

# First Nations Woodlands



A newsletter to assist First Nations Forest Managers

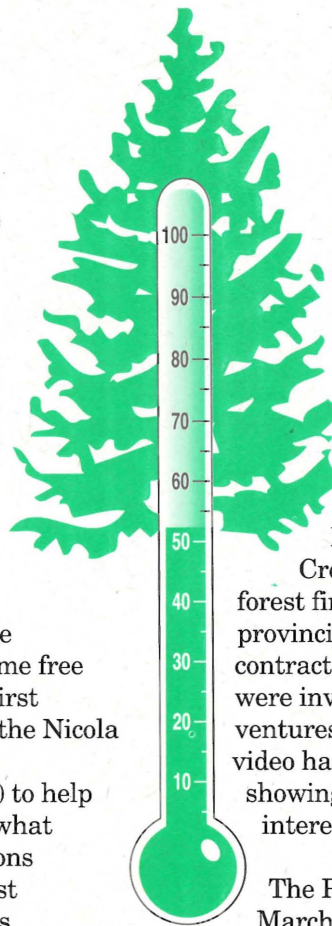
## Program passes halfway mark

**A**pril 30, 1991. The date that the Canada-British Columbia Partnership Agreement on Forest Resource Development was signed and the date that the First Nations Woodlands Program came into being. A lot has happened in the two and a half years the Program's operated.

Seventy-five First Nations have signed on. Some are just beginning their forest management programs by taking a hard look at their forests and seeing just how much wood and other products are out there. Others have passed this stage and are figuring out what to do with it. Communities are asking themselves, "Should we log it? Should we lock it up and do nothing? or, Should we do something in between? How many jobs will there be? What are the economic benefits and environmental trade-offs?"

It's a long, sometimes arduous process but these questions are eventually answered. In fact, forty-two

First Nations have at least answered the preliminary questions. They've spaced 1270 ha, pruned 330 ha, prepared and planted 250 ha. In addition, 200 ha of plantations have been brushed to make sure the little seedlings can become free growing. A lot of First Nations are using the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) to help them understand what some of the questions should be. The First Nations Woodlands Program financed NVIT to develop "An Introduction to Natural Resources Technology" and provides funding to First Nations to have the five-day workshop delivered in their communities. Close to 100 community leaders have taken time out of their busy

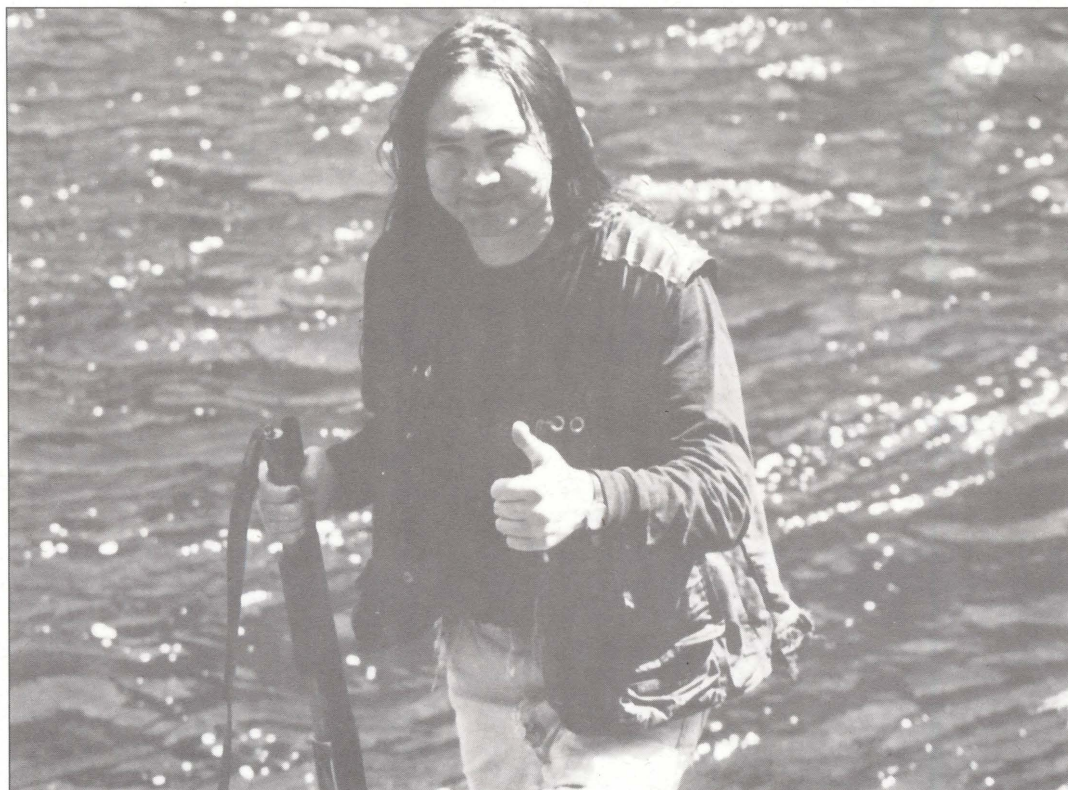


schedules to attend.

A lot of communities are using the Program as a stepping stone to forestry work off reserve. Many aboriginals were employed last summer in the Forest Service's Unit Crew Program fighting forest fires, others took on provincial silvicultural contracts and still others were involved in joint ventures with industry. A video has been developed showing some of the more interesting projects.

The Program runs until March 31, 1996 which means we've just passed the halfway mark. There's still lots to do and a general call has been made to all First Nations to submit their proposals for 1994/95. Give us a call at 363-0600 if you need a copy of the guidelines or want further information.





# Alex Chartrand

## ...in my own words

“I got my start in forestry when I went to work as a laborer for a Victoria company in 1988. I went out with them to do some work and really loved it, and said to myself ‘Hey, this is for me.’ Within two weeks I was headed to Saskatchewan to the National Indian Forestry Institute. It was a real spur of the moment decision but I haven’t looked back since.”

“I was there for three years and spent each summer working at various forestry jobs. I worked with the Ministry of Forests Regional office in Vancouver. I did some GIS work and looked at building roads, doing some calculations into how much fill was needed to stabilize them. I really loved it. That was the first summer. The second year, I worked with the Mid-Coast District in Bella Coola. I basically spent most of the time on field trips travelling by plane, and would then stay on a fisheries boat. I did that for four months. It was really great, being out in such a beautiful place. We also did work with handloggers, marking out areas for them.

“We up in Oweekeno had an [FRDA First Nations Woodlands] operation to space the trees on our reserve. We finished that up in 1991, and I understand the trees are really doing great, really sprouting up. Since the project, there’s been some incredible growth happening.

“We also just finished up another FRDA project with the Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’wx Band up near the Nekite River — another 41 hectares of spacing.

“It was important for our Band to get involved in projects like this because it was on our own territory. For this community, it brought them back into the traditional

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“We need to be able to sustain the land and remember that the land comes first. Without the land, you lose something inside yourself”

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territory. It was great for the crew to be up there, just to be out on their own land — even when we only had a 40’x12’ trailer for a crew of eight or nine guys. It brings the community back home and gives them a sense of freedom and even relaxation, to be away from the hustle and bustle, and to get away from some of the social problems some of them may be facing. The project also provided some income as well as experience for our crew.

“I think that we all need to show a greater respect for the land, and realize that it’s connected to the water which is connected to the sea and to the air. I hope that everyone recognizes that and treats it all in a good way. I guess the

word I want is ‘sustainable.’ We need to be able to sustain the land and remember that the land comes first. Without the land, you lose something inside yourself.

“I hope we can look after the land in a much more healthy way for all uses. Actually I really believe that can be done. I really believe we can do that and meet our social and economic needs. If we’re going to do that though, one of the most important things is that we need to educate all the people — across Canada, to the United States, and around the world. We should help people understand where the food, their clothes and cars all come from. They come from the land.

“And we need to educate governments so that they’ll integrate those views into their policies. The land’s like your body — if you treat your body badly, it’s not going to function properly. And what I call Mother Earth works the same way. If we as a whole don’t treat her properly, she won’t function and provide for any of us.

“To make that happen, First Nations Communities in logging areas need to have a greater say in what happens, and have some real control. The government and industry needs to say to them ‘Hey, I hear you,’ and put that into their policy.”



## Fort Nelson Band overcomes unique 'northern' challenges



Glen Badine

“There are First Nations further north than ourselves but none are as active in forestry as we are,” according to Glen Badine, Chief of the Fort Nelson Band.

The band’s program began with the selection of a forest consulting firm to examine the reserve and count up all the trees. With this basic information in hand, a forest management plan was developed and a course of action determined.

One thing the plan recommended was to knock down 32 hectares of scrub timber with heavy equipment, pile the material into windrows, let them dry over the summer to be burned in the fall, and then plant spruce seedlings the following spring.

The band applied to the First Nations Woodlands Program for funding, and the Canadian Forest Service agreed to contribute 90% of the \$64,000 required to make it happen.

The band's contracting company, Eh-Cho-Dene Enterprises, had experience doing similar work for the B.C. Forest Service. Since they had the heavy equipment available, they were given the job of clearing the site. Six months later, band members were employed to burn the windrows.

It hasn't all been easy though. "I've only been Chief for a little while now and I'm still trying to get a handle on everything the previous Council got started," says Badine. "I was really concerned about the site preparation and I didn't think the windrows had been burned properly so I asked the Canadian Forest Service to come up and give me some advice. Now that I've walked the site with them, I can see that we did a good job."

Forestry in the north is tougher than down south. It takes a long time for the frost to leave the ground during spring breakup, and all your activities have to be planned around a very short growing season. Summer snowfalls aren't uncommon, and create some working and growing conditions that few would consider ideal. Badine says the weather can also impede the hiring of people to carry out the work. People are less likely to want to go out tree planting if they know they're going to be doing so in the rain, he explains.

Access is another problem particularly troublesome in the north. Many of the areas are difficult to get into because of the terrain. But overcoming challenges that face northern bands and other landowners simply proves that the commitment to enhance their forest lands is indeed extremely strong.

That commitment, explains Badine, has a lot to do with future generations. "We have our own school here, and we wanted to show the young kids that we could restore the forest, and really take care of it."

These forest lands have traditionally been integral to native culture, and Badine feels that it's imperative for band members to continue to respect that relationship. "These lands are very

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**The band's plan included piling scrub timber into windrows, burning them in the fall, and then planting spruce seedlings.**

important to us," he explains. "They are traditional hunting areas, and important because they protect tradition and culture. And we have to remember that trapping was one of our main sources of survival."

Projects like these also help foster a sense of community among band members. "Getting people involved," says Badine, "is one of the key aspects at work here."

The importance of the Fort Nelson Band's project lies in its respect for the past, and dedication to instilling that respect in future generations — altogether fostering a positive relationship between individual band members as well as with their traditional lands.



## Water management in action

“**B**oy, there sure is a lot of snow out here. I wonder if the creek will flood in the spring?” Has this thought crossed your mind when walking through your woodland in the middle of winter? In some areas of the province, there is a management technique that can be used to not only improve your water supply by lessening the chance of

flooding, but to also enhance other resources.

The technique involves making small openings in the forest by harvesting groups of trees, or by making existing gaps larger. The idea is to have several circular openings about one tree-height in diameter. For example, if the trees are 20 m tall, then the opening diameter should be 20 m. An

opening of this size is slightly less than 1/20 ha. The openings change the way wind moves over the tree tops and cause more snow to collect in the openings than in the surrounding forest.

A major cause of snow melt is energy from the sun. This energy is absorbed by both the snow and trees. Openings one tree-height in diameter are small enough to

shade the snow from direct sun, yet large enough that heat from the trees does not melt much snow. The result is that spring snow melt in the openings is delayed. Snow under the trees melts first, then snow in the openings. Creeks will have two smaller spring high flows, rather than one large, potentially flooding, high flow.

The small openings are also a good growing environment for tree seedlings. The effects of the openings will





continue for many years. As the new trees in the openings grow to the height of the surrounding trees, there will be progressively less of an effect.

Of course, it is not necessary to regenerate the openings with trees. They may also be left as forage areas for wildlife or domestic stock. Better forage is produced in openings slightly larger than one tree-height, so melt would not be delayed as long in the spring. The number and size of openings you make will depend on your management objectives: How much wood and/or forage do you want? Do you want to reduce the chance of flooding slightly, or a lot?

If you decide to use a technique like this, perhaps during your next winter walk in deep snow you will find yourself enjoying the scenery, rather than worrying about flooding.

## Managing for water — things to do today

Maintaining a good supply of high-quality water is one of the key aspects to water management on any woodland. Two things you can do to easily maintain water quality are to check roads and stream banks for signs of erosion or instability. Gravel and dirt roads are



major sources of sediment in streams. Here is a checklist of what to look for and what to do:

- check the shape of the road surface. It should be slightly rounded, or "crowned," to allow for good drainage and stable road beds;
- look for ruts and potholes. Roads used often should be upgraded frequently to fill them. If left unfilled, they give water a place to collect and start eroding the surface;
- look for small gullies in the road surface. They are a sign that the surface material does not drain well after rain

storms. A new load of coarse material, like gravel, may be needed;

- check the condition of the ditches beside roads. They should have a good cover of vegetation and not have a lot of debris in them. Some debris is good, because it and the vegetation act like small dams, slowing the water and allowing the sediment to settle out before reaching the stream. Too much debris could cause water to pond beside the road and make the road bed unstable;
- check the conditions of all culverts. Proper maintenance of culverts is essential to providing good



drainage. Make sure that they are free of any debris, and that the inlets and outlets are not crushed. Otherwise, water could pond beside the road. Check also that the outlet is not "hanging" above the stream. Falling water is very powerful and can gouge the stream bed. If you think a culvert is not working properly, have it replaced.

Erosion of stream banks is a natural occurrence, but it can be minimized. The checklist here includes:

- identify sections of stream bank that show signs of undercutting or slumping. They could be stabilized if necessary;
- check for large amounts of debris. Debris such as logs and branches, is important as fish habitat, but too much can cause water to pond. This could lead to slumping of the stream bank;
- pay attention to activities done near or in streams. Cattle crossing a stream or using it as a watering site may disturb the stream bed and banks, causing sediment to enter the stream.

Removing gravel from the stream bed is another disturbance and sediment source.

Any potential problem sites noted on roads or along streams should be checked during and just after rain storms, as well as in spring

during snow melt. This will give you an idea of how severe any erosion problem can be when water levels are high.

A little time invested in maintaining roads, culverts and stream bank stability can do a lot in maintaining high quality water.



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**Editor:** Barry M. Gee

**Layout:** Soren Henrich

**Contributors:** Mark Atherton, John Berry, Barry M. Gee