



A joint Natural Resources Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada program.

Aboriginal forestry program up for renewal

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By Sarah Seinen

Aboriginal Forestry 2007, the regional conference of the First Nations Forestry Program, highlighted the successes of the past and the opportunities of the future.

More than 150 clients and stakeholders attended the conference, held in Enoch west of Edmonton from May 7 to 9, to learn more about First Nations-based forestry projects and the future of the program.

The current government commitment to the program ends in March 2008, but there are plans for renewal. Natural Resources Canada's Canadian Forest Service is conducting a survey to gauge broad trends and areas for improvement.

Presentations were given by a variety of community and government representatives involved with projects within the Northern Forestry Centre's jurisdiction, which includes Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. Other presenters from British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador shared their expertise.

Chief Rose Laboucan of Driftpile First Nation, situated on the south shore of Lesser Slave Lake in northern Alberta, said in a luncheon address that First Nations have an inherent connection to the land and a responsibility to take care of the forest.

"Every little thing in the forest has a purpose, and we need to protect the forest so it's there for our grandkids," said Laboucan. Driftpile First Nation, with support from the First Nations Forestry Program, has adopted a five-year plan to upgrade its forest resources by replanting 40,000 coniferous trees in an area damaged by fire in 2001.



Laboucan said Driftpile has also imposed a moratorium on cutting trees within its boundaries. "The forest gives us so much – what are we giving back?" she asked. Laboucan also challenged governments to continue the First Nations Forestry Program, because it is working well.



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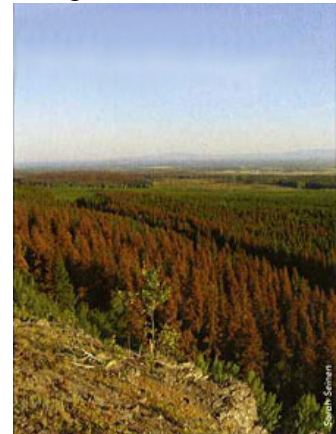
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Gordon Miller, director general of the Canadian Forest Service's Northern Forestry Centre, said the theme of the conference, "Success in Partnerships," was timely and fitting, as all of the program's projects are built on partnerships. He pointed to the regional development of projects and the flexibility of the program as major factors for success.

The First Nations Forestry Program is jointly funded by Natural Resources Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The program has contributed about \$43 million to projects, while First Nations communities and other partners have added \$115 million, for a total of more than \$158 million since 1996.

"Landscape and forestry issues are evolving rapidly, and the boreal is likely to change as well, due to major events such as the mountain pine beetle infestation and climate change," said Miller, who encouraged conference participants to explore a variety of opportunities and projects.



Mountain pine beetle is changing the face of the boreal, presenting



Brian Wilson, national director of programs for the Canadian Forest Service, emphasized the importance of forests to First Nations communities. He said forestry and forestry-related activities are primary sources of employment and income for many Aboriginal communities.

"As we plan for program renewal, we will build on what works well, continue to be outcomes oriented and explore the future of both community- and regional-scale partnerships," said Wilson. The main outcomes of the program have been training and capacity building, access to resources, business development and forest management.

Adam Wellstead, a social scientist at the Northern Forestry Centre, is conducting a survey for the program. It was launched this spring and received 170 responses in the first two weeks. Wellstead said about 3,000 people (First Nations and non-First Nations) have been identified as key stakeholders in Aboriginal forestry.

Some of the issues identified so far by the survey are the need for forest certification in certain areas, a lack of access to resources, traditional and integrated land management and improved training opportunities.

Conference organizers consider the event a major success.

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Aboriginal Youth to Survive and Stay Alive in the Forest

By Laurie Saulnier

Think back to your childhood and summer – what do you remember? Hot days, swimming, cooking treats on the fire, and summer camp with your friends! NRCan, through the First Nations Forestry Program and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, recently supported four five-day long summer camps for Aboriginal youth taking place in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The camps, themed “Survive and Stay Alive,” have the goal of educating Aboriginal children on how to survive in the wilderness, incorporating both modern and traditional ways.

Playing on the theme of a similarly titled popular TV show, the campers were divided into teams, picked their name, and painted their flag. Each day they were challenged to learn about the five basic elements of woods survival: fire, first aid, food, water, and shelter. Teams earned points based on attendance, group work, listening, challenges, and respect for one another.



Chris Pitt enjoys cinnamon apples with Eel Ground First Nation children

NRCan employees Chris Pitt and Laurie Saulnier visited one of the camps at Eel Ground First Nation, a community of 900 located in northern New Brunswick. Eighteen children aged 5-10 years old headed into the woods to brave the hot 34°C sun and hordes of black flies and mosquitoes (proving to the grown-ups that kids handle heat and bugs way better than we do). Their mission was to learn what to do should they ever find themselves alone in the woods. Their enthusiasm was infectious, and when it was time to make a snack on the fire, Chris was right there with them making apples and cinnamon on the campfire. One very smart little boy offered to cook Chris's apple-cinnamon treat for him - just in case Chris burned his fingers.

Steve Ginnish, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Program (ASEP) Coordinator at Eel Ground, joined the group as well and showed everyone a traditional Aboriginal herb called “golden thread” that can be used medicinally when brewed into a tea and how to treat a minor cut with tree sap. Steve explains the importance of the camp to the community. “With the community growing so fast, many of the children do not have a lot of contact with the elders at Eel Ground. Camps like this encourage youth to involve themselves more in their community and learn more about their heritage. We hope to enhance the program in the future by including even more First Nations content.”

Chris also believes that the camp has great benefits for the children who participated. "This camp serves to introduce to them the natural environment and their own surroundings. I believe it definitely succeeds in piquing their interest in the forest; our ultimate goal is to encourage Aboriginal youth to pursue careers in natural sciences and eventually develop the capacity in First nations communities to manage their natural resources. 'Survive and Stay Alive' is a good stepping stone to reaching this goal."



Lessons on tinder, kindling and how to build a fire

As the day came to an end, it was obvious to all that the kids had a great time and learned a lot from the camp. We can also take a few lessons from them: get out and enjoy the summer, always run like the wind, explore the forests, learn new things, remember your heritage, never mind the bugs, and when it's too hot – end the day with a water gun fight with your friends!

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Upcoming Events ...

(click on links for more information)

[4th Interjurisdictional Symposium on Aboriginal Involvement in Resource Management](#)

September 10 – 13, 2007

**Marriott Edmonton, River Cree Resort
Edmonton, Alberta**

[National Forest Week](#)

September 23 – 29, 2007

Watch for more information on these events...

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations presents:

"Begin the Journey to Success"

October 10 and 11, 2007

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

First Nations Forestry Program National Congress

April / May 2008

Location to be determined