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SPOTLIGHT

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*IUFRO Spotlight is an initiative of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations. Its aim is to introduce, in a timely fashion, significant findings in forest research from IUFRO officeholders and member organizations to a worldwide network of decision makers, policy makers and researchers.*



iufro2019  
Curitiba • Brazil

*IUFRO Spotlight issues up to September 2019 will primarily focus on the XXV IUFRO World Congress that will take place on 29 September-5 October 2019 in Curitiba, Brazil.*

*Individual Congress sessions will be highlighted in order to draw attention to the broader Congress themes, the wide variety of topics that will be addressed at the Congress and their importance on a regional and global scale.*

*Visit the Congress website at <http://iufro2019.com/> or [https://www.iufro.org/events/congresses/2019/!](https://www.iufro.org/events/congresses/2019/)*

*IUFRO Spotlight #73 /September 2019*

## A Quest for Fairness in Forest Management Decisions: Integrating Indigenous Rights, Practices and Knowledge

“The practices, rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples in forestry are being increasingly recognized by national policies, international treaties and by business arrangements such as certification,” said Dr. Stephen Wyatt of the School of Forestry at the University of Moncton in New Brunswick, Canada.

“But,” he said, “actually putting these into practice is challenging.”

Dr. Wyatt, will be one of the presenters at a IUFRO World Congress session in Brazil this fall, entitled: ***Indigenous and Traditional Peoples and their Forests: Governance, Dialogue and Power for Rights and Recognition.***



*Haida Heritage Centre at sunrise. Ngaio Hotte*

A second related session: ***Indigenous and Traditional Peoples and their Forests: Values, Knowledge and Practices for Management and Livelihoods*** will be held later the same day.

“What we have to remember is that traditional knowledge is typically based on very-long term experience of a particular location, whether this concerns usable plants, animal behavior, water management or environmental changes,” he said. “This knowledge can be of vital importance for contemporary management.”

“There will be a total of 21 presenters in the two sessions; all reflecting different aspects of Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge, management and governance of forests,” he said. “They will be presenting research from 13 different countries in South, Central and North America, Africa, Asia and Europe.”

“While each culture is distinct, Indigenous values are often centered around respect for the forest and an acknowledgement of the complex inter-relations within forest ecosystems – a precursor of much of our scientific rhetoric about sustainable management.”

There are many obstacles that can block acceptance of traditional knowledge in forest management, Dr. Wyatt explained. “Some are institutional – the exclusion of traditional knowledge holders from forest management planning processes.”

“Others lie in the Indigenous communities themselves, where elders who hold the knowledge are dying or where customs impose restrictions on knowledge sharing.”

Among presenters, Andrea Vásquez Fernández has been working with the Ashéninka and Yine Peoples from the Peruvian Amazon to understand “intercultural respect,” in a context where ideas of “development” are used to justify resource exploitation by outsiders, over the preferences of the Indigenous occupants.

Dr. Wyatt noted: “Forest managers are typically trained in forest science methods that originated in 19th century Europe. They may not appreciate the importance or the usefulness of knowledge that is transferred orally through stories, instead of being printed in a textbook.”

The Congress sessions, he added, are aimed at sharing experience and research about how those Indigenous rights, practices and knowledge can be incorporated into forest management practices.

“The nature of obstacles faced by Indigenous Peoples varies greatly across the world,” Dr. Wyatt said. “Speakers in the sessions will be describing some of these obstacles in different situations, and will also be presenting some of the ways to overcome these.

“They have a variety of solutions to offer. Some are based in institutional changes – regulations or consultation practices. Others may involve educational techniques for forest planners, or for Indigenous Peoples.

“Yet others relate to good old-fashioned scientific fieldwork – getting out in the forest, studying the environment and learning from people who have been doing it for generations, he said.

“For example, Folaranmi Babalola will be describing how sacred forests in Nigeria have contributed to maintaining forest diversity and supporting livelihoods; Kazuhiro Harada will be examining new community forest legislation in Indonesia that recognizes traditional rights and practices in tree tapping; and Ngaio Hotte will be considering how to overcome distrust between Indigenous Peoples and governments in Canada.”

“Interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples are critical here. While there are many instances of conflict and tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, there are also multiple examples of collaboration. We will be seeing both in these sessions.”

The goal is to share experiences and ideas about how to make it easier for forest scientists, managers and policy makers to better recognize Indigenous Peoples in forestry, he added.

“But that recognition presents a variety of challenges, and requires more than just words from forestry managers, governments and companies.

“Research around the world has developed a series of tools that can help us respond to this challenge and enhance forest management with new information, deeper understanding, more effective governance and greater recognition of Indigenous Peoples. That’s what we want people to take from these two sessions,” he said.

**See you at the IUFRO 2019 World Congress!** Visit <http://iufro2019.com/>

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