SFI has proudly partnered with and invested in over 120 Indigenous communities across Canada and the U.S.

SFI promotes Indigenous rights, respect and engagement

SFI supports community-led forest-focused initiatives and partners with leading Indigenous organizations so that all communities are able to fully value and benefit from sustainably managed forests. Through growing and strengthening our relationships, SFI maintains strong alignment between SFI standards and the values, rights, and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples.

The SFI Forest Management Standard is aligned with Indigenous values, including rights, knowledge, and environmental considerations. SFI also partners with leading organizations like the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business and Habitat for Humanity Canada’s Indigenous Housing Partnership. To date, SFI has awarded nine grants focused on these values from the boreal forests of Canada to the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest.

Use of the SFI Forest Management Standard continues to grow across Canada and U.S., with communities using SFI standards to address cultural, economic and environmental interests. In Canada, the SFI Small-Scale Forest Management Module for Indigenous Peoples, Families and Communities also offers the opportunity to participate in a group certification and benefit from economies of scale.

Indigenous communities began certifying to SFI in 2010. Today, 39 Indigenous groups across Canada and the U.S. work on over 4-million hectares/10-million acres of land certified to SFI.
SFI CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS GRANT PROGRAM

Since 2010, SFI has directly invested over $300,000 in Indigenous community-led projects, supporting over $2 million in leveraged funding involving 11+ Indigenous nation partners.

The Tk’emlups First Nations in British Columbia worked with their elders to describe cultural heritage resources, such as traditional foods and medicines, and trained youth to work with the forest sector to protect these resources.

The Native Earth Environmental Youth Camp is a youth camp devoted to sustainable science and traditional ecological knowledge run by the State University of New York in partnership with the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force.

On BC’s central coast the Heiltsuk are using databases and geographic information systems to improve the understanding of location and importance of culturally-modified trees distributed throughout their traditional territory.
The Effingham River Restoration Project is improving salmonid rearing habitats in British Columbia, while providing training opportunities for local Indigenous community members.

Quebec’s Laval University, SFI and its partners supported Indigenous communities and forest companies to expand opportunities for Indigenous forestry workers.

Monitoring Water Temperatures and Flows for Steelhead in Relation to Forest Management Practices, from the Fraser Basin Council, will work to conserve steelhead trout in BC through improved forest management techniques.

The San Carlos Apache Forest Resources Youth Outreach Program is being supported by SFI to promote the link between sustainable forestry, cultural heritage and empowering tribal youth.

CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

The Nanwakolas Council, a leadership group for 12 coastal British Columbia First Nations, worked with SFI Program Participant Interfor, to identify the qualities of western red cedar trees suitable for carving traditional canoes and poles, and for Big House construction. Suitable trees are at least three feet in diameter, 300 to 600 years old and free of large knots. Forestry professionals from Interfor and master carvers from area First Nations developed field criteria, which were then used by crews to identify appropriate trees. This partnership, respecting traditional lands and cultural needs, was awarded a SFI Conservation Leadership Award.

Learn more: forests.org/indigenous

During the 2015-2019 standard revision process, SFI received comments from Indigenous people and held a dedicated workshop on addressing those comments and incorporating them into the standard.

Many SFI standard requirements reflect and support values and an approach to land management that are important to Indigenous communities:

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS: Objective 8 recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples’ rights and traditional knowledge. This includes understanding and respecting traditional forest-related knowledge, protecting spiritual, historical and cultural sites, and using non-timber forest products.

WATER: Objective 3 requires protection and maintenance of rivers, streams, lakes and other water bodies, a top priority for Indigenous communities that rely on naturally functioning water resources.

SPECIAL SITES: Objective 6 calls for the protection of special sites and requires SFI Program Participants to manage lands that are ecologically, geologically, historically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities. This includes sites special to Indigenous Peoples.

RESEARCH: Objective 10 requires support for forestry research, science and technology. Indigenous land managers work with a variety of agencies to advance research and combine it with cultural ideals, objectives and values.

TRAINING: Objective 11 requires that SFI Program Participants train personnel and contractors so they can support sustainable forestry practices. Indigenous communities working in forestry value this opportunity to build capacity within their communities.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: Objective 12 encourages public involvement in the practice of sustainable forestry, which means providing opportunities for Indigenous communities to provide input about plans for traditional lands and their use.