



Indigenous 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 Indigenous 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 Indigenous group must be consulted before decisions are taken that would affect their rights on their traditional territory. This includes land-use decisions related to forestry.

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

- The Government of Canada is committed to supporting opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in the natural resource sectors and to fulfilling its legal duty to consult Indigenous 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 Indigenous 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 Indigenous communities by encouraging development of business leadership and human resource management best practices.
- Indigenous engagement and consultation by and between all parties — the federal Crown, provincial Crown, Indigenous 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 Indigenous engagement, all major third-party certification systems for forest management practices in Canada have elements that relate specifically to Indigenous consultations and engagement. With 166 million hectares of third-party certified forest, 40% of all certified forest in the world, certification systems play an important role in supporting Indigenous engagement in forestry operations across Canada.

Canada is committed to working with Indigenous communities to enhance their participation in the forest sector.

- Forests play a central role – culturally, spiritually and economically – in the lives of many Indigenous communities across Canada.
- As of 2011, 70% of Indigenous communities in Canada were located in forested areas, and about 9,000 Indigenous 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 Indigenous community participation in the forest sector – creating new economic development opportunities for these communities.
- Between 2003 and 2013, Indigenous interests increased their share of total Canadian tenure volume from 5% to over 10%.

Canada is supporting measures to increase Indigenous participation in forestry.

- Governments are actively supporting business development, community readiness and employment in forestry for Indigenous communities across Canada.
- The Aboriginal Forestry Initiative is the Government of Canada's strategic approach to supporting forest-based economic development for Indigenous 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 Indigenous communities, delivering on-the-ground programming that makes a real impact in communities.
- Since 2014, the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative, in concert with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, and the Government of the Northwest Territories, has been supporting the development of a regional bioeconomy through Indigenous forest tenure, community readiness and industry development activities in the South Slave region of the territory.

In the same period, the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative provided close to \$2 million in funding, with current activities focussed on supporting improved forest inventories, harvest plans and community readiness activities among seven Indigenous groups and wood fibre supply agreements with the two Forest Management Agreement holders.

- The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative are funding activities that help Northern Ontario Indigenous communities identify, secure and realize economic benefits stemming from forest tenure modernization. This project provided more than \$750,000 of funding in 2014/15 to support the participation of Indigenous communities in conversions to enhanced Sustainable Forest Licences in Northern Ontario. This project is expected to provide approximately \$1 million of additional funding to 19 Indigenous 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. Since 2002, the Province of British Columbia (B.C.) has signed forestry agreements with 177 First Nations, providing more than \$382 million in revenue-sharing and access to more than 181 million cubic metres of timber. First Nations in B.C. hold tenures representing 13% of the provincial Allowable Annual Cut – up from less than 3% in 2001.
- 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 Indigenous 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% of Canada's land mass.