

## Canadian Ecology Centre Hosts the Art of Professional Practice

By John Pineau

From February 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, the Canadian Ecology Centre hosted a unique continuing education - professional development event for forestry and natural resources sector workers entitled ‘the Art of Professional Practice.’ The course was organized and delivered with the help of Professor Ken Brown of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. Dr. Brown assembled a team of specialists in mediation, negotiation, and consensus building from across North America to conduct the intensive five day course. Fourteen individuals participated, representing Tembec, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Canadian Forest Service, and several Sustainable Forest Licensees.

“The Art of Professional Practice was designed to help mid-career resource management professionals to improve their ability to work productively with others in an organizational setting,” said Dr. Brown. “The course is especially relevant to members of resource management planning teams who wish to reach decisions about natural resources in concert with other stakeholders through a consensus-based process.”

Course instruction for the Art of Professional Practice relied heavily on active, experiential learning. Participants received hands-on experience facilitating groups, engaging in simulated conflicts designed to exercise negotiation and mediation skills, and writing and analyzing case studies based on difficult conversations. The students also practiced skills for productively discussing difficult issues with others.

“Our course instructors used an active learning approach because learning to lead, facilitate, negotiate, mediate, and participate productively in difficult conversations is, in many ways, like learning to ride a bicycle,” said Dr. Brown. “In all such cases, being told what to do is not particularly helpful, whereas attempting to perform the skill under the guidance of a coach is a well-established road to improvement.”



**Top row:** Doris Krahn, Ron Luopa, Paul Fantine, Brad Mitchell

**2<sup>nd</sup> row:** Josée Babineau, Ric Hansel, Darwin Burgess, Joerg Hettmann

**3<sup>rd</sup> row:** Alison Jackson, Stan Phippen, John McNutt, Gord Breau

**Front row:** James Fraser, Mac Brown, Cory Coneybeare



Dr. Dale Finn (right) with Dr. Mac Brown plan a session for the Art of Professional Practice

The Art of Professional Practice is a second success in a series of continuing education - professional development courses being planned by the Canadian Ecology Centre and the Forestry Research Partnership. An introduction to forest hydrology, developed and delivered with the help of Trent University was well attended and received at the Centre this past fall. There is a recognized need to provide this type of opportunity to the forestry and natural resources sector, and the Ecology Centre is beginning to build a

niche to organize and deliver many more relevant courses.