

## Woodlotters gather to celebrate success

“My being is filled up with goodness to see you here.”

These were the words of welcome from Chief Willie Charlie of the Sts’ailes First Nation as licensees and stakeholders from around the province gathered in Harrison Hot Springs for the 2011 Annual General Meetings of the Federation of BC Woodlot Association and the Woodlot Product Development Council. In addition to the usual business, attendees were treated to some unique and memorable presentations, and recognized some exemplary forest advocates.

Mark Clark, FBCWA President, took time in his opening speech to honour three very special woodlotters, inducting them as Life Members into the Federation. Len Bawtree (Shuswap Okanagan), Wilf Chelle (Peace River) and Peter Kokoska (Fraser Valley) were recognized for their significant and lasting contributions to the woodlot program, receiving praise from Clark for being “true supporters of small tenures” in the province.

The Woodlot Product Development Council also took an opportunity to recognize the efforts of Matt Wealick, who guides the activities of the Ch-ihl-kway-uhk First Nations Woodlot.

The WPDC Stewardship Recognition Program celebrates licensees who demonstrate



FBCWA President Mark Clark (top left) shares a laugh with newly-inducted Life Members (clockwise from top right): Peter Kokoska, Len Bawtree, and Wilf Chelle.

exceptional management practices and elevate the industry as a whole. This First Nations owned and operated woodlot represents a challenging mix of public interface, endangered wildlife species and riparian habitat, which Wealick and his partners manage with tremendous success, in spite of early public scrutiny and regulatory hurdles.

After touring the Ch-ihl-kway-uhk site and enjoying a barbeque dinner in Agassiz, woodlotters returned indoors the following day to

take part in a panel discussion addressing International Success Stories. Experts representing Canada, Africa, Scotland, Finland and Germany shared their insights about the various regions, exploring the similarities and surprising differences within the industry.

Attendees heard about countries where a tree is worth more standing in the forest than in a lumber mill, where timber stands grew out of post-war government policy, and where vast portions of land are entrusted to families for stewardship in a fashion similar to the Woodlot program but on a much smaller footprint.

As MLA Steve Thompson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources, said in his Keynote address, BC is considered a world leader in forestry practices and the Woodlot Program is an integral part of the industry.

The annual presentation of the Minister’s Award of Excellence is a very public means of recognizing the work done by these forest stewards. George Delisle, Alistair Schroff, Earl Ingram and Grant Hayden were honoured with the award this year.

All the licensees, though, give tremendous energy and dedication to the enhancement and sustainability of our precious forest resources, one that signals the ongoing importance of the program locally – and globally.

## Minister Thomson launches online wood marketplace

A website designed to connect buyers and sellers of BC wood products was launched at the Union of BC Municipalities annual convention on September 28, by

Steve Thomson, minister of forests, lands and natural resources. WoodSouceBC.com is intended to help community forest association members, woodlot

licensees, First Nations tenures, private forest land owners, manufacturers and others to access current information on the availability of wood products

within BC’s forest communities. Its goal is to identify new log market opportunities in an effort to increase the value of wood to small tenure holders.

# First Nations venture stands out in forest

## *Ch-ihl-kway-uhk WL0084 a model in community engagement and sustainability*

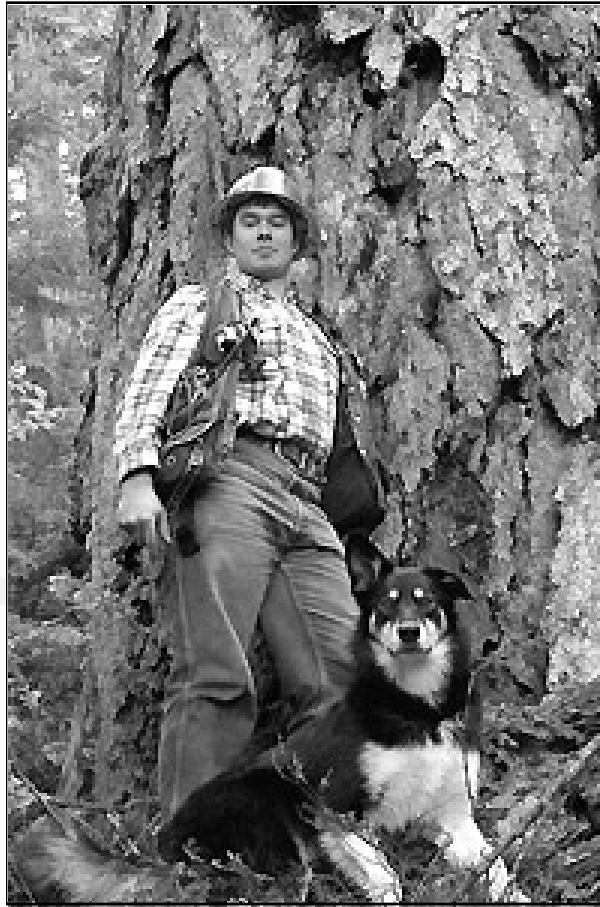
A Greek philosopher once wrote that “Nothing great is easy.”

Matt Wealick can certainly attest to that truism. The journey from the first Woodlot License Plan to the ultimate operation of the Ch-ihl-kway-uhk WL 0084 wasn't an easy one for Matt and his partners.

Negative public perceptions of logging weighed on the venture, and there were many other obstacles to overcome as this entirely First Nations licensed and managed woodlot took root. But Matt's ability to navigate the multitude of challenges paved the way for long-term cultural and commercial success.

With a signed Forest & Range Agreement dated 2004, Ch-ihl-kway-uhk Forest Ltd. set about writing a five year Woodlot License Plan and got a surprisingly negative reaction from the community. The parcel is located in the Chilliwack River Valley – territory of the Ts'elxweyeqw Tribe – and includes the Elk-Thurston Trail, a highly popular destination for hikers. Despite what he felt were sound compromises between environmental protection and commercial necessity, Matt was challenged with a 1,200 signature petition and they were forced to go back to the drawing board.

Further hampering the completion of a plan was the revelation that WL0084 was home to several species at risk: the Pacific Water Shrew, the Coastal Giant Salamander and Tall Bugbane. As such, they were protected by setting aside formal Wildlife Habitat Areas. Coupled with multiple Community



**Matt Wealick hopes to increase awareness of opportunities in the forest sector for First Nations youth.** UBC FACULTY OF FORESTRY

Watersheds and a network of uncharted streams representing riparian areas, plotting a course for eventual harvest on the woodlot was becoming an exercise in walking on eggshells.

Through careful public consultation and education, and measured efforts to comply with Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations standards while still shaping a viable business model, Matt and his team finally received approval for their

Management and Woodlot License Plans in 2007. Since 2008 they have harvested 30,000m<sup>3</sup> over five cut blocks, building four kilometres of access roads, successfully balancing the needs of the public and the wildlife.

While some members of the public were very vocal about the preservation of the natural landscape, on the flip side, there was also the unfortunate abuse of the remote forestry roads. Illegal dumping is an ongoing issue which Matt and his Contract Supervisor, Kevin Webber, have to address.

However, they've come up with a creative solution – one that reaps benefits for several parties. Through a unique sponsorship initiative, local First Nations youth groups and sports teams receive financial support in return for cleaning up the waste left at the road side.

With this sponsorship program and school field trips, Matt hopes to increase awareness of the woodlot, its management, and the opportunities for local First Nations youth to become involved in the future.

A member of the Ch-ihl-kway-uhk tribe – part of the Tzeachten First Nation – Matt is ever aware of the imperative to honour the cultural needs of his community. Through the careful management of this woodlot, ongoing dialogue with the community, and a commitment to the long term sustainability of the forest - both economically and environmentally - Matt's efforts serve as a shining example of small tenure forestry, and exemplify the goals of the Woodlot program.



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