

Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada
“Voice of Forest Practitioners”

Policy Paper

Education of Forest Practitioners

The Education of Forest Practitioners

The Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) advocates the best available educational resources and continuous learning for all forest practitioners. This knowledge can be attained through a combination of minimum core course requirements from a post-secondary institution, expertise gained through years of experience, and participating in continuing education opportunities relevant to their field of practice.

Regardless of how forest practitioners establish their base knowledge, all are encouraged to supplement their knowledge by taking full advantage of continuous learning opportunities.

Values and Beliefs

CIF/IFC believes that members should have an intimate knowledge and understanding of the forest ecosystems in which they reside and work. The stewardship of our forests must be based on an understanding of ecological principles coupled with appropriate inventory and monitoring to ensure that ecological integrity and function are maintained within an acceptable sociological framework. Through this understanding, members should promote the intelligent use of Canada's forests to provide a sustainable flow of a wide range of forest commodities, while ensuring a balance of environmental, economic, social and cultural values.

Background

The challenge of managing forests has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. Originally, forest management focused on managing timber resources; today, it focuses on these values that are managed under an ecosystem-based management philosophy. These approaches to managing forest resources will continue to evolve; with this evolution, the forest practitioner's skills will also need to grow.

The skill sets required to manage forests are constantly changing. Today's forest practitioner needs a diverse skill set such as including an understanding of forest and aquatic ecosystems, economic issues, appreciation of social/cultural dynamics, public



participation, conflict resolution capabilities and information technology. The acquisition of skills necessary to manage forest ecosystems need to be derived from a variety of sources such as formal academic training, field experience and continuing education. The accumulation of all education sources maximizes the skills of the practitioners.

Canadians' vision of sustainable forest management, as stated in the National Forest Strategy is "*The long-term health of Canada's forest will be maintained and enhanced, for the benefit of all living things, and for the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of all Canadians now and in the future*". Canada's National Forest Strategy also recognizes the necessity of education and enhancement of skills and knowledge for forest practitioners to meet this vision.

CIF/IFC Policy on Education of Forest Practitioners

The Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada will strive to ensure that Canada's forest practitioners have the attitudes, aptitudes and skills necessary to manage Canada's forests consistent with the Institute's values and beliefs and with Canadians' vision for the forest.

We believe that if forestry is to flourish and the beliefs and values of CIF/IFC are to be realized, it is essential to **attract superior students** to forestry. To maintain a pool of dedicated and enthusiastic individuals graduating from baccalaureate and forest technology programs, it is essential that forestry maintains and enhances its image of providing a fulfilling, prestigious and environmentally conscious career where one's actions will create a positive impact on the environment and sustainability of our forest resources.

The CIF/IFC is committed to working with forestry partners (e.g. forest industry, government, non-government organizations and educational institutions) to promote a positive image of forestry and create a highly qualified and talented pool of forest practitioners. This will be achieved through working groups of like-minded organizations working collaboratively toward achieving the objective.

Educational standards must be rigorous to ensure that practitioners have both the intellectual ability and knowledge to cope with the complexities of modern forest management. Forestry programs should be innovative and current with new and emerging technology. Traditional forestry programs have focused on trees - their cultivation, protection, measurement, harvesting and utilization- while attempting to provide enough background in the other aspects of forestry to enable graduates to communicate with forest practitioners specializing in other disciplines. With the commitment to forest management that is economically, environmentally, culturally, and socially sustainable, the concern that forestry programs need to be broadened has become apparent. It is essential that academic standards be maintained; however alternative models must be explored. An alternative model would sanction specialists having a strong background in forestry, but differing in the specifics of that background. The CIF/IFC believes that new



models of education, more consistent with the broad values and beliefs of the Institute should be pursued.

CIF/IFC maintains that the values and beliefs of the Institute and Canadians are more likely to be realized if forest practitioners **continue their education** on an ongoing basis following graduation from university or college. Furthermore, public confidence in our profession is likely to be enhanced if forest practitioners keep abreast of changes and improvements in the practice of forestry.

CIF/IFC strongly supports continuing education and will contribute to its development by:

1. Stressing the importance of continuing education and advocating that it be required of forest practitioners.
2. Creating opportunities for continuing education in a variety of ways including workshops, seminars and our own Continuing Forestry Education program.
3. Conveying a willingness to help in defining the elements of a program of continuing education that could be accepted uniformly.

Summary

The CIF/IFC will work with forest partners to help attract superior students representing the diversity of Canada to rigorous, relevant academic programs that reflect the breadth of our values and beliefs. CIF/IFC believes that the ongoing education of practitioners is critical if sustainable forestry is to be realized. The CIF/IFC will promote continuing education so that forest practitioners will remain current, and the management of forests will continue to improve and be seen as doing so by the public.

The CIF/IFC

The Canadian Institute of Forestry / Institut forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) is a national voice of forest practitioners. The CIF/IFC, formed in 1908, represents members who are foresters, forest technologists and technicians, educators, scientists and others with a professional interest in forestry. The Institute's mission is "*to provide national leadership in forestry, promote competence among forestry professionals, and foster public awareness of Canadian and international forestry issues.*"

We are people with a professional interest in forestry, working in government, industry, academic and consulting fields. Our members use their education, training, and experience to help manage the forests of Canada and to make the Canadian public aware of forestry.

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