



National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA)

PRESS RELEASE

Forest Stewardship & FPIC: Our Doorway to Prosperity

Ottawa/Saskatoon (December 9, 2014) – More than 50 forest managers, technicians, academics, lawyers, students, CEO's and First Nations chiefs, from across the nation attended a national meeting of the First Nations Forest Sector in sunny Saskatoon last week. They were gathered to recognize and invigorate Forest Stewardship and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) to advance sustainable forest management and self-sufficiency on our forested homelands.

Participants in the national meeting included representatives covering all major forested regions of Canada, including First Nations governments, industry, universities, and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system. The event was convened by the National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA).

According to Bradley Young, Executive Director of NAFA, who also chairs the Permanent Indigenous Peoples' Committee of FSC, the purpose of the meeting was to enhance momentum and recognition of First Nations environmental, cultural, and economic stewardship of their homelands: "Together with First Nations, Industry, and innovative market certification, truly sustainable forest management is driving environmental, economic, and social performance and investment in Canada's forests."

NAFA reiterates the meeting participant's detailed contributions in calling for governments, industry partners, and civil society to recognize and support First Nation's self-sufficiency on the vast Indigenous Cultural Landscapes which are Canada's forests. Indigenous Peoples have been stewards of their forested homelands on a sustainable basis from time immemorial. It is only now that leaders in science and market certification are catching up to the wisdom of our elders to: "...not protect the forest to death but to continue to inhabit and honour it by respectfully making a living - pimatisowin."

In demonstration of this, the meeting featured a field trip to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council's 1.8 million hectare forest management area and treaty territory, in present day northern Saskatchewan, which is the home of a regional economic engine anchored by NorSask Forest Products' (100% First Nations owned) lumber mill and bioenergy complex. The FSC's President and CEO, Francois Dufresne, was on hand personally to reinforce the Indigenous partnerships and relationships with FSC that will enable Canada's forests to continue to grow and thrive: "First Nations are key players in the global forest economy with millennia of experience in the successful management of diverse forest homelands. We are deeply honoured by First Nations continued partnership and participation in FSC."

NAFA is Canada's national First Nations forest sector voice. Over 80% of First Nations are found in the forest, holding over 27 million cubic metres of annual allowable cut on aggregate. Driving performance and growth with these communities can create over 7,400 new jobs and over \$3.3 billion in new GDP.

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