



Forestry and Caring for all our Relations: with Indigenous Forester David Flood

Janet Sumner

Welcome to the Clear Cut.

[Music]

Janet Sumner

Hi, I'm Janet Sumner, Executive Director at Wildlands League.

Kaya Adleman

And I'm Kaya Adleman, Carbon Manager at Wildlands League.

Janet Sumner

Wildlands League is a Canadian conservation organization, working on protecting the natural world.

Kaya Adleman

[The Clear Cut](#) is bringing to you the much-needed conversation on Canadian Forest Management, and how we can better protect one of Canada's most important ecosystems as our forests are reaching a tipping point.

Janet Sumner

I'm quite excited about this episode with David. I've known him a long time and this is a real privilege to get a chance to sit down with David and have this discussion.



Kaya Adleman

Yeah likewise I really enjoyed meeting him formally for the first time. I've sat in a few meetings with him before and he's always had a lot of interesting things to say. But it was really cool to be able to sit down and really kind of unpack everything from that indigenous perspective on forestry which has I think been missing from our conversation so far. And it's a really important aspect of the conversation if not the most important, so yeah. It was a great chat, and really, really interesting.

Janet Sumner

Yeah, and one of the great things about David is that he holds both worldviews in one body. he's been trained as a Registered Professional Forester and at the same time he's an indigenous man with a history and a legacy that he's bringing forward from his father and his grandmother, etc. And he talks about that in the episode so if we could just start with a little bit about David and how he introduces himself.

[Music]

Janet Sumner

OK, so without further ado, David, thank you so very, very much for joining us today on *The Clear Cut*. We're really happy to have you here and appreciate your time. But for our listeners, I'm hoping you can tell them a little bit about yourself and, I know there's a lot to tell, so feel free. Just go for it.

David Flood

Oh certainly. [Megwetch](#). My given name at birth is David Flood. I'm from [Matachewan First Nation](#) and my spirit name is Strong Wolf. Like many Anishinaabe people in Canada, I'm finding my way home, finding my way to my culture and finding ways to serve through advocacy and governance, to support communities. To regain sovereignty, aid rights and jurisdiction. It's the journey I've been on since graduating high school and going to college and post secondary. I was gifted that ability by our ancestors who signed the Treaty where the education commitments under Treaty of, at least at that minimum level, has been lived up to at different levels of commitment by the federal and provincial governments. Mainly federal. And when I went off to college and university, I just realized that was money from our ancestors past, who had a vision of us to coexist with our Treaty partners. And it's important that we go back and help support our communities after that long, I call it the dark period.



Through my career in my career and life capacity, what I've done is, I always had an interest in the land and environment. I've been a harvester ever since I could hold a pellet gun. And I processed rabbits and partridge, and my dad taught me how to start doing the harvesting for our family and I always had a lifelong commitment to doing that. [I] felt privileged to be able to bring animals from the land home and feed the family. So thinking ahead in terms of a career being in the natural environment would be a smart career. So I started my education at the college, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. And then through my brief seasonal experiences, some folks I ran into, call them mentors, through the summer suggested that I might have more of a mind for management. And when I went on to the University of Alberta, did a Bachelor Science in Forest Management, I argue that's where my advocacy was born, because I took my elective courses, I took them all in Native Studies. At the time, Alberta had a Native Studies program. And I was again fortunate enough to run into that opportunity. And yeah never looked back. Strong review of the [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#) and started to understand there was a lot of work to do and rebuilding that bridge from the time of treaty making to where we were then in around 2000, or sorry 2000... a little older than that, 1995/96 was kind of when I started taking Native Studies courses in university. So that that allowed me to graduate. And I started my career working on the West Coast in forestry. And I bounced my family back and forth twice to Ontario. And I currently reside in Ontario as a registered professional forester. I've held that designation over the last 10-15 years back and forth. Again, I feel there's merit to the code of ethics of the forester and what they're obligated to do in terms of how they're meant to manage the forest. And look after the benefits of the forest to the people. Not their employer or governments, but the people, and the true sustainability of the forest and lands. So that's why I maintain that designation. And as we can tell by the conversation today, there's going to be evidence that there's more work to be done.

Janet Sumner

Thank you for giving us that brief summary of who David Flood is and where your history comes from. Can you maybe describe your homeland and where your homeland is for people who might not know? We have, just so you know, we have listeners who literally span the globe. So they may not know where you hail from.

David Flood

Yeah no, that's fantastic. So again, I did have the opportunity of being raised out in Western Canada. My dad brought us out there from an economic standpoint. So I was raised in the foothills of Alberta and along Edson Hinton/Jasper Park, in the foothills area. So it was a great place to be raised because it was quite similar to where my home community is. We got the four seasons, you know, a variety of animals and a boreal forest landscape. But my home First Nation community is in Northern Ontario. At the height of land where the transition forest between the Great Lakes and the boreal meet. And it's the



Canadian Shield. It's where the Arctic watershed flows north and the Atlantic flows south. Right through the headwaters of the Ottawa River Valley waterway. Where a lot of electrification has happened since the turn of the century. We're subscribed to [Treaty #9](#). Which is the 1905/06 treaty. But arguably, physically, our reserve land base is in the Robinson Huron Treaty area. So it's south of the height of land(?). And you can see, in the deliberations of the Treaty making they called us the Northern-bound Ojibways and that would be caught in the next treaty making exercise when they came up with the [1850 Robinson Huron Treaty](#). Which, interestingly enough, is going through a [treaty annuities case](#) after all this time, and you have to contemplate what that means. That's a pre-Confederacy Treaty 1850, not 1867. And if everyone's paying attention what 1867 was, that's where we were actually written out of the fabric of Canada. And ignored it for that dark period of time I referenced earlier. And by that dark period of time, I'm, for your audience's benefit if they're not comfortable with it, but this is what it is. That's when Canada chose to embark on [a formal genocide of indigenous people in Canada](#).

Janet Sumner

I think we have to start with truth, right?

David Flood

Absolutely. Kind of goes back and harkens to my early days. And this is long before the [unmarked graves](#), you know, the true understanding of the depth of the impact of residential schools. When I went and took those Native Studies classes, that wasn't on my radar. So if you're asking me if I'm more motivated today because of those incidences, absolutely. I know you didn't ask, but I'm telling you, I'm now more motivated than ever. You know, to right the ship and put in place our sovereignty, governance and jurisdiction, especially in the Treaty 9 context. Because, you know, north of 50th and 51st parallel in Ontario, it's predominantly indigenous communities.

Janet Sumner

Yeah... thank you for that. Hopefully we are embarking on a new era. And I say that with the with the hope from my heart as well, that I hope that as a treaty person that we all step into this new reality

[Music]

Janet Sumner

THE CLEAR CUT

So Kaya, there were a couple things that jumped out at me about what David was just saying. One was this piece about the designation, or the qualification of being a [Registered Professional Forester](#). And he talks about that and says the responsibility of the registered professional Forester (the RPF) is not to the employer who pays his salary or her salary, or to the government, but actually to the people. It's actually to the people. And he'll go on in this interview a little bit more about that but I think that's a really important point for people to know that, kind of like if you're a doctor your responsibility is not to the hospital, but it's to your patient. And in this case the RPF's responsibility is to the people, it's not to the company or the government. So that was number one. That was one of the things that he brought up. The other was a little bit of Canadian history, which is he's talking about the Treaty and where his home nation is. And he talks about being written out of the fabric of Canada and the dark period. Now, David's going to get into a lot more about this. But one of the things you and I did right after we did this interview with David, we said need to get somebody who's going to come in and give us more information about all of the terms that he uses or the references that he makes so that we have a bit of a fuller understanding of Canadian history and all of the different decision points. So in the second episode of this which is going to be in another week's time we'll get to hear from somebody who's worked on this and understands these issues and that will be Anastasia Lintner and we look forward to having that conversation with her in the next episode. So there will be show notes for you, there will be links, getting educated on this is obviously a good idea, but David has a lot to say on these issues.

Kaya Adleman

Mhm. I think it was important to hear that, because it gives a lot of context for the forestry conversation going forward. And how the genocide of indigenous peoples in Canada has really stripped away their sovereignty and decision-making abilities in what happens on their traditional territories. Forestry being one of those main industrial activities that happened at the time of Confederacy. So it's important to get that context, I think. And just a little bit from my point of view, I'm originally from the U.S. and coming to Canada for university, I definitely learned a lot more about indigenous people's role in environmentalism and how important an indigenous worldview is to actually creating real, tangible solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises. And also learning a lot more about the history of indigenous peoples in North America. And unfortunately that's really absent from the educational curriculum in the US. And so I think it's important in this podcast to really emphasize that, because it's definitely missing, it's missing in Canada, but it's especially missing in other parts of the world too.

Janet Sumner

Yeah. I think it's up to all of us to be on a learning journey. For me it's really fascinating to hear from David and just how he has incorporated all of these teachings, and bringing both worldviews: indigenous



and non-indigenous into an integrated knowledge base that he has. So without further ado, let's keep the conversation going because I think people will get the benefit from that.

David Flood

I mean it's not in us and them the Treaty was always meant to be weak. And we as far as indigenous people and the way we lived as societies, you know, we've we've lived up to our bargain and shared more than enough. I always contemplate and try to. Understand. Like. How? Why? Why how could? How could through? Time. Our people, you know, lead the development of Canada through the fur trade and then have a fundamental collapse in relationship. Where we became seen as less than. You know. You go to the royal proclamation. And then you go to. Confederacy and and what changed? What? What changed in roughly that 100 year period? And then of course you know the population dynamics, the disease, the dependency on. You know, the Hudson's Bay Company for goods and services at the collapse of the fur trade. You know it. It just seemed to be like one of those perfect storms where it was just this ongoing erosion of relationship instead of an investment. And then when you know railroad mining and timbering came around and the need for going beyond colonial settlements and then importing more people into Canada, immigrating more people into Canada and then taking up the land for agriculture. You know, it just it just. Again, the writing was on the wall with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Indian is savage unless they meet certain conditions to be deemed not Indian. Whether it was through enfranchisement or education or other. And it was absolutely discretionary through the powers and provisions of the Indian Act and the Minister. And we have a living treaty that our courts, the superior courts, have ruled you are all in the same sound box. Please contemporize your relationship and move forward. And that's the Mikisew Decision. Treat your treaties as if they're an unwritten blueprint and manage your relationship going forward. We've yet to do that. And of course, what's going on in Canada with the climate of climate action and climate change, a lot of our provinces went to PC Conservative governments and they're, you know, eroding the idea of taking action on climate change. With the exception of BC and now, perhaps Manitoba. Otherwise, other provinces are talking about separating, and the hostility of the greenhouse gas framework et cetera. So it's quite the paradigm shift we're in and there is an urgency. There is an absolute urgency.

[Music]

Janet Sumner

Yeah for me, one of the things he mentions is the central point about the Mikisew Decision. That we have to contemporize our relationship. He speaks but past, but David's very much focused on the future. And he's kind of giving context with a lot of what he's saying here, so that we can understand and then



move forward with a new path, and a new way being. And he talks about it not being an "us and them" but rather how do we as Treaty partners, because you can't have a treaty with only one signatory, it actually had to be between two entities. And so that's actually interesting that both signatories, both sides of the equation are called to work together and contemporize their relationship. He also mentions the concept of climate change, and what I find very interesting, and maybe many Canadians don't know this, but we were all suffering from climate change. And what's interesting to me, when you go to the very far north, like I've spent time in Peawanuck and indigenous communities in the Mushkegowuk territory, which is on the coast of Hudson Bay. And up there at the client is warming like at 4-5 degrees. And so we're already seeing big shifts in the Indigenous communities that are seeing massive shifts in their land base, and in their rivers, and how they travel, and all the rest of it. So when he mentions about climate change being important for indigenous people, it is very important for those people whose land is changing and literally in some cases dropping out from underneath their feet because we're seeing the melting of the permafrost. But similarly, in the south, that part of the world is experiencing enormous change from climate change. And it's not just for the indigenous people but for all people. And so this is important because it's about working together and both sides of the treaty working together.

Kaya Adleman

I think it's really interesting when David talks about how settlers in Canada, before Canada became a Confederacy, really relied on his people and First Nations people to learn about the land. They really helped lead the fur trade, and then I don't know, it seems like as industrialization kind of moved forward, the relationship kind of fell apart. And we kind of embarked on those dark times that David alluded to earlier. And I think this is really kind of important context for setting up the next section of our conversation because David will talk a lot about how indigenous knowledge, and because indigenous people have been stewarding their lands since time immemorial, and they know their lands better than anyone does, and how we need that input in creating better outcomes for biodiversity and conservation and better outcomes for forestry.

David Flood

you know, coming from the foothills in Alberta and growing up there and being on the land and on the landscape and gaining an appreciation growing up there. Then coming to the boreal forest, over that decade, now that I've been back consistently, I kind of would argue and this is just my own personal life experience. I think the eastern boreal might be one of the more diverse and dynamic you know, per square hectare per square meter diversity. I've been across Canada and worked in been through some forests in northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan. Lived and breathed the full experience, but you know, been in and out of the forest types and I'm really quite impressed about the diversity that exists up here



at the height of land and the Canadian Shield, I haven't seen this kind of diversity anywhere else and that that includes the coastal temperate rainforest. I mean, they totally different species and things like that, but just the abundance, the abundance, you know, when you do these science based experiments and you drop that square meter down on the ground and you randomly throw it around and you just measure everything that's in that square meter. Guaranteed it seems like we have more in Northeastern Ontario. So it's on that basis that I'm I do get quite concerned when. Companies manage the forest resources under forest resource inventory data and kind of the running understanding is it's inaccurate. The running understanding is it's not exact. And then you're going to machinate it through a forest management model and call it sustainable forestry out at the other. End and then you're going to look at your ecosystem impacts over that 250 year period. Of time and look. At your range of natural variation and pound your habitat models through there and say it appears that the animals you know natural range of habitat is maintained within that plus/minus 20%. That's a 40% variance from where we think they like to live, and that's the other one where we think they like to live.

[Music]

Kaya Adleman

Right. So I guess just so that I'm understanding this fully, in Ontario when they do forest management planning, they have like a forest management model that they put all of the data into right? And then after they put it to the box, does it result in a plan? Or do they have just kind of the ingredients for the plan after it goes through the model?

Janet Sumner

Well the forest management plans that I've worked on, and I haven't worked on every single one in Ontario. But the process is they have [stand and site guides, and landscape guides](#), and there are many things that you have to put into the plan. It might be a marksand analysis, might be a wood supply analysis, all different kinds of things that you're analyzing and you're putting through, not a machine, but an analysis tool. And as you do that, it gives you data and then you use that to actually start to devise a plan, knowing that you can only you know go so far. You've got a landscape, you've got a geography, so all of those are ingredients. It's not like one great big master machine that you just pour all the data into it goes there's your plan, Tada! There's your plan. Because there's a lot of decision points along the way as well, but I guess what David's saying is when the data that's going in has this huge variation on it in terms of our certainty around whether or not species are going to persist. That really means it's kind of like, it starts to feel like you're, not necessarily guessing, but you don't have a solid foundation on which to say 'yes here's the data here's what we know.' I do think that that for me



anyway suggest that there is even a greater role in trying to work on these plans with the land users, with the people who know the land the best and David will talk about his own life experience on that.

Kaya Adleman

I guess after hearing that from you, and considering the fact that David was saying that after you run it through the model, which has very limited input from an indigenous knowledge base, they're calling it sustainable, right? And then you look at the actual impact on the land after the fact... I guess without further Ado will hear more about that

David Flood

I'm going to talk about limited science. Science is an empirical. Decision making tool in the Canadian context. Of forestry and forest management. It's limited, it's limited in its its ability and and in fact practitioners are not often connected very well to the most current science, which is shown in evolution and a shift away from some of the older empirical ways of of assessing. Certain ways to manage for habitat and animal use.

Bringing Western science and two eyed seeing into our communities so that we can, you know, accelerate our close the gap between what Western science thinks they know and and what indigenous communities know based on millennial of experience thousands of years. You know, I think about my grandmother that passed, and I certainly don't have all the knowledge she carries, but she carried 4 generations before her and it was all oral society. In the language. What an encyclopedia that would be. Meanwhile, I didn't learn the language from her. I wasn't raised near her, and all I got was more incidental experiences from her, but enough to compel me to be curious and know that there's no way in heck four years of university is going to tell me everything I need to know about. What's on the land out there? And I and I, I really believe that again going back to that biodiversity conversation earlier, where I I just know intuitively there's more going on out there on the land per hectare by ecosystem type that we need to do better monitoring on. So we know what the impacts are and that's that's that's. Kind of. The premise of the cumulative impacts case. We have protected Aboriginal rights and treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution, so knowing that you know that that's that space, we get to feel for our inherent rights, jurisdiction and sovereignty, so that coexistence can be real. And and that's that's the the space we're trying. To fill right now.

You know that spirit and intent of hope and the purposing of the Guardian program and the building out of lands and resource departments. Because ultimately, without those institutional development pieces in place. We we're our wheels are spinning. And and the crown. The provincial crown is not going to do that for us necessarily. We've we've just run into too much silence



[Music]

Janet Sumner

David's final remark, saying we've just run into too much silence, kind of really hit me. I can imagine you're saying things, you're repeating things, you're knowledge holders, the folks who have been on the land who have worked the land continue to say things, and there's not really a place for two-eyed seeing. For this ability to speak, for example, on a forest management plan, it could be on you know mineral exploration, or what have you. But anytime there is going to be a regulated system of access to your land, we haven't yet adequately designed the system so that there is an us planning together. And so I find that idea of running into the wall of silence it really conveys a lot when he says that, for me anyway.

And the other part I just wanted to mention about two-eyed seeing, the first time I heard that term or really ran into that in a big way, was when I was the co-chair of advisory panel and we had [Dr. Reg Crowshoe](#) Blackfoot from Alberta and his wife Rose on our panel. And he introduced and actually rather did a lot of education around the two-eyed seeing and really helped us understand as an entire panel of people from industry, environmental groups, academia. Just what it meant to embrace two-eyed seeing, which was this idea that you have two worldviews, an indigenous and a non-indigenous worldview. And it's about creating a conversation and an ethical space in which to have that conversation. So you're bringing both worldviews into the conversation, and so I love this term of two-eyed seeing and being able to hold the space for that ethical conversation.

Kaya Adleman

Mhm. And I think, just to speak to that institutional aspect, the institutions are not there. I think that's just what David is saying with building out the lands and resource departments with indigenous people and Indigenous knowledge holders, so that better monitoring of the lands can be done, bringing in that framework into you know forest management decisions, or any other decisions.

Janet Sumner

I think that's all really important, Kaya. And I think that not only is it about indigenous people being able to monitor on the land, but guess what folks? Our science isn't a complete road map for all of this and so we actually need the indigenous knowledge and I think that's the other thing that really hits me is that, he's not just saying we need to be able to monitor the stuff, but we collectively need indigenous people monitoring this stuff so we can make the best plan possible.



David Flood

For us, we have this notion that we need to improve and look at moose recovery. And look at the way we're managing late winter moose habitat. Understand the moose populations and where they go at different times of year and that that. That feathers together with the idea of don't continue the use of herbicide spray. They are browsing animal. Quit spraying where they need to live in the winter. And this is the wildest part. When we jumped into this exercise, I had. A band member who was a graduate from McGill in biology. So again a call them home opportunity, right post secondary indigenous person got some knowledge right. Come and work on something that your community has said is important, so put them to work doing the research. What is a good researcher do when it comes to understanding Western science and trying to develop two-eyed seeing? What do we already know? Well, lo and behold, in Ontario there was a report from the late 80s that actually gave rise to the notion of late winter moose habitat or moose, not moose, late winter habitat for ungulates. And apparently that paper went on to actually start doing the deer winter ranges and things like that in other provinces. But not so heavily used in the Ontario context. Because it seemed like moose could just pretty much live anywhere and everywhere, they were very resilient across the landscape. But that was until what did they do? Oh, introduced that fire emulation harvesting for a decade. And at the same time that that guidebook came out, they were also supposed to do moose enhancement areas. To offset the impacts of this kind of harvesting with moose enhancement as a source area. And so that 1980s paper, guess what it said? Make sure there's enough brows adjacent to late winter moose habitat within 100 meters because that's what the study said. In the animals congregate in winter together, the yard yarding collecting, gathering. But the science over the last 30 years didn't use. The word has never really used the word yarding we call it yarding. It's it's very prominent in our in our common language they yard. They come together, they're familial, the moose. And so not only did it say within 100 meters, it actually said the moms, the pregnant moms will only go out within 10 no more than 20 meters along these areas. In inherently, you know from a you know now we've, we've we've elevated our awareness we've we've found new information and you know we want to create an implementation practice because that's where we are now remember customized consultation relationship table. You know, match science with knowledge and land use and expectations. We want to get rid of herbicide spraying. That's a mandate of ours. We want to enhance late winter moose habitats. So we increased the populations because they dipped between 25 and 50% over that same decade. And why was that? Because of increased Hunter success, you go into these harvest areas heavily loaded. The moves are standing there in these goals, draws and valleys, and they don't they they don't, they don't know. They're out in the open. Right. They think there's a scape, you know, they got a little bit of big trees behind them along the waterway or around a pond or a little reserve area. So back to the. Back to the reality. You're starving the mother. And what do what do? What happens with mothers when they're starved and they're pregnant? They'll abort the baby. So there's a compounding effect here that that I you. Know and and I. And some foresters, oh, don't don't say it like that. That's not true. That's like, come on. That's not real. I said, well,



how would you know? I mean, it sounds a little bit extreme, but how would you know? I mean, your own science says that the female pregnant mother doesn't go out into those open areas because of the hardship on the animal. And the need for escapism if the wolves come out there. And if it's a hard pack, what happens when they go out there? The wolves can actually jump on them faster, but and they're better off in the timber, right? And especially if they're familiar in a yard, they can help protect each other. In the underneath the forest conifer canopy and it's conifer, by the way, that they escape under. Sounds common sense. Sounds like you don't need a whole. Lot of science. But there is a value to what we learn from looking at Western science knowledge because it allows us to connect the dot to some of our indigenous ways of knowing, and then now it's about implementing that. And sadly, that's the pinch point we're in right now we're having. A hard time. Fully implementing our intentions around. Late winter moose habitat and we we would our suggestion again from indigenous ways of knowing is. Well, let's just pick. Something between 20 and 100 meters. Right. And don't spray. And of course, going forward, you can manage your investments if you're going to plant and you're worried about your, your planted species, conifer species, if you're planting and they're dying underneath the right, the closed canopy of the Aspen, that might be regrowing in that 100 meter area, but isn't the boreal forest the mosaic of diversity? And so if you're. What the hell? The next 10 years we have 100 meter buffers on late winter moose habitat. Who's that really going to hurt? Isn't actually going to increase more carbon on the landscape. You're not spraying the deciduous. There will be conifer growing up underneath that cause. Conifer comes up successfully underneath Aspen. And you might actually improve the moose population.

Janet Sumner

Does it help with fire breaks? Do you think is that?

David Flood

Absolutely, it would absolutely, but it breaks the. Continuity I mean. Let's go to another concern about fire. Knowing the system and the regime that's been going on about the herbicide spraying and promoting conifer and and the reality that the spruce budworm, yes, it prefers balsam, but it also now has attacked spruce and across our Northeastern Ontario, it's now 100% the the the epidemic has happened and we've got so much standing. Dead fuel wood now. Because it it. I mean the, the, the, the bud worm has now spread and it's got more heavily impacted areas. That, of course, the forest companies are going to try and do more solid thing in right to mitigate the the fire impact, but you still have so much more standing dead fuel and we are one of the areas across Canada that has limited large scale fire burning going on. So this coming next fire season, I I'd like to think that that. There's an emerging diligence emerging that. Our area could be one of the next ones to go because we've created the fuel source because of the way we managed our forest and herbicide spray and. Don't have those brakes. No, I'm just saying this off the cuff because I'm as I'm I cover a lot of the landscape up here in our territory. I I could be driving, you know. 1200 kilometers on any given day, and I see a lot of the



forest and, yeah, I'm just intuitively, naturally concerned and I'd. Like to believe that? You know the crown is. And and the companies.

[Music]

Janet Sumner

I think David's right. I think that the recent surge and size and frequency of forest fires has everybody concerned beyond the borders of Canada. That people of Washington DC are concerned as the skies have filled with smoke. So I think that forest fires are a big concern for everybody. And I'll also just mention that spraying with the pesticides or herbicides is not universal across Canada. I know for example, they don't spray in Quebec and why is that, and can we maybe borrow from that. But this concern about spraying has come up in the context of many indigenous nations, and how it affects the water, the species, etc. So I do think it's something that Ontarians need to look at, and if we can get out of that that would be great.

Kaya Adleman

Yeah, I mean. [Rachel Carson, Silent Spring](#). Like you'd think that it's a little obvious that it's probably not the best course of action to spray chemicals on everything. They knew that in the 1970s.

David Flood

So that's where indigenous knowledge and place based experience I think comes into effect. I've just heard way too many stories about my grandmother. You know, being approached by education institutes, you know where they're tracking links or wolves or, you know when they come and talk to her about where do we find them, how can we tag more, more animals and things like that? So there you go. She was. The pH. D. You know what I mean? She was the educator and and meanwhile at the Forest management planning meetings when she tried to speak to the foresters. They weren't hearing her, they just thought she was a lovely little old lady, saying some very interesting things around when consultation was tell us your issues and concerns. Thank you very much. But we don't have to move to consent.

Kaya Adleman

I just love how he says that his grandmother was the PhD. That's just such a good way to put it.



Janet Sumner

Yeah, it's fantastic. Obviously his respect for his grandmother is deep, it's so good when he does that.

Kaya Adleman

But it's also frustrating on the other end, that her input was just disregarded despite all of the knowledge she had about that land. So yeah, very frustrating. And David goes on to actually talk about how not incorporating indigenous knowledge into forest management decisions can create bad outcomes.

David Flood

I used the example on the Temiscaming forest over here that has not slowed down through both of those downturns in the forest sector, it's operated pretty much near 95% or better. And if you want to look at, you know, really what the full implementation of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and all of its glory and guides and herbicide spraying and. I mean, this is where it brought me to that conversation of sterilization. You know, we have quite heavily impacted and young forest with very little old growth and by the end of this 10 year cycle, we've at least shown within a sub region of the forest there is no more Martin core habitat to be had, it's fragmented to such a point where you couldn't use that. Ontario wildlife habitat modeling show that that in that area for we didn't. I don't know exactly how far out I think it's over 50 years before you would actually say there would be enough recruitment for. Martin, so now these little Martin got to go from here. And go figure out where they're going to maintain their genetic diversity and find other old forest habitat. And from here they've got a long. Ways to go. To go find that next forest and most most animals that out migrate, they don't. They don't travel that far. They don't travel 10/15/25 kilometers. Their home ranges are not. That big. So it's kind of putting an animal on a path of extra patient and that's just in our view not healthy. And we worry about the next round of forest management planning given that that's that's the trajectory on is what is going to be the recovery. And the herbicide spraying has to stop it. It fundamentally has to stop. Because you are you are. You are not taking advantage of the resiliency of the boreal forest. If you continue to spray that way, and these large cutover areas that are allowing that the natural succession of what Aspen and and other deciduous trees will do well, that's what you, I mean, the art and science of forestry. Then right. If you don't want it to flourish and come up that way, then think about alternatives so that you're mitigating the the the flushing of these trees in the pioneer stage of forest succession. You're not actually respecting what fire emulation is in some ways. Again, we're diving into a little bit of the dynamics of ecology and ecosystems and economy. You know, at at the expense of whom or what and. We can have a green forest. Just go down South. They're still operating forestry down South of us. It's at a different scale and

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it's different product lines, you know, and there's it's interact with urban sprawl, you know, but there's a lot of green. But it's not. It's not the same as what we've asked ourselves to commit to and and that is a healthy ecosystem, which includes water, soils. Animal habitat. And the interaction of. Well, frankly, indigenous people and northerners.

[Music]

Janet Sumner

Yeah, I think that choice right? And when he talks about how we have forest down south, I would argue that these aren't really functioning forest ecosystems, but rather they're stands of trees. So we can have green areas where we have lots of trees, or we can choose to have a functioning ecosystem. And the choice is kind of stark but that's where we're at. And you know I live in Scarborough, and we have some forest here I mean, Rouge National Urban Park actually has a forest. But there's a whole bunch of places where we're replanting trees and we've got trees, but we don't have a functioning ecosystem. And so I think this is rightly put by David, is to look at that and say we have a choice to make and because we have that choice to make we can- or because we still have that choice to make let's choose to have a functioning ecosystem and then make the right decisions to make that happen.

Kaya Adleman

Right. And this idea that there's green forests down south, there's kind of this more insidious manifestation of that idea in that are we like greenwashing the forest? Like David will say, and you can look this up, most Canadians, [they live really close to the US border](#) relative to the vast expanse of the country's political boundaries. It's hard to, I think, conceptualize the vast impacts of forestry and other industrial impacts on forests in the north when you can like take a 30 minute drive somewhere, like if you live in a city in Canada, and you know, go on a hike and you're like 'oh wow like you know how can all this be happening when you know I'm standing in the middle of trees.' And my really close friend from university, she's from BC. And she says that if you drive around along the roads in British Columbia, it's really beautiful and there's all these trees, but then you walk like maybe 10 or 15 meters into the tree line and then it's just clear cuts. So it's kind of, it's giving false advertising of what our landscape really looks like.

And yeah so, I think that kind of brings us to how there's kind of contradictions in what the intent of the Treaties that David describes earlier set out to do, and their outline of creating a coexisting relationship between indigenous people and settlers, and how that manifestation is not actually what happens in practice.



David Flood

Under the current Crown Forest Sustainability Act, if you just read the [1st 6 sections of of commitments of what the legislation](#) is meant to do. There is a wonderful motherhood statement on what. Sustainable forestry is in Ontario and it's actually ecosystem based driven. That's not what they're doing. You know most forest management plans and the modeling they do is based on forest type and they give it economic labels, not. And they lump them. They don't actually give rise to the kind of variation in diversity that actually exists across the boreal forest. I mean, it's not mountains. It's not. You know, there's so much water and so many watersheds, and even though it doesn't look like a very dynamic landscape, it is incredibly diverse. So, you know, you pause there and you go, OK, so it's got a commitment to federal law. It says we will be consistent with the Constitution, which means [section 35 rights](#). Right. They're going to be consistent with that. They're not going to infringe on abortion. Rights and treaty rights. And we're also going to be supported by other regulation like the [forest Management Planning Manual](#), they call it the Bible here in the province and other supporting guides. Science based guides. And so. When you put that package together and you read the the last sort of quotient of what it says in those first six sections, it says. Sustainability of forestry will be defined by the forest management plan that is developed through the forest Management Planning Regulation. So now where does that take us? It takes us to a planning team. And an SFO, a sustainable forest license, of which the licensee is required to lead the forest management planning process. Of which the First Nations are invited. By the crown. Under an underutilized mechanism of CCA, so the default is they default to the public process unless they actually find a way to negotiate their way into. I now if you heard what I said about, we have taken the Crown to court, bumped up a forest management plan on the under the EA process and actually got them to bend the knee at the time they were they were eroding the EA process realizing that's the Fox in the Hen House overseeing. EEA implementation now, which the Ministry of Environment used to do under the declaration order. So it's not simple folks. I guess this is this is this is complicated stuff and now let's go back to the planning team. And this is an age-old story since 1995, and the exception of the Crown, Forest and Billiat many, many a good minded indigenous person went to those planning teams. Highly knowledgeable land use practitioners and elders. And it was again tell us your issues and concerns. The biologists would often intervene or they would find a way to say the land use guide is is accurate. It's a. Science based and and. More recently, in the last 10/15 years, we know the implementation of natural pattern emulation disturbance regime of fire. Emulation would I mean it, it's it's a, it's a war zone out there. When you look at the implementation of these vast harvest areas. That are sprayed with herbicide and then? Not managed very well for adjacency of escapism for animals and continuity and connectivity. UM. You know, it's actually got a lot, even a lot of the forest harvesting companies you know, while they're going, hey, this works well economically. I'm making great money. They're going, this is not healthy for the forests. Without diving into all the complexities of, you know, ecosystem based forest management and diving into the sciences and what's required in the range of nature like they don't know how to. Like most people would not talk like that, and yet you have First



Nations people going to these planning team. Tables under resource to be there to actually translate what they're speaking to and say we need to look at this, we need to look at that and translate it in such a way that the biologists and others that the planning team would say we need to set objectives around some of these things. So it Harkins me back to when I first started as a forester at Nan and acting at the region and trying to support 8 communities going through forest management planning processes. And we. We got to the point on one forest, the Temiskaming Forest as an example, where we actually had indigenous objectives. We we sat as a group of indigenous communities and we said OK, what would be our long term management objectives? What would be our desired future for US conditions, right? What do we want to see? And it included monitoring. It included the Bioeconomy included diversification, like utilization of waste like we, we've always said that three times we got to figure this out sooner than later because in the end it's bitten most of the SFL's on. The rear end. Because in those re rationalizations of the downturn of the economies we've lost, low grade hardware users in certain forests, and what does that mean? The conifer user spruce pine fur are going after the conifer. And who uses those forests? Very important keystone species, Martin and moose, for example. And so the conifer users hammering away at at the conifer stands the the majority, 80% or plus conifer stands. They're not messing around in the mix with stands because they don't have a low grade hardwood user. Maybe Columbia, the veneer, A veneer, consumer. And then of course, that's we get all that slash waste on the roadside. And that's the oddly. Sustainable, because that's the current condition economically. To leave waste. But really, that's. The the measure of the cost of that impact is not really being measured properly. You're not doing it from an ecological measurement, you're you're just looking at the consumptive wood resource measurement.

Janet Sumner

So David, I just want to draw that point there. So you're saying that it's economically sustainable and one could even argue whether that's true or not. Environmentally sustainable.

David Flood

Well, that's just to keep the lights on. When I say economically sustainable, that's that's what they're doing and rationalizing just to be able to keep the lights on on the current sector. Now let's let's. Just pause there again. This current Conservative government has come in and asked for a doubling of the wood consumption to the pre downturn era. Where we went through mill rationalization 2 times in this province and one would argue we should probably do it a third time. And they want to actually go back to the pre. The pre 26,000,000 cubic meters of wood consumption. Now they're saying they want to get there by in part the bioeconomy and biomass like do better consumption of wood waste. Well, that'll make up some part of it. But juxtapose that with the current environment. What do we need to? Be doing right now. Going to 30% of the landscape in conservation areas to meet that international biodiversity commitment and this province is silent on that. And they sit around, just under 12% across the province as an average. So you want to double wood consumption and you're not implementing that conservation measure. Those two do not intersect very well. So what are you doing? Are you



delaying so that you actually harvest more and then conserve? What? What's the plan? Right. We already know that following the species at Risk Act is voluntary. At these planning teams. So in others, the planning team gets together and determines what are the species that are deemed most important to us. We don't have to use the species at risk legislation and impose that on that geography, that land base, that's a federal. So there's just all kinds of things, right? So Can you imagine that Port Forrester, both from the industry and and and government? And quite often these are like new sort of two five year old foresters out of school. They're mentored, they're being mentored, but they're put into this machination of this, this grinding engine of coming out the other side. Of a a pretty. Straight forward three years sort. Of Bang Bang bang, these things will get done and and then implementation. But it it doesn't leave a lot of room, you know, to support. You know what we call the art and science of forestry there. There is an element of the unknown that we should always be contemplating. But there's this perception that these land, the, the guidebooks. I'm sorry. The landscape guide the site and stand guide. These are these are law and they followed. And then if you can stand behind them and say I've implement these as our. Implementation strategies then. I'm legally safe as a forester to stand behind these things instead of understanding that maybe some things need course corrections.

[Music]

Janet Sumner

Yeah, I just wanna start with one thing that David says. He talks about the Species At Risk Act being voluntary. I think what he's referring to is that the Ontario Endangered Species Act. Right now, forestry and several other extractive industries or development are exempt from The Endangered Species Act. It was one of the things that the [current Ontario government did](#) when it came into power. It created a permanent exemption for these industries from The Endangered Species Act. And so what we've got now is we've moved from having a law about endangered species that you had to follow, to a Crown Forest Sustainability Act where you're required to plan for the species, so they get to volunteer which species they want to plan for and sit down and do that. It's a very different reality on the ground. And we can provide links to that so people understand how the Species at Risk Act is working. So both the federal act and the provincial act don't have any teeth when it comes to, or aren't being used to have any teeth, that when it comes to forest management planning and requiring actual things to happen on the ground. So that's one of the things that David mentions in in passing.

Kaya Adleman

I like that you said that, because I think it kind of speaks to this whole theme of what David was saying. And that's that the implementation isn't there. And I think what he's also saying with that, is that there's



this underlying economic framework that we just have to drive as much wood through the mill as we can to maximize profits, make as much money as we can, so while we have some of the tools and ingredients that could actually be incorporating ecosystem values, indigenous perspectives, the implementation of them is just really poor or non-existent. Going back to the economic frame kind of driving all of this, even that's not sustainable as David says. Like it's just to keep the lights on and eventually we're going to run out, and even as David was saying companies are realizing that the forest is not healthy and at the end of the day who is that helping you know?

Janet Sumner

Yeah I think that one of the things that, unless you live there, you may not know this, but Northerners who are working in the forest industry, they love the forest. They love being in the forest, it's one of the reasons that they may have taken on that job or that area of study because they love it. And as he mentions, many of them are realizing or they know that that reality is true. That we were harming, and it's not to say that we can't do any forestry because that's not the position of Wildlands League, but certainly that the current state of play and how we're managing the forest is not leading to the outcomes that were promising ourselves. That we're going to deliver either economic sustainability or environmental and ecosystem sustainability across a range of species so. I think that this is all leading to as you listen to each one of these episodes, you hear everybody sort of repeating themes that it is the driving need to feed the mill, that is in some cases, in most of these cases actually driving decisions that aren't going to lead to economic or environmental sustainability. So what's the future, what does that look like? And we don't solve that with the current episodes but it does start to ask people, maybe we need to start looking at that problem and having a better conversation about that.

David Flood

the forester's job is to uphold the management of the forest in such a way that it meets. The needs of the people. Well, in the Ontario context, if you think about who manages the Foresters Act, it's the Minister and. Who is the people? Because if you recall what I said under Confederacy, the indigenous person is under section 91 of Confederacy and managed by the Indian Act. So are they provincial people? Are they? What happened to the treaty? What happened to coexistence? And so when you drive into fpic and you're a forester within a province and you're an RPF, a registered professional forest, and you have this legal code of ethics, obligation, and now you have this international law facing you. Now, what do you do now? What do you do when you go and consult with the First Nations whose territories you're actually extracting? Forestry resources from. And how do you manage for that inherent definition of sustainability? Is it sustainability for the wood to the mill? Or is it sustainability for water, healthy ecosystems, habitats, species at risk? The migratory birds. And and of course, at the end of the day, I always like to say that is our grocery store and that is our medicine chest and Canada and



the province cannot foot the bill if we cannot find a way for that food security and food sovereignty to coexist in whatever scheme of forestry and forest management is going to go ahead in the face of climate change.

If you understand how forestry and forest management occurs in Ontario, there is the Crown Land policy branch. There is the forest industry division. Those are the forestry operations branch. There's the Forest information section. There are 4 distinct silos. Which one do you think pulls the strings?... Well, it always goes back to what's what, what's leading the cart, right. And if the operations branch is the cart who's pulling it policy branch. So if you're going to steer the CART policy, branch is going to steer that tempered with the harnesses and the reins, and the driver called forest Industry branch, right? And then forest information is good data management for. Well, it's meant to be good data management for Open Access. So we make good landscape level decisions. So it's policy branch, you know that that is is the one that's going to open the door for Crown land policy branch. How are we using the land and the landscapes? What drives sustainability? If they're not. Ministry of Environment and Conservation and Parks, then, who drives the conservation agenda. M&R points to MECP. And MECP says we don't have a mandate. And MNR says when they're ready to lay out conservation. We're ready with the land. So it's a bit that's bureaucratic. But then behind the policy is who's driving the agenda right on the 2019 forest sector. Policy is driving the agenda. Double the wood consumption.

Janet Sumner

Right. And then you've got this complexity of how you do a force management plan. And as you said, they're driving in a three-year window to try and get to the end of it and they've got all of these parameters that they have to take into consideration, mashing it through a model which doesn't necessarily consider all of the things that you should be considering. Or adjusting for and and this is the one of the things that really frightened me. Was that not only is that having a bad impact on the. But even the fiber supply is not there. When companies go out to cut it because our forest resources inventory is not accurate and we've, as you said, we've known that for a very long time, I started working on conservation 20 years ago and I knew it then. That the F MRI data, you know it just wasn't accurate. So how do you build a model with that 40% variance and knowing that when you get out in the divorce, I mean it's kind of like the good guess where you stick your thumb up and you try to figure out what might be happening.

David Flood

That's right.

Janet Sumner



And then and then you don't have all of the indigenous? People who can actually help you understand the land. There's no there's no inherent collaboration

David Flood

I mean, we can talk about consent as a different conversation around what that looks like at scale into the future, but at the end of the day, if you do engagement properly, you you will find a way to find consensus. You know around the table which is like consent, but you just got to spend the time to get there, right? Instead of this hard. No veto. Negotiate, like perception that it's a veto. Well, don't make it a veto. Work together to find a workable solution. Then you don't have to worry about that. Take as long as it takes.

[Music]

Janet Sumner

I'm now feeling incredibly sorry for that poor registered professional forester who has all of these ingredients that they have to consider, and wow what a weight of the world on that poor RPF, who's actually managing the forest management process. And I know I've sat in on forest management plans where you've had all of these sides and all of these parts of the equation coming to bear. And it is an enormous task to integrate all of that, data, guides etc., into one forest management plan and get an agreement on it. It's an enormous cost for companies, etc. They fill up binders, or I guess now it would be USBs now, or I guess stored on the cloud. But it's an enormous amount of work. So my hat is off to the RPF's out there who are trying to integrate all of this because it is an enormous task for people. But it's necessary. And again David reiterates the theme, "what happened to coexistence?" And I think this is the thrust of what David talks about is that coexistence is not just for the people, but it's for all the creatures that exist with us. And so he actually gets into that in our next episode. And as promised, we're going to have a section with Anastasia Lintner, who's going to unpack some of these terms, like the Mikisew Decision, FPIC, UNDRIP, and the Blueberry Decision, etc. And there's many other pieces that she'll unpack for us. But we will have show notes and links, so that if people do want to do some of the research themselves and get educated on these items. And really understand the context within which we are working, and how do we navigate to a world where we have coexistence, and collaboration, and working together, and two-eyed seeing. So we're being an indigenous and non-indigenous worldview to bear on these problems.

Kaya Adleman

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Yeah, we'll said Janet. I don't think I can add anything else to that. But I will say, if you loved listening to David as much as Janet and I did, and you want to learn more about him before we get to our next episode, please please please check out his website, Wahkohtowin Development GP Inc., you can find it at www.wahkohtowin.com. And I'm just gonna spell that for you its W-A-H-K-O-H-T-O-W-I-N .com. If you go there, you can check out all the cool projects that he's doing and that the group is doing. Some of that we'll talk about in the next episode too. And also they have some good videos on their YouTube Channel, highly recommend watching those as well.

Janet Sumner

Thanks Kaya.

[Music]

Janet

If you like this episode of the Clear Cut, and want to keep the content coming, support the show, it would mean so much to Kaya and I. You can do so by clicking the link in the episode description, or going to our website, www.wildlandsleague.org/theclearcut.

Kaya

That link is also in our episode description. And stay tuned for new episodes, by following us on social media

Janet

That's @wildlandsleague on instagram, twitter, and facebook, or linkedin, of course.

Kaya

See you next time!