



General Manager Christmas Message

As we close this calendar year, I'd like to reflect on the accomplishments of Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd. (BLCF) and review the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

You may remember that I made commitments to focus our efforts on long-term strategic goals "beyond the beetle". I have committed to continued community transparency and engagement, as well as implementing the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) with our First Nation partners.

We have successfully maintained our Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Re-Certification in 2019 and finalized the implementation of the Boer Mountain Hazard Abatement Project. We completed a Landscape Fire Management Plan and embarked on phase one of implementation. This is a 3-5-year project to support and enhance community safety and community forest sustainability. Stay tuned for demonstrations, (*Field Bus Tours*) in early summer to the Mackenzie/Guyishton Lake area. My goal is to continue emphasizing and demonstrating the important social fabric that BLCF has in the community.

Throughout the year, we held key information sessions to promote and enhance our social licence. Our 6th Annual Public Information Open House/Community BBQ had the greatest turnout yet, serving more than 300 burgers and hot dogs. We completed many community meetings and presentations to showcase the works of the Mountain Pine Beetle Mitigation Project (MPBMP) efforts and the strategic direction of the BLCF. We participated in the Fall Fair where we were able to talk to many community members answering any questions or concerns. Most recently, we participated in the First Annual Fun, Frost. Family Festival, which was a Community success. We were very pleased with the large turn out of the community members (*approximately 300 people*), on such a crisp evening. We were happy to be able to warm them up by serving BBQ hot dogs and individually served over 500 cups of hot chocolate.

We have submitted our new Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) and our Management Plan #4 to the Ministry of Forest for review and approval. This is a 10-year strategic focus and will set us on the path 'Beyond the Beetle'. All of these efforts have continued to support our local milling facilities; Babine, Decker, Tahtsa Timber and Pinnacle Pellet, by providing fibre for utilization.

We will continue our presence at future community events and activities to offer the opportunity for the community to ask questions and get informed about the activities of the community forest. There is a wealth of information available and I really encourage everyone to ask the questions and get informed! We are applying state of the art technologies in the resource sector, making our activities at BLCF exemplary. There is a dedicated team of volunteers - your Board of Directors, coming from diverse backgrounds that represent all aspects of our community. I encourage you to meet them and discuss the strategic direction of BLCF.

For many community members, the 2018 unprecedented wildfire season is still vivid in their memory, and the early start in 2019 at Lejac was a stark reminder that we cannot be complacent. The extent of the mountain pine beetle epidemic has exacerbated these effects, leaving many of our communities in extreme fire danger. Collectively we need to recognize that we live in a fire-based ecosystem, and as such, our day to day life and our forest management must reflect strategies that support this frequent landscape change. Although the Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) of the late 90s contemplated the possible extent of landscape-level changes that have come with the mountain pine beetle epidemic of the mid-2000s, the legislation has not kept pace.

I am excited to report, that with support from the Forest District team, and Northwest Fire Center, we have embarked on doing everything we can to manage this risk. The Ministry of Forest has committed to the removal of the landscape constraints to support this landscape fire ecosystem-based initiative. Phase one is the area south of town, the Mackenzie/Guyishton Lake area.

The Community Forest Agreement K1A licence is an amazingly viable resource and BCLF is on the path of success. I believe as a community forest, we are a top performing community forest in the province and our 2019 Resource Industry Award recognition exemplifies these achievements. On behalf of the Board and Staff, we would like to thank you for this recognition.

I want you all to join me in celebrating our successes and in helping to manage the upcoming challenges. I encourage all community members to explore all that BLCF does in our community and support BCLF in managing this forest licence for what it is—an area-based tenure.

If you have any questions, please feel free to stop by the community forest office located at 153 Francois Lake Drive. Call: (250) 692-7724 to schedule a specific time to discuss matters that are important to you.

On behalf of the Board and staff of Comfor Management Services Ltd. and Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd., I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Frank Varga RPF
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