For Immediate Release

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**Hayden Leo from Líl̓wat Forestry Ventures Receives CFI's Top 20 Under 40 Award**

**Mount Currie, B.C. –** Canadian Forest Industries (CFI) Magazine recently unveiled its prestigious Top 20 Under 40 forestry leadership awards for 2024, celebrating young professionals driving innovation and making significant contributions to the industry. Among the outstanding individuals is Hayden Leo, a Forestry Technician from the Líl̓wat Nation working for Líl̓wat Forestry Ventures (LFV). His relentless pursuit of knowledge and remarkable dedication to forestry over the last eleven years have earned him a place among this year’s awardees.

“I am incredibly honoured to receive this award. I feel as though I share it with my mentors, whose guidance has empowered me to make a difference,” said Leo. “This award reinforces my belief that I am heading in the right direction. Using this recognition, I am sure it will boost my confidence in making forestry decisions moving forward.”

As Jennifer Ellson, CFI Magazine’s editor shared, Leo’s deep involvement in First Nations initiatives and his significant contributions to the sector make him truly deserving of this award.

“It's incredibly inspiring to have someone like Hayden Leo leading the way in the forest industry,” she expressed. “That this recognition came on the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation feels like a poetic tribute to the important role that young Indigenous leaders like Hayden play in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future for our industry.”

Starting out with very little knowledge of forestry, Leo joined LFV as a member of the firefighting crew in 2013. He quickly advanced by completing a silviculture survey accreditation and earning a diploma in forestry from the British Columbia Institute of Technology. His evident passion for forestry and perseverance ultimately led him to continue his education at the University of Northern British Columbia, where he is currently working toward becoming a Registered Professional Forester.

“After completing my diploma, I took a couple of years off to focus on my career and gain practical work experience in forestry management,” he explained. “I wanted to become a Registered Professional forester for my community, and I aim to complete my designation in 2025.”

In his current role as a Forestry Technician, Leo oversees wood contracts and manages technical aspects of forestry operations, consistently demonstrating a strategic vision that aligns business goals with environmental stewardship. As he rose to leadership, his positive nature and ability to rapidly adapt to challenges became catalysts for the organization’s success.

Most notably, he played a key role in the Q̓welq̓welústen/Mount Meager Landslide Restoration, a project aimed at reducing flood risks on reserve lands and creating conditions suitable for vegetation and wildlife habitat. This innovative project earned LFV recognition as a finalist in the BC Real Estate Foundation 2024 Land Awards this past summer.

“The value that Hayden brings is hard work. He is driven to improve himself and genuinely cares about people and his community,” shared Klay Tindall, general manager of LFV. “He is very community-focused, which is significant because he’s not pursuing education solely for himself, but to serve the entire community. Hayden also has an infectiously positive attitude, so even when facing challenges, he tackles them with a smile. Without a doubt, he is deserving of this award, and we are so proud of him.”

As Leo further shared his long-term goals, his dedication and passion for forestry, along with his commitment to his community, are evident.

“Once I’m too old to walk in the woods, I want to bring forestry education to my community and become a teacher that will be recognized in professional forestry,” he said, sharing his excitement about the journey ahead.

**To book an interview with Hayden Leo, contact:**

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