

**“WHAT THEY ARE DOING TO THE LAND, THEY ARE DOING TO US”:
ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS ON HAIDA GWAI**

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of Native environmental politics on Haida Gwaii, also known as the Queen Charlotte Islands, since the late 1970's. During that time, concerns among the Haida about the impacts of industrial logging on their culture led to the emergence of a sustained, innovative challenge to the existing regime of resource extraction on the islands as well as the larger colonial structures on which it was premised. As a result, environmental activism became a means for the Haida to pursue decolonization outside the official channels of the land claims process. In particular this paper focuses on the conflict surrounding logging in the area of South Moresby Island culminating in the creation of the Gwaii Haanas National Park, which was the first National Park to be co-managed by the Government of Canada and an indigenous nation. By tracing the development of environmental activism on Haida Gwaii it contributes to an understanding of the ways that recent Native environmental movements have formulated indigenous identity and drawn on cultural traditions as well as their experience of colonialism. It also contributes to debates surrounding co-management and TEK by showing how the development of Haida environmental management structures occurred in conjunction with the development of a Haida environmental politics without which it would not have been capable of delivering on its liberatory promise.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In March of 2005, the people of Haida Gwaii (also known as the Queen Charlotte Islands), an archipelago comprised of over one hundred islands off the northwest coast of British Columbia, set up a series of roadblocks in what they called the ‘Islands Spirit Rising.’ Carrying the red and white flag of the Haida Nation and banners declaring that “Enough is Enough,” Haida and non-Haida residents of the islands sought to block logging operations by forestry giant Weyerhaeuser.

This action was taken in response to what they felt were violations of a six point agreement the Council of the Haida Nation (CHN) had reached with Weyerhaeuser over logging practices in 2002, as well as the failure of the Government of British Columbia to fulfill its responsibility to consult with the Haida on forestry policy as it had been ordered to do by the supreme court of Canada in a recent ruling.¹ According to the Haida, the BC Government had continued to allow logging in areas designated for protection in the Haida Land Use Vision (HLUV), despite participation in ‘Land Use Planning’ consultations with the CHN. The ‘Islands Spirit Rising’ was to serve as added incentive for the Government and Weyerhaeuser to deal fairly with the Haida in considering their interests.

Between March and April, 2005, the Haida, with the support of local communities like Port Clemens and Sandspit, manned blockades at the Yakoun and Hona rivers, set up checkpoints to record the names of people traveling to protected areas, and seized logs on

¹ *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)*. 3 S.C.R. 511, 2004, SCC 73.

their way out of the designated zones.² Feasts were held in various communities on the islands in support of the action and people gathered to show support for the Haida as far away as Toronto and New York. These blockades and demonstrations seemingly succeeded where court action could not, since after weeks of negotiation the CHN and the province reached an agreement to resume the land-use planning process and suspend further logging in the contested areas.³

As a result of this planning process, in December of 2007, Gujaaw, president of the CHN, and Gordon Campbell, premier of British Columbia, signed the *Haida Gwaii Strategic Land Use Agreement*, based on the concept of ‘Eco-system Based Management’ (EBM) which the agreement defines as “an adaptive, systematic approach to managing human activities, that seeks to ensure the co-existence of healthy, fully functioning ecosystems and human communities.” The agreement furthermore recognized a number of “Haida Natural, Cultural, and Spiritual Areas” which the Haida would maintain “in accordance with their laws, policies, customs, traditions and decision-making processes.”⁴ The events of the ‘Islands Spirit Uprising’ and the dual strategy of engaging in popular mobilization while pursuing official processes like court battles and inter-governmental negotiations should be familiar to anyone who has followed events on Haida Gwaii over the last forty years. In particular, it is reminiscent of the efforts throughout the 1980’s to have the area surrounding South Moresby Island in the southern end of the archipelago protected from logging, which culminated in the creation of the

² For a complete account of these events see the Islands Spirit Rising website: <http://www.haidanation.ca/islands/islands.html> (accessed 08/04/09).

³ “Understanding Arising from April 22 2005 Discussions Between the Province and the Council of Haida Nation,” text available at <http://www.haidanation.ca/islands/Agreement.html> (accessed 08/04/09)

⁴ Haida Gwaii Strategic Land Use Agreement. September 13, 2007, http://www.haidanation.ca/Pages/Programs/Land_Use_Planning/PDF/StrategicLandUseAgre/HGstrategicDec_07.pdf (accessed 08/04/09).

Gwaii Haanas National Park in 1993. From at least the mid-1970's, an increasingly assertive Haida environmental politics has emerged on the Queen Charlotte Islands. Since this time, the Haida have pursued a number of strategies, from participation in cooperative management processes to illegal roadblocks, in order to reclaim control over the forests and waters of Haida Gwaii. Throughout this period the Haida continued to draw links between their opposition to the environmental damage wrought by resource extraction industries and the nature of colonialism in BC.

In the last decade or so, scholars have been increasingly interested in the relationship between indigenous peoples and environmentalism. A number of historians and anthropologists have sought to problematize stereotypical notions of the ecological Indian, even while other scholarship, and a growing body of government policy, has been premised on the notion that indigenous peoples do indeed have some sort of special relationship with nature in the form of their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Furthermore, indigenous people from the Canadian north to Oceania have, more and more frequently, positioned themselves as better stewards of nature and have allied themselves, although sometimes uneasily, with a variety of environmentalist movements. Among scholars of indigenous North America, the question of how to understand indigenous environmental politics and the growing currency of notions like TEK has, therefore, been a contentious one, not least because how we understand these questions has serious political implications for indigenous people in the real world. While most writers on the subject have positioned their arguments as supporting anti-colonial struggles, it is not uncommon for particular positions to be accused of giving succour to the very structures they purport to oppose. The reception Shepard Krech's *The Ecological*

Indian: Myth and History (1999), which I discuss in greater detail below, has become something of a cautionary tale in this regard. In a 2007 essay on the critical reception of *Ecological Indian*, Krech quotes one critic as describing his book as “the worst among many egregious examples of the American professoriate serving the systems that are so effectively destroying the earth,” another raised the possibility that his analysis was driven by “a political doctrine of the imperial kind.”⁵ These questions, then, are not merely ‘academic’ but are often central to the ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples in opposition to colonialism.⁶ In many cases, as on Haida Gwaii, environmental issues are seen by indigenous peoples as central to their capacity to survive as distinct cultures.

The conflicts surrounding forestry on Haida Gwaii since the 1970’s thus seem to me to be an interesting and largely understudied subject through which we can gain a greater understanding of both indigenous environmental politics and debates surrounding TEK and cooperative management discourse. This paper will show that indigenous environmental activism cannot be understood as flowing from some inherent feature of the Haida people, but is, rather, the product of specific colonial histories and cultural politics. Furthermore, it will argue that attempts to apply traditional ecological knowledge and to develop structures through which indigenous communities can have an effective role in managing their resources, if they are indeed to serve as a means of empowering indigenous communities, cannot ignore the colonial structures in which they are embedded, nor can they operate on the basis of an essentialized and static conception

⁵ Shepard Krech III, “Beyond the *Ecological Indian*” in *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, ed. Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 6.

⁶ For articles about the inherently political nature of Scholarship on Native North America see: Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, eds. *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

of indigeneity. As this paper will demonstrate, the Haida have been able to combine a creative cultural politics and a committed environmental movement in order to pursue decolonization outside the official land claims process. As a result, environmental politics on Haida Gwaii has emerged, to use Ramachandra Guha's phrase, as "one of the most innovative responses to the ecological and cultural crisis of modern society."⁷

2. ENVIRONMENTALISM, KNOWLEDGE, AND POLITICS: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE ECOLOGICAL INDIAN

The recent academic debate surrounding the relationship between indigenous peoples and the natural world stems in large part from Shepard Krech's *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999). In this highly controversial work, Krech sought to challenge one of the most pervasive images of indigenous peoples in North America: that of the Ecological Indian, who "brims over with ecological prescience and wisdom."⁸ While his main conclusions have not been seen as having great lasting scholarly significance – through a series of case studies he shows, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the myth does not live up to reality – the political implications of his arguments have been

⁷ Guha, in his discussion of environmental politics among the Chipko in Northern India, sums up their aims in a way which could just as easily describe the Haida: "At one level they are defensive, seeking to escape the tentacles of the commercial economy and the centralizing state; at yet another level they are assertive, actively challenging the ruling-class vision of a homogenizing urban-industrial culture... Far from being the dying wail of a class about to drop down the trapdoor of history, the call of the Chipko represents one of the most innovative responses to the ecological and cultural crisis of modern society." In Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, expanded ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 196.

⁸ Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 21. See also, Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (Toronto: Random House, 1979).

hotly debated.⁹ Krech concluded his book with an epilogue in which he moved from a discussion of Paleolithic hunting practices and the like, to a discussion of the political consequences for indigenous people of strategically adopting the rhetoric of the ecological Indian. He argued that, while this might seem to be an effective strategy, by positioning themselves in this way, indigenous people set an impossibly high standard, and when they inevitably fall short of this, whatever claims they make on its basis will be jeopardized.

While Krech makes a good point that such strategic essentialisms can, at times, be harmful for native political goals, his treatment of them is overly simplistic. As Darren Ranco points out “Krech does not recognize such identity claims and the context and resistance to them as an object for cultural analysis” and as a result he ends up treating them as “a disturbance of ‘real’ cultural behaviours.”¹⁰ Ranco, following the work of Marshall Sahlins, argues that Krech’s approach tends to obscure the operation of culture and power in such formulations of identity.¹¹ We need to take these types of self-fashioning seriously in order to understand why and how indigenous people employ them. Indigenous people do not simply adopt imagery from settler society wholesale; rather such identity claims often flow from particular cultural logics which employ ‘outside’ ideas like conservation in ways which maintain “logical and ontological continuities” within these cultures while responding to the discursive structures of

⁹ See for example: Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis, eds. *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Michael Doxtater, “Indigenous Knowledge in the Decolonial Era,” *American Indian Quarterly* 28, n. 3-4 (2004): 618-633; Raymond Hames, “The Ecologically Noble Savage Debate,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36, (2007): 177-190.

¹⁰ Darren J. Ranco, “The Ecological Indian and the Politics of Representation” in *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, ed. Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 32-33.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 36-37.

colonial modernity.¹² Thus, pointing out the influence of western notions of indigeneity on the discourses indigenous people use in their political struggles is, perhaps, not the most productive avenue for analysis.

Instead, a number of scholars have developed alternate approaches to these questions. For example, Paul Nadasdy has argued that categories like environmentalism and conservationism, as products of a western cultural tradition, do not correspond to the ways that indigenous people conceive of their relationship with the natural world.¹³ To attempt to evaluate the ecological “nobility” of indigenous peoples is to hold them to standards which are not their own. We must therefore evaluate native people’s claim to be more environmentally benign on their own terms.

Nadasdy’s arguments are an important reminder that we should be careful about how the categories of analysis we use can obscure more than they reveal; however, he tends to portray these categories as far more static than they really are. For example, a number of environmental historians have launched critiques of the cultural assumptions on which environmentalism is based and have sought to reformulate it in ways which are perhaps closer to the sets of beliefs which are held by the indigenous peoples Nadasdy studies.¹⁴ In any case, I can see no reason why our understanding of what constitutes environmentalism cannot be modified to include other cultural influences, this is a process which the Haida themselves have been engaged in during the last three decades. While the Haida have certainly made use of environmentalist rhetoric, they consistently

¹² This phrase is from Marshall Sahlins, “Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History” *Journal of Modern History* 65, 1-25 as quoted in Ranco, *Ecological Indian*, 36.

¹³ Paul Nadasdy, “Transcending the Debate Over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism,” *Ethnohistory* 52, no. 2 (2005): 291-331.

¹⁴ See for example, the essays in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996) especially Cronon’s now famous critique “The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.”

recast notions of what constitutes environmentalism in a way that combines western and Haida categories. The result has been an environmentalism that is nonetheless centered on an understanding of Haida values.

One distinct aspect of Haida environmentalism is its direct connection to anti-colonial politics. In a recent article, Anna J. Willow points to similar dynamics in indigenous environmental activism among the Anishinabe of Northwestern Ontario. She points out that portrayals of indigenous environmentalism often regard it as somehow an inherent feature of indigenous cultures and, as a result, they miss its political aspects. According to Willow, native environmental activism is inextricably tied to anti-colonial struggles.¹⁵ It is also a mistake to view environmentalist rhetoric as simply a politically expedient form of argument for indigenous people to make.¹⁶ As the Willow's work with the Anishinabe demonstrates, and as the history of activism on Haida Gwaii holds out, environmental degradation is understood by indigenous peoples as a direct result of histories of colonialism and the negative results of colonial resource extraction for themselves and the lands they occupy.¹⁷

This links between colonial structures and indigenous environmentalism is often hidden in non-native portrayals. And, as a result, some scholars have argued that environmentalist arguments are framed in ways that perpetuate rather than challenge colonial structures. For example, in discussing the famous conflict over the logging of

¹⁵ Anna J. Willow, "Clear-Cutting and Colonialism: The Ethnopolitical Dynamics of Environmental Activism in Northwestern Ontario," *Ethnohistory* 56, no. 1 (2009): 35-67.

¹⁶ Paul Tennant does this to some extent in his work on Native Politics in BC: *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 207.

¹⁷ See: Donald A. Grinde and Bruce E. Johansen, *Ecocide of Native America: Environmental Destruction of Indigenous Lands and Peoples* (Santa Fe: Clear Light, 1995); Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Expropriation in Contemporary North America* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992).

Clayoquot Sound in BC, Bruce Braun demonstrates how for the settler participants in the conflict it “seemed entirely natural for the Sound to be conceived of as wilderness, working forests, recreation zones, wildlife reserves, scenic corridors, and so on, with no reference to the spatial and economic practices of the Nuu-chah-nulth,” he points to the relative lack of native people joining in the blockades of logging roads in the Sound as evidence of the failure of environmentalist arguments to address the concerns of indigenous people.¹⁸ In contrast to the Clayoquot conflict, the Haida were at the forefront of the opposition in the campaign to prevent logging on South Moresby, blockades were almost exclusively occupied by Haida people, and the link between their environmental activism and their political aspirations was made repeatedly and forcefully. Thus, the history of environmental activism on Haida Gwaii destabilizes understandings of indigenous environmentalism that ignore its political and anti-colonial aspects.

Understanding environmentalism on Haida Gwaii as part of a political movement, embedded in a forceful and inventive reassertion of Haida control over the islands, also helps to contribute to a debate about the implications of current policies of co-management and traditional ecological knowledge. Since the 1980’s and the development of a number of international initiatives studying TEK, the concept has been enshrined in a number of governmental programs in Canada and elsewhere. These programs have sought to integrate TEK and western scientific approaches to resource management and implement structures for the co-management of natural resources in the traditional territories of indigenous peoples. The stated intent of many of these programs is to improve the management of natural resources and provide a measure of empowerment

¹⁸ Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture and Power on Canada’s West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 8.

and control over resources for local indigenous communities. For the most part, scholars of TEK have been positive in their assessments of these co-management arrangements.¹⁹ However, some recent work has sought to problematize the assumptions behind TEK and co-management, in particular the notion that TEK constitutes a discreet body of information which can be unproblematically incorporated into western management regimes.²⁰ These scholars argue that, although TEK sounds good in principle, its practical application may be more difficult.

Paul Nadasdy has provided an important critique of the assumptions on which TEK and co-management are premised. His argument is that, despite their rhetoric of inclusion and cooperation, the practice of co-management and TEK integration is based on a fundamentally Western worldview which cannot incorporate many of the conceptual categories on which indigenous people, in this case the Kluane of the southwestern Yukon, base their understandings of the natural world. If indigenous people want to have their voices heard in management discussions they need to translate their arguments in ways that legitimize western understandings of nature. For example, they need to discuss animals quantitatively, rather than in relational terms, or they need to discuss land in terms of western conceptions of resources and private property rather than in ways that are embedded in native social worlds. As a result, the ecological knowledge that ends up entering into management discourse is transformed in significant ways. Furthermore,

¹⁹ see: Martha Johnson, ed., *Lore: Capturing Traditional Environmental Knowledge* (NWT: Dene Cultural Institute, 1992); Richard G. Kuhn and Frank Duerden, "A Review of Traditional Environmental Knowledge: An Interdisciplinary Canadian Perspective," *Culture* 11, no. 1 (1996); Berkes, Fikret. "Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Perspective" in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases*, Julian Inglis ed. (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1993); Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management* (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 1999).

²⁰ For example: Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Paul Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

indigenous people are often unused to speaking about the world in these terms, whereas the corporate representatives and bureaucrats with whom they share the process, and against whom they often struggle to have their interests represented, are much more proficient in these types of language and thus tend to dominate the process.²¹

In addition to presenting problems for the capacity of TEK and co-management to actually serve their purpose of incorporating indigenous voices and empowering communities, Nadasdy argues that much more subtle processes are at work. In order to participate in co-management processes, indigenous communities must increasingly adopt bureaucratic administrative structures. In addition, the young indigenous people who staff the proliferating co-management offices increasingly learn to operate within bureaucratic regimes rather than learning to function within indigenous social worlds by, for example, spending large amounts of time in the bush hunting. As a result, according to Nadasdy, co-management regimes serve as a means of extending state power into indigenous communities and rather than serving to empower indigenous communities, they are part of the ongoing transformative processes of colonialism.

Previous conservationist efforts in Canada and elsewhere have been implicated in the extension of colonial power over the countryside. The creation of national and provincial parks, for example, involved the marginalization and dispossession indigenous people.²² In other instances, wildlife conservation initiatives and the regulation of indigenous hunting and trapping, while premised on principles of objectivity and rational management, have served as a means of extending state power over land that had

²¹ Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*. See also: Paul Nadasdy, "Reevaluating the Co-management Success Story," *Artic* 54, no. 4 (2003): 367-380.

²² Theodore Binnema and Melanie Niemi, "'Let the Line Be Drawn Now': Wilderness, Conservation, and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada," *Environmental History*, no. 11 (2006): 724-50.

previously been managed by indigenous people in accordance with their own cultural practices.²³ This historical context raises legitimate concerns that current co-management projects will be part of similar processes.

Nadasdy's understanding of these processes finds its theoretical base in the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, both of whom draw explicit links between the capacity to legitimize certain types of knowledge and the exercise of power.²⁴ In particular, Bourdieu's work on the structure of bureaucracies and the formation of social fields informs much of Nadasdy's interpretation of co-management as a modality of state-formation. Bourdieu's work, however, provides a much greater capacity for subordinate groups to challenge and remake power structures than Nadasdy seems to allow. For example, in a discussion of the formation of social groups, Bourdieu describes how "knowledge of the social world and, more precisely, the categories that make it possible, are the stakes, *par excellence*, of political struggle, the inextricably theoretical and practical struggle for the power to conserve or transform the social world by conserving or transforming the categories through which it is perceived."²⁵ Although social fields tend to reproduce themselves, there is always the capacity for transformation.

²³ Tina Loo, *States of Nature: Conserving Canada's Wilderness in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: UBC Press 2006); John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: UBC Press).

²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu. *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Michel Foucault. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980)

²⁵ Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Social Space and The Genesis of Groups," *History and Theory* 14, no. 16 (1985): 729. Also see: Pierre Bourdieu. *The Logic of Practice*, Richard Nice trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), "Each state of the social world is thus no more than a temporary equilibrium... The object of social science is a reality that encompasses all the individual and collective struggles aimed at conserving or transforming reality... whose specifically symbolic efficacy can help to conserve or subvert the established order, that is to say, reality," 141.

If we understand the social world as always subject to transformation through political struggle, the potential for co-management and TEK to serve liberatory ends improves. To the extent that these processes are largely state initiated and directed, and essentially imposed on their indigenous participants, then it would seem that Nadasdy is quite right in arguing that they will serve to extend state power. However, if, as I will argue is the case on Haida Gwaii, they are accompanied by an assertive indigenous politics and are initiated and maintained by indigenous people themselves, they can serve to undermine that power and transform colonial structures.

At the heart of this study is an intersection between questions of structural power, and the various cultural discourses through which the social world is perceived and particular arrangements of power within it are legitimized and made natural. One such discourse surrounds divisions between nature and culture. Scholars working in the field of environmental history have increasingly pointed to the ways that nature and culture are inextricably linked.²⁶ Nature, or a given understanding of it, is always a social artifact. And, indeed, such constructions often obscure the operation of particular power dynamics.²⁷ However, how these categories come into being and are transformed, in other words, what exactly is meant by the social construction of nature is often unclear.²⁸

By drawing links between the operation of cultural discourses about the forests of Haida

²⁶ See: Noel Castree and Bruce Braun, eds., *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics* (Malden: Blackwell, 2001); Phillipe Descola and Gisli Palsson eds., *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1996); William Cronon. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); I.S. MacLaren, "Cultured Wilderness in Jasper National Park," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 3, no. 34 (1999): 7-58; Alan MacEachern. *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2001).

²⁷ Braun, *Intemperate Rainforest*. See also: Bruce Braun. "Colonial Vestiges: Representing Forest Landscapes on Canada's West Coast" in Trevor J. Barnes and Richard Hayter eds., *Troubles in the Rainforest: British Columbia's Forest Economy in Transition* (Victoria: Western Geographical Press, 1997).

²⁸ David Demeritt, "What is the Social Construction of Nature? A Typology and Sympathetic Critique," *Progress in Human Geography* 26, no. 6 (2002): 767-790; Ian Hacking. *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Gwaii and the practice of environmental politics, this project helps to expand our understanding of social nature. The conflicts it documents were in large part about whose understanding of nature would serve as the basis for future policies, which would in turn have significant material consequences for what types of forest would exist on Haida Gwaii. Thus, the subject of this study is in part the networks of the social, political and discursive through which particular natures are produced and sustained.²⁹

Also important in all this is the continued currency of discourses relating to tradition and modernity. Despite their thorough dismantling in a number of historical works, these concepts continue to have considerable impacts on the lives of people in the real world, especially for indigenous peoples for whom they often serve as both the basis for action and as significant obstacles.³⁰ Clearly, the notion of the traditional is central to the concept of TEK. There is an important sense in which the types of knowledge and the values which indigenous peoples employ in discussions of TEK really do derive from long-held cultural practices. Nevertheless, as this study shows, many of these practices have been and continue to be redeployed in a social world which has been irrevocably shaped by modernity.³¹ In large part, the history of environmental politics on Haida Gwaii since the 1970's has been about negotiating a place in this world.

²⁹ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 10-11.

³⁰ Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff eds., *Modernity and its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004); Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-nineteenth Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

³¹ David Scott has argued that for the subjects of colonial regimes, "colonial power... reshaped or reorganized the conceptual and institutional conditions of possibility of social action and its understanding." David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 119.

3. CREATING THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS: FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF CAPITALISM

The archipelago officially known as the Queen Charlottes, but called Haida Gwaii – the islands of the people – by its original inhabitants, is a remote chain of over a hundred islands off the northwest coast of British Columbia. Although once densely populated, over the course of the twentieth century the population of Haida Gwaii has not risen much above four thousand people, and has been, at times, considerably less than that. And yet, this small archipelago has long been embedded in economic, political, and intellectual networks which have extended far beyond its fractured shores.

The human history of the Queen Charlottes begins long before they acquired that particular name. One of the reasons for the ecological diversity and unusual number of endemic species that have earned Haida Gwaii the title of ‘the Canadian Galapagos’ is the archipelago’s status as a glacial refugium, untouched by the last major Ice Age. These conditions also mean that the islands have been populated continuously for over ten thousand years. Such has been the durability of human culture on Haida Gwaii that Haida oral traditions record the arrival of the red cedar, around which the Haida built one of the great material cultures of the world.³² Taking advantage of abundance of marine life in the surrounding waters as well as the dense forests of the islands, the Haida developed a highly stratified culture based around hundreds of towns along the coasts of the islands, with a population of almost fifteen thousand at its peak.³³ The first encounters between

³² Kii7iljuus (Barbara Wilson) and Heather Harris, “*Tllsda Xaaydas K’aaygang.na*: Long, Long Ago Haida Ancient Stories” in Daryl W. Fredje and Rolf W. Mathewes, eds., *Haida Gwaii: Human History and Environment from the Time of the Loon to the Time of the Iron People* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

³³ Steven Acheson. “Gwaii Haanas Settlement Archeology,” in Fredje and Mathewes. *Haida Gwaii*, 330.

Haida and Europeans occurred in the late eighteenth century when Spanish trading ships visited the islands. According to Robin Fisher, a 1774 meeting between the Spanish trader *Santiago* and a group of Haida off the shores Langara Island is the first recorded contact between Europeans and Native people in what became BC.³⁴ However, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Europeans began to have a significant impact on Haida Gwaii. As the northwest coast was increasingly embedded in European fur trading networks, profits from the sale of sea-otter pelts provided the basis for a brief ‘golden age’ on Haida Gwaii. But, as was the case almost everywhere else on the continent, Europeans also brought epidemics. By the beginning of the twentieth century, disease had reduced the Haida population to fewer than 1000 individuals. As the epidemics took their toll, the Haida increasingly came to live near the archipelago’s two missions, established in the late nineteenth century at the old village sites of Masset and Skidegate. By 1920 almost all other Haida villages had been abandoned.³⁵ To this day Masset and Skidegate remain the two major centers of Haida population on the islands, although Haida families maintain their ties to their pre-epidemic town sites.

It was during the period when the epidemics were at their peak that reserves were allocated on Haida Gwaii, and a political geography was established which would set the pattern of resource exploitation for much of the twentieth century. In 1882, Peter O’Reilly, Indian Reserve Commissioner for British Columbia, arrived on the Queen Charlottes and established reserves around the remaining Haida settlements.³⁶ In doing so

³⁴ Robin Fisher. *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, 2nd ed. 1992 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), 1.

³⁵ John R. Henderson, “Missionary Influences on Haida Settlement and Subsistence Patterns, 1876-1920,” *Ethnohistory* 21, no. 4 (1974): 303-316.

³⁶ Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 213.

he claimed vast tracts of Haida land for the province. Of the approximately 10,000 square kilometers that make up the archipelago less than fifteen square kilometers were allocated to the Haida as reserves.³⁷ While this new political geography may not have had an immediate impact, as Haida subsistence practices continued, as the twentieth century progressed it began to solidify as a result of increasingly harsh government repression of indigenous culture in BC and the growth of resource extraction industries, especially forestry.

Inevitably, the forests of the Queen Charlottes, which had provided the basis for much of the Haida material culture for thousands of years, began to attract the attention of forestry companies seeking to take advantage of the vast forest resources on which the growing economy of BC was being built. Beginning in 1908 with the establishment of the Moresby Island Timber Company, a number of small scale logging operations began operating on the islands.³⁸ The outbreak of WW1 and an explosion in the demand for high quality Sitka spruce, a key material for airplane construction, brought a short lived boom to the logging industry on the Queen Charlottes. However, the end of the war and the beginning of the Great Depression had a major impact on logging on the northwest coast causing a significant slow down of activity. Nevertheless, throughout this period logging continued to have a transformative effect on the forests of Haida Gwaii, especially with the emergence of new technologies, which facilitated larger cuts.

The end of the 1930's and the beginning of World War 2 saw the recovery of the forest industry in BC and the next four decades were a period of increasingly intense

³⁷ These numbers are derived from Daryl W. Fredje and Rolf Mathewes, eds., *Haida Gwaii: Human History and Environment from the Time of the Loon to the Time of the Iron People* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005) and Harris, *Making Native Space*, 214.

³⁸ Richard Rajala, *Up-Coast: Forests and Industry on British Columbia's North Coast, 1870-2005* (Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2006), 32-35.

logging on Haida Gwaii. The post-war period was one in which the forest industry came to be dominated by large forestry companies like ITT Rayonier and Weyerhaeuser, and in which concerns over timber supply on the south coast led to the implementation of a new system of forest tenures. In 1945, a Royal Commission report on the state on BC's forests by Chief Justice Gordon Sloan recommended the creation of a series of Tree Forest Licenses.³⁹ TFLs were premised on the concept of sustained-yield, the idea that old growth forests could be converted into 'tree farms' which would be scientifically managed and cut on a rotating basis which would preserve the productivity of BC forests on a consistent level in perpetuity.⁴⁰ As a result of this policy much of the Queen Charlottes came to be incorporated within two major TFLs, number 29, which covered nearly 300,000 acres in the South Moresby area and was operated by Rayonier, and number 39, licensed to Weyerhaeuser and occupying most of the area of Masset island.⁴¹ The new TFL system, combined with new harvesting technologies, led to massive clear-cuts on the Queen Charlotte islands, and as it became clear that annual regeneration was not keeping pace with the rate of cuts, the TFL's became a subject of significant public controversy.

In the 1970's a vocal opposition to logging practices was emerging in BC. This movement was, in large part, the product of growing environmentalist critiques of resource extraction originating from settler culture, nevertheless the province's indigenous nations played a central role in the formulating and sustaining this opposition.

³⁹ Rajala, *Up-Coast*, pg. 153

⁴⁰ Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log: Wilderness Politics in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), xv.

⁴¹ Rajala. *Up-Coast*, 153, 161.

By the 1970's indigenous people in BC had been subjected to over a century of disease and harsh government repression of their culture, the Haida were no exception. In many cases cultural expressions central to Haida identity and traditional social organization, such as the potlatch, had been criminalized and forced underground.⁴² Other forms of political organization among indigenous people on the coast had been severely restricted.⁴³ Meanwhile, the impacts of the residential schools systems were being felt throughout Haida society, leading to language and culture loss, along with other much darker legacies. While many Haida worked in the settler economy, including the forestry industry, poverty and unemployment were endemic in Haida communities. At the same time forestry and the reserve system were impacting the ability of traditional resource harvesting activities to provide sustenance outside of the settler economy.

Despite this grim picture, the Haida and other indigenous peoples of BC were able to sustain their cultures and identities. As the worst of the epidemics passed the Haida population began to recover. Despite government policies that forced Haida cultural expressions underground, key institutions such as the hereditary town-based leadership and kinship system organized around the Raven and Eagle moieties survived.⁴⁴ Furthermore, political organizations were maintained throughout this period and in some cases networks of political alliances between the Haida and other indigenous peoples were extended. Organizations like the *Union of BC Chiefs* and the *Native Indian*

⁴² see: Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An Iron Hand Upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre, 1990).

⁴³ For example, in the late-1920's the Canadian government essentially criminalized raising money or hiring lawyers to pursue land claims, even gathering to discuss land claims was illegal without the permission of colonial officials, any Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 111-113.

⁴⁴ Mary Lee Stearns, *Haida Culture in Captivity: The Masset Band* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981)

Brotherhood continued to lobby for native rights and land claims despite the considerable obstacles in their paths.

Then, in the late 1960's and early 1970's important developments considerably expanded the scope for the expression of indigenous cultural and political aspirations in BC. In the 1960's reforms to the Indian Act eliminated many of the restrictions on cultural expression as well as legislation that had, for example, made it illegal for indigenous people to raise money to sue the government, and in 1966 the last Indian agent was removed from the Queen Charlotte Islands.⁴⁵ It was also in this period that a new generation of Haida leaders and activists emerged. Drawing on new ideas and the experience gained from education in settler society, combined with a firm commitment to Haida identity, this new generation was central to the emergence of environmental activism on Haida Gwaii, and the development of a powerful and innovative reassertion of Haida control over their traditional lands. All of which burst onto the public stage with a seemingly routine and innocuous application by Rayonier to move its logging operations in TFL 24 from Talunkwan to Burnaby island. This simple piece of bureaucracy, business as usual in a province where the priority of logging interests had rarely been seriously challenged, ignited a confrontation which gained the attention of the entire country, and produced a serious challenge to the colonial system in BC.

⁴⁵ Stearns, *Culture in Captivity*, 4.

4. THE EMERGENCE OF NATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM ON HAIDA GWAI

In 1974, Rayonier Canada (BC) Ltd., a subsidiary of IT&T, submitted its five-year logging plan to the province. In it, Rayonier proposed to move its operations, which were contracted to Frank Beban Logging Ltd., from Talunkwan Island to block five of TFL 24 on Burnaby island in the South Moresby area.⁴⁶ This proposal met with an unexpected level of local opposition and soon became an issue of national and even international significance. All of which began with one man: Gujaaw.

Born with the English name Gary Edenshaw to an important Haida family, the man who would later take the Haida name Gujaaw, was central to the development of environmental activism on Haida Gwaii. As Elizabeth May relates in her book, *Paradise Won: The Struggle to Save South Moresby*, an insider account from her time as assistant to the Canadian Environmental minister, the whole campaign began when Gujaaw heard about Rayonier's proposal. Gujaaw had spent much of his life traveling and hunting in the South Moresby area and had seen first hand the effects of clear-cut logging on Talunkwan. Thus, when Rayonier proposed the move to Burnaby Island, Gujaaw, with the help of a few locals created the South Moresby Wilderness Proposal, and formed the Islands Protection Committee, later the Islands Protection Society (IPS).⁴⁷ With the help of his uncle Percy Williams, himself a logger and a member of the Skidegate Band Council, Gujaaw was able to enlist the support of the Skidegate Council for his proposal.

In late 1974 the Skidegate Band Council released a statement objecting to the Rayonier proposal on the basis that it threatened an area upon which the Haida relied for

⁴⁶ South Moresby Resource Planning Team, *South Moresby Land Use Alternatives* (Victoria: 1983), 15.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth May, *Paradise Won: The Struggle for South Moresby* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1990), 12-19.

sustenance and “artistic, cultural and spiritual inspiration.”⁴⁸ As a result, the government of BC stopped the plan to log Burnaby and instead gave Rayonier and Frank Beban permission to log Lyell Island in the northern part of the South Moresby Area. This would prove to be a fateful decision. Once again, Gujaaw and the IPS sought to block this move. They organized and submitted a petition in support of their earlier plan to protect all of South Moresby, and in the face of increasing local objections the province formed an Environmental Land Use Committee in 1976, this committee proposed the creation of an ecological reserve at Windy Bay on Lyell island.⁴⁹

Then in 1978, a new provincial Forest Act was passed which provided for the perpetual renewal of the province’s TFLs, including TFL 24. In an attempt once again to block the renewal of TFL 24, Nathan Young, the hereditary chief of Tanu, in the area of Lyell Island, and Gujaaw, seeking standing as a hunter-gatherer, took the minister of forests to court. While the resulting case, *Chief Tanu et al. v. The Ministry of Forests*, did not have the hoped for effect, it did set the pattern for what would become an ongoing series of court struggles over the status of TFLs.⁵⁰ Furthermore, it brought the issue of South Moresby to the attention of the public.

As a result of growing public interest in the South Moresby issue, the province created the South Moresby Resource Planning Team. Comprised of representatives from various government ministries, resource industries, and with Gujaaw once again representing the Haida, in this case as one of two participants from the Skidegate band Council, the planning team was tasked with evaluating the proposal for an ecological

⁴⁸ *South Moresby Land Use Alternatives*, 15.

⁴⁹ Alex Grzybowski, “The Fate of the Queen Charlottes,” *Alternatives: Perspectives on Society Technology and the Environment*, 12, no. 3-4 (1985): 58-59.

⁵⁰ In the 1990’s the Haida submitted a similar challenge to the renewal of TLF 39. See introduction.

reserve at Windy bay as well as the wider question of the fate of logging on South Moresby. In 1983, it submitted its report entitled *South Moresby Land Use Alternatives*, in which it proposed four alternative scenarios involving various levels of protection for South Moresby. Ranging from total protection in the form of a provincial or national park, to a ‘resource emphasis’ in which “habitats are dramatically affected”⁵¹ these four scenarios formed the framework for debates over South Moresby for the next decade. The Planning Teams report also stated that, while “it was once thought that Haida culture would continue as long as there were Haidas, it is clear now that this is not the case. Having survived the cultural domination, repression and diseases of the past, there is a justifiable fear that continued industrial expansion has the capability of putting Haida cultural heritage to an end.”⁵² Here the Haida representatives on the Planning Team were able to articulate an understanding of the forest in which nature and culture were intimately connected, and which was very different from the types of connections that formed the basis for the existing system of forestry in BC. According to the Haida, without sufficient red cedar the Haida could not survive. Furthermore, specific types of trees were needed, only several-hundred year old monumental cedar could be used for certain important practices, and preservation of monumental cedar was at fundamentally at odds with the sustained-yield system.

These early efforts to stop logging on South Moresby demonstrate a number of important dynamics of the emerging Haida environmentalism. First, the development of opposition to logging was a direct result of the history of resource extraction and, thus, colonialism on Haida Gwaii. It was the product of experiences Haida people had with the

⁵¹ *South Moresby Land Use Alternatives*, 161.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 67.

legacy of logging as it affected their capacity to carry out traditional cultural practices. Second, Haida opposition to logging did not emerge fully formed from some mysterious ecological conscience. It was part of an emerging popular movement developed by people like Gujaaw, who were able to mobilize support for their cause within the community. Third, while the early phases of opposition to logging had a popular component they nevertheless relied heavily on formal processes and appeals to state structures. As the movement progressed it would increasingly operate outside of official channels, and become more and more tied into an innovative expressions of Haida anti-colonial aspirations. Finally, Haida participation in various committees and consulting bodies indicates something about the prospects for later co-management structures. While the Haida were able to express their concerns about forestry and have their interests included in reports such as *South Moresby Land Use Alternatives*, this had little effect on the structures of resource management on Haida Gwaii.

This was not because of any epistemological limitations of these processes, rather, the momentum and influence of the forest products industry in BC was simply too great to be overcome so easily. The failure of the Haida to influence provincial forest policy to any significant extent is hardly surprising, considering that in January of 1986 it was discovered that Tom Waterland, the Minister of Forests for BC, had significant investments in Western Pulp Ltd., a subsidiary of Western Forest Products.⁵³ As a result of this discovery Waterland, who had famously endorsed the position of the logging companies on Haida Gwaii by writing that opposing a park “seems like a clear-cut decision” in a visitor’s logbook during a tour of South Moresby in 1984, was forced to

⁵³ John Cuickshank and Jack Danylchuck, “Holds Investment in Forestry Company, BC Minister Quits,” *Globe and Mail*, January 18, 1986.

resign as Forest Minister.⁵⁴ Despite his resignation, Waterland maintained that he had not acted unethically. And, indeed, there is some logic to his position as the perceived conflict of interest created by the Forest Minister owning stock in a forest product company was a microcosm of the economic system of BC as a whole, where economic prosperity had long been tied to maintaining a stable business environment for resource extraction industries. By the early 1980's, when the South Moresby conflict erupted, the provincial government and forestry companies had been working for over a century to create such a stable system. As a result, in order to affect forestry policy, the Haida and their environmentalist allies had to engage a social field in which, in contrast to members of the forest products industry, they held very little social capital.⁵⁵ This field would have to undergo some changes before their interests could be represented.

5. CONFRONTATION ON LYELL ISLAND

By 1985 it was becoming increasingly clear that the strategies that the Haida had been pursuing were not working. Despite the recommendations of the Resource Planning Team, and strong local support for the creation of a park, the province was no closer to creating an ecological reserve in the South Moresby Area. Then in October of 1985, the provincial government announced the creation of yet another committee: the Special Advisory Committee on Wilderness Preservation, later known as the Wilderness Advisory Committee (WAC), which would review a number of proposed parks in the

⁵⁴ Wilson, *Talk and Log*, 193.

⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital" in *The Sociology of Economic Life*, Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg, eds., 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001).

province and, once again, make recommendations to the government.⁵⁶ To the Haida this appeared as just one more instance of stalling on the part of the government. Newly elected president of the CHN, Miles Richardson, explained the Haida position: “the Haida people have made the decision there is to be no more logging in that area. We fully intend to uphold that... We are mobilizing our people to place them on Lyell Island to stop logging.”⁵⁷

What followed was a series of blockades and protracted legal battles that lasted for nearly two years and brought the conflict over South Moresby to the attention of the world. In late October, the Haida began preparations for direct action to oppose logging on Lyell Island.⁵⁸ As Frank Beban Logging prepared to begin cutting on Lyell, the stage was set for confrontation. On October 30th logging trucks moving towards the cutting blocks on Lyell were met by a line of Haida dressed in full ceremonial regalia, accompanied by the sound of traditional drums.⁵⁹ For the rest of that week, logging operations were halted on Lyell as the battle turned to the courtrooms of Vancouver.

Following the obstruction of his logging operations, Beban sought a court injunction to end the blockade. On November 7, a number of Haida, including Miles Richardson and Diane Brown, two key figures in the ongoing struggle, took the stand in court to argue against the injunction.⁶⁰ Refusing legal representation, the Haida addressed Justice Harold McKay directly. Once again they argued that their actions were necessary

⁵⁶ May, *Paradise Won*, 108. Wilderness Advisory Committee, *Wilderness Mosaic: The Report of the Wilderness Advisory Committee*, (Vancouver: Ministry of Environment, 1986), Appendix A.

⁵⁷ May, *Paradise Won*, 109.

⁵⁸ John Cruickshank, “B.C. Indians Vow to Halt Island Logging,” *Globe and Mail*, October 24th, 1985

⁵⁹ May, *Paradise Won*, 114.

⁶⁰ John Cruickshank, “Leave Us More than Stumps, Haidas Tell Judge,” *Globe and Mail*, November 7th, 1985

in order to preserve Haida culture. Diane Brown's testimony at these hearing is of particular interest as it draws on many of the themes central to Haida environmentalism.

In her testimony before Judge McKay, Brown explained her reasons for opposing logging in ways which drew on her understanding of Haida tradition, the impacts of colonialism and resource extraction, as well as her close connection to the forests and waters which were under threat from logging. According to Brown, the struggle against logging was linked to a long history of opposition to colonial attempt to destroy Haida culture. She described how as a young girl, instead of going to the missionary schools on the island her uncle, Watson Price, brought her to their hereditary lands in the area around Lyell island in order to learn traditional food gathering, and the values that came with it. It was there that she was instructed in the principle that the land from which the Haida drew sustenance required their respect, and where she developed what she describes as a spiritual connection to the traditional food she still harvested in South Moresby. She also pointed to her close experience with the aftermath of clear-cutting. She described the failures of restocking plans and the inadequacy of second-growth forests.⁶¹ Browns testimony was informed by a deep place-based connection between Haida identity and Haida Gwaii, one which was threatened by the continuation of logging on Lyell Island.⁶²

Diane Brown's understanding of the stakes of the conflict over South Moresby was shared by the other Haida who testified at the injunction hearing, and despite expressing tentative agreement with their position, McKay eventually ruled that he had

⁶¹ The full text of Diane Brown's testimony is available in Norbert Ruebesaat, "Speaking with Diane Brown" (Masters Thesis, Simon Frasier University, 1987), Appendix A.

⁶² Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

no option but to grant the injunction.⁶³ Given the existing system of forest tenures in BC, McKay had little choice, regardless of any arguments the Haida could muster, the law required McKay to protect Beban's license. The Haida, however, refused to recognize the legitimacy of the political system on which this ownership was based. The Haida position, which was based in an alternate political order premised on values like those Diane Brown described in her testimony, could not form the basis for McKay's decision. The struggle over South Moresby was, in large part, about which of these two political structures, and the respective social natures they produced, would form the basis for action on Haida Gwaii.

In late 1985, the system based in sustained-yield and the TFL's was still in the ascendancy. Armed with the injunction against the blockade, Frank Beban's logging operations went ahead, and the Haida were faced with the decision to either abandon the blockades or continue and face contempt of court charges. In a show of respect for Judge McKay the Haida briefly stood aside and allowed logging to continue. But, the next day the blockades were resumed, after some deliberation it was decided that three Haida elders, Ada Yovanovich, Watson Price and Ethel Jones, would stand on the road and face arrest as a means of demonstrating their commitment to the Haida cause. Thus, on November 15, the three elders, dressed in their traditional red and black blankets and flanked by a solemn group of Haida, were arrested by the RCMP on contempt of court charges.

The blockades continued throughout November and by the end of the month sixty-seven Haida had been arrested in the blockades. Of those arrested, the majority

⁶³ *Globe and Mail*, "B.C. Judge Forbids Haida Indians From Obstructing Island Logging," November 9th, 1985.

faced minor mischief charges, while ten Haida, including Gujaaw and Diane Brown faced contempt charges. Initially, Supreme Court Justice Allan MacEachern considered imposing four to six months of imprisonment for the ten Haida charged with contempt, though their sentences would be suspended if they promised not to return to Lyell for six months. While the Haida continued to block logging on Lyell and consider their next move, a poll in the Vancouver Sun demonstrated that public support was largely behind the Haida's civil disobedience. The Haida's tactics were bringing increasing attention to the issue of South Moresby, and in early December 1985, the charges against most of the Haida arrested on Lyell were dropped and the ten who had been charged with contempt were given suspended sentences, despite their refusal to stay away from South Moresby. Furthermore, after meetings with the CHN, Brian Smith, the attorney general of BC agreed to suspend new cutting permits on Lyell, and the Haida agreed to lift the blockades temporarily as a show of good faith.⁶⁴

For the Haida participants, the blockade on Lyell Island was of wide ranging significance. According to Diane Brown, in a 1986 article written with Alex Grzybowski and published in a small Canadian environmentalist journal, the blockades were part of the formation of "a new land ethic" among the Haida, "based on the fundamental respect for the living and non-living worlds that is essential to the ancient spiritual traditions and on the recognition of the destructive capacities of modern economies and technologies." On Lyell Island, "the clouds of disease and alcohol and foreign ideas parted and the ancient spiritual forces were touched again."⁶⁵ Brown's article captures an important link

⁶⁴ "A Chronology of Conflict," in *Haada Laas: Journal of the Haida Nation*, Special ed., Vol. 2, No.2, (1985), 4.

⁶⁵ Diane Brown and Alex Grzybowski, "Feasting in Haida Gwaii," *Alternatives: Perspectives on Society, Technology and Environment* 13, No.4 (1986): 16.

between the environmental activism on Lyell Island and the emergence of new expressions of Haida values and territoriality. Increasingly the Haida were insisting that governments and resource extraction industries take into account their understandings of how humans should relate to the environment on Haida Gwaii. Furthermore, they were beginning to develop new institutional structures through which these understandings could be put into practice.

One of the most important management structures developed in this period was the Haida Gwaii Watchmen Program. The Haida traditionally carved three human figures on the top of certain totem poles, one looking out to sea and one each looking up and down the coast, these watchmen were meant to symbolize the need for vigilance against impending attacks. Inspired by this historical practice, in the early eighties groups of Haida began traveling to old village sites in the South Moresby area in order to protect their natural and cultural heritage, thus reproducing the role of the traditional watchmen figures. Since the formalization of the Watchmen program by the Skidegate band council in 1981 they have become increasingly involved in a management and educational role in what would become Gwaii Haanas, and helped maintain a concrete Haida presence in South Moresby throughout the conflicts of the 1980's. Furthermore, they constitute a creative redeployment of traditional cultural symbols in environmental politics. While the original Watchmen served to warn of approaching raiding parties, in their modern form they helped to defend against new threats to the islands.⁶⁶

One of the consequences of the increasingly assertive Haida environmentalist activism and its expression through programs like the Watchmen was that for the first

⁶⁶ For more on the Haida Watchmen see: Nancy J. Turner, *The Earth's Blanket: Traditional Teachings for Sustainable Living* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005).

time governments and industry had to at least make a show of considering Haida interests into account. In the wake of the confrontation on Lyell Island, public opinion polls showed widespread support for the Haida within BC, and the situation on South Moresby was began to draw international attention.⁶⁷ To some extent, the success of the Haida position on South Moresby reflected an ongoing cultural shift within settler society as people, increasingly aware of the environmental impacts of industrial culture, sought alternatives elsewhere. With the help of non-native allies like David Suzuki and the Islands Protection Society, the Haida were able to draw on this growing feeling in order to develop considerable public support for their position.⁶⁸ In doing so, the Haida campaign on South Moresby was able to harness an alternate source of social capital by transforming the social categories through which forests were perceived, as well as wider perception of what was at stake in conflicts over logging. The issue was less private property, profits, and the rational management of forests by responsible corporate stewards, and more the fate of a rich and ancient rainforest and the culture that had relied on it for millennia. Throughout this time one constant were the continuous public consultations and government panels investigating environmental issues. In these, the connection between the categories through which the forests were understood and the legitimization of different political and cultural systems was paramount.

⁶⁷ Larry Pynn, "Talk land issue, Polls Tell Bennett," *Vancouver Sun*, November 30th, 1985.

⁶⁸ In 1980, David Suzuki's popular program "The Nature of Things" ran a special episode on the South Moresby conflict, while in 1984 the Island Protection Society published *Islands at the Edge: Preserving the Queen Charlotte Islands Wilderness* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984).

6. PUBLIC CONSULTATION, TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

As the Haida were challenging the legitimacy of TFL 24 through different forms of environmental activism, the provincial government organized two major public consultation bodies on environmental subjects. The first was the West Coast Offshore Exploration Environmental Assessment Panel (henceforth Environmental Assessment Panel) which held a series of meetings in 1984 and 1985 in communities on Haida Gwaii, and in Vancouver, in order to assess residents' views about the potential impacts of oil exploration and drilling in Hecate Strait.⁶⁹ The second was the WAC, which held meetings in a number of communities in BC in order to review proposals for the establishment and amendment of provincial parks in sixteen key areas of wilderness conflicts throughout the province. The conflict surrounding the creation of a park on South Moresby was a top priority for the WAC and in 1986 the committee held two public meetings in Skidegate and Sandspit on Haida Gwaii, as well as receiving written submissions from various groups on the subject. In both of these consultations Haida people expressed their concerns about environmental degradation on Haida Gwaii as well as their marginalization from decision-making and resource management on the islands.

Although they predate the growth of TEK integration and co-management structures in Canada, the WAC and Environmental Assessment Panel share a number of similarities with them. Several of the concerns that scholars have raised in connection with TEK and co-management arise in the context of the consultations of the early and mid 1980's, such as the difficulty in translating different values and knowledge systems

⁶⁹ Catherine Shapcott, "Environmental Impact Assessment and Resource Management, a Haida Case Study: Implications for Native People of the North," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 9, no. 1 (1989): 66.

across cultures, as well as the power imbalances produced by differing levels of familiarity with procedural structures and bureaucracy. In both the WAC and the Environmental Assessment Panel, the Haida participants demonstrated their awareness of these limitations, and participated with some reluctance. They, nonetheless, insisted that their local knowledge be taken into account in resource management decisions. And, crucially, they were willing to back that insistence with political action.

In the course of the meetings of the Environmental Assessment Panel, Haida participants repeatedly stressed both the importance and superiority of their local knowledge and the capacity and legitimacy of the Haida nation's claims over Haida Gwaii. For example, in the Skidegate meeting of September of 1885, Frank Collinson, a traditional chief and member of the CHN, opened the Haida presentation by reading a prepared statement, which referenced international law and the right to self-determination in support of Haida claims to sovereignty, and then pointed to the lack of certainty shown by the representatives of the oil industry about the potential impacts of offshore drilling, which he contrasted with Haida familiarity with the islands and their surrounding waters. Following Frank Collinson, Miles Richardson then went on to provide a statement about Haida understandings of the relationship between people and nature on the islands: "One reason the Haida Nation is still here after ten thousand years, or many thousands of years that we've lived on these islands, is because of the spiritual relationship that our people have had with the resources that we depended on, that we live amongst; that we always knew if we were to survive on Haida Gwaii that those resources must be managed and taken care of. There must be a balance maintained between our people and those

resources and all of the things that affected them.”⁷⁰ This statement about the Haida’s spiritual relationship with nature must be understood in the context of the growing confrontation between the Haida and forestry companies of Haida Gwaii which, when Richardson was speaking before the panel, was just over a month away from the direct confrontations of Lyell Island.

Indeed, on October 29th, just days before Frank Beban’s trucks were turned back on Lyell, the Environmental Assessment Panel held a general meeting at which two participants in the blockades, Michael Nichol and Lavina Lightbrown, spoke. In both of their presentations they emphasized Haida knowledge of the islands as well as the limitations of settler procedures for understanding nature. For example, during the meeting Nichol asked why a particular area was not designated as sensitive to damage by oil production. When the committee responded that they did not know the reason, Nichol pointed out that the area in question, “is one of the very few sockeye-producing rivers on the Charlottes that hasn’t been logged. There’s also an extensive sand beach with a razor clam population, which as you are probably aware, is not all that common on the BC coast. I have intimate knowledge of that place... I say all this to make a point, sir, that local knowledge would assist you in that.”⁷¹ Nichol went on to propose a collaborative effort between the CHN and the government of Canada in order to gather information about local resources, but he emphasized that in any such project the Haida would have to have control over the use of information: “we will compile the information, we will control access to the information. We will be in control of the master data... at this point,

⁷⁰ West Coast Offshore Exploration Environmental Assessment Panel. *Public Hearings, General Session/ West Coast Offshore Exploration Environmental Assessment Panel*, (Victoria: Total Reporting Service, 1986), Vol. 3, 872.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, 112.

in the absence of any agreement between the CHN and any foreign or Canadian governments or whatever, we're not about to reveal our heart and soul."⁷² Here Nichol captures a key issue for what would later become institutionalized as TEK integration and co-management, the centrality of questions of power and control over knowledge. If co-management is to be effective in empowering communities, indigenous people must have a central role in determining its application according to their own values and procedures.

Lavina Lightbrown's presentation at the hearings also emphasized these points. Pointing to the need for the Canadian government to deal with native people differently than they had in the past, Lightbrown argued that "we have different values, different cultures, a different way of dealing with things... We can't deal just on your rules all the time to create better understanding. You must also look at our philosophy and our culture and our value system." Lightbrown went on to emphasize the legitimacy of Haida local knowledge, which had a fundamentally different basis than the knowledge of western resource managers, "I have had to live with the environment you're talking about, and so it is with many of our people, because they don't have a piece of paper on the wall doesn't mean they don't have the expertise."⁷³ In addition to questioning the basis of western knowledge, Lightbrown also pointed to fundamental differences in the ways that knowledge was applied and decision reached in the two cultures: "I feel very lost in this atmosphere. I wish I could deal with you in a longhouse where we stand and talk about things until the issues are resolved. I wish I could stand on one of our beaches and talk to you about how important the environment is that we live in."⁷⁴ Indeed, at various times in the context of resource management consultations on the islands, the Haida did host

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 172.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 175.

government and corporate representatives in traditional settings, developing alternatives to the consultation process that were embedded in Haida cultural forms. But, despite Lightbrown's, and others, insistence on their lack of comfort in the context of official government consultation processes, the Haida repeatedly demonstrated their capacity to use these processes to effectively pursue their interests, especially when combined with political activism and other forms of organization outside of them.

This is clear from Haida participation in the WAC. Despite their suspicion that it was just another form of governmental stalling, a few Haida people did speak at the meetings of the WAC. Their presentations each stressed familiar themes, they emphasized the unique relationship Haida people had with the islands, insisted on the role of colonialism in the conflict and the importance of questions of sovereignty, and each raised questions about the procedural legitimacy of the meetings. The most explicit rejection of the legitimacy of the WAC came from Michael Nichol, who appeared in his role as a chairman of the CHN. In speech before the WAC, Nichol presented the official position of the CHN, which was that any discussion of preservation should be carried out in the context of land claims negotiations. For the CHN the creation of a park on South Moresby was a secondary issue when compared to recognition of the Haida right to decide the fate of the islands. According to Nichol, the Haida nation had already determined that no more logging would occur on South Moresby, what was at issue was the failure of the governments of BC and Canada to recognize this decision. Nichol summed up the impasse by pointing out that those in the government who were ultimately responsible for deciding the fate of South Moresby “know where the proper

forum is. With all due respect, it is not here at the committee level... This is a political problem that has to be dealt with between the CHN and the provincial government.”⁷⁵

In her presentation, Diane Brown also questioned the legitimacy of the WAC. For her, the meetings of the WAC brought to mind the Royal Commission that came to Skidegate in 1913 and announced the creation of reserves on Haida Gwaii: “in 1913 there was such people as you in our community up at Skidegate. Those people’s mission to Skidegate was to tell our leaders how they were going to chop up the islands and survey it.”⁷⁶ Her concern was that, like that 1913 delegation, the WAC was not really concerned with Haida interests, and would simply announce its decision as a *fait accompli* regardless of the views of the Haida. She also, stressed the very different views that Haida people had of the forest, seeing it, not as a mere volume of merchantable timber, but instead as an intimately connected web of relationships and obligations, which “has deep spiritual meaning to the Haida people.”⁷⁷ Particularly striking was her insistence that, rather than an uninhabited wilderness, South Moresby was a place where her Haida ancestors continued to make their homes. Brown explained to the committee that “part of why I’m fighting to preserve that land is to keep a home for those ancestors that are still there today.”⁷⁸ For her, this was an essential component of the Haida connection to the South Moresby area, while the loggers lived in trailers and were ready to leave when the resources were exhausted, the Haida weren’t about to go anywhere: “Our houses are deeply implanted into the ground, our ancestors have cemeteries all over on South

⁷⁵ Michael Nichol, in Wilderness Advisory Committee, *Proceedings at Public Meeting, Skidegate Q.C.I.*, Vol.2, (Vancouver: Ministry of Environment, 1986), 123.

⁷⁶ Diane Brown, in Wilderness Advisory Committee, *Proceedings at Public Meeting, Skidegate Q.C.I.*, Vol.2, (Vancouver: Ministry of Environment, 1986), 74.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

Moresby... we may not be there physically in numbers, but we are there quietly.”⁷⁹ This distinction, between the connectedness of the Haida and the itinerancy of the logging camps, demonstrates the conflicting understandings of the forest that ran throughout the WAC process and the wider debates over South Moresby. For the Haida and their allies South Moresby was unique and special, while their opponents saw it as just one more stretch of forest, largely indistinguishable from any other in the vast sea of trees that covered most of the province.

Gujaaw, the only Haida to speak at the WAC meetings held in Vancouver, was in particularly brilliant form in summarizing the Haida position on South Moresby. In particular one section of his presentation is worth quoting at length:

“Without trying to be derogatory or anything, but you know, seeing Western Forest Products’ really slick and convincing presentation that they had... the thing that I really noticed is the striking resemblance between you people (the WAC committee members) and my friends at Western Forest Products. And to lay our position and let you decide what is going to happen down there is just, you know, it’s so ironic to us. Why should we be having to do that except that it’s the fact of life. I’m not trying to be insulting, there are some nice-looking guys in Western Forest Products.”⁸⁰

Here Gujaaw raises an important point about the resemblance between the committee members and the WFP representatives, which points to the operation of social capital within management debates. The representatives of the forest products industry in many ways shared the same cultural background and social station as the people making policy recommendations, they were used to speaking at meetings like those of the WAC and were able to express their position in language which was familiar to the committee

⁷⁹ Ibid., 79.

⁸⁰ Gary Edenshaw, in Wilderness Advisory Committee, *Proceedings at Public Meeting, Vancouver*, Vol. 12 (Vancouver: Ministry of Environment, 1986), 286.

members; in contrast, for example, to Diane Brown, whose talk of ancestor spirits must have seemed very foreign to the committee members. Through people like Gujaaw and Michael Nichols, the Haida were becoming increasingly adept at dealing with bureaucratic structures like the WAC. Furthermore, they were able to do so without losing their sense of what it meant to be Haida. Throughout their participation in these committees they maintained an insistence on Haida ways of using the land. Indeed, the eventual outcome of their efforts to stop logging on South Moresby provided an opportunity to maintain and in some cases expand traditional food gathering on Haida Gwaii.

In 1986 the WAC published a report on its findings and recommendations entitled *The Wilderness Mosaic*. In it they define wilderness as “an expanse of land preferably greater than 5000 hectares retaining its natural character, affected mainly by the forces of nature with the imprint of modern man substantially unnoticeable.”⁸¹ They recommended a protected area and ecological reserve an area which largely corresponds to the boundaries of the current Gwaii Haanas National Park. Furthermore, they advised that the government consult with the Haida on their interests in the area and provide them with a role in the management of the park. However, the WAC’s recommendations were problematic for two reasons. First, they did not include Lyell Island and would have allowed logging to continue in that area, which the Haida had expended considerable effort to protect. Second, they were merely recommendations, and given BC’s history of ignoring the recommendation of the various committees that had already been appointed,

⁸¹ Wilderness Advisory Committee, *Wilderness Mosaic: The Report of the Wilderness Advisory Committee*, (Vancouver: Ministry of Environment, 1986), 7.

there was considerable doubt that the WAC would have any impact of the province's policies towards Haida Gwaii.

The recommendations of the Environmental Assessment Panel were also largely problematic for the Haida. On one hand, the panel recognized the objections raised by indigenous participants. Pointing out, for example, that “the perception among the aboriginal peoples of the region that traditional rights will be further eroded by their inability to participate in decisions affecting marine resources is likely to be a major socio-economic impact associated with offshore hydrocarbon exploration,” and recommending that mechanisms be developed to ensure their ability to participate.⁸² On the other hand, the panel provided no clear indication of how such a mechanism would be developed, and in the meanwhile recommended that oil exploration continue, within the confines of certain additional precautions.

In both the WAC and the Environmental Assessment Panel the operation of colonial power in BC limited their capacity to give force to indigenous concerns about resource extraction and to empower indigenous communities to engage with decision making processes. While indigenous people were able to express these concerns in ways which were embedded in their cultural understandings of the natural world, and were sometimes successful in having those views included in the recommendations of government panels, ultimately decisions about resource extraction in their territories were made elsewhere. In order for the concerns the Haida participants expressed in these public consultations to be taken into account in management decisions a wider challenge to colonial structures was necessary.

⁸² West Coast Offshore Exploration Environmental Assessment Panel. *Reports and Recommendations of the West Coast Offshore Exploration Environmental Assessment Panel*, (Vancouver, 1986), 32.

7. THE CREATION OF GWAI HAANAS

The recommendations of the WAC included the basic elements of the settlement which the Haida and the provincial government would eventually reach, despite its failure to include Lyell Island in the proposed park – a major sticking point for the Haida. However, with the publication of the WAC's recommendation in early 1986, it was not at all clear whether a park would in fact be created in the South Moresby Area. Furthermore, the creation of a park would only satisfy some of the Haida's interests in the area. After all, their ultimate goal was to reclaim control over their lands, and a park had the potential to be just as threatening to their claims as a TFL. Thus over the next decade or so, the nature and extent of the park on South Moresby was a subject of considerable debate.

Although the Haida blockades of Lyell Island ended in November 1986, the area remained contested. The Haida maintained their position that Lyell was not to be logged and held open the possibility of further direct action. Meanwhile, at least ostensibly, the area was still slated for logging by WFP. This state of affairs was confirmed in March 1986, with the publication of the WAC's final report, *The Wilderness Mosaic*, which recommended a national park on South Moresby which did not include Lyell. In June of 1986 the provincial government agreed in principle with the WAC's report, however, the Haida were hardly placated by this result.

In July 1986, in protest over the ongoing failure of both BC and Canada to address their concerns, 10 Haida, including Miles Richardson and Gujaaw, renounced their Canadian citizenship. Although this was a largely symbolic gesture – the government did not recognize their renunciation on the basis that they weren't citizens of

another recognized nation – it is indicative of the growing nationalist sentiment which was developing among the Haida at this time. A significant element of which was the development of a number of management structures such as the Haida Watchmen program.

Throughout the remainder of 1986 and into 1987, negotiations continued over the potential park on South Moresby. Then in the summer of 1987, after negotiations nearly fell apart several times, the governments of BC and Canada reached an agreement to create a National Park on South Moresby, including Lyell Island.⁸³ The deal called for the Canadian government to provide \$106 million in funding for what was to be called a National Park and Reserve. While, for many in the Haida community and their supporters in settler society, this was an important victory, enthusiasm was tempered by concerns about the future role the Haida would have in the management of the park. As one member of the CHN put it, “we’d rather have a flock of tourists than a flock of loggers... but I’m worried about this. We’ll definitely be keeping a close eye. If anything goes on there that we don’t like we’ll have to get confrontational again.”⁸⁴

In the absence of any clear arrangement between Canada and the CHN about the role of the Haida in the newly created park, the Haida Nation continued their policy of acting as a sovereign authority on the islands. Thus at various times they closed particular sites in South Moresby, and charged visitors fees for the right to travel in the park – a move which was illegal but which tourists seemed to comply with willingly.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, negotiations with the government proceeded towards the development of

⁸³ Elizabeth May provides an insider account of the protracted negotiations in her book, *Paradise Won*, 247-279.

⁸⁴ Jim Edenshaw, as quoted by Miro Certenig in his article “Haida Delight Over Park Tempered with Concerns about Land Claim,” in *Vancouver Sun*, July 13, 1987.

⁸⁵ *Globe and Mail*, “Haida Charging \$25 to Enter Park,” February 2, 1989.

what would be a unique experiment, the first co-operative resource management agreement between the Canadian Government and an indigenous nation.

Finally, in 1993, after more than two decades of standoffs, court battles, and negotiations, the Canadian Government and the CHN signed the *Gwaii Haanas Agreement*. In this document, the two parties agreed to set aside the question of their conflicting title claims in the South Moresby area in order to develop a mutually satisfactory system for administering the newly created park. The agreement created the Archipelago Management Board, an administrative body consisting of two representatives of the Canadian Government and two from the Haida Nation which was tasked with setting the management goals for the park, identifying important ecological and cultural sites, developing programs to assist with the employment of Haida people in the park, and other business.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the agreement made specific allowance for the continuation of important cultural activities and resource harvesting practices in the park, including hunting and trapping, gathering plants for religious and medicinal uses, fishing, and the cutting of trees for artistic and cultural purposes.⁸⁷ The agreement also provided an official role for the Haida Watchmen in the management of the park. While for the most part sidestepping the question of sovereignty, the Gwaii Haanas agreement was a significant step towards the development of a post-colonial relationship between the Haida nation and the Canadian government, one in which the environmental activism of the 1980's was central.

⁸⁶ Parks Canada, *Gwaii Haanas Agreement* (January 1993), http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/plan/plan2a_e.asp (accessed: 08/11/09)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

8. CONCLUSION

Retuning to the present day, and the events of the Islands Spirit Rising, the legacy of the 1980's is clear. The tactics and structures developed in that time, as well as the Haida environmental vision which emerged alongside them, continue to inform the practice of Haida environmentalism on the islands. Since the creation of the Gwaii Haanas/South Moresby National Park, the relationship between human cultures and the natural systems on Haida Gwaii have been undergoing a slow but certain process of restructuring in line with Haida values. A project which has increasingly gained the support of the islands non-Haida residents as well.⁸⁸ Thus, the 1980's and the conflicts on South Moresby were a pivotal moment which continue to have profound consequences for the human and non-human worlds on Haida Gwaii.

This moment was the product of a native environmental politics which drew on tradition and modernity in creative and unexpected ways. It was firmly rooted in Haida values and concepts, an understanding of the forests of South Moresby based on a deep commitment to place, a place which was seen by forestry companies as a certain density of merchantable timber, or by environmentalists as a primeval and undisturbed wilderness, but which the Haida understood as imprinted with their ongoing cultural presence. In order to protect those forests, from which they continued to draw physical and cultural sustenance, the Haida appealed to the growing conservationist sentiment in settler society and employed a variety of strategies of political dissent and civil

⁸⁸ The CHN has recently signed a 'Protocol Agreement' with the Municipalities of Port Clements and Masset, reaching "An understanding about working together for the well-being of the land, waters and people of Haida Gwaii." which affirms the "hereditary responsibilities and the relationship of the Haida people to Haida Gwaii. "Protocol Agreement" in *Haida Laas: Journal of the Haida Nation*, (June 2006).

disobedience. The campaign for South Moresby was a distinctly hybrid product of a colonial modernity in BC.

To say that Haida environmental activism was the product of the Haida encounter with modernity, or that appeals to conservationism in settler society were in part tactically motivated, is emphatically not to say that the values that the Haida referenced were invented. It is an unfortunate reality that when indigenous people engage in politics, or modify existing cultural traditions, such actions are seen as invalidating claims about traditional values. Too often indigenous cultures are treated as frozen in some pre-political past, so that indigenous people who make claims based in a political present don't quite qualify as native enough in the eyes of certain elements of settler culture. Haida environmental activism, although it was creative and employed an, often shrewd, understanding of how to appeal to currents within settler culture, was nonetheless firmly grounded in Haida cultural traditions.

This disclaimer does, however, seem an uncomfortable fit with one of the key points that this essay has made. I intended this paper to be an intervention in ongoing debates about the 'ecological Indian,' and have argued that questions about whether the historical practices of indigenous peoples constituted conservationism, to some extent, miss the point. It is not so much important whether indigenous people were environmentalists in the past; because, in many cases, they are environmentalists now. This might at first seem to contradict the idea that the values and practices of modern Haida environmentalist activism are based on longstanding Haida cultural tradition, however, I think that there is not any real contradiction here at all. As both Shepard Krech and Paul Nadasdy have argued in their own, very different, ways, the conceptual

categories on which notions like conservationism and environmentalism are based did not, and often do not, fit with the way that indigenous cultures have seen the world. Nevertheless, in many cases, as on Haida Gwaii, encounters with colonial resource extraction regimes have led many indigenous peoples to position themselves as conservationist by drawing on cultural practices and values which can serve as the basis for an improved relationship between humans and the natural world. It is important to understand the ways that recent Native environmental movements have formulated indigenous identity and drawn on cultural traditions as well as histories of colonialism.

Central to all this is the operation of power and the possibilities for overcoming colonialism. Haida environmental activism on South Moresby was intimately connected to anticolonial politics and it was at least partially successful in breaking down the colonial system on Haida Gwaii. The movement on South Moresby was successful because the Haida were able to transform the categories through which the forest was understood and through which decisions about the forest were made. By pursuing both the official processes of consultation and government planning, as well as direct civil disobedience the Haida were able to assert their interests in determining the structure of forest policy on Haida Gwaii. As a result, environmental politics on Haida Gwaii have emerged, since the late 1980's as a powerful and innovative challenge to colonialism in British Columbia.

This has important consequences for how we understand co-operative management and the implementation of traditional ecological knowledge. In the case of Haida Gwaii, the development of co-management systems and structures for applying TEK was not the beginning of a process of empowering communities, rather it was the

result of such a process. Or, at least, the development of Haida environmental management structures has occurred in conjunction with the development of a Haida environmental politics without which it would not have been capable of delivering on its liberatory promise. This suggests that the capacity of co-management to serve as empowering for indigenous peoples is directly tied to the extent to which they determine its direction.

It is obviously impossible to know what Haida Gwaii might look like today had forestry continued in the same way it had been when Rayonier submitted their 1974 proposal, but it is certain that it would be very different from its current form. This is perhaps the clearest sense in which, for the last thirty years, the Haida have been engaged in the social construction of nature. Different values and understandings of the forest have had real material impacts on the type of nature that exists on Haida Gwaii. Though much damage has been done, there is reason to be optimistic that recent developments will continue to produce a social nature on Haida Gwaii that is more in line with Haida values, and which will be on the whole much more sustainable for all of the islands' inhabitants. In the process Haida Gwaii may once more become the Islands of the People.

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