

# TECHNICAL SERVICES CASE STUDIES

## Seton Lake Band | Shalalth Log Homes

### SETON LAKE, B.C.

Maintaining a viable manufacturing enterprise in today's competitive marketplace is a challenge, regardless of your size and location. But when you are situated in a remote location such as Shalalth, BC, addressing these challenges is not always straightforward. Shalalth Log Homes of Seton Lake however, feel that they have found a solution that will move their business ahead even in these trying times.

### TECHNICAL SERVICE REQUIREMENT

Several years ago the Seton Lake Band purchased and built a mill to produce D-Log housing shells. A number of structures were manufactured, but the mill was shut down because the Band members were not happy with the product they could offer. More recently, the Band purchased a small circular travelling Lucas sawmill to convert the available logs into material suitable for their existing profiler. Their plant also includes a Log-o-Sol planer and a dry kiln. The plan was to manufacture components for wooden sheds, high grade flooring blanks, pallet boards, as well as framing lumber for local construction.



The Band then called upon the services of the B.C. First Nations Wood Products Technical Support Program (WPTSP) to assist with improving the viability of their operations. In order to improve efficiency, it was felt that technical assistance was required, and that instruction on the operation of the equipment was also desirable. As well, better information was required to build a business and marketing plan. Once this business strategy was in place the Program would provide further technical assistance to help the Band manufacture a cost effective, quality product.

### SERVICE PROVIDED

Technical Support Program staff visited the operation, and discussed various aspects of the manufacturing process including the correct breakdown of the log for quality and yield, and the proper approach to storage, stickering, and drying to minimize degrade. The existing kiln was found to be not adequately equipped to dry the wood properly, and a drying schedule was developed to help with this problem.

During the visit, a number of other equipment modifications were proposed. The Band has now nearly completed the machinery changes required to make a better joint for the logs in the log house, and the installation of the sawmill is adequate for initial production of raw material for the garden sheds and log house construction. Modifications were also made at the kiln to dry the wood required for the joinery work.



One of the outcomes of the technical service provided was a recommendation to focus initially on the production of garden sheds using the Band's existing equipment. With this focus, the operation could produce 6 to 8 sheds per week and employ 6 to 8 people. In the future, the production could be diversified to produce other similar products.

The Band is now producing prototypes and this production experience is providing an opportunity for Band members to develop their skills, enhance their speed and improve the quality of their output. The planned outcome – a cost effective and sustainable business.

### BAND TESTIMONIAL

Having worked with staff of the First Nations' Wood Products Technical Support Program over the past three years, Mr. Cliff Casper, Seton Lake Band Economic Development Manager has concluded that the service has been both "professional and knowledgeable". The assistance has included the improvement of log home profiles, technical support in kiln drying, and the detailing of ways to manufacture additional value-added products.

*"As a remote Band we are always searching for technical help from institutes that can provide quality technical support."*

*— C. Casper, Seaton Lake Band*

### B.C. FIRST NATIONS WOOD PRODUCTS TECHNICAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Administered by the B.C. First Nations Forestry Council, the Wood Products Technical Support Program offers access to FPIInnovations, Canada's not-for-profit forest products research organization. Through FPIInnovations, a network of qualified industry advisors, scientists and technologists, with expertise in primary and secondary wood product manufacturing as well as market intelligence and economics is being made available to First Nations' businesses and communities throughout the province. In addition to applying their own knowledge to the challenges of the industry's daily operations, these advisors are serving as the conduit for access to a much broader based network of experts throughout the international knowledge community.



### ABOUT SHALATH

At the foot of Mission Pass, the community of Shalalth, B.C. was at one time a main transportation hub of B.C.'s Southern Interior. This changed with the opening of the Bridge River Canyon Road fifty years ago. It now claims to be one of the most remote communities in southern BC. For many years it was the only access to the Bridge River goldfields.

Photo Courtesy of M. Cleven: | <http://www.cayoosh.net/pix/cleven/aboveshalalth1.jpg>

**For more information please contact:** B.C. First Nations' Wood Products Technical Support Program

**Dave McRae**

FPIInnovations – Forintek | Industry Advisor – First Nations Liaison and Program Co-Director | **cell** 250 713 1721