

Workshop Report

Aboriginal Issues in Boreal Forest Management

27-28 May 2002

Winnipeg Manitoba

The workshop was co-hosted by NAFA and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and co-funded by Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and Canadian Boreal Trust. One hundred delegates attended from across the boreal forest region of Canada from Labrador to Yukon. The majority of delegates were Aboriginal, but several non-Aboriginal groups were represented as well. Delegates represented a broad cross section of concerned groups, ranging from traditional people, to forest industry. This workshop was the first time for many delegates to meet with one another and to share their stories and concerns.

This gathering of representatives from the widely dispersed boreal Aboriginal communities and organizations from Labrador to the Yukon Territory demonstrates that there are growing concerns for the future well-being of the boreal forest. Eighty-five percent of the Aboriginal communities of Canada are located in the boreal forest region; although many of their members have migrated to urban centres for work, education, medical, or other reasons, the North remains their cultural and sentimental homelands.

The Aboriginal Peoples of the boreal regions face difficult and complex issues relating to the use and management of their traditional lands. With increasing focus and pressure on the boreal forest, from providing a global carbon sink to protect against climate change, to being another source for commodity products, the boreal is becoming an expanded frontier for environmental campaigns and industrial exploitation. One of the major current challenges, and opportunity, for Aboriginal communities is the establishment of a national boreal forest certification standard. Aboriginal Peoples have an opportunity to influence boreal forest management, including the recognition and protection of their Aboriginal and treaty rights and land use practices.

Topics in the two days of meetings and discussion covered a broad range of topics, from the need for greater access to resources to enable viability and profitability of commercial operations, to the need to keep special areas pristine and protected from development. Delegates shared passionately about the social and cultural and spiritual aspects of the boreal forest, and also the need for employment and income to provide necessities of life.

The method by which potential delegates were selected was purposive, meaning the individuals were selected who were most likely to provide information to help address the issues to be raised at the workshop. Key individuals were identified, and these individuals recommended others to contact. With the original estimate of 50 participants, the Gordon Foundation provided \$25,000 to fund the costs of the workshop. In order to accommodate the extra demand, additional funds were sought from Canadian Boreal Trust and they contributed \$20,000.

In advance of the workshop, information packages were sent to over 40 different community/organization offices. As a matter of protocol, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs was contacted and asked to co-host the gathering as it was located in their traditional territory. Elder Carolyne Bruyere opened the sessions with traditional Anishnabe prayer and ceremony, and Louis Harper, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and Dave Mannix, Chair for National Aboriginal Forestry Association welcomed the delegates. Workshop facilitator Angus Dickie explained the agenda, and the delegates introduced themselves and the main concerns and issues in their home areas.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss issues and concerns of Aboriginal Peoples in the boreal forest relating to forest certification and sustainable forest management. The workshop was structured as a series of plenary sessions where panels of experts presented facts and information, followed by questions and discussion from the delegates. These included broad topics of discussion such as; protection of water resources, subsistence hunting and fishing, conservation, environmental degradation as a result of logging activities, ecological restoration, access to resources, commercial logging, non-timber forest resources, Aboriginal and Treaty rights, impacts on spiritual and cultural uses of the forest, use of herbicides, land use planning, parks and protected areas, forest recreation and eco-tourism opportunities, wildlife habitats, trapping, and coordination and liaison. For further information on the discussions, please refer to the Workshop Agenda and Proceedings which are included with this Report.

The workshop's primary focus was to discuss the matter of sustainable forest management, and various means by which that might be achieved. Forest certification is one such means by which many of the delegates' concerns could be addressed, however there needs to be a structure in place to carry out the huge amount of work required. In order to undertake the work needed for coordination, communication, strategizing, and implementation of recommendations across the vast boreal land base, an appropriate representative council is required. The consensus was that the boreal region due to its unique circumstances and concerns warrant a separate council dedicated to boreal forest certification, with the suggested title "Aboriginal Boreal Forest Council."

Currently, FSC Canada is in the process of developing a National Boreal Forest Certification Standard, and has a deadline of December 2003 to have a draft standard in place. Marc Thibault, FSC National Boreal Standard Coordinator explained the complexity in achieving this standard across the boreal region. FSC has established a Boreal Coordinating Committee in an effort to get input from industry, environmental organizations, academia, and other interest groups, but recognize the fact that Aboriginal Peoples are not just another stakeholder, and that their interests would be best represented by their own structures. The proposed Aboriginal Boreal Forest Council would perform a function similar to that of the Boreal Coordinating Committee, and would require an appropriate budget to carry out the work involved.

The delegates agreed to support the efforts of Peggy Smith and Russell Diabo on the Indigenous Chamber of FSC Canada, and asked that an options paper be prepared to initiate discussion as to how Aboriginal involvement can best be achieved in the matters

of certification and sustainable forest management. The paper *Models for Aboriginal Participation in Boreal Forest Certification Systems* provides background information on certification, compares various certifications systems available, and will encourage discussion of potential models that are focused to Aboriginal interests.

Although there was no formal resolution passed by the delegates, it was their consensus that it is imperative that there is follow-up to these initial discussions, and a system of coordination be established. There remains the uncertainty about whether the proposed Council will be national in scope, or limited to the boreal forest regions. Will there be two separate councils? Most of our boreal Aboriginal communities are small and isolated with poor communication networks linking them to other communities and organizations. To support the standard process, a strong network of key individuals and groups will need to be strengthened and maintained.

The general feeling of the delegates was that the work is just beginning, and that much needs to be done. The sense of being overwhelmed by the task at hand is lessened in the knowing that other Aboriginal Peoples across the boreal region are facing similar challenges and constraints such as lack of funding, lack of capacity, lack of sufficient information to make informed decisions, yet hope still exists that Aboriginal Peoples will eventually participate more fully in sustainable forest management in their traditional territories.

Angus Dickie RPF
Boreal Forest Issues Coordinator

**“ABORIGINAL ISSUES IN BOREAL FOREST MANAGEMENT”
WORKSHOP**

27 – 28 May 2002

**Sheraton Winnipeg Hotel
161 Donald Street, Winnipeg Manitoba**

DAY 1: 27 May 2002

9:15 – 10:30

- Opening prayer from Elder Carolyne Bruyere
- Welcoming by Louis Harper, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Dave Mannix, Chair, National Aboriginal Forestry Association
- Explanation of agenda, purpose, and desired outcomes
- Self-introduction by participants, where they're from, why they came, what they expect

Break: 10:30 – 10:45 Refreshments provided

Plenary 1: 10:45 – 12.30

First Nations Initiatives in Boreal Forest Management
Facilitator; Angus Dickie RPF

The opening plenary session will consist of presentations from various First Nations on their approaches to forest management and land use planning.

- Richard Nuna, Innu Nation, Labrador
- Alex Chingee Jr., McLeod Lake First Nation, BC
- discussion

Lunch: 12:30 – 1:30 Lunch provided

Plenary 2: 1:30 – 5:30

Facilitator; Harry Bombay NAFA

The development of instruments/mechanisms such as protocols, Earth Laws, consultation frameworks, etc. which guide the manner in which First Nations participate in natural resources management. Issues to discuss include Aboriginal & Treaty Rights, Values, Interests;

- James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement, Geoff Quaile, Grande Council of Crees, (Eeyou Istchee), Quebec
- Impact and Benefit Agreements - George Kemp, First Nations Limited Partnership, Manitoba
- Trilateral Agreement – Russel Diabo, Algonquins of Barriere Lake, Quebec
- Discussion

DAY 2: 28 May 2002

Plenary 3: 9:00 – 10:30

Forest Certification in Canada -
Facilitator; Peggy Smith RPF

- Overview of different certification systems; eg. Forest Stewardship Council, Canadian Standards Association, International Standards Organization, Sustainable Forestry Initiative
- Outcomes of NAFA/FSC 2001 Conference, Formation of Aboriginal Boreal Forestry Council
- Presentation by Marc Thibault, Boreal Coordinator, FSC Canada on development of National Boreal Standard
- Presentation from Valerie Courtois, Inst. de Durable Dev. Autochtone, Quebec
- discussion

Break: 10:30 – 10:45 Refreshments provided

Plenary 4: 10:45 – 12:30

Conservation and Sustainable Development
Facilitator; Andrew Chapeski, Taiga Institute, Kenora ON

To gain a better understanding of the issues facing Aboriginal communities who are being affected by National and Provincial parks and similar initiatives;

- Parks and Protected Areas, Paul Cormier, Parks Canada – Manitoba Field Unit
- Conservation Initiatives – Stewart Elgie, Canadian Boreal Trust;
- Presentation by Jim Webb, Little Red River Cree Nation, Alberta
- Presentation by Chief Vera Miller, Poplar River First Nation, Manitoba
- discussion

Lunch: 12:00 – 1:30 Lunch provided

Discussion Session: 1:30 – 3:00

- Sustainable Development & Certification – key issues and concerns
- Conservation, Parks & Protected Areas – key issues and concerns
- Assessment of issues, common concerns, development of options/strategies
- Options for Aboriginal Boreal Forestry Council

Closing Session: 3:00 – 3:30

Harry Bombay
Summary of other important issues/initiatives relevant to boreal forest management including;

- Forest 2020, National Forest Strategy review, Criteria & Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, World Forestry Congress 2003
- Approaches to Implementation – An Aboriginal Boreal Forest Process
- Summary and Next Steps
- 3:30 Closing prayer