographics for 2 modules.
- Finished Ideation Phase of new toolkit website.
- Hired 1 Socioeconomic Lead to support economic and financial elements of the project.

- Hired 1 Indigenous Education Specialist to create a methodology for the project and toolkit, along with educational curriculum for workshops and workbooks.
- Hired 1 Graphic Designer and Illustrator for the toolkit.
- Nuxalk Nation established as primary partner for this work.

Current Outcome Progress

- Still in the early stages of this work with no outcomes to report yet.

Goal #3: Routes to Roots — Community-Led Regional Supply Chain & Circular Economy

Goal Target by 2030

By December 2030, Routes to Roots is thriving and self-sustaining in its first pilot site without Ecotrust Canada, serving as a replicable model for other Nations. The circular economy model supports culturally grounded trade, livelihoods, and community well-being, with at least 2 Nations independently operating the program.

Annual Goal 2025

By December 2025, complete the initial concept design of Routes to Roots with Nuxalk Nation (including a Community Needs Assessment and Steering Committee) and publicly launch the initiative.

People Reached

Nuxalk Nation community members (~1,200 in the immediate area; 2,500 total) involved in Routes to Roots design and early implementation.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Conduct Community Needs Assessment with Nuxalk Nation.

- Establish a Nuxalk Working Group.
- Establish Nuxalk Nation as a “Champion” or ambassador community.
- Develop outreach materials including a web presence (blog and briefer) for Routes to Roots.
- Design initial concepts for a multi-year, multi-community program with a fiscally sustainable exit strategy.
- Establish Steering Committees and governance structures, especially focused on Youth Councils.
- Publicly launch Routes to Roots initiative in newsletter and online campaign.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- Routes to Roots initial concept design finalized.
- Publicly launched on Earth Day with a blog by Program Manager Carrigan Tallio (Nuxalk Nation).
- Community Needs Assessment conducted.
- Nuxalk Nation established as a “Champion” or Ambassador community.
- Public briefer created.
- Soft community launch at Indigenous Peoples Day event in Nuxalk territory (July 2025).

Current Outcome Progress

- Routes to Roots has moved from concept to a concrete, Indigenous-led model — one that did not previously exist in this form. Grounding the initiative in traditional trading systems gives it a distinct foundation that positions it to support circular economies in ways that conventional economic development approaches have not. The initiative is in its early stages, and measurable economic and supply chain outcomes — such as exchanges facilitated or local economic activity supported — are expected as the model matures in 2026 and beyond.

Comparing Outputs 2021–2025

OUTCOMES	OUTPUT	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Develop new partnerships & strengthen existing ones	# First Nations governments and communities worked with	5	12	8	3	1 – focusing on Nuxalk as our key partner
Support Indigenous communities by democratizing information	# tools and reports created	8	5	3	4	2 (Landscape Report & map)
Support regional coordination on housing and lands governance	# regions supported	2 (TNG, Huu-ay-aht)	2 (TNG, SW Yukon FN)	2 (TNG, SW Yukon FN)	3 (Nuxalk, TNG, Canada-wide)	2 (Nuxalk, Cana-da-wide)
Indigenous Housing & Homelands Governance Toolkit — online reach	# online visitors to the toolkit	--	65	1,163	3,690	1,296 (winding down as we develop new modules in 2025-2026)

Community Energy Program

The Problem

In British Columbia, over 200,000 households face energy insecurity.* The lack of access to affordable fuel forces families to make heartbreaking choices—such as whether to pay their utility bills or buy groceries. Adverse health impacts, including cardiovascular and respiratory disease, frequently accompany energy insecurity. As economic and climate conditions worsen, more families in Canada are experiencing energy insecurity and the health impacts of under- and over-heated homes. Households in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to energy insecurity and can pay up to 3X the provincial average for energy. These households are often the most overlooked by traditional programming and investment.

To date, our program has enabled over 600 households to save $16 million on energy costs, while eliminating over 20,000 tonnes of GHG emissions and providing lifesaving cooling during heat waves.

Theory of Change

IF Ecotrust Canada delivers accessible home energy retrofits to underserved rural, remote, and Indigenous communities while advocating for the policy changes needed to make clean energy equitable,

THEN families will live in homes that are healthy, affordable, and climate-resilient — free from the impossible choice between heating their homes and paying for life's other essentials,

BECAUSE when the systemic barriers of cost, access, and exclusionary policy are removed, clean energy stops being a luxury and becomes the foundation for thriving, place-based communities.

* *In British Columbia, over 200,000 households face energy insecurity. The lack of access to affordable fuel forces families to make heartbreaking choices—such as whether to pay their utility bills or buy groceries. Adverse health impacts, including cardiovascular and respiratory disease, frequently accompany energy insecurity. As economic and climate conditions worsen, more families in Canada are experiencing energy insecurity and the health impacts of under- and over-heated homes. Households in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to energy insecurity and can pay up to 3X the provincial average for energy. These households are often the most overlooked by traditional programming and investment.*

Cumulative Outcomes 2021-2025

The Community Energy Program helps rural, remote, and Indigenous communities replace costly, carbon-heavy heating with clean, affordable alternatives. The results of our work have grown over the years.

By the end of 2021, the program had delivered 77 heat pumps across one partner community — a first proof of concept that generated an estimated $2.3 million in lifetime household cost savings, eliminated an estimated 5,204 tonnes of CO2eq over the lifetime of the installed equipment, and created 450 hours of local employment.

By the end of 2023, momentum had grown significantly. With 354 heat pumps installed across five partner communities, cumulative lifetime cost savings reached an estimated $8.9 million, CO2eq reductions climbed to 11,619 tonnes, and local employment hours more than tripled to 1,326.

By the end of 2025, the program had expanded to a greater diversity of partnerships with First Nations community partners, rural non-profits, and seniors service organizations — and the impact followed. Six hundred heat pumps are keeping homes warm and energy bills manageable, with projected lifetime cost savings of $13.5M and an estimated 12,600 tonnes of CO2eq eliminated over the life of installed equipment.

Since the program began in 2018, it has impacted 1,440 community members benefiting from home energy retrofit and upgrade work through our direct partnerships, as well as approximately 14,000 low- and moderate-income BC residents who have already benefited from cost-saving retrofits through the province-wide Energy Savings Program that we successfully advocated for.

Cumulative Outcomes 2021-2025 continued

Policy momentum:

Our policy advocacy has grown steadily in scale and impact over four years. In 2021, we published a research report and secured a major early win: a new BC Government incentive program making home retrofits more accessible for tens of thousands of low- and moderate-income households.

By 2022, joint recommendations delivered to the government in November 2022 were instrumental in affecting policy changes to end incentives for natural gas furnaces and boilers, responsible for approximately 7.6 megatonnes of emissions in BC. Through our advocacy around the Customer Crisis Fund, a program for customers facing a temporary financial emergency, the government committed to keeping the fund.

In 2023, that momentum accelerated to 18 policy outputs — including three research reports, five letters, and three regulatory submissions — our recommendations were reflected in the BC Budget, a new BCUC Chair was appointed, and gas furnace rebates were phased out.

In 2024, we reached 20 policy outputs and our most significant systemic win to that point: the BC Government created the Energy Savings Program, providing full-cost retrofit support for up to 16,000 low- and moderate-income households across BC.

In 2025, our advocacy led the BC Government to commit $100 million to deliver approximately 8,300 additional heat pump rebates for renters and low-income households, a program Ecotrust Canada has been formally calling for since 2021.

Learnings

Home Energy Savings Program

Through numerous community visits, engagements with contractors, and conversations with program participants, we came to recognize that residents of manufactured homes face unique challenges with home retrofits, even though they stand to benefit greatly. BC is home to approximately 80,000 manufactured home households, and these homes use 61% more energy per square foot than other housing types, making their residents among the most likely to experience energy insecurity. Yet only around 1% have been reached by retrofit programs to date.

The barriers stem from both the characteristics of these homes and their setting in manufactured home parks. The electrical distribution infrastructure in manufactured home parks is privately owned, meaning park owners may restrict the electrification measures their residents can undertake, and in 9% of the parks represented in our survey,* heat pump installations had been banned outright.

In response, we initiated a research project and published a report of our findings in August 2025. Since then, we've been working to tackle the barriers identified by our research: supporting park owners to learn about their park's electrical infrastructure, advocating for program changes to better support this housing type, and developing partnerships and community outreach strategies specifically tailored to these communities. We'll be tracking retrofit completion rates for manufactured home participants through 2026 to measure whether these changes are making a difference.

* *Survey responses represented 47 different manufactured home parks spread across British Columbia. See report: "Manufactured Home Retrofits in BC (2025)."*

Community Energy Impact Chart

Goal #1: Indigenous Community Retrofits

Goal Target by 2030

Complete community-wide home energy retrofit programs in three First Nation communities, installing 300 heat pumps or equivalent retrofit measures between 2025 and the end of 2030, generating an estimated $9M in lifetime cost savings, and eliminating 8,000 tonnes of GHG emissions.

Annual Goal

Advance energy security in Indigenous communities facing uniquely high energy cost burdens by implementing community-scale energy efficiency retrofits, installing 50 heat pumps across 5 partner communities, generating $1M in lifetime cost savings and achieving 1,000 tonnes of GHG emission reductions by December 31, 2025.

People Reached

About 120 people (50 households) were positively impacted by retrofits in their homes, primarily households in on-reserve Indigenous communities.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Develop and maintain partnerships to extend on-the-ground home retrofit work with Indigenous communities.
- Develop community home energy efficiency reports.
- Raise funding to improve home energy efficiency.
- Manage and coordinate energy efficiency retrofits for communities.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- 27 heat pumps installed with Kwakiutl and Hupacasath First Nations

- No new community efficiency reports completed.
- $285,000 funds raised.
- 5 active partners in project development or implementation phase.

Current Outcome Progress

- Community partners experienced increased awareness and knowledge of home energy opportunities in their community.
- Residents experienced improvements to home comfort, safety, and bill savings following heat pump installations, estimated at $1,500 per home annually, or $607,500 total across the lifetime of installed equipment.
- Reduction in fossil fuel use and GHG emissions observed in partner communities, estimated at 560 tonnes GHGs over the lifetime of installed equipment.

Goal #2: Policy Advocacy

Goal Target by 2030

Influence provincial and federal energy policy to expand access to clean energy retrofits for 10,000 additional energy-insecure households in BC by securing at least 2 policy wins — such as new funding programs, regulatory changes, or owner-operator protections — by 2030.

Annual Goal

Protect grant and funding programs that are enhancing energy affordability and climate resilience by producing 1 research report, conducting 5 government meetings, and achieving 1 policy win to support low-income households by December 31, 2026.

People Reached

9,000 people (3,777 households) were directly impacted through income-qualified rebate programs in 2025; up to 5 million people (entire population of British Columbia) indirectly through policy influence.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Work with communities to understand policy gaps and needs.
- Produce timely and relevant research to inform policymakers and the public.
- Submit regulatory filings and government submissions.
- Convene and participate in the Home Energy Justice Forum.
- Lead coalition of municipalities and organizations in government advocacy (e.g. UBCM Convention statement on renter heat safety, signed by 12 organizations and 8 municipalities).

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- 1 research report published (manufactured home energy efficiency barriers in BC).
- 1 report published on safe temperatures in BC rental housing, with accompanying policy action tracker.
- 110 participants at Home Energy Justice Forum (May 27, Vancouver) — policymakers, experts, and advocates focused on BC energy insecurity affecting 250,000+ households.

...Continued

- Coalition statement on renter heat safety co-signed by 12 organizations and elected officials from 8 municipalities, presented at UBCM Convention.
- 1 earned media (*National Observer*).
- Published and distributed Forum Proceedings Report, identifying concrete action items for policymakers, including regulating safe indoor temperatures in rentals and recognizing safe housing as a human right.
- Co-development of BC's 2026 Building Electrification Roadmap as a Steering Committee member.
- Regulatory engagement with BC Hydro on equitable and affordable rate designs.
- Standing quarterly meetings with BC Government staff and 2 meetings with Cabinet Ministers (Dix and Boyle).

Current Outcome Progress

Major policy win: BC Government announced $100M investment for ~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.

Goal #3: Rural Partnerships

Goal Target by 2030

500 households in rural coastal BC communities to transition to clean home energy systems, completing retrofits that generate $11 Million in lifetime cost savings and reduce 10,000 tonnes of GHG emissions across 5 regions between 2025 and the end of 2030.

Annual Goal

Expand the Home Energy Savings Program (HESP), achieving 230+ participants, completing 80 retrofits, reaching residents through communications, and expanding service area to include qathet region, Quadra, Cortes, Denman, and Hornby Islands by December 31, 2025.

People Reached

296 participants enrolled in our program, with an additional 6,305 informed via our website and 4,445 engagements on social media.

Annual Output Goals (Activities)

- Partner outreach to governments, First Nations, community service organizations, and contractors.
- Deliver workshops, one-on-one participant support, and home retrofit coordination.
- Public outreach and communications to residents across service regions.
- Expand program to new service areas: Quadra, Cortes, Denman and Hornby Islands, and qathet region (Powell River).

...Continued

- Connect participants to top-up funding and rebates for low-income households.

Annual Output Progress (Activities)

- 296 participants had enrolled in the Home Energy Savings Program by the end of Year 2.
- Program expanded to Quadra, Cortes, Denman, Hornby Islands, and qathet region, while continuing in Prince Rupert and northern Vancouver Island.
- Testimonial shared: Jerry Olney (Alert Bay) secured $23,000 in grants for heat pump, insulation, and air exchange system; reporting monthly energy bill savings and improved home comfort.
- 116 household retrofits with heat pumps completed.
- $872,160 in rebate funding accessed by households.

Current Outcome Progress

- Increased awareness of rebate and retrofit opportunities among community members in service areas.
- Improved home health, safety, and energy affordability for participants who completed retrofits.
- Residents experienced improvements to home comfort, safety, and bill savings following heat pump installations, estimated at $1,500 per home annually, or $2.6M total across the lifetime of installed equipment.
- Reduction in fossil fuel use and GHG emissions observed in partner communities, estimated at 2,400 tonnes of GHGs over the lifetime of installed equipment.
- Program participants gave the Home Energy Savings Program an average of 4.5/5 stars for being an informative service and an average of 4.5/5 stars for being helpful with applying for rebates and completing their retrofit.

Comparing Outputs 2021–2025

OUTCOMES	OUTPUT	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Better thermal comfort and air quality	# projects # homes # upgrades	77 heat pumps installed in a partner community	191 heat pump retrofits installed across 4 partner communities	86 heat pumps installed across 3 partner communities	74 heat pumps installed across 7 partner communities & regions	143 heat pumps installed across 9 partner communities and regions
Healthier environment*	# GHG reduction (tCO2e)	5,204 tonnes CO2eq over lifetime of installed equipment	5,492 tonnes of CO2eq will be eliminated over the lifetime of installed equipment	923 tonnes of CO2eq emission reductions over the lifetime of installed equipment	1,090 tonnes of C02eq emission reductions over the lifetime of installed equipment	2,980 tonnes CO2eq emission reductions over lifetime of installed equipment
Home Energy Affordability	Cost Savings in $**	$2.3M estimated over project lifetime	$4.9M estimated over project lifetime	$1.7M estimated over project lifetime	$1.7M estimated over project lifetime	$3.2 Million estimated cost savings over project lifetime
Policymakers aligned and activated; policies/ programs adopted	# reports, submissions, media, blogs #meetings, events # programs adopted	6 outputs (1 blog, 1 webinar, 2 media, 1 press release) 1 new BC Government incentive program for low- and moderate-income households	13 outputs (1 joint submission, 6 engagements, 1 blog, 3 media) 2 issues addressed in the new BC Energy Minister's mandate letter	21 outputs (3 reports, 4 media, 3 submissions, 5 letters, 1 event, 1 blog, 1 press release) 3 desired BC Government responses including new BCUC Chair, BC Budget included our recommendations, and gas furnace rebates phased out	22 outputs (1 research report, 1 webinar, 2 blogs, 6 earned media, 1 conference presentation, 2 regulatory submissions, 5 government meetings, 2 press releases, 1 partner report) 1 Major policy achievement in BC	16 outputs (2 research reports, 2 blogs, 1 media, 1 event, 1 coalition statement, 1 BC gov program adopted, 4 provincial meeting, 2 meetings with cabinet minsters, 1 BC roadmap co-developed, 1 regulatory engagement with BC Hydro.)

* *Variance in GHG emissions reductions from year-to-year stems from differences in retrofits completed and the fuel source for systems being replaced (ie. Fossil fuel or electric).*

** *Home energy savings are measured in cost savings both annually and as a total estimate based on an equipment life-time of 15 years. These are estimates based on modelling for energy use in typical home archetypes across the regions we work in.*


24806
EMERALD PASS

Vancouver Office

225 West 8th Avenue, Suite #300
Vancouver, BC, V5Y 1N3
604.682.4141

Prince Rupert Office

425-309 2nd Avenue West
Prince Rupert, BC V8J 3T1
250.624.4191

ecotrust.ca