

# Fostering an Ecosystem of Trust:

## Grounding Regulatory Practice in Lessons from *Populus tremuloides*

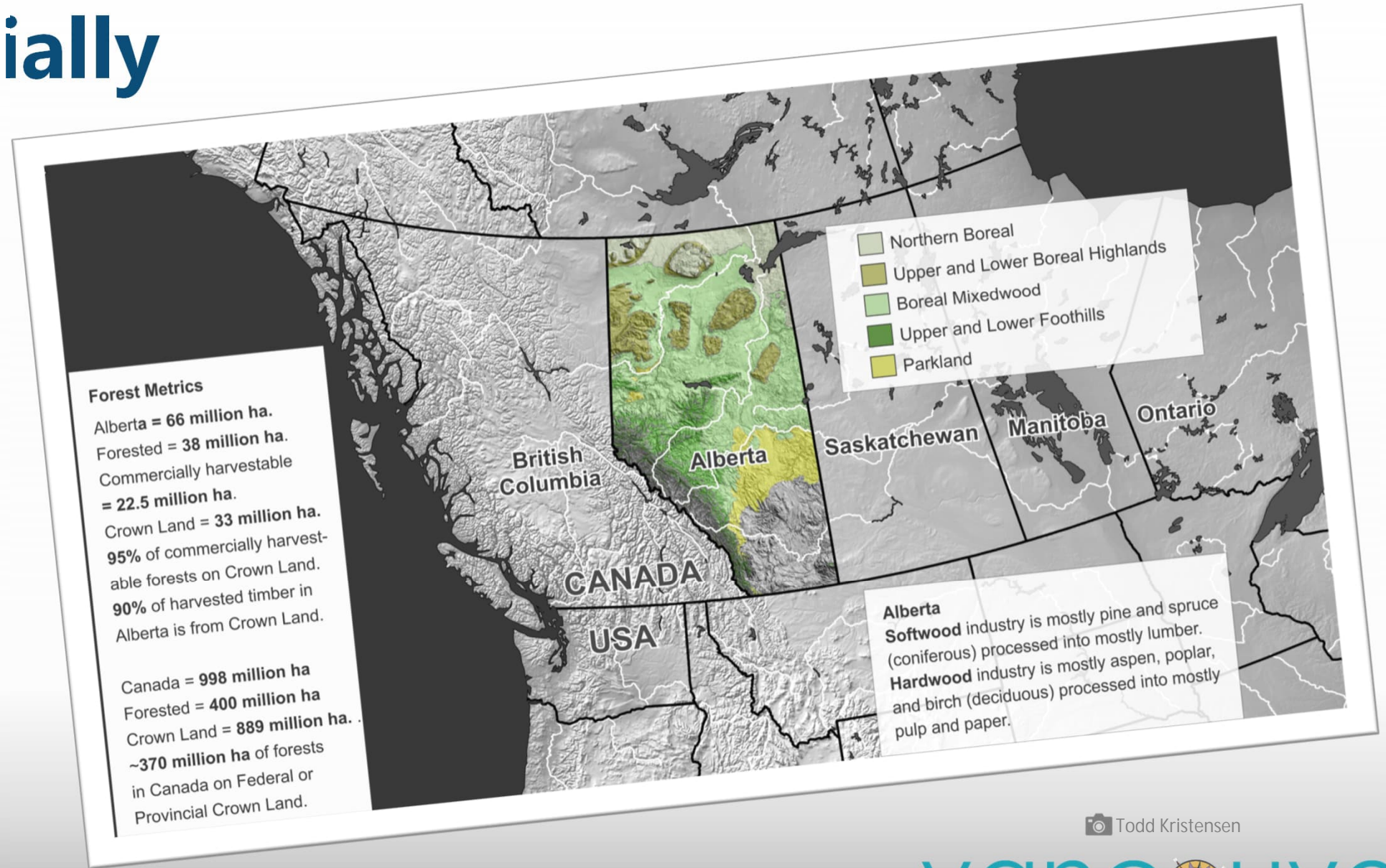


Amiskwaciwâskahikan  
(ᐱᓄᑦᕈᕐᕋᐅᓂᐸᐃᐱᐢᐤ) or  
Beaver Hills Lodge





# Provincially



Todd Kristensen

# Nationally







# The Eco System

# The Trust Ecosystem Challenge

Key Problem:

Perceived decline to trust in self-regulation model and professionals amid complex interest holder demands.

AAFMP Context:

Small regulator balancing the interests of multiple interest holders with significantly different values and needs.

Stakes:

Trust = Compliance + Collaboration + Public Confidence

# Principles

- Trust is tenuous
- Trust requires effort & time
- Trust builds exponentially
- Once broken, trust may be lost completely and forever
- Threats include prioritized self over the others, questioning motives and criticizing, & neglect of others



# Five Dimensions of Trust



# Three Foundational Elements:

1. Analysis of others to determine the potential of their competence, integrity, and predictability;
2. Building mutual confidence based on shared knowledge and common experience between the partners; and
3. The establishment of relationships based on interpersonal interactions.

# A Network of Trust

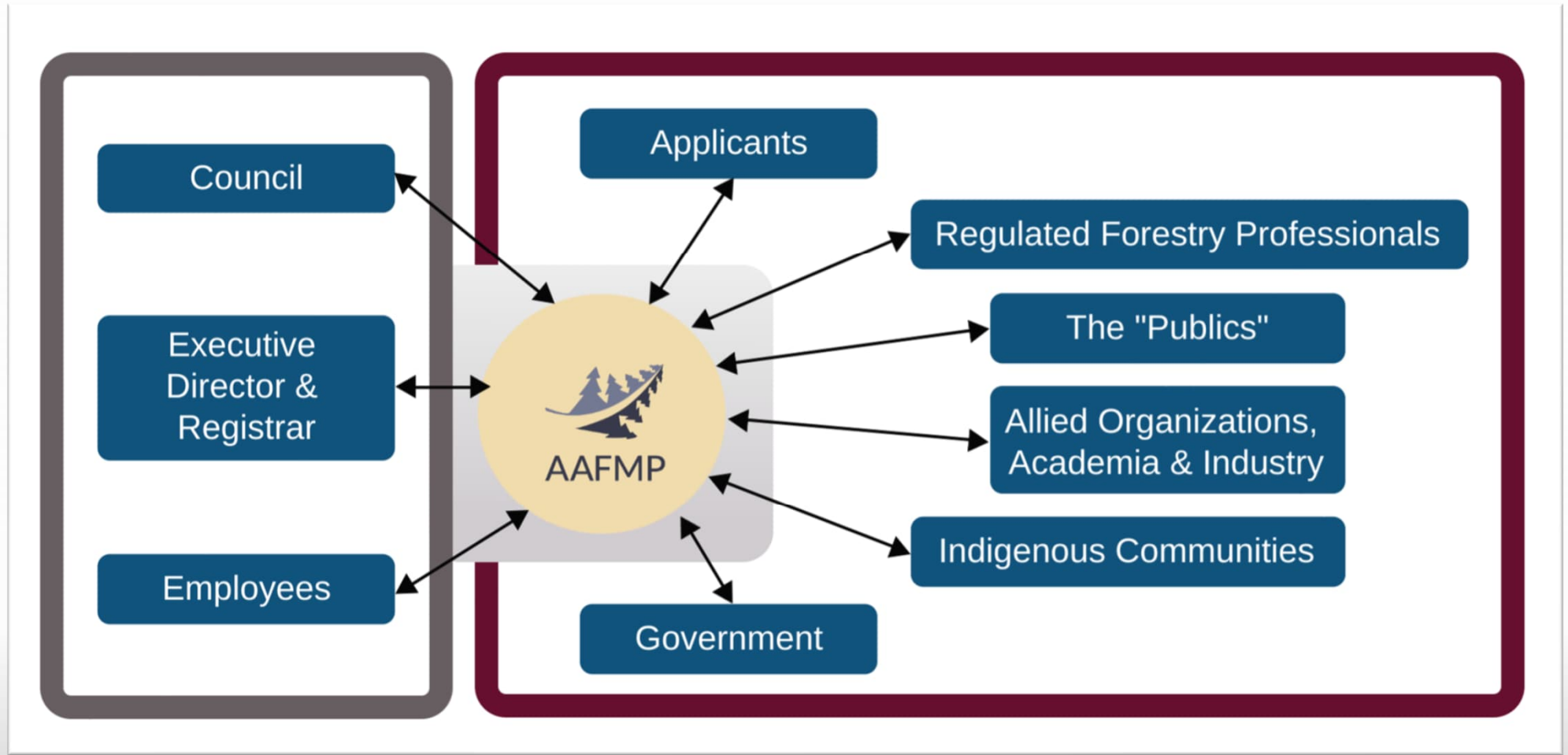


# The Stakeholder “Forest” of Complexity

- Highly adaptable
- Spans a wide range
- Developed tolerances
- Diverse interactions
- High biodiversity

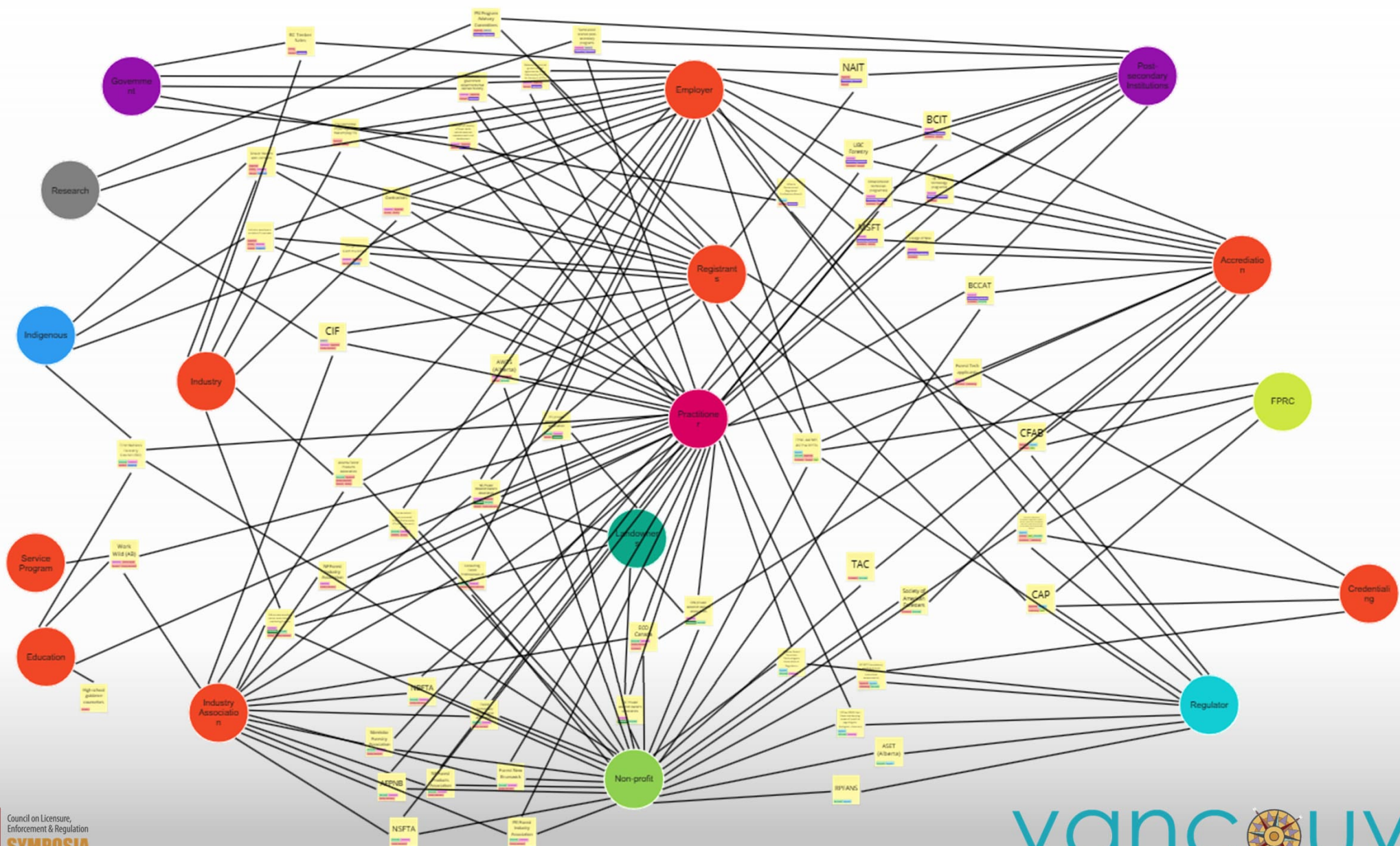


# The Stakeholder “Forest” of Complexity





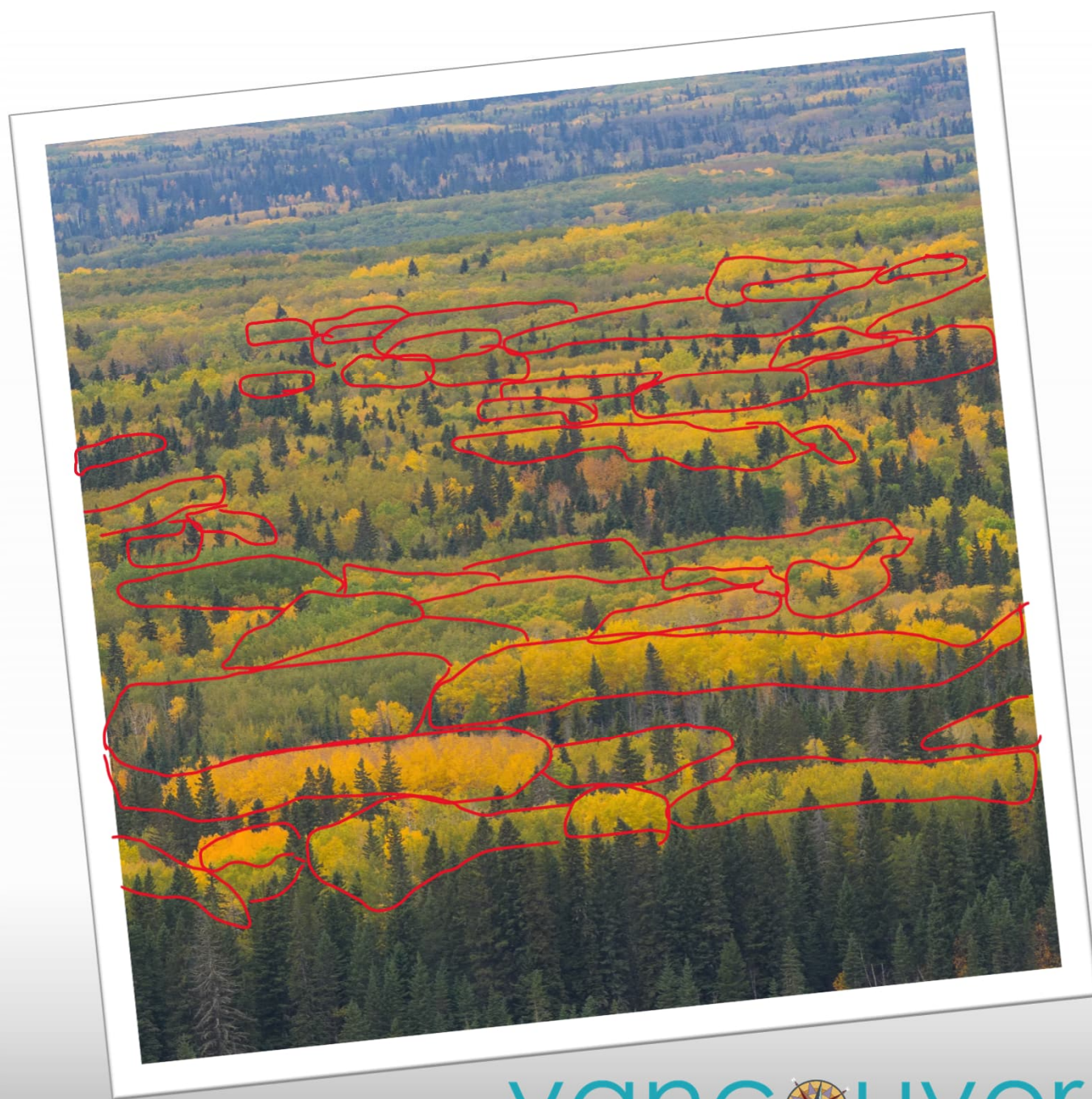
# The Stakeholder “Forest” of Complexity





# The Aspen Grove

- Forest is generally the same species of trees
- Separate genetically cloned groups of aspen
- External factors that influence clones differently across the landscape



# The Aspen Grove

- Systems approach to ensuring the public's interests are considered
- Governance
- Professional skills training
- Work collectively with interest holders



# Cultivating Trust



# The Talking Forest

*Populus tremuloides*





# The Talking Forest

Trust is often initiated, developed, and maintained through the establishment of relationships based on interpersonal interactions with individuals and community



# What We Hear

Serhii, fled to Canada from Ukraine

Two years and two months we live in Canada, but it seems to me it was yesterday. We bought a townhouse in Terwillegar and are moving today. Honestly, I love this country and our province! Thanks for your advice to heading Edmonton.

I really appreciate your support.

Fabiano, immigrated from Brazil

I have good news. Finally, my visa process was approved (for me and my family). I just would like to keep you posted about it. I recognize that you were one of the persons who supported a lot my application process for AAFMP and work permit as well. Thanks for all of that. I contacted Henrique and he was very attentive and kind and I hope we can build a good connection.



# The Talking Forest

Trust looks like:

- Viewing AAFMP as accessible and collaborative.
- Accessible
- Collaborative
- Processes are practical & tailored
- Guardian, not an enforcer
- Respect for expertise & perspective
- Compassionate



# Branching Out

# Resilience After Disturbance

- Highly adaptable
- Stimulated by disturbance
- Creates a more hospitable microclimate
- Aids in the establishment of its successors



© Dawe, D., Whitman, E., Michaelian, M. *et al.* (2025)



# Embracing Disturbance





# Becoming an Establiher

To grow and change  
before disturbances  
occur:

- Build staff capacity  
and provide training
- Lead new initiatives
- Learn from  
disturbances
- Share the  
experiences



# Takeaways

- Interest holder complexity in natural resource sectors impacts trust in regulatory decisions.
- Maintain legitimacy when balancing public interest and industry pressure.
- Unique advantages and vulnerabilities of small regulators in lesser-known professions—and how to leverage agility while managing resource constraints to strengthen trust.
- Adapt and grow trust throughout organizational and environmental change.



# Questions?

*Imagine your regulator as an aspen grove.  
Where are the gaps in your root system?  
How will you make the leaves speak?  
How do you adapt and react to disturbance?*





# Thank you

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Association of Alberta  
Forest Management  
Professionals