

# **Fond du Lac Sugar Bush Tapping Guidelines**

The intent of these guidelines is to assure Fond du Lac's sugar bush resource remains healthy and available to Band members now and into the future. Published research and the advice of local experts were used to compile these guidelines.

## **Site Selection**

- Choose sites that are accessible throughout the entire tapping season. Dirt roads that may be useable in the beginning of the season can often become very muddy and rutted near the end as the frost goes out of the ground and the ground becomes soft. Select sites with good access that does not require traversing wetlands or other sensitive areas that may be damaged, especially near the end of the season.
- Choose sites with healthy, large-crowned sugar maples and/or red maples. Avoid selecting areas where the trees show signs of stress or decline (e.g. dead or dying tops, missing bark, many dead trees nearby, porcupine damage, etc.).

## **Tree Selection**

- Select healthy, full-crowed sugar maple or red maple trees that are at least 10" in diameter at chest height (about 4 ½ feet above the ground). Tapping smaller trees will yield little sap and risk the long-term health of the tree.
- Avoid tapping trees that have been tapped for several years in a row.
- Avoid driving ATV's, tractors, trucks, or other vehicles within 20 feet of the base of the tree during the tapping season. The ground is soft and the roots can be damaged, affecting the health of the tree. Instead, carry buckets or bags by hand to vehicles, wagons, or other maintenance equipment.

## **Tapping Trees**

- **Spout Selection**
  - Do not tap frozen trees as this can cause the bark to split. Only tap trees when the sap has begun to flow. Tap the spouts in carefully to avoid damaging the tree. Avoid tapping discolored or damaged looking bark.
  - Smaller spouts are preferable to larger spouts. Research shows smaller spouts will deliver as much sap as larger spouts with less damage to the tree.
  - Use 5/16" or 19/64" spouts if possible. These spouts should not be placed more than 1 ½" deep.
  - Older style 7/16" spouts are still acceptable but should be replaced with smaller spouts when possible. This size spout should not be placed more than 2 ½" deep.
  - Holes should be drilled at a slight upward angle so that sap can flow down and out of the hole.
- **Number of Spouts and Spacing**
  - The number of spouts per tree should be based on the diameter of the tree at chest height.
    - Trees 10" – 18" in diameter should have no more than 1 tap per tree.
    - Trees larger than 18" can have up to 2 taps per tree.
    - Spouts should be spaced at least 6" horizontally and 2 feet vertically from previous year's tap hole locations.
    - Never re-tap existing holes or drill new taps near the end of the season trying to prolong the season.
- **Be sure to remove all spouts from trees and clean up other equipment from the site at the end of the season.**