

Women and Maori in Forestry and Wood Processing

Margriet Theron

Maori and women are not doing well in terms of filling technical and management positions in forestry and wood processing in New Zealand. There have been some promising recent signs that things may be changing - but on some fronts it is still two steps forward and one backwards ...

In this article, no attempt has been made to provide a full statistical picture of the employment of women and Maori in the forest industry. Instead, I provide some personal observations which point at some of the trends.

Women in forestry research

At the highest intellectual level, the New Zealand Forest Research Institute Limited (and FRI before that), has always had a few prominent women scientists like Ruth Gadgil, Sue Carson, Kathy Horgan and Myra Chou. They have been internationally recognised for their research, but were never appointed to senior management positions in science. With the appointment of Frances Maplesden as manager market knowledge, there has been a first breakthrough into a "real" management position for a woman at Forest Research. I contrast a "real" management position with senior staff jobs held by women in FRI in the late 1980s. When Russ Ballard had to manage FRI through the first round of cuts to Government funding for forestry research in 1986, he created a set of new positions to help FRI to adjust to the more commercial environment. Three out of the four appointees were women: Patricia Plackett as marketing manager, Sue Carson as cooperative research manager, me as planning manager, and Nigel Williams as software commercial manager. Did Russ think that the new, commercial environment required a new approach to forest research management? Much more recently, with more dramatic changes in Forest Research's commercial environment, Bryce Heard, CEO, has appointed a new group of young women into customer relations management positions. Co-incidence?

Women in forest management education

At the Faculty of Forestry and Technology of Waiariki Institute of Technology, we offer the National Diploma in Forestry (Forest Management) as a two and a half year full-time programme. The pattern there has been: few, but very successful female students. The very first group of graduates to complete this qualification included Tina Cummins, who was right at the top of the class, and has gone on to a very successful career in health



Maori and women still struggle to fill technical and management positions.

Courtesy Waiariki Institute of Technology

and safety research in forest harvesting. She is now customer relations manager for harvesting at Forest Research.

Two women completed the Diploma in 1998. At present there are 3 women in the Year 1 class (14 percent of the total); 5 in the Year 2 class (13 percent) and none in the Year 3 class.

Forest Industries Training is promoting forestry and wood processing careers for women, and the Ministry of Forestry published a book on *Women in Forestry* as its Suffrage Centennial project in 1993. Forest management today is a job which requires strong interpersonal skills, high computer competency, and an emphasis on quality, environmental and safety management. The basic skills of clearing, planting, pruning, thinning and harvesting are still important, but the ability to integrate a wide range of knowledge and foresight into workable, commercially viable forest management plans is much more important. And this is something that women can do as well as any man.

Maori in forest management education

With growing areas of plantation forestry in Maori ownership, there is an obvious need for more young Maori to enter forest management careers. Kaumatua like Nick Wall of Tuwharetoa are passionate about "Getting my people into white collar jobs in forestry".

The University of Canterbury has attracted very small numbers of Maori into its forestry degree programmes. Massey University, which now offers forestry as a major in its Bachelor of Applied Science, is making every effort to increase its number of Maori students in agriculture, horticulture and forestry. Massey has entered into a joint venture with Te Arawa Confederation of Tribes and Waiariki Institute of Technology to offer Year 1 of B Appl Sc in Rotorua, to make the degree more accessible to Maori students. Skill New Zealand provides fully funded places on the course to Maori students between 17 and 21 years of age. This year, after a very intensive promotional campaign in schools in the area, led by Ngati Whakaue kaumatua Pihopa Kingi, there are 6 Maori students in a class of 12 who have started their studies towards this Massey degree at Waiariki.

The National Diploma in Forestry (Forest Management), which was developed by Forest Industries Training based on the identified skill requirements of the industry, has made forest management education much more accessible to Maori. For the first time in 1998, Skill New Zealand provided funding for ten

young Maori for Year 1 of the Diploma programme. Nine of these students completed the year successfully, and are now fee-paying students in the second year of the Diploma. BUT ... the high number of redundancies in forestry last year had a negative impact on student numbers this year. Overall, the class size is down from 42 in Year 1 in 1998, to 26 in 1999. And only ONE of the ten fully funded places provided by Skill New Zealand for Maori students has been taken up; the rest of the funding was returned to Wellington, sadly unused.

Waiariki has an arrangement with Te Runanga O Turanganui A Kiwa, under which the Runanga teaches Year 1 of the Diploma in Forestry (Forest Management) in Gisborne, with some help from Waiariki lecturers. The students then come to Waiariki for Years 2 and 3 of their studies. This year, there are 12 such students in the Diploma classes at Waiariki; while a group of 18 have started their studies in Gisborne. Of this group, 2 are women - a breakthrough for forestry and Maori on the East Coast.

Maori and women in wood processing education

Maori are very well represented in the full-year programmes in solid wood processing offered at Waiariki's Timber Technology Campus (TITC). To make wood processing education more accessible to Maori and other students, the classes are offered in Murupara, Kawerau, Whakatane, Tokoroa and Taupo, with students being transported to TITC for practical parts of the programme which are undertaken in the training sawmill and the sawdoctors' and timber machining workshops. Some of these programmes rely on the financial support of Fletcher Challenge Forests, who provides bursaries to some students, and assists with transport costs.

Of the 81 full-time students studying at TITC towards certificates in wood processing (with specialisations in sawmilling, timber machining, sawdoctoring, or remanufacturing) in 1999, 68 are Maori, and 20 are female.

Some of the young women who have completed their wood processing education at TITC have entered careers in timber grading and quality management, and as science technicians at Forest Research.

Forest Industries Training is committed to the development of a National Diploma in Solid Wood Processing in 1999. I sincerely hope that the growing number of Maori and women who are completing the National Certificate in Solid Wood Processing (Introductory Skills) at TITC will continue their study towards this Diploma, to enable them to take up leadership positions in the value added wood processing industry. And that the excellent work that Forest Industry Training is doing to promote the industry will result in talented Maori and female school leavers choosing forestry and wood processing as their careers.



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Some thoughts on Millennium Forestry

By J.E. Henry

It is interesting that Carter Holt Harvey have come up with a change in their management philosophy and aim to produce a lower grade of wood at a cheaper cost. According to their chief forestry executive Devon McLean, as reported in several newspapers, the objective is to get wood costs down so that they are competitive with overseas suppliers. They are prepared to accept a poorer quality of wood to achieve this. The trees are to be planted wider apart and will not be pruned. The length of the rotation has not been stated but the aim is obviously for a shorter one.

Wider spacing is not new. There will be considerable cost saving from this but the disadvantages are very great. Some companies did this in the 1925-35 planting era for the same reason that is obvious today - to reduce the cost of establishment. The results then were not pretty - nor will these be. The size and the number of branches down to ground level being the major feature. These do increase the cost at time of logging, as well as increasing the danger of the operation and the amount of debris left on the ground. There will also be an increase in the fire danger and the degree of loss will be greater due to the increased fuel factor, should a fire occur.

With the reduced stocking and shorter rotation greater care will need to be taken with the establishment stage. The forest site ceases to be productive from the time a tree on it is felled. It is therefore important to get replacement stock into that ground as quickly as possible. With the highly developed nursery practices of today it is possible to plant for nearly eight months of the year in their region. To enable this to be done, felling practices must be disciplined so that the site is cleared and available for planting as quickly as possible after felling. The aim is to avoid losing a growing season, which would add a year to the site rotation. This would be a 5% increase on a 20-year rotation - the difference between a 20-year tree rotation and a 21-year site rotation. Hopefully good logging practices will have left the site in a suitable condition for planting but if work is necessary to spread debris and to prepare roadsides and dumps ready for planting then this has to be planned ahead so that planting is



Courtesy of Carter Holt Harvey Ltd.

Felling practices must be disciplined to quickly clear sites.