

Success and Sustainability:

Wise Practices from Indigenous Economic Development Corporations in the Forestry Sector



CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR
INDIGENOUS
BUSINESS

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About CCIB

Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB) is an Indigenous-owned non-profit based in Toronto, Ontario, committed to advancing economic opportunities for Indigenous businesses and communities across Canada. We have a membership base of over 2,800 current and pending members nationwide, of which more than half are Indigenous owned. CCIB builds bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, businesses, and communities through diverse programming, providing tools, training, network-building, major business awards, and national events.

For more information about CCIB, please click the following link: [CCIB Home Page](#)

About the Funder and the Indigenous Forestry Initiative

Natural Resources Canada develops policies and programs that enhance the contribution of the natural resources sector to the economy, improve the quality of life for all Canadians, and conducts innovative science in facilities across Canada to generate ideas and transfer technologies.

They are an established leader in the fields of:

- energy sources and distribution
- forests and forestry
- minerals and mining
- earth sciences
- energy efficiency
- science and data

They also represent Canada and improve the quality of life for Canadians. They have generously funded this research under their Indigenous Forestry Initiative (IFI) stream.

For more information on Natural Resources Canada, please visit their homepage by clicking the following link: [Natural Resources Canada](#).

In June 2017, the Government of Canada announced the IFI as a featured component of the Softwood Lumber Action Plan, expanding its \$1 million/year ongoing budget by an additional \$10 million in funding over three years (2017 to 2020).

In Budget 2019, the Government of Canada announced a three-year \$15.6 million expansion to the program. This increase in funding will allow for a greater number of Indigenous projects, as well as larger Indigenous-led economic development projects, starting in 2020.

In September 2023, the Government of Canada announced a three-year \$16.6 million renewal of the IFI (\$13 million in total investments to communities), in addition to a re-focused mandate to advance reconciliation in the forest sector by supporting Indigenous-identified priorities to accelerate awareness, influence, inclusion, and leadership.

The IFI provides financial support to inclusive, Indigenous-led activities in the forest sector, such as:

- gathering, developing, using, and protecting Indigenous knowledge and science;
- Indigenous leadership and participation in forest stewardship
- the identification, consideration, and pursuit of economic development opportunities.

For more information on the IFI, please click the following link:
[Indigenous Forestry Initiative \(canada.ca\)](#).





Executive Summary

Objective

This project aims to strengthen the knowledge and capacity of the Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB), in partnership with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), by deepening understanding of how to support meaningful engagement of Indigenous businesses and communities in the forestry sector.

It will do so through a focused examination of the roles, experiences, and participation of Indigenous Economic Development Corporations (IEDCs) within the forestry industry. This report is the final installment of a three-part series that builds on CCIB's forestry-focused research. It follows the earlier publications *Success and Sustainability: An Introduction to Indigenous Participation in the Forestry Sector*, *Success and Sustainability: Training and Skills Development*, and *Wise Practices, Success and Sustainability: Wise Practices for Supporting Indigenous Participation in the Forestry Sector*.

Through in-depth profiles of three IEDCs demonstrating leadership in forestry engagement, this project will identify best practices and practical tools that support Indigenous businesses and communities in strengthening their roles and thriving as leaders in the forestry sector. The findings will help inform other Indigenous businesses and communities by sharing strategies that contribute to long-term success.



Main Findings

Based on desk research and in-depth interviews with Tahltan Nation Development Corporation (TNDC), Tatanka Oyate Holdings, and Dallan LP, several key themes and insights emerged, highlighting best practices for increasing Indigenous participation in the forestry sector.

Empowering Indigenous-Led Forestry Management

- **Transparent and meaningful community engagement:** Transparent and meaningful community engagement requires listening to community voices throughout all stages of forestry management to ensure decisions remain accountable, trusted, and rooted in Indigenous priorities and lived experiences.
- **Cultural values embedded in forestry management:** Embedding cultural values into forestry management means ensuring all operations honour the land, support cultural continuity, and prioritize long-term community well-being over short-term economic gain.
- **Indigenous governance and decision-making authority:** Strengthening Indigenous governance requires that all forestry decisions, such as harvesting plans, permits, and service delivery, receive approval through Indigenous led governing bodies to uphold sovereignty, accountability, and alignment with community values.
- **Environmental stewardship as a virtuous commitment:** Environmental stewardship in Indigenous-led forestry emphasizes the importance and responsibility in forestry management to protect the land through sustainable harvesting, community education, and practices that mitigate cumulative environmental impacts for future generations.

Strengthening Partnerships

- **Shared values and respect:** Strong partnerships are built on shared values and mutual respect, creating a foundation of trust that encourages communities to engage confidently and collaboratively in long-term forestry initiatives.
- **Equity, transparency, and shared benefits:** Upholding true equity partnerships means ensuring fair and equal profit sharing, transparent communication on costs and liabilities, and meaningful decision-making power for all partners.
- **Community-centred relationship building:** By prioritizing community-centred relationships that focus on collaboration and reinvestment into overall community well-being, strong partnerships are formed.

Integration of Traditional Knowledge (TK)

- **Governance and decision-making:** Ensures forestry decisions reflect culturally grounded stewardship practices that protect the land, guide sustainable operations, and uphold community-driven values.
- **Integration into policy training:** Strengthens forestry management by ensuring that all staff understand and apply culturally informed, holistic approaches that improve outcomes that align with community priorities.
- **Protecting culturally significant areas:** Protection of culturally sacred areas ensures forestry practices safeguard sacred sites, maintain ecological balance, and uphold long-standing responsibilities to the land and future generations.



Supporting Skills Development

- **Practical on-the-job training:** Provides Indigenous employees with transferable skills, confidence, and mentorship that support career advancement and increase Indigenous representation in higher-level forestry roles.
- **Training embedded in partnerships:** Ensures Indigenous workers and community-owned businesses gain priority access to skill-building roles, strengthening long-term employment pathways while supporting economic self-determination.
- **Outreach and awareness:** Strengthening outreach and awareness about training and job opportunities is vital because it ensures community members can access clear, accessible pathways into forestry careers, reducing participation barriers and connecting interested individuals with meaningful skills development.

Inspiring Youth Engagement

- **Early exposure and hands-on training:** Early exposure and hands-on training empower Indigenous-led forestry management by sparking youth interest, building foundational skills, and creating clear pathways into long-term roles within the sector.
- **Mentorship and youth representation:** Essential for future Indigenous leaders to gain confidence, technical skills, and cultural grounding by being meaningfully included in operational and decision-making spaces.

Enhancing Community Development

- **Enhancing community development in Indigenous-led forestry** requires ensuring that economic benefits, employment opportunities, and culturally grounded decision-making remain within the community to strengthen long-term social, cultural, and economic resilience.

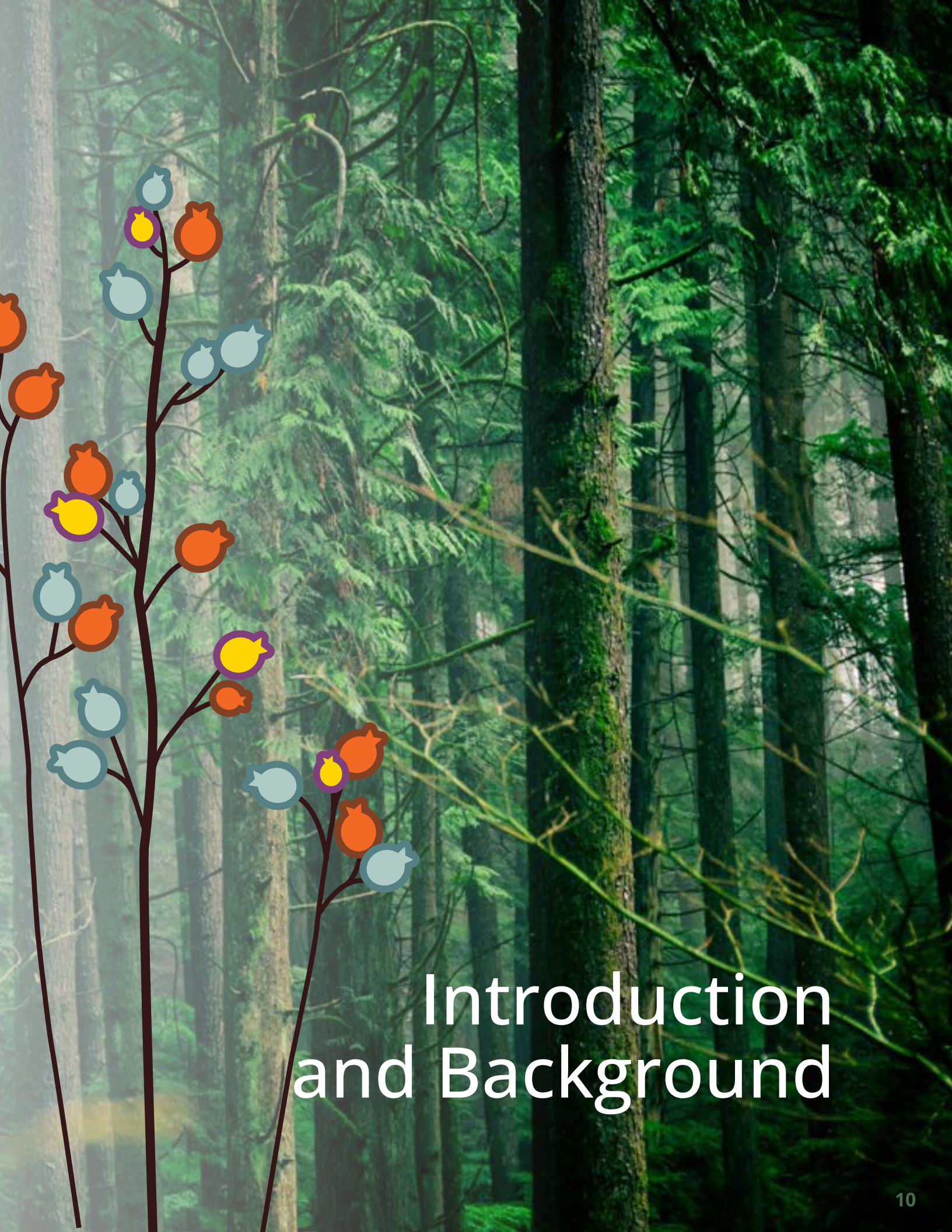


Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to strengthen Indigenous participation in the forestry sector by providing effective tools for success that empower Indigenous-led management, enhance equitable partnerships, embed Traditional Knowledge, support skills and youth development, and ensure community-centred economic, cultural, and environmental benefits.

- 1. Strengthen Indigenous-led forestry management** by embedding intentional community engagement, cultural values, and Indigenous governance into all decision-making processes.
- 2. Prioritize equitable partnerships** with aligned values that share risks, benefits, and decision-making while investing in strong, trust-based relationships that prioritize community well-being.
- 3. Integrate Traditional Knowledge throughout forestry operations** by incorporating Indigenous cultural protocols into governance, workforce training, and land stewardship practices.
- 4. Expand skills development opportunities** by embedding hands-on training, mentorship, and capacity-building opportunities directly into forestry operations and partnerships.
- 5. Increase access to forestry careers** by improving communication of job and training opportunities through community networks, education systems, and focused outreach.
- 6. Inspire Indigenous youth leadership** by creating early exposure opportunities, mentorship pathways, and meaningful inclusion in operational and decision-making spaces.





Introduction and Background

Profile and Brief Overview of the Forestry Sector in Canada

Indigenous Peoples in Canada have faced systemic barriers that limit their full participation in economic opportunities, including within the forestry sector. Despite being rights holders with deep cultural, ecological, and territorial connections to the land, they are often excluded from meaningful roles in operational decision-making. Persistent gaps in skills training, chronic underfunding, limited access to resources, and ongoing experiences of bias continue to restrict Indigenous participation and advancement in the forest industry. Removing these barriers can unlock economic benefits and foster a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable forestry sector.

Indigenous Participation in the Forestry Sector

Indigenous participation in the forestry sector has expanded in recent years. In 2021, it was estimated that approximately one million Indigenous Peoples live near forests.¹ Due to this proximity, Indigenous participation in forestry is the highest in Canada, with over 11,000 Indigenous Peoples relying on the sector for their employment and income.² As of 2024, the forestry sector directly employs 194,040 people and contributes an additional \$30.7 billion to Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).³

Summary of Key Findings and Barriers from Previous Reports

Across the first three reports, a set of interconnected barriers was identified that continues to limit Indigenous participation in the forestry sector. These include inconsistent access to financing and funding, challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled workers, regulations and tax policies that lack clarity, limited access to tenure and business opportunities, partnerships that are not fully recognized or leveraged, and the insufficient integration of Traditional Knowledge within forestry planning and operations.

Building on the findings from the previous reports, this final report focuses on advancing solutions to the identified barriers through knowledge sharing and practical insights. It highlights the importance of strong Indigenous leadership in forestry management, the value of meaningful and equitable partnerships, the integration of Traditional Knowledge across forestry operations, and the development of robust skills training and workforce pathways. By also emphasizing the role of youth engagement and the broader community benefits generated by forestry activities, this report offers strategies to strengthen Indigenous businesses' and communities' participation and leadership in the forestry sector.

¹ The State of Canada's Forests: Annual Report 2025 - Natural Resources Canada

² The State of Canada's Forests: Annual Report 2025 - Natural Resources Canada

³ The State of Canada's Forests: Annual Report 2025 - Natural Resources Canada



Research Methodology

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this report involves desktop research and in-depth interviews with forestry IEDCs.

Our research team planned and conducted six interviews on Microsoft Teams with representatives from three IEDCs who play a crucial role in the forestry sector. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized for summarization in the following subsections.

DESKTOP RESEARCH

Our process began with desk-based research, drawing on themes and topics we identified that could help shape our reviews. This included a review of:

The quantitative data from the previous reports of the series that we published: *Success and Sustainability: An Introduction to Indigenous Participation in the Forestry Sector*, *Success and Sustainability: Training and Skills Development*, and *Wise Practices*, *Success and Sustainability: Wise Practices for Supporting Indigenous Participation in the Forestry Sector*

- Central ideas from Success and Sustainability: Training and Skills Development, Best Practices for Supporting Indigenous Participation in the Forestry Sector, and Best Practices.
- Existing and current literature on Indigenous Forestry.

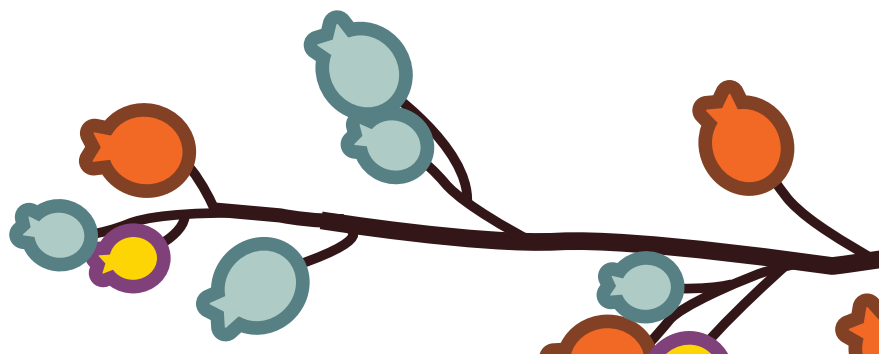
INTERVIEW DESIGN AND COORDINATION

After identifying key themes from the literature, we designed a baseline interview guide for our participants. The interview guide was tailored to three IEDCs, given that their industry focuses varied. The first IEDC was the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation (TNDC), which participates in the forestry sector through its Tahltan Forestry partnership with NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

The second IEDC was Tatanka Oyate Holdings, which is in the early stages of entering the industry as an equity partner of One Sky Forest Products (OSFP). The third IEDC, Dallan LP, has entered partnerships with First Nations communities to deliver forestry services.

The team then utilized these themes to inform the interview guide:

- Empowering Indigenous-led Forestry Management
- Strengthening Partnerships
- Integration of Traditional Knowledge
- Supporting Skills Development
- Inspiring Youth Engagement
- Enhancing Community Development



PROFILE OF PARTICIPATING IEDCS

The IEDCs in this project capture the diversity of Indigenous businesses and the Indigenous economy within the forestry sector. CCIB researchers spoke with three IEDCs, all operating in forestry but serving the industry in distinct ways. We conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted remotely over video and were recorded and transcribed.

TNDC, through Tahltan Forestry Ltd., a jointly owned venture between TNDC and NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd., manages the Tahltan Nation's Woodland Licence, allowing an annual harvest of up to 75,000 m³ in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area.⁴ In addition to sustainable management and harvesting under the forest licence, including planning, permitting, operations, log sales, and silviculture, Tahltan Forestry performs road construction, tree clearing, and logging/timber removal services to support mining and industrial projects within Tahltan Territory.

Tatanka Oyate Holdings is an Indigenous-owned investment and development corporation focused on advancing economic sovereignty through sustainable resource management. They are an equity partner in OSFP and are in the early stages of operating an orientated strand board (OSB) mill in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and manage nearly 1.2 million m³ of timber under provincial allocation.⁵ They are located on Treaty 6 Territory.

Dallan LP is a 100 per cent Indigenous-owned business. Owner Dale Levesque, who is a member of Fort William First Nations, is in partnership with Lac Des Mille Lac First Nation and Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation. Dallan LP provides mobile equipment yard services to several mills in Ontario, located on Treaty 3 Territory.⁶

DATA ANALYSIS

We analyzed the interview transcripts and systematically coded the key topics discussed by participants. The coded data were then collated and organized, forming the primary structure for interpreting the findings. Within each theme, we examined patterns, recurring ideas, and shared perspectives.

Using this thematic structure, we developed a key findings report that synthesizes insights from the interviews. The report expands on each theme, highlighting notable trends and incorporating descriptive quotations from participants.

⁴ Tahltan Nation Development Corporation (2025). Audit of Forest Planning and Practices. Page 1. Retrieved from: <https://www.bcfpb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ARC272-Tahltan-Nation-Development-Corp.pdf>

⁵ Government of Saskatchewan (2024). Government of Saskatchewan Issues New Timber Allocations to One Sky. Retrieved from: Government of Saskatchewan Issues New Timber Allocations to One Sky | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan

⁶ Indigenous-owned Forestry Services Company Receives National Award



Research Findings

Research Findings from Indigenous Economic Development Corporations in the Forestry Sector

To ensure diverse representation across the sector, the research findings draw on three IEDCs recognized for their leadership in different areas of forestry, including forestry services, forest management, timber harvesting, early-stage pre-development work for an OSB plant, and oversight of allowable timber cuts.

By collating perspectives from these distinct yet complementary operations, the research offers a comprehensive set of insights to strengthen Indigenous community and business participation across the forestry sector, regardless of the specific services, roles, or forestry activities they provide.

The research findings will support Indigenous businesses and communities by advancing knowledge of Indigenous leadership in the forestry sector. It will examine the importance of strong partnerships, the integration of Traditional Knowledge, the need for skills and workforce development, youth involvement, and the broader contributions of forestry operations to community development.

Empowering Indigenous-led Forestry Management

Showcasing Indigenous leadership in forestry management highlights how Indigenous communities can oversee complex forestry operations, balancing economic development with cultural values and environmental stewardship. Indigenous-led forestry is a powerful means of self-determination, in which decision-making and implementation are grounded in culturally sustainable forest management.

Previous research shows gaps in management roles, with career mobility frustrations being the most common.⁷ Opportunities for Indigenous forestry employees to learn new skills and receive development training were limited, and there were few opportunities for aspiring management roles to further business development.⁸ Increasing Indigenous representation in management and senior-level roles is essential for long-term career success in the forestry sector.

The IEDCs interviewed have extensive knowledge and oversight of forestry management. Whether it be managing a woodland license, the overall structure of the forestry business, or service delivery,

participants expressed a shared view of the importance of Indigenous-led forestry management. The commonalities that came up each time were:

- 1. Transparent and meaningful community engagement**
- 2. Cultural values embedded in forestry management**
- 3. Indigenous governance and decision-making authority**
- 4. Environmental stewardship as a virtuous commitment**

These aspects of forestry management surfaced as the highest priorities for the IEDC participants we interviewed. Showcasing that a balance between economic development, cultural values, community engagement, and environmental stewardship remains a steadfast priority in forestry management.

⁷ Success-and-Sustainability-Part-Two.pdf

⁸ Success-and-Sustainability-Part-Two.pdf

Transparent and Meaningful Community Engagement

Transparent and meaningful community engagement is a critical aspect of Indigenous-led forestry management and goes beyond checking a box. Listening to community members as part of the management process emerged as especially important, as community input was a driving force behind upper management decisions in those IEDCs.

Community involvement can occur throughout all phases of forestry management, with discussions ranging from environmental concerns to day-to-day operations and potential impacts on traplines and wildlife. Community members hold significant jurisdiction in maintaining transparency and accountability in forestry management. These connections make the decision-making process more personal, trusted and grounded in Indigenous value systems.

We have community meetings. It's part of an obligation, not only from big governors, but it's part of the transparency you have to the communities in general, whether they're Indigenous or not.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

Cultural Values Embedded within Forestry Management

Participants identified the importance of integrating cultural values as a critical component of Indigenous-led forestry management. Forestry decisions should be guided by respect for the land and a willingness to walk away if operations threaten traditional cultural continuity.

By prioritizing long-term community health over monetary profit, participants emphasized the importance of sharing benefits through land-based education initiatives that support cultural continuity and environmental care. Embedding these values ensures that forestry practices reflect Indigenous cultural values and sustain long-term relationships with the land rather than relying on extractive economic models.

Our old native values are communal, respect the land and always help each other, more than what you'd see in Neo capitalism. It's not just about how much money was made, but how much did we share with private Tahltan businesses, that type of social profit is just as important as monetary profit.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

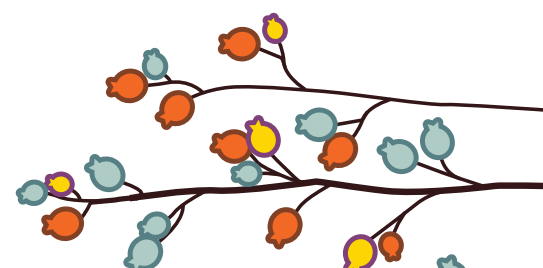
We respect the land first. We will not do things that are too abrasive—we will walk away. But if we see value in harvesting and it is sustainable then we want to see values such as taking care of each other and making sure everyone eats.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

Indigenous Governance and Decision-Making Authority

Indigenous governance and decision-making authority were identified as key components of the IEDCs' forestry management structure. Interviewees emphasized that forestry activities proceed only with approval from Indigenous governing bodies, which ensure that the priorities of the community, the people, and the land are properly represented.

Whether you are making decisions on harvesting, cutting permits, service delivery, or proposals and authorizations, decisions approved by an Indigenous-governed body reinforce Indigenous sovereignty and maintain accountability and transparency for community members.



Before we can even do anything as a business, it has to be approved by our political arm, our political body. We have to go through a political body because they represent our people. Most of the approval is done through the licence and the way it is managed, it is done through our governments. We do community meetings. It's part of an obligation.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

Presentations take place at semi-regular intervals on proposed plans and projects. And we engage directly with the Tahltan Nation Lands Department to get feedback and recommendations regarding all proposed harvesting operations on the license.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

Everything is done through the Tahltan Central Government through their Lands Department, which includes consultations with community members and community meetings to advise the community and answer any questions and concerns regarding environment and the use of the resource and grow back periods.

Jamie Gleason - TNDC

The Lands Department is consulted on proposed harvesting areas prior to starting fieldwork to ensure that we are aware of any known or suspected areas of concern. Not only does this provide an important opportunity for us to learn more about Tahltan interests on the land, it helps to reduce costs and delays in permitting.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship is vital for Indigenous communities in the forestry sector. It ensures a continual connection to the land and cultural identity, while recognizing that the land's health and sovereignty extend to the people. Participants emphasized that environmental stewardship is non-negotiable, highlighting practices and policies that are enforced not merely for compliance but as an ethical responsibility to protect future generations.

This is seen through the harvesting of trees, educating communities on the importance of environmental stewardship, ensuring staff are trained in environmental compliance, mitigating cumulative environmental risks during operations, and upholding the values of environmental stewardship.

Our First Nations communities depend on the sustainability of the natural resources. The company recognizes the impact and responsibility of environmental commitment on the communities and the people that live in them, and for the long-term future of the company.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

We're committed to tracking and keeping records for all environmental near misses and spills while meeting the legal requirements. We train, educate, and audit all of our people, including our managers, to ensure compliance on our environmental policy.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP



We stand by our environmental policy 100%. Especially with heavy equipment, I mean and we got a huge amount of equipment with a lot of fuel and oil capacities. So any kind of spill could be classified as a Class 3.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

Strengthening Partnerships

Partnerships extend beyond transactional agreements; they create space for shared decision-making, capacity-building, and long-term economic development rooted in Indigenous values. This will further support Indigenous involvement in the forestry sector while encouraging more inclusive and culturally grounded approaches.

Previous reports highlighted a lack of meaningful opportunities for Indigenous businesses in the forestry sector. These challenges intersect with differing worldviews, where Indigenous businesses often prioritize cultural continuity, stewardship, and collective well-being, which may not align with Western market-driven approaches. Recognizing these differences is essential to building genuine partnerships.

Each IEDC involved in the interview process is in a formal partnership. Dallan LP operates as an Indigenous-owned business, partnering with Lac Des Mille Lac First Nation and Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation to deliver forestry and industrial services. Lac Des Mille Lac and Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nations originally partnered with North American Mill Yard (NAMYS) in 2014, which is when Dallan LP was formed.⁹

Tahltan Nation Development Corporation (TNDC), through its jointly owned company with NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd., operates Tahltan Forestry Ltd, which was established in 2019.¹⁰ TNDC plays a key role in its partnership with NorthPac by managing the forestry license and providing essential services to the area. NorthPac Forestry was created in 2018 based on its expertise in forestry and sustainability in resource development.¹¹

Additionally, Tatanka Oyate Holdings is an equity partner with One Sky Forest Products (OSFP) to help operate sustainable harvesting. OSFP was formed as a partnership in 2020.¹² This new partnership with OSFP is still under construction but is set to open by 2027.¹³ This partnership involved Tatanka Oyate Holdings, three other First Nations, and another forestry industry shareholder from British Columbia.¹⁴

Although all three IEDCs involved had distinct forestry partnership models, participants described several shared values on what makes a strong and effective partnership. The following themes reflect these common insights, illustrating what strong partnerships look like in practice and why these are essential to increasing Indigenous participation in the forestry sector.

- 1. Shared values and respect**
- 2. Equity, transparency, and shared benefits**
- 3. Community-centred relationship building**

⁹ Indigenous-owned Forestry Services Company Receives National Award

¹⁰ Tahltan partnership - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

¹¹ Our Company - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

¹² Government of Saskatchewan Issues New Timber Allocations to One Sky | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan

¹³ New OSB mill construction in Prince Albert set for 2025

¹⁴ Government of Saskatchewan Issues New Timber Allocations to One Sky | News and Media | Government of Saskatchewan

Shared Values and Respect

Participants collectively emphasized the importance of a good partnership beginning with aligned values, mutual respect, authentic intentions, and a good attitude from the top down. Partnerships that are rooted in mutual respect include taking the time to get to know the community, its governance, and its people, and ensuring that trust is built prior to a formal agreement. Partnerships that are rooted in respect and aligned intentions help build trust, accountability, and long term success, benefiting both the business and Indigenous communities they work with.

The fundamental start of a good partnership is attitude. Top-down attitude. There is a fundamental difference between someone who wants to be my partner versus an arranged marriage. One shows up every single day, every single minute. And the other never really has value for you other than checking the Indian box. I don't want to get into any partnerships anymore with anyone who doesn't align with us, especially if they don't wake up every day trying to make our world better because we're trying to make the world better.

Calvin Carlick – TNDC

Spend the time to get to know them before you make a deal and make sure their values are aligned with whichever First Nation is affected. It really all comes back to respect and consideration.

Jamie Gleason – TNDC

Equity, Transparency, and Shared Benefits

Building on the groundwork of shared values and respect, a strong theme among the interviewees was the importance of true equity partnerships. Participants emphasized the importance of partnerships that go beyond symbolic inclusion. They need to ensure that financial gains are shared fairly, that costs and liabilities are openly communicated, and that joint management is used, with both partners included in business operations. Indigenous partners should not be left with less revenue and hidden costs; this only reinforces the historical harms where land and resources are taken for profit without trust, transparency and equity benefits for Indigenous communities.

NorthPac believes that effective partnerships require shared accountability, with both parties sharing in the gain and sharing in the pain. A true equity partnership, rooted in transparency, ensures that both partners stand on equal footing, and prevents scenarios where the non-Indigenous partner walks away with more than their fair share.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

Community-Centred Relationship Building

Participants emphasized the importance of a good partnership, not being just about money but about community inclusion and relationship-building. About creating pathways for greater community benefits through shared values and decision-making. Partners build trust by being physically present in the community, by attending gatherings and important events with genuine interest and ongoing engagement.

Having a good partnership means staying grounded in community input and governance structures that ensure decisions reflect the community's interests. When partners understand the importance of reinvesting revenue back into the community, creating jobs for members, and donating to local initiatives, you have a good partnership.

With our Nation, there's such a strong feedback loop between our people, our governors and activities on our land that nothing happens without deep integration of government, people and the culture. The culture in our territory is that everyone feels like a direct and strong shareholder of TNDC. So as soon as something happens and they don't like it, it can get immediate attention. That's how interconnected everything is, and that's how people are. Everyone is so connected the slightest complaint goes through the whole system in 5.2 seconds.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

At the end of the day, there's no substitute for actually showing up. Taking the time to sit down with leaders, attend events, and chat face-to-face with members is how you build real trust. That kind of open communication is what makes a partnership actually work.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

TNDC's Tahltan's Prosperity Metrics

Calvin Carlick, Vice President, Partnerships with TNDC, is Tahltan from the Crow Clan and Carlick family, and grew up in Iskut. Calvin described how his Tahltan Prosperity Metrics guide how partners contribute to workforce empowerment, revenue, and equity, supporting local businesses and community donations. These metrics ensure that partnerships deliver tangible benefits through jobs, training, equity growth, and reinvestment in community initiatives.

***With the Tahltan Prosperity Metrics, number one core value is workforce empowerment.** That's the most important. That's our people, and the first stage of*

that is to hire them. Everyone loves a paycheck. Everyone loves to have a purpose. The second stage is to train them or add value to them, and third is to promote or advance them and give them responsibility. We use our partnerships to make sure they understand that those are our core values. Every time you do one of those things, it uplifts our Nation.

***The second core value is revenue and equity.** Revenue, of course, is money coming in. We love that and especially in partnerships, we love when money comes in and that it's truthful. Money is good, it empowers First Nations communities to do good and do the things they want and not listen to others.*

***The third core value is private businesses;** it's a certain element of our economy. Everyone wishes to become an entrepreneur. It's a very different world, a very skillful, artful world. But to be successful some part of it sometimes is giving someone a shot, letting them make mistakes while they're under your care and allowing them to do those things. And at some point, they can fly on their own, and that that is giving back to the native community.*

***The fourth core value is community resources,** so donations or in-kind donations. All of our partners who are busy, making sure they try to donate back to our communities, so that's more value driving back to our Nation. So a good partner does those things, good attitude for one, and then they follow the four metrics and try to maximize them.*

Calvin Carlick - TNDC



Integration of Traditional Knowledge

These profiles emphasize the vital role of Traditional Knowledge systems in forestry and land management. They highlight how Indigenous values and practices foster sustainable and culturally grounded approaches to stewardship. By showcasing successful models, the profiles demonstrate how Traditional Knowledge can be woven into modern forestry practices.

Participants identified three emerging themes regarding the importance of Traditional Knowledge in forestry operations. These themes highlight how integrating Traditional Knowledge can enhance sustainability and strengthen community relationships by incorporating culturally informed practices into their business strategies.

1. **Governance and decision-making**
2. **Integration into policy training**
3. **Protecting culturally significant areas**

At the same time, many participants noted that the formal incorporation of Traditional Knowledge into forestry operations is still evolving, highlighting a continuing gap in research and practice that IEDCs are actively working to address.

Governance and Decision-Making

Building on previous reports, integrating Traditional Knowledge into decision-making leads to more holistic and effective forestry and land management.¹⁵ Traditional Knowledge plays a significant role in IEDCs' decision-making processes, guiding choices related to community, partnerships, and operations. Integrating this knowledge into business decisions strengthens sustainability, improves community trust, and delivers long-term operational benefits for IEDCs and their partners.

Participants emphasized that Traditional Knowledge plays a significant role in informing sustainable land stewardship practices, even when not formally identified. Through community expectations and cultural protocols, it continues to shape every stage of decision-making, from harvesting to identifying areas to avoid and species to protect.

An important detail the participants noted was how Traditional Knowledge is embedded within governance structures. Approval processes should be intentionally aligned with community values, ensuring that decisions reflect cultural values grounded in community-driven knowledge systems.

How do we incorporate Traditional Knowledge? The whole thing encompasses our value system. It's not explicitly, like, put up as a poster, but you don't get this far as cutting down a tree without our values going in front of that license to approve it. Those approval processes are always filtered through our value system.

Calvin Carlick – TNDC



¹⁵ Success-and-Sustainability-Part-Two.pdf



Integration into Policy and Training

In policy development and training operations, Traditional Knowledge must be at the forefront. Participants emphasized that Traditional Knowledge should be integrated into the corporate environment to ensure it is widely understood and applied across the organization. Ensuring it is embedded in the corporate structure is important for delivering more holistic, culturally grounded, and effective outcomes for the community.

We are currently working with our Partners on the development of a Cultural Training Program that has been designed by the Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation. It's a tool for gaining awareness and understanding of the history, people, ways of life, and future vision of our Nation. Through this program, participants will learn about our cultural values, as well as important information about how to respectfully work in areas of cultural significance and how to interact with heritage sites, waterways and wildlife, among others.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

Participants demonstrated strong leadership in integrating Traditional Knowledge, ensuring that forestry operations do not compromise culturally protected areas. This was evident in the development of new training programs that outline how to work respectfully in areas of cultural significance to preserve oral history and to develop land stewardship plans. This ensures that development does not compromise sensitive cultural areas and that forestry operations remain aligned with their long-held responsibilities to the land and future generations.

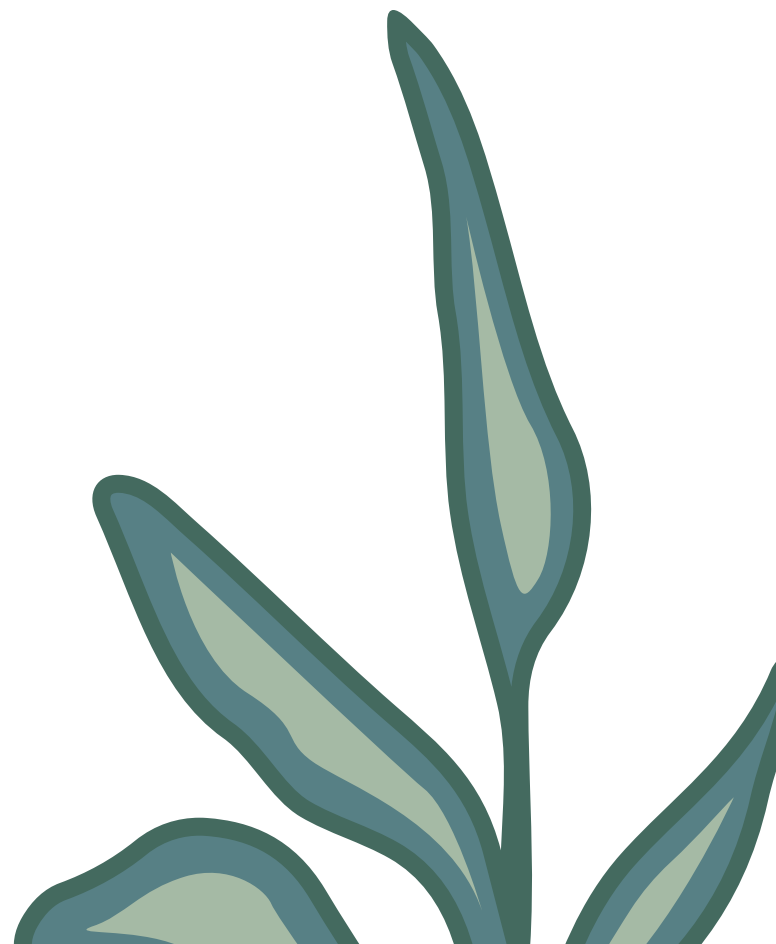
I can acknowledge and confirm that Traditional Knowledge is incorporated into our business. It's in our values and our governing mandates that are established for the operation of the Tahltan. Respecting the lands, the culture, the Nation, those are all key values.

Jamie Gleason - TNDC

Protecting Culturally Sensitive Areas

Forestry operations, when grounded in Traditional Knowledge, are deeply tied to environmental stewardship, reduced risk or project delays, long-term partnerships and broader decolonial efforts. Traditional Knowledge not only guides how forests are harvested but also how they are restored. This reflects the importance of long-term ecological balance and protection of places that hold cultural, spiritual, and historical significance. This creates a symbiotic relationship with the forest, as the process allows future generations to reap the same benefits.¹⁶

¹⁶ Success-and-Sustainability-Part-Two.pdf



Supporting Skills Development

Our previous reports have highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous businesses, including gaps in accessible training, competition for skilled employees, limited access to financing and capital for professional development, and a lack of cultural relevance in training programs designed for Indigenous businesses and communities in forestry.

Strengthening training, mentorship, and employment pathways that enhance Indigenous participation in the forestry sector is essential for demonstrating how IEDCs build capacity and establish sustainable, community-driven models of engagement. These pathways can also serve as trusted examples for other IEDCs and communities seeking to enter or expand within the sector.

The interviewed IEDCs showcased shared pathways to increasing Indigenous participation in the forestry sector through skills and training. These common themes provide a foundation for successful models to increase skills and training for Indigenous Peoples in the forestry sector. The themes identified are as follows:

1. **Practical on-the-job training**
2. **Training embedded in partnerships**
3. **Outreach and awareness**

Practical On-The-Job Training

Participants emphasized the importance of practical, hands-on, transferable training embedded within IEDCs' operations. Training can range from initial specialized onboarding and machine-specific training to mentorship for supervision and management roles, and field-based learning embedded into day-to-day work. On-the-job opportunities provide employees with the skills needed not only to succeed in their current roles but also in future roles.

Practical on-the-job training provides IEDCs with an avenue for Indigenous employees to gain transferable skills and mentorship without the financial burden of increased business costs associated with training programs. This also supports Indigenous

participation in the forestry sector by providing Indigenous employees with the skills and confidence to move into higher-paying positions, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge is incorporated into more management roles where it can meaningfully guide decision-making and forestry operations.

Anyone who works for Dallan, from the equipment side, we provide specialized training on all our machines. Depending on their experience, it can range from 2–4 weeks of training for a specific piece of equipment (40–160 hours). An employee maybe trained on multiple pieces of equipment, depending on what they were hired for.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

They go out of their way to make sure that Tahltan people are working on site and get these supervisor roles and are practicing. And I'm sure they let them genuinely feel like supervisors, not a lot of hand holding, or reduction of scope or responsibility.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

Training Embedded in Partnerships

Training and skills development were also evident in the partnership models used across the forestry projects. In these models, forestry partners intentionally embed training and career-building pathways into contracts, project planning, and day-to-day operations. By structuring agreements this way, partners ensure that Indigenous communities have a clear, consistent, and meaningful place in the sector, while also creating repeatable pathways that support long-term participation and advancement.



These structured pathways help move communities from short-term project roles into sustained involvement across the forestry workforce, which can be adapted by other IEDCs seeking to build similar capacity. Having training embedded in partnerships goes back to having good partners who share values, show mutual respect, and create pathways for better community benefits. Participants, when speaking to skills and training, emphasized the inclusion of community members through subcontracting agreements, which can extend to further skills and training for community members who work for community-owned subcontracting businesses.

This approach guarantees community members priority access to jobs and skill-building roles, ensures that training is a built-in responsibility for partners, and creates long-term employment pathways as crews become increasingly community-run. This supports economic self-determination by empowering community-owned companies to build their own capacity.

Our partners will take phone calls from members. They always deliver wood to the communities, and everyone loves it. For me knowing that type of profit is more meaningful than making money. Where our direct members get impacted.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

We're able to subcontract most, if not all, of the work to Nation member-owned businesses, and this has been hugely successful for us because there's a number of Tahltan, and Nisga'a that have forestry harvesting experience and knowledge. Some of them have made other partnerships with companies and created their own business, others are working as contract hand fallers. We typically are able to subcontract most, if not all, of the work to Nation member owned businesses. So that's been a huge success story for us.

Jamie Gleason - TNDC

Outreach and Awareness

Increasing Indigenous participation in the forestry sector through skills and training depends not only on practical on-the-job training but also on ensuring that jobs, skills, and training opportunities are communicated to community members. Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining open communication channels to ensure members know which pathways exist.

Participants highlighted that communication about training and employment opportunities occurs through a variety of channels, such as community sites, job fairs, local store postings, community events, and communication with the education and training departments within local First Nations. These are important because they create new opportunities within the community with long-lasting impacts. When there is interest in certain jobs, some IEDCs will coordinate training and skills development programs to connect them with subcontractors, building that initial personal connection and reducing barriers to online applications.

We do a wide range of networking for employment opportunities. We do job fairs, communication with the education training departments of other First Nations, not just our partners, our website and Facebook page.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

The Tahltan Central Government has a website called "OnTrack" where you can post job opportunities and find qualified Tahltan employees, which we've done in the past. We have also participated in a number of job fairs over the years, which can be a great opportunity to meet people with experience or interest in working within the forest industry.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

Inspiring Youth Engagement

Supporting opportunities for youth to explore careers in the forestry sector is vital to building a sustainable and inclusive future. Their involvement ensures the continuation of Traditional Knowledge and the strengthening of community leadership while fostering meaningful pathways for economic empowerment.

Building on previous research, the need for youth engagement in forestry remains a key concern for many of the IEDCs that were interviewed. Involving youth in the forestry sector fosters independence and new skills and helps overcome socioeconomic challenges.¹⁷ Youth who develop new skills and train in new environments go on to excel in other opportunities and career-related skills.¹⁸

Although gaps were identified in youth-specific programs, training, and education, the IEDCs emphasized that youth presence and mentorship are crucial for long-term Indigenous leadership in forestry. Two main themes emerged across participants during the interview phase.

1. Early exposure and hands-on training
2. Mentorship and youth representation

Early Exposure and Hands-on Training

Participants emphasized that involving youth in the forestry sector early is essential for building interest and sustaining future Indigenous participation. While forestry encompasses a wide range of pathways, it remains a technically demanding sector to enter. However, with early exposure, mentorship, and sustained interest, it can be accessible and achievable. Engaging youth in forestry at an early stage helps build the skills, confidence, and passion required for

long-term careers, strengthening workforce readiness and supporting the sector's future leadership and sustainability.

Some participants spoke about engaging youth through word of mouth and communication channels, bringing youth in early as labourers, mentoring them, and having them work their way up from there. Others spoke about summer student programs and placements, both right out of high school and after post-secondary studies. Youth from smaller Indigenous communities often leave their communities to find employment, so creating these opportunities early on is critical.

We try to participate as much as possible with high school post-secondary placement for mechanical positions and some managerial roles. We offer a summer student program for returning students who attend school. So, we generally hire summer students to work alongside the operations.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

Mentorship and Youth Representation

Although interviewees acknowledged a gap in youth-specific mentorship and leadership roles within forestry, they were clear that youth engagement remains top of mind and represents a significant opportunity for improvement. Participants expressed that strengthening this space is critical for fostering future leaders who carry forward both technical skills and cultural values into forestry management.

¹⁷ Success-and-Sustainability-An-Introduction-to-Indigenous-Participation (Natural Resource Canada 2025) (Tahltan Nation Development 2025) (Radford 2024) (FPAC.ca 2025) (Canadian Council for Indigenous Business 2025) (NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd. n.d.) (NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd. n.d.) (Sorokan 2024) (Business 2024)-in-the-Forestry-Sector.pdf

¹⁸ Success-and-Sustainability-An-Introduction-to-Indigenous-Participation-in-the-Forestry-Sector.pdf

Participants acknowledged the importance of involving youth in meetings, decision-making spaces, and day-to-day operations to help Indigenous youth understand how forestry works and to expose them to career pathways they may not otherwise consider. Bringing them to the table allows youth to learn, observe, and develop confidence, an important step toward long-term participation in the sector.

On many occasions I've been fortunate enough to be able to give a presentation on forestry and career paths within the industry to groups of Tahltan youth at AME Roundup. It's a great way to gauge interest and encourage students to consider a path in natural resources, and hopefully, a future with our sector.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

Enhancing Community Development

Across the interviewees and highlighted themes, increasing Indigenous-led forestry was consistently brought back to the principle of “nothing about us without us.” One consistent value was the importance of bringing the community along and continually giving back; doing so not only strengthens cultural and social well-being but also drives long-term economic prosperity by ensuring that jobs, training, contracts, and dividends remain rooted within First Nation communities.

Increasing Indigenous participation goes beyond financial gains; it directly impacts cultural revitalization, self-determination, and improved health and education outcomes for all community members. Participants emphasized that through job empowerment, training, mentorship, revenue sharing, dividends, local donations, support for local businesses, and in-kind contributions, Indigenous participation in forestry can fuel economic, social, and cultural well-being.

By increasing Indigenous involvement, communities gain the financial capacity to invest in cultural revitalization, self-determination, improved health and education outcomes, and land-based programming. When communities maintain control over resources and decision-making, they can direct funds toward local priorities, from language initiatives to land stewardship, strengthening collective well-being.

Success is cultural revitalization, self-determination, improved health and education outcomes. It is if we're fitter, healthier, smarter. So, workforce empowerment, jobs, training, promotions, doesn't matter how big we get, we can get as big as Amazon. These will still be the same measurements of what we pay attention to the most, it comes back to dividends for communities.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

Whether it's helping a youth team travel for a tournament or dropping off firewood for the community, we try to step up whenever there's a need. At a larger scale, we're proud of the economic impact we've made, not just through dividends to TNDC, but by prioritizing Tahltan contractors and workers. For us, winning awards from TNDC for contracting member businesses and for Tahltan workforce empowerment were such incredible honours.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

Providing meaningful employment is the biggest benefit for the communities and community involvement. We also support many local charities.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP





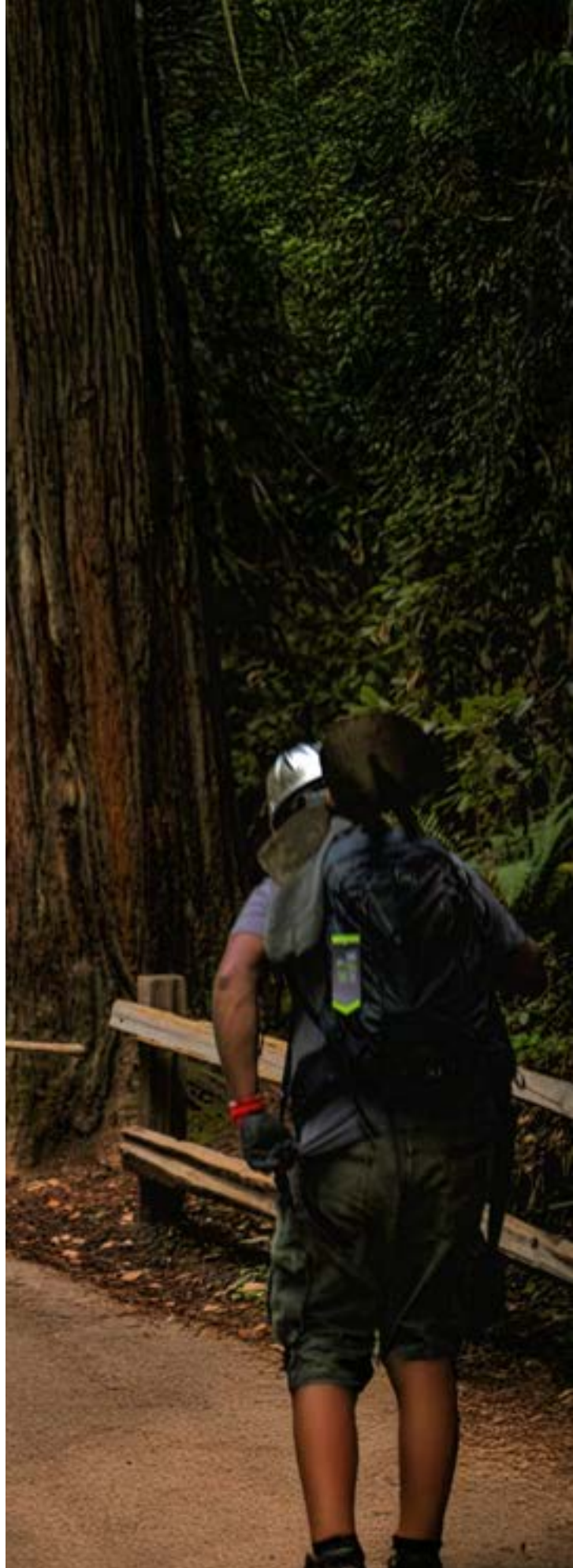
Conclusion

Conclusion

Through profiles of three IEDCs that demonstrate leadership in forestry engagement, this project brought together best practices and tools to not only increase Indigenous participation in the forestry sector but also enable Indigenous communities to thrive as leaders. This will help inform other Indigenous businesses and communities by sharing strategies that contribute to success.

The findings clearly demonstrate that IEDCs can be central drivers of increasing Indigenous participation, contributing not only to economic prosperity but also to cultural continuity, community prosperity, and strengthened governance. Taken together, Indigenous-led forestry management, equitable partnerships, support for skills development, youth empowerment, and the integration of Traditional Knowledge emerged as foundational pillars of success.

Strong governance structures, transparent decision-making processes, and community-driven values reinforced IEDCs' role as vehicles for self-determination and long-term stewardship of forest lands. These insights fulfill the project's objective by equipping CCIB, NRCan, and Indigenous businesses and communities with evidence-based pathways to enhance Indigenous inclusion and leadership across the forestry sector successfully.





Recommendations

Recommendations

Based on the main findings from in-depth interviews with three IEDCs in the forestry sector, the following recommendations aim to provide Indigenous communities and businesses with tools to increase Indigenous participation in the forestry sector.

1. Empowering Indigenous-Led Management

Establish consistent, structured community engagement processes, such as regular meetings and open consultation and communication channels, to ensure that all forestry decisions remain transparent, trusted, and grounded in community priorities.

Integrate cultural values and land-based teachings directly into forestry policies and operations so that decision-making consistently reflects long-term sustainability, respect for the land, and community well-being, rather than short-term profit, protecting the next seven generations.

Formalize governance policies and procedures that require all forestry activities, permits, harvesting plans, and operational decisions to be approved by Indigenous governing bodies, reinforcing sovereignty and ensuring accountability to the community.

Strengthen environmental stewardship by maintaining a robust monitoring and compliance program, training staff in environmental responsibility, and ensuring all operations prioritize ecosystem health and generational sustainability.

2. Enhance Equitable Partnerships

Prioritize partnerships rooted in aligned values, mutual respect, and genuine understanding of the community by ensuring potential partners invest time in learning the community's culture, governance, and priorities before any formal agreement is made.

Establish partnership agreements that ensure true equity, with financial gains, risks, and decision-making authority are shared openly and transparently, so Indigenous partners benefit fairly and are never burdened by hidden costs or unequal revenue structures.

Strengthen partnerships through deep, ongoing community engagement by ensuring partners build trust through consistent presence in the community, participating in local events, and ensuring decisions reflect community interests, values, and long-term benefits.



3. Embed Traditional Knowledge

Ensure all forestry approvals and decisions are filtered through Indigenous value systems by embedding Traditional Knowledge into governance structures, so community-driven cultural protocols guide every stage of operations.

Formally incorporate Traditional Knowledge into corporate policies and workforce training, including cultural training programs, to establish a consistent, organization-wide foundation for planning, management, and daily operations.

Develop and enforce stewardship practices and training that protect culturally and spiritually significant areas, ensuring harvesting, restoration, and land use activities align with long term ecological balance and cultural preservation.

4. Support Skills and Youth Development

Embed hands-on, transferable training directly into day-to-day operations so that Indigenous employees can build skills, confidence, and pathways into higher-level roles without financial or logistical barriers.

Ensure all partnership agreements include built-in training commitments, including subcontracting opportunities, mentorship, and skill-building roles. This will ensure that community members benefit from long-term employment and capacity-building.

Strengthen communication channels within communities by regularly sharing job postings, training opportunities, and career pathways through local networks, events, and education departments to increase access and reduce barriers to participation.

Create early opportunities for youth, such as summer placements, entry-level field roles, and school partnerships, to spark interest, build practical skills, and encourage long-term participation in the forestry sector.

Increase youth involvement in meetings, decision-making spaces, and operational activities by developing mentorship programs that expose youth to leadership, technical skills, and real-world forestry experience.

By implementing these recommendations, Indigenous communities and businesses, whether new to the forestry sector or already engaged, can strengthen their participation and leadership in forestry. These approaches offer practical guidance, real-world tools, and the skills needed to support long-term success while opening new pathways for deeper participation in the sector. Together, they inspire growth, honour community strengths, build on Indigenous value systems, and help build a thriving, Indigenous-led forestry future for the next seven generations.



Reflections and Advice

As each conversation with the IEDCs came to a close, participants offered thoughtful reflections on their lived experiences in the forestry sector. Their insights offer guidance for Indigenous communities and businesses looking to enter the sector, as well as for those already in it. They emphasized the importance of community values and strong, trust-based partnerships built on aligned values, while stressing perseverance, preparedness, and surrounding yourself with the right people.

Find good partners who can support the vision, participate in the business, share the same values in environmental stewardship, while supporting the First Nation communities.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

If I can say one thing, you know, for somebody to come into it, find good partners, make sure they support your vision, make sure they want to participate in the business.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

We share the same values and environment, and we support their local communities and other communities. So, I think that's what makes a successful group and business.

Dale Levesque - Dallan LP

Don't give up, that's my advice. Forestry is a super important sector. It's a cornerstone of the rural economy and seeing Indigenous communities finally gain their rightful place in the sector is incredibly powerful. It's a rewarding field with a bright future, and now is the time to keep pushing forward.

Andrew Burke - NorthPac Forestry Group Ltd.

Spend the time to get to know them before you make a deal, and make sure their values are aligned with whichever First Nation is affected, and that all really comes back to respect and consideration. Do a vetting process, see what different companies are willing to do when they're working with us. Great way to kind of flush this out and see who's out there and know what they're willing to do for you and for the Nation.

Jamie Gleason - TNDC

Making sure communities get the right start with the right people right away. The right people, capital and the right partners.

Calvin Carlick - TNDC

Areas for Future Research

This research highlighted several areas where increased capacity, resources, and funding are needed to strengthen Indigenous participation in the forestry sector. Participants emphasized the need for stronger integration of Traditional Knowledge across policy, training, and decision-making frameworks. There is also a need for greater investment in youth engagement and leadership pathways, including funding for mentorship, exposure to governance, and hands-on learning that connects young people to both the cultural and technical aspects of forestry.

Although tariffs were not part of the formal interview questions, concerns were raised given the current economic landscape, underscoring the need for dedicated research and financial support to help Indigenous forestry businesses navigate rising softwood lumber duties and economic instability. Expanding capacity in these areas will be essential to advancing long-term Indigenous participation in the forestry sector and strengthening Indigenous economic self-determination.



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