



# THE WOODLOT COMMUNICATOR



www.woodlot.bc.ca

Summer 2020



Aerial view of a cut block on Saulteau Woodlot License #231 in Moberley Lake (2007)

## Saulteau First Nations: Woodlot Excellence in the Community

Community. It's at the heart of every woodlot in British Columbia. Every one of the province's 850 woodlot licences is woven into the fabric of the communities they share...economically, ecologically, and socially.

For each one, this community relationship is slightly different. Some are nestled up against towns. They're shared with outdoor enthusiasts on horseback or ATV, hunters, foragers, hikers, and bikers.

***Others, still, call the woodlot their home.***

This is the case for the Saulteau First Nations, which manages W0231 in Moberley Lake. The territory is shared by The Saulteaux (Anishinabe), Nehiyaw (Cree) and Mountain Dunne-Za (Beaver) tribes – a 'community' arrangement that was formalized by Treaty 8

in 1914. Management of the woodlot takes into account the needs of all three tribes.

For years the Saulteau Nations' woodlot licence was managed by John Stokmans. Over time, the woodlot was transformed from an underutilized natural resource to a consistent source of economic, environmental and cultural benefits.

His efforts, and those of the community, were so successful they captured the Minister's Award for Innovation and Excellence in Woodlot Management in 2018. It acknowledged the far-reaching achievements of the Nation, both financially and environmentally.

For Stokmans, this success was a community effort...including the broader forestry community. When first taking the helm, he forged a relationship with Don Scott, a silviculture expert with Chetwynd Forest Industries (CFI).

Its parent company, West Fraser, is known for its strong First Nations ties in forestry around the province.

Scott guided Stokmans through many aspects of forest management, not the least of which was the arduous process of navigating RESULTS, the provincial government's data reporting system.

***With a solid understanding of the successes (and failures) on the woodlot, Stokmans was better able to plan for harvest and restocking...***

...and make a case to the provincial ministry for changes to broader woodlot policies.

Ministry officials, First Nations members and fellow woodlot licensees agree that Stokmans' collaborative, learning-based and reasonable

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approach was a huge benefit to the woodlot. His willingness to try novel solutions for common problems has sparked a culture of innovation in the community.

Leadership on the woodlot was known for adapting to shifting conditions. In the early 2000s the natural resource managers introduced mixed-wood stands, including blocks of aspen. Species like pine were given better footing, but not competition, in the wet, unstable soil.

The Saulteau Nations felt strongly about the use of chemicals on the woodlot for weed and pest control. After much research and deliberation, Stokmans acquired a herd of 300 sheep and professional herders to do the brushing – the control of underbrush and weeds that

compete with seedlings for light, water and nourishment – for them.

Unfortunately, the endeavour proved to be out of reach when scaled for the size of their 600 hectare woodlot, but that didn't stop the Saulteau Nations from pivoting. The 42-acre sheep pasture and barn will be converted to another business venture.

The band is in the process of planning a small square-timber mill in the former barn, and the pasture will serve as a sorting lot. For now, their timber goes to local mills offsite, but in the near future the lumber they need to expand on their 10-unit senior's housing project will come from the Nation's mill.

***There's a market for all the fibre from their woodlot. Currently, post-harvest fibre is used as biofuel by Twin Sisters Nursery to heat their greenhouses, and as firewood for the Elders in the community.***

This crown forest is a textbook example of how a woodlot licence should be managed, with community at its heart. As Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation said, "Their woodlot provides jobs for members of their nations, is operated with environmental impacts front of mind and is an added revenue stream for the Saulteau peoples."

John has passed the torch to Sarah Blake, RPF, and she already has plans to continue the tradition of innovation while meeting the high standards set by her predecessors.

The Saulteau First Nations have proven that a woodlot can balance cultural, ecological and economic needs, and host productive partnerships with BC's First Nations communities.



John Stokmans with Steve Kozuki, FES Director, at the 2018 AGM receiving the Minister's Award

By SARA GRADY

## Annual Report on B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/dripa\\_annual\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/dripa_annual_report_2020.pdf)

**This first report covers the period from when the Act was passed into law on November 28, 2019 to March 31, 2020.**



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**Sawyer Seinen learning about our forests with his dog and a stick!**



Check out the YouTube videos of our woodlot kids on their family woodlots this past summer.

**YouTube** /BCWoodlotAssoc



**FEDERATION OF BC WOODLOT ASSOCIATIONS**

381 Pheasant Road • Williams Lake, BC, V2G 5A9

Tel: (250) 398-7646 • Toll Free: 1-866-345-8733

Email: [gen\\_manager@woodlot.bc.ca](mailto:gen_manager@woodlot.bc.ca) • [www.woodlot.bc.ca](http://www.woodlot.bc.ca)

**WOODLOT PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

P.O. Box 23011 Plaza 33 Postal Outlet

Kelowna, BC V1X 7K7

Phone: (250) 961-0271 • Email: [cjmclary401@gmail.com](mailto:cjmclary401@gmail.com)