



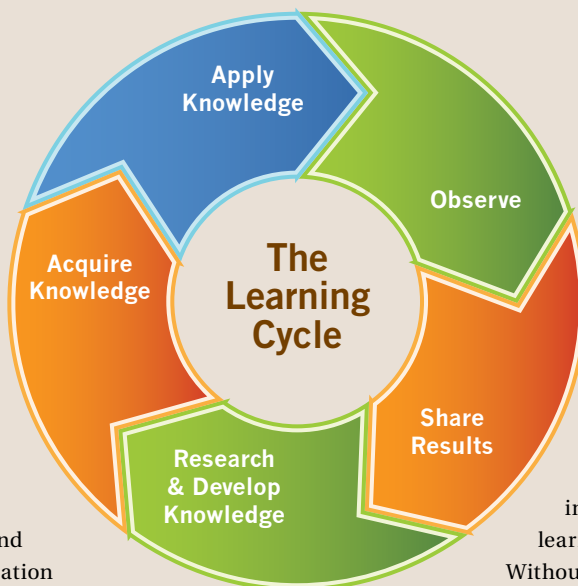
The Learning Cycle: What is it? And Keep Pedalling!

TRAVELLING THROUGH THE BC

INTERIOR THESE LAST FEW YEARS, IT HAS been increasingly easy to observe the scale of the mountain pine beetle infestation. The landscape of pine tree death is overwhelming. On this last trip, I decided to become acquainted with Hec Richmond's autobiography, *Forever Green*. Hec was a founding member of the ABCFP and forest entomologist working in BC and Alberta on a mountain pine beetle infestation in the 1920s. He spent a career sampling forests, reporting on infestations and planning control treatments. It was not surprising for me to read the emphasis that he placed on experiential learning supported by a sound education platform.

The practice of professional forestry is a science-based education and the core knowledge tends to compound over time through a learning cycle. Professional practitioners learn the practice of professional forestry, apply theory to their own individual practice, observe the outcomes, share the results with other practitioners and in turn inform the development of new concepts. In other words, you don't have to be Hec Richmond to apply his thinking to your professional practice in today's forests.

This method of continuous learning is not unique to professional forestry. However, the community of forest professionals began using this method to a greater extent in the late 1980s through programs such as FRDA (Forest Resource Development Agreement) and FRBC (Forest Renewal BC). It became part of the culture of forest professionals' development. Research, forest management trials or simply operational observations were discussed at workshops in office and field. While the practitioners themselves have benefited from this learning culture, the real beneficiaries are the users of the professional service (including the public, employers and other professionals). As a result of the learning cycle, the forestry community initiated management programs such as variable retention or actions such as managing wind throw on forest edges and genetic gain in tree seed. The learning cycle helped to transfer, test and improve this knowledge to the benefit of the forest and achieving society's values. The ABCFP is concerned that the recent economic downturn and



reduction in expenditures among forest resource employers has led to an erosion of the learning cycle as fewer practitioners are able to have the time or resources to attend information sharing workshops or participate broadly with other practitioners from other business interests. The absence of the learning cycle reduces the likelihood for innovation at just the time when the forces of learning and innovation are needed the most.

Without the learning cycle, professional practitioners who work in relative isolation will find their professional role increasingly more difficult. Isolation can be a physical context where only one resource professional is working for the employer. However, it can also occur in a group context, where professional exchange occurs only between like-minded practitioners. There are many reasons to try to strengthen our learning cycle. Forest management in areas such as combining or overlapping uses on the landscape, alternative energy activities, managing secondary structure in mountain pine beetle affected forests and building resilient forests to withstand the effects of climate change, are all current subjects that require the transfer and exchange of the learning cycle. In his summation, Hec Richmond, RPF, reflected on the challenges forest professionals face in keeping abreast with current knowledge and the increasing pace and complexity of managing forest resources for a multiple of values. His words were written almost 30 years ago and they remain true today, perhaps more so. In particular, there are two challenges that we, as independent forest professionals, can address now in order to improve the learning cycle. First, find other ways to acquire knowledge information and transfer it among our peers. For example, build on your knowledge through FREP (Forest and Range Evaluation Program) reporting or develop an informal peer group for information sharing across business sectors in your area. Secondly, encourage employers to participate in the learning cycle through supporting specific research, traditional face-to-face workshops, online learning, webinars or other forms of exchange. Professional reliance in FRPA (*Forest and Range Practices Act*) can return an extraordinary number of benefits to the users of profes-

sional service. It is the freedom to rely on the practice of professionals who are accountable for their decisions and advice. Professionals' decisions and advice are reliable because they are founded on education, practice experience, observation and information sharing in a discipline of continuous learning called the learning cycle. As the profession's duty in the *Foresters Act* is to serve and protect the

public interest in the practice of professional forestry, it is therefore a social imperative that we re-establish the learning cycle in forestry with greater earnest in order to support and amplify the benefits of initiatives such as professional reliance and forest stewardship. 🐻

Michael Larock, RPF, is director of professional practice and forest stewardship at the ABCFP.

Doing Professional Development From Your Desk

Association of BC Forest Professionals – Online Workshops

The ABCFP is working hard to find new ways to serve our members as the forest sector continues to fluctuate. Putting our workshops online makes them cheaper on a few fronts: the cost of the workshop is less, people miss less work because no travel is involved and there are no hotel, meal or travel costs.

www.abcfp.ca/practice_development/continuing_education/workshops.asp

Canadian Institute of Forestry – Electronic Lecture Series

The CIF/IFC offers an interactive electronic lecture series. The lectures are easy to access and efforts have been made to keep them user-friendly. Once registered, an e-mail will be sent out to you providing the speakers' presentation and the step by step instructions for participation. At the time of the lecture, you simply call into the teleconference and follow along with the presenter on your computer. All that is required is a computer and a phone.

www.cif-ifc.org/site/electure

FORREX – Forest Science Online Research Chat Series: Management Questions – Science Answers

A research chat is a short, virtual dialogue, facilitated by FORREX and the Provincial Forest Extension Program, to help you showcase how your research has made a difference. These virtual dialogues will allow research proponents to briefly describe—in 15–20 minutes—the management problems their project is addressing and any information or lessons learned from their work.

www.forrex.org/events/scienceforum/past_chats.asp

FORREX – Webinars

FORREX provides webinar series about different natural resource management issues. Below are links to two past webinar series: *What's New in Forest Productivity Research?* and *Managing Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Increasingly Human-Dominated Landscapes*.

New series will be announced on Forrex's website, under News & Events.

www.forrex.org/program/forest/Forest_Productivity_Research.asp

www.forrex.org/program/con_bio/managing_human_wildlife_conflicts.asp

FORREX - BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management (JEM)

FORREX has a 'test your knowledge' section at the end of each JEM article. This allows professionals to read the article, answer the three or four questions and then see if they have understood the article's key messages. While this isn't a virtual lecture, it is still self-directed study.

Ministry of Forest and Range – Research and Knowledge Management Branch Seminar Series

These seminars give forest professionals a chance to keep up-to-date to on the research coming out of BC forestry. They are held in-person in Victoria; however, you can also call in and listen on a conference call. www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/research_seminars

University of Alberta – Forest Industry Lecture Series

These lecture series deal with a wide range of topics such as: forest ecology, forest science, silviculture, wildlife management, forest management, ecosystem management, lumber and paper sales, labor, international trade, forest economics and forestry-related social issues. Speakers are scientists, industry and business leaders, senior government officials, academics and forestry alumni.

www.ales.ualberta.ca/en/rr/SeminarsandLectures/ForestIndustryLecture.aspx



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