



Woodlotters demonstrate excellence

By SARA GRADY

When presenting Alistair Schroff and Earl Ingram with the Minister's Award for Excellence in Woodlot Management, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thompson gave strong words of praise and identified Schroff as "an invaluable resource to the Ministry in his 13 years of woodlot operations". Schroff and his father-in-law were the recipients of both the Northern Region and overall Provincial awards - which recognize the exemplary practices of licensees.

Consistent with his genuine desire to give back to his community, the entire cash award of \$3500 was given to local charities - the Lakes Animal Friendship Society and the Southside Seniors Housing Society. It is this willingness to share that makes this Burns Lake native such a valuable member of the Woodlot community.

The requirements for a successful award application involve three criteria: Improved Site Productivity, Improved Utilization and Increased Administrative Efficiency. Schroff and Ingram demonstrated excellence in all 3 areas.

Through creating one of the first 10-year Forest Development Plans in the Nadina District, Schroff greatly reduced the workload and amount of paperwork for himself and the Ministry by harvesting four five-year cut control periods without amendment. Similarly, he streamlined the process for the administration of beetle kill and blowdown salvage openings, reducing the time both he and the Ministry would usually require for tracking and reporting.



'Woodlot licenses are a social contract. There are obligations that come with those rights,' says Alistair Schroff, above in a stand of nine-year-old replanted spruce. Schroff and Earl Ingram, top right, were the Minister's Awards for Excellence in Woodlot Management.

Schroff, a UBC Forestry graduate and Registered Professional Forester, has also taken steps to improve site productivity that benefit not only the business, but the environment as well. The woodlot has significant plantings of Class A (genetically-modified) spruce and pine. A more expensive alternative to Class B stock, these plantings are expected to be healthier and greatly increase yields at the end of the line. Schroff also introduced Douglas fir into his planting stock, a variety that will better adapt to anticipated changes in climate in years to come.

Licensees are obligated to replant harvested



areas, with a few exceptions such as very small openings created by blowdown or areas which are the Ministry's responsibility. Schroff has taken this obligation

one step further, re-planting even these areas which are technically exempt. He's made significant efforts to rehabilitate access roads once logging is complete, despite the fact that rules allow for a proportion of permanent roads to remain unplanted after harvest. In an area known for its lush rolling forests and pristine fishing lakes, maintaining a healthy 'looking' woodlot is just as important as running a productive and profitable one.

Schroff demonstrated many examples of improved utilization as well. Poor grade logs were marketed which would normally end up in a slash pile, salvage operations were conducted to minimize future losses and trees disturbed by roads, landings and skid trails were made use of.

Schroff devotes incredible energy and effort into the development of better practices, and shares his knowledge with fellow licensees and members of the community as a past-President of the Nadina Woodlot Association, an instructor for aspiring professional foresters at the College of New Caledonia, as a host of field tours for residents and young students, and as an author of instructional manuals for woodlot licensees. Schroff and his family demonstrate a dedication to the essence of the woodlot program, setting an excellent example for their peers and a positive image in the public eye.

'Woodlots for widows and dummies'

When Julia Kowalsky's husband Cliff died in 2006, she was thrown headlong into managing the family woodlot. What she found was a new passion, and a whole lot of new friends willing to help her along the way

By JULIA KOWALSKY

Cliff died before completing his 2005/06 logging plan. Even though he was able to deliver several loads to Canfor before his death, my first challenge was to carry on and see the logging completed.

At the start, there was a sense of panic, followed by an extremely sharp learning curve. I found that people, whether in the Ministry, forester friends, or consultants, were very patient. They willingly answered my questions, sometimes the same ones over and over, and offered advice.

One challenge was learning all the terms and acronyms. Over time I came to realize that I had heard, and surprisingly understood, many of the terms, protocols and procedures from listening to Cliff. Thirty years of osmosis was standing me in good stead.

While relieved that logging was over, I soon discovered that Cliff had ordered thousands of trees to be planted that summer. I phoned John at Canfor and was put in contact with one of their planting contractors, who planted the blocks in two days and did an excellent job. The trees that year were of good stock and are now three feet high.

Slowly I began to enjoy the challenges. Our three children, who had worked closely with Cliff in the bush over the years, offered plenty of advice. The many changes imple-



Julia Kowalsky enjoys a brisk winter walk out on the family woodlot near Fort St. John.

mented by the Ministry of Forests were challenging. Things had become more complicated, and for an amateur there seemed to be far too many hoops to jump through.

There are five major pipelines on our woodlot. I have always believed in consultation before the fact rather than confrontation after. But when we visited the woodlot one summer and found right of ways widened, and marking stakes all over the place, I'm afraid I became more than a little agitated. Things did end well after a few calls, meetings and taking folks to task.

In 2008 the pesky pine beetle reared its ugly head and gave us another challenge. This diversion of nature wasn't in the original management plan. Fortunately the woodlot has a good mixture of spruce and pine so there are still trees standing. We had to make some hard decisions but always kept forest health uppermost in our minds.

There have been other challenges along the way, with road tenure issues, trappers, folks

helping themselves to at least half a logging truck load of wood from a log deck, waste assessments and finding old pipelines that were not marked on any maps.

But I have also had the privilege of working with, and talking to many skilled and knowledgeable people to ensure the health of our woodlot.

Cliff had many wishes for the woodlot, but one dear to both of us was to make it a place of learning. I took my class there in 2011 to show them what sustainable forestry looks like as well as explain why it is sometimes necessary to take out a large area of trees to keep the forest healthy.

My education is far from complete and I know there will be more challenges. Just keeping up with deadlines and the changes in regulations can be daunting. However, I have a telephone list of helpful people I can call. When I retire from teaching, I am thinking of writing a book on woodlots and titling it "Woodlots for Widows and Dummies."



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