

NAFA AND SERPENT RIVER FIRST NATION MEET TREEPLANTING COMMITMENTS FOR CARBON-NEUTRAL CONFERENCE



On May 11, 2006, staff of the National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA) and local community volunteers braved a gradually increasing rainfall to plant 2000 jack pine seedlings at the Serpent River First Nation. This “planting party” met NAFA’s obligations under an agreement with Tree Canada to offset the carbon dioxide emissions associated with NAFA’s February 2005 conference in Kelowna.

In general, any large conference will generate significant emissions of carbon dioxide, which is a greenhouse gas that contributes to the problem of global climate change. Traveling to a conference in vehicles powered by fossil fuels, such as automobiles and especially airplanes, is one big source of emissions. Other sources include the use of energy for heat, light, and other power demands associated with the event. Tree Canada operates a program that helps organizations like NAFA to “offset” these harmful emissions by planting a specified number of trees. Over a lifetime, the trees will absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as a part of their process to turn sunlight into food (photosynthesis). The absorbed carbon is “sequestered” in the tree in the form of roots, trunk, branches, leaves, and other substances. For more information, see the Tree Canada website at www.treecanada.ca.

The site at Serpent River First Nation where the trees were planted had previously been blasted to obtain crushed rock for local road construction projects. After the construction was completed, the site was “rehabilitated” but left bare of trees. By choosing this site for planting, NAFA and the community partners found a way to make the trees provide benefits in many different ways. This is one of the wonderful characteristics of trees – they are the ultimate in multiple-service features. Over the coming years, the jack pine trees will improve site stability, sequester carbon, provide wildlife habitat, beautify the site, potentially provide some timber, and many other functions. We are aiming for at least 75% survival of the 2000 trees planted.

NAFA owes a special thanks to Dean Assinewe and Keith Sayers of the North Shore Tribal Council Forestry Unit, who organized and supervised the event at the community level. Amanda Commanda of the Serpent River First Nation also played a key role by recruiting a large number of volunteers. Other local community volunteers included Matthew Commanda, Jesse Commanda, Rochelle Meawasige, April Moore, and Jessica Lewis. The photos below tell the story.

This was a successful example of linking local restoration efforts with national and global environmental concerns. NAFA thanks everyone who made this possible!



The site before planting.



Judy Stevens prepares the day's first tray of jack pine seedlings.



The NAFA crew, ready to go: Lorraine Rekmans, Harry Bombay, and Mark Kepkay.



As the crew gets started, so does the rain: Mark Kepkay, Harry Bombay, Lorraine Rekmans, and Judy Stevens.



Dean Assinewe and Keith Sayers lay out the planting control lines.



Keith Sayers directs traffic.



As the NAFA crew starts to tire, reinforcements arrive: Matthew Commanda, Rochelle Meawasige, and Jesse Commanda.



Matthew and Jesse Commanda