

TreeTalk

AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE CARIBOO

Environmental activist **Valerie Langer** of the Friends of Clayoquot Sound organization will be at UCC to deliver a slide show and public lecture

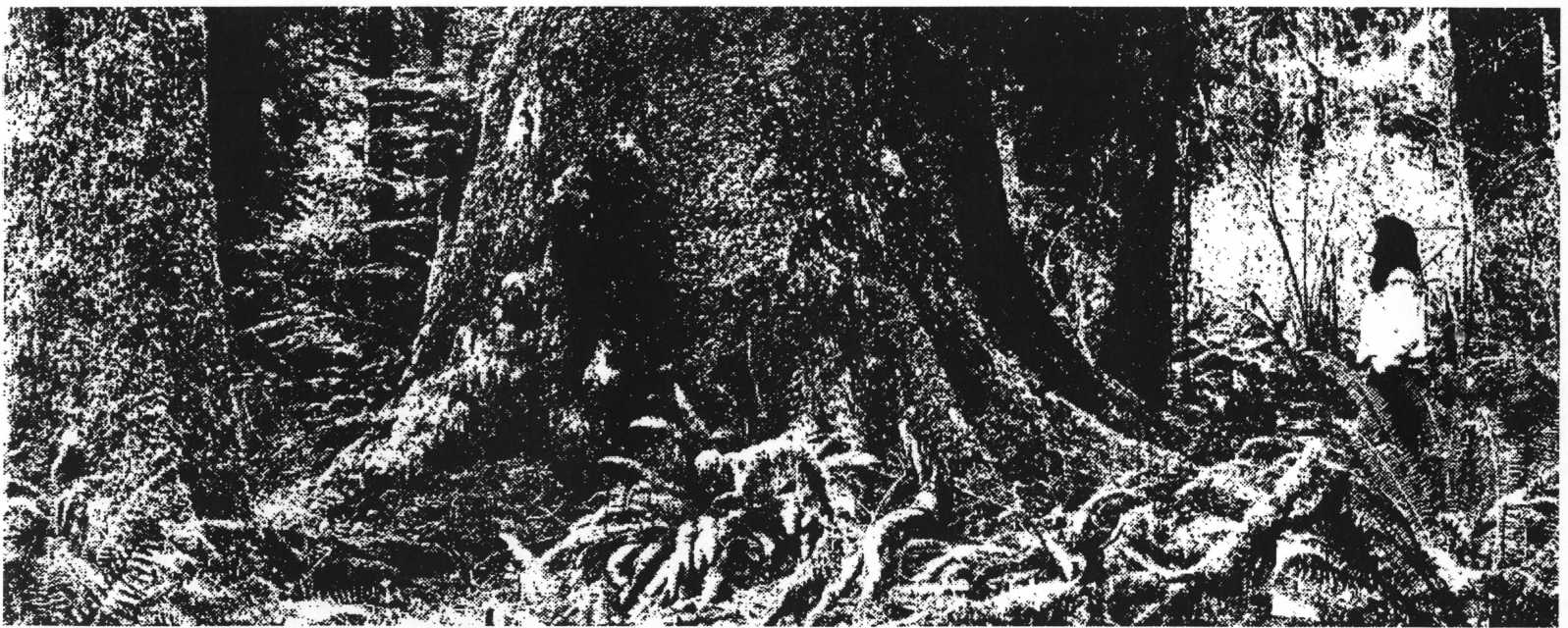
Wednesday, February 1st, 7:30 pm, Room A 222

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Thursday, February 2nd, Noon, Room A 126

Merv Wilkinson, an 84-year-old Vancouver Island logger who has been selectively cutting his private woodlot for decades with no noticeable loss, will address sustainability in the forests.

Tuesday, February 28th, 2 pm, Room AE 162



Dr. Lorne Wilkinson, Professor at UBC Regent College speaks on "Environmental Theology: I Was Arrested at Clayoquot."

Thursday, March 2, Noon, Clocktower Theatre

Dr. Patrick Moore, Forest Alliance of BC presents the industry perspective on BC forest practices.

Tuesday, March 7, 2 pm, Room AE 162

Mind and Other Matters at the University College of the Cariboo

TreeTalk: Francis Seymour

"Even though I'm a government employee, I'm first and foremost 1st Nations," asserted Francis Seymour, Aboriginal Forest Advisor for the Kamloops Forest District, in a recent noon-hour talk at the University College of the Cariboo.

He's been a government employee with the provincial Ministry of Forests since the 1960s, but he's been 1st Nations since birth. Now, with the establishment of aboriginal advisors, Seymour gets the chance to balance both of his loyalties. Pending land claims brought a Ministry of Forests awareness that government, industry needed to work with aboriginal people. Seymour's unique liaison position came about because government and industry didn't have people knowledgeable about 1st Nations issues, and 1st Nations groups didn't have people knowledgeable about government and industry. Thus, Seymour functions as negotiator, mediator, educator, trainer and liaison between the eighteen district bands, and the Kamloops Forest District.

*Whose tradit. territories
extend into*

His job is not an easy one. Issues that still scar the aboriginal community, like residential schools, come up during the course of forestry negotiations, and Seymour finds himself in the middle of debates over sustaining subsistence versus economic development. And, of course, many bands are themselves divided over these same issues.

Current 1st Nations concerns, Seymour notes, centre around clearcuts which, elders and others say, decimate herbs and plants important to traditional culture, and around water quality, which not only affects fish habitat, but the well-being of other animals in the ecosystem.

But aboriginal organizations are not simply waiting for the government to make the first move. The National First Nations Forestry Association has developed their own Forest Practices Code, and band and tribal councils take a leading role in initiatives like traditional set-asides for native seed preservation.

Working together, government and aboriginal people in B.C. establish economic development opportunities, training programs, liaison with industry, cross-cultural workshops, communications strategies, and a cooperative approach to integrated resource management.

"We have to live and work together," Seymour concludes, "so we need to foster trust, respect and understanding in order to maintain mutual good relationships."

TreeTalk: Merv Wilkinson

Last month, an old man got up in front of an audience of about 60 people at the University College of the Cariboo. He didn't read from any notes, and, at times, he seemed to stare off into space as he spoke; he was seeing the vibrant forest that he has walked in nearly every day since he was a young man. His name is Merv Wilkinson, an 84-year-old practical forester from near Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, whose woodlot has sustained for decades: nine cuts, with no loss in volume of wood.

"Don't let anyone tell you that old trees must be harvested," he snorts. "Loss through premature and undersize cuts can cause a loss of 12% to 18% of biodiversity. Besides, undersize cuts rob us. It takes 13 sixty-year cycles to produce wood equal to that of a 180-year-old stand." Producing a single sheet handout--double-sided, of course, on recycled, unbleached paper--Wilkinson shows how trees left standing in the forest generate three times the rate of interest of money left in the bank. He also calculates that the timber value of one 180-year-old tree was more than ten times greater than a 60-year-old tree--a graphic example of old-growth forest economics.

But this man is no academic economist. His lessons were learned in the bush, and his wisdom comes from his life in the forest. "Natural seeding is the best way to go. Squirrels plant most of my trees," he says, "they know a good seed tree, and a lot of the seeds they bury sprout. Of course, some of the seedlings are too close together, but I pull the most crowded ones, then in a few years, I cut Christmas trees, then the rest grow to maturity. Wilkinson outlines his forest management strategy: "Roll over with nature," he asserts, "nature sterilizes the land against species-specific disease through tree species succession. My woodlot has gone from cedar to fir, and back to cedar in 50 years. Plant trees, not hybrids, and don't use pesticides--trees don't like them."

Wilkinson has something to say about more conventional logging methods as well. "We teach forest economics and technology, not forestry: students learn very little identification. And we need community-controlled, small-scale forestry, which employs people. The way we do it now, 62% of forestry dollars leave Canada. And some German foresters who came to look at my woodlot told me that plantation forestry is a disaster."

"Sure, I high-grade," Wilkinson admits, "but diversity must be maintained at all costs. I leave the good seed-bearers, I maintain a multi-age, multi-level, multi-species forest, and I preserve the integrity of the soil. My woodlot, with slower-growing trees produces good wood that you can make anything out of."

Mind & Other Matters at the University College of the Cariboo

TreeTalk: Valerie Langer

Valerie Langer doesn't seem big enough to carry the weight of a rainforest on her shoulders, but she tries, with a little help from her friends . . . The Friends of Clayoquot Sound, that is.

Ms. Langer was at the University College of the Cariboo last month to present a lecture and slide show about old growth forests, especially those in the Clayoquot Sound region of Vancouver Island.

Langer began her presentation with slides of her beloved Clayoquot Sound, still 80% intact, and the only remaining Vancouver Island region, she says, large enough to sustain a complete ecosystem. Her fear is that government approvals to log 74% of the region will allow lumber companies to devastate its biological diversity, resulting in species die-out.

"A tree farm is an industrial concept," she states, "it consists of trees, but not forest, because managing for fibre does not create biological diversity, and fungi are as important as trees for ecosystem survival."

Thus, Langer and her Friends blockaded the logging road leading to the MacMillan Bloedel clearcuts during the summer of 1994, an illegal act, she says, that, with 12,000 participants, became "a movement of principle."

Forest companies, Langer claims, were not complying with guidelines, the rate of cut in B.C. forests increased while automation displaced 27,000 forest-related jobs over the past 15 years, and B.C. was selling lumber overseas at prices that couldn't be matched by those countries' domestic suppliers. Langer and her Friends saw something wrong with a policy (and stumpage scale) that allowed B.C. trees to be cut, shipped and sold at rates significantly lower than in other "northern" countries, and this, combined with the knowledge that 50% of the trees in the Clayoquot would end up as pulp, drove what Langer calls "a people's movement."

The upshot of this movement was that B.C. held the biggest mass trials in world history, with 857 blockaders tried en masse, and the B.C. and Canadian governments launched a major international PR campaign defending forest industry practices in B.C.

But the logging continues, so how, one member of the audience asked, can Langer go on, when it seems that the message she so eloquently and powerfully preaches goes largely unheeded by those who hold the future of the Clayoquot in their hands?

"Our land is our identity," asserts Langer, "the word 'temple' is an Indo-European word for 'sacred grove,' and our forests are a privilege, not a warehouse. We have developed a culture that has the technology and capacity to destroy ecosystems. Our challenge is to garner the wisdom not to destroy, even though we have the capacity to do just that."

Mind & Other Matters at the University College of the Cariboo

TreeTalk: Patrick Moore

Patrick Moore, formerly of Greenpeace, now of the B.C. Forest Alliance, performed a delicate balancing act at the University College of the Cariboo last month. His challenge, he states, is to find a balance between environmental and economic concerns in the forest.

"Scarred landscapes from clearcuts are not typical," Moore asserts, showing slides of 10-year-old clearcuts lush with young lodgepole pine, "the casualty in this confrontation is that people don't see the 150-year evolution of the working forest. And clearcuts are better for light-loving species like fireweed."

The government, Moore insists, is responsible for many past forestry disasters in B.C., including the infamous 'Black Hole' near Tofino on Vancouver Island. "The government rubberstamps logging, then blames corporations," Moore complains. "Forest companies are just tenant tree-farmers:" it's up to the landlord to lay down the law.

Part of the problem faced by B.C. forest companies is one of perception, Moore states. Thus, he tries to foster a change in attitude, cautioning people to ignore aesthetics, and asking the audience to "think of a clearcut as a temporary meadow, a lake as a wet desert," and reminding his listeners that "there is more for deer, bears and birds to eat in clearcuts."

Admitting that "there are a lot of things you can't preserve in a clearcut forest, and many things in old-growth forests can't be re-created in 2nd-growth forests," Moore insists that "you can have your cake and eat it with B.C. coastal rainforests. The forests of B.C. are more resilient and renewable than people think. Fire," Moore claims, "is a far greater agent of change in Canadian forests than clearcutting. And [unlike a clearcut] fires can come through town and kill everybody." Also far worse than clearcuts are parking lots and hay farms, states Moore. "A hayfield may look nicer than a clearcut, but that hayfarm will never grow any trees, while a clearcut will eventually grow back."

"And clearcuts don't kill salmon, bad road-building associated with clearcutting, as well as dams, pavement, suburbs and agriculture kill salmon. Salmon streams are not impacted by logging, and, besides, not a single species has been rendered extinct in the forests of B.C. Conservation biologists and others have simply invented the number of species that have gone extinct."

As for job-loss in the forests due to automation, Moore points out that it is better to pay one person to do the job of sixteen, because otherwise that person will have to split that wage with fifteen other workers. From Moore's, and the many people employed in the forest industry in B.C., perspectives, that is the bottom line. When workers weigh the future of the forest against their immediate economic needs, it is easier to imagine a clearcut as a temporary meadow, a lake as a wet desert, than to imagine an industry where old-growth is preserved, where sixteen people do the work of one machine operator, and where the mortgage still must be paid. Patrick Moore will have to work very hard indeed to find the "balance" that seems to elude us all.