

First Nations Forestry Program



Building Strength

Kanaka Bar Band

January 1999

Forestry and Silviculture Training Opens Door to Forestry Industry for Kanaka Bar Band

Jobs in the forest industry are nothing new for First Nations in the Fraser Canyon region of British Columbia. Since the 1960s, First Nations individuals have worked in the logging, milling and tree planting side of the business in this rugged, mountainous part of the province. Though there have been First Nation-owned silviculture companies operating in the Fraser Canyon, none of the six First Nations bands in the area staked a claim in this major resource industry until two years ago. The Kanaka Bar Band decided to use the forests in their traditional territory as a natural source of jobs and management opportunities for their members. This was started in 1997 with funding from the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) to provide assistance with building capacity in forestry and in updating their reserve forest management plan. Silviculture training was provided to four band members who also worked closely with the forestry consultant in developing the management plan.

Chief James Frank of the Kanaka Bar Band knew that despite the abundance of logging operations in the Fraser Canyon, very few local companies, Aboriginal or non-

Aboriginal, were taking advantage of the sub-contracting opportunities. Many of the contracts were going to companies outside the Fraser Canyon. The Chief and Council took on a dormant company called Siwash Silviculture Ltd. and set out to establish a band-controlled and operated venture. This company would train and employ First Nations people to successfully compete in the silviculture contracting business in the Fraser Canyon.

The Fraser Canyon Tribal Administration entered the picture when they supported a cooperative training program involving on-the-job training for First



Siwash Silviculture crew members collecting tree growth data as part of their field training



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Crew members become familiar with analyzing computer data

According to Haynes, funds from the First Nations Forestry Program gave the band the opportunity to train individuals so that they could secure silviculture contracts with local forest companies.

“The goal was to develop an Aboriginal contracting and consulting venture that would offer technical services to forest license holders in the Fraser Canyon. Carrying out contracts, on time and up to standard, is an important way for the crew to learn how to be competitive in the forest sector,” Haynes explained.

From the beginning, the goal of the venture was self-sufficiency. Neither the Tribal Council or the Kanaka Band subsidized the company’s operating or employee training costs. In order to reach a fiscally

responsible position, the crew’s pay is based not on hourly or weekly salaries, but on productivity, which is common in the silviculture industry. Haynes says this encourages the company to be more competitive, as well as encouraging motivation and goal-setting among crew members.

In addition to his training and management roles, Haynes serves as the band’s liaison to forestry companies, pursuing contract opportunities on behalf of the band. During its second year in 1998, the venture secured more than \$50,000 in contracts, primarily from Lytton Lumber Ltd. and Peyah Lumber Company.

The 1998 crew represented a number of Canyon bands, including Lytton, Siska, Kanaka Bar, Skuppah and Nicomen Bands. “We did well in 1998 despite the industry downturn,” Haynes reports.

Haynes credits much of the venture’s success to having a well-trained, versatile crew that is prepared to carry out almost any aspect of

Nations participants completing silviculture contracts. The Kanaka Bar Band hired Noel Haynes, a Registered Professional Forester and an experienced schoolteacher who had worked in reserve schools. Haynes utilized the funds from the FNFP to teach the four band members skills such as chainsaw use, tree species and common disease identification, safety, spacing, brushing, field inspections and other silviculture skills.

Haynes enthusiastically supports the co-op training approach because he feels it allows crews to learn while they carry out actual contracts. The training program offers competence and theoretical and practical experience to the individuals involved. To date, seven participants, who average 25 years of age, have taken part in the training program, with six working on the silviculture crew during the 1998 season.





silviculture work. Next year, there is a plan to have the crew go through basic forest fire fighting training so they can respond if needed.

The long-term goal of the band is to secure an increasingly larger decision making role in the regional forest sector, which comes with incremental successes. The band has ongoing sub-contracting agreements with several local forestry companies. They are also in discussions with the Ministry of Forests to develop some silviculture opportunities in the Lillooet area.

Haynes' advice to other First Nations bands considering going into the silviculture field is to use a cooperative education model to train crews, which involves a combination of classroom training and on-the-job training; look for contract opportunities in high skill and technical areas, not just the labour market; and support the development of First Nations entrepreneurs in the community.

Judging by local First Nations high school students' interest in jobs in the forestry sector, the success of Siwash Silviculture is already evident in the community. Siwash Silviculture and students from Kumsheen High School participated in a co-op education program during the 1998-99 school year. The company's crew worked side by side with the students from both the academic and special needs programs at the school, giving them valuable basic training in silviculture.

Haynes, always looking for an opportunity to use the work place as a classroom, commented with pride, "Everyone learned and gained from the experience."

Perhaps the most positive outcome of the high school co-op program was that it exposed many First Nations youth to potential careers in forestry. For the local First Nations bands, that's another step in pursuing their goal of becoming active players in all aspects of harvesting and managing forests in the Fraser Canyon.



Siwash Silviculture crew members review forestry project plans





First Nations Forestry Program

In April 1996 the First Nations Forestry Program was announced by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and Natural Resources Canada-Canadian Forest Service (CFS) to improve economic conditions in status First Nations communities. The program is jointly funded by the two Departments for the purpose of assisting First Nations in building capacity in forestry. In guiding this, the program has the following four objectives:

- To enhance the capacity of First Nations to operate and participate in forest based businesses.
- To increase First Nations partnerships and joint ventures.
- To investigate other funding mechanisms that may be created to finance First Nations forestry development.
- To enhance the capacity of First Nations to sustainably manage forest resources.

The First Nations Forestry Program is a five year program expiring on March 31, 2001. The budget over the term of the program is on a declining scale totaling \$24.9 million nationally, of which approximately 19% is allocated to British Columbia. The program in BC was developed and is managed by a BC First Nations Forestry Program Management Board, comprising of 9 First Nations representatives (community and business) and 3 government representatives (DIAND, Canadian Forest Service, Ministry of Forests).

Applications to the First Nations Forestry Program are solicited through an annual call letter for project proposals through a wide distribution to all First Nations in BC. The letter is issued in early November and expires in early February of each year.

The high number of applications against limited program funding has prevented the need for additional call letters during the fiscal year. The BC First Nations Forestry Program Management Board meets in early March to review and approve project proposals. Each proposal is individually reviewed and evaluated against the program guidelines and criteria and are approved on the basis of project merit.

The First Nations Forestry Program encourages the participation of First Nations and other partners in sharing the costs of implementing projects. The program emphasizes self-sufficiency by providing "seed" funding or start-up assistance to First Nations for projects that will enhance the capacity and capability of bands to generate longer term revenues, jobs and economic opportunities in forestry.

Examples of the types of projects that have been funded focussed on training in enhancing capacity to develop and operate small forestry businesses, develop community level forestry strategies, establish joint ventures, manage small wood licenses and participate in forest management activities.

Contact Information

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