



Past and Future Intersect on Woodlot



Kevin hosts Nazko First Nation members and Ministry staff, laying the groundwork for a strong relationship with all the stakeholders on his newly acquired woodlot. R-L Rob Willows, FLNRO, Nazko Chief Stuart Alec, Kevin Arnett, Woodlot Licensee.

By SARA GRADY

Kevin Arnett has wanted to manage a slice of the forest for quite some time. He started working on his parents' woodlot five years ago, but the dream of having responsibility for his own land has been brewing for much longer.

That dream came to fruition this year when Kevin turned nineteen and took possession of Woodlot License #626, making him the youngest woodlotter in the program's 27-year history. And it's no ordinary woodlot.

The 600-hectare plot spreading west of Quesnel, like countless others in the region, is a shadow of its former self thanks to the ravages of the Mountain Pine Beetle. Nearly two thirds of the forest was wiped out, leaving sparse stands of spruce and fir.

Most woodlotters in BC can stagger their planting and harvest regimes, but for those recovering from the total devastation of the pine beetle the planting is done in broad strokes, and the harvest is an event on the distant horizon.

Such is the case for Kevin, who plans to plant the last of the recently logged beetle-damaged

blocks, then focus on brushing for the next few years. He expects it will be at least ten years before he can begin to assess harvesting prospects.

During that decade Kevin will be working closely with an important group of neighbours: the Nazko First Nation. His woodlot overlaps a region steeped in history and cultural heritage tracing back to at least 2200 BC.

The Carrier Sekani Nation, or Dakelh (meaning "people who go around by boat"), covers approximately 76,000 square kilometres in BC's north central interior and spans from



Like 60% of Kevin's woodlot, this block was logged in 2004 to remove trees killed by the Mountain Pine Beetle. Replanted in 2008, the spruce growing here are classified as "free growing" – the sign of a vital, healthy forest.

the Pacific Ocean to the Rocky Mountains, encompassing 19 bands, including the Nazko.

Before the arrival of European settlers and the resultant fur trade in the late 1800s the Carrier way of life was centred on a seasonal round: a summer flurry of hunting, fishing, gathering berries and other plants, and preserving it all

for both consumption and commerce. "Grease trails" – named for the coveted oil rendered from eulachon, or candlefish – were developed so that bands could communicate and conduct trade amongst themselves.

It was one such grease trail that provided safe passage for explorer Alexander Mackenzie, a

Scotsman who was determined to find a safe route from "Montreal, Canada" to the Northwest Passage. In fact, Kevin learned during a visit with the Nazko Band Chief Stuart Alec that it was the Chief's great, great, great grandmother who served as guide for Mackenzie and his seven companions in 1793, leading them safely through the Nuxalt-Carrier Grease Trail (or Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail) from Quesnel to Bella Coola.

It's this heritage that Kevin will be closely guarding on the Punchaw Lake woodlot. One of his first tasks was hosting Chief Alec, several Band stakeholders and Ministry officials to ensure an open dialogue of respect exists. It was a welcomed endorsement from Chief Alec when he shared his tremendous faith in the woodlot licence program and its commitment to honouring First Nations history and preserving the health of the forest.

As part of the next, vital generation taking a role in the provincial woodlot program, it seems that youth like Kevin can help a bright future unfold without abandoning the past.

2015 CONFERENCE *Wine, Woodlots and Wanderings*

The Okanagan Shuswap and Boundary Woodlot Associations are co-hosting the joint conference for the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations and the Woodlot Product Development Council this year.



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