

CALLING ALL FORESTRY WORKERS: BE AN AMBASSADOR FOR FORESTRY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

By Pieta Woolley

You work in the woods, so you already know that BC's forest industry is sustainable and renewable. You see it every day. But ironically, out of the woods and in the small cities where most forest workers live, that good-news story often doesn't get told at all.

You care about your work. You also care about your neighbours. This article will give you some tools to talk about the forest so people who don't know much about the industry will start to understand it—and your pride in your work—better.

Here on the coast, older stands of timber (aka old growth) are still an important component of BC's working forest. The forest we're allowed to harvest has shrunk significantly over the last 40 years. (The allowable annual cut has declined from 23.6 million m³/year to 16.5 m³/year between 1975 and 2015.) Reducing the working forest more negatively affects our rural towns and cities and BC's economy as a whole. And, as you know, BC's forest industry is a

world-class example of sustainable forest management.

The Truck Loggers Association is working hard with communities and government to tell forestry's good news stories. As people who work in the forest industry, though, you are on-the-ground in the places that matter most: small towns and cities that depend on a vibrant, sustainable forest sector.

We know many of you are more comfortable out in the woods with the trees rather than talking about forestry at your local arena or pub. But we're hoping you'll chime in, with the help of this article, and let your friends and neighbours know why you're proud of forestry and the work you do.

And now, here are five ways to help your neighbours understand why, on old growth, the word of the hour is "balance."

1. We balance the harvest and the conservation of all ecosystems including old growth.

Facts: On Vancouver Island, more than 500,000 hectares of old growth is fully protected, forever. That's the equivalent of 27 Saltspring Islands.

How Andrew Ashford talks about it: There are two very different ways to talk about old growth with people outside the industry, says Andrew Ashford, the Ministry of Forests District Manager for the North Island.

First, technical. On Vancouver Island, 13.3 percent of public forests are fully protected from logging forever, in parks and protected areas—exceeding United Nations targets. And, when forestry professionals plan a cut block, provincial laws dictate that they must leave some trees as old growth management areas (OGMAs), meaning old growth is managed for throughout the Island—not just in pretty spots aimed at tourists, but remaining for other values as well.

Second—and probably more convincingly, Ashford believes the root of the public concern is emotional, rather than technical.

"I get it, I love old growth," he said, mentioning that he sometimes looks at the landscape near Port McNeill where he's based, and imagines the primeval forest as it once was. "Forests are very personal for people. Depending on where you've grown up and how much time you've spent in them determines what forests mean to you spiritually. Standing in a place with very large trees feels like being in a cathedral. It's an amazing sight. [Harvesting old growth] is about a balance of values, determined by what the public expects. And I think we're doing an excellent job."

2. We need a working forest to have a forest industry.

Facts: One in 25 Vancouver Island jobs is directly in forestry (http://www.cofi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/bc_industry_impact_01-2015.pdf)—supporting a huge proportion of the region. And, about one sixth of the timber available for harvesting on Vancouver Island is old growth.

How Dallas Smith talks about it: Given his background, you wouldn't expect Dallas Smith to support old growth logging at all. The 42-year-old grew up in Surrey—an urbanite. In his early career, he helped negotiate the celebrated Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. And, he's Kwakwaka'wakw, a former director of the Nanwakolas Council. But he does support the working forest because jobs are so important to the North Island; he takes flack for it on Twitter, and elsewhere.

"People think that if you're First Nations, you have to protect every tree," said Smith, who is now the provincial Liberal candidate for North Island-

Campbell River. "Protecting some trees is important, but there's an economic side that my community needs."

Smith's story gives him a unique insight into where the old growth conflict comes from. In cities, he said, many people are out of touch with the real economy of the province. In 2015, the provincial government collected over \$800 million directly from the forest sector—an amount that does not include income tax paid by workers, or secondary industries. That's enough money to fund the entire Legislative Assembly, Office of the Premier, and several entire government ministries together. That disconnect was laid plain, he said, at both the UBCM and the BC Chamber of Commerce, where urbanites voted on old growth, not thinking through the real costs to workers, their families and communities like his.

"There's a balance between ecology, economics and quality of life that needs to be there," Smith said. "It's like a three-legged stool. If it's not balanced, it can get pretty wobbly."

3. Communities need to find their own balance.

Facts: There are no official statistics showing how much revenue big-tree tourism generates compared to logging some old growth—but local communities are proactively assessing it for themselves.

How Hank Bood talks about it: At last September's UBCM meeting, Port Hardy Mayor Hank Bood wasn't impressed by the resolution to end all old growth logging on Vancouver Island. The gathering of municipal officials "isn't a think tank," he noted. And the resolution,

one of 178 considered at the three-day meeting, was decided in five minutes, he remembers—sandwiched between decisions about managing migratory geese, and preventing the spread of invasive mussels.

For his community of 5,000 on the northern tip of the island, rooted in forestry with a fast-emerging tourism sector as the gateway to the Great Bear Rainforest, the question of how to value old growth isn't something to grandstand about. Rather, it's a serious question best answered locally.

Claiming that "we don't get in each other's way," Bood said his community is a great example of co-existing tourism, a wild fishery, aquaculture, and forestry.

"I'm an optimist," Bood said. "There's room to preserve things that need to be preserved, and also to protect the day-to-day stuff, like livings for families and communities."

4. First Nations stewardship must be acknowledged and respected.

Facts: Forestry companies are increasingly owned by First Nations in BC. About 12 percent of the provincial cut is now managed by First Nations. (<https://openparliament.ca/committees/natural-resources/41-2/48/keith-atkinson-1/only/>).

How Robert J. Dennis Sr. talks about it: "None of them come to visit us to find out what we're doing." That's Huu-Ay-Aht Chief Councillor Robert Dennis' main beef with anti-old growth activists on Vancouver Island. "I sit here in my office with no one knocking on my door. It's people outside our territories trying to tell us how to run our affairs. It gets the hair on the back of my neck up."

The biggest business belonging to the Huu-ay-aht First Nation is forestry. A shake and shingle operation and a small log sort complement their harvesting operations, which are partly under the Maa-Nulth First Nations Treaty, and partly under provincial tenures. Old growth is part of their territory in Pacific Rim Park and several islands off the West Coast, plus TFL 44 and elsewhere. They're managed under an assortment of provincial and treaty laws and plans, plus the Huu-ay-aht's



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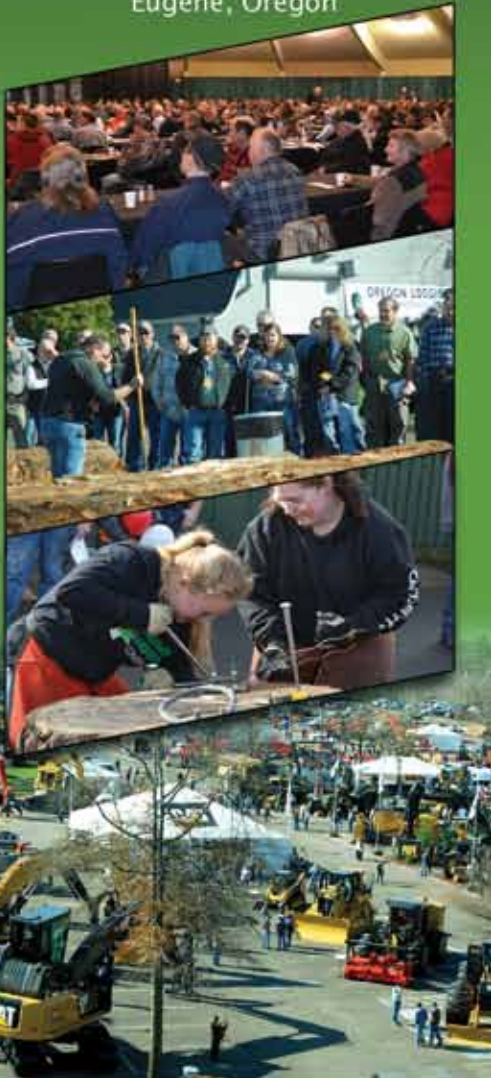


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own five principals, representing community standards.

“Please talk to us before making statements about how our land should be managed,” said Dennis.

5. Forestry is well planned and heavily regulated.

Facts: This is not the Wild West. The VILUP is a multi-stakeholder agreement that governs old growth harvesting and protection. All forestry activities on Crown Land happen under the provincial Forestry Act. Problems are resolved through the BC Forest Practices Board.

How Andrew Ashford talks about it: If there is public appetite for a different kind of approach to old growth, the way to address that is through revising the VILUP. However, he said, the agreement is worth respecting, as it is. In the post-Clayoquot era, Ashford explained that environmentalists, public advisory groups, tourism, business and First Nations came together to write the agreement. Any changes to it “should be discussed in public, and informed.” Not, in other words, quickly at the UBCM or

the BC Chamber of Commerce.

Ashford is a registered professional forester. It’s a professional designation that requires a university degree, successfully completing a professional exam and two years of articling. These are the people who do the on-the-ground planning for cut blocks. Wildlife tree patches, visual quality, OGMAs, riparian zones and other conservation-related instruments are required when planning.

“Forestry in this province is not perfect, and we’re not going to make everyone happy,” Ashford acknowledged. “But I’d say I’m really happy with the sector.... The reality is, we are going to have a vast amount of old growth distributed across Vancouver Island forever.”

Hopefully, a few of these talking points resonated with you, and you’ll want to share them with your friends and neighbours. We at the Truck Loggers Association can’t emphasize enough how important these on-the-ground conversations can be, in maintaining a long-term, sustainable industry.

So please share your story far and wide in your community!▲

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