

GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES: TRAINING, PARTNERSHIPS AND SPOTTED OWL FRIENDLY LOGGING

By Brenda Martin



Craig John is one of the Lil'wat people working for Southview Forest Services. Before coming back to Mount Currie, he was working at Southview's Pitt Lake camp.

Between training, partnerships and spotted-owl-friendly logging, there's a lot of good news forestry going on the Lil'wat First Nation territory near Mount Currie, just past Pemberton.

Lil'wat First Nation has developed tenure within their traditional territory and now has three different types—a non-replaceable forest license, two woodlots and a regular forest license making up an annual allowable cut (AAC) of 65,000 m³. Klay Tindall, Forest Operations Manager for Lil'wat Forestry Ventures LP, said the final goal is have all of the different licences amalgamated into one First Nations woodland licence—an area-based, long-term forest tenure unique to First Nations' interest in the land and resources.

With an AAC of that size, the Lil'wat Nation has invested time and energy into forestry training for its band members. First they contracted the College of the Rockies to come to Mount Currie and put on their Forest-

ry Boot Camp course. The course takes 15 days and participants end up with a broad range of forestry skills. Tracey Whiting, Continuing Education Manager at College of the Rockies, said the Lil'wat First Nation was able to have the course tailored to their students' needs as part of the contract. Here are the skills the Lil'wat requested for their Forestry Boot Camp course.

- Teambuilding
- Forestry Vehicle Safety Awareness
- Occupational First Aid Level 1
- Transportation Endorsement
- Basic Chainsaw Safety & Operations
- ATV Training
- Introduction to Resource Management
- Back Country Safety & Travel
- Field Communication & Data Collection

- Introduction to Layout and Site Assessment
- Introduction to Current Forest Management
- Priorities (Pine Beetle & Fire Ecology)
- Species Identification
- GPS & Mapping
- Introduction to Wildlife Management
- Bear Aware
- WHMIS
- S100A
- Overview of Endangered Species
- Introduction to Silviculture
- Networking opportunity with local forest contractors and businesses

“The course teaches students a broad set of skills,” says Tindall, “so you can get a diverse workforce out of it.”

The Lil'wat First Nation also trained eight fallers this past year through the BC Forest Safety Council's New Faller



The orange dots on the trees let the loggers know which trees to leave standing. As a managed future habitat area, the logging operation must leave 40 of the 80 largest trees per hectare.

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Training program. The program is run by BC Forest Safety Council and administered by the College of the Rockies. It ensures new fallers entering the workforce are properly trained and prepared to work in a safe, productive manner. It includes 30 days closely supervised field and classroom training followed by up to 180 days of falling activity under close supervision, before taking the faller certification exam.

But after training, people need on-the-job experience. That's where a partnership between the Lil'wat Forestry Ventures LP, Southview Forest Services and Ashlaur Trading comes into play. Of the 12 cutblocks that Lil'wat Forestry Ventures has harvested since last spring, five were harvested by Southview Forest Services. As part of the agreement, Southview has taken some Lil'wat First Nations members onto their crew to continue their training. Howie McKamey, a partner in Southview Forest Services, said, "We had six Lil'wat people working on our Gates Lake crew. Four fallers, one guy on rigging and one guy on bridges. The total crew would have been 10 people—then 12 when we brought the yarder in." The partnership has been a positive one in McKamey's view. "The Mount Currie group is really progressive," said McKamey, "There are lots of people available to work and they want to work."

Craig John is one of the Lil'wat people working for Southview. Before coming back to Mount Currie, he was working at Southview's Pitt Lake camp. Now he's working locally, he can go home to his family each night which he appreciates. He started out as a buckler and now he's a rigger—setting out the guylines to stabilize the yarder. Asked what he likes about forestry, John says he likes working as a team with the other guys and the fact that the work is outdoors and physically demanding. "I started young making firewood with my dad and my uncles," said John. He considered forestry again after a friend of his got onto a rigging crew and got his ticket. "It was a way to move on from construction work," said John.

The logs harvested as part of this partnership are hauled down to the Squamish dry land sort run by West-Barr Contracting where they are scaled and sorted for sale. Barry Simpson of Ashlaur Trading explains that it's a more

complicated sort than your average. “We have fifty-six different sorts going on here,” said Simpson, “which is a lot more than usual. We’re sorting for multiple domestic consumer products—peeler logs, custom cut, high-grade, shop quality, pulp mill, cedar mill—as well as selling multiple sorts to Korea, China and Japan.”

And this is where the story takes another turn. Following revisions to the 1997 Spotted Owl Management Plan, the amount of area under formal owl management increased without unduly restricting timber availability. The new plan was approved in early 2013 through the Government Actions Regulation (GAR). Better distribution and concentration of long-term owl habitat areas in higher quality habitat resulted in the designation of a “managed future habitat area” near Gates Lake, not far from the Lil’wat community of Mount Currie. The general wildlife measures for the area supports restricted harvesting opportunities that are intended to enhance spotted owl habitat and Lil’wat took the lead to pursue this opportunity. However, since objectives in Lil’wat’s forest stewardship plan (FSP) referred to the now out-of-date 1997 owl plan, in order for logging plans to come to fruition for the 2012 season their FSP needed an amendment.

“To legally enable this operation for the upcoming season we had to resolve Lil’wat’s application to amend their forest stewardship plan, making it consistent with the latest spotted owl plan, as well as amending an overlapping old growth management area,” said Frank DeGagne, Land & Resource Specialist for the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. “Even with a full review by tenures staff and a site visit, we were able to process the application to a favorable decision quite quickly—under two months—which enabled Lil’wat to do some logging in support of local training while also enhancing owl habitat.”

The Gates Lake cut block is now a managed future habitat area within a broader spotted owl wildlife habitat area. The debris management objectives require that loggers process the wood where it falls rather than hauling all the debris out to the roadside. Where this isn’t possible, they redistribute the debris created at the roadside back to



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the forest floor. The idea is to leave a covering of branches and needles that small mammals and rodents—regular owl prey—would be drawn to make their homes in. The logging operation is also obligated to leave 40 of the 80 largest trees per hectare standing so owls can use them to sit in as they hunt their prey. “The idea is that these stands may become suitable owl habitat again, and used by owls, sooner in the future (i.e. 80 years from now) than had the stand been clear-cut harvested by conventional methods (i.e. 120 years from now),” said Ian Blackburn, Spotted Owl Recovery Coordinator for the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

This harvesting is part of a bigger plan for spotted owl in the Gates Lake area. “There are also habitat enhancements within wildlife habitat areas designated as long-term owl habitat areas in the Gates area,” said Blackburn. “In these areas we only take about 33 per cent of the timber volume out and retain approximately 250 large diameter trees per hectare.” The Gates Lake area also has spotted owl habitat areas that are set aside as preserved habitat as well as several old growth management areas.

Forestry is coming together on a lot of fronts here. The training of a new, local workforce just as the industry is coming to terms with the labour crisis ahead of us. A mutually beneficial partnership between established forest contractors—Southview Forest Services and Ashlaur Trading—with a newer First Nations forestry business—Lil’wat Forestry Ventures. And work between the Lil’wat First Nation, the Ministry for Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and the Ministry of Environment to preserve and enhance spotted owl habitat while enabling the Lil’wat First Nation to do some logging near their community in support of local training. Good news stories like this are happening every day in our coastal forest industry. We need to start telling more of them. 🌲