

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

MANDATE

As the natural resource sector's largest agency, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations provides British Columbians with integrated access to a wide range of natural resource management services. Anchored by the vision of economic prosperity and environmental sustainability, the ministry aims to balance conservation of the province's vast natural resources with appropriate public and industrial uses. By combining administration of policy and operations, we are able to ensure sustainable, long-term stewardship of forests, lands, water and wildlife while delivering streamlined, cost-effective services.



EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT TO MULTICULTURALISM

Ministry executive remains committed to promoting an inclusive work environment indicative of the value British Columbians place on their diversity.

We endeavour to provide an equal opportunity for full participation and access to services within all communities and strive to foster a workplace free of all racism, harassment and all forms of discrimination. In addition, the ministry will continue to make hiring decisions on the basis of merit only. Development of a recruitment and retention plan has already begun. We support the Province's commitment to improve relations with Aboriginal peoples and continue to engage, consult and accommodate First Nations' interests and values while providing responsible access to land and resources.

KEY PROCESSES, POLICIES AND STRUCTURES IN SUPPORT OF MULTICULTURALISM

The ministry reviews and evaluates policies, programs and services continuously to ensure they are fair, equitable and free of barriers. We recognize the many benefits of eliminating discrimination from the workplace and continue to support programs on building diversity and respectful workplaces in the public service. We continue to uphold the standards of conduct and develop policies aimed to creating an inclusive work environment.

NATURAL RESOURCE SECTOR TRANSFORMATION PLAN

Embracing diversity as part of our corporate culture is integral to our ability to meet citizens' needs and expectations. The Natural Resource Sector ministries began work on this in January 2012 with the release of a Diversity and Inclusiveness Plan. This work continues in Natural Resource Sector Transformation Plan. The purpose of the initiative is twofold; internally to achieve a more inclusive workplace culture and externally to ensure that our services meet the diverse needs of our communities.

Through a sector-wide online survey, we have established a baseline understanding and awareness of what diversity and inclusiveness is, perceived barriers and areas of opportunity. The contributions of our employees informed our plan on how to move forward. Our current focus is on building awareness and accountability for all by focusing on communication, conversation and ongoing dialogue.

We have developed a toolkit with practical aids to build employee understanding and awareness; showcased diversity and inclusiveness on our employee learning and development site; and have launched an inclusion tool to evaluate policies, programs and services to ensure we meet the diverse needs of the citizens we serve.

Looking forward, we will focus on further embedding diversity and inclusiveness into our organizational culture. The People Strategy 2 values and supports diversity and inclusiveness. Future commitments include building diversity and inclusiveness awareness and improving policies and practices using the Diversity and Inclusiveness Assessment Tool developed in 2012/13.

FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY TRAINING PROGRAM

A partnership forged between BC Timber Sales and the First Nations Forestry Council resulted in the pilot creation of the First Nations Forestry Training Program in September 2012. The First Nations Forestry Training Program delivers opportunities to Aboriginal students to gain education and employment experience in forestry and is unique in that specific career paths are built on individual student's interests and abilities. Program support includes tuition, assistance with books or work gear and a living allowance that allows students the freedom to focus on educational goals. In terms of critical forest sector work experience, BC Timber Sales provides paid summer jobs and mentorships for those students pursuing forest technician training.

Currently, five of the original six pilot students have finished their second year of schooling and have begun their final work terms with BC Timber Sales. With additional funding from Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and the Government of Canada, the original pilot program was expanded this past year to include another 22 students. Due to strong leadership from the BC First Nations Forestry Council and BC Timber Sales and funding support from FLNR, the program will receive funding for the upcoming school year.

Leading forestry companies across the province have also stepped in to assist with program expansion, and work is currently underway to secure longer term (5–10 year) funding from both private and public sectors.

HIGHLIGHTS OF INITIATIVES

- » Most ministry offices can provide services to the public in more than one language:
 - The South Coast Regional Operations office in Surrey can currently provide services in 18 languages.
 - FrontCounter BC, which operates 29 offices across the province, has made pamphlets in Punjabi and can produce materials in additional languages upon request.
- » A dual posting process allows the ministry to recruit from a more diverse pool of candidates:
 - Non-designated staff may be considered in cases where professional designations are deemed non critical.
 - The Professional Designation Project Committee continues to refine criteria for designation requirements.
- » Sessions on First Nations cultural awareness.
- » Distribution of materials promoting diversity, including pamphlets, frequently asked questions, survey results, resource summaries and the Diversity Toolkit.
- » Training opportunities encouraging staff to eliminate racism and appreciate cultural diversity.
- » Training on government policies prohibiting discrimination in the workplace.
- » Continued employment of dedicated Aboriginal fire unit crews.
- » Ongoing participation in the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program.
- » Training provided to First Nations in Crown land policies and procedures.