



Solid experience and good iron

Tranquil Timber Ltd. may be fairly new to coastal logging, but its partners have many years of solid experience behind them—and plenty of good logging iron to back them up.

By Paul MacDonald

When it comes to forest management in the Clayoquot Sound, it's all tranquil these days—and Tranquil, too, as in Tranquil Timber Ltd.

The Clayoquot Sound, on the west coast of B.C.'s Vancouver Island, has seen well-publicized large scale environmental protests over the years, notably in the early-1990s. There were mass arrests and almost daily standoffs between protesters and loggers. There seemed to be a story almost every night on the national news on the goings-on at Clayoquot.

But these days, it's pretty quiet—tranquil, really—in the Clayoquot. A new set of forest management rules is now in place, and much of the logging is being directed by First Nations groups.

And Tranquil Timber, a stump-to-dump contracting operation co-owned by young logger Dave Lornie, has been working closely with the First Nations groups and the forest companies—Western Forest Products and Interfor—who are involved in the Clayoquot.

Prior to setting up Tranquil Timber, Lornie was involved in logging joint ventures with Wayne Fontaine of west coast logging operation Palmer Bay Logging, and was eventually logging manager of Palmer Bay. Lornie, along with his dad, Tom, and Keith Jenkins, bought Palmer Bay in early 2009, and formed Tranquil Timber.

Suitably enough, one of their first jobs was logging in the Tranquil Valley for Iisaak Forest Resources Ltd., a joint-venture forest company between the Central Region Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations.

Iisaak Forest Resources aims to be a global leader in conservation-based management of natural forests and the production of forest products and services. Iisaak means “respect” in the Nuu-chah-nulth language. Reflecting that, the company addresses issues of sustainable development, the role of partnerships, and problem solving relative to conservation in the management of forestlands in the Clayoquot Sound Region.

The fit between Iisaak Forest Resources and Tranquil Timber has been a good one, supported by Lornie and his aim to succeed in the logging business, but to succeed in a sustainable fashion.

There was plenty of exposure to the logging industry when Lornie was young. His dad ran on-highway and off highway trucks. The now 31-year-old Lornie started out in logging when he was 18.

These days, his dad Tom Lornie, in addition to being a partner in Tranquil Timber, also does some monkey wrenching on their equipment.

The other partner in Tranquil Timber, Keith Jenkins, has solid experience as a foreman, for both Palmer Bay Logging and



Mike Hamilton Logging. A recent addition to Tranquil Timber is Wade Cooper from Bainbridge Holding, who is the new general manager/logging manager. “We have a strong team with a proven track record and solid operational knowledge,” says Lornie.

The personnel fits, as does the company name. “We worked our first logging contact in the Tranquil Valley, and I thought that name had a ring to it. We found tranquility in the Clayoquot. We’ve only been in business for a short time, but so far, we’ve been pretty successful.”

Recently, they expanded into doing heli-hand falling for the Alberni operation of Western Forest Products, and full phase contracting for Western’s Henderson Lake operation, all in the same region on Vancouver Island. In addition to logging, they also do road reactivation and road deactivation, with plans to move into roadbuilding in the not too distant future.

Their first year of operation, they managed to stay in the black financially, which was an accomplishment considering the downturn the industry was going through.

The last few years has seen a number of large and established B.C. coastal contractors exit the business. That turmoil, though, created opportunities for the surviving contractors, however.

“You’ve got a situation now where probably seven contractors on the west coast are doing what 15 contractors used to do,” says Lornie. “With some contractors leaving the business, or no longer in business, it was a pretty good position to be in to accumulate some equipment at good prices. There have definitely been some good deals out there.”

That said, Tranquil kept some equipment longer than normal during the downturn. “I would have liked to have refreshed some of the loaders earlier,” says Lornie. “I got one new machine, but we did a lot of rebuilds on the older stuff.”

The days of terrific deals on used equipment seem to have passed, with the industry slowly going into recovery mode. This past summer, they were trying to pick up a used log loader. “But there are none available,” says Lornie. “Six months ago, you couldn’t give them away, but it’s a different story now. All the used loaders have been bought up. It’s like the ignition key has been turned back on with the forest industry—it’s really starting to pick back up.”

Illustrating the faith they now have in the industry, they recently took delivery of a brand new log loader, a Cat 330. “We believe in this industry,” says Lornie.

Tranquil Timber has toughed out some challenging times over the last two years. Through part of 2008 and the first half of 2009, it was slow. “But then through last summer and fall, we were doing full production.”

During the downturn, they worked closely with their main customer, Iisaak Forest Resources, to develop a viable economic plan to continue operations. “Derek Drake, operations manager for Iisaak Forest Resources, wanted to make it realistic and workable for everyone,” Lornie explained. “Rather than just shut down, we sat down and discussed our options and how we could keep going. And what we had to do to make sure the operation was viable and keep the lights on. We looked at how we could get things to work from both sides, so we could get through the hard times.”



These days, Lornie is busier than ever, so he's thankful to have good co-owners and managers and a solid employee group to share the responsibilities of running Tranquil Timber. But he admits it's a transition to being in the management seat. "It's tough—I'm really hands on," he says.

"My days of running loader, jumping into the logging truck and monkey wrenching are quickly coming to an end, with the management duties I have. But I still have the chance to get on the equipment, though."

And he has no complaints about the challenges and responsibilities of co-owning a contracting operation. "I've always wanted to do this since I was a kid—I'd always thought of setting up a business," he says. "I'm living my dream—it's exciting."

To say that Tranquil works closely with First Nations bands would be a complete understatement. About 40 per cent of their crew in the Clayoquot is First Nations. "We have machine operators, trainees and we have an apprentice mechanic program going with a First Nations member. We're working to have First Nations people prosper in the Clayoquot."

Part of Tranquil's understanding with the bands is that there is a First Nations component to their work force, though there are no set numbers.

"But they definitely want to see results—they don't want to have broken promises. We're there to help the bands prosper, and run a successful business at the same time."

Lornie said their experience with employing First Nations members has been positive.

Lornie added that he thinks this is "definitely" a good business model with more timber being under the jurisdiction of First Nations bands in B.C.—and with the settlement of land claims, possibly outright First Nations ownership of timber/land in the future.

Some skills building needs to be carried out, but that's where training programs can help address the gap.

And while it's hard to see this right now, with the industry still coming out of the downturn, there are forecasts of labour shortages in the not too distant future. "The First Nations bands are a huge source of people," says Lornie. "With the trainees we have, I'm trying to rejuvenate the industry with the young guys. We have some older guys running some of the equipment, but we want to have junior guys, too, so they have a 30 year career ahead of them in the forest industry."

Their equipment line-up includes two year-old 980H Cats that are in good shape, and the second-to-last Madill 3800C ever built. They also picked up a Cypress 7280C yarder, that was updated with a Series 60 engine. "The Cypress had about a \$600,000 refresh on it, and only about 2900 hours on it when we bought it. It's a really decent machine."

Tranquil Timber has two full float camps, one with accommodation for 35 and the other with accommodations for 27. Lornie notes those camps can be mobilized on short notice to deliver the wood that customers are looking for.

And interestingly, all of this equipment has been running on biodiesel, supplied by Vancouver Island-based Columbia Fuels. Tranquil Timber has been using biodiesel for about three years now, with no problems, reports Lornie.



Columbia supplied Lornie with good information about how biodiesel was being successfully used in other applications, so there was no hesitation or phase-in period.

“We just fueled up the equipment with the biodiesel and turned the key.” They had competitive prices for the fuel and it was a good fit environmentally.

“I asked Gerry Hubbick at Columbia Fuels if there were any problems, and he told us no. I had heard through the grapevine that there might be some fuel filter problems with biodiesel, but we’ve never seen that. It’s been great. We’ve had no downtime from biodiesel.

“It’s definitely cleaner burning, and the way things are going, I think the logging industry is going to utilize more biodiesel as time goes on.”

Equipment operators have not noticed any difference in equipment operations. “It’s gone pretty well.”

So well, that Lornie said that if someone was thinking about switching to biodiesel, “I’d highly recommend it. There’s really no downside to it.”

And the operation goes through a fair bit of fuel. They burn about 32,000 litres a month when they are in full operation in the Clayoquot, and between 32,000 and 40,000 litres a month at Henderson Lake. The float camps use upwards of 4,000 litres a month.

No equipment modifications are required to run biodiesel. Lornie noted that he has been upgrading his logging trucks, doing one a year, from naturally aspirated V12s to more modern M14 Cummins Celec Plus engines.

“They are cleaner burning engines, and they perform well, too, with the biodiesel. With the newer engines, they are tuned towards using biofuels. But I can utilize biodiesel with any of my older aspirated engines, as well.”

The fact that Tranquil Timber is utilizing biodiesel in their operations is of interest to their customers, Western Forest Products and Interfor. “Derek Drake at Iisaak Forest Resources was also really interested in us burning biodiesel. It was a key point with the environmentalists, in terms of what we are doing to better the environment in the Clayoquot Biosphere.”

The concept of using biodiesel in the biosphere is clearly a winner, says Lornie. “It’s a good story all the way around.”