



National Chief Addresses 10th Forest Congress




National Chief, Phil Fontaine, addressed the 10th National Forest Congress in Ottawa. Photo courtesy of Canadian Forestry Association.

Phil Fontaine, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations, addressed the 10th National Forest Congress held in Gatineau, Quebec, September 2006. This event marked the 100th anniversary of the first National Forest Congress, convened by the Canadian Forestry Association in 1906. The theme of the Congress was *Sustainable Land Management in the Boreal. A Global Challenge*. Delegates to the Congress included senior officials of governments and industry, including oil and gas, mining, and forest companies, research and educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. International perspectives were included with presentations from the Swedish and Russian representatives and from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). First Nation presentations were slotted into the various theme areas and included the Dehcho of Northwest Territories, the Whitefeather Forest Initiative in Ontario, the Innu Nation of Labrador, the Kaska Dene of northern British Columbia and an overview of issues by Harry Bombay of NAFA. The Congress was significant in that it emphasized the need for long-term implementation of sustainable, integrated land use management policies and practices.

In his remarks the National Chief observed that “many opportunities exist for First Nations in our relationship with the boreal forest and all other people who have an interest”. He commended the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy on its report which identified key issues and challenges, and recommended actions which would facilitate Aboriginal Peoples’ engagement (see chapter 3.4 of *Boreal Futures: Governance, Conservation, and Development in Canada’s Boreal*).

In setting the context for his speech, the National Chief reminded the delegates that the boreal is home to the majority of First Nation communities in Canada and that they have been systematically excluded from forest-based development. He stated that the various interests must work together in reaching a balance between conservation and development and addressing the challenges of climate change, US softwood protectionism, fire and other issues such as the mountain pine beetle infestation.

A key point made by the National Chief was the need for certainty on the part of all interests. For First Nations this will require that constitutionally protected Aboriginal and Treaty rights be respected and accommodated by other governments and the private sector and that they be translated into tangible benefits. New approaches will be needed to achieve this. He pointed to the First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord reached just prior to the First Ministers meeting in Kelowna and the Transformative Change Accord now being implemented in BC as milestones leading to new approaches.

The National Chief assured the audience that if new arrangements are developed to become effectively engaged, First Nations will be willing partners in making the Boreal Forest the healthy sustainable and valuable national treasure we all want it to be for future generations. 

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

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NAFA Conference

Looking Back, Looking Forward:
RCAP In Review

February 27 to March 1, 2007 in Ottawa

Register at: www.nafaforestry.org


NAFA joins National Forest Strategy (NFS) Steering Committee

Lorraine Rekmans, Executive Director of the National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA) has been appointed to serve as a member of the National Forest Strategy Coalition (NFSC) Steering Committee. NAFA became eligible to serve as a steering committee member after signing the Canada Forest Accord in 2006. The committee is comprised of three governmental representatives and three non-governmental representatives. Mike Willick is currently acting as interim chair of the committee until the NFS has been renewed.

Rekmans will serve on the committee with Dirk Brinkman, Barry Waito, Bob Bailey and Jim Farrell. The Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the NFS and advises the NFSC Chair. From time to time the NFSC Chair is invited to review progress at annual meetings of the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM).

The NFS Steering Committee began its role as the public trustee of the NFS.

The steering committee will oversee the general direction of the NFSC. The committee manages coalition business and will develop terms of reference for the review of the 2003-2008 NFS.

In the meantime, the CCFM is leading the development of the next NFS for 2008-2012. The CCFM has outlined a process for input on the next strategy. More information will be made available at the NFS Annual General Meeting on February 21, 2007. 

NFS Team Three Working on Joint Forestry Project

As Champion of the National Forest Strategy (NFS) Theme 3, NAFA has been coordinating a project to address the need for capacity building for Aboriginal rights and participation in Canada's forest sector. This effort is tied to the need to implement Action Item 3.4 of the NFS, calling for signatories to "direct federal and other available funding to support Aboriginal capacity building and participation in implementing the NFS."

The Capacity Working Group includes a wide range of parties, including Aboriginal organizations and communities, federal and provincial government representatives, forest companies, academics, and others. These parties have come together under a vision of mutual benefit through capacity building in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and organizations. Our goal is to develop a jointly authored discussion paper on the topic of capacity building, to be published in spring 2007.


The discussion paper will provide an overview of the full range of considerations that make up the concept

of capacity building. However, the Working Group is currently attempting to develop a more detailed and concrete framework, including eight different categories of resources (also sometimes called "capital") that can be drawn upon to create capacity. The idea of capacity building involves cultivating various resources, but it also involves linking these resources to the fundamental political will, to implement Aboriginal rights and title with regard to forest resources.

One interesting point that is emerging from the discussions of the Capacity Working Group addresses the question of, "Whose capacity do we need to build?" In these kinds of discussions, it is usually assumed that it is the Aboriginal groups that lack capacity. But this is only part of the story: In fact, Aboriginal communities and organizations possess many resources already, for example traditional knowledge, an ability to bridge and adapt to different cultures, and many strong leaders. Much of the problem is actually in the second part of our capacity framework – how to recognize and apply existing resources so that we can improve Aboriginal rights

and participation in the forest sector. This may be largely a question of improving the fit of institutional arrangements (tenure provisions, planning and decision procedures, etc.) with the contributions that Aboriginal Peoples are already able to make.


The second side of the "capacity for whom" question is the non-Aboriginal parties. The consensus of the Capacity Working Group is that governments and forest companies are also in need of capacity building. Of course the capacity gap is of a different kind: For example, instead of technical skills, forest companies may need to build their understanding of Aboriginal rights and title. For another example, instead of financial resources, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada may require more human resources with forestry-specific expertise. In short, the Working Group is finding that capacity building is a two-way street, and the benefits are two-way as well.

For more information about the Capacity Working Group and the NFS in general, contact the NAFA office or visit the website: www.nafaforestry.org/forest_home/nfs.html 

First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) Review

The First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) is a joint program sponsored by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) as the sole federal program dedicated specifically to First Nations participation in the forest sector. This program provides \$5 million per year nationally. The FNFP is a program that is based on a Memorandum of Understanding between DIAND and NRCan, and is scheduled to expire March 31, 2008.


In anticipation of final evaluation of the program and with the intention of advocating for a new enhanced program, First Nations are preparing resolutions and strategies to influence future forest management programming. There have been a number of resolutions passed and proposed in the past few months. For a number of

years Canada's management of forested Indian Reserve lands has attracted criticism from an array of sources since at least the mid-1980's. One of the largest criticisms has been that Indian Reserve forestry programs do not adequately incorporate contemporary resource management concerns relating to environmental sustainability. In addition, the Auditor General of Canada noted in 1992 concerns that DIAND could not fulfil its responsibility to report on revenues derived from timber harvested on First Nation lands. In response, DIAND sought out a partnership with NRCan and relies on expertise of the Canadian Forest Service to administer the FNFP. First Nations are expected to make recommendation on how future programming can be improved to address the First Nation forest management needs. 

NOTICE:

Aboriginal Foresters and Forest Technicians

The Aboriginal Strategic Initiative of the Canadian Model Forest Network is conducting a survey of Aboriginal Foresters and Forest Technicians. The Canadian Model Forest Network is working on strategies that will encourage Aboriginal youth to enter forestry as a career. As such, we want to hear from Aboriginal foresters and forest technicians about why they chose forestry as their career.

To participate in the survey please contact Reg Parsons, at (709) 637-4906. or email: reg.parsons@nrcan.gc.ca 

NAFA and NFS Partners Launch Forest Home Website


The forests of Canada are home to a majority of Canada's First Nations and Métis. Now people concerned with Aboriginal rights and participation in the forest sector have a home on the internet. The Forest Home website was launched in August 2006 as a place where you can find tools, news, and information about a wide range of issues. We also invite comments as to how we can make the website more useful to you.

Go to: www.nafaforestry.org/forest_home 

New First Nations Building at University of Quebec in Abitibi-Temiscaming

A new First Nations Building is slated for construction at the University of Québec in Abitibi-Temiscaming (UQAT), Québec. The total cost is estimated to be almost \$9 million. The federal and provincial governments have each committed \$3.8 million, and local groups have raised \$1.25 million.

The building will be a key component of UQAT's strategy to develop programs of postsecondary education that respect and accommodate Aboriginal culture and students. It will be a special place where the university, identity and development meet. The First Nations Building will be erected at the Centre d'études supérieures Lucien-Cliche in Val-d'Or, which houses the local campuses of UQAT and Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

First Nations people are a growing component of the UQAT student population. Another major development in the works at UQAT is the establishment of a Research Chair in Social and Aboriginal forestry. The principals are currently seeking funding for this important issue, with the hopes of a launch in 2007. 



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*“Advancing the concepts
of sustainable forest
management.”*

NAFA updates First Nation Held Tenure Report

This year NAFA will undertake a research study which will document the trend of increasing First Nation-held forest tenures in Canada and provide an analysis of factors contributing to this trend. This study will also provide a comparative analysis of changes in tenure since the 2002-2003 tenure report was completed. This study will serve to demonstrate recent trends in the past four years in tenure allocation and will, in addition, provide information to report on progress linked to action item 3.5 within the Rights and Participation of Aboriginal Peoples Theme of the National Forest Strategy 2003 - 2008.

Canada's forests cover 417.6 million hectares and account for 10% of the world's total forest land. The majority of forest land in Canada is publicly-owned: 71% by provincial governments and 23% by the Federal and territorial governments. The remaining 6% is privately owned.

To manage forest lands, provincial governments have instituted forest policy in the form of tenure systems which regulate forest management practices, grant timber harvesting rights and delegate forest management responsibilities to the private sector. The Northwest Territories manage their own tenure system, while the transfer of jurisdictional responsibility from the Federal Government to the Yukon Territorial Government is currently underway.


The study will be released in March 2007. This project is funded by the First Nations Forestry Program. 



Attention Aboriginal Forestry Students

The Canadian Aboriginal Science and Technology Society (CASTS) is offering **FREE** membership to Aboriginal Science and Technology students.

The CASTS membership will provide you with a number of services including information about Employment Opportunities. Employment opportunities will be emailed directly to you. Joining CASTS is quick and easy using an online application form.

For more information visit the CASTS website at:
www.casts.ca 

National Aboriginal Forestry Association

The goal of NAFA is to promote Aboriginal involvement in forest management and related commercial opportunities. NAFA is committed to holistic or multiple-use forestry, which implies the rebuilding and the sustainable development of the forest resource to serve a multitude of community needs.

NAFA is a grass roots initiative backed by First Nations and other Aboriginal groups and organizations that function at either the regional or community level in the area of forestry.



The Board of Directors is comprised of ten representatives, one from each of the provinces and territories, except for the Atlantic region which has two directors.



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