

# ACR Aboriginal Programs Project Program Template

<b>Program Area:</b>	5.0	Resource Stewardship
<b>Sub Program:</b>	5.1	Strengthening the Knowledge Base
<b>Template:</b>	5.1.5	Traditional Cultural Study and Industry Referral Program
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	<i>West Fraser Mills Ltd., Foothills Model Forest</i>	

## 1. Objective

To work with multiple Aboriginal communities within the Foothills Model Forest to collect traditional cultural knowledge and to design and implement a joint industry/Aboriginal referral process.

## 2. Description

The Foothills Model Forest (FMF) area is home to 13 Aboriginal communities in Alberta and four Aboriginal communities in British Columbia who have a vested interest in having an informed relationship with all stakeholders in the FMF area.

The focus and specific purpose of a traditional culture study (TCS), in the context of the Foothills Model Forest, is to research the merits of applying traditional knowledge to the management practices of a sustainable forest. As well, participating Aboriginal communities will have a permanent record, in the form of a GIS database, of their traditional use of the land. The study includes status, non-status and Métis people - anyone with a traditional Aboriginal heritage.

The FMF's traditional culture study is guided by two documents: "A Guide to Conducting a Traditional Knowledge and Land Use Study", published by Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service, and "Best Practices Handbook for Traditional Use Studies", published by Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

The industry referral process is intended to facilitate communication between Aboriginal communities and industry to prevent disturbance of Aboriginal cultural, historical or spiritual sites. It is based on the repository of cultural data that will be created by the traditional culture study. This repository will provide the means to refer prospective surface land users to the Aboriginal community of interest for consultation and direction concerning community-based data.

A steering committee is the guiding force for the TCS study. The committee is made up of representatives from five participating communities, the forest industry, the oil and gas industry, Parks Canada, the Province of Alberta, and the FMF. This committee meets five times per year to give direction to the process and to assume responsibility for the production of extraordinary guidelines and research projects.

### **3. Implementation**

The program is implemented through the direction of the FMF's board of directors. A multiple-partner steering committee oversees program planning and strategy. The program lead works with the communities and ad-hoc committees in acquiring the TCS data and developing the referral process.

### **4. Timeframe for Results**

Preparation has taken two years. The first community started their research in year 2005. The five initial Aboriginal communities are scheduled to have their traditional knowledge data in the repository by the summer of 2007. The referral process is also expected to be working by the summer of 2007. Thereafter, the duration of research for all seventeen communities will be determined by available resources, both money and people.

### **5. Measurable Criteria**

- For each community, the history of elders will be recorded orally and written.
- A repository of cultural data will be maintained on the FMF GIS at a coarse level of resolution and denoted by the community of interest. This repository will provide the means to refer prospective surface land users to the Aboriginal community of interest for consultation and direction concerning community-based data.
- An information protocol will be developed to facilitate copyright and intellectual property practices.
- The traditional knowledge of the elders and other persons with traditional cultural data will be recorded and placed in an electronic data system. All traditional land use sites, such as burial sites, sacred sites, home sites and animal habitat, will be mapped and the information protected in a GIS data base.
- If the community studies are successfully completed, the Foothills Model Forest area will have a thorough description of Aboriginal use of this land. The Foothills Model Forest will have facilitated the production of a data base for the benefit of the seventeen communities in the area. By extension, traditional knowledge will be applied to land use practices.
- Two community TCS projects are underway with three more communities to be underway by June 2007.
- Referral process will be in place June 2007.

### **6. Budget**

The required funds are different for each community. The estimate to complete the first five communities is \$543,000. To date, \$246,000 has been committed to cover three communities.

The Alberta government, West Fraser Mills Ltd. and the Foothills Model Forest are supporting the project. For the first two years, funds were used to network with the communities, do initial training, provide for coordination of the steering committee and develop strategies and plans.

## **7. Partners and Sponsors**

West Fraser Mills Ltd., Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Petro-Canada Ltd., Talisman Energy, Jasper National Park, Foothills Ojibway Society, Aseniwuche Winewak, Nakcowinewak, Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation, Sunchild First Nation, Canadian Forest Service

## **8. Experience with the Program**

Building trust, reaching understanding and gaining acceptance of the programs was a difficult and lengthy process. It was time well spent in that it helped all partners to understand each other and develop a strong working relationship. A "Guiding Principles Agreement" came out of the development process. Today, communities are working together to help each other understand the process, do the studies and develop a referral process.

## **9. General Applicability**

Once completed, we will have multiple Aboriginal input on their TCS, uniform data input for all communities involved, a process that allows the effective use of time and resources of both the communities and industry. Once established and validated, this process can serve as a model for other jurisdictions. Advantages include multiple communities utilizing the same format, common data input, and sharing of resources which allows communities to utilize state-of-the-art systems that they may not have been able to afford on their own.

## **10. Additional Information or Support**

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Date Entered or Updated: June 30, 2005