Brazilian press stops in for a visit

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A group of Brazilian journalists stopped in Hinton recently for a tour of the Foothills Research Institute (FRI) where they saw how Western Canada is dealing with forest management issues.

The tour, organized by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, brought five journalists, two television crew members and a Canadian government official on a tour of the local research institute’s projects.

“It was part of a larger tour they were on,” said Joan Simonton, communication and extension coordinator for FRI. “The theme was innovation and social progress.”

The group was traveling across Canada exploring projects related to these themes, and stopped in Hinton during the Western leg of the tour.

Before coming to Hinton, the group stopped in Calgary and the Siksika First Nation.

“We gave them a PowerPoint presentation on what we do and then we went out to where we’re doing our work,” said Simonton.

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Joan Simonton, FRI communication and extension coordinator

The tour included an explanation of the FRI’s Aboriginal involvement program, which piqued the interest of the visitors, who have similar issues at home.

“They were quite enamoured and excited about that,” she said.

The group then learned about the natural disturbance program which deals with how mother nature might disturb the forest with fire, insects and disease,” said Simonton.

In Canada, using controlled burnings in forestry is common practice, which was surprising to the visitors.

“In Brazil, applying fire is bad because when they clear forests by burning it destroys the soil, which is the opposite here,” said Simonton.

Before the end of the tour, the group stopped at Kelly’s Bighorn, where they were treated to a brief presentation by Scott Sunderland, who manages the area.

The tour of the protected area so impressed the visitors that one asked if they were hiring, said Simonton.

This is not the first time foreign press has come to visit the FRI, as a group of French journalists visited the institute last year.

Simonton said such tours are helping spread knowledge of cutting edge forest management strategies around the world.

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