

# First Nations Forestry Program

## Building Strength



Skeetchestn Indian Band

April 2001

### The Skeetchestn Indian Band is no stranger to forestry

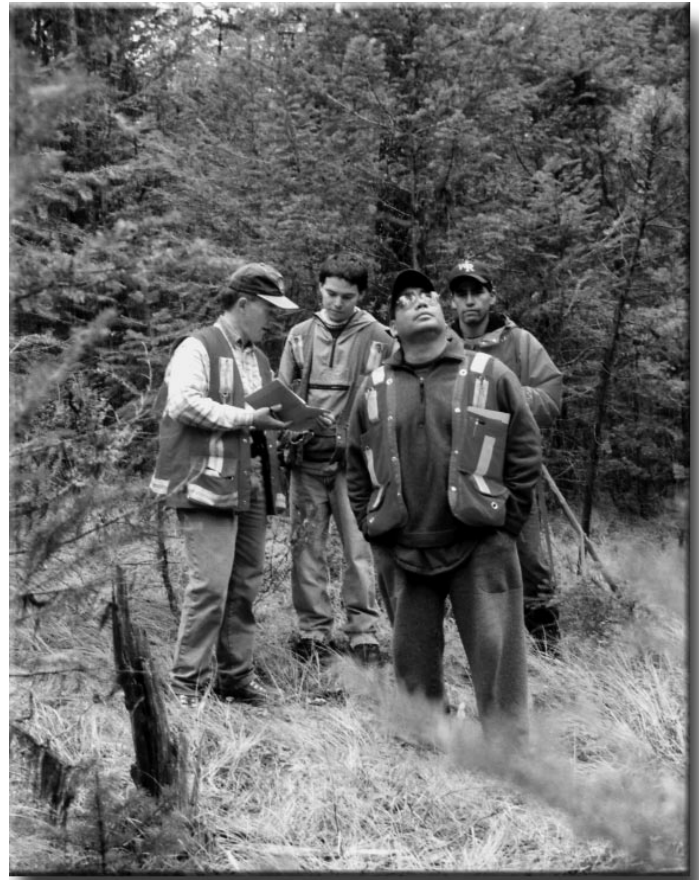
Since the mid-1950s, the Skeetchestn Indian Band has been actively involved with forest management activities on their reserves located west of Kamloops near Savona, BC.

"I remember (as a child) watching my great grandfather horse-logging and me playing around the logs," comments Chief Ron Ignace.

For over ten years, the Skeetchestn Band has been particularly active carrying out silviculture activities both on and off their reserves. Band members worked on surveys, juvenile spacing, and pruning. Historically, band members have fished and hunted as the major source of food and have kept a close inventory on these resources for generations. Members of the band still use a multitude of non-timber forest resources for food, medicinal, and structural materials in their everyday lives. However, they are now also dependent upon the timber resource as a source of employment and economic growth.

In 1996 the band applied for a provincial woodlot licence to manage and harvest. A woodlot allows the band to access a portion of provincial crown land to be managed together with a portion of reserve forestland. The combined areas make up the total working woodlot forest area. Having this tenure provides the Skeetchestn Band with an opportunity

to increase the actual area of their working forest by combining about 557 hectares of provincial crown land to their reserve working forest area. With the



*Technical forestry education provides trainees with future employment options.*



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*Forestry technical trainees Gabe Jules and Darrel Peters combined both office and field work as part of their training.*

financial support of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), the band successfully applied for and was granted a woodlot licence. Following approval of the licence, the FNFP financially assisted with developing the Forest Management and Operational Plans, plus field forestry training for two band members. As a result, these trainees are now qualified to complete more of the actual technical forestry work such as surveys, logging layout, and timber cruising that would have been contracted out in the past. With this tenure the

band can now provide greater opportunities for its members to gain experience in field-based forestry activities including collection of field data, and cut block boundary and road layout work. In addition to collecting technical cruise data, the forestry trainees collected cultural

heritage data in the areas of food, medicinal plants, fish and game, and camping locations.

As Mike Anderson, the band's forester, pointed out, "What was interesting about collecting the cultural inventory information was that the crown land portion of the woodlot represents different ecosystems than what are found on the reserves. Therefore, a different variety of traditional plants are present in the vegetation. The inventory work also provided the crew with a more holistic understanding of the forest and the relative importance of traditional plant species. In addition, it has helped our technicians develop, or look at alternatives to the traditional methods of logging. The outcome of the work funded by the FNFP was that it offered an opportunity to use crown land areas to educate younger band members in a broader spectrum of traditional plants and their uses, than what they were familiar with."

Another benefit of having this woodlot is that it has started the band towards developing a forestry-based business. They're looking to identify opportunities and provide direction for future silviculture and harvesting activities, both on the reserve and on their woodlot licence. The completed forest management plan has established the base information for managing their woodlot. An Operational Plan (which was also completed and approved by the BC Ministry of Forests) takes information from the Management Plan and sets



out how they plan to carry out activities for the next ten years. In developing the Operational Plan, the band was able to create a unique training opportunity for some members of the enhanced forestry crew under the supervision of their forester.

Mr. Anderson explained, "During the past year we were able to train two band members in field data collection for an operational timber cruise. During this exercise they were able to collect sufficiently accurate data to submit for compilation in support of a cutting permit application for the woodlot. These band members also received specific classroom and field training in cut block and road

layout. They were able to complete the field layout for two cutblocks, plus approximately three kilometers of roads."

An educational outcome of having a community crew being involved in all phases of woodlot management planning was significant. This broader training allowed forestry crew members to develop an increased diversity of job skills which will provide them with more flexibility in terms of the types of jobs they are now qualified to do. They are now no longer just limited to spacing and pruning activities.



*Skeetchestn's horse logging crew – doing an environmentally-sensitive style of harvesting.*





Funding from the FNFP specifically helped with project administration costs, trainee field wages, management costs, minor equipment costs, and travel expenses. This has provided the band with a completed Forest Management and Development Plan for the woodlot, plus all of the fieldwork necessary for initial harvesting. For two young band members, Gabe Jules and Darrel Peters, this opportunity has provided them with useful training and skills that can be applied to other contract work. This work has also increased the Skeetchestn Band's understanding of forestry impacts, allowing them to make more informed decisions on forest management issues. As well, it has provided a base of Traditional Knowledge Information which is being incorporated into their forestry planning.

In terms of overall forestry jobs created, the community has its own horse-logging crew who will carry out the harvesting. "As a matter of fact, the band has a horse-logging team out there right now, and band members are doing the falling and bucking," Chief Ignace explained. Using horses that are cheaper than skidders to purchase, operate and maintain will provide about 20 person-weeks per year of logging employment, about two to three person-weeks for loading and trucking, and two to three person-weeks of technical forestry work. This horse-logging crew is also able to do a much more environmentally-sensitive style of harvesting.

The band's forester further explained that following the development of their woodlot, the Skeetchestn Band was also recently successful in securing a 10-year, 15,000 m<sup>3</sup> annual cut forest licence in partnership with Ainsworth Lumber Ltd. This licence is anticipated to create 20 to 25 new jobs and most of them will go to First Nations. It is anticipated that there will be eight jobs in logging, six jobs in milling, and two technical forestry jobs, plus various jobs in trucking, administration, and value added.

The community capacity building doesn't end there because recently the band started a Natural Resource Education Program for grades 10 to 12. The Skeetchestn Band already has a successful long-term partnership with Simon Fraser University (SFU) in post-secondary education. Through SFU they have established the "Secwepemc Education Institute" and have developed a proposal to establish a post baccalaureate training program in "Environmental Resource Management". This will provide an opportunity for people to more easily ladder into different aspects of forestry management. Therefore, it will provide more opportunities and flexibility in terms of education for the community's youth.

Mr. Anderson summed up what it means to receive this type of financial support for forestry training, "The FNFP training was a good building block because out of this training the young people in the community are beginning to recognize that they need to have an education if they want to move forward with their lives."

## Contact Information

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