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# A Vision for First Nations Forestry in 2020

National Council,  
First Nations Forestry Program



Canada 

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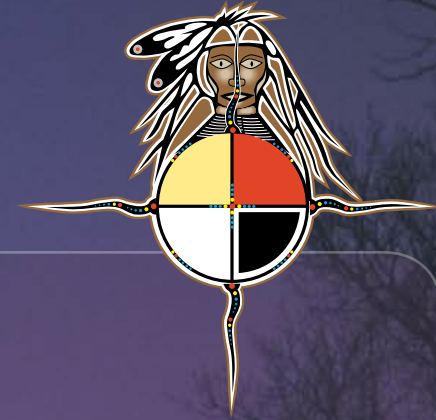
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## The Vision Statement

“Traditional territories, lands and forest tenures are managed holistically under First Nations authority by First Nations forestry practitioners and professionals, in accordance with the reconciliation of Aboriginal title and rights, respect for the ‘spirit of the forest’ and which incorporates traditional knowledge, values and principles. These attributes are the foundations for a vibrant and sustainable First Nations forest-based economy that engages youth and results in healthy First Nations communities and environments.”







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# Introduction



In March 2007, the National Council of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) launched a process to develop a collective vision for First Nations forestry from the perspective of First Nations forestry practitioners. The Vision is to be shared with First Nations communities and forestry practitioners, and is intended to inform and influence forest policy planners, educators and decision-makers in government, industry and academia.

The objectives of the visioning exercise are threefold:

1. To identify, present and promote a 10-year Vision for First Nations Forestry that describes desired outcomes and measures of success;
2. To identify potential roles for government, First Nations and industry in contributing to the achievement of the Vision; and
3. To identify opportunities and priorities for future First Nations forest sector programming.

The Vision was developed through a series of facilitated meetings with First Nations members from the First Nations Forestry Program's nine Provincial and Territorial Management Committees from across Canada. To guide the visioning exercise, four interview questions were posed to the participants at each meeting: (1) What is First Nations forestry?; (2) What is your vision of First Nations forestry in 10 years?; (3) How will this vision be achieved?; and (4) How will First Nations recognize that the vision has been achieved?

The nine reports of the regional visioning exercises were completed as stand-alone documents and distributed to all FNFP Committee representatives. A national roll-up report was then produced and endorsed by the FNFP National Council. The full report and the individual regional summary reports are available on request; contact [fnfp.bulletin@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca](mailto:fnfp.bulletin@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca).

The summary report represents the Vision of First Nations forestry practitioners who serve on the FNFP National Council. The views and opinions expressed in it are those of the authors. It does not necessarily represent the views of Natural Resources Canada or Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, which co-sponsored the visioning exercise under the FNFP.







# What is First Nations Forestry?



## First Nations forestry

- is holistic;
- is integrated with community values;
- involves stewardship and sustainability;
- speaks to access to resources and economic self-sufficiency;
- is about governance;
- values partnerships and mutual respect; and
- creates economic opportunities (employment, skills development and business development).

**Our shared Vision  
integrates four aspects:**









# Lands

First Nations traditional territories, lands and forest tenures are managed holistically . . .



Lands, and access to forest resources, are key elements of our Vision for the future of First Nations forestry.

“Lands” includes reserve and treaty land entitlement (TLE) lands, lands under modern-day Treaties (comprehensive claims); traditional territories, including those territories under a claim of Aboriginal title; and treaty concepts of stewardship, a sharing of treaty lands and equitable access to resources.

“Lands” also refers to tenures held by First Nations and/or access to forest resources and timber volumes, allocations and licences on Crown lands.

The settlement of comprehensive and specific claims across Canada is increasing the quantum of First Nations lands. For example, total reserve lands across Canada stood at 3.4 million hectares in 2009. This amount is projected to reach close to 5 million hectares by 2022.

An increased land base and greater access to forest lands and resources are fundamental enablers that will accelerate First Nations participation and contributions to Canada’s forest sector. Unresolved land and treaty issues are a major impediment to forest sector investment, growth and the development of partnerships between First Nations and industry.

## Key Trend Indicators

- *Hectares of forested lands under First Nations ownership and control (reserve lands)*
- *Number and size of land claims settled and modern-day treaties enacted*
- *Timber allocations and harvesting licences on Crown lands (forest tenures, co-management agreements)*







# Authority

. . . under First Nations authority by First Nations forestry practitioners and professionals, in accordance with the reconciliation of Aboriginal title and rights . . .

Authority is defined here to mean control of – and responsibility for – the planning, development and management of forested lands and forest resources.

Authority and jurisdiction of First Nations forested lands are being restored by virtue of several factors: the growing exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty rights; the resolution of land claims and Treaty settlements; and agreements with provinces and territories to share decision-making authority and resource revenues, environmental assessment processes and wide-area planning initiatives.

First Nations are assuming greater roles and responsibilities in the management and commercial use of forests as a result of growing professional competency and the settlement of comprehensive and specific land claims.

Revenue-sharing must be a requirement of any new provincial/territorial licensing or other arrangements with industry. As well, forest resource revenues, including royalties and fees paid for the right to use First Nations reserve lands, should be collected and managed by First Nations. Other potential resource revenues that could be shared include royalties for gas, oil, coal, sand and gravel; mineral taxes; and water rental fees from hydroelectric generation.

## Key Trend Indicators

- *Professionally qualified First Nations foresters and forest technicians actively engaged in Aboriginal forestry*
- *First Nations exercising forestry regulations consistent with First Nations spiritual values, land use plans and the exercise of traditional land and resource use rights*
- *Partnership arrangements and comprehensive co-management agreements between First Nations and provincial/territorial and federal governments based on mutual respect*
- *Inter-tribal collaboration and growing volume of inter-tribal trade in forest products and services*
- *Wood supply arrangements negotiated directly with First Nations*
- *Resource royalty revenues that reduce dependence on annual government program funding*









# Values

. . . respect for the “spirit of the forest” and the incorporation of traditional knowledge, values and principles . . .



For First Nations, the forest has special spiritual, cultural, economic and social significance. Respect for the “spirit of the forest” is therefore a predominant value guiding Aboriginal forestry. For these reasons, forest management regimes need to incorporate traditional knowledge, values and principles.

A defining feature of each First Nation’s customary law is a holistic view of the land. First Nations forestry is about “the whole forest” and refers to “everything on the land.”

The forest is a place that sustains traditional livelihoods and cultural practices, including hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering food, water and medicine for domestic, ceremonial and healing purposes; and resources for building shelters, transportation, heating, cooking and drying. In addition, “respecting the spirit of the forest” is about being responsible for maintaining the integrity of the forest when disturbances occur, for example, by implementing restorative measures.

Respecting traditional knowledge and harmonizing multiple uses are central to our Vision for First Nations forestry.

## Key Trend Indicators

- *Forest management plans, regulations and regimes that respects the spirit of the forest and incorporates First Nations customary law, values, traditional knowledge and the wisdom of the Elders*
- *Investments in traditional land use research and occupancy studies*







# Economy linked to community well-being

... a vibrant and sustainable First Nations forest-based economy that engages youth and results in healthy First Nations communities and environments.



Many First Nations across Canada are forest-dependent: 80 percent of First Nations communities are located in Canada's forest regions. For those First Nations within or adjacent to areas with commercial forestry potential, forestry can offer the best opportunity for community sustainability, which creates wealth, income, jobs and skills that support community self-reliance.

One of the key ingredients for healthy communities is the engagement of First Nations youth in forestry-related training, education and employment. Focused investments are needed to prepare youth for careers in the forest sector.

In the future, government and industry partners are encouraged to allocate more resources to community-based education and on-the-job training. By these means, literacy and technical and business competencies are strengthened and First Nations citizens have an opportunity to acquire the basic skills required for employment in forestry-related occupations and professions.

## Key Trend Indicators

- *Access by First Nations youth to educational opportunities and successful completion of professional training in natural resources-related fields*
- *Employment in the forest-based economy, both on and off reserve*
- *First Nations business ownership and partnerships with industry*
- *Participation in emerging opportunities such as bio-energy, environmental goods and services, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and procurement opportunities in forestry services*
- *Workforce participation at all levels in the forest sector, from entry-level to senior management*
- *Market access for First Nations forest products and services facilitated through increased certification and branding*







# Summary

First Nations forestry involves holistic and integrated land management, sustainable use and environmental stewardship, and the restoration of economic self-sufficiency, governance and community well-being. It is about respecting the “spirit of the forest,” restoring the vitality of First Nations communities and working with the natural resources upon which we depend. In terms of priorities, all are equally important.

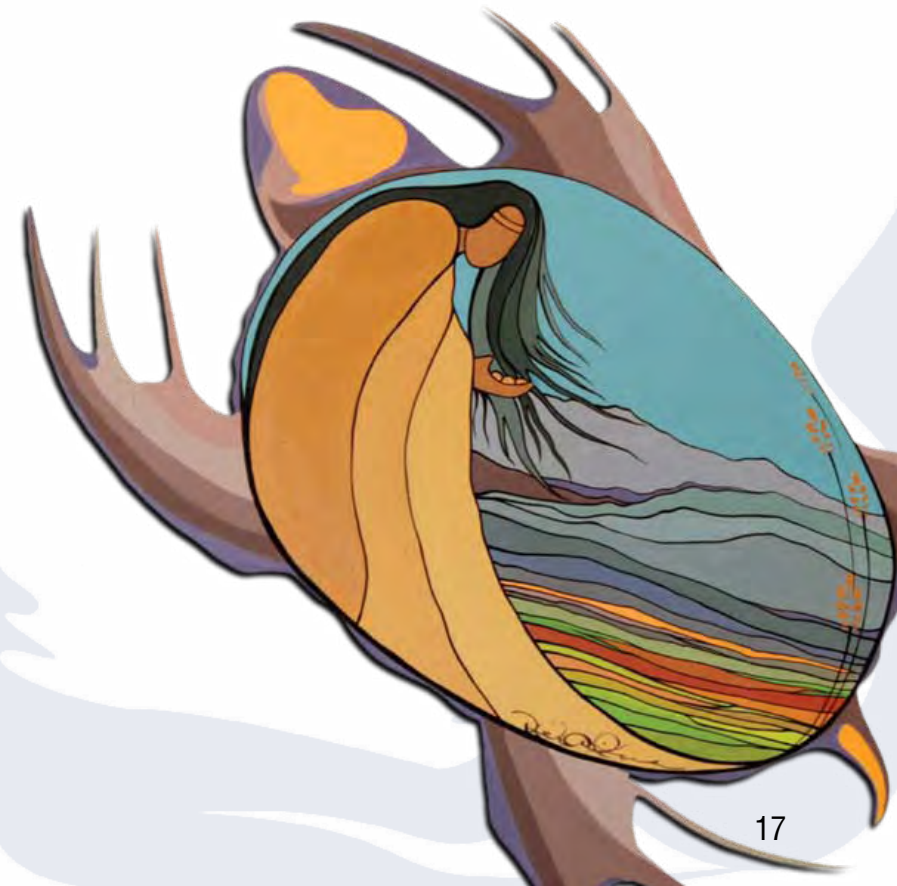
As First Nations forestry practitioners, our Vision is about the future. It is informed by our collective experiences, the teachings of our Elders and our daily lives working in forestry in and around our communities.

Our vision for First Nations forestry in 2020 is ambitious but realistic and achievable. We are seeking to achieve healthy, self-reliant First Nations communities that participate more fully in the forest-based economy in accordance with the values and aspirations of our individual communities.

We are making good progress on several fronts. Looking back over the past 15 years of the First Nations Forestry Program, we have witnessed a measurable positive change in our capacity to govern and sustainably manage our forest resources and in our ability to participate in and benefit from major forest sector economic opportunities. This is a “win-win” situation for both Canada and First Nations. Looking to the immediate and long-term future, we need to build on our successes and best practices and to accelerate opportunities for our youth.

The key indicators identified in this report will help us measure our progress in attaining the Vision. Advancing the Vision will require ongoing collaboration, support and engagement by governments, industry and neighbouring non-Aboriginal communities and institutions.

We hope you will support our Vision, and we look forward to working together with you to advance First Nations participation in forestry across the country.





# First Nations Forestry Program National Council



## Visioning Exercise

### Participating representatives:



Earl Smith  
BC PTMC



Rose Kushnirak  
Yukon PTMC



Gordon Iron  
Saskatchewan PTMC



Chris McCormick  
Ontario PTMC



Alton Hudson  
Atlantic PTMC

### Session facilitators:

- John Doornbos, Manager, Operational Programs, Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources Canada
- Jack Smyth, Chief, Forestry Development and Aboriginal Affairs, Canadian Forest Service



Ron Matthew  
BC PTMC

*Dedicated to the memory of Ron Matthew,  
whose commitment and contributions to First Nations forestry  
are remembered with fondness, respect and appreciation.*