



PRESS RELEASE



Filière Forestière des Premières Nations du Québec SIGNATURE OF INITIAL COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

Mashteuiatsh, January 17, 2012 – The executive committee of Filière Forestière des Premières Nations du Québec (FFPNQ) is pleased to announce the signing of an initial series of cooperation agreements negotiated with FPInnovations, the First Nations of Québec and Labrador Economic Development Corporation and Forêt modèle du Lac-Saint-Jean. The agreements will help FFPNQ achieve its objectives, as part of a development support strategy for Native-owned forest companies.

Signed today at the Native Museum of Mashteuiatsh, the agreements are aligned with an approach aimed at promoting and encouraging the development of Native forest companies. First Nations can tap into ancestral knowledge and are ready to rise to challenges. Indeed, Aboriginal communities are home to a growing number of small and medium-sized businesses in the forest sector.

According to Édouard Robertson, Executive Director of the Société de Développement Économique Innu de Mashteuiatsh (SDEI), the organization responsible for FFPNQ implementation, it is interesting to note that even in a period of economic turmoil, Aboriginal entrepreneurs remain confident about the future and want to be part of the economic upturn. “First Nations have grown with trees and evolved with forests. They protect them and are the people who know them the best. Our challenge is to deploy economic activities in a spirit of respect for forests.”

Solidly established in its field, FPInnovations is a Canadian organization devoted to optimizing the forest sector value chain. It capitalizes on Canadian fibre characteristics and develops new products and markets in a sustainable development perspective. In his speech, FPInnovations President and CEO Pierre Lapointe stressed the importance of FFPNQ as part of a new perception of forest operations in harmony with the environment. He told the people in attendance, “We are celebrating this partnership agreement as an important step in the acquisition and sharing of technical knowledge in the fields of forestry operations, silviculture, transportation, primary and secondary transformation and bioenergy. Innovation and new technologies will play a pivotal role in the development of the local and regional forest sector, and will help create new businesses and new jobs.”

Pierre Bastien, Director General of the First Nations of Québec and Labrador Economic Development Corporation and a signatory of one of the agreements, said that the agreement is the result of efforts by various partners. According to him, “We believed in the development of FFPNQ from the start. Indeed, back in 2008, thanks to our First Nations forestry cooperative, we gathered data on our communities’ forestry profile and, with the collaboration of FFPNQ, we can now complete the interpretation of this information and integrate FFPNQ networking with that deployed by the First Nations of Québec Business Network. Thanks to this multiple partnership, we will reach our objectives while showing our commitment to the inter-community market. The strengths are complementary. Today, we are delighted to see that SDEI’s efforts have led to the creation of FFPNQ, and FFPNQ can count on our support.”

Another signatory, Serge Harvey, Executive Director of Forêt modèle du Lac-Saint-Jean, said that it is an honour to be part of the new cooperation. He went on to say, “The creation of FFPNQ is due in part to a project devised by Forêt modèle du Lac-Saint-Jean, and it’s a sign of recognition for us to be able to continue to take part in developing this organization. We are convinced that thanks to its original approach to forest operations and development, aligned with the Aboriginal vision, FFPNQ can become a high-profile resource for real-life application of a number of our future research findings.”

Created by SDEI, FFPNQ is supported by partner organizations in the Pessamit, Ekuanitshit, Essipit and Waswanipi communities. It also receives financial support from two federal government departments, namely Natural Resources Canada and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Florent Bégin, Economic Development Adviser and Vice-Chief of the Conseil des Montagnais du Lac-Saint-Jean, also attended the signing ceremony. He emphasized the efforts deployed by FFPNQ and reminded the participants that “despite the regional and provincial forest industry crisis, First Nations continue to forge ahead with projects like FFPNQ. They even see a bright future for the sector, thanks to new ways of doing things in terms of forest development.”

In short, the signing of the agreements is the first step toward a new development approach for Québec forests, featuring a high-profile role for First Nations.

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Source: **André Benoît**
Filière Forestière des Premières Nations du Québec (FFPNQ)
418-275-5757, extension 106