



IN THE 1980s, POLICY AND REGULATORY CHANGES in BC created a need for advanced education in silviculture for RPFs working on BC's Crown forest estate. The annual cutover was escalating, reaching 170,000 hectares in the 1990s. The cancellation of ranger districts and their positions with the professionalization of the BC Forest Service led to RPFs being held accountable.

The province switched from a cumbersome prior approval 'credit to stumpage' mechanism to pay for silviculture to handing over full fiscal responsibility for basic silviculture to the forest industry who feared countervailing duty escalation. The province brought in a free growing requirement and green-up and adjacency constraints on cut block layout. The industry RPFs were pushed to regenerate and green-up cutblocks as fast as possible. The operational issues of site preparation, vegetation management and accelerated

Alberta requested that some provincial government foresters be allowed to attend the BC government funded SIBC program. Their enthusiastic appreciation of their experience resulted in the creation of the Alberta Advanced Forest Management Institute (AAFMI), based in Hinton, Alberta. Ontario created a similar institute at Thunder Bay. A proposal for a Quebec institute was never funded.

Problems and issues over road construction and endangered fish habitat led to the need for advanced education in forest engineering. SIBC was expanded to include forest engineering modules and was therefore renamed to the Forest Management Institute of BC (FMIBC).

The Clayquot crisis and the international embarrassment endured by the BC government over the 'War in the Woods' resulted in the *Forest Practice Code* being set up by Andrew Petter, then Minister of Forests. The numerous code manuals enforced by regulation led to

Forest Management Institute of BC – What it Accomplished and the Gap it Left

planting became important. Public objections to ugly and large clearcuts necessitated new landscape planning and visual quality objectives. As a result, cut block layout became more complex.

To meet the new challenges, the silviculture contracting industry and the silviculture branch of the BC Ministry of Forests rapidly expanded. Mandatory silviculture prescriptions – signed by RPFs – were required for all cutblocks. McMillan Bloedel set up 'high yield' silviculture programs in BC with rigorous audits and controls and use of pre-commercial thinning (PCT), commercial thinning (CT), genetics and fertilization.

In the early 1980s, the head of the Silviculture Branch of the BC Ministry of Forests (Charlie Johnson, RPF) visited the Silviculture Institutes in Washington and Oregon and recommended following the USFS model. BC set up the Silviculture Institute of BC (SIBC) with the first five years of funding (1985-1990) being provided by FRDA I (the first provincial-federal government Forest Resources Development Agreement).

SIBC was proposed as a non-profit educational institution. Eventually, approval was obtained for the University of British Columbia to award a Diploma in Advanced Silviculture to program graduates.

Initially, SIBC offered four, two-week modules of advanced education for RPFs with a minimum of five years practical work experience. The last module was a field prescription preparation. Later, two additional modules were added.

Module 1: Basic Principles

Module 2: Regeneration

Module 3: Forest and Stand Development

Module 4: Silviculture Planning and Practices

Module 5: Forest Analysis

Module 6: Silviculture Prescription

'default to code' attitude by RPFs. Creativity was stifled. In addition, the 20% loss of corporate allowable cut imposed by the Ministry of Forests and the creation of BC Timber Sales hugely reduced industry interest and leadership in silviculture. The ACE (allowable cut effect) incentive was gone. Fast, efficient and cost-effective 'basic silviculture' to minimums tended to dominate silviculture prescriptions.

The Silviculture Branch was reorganized and funding for FMIBC was terminated. Then US President Clinton's decision to massively reduce US National Forest allowable cuts resulted in huge stumpage revenues in BC in the early 1990s. Forest Renewal BC (FRBC) was created with huge funding. Silviculture projects were funded all over BC, weakly linked to AAC or forest level sustainable forest management (SFM) objectives. A lot of silviculture money was focused on job creation work. The Auditor General investigated FRBC and it was disbanded in 2002. Silviculture lost some credibility.

Proposals by the FMIBC Board of Directors to restructure the educational modules around sustainable forest management for RPFs were never approved nor funded. The last graduating class from FMIBC was in 2003. From 1985-2003, over 350 RPFs, PEngs and technologists graduated from SIBC/FMIBC. The Alberta and Ontario Institutes were also closed.

None operate today.

The current economic crisis in the BC forest industry has led to a loss of industry silviculture expertise and leadership. The BC Ministry of Forests and Range is weakened and concerned with economic problems, climate change and other issues. The private nursery industry has been greatly reduced. The mountain pine beetle (MPB) has killed most of the high quality old dense lodgepole pine in BC

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which gave the lumber industry a huge competitive advantage in the US market. The age class structures of the TSAs tend to be dominated by younger stands. Accelerated operability of mid-rotation stands is needed to cover the age class gap in wood supply. Future yields of the 10 million hectares of MPB-killed stands are now very uncertain.

The silviculture challenges are huge.

The 1980s and 1990s SIBC/FMIBC grads have mainly retired or moved onto other career paths and there is a need for new educational opportunities for RPFs, PEngs and RFTs. Recent budget cuts to the BC Ministry of Forests and Range will further reduce operational silviculture staffing.

Currently, the three regional silviculture committees (coastal, interior and southern) hold winter workshops and summer field meetings which are well attended today, mainly by government and consulting forest professionals. The talks and discussions tend to cover a very broad range of issues of Crown forest management and problems, not just silviculture topics. The Washington Silviculture Institute still operates with most of the attending foresters working on privately owned lands.

In the near future, the UBC Faculty of Forestry will start a course-based Masters program for RPFs who wish to upgrade and for ASFITS (Allied Science FITs) who wish to become RPFs. 🐾

We would like to recognize and acknowledge the early founders of SIBC – Charlie Johnson, RPF, Bill Dumont, RPF, Steve Tolnai, RPF, David Handley, RPF, and Gordon Weetman, RPF.



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Gordon F. Weetman PhD, RPF (Ret), was professor of silviculture at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Forestry from 1978 to 1999. In 1997 he occupied the Forest Renewal BC Chair in Silviculture at UBC. He retired in 1999 and is now professor emeritus.

Candace Parsons, RPF, has been the director of student services for the UBC Faculty of Forestry since December 2003. She loves assisting forestry students to succeed in their academic programs. She is also the current Chair of the Canadian Institute of Forestry - Vancouver Section and, from 1991-2003, she was the executive director of the Forest Management Institute of BC.


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