

Natural resource information needs of Aboriginal communities in the Southern Interior of British Columbia

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Abstract

This paper describes the First Nations Community Needs Analysis Process that FORREX–Forest Research Extension Partnership (formerly SIFERP, the Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership) undertook in 1999/2000 to identify and analyze the land and natural resource management information needs of the First Nations’ communities in the Southern Interior of British Columbia. It also responds to the outcomes of the information needs assessment by presenting a “Framework for Action,” part of which includes establishing the Partnership’s Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program.

Based on the results of the information needs assessment, First Nations’ communities in the Southern Interior of British Columbia clearly have a need and a desire to participate in forestry extension services. The information needs assessment also revealed and expanded on several issues that must be considered in the provision of extension services to First Nations’ communities.

With incentive from its Aboriginal partners, FORREX has taken a leadership role in providing extension services and has undertaken the responsibility of working with its Aboriginal partners to identify the information and research needs in their communities. The needs analysis process has also provided direction for including traditional ecological knowledge in natural resources management and policy development.

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Introduction

FORREX—Forest Research Extension Partnership is a non-profit co-operative organization focused on developing, using, and sharing knowledge about forested ecosystems—how these ecosystems function, their sustainability, and how to manage them from a holistic perspective.

The Partnership's primary goal is to facilitate collaborative extension, technology development, and research ventures between partnering organizations. The broad goals of the Partnership are to:

- Ensure the natural resource community information needs and demands are identified,
- Provide extension and research services that are focused on the real needs of partners,
- Ensure scientific and expert support for an adaptive management approach, and
- Guarantee that resources and information are shared.

Membership in the Partnership currently includes government agencies, First Nations' communities, forest companies, learning institutions, and other public and special interest groups.

This paper outlines the First Nations community needs analysis process that the Partnership undertook to identify and analyze the land and natural resources management information needs of the First Nations' communities in the Southern Interior of British Columbia. This paper also presents a "framework for action" that responds to the outcomes of the information needs assessment process.

Initiating the First Nations Community Needs Analysis Process

In the early stages of its development, the Partnership set out to identify the information needs and gaps of its members and of the forest community at large. In 1998, a client survey was undertaken (Gregory and Satterfield 1999) to identify the primary information needs of the Partnership's clients and other members of the forest sector. To help determine its own role in providing information to the forest community, the Partnership sought to identify current sources of information, methods of transferring information, and barriers to accessing information.

Only a small number of the returned surveys came from First Nations' communities. To address this gap, the Partnership initiated the First Nations community

needs analysis process to determine the land and natural resource management information needs of First Nations. First, a series of three focus groups with First Nations people was delivered in three regions of the Southern Interior. Second, a comprehensive meeting of the focus group participants was conducted to synthesize what was learned at the three regional workshops. Third, the Partnership analyzed the outcomes of the process, and from this a framework for action emerged to guide the Partnership in addressing the natural resource management information needs of the groups assessed.

The Needs Analysis Process

Step 1: Regional Focus Groups

Organization and Objectives

In June 1999, three workshops were scheduled in the Thompson–Okanagan, the Cariboo–Chilcotin, and the Kootenays regions of British Columbia's Southern Interior. These workshops were designed to have First Nations people identify the land and resource management information needs of their communities, to determine which of these information needs would likely need to be addressed using sources outside their own communities, and to prioritize these needs.

To ensure that meaningful results were obtained, the workshops were carefully planned and organized to accommodate the learning and work styles of the participants. Throughout the process, emphasis was placed on mutual respect and trust, willingness to listen and understand, and acknowledgement of knowledge and contributions. Groups were kept small, consisting of no more than 12 people, and the brainstorming/consensus-building approach was used to identify needs and issues. Considerable attention was given to providing the individual participants, and the tribal councils and bands, with adequate preliminary and preparatory information before attending the workshop. In addition, the workshops were scheduled so that ample time was available for networking, rest, meals, and travel. They were held in comfortable locations as much away from distractions as possible. Participants were invited to join a focus group based on their ability to accurately identify the needs of the community they represented, their commitment to the exercise, and their willingness and ability to attend the workshop from beginning to end.

The workshop began with a brainstorming session surrounding the question: "What does your community



need in regard to land and natural resources?”. All responses were accepted without judgement or criticism. In consensus-building sessions, the group focused on specific needs, and identified the actions required to meet their needs. The group then prioritized their needs; they were also asked to distinguish between which needs they could address themselves, and with which they needed help addressing. Of the latter, they were asked to identify which needs the Partnership could help them with.

The end result of each workshop was a “needs analysis matrix” for each geographical area. After the workshop, participants had an opportunity to confirm that the matrix accurately represented their information needs. They were also asked to identify the top five needs within their communities—particularly needs with which they felt that the Partnership could assist. The outcomes are consolidated in a set of tables, one for each group/region (see Tables 1–3).

Outcomes

Based on the results of the focus groups, the information needs of First Nations’ communities in the Southern Interior appear to be similar. The following list of unranked priorities related to natural resource management issues was identified by workshop participants as areas in which they were willing to work with non-Aboriginal agencies.

- Build capacity¹ and develop the community.
- Access technological resources, information, funding, land, and employment.
- Revamp the education system to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities.
- Acquire knowledge of, and apply, both traditional ecological knowledge² and science.
- Protect the land, its resources and wildlife.
- Request involvement in developing natural resources management plans and in decision making with non-Aboriginals.
- Educate non-Aboriginals about Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal rights and title as it affects natural resources management.

Participant feedback suggests that the needs analysis focus groups were very informative and worthwhile to attend.

Step 2: Follow-Up Meeting

Organization and Objectives

On March 6–7, 2000, the Partnership hosted a two-day follow-up meeting with the First Nations community needs analysis focus groups. All participants who had attended the initial focus groups in June 1999, as well as members of the FORREX Aboriginal Forestry Extension Working Group³, were invited; 17 people participated in this workshop.

The objectives of this meeting were to:

1. Give people from different regions an opportunity to exchange information and experiences about natural resource management issues common to Aboriginal communities.
2. Synthesize the information in the matrices produced at the three previous workshops into a program of principles to guide the Partnership’s Aboriginal Forestry Extension Specialist Program.
3. Obtain a mandate for the Partnership to provide extension services to Aboriginal groups.

At this meeting, participants further discussed the prioritized topics of the previous focus groups. An overview of the overall outcomes follows (see Tables 1–3 for regional summaries).

Land and resources: All three regional groups placed strong emphasis on the importance of protecting land, resources, and wildlife. They would like to acquire the knowledge and resources to conduct wildlife assessments and resource inventories, practise sustainable development, identify and protect endangered species, and identify and monitor tree diseases and other forest health indicators.

Technical expertise and research: Two of the groups identified a need to continue using expertise that already exists within First Nations’ communities, and develop expertise from a scientific perspective. They would like

¹ Capacity refers to the infrastructure and resources of First Nations’ communities, in terms of technology, human resources, and knowledge.

² “Traditional ecological knowledge” (TEK) has become the standard term for referring to the knowledge and scientific systems of Indigenous Peoples. This term is well understood by the scientific and government communities; however, it is not the term that Indigenous Peoples prefer to use for their knowledge systems. The current term accepted by Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations level is “indigenous peoples’ knowledge” (IPK).

³ The Aboriginal Forestry Extension Working Group guides the FORREX Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program.



TABLE 1. Outcomes of the information needs analysis workshop held in the Thompson–Okanagan Region. Priority information needs that the Aboriginal participants felt they could best address by working with the Partnership appear in **bold italic** type; other non-priority information needs that the Aboriginal participants felt they could best address working with the Partnership appear in *italic* type. Information needs that the Aboriginal participants felt they could best address by working alone appear in **bold** type.

<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — A. BUILD CAPACITY</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A-1 Establish community involvement • <i>A-2 Identify our resources</i> • <i>A-3 Identify needs</i> • <i>A-4 Build infrastructure</i> • <i>A-5 Identify opportunities</i> • <i>A-6 Participate fully in all areas of natural resources that affect us</i> • <i>A-7 Require active involvement in the community</i> • A-8 Demonstrate political unity at all levels (internal) • A-9 DEMAND LONG-TERM COMMITMENT • <i>A-10 Develop land bases</i> • <i>A-11 Develop own research; acquire more research resources</i> • A-12 ACCESS TECHNICAL RESOURCES; SHARE ABORIGINAL TECHNICAL RESOURCES • <i>A-13 Identify and create partnerships</i> • <i>A-14 Support Aboriginal networking</i> • <i>A-15 Develop and incorporate entrepreneurial and small business development</i> • <i>A-16 Demand and provide meaningful employment</i> • <i>A-17 Provide employment and enjoy economic independence</i> • <i>A-18 Demand our share of funding; money from government</i> • <i>A-19 Access funding</i> • A-20 Have self-respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-15 Apply ethics • B-16 Provide role models • <i>B-17 Develop professional Aboriginal associations</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — B. EDUCATE</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-1 Encourage self-discipline • B-2 Encourage self-respect • <i>B-3 Share traditional education</i> • <i>B-4 Incorporate Aboriginal language, history, and culture in the local school system</i> • <i>B-5 Provide more educational alternatives to Aboriginal people—technical, trades, apprenticeships, etc.</i> • <i>B-6 Incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge in contemporary education</i> • <i>B-7 Develop Aboriginal professionals</i> • <i>B-8 Provide support for continuing education</i> • B-9 Educate at the band level; encourage community involvement • <i>B-10 Merge and balance traditional ecological and technical knowledge</i> • <i>B-11 Demand recognition of Aboriginal rights and title</i> • <i>B-12 Educate general public about Aboriginal people</i> • <i>B-13 Educate media about Aboriginal people</i> • <i>B-14 Educate industry and government about Aboriginal people</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — C. COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY INTERNALLY</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C-1 Network with other Aboriginal communities • C-2 Re-establish trust • C-3 Provide Aboriginal representation • <i>C-4 Communicate with policy makers and community</i> • <i>C-5 Co-operate with international Aboriginal organizations</i> • C-6 Communicate between nations regarding wildlife management
<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — D. ESTABLISH EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND CO-OPERATION</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>D-1 Implement the “new relationship” from the Royal Commission</i> • <i>D-2 Demand respect from government</i> • <i>D-3 Provide Aboriginal liaison and representation</i> • <i>D-4 Demand full and meaningful consultation in all other fields</i> • <i>D-5 Have unencumbered access to information</i> • <i>D-6 Have direct involvement in development processes</i> • <i>D-7 Require communication between ministries</i> • <i>D-8 Demand government and industry accountability</i> • <i>D-9 Require companies to pay for referrals</i> • <i>D-10 Participate in international Aboriginal affairs</i> • <i>D-11 Re-establish trust</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — E. EXERCISE ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AND TITLE</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>E-1 Demand external recognition of ownership</i> • <i>E-2 Demand external recognition of inherent Aboriginal rights</i> • <i>E-3 Share Traditional Ecological Knowledge and wisdom</i> • <i>E-4 Access all resources</i> • E-5 Clarify native rights • <i>E-6 Demand recognition of ownership of cultural heritage resources</i> • <i>E-7 Assert authority and jurisdiction</i> • <i>E-8 Demand recognition of Delgamuukw</i> • <i>E-9 Protect Indigenous intellectual knowledge and property rights</i> • E-10 Exercise Aboriginal rights and title • E-11 Exercise sovereignty



TABLE 1. Continued

<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — F. DEVELOP OWN LEGAL EXPERTISE</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F-1 <i>Implement principles of Delgamuukw</i> • F-2 <i>Use Traditional Ecological Knowledge and wisdom effectively</i> • F-3 <i>Clarify native rights</i> • F-4 <i>Protect natural resources; protect fish and wildlife</i> • F-5 <i>Demand government and industry accountability</i> • F-6 <i>Protect Indigenous intellectual knowledge and property rights (international/national)</i> • F-7 <i>Develop international expertise</i> • F-8 <i>Develop national expertise</i> <p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — G. MANAGE RESOURCES</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G-1 <i>Incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and wisdom</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G-2 <i>Implement Delgamuukw</i> • G-3 <i>Recognize endangered species</i> • G-4 <i>Recognize the needs of the ecosystem, economy, and community</i> • G-5 <i>Identify gaps in resource needs</i> • G-6 <i>Plan and develop projects</i> • G-7 <i>Access and provide training</i> • G-8 <i>Establish resource inventory</i> • G-9 <i>Protect fish and wildlife</i> • G-10 <i>Protect natural resources</i> • G-11 <i>Protect endangered species</i> • G-12 <i>Expand land base</i> • G-13 <i>Establish Aboriginal game reserves</i> • G-14 <i>Build capacity for referrals</i> • G-15 <i>Access resources</i> • G-16 <i>Share resource revenues</i> • G-17 <i>Control resources</i>
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TABLE 2. Outcomes of the information needs analysis workshop held in the Cariboo–Chilcotin Region. Priority information needs that the Aboriginal participants felt they could best address by working with the Partnership appear in **bold italic** type; other non-priority information needs that the Aboriginal participants felt they could best address working with the Partnership appear in *italic* type.

<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — A. DEVELOP AND OBTAIN CAPACITY</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A-1 <i>Obtain capacity for expert research</i> • A-2 <i>Obtain capacity for footwork research</i> • A-3 <i>Obtain time and resources to do more research within Aboriginal communities</i> • A-4 MATCH RESOURCES TO NEEDS • A-5 <i>Obtain capacity to maintain resources</i> • A-6 <i>Build capacity for the development of Tribal Council technological centres (i.e., GIS, CPS, computers, archives)</i> • A-7 OBTAIN TECHNOLOGY • A-8 <i>Obtain capacity to access information on how other cultures have dealt with similar situations</i> • A-9 <i>Recruit financial partners</i> • A-10 <i>Obtain funding to manage regeneration of areas that have been grossly mismanaged (i.e., mines sites, large clearcuts)</i> • A-11 <i>Work with non-Aboriginal interest groups (i.e., coalition)</i> <p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — B. ACQUIRE AND DEVELOP EDUCATION AND TRAINING</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-1 <i>Revamp high school education to meet the needs of aboriginal communities (i.e., fast-tracking)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-2 <i>Develop educational opportunities/programs that reinforce Aboriginal view of the land</i> • B-3 <i>Provide exposure to educational opportunities outside communities</i> • B-4 <i>Acquire knowledge of ecosystems</i> • B-5 <i>Learn how to use technology</i> • B-6 <i>Develop specialized knowledge through education, training, and experience</i> • B-7 <i>Acquire knowledge of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Western science regarding natural regeneration</i> • B-8 <i>Learn and practise the traditional role of fire in the forest</i> • B-9 <i>Develop and implement training in land use studies</i> • B-10 <i>Develop expertise in proposal writing</i> • B-11 <i>Develop capacity through education, training, and experience</i> • B-12 <i>Learn about impacts of land management and industrial activities on Aboriginal peoples' sustenance resources</i> • B-13 <i>Provide training in entrepreneurship</i> • B-14 <i>Obtain employment-related education and training</i> • B-15 <i>Gain knowledge, expertise, and experience in construction trades</i> • B-16 <i>Gain knowledge of pesticides and herbicides</i> • B-17 <i>Acquire education from the Partnership</i>
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TABLE 3. Outcomes of the information needs analysis workshop held in the Kootenay Region. Information needs that the Aboriginal participants felt they could best address by working with outside agencies appear in *italic* type. Information needs that the Aboriginal participants felt they could best address by working alone appear in **bold** type.

<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — A. DEFINE OURSELVES</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A-1 Define the Ktunaxa nation • A-2 Define our nation's boundaries (cross-border) • A-3 Utilize our Elders' skills and knowledge (i.e., trapping, language) • A-4 Use the Ktunaxa language every day • A-5 Tell our story • A-6 Learn the cycle of life • A-7 Respect the cycle of life • <i>A-8 Share our knowledge of the cycle of life</i> • <i>A-9 Demand recognition of our nation</i> • A-10 Practice Aboriginal rights • A-11 Identify and use traditional names within our traditional territories • A-12 Exercise traditional use (i.e., hunting, fishing, berry picking) • <i>A-13 Reclaim and utilize traditional trap lines</i> • <i>A-14 Share knowledge (i.e., stories, legends, ecology)</i> • <i>A-15 Conduct archaeology studies in traditional territories (including public and private land)</i> • <i>A-16 Explore the opportunities to protect intellectual property rights</i> • <i>A-17 Revise the Indian Act</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>B-14 Access industry information (i.e., mining, forestry)</i> • <i>B-15 Establish and enforce policing and law making within traditional territories</i> • <i>B-16 Make informed decisions based on traditional knowledge and western science</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — B. MANAGE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>B-1 Encourage and support wellness initiatives</i> • B-2 Develop and encourage communication within Tribal Council (between departments) • B-3 Encourage interaction with other First Nations • B-4 Define capacity building • <i>B-5 Apply capacity building</i> • B-6 Develop recognition and respect in all matters • <i>B-7 Develop working relationships with different agencies</i> • <i>B-8 Require more First Nations involvement in industry expansion</i> • <i>B-9 Require involvement in industry development plans</i> • <i>B-10 Require involvement in municipal development plans</i> • <i>B-11 Require involvement in federal development plans</i> • <i>B-12 Require involvement in provincial development plans</i> • <i>B-13 Establish a process of sharing revenues and royalties</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED — C. MANAGE EDUCATION INTERNALLY</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C-1 Accept responsibility for our own learning (from infancy on) • C-2 Develop and implement our own education (from infancy on) • <i>C-3 Provide basic educational needs</i> • <i>C-4 Ensure our students acquire an adequate education</i> • <i>C-5 Enlighten the next generation on the importance of ecology</i> • <i>C-6 Provide alternative education to encourage youth to stay in school</i> • <i>C-7 Conduct ongoing needs analysis regarding education</i> • <i>C-8 Provide life skills training</i> • <i>C-9 Provide life-long career counselling</i> • <i>C-10 Provide recognized upgrading opportunities for adults (not GED)</i> • <i>C-11 Identify post-secondary opportunities that will meet our needs (i.e., archaeology, GIS)</i> • <i>C-12 Acquire an understanding of the impact of noxious weeds on native plants, animals, insects, and fish</i> • <i>C-13 Ensure that post-secondary programs are recognized and certified</i> • <i>C-14 Access more education dollars</i>
	<p style="text-align: center;">GENERAL AREA OF NEED— D. PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>SPECIFIC NEEDS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>D-1 Identify economic options and opportunities</i> • <i>D-2 Recruit and promote employment opportunities</i> • <i>D-3 Access community-based entrepreneurial training and other forms of business training</i> • <i>D-4 Encourage and support self-employment</i> • <i>D-5 Communicate with industry and government</i> • <i>D-6 Acquire expert advice</i> • <i>D-7 Obtain more forestry contracts within traditional territories (i.e., silviculture, forest health, prescribed burning)</i> • <i>D-8 Identify and secure funding</i>



to conduct their own research, and be respected and recognized for their contributions. Emphasis was placed on preventing the exploitation of traditional ecological knowledge, as well as protecting intellectual property rights⁴.

Technology: Each of the three groups expressed a need to have access to technological resources.

Access to information: Two groups noted a desire for access to government information, while the third expressed a need for access to industry information.

Funding: Each of the three groups expressed a need for more government funding, but they also suggested alternative funding sources.

Capacity: Each group identified a need to develop the infrastructure to manage their resources and interests. In particular, one group suggested that long-term commitments from business and government agencies would assist them in developing their much-needed capacity.

Employment: Training in entrepreneurial business practices is required, as well as long-term employment.

Education (community level): The groups expressed a common desire for the incorporation of more First Nations language, history, and culture into the school system. The groups were also concerned about students graduating from secondary school without the ability to continue their education and without access to relevant post-secondary education programs. There is also a need to encourage and support community-level wellness initiatives.

Education (land- and resource-related): Each group expressed a need to learn more about traditional ecological knowledge and the application of science to land and natural resources management. One group expressed a need to learn more about industry concepts and the forest tenure system.

Education (non-Aboriginal parties): Two groups expressed a strong need to share their traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom with other groups (e.g., government, industry, media, and the general public). One group suggested that they wanted to educate non-Aboriginals about the differences between the various nations.

Interest groups: First Nations groups want more involvement in the development of plans and decisions

made by industry, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments. They would like full and meaningful consultation, recognition of their shared knowledge and input, and current reports on the plans and decisions resulting from these meetings.

Aboriginal rights and title: Each group would like recognition of their Aboriginal rights and title, access to more land, and the right to continue traditional practices (e.g., hunting, fishing, and gathering) in their traditional territories.

Although many of these needs fall outside of the Partnership's mandate, they form the basis from which Aboriginal communities view their needs as related to the natural resources sector of the economy.

Additional Points

The participants re-emphasized some of the following points or noted other issues/challenges that the Partnership would need to consider in providing forestry extension service to First Nations groups.

Capacity: The dire lack of capacity within the Aboriginal communities is well known, by the communities themselves, the resource-user groups with whom they interact, and by governments. For example, plans for land development activities that might infringe on traditional territory must be referred to the appropriate First Nation for review. However, the worker who deals with referrals has other responsibilities as well, and therefore the community is unable to handle all of these referrals in a timely manner. Many of documents are highly technical, and are prepared by organizations that have readier access to technology and human resources.

Many examples and models of sound resource management practice occur, and some First Nations do have adequate technological, human, and financial resources. However, even where these resources are available, most First Nations have yet to apply them to the day-to-day needs of natural resources management.

For those First Nations lacking the technological, human, and financial resources, an extensive capacity-building requirement will be attached to the provision of extension services. In most other communities, capacity-building initiatives will likely tap into existing technical and human resources to address natural resources management issues.

⁴ "Intellectual property rights" are defined in Article 8(j) of the United Nations *Convention on Biological Diversity* (United Nations Environment Programme 1992).



Financial benefits versus costs: All communities expressed concerns about the amount of natural resources being extracted from their traditional territories, with few of the financial benefits returning to the local area. Aboriginal people feel left out of the business and employment opportunities in the resource industries.

At the same time, the responsibility of asserting Aboriginal rights continues to drain the Aboriginal community. For example, the financial cost of addressing referrals has become onerous. The financial resources required to handle referrals effectively do not exist; the unresolved questions of Aboriginal rights and title upon which these difficult questions rest remain unanswered, yet the resource-extraction industries continue to place referrals on the desks of Aboriginal resource managers. These resource managers feel that the resource-extraction industries need to recognize the seriousness of this situation, and that they must offer some level of assistance to resolve this difficult problem.

Avenues and protocols for communication: The leadership and governance structure in the First Nations community requires recognition before any other contact is made. In most areas, the tribal council would be the Partnership's first point of contact.

Seven separate tribal councils exist in the Southern Interior: the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council, the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council, the Nicola Valley Tribal Association, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, the Lillooet Tribal Council, the Tsilqot'in National Government, the Carrier-Chilcotin Tribal Council, and the Cariboo Tribal Council.

However, tribal councils do not represent all Aboriginal communities. A number of independent communities (i.e., the various Metis organizations and United Native Nations organizations) address the concerns of urban Aboriginals, as well Aboriginal people who are not registered under the Indian Act.

Determining which communities are independent and which are represented by tribal council members will be important when providing services. Therefore, any initiatives aimed at tribal councils must also be directed towards bands and other Aboriginal communities that are outside of the tribal council system.

The Partnership will also need to communicate with natural resource managers within, or associated with, Aboriginal communities. In some cases, managers from various communities are members of informal associations. These groups desire more organization and the

formation of a formal association outside of the existing tribal council system, perhaps at a regional or provincial level.

The question of how the Partnership should connect with Aboriginal communities in the most effective manner is further complicated by the Partnership's nonpolitical mandate. Tribal councils may be viewed as too political by other members of the Partnership. The issue is further complicated because tribal councils do not represent a significant portion of the entire Aboriginal community. While the Partnership must continue to provide extension services to tribal councils, a clear delineation is required between a tribal council's political agenda and the extension services and products the Partnership provides.

The Partnership also needs to consider the role of the cultural education centres and similar organizations. Several of these organizations exist within the Southern Interior, acting as repositories of valuable cultural, historical, linguistic, and socio-economic information. They provide leadership in developing applications of Indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge. They also develop the information storage and retrieval systems required to access these valuable resources. Cultural centres will play an important role in the development of traditional ecological knowledge practices in resource management. Aboriginal education institutes (e.g., the En'owkin Centre, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, and the Secwepemc Cultural Education Centre) were suggested as potential institutions from which the Partnership could operate. However, not all tribal areas have such educational institutes.

Another possibility is to establish Aboriginal extension specialists or workers to deliver various extension products to the Aboriginal communities.

Overall Consensus

A general consensus was reached that the Partnership's role in providing forestry extension services would be critical in assisting First Nations' communities to manage their land and natural resources.

Step 3: Developing a Framework for Action

Through the First Nations community needs analysis process, the Partnership identified a range of forestry-related information and research needs in Southern Interior Aboriginal communities. The First Nations groups have also indicated that they want to participate in exchanging information. Therefore, the Partnership has taken a leadership role in addressing these needs



through the creation of its Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program. This program will function as an extension and information link between Aboriginal communities and the scientific community, resource users, and government regulatory agencies.

Objectives and Goals

To facilitate understanding between the Aboriginal communities and the larger community, the Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program will provide forums where the knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal Elders, traditional ecological knowledge keepers, and other non-Aboriginal resource practitioners can be shared. This will be accomplished through meetings, conferences, workshops, and written materials. The program's goals follow.

1. Develop strategies for improving Aboriginal participation in Forest Management Plans and other related forest-policy development processes.
2. Facilitate dialogue between Aboriginal resource management agencies and government, forest companies, municipalities, regional districts, and other resource user groups to improve future socio-economic opportunities that result from the natural resource economy.
3. Work with Aboriginal people to provide training opportunities and to facilitate entrepreneurship capacity in resource management, and to improve core skills within the Aboriginal community.
4. Help define the role of traditional ecological knowledge in the development of community, economic, and social planning in the Aboriginal community and in the community-at-large.
5. Work with Aboriginal people to provide knowledge of Aboriginal rights and title as it relates to the Partnership's mandate in order to provide forest extension and research services to all its partners.

Guidelines

1. Through the Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program, the Partnership will provide extension that will enable the involvement of its Aboriginal partners⁵ in forest management and decision making which is consistent with sound ecological management principles, provincial forest practices, and Aboriginal rights and title affirmed in the Section (35) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, by:
 - Developing and delivering extension activities

that will improve the ability of Aboriginal people to be involved in forest policy development at all levels, taking into account initiatives already started and areas where co-ordination of new efforts is needed.

- Assisting Aboriginal people to develop a vision of the forest that reflects their shared beliefs, values, and economic aspirations regarding the forest, while respecting regional and ecological diversity.
 - Assisting Aboriginal people to build their knowledge capacity, and to co-ordinate data gathering and reporting activities already carried out by various agencies relevant to Aboriginal participation in forest management.
 - Identifying means by which traditional ecological knowledge can contribute to sustainable forest management, and by which guidelines for defining this knowledge are developed which incorporate TEK into forest research, management practices, and planning and training, in a manner that respects Article 8(j) of the United Nations *Convention on Biological Diversity* (United Nations Environment Programme 1992).
2. The Partnership will assist its Aboriginal partners to develop and facilitate a public dialogue that educates about Aboriginal and treaty rights in sustainable forest management, by:
 - Providing the relevant and necessary extension services to initiate or continue, and where necessary reform, processes for the discussion of existing legislation and policies governing the management of forest lands in light of Aboriginal and treaty rights.
 - Providing the relevant and necessary extension services to: (a) implement policy frameworks that will help guide all resource managers in understanding Aboriginal and treaty rights, (b) ensure that forest operations and tenure arrangements do not infringe, without appropriate justification, on Aboriginal and treaty rights, and (c) ensure that the exercising of these rights does not infringe on sustainable forest practices.
 - Working together to improve understanding between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of the natural resource community in matters of the history behind Aboriginal and treaty rights, traditional forest values, and modern Aboriginal aspirations and needs.

⁵ FORREX's Aboriginal Partners are: Ditidaht Nation, En'owkin Centre, Ktunaka Kinbasket Tribal Council, Lillooet Tribal Council, Nicola Tribal Association, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, Shuswap Nation Tribal Council.



3. The Partnership will support its Aboriginal partners in developing employment and business development strategies in the forest sector by:
 - Assisting to conduct reviews of proven forest-based business opportunities and business models.
 - Providing extension services that will encourage Aboriginal employment in forestry operations and other forest-based businesses.
 - Assisting in developing business capacity.
4. The Partnership will assist its Aboriginal partners to increase the capacity of their communities and to participate in sustainable forest management by:
 - Assisting in the development of a human resources strategy that addresses the forest-sector education, training, and employment needs of Aboriginal partners.
 - Assisting in developing an agenda to address research capacity and issues specific to sustainable forests.
5. The Partnership will assist its Aboriginal partners to achieve sustainable forest management practices by:
 - Assisting in creating an awareness among Aboriginal leaders and decision makers of the importance of sustainable management of forest land in achieving the broader range of social, ecological, and economic objectives.
 - Assisting in designing and implementing strategies of sufficient scope and duration such that Aboriginal people can undertake sustainable forest management in all of their natural resources management activities.

Conclusion

In 1999/2000, FORREX—Forest Research and Extension Partnership (formerly SIFERP, the Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership) undertook a First Nations community needs analysis process to determine the information needs of First Nations' communities as related to land and natural resources management, in particular forested ecosystems.

Based on the results of this process, the First Nations' communities in the Southern Interior of British Columbia clearly have a need and a desire to participate in forestry extension services provided by the Partnership.

This needs assessment also revealed and expanded on several issues that the Partnership must consider in providing extension services to Aboriginal communities. The process illustrated that the overall Aboriginal community consists of a diverse set of groups, each with unique characteristics and needs. Various legal, cultural, and political organizations already provide services to Aboriginal people. However, the infrastructure and resources needed to manage natural resources are not equally available, either among the Aboriginal groups themselves or between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal groups.

Forestry extension between Aboriginal partners and non-Aboriginal partners will also require a considerable sensitivity as the tensions resulting from unresolved issues of Aboriginal rights and title further strain the relationships between the resource industry and the Aboriginal community. In addition, the need to link traditional ecological knowledge to policy making and to industry adds to the complexity of providing extension services to the Aboriginal community. To facilitate these and other matters, the Aboriginal community clearly has a need for forestry extension services.

The Partnership has therefore taken a leadership role in providing these extension services to its Aboriginal partners. With the First Nations needs analysis process, the Partnership began working with its Aboriginal partners to identify the information and research needs of the Aboriginal community, and to create the solutions required to develop linkages and partnerships with the resource industry. This process has also provided direction for including traditional ecological knowledge in natural resources management and policy development. The Partnership's Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program will be a vehicle for serving Aboriginal communities and the various resource-user groups with which they interact in the Southern Interior of British Columbia.

The Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program will provide forums to share the knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal Elders and the keepers of traditional ecological knowledge, and other non-Aboriginal resource practitioners. This will broaden the environmental, economic, social, and cultural understanding of the Aboriginal communities and the larger community with each other, and facilitate the common goal of enhancing the long-term health of the Southern Interior's forest and range ecosystems.



Editor's Note

The intent of the First Nations needs assessment process was to develop extension strategies that will assist First Nations in resolving the human, technical, and other resource gaps that now hinder their meaningful participation in natural resources management. Through the needs assessment process and the development of the Partnership's Aboriginal Forestry Extension Program, opportunities for enhanced collaboration and improved information management will result in new sources of human, technical, and funding capacity.

The reviewers of this paper unanimously agreed that the contents of this paper accurately conveyed the situation of First Nations' communities in their efforts to participate meaningfully in natural resource management. They stated that the Partnership's initiative to advance an Aboriginal extension program would result in an expanded Aboriginal extension infrastructure—a development they had no problem with. They also stated that this new extension capacity would best benefit Aboriginal communities if it was delivered by First Nations' organizations rather than by the Partnership. This approach is consistent with the Partnership model of building extension capacity within the community

that will most benefit from these services. It is not the intent of the Partnership to compete with First Nations' communities in the development of extension capacity. Our objective is to fully employ the combined capacity of all our Partners, including First Nations, to collaboratively develop innovative, sustainable ecosystem management practices.

Chris Hollstedt,
FORREX Executive Director
and *JEM* Editor-in-Chief

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