

Nimpkish Woodlands Advisory Committee and Vancouver Island North Woodlands Advisory Group

Annual Joint Meeting

Panel Session Meeting Notes

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015

Attendance: Lisa Perrault (WFP), Randy Boas (WFP), Warren Beatty (Neucel), Joli White (VINWAG), Jon Lok (NWAC), Thomas Doak-Dunelly (VINWAG), Will Sloan (WFP), Ione Brown (VINWAG), Clint Cadwallader (WFP), Abbey Jones (WFP), Fred Robertson (VINWAG), Gunnar Wigard (VINWAG), Paul Barolet (MoFLNRO), Pat English (VINWAG/NWAC), Gaby Wickstrom (VINWAG), Jon Flintoft (WFP), Adrian Pendergast (Port Hardy Secondary School, School District 85), Jeff Houle (VINWAG), Leith Paganoni (Marine Harvest), Dave Trerise (VINWAG), Stuart Glen (WFP), Jon Tidbury (VINWAG), Shirley Ackland (Mayor, Town of Port McNeill), Dale Dorward (VINWAG), Janet Dorward (VINWAG), Glen Robertson (USW), Graham McDonald (VINWAG/NWAC), Bill Nelson (NWAC)

Facilitator: Annemarie Koch

Notetaker: Kelly McMahan

Annemarie reviewed the safety procedures with the group and then opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for attending. She reviewed the purpose of the meeting, which was to identify and recommend recruitment and retention strategies to maintain a talented workforce in the North Island Forest Industry over the next decade.

Annemarie introduced the panel of speakers: Randy Boas (Operations Manager Englewood Forest Operation, WFP), Jon Lok (Strategic Natural Resource Consultants), Abbey Jones (Human Resources, WFP), Fred Robertson (VINWAG and School District 85), Adrian Pendergast (Port Hardy Secondary School, School District 85), Bill Nelson (Holbrook & Dyson Logging) and Lisa Perrault (WFP).

Annemarie reviewed the format of the meeting, noting that the panel presentations would be followed by a question period and discussion. She noted that every effort would be made to ensure those who wished to ask questions and to speak could do so. She reminded participants to stay on topic and asked that anyone wishing to ask a question raise a hand.

Lisa Perrault opened the session by briefly defining the need for a forest recruitment and retention strategy for the North Island along with some of her thoughts how and why we need to recruit a talented work force on the North Island. Lisa pointed to some of the real challenges of getting talented people to work on the North Island. She also noted that there is an ageing workforce on the North Island and that while 30% of the workforce in the sawmill sector must be replaced over the next five to ten years, up to 60% of the workforce in the timberlands sector must be replaced over the next five to ten years.

She noted that retention is also a problem. She suggested that, in addition to the lack of qualified workers, significant education and training gaps, coupled with the lack of apprenticeship programs demonstrate a need for a standardized way of training. Lisa noted that, while there is lots of on the job training, there is a lack of career and job information out there for individuals to discover careers in forestry. Lisa noted that there is a need for youth to see the forestry sector as a viable career choice. She noted that, currently, there are misconceptions about forestry as a career, including a perception that the work is low tech, seasonal and geographically remote.

Lisa stressed the need to clarify with youth that forestry is a viable and exciting career choice with diverse options to develop and exercise skill sets.

She closed by inviting participants to discuss ways of attracting people to work in the forestry sector on northern Vancouver Island.

**Session Topic One:** What are some of the initiatives (e.g. training, mentorship) currently underway that support successful recruitment and retention of talented workers in the North Island Forest Industry?

Fred reviewed his understanding of the issues around successful forestry recruitment and concluded that the best way to attract and retain workers in the forest industry on the North Island is to hire people from the North Island. He noted that family and community influence keeps people in the north.

Fred provided a history of the forestry training academy initiative that has recently been developed and implemented through School District 85 and then invited Adrian to talk more about the program.

Adrian outlined how School District 85's forestry academy works and how it came to fruition. Initially he identified what the program needed to look like and how he wanted it to address the full aspects of forestry with a significant First Nations involvement. He knew they had to create their own model and that it needed to specifically address the North Island's needs. Adrian reviewed elements of the academy program, noting it offers 16 grad credits over 2 years, and includes units on soils, geology, climate, flora/fauna, and hydrology. Adrian noted the program can only thrive with cooperation, commitment (industry support such as tours, presentations) and cash. He pointed to some of the funding sources, including the School District, Industry, and the Truck Loggers Association. He noted the Truck Loggers Association was a big help with the donation of safety equipment.

Adrian provided an overview of the program. Each module is over a 10 day period that involves giving students exposure to all the values through opportunities within the North Island. The purpose was to get the students out of the classroom and into the woods. Some of the trips involved working with Strategic Natural Resource Consultants learning GIS and forestry field work, and touring with WFP through an active operation. Practical experience was gained with Gordon Glover on the Community Forest and there was a trip over to Alert Bay guided by 'Namgis representative Rachel Dalton. The group also visited Cormorant Island for a look at some CMT's. The group did a field trip down island to Sylvan Vale Nursery along with a Dryland Sort tour at Coastland. There was lots of practical work experience with the different technologies that are used in the industry. It was noted that there is one student from Alert Bay who travels over to take part in the program. The results are turning students'

minds to choosing forestry as a career. It was noted that the student coming from Alert Bay has an interest in the history of logging. Non timber forest products were also part of the tour with the students.

**Session Topic Two:** What are some of the issues that need to be addressed to ensure successful recruitment and retention of a talented workforce in the North Island Forest Industry?

Bill Nelson opened the session, noting that training costs are a big barrier, along with a disconnect between training programs and future employment in the industry. He explained that people coming out of school can have expectations for big wages and a big job title that are totally inconsistent with their experience and seniority in the industry.

In the case of young workers, on the ground training, giving people time on equipment, the cost of mistakes, such as 1) cost of broken equipment 2) human safety, is a problem. Every job has to take into account the costs of learning the job, along with the impact on production. It was noted in general that we need to be able to give the workforce a full year's work. An industry that offers seasonal or term work can have a harder time attracting employees. Younger people need to have jobs to build a future and build a vision. They need to be afforded the necessities in building a life. If employees are only hired part time, they are forced to find fill in work and the fill in work becomes full time work and good employees get snapped up by other jobs that offer more full time opportunities and better wages. It was noted that the people at the bottom of the seniority list, need to have a reason to feel loyal to the industry.

Social media has become a huge help in attracting the younger crowd. It really helps in creating more branding in the workforce. It creates a sense of a team environment. People want to belong to a team. It was identified that workplaces need to provide a safe, positive place to work, along with maintaining a high level of safety. Positivity was identified as key. Providing positive leadership is hard to do in the face of challenges but it is essential.

Positivity and stability are important for senior levels of management to maintain within the workforce. It is also noted within the context of new workers that clear expectations are needed for potential employees from the outset. A lot of people come into the workforce and want to excel quickly. It is to be noted within today's workforce that moving up the ladder takes time. Further to this training wages and a type of wage that is commensurate with the experience that is coming into the workforce is important to understand. There needs to be credibility on this front. At the end of the day, carving out a life with balance is where everyone wants to be. People want steady work, with a future and need to feel they belong. It was noted that a driver's license is very important. Employees without a driver's license are limited in what they can do in the workplace and can make them less attractive to employers.

Abbey Jones: WFP Human Resources Department in Nanaimo noted she was here to listen and learn about the challenges facing the North Island. She pointed out that, currently, what she is seeing is a large contingent of people working in the oil patch that want to get back to the island. These people offer good skillsets and experience in the workforce. An identified issue is that they can't hit the ground

running as they were not trained in forestry. Training is identified as a key variable as there is not a big opportunity to train these individuals. Students with post-secondary training also can't be hired due to the lack of experience in field work in forestry.

Randy Boas: Challenges seem to be about misalignment of past and available training resources and industry's wants and needs. . Randy's background is in harvesting including labour contracting and management and has worked in several WFP operations including Holberg, Jeune Landing and Englewood.. Randy believes in training from within where possible but at times you need to hire fully experienced employees from outside your operations. Schools are unable or unwilling to produce a "fully qualified" employee that can be hired by industry. Some of that is because of a lack of understanding of the Collective Agreement and understanding the definition of "fully qualified". Randy noted there is a need for workers in the industry but there is a misalignment between the funding sources, the types of programs and students in forestry harvesting training and industry's needs.

Because post-secondary is unable to produce "fully qualified", what they need to be able to produce is an employable person who has an edge on others in order to make them more qualified to get their foot in the door. Some post-secondary training is selling false hope that if you take this course you can get a high paying machine operators job in the forest industry; that is not the case. Randy suggested there may be a need for industry and the Union to discuss a graduated training wage. The starting wage for a position many employees enter the forest industry is landing man, at \$29/hr plus travel and benefits. To pay this right at the outset for a trainee is a big burden. There would need to be a structured training program with milestones to ensure employees didn't get "stranded" at a lower wage and once you are qualified you will move up and make the full wage.

**Session Topic Three:** What new initiatives or modifications to existing initiatives can be undertaken to support successful recruitment and retention of a talented workforce in the North Island forest industry?

Recruitment, retention or engagement? Recruitment or attraction? Jon asked which of these is most important? He noted that what got us here won't bring us to a solution. It was noted that the real question is around engagement of workers, to the industry and to our communities. Jon noted that the benefits of high employee engagement include: lower turnover (67%), higher productivity (21%), fewer product quality incidents (41%), fewer safety incidents (48%), lower absenteeism (37%), increased customer metrics (10%), increased team performance (31%), better sales (37%), and better customer satisfaction (42%).

Where engagement exists is the overlap between vision leadership and tactics. The goal is effective engagement. High performance employees want to feel safe and valued; it drives how hard an employee intends to work. Leaders play a pivotal role in creating, or destroying an employee's sense of wellbeing through their interactions, expectations and behavior. So, if you want high-performing employees you need quality leadership. Consistency is also key with respect to leadership.

At the outset there should be vision. Vision comes before resources, tactics and strategies. Business leaders often skip vision, mission and values they go straight to tactics and actions. They want instant gratification and they just get going and keep going and going and going.

*Individual commitment to a group effort-that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work. Vince Lombardi*

Jon referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs. At the base of the pyramid are the needs of survival, air, shelter, water, food, sleep, sex. Next is the need for safety and security, the next are social needs friendship and family. The next need is esteem, self-esteem, confidence, achievement and the top of the pyramid is self-actualization, creativity, problem solving, authenticity and spontaneity. Jon noted the relationship of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to employee engagement. At the low end of the scale when an employee is working within the base level needs of survival they tend to be less engaged, have more sick days, don't like their teams or managers. When an employee has a high level of engagement they are working from the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and are at the highest level of service and inspire others to do their best and love working where they do.

Jon noted the Four Enablers of Employee Engagement: 1) Visible, empowering leadership providing a strong *strategic narrative* about the organization, where it's come from and where it's going. 2) **Engaging managers** who: focus their people, treat people as individuals, coach and stretch their people. 3) there is **employee voice** throughout the organization, for reinforcing and challenging views, between functions and externally; employees are seen as central to the solutions. 4) There is **organizational integrity**-the values on the wall are reflected in day to day behaviors. There is no "say-do" gap.

All we need is engagement.....need to walk the talk. It is apparent with respect to safety. Business, community and people where they intersect what the company does, what the person does, makes everyone better. It creates a positive and more engaged work environment. It makes us all stronger, better. We need training to make our employees better. Strategic uses work to develop people. The more you can grow a person the better employee they can become for all of the industry.

#### **Open dialogue- working towards the elements of a recruitment strategy....**

*The following observations and comments were made during the course of the meeting. In the interests of encouraging free and open dialogue, no names are attached to these notes*

Key element is that companies are invested in the community, not always the case. How do we work towards this?

Investment is not always dollars, it is the recognition of mutual interests. Communicate the goals and vision and objectives to get to.....let the pieces intersect and see where the value lies and align the values. When we view each other as singularly transactional it becomes a problem. We need to give a little and take a little. We need to be more value focused rather than cost focused. We need to invest

in the person. Recognizing that we all need other, if we remove what is important to individuals, it is no longer a value situation.

There is a drain on the North Island when people leave. The number of people leaving Port McNeill is a big issue. The connections are very important and we need to keep the connections stronger. There is increasing urbanization and we need to invest in strategies in keeping the rural centers alive. Companies that are desperate for employees should maybe look at the value they bring to rural communities when they are hired. The question needs to be asked what value they bring to the community. How do we help employers seek people who add value to the communities in which they live? North Island hires are really important...Engagement is very important. People in leadership position have to get engaged in their communities and sit locally on boards. The strengths of living in small rural towns need to be expressed a little more loudly. The assets of high recreational values, and decreased house prices are a few mentioned.

It is good to see the employees work where they live. Communities in the North Island are trying to keep people in communities. They need to provide water, sewer and roads. There has to be an internet service that accesses all of the North Island. It is important to service the rural communities with the proper amenities in keeping them on the North Island. Keep them where they are and hopefully they will stay there. It has to be project based. Focus on the specifics to make it successful.

Connectivity relies on excellent communication within the community and the leaders in the Community. If Neucel is not working it affects all of us. Capital on the North Island is our human resources. It is important to make the connection with the communities to make them feel valued within the areas that they are in. Forestry is challenged with the boomer population retiring. We need to regenerate and use the resources of the older crew. Support the older workers with some mentoring programs that pair up the young with the older crew members. They are a valued part of the collective knowledge and this information needs to get passed on.

A successful recruitment and retention is program has brought/kept 5 doctors in Port McNeill and Port Hardy. Several of these doctors have children under the age of 5. The value of living on the North Island was sold to them, i.e.: coffee, smoked salmon and a very strong sense of community. Is the recruitment age 20-25 year old? Or should we target the younger high school age. Are their barriers to exploring the youth? A lot of the kids have parents in the industry, and yet they see only a small portion of the industry. The co-op programs start getting people with their feet wet along with summer student opportunities. It is to be noted that the technical schools don't always give students the chance for employment that co-op opportunities do.

Experience from the Logging Fundamentals Training was that the younger students are not fully meeting the requirements of the logging part of equation. Brains are not fully developed in the younger aged employees. A structured program is needed with good mentors. It was pivotal to get students to a good place with an experienced worker. Putting a new and young worker directly in an on the job training situation is not preferred in the logging industry where safety of employees is paramount.

A specific story was told about a forester starting his career in 1995 fresh from UBC that was told to forget the book side of the job and start working in the field. This employee is not able to work with summer students and help with the understanding of different technology. WFP in Port McNeill took a chance on a grade 12 NISS student who was hired as a summer student. At the end of the work term, WFP was able to secure a seat in the VIU Forestry program. His original intention was to become a paramedic. The student returned for two successive summer work terms with WFP, graduated with a Diploma in Forest Resources Technology from VIU and is now enrolled in the GIS Diploma program at VIU. It was noted that there are different entries and pathways into the forest industry. Pathways can come with different opportunities....

The educational background is not always high school, work ethic, professionalism, kids without the ability to actually pass aptitude testing. General attitude and ability is also taken into account when hiring employees. It is so important that management is able to assess employees properly. Discussions around honesty and work practices become a union agreement. Currently, we are setting kids up to not accept constructive feedback.

Can we develop a vision - it is important to create a vision.

North Island kids- have a hard time getting a seat at technical schools, we need to possibly lobby the schools to keep seats for North Island kids. These are part of the vision. One of the best things that can happen on the North Island is that our economy becomes diversified and we can move in and out of different opportunities. Need to find ways to diversify to help the community, and a more diversified workforce. Build the population.

Quality candidates, training, biggest problems facing the North Island is to recognize recruiting families not just people. Finding employment for a spouse....lots of urbanization in people in these times...industry has to work with community. The school district is very impressive, it is beyond reading, writing and arithmetic...practical training is really the key and the school is adapting to this. The high school is really responsive to this.

Average age of millwright is 55. How do you address the need to sustain the workforce? Tell the schools what we need. Investment is made in people. If we can't give them full time work, train them. What is the cost when you have no employees to run the equipment? Government/Education/Industry knows the challenges.

Communication is the key, breaking down the silos. Let's identify the needs and values of the people that are working within the industry. How do we recruit the whole picture into the towns. Make it desirable for all of the family. Good mentoring programs are a key piece in the whole industry. Supply and demand is not going to align. Supply gone, demand present. Unions are a very important piece in this whole equation.

Retention is an important piece- keeping everyone employed. It is good to note that more women are becoming professionals. They want to have good jobs to come to the rural communities. It was noted

that the Northern Living Allowance could be used as an incentive to keep people in this rural area; lobbying needed.

Is there a vision in all of this?

Must include more exposure for young people to the career opportunities in forestry - high school programs, throw a big net out and see what gets caught. The industry needs more exposure! The forest industry is not just the mill. We need to get the younger generation turned onto the possibility of forestry as a career choice and to get rid of the negative stigma that is associated with forestry. There are so many facets within the industry and it is not just harvesting. It is vast and captures more of the population. Federal website- the greenest workforce in the world website <http://thegreenestworkforce.ca> that brings forestry to light is a good start. Forestry is a lifestyle opportunity.

Vision needs to include promotion of the North Island. The moorage in Port McNeill is ~ \$600/year as compared to one in Victoria at ~ \$3600/yr. Benefits are not communicated properly and loud enough. What is available locally? You work where others come to play. Have discussions with other communities about the North Island. The gap in the information is that Campbell River and Nanaimo are often defined as the 'North Island.'

We need to generate awareness among other communities that are south of the region. Need a strong belief in forestry and believes in it helps the programs run. It takes a person to make things work, along with the financial background. It's important to take a long term view towards the programs that work. People are able to sign up to the program (North Island Forestry Academy) from other schools...recruitment is important and having someone with the connection and the ability to network and create the opportunities for youth.

Vision needs to include ways of attracting people to the North Island. The forest industry should look like it offers employment at all levels and a pathway to entry at all different points in people's lives. It needs to be sold that there are many pathways to enter forestry. Career prep-counselors/ forestry teachers need to pitch and be the key influencers in the school system. There needs to be a paid coordinator to promote jobs in the North Island- a website to promote this is needed again.

One person can make a difference. One moment can make a big difference. The least likely person can always make the biggest difference within the industry.

Vision should be unattainable- the idea is to progress towards it. Prosperity... in communities, in business, personally, sustainability, start at a point of commonality to help get to a vision.

It was noted that we need to have events on the North Island to draw people up.

On the coast, the cut has gone down by 30% in the last number of years. This volume loss is related to job losses; resilient people are what industry needs.

School boards are important to draw out the experiences.

**Possible Vision for discussion purposes:** People see forestry as a desirable and prosperous career on Northern Vancouver Island and ultimately choose to live and work on the North Island because it offers a rewarding and balanced lifestyle.

OR

North Island youth/people see forestry as providing a rewarding and balanced lifestyle. (need to get that vision). The perception of forestry is that it is a desirable and viable career.

The ability for people to have a lifestyle that is more balanced. Retirees.....moving to the small towns as a means of retirement. Run the 25 through the system to get the one. Mechanics are a tough one to keep,, it takes \$100,000 to properly train a handfaller and then they move on.

Challenges: rural issues, keeping people in small towns.

Task force on forestry labour- is there interest in a step progression? Is there a way to develop the skill set to develop the initial workforce. BC Forest Sector Workforce- it has been a long haul in getting this going. The initial study has been slow to fruition and now people are working together. The audience is with government in early January. It is to be noted that the apprenticeship programs within industry are not strong enough. This group should forward ideas to the other group that should be added into the strategy.

Annemarie noted that the adjournment time was approaching and asked if anyone in the group would like to volunteer to continue working on a vision and strategy to attract skilled works to the forest sector on Northern Vancouver Island. The following individuals agreed to volunteer for this: Gaby Wickstrom, Pat English, John Tidbury, Jon Lok, Shirley Ackland, Ione Brown, Fred Robertson and Lisa Perrault.

More comments on attraction and recruiting to the North Island were discussed. It is local issues and more training is required specific to this area. It was noted that working and living on the North Island must be seen as a lifestyle, a career, rather than just a job.

It was noted that, out of necessity, 50% of the Holberg shop employees were trained through apprenticeships. The North Island wants people to live and stay here. The target audience is youth that live in the local area. The larger long term vision is to bring families into the North Island. Oil patch employees are coming back to the North Island and the quality of life is not available to them within the oil patch. The attraction is LIFESTYLE! It is enticing to the people who want to be here.

Annemarie thanked everyone for participating and wished everyone a safe drive and a good night.