

Briefing Note: Community Forestry in Canada

Global economic instability, the need for local adaptation to climate change impacts, and Supreme Court rulings over Aboriginal and Treaty Rights have drawn attention to community dissatisfaction with centralized approaches to natural resource management. **Communities across Canada seek opportunities for increased control over and benefits from natural resources.**

Community forests offer local forest management opportunities. They support social, environmental, and economic sustainability through: a) local decision-making, b) local economic resilience and benefit sharing opportunities, and c) sustainable forest uses. This brief outlines diverse forms of community forests in Canada, and offers recommendations to increase local benefits through community forests.

Why does local forest management matter?

Almost half of Canada's land base is forested and the vast majority of forestland is publically owned.¹ However, provincial government and industry interests dominate Canada's forest sector, and these decision-making systems tend to serve the interests of a few key stakeholders.

"There are increasing perceptions in Canada that provincial forest tenure systems no longer provide the economic and social benefits they were designed to deliver and that they may be a root cause of the many serious problems that increasingly beset the forest sector."

Haley & Nelson, 2007³

Has the time come to rethink Canada's Crown forest tenure systems?, pg. 630

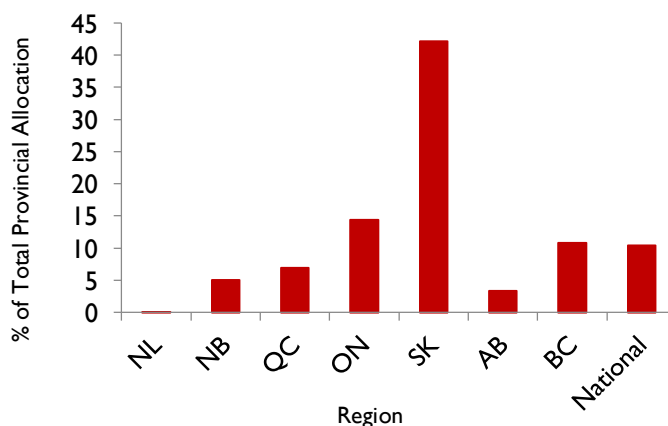
The current system often excludes communities from resource decision-making and benefits,² restricting local capacity. For many resource-dependent communities, geographic

isolation and limited access to services and economic opportunities can make them vulnerable to large-scale disturbances (i.e., economic downturns, climate change). Many communities are concerned with the environmental impacts of industrial forest development in their region.³

Across Canada, interest in community involvement in the forestry sector has been growing over the past decade. Community forests are not new to Canada, and viable examples date back many decades in some provinces, such as Agreement Forests in Ontario (1920s), forestry cooperatives in Quebec (1940) and municipal forests in British Columbia (1950s).⁴

The National Aboriginal Forestry Association measured a steady rise in timber volume harvested by Aboriginal interests since 2003. While many community forests can be found in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, over 116 community forests have been documented across the country.⁵ The British Columbia Community Forest Association grew from 10 in 2002 to over 50 in 2015.⁶ There is increasing interest in heightening community involvement in the forestry sector, and it is thus timely for decision-makers to formally address the changing culture of forest management in Canada.⁷

Forest Tenure Volume Allocated to First Nation Interests, 2013⁸



What are community forests?

A community forest is a forest operation organized and run at the local-level and based on community values. Community forests take many forms, such as: partnerships, corporations, societies, First Nations, municipalities, and co-operative associations.

Community forests often focus on objectives beyond timber harvesting, such as the management of the greater watershed or landscape. Many community forests also include local processing and marketing initiatives for increased local employment and revenue. Other opportunities for economic resilience include diversification through non-timber forest products, recreation, and educational activities. As the number of community forests across Canada increases, the economic viability of these endeavours increases.



Benefits and Impacts

Based on local priorities, community forests can address many needs and produce benefits:⁹

- **Resource access:** parties can access wood fiber supplies that would not otherwise have been available;
- **Long-term resource management:** investment in the care and sustainable use of forestland, particularly in areas that hold local significance for ecological or social reasons;
- **Capacity building:** opportunities for formal training, work experience, and skill development;
- **Employment:** continued employment of existing personnel and/or the creation of new positions within the community through forestry operations as well as tourism and/or non-timber forest harvesting;
- **Profit:** revenue generation and recirculation within the larger community;
- **Conflict avoidance:** resolve previous or impending conflict over resource access and use;
- **Sociocultural benefits:** manage for local values and conduct cultural resource inventories or traditional knowledge studies;
- **Environmental sustainability:** local stewardship and ecologically sensitive forestry practices that take into consideration multiple timber and non-timber values;
- **Economic resilience:** develops community self-reliance on local employment and forest use, and provides opportunities for a diversified economy.

Increasing community involvement in forestry is outlined as a priority in Canada's National Forest Strategy (2008). Multiple provincial strategies and community plans also identify desires to strengthen the role of communities in decision-making and forest-related benefits.

“After a long period of exclusion, Aboriginal peoples are seeking an enhanced role in natural resource management especially on the forested lands within their traditional territories.”

*National Aboriginal Forestry Association, 2010
Framework for Aboriginal Capacity-Building in the
Forest Sector, pg. 2*

Examples of community forests in Canada

British Columbia

Burns Lake Community Forest Corporation (Est. 1998)
 Tenure: Community Forest Tenure License
 License holder: Municipally (Corporation of the Village of Burns Lake) owned limited company (Comfor Management Services Ltd.).
 Hectares: 89,109

Ontario

White Feather Forest Initiative (Est. 1998)
 Tenure: Sustainable Forest License (SFL)
 License holder: Whitefeather Forest Community Resource Management Authority, non-profit corporation
 Hectares: 436,582

Quebec

Matane Regional County Municipality (Est. 1999)
 Tenure: Territorial Management Agreement
 License holder: Regional municipality
 Hectares: 13,000

Saskatchewan

Mistik Management Ltd. (Est. 1998)
 Tenure: Forest Management License Agreement (FMLA)
 License holder: Mistik Management Ltd. (jointly owned by Millar Western Pulp Ltd. And NorSask Forest Products Inc.)
 Hectares: 1,900,000

Nova Scotia

Medway Community Forest Cooperative (Est. 2015)
 Tenure: Forest Utilization License Agreements (FULA)
 License holder: co-operative with a registered office at Kempt, Queens County
 Hectares: 15,000

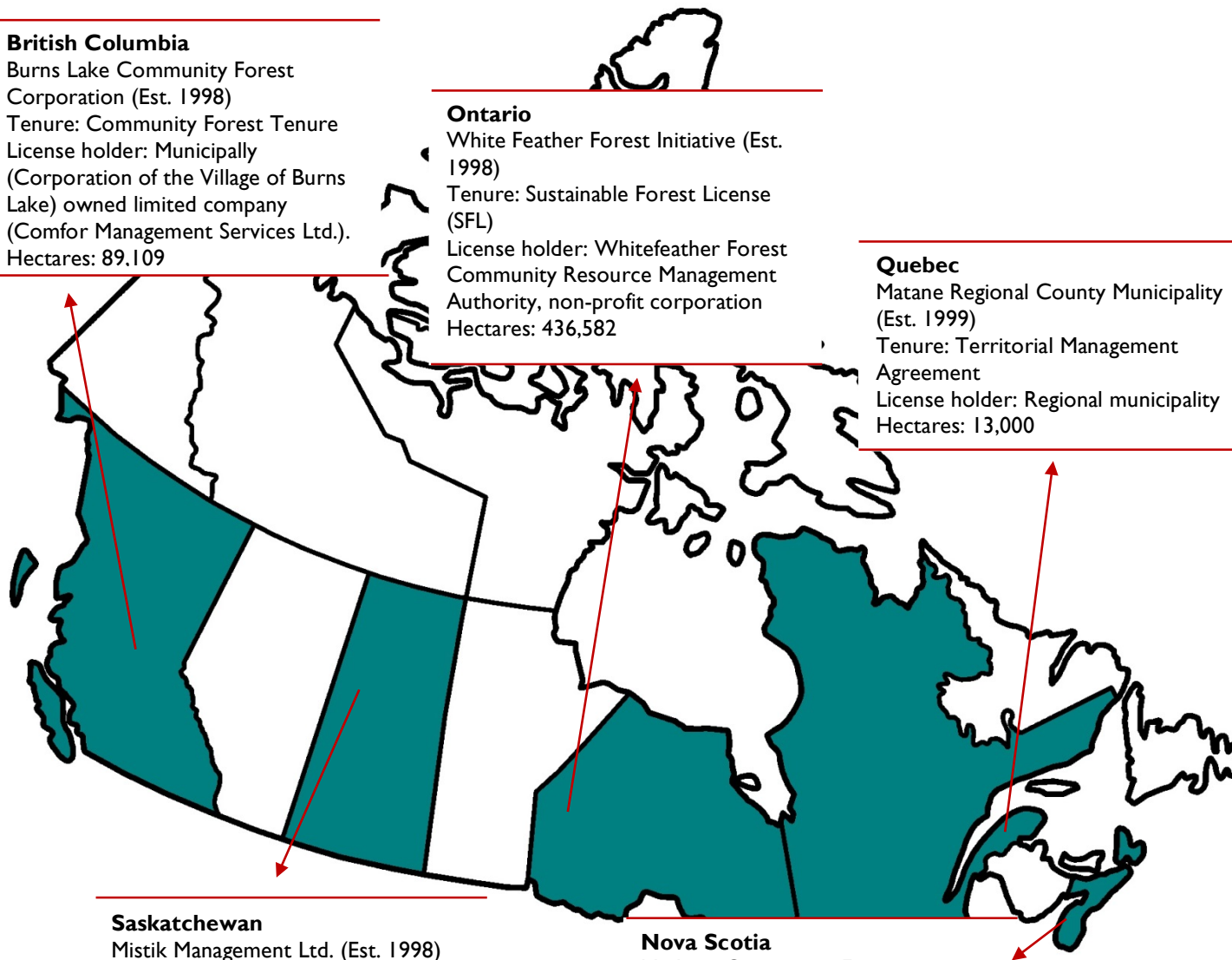
British Columbia: “The Province uses new types of tenure to support communities, First Nations and other smaller operators to increase their participation in the forest sector, generate more benefits from smaller parcels of land, and further diversify the industry.” (Our Natural Advantage Forest Sector Strategy for British Columbia, 2012, pg 2)

Saskatchewan: “New products such as dissolving pulp from the Prince Albert mill and new First Nations and Métis partnerships across the north offer opportunities for northerners and north communities.” (Saskatchewan Plan for Growth, 2012, pg 24)

Ontario: “The composition, structure, governance of Enhanced Sustainable Forest License (ESFL) companies will be flexible addressing local circumstances and inter including: local First Nations and Métis communities, local communities, local forest industry.” (Ministry of Natural Resource Forestry: Forest Tenure Modernization, 2014)

Quebec: “Regionalization allows local and regional stakeholders to play an active role in developing their land base. Local and Aboriginal communities can make their forest-related concerns, values, and needs known more directly.” (Sustainable Forest Management Strategy, 2015, pg 9)

Nova Scotia: “Community groups and other interested groups have called on the government to revise the current ways of distributing timber licences and other rights to provincially owned forest resources... The department will work with interested groups to develop and test these approaches.” (The Path We Share: A Natural Resource Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020, pg 39)



Recommendations

Re-design legal frameworks to ensure all provincial and territorial forest acts contain specific language enabling local control and community tenures. Meaningful increases in local participation and involvement in forestry are not supported within the current legislative framework in most provinces and territories. Many forest acts include a clause to accommodate community access to forest resources, however, there is a need to clarify and strengthen the law to enable increased local-level engagement.

Fund innovative programs and strategies such as new models of forest tenure for increased community involvement. New programs could include the redistribution and reorganization of tenure rights and AAC allocations for non-industry interests, as well as the establishment of new partnerships, ensuring available and culturally appropriate access to timber resources.

Improve capacity and coordination of information and resource sharing among communities, supported by all three levels of government. Data exist that can provide examples of plans, forest inventories, mapping information and other tools to interested communities. There is need for sharing among communities, and building strength within a common voice and capacity. Regional and national networks can be supported to mobilize resources. The creation of regional and national networks is needed to facilitate coordination, and promote economic diversification through linking operators with markets. Support from all three levels of government is necessary to ensure the success of such coordination across jurisdictions.

Encourage training and education among those with an interest in increasing community involvement to be tomorrow's leaders. New post-secondary and school curricula, as well as professional development events, can be established to support local forest management and businesses. There is a need to create the professional work force and culture of innovation needed to support community forestry.



Resources

British Columbia Community Forest Association
<http://bccfa.ca/>

Canadian Institute of Forestry
<http://www.cif-ifc.org/>

Community Economic Development Network
<https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/en>

Community Forests Canada Network
<http://www.communityforestsCanada.net/>

Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation
<http://crrf.ca/>

National Aboriginal Forestry Association
<http://www.nafaforestry.org/>

Sustainable Forest Management Network
<http://www.sfmn.ales.ualberta>

¹ Luckert, M., Haley, D., & Hoberg, G. (2011). *Policies for sustainably managing Canada's forests: Tenure, stumpage and forest practices*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

² Ross, M. M., & Smith, P. (2002). *Accommodation of Aboriginal Rights: The Need for an Aboriginal Forest Tenure (Synthesis Report)*. Edmonton, AB: Sustainable Forest Management Network.

³ Haley, D. & Nelson, H. (2007). Has the time come to rethink Canada's Crown forest tenure systems? *Forestry Chronicle*, 83(5), 630-641.

⁴ Hickey, C. & Nelson, M. (2005). *Partnerships between First Nations and the forest sector: A national survey*. Edmonton, Alberta: Sustainable Forest Management Network.

⁵ Teitelbaum, S., Beckley, T., & Nadeau, S. (2006). A national portrait of community forestry on public land in Canada. *Forestry Chronicle*, 82(3), 416-428.

⁶ BCCFA. (2013). 2012-2017 Strategic Plan. Retrieved from <http://bccfa.ca/index.php/about-us/strategic-plan>

⁷ Gauthier, S., Bernier, P., Burtin, P. J., Edwards, J., Isaac, K., Isabel, N., Jayen, K., Le Goff, H., & Nelson, E. A. (2014). Climate change vulnerability and adaptation in the managed Canadian boreal forest. *Environmental Reviews*, 22, 256-285.

⁸ National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA). (2015). Third Report on First Nation-held Forest Tenure in Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.nafaforestry.org/>

⁹ Bullock, R., & Hanna, K. (2012). *Community forestry: Local values, conflict, and forest governance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.