



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

June/July 2008

FNFP Embarks on Transition Year

In early spring, an announcement by the Canadian Forest Service confirmed that the First Nations Forestry Program would be extended for the 2008-09 “transition year” and that the two sponsoring federal departments, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Department of Natural Resources, would be considering their options for future year programming over the coming months.

Call for proposals for 2008-09 projects have been issued by the regional forestry centres of NRCan’s Canadian Forest Service, with project decisions to be taken in early summer. This year, the program will be supporting both community-level and regional scale capacity-building projects, with a requirement that at least 20% of the project funding be earmarked to regional scale projects with multi-community impacts. “Some of the best opportunities for sustained First Nations forestry capacity-building exist at the regional level, involving several communities, governments and companies, and we want to make sure that First Nations can access these partnership possibilities as well,” says Brian Wilson, Director of Programs with CFS’s Science and Programs Branch in Ottawa.

The increased focus on regional projects is inspired, in part, by the success of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership in New Brunswick, a multi-year regional scale partnership initiative, supported by HRSDC, NRCan, the provincial government, industry and First Nations organizations. So far, the initiative has trained several hundred Aboriginal workers and assisted the placement of 250 individuals in seasonal and full-time employment in New Brunswick’s forest sector.

Another source of inspiration and direction during our transition year will be the recent FNFP visioning exercise that gathered First Nations forestry leaders and practitioners in every region of Canada, and asked them to collectively define their vision for First Nations forestry 10 years from now. The exercise has been led by Michael Anderson, the Manitoba representative on the FNFP’s National Council, with the assistance of CFS’s John Doornbos and Jack Smyth.

FNFP representatives travelled to each of Canada’s regions and met face-to-face with the Provincial Territorial Management Committees (PTMCs) who steer the FNFP’s priority-setting for the selection of forest projects. “The majority of the PTMC representatives who attended these sessions were First Nations—some of them were government or industry people—but mostly it was First Nations talking,” says Jack, “and that’s what’s important.”



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada



The visioning exercise revealed an emerging consensual vision among First Nations of what they want forestry to mean for their communities in ten years: community-based economic development, self-reliance and respect for traditional values. The results of this exercise are expected to be published later this year.

For information:

Greg Weir
(613) 947-9030
gweir@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca

Jack Smyth
(613) 947-4292
jsmyth@mrcan-rncan.gc.ca

Youth Enjoy Amisk-adventure in Forestry



The skilled workforce of the future of First Nations Forestry is taking shape today, in the form of the young graduates of the Aboriginal Junior Forest Ranger program.

“The kids here say they would recommend it to anyone” says Ron Burns, the manager of First Nation Island Forest Management, which delivers the program, “One of the comments we hear a lot is that it should be more widely available.” The six week course —supported by a host of partners that includes the First Nations Forestry Program,

Prince Albert Grand Council, the Model Forest Network, and the Saskatchewan Ministries of Aboriginal Relations and the Environment—is meant to encourage young people to finish high-school and interest them in careers in forestry or other natural-resource fields. If the enthusiasm it generates among its participants is any indication, the Junior Forest Rangers program has been a success.

Twenty students from six communities gathered this summer at Camp Amisk, on Sturgeon Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan, to learn a wide variety of skills, such as radio communication, firearms safety, boat and water safety, plant identification, life skills, and outdoor survival. They also participated in a cultural learning circle that allowed them to benefit from some of the traditional knowledge that First Nations elders have to pass on.

The young people in the program were between 16 and 21 years old. “There’s a reason why we picked that age,” explains Ron. “At 16 you can be certified, and when you go out there and look for a job that makes all the difference.” By the time participants complete the Junior Forest Rangers program they are equipped with a fistful of certifications that include type 3 firefighting, First Aid, CPR, and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, all of them valuable in the labour market.

The FNFP has supported many other Junior Forest Rangers programs. Ten students from Keethanow High School in Stanley Mission made up another class of Junior Rangers this summer, and the program has seen success in locations across Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. Interest remains high among Saskatchewan First Nations communities, some of which have already asked to be included in next year’s program.

For information:

Michael Newman
(306) 953-8546
mnewman@nrca-nrcan.gc.ca



Junior Forest Rangers learn first aid and wilderness survival at Stanley Mission, SK

Study Investigates Feasibility of a Medicinal Fungus Harvest in Northern Saskatchewan

One First Nations business in Northern Saskatchewan has been studying the potential of a very unusual non-timber forest product—a fungus that grows on trees in the area. An inventory of Chaga fungi was performed in Northern Saskatchewan by Kitsaki Management Limited Partnership with the purpose of determining the feasibility of a developing a sustainable Chaga industry.

Originally, Chaga has been a fungus that was mainly used for medicinal purposes among First Nations as well as in Japan and Russia. Recent studies performed on the fungus have proven that Chaga contains antioxidants which can help to combat cancer. With such studies, the demand for Chaga has grown in international markets, most notably in Russia and Japan, often fetching high prices.

The research study determined that a sustainable Chaga harvest is not without its difficulties. Most of those difficulties stem from the fact that Chaga is a parasite which lives off of birch trees and is more than likely to kill its host. Once the Birch dies, the Chaga eventually dies as well.

Diane McLeod, a consultant with BorealTech Consulting who worked on the research project, determined that “There is a need to educate people. If the tree is still healthy, leave a bit of Chaga behind to grow, this way it could be sustainable.” Another step towards the sustainability of Chaga that the study explored was the inoculation of birch trees with the fungus. Unfortunately more time will be needed to determine the success of this method however inoculation may become a viable option in future Chaga harvests.



With support from the First Nations Forestry Program, the project has helped to promote chaga as a viable value added product that can be harvested by First Nations in Northern Saskatchewan.

For information:

Michael Newman
(306) 953-8546
mnewman@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca