Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

MATHEW MURRAY
BSc (University of Victoria, 2009)

“Re-scaling Governance: First Nations and the Challenge of Shale Gas Development in British Columbia”

School of Environmental Studies

Tuesday, August 18, 2015
1:00PM
David Turpin Building
Room B247

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Karena Shaw, School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. James Rowe, School of Environmental Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Deborah Curran, School of Law, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Timothy Hopper, School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The government of British Columbia faces a host of challenges as it attempts to establish a liquefied natural gas export (LNG) sector to reignite shale gas production in northeast BC. Not only must it contend with a competitive and saturated global marketplace, but the industry is also a driver of conflict between the government, proponents, and Treaty 8 First Nations who are exposed to its novel environmental and human health risks. Evidence suggests consultation processes are not protecting First Nations rights and other local interests, so the Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) continue to actively press the government to address critical governance failures. Drawing on primary research, this thesis investigates how those involved at the local level perceive existing shale gas governance arrangements, and what a new governance structure would have to accomplish in order to successfully address local concerns. Interviews were conducted with the FNFN, consultants, local government, and the BC Oil and Gas Commission. Participant observation was carried out in the Fort Nelson First Nation lands department. Occasionally, social conflict, especially in Indigenous-settler contexts, acts as a proxy for the introduction of more deliberative, democratic, and locally empowering governance arrangements that challenge centralization, and other colonial tensions in state resource management schemes. The FNFN have forwarded co-management as a possible means of increasing community authority, to promote a more balanced land use vision for their territory, and implement new planning and management tools to address current governance failures. This thesis will also explore the opportunities and limitations of comanagement in this context. The FNFN face several distinct contextual challenges as they attempt to negotiate a more balanced vision of development in their territory in the face of this new and complex industry. This thesis discusses critical governance and authority issues in resource conflicts in colonial settings, as well as the challenges that globally organized extractive capitalist industries pose for movements towards new governance arrangements and sustainable local economies.