

DR. CHRISTIAN MESSIER

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“The Decline of the Forestry Profession: Causes and Solutions?”

ABSTRACT:

We are witnessing a global decline in the interest and prestige of the forestry profession that is quite unparallelled since the profession started some 300 years ago. This talk will propose some likely causes for this decline and suggest some possible solutions. Forestry is deeply rooted in the old German philosophy of neatness and efficiency. The German expression “Walderziehung” literally means that we need to “educate” the forests. At the core is the strong belief that natural forests are in a messy and unproductive state that needs to be made more efficient in order to supply a steady stream of timber, game, fish and recreational opportunities.

For today’s outspoken public, forests are clearly more than a source of renewable resources to be extracted. They are viewed as complex, beautiful, mystical and living systems that sustain an incredible diversity of life. There is therefore an increasing disconnect between the view of the forest as orderly and factory-like as appreciated by the forester or messy, mystical and natural (or at least semi-natural) as envisioned by much of the public. This lack of spiritual and ecological sensibility in forestry about the living forest ecosystem is the main cause of this increasing disconnect with many citizens, especially city folks.

Today’s forestry training and culture seem ill-equipped to fulfill these new societal demands. If we look at the standard curriculum of the Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board, we see that the whole curriculum has a clear tree bias. The forest is thought of as a “machine” that creates timber and fibre. However, the forest represents for many people the last natural refuge in our increasingly human-controlled world.

The profession needs to change its focus dramatically, from training people how to cut and grow trees, to training people to evaluate and manage all ecological services provided by the forest. We need to be more sensitive to this new reality. We still need wood-cutters, but to face these new societal demands, we need the new foresters to be managers of the forest ecosystem in all of its complexity and diversity.

BIOGRAPHY:

Dr. Messier is a graduate forester from Laval University, and obtained his PhD from the University of British Columbia. He has also completed a post doc. at the University of Helsinki in Finland. His research includes and focuses on a variety of topics including natural disturbance patterns, TRIAD which is developing new approaches to forest management, and tree, stand and landscape modeling.

Dr. Messier has been involved with the Sustainable Forest Management Network, the Centre of Forest Studies. He is also co-leader for the ‘fast growing tree’ network in Quebec. He is responsible for successfully supervising many graduate students who have and continue to conduct a wide range of valuable research relating to forestry.



DATE: Thursday, November 8, 2007
TIME: 7:30 PM

PLACE: Prince George Campus
Canfor Theatre, Room 6-213

The Doug Little Memorial Lecture



Doug Little
1928—1993

The Doug Little Memorial Lecture series was initiated by the faculty of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) in the fall of 1996. This annual event commemorates the late J.D. Little, former Senior Vice-President Forest Operations, Northwood Pulp and Timber Limited.

Doug was a founding supporter of UNBC and a recipient in 1986 of the distinguished forester award from the association of British Columbia Professional Foresters. Doug Little's philosophy was that with appropriate forest management, the resources of the forest can be sustained for future generations.

The lecture series is supported by an endowment from Northwood Pulp and Timber Limited now Canfor.

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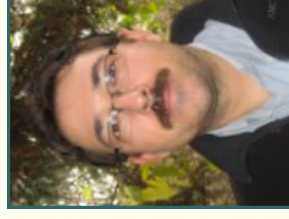
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“The Decline of the
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by

Dr. Christian Messier

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EVERYONE WELCOME!

