



Canada's  
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Advantage

CASE STUDY

# Diversified prosperity

A community approach to land  
tenure makes way for multiple  
revenues and beneficiaries

WHISTLER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

**From conflict to community driven economic development, B.C.'s Community Forest Agreements opened a pathway for community-led logging that is delivering on a triple bottom line business model that is generating profit from ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, tourism and logging.**

## **DRIVER**

Conflict over forest management and ownership has been a longstanding issue in B.C. In response to greater calls for First Nations and local community control over forests, the province introduced area-based forest licenses called Community Forest Agreements (CFA) in 1998. This allowed for a new type of tenure in forestry management that aligns with local communities' values and vision for development.

## **MECHANISM FOR CHANGE**

Community Forest Agreements take place on provincial Crown land in B.C., where Crown land covers roughly 94% of the land base. Licenses are issued by the province to communities that develop a management plan, including commitments to make a broader social, economic and resource use impact. These management plans are critical to the success of CFAs and empower communities to build a business model that generates social, economic, cultural, and environmental benefits, ensuring that local values

and priorities shape how forests are stewarded. Community Forest Agreements are also long-term—25-to-99-year agreements—granting communities the exclusive right to harvest timber and manage botanical forest products within a fixed area.

Today, there are 62 CFAs, covering about 5% of annual harvest volumes in B.C. on public lands.<sup>55</sup> Roughly half of these CFAs are led by Indigenous Nations or Nations working in partnership with non-Indigenous communities to oversee activities under the CFA. One example, the Cheakamus Community Forest (CCF), is a three-way equal partnership including Lil'wat Nation, Squamish Nation and the Resort Municipality of Whistler. The Cheakamus Community Forest covers 81,589 acres and manages its tenure under an Ecosystem-based Management (EBM) Plan that focuses on delivering ecosystem function, cultural values, wildfire risk mitigation and recreation/tourism values, as it plans its harvesting operations.

**62**

Community Forest Agreements (CFAs)

Roughly  
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of CFAs are  
Indigenous-Led or Co-Led

**81,589**

Acres Covered by Cheakamus  
Community Forest



## IN THE MAKING

The Cheakamus Community Forest's Ecosystem-based Management Plan led to developing a carbon offset program, as forest conservation and protection was a priority for the community under the plan.

The Ecosystem-based Management Plan informed the community's forestry management approach, which includes reduced harvest levels, extended rotation ages, expanded reserves, and enhanced old-growth and wildlife habitat protection compared to standard forestry practices. Because of these practices and the establishment of an atmospheric benefit sharing agreement, the Cheakamus Community Forest operates the only community forest carbon offset project in B.C., generating revenue to fund their stewardship and climate initiatives.

The Cheakamus Community Forest surrounds the Whistler resort, one of the top tourist destinations in the province, positioning the community to build tourism experiences throughout the managed forest. But it also adds a greater responsibility to undertake large-scale wildfire risk reduction to protect Whistler's wildland-urban interface. Recently, the Cheakamus Community Forest completed a climate change risk assessment and identified areas subject to wildfire and drought risks, which they are using to inform strategic forestry operations plans to create a diverse, climate resilient forest.

## IMPACT

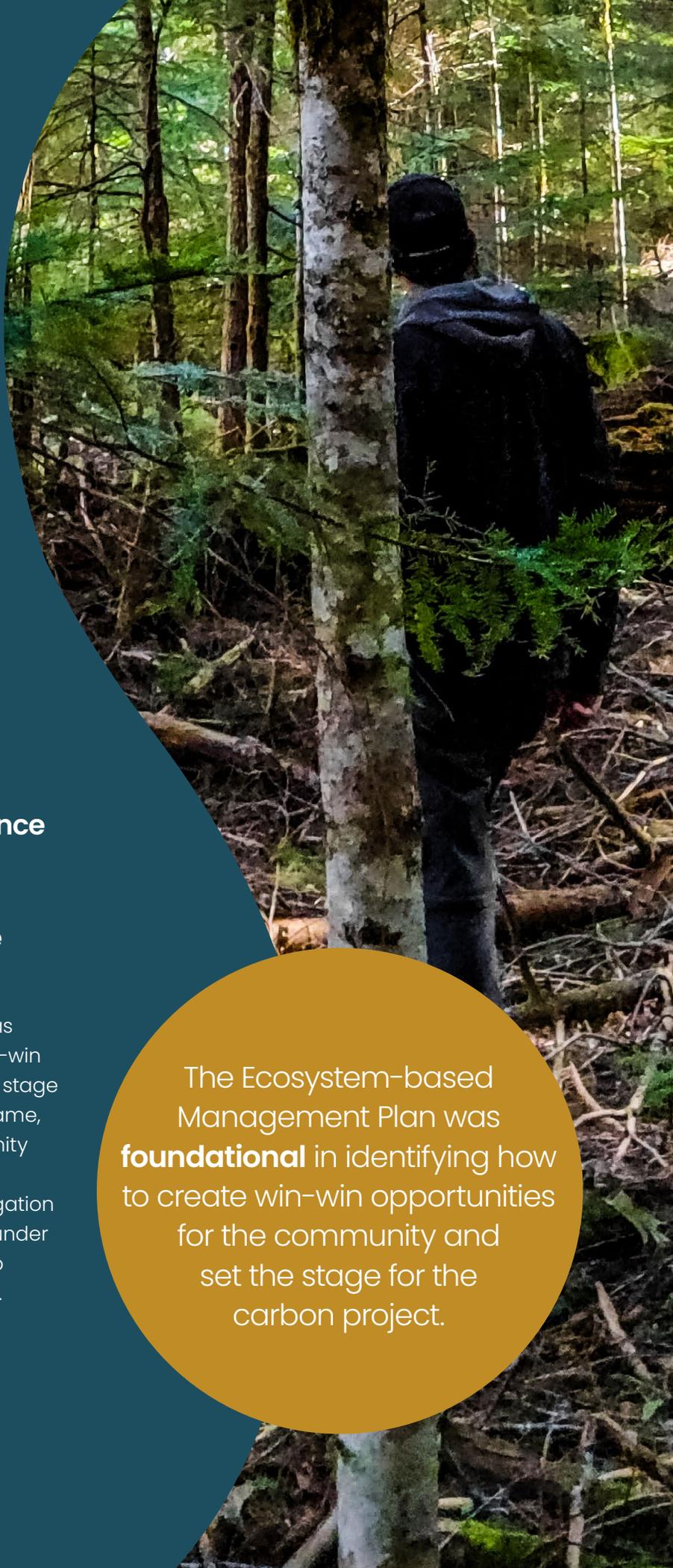
The community forest tenure contributes \$1-2 million annually through timber harvesting to the Sea-to-Sky economy, supports Indigenous employment and capacity-building, and ensures transparent, community-driven governance through significant community engagement and information sharing agreements.

Since its inception in 2009, the Cheakamus Community Forest has demonstrated its environmental impact through Improved Forest Management as defined by the B.C. Forest Carbon Offset Protocol, by avoiding an estimated 10,000–15,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, annually, generating over 150,000 carbon credits to-date, which equates to about \$100,000 per year from carbon sales to reinvest in forest stewardship.<sup>56</sup>

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Estimated Up To  
**15,000**  
Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide  
Emissions Avoided Annually

**\$100,000**  
Generated Per Year From Carbon Sales  
to Reinvest in Forest Stewardship



## LESSONS

**In a triple bottom line business model, frictions between environment, community resilience and economic growth can lead to the development of multiple revenue streams that contribute to building natural capital.**

The Ecosystem-based Management Plan was foundational in identifying how to create win-win opportunities for the community and set the stage for the carbon project. For others to do the same, enabling policy that positions other community forests to generate profit from their work in producing ecosystem services like GHG mitigation is required. This is an opportunity to explore under the B.C. Minister of Forests recent mandate to expand the community forest tenure system.

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<sup>55</sup> British Columbia Community Forest Association.  
<sup>56</sup> Cheakamus Community Forest. Carbon Project.

Case studies are originally published by RBC Climate Action Institute: [Unearthing Value: How nature can play a critical role in pro-growth agendas.](#)



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