



# Aboriginal Peoples and Forestry in Canada

## *Canada is a global leader in the protection of Aboriginal rights.*

- Canada provides strong legal protection for the rights of Aboriginal Peoples to continue traditional practices and customs resulting from their ancestors' use of the land before European contact.
- This protection is provided through numerous treaties negotiated between the Crown and individual Aboriginal groups over the years and through court decisions clarifying key aspects of constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights.
- In 1982, Canada took the historic step of providing constitutional protection to the Aboriginal and treaty rights of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. In combination with subsequent Supreme Court of Canada decisions, this has produced one of the strongest frameworks supporting the protection of Aboriginal rights anywhere in the world.
- In Canada, an Aboriginal group must be consulted before decisions are taken that would affect their rights on their traditional territory. This includes the land-use decisions related to forestry.

## *Empowering Aboriginal Peoples is a key component of Canada's approach to sustainable forest management.*

- The Government of Canada is committed to supporting opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples in the natural resources sectors and to fulfilling its legal duty to consult Aboriginal groups whenever its decisions or actions could impact established or potential Aboriginal or treaty rights.
- The Government of Canada also recognizes that industry has a critical role to play in developing economic partnerships with Aboriginal Peoples, including ensuring that they are properly consulted on plans to develop natural resources.
- Industry associations, such as the Forest Products Association of Canada, also engage with Aboriginal communities by encouraging development of business leadership and human resource management best practices.
- Aboriginal engagement and consultation by and between all parties — the federal Crown, provincial Crown, Aboriginal governments and business organizations, and the forest industry — can vary widely for different types of projects and by region.
- In addition to federal, provincial and industry roles relating to Aboriginal engagement, all major third-party certification systems for forest management practices in Canada have criteria relating specifically to Aboriginal consultations and engagement. With 161 million hectares of third-party certified forest, 43 percent of all certified forest in the world, certification systems in Canada require more Aboriginal engagement than anywhere else in the world.

### *Canada is committed to working with Aboriginal communities to enhance their participation in the forest sector.*

- Forests play a central role – culturally, spiritually and economically – in the lives of many Aboriginal communities across Canada.
- As of 2011, 70 percent of Aboriginal communities in Canada were in located in forested areas, and about 9,000 Aboriginal people are employed in the forest sector.
- Forest tenure arrangements in Canada are changing. Over the past decade, many provinces and territories have engaged in tenure reform efforts to encourage greater local and Aboriginal community participation in the forest sector – creating new economic development opportunities for these communities.
- Between 2003 and 2013, Aboriginal interests increased their share of total Canadian tenure volume from 5 percent to over 10 percent.

### *Canada is supporting measures to increase Aboriginal participation in forestry.*

- Governments are actively supporting business development, community readiness and employment in forestry for Aboriginal communities across Canada.
- The Aboriginal Forestry Initiative is the Government of Canada's strategic approach to supporting forest-based economic development for Aboriginal Peoples across Canada. Since 2011, the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative has provided more than \$10 million in funding to 50 projects across the country in more than 100 Aboriginal communities, delivering on-the-ground programming that makes a real impact in communities.
- Since 2014, the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative has worked with the Government of the Northwest Territories to support forest tenure, community readiness, industry development and market development activities through opportunities in the bio-economy in the South Slave region. This project received more than \$1 million from the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative since 2011 and will receive an additional \$965,000 of funding

in 2015/16 to support forest inventory, timber harvest plans, wood fibre supply agreements and community readiness activities in four communities.

- The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario and the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative are funding activities that help Northern Ontario Aboriginal communities identify, secure and realize economic benefits stemming from forest tenure modernization. This project is supporting the participation of 16 Aboriginal communities in five enhanced Sustainable Forestry License conversions in Northern Ontario. This project is expected to provide an additional \$1 million of funding to 20 Aboriginal communities in 2015/16.
- Several provinces have introduced forest consultation and revenue sharing agreements to share economic benefits with First Nations based on harvest activities in their traditional territories. British Columbia has close to 200 of these agreements with First Nations. Since 2003, the province has shared more than \$350 million with participating First Nations.
- Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and Yukon also have revenue sharing based on modern treaties, which provide a foundation for mutual, beneficial and sustainable development of natural resources across Canada. These modern treaties have provided Aboriginal ownership over 600,000 square kilometres of land (almost the size of Manitoba), capital transfers of more than \$3.2 billion and certainty with respect to Aboriginal land rights in approximately 40 percent of Canada's land mass.