

Aboriginal Involvement Program



This program is a unique Aboriginal community driven initiative designed to help Aboriginal communities preserve their culture.

The Aboriginal Involvement Program continues to demonstrate excellence in its three sub-program areas, the Multi-community Traditional Cultural Study, proprietary Referral Process, and Supporting Aboriginal – Industry site visits. Specifically, the study has documented and is storing 1800 quality control checked cultural sites from three communities (Foothills Ojibway Society, Sunchild First Nation, Bighorn First Nation) in one central, protected database. In leveraging these sites through the Foothills Research Institute's propriety Referral Process, 73 cultural sites have been protected from potential disturbance, through twenty one pilot referral runs by four companies (Shell Canada Limited, West Fraser Mills Ltd., Coal Valley Resources Ltd. and Devon Canada Corporation) and Jasper National Park.

On top of all this applied research, numerous community technicians, elders, and leaders continue to be supported in all phases of their research training and aspirations. Flowing from this, industry and government partners remain stalwart supporters and contributors to the program's overall success. In the next few years, expanded research applications for Aboriginal data and knowledge in sustainable resource management and development will be pursued with vigour. This is possible due to the hard work, support, and overall exceptional research capabilities of the Foothills Research Institute and its partners.

Referral Process

The Aboriginal Involvement Program Referral Process identifies potential conflicts surrounding proposed developments in the eastern slopes of Alberta. It directs industry to Aboriginal communities with ties to the land before industry develops the land. The referral process is as follows: Aboriginal communities identify and capture culturally significant land locations using GPS technology. These land locations are stored in one central database at Foothills Research Institute. Industry submits its proposed developments to the Aboriginal Involvement Program GIS specialist who, using an automated process compares the proposed development area to the culturally significant sites stored in the database. If a culturally significant site will be affected by the proposed development, the referral process indicates this in a report. Industry is then given a copy of the report pointing them to the Aboriginal communities who have ties to the land—and discussion between the two parties can begin. That said, the report does not identify precise locations of culturally significant sites; that information is owned solely by the Aboriginal communities with ties to those sites. Foothills Research Institute does not act as mediator in the referral process.



Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a mapping project that links the Traditional Culture Study and the Aboriginal Community/ Industry Referral Process. It entails development of a GIS database. The database is managed by Foothills Research Institute and belongs to the individual Aboriginal communities. It is not made available to industry.

Foothills Research Institute is a leader in developing innovative science and knowledge for integrated resource management on the forest landscape through diverse and actively engaged partnerships.

The Foothills Research Partnership Ltd. landbase is located in west-central Alberta, and is based in the resource community of Hinton, some three hours west of Edmonton. It covers roughly 2.75 million hectare (27,500 square kilometres), and embodies Jasper National Park of Canada, the Willmore Wilderness Park, and the Forest Management Area of Hinton Wood Products, a Division of West Fraser Mills Ltd. It also includes some provincial "crown forest management units" and the Hinton Training Centre's Cache Percotte Training Forest. Within its boundaries are three forest areas—boreal, montane, and sub-alpine—and many forest uses including timber, petroleum, and coal extraction, tourism, and recreation.

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