



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT – THE MISSING LINK FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

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Steadily changing market place conditions and transformations taking place in the forestry products industry is highlighting the need for research and development.



The loss of international competitiveness has affected the traditional forest industries such as pulp and paper and lumber, and has resulted in corporate mergers and acquisitions, closures of hundreds of mills, and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. The federal government has put its support behind the forest industry, and has taken aims to reverse the current downturn by announcing last year a \$127.5 million dollar investment to address long-term competitiveness. This money is earmarked to help the forest companies remain leaders in the forest

industry through research and development of new technologies and products, to attract investment and to develop and seize opportunities on a global scale.

In a commissioned report by the Forest Products Industry of Canada, Industry at a Crossroads, it has been strongly emphasised that Canada should support a renewed commitment to research and innovation with the goal being to strengthen the Canadian forest products industry. Other factors like global economic growth, new technologies in the industry, and increasing public concerns with climate change are all providing direction for Canada's forest industry in the international marketplace. Due to the steady decline of these traditional industries, research and development is heralded as the primary means of revitalizing the industry.

Over the past three years there have been efforts made within the industry and by government to restructure institutional arrangements

for forest sector research and development. FPIInnovations was created in 2007 with the goal of strengthening the Canadian forest sector's global competitiveness through research and innovation, knowledge transfer and implementation. "[FPIInnovations] will permit the forest industry to speak with a stronger common voice on forest-sector issues..." said the Honourable Gary Lunn, the Minister of Natural Resources. FPIInnovations was formed by the incorporation of Canada's three national research institutes, FERIC (woodlands operations), Forintek (wood industries), and Paprican (pulp and paper), and is now the world's largest public/private, not-for-profit forest research institute. FPIInnovations which is directed by member forest companies works on behalf of its membership with much of its research outputs being proprietary in nature.

Also with a similar goal, the Wood Fibre Center, created in 2006 through the

"R & D is important because Aboriginal people have significantly increasing influence in forest resource management and use."

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reallocation of the financial and human resources of the Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada, complements the research and development initiatives of FPInnovations by focusing research on wood supply (fibre attribute knowledge) and forest regeneration programs.

Responding to industry needs, the Federal Government intends to support and strengthen the competitiveness of the industry, while assisting the industry during this transformative change. The funding provided by the Federal

Government will produce outputs intended to benefit and enable the industry to set priorities for research. Minister Lunn said during a February 2007 speech, "You – the industry – will set the priorities with respect to what research is most important."

While there is a broad acknowledgement in the forest sector that Aboriginal Peoples have significantly increasing influence in forest resource management and use, research and innovation initiatives at the national level do not consider the needs of

Aboriginal communities in forest-based development. With Aboriginal Peoples' access to forest resources steadily increasing, and the realization that the current downturn in the forest industry's commodity production could be long term, Aboriginal communities ultimately need to diversify their approaches to forest-based development. Aboriginal focused research and development could address this fundamental need and ensure that Aboriginal communities are major players in the new forest economy.

NATIONAL FOREST STRATEGY UPDATE 2003-2008

Canada's National Forest Strategy for 2008 and beyond will be developed by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM). According to the process established for its development, the new National Forest Strategy (NFS) will be released in September 2008 and it will focus on selected current and future issues of national priority and importance.

The previous three national forest strategies, spanning the period from 1992-2008, were developed by the National Forest Strategy Coalition, which consisted of a variety of interests. On a voluntary basis, the coalition membership has included the federal government, most provincial governments, the forest industry, academia and research institutes, forest practitioners, private woodlot owners, and some environmental and conservation organizations. The primary role of the Coalition has been to oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of the strategies. NAFA has played an active

role in the Coalition bringing forth Aboriginal perspectives as evidenced in Theme 3 of the current Strategy and acting as Theme 3 Champion in terms of implementation and providing data for the recently completed evaluation.

Deemed to be blueprints for sustainable forest management in Canada, past strategies took a broad and all-encompassing approach. The strengths of the previous strategies were that they sought to build a consensus, and there was recognition that sustainable forest management is multi-dimensional with the balance of values significantly different among stakeholders. From the point of view of First Nations, the strategies' recognition that institutional change is necessary to accommodate Aboriginal People's interests, has brought forward an increased awareness of the interplay between forest policy and Aboriginal and treaty rights. However, the strengths of previous strategies might also have been their weaknesses. Evaluations of the national forest

strategies have found that very little progress has been achieved on most of the objectives that had been articulated. The insurmountable number of action items combined with no means of designating responsibility and accountability resulted in a lack of commitment and overall indifference on the part of key parties.

The CCFM, in assuming leadership for the new NFS, has designed a streamlined process for stakeholder involvement. With the focus being on national priorities, steps in the process include bilateral meetings with national organizations and a national workshop to be held in Ottawa in mid April. Feedback on the CCFM discussion paper, *Canada's Forest Strategy for 2008 and Beyond*, and findings of the NFS Evaluation Report will be considered in the first draft of the strategy which will be available by the end of March 2008. For Aboriginal Peoples the question

NATIONAL FOREST STRATEGY CONTINUED...

remains, will their issues as identified in previous strategies be considered a matter of national priority?

NAFA encourages First Nations, Aboriginal organizations, and other

Aboriginal forest interests, to submit their comments and concerns to the CCFM. NAFA would appreciate a copy of any submissions as we expect to be engaged in both bilateral meetings and in the national workshop. For

more details see websites: CCFM <http://www.ccmf.org/> and National Forest Strategy Coalition <http://nfsc.forest.ca/>.

SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT (SFM) NETWORK

Since 1995, the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Network has made significant progress by doubling the amount of university-based research that is focused on Aboriginal forest issues. Housed at the University of Alberta, the SFM Network is the only research institute with a dedicated program for Aboriginal forest research. Under the Sustainable Aboriginal Communities (SAC) program, the SFM Network has expended about \$500-\$600 thousand per year on research projects addressing forest management issues at local levels and policy issues at regional and national levels.

The SFM Network is one of Canada’s Centre of Excellence and has been operating for 13 years. Several First Nations, tribal councils and national Aboriginal organizations are partners in the Network and help guide the SAC program. NAFA is an affiliate of the SFM Network and has served on various committees and in particular the Network’s board of directors. Some of the more notable projects include research on:

- Aboriginal Forest Tenure – explores opportunities for change to meet Aboriginal community needs in existing tenure systems,
- Aboriginal community and forest industry relationships

– seeking compatibility between Aboriginal traditional values and industry values,

- The role of traditional knowledge and values in sustainable forest management,
- Sustainable forestry within Aboriginal communities – examines fundamentals for sustainable forestry in Aboriginal communities,
- Aboriginal forest values – forest values critical to their cultural existence, and
- Traditional land use and occupancy – rationalizes traditional use of the land to help communities maintain cultural and spiritual values.

A summary of the current Aboriginal research projects can be found at the SFM website: http://www.sfmnetwork.ca/html/inbrief_aboriginal_communities_e.html.

The coming fiscal year (2008-2009), is the final year of the SFM

Network’s current mandate as the agreement with the Network Centre of Excellence program, will expire March 31, 2009. Consequently the future of the Network and therefore that of the SAC Program is uncertain. Should the SFM close its doors there will be a huge gap in sustainable forest management research. Who will pick up the torch and continue sustainable forest management research with Aboriginal interests in mind?

As changes are made in policy as a result of other factors, i.e. (forest industry competitiveness, measures to mitigate climate change, the rising Canadian dollar, and forest conservation), Aboriginal forest interests have to be addressed through forest research. Because Aboriginal Peoples are gaining more access to Canada’s forests, and are acquiring a more significant role in all aspects of the forest sector, more Aboriginal forest research is needed and necessary for more effective engagement. The probable demise of the SFM Network should

be succeeded by a major research initiative mandated by the Aboriginal community and dedicated solely to Aboriginal forest issues.

“Should the SFM close its doors there will be a huge gap in Aboriginal sustainable forest management research.”

XIII WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

Coming up on October 18-25, 2009, is the 13th World Forestry Congress to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This event, held every six years under the auspices of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, is expected to attract roughly 6,000 participants. In 2003 NAFA coordinated the Indigenous People's Forest Forum at the XII World Forestry Congress which produced The Wendake Action Plan, and served to raise the profile of Indigenous Peoples forestry issues. The theme for the World Forestry Congress XIII will be "Forests in Development: a Vital Balance," which stresses the importance of sustainability in all areas of forest management, and how it contributes to the sustainability of the entire planet. There will be a thematic session on Indigenous Peoples and if anyone is interested in submitting a paper to the World Forestry Congress please let NAFA know and we can work with you on the submission. To find out more about the upcoming Congress and about their submission deadline, please visit their website at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/18507/en/>.

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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