

Tales from the Front Lines of an

Ecological Civilization



BRINKMAN GROUP

BRINKMAN GROUP
NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2014

Note from the Editor

By Erik Brinkman,
Communications & Special Projects Coordinator



For better or for worse, humans have become the globally dominant species, not surprising for earth's most complex super-cooperator. Our unique blend of specialization, creativity, and cooperation combined with an insatiable biological self-interest, has resulted in an unparalleled collective capacity to bend the earth's systems to our will. Or so we believe.

Now our industrial civilization's unintended side effects threaten the critical balance on which the future of all human well-being depends. This newsletter is an acknowledgement to the people working hardest to turn this situation around — to create an ecological civilization that consciously nurtures the biosphere's future.

In these pages you'll read about the artists, warriors, greeners and specialists that make up the Brinkman family. From tropical rain forests to treacherous cutblocks, each of us is engaged in a different aspect of the same epic task: restoring the balance that every living thing depends on.

At Brinkman we continually seek to identify and enhance undervalued or missing landscape benefits. We partner with First Nations on the front-lines of sustainable resource stewardship, ensuring maximum benefit to the local communities while responsibly managing the ecosystems we rely on. Every tree we plant restores resilience to our forests, soils, and ecosystems. Every project we complete reinforces an essential truth: in restoring each local ecosystem we restore ourselves, our children and our future.

The economy and the environment are often pitted against one another, but there can be no long-term growth without sustainability. So it is our job to reconcile the two through the building of an Ecological Civilization.

There are thousands of incredible, and heartfelt teaching stories to tell along this journey. From the newly caulked boots grappling the wet cliff slash on the Coast of B.C. to the CEO's holey socks in sandals at an international climate convention, this newsletter is a snapshot of the last year's many adventures. It is an honour to work alongside the ecological civilization-building employees of the Brinkman Group. Let's go let's go let's go! 🌱



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Brinkman Group General News



Dirk's 2014 Greeting of Gratitude: Building an Ecological Civilization

*By Dirk Brinkman,
CEO and Co-Founder Brinkman Group*

My party costume for Fred & Brigitte's New Year's Eve bacchanal was a Barúoca medicine man mask of displeasure. The Barúoca mask was designed to will the Conquistadors out of Costa Rica. But we are all here to stay. An afternoon of cleansing in the clean Pacific surf refreshed the gratitude with which I know that we are all welcome here today.

Still the world felt some crude shocks in 2013. One example was the largest super-typhoon, bred in the pollution warmed Pacific Ocean, which utterly devastated parts of the Philippines. Like 2013 after Hurricane Sandy in 2012, we enter 2014 after Typhoon Haiyan, joined by a few more people who share the urgency of avoiding the unintended side-effects of our industrial civilization.

The Challenges may be global, but solutions are always local. From the early days, where our band of alternative entrepreneurs began

reforesting BC's devastated "take the best and wreck the rest" clearcut logging, we have planted hope. In the logging slash we became the highest quality, most efficient, reforestation service. That commitment carried us through epic adventures, earning many friends along the way. Today we have complex partnerships with local indigenous communities that are built on simple ideas: trust, responsibility and tangible benefits for local people on the front line of resource development. It has been a great privilege to witness with gratitude through our many epics, how this remarkable group of adventurers matched up and scaled up to meet these local and regional sustainability challenges.

Profoundly, that privilege was ratcheted up in the last ten days of 2013 as I entered the enchantment of our first grandchild's intense awareness, amazement and pleasure, reminding me again how we are building

for the next generations. It is always good to get a glimpse of where all of our unique collective initiative is headed.

For me this glimpse came from a surprising place. In the spring of 2013, newly appointed President Xi of China, challenged his newly 'elected' (within the Central Party's process) government, to create an "ecological civilization." A Chinese sustainable development review at the end of the year, likened this moment in their history, to the darkness at noon in the city of London in the eighteenth century at the height of heating with coal, when the air was so dark with pollution you could scarcely see the horse on your carriage.

Today's London England may have clean air and tomorrow's China may no longer have melting glaciers, drying rivers, polluted soil, air and water and dust storms that shut down their airports. Someday, perhaps not long after that, the rest of the world's biodiversity may once again rebound within re-stabilized earth systems--stable climate, de-acidified oceans, recharged fresh water, and re-built healthy soils.

But I know, because of your dedication, integrity and commitment, the incredibly challenging transformation from an industrial to an ecological civilization will be more certain. And I know that this transformation will retain the culturally unique balance found through the wisdom of local indigenous and traditional communities, because of your sensitivity, pragmatism and vision.

And it is for that certainty, as I begin working with you in 2014, that I am most grateful. May each of you enjoy the best of 2014. 🌱



Brinkman Planter Rescues Wife from Cougar: Exclusive Story and Interview

By Baba Brinkman

"The man wasn't going to let the cougar have the woman without a fight." This isn't from an Ernest Hemingway short story and it isn't a passage from *Clan of the Cave Bear*. It's from a September 2013 Canadian Press news story, reporting on a remarkable incident involving a Brinkman tree planter and his wife. The planter in question is Rick Coutts, who lives with his wife Sandy on remote Flores Island in Clayoquot Sound. Rick has worked with Brinkman every season for more than 30 years, one of the longest-tenured field workers with the company, and one of our most impressive highballers. On September 8th a cougar attacked and mauled Sandy while she was working in their garden, and Rick fought the animal off with a spear. Sandy was severely hurt, but with the help of the Coast Guard they got her to surgery in Victoria a matter of hours later and she is now on her way to a full recovery. The cougar was later found in the woods nearby, dead from its wounds.

This story has been amply reported in the international press and in the *Globe and Mail*, for instance here, and here, and here, so I won't recount the whole saga, but I spoke to Rick on the phone earlier today and he filled in some of the details for the Brinkman community. The cougar had made several appearances over the

summer, approaching Sandy three separate times, and the third time she chased it away by slashing at it with a machete. They reported the stalking behaviour to animal conservation officers, who came to Flores and searched for the cougar with tracking dogs but couldn't find it. Rick looked into buying a rifle for protection, but the process to get a license and complete the safety course might have taken weeks or months from their remote location, so he settled on a Cold Steel boar spear, which he bought over the counter on a trip into town and leaned against the house for quick access. On September 8th, Sandy was working in the garden and Rick was a short distance away cutting cedar shakes with his chainsaw. The cougar crept up on Sandy and leapt to attack, knocking her to the ground and biting into her head and neck. Its claws ripped a gash down her cheek and another the length of her forehead, luckily missing her eye, and its teeth tore her scalp mostly off, the skin connected only by a few inches at the back of her neck. It was trying to flip her over to get at her neck from the front, but she kept herself huddled face down. At one point she tried to put a hand in its mouth to pry it off and it bit down, breaking several of her fingers. It tried to drag her into the woods and she dug into the ground with her broken

hands, and screamed.

Rick had heard nothing over the sound of the chainsaw until this point. For no reason he can remember, he shut the saw off and listened, and heard Sandy's scream, and he immediately knew what had happened. Yelling her name at the top of his lungs, he sprinted to the cabin to grab the boar spear, and then to the garden where he saw the big cat hunched over Sandy, still biting at her head. It had now torn her left bicep almost completely off as well. The cat knew Rick was coming because he had been shouting Sandy's name at full volume during his run, hoping to scare it off, but it wasn't intimidated. When Rick approach, the cougar hunkered down, guarding its prey, staring at him threateningly. Rick circled around and drove the spear with his full strength into the animal's chest just behind its front legs. The wing tips on the spear prevented it from penetrating deeper than the length of the 18.5" blade, but that was enough. The cougar wriggled and thrashed, and when Rick pulled the spear out it dashed into the woods. >>> At that point they didn't know if the animal was badly wounded or just spooked, so Rick set off a bear banger, keeping a watchful eye on the woods. Sandy was fully conscious and lucid, and he supported her as they walked back to the house and phoned for

an emergency coast guard rescue. She was in shock and feeling hardly any pain as Rick did his best to wrap her wounds and stop the bleeding. She reminded him to turn off the stove, where food was still on cooking, and directed him to collect clothes and things they would need in case they were away for a while. Rick had steadied himself, suppressing his instinctive panic at the obvious severity of her wounds, her scalp and face the worst of all, and he provided nothing but calm reassurance and steady support. The coast guard took an hour to arrive.

The rest of the story is a testament to the quality of local community and government support. The coast guard arrived, running the boat directly up onto the beach, and helped with emergency first aid. They got Sandy to Tofino in record time, and a helicopter medevaced them to Victoria, where a surgeon was waiting, a specialist in animal attack lacerations. Sandy needed pins in her broken hand, and ended up with more than 300 staples in her head and neck. They returned home to Flores Island just three weeks after “the accident” as Rick now refers to it, but have returned to Victoria several times to deal with infections and skin grafts. Their friend Cosy set up a Facebook page with bank information and is accepting donations to help them cover the

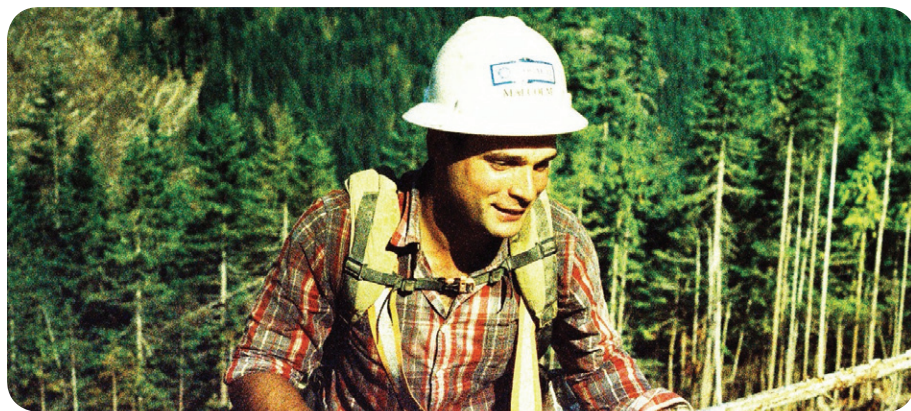
travel and recovery costs. And throughout they received overwhelming love and support from the Tofino community, as friends visited and brought them food and gifts. Sandy didn't eat a bite of hospital food during her entire stay.

Animal control went to Flores the next day with tracking dogs to look for the cougar, but they didn't have to look far. It was lying dead 60 feet from the garden, and a necropsy later showed that Rick's spear thrust punctured both of its lungs and its heart. This is the first incident of a cougar killed with a spear in modern history, and I only say “modern” because I'd be surprised if there isn't a paleolithic cave painting somewhere out there depicting the scene. Rick told me: “A lot of people have been throwing the word “hero” around but come on, anyone would have done the same thing. Imagine it was your sister or your daughter or your wife being attacked, you just act on instinct.” Despite his protests, there's no deflecting the flood of universal admiration that follows when you save someone's life under extreme duress. We salute you Rick, and we wish Sandy a speedy recover to health and wholeness.

But for anyone tempted to try to salute either of them in person, if you don't know them, don't do it! Rick and Sandy are private people who don't in any way seek the

spotlight. Sandy wasn't even out of surgery before Rick was ducking reporters looking for a scoop at the hospital, which he felt was the ultimate disrespect, and they even came to his house on Flores to try to take pictures; conservation officers had to put up “crime scene” tape all around the area to keep them out. The last thing Rick and Sandy want is for their home to become a tourist destination. “Lion-Killer's House 100m.” Rick hasn't seen the international news stories yet, but said he might check them out next time he's in town and at a computer. He might be surprised to find that the manufacturer of the boar spear is even using the incident as a marketing tool for their product.

The irony is, within the tree planting community Rick Coutts is already something of a legend for another reason entirely. He's the only planter on record to have personally put in more than 3 million trees. I planted with Rick for eight years in the 1990s and early 2000s and he's the best guy to work with, cheerful with great stories and unlimited positivity, but impossible to keep up with. Too many times on the block he'd have to cut a conversation short with “Let's continue this later, I'm out of bullets!” And with a smile he'd start jogging back to the cache to bag up again. 🌲



No Man is an Island: Faraz Khodabandeh Remembered

By Erik Brinkman

We gathered en mass on November 19th 2013 at East and West parallel memorials, to celebrate the life of Faraz Khodabandeh. Hundreds of souls who had been touched by the inimitable energy of a rare modern renaissance man shared stories, photos and memories. This knee-buckling slideshow, Faraz Khodabandeh 1984-2013, made up of a mosaic of photos and quotes submitted by his innumerable friends and loving family was viewed at the events. Man, was he ever photogenic.

Earlier that day his family and close friends laid his body to rest at York Cemetery in his home town of Toronto. Faraz was buried with his planting shovel, the same shovel he had planted his one millionth tree with just over a week before he was killed by a motorist while crossing highway I-70 on foot

in Missouri on November 10th 2013.

Faraz worked on a great number of our projects in various provinces; in a seemingly short time he transformed from a young wild card planter's planter, into an integral asset to any field team that he was part of. As a Foreman he was paternally protective of his crew, sacrificing himself to ensure that they were always provided for, and as a prolific First Aid Responder he was composed, vigilant and methodical in his care for the safety and wellbeing of the whole crew. But it is the unforgettable character and friend who fully engaged with, fought for and believed in, the people of the planting community across Canada, who will be wrenchingly missed. A bold, immovable and honorable man, always brimming with passion and mischief, we have lost a true forest warrior. The one and only Faraz.

The Faraz Memorial Fund at the Cumberland

Community Forest Society continues to accept donations to preserve his memory in the form of a forest covenant. The Comox Valley Echo published an article entitled Immortalized in the Trees to inform the public of this legendary forest champion, honouring his memory by encouraging support for the Faraz Fund. Faraz's sister Poupak Khodabandeh has graciously put up the Faraz Memorial Facebook page to continue to share memories.

This excerpt from a letter Faraz wrote to his friends in the Spring of 2013 poignantly captures his sensitivity and the essence of what it is to be a tree planter:

"We share a connection. A connection that is manifest in the extremely short time it requires for us to become comfortable with one another when we first meet as otherwise complete strangers. It's a trust that cannot be easily described in words and harder still to be

understood by those who have never spent time in our culture. Nonetheless it is one founded in the fact that there are specific qualities in a person's character that both attract them to, and keep them in, the planting world."

Faraz planted 1,001,982 trees. Dirk had his commemorative millionaire shovel made and sent to his family for the memorial. Here is an excerpt from a thank you letter from Faraz's mother, Flora Nadafi, to Dirk and Brinkman: "The one million tree shovel that Judi delivered to us with the special message from you is now placed in its deserved spot in my apartment on the mantel."

Faraz's network is spread across the globe, so please share this notice with all who knew him.

Our friend Faraz will be dearly missed and always remembered. 🌱



Welcome to Costa Rica !BIENVENIDOS A BARCA!

By Betsy Barcus

You've come a long, long way if you've made it to BARCA's main offices in Costa Rica. You will have braved plane travel, sloshed through torrential rains, avoided possible landslides and flooding (especially if you took the coastal highway past Parrita), and survived the famous Costa Rican roads. Welcome to Salamá, the headquarters for our Costa Rican Operations!

Stepping out of an air-conditioned car and into our famous southern Pacific humidity

(if it's not raining, of course) is the first step. At least the view of the surrounding teak plantations, which at times house red macaws and white-faced monkeys, makes up for the heat.

¡Pase adelante!

Due to our recent expansion to other parts of the country, the only two people you are sure to find in the Salamá main office are Administrator **Rafael Sequeira**, and

Receptionist **Mileny González**.

Today we rose early enough to catch **José Corrales**, the Operations Manager for all of Costa Rica, and **Evelyn Ramírez**, the Forest Supervisor for Central and Southern Pacific Regions, before they head out to examine a newly planted site with a client. Early in Costa Rica means before 6 AM, which is not hard, as our world famous sunrise is at 5 AM. When Evelyn is not in the main office or on the road you can find her in Palmar Sur, where we operate one of our production and research nurseries.

Where are the rest of us?

Our new Regional Supervisor, **Róger Bonilla**, is on the road, checking out one of the new farms we began managing this year, either in Cariari de Limón or in the North Pacific. Forester **Nancy Guzmán** works from her home office and travels to where she is needed, networking at events such as the ¡Vive la Madera! Fair that recently took place in San José. When newest team member **Javier Pacheco** isn't in the San José office, he can be found selling Jiffies, the world's leading seedling rooting medium, which BARCA is the Central American distributor for JIFFY International AS. Senior forester

Ricardo Luján works out of his home office in Pérez Zeledón, often on Skype with Fred, Diego or one of BARCA's clients.

Although **Diego Dipieri's** main office is in Panamá, as BARCA's Operations Director he visits the CR operations quite often. Here we caught him at the nursery with Bruno, our mouse-chaser mascot. When I'm not working from my home office in the

hills, I can usually be found in either of the Salamá or San José offices, or visiting one of the field crews.

Our Financial Director, **Jorge Mora**, works out of our office in San José, along with our two accountants, **Rolando Durán** and **Iván Quirós**.

The other hundred or so year-round workers are spread along the Pacific coast, from

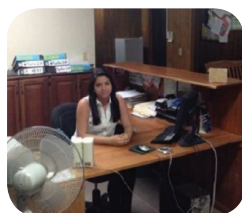
the Nicaraguan border in the North, to Panamá in the South, and to the East in Cariari in the Limon province.

Last but certainly not least is our fearless leader **Fred Schutter**, the Managing Director of BARCA, who is not in his home office today, but out front pruning trees to clear his office ocean view.

Hasta pronto amigos! 🌱



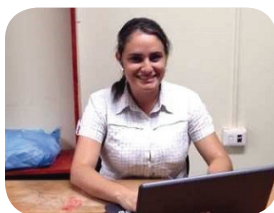
Rafael Sequeira



Mileny González



José Corrales



Evelyn Ramírez



Palmar Sur Field Nursery



Róger Bonilla



Nancy Guzmán



Javier Pacheco



Ricardo Luján



Diego Dipieri



Betsy Barcus & Field Crew



Jorge Mora



Rolando Durán



Iván Quirós



Fred Schutter



Harvesting a Resource to Save it: BARCA and the Comarca Emberá -Wounaan in the Darién Province of the Republic of Panama

By Rigoberto Dagaiza



Since 2008 BARCA Panama has supported and worked for the Emberá-Wounaan People in the Darién Gap. Ne-drua, (Land of Richness in Embera language), was created back in September 2009 as an economic development arm of the Congreso General Emberá-Wounaan, the traditional governing body of the Comarca Emberá-Wounaan of Darién Province. The initial concept was to be modeled from Brinkman's understanding of the intricacies and for building indigenous partnerships from experience with working with First Nations in Canada. The Embera and Wounaan people are the third largest indigenous group in the Republic of Panamá, located in the eastern part of the country border with Colombia. Ne-drua Wounaan territory, called Comarca, has some 430,000 hectares, where more than 95% is pristine rain forest jungle; this is the most valuable asset the Embera and Wounaan possess today.



The Challenge

The Comarca is rich in natural resources that can be used for any business development idea, from forest to non-forest products, agriculture products, livestock, etc. The great challenge is to find financial resources for pre-investment on specific business ideas projected to mid and long-term investment plans that support the socio-economic development goals of the Emberá-Wounaan.

BARCA supports and directs the business development company Ne-drua. Ne-drua as a business entity is called to implement business activities that utilize the resources available in the Comarca.

BARCA and Ne-drua have the vision to empower the Emberá-Wounaan through sustainable economic development, from being self-subsistence farmers to becoming independent business minded people with their own authority, productively and actively participating in the national economy.

BARCA works with Ne-drua and the Emberá-Wounaan people to move away from selling raw resources toward developing a processing and value added sector that utilizes the resources the Emberá-Wounaan have available. Through the development of economic opportunities now and in the future we empower higher value and sustainable economic development over simply resource extraction.

Sustainable Forest management

The Traditional Authorities have implemented Sustainable Forest Management Plans where local communities take the responsibility to manage and take care of the forest as they have for centuries. The communities have developed and implemented 4 forest management plans (68,762.48 hectares) that are approved by ANAM (government office responsible for natural resources in Panama).

Since 2010 BARCA and Ne-drua have supported the communities in the development and FSC certification of 6 additional forest management plans currently in the approval process of ANAM, representing another 106,573.60 hectares. The total of 175,336.08 hectares of forest land, soon to be under management of the communities, will provide the resources needed for the envisioned value added processing industry developed and run by Ne-drua. Currently there are 4 forest management plans approved by ANAM (government office responsible for all natural resources in Panama), which adds up to 68,762.48 hectares all together. There are also 6 forest management plans in process in ANAM representing another 106,573.60 hectares, for a total of 175,336.08 hectares of forest land soon to be under management.

Ne-drua as a business entity is called to implement business activities utilizing the resources available in the Comarca to do business from a sustainable point of view. This means forest products coming from a well-managed forest land owned by the Embera and Wounaan in the Comarca. So, the vision is to be able to integrate Forest Product (raw material) + Industry (added value, processing) + Market (national, international). This way the communities will be responsible for the raw material, Ne-drua will do the processing aspect and the market, which will support economic activities in the Comarca.



Rigoberto Dagaiza

Leading and supporting

Twenty-five years ago there were very few people from the Comarca Emberá-Wounaan that had the chance to finish higher education. A transition from the jungle to city life was necessary to go after a dream of getting educated, something new to the people at that time.

My own journey began in 1970 by attending first grade at the first school created in one of the remotest areas in the Comarca. From an indigenous community to a Latin community (as it was called), it meant drastic changes the second year of school, seemingly because my parents were interested that I would learn to speak good Spanish. After ninth grade another transition was necessary at this time from a village to the city to be able to finish High School and then from the city overseas, another major decision and a big step to take.

That is how in 1989 I received a Business Administration Degree from a university in the United States. After 18 years of experience working for NGOs and government agencies, in 2010 I was called to become part of BARCA, S.A. to work directly with Ne-drua, primarily for business ideas development and also administrative responsibilities.



Business Opportunities

Since 2010, I and many others in BARCA and Ne-drua have developed several business ideas that are currently at different stages of development. The development of our wood processing plant, important to maximize the value of all wood species currently planned for harvesting in the Comarca, will see its final stages in 2014.

The agriculture products processing plant has been operational since 2013, and hopes to create benefits to our communities in 2014.

Since 2010 we have also worked on several tourism initiatives that will see further development in the years to come.

Ne-drua, BARCA and Brinkman Earth Systems are working together in 2014, to support the Traditional Authorities of the Emberá-Wounaan with their decision making, on how to potentially benefit from Forest conservation and carbon stock protection through carbon credit projects using both national and project level approaches.

Ne-drua, as a business entity, is always looking for support and new business development ideas, through investment, partnerships and/or joint ventures. 🌱



Lee Maxwell Retires: A Collection of Appreciation

By Erik Brinkman

After thirty-three years working for Brinkman & Associates, our tireless General Manager Lee Maxwell retired this year, becoming the first lifelong employee to retire from the company (as opposed to leaving for another job). At the Brinkman Christmas Party in December, Dirk Brinkman, John Lawrence and Baba Brinkman delivered speeches (Baba's was a rap) of gratitude for Lee's time with Brinkman. Here are some key excerpts from these three speeches, celebrating Lee's time with Brinkman and her many contributions to the company.

Dirk: Lee Maxwell has retired. So we want to acknowledge her. We want to thank her for helping create the glorious years. She started from the ground up, from the Riondel office above the curling rink, moving to her first formal bunk room office in the trailer camp we bought from Canfor Woss in the early 80's. In the beginning she worked with Joyce to build the payroll and accounting systems, always focused on making it work in the field. She was one of the first coordinators—the first in an enduring tradition, mentoring many operations and regional managers. Because of her strength, Lee's role was often to step into the breach in a crisis, or to facilitate a transition. During her 33 years with the company we have assembled a glorious group of exceptional people who were wonderful friends to work with. Lee's tough love held us together and we loved her for it.

John: I first met Lee back in the 80's after Robyn convinced Dirk's brother Wiebe to hire me, and we started planting in Ontario. Lee was the key to the move to Ontario and it must have been as hectic and crazy for her as it was exciting.

I remember always finding Lee to be a calm and reassuring voice at the end of the phone line. I called Lee at all hours, weekends or weeknights (rarely during office hours) and she always answered as I crammed myself into countless pay phones across northern Ontario.

Throughout the years there were many successes and many failures, sometimes those failures could be pretty overwhelming to a tired kid learning the ropes. So, I'd call Lee and we'd laugh, A LOT! It seemed to me that Lee never treated a problem as anything other than an obstacle to be overcome – there weren't failures, just funny stories.

I learned a lot from Lee, sometimes directly through her guidance and perseverance, and sometimes indirectly through her patience and support as I puzzled things through. Like many of you, for many years my entire contact with the company and head office was Lee. There's no question that working with Lee was an important reason why I stayed with this organization, and I will always be grateful for everything that she taught me and everything that we shared together.

Baba:

Whatever the job, Lee was up to the challenge
Brinkman was expanding, and had work enough for her talents
She was sent to the field to avert disasters
Serious, stressful situations, punctuated by bursts of laughter
She was sent to Northern Alberta to recruit planters
She was sent to audit supervisors' books and improve standards
Some people lead with their guts, and act on intuition
So Lee was tough, but friendly, the smiling inquisition
She made sure the numbers reconciled and made sense
While my dad continued his world domination plans

She learned how a big loss and how a big win feels
And with the nurseries she learned about tilting at windmills
The company expanded further, it always had a heartbeat
The office moved to the new location on Sharpe Street
And Lee became operations manager, the gravitational centerpiece
Her official job description was "Chief Preventer of Entropy"

Which wasn't easy with a dozen powerful personalities pulling
In a dozen different directions in each discussion, with some cajoling
And some bulldozing, and often the heat was shocking
The conversation could be about pay or pizza toppings
Brinkman just attracted strong-wills and strong minds
Some of whom just couldn't function within a hierarchy's confines
Lee was promoted to General Manager and had a claim to seniority
A former hippie with a newfound taste for authority
A mother hen surrounded by insubordinate peacocks
And a boss who thinks only in global historical epochs

Brinkman is what it is because of Lee's influence
Her life is unfolding in thirty three year increments
This is 33 AD, thirty-three years After Dirk
And now, at 66, her next epoch is After Work
It begins tonight, the next in a series of transitions
That's Lee's nature, she always takes an active interest
Always thinking of others, always generous to a fault
Never concerned about the credit, just the result
Brinkman is blessed for the years that she invested in it
And envies the next group with whom she spends a minute
Here's to half a life spent in the Brinkman trenches
And here's to the next thirty three years of adventures! 🌱



Seven Ravens and a Life of Tree Planting: From Nanaimo Lakes to Kenya

By Michael Nickels

In the Spring of 1980 I was one of ten passengers on a Wardair flight from Toronto to Vancouver. As the flight was virtually empty, I decided to walk around the plane. At the back of the plane I met a lovely young couple. They asked me where I was headed and what I was going to be doing. I said that I was off to the Coast to find myself a job as a chokerman, to which Pierre exclaimed: "Oh man you need to be planting trees, not cutting them down." Somehow what he said immediately struck a chord in me and set me on my life's path.

Through further investigation, I found the name of Dirk Brinkman who I then called to see if I could get a job. He agreed to meet me and my friend Pat who I was travelling with. Arriving at 6151 Thorne Ave, I met Dirk at the door with a baby crawling out from underneath his rather large beard. Instantly I liked the man and I remember feeling terribly guilty about fibbing that I had experience as a planter in Ontario. Dirk saw right through the mask and said, "So what else have you done?" I said that I had shorn sheep and been a roustabout in Australia which certainly was true! "You're hired!" he said.

Four days later we met Dirk at a camp just outside of Cassidy near Nanaimo Lakes. The following morning he took Pat and I to the clearcut block and said, "So I know you've never planted before, so here is how it is done. Follow me, pay attention and keep up!" We followed as Dirk went

into Ninja-mode slicing his way like the Tasmanian Devil through bush and slash, wildly flailing his mattock. Then he said, "Got it?" Then he was gone! Within five minutes we had our second reality check: Crazy Man Kevin frothing at the mouth screaming every obscenity in the English language, condemning the "bloody greeners" for crossing into his land, creaming him out of all his gravy, which was because we had followed Dirk's random Ninja ghost line. On Day three I had my first 1000 tree day.

After that first season I continued working with Brinkman in Ontario, Alberta and BC as a planter, tree deliverer, foreman and supervisor for about 20 years. I had my own company in Southern Ontario for several years as well, which was particularly interesting as we were planting up to 100 different species of trees.

33 years later I am still at it, planting trees! These days my efforts are mostly focused at Seven Ravens Farm on Salt Spring Island and in East Africa.

I first went out to Kenya 25 years ago and since then our efforts have totalled over 8 million trees with over 300 different multi-purpose species to provide fruits, nuts, medicines, fodder trees, nitrogen fixers and fuel wood for firewood and charcoal, as well as beautification and erosion control. This work is now married with permaculture design to create bountiful landscapes and improve food security and economic opportunities.

Over the next five years, Seven Ravens Permaculture and Eco-forestry Academy along with our students will be opening up five practical permaculture schools in five countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and Malawi). The schools will have a focus on training elementary school teachers, who will take their new found skills back to their respective schools to implement permaculture teachings into the curriculum, thus spreading permaculture knowledge to over 3,000 teachers and 2.1 million students over the next five years.

I recently returned from Kenya, where we have just opened up our first Practical Permaculture Institute. The first students are about to complete their PDC in the next few days.

Here at Seven Ravens we are experimenting with planting every type of permaculture tree that is adaptable to our climate, as well as many high valued hardwoods and a large array of root rot resistant conifers. Our 40 acre farm has hosted over 500 students from all over the world, and currently we teach three PDC courses per year. Spring and Summer courses are six weeks long, with the Fall course being four weeks on Salt Spring Island, and four weeks in East Africa. This incredible life adventure that I am on is the most rewarding work that I can think of for myself and for the future of my children, and for this I want to say THANKS DIRK!!!

The motto of this story is: "Be open and talk to people that you meet for you never know which doors may open."

For more information about us, please visit our website www.seven-ravens.com or call us at (250) 653 9565. 🌱



A Smile is Greater Than the Sum of its Teeth: Planting to Pay the Dentist

By Leah Scheitel

"Love is when you're missing some of your teeth, but you're not afraid to smile, because you know your friends will love you even though some of you is missing." -Emma K. Age 6.

I was once known for my teeth: perfectly straight and charming, naturally. I have been complimented on my "tooth to gum ratio" more than once, and they were the envy of all of my friends who had to suffer through years of orthodontist appointments and braces. Simply put – they were my best feature.

In April 2013, I shattered my mouth in a bike accident. I hit a car and took off the side mirror with my face before eating pavement. Besides being very painful physically, the emotional turmoil of losing my beloved teeth was a new hurdle to deal with. I fractured nearly all of them, and lost four and a half teeth, forcing me to be on a liquid diet for six weeks. The final dental bill was estimated to exceed \$30,000. With all of these factors and my damaged confidence,

my outlook on life was pretty bleak before starting the planting season in May.

I was nervous to plant with Brinkman, as it was a new camp and contract for me. I had fears that people wouldn't understand my current situation and how much the accident had altered my life. Yet I needed the money, so I went to Prince George to join Erik's camp. My experience was something I could never have expected.

The outpouring of love and support I received from the entire camp was incredible. Not only did they listen to my mouth woes, but they thought it was bad ass that I was able to plant on smoothies and soup for the first two weeks. They laughed when I referred to my mouth as "the boner shrinker" and on days off, when I'd spend four hours in the dentist chair in Prince George, they'd have a beer waiting for me in camp. It's because of their love and support that I've been able to deal with the tooth devastation as well as I have. It made it easier to heal.

Erik and Dawn's crews had a "Pound for

Leah's Smile" day, which was the coolest thing. Unbeknownst to me, Erik asked the crews to donate trees to me to help cover the intimidating dental bill. And boy, did they pound. The trees donated raised over \$4,200. The amount of generosity for a girl they'd just met is something that I've never seen. They literally bought me two teeth, as the implants cost over \$2000 each. That donation was hands down the nicest gesture I've ever received. The best was when I called to tell my Mom.

"Excuse me," she asked, "A bunch of people raised that much? Can you tell them all that I love them? I love them because they care about you."

That's exactly what the camp did – they cared about me. That amount of care is astonishing. To have that many cool and beautiful people on your side and cheering for you as you combat life with a broken mouth and heart is such a wonderful thing to feel. Front teeth are replaceable with time and money, but my experience and those people are not. They are some of the best people I know.

I want to thank everyone in the Brinkman family and especially Erik and Dawn's crews for their donations and the undying support. I don't know if I'll ever be able to thank everyone enough, and express just how much it meant to me. It made me want to smile again, and that is the best thing I could ask for.

Erik Brinkman's Postscript

Leah overcame the unimaginable with class, and was a constant reminder that nothing is insurmountable. She played an essential role for each person on the crew, and an even greater role for us as a group, a testament to the fact that the whole of a planting crew is greater than the sum of its planters. Leah's smile came to represent that whole for us, so it came as no surprise to see the amazing number of trees the crew planted for the wellbeing of that smile. I was also proud when Brinkman as a company donated \$1250 to add to the \$4260.25 in trees that the crew planted, creating a novelty cheque photo-op for the ages. The money doesn't come close to adding up to the total inspiration she provided for my crew this season, but it's a start. 🌱





Salute to Lisa Houle: A Forest Safety Ambassador

By Timo Scheiber

As many of you know, Lisa Houle moved on from our ranks this year into a career with WorkSafe BC. There she joins James Devries, her long-time partner and past Brinkman Coordinator. Lisa has taken on the role of Forest Industry Liaison, so we will still be seeing her at various industry functions, and in many ways she continues on with her past efforts to keep forestry workers safe.

Most of you currently working with Brinkman will remember Lisa as OH&S coordinator for the company, a position she held with great effect for the last 8 years. What you may not know are the many varied job titles that Lisa held in her time with Brinkman. Planter, Crew Boss, Foreperson, Front Desk attendant, Contract facilitator, and Contract Coordinator. I think she even cooked once or twice!

When I met Lisa in the early 90's, she had just taken a temporary (seasonal) position at the front desk. Bright eyed and bushy tailed, Lisa was the voice we got on the phone prior to the automated phone system now in place (I still miss the days when you got a real

person on the line). She quickly proved her competence – in fact, her indispensability – and was signed on more or less permanently any time she was not in Alberta with Lisa Holleman, looking after crews and trying to find her way around in the 'shelterwood' cutting that Weyerhaeuser preferred. I visited there a few times, moonlighting as a planter after supervising all spring, and had the pleasure of working on Lisa's crew once or twice. Organized, positive, and always quick to laugh and smile, she showed the same capabilities in the field that everyone at the office had so quickly come to appreciate.

Many of Lisa's positions with Brinkman were created just for her, to make sure we got the best of her considerable skills at any given time. So, as many of us have, she grew in her career with the company and took on new challenges and greater responsibility. Much of the credit for our initial OH&S program goes to James, who managed this portfolio off the corner of his desk for years, trying to make it interesting

The above illustration, "Contemplative Renourishment" by Emily McGratten, was commissioned by Brinkman and Associates Reforestation Ltd. as a gift of recognition for Lisa Houle.

and exciting at the supervisor's meeting every year despite an (often) lukewarm reception from a bunch of heathens who hadn't yet come to appreciate the value of a Health and Safety program. However, it was Lisa who authored the program that we see today, and who shepherded us through some difficult tragedies – learning what she could from each incident and incorporating that knowledge into our program.

Needless to say, Lisa achieved so much in her time with us and the company has gained enormously from her dedication and skill. That being said, we wish Lisa the best in her new endeavours, and expect to be sitting across the table from her on occasion in the future. She still works in our aid, but from a distance now. Robin McCullough has taken the reins and we look forward to continued excellent support and leadership from the OH&S coordinator role in coming seasons. So as a friend and colleague I say, "Goodbye Lisa, best wishes, and sorry for all my snoring over the years of shared rooms on road trips. Salute!" We will miss you. 🌲



Brinkman First Aid Responder and Cook Save Lives: The Miracle of a Chance iPod Malfunction

By Lumi Faucher

June 19th 2013. We are heading north to our campsite in the Stikine region, near the Alaskan border. Our convoy is spread out except for the trifecta, Heather Mcansh in her Delica, Rob Atkinson with the office trailer and myself with the kitchen trailer. We are grouped together, close to getting near to getting less far from our camp (it's a very long drive). The mountains are beautiful. For the majority of us it's our first time witnessing such a landscape. Most of us will never see that part of the world 'cause it's so \$%#@! far from any decent coffee place, which is a shame. We are on the lookout for our turn off of the Highway of Tears and the three of us drive right by the camp (Matt's directions). So Heather is in front, Rob's second and I'm bringing up the rear. The three of us make a U-turn at a very safe and appropriate spot, 'cause that's what we're taught in the resource road driving course at the supervisors' meetings. All of a sudden I see from a far distance Heather's van pulled over on the side of the road and she's waving me down like she wants me to pull over and make out with her – an emergency – so I stop. Turns out she had problems with her iPod so she pulled over. As she was trying to fix that

critical technical failure, she heard screaming and moaning coming from the ditch. She took a look and found a truck that had swerved off the road and down an embankment that was about ten metres from the berm of the road. There is no way in hell anyone else could see that truck from the road. Only a chance iPod malfunction could've made someone stop at that particular spot, a very dodgy curve on a relatively unsafe highway.

So Heather takes me down the embankment to the horrific scene at the bottom, a destroyed vehicle with two people trapped inside. The truck had stopped on its side with a man and a woman stuck, getting eaten alive by mosquitoes and no-see-ums, injured and completely dehydrated.

I run back up the embankment and get on the truck mount to call Rob (a Level 3 First Aid Attendant) who had just driven by. In the meantime, Heather and I talk with the distressed couple and try to figure out what the next move should be. "Bug spray, please!" is their first request. Then they ask for water. Forgetting the danger of giving water to people suffering from serious trauma, I run back up to the truck to get the water. Luckily Rob arrives in time (he's fast for an old guy).

"NO WATER!" he shouts, nimbly climbing down the embankment to assess the scene. With Rob on site, he deftly takes charge. After ensuring that the scene was safe and accounting for all the patients, Rob has us call the air ambulance from our satellite phone and sends for help from the mining camp nearby, and within 15 minutes there are about 15 people on site. Rob, meanwhile, is handling the whole thing like a champ while Heather is helping by talking to the poor people in the truck. The air ambulance, it turns out, was going to be a while so with the scene under control, I returned to my truck and duty. Despite everything that happened we still had to set up camp and start planting the next day.

As it turned out, Rob had to stay on scene for four hours. The emergency responders brought in the Jaws of Life to rescue those two pilgrims from their truck. But they both survived with minor injuries, thanks to Matt Robertson's directions, an iPod that miraculously stopped working at the right time, and the good works of Heather Mcansh and Rob Atkinson. 🌱

Reports from the Field



2013 Season Overview from Judi Tetro: Adventures in Eastern Canada

*By Judi Tetro,
Eastern Canada Operations Manager*

What is The East? Well, in Brinkman and Associates Reforestation terms, The East comprises the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Please, please don't tell anyone who lives in Alberta or Saskatchewan that we include them in The East... we will be tarred and feathered – and likely shunned and booted out of those provinces!

That aside, The East has the most fun and is the best place to work of all the regions! Ok, maybe we shouldn't tell people who plant in BC that [totally true fact] either.

The East planted a lot of trees in 2013, surveyed thousands of hectares, burned hundreds of slash piles, and 'greened' the highway right-of-ways of Southern Ontario. Here is a quick synopsis: In Southern Ontario, under the guidance of Mike Hayes (22 years with B&A), the silviculture group plants and tends trees along the sides of highways, in farmer's fields, in converted landfills and mines, and in community forests. This work has morphed from 'early spring planting' to work that lasts as long as

the reforestation planting season up north. Many people who work on our traditional reforestation contracts also work with Mike in the early spring. This is a great way to extend their season and get warmed up and in shape for planting – while putting some money into their pockets! Mike also has a crew that sticks with him after the big April planting push is over. This work is interesting and it's different all the time – some days planting along the side of the busiest highway in Canada, other days in a serene forest. Good stuff.

Our reforestation program in Northern Ontario is headed by Neil Whan (21 years with B&A). Neil has been busy for the past 21 years working for Resolute Forest Products in the Thunder Bay area (that's right, same client every year since he started!). Ask him anything about the work there and he knows it (and, when his resolute work is done, Neil also runs projects across the country). This year in Ontario we had 3 camps: Neil with Resolute FP, Ben Bradford with Lake Nipigon FP and Nagagami FM, and Robin McCullough with Resolute FP. The regular planting season was around 40 work days and planters had the opportunity to add another 30-40 days to that number (the early work with Hayes was around 15 days; Chris Goetz ran a small plant in July for 11 days; Matty Brown ran another one in August for 5 days; and Shawn Driscoll ran one in September for 5 days). As if this was not already a ton of work, we also had a two month survey project this fall (run by Ben), and one month of slash pile burning (run by Neil). The season was ALMOST OVER in Ontario... by November 30!

Manitoba planting is short, but SWEET. Manitoba planting has some serious prairie topography happening – and to add to that, the area we typically plant in is called the Sandilands Provincial Forest. The planting is just as it sounds: flat and sandy (for the most part... there are a few pieces of slash!!). This year Robin's crew planted for about

one month in Manitoba before heading to Ontario to finish out the rest of the season. Saskatchewan is also flat (who knew!), but the planting in Saskatchewan is a bit more challenging than Manitoba. Brian's crew went into SK for a quick honeymoon plant in the middle of the season. It was a great gap filler and the planters did really well.

We have been working with most of our clients in Alberta for over 15 years. It's a great place to work – amazing clients and incredible crews. All our work is within a few hours of Edmonton. Lots of helicopters and Hagglunds and yes, lots of mud! Alberta provides long, full planting seasons every year; we definitely send people home tired. This year we had Andy Cameron back doing his usual stellar job at Weyerhaeuser; we had Brian Bullock soar into Blue Ridge Lumber and ANC and do a great job; and Dawn Brinkman who slides in to perform her usual Hollywood class act July plant with Millar Western. 2013 was another great season in Alberta.

2014? Well, more of the same... mostly! I am really happy to announce that we are in the end process of securing a very exciting new opportunity in our Ontario operations. Frontier, an Ontario tree planting company owned by PRT (the nursery company), has been operating in Ontario for over 20 years. They have good contracts and a strong staff team and planters. PRT has recently undergone an ownership change, and the new owners have decided that it's important to focus on their nursery business and not tree planting.

Brinkman was approached with the opportunity to purchase PRT Frontier's tree planting operations. We are very excited to be presented with this prospect. It will open up a new part of the Ontario market to Brinkman, it greatly increases the amount of work we will be doing, and it offers the chance to work with new people, and with new clients.

This is a very exciting development and we are looking forward to this new chapter and to welcome new people into our team.

We also have our Sandilands show back again in Manitoba. Saskatchewan will be a little bigger this year. And in Alberta, all the usual great contracts.

If you have any comments or questions, I'm always happy to hear from you. 🌱



Report from Ben Bradford's Crew: Be Nice and Make Money in Northern Ontario

*By Ben Bradford,
Project manager*

There are many challenges associated with working in Ontario, and in the 2013 season I think our crew faced them all! Despite the freezing rains and snow of early May, the sweltering heat of July, a seemingly endless flu pandemic, mosquitos that swarmed like blackflies, broken busses, Alberta-style gumbo roads and a crew made up of 95% greeners, we managed to pull it off!

I'd like to thank my amazing staff. If it weren't for all your hard work training up our new planters, and doing it all with a smile, we would have never succeeded! A huge thank you to everyone who planted in my camp in 2013 as well, you truly embodied our camp rules of "Be Nice, and Make Money!"

The season started out rough, a simple 3 hour mobilization turned into an 8 hour ordeal as a bus blew a tire only one hour out of Thunder Bay, and of course it was the evening, and the weekend, and no one in town had a spare! After a quick trip back to Thunder Bay to grab a replacement tire (and a spare for the future), the bus was back on the road and the few of us that

stayed behind made it to camp (let the sleep deprivation begin!) We felt right at home, our first site was the "Brinkman Airport"! That feeling was short lived, as the next morning someone from town showed up to inform us that we were trespassing on private property. After sorting out some land-use permit confusion we were allowed to stay and the camp went up without too many hitches (apparently our mess-test uses 11ft poles, but we had 12ft ones, nothing a hacksaw couldn't fix!)

The planters arrived a few days later to cold temperatures and snow, and I'm sure many of them were questioning what they had gotten themselves into! After our first day off, a gnarly stomach flu hitched a ride back to camp with the planters and circulated around for the next two weeks. Eventually it warmed up and our immune systems toughened up, and we finished off our work around Lake Nipigon without to many more issues, just a couple of loose lug-nuts on a bus, and the downtime was a great opportunity for a massage train!



Bus sunset Nipigon



Massage Train



Log bar



Green-up can be an issue



Beaver Lodge with Satellite TV

From there we moved to the swamps of Hornepayne, where things got done without any major problems. The land was tough and everyone missed the good scarification and bundled stock of the last contract. Things got back up to speed after planters learned how to work the straight plant. The biggest challenges we faced were soupy roads, ravenous black flies and figuring out how to make a bar for party night; our crafty tree runner and his chainsaw solved that problem for us!

The final leg of our season involved a quick move down to White River, where we ended up camping on one of the cut blocks that we had to plant! All the planters commented on how it was just like in "Do it with Joy," planting around (and sometimes in) everyone's tents! The land in White River was a mix of "dreamy like wow" and areas where, as our client noted, "green-up was an issue." With the sweltering heat of July and many of our planters having to leave for other commitments, our numbers dwindled, and many of us wondered if we were ever going to finish. Reinforcements from Robin's and Neil's camps arrived just in time for us to pound it out, and our season came to a close.

We faced many challenges, but overcame them all as a team, leaving our clients happy, our pockets fuller and our lives richer with the many friendships made and experiences shared. I look forward to seeing you all back in 2014, if ya dig it! 🌱



Alana's crew L to R: Ani, Aiden, Danielle, Becky, Justin, Alana and Nick



Marlyn's crew: Hugh, Marlyn, Vee, Jessica, and Kevin.

PLUS! A Snapshot of Hornepayne Captured in Quotes

By Alan Bursley

"It could always be worse. Near freezing, Rain, sleet, hail, snow...and only 6 hours left to my work day."

"Who put rocks in my back bag?"

"Buses will break down... the wheels... the breaks... run out of gas. This is known!"

"Bread and soup heals the soul."

"The bears will stash all of your stuff in the woods if you let em."

"Do the hard stuff now, your legs will thank you later. "

"Pounding is just working hard."

"Tent city!"

"4 o'clock fulz###%labspksaahh!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!..." The twins' PG version.

"We camped on a block, now we get to plant it, just like in Do it With Joy!"

"Doing laundry with the locals is faster."

"Robby is stalked by wolves...literally."

"Push through the hard stuff to get to the good stuff!"



Eagle Training Camp 2013: Robin's Crew Winning in Manitoba

*By Robin McCullough,
Project Manager/OH+S Coordinator*

For those of you who haven't heard, our camp is one giant Eagle. I am the Eagle Eyes, because I see everything, always watching, always thinking. Our tree deliverers – stolen Manitoba golden boys – are the Eagle Talons, always ahead of the crew, always reaching for more. Our cooks are the Eagle's Heart and Stomach; no one goes anywhere without the strength our cooks give us. Our crewbosses are the Eagle bones, guiding our daily flights, adapting to change, coordinating our hunt. And our planters, our warriors, they are our Eagle feathers. Small feathers when they first go out to hunt, they provide more and more lift each day we fly.

Our prey is numbers. Total camp daily production, that's what we hunt, every day. It always takes all day, it's always exhausting, and we need all of our feathers and bones to succeed. No one can do it alone; we triumph where we do because the Eagle flies as one. Eagle Training Camp 2013 started as one big "licorice all-sorts" of a camp, dumped out onto the deceptively grassy bogs of Manitoba (those green carpets of firm flatness are not what they seem; they are sponges and they will pull your F550 down, down, down into their depths at the merest hint of moisture). Of the 12 field staff and 2 kitchen staff on the project, only Homie and

Anna (my wingman and my head bus driver) had worked for me before. But that didn't matter – one shift and we knew we had the most badass Eagle yet. This is one massive shout out to the staff who made 2013 happen: Tony and Nij, our stolen Manitoba golden boys, working it out in the truck, at the reefer, and on the quad, bringing us what we needed. Pat McBride, AKA C-Nugs – Pat fought the shift from Neil's camp, but it was meant to be. No one answers the radio sounding more asleep than Pat. Our new crewbosses: darling Laura, Evan, Laurel, Sable, Brooke and Char. Our perfect Quality Assessor, Nick Kenzo Teramura. And our imported cooks – Lucie from England (so fancy, so beloved) and Gwyn from Bella Coola (so under-clothed, so adored). From these bones and talons and organs we built Eagle Training Camp 2013.

We set it up on the bogs of Manitoba. They look so benign, under their wee layer of grass; they look like reasonable places to erect a camp for 79 planters and 15 staff. So we did. And except for the truckfull of hosers who had to push their Dodge out of tent city one (work) night, the friendly Manitobans saved our asses over and over and over again.

But mostly we saved our own. It's no small feat to take a camp of 50+ greeners and turn it into a number-eating Eagle (topping out around 120,000 trees a day going in the ground), but we did it. Scratch that – you did it. All I did was watch the Eagle soar. 🌱

Postscript: Eagle Hatches in Mazinaw-Lanark

Tiny crew for the early work show, did they know they would grow to be eagles? Perched all over the forwarder we used for tree delivery. We got about 60 boxes on it-- once we had built sides between the ribs with planks. Nij and I were both on bikes and had a tough time climbing the hills into the blocks from staging with empty quads; steep, super muddy and mushy, being early spring after a heavy snowy winter. We couldn't have done it without the forwarder. Dirk visited us on the last day of this show, as

we were about an hour from Ottawa, and he had come over that weekend to visit Joyce. He rented a convertible and arrived for our contract closeout party in style; Marley and I made him fresh-pressed green juice instead of sausages.

When later he saw the forwarder crew photo he had to exclaim, "BARCA in Panama just bought the identical machine in 2013 for harvesting the maturing teak--after 20 years of planting in tropical Central America. These machines are not common, being a



new simple low tech Swedish forwarder-- 'low tech and Swedish', an oxymoron really. But so far BARCA has not used it to haul seedlings. Good idea." 🌱



Matty's War: Special Reserves Called to Duty East of Matheson, South of Nowhere, Ontario

By *Matty Brown*,
Project Manager

As soon as I hang up I realize I don't have any bags. That's the problem with being out of The Game a while—you're not expecting a call to pinch hit—least of all one that involves bagging up. When's the last time I did that? But here I am thanking Judi Tetro for the opportunity when it occurs to me that I've given her nephews most of my planting equipment. This will mean a trip to my parents' barn where my brother and I would send gear to die. I'm going to have to hope that somewhere amidst the heap of busted buckles, duct tape patches and zap strap stitching, I can put something together that will hold out for 7-8 days of planting near the Ontario/Quebec border, East of Matheson, South of nowhere. I put together a serviceable set of bags and pull out a rusted wreck of a speed spade from the glory days of Hornepayne.

A mouse had made a nest in my right steel toe boot...

J.T. assures me it'll be a lucrative show, pine ground, full accommodations, and a "greenside-up" client. On the last point, it turns out we got a no-BS forester who has worked closely with Judi years ago when we were breaking in to Northeastern Ontario. Proof it pays to do it right the first time. Turned out the forester had a story for just about every tree planted in Manitouwadge: Bombadiers buried to the racks in black muck, snow caches stuffed with bare root stock, sheer-bladed wind rows, and even

the dreaded seven-cent trees. One thing's for sure: if you're making money in the tree business in Ontario these days, you know what you're doing. Even the foresters daughter will be on the crew, and I hear how her first trees were planted in Manitouwadge too, when she was three.

I'm always struck by how much I like planters. Not their hygiene, not as roommates, or at dinner functions in the off-season, but I like them. They understand me; they are familiar, and while no two of us are the same, we share a visceral connection through the job we love to hate. It's probably what I miss most about The Game. You put six planters in a truck for a week, run 'em hard through some bush with a campfire and some beer and you've got yourself a decent reality TV show with a lasting friendship or two. Do that with the pension-bound public sector outfit I'm with now and you've got Coronation Street: The Deleted Scenes.

That first day on the block with a new crew is always interesting isn't it? You find out so much about people: so-and-so chain smokes; these two are a closet couple; this guy loves his metal bands; he's fast; she's faster. I am the slowest planter here. It's not even close. 77k is not a whole lotta trees in the grand scheme of things—it's a descent day's production for a 30 spade crew where I come from. But there's only five and half of us, and we have to be done by Labour Day—seven days from now. Do the math and factor in that people are spent and want that long weekend to unwind, do the cottage thing, get back to school, whatever, and we've got our work cut out for us.

There's three blocks, just over half the trees go in the first and its good-enough land, but it pisses rain the third and final day in there, and much of my time is spent on the quad shuffling trees and cleaning out caches. Despite the rain—or perhaps because of it—we're in the truck by four, and it feels good to have a shift in. We debate a run for the border: it's an hour back to town and the bottle shop closes at five here in Matheson pop. 1200. We roll the dice nixing the border run plan and cruise into town at five-minutes-to closing. I forgot how good beer tastes after a shift of hard work.

On the night off there is Springsteen.

On the day off I am lost. Well, not lost but

I can't find tomorrow's block. Great client, yes, but maps... It's one of those: "you'll know it as soon as you find it" blocks, but as anyone who's spent a morning slamming trees into the wrong block will tell you, that's not as confidence-inspiring as some UTM coordinates. The maps are spread out all over my truck Shotgun, and my Alaskan Malamute, Molly, has sat her muddy 100-pound butt on half of them. Would we like the job as much if there was a red carpet to every block we planted?

It's not like there's a crew coming in hot behind us. Anything we get done tonight is one thing more we won't have to do tomorrow. And no sooner do you clear your mind, relax, and push that lump down your throat do you go from being lost to found. And the block looks good, damn it's good: a nearly-perfect ten-hectare square, of sandy, clear, Pli land. 12 cents!? On the way back to camp it occurs to me we might get all 17k in the ground in a day, which would set us up nicely to finish in five days. Betcha this gang is up for it. On the drive home I'm listening to The Stones on 940 AM when I notice a pack of Exports stuffed between the seats. Two left. The Capitalist in the planter lives for the days when you show up at the block, and, barring an injury or act of the planting gods, you know you are going to make some serious coin that day. I get that we are always trying to make serious coin, but you know what I mean: there are days when you just know you're gonna make a lot of money. The next two are such days for our gang. After demolishing the 17k on Day 1 we are hit by rain the next morning, but it lets up just short of drowning our courage. We finish the last tree at around 4:30, the fifth day of the job. It's been good money—the last two days especially.

We take the long way home to check out Kirkland Lake. I realize I left my crocs on the block. Damn it. One of us planted trees along the highway here, somewhere, can't exactly remember where—it was a while ago. We slow down at an overgrown cutblock. We think this might be it, hard to tell. Trees take their time. We stop at Tim Horton's and the LCBO, blasting the new Daft Punk on the way home. We talk to each other, over each other, about each other. We talk.

Job well done. 🌱



Matt's B.C. Interior Breakdown: 12 Million Trees in Mini-Facts

*By Matt Robertson,
BC Regional Manager*

This past 2013 season in the central BC Interior where the camps I work with call home was a great season. It was a season where in nine weeks 12 million trees were planted by rookies of future promise, seasoned hitters and grizzled vets, overseen by an exceptionally talented core of staff. Somehow in the middle of all this, great parties were thrown, comradery abounded and acts of generosity were born.

Being a forestry athlete is a tough way to make a living, which is something that I don't have to explain to you, but what I can do is relay some of the sheer scale of what was performed. Without sounding too evangelical, the accomplishments in a day of tree planting are miraculous.

Here are a few little "mini-facts" on some of what it took for the crews I work with to plant the 12 Million trees this season:

- 45.5 Million Calories were burnt by the planters and staff
- 25,650 meals were prepared by our cooks
- 51,200 Lbs of groceries were delivered to the four tents camps
- 44 reefers delivered 12 million trees (one a day)
- 40,000 boxes of trees were moved to the field in pickup trucks
- 8600 hectares were restored with seedlings, by hand.
- 1.7 Million tonnes of Carbon by 2113 will have been sequestered on the 8600 Hectares (Thx Frederik!)

- At least 102,000 liters of fuel was used to transport planters, trees and run camps. Your guess is as good as mine on the amount of fuel we burnt on the > 1 million heli trees planted.

So, to take a step back, a day of tree planting is a major feat and you're the best at it!

Amongst all the logistics of the 12 million trees, our crews showed great moments of compassion where you folks donated trees to fellow planters in need who had personal health issues, and also to our reforestation cousins in Tanzania through Community Forests International. The funds from planted trees that have been donated not only have gone into reforestation on the Island of Pemba, but also into simple yet genius ideas on wood conservation. The funds have been used to redesign wood ovens for cooking that would require 40% less wood to be burnt and also for community solar battery banks where families share a solar generating station to charge batteries for their weekly power needs. These are simple but effective ways that your donation has been "spring boarding" change on the other side of the planet. This video is a thank you to Brinkman Planters directly from Pemba, Tanzania.

2013 was also a year of transition. In 2013 John Beaton stepped aside from the reins of the Fir Camp in Prince George and became Brinkman's Coastal Coordinator. For the last two weeks of the season, his crew was managed by Jeremy Cameron who looked

very natural in the role. John's legacy of ground breaking project management and development has allowed us to expand greatly and lead the way for all crews to continue client service improvements. Thank you John, you are the consummate professional.

Also in transition, Bryon Weddell has opted to take a different path in life from silviculture. Bryon has worked extremely hard to become an elite member of the skiing community and is now a heli ski guide. At present, he is reaping the rewards after a long work cycle and last we spoke there were a few places on the planet that needed him to go visit before snow season. Bryon joined Brinkman in 2002 with Paul Berg's crew in Revelstoke. The batch of resident solid mentors in Revelstoke (Zip, Stevey, P. Bergo, etc) helped Brian become a fast planter in no time and because he learned in Revvie's tough ground, he could plant anywhere. He acquired the nick name of "Hot Bryon" in 2007 which stuck to him for both his benefit and detriment until he acquired his next nick name. Bryon became a Project Manager for our 100 Mile contracts, and the forester was so impressed by him that he dubbed Bryon with his new name "The Future"! He is not only an excellent Project Manager with a keen and natural business sense, but his personality also always brings warmth and good humour to crews. Thank you for everything Bryon and we know your future path will be successful!

I cannot thank you all enough for becoming part of the culture that looks out for each other's health and wellbeing, not just at home but on all fronts. In my eyes you each stand tall. You are an amazing wilderness community, and I am so very proud of the privilege of serving you. 🌱



Dawn's Gypsy Caravan Crew: From 70 Mile to Whitecourt, 3000km and Counting

By Dawn Brinkman,
Project Manager

The 2013 season was one to be reckoned with. Our gypsy caravan of a crew covered 3000km, from the southern semi-arid Cowboy interior to the Northern heights of the Stikine valley to the oilfield swamps of Northern Alberta- by the end an amoeba of organized chaos. It was a long and lucrative season for the crew; we had an outstanding team on staff, happy clients, and a great vibe of a camp.

The first trees hit the ground in early May outside of 70 Mile House. June saw us finish and split in three directions to help boost several other contracts in the region, with half the crew and myself joining Erik's crew in Summit Lake near Prince George. In a packed camp with sixty plus planters, our mob of misfits got on famously and hosted a "Star Trek Gone Wild" tri-camp party with John Beaton's crew, with a guest appearance from the East Van band The Boom Booms. After three shifts with Erik, our whole crew reunited mid-June in Prince George to head northwest to the Stikine valley. Our gorgeous campground blew us away with great swimming, canoeing and a stunning

mountainous backdrop. Four shifts in the Stikine Valley's remote beauty and we were on the road again, this time for our July summer work.

Next stop, Whitecourt Alberta. Joined by a cast of characters from various other Brinkman BC spring crews, our crew grew to nearly 50. With the graduated horse power, we hustled through the trees to an early finish July 27th. It was a lucky contract- with 80% heli-access, we were ever grateful for experienced pilots and cooperative weather. The windstorms may have thrown our dry tent 500 meters into the forest and ripped off the office trailer awning, but the low-ceilings only grounded us once. Somewhere in there we managed to take over the Admiral hotel in Whitecourt and throw a collaborative camp Hill-Billy Arranged Marriage extravaganza with Brian's crew. All in all, it was a pleasure of a season with a road trip flavor, talented staff, enchanting cooks and a most fantastic crew.

Thank you to all the people I had the great fortune of working with, and I look forward to a rival 2014. 🍷





This is the PG Fir Camp and Life is Good

*By John Beaton,
Supervisor/ Coastal Coordinator*

The Fir Camp. 2013. Prince George. The sun is coming up as the steam rises from your 3rd cup of coffee. You're about to load up again, and you're ready. It was a good season and already, though you may not have admitted it to yourself, you look forward to the next. Your mind loses focus when you

think about the hard days, and seems to gain crystal clarity when you remember the good, projecting those days to otherwise unreachable status. You are a planter in the Fir Camp, and life is good.

It was a great year, 2013. Tons of fun, and more trees than you can count. Also to

be my last as a supervisor. My name is John Beaton and I managed Brinkman's Fir Camp for all but one of the years we have been in Prince George as a company. I took the reins from Matty Robertson and Teresa Williams and have passed them on to Jeremy Cameron; who managed the camp alongside long time foremen for the summer program last year. We have a great working relationship with our clients built on trust, respect and quality workmanship. We manage with integrity and care about our crew's well-being, and it shows.

So come to Prince George and plant some trees with people who care. We have a full spring program starting with a couple of crews as soon as the snow melts, and summer trees to boot.

This will keep you busy from the first week of May until the middle of July. In the meantime, enjoy the last days before the steam starts rising off your 3rd cup of coffee once again. Or tea, we don't discriminate here in our camps... 🌱

PLUS! Coastal Tour: Where there are Underwater Mountains and Mountains Underwater

Coastal BC. Where there are underwater mountains and mountains underwater. Where your daily commute can include a ride in the crew cab, a trip on any number of boats and a flight in the heli. Then back again. Where often the only break from the weather is found huddling beside a burning box; thanking the powers that be that the wax boxes light in nearly any condition imaginable. Where the professionals excel and those up and coming are tested to their limits and beyond. Where anyone in their right mind would start considering alternative career paths 10 minutes ago on a yesterday. For the lucky amongst us it is also known simply as "home."

In my new role in 2014 as the full time Coastal Coordinator for Brinkman my focus is on securing a fair shake for all who join the ranks in the coast, spending much time viewing and bidding in order to identify our best opportunities. Not that long ago I was

burning boxes roadside with my buddies on the block as the rains pushed the limits of the heaviest coastal woolen armor; the steadfast Stanfield. After all no true coastal planter ever leaves the warmth of their homes without a trusty Stanny and a couple of sets of poly pro.

The coast is seeing some leaders of yesterday transition into new roles or life paths and opening up opportunities for a new wave. Currently we have Kyle Strong, Brian Bullock, Ian Matthews, Marc Robillard, Jeremy Cameron, Claud Contant & Barry Needham managing a variety of planting, brushing and protection work from as far north as the reaches of the mid coast all the way down to the Saanich Peninsula.

Whether it's in the early spring or the late fall the goal remains the same. We are dedicated to providing the best opportunities available to our employees by remaining innovative in our approach and leaving no stone unturned



in search of the best work possible. To all those who make the cut we offer long seasons and a well-trained management team that will work their hardest to ensure your success. In the years to come it is our goal to continue to build upon the strong base we have and to investigate niche coastal markets to best utilize the strengths and training of our management team in an effort to provide the safest experience and best earning potential to all. The coast. Keep your caulks sharp and your game face on... or it'll get cha! 🌱



Erik's Big Bad Baboon Crew Finds a Home: The Brinkman and Chingee Clans Reunite at Summit Lake after 40 Years

By Erik Brinkman,
Project Manager/Communications & Special Projects Coordinator

So much is in the camp; this cannot be underestimated. It provides the planters with a hearth, a home, respite from the often tempestuous block. In The Planters Guide Book, (yet to be written) Rule #423 states, "Hotel shows should never last, while a good camp should never be passed."

I have the honour of managing a brazen, organismic troop of tree planters that go by the handle the Big Bad Baboon Crew. Last season we started out our bountiful Prince George (PG) contract in a domestic PG campground flanked by senior Rent-A-RVs, newly-wed campers and shoes off bathroom policies called Blue Cedars PG. Perfectly timed with the one week expiry date of houseguest hospitality, we gobbled up the surrounding gravy and had to migrate North.

When I scouted out our second camp site a few days before we had to move – a centrally located gravel pit we had identified via satellite during the snowed out months, single digits away from the bulk of our volume – it was under a lake. Regular fare. I wasn't too keen to approach the campground owner from the previous season for reasons of charlatanry, but after knocking on every door of the Summit Lake local residences and gleaning every swamp, landing, quarry, wide shoulder and cougar den within 100km for a suitable camp spot it was looking like I didn't have a choice. It was time to move 42 planters and a camp, and

we were homeless. So I made the 11th hour 11th minute call and started haggling. After multiple price raise confirm raises, term and condition juggling he said he would call back in 10 minutes to re-un-confirm.

While I was waiting, counting down from 10 while breathing deeply, I got another call. "Hi, I'm Daryl, the Mayor of Summit Lake, I got your message. I think I can help you." Daryl introduced me to the owners of the Summit Lake Campground (now officially Loons Haven Resort, named by a Baboon), a local First Nations family-owned Northern paradise. It turns out the owners, the Chingee family, are descendants of tribal elder Harry Chingee, who my father encountered in his early forays into the BC wilderness in the 1960's.

The next day Daryl was digging our grey water pit with his backhoe, as we buckled down our camp, and settled in to our new digs. We had worked out a mutually beneficial deal with owner-caretakers Bernie and Justin Chingee and set up our caravan in the nicest tree planting camp I had ever seen: beach, pier, lake, and beer icing in a snow pile brought in with the bucket of the Mayor's hoe.

This is a good BC contract, one of the best: direct award, straight forward specs, reflective prices, dependable client. And this is a good BC crew, one of the best...and last season had its choice of career-affirming work days, full of the ever toe-clenching,

oscillating thrill of planting life, and our brazen troop now had a camp to roost in the lee of the cutblock. The deepening connections of hard work combined well with the incomparably pristine home-with-a-heart, enabled us to embrace a place that was finally up to the task of recharging those who are made for the highest rewards. The Baboons found a worthy home.

"The strength of a tree planting crew derives from the integrity of the home" says Confucius... kind of.

When I found out about the connection between the Brinkman and Chingee clans I asked Dirk to write up a brief recollection of his first pass through Summit Lake over forty years ago. Here's what he wrote:

Joyce had a great idea to visit Erik's camp for my birthday, so I celebrated my 68th birthday in the Summit Lake campground north of Prince George where Erik had his planting crew and where Dawn and her crew had been a few weeks before.

There were some wonderful people there running the campground, the son and grandson of Harry Chingee, who was one of the more level headed McLeod Carrier people I had met in 1968, when two college friends and I first drove by Summit Lake. Summit Lake is just about where all the black spruce form spires because the heavy winter snows break off any long branches. When the dark spikes of the black spruce dominate, you know you have come to the remote north and I always remember the sensation of that shift in the landscape.

We first drove by in 1968 just 45 years (and a month) ago. I was a fresh naïve college graduate. At Summit Lake we decided to stop and fell a few trees in the forest alongside the road. We did this so that we could honestly say that we had fallen trees when we applied for a job as a faller – it may have seemed wiser to ask for training but we were too proud to admit we had no clue. A few weeks later we had begun, with plenty of jobs open because of the fatalities, and because gangrene set in before injured workers made it to the PG hospital, as it took three days by boat just to get to Findlay Forks where a car could race the rest of the 250 miles. The (then called) Workman's Compensation Board consequently shut the whole lake slashing operation down. All the

contractors were to convene at Fort Graham, long since flooded.

It was in Fort Graham that I really appreciated Harry's even temperament. That moment at Fort Graham can have been like no other. A confluence of helicopters flying in to hire and fly off potential fire fighters for fires in the region. They offered to rent our saws so that is what we did — just as I had decided we should be contractors ourselves.

Bush planes were coming and going out with workers being flown out to go home. River boats were depositing shut-down contractor crews and contractors and crews were trying to talk someone into boating them back to Findlay Forks because it was cheaper than arguing with each other. Everyone watched their gear like hawks and accusations of power saws being stolen were routine. Avoiding fights was a part of survival.

Throughout everything, Harry sat quietly amused, refusing all offers to ferry people off. Harry had the boating contract with Hydro and his 15 year old son ran the motor.

As he awaited his next instructions from the BC Hydro boss who had been taken from camp to camp by Harry to find everyone and bring them to Ft Graham to see they were all accounted for, his amusement and quiet observations of the crazy white men were a rare relief point of sanity.

From that day on I looked forward to talking quietly with Harry whenever I had a chance. So it was most wonderful to stop at Summit Lake and find that his nephew Bernie and grand-nephew Justin had become good friends with Erik and Dawn, whose crews had camped on their campground. (Bernie decided to go outside the treaty process and ask to have a Forest Service Campground on Summit Lake transferred to their name, in order to create a business). It was a beautiful spot on the lake perfect for swimming with a sandy beach. The planters could likely not have camped there if it was still under forest service management with all of its restrictions against 'industrial' activities of tree planting camps.

Now with good management keeping the peace between the planter parties and the traditional campers, and with all of the broken glass cleaned up, the grass seeded, docks repaired, trails kept up, etc, everything was copacetic. Best of all, genetics connected again a generation later. Harry was only 50 in 1968 but I thought of him as an elder and he is still healthy. Now 94, Harry is dictating a book about his life to a Douglas College archivist. Certainly my youthful risk-taking self from those days would also have been surprised I was still healthy and back in Summit Lake at age 68. Loon's Haven Resort on Summit Lake has cleared an area along the lake it is now designating the special "Brinkman Baboon Area" of their campground for our seasonal returns, so we can settle in and establish our hearth. I look eagerly forward to reuniting with the troop and continuing the legacy of the Brinkman and Chingee clans with Bernie and Justin at when we return to Summit Lake for the 2014 interior season. 🌱



The Baboons carpet the mess tent.



Robin and Camille ride with Boat Master Bernie Chingee



Erik Brinkman bringing the kiddies juice for their ride to school



Rosanna served up dinner by the Meat Master Mayor Daryl Fitzsimmons



Summit Lake, BC



The Big Bad Baboon Crew banner



Timo's 2013 B.C. Overview: Encouraged by the Grassroots, Take-Charge Leadership of Brinkman Field Staff

*By Timo Scheiber,
BC Operations Manager*

For me each 'season' is split into three overlapping phases: securing projects, plan & prepare, and operational. With that in mind each yearly cycle starts with our fall viewing / negotiating / bidding, rolls into the winter of planning and preparing for the upcoming work, and kicks off with the first trees in the ground at the end of February. However, the real emotional start is the mid-February western gathering-of-the-clans / project manager meeting, usually held somewhere around Vancouver.

Last spring we all gathered at the North Vancouver School District's live-in facility 15 minutes out of Squamish. It was a fun and information-filled four days (and nights!) of sharing our collective knowledge and experience. As usual when treeplanters gather, there wasn't much sleep to be had. In addition to the usual presentations and training sessions, some highlights included a visit from Joyce Murray (then working on her campaign to become leader of the federal Liberal Party) and a special field-personnel-only working session on imbedding a healthy culture at Brinkman & Associates. Field personnel only? Yes, 'we' the regional

managers and operational staff got kicked out so the field managers could have a frank and open discussion about this important topic. One of the most impressive displays of grass roots, take-charge leadership I've ever seen and (I think) a real turning point in our history in terms of people taking control of issues that affect them in our camps. So what are some of the highlights from the 2013 field season?

Starting and ending with central Vancouver Island, 2013 was yet another stellar season for Barry Needham and crew. Barry continues to soldier on at 65, the brink of retirement. For some years now he has been the senior guy: among all the logging and operational staff working in the region – Barry has been there the longest! We always joke that, as in hockey, Barry's return each year will be a game day decision, but jokes aside I know his crew and clients are very happy at his continued presence. His fall project was particularly large last year – some tired folks for sure as October came and trees were still filling the reefer.

Barry shared his Kootney camp with Jeremy Weddell in May & June. Jeremy stepped up to the plate this year to head a small expansion team in the Kootenay's taking on our increasing volume. It was the old dog and the new dog sharing the same kennel, but everyone got along well and overall a success to be proud of. As usual Mim and her new assistant poured their creativity into

an excellent spread of food for both crews, and some great volleyball games were had. Jonas Plaumann, with Leaf McClary and their intrepid crew of east shore shovel specialists took the show on the road to pick up smaller satellite shows around the Kootneys.

Which brings us to Rainer & Cathy Korn, who battled wind, lightning, and rising water around Fernie over the spring season. I hope they can look back with a well-deserved sense of pride in once again pulling it off, but I'm also sure there are a few new grey hairs as well!

I did have the good fortune of being in camp for a wine tasting & costume party. The 'come as something starting with R' theme seemed a bit vague, until Jake Zaiss walked in dressed as Rainer, a performance I will not soon forget. Claud Contant showed up half way through the project to help with our Safe Companies audit (thanks again everyone!), happily taking over a vacant tent and full custody of the ETV. Marc Robillard and his small crew of shrubbies also worked with Rainer & company for a few weeks prior to firing up the brushsaws to lay waste to some undesirable species. Brushing carried on into July, another successful season although unfortunately blemished (for the second year!) by the theft of our new fire pump. What do we have to do, hire a full time guard? What are people doing with these things anyway? Actually, I don't want to know... 🌲



Here's the view out of my office window in Duncan.



A Journey to the Mid-West Coast with Marc Robillard: Kwicksutaineuk-ah-kwa-mish

By Marc Robillard,
Project Manager

Since 2007 I have been the lucky person to work with the First Nations people of Gilford Island. Several clients have hired us to remove browsing protectors also known as cones.

Gilford has a very large population of deer. The plantations we put in after logging were soon ungulate calories. They especially like western red cedar. On Yeo Island you could sometimes see deer screening and eating trees right behind you as you were planting. You often came back on your line and could not find the tree you just put in, or it was just laying there out of its hole.

The foresters really like the western red cedar. It is a valuable species that yields a high demand in the marketplace. Red cedar is also very important to the First Nations who built their canoes with them and used the bark for clothing. A lot of First Nations still use it for carving their artwork and heating their homes. The forest practice code requires foresters to plant what they harvested to a certain extent, so planting species less palatable to deer was not an option.



The solution was to install protectors around those trees. They came in many shapes and sizes. The picture below shows the browsing protectors, one of the many types we remove. We come in with crews to remove

and dispose of the cones or find a way to reuse them.

Over these 7 years of work we have gotten pretty good at it. Gilford has a tiny full time population of about 18 residents. When our cone removal project runs we get a lot of the band members that live in other areas to come back home to work. It is great to see the families reunite.

Brinkman, the Gilford band and the forestry company get together to make things work. The secret of our success is cooperation. The client gives us the work, Amy Speck and I set the crewmembers up with groceries, equipment and prompt payroll. Dory, Herb and I hire the crew. Dory used to coach the soccer team (the Breakers) and has been a great influence on the young people, guiding them to do their job with the same attitude as if they were in a soccer tournament. The local residents take family and friends into their homes. I usually get to stay with Jo-Ann and Paul or Lucy. These guys are great hosts and spectacular cooks. There is a community dinner once a week, Cathy Williams usually cooks for every one. The food is plentiful and delicious. Thomas will once in a while hunt down a seal and give it away to some one who likes traditional foods. Not too many of the younger folks are still interested in eating seal. I had the luck of eating some fried seal blubber with Beatrice Smith. What a delicacy! Fatty, rich, just plain delicious! But approach with caution it's like dessert, if you eat too much you really feel like you over did it.

The people working in the field are the ones who really make things happen. That team now runs like a well-oiled machine thanks to



In this photo is Brian Scow, with 2 of his masks. Brian is one of the people from the crew that just follows me where ever the work is. He was on the Fernie brushing crew this summer. Thomas came and gave it a try as well.

some of the people listed here: Jillian Smith, Thomas Williams, William Treibwasser, Brian Scow, Charlie Johnson, Sam Johnson, Denis Johnson, Teddy Scheck, Joel Johnson JR., Graham Scow, Cory Knowls, Dean Coon, Chris Larsen, Allen Souch Senior and Junior, Jake Smith, and Jonah Johnson.

These are just a few of the people in the field that make our project work. They are professional cone removers. They can all work together bounce off each other and almost never miss a cone. I would like to really thank you guys! We make a great team. Louis Yannick Jullien was also a big part of our success in the beginning. He was a great foreman and is still a good friend. We had his son Alan Jullien Corignan do his first bush work with us this year. The first 3 years on Gilford we had lots of work. The projects were larger, longer and employed more people. For 2014 we are happy that we have another season, but we would like more work for this great crew.

On days off we sometimes take the truck and go out to the guys' favourite hunting spot. Since I usually have the only trucks on that side of the island, it gets put to good use. Some of these guys are excellent shots. Joel Johnson JR got many deer with a little 22. Jillian Smith and Mary Glasser on sunny days can be seen on the beach looking for old glass trading beads. It is not rare to see Jill pick 8 beads in less than 2 hours. She must have the vision of a hawk. On the job she never misses a cone either. I have not been able to find one bead by myself in 7 years. Brian Scow, Charlie Johnson, Sandy Johnson, Aba are also some of the very talented artists. If you get to visit the Gilford village go talk to these guys and get them to show you their art. Sandy made a dug out cedar canoe. Brian can carve 2 masks in one week. Aba specializes in paddles. These guys all do outstanding work. 🌲

Brinkman Creative Cache



Brinkman Art Cache: Seasonal Worker Equals Non-Starving Artist

By Baba Brinkman

The life of an aspiring artist requires a fine balancing act between dedication to honing a craft that doesn't pay much just yet, and working a "day job" to pay bills in the meantime. If only you could dedicate all your time to music/painting/jewelry/writing, the promised land of financial self-sufficiency would come so much sooner! That's why artists have always been attracted to the seasonal magic of tree planting. Disappear into the woods for a few months, have adventures, recharge your creative juices, practice your craft after work, or practice it all day on the block if you're a vocalist like myself, and emerge at the end of the Summer with money in the bank and a whole glorious off-season ahead of you, ready to focus 100% on making it happen. Planting camps can be crucibles of creativity. One of the highest achieving ex-planter is Yann Martel, who worked with Brinkman for several years in the late 1980s before dedicating himself to writing full-time. To accommodate his habit of stopping to write while planting, Yann was finally made camp joe in White River. Dirk still recalls the graffiti on the outhouse wall: "How many tree planters does it take to screw in a light

bulb? None, Yann will do it." Martel's fourth novel was the international bestseller *Life of Pi*, adapted last year into a major Hollywood film directed by Ang Lee. Another ex-planter of note is Shania Twain, who worked in Northern Ontario (though not with Brinkman). According to Shania: "It was a very rugged existence, but I was very creative and I would sit alone in the forest with my dog and a guitar and would just write songs."

Erik Brinkman's camp has more recently been a cauldron of creativity, turning out several musical prodigies, notably the Brinkman veteran tree runner and Winnipeg folk rocker Smoky Tiger and East Vancouver soul collective The Boom Booms. Smoky Tiger, aka Andrew Courtnage, is spending the winter in Manning Park, BC working on new music after completing a recent 15-day tour of Ontario organized by Sure Shot Bookings. He played his final Winnipeg show last year on a rooftop to 300 street-level spectators, a concert broken up shortly after by the cops. Rebel music! Equally artful is Andrew's account of his tribal tree running adventures in Manitoba for the 2013 season. Smoky Tiger's work was also featured in an unusual art context recently, as part of

an exhibit at Ontario's McMichael Gallery entitled "Dialogue and Divergence: Art of the Northwest Coast." The work on display is the music video for "The Tree Planter's Waltz", filmed on location at Erik's camp in 2009. The video runs on a continuous loop as part of the exhibit, displayed directly across from (and presented as if it has equal artistic merit to) a painting by Emily Carr.

Here's an excerpt from the McMichael Gallery exhibition plate:

The 2009 video titled *The Tree Planters' Waltz* provides a humorous framework for examining aspects of the employment and the recreational community life of these seasonal workers. In reality, the work life of the tree planter is exhausting, demanding and carries risks from wildlife, black flies and other insect swarms. Individually and collectively, the people involved in this activity are committed to maintaining the strict quality standards for planting, which are related to the number of trees planted as well as their placement on the land. Tree planters are personally invested in an experience with nature and passionate about the role that they play in replacing the forests that have been clear-cut to support modern industries and life styles.

As for the Boom Booms, after taking 2nd place out of 20 selected bands competing in the Peak Performance Project in 2011, they've had two big years touring the US and Canada, not to mention Brazil, Haiti and other exotic locales. Currently they are working on their new album with Grammy Award-winning producer Chin Injeti, featuring the advance single "Real Love." The Boom Booms, who have collectively planted more than 1.5 million trees, will be releasing the as-yet untitled record in early 2014 followed by another epic round of touring.

For more on the music tip, check out the Soundcloud Page of up-and-coming Cyber Punk producer and Brinkman planter Peter Scheiber aka xDelphy, with the feature track "Release".

In the visual and physical arts, Brinkman planters also include illustrators, painters, photographers, and jewelry artists. Tommy Aird is a professional photographer from the Yukon, recently relocated to Toronto, whose work has been featured in several exhibitions recently. Emily McGratten is a Kelowna-based illustrator and comic artist who “specializes in ink and watercolour drawings and often works mixing traditional and digital media together to create her own unique style.” She was promoted to foreman for the 2014 season and was commissioned by Brinkman to paint the original watercolour illustrations for Lisa Houle and the January 2014 Newsletter. Camille LaCrasse, younger sister of Brinkman highballer and musician Simon-Pierre Lacasse, planted her first season last year, while her paintings and sketches

speak for themselves in shows and galleries in the off-season. And Miriam de Langley, a recent BFA graduate and trained goldsmith, is bringing her appreciation of the natural world together with an eye for fine jewelry design. In Miriam’s words: “With nature as my primary inspiration, I create miniature sculptures of wearable art. Each one is embedded with symbols, intended not only to adorn, but to resonate and become a talisman for the wearer.”

As for me, I’m still touring and performing *The Rap Guide to Evolution* and *The Canterbury Tales Remixed* on a regular basis. “Evolution” has a six week tour of Australia booked for May/June 2014, including a week at the Sydney Opera House, and in the meantime I’m working on new music and new shows, continuing my quest to distill the best of the big ideas into bite-sized songs and sketches

for entertainment and edification. Now projects, tours, and releases are posted at www.bababrinkman.com for whoever’s interested. I planted trees every summer starting at age 15, hanging my shovel up at age 25 to pursue the dream of rapping and telling stories for a living. I’m 35 now, a decade into artistic self-reliance, and like Shania Twain (words I never thought I’d write) I still credit tree planting with supporting the inception of my craft.

The Brinkman Art Cache is now an open (curated) forum, a place for current planters and ex-planters to share their creative endeavors across all media. Submit your newest work, links, and events to newsletter@brinkman.ca throughout the year. 🌱



The Four Seasons: Heroes, Rogues and Warriors

By Carly Vandergriendt

We tell ourselves that we will never do it again, then scurry back to the cities, like rabbits scurrying back to their burrows. Back to bikes, apartments, computers. For a few weeks we stay drunk on summer, gasping for the last breath of it like drowning swimmers. We feast on the glories of our former lives, the ones we left behind. We make love in beds and sleep until late in the afternoon, then rise in the evening to burn off our nights in revelries that never last past Labour Day. Fall is a rumor that was whispered to us when we first returned. By the time it actually rolls

into town, the newness, the raw intrigue in being our old selves has been lifted away on the wind, dead as the leaves. We lose our appetites, our tans fade, and we fall out of love. We start to shiver to the rhythms of our past lives, tending bars or heading south or frequenting libraries. We settle in like silt at the bottom of a lake. Remembering the bush life, the tents and trucks and trees, becomes like trying to remember a foggy dream.

We wait out the winters. We are a people perpetually unsatisfied, always holding out for the next: cheque, party, lover, episode,

season, trip. Our canvases are marked with tales of planting, which we recount at dinner parties because they are still the best stories we have. Enthralled strangers ask us what it is really like and we cannot resist cultivating the myth for them. We bask in portraying ourselves as heroes, rogues, and warriors, as though we’re marked in some way. And maybe we are. There is one thing that we do well: imagining something better over the next horizon.

If there is such a thing as spring, we never know it. We itch with the fever, passing April like kids who cannot sleep on Christmas Eve. When the time comes, we busy ourselves uncovering sleeping bags, moldy dry packs, and shovels still dormant in the very places where we discarded them in August. We buy boots, slide our fingers into fresh gloves, and purchase tickets, rustling our feathers like birds readying for flight. The sense of opportunity is still there when we arrive in camp, in the orientation speeches, the doe-eyed greeners, and the crew lists. Can we ever recapture the excitement of those first days and nights, before our watches sound at six on a frosty morning in May? In the land we swear, “What the hell am I doing back here?” as we lift our shovels to pierce our promised land. 🌱

My Heart Belongs in the Bush: From London, England to Cooking in a School Bus in Northern Manitoba

By Lucianne Wardle

I grew up in England
My life was, at times, pretty tame
I had no idea when I left to start tree planting
That things would never quite be the same
The adventure started in Steinbach
Where I was in it up to my neck
Camping on the baseball pitch
Where my new bed-partners were an army
of tics
While I was being de-blooded
We were unfortunately flooded
In fact, my mental health was on the brink
Thank God for our saviour
The curling rink!
The rain finally stopped
and we headed East
We were alone in the bush
But we had each other at least
Shit got pretty crazy
Some memories are really quite hazy
Bush tattoos, breathing fire
Tapping into some carnal desires
It was like we didn't know what species we
were from

Culminating in the Trans-Animal Prom
It wasn't all party, my role was the Cook
All of my commitment it definitely took
Pulled pork poutine
I became a cooking machine
My skills were put to the test
Fish and chips were said to be my best
Getting the groceries proved tough
My relationship with Sysco was at times a
little rough
Picking up food deliveries in Robin's truck
If there's not enough space this time, we're
shit out of luck
Despite the insect infestation
I had much gratification
For the strong friendships we made
I know they will never fade
I never thought when I left London
That I would be faced with the conundrum
Of not wanting to leave the kitchen bus
And I know I speak for all of us
When I say, to leave it was really a push
Because truly, my heart belongs in the bush 🌲



Manitoba Conquest: My Prairie Planting Prayers are Answered

By Andrew Courtage

This humble Manitoban tree runner is proud to report a successful season of silviculture adventuring in the Sandiland Provincial forests of South Eastern Manitoba in 2013 as well as a renewed contract in 2014. Working in my home province has always been a dream of mine and I vividly remember many a night off somewhere in BC sitting around the fire drunkenly whispering in the ear of Dirk or John, "Bring Brinkman to the prairies. We are the center. We are the heart. We are the province that will bring the whole company together geographically." So when Robin McCullough informed me that she was running a planting show in the Sandilands, and that they were in need of a tree runner, I felt my proud prairie heart soar, finally my

prairie prayers were answered. I falsely anticipated a logistical cakewalk; after all one thing that surely defines the prairies is the complete absence of slopes or inclines which makes for long stretches of easily navigable arrow-straight roads, and blocks that resemble farmers' fields. Heck, some of those fields are even site prepped! Easy quadding and driving for me I thought! No way could I have anticipated the unique challenges that prairie planting would present. Robin, our stalwart, fairy-like supervisor had run a contract here the previous year. This year she would draw myself and fellow Manitoba patriot, Tony Hisco, from the West, as well as some fresh-



faced upstarts to reinforce the staff line up. The final lineup consisted of foremen Tony, Mike Homewood, Anna Toczynska, Laurel Ward, Evan Allen, Sable Blake, Laura Little, Pat McBride, with Nick Teramura on quality assessment. Lucie Wardle and Gwyn Anderson deliciously rounded off the cooking component.

Perhaps the first major challenge was picking up the 80 plus planters from the Winnipeg International airport in gale force winds, organizing their massive amount of gear into the trailer and then loading them into the school buses. At one point I became airborne trying to rope down the tarp I was using to cover the big blue trailer. 80 planters are a heck of a lot and only 20 of those had any planting experience.

Inside our makeshift mess tent next to the curling rink in the abandoned farm village of Piney, Manitoba, Robin gave hands down the greatest intro welcoming speech I've ever heard. And I've heard some pretty darn good speeches, from Erik's poet-mystic Viking style to Johnny's pacing in Viking boots eloquence to Claude's thickly accented fatherly warnings and good-natured curses. Robin had already developed an entire mythos to support the spiritual aspect of the tribe based on the Eagle power animal, a soul-enriching and morale-boosting cosmology. In fact I believe it could have relevance to the whole company and I'm proud to think she may have the position to implement it in her new role as head of OH&S at the office. Finally assembled in that muddy tabernacle in Piney we formed the 'Eagle Training Camp.' Now that I'm writing with eagle-eyed retrospection, the whole season kind of reminds me of the *Mighty Ducks* movie where a sort of ragtag, inexperienced, riff-raff type team overcomes many obstacles before finally learning to form the Flying V and achieve the Stanley Cup. In our case transmuting into an eagle and planting a heck of a lot of trees.

Managing a ginormous crew of mostly greeners is a massive undertaking, especially when we started the season with an apocalyptic storm. Ninety percent of the tents were underwater within the first couple of shifts, every day our mess tent was half destroyed, and all our tree boxes were repeatedly spread about as if a plane had crashed. To get to the staff table we would cross a bridge made of old planks salvaged from a junk pile. At this point, greeners were dropping like flies. I tried to deliver a rallying speech to half a dozen of them huddled in the swamped dry tent to no avail.

Eventually, in an epically Manitoban maneuver, we actually migrated the entire crew into the curling rink for a few nights until the storm blew by. In typical Brinkman style our resilient spirit carried us through as we discovered that the weird ruins of our mess tent could magically transform into a psychedelic disco-tech, so we hosted Winnipeg's greatest DJ Co-op for my birthday celebration.

Then the sun came out and folks started to settle into the planting experience. The Sandilands are so named because much of Manitoba is the remains of the bottom of a vast primeval ocean called Lake Agassiz. The sandy and often brackied soil made for some very rapid planting and I soon realized as a tree runner it would be a big challenge to keep up. The brackie blocks were so flat and Pac-Man-like that planters could calculate exactly how many trees would be planted from the road.

As the days started to heat up drivers were introduced to another obstacle of the Sandilands; sand traps. Unlike mud, which becomes more hazardous as it gets wetter, sand gets stickier as it dries. More than once I bellowed in vain as the fat duellies of my F550 flat deck tree truck sank into a seemingly hard straight away, like a trumpeting elephant into quicksand. Thankfully there was often the famously

friendly Manitoban farmer, ready nearby with a tractor to pop me out.

Shedding more greeners and becoming leaner in the process we migrated to the top side of the Sandilands forest near a tiny town called Hadashville. Here the Eagle camp truly started to mature and grow its feathers. Stubborn greeners started to get big numbers; a triad of hard cores, dubbed 'The Whippersnappers,' would consistently out-plant the crew.

Another notable and unique hazard was the tic epidemic. Sometimes I'd roll up my pant legs to find a whole civilization of the little buggers gorging themselves on my ankles. At camp planters could be observed grooming each other like chimpanzees in a National Geographic special.

Some notable planting trials included planting around a sandy dirt bike arena filled with drunken, gypsy rednecks, planting in a narrow block shaped like an impossibly long twisty tube designed as an owl habitat, and attempting to plant in an enormous waterlogged marsh where I almost completely submerged the quad several times with much bellowing, gnashing of teeth and flexing of muscles. Here I learned to admire the resiliency of the burgeoning planters and foremen. Here the eagle got its wings.

In the end I believe our client was pleased and overall impressed by our planting performance as well as the versatility and organization of our camp. We shared reefer space with a company who, to my amazement, didn't use a single load binder to secure their tree loads. I foresee new areas of conquest for Brinkman in Manitoba in the future. The Eagle camp will return to the Sandilands this year hardened and more experienced, ready to pound and proudly represent this most honourable of planting companies in the prairies. 🌲



Burning Man in Swan Hills: Sometimes it Takes a Sacrifice

By Pier Ouellette

The block that day was one of the best I had ever... BEEP.BEEP.BEEP

With my eyes still shut, I reach around to turn my alarm off. 5:55 a.m. I unzip the door to my tent. A thick fog makes it impossible to see anything around me.

"Tabernacle!" (en.transl. "oh shoot!") Now, a bit of fog in the morning before going to work usually does not inspire me to yell out religious profanity. However, we were working on a heli contract which meant we would not be able to fly out to the blocks.

"Ostie!" (en.transl. "bummer!") Again, having a day off usually makes me relatively happy. Why all these bad words, I hear you ask? Well, this was the third consecutive day that we would not be flying out due to fog or snow. We had half a day's worth of trees left to finish off the contract. And Swan Hills offers limited day-off activities.

"We have a day off! But we are still in Swan Hills. But we have a day off! But we are still in Swan Hills..." was my thinking as I walked to the mess tent. As we waited to see if the fog



would lift soon enough to fly out, everyone tried to keep busy.

Ronnie was doing his daily push-ups, while Dricker was pretending to win at poker. When it seemed like everyone was starting to lose hope, the legendary Richard "Bear Bait" Altman decided that we needed to sacrifice something to appeal to some god. Half an hour later, everything was set. Richard said a few words before setting our sacrifice aflame. To this day I still believe some sort of black magic occurred for as soon as the fire started, Andy, our supervisor, broke out into this strange dance.* I had never seen anything like it. For the few minutes it took to completely burn our sacrifice, it felt like we were at Burning Man times a million.** Needless to say, the fog lifted soon after, we pounded out the last of the trees and the next morning camp was torn down and Swan Hills was far behind us. 🍷

* Andy was not dancing.

** I have never been to Burning Man.



I Wish I Was a Tunnel Bush: That Day at 100 Mile

By Ola Szczecinsk

One day was bad in particular. It began with the sun beating down on me, burning the back of my neck, top of my head and exposed forearms. The land was a giant slab of rock, into which I was forced to dig holes and plant, like in some cruel, ancient Greek afterlife. There were also the tunnel bushes, as I called them, that covered seventy per cent of my piece: long giant things, seemingly from the Jurassic era, that snapped at me and whipped me in the face, smacked me in my thighs and threatened to gouge my eyes out, as I struggled to plant in the rock from which they miraculously grew. "Evil weird bush things," I said to no one, "I hate you so much right now." There was

also a hill that lumbered up towards the tree line, covered with puddles and potholes full of water from all the rain that season. The mosquitoes: no amount of DEET could save me from that buzzing, maddening, biting, swarming mass.

Beyond the tree line was an inscrutable dark, some kind of lurking silence. I stared into it, searching, trying to identify my predators behind it. (Suddenly I remember a story and the following words flash through my mind: You don't know a cougar is following you until it's right on top of you. And then it's too late.) My heart quickens, my stomach dips, and I feel dizzy all over. I stand real still and listen, like a deer, my breathing the only sound in this moment. I hear a twig crack somewhere to the right, and my head swings towards it. My heart is pumping blood so fast that I think it will leap right out, I can feel it even in my eardrums, in my throat: my whole self has been reduced to a giant, bleeding, pounding heart.

But the darkness is total, and I see nothing. The crack in the trees is followed by an interminable silence, and I talk myself down. My shovel hits the dirt, and the standoff is broken.

And you were there with me, that whole time.

Before I left, you said I couldn't do this. You said: "You are thirty-three years old, too old to be a rookie." You said: "You're tiny, smaller even than most women. How do you think you will carry all that weight all day? And besides, you already have a bad back from all those years of bartending, from carrying all those kegs and those two-fours. Speaking of which: you are so out of shape. You've spent the last two decades drinking and smoking your face off, how will you survive even one day of tree planting, never mind two whole months?" You paused then and allowed me to consider all this. You cocked your head to the side and watched me as it all sunk in, then you took a deep breath and continued. "Don't forget," you said, "you are scared of things, many things, like bears and like cougars. Don't you realize that you are going straight into all that, into the dark opened mouths of the bears and the cougars? And what will happen when you hear a growl in the bushes, will you freeze like a deer? Yes, you will. I know you. And

there are the lightning storms, you won't even go outside in the city in one of those, or even go near the windows. You are afraid of things, you always have been." You really had me there, at that point, and I think you saw that. You saw a small opening where my mind wavered, doubted. Your eyes flashed greedily and you pounced on me, moving in quickly for the kill: "You're not cut out for this: you're just a skinny bookworm weirdo who's afraid of everything. What business do you have in the woods with the bears and the rocks and the storms, all that thunder and lightning? That is not your world."

To this I said nothing.

That day the lightning came as well. The scorching sun left early in the morning and was hidden briefly behind a giant hail cloud. It was black and ominous, and it was coming straight for me. Powerless to stop it, I banged away at the rock with my shovel, eyeing it with dread as it sailed closer and closer. When it came near it unleashed all its fury and weight in a matter of minutes, throwing down its rocks in a massive hit and run campaign, emptying itself with one giant push. Then came the downpour, fat heavy drops, the lighting and thunder, terrorizing me, chasing me through those bushes behind which I cowered and trembled. The rain drops were freezing, and within moments my teeth were chattering. Had I ever felt any more fragile than in that moment? Alone and shivering behind some useless skinny branches, wondering if it would be the lightning or the bears that would finish me? "I guess it doesn't matter," I heard someone say, and noticed that it came from me.

That's when you stepped out and saw me at my most vulnerable. You looked me up and down, knowingly, as though the sight of me shaking from the cold and the fear confirmed a deep seated truth that you already knew about me, tried to warn me about even: I'm not cut out for this. I don't belong here.

For a moment I felt defeated, and I considered my options. I could stand here, I thought, for the rest of the day, just stand here and wait for the sun to pass from one side of the sky to the other. I could enter into a deep state of boredom and stillness and frozen misery. I could stand here forever, stand here until

I turn into the very branches that cover me and no one will ever find me again. You nodded your head solemnly, suggesting that it is best for everyone involved that I do that, quietly fade away until everyone forgets about me. From behind my cloak of invisibility I would watch all the tired planters throwing their bags into the back of their trucks, or kicking at the dirt while smoking their end-of-day cigarettes. Maybe I'd watch with some boredom as they fought to pull one of the trucks out from the mud, its front wheel spinning and whirring and spraying everyone with brown sludge. The sun would be just to my right at this time, because I'd be facing south, and I'd watch—as silent as a tunnel bush—the trucks slowly making their way out from the block in a line, jostling up and down and to the side, until everyone was gone, including Graham, who takes a bit of extra time hitching up the quad.

Then I'd be all alone, indistinguishable from the branches that hide me, and no one—not even myself—would have to watch me failing. It would be quiet. Maybe an occasional rustle. And then the bears, well, I guess they could have their way with me. You nodded your head slowly at all this. "Yes," you said, turning to walk away as though it had been decided, "I think that would be best for everyone."

And that's when I did it. From some deep unknown darkness inside of me, I summoned the drive to smack you in the head with my shovel. I called out to you and you turned, not expecting it. Your face still wore the expression of a smug and certain victory: it enraged me all the more, your confidence. How do you know any of this, I wanted to ask you. How can you say you know me when you've never seen me here before? Never seen me working outdoors in a lightning storm, because you've never let me into one? How can you be so sure, I screamed, the rain dripping from my hair and my eyelashes. Your face then changed, quivering with uncertainty as you watched me raise my shovel to the sky. Your eyes flashed with outrage and fear, but it was too late for you. I wacked you in the head as hard as I could and I walked away, planting the spruce as I went, every 3.99 meters. More or less.

...depending. 🌱



Coming Home: A Consideration of Camp Life

By Alex Robertson

A recurring theme in the life of many tree planters is a certain sort of vagrancy. The nature of the job requires one to continually reconsider what and where is home.

It starts with the actual season of work when we unite as a nomadic tribe, setting up and tearing down camp in places that seem to be, by way of their remoteness, the exclusive territory of our subculture. For a few months, we are infused with a sense of community that we will perhaps never quite experience in the modern, default world. Then, through a truly ridiculous amount of physical labour and camaraderie, we are transformed into superhuman creatures. Our personalities are sharpened and our behaviour is increasingly intensified as we become magnified versions of our former selves. In other words, we build character. Then, like an oasis slowly materializing out of an endless scorching desert, the enormously satisfying day of our release back into the

world comes strolling along. We brace ourselves. We make plans. Some of us decide to prolong the journey by embarking on an off-season full of constant travel. Some of us decide to hunker down and dedicate the coming fall and winter to quiet study, formal or otherwise. And some of us decide to just embrace our inner rock star and live a life of luxury for as long as possible.

Whatever we end up doing, we will most likely have to adjust, to a certain extent, back to some of the subtle conventions of the default world. This can be a frustrating and even disheartening process. We do our best. We attempt to behave ourselves at social gatherings. We sympathize with our city-dwelling friends who might complain of a hard day at work. We try to appreciate nature in the form of a city park. And although our reintegration may be sufficient or even successful, it somehow doesn't ever become quite complete. There is some sort

of a BcBcrestless spark that refuses to go out. To have experienced a lifestyle as challenging and rewarding as tree planting is to undergo a permanent shift in perspective. At times, this can make regular life seem somewhat mundane. Consequently, a vague understanding develops between planters. If we are lucky enough to run into each other during the off-season, there is often a comfortable familiarity that will arise. We become aware of our collective nostalgia from which we are momentarily released. We carry on like this for a while. Whether we end up achieving some semblance of routine, or whether we struggle with restlessness, the seasons continue to turn. Eventually, the snow melts and the ground begins to thaw. A whole new mixed bag of emotions, anything from giddy anticipation to ominous dread envelopes our minds as we consider a return to the bush. For those of us that make that fateful decision, we start the countdown. During the final sprint, we scramble chaotically to leave our lives back in the default world in some modicum of order. But as soon as we make our departure, an immense weight is lifted from our shoulders. The often long and scenic drive to camp serves as a kind of decompression, easing us through the transition. We arrive and literally build our home with our long lost friends. We set up the foundation for community. With this comes one of the most valuable lessons of tree planting: to be home should not refer to a particular location, but rather an ability to create community amongst friends. See you in camp. 🌱

Longest Bag-up: We are Wild Things

By Jean-Francis Garrity



On cut blocks
Outnumbering our expectations
We are wild things
Howling at the moon
We are trees
Deeply rooted in rich soil
We are mice
Scouring scarce
Pockets of cream
We are the helpless
Hungry beasts

Burrowed far into
The starry night
We are giants
Trudging through treelines
And pillars of obsolete
Spruce corpses
We are the spearheaded flame
Of our own bravery
We are the mace
Pummeling through the flesh
Of the earth

Digging our way out
Planting trees
Breathing out savage perfumes
To the uncaring and the indifferent
Before a thousand legions of black flies
We are forever on the fringe of madness
Forever the dreamer
Forever cast out
Further and further
Along the treeline
Longest bag-up ever 🌱



Freaks of Nature: A Greener's Journey to the Edge and Beyond

By Lisa Ewasko

"Summit Lake is a place where all the black spruce form spires because heavy winter snows break off any long branches. When the dark spikes of black spruce dominate, you know you have come to the remote North..."
Dirk Brinkman

In the 1950s, the global surface was 30 percent covered with forests and in 2005 it was in the range of 5 percent.¹ Trees have the ability to heal; they are freaks of nature. Trees and plants have never been thought of as warm blooded like mammals, but they are in fact. As the spring sun rises in the southern horizon the trees warm up, beginning at the trunk. There is a black box passive effect but there is also a clear increase in the metabolism of some trees over and above this passive status. This warming phenomenon is used by wildflower populations of tubers, rhizomes and cormous plants that hug the apron area of the trunk. This early awakening initiates a release from plant dormancy. In many cases this is aided by insects undoing the sugar glues of winter that tie up buds and flowers

so growth can commence.²

Human touch has memory. Tree planters are magicians, bombshells, and superheroes, people who can hold a tree in their hand and have it in the ground and on to the next micro-site in the blink of an eye. A disappearing act: now you see it; now you don't.

A nation is its heritage. An inheritance of traditions and achievements, and beliefs that belonged to our predecessors. Heritage has survived wars, genocide, vicious contagious bacterial diseases, massive movements of earth, and even the direction which water flows. It has seen lakes of drowned moose, massive slash-sized piles of buffalo bones, and explosions that have made sides of granite turn into exploding fireworks of stone.

There is something inexplicably regal about standing amongst the line of leftover giants on the top of the hills of a cut block, like the alleys of trees that line the roads to Versailles. A line of freaks that for whatever reason are still standing. The ones that in a lightning storm make you out to be a fool,

a scurrying mouse holding a 3 foot metal shaft with a small scoop at the end of it. The ones that on a windy day you can hear creek and bend.

The best mother trees are the healthiest and the more mature. Often they are the largest also. These are the trees that have learned the tricks of the trade in living. These trees carry the best card for genetic deliverance in an adaptable light-and-climate-controlled enzyme system. These trees also carry the best medicinal tools, triggered to last centuries, if not millennia. Mother trees of the highest caliber produce offspring of a similar rating. Despite all of this, it is the mother trees that get the axe in the global garden. They do not receive the respect they deserve, ever.³

The foreman who got me the job with Brinkman and I met at a bar in Winnipeg called the High and Lonesome Club in early April. "Any last advice?" I asked. "You're going to cry a lot." "Like I've never cried before... I got this," I told myself. The timing was right, I was physically and mentally prepared.

Fast forward a couple weeks, I didn't have it. I didn't have a head, I didn't have an arm, I didn't have a leg. I found myself handicapped, pissed off, constantly swamped in hot tears, and cursing every lost opportunity, lovesick moment, and stick that bruised me. I was sick of struggling and it quickly turned into some kind of wicked game.

All is fair in love and war, they say. War is not waged and blood is not spilled over love, it is spilled over land. Land is fought for with tooth and nail to maintain or abstract. This land fuels the fire from which every aspect of our culture is born. This country has been built by hand and shovel. Tree planters are not performing some kind of vexing work, they are continuing a method of breaking land, as Dirk Brinkman referred to it as bio-mimicry like the organic architecture of termites or honeybees.

Some of the most important biochemical medicines produced by the global forest go unnoticed. These are the waxes, gums, and resins of the forest. These are bled by the trunk of the tree...Honey bees bring back this resin and it is mixed into the waxes of the hive body. It seals the hive against invasion, regulates the temperature, and keeps the hive sanitized.⁴



The day that I finally planted my first thousand coincided with the dawn of the bugs, my greatest fear when sending myself out to tree plant. A fidgety person, I didn't bet money that I was going to fare well against them. It pissed rain all day, and at quarter to five, it didn't look like I was going to make one thousand. Emily grabbed some trees out of my bag to help me finish them and I turned to her hysterical, snot dripping from my nose in tears, "You can't take those, they are my thousand." Impossible possibilities, I made it, barely. I didn't say a word the entire ride back to camp. I was feeling spine

twisting pain everywhere. I burst into my trailer just in time to tear off my boots and slam the door so I could lay on the floor and sob without anyone around. I didn't stop until everyone had finished eating dinner. Little sister was not doing so well. No doubt I could be heard crying, because as older brothers do, they check up on you. They paid me a visit, we all got half drunk, smoked some cigarettes, shot the shit. George said I could keep Honda the meek pit-bull for the night. A dog you can't help but throw your sweater on top of when he is napping on the block because he is such a darling. They

all made everything ok. The same brothers would unsuspectingly put Gatorade powder in your four litre jug. "What the hell?" Like I had never seen or tasted orange water before.

Fast forward a month. I was miserable, and constantly telling myself "I am going to walk away from this." Right out of the block and keep walking. A foreman came up to me on the block, one I thought I had a good rapport with. "You know Lisa you are one of the most negative planters I have ever encountered." It couldn't have been too far from the truth. I have had the mouth of a trucker since I was eight, and could be heard swearing and throwing a fit from the opposite end of the block. "I flipped the quad three times today. Everyone has it bad, but everyone is doing their best. You're not alone in this." I became completely consumed by planting in every aspect of my life and lost all perspective. "Everyone counts." There is a saying in Manitoba Cree to this equivalent. Don't ever forget it.

Even in your darkest moments when you have to find the strength somewhere, anywhere, in whatever faith it is you believe, in those moments when you have to pray to yourself "you're ok, you're ok, you're ok, you're ok..." because the only way out is through. In my 27 years of life, my last tree planting shift was the first time I truly heard the words "It'll be ok." It will be, because you can hold trust in the ability of the people around you.

They are, after all, superhuman, some kind of elite upholding a heritage of orchestrating landscape by hand. It used to be a notion of settling, taming, giving order to and controlling the landscape, something humans don't understand. Pursuing the picturesque and conquering the sublime. It has evolved. It is still about abstracting, but at this point it is about holding on to what is left. Your sense of reality is heightened when you're on the cut block. The filters that cloud our perceptions when we are in the real world no longer exist. There is no hiding, only seeking. 🌲

1. Diana Beresford-Kroeger, *The Global Forest*, (New York: Penguin Group Inc, 2010) p76
2. p62
3. p63
4. p59



Welcome to Kitty Talk New Westminster: A Creative Tour of 520 Sharpe Street

By Kitty Ypma

Yes, you are right. Behind this address (with the company trained snail cleaning the 2) is the famous New West office of Brinkman & Associates Reforestation Ltd. and I, the infamous tree counter Kitty Ypma, am your tour guide. Before I confuse everybody with names and positions I thought I would show you how people's personalities are reflected by their decor.

Let's go inside. Dirk Brinkman's office is the first on the right. Don't be shy, go on in, the CEO is not in today, and if he was he would invite you in with a grin. While Dirk is playing with his action figures, his Executive Assistant Christy Frisken works in the kitty-corner office across the hall. Besides being very capable she turns out to be very innovative as well. I first thought that she was an artist and had created an

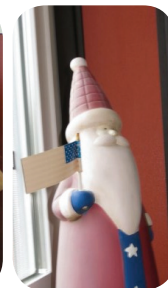
art installation in her office to feel more at home. I tried to decipher the meaning of the work, but it just seemed to me to be a waste bin on a post in front of a collage of Brinkman projects around the Americas. But that can't be it. I didn't want to ask her, I wanted to deconstruct the motives behind the work all by myself. In the end I did. . . Can you?

While you think about it let's stay on the ground level and have a peek into our COO John Lawrence's office. Whoops sorry folks, I didn't know he was in. Watch out, he might look harmless and snugly but don't be deceived. When you enter his office you might find yourself in the "Lions Den." But how did this fierce lion decorate his office? Believe it or not, yes, it is a peaceful Santa. Isn't that sweet?

We don't have a dress code in the office, but once in a while (Halloween) the Administrative Assistant Robyn Mooney likes to dress up. Here she is with her ruby slippers and dog Toto.



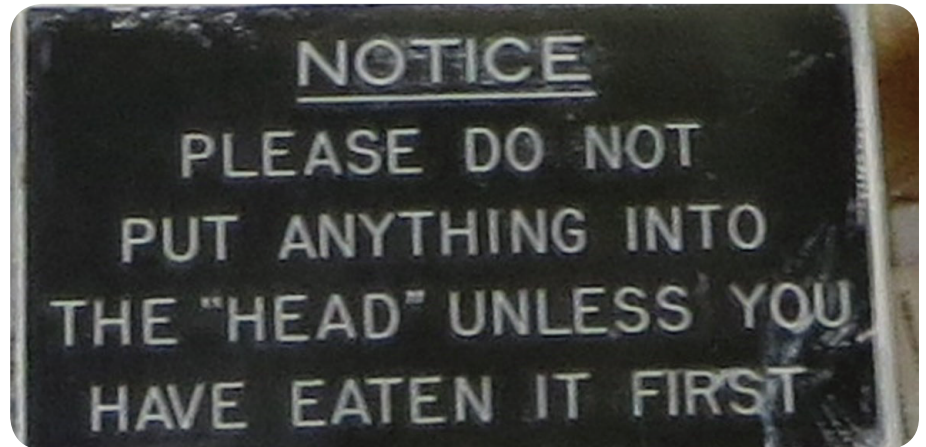
This is a dog friendly office. It keeps things light and lively with balls flying through the air and a constant 'tug of war' going on.



L to R: Dirk's Office; a close up of the treeplanting action figure Brinkman released, single addition; Christy's office; John Lawrence; John's office decor

There are many more interesting and exciting people doing important work in their decorated dens on the main floor, but I don't want to give it all away at once...

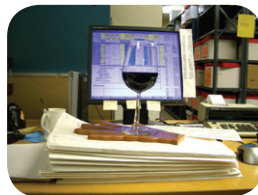
So that brings us to the dungeons. We are now heading downstairs to visit the accounting department. Hold on to the railing please, we don't want anybody to fall over the side. Accounting is one big room with many desks where the ladies work their magic and everyone gets paid. Here we decorate our own spaces too.



Our Cost Accountant, Christine Usher in the back, has garnished her desk with travel emblems. You might not be able to read the words on the 'plaque' so I enhanced them. I kept many secrets hidden and didn't introduce you to the whole office, so you can get the tour in person next time you visit us.

I still want to draw your attention to one piece of quizzical office history. When we first moved into this building we made a strange discovery. Downstairs there is a shower and two washrooms, one for the men and one for the ladies???. And here is the oddity. Two toilets side by side in the ladies???. What can I say? I wondered what the people were thinking who installed those toilets. Ladies enjoy company when they go to the washroom? Anyway we will never know and soon the extra toilet was removed. But to my big surprise, it showed up as guest seat in an office upstairs!!!! Maybe to relax the client during meetings... just kidding.

Well did you figure out the installation art in Christy's office yet? No, ok, have a look. Second picture from the left is the air conditioning vent that blasts cold air in the summer and when Christy sits below it gets freezing cold. So she took the wastebasket and an adjustable pole, captured the cold air



and created a piece of art in the meantime. Whoops, I almost forgot my office. I am Kitty and I do the payroll down in the dungeon. You know how I would like to decorate my little space? Like this. Again just joking. Alas, this is only after work on a special occasion, so I decorate my little space with a smile instead. Have a nice day!

PS I would like to end this tour with a quote I saw in the subway in Berlin.
"One who plants trees loves oneself and everybody else." 🌱

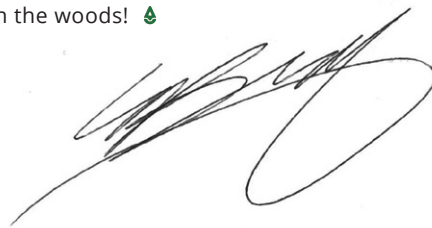


Moving Forward

Thank you to everyone who submitted content for the inaugural Brinkman e-newsletter. This publication wouldn't exist without your thoughtful generosity. More experiences, stories and news-releases will follow, so check again to access fresh content at www.brinkman.ca/news. To contribute and keep us current submit your newest stories, work, photos, links, and insights to newsletter@brinkman.ca throughout the year.

One final thought: if you've received this email, it means that in a fundamental way you're part of the solution — someone working to build an ecological civilization. Don't forget, as member of the Brinkman Group you're part of a unique group of people, doing amazing things on a truly world-changing scale. To our partners and team members, thank you for your integrity and commitment all these years. We look forward to many more seasons working side by side.

See you in the woods! 🌲

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik Brinkman', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

*Erik Brinkman,
Communications & Special Projects Coordinator*



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