



People power energy

conservation at TI'oh Forest Products

TI'oh Forest Products helped set the table in demonstrating what the Sinclair Group can accomplish with people-powered energy conservation initiatives.

Challenged with a goal of identifying 100,000 kilowatt hours of potential savings, the mill's employees combined to deliver six times that figure. "It was a huge success and predominantly floor-driven," recalls Laura Chernowski, TI'oh's general manager.

TI'oh is a limited partnership between the Nak'azdli First Nation based in Fort St. James and Apollo Forest Products.

A further legacy from the energy blitz at TI'oh is an increase in communication within the mill. "The realization among TI'oh's people that they do impact the big picture was the most thrilling part of the program for me," says Chernowski.

TI'oh's people are 90 per cent First Nation and the finger jointing operation has been offering stability to the regional economy since 1995. The mill currently operates two eight hour shifts daily with 16 production staff on each. Annual production is around 35 million board feet in a variety of dimensions for both the U.S. and Canadian markets.

Approximately six primary sawmills typically provide TI'oh with the types of raw material it requires to manufacture quality finger jointed studs and other wood products. But fibre supply is becoming more restricted, notes Chernowski. Factors influencing that include the permanent closure of one sawmill/planer complex in Fort St. James and the re-start of another under different ownership.

The increase in bioenergy development and wood pellet manufacture add to the fibre supply scenario. Add in a future reduction in AAC among regional licencees as the mountain pine beetle epidemic declines and traditional fibre supply sources are further impacted. And just for good measure, a new mine is being developed north of Fort St. James that Chernowski declares "is hot for people."

But TI'oh has advanced its reputation as a quality producer in its markets during the last 15 years. And has a history of successfully responding to its challenges.