BCCFA Conference May 27, 2025
Breakout Session - Sticky Situations: Tackling Social Media,
Misinformation and Community Communication

Moderator - Yolanda Clatworthy, Associate Director, Mitigating Wildfire Initiative - Centre for Dialogue

Notes compiled by – Britta Barteski

Speakers

- Sara Zieleman, Executive Director, Sunshine Coast Community Forest
- Skye Cunningham, Communications Specialist, Cabin Resource Management
- Dr. Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz, Research and Extension Specialist, UBC Centre for Wildfire Coexistence

Main Topics Discussed
- Misinformation and stigma in forestry
- Community engagement and trust-building
- Collaboration across agencies and stakeholders
- First Nations perspectives and reconciliation
- Communication strategies in challenging contexts
- Importance of reciprocal relationships
- The role of extension in forestry communication

Key Takeaways
- Misinformation is often based on kernels of truth; acknowledging this can help bridge understanding.
- Trust must be intentionally built through collaboration, consistency, and community presence.
- Community forestry requires long-term engagement and patience, especially with First Nations.
- Effective communication includes being present, listening deeply, and countering misinformation with facts and empathy.
- Extension work (like BCCFA's *Fuel for Thought*) is key to bridging the gap between research and community understanding.

- Engagement strategies must be tailored to community needs and values.
- You are not alone in facing complex challenges; collaboration can provide strength and new tools.

Action Items
- Share *Fuel for Thought* resource with colleagues and board members.
- Develop or refine a communications plan that includes strategies for responding to misinformation.
- Follow up with session contacts to learn more about their engagement strategies.
- Incorporate First Nations voices and leadership into local forestry initiatives more intentionally.

Questions & Follow-Ups
- What specific pre-planning tools are recommended for preparing communication strategies?
- How can trust-building efforts be formally integrated into forestry project workflows?

Important Details/Quotes
- "You are not wrong in…" – A technique to validate while redirecting.
- Trust is built on familiarity – "Who you know."
- "Breathe. Take your time. Lean forward and review your notes."
- "Identify how you trust the people that you do and replicate that process."
- "Bring down the complexity and tailor to the needs of the audience."
- "Step 1 – Improve communication with the Board and the community."

Thoughts/Observations
- Misinformation is often emotional, not just factual—approaching with empathy is critical.
- Building trust seems as much a social process as a technical one; "showing up" matters more than we often account for.
- There's strength in shared experiences—a valuable reminder that many others face similar challenges.

Connections to Other Sessions
- Direct tie-in to sessions discussing community resilience and First Nations partnerships.
- Links well with previous BCCFA presentations on social license and public outreach.

- Fuel for Thought was cited as a cross-session resource on communication and extension.

Resources Mentioned

- *Fuel for Thought* – Available on the BCCFA website

Feedback/Suggestions

- Excellent use of real-life experiences and case studies.