

First Nations Woodlands

A newsletter to assist First Nations Forest Managers

Logo contest finds new symbol for First Nations Woodlands



The imagination of a native artist has given a visual identity to a forestry project cooperatively funded by the federal and provincial governments. Art Wilson's striking motif won the First Nations Woodlands Program logo contest and garnered the Kispiox Band member \$2500 for his work.

The contest was open to all native residents in B.C.

Over 30 artists from around the province submitted 56 works on the theme of "a caring relationship among natives, trees and forest resources." The program which Wilson's design now symbolizes strives to provide First Nations with the technical support and funding needed to manage their forests, and is administered through the Canada-British Columbia Partnership

Agreement on Forest Resource Development: FRDA II.

The winning graphic depicts the sun as a lifegiving source to the tree, suggesting the health of our forests. The human head below the tree represents the aboriginal thinking in forestry, with the tree roots forming the human hair.

Profile on: George Watts

Chairman of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council

The First Nations Woodlands Program, which provides funding for forestry projects to native bands in B.C., is useful to aboriginal people as an interim arrangement, according to George Watts, one of three native members of the program's management committee.

The program is in keeping with the modern-day approach to forest management which, in combination with the historical perspective of Indian people, can provide a balanced form of forest management, explains Watts. He lists three personal goals for the program: efficient use of money, commitment to the projects by those who advance them, and development of skills at the community level. These objectives, he believes, are being met.

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“We now have silviculture crews that are entirely aboriginal, aboriginal technicians, a few foresters. I would certainly like to see a lot more foresters. I guess that'll come in time,” says Watts.

Noting that those who are using the program - involving more than 50 per cent of First Nations in the province - are resident on the land involved, Watts comments: “It's a natural thing to be happening. It always seemed a bit ridiculous that you'd bring people all the way from Saskatchewan to plant trees in B.C.”

Under the current four-year Canada/B.C. Partnership Agreement on Forest Resource Development (FRDA II),

First Nations are also recognizing their obligation to present good projects. “There's a meeting of responsibilities from First Nations this time around,” Watts observes.

Although there has been no serious discussion of future directions for the program, Watts says “it's something we need to seriously think about. As land claims are settled and as areas increase, clearly there will have to be bigger and more intense programs. The next stage is self-government, more aboriginal control and management.”

Watts, who has been chairman of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council for the last 23 years, is committed to more aboriginal autonomy. “If people want us to prove that we can do it, let's do it and get the bogeyman out of the closet so we can devote our energy to real things. Let's get the results and then we will have control.”

Native people who are making decisions about forests are caught in a difficult dilemma, says Watts. On the one hand, there is the need to establish an economic base. On the other, “We are coming from a position of recognizing that the earth is what gives you life” - the traditional native view.

“It’s a real balancing act,” admits Watts, who advocates caution. The dilemma can be resolved, he believes, but it will require people to challenge their beliefs and values, and question their choices.

One question to be asked is: “Do we really need something - or are we just being consumers?” Beyond re-evaluating the ethic of consumerism, he adds, is “asking ourselves about happiness.”

The evolution of forest management by aboriginal people “has been a growing process and will continue to be,” according to the native leader, who has advised a number of bands about forestry projects. “When you start with just an economic argument, it’s a very tough force to deal with. It hasn’t been easy.”

“What I see happening is a lot of our people dancing on ice -- a damned-if-you-do-or-don’t situation all the time. It’s very tough to find a balance. Again, I think it gets back to how you’re bringing up future generations. If you can create new attitudes in future generations, there isn’t even a debate about consumerism.”



George Watts

As the agenda moves ahead, Watts says he will do what he can to motivate the First Nations Woodlands Program to continue to be responsive to forestry in local situations, because “dealing with forestry in Kyuquot is a lot different than dealing with forestry in Vancouver.” He also supports greater community control.

Change, both for Indian and non-Indian people, is

inevitable, says Watts, and everyone should prepare for it. “People can fight change or manage it. When you fight change, you end up with chaos.”

As natives create a new role for themselves, George Watts sees the relationship between Natural Resources Canada and First Nations evolving to address the changing role.



Bobbi Ellen Peters

Bobbi Ellen Peters, 25, is a native forestry technician who has been working with consulting forester Ray Hatch for the last three years. She is a member of the Chawathil band which received funding from the First Nations Woodlands Program for brushing, weeding and spacing of 49 hectares.

"I've been working with Hatch Woodlands and am now in my third year. Most of our work is located in Williams Lake, Prince George, with some in Kamloops and Princeton.

"The brushing and weeding contract was just an idea Ray Hatch and I had to get something going with the Chawathil band. (The band is located near Hope and belongs to the Sto:lo Tribal Council based in Chilliwack.) Ray started working with the band in 1986, clearing a bunch of blocks and

restocking them with commercial species.

"For a year after some of the blocks were planted, they were maintained, but since then they haven't been... A lot of the paperwork was done by Ray, but I had to go and look at the different blocks to see if they needed to be treated. It was a way to try and get employment for myself closer to home.

"I was working with Elizabeth Panozzo and John Whirtz (foresters also employed at Hatch Woodlands). They had a lot

to do with the brushing and weeding surveys, which were really new to me, so they coached me.

“I did the surveys and pretty well managed the program, getting it started, making sure the costs were within budget, and hiring people. It’s not really part of my job, but I’m a band member and a lot of people aren’t really familiar with forestry in our membership. I guess they really didn’t want to get involved, so to get things going, I pretty well had to do it.

“At first, it was really hectic and frustrating a lot of the time. Once the worst was over and I started to understand it a bit more, I felt relaxed. A lot of things I didn’t even have to worry about, but I just didn’t want to fail. I wanted it to be a success.

“It’s been a really good learning experience for me. I’ve learned a lot, working with different figures. The project was worth close to \$40,000 (including a 10 per cent investment by the band). It employed six people, all band members.

“It wasn’t meant to be a full-time job, but it was a full-time job, though, because I put in so much time to make it work, to motivate it, activate it. A lot of the work I did was the band’s responsibility. I guess if I wasn’t a band member, I would have been caught up

in it but I wanted to see something happening with forestry in Chawathil.

“For this generation, it probably won’t benefit us much, but maybe for future generations. For my children (Kyle, 6, and Maggie, 3), it would benefit them a lot. My son asks a lot of questions about trees...

“The people I worked

“A lot of people are naive - they don’t realize the value of our forests.”

with when I got started (in 1986-87) were older men. They encouraged me to get into forestry because our band didn’t have anybody and this school (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in Merritt) offered it. I didn’t know if I’d be into it, but even after taking the first year, I was really interested.

“This was the first work I’d done with the Chawathil band. It’s a start... Maybe in the future, I could work with the Chawathil again -

expand their reforestation. “They have some commercial species planted, but there’s not much profit in forestry for our band right now. There’s cedar, cottonwood, spruce and fir. After we did the surveys, we also found a lot of alder trees were dominating the blocks.

“Any commercial trees that are overtopped with brush were cleared around one metre. We’re also spacing, with preference to commercial trees...

“As soon as the brushing, weeding and spacing were over, I did checks to see if it was within Natural Resources Canada’s guidelines. I worked with the employees, helping them along if they had concerns or misunderstandings, making sure the quality was there - and the quantity.

“It’s a good program. There’s benefit to the trees - it should improve the growth and even the quality. Also, it’s a bit of employment for our band. We got about two months of work. It’s good to see people getting jobs - there haven’t been many programs in the last few years for our band members.

“The band probably wouldn’t have been able to afford this program. Even if they did, it probably wouldn’t have been their priority to spend the money. A lot of people are naive - they don’t realize the value of our forests.”

Penticton project sees self-imposed stop to logging

The Penticton Indian Band has turned what was a serious problem into a truly winning situation for all involved.

Previous logging practices on their reserve lands had jeopardized the health of their forests, and created problems with mistletoe as well as increased the fire hazard. To turn this situation around, the band devised a reserve

management plan so that all of their forest resources could be better managed. In order to implement the plan, the band felt it was necessary to impose a 10-year moratorium on any further logging on the land.

Band Manager, Greg Gabriel, explains that "We wanted to send a message to potential logging contractors as well as band members that there was concern as to

logging practices, and to cleaning up the timberlands. We wanted to make sure there were proper guidelines in place before anymore logging took place."

They are now in the sixth year of that moratorium which the band members initiated themselves, and the benefits are becoming very evident.

The stop to logging has allowed for the opportunity to carry out a variety of rehabilitation work, much of it with help from the First Nations Woodlands Program. And according to Gabriel, it's resulted in "a significant upgrading of our forest land. A lot of areas are really starting to look healthy." It's really been a win-win situation. The forest is getting its health restored, and the band members receive the satisfaction of knowing that the benefits of their work will stretch long into the future.

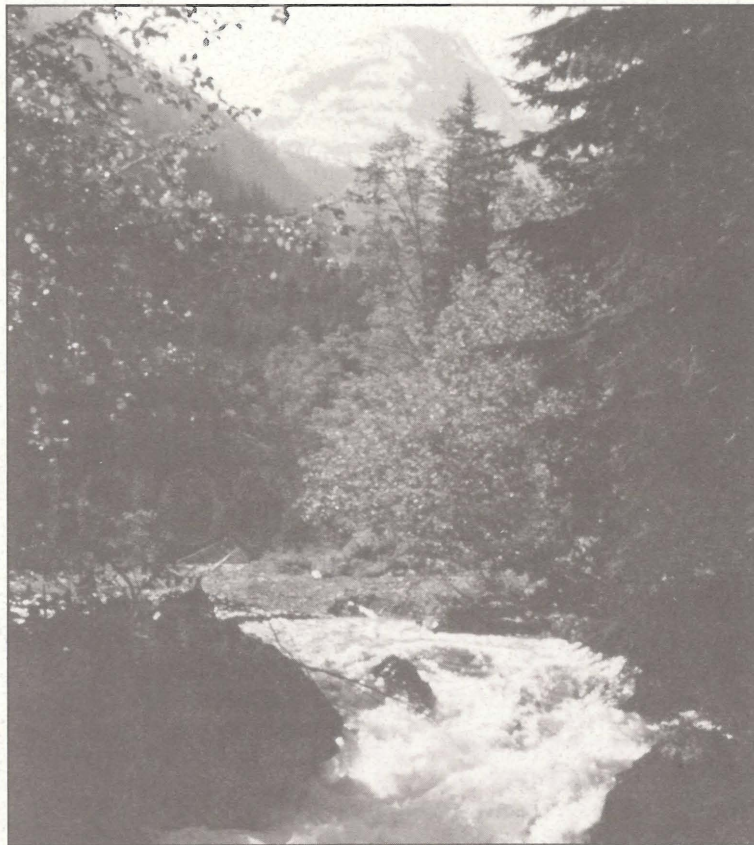


Have phone will travel -- while in the field, Band Manager Greg Gabriel stays in contact with his office via cellular telephone

Water, water everywhere— Why be concerned about water?

British Columbia has a very diverse landscape. Of the 11 forest types, or "regions" in Canada, six are found in B.C., more than any other province. B.C. is also divided into 14 biogeoclimatic zones, each zone having a particular combination of geography, climate and vegetation (see "Managing for Wildlife" in the Summer 1992 newsletter). The biogeoclimatic information for the zones is used in making resource management decisions: what is appropriate in one zone may not be appropriate in another.

When managing your woodland for water, the focus should be on managing the vegetation because it is difficult to affect geography or climate. Different forest types, being different ecosystems, cannot be managed using a single method or technique. However, using basic guiding principles, you can adapt management techniques to your own unique situation. These principles, in combination with sound judgement, will result in effective woodland management.



Water is essential for life -- an important fact, often

overlooked. We are familiar with the role water plays in our homes and gardens, but what about beyond the back fence, in the forest?

Water is everywhere in a forest. It is in ponds and marshes, streams and creeks. It provides habitat for all sorts of wildlife, such as fish, raccoons, ducks, bears, frogs and insects. Not so obvious though is the water flowing underground, sustaining the trees, bushes and soil insects. Less obvious still is the water in the air,

which controls water loss from plant and tree leaves.

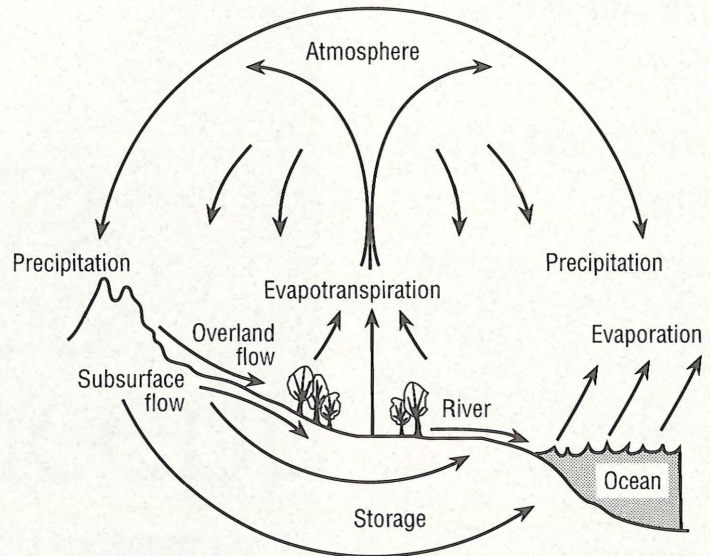
But where does this water come from, and where does it go?

Like most processes in nature, water comes and goes in a cycle (see next page). The cycle is complex, but there are basic parts:

- water comes down from the atmosphere as rain or snow;
- it is caught by the leaves of trees, soaks into the ground, flows along the surface, or falls into water bodies;

- some water flowing through the soil is taken up by plants and returned to the atmosphere through their leaves as water vapour;
- some water evaporates directly back to the atmosphere from tree leaves;
- some water flows into streams, lakes and ultimately the ocean;
- water evaporates from open water bodies into the atmosphere;
- the cycle continues.

When a woodland is managed for a resource, whether it be wildlife or wood, the water cycle is affected. Removing trees for timber can increase the amount of water flowing into streams, because the trees no longer take water from the soil and return it to the atmosphere. Even choosing to leave a woodland alone can affect the cycle because the woodland, being made up of living things, changes over time.



There are four considerations to keep in mind when thinking about water in a woodland:

- 1) How much water is moving off the land, flowing in streams or underground?
- 2) When are water levels in streams highest? (Usually during spring snow melt?) When are they lowest? (Usually late summer or early fall?) How soon after rain storms do water levels start to rise and when are they highest?

3) What is the quality of the water? Is it good? Does it change depending on the time of year?

4) Who is downstream of the woodland? Everything done on a woodland affects people, animals and plants downstream.

These considerations are important when making management decisions. A professional forester can assist you in evaluating them.



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Canada British Columbia Partnership Agreement on Forest Resource Development: FRDA II

