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

of

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BA (Hons) (Dalhousie University, 2014)

“Climate Justice in the Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement:
Critical reflections on youth environmental organizing in Canada”

School of Environmental Studies

Tuesday, August 28, 2018
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B017

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

External Examiner:
Dr. Angela Carter, Department of Political Science, University of Waterloo

Chair of Oral Examination:
Prof. Michael Eby, School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, UVic

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

The fossil fuel divestment movement is a directed-network campaign that strategically uses economic and ethical arguments to challenge the social license of the fossil fuel industry. Fossil fuel divestment campaigns have become an induction point for the youth climate movement in North America (Grady-Benson & Sarathy, 2015; Rowe et. al., 2016). The analytical and operational approaches to social change employed by the fossil fuel divestment movement are having a ripple effect on the political orientation of a new generation of activists and environmental leaders. This thesis explores concepts and practices of climate justice in the fossil fuel divestment movement on Canadian university campuses, as a flashpoint in the shifting terrain of environmentalism. The research uses qualitative methods to analyze three case study campaigns, as well as supplemental interviews from additional campaign members and national coordinating organizations like 350.org and the Canadian Youth Climate Coalition. This project contributes to a growing body of literature concerned with applied political theory (Rowe et. al., 2016; Schifeling & Hoffman, 2017) and the social impacts of fossil fuel divestment (Bratman et al, 2016; Grady-Benson & Sarathy, 2015; Mangat et al., 2018), providing new insight into the potential of divestment organizing to disrupt dominant narratives of mainstream environmentalism. Fossil fuel divestment organizers are articulating climate justice analysis that calls for transformative system change, including critiques of neoliberal capitalism that are predominantly grounded in climate justice approaches.