

A National Event in Hearst: Bio/Eco/Socio Conference

Paul Courville and Nancy Young

From April 12th to 14th of this year, a multitude of representatives from northern Ontario communities, industries, and businesses gathered in the town of Hearst, Ontario to participate in the Bio, Eco, Socio (BES) Conference. The conference sought to bring all these representatives together to discuss economic diversification and to create action plans to ensure the sustainability of small northern communities.

The conference, organized by the Hearst Economic Development Committee, took place at the campus of l'Université de Hearst. The format for this event included presentations about sustainability in terms of environment and forest ecology, community, and bioeconomy, a trade show featuring a variety of northern Ontario businesses, a discussion/working period, and a banquet featuring a keynote address by Dr. David Suzuki!



The Forestry Research Partnership (FRP) had a strong presence throughout the event with a high tech display booth at the trade show and active participation and (shameless) promotion by Ken Durst, Paul Courville, and Nancy Young. This high tech booth saw a lot of visitation from the participants (including the mayor of Hearst) with several monitors displaying LiDAR point clouds and slideshows featuring the "Acquiring and testing Multiband

orthophotography (and integrated LiDAR) for production of enhanced forest inventories in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Forest" project. The importance of this project and the FRP's strong commitment to key research and development was even emphasized by Dr. David DeYoe, of Bio-Trend Systems Inc., in his summation speech at the end of the presentations. As a result of the FRP's activity at this event, Ken Durst was subsequently invited back to Hearst to give a very well-received presentation on how LiDAR can benefit communities.

The discussion period had all of the delegates divided into three working groups with the aim of developing action plans for carrying the momentum of this conference forward. Each group focused on a conference theme (the environment and forest ecology, the community, or the bioeconomy) and brainstormed ways to work towards/achieve resilience in this tumultuous time.



Ken Durst leading the discussion on bioeconomy

The highlight of the conference was, of course, the banquet with David Suzuki as the headliner. Despite the hesitance by much of the forest industry community to embrace Suzuki's ideology, the address remained on a largely positive note regarding the proactive nature of this conference and of Ontario's forest industries through their commitment to FSC certification, etc. Dr. Suzuki expressed delighted surprise at the advances made in forestry, bioproduct, and other research in Ontario as presented by Dr. DeYeo, and even promised to return to Hearst next year to see the progress made as a result of this conference!



The FRP's Paul Courville and Nancy Young with Dr. Suzuki!