

# The Bridge #15

Newsletter from the Canadian Forest Service, Pacific Forestry Centre



MPBI

## PENTICTON INDIAN BAND FIGHTS FIRE WITH PLANNING

Okanagan Valley residents know that forest fires pose a serious threat to their communities. Dramatic events in the summer of 2003, when forest fire destroyed over 200 homes in Kelowna and burned much of Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park, demonstrated to everybody just how serious that threat can be.

“The Okanagan Mountain fire wasn’t that far from our reserve land,” says Greg Gabriel, Band Administrator for the Penticton Indian Band. “We’ve got forested reserve land close to residential areas, so we want to reduce the risk of an interface fire.”

When fire suppression specialists speak of the “interface”, they are referring to areas where forests and structures are close enough together for wildfire to spread from trees to buildings.

Fire isn’t the only challenge facing the Penticton Indian Band. Okanagan forests also face a mountain pine beetle epidemic. The current infestation – the largest of its kind in British Columbia’s history – threatens to destroy much of the lodgepole pine forest in the province’s interior. The beetles can also attack the ponderosa pine, a species abundant on Penticton Indian Band land.

Gabriel found help to reduce the forest fire hazard and make local forests less susceptible to the spread of mountain pine beetle through participation in Natural Resources Canada’s Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative (MPBI), First Nations Element.



Photo credit – BC Ministry of Forests

*Thinned stands are more resistant to fire.*

“We were initially approached by Jim Mottishaw from the British Columbia Ministry of Forests,” Gabriel says. “He asked if they could carry out a short forest fuel management training program for fire suppression crews. The band also turned to Natural Resources Canada and applied for \$53,520 in funding from the Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative to assist with implementing a forest fuel management plan that was drawn up with support of the British

*Apply now to the Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative - First Nations Element. The program accepts applications on an on-going basis throughout the year.*

*The First Nations Forestry Program accepts applications once a year during the winter. The most recent deadline was December 16, 2005.*





Photo credit – Karl Larsen

*Fire in forestland close to residential areas poses a serious threat.*

Columbia Ministry of Forests and a local forestry consultant.”

“Essentially, we cut firebreaks into the ponderosa pine forests that run north and south on the west side of the valley,” explains Gabriel. “We used silviculture techniques to prune and thin out the forest cover to reduce fire risk. The work will also help protect our pine stands from beetle infestation, because the thinning and pruning make the forest healthier.”

A five-person crew from the Penticton Indian Band worked through last August and September to create the firebreaks. In addition, the crew raked up dead wood and debris into piles that can be safely burned when the winter snow comes – a measure that removes potential forest fire fuel and understory habitat for insects.

The project resulted in firebreaks between 25 and 50 metres wide, cut into the forest at five separate locations behind residential areas on the Penticton Indian Band land.

“Part of the firebreak is directly behind our band office,” says Gabriel. “The area where we were working has seen forest fires in the past. Of course in recent years more houses have been built, and it just makes sense to try and manage the forest fuel situation to reduce the risk of a forest fire spreading into a residential zone.”

The Penticton Indian Band has been proactive in understanding fire risk and reducing forest fire hazard. Within a year after the 2003 fire season, the band worked in partnership with the BC Ministry of Forests, completing a project to thin and prune forests close to residential homes on reserve land.

“Our partnership with Natural Resources Canada enabled us to continue that work,” says Gabriel. “This summer’s firebreak project covered about 20 hectares of forest land. And I’m happy to report that our crew found little beetle infestation in the areas treated.”

There’s more firebreak work to be done on the Penticton Indian Band reserve, and it’s always necessary to keep a watchful eye open for beetle infestation. Gabriel would like to see the band continue its



relationship with Natural Resources Canada through the MPBI.

“It’s a good program,” he says. “With our climate changing we are seeing that our forests are coming under a lot of stress, and the build-up of fuel is a problem too. We know we’ve got to take action now to manage the situation, to protect our forest resource and our communities.”

tion, or be at risk for future mountain pine beetle attack.

More information about the Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative, First Nations Element, is available online at [mpb.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca](http://mpb.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca).

First Nations battling mountain pine beetles should apply for help now to curb the infestation and reforest reserve lands. Over the past two years Natural Resources Canada has approved 77 applications to MPBI – First Nations Element. Natural Resources Canada receives and reviews applications on an on-going basis.

## MPBI MPBI FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR FOREST FUEL MANAGEMENT

**F**irst Nations communities can receive funding from the Government of Canada’s Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative (MPBI) to reduce mountain pine beetle attack. The program includes funding to reduce fire hazard posed by pine stands that have been infested or may be infested by mountain pine beetles threatening their communities.

Funding helps pay for measures such as:

- forest fuel management plans
- thinning and pruning trees to control the spread of fire
- reducing and removing built-up forest fuel
- planting new trees
- creating firebreaks and fuel breaks.

Stands on reserve lands directly surrounding the community core area are eligible for forest fuel management funding. To qualify, forests must be under beetle attack now, or have a history of beetle infesta-



*Funding helps pay for planting new trees.*

For information about MPBI or to apply for the program, contact a program forestry officer with Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service:

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## FIRST NATIONS SYMPOSIUM DRAWS INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

**F**irst Nations culture in British Columbia has attracted world attention for a long time now, but an international event held on Vancouver Island last summer focused on an aboriginal tradition deeply rooted in forestry. People gathered at Victoria in August for a combination symposium, tradeshow and conference devoted to non-timber forest products.

Deeply interwoven into First Nations culture, non-timber forest products include mushrooms, salal, evergreens, natural health products, and specialty wood/craft products. Today, ecotourism can be added to that list. For years the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) has been helping aboriginal communities develop a non-timber forest products industry, through partnerships between First Nations, the Canadian Forest Service and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

With \$24,970 from the program, FNFP supported Royal Roads University and the Cowichan Tribes, based in Duncan. They were getting ready to hold an event profiling non-timber forest products. Royal Roads, home to the Centre for Non-Timber Resources, hosted a combination of activities from August 27-29, 2005, including an academic symposium – “A Future Beneath the Trees”, an industry conference – “Buy BCwild” and a trade show – “Shop the Wild”.

The symposium brought together international experts to discuss commercial development of non-timber forest products and its affects on rural economies and forest conservation. Buy BCwild assembled experienced entrepreneurs exploring ways to make viable businesses with non-timber forest products. Shop the Wild, a one-day marketplace open to the public, showcased non-timber forest products and the businesses that market them. About 3,000 people attended Shop the Wild, while the symposium and conference drew approximately 300 participants.



Photo credit – Royal Roads University

*Non-timber forest products provide First Nations with commercial opportunities.*



Photo credit – Royal Roads University

*Shop the Wild drew 3,000 shoppers interested in non-timber forest products.*

“We wanted to get involved in organizing this event for two reasons,” says Stephanie Peter, Natural Resource Technician for the Cowichan Tribes. “Non-timber forest products play a major role in the life of our people, so we have a keen interest in promoting the sector. Also, as co-ordinators for First Nations participation, we had a golden opportunity to develop strong contacts with other British Columbia bands interested in non-timber forest products.”

FNFP support came into the picture by helping Peter arrange for attendance and accommodation of 20 First Nations representatives. Attendees came from bands across the province, including the Siska Indian Band, the Neskonlith Band, the St. Mary’s Indian Band, the Nisga’a Nation, the Cheslatta Carrier Nation, the Adams Lake First Nation, the Songhees Nation, the Cowichan Tribes, the Squamish Nation, and the ‘Namgis First Nation. A delegate from the Aboriginal Forest Industries Council also attended.

“The forest has always been a grocery store for people of the Cowichan Tribes,” says Peter. “Many plants grow on the forest floor that provide natural,

healthy food sources. One example is Indian potato, or in our language, ‘sqewth.”

But Peter believes the importance of non-timber forest products for First Nations goes beyond a traditional food source or the basis for a contemporary business venture – it really plays a significant cultural role. For generations First Nations people have been using the natural resources available from the forests surrounding them. Knowledge of plants and their uses has always been a part of aboriginal culture.

Non-timber forest products can also play a vital economic role in First Nations communities. For example, in 1997 the commercial harvest of mushrooms and other products employed 32,000 people, First Nations and non-natives combined, and generated \$280 million, part of the sector’s total \$680 million revenue for that year in British Columbia.

“Besides food, culture, and economic development, there’s also an important ecological aspect to non-timber forest products,” Peter says. “A healthy forest is a renewable source of non-timber forest products. That means we need to be concerned and

informed about issues like over-harvesting and invasive species.”

Peter is encouraged by the success of the combined symposium/conference/trade show. The Cowichan Tribes, building on this experience, plan to host a conference in January of next year about species at risk.

“We’re facing some on-going challenges in non-timber forest products,” she says. “When communities grow, we often lose areas like forest and woodland meadows to urban development. Access to forest areas can be a problem for us. And there’s always the work needed to build strong First Nations businesses in the sector.”

In future non-timber forest products can continue to provide food and economic development, as well as an activity supportive of First Nations culture. She says First Nations must continue to work with each other to build strong businesses and address issues like forest health, that impact the non-timber forest product sector.

To date, the First Nations Forestry Program has supported over 20 non-timber forest product-related



Photo credit – Royal Roads University

Products include jams, jellies, and botanicals.

projects involving native communities across the province. Projects range from feasibility studies and business plans to the production and marketing of products, including jams and jellies, wreaths and botanicals, oils and various hand-crafted items.

## BEETLEWOOD SALVAGE HELPS FUTURE FOREST GROW

MPBI

**B**y making the best out of a bad situation now, the Skeetchestn Indian Band is taking steps to ensure there will still be a forest for the future on band land, once mountain pine beetle infested trees have been harvested.

“Skeetchestn Indian Band forests have been under mountain pine beetle attack for about five years now,” says Mike Anderson, the band’s forester. “We know that within 10 years 90 per cent of our pine trees will be dead.”

Situated northwest of Savona, near Kamloops, the Skeetchestn Indian Band reserve includes about 2,500 hectares of forest. Mixed species make up the forest cover, with a strong component of lodgepole pine and some ponderosa pine. Last winter, with help from Natural Resource Canada’s Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative, the band surveyed their forest to determine how much beetle infestation had occurred. The survey work showed a heavy infestation in most of the pine. The next challenge was deciding what to do about it.

Anderson explains that the Skeetchestn Indian Band determined to accomplish two goals: salvage as much pine as possible and rely on another species for a future forest. Partnering with Natural Resources Canada enabled the band to implement a project to help achieve both goals.

“We have between 30 and 40 per cent pine in our forest cover,” Anderson says. “But there’s a lot of Douglas fir too, mostly in the understory. So, we saw that by select logging the dead and dying pine, we could salvage and sell some wood, while at the same





*First Nations often use salvage harvesting to control mountain pine beetle.*

time leaving our understory forest in place to grow to maturity.”

With \$20,728 from the Initiative, the Skeetchestn Indian Band was able to plan to log a 160-hectare parcel where over half the pine trees were heavily infested by mountain pine beetle. Preparation included drawing up a plan laying out the area into cutblocks. The project also paid for some minor access improvements on approximately 11 kilometres of road, so crews could get logging equipment onto the site.

“It’s really all we could do with the pine on that land,” Anderson says. “The infestation was just beyond taking any other measures, such as baiting trees with pheromone. Salvage logging was the only practical option.”

Two members of the Skeetchestn Indian Band worked over the summer on the project. The work presented an opportunity to train these band members to survey a forest and plan cutblocks for harvesting. The project allowed the Skeetchestn Indian Band

to complete a site plan, logging plan and environmental assessment necessary to get a timber permit from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

“Now that we have the logging plan established, we will go ahead with harvesting over the winter,” Anderson says. He adds that it is cheaper to clearcut the pine-infested forestland, but that isn’t going to happen, because the band wants to save the Douglas fir. Instead, the cutblocks will be selectively logged to peel away the dead and dying pine trees, leaving the fir understory as the basis of a healthy future forest.

“The Skeetchestn Indian Band wants to ensure there will be healthy trees after the pine beetle epidemic,” Anderson says. “We’re not doing this just for the sake of logging now. In fact, we don’t expect to make a lot of money from this harvest. We know we’re going to lose our pine, but we’re determined not to lose our forest.”

The Skeetchestn Indian Band strives to protect environmental values. Anderson says coho and steelhead stocks in the Deadman River and Thompson

River are examples. Both drainages could be impacted by logging on Skeetchestn Indian Band land.

“The Thompson coho stocks are officially on the species-at-risk list, and our steelhead are an endangered species,” says Anderson. “It’s another reason why the band doesn’t want to clearcut on reserve land in those river valleys.”

Anderson referenced the vision statement of the Skeetchestn Environment Lands and Sustainable Resources department, which reads in part: “The Skeetchestn Indian Band is involved in the sustainable management of eco-systems and their forests, range and water resources including community values for wildlife, fisheries, and plants within Skeetchestn Traditional Territory.”

“We’ve got to manage the mountain pine beetle epidemic as best we can, and the Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative is helping us to do that,” Anderson says. “So, we’ll do what we have to do, and we’ll still have a forest left for the future. That’s very important.”

*“We’ve got to manage the mountain pine beetle as best we can, and the Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative is helping us to do that.”*

**Mike Anderson,  
Band Forester  
Skeetchestn Indian  
Band**

fir forest, carpeted in many places with a six-inch layer of coniferous needles. As things turned out, her unique approach enlisted community action to tackle a forestry challenge.

The process began last year, while she was conducting an archaeological overview of Cayoose reserve land to identify sites of cultural significance for the band. The band is located immediately southwest of Lillooet, where Cayoose Creek joins the Fraser River. About 120 of the band’s 172 members live on the reserve. Edwards couldn’t help but notice the overgrown tangle of dead wood and understory that engulfed the forest floor.

“It was obvious that the undergrowth posed a serious forest health problem and it obscured our archaeological sites,” says Edwards. She applied to Natural Resources Canada’s First Nations Forestry Program for help.

With \$25,000 from the program, Edwards acquired the means to improve forest health on the reserve. To accomplish that goal, she turned to band members themselves.

“I began to think about how we could do this as a community,” she says. “How could we involve our people, including our youth, in cleaning up the forest?”

Edwards points out that many band members didn’t really know a lot about the forest ecosystem. If she could get the community involved directly, the activity might help band members reconnect with an important part of their heritage, in addition to helping the present-day forest.

Her solution was simple and direct. She would use part of the project money to hire adult and youth band members to gather and pile dead wood and then rake up and pile the smaller debris. Her plans

## **FNFP** PARTICIPATION BENEFITS FOREST AND COMMUNITY

**G**etting people to connect with the forest that surrounds their community takes imagination and leadership, and the Cayoose Creek Indian Band (with a little help from Natural Resources Canada) knows it can be done in a very rewarding way.

Michelle Edwards, Aboriginal Land Steward for the band, wanted to do something to substantially improve forest health on reserve land. Woody debris and overgrown understory choked an aging Douglas





included paying individuals \$150 for every 40 hours they worked in the bush. Adults could put in a basic working day, and students could work two hours per day after school, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm.

“The community really got behind the idea,” Edwards says. “School buses dropped kids off at the worksite after school, where I met them with rakes, gloves – everything they needed. Adults often worked a full day in the forest. Some family units participated together – my own family, for example.”

Edwards says about 40 people, aged 13 to 40, cleared debris on approximately 120 hectares of forest between mid-April and the end of June. Almost half the participants were teenagers. The project paid many dividends.

“The wood and debris piles will be burned this winter,” she says. “The forest will be healthier now. We’ll get a lot of berries growing back again.”

Edwards was very pleased with the reaction of band members. The project sparked social interaction, bringing young and older people together.

“People started talking about what they could do with a healthy forest,” she said. “They became more informed about the band’s archaeological sites. They talked with each other about the importance of plants, berries, and the animals that live in a healthy forest.”

Edwards says word of the project’s success has spread to other bands in the Lillooet area. She’s getting inquiries from First Nations interested in doing something similar on their reserve forestland.

“I think the project helped us connect with each other, our history and our forest,” says Edwards. “And I know it benefited the community as a whole by improving the health of our forestland.”



*Michelle Edwards points out the results of recent efforts to improve forest health.*

## BEETLE PROBE PROMPTS NEW FOCUS ON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**F**or the Nicomen Indian Band, managing mountain pine beetle infestation is an important step toward building effective management for all natural resources on reserve land.

“It’s about more than the mountain pine beetle,” says Ray Drynock, Natural Resources Manager for the Nicomen Indian Band. “For a long time now we haven’t had as much control over the resources of our forestland as we would like - not just the fibre, but other values, like recreational use, water conservation and wildlife protection. We think these things, including forest health, are all connected.”

The Nicomen First Nation office is located 17 kilometres northeast of Lytton, along the TransCanada Highway toward Spences Bridge. The band has small reserves along the Thompson River, and a larger territory on the plateau above the valley.

“There’s a mixed forest up on the high ground where there’s lodgepole and ponderosa pine,” says Drynock. “That forest is very important to the Nicomen Indian Band. We know it has economic value. But also, the community uses forest land for recreation.”

The mountain pine beetle infestation in neighbouring valleys has risen from 20 per cent to 80 per cent of pine stands within the last two years. Drynock is concerned that the same thing will happen to the forests on the Nicomen Indian Band reserves.

“If we can jump on it now, we’ll have a better chance to keep the mountain pine beetle under control,” he says. “The first thing we needed to do was take a serious look at the forest to determine the level of infestation, so we could

decide on a suitable treatment to deal with the insects.”

With \$24,900 from Natural Resources Canada’s Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative, the Nicomen Indian Band is conducting a beetle probe on 473 hectares of forest land above the east side of the Thompson River. The detailed probe will produce information about the level and exact location of mountain pine beetle infestation. Armed with that information, the band will then produce a mountain pine beetle management strategy, with recommendations for suitable treatments to control the spread of beetles.

“I’m thinking now that after we do the probe, we could be looking at some fall and burn, maybe even some salvage harvesting,” Drynock says. “We want to keep as many ponderosa pine healthy up there as possible, because that helps the whole ecosystem.”

Drynock points out that the plateau is arid, and healthy ponderosa pine retain water in the soil and provide shade for range vegetation. The vegetation is crucial to supporting the wildlife population, deer in particular, that live in the delicate plateau ecosystem.

Three members of the Nicomen Indian Band conducted the beetle probe between early October and mid-November. Four hundred and seventy-three hectares is a sizeable tract to probe, but the forest includes large patches of open range and grassland, and not all of the land is heavily forested.

“There’s only about 40 people in the Nicomen Indian Band still on the reserve, and about 130 in total,” Drynock says. “The people here use that forest land for camping, hiking, and horseback riding. We’d really like to get a better handle on managing the ecosystem, as well as having more control over public access.”

*“If we can jump on it now, we’ll have a better chance to keep the mountain pine beetle under control.”*

**Ray Drynock,  
Natural Resources  
Manager  
Nicomen Indian Band**





By taking steps to manage the mountain pine beetle, the Nicomen Indian Band is building capacity to manage its resource land for other values. Drynock knows it will be a challenge.

“I just graduated from Nicola Valley Institute of Technology as a Natural Resources Technician earlier this year,” he says. “I want to use this job to get things like the mountain pine beetle probe and management strategy done. The health of our forest resource and ecosystem is a big responsibility. I want to see our band think about the big picture, in terms of overall resource management.”

“I never thought I’d get a chance to meet Burt Reynolds in person, right here on the reserve,” says Chief Russell Chipps. “But I guess the movie-makers thought Beecher Bay was just the right setting for their film.”

Chipps referred to segments of “Dungeon Siege,” a film shot on the Beecher Bay First Nation land in August by German director Uwe Boll. The venture brought several well-known actors, plus a small army of crew and extras, to the Beecher Bay First Nation.

“We’re really putting a focus on economic development for our band,” Chipps says.

“Getting the movie crew here was great, but we know in the long term we’ve got to get the most out of the things that have been with us for generations – our natural resources. That means taking

care of our forests.”

That’s where the First Nations Forestry Program comes in. Administered by Natural Resources Canada and the Canadian Forest Service in Victoria, the program helps First Nations across the province develop their forest resources.

## FNFP FOREST FIGURES IN BAND’S FUTURE, SAYS BEECHER BAY CHIEF

**D**ouglas fir growing along the rocky Pacific Coast of south Vancouver Island provide the Beecher Bay First Nation with an economic resource and an inspiring natural setting. Last summer Beecher Bay lured famous American movie actor Burt Reynolds to the small East Sooke First Nations community of 209 people - but he was there for a job.



*Dennis Charles of the Beecher Bay First Nation supports the band’s forestry work.*





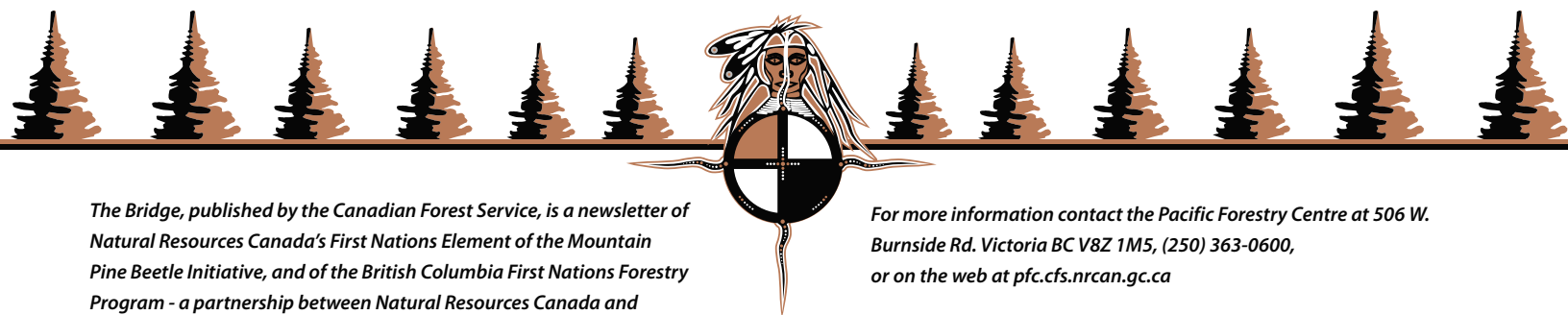
*Alan Delisle, RPE, looks over an area of the Beecher Bay First Nation forestland overrun with scotch broom.*

With \$25,000 from the program, the Beecher Bay First Nation hired four band members and a supervisor to complete a silviculture project in Douglas fir stands on the reserve. Running from May to October, the project included spacing 20 hectares of forest to remove over-stocked juvenile firs. This will help the remaining trees to mature into a healthy forest, providing a source of quality wood fibre.

“We also got rid of a lot of scotch broom, an invasive species that has really moved into the forests on Beecher Bay reserve land,” says Alan DeLisle of VanWest Forestry Ltd., the band’s forestry consultant for the project. “To finish off, we are going back to plant trees on 18 hectares logged recently for cedar and fir.”

Chipps says the Beecher Bay First Nation wants to increase the long-term productivity of its forest stands. Silviculture will help achieve that goal by ensuring that the band’s forests are properly stocked for health and growth.

“We will continue to develop our forest for the economic benefit of our band,” says Chipps. “Right now we’re looking at putting together a comprehensive forest management plan. Completing projects like the silviculture work through the First Nations Forestry Program helps us build capacity for the future.”



*The Bridge, published by the Canadian Forest Service, is a newsletter of Natural Resources Canada’s First Nations Element of the Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative, and of the British Columbia First Nations Forestry Program - a partnership between Natural Resources Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.*

*For more information contact the Pacific Forestry Centre at 506 W. Burnside Rd. Victoria BC V8Z 1M5, (250) 363-0600, or on the web at [pfc.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca](http://pfc.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca)*



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