



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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

of

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BA (University of Guelph, 2006)

“When consultation becomes a checkbox, what’s the fracking point?: Colonial constraints on social learning processes in Northeast BC and the Fort Nelson First Nation’s New Approach to resource governance”

Department of Geography

Wednesday, August 26, 2015

10:00AM

David Turpin Building
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Michele-Lee Moore, Department of Geography, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Christopher Darimont, Department of Geography, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

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Dr. Karen Courtney, School of Health Information Science, UVic

Abstract

This Master's thesis seeks to develop a better understanding of how Indigenous voices can be included in water governance. As a starting point, social learning theory, collaborative governance and Indigenous and Canadian relations were carefully studied. Despite the large body of research on collaborative governance with first nations and on social learning in water governance, little is known specifically about social learning processes in colonial contexts. Using grounded theory and Indigenous methodologies, this research investigates how the current approach to implementing the Province's legal constitutional, "duty to consult" affects social learning processes and the inclusion of Indigenous people in water governance. Findings indicate that the laws and policies that have been created based on the Crown's interpretation of Treaty 8, constrain social learning as they do not allow for the flexibility needed for a reframing process that might bring the actors to a common understanding of Treaty 8, the treaty relationship and its application as such today, as a basis for future collaboration. Without reframing processes, the consultation process is perceived by the Fort Nelson First Nation to lack legitimacy and neutral facilitation. Subsequently, consultation is seen as a checkbox that must be completed, but fails to include First Nations' knowledge, interests and concerns about impacts from development and appropriate accommodation. This research also investigates a new governance arrangement emerging in Northeast BC, which changes the way Fort Nelson First Nation voices are included in decision making. Processes of nation building and capacity building contribute to Fort Nelson First Nation's New Approach to governance. The New Approach sees changes to the sites of authority, revenue and norms and beliefs, resulting in a governance innovation that circumvents government's role in governance by creating a closer working relationship between industry and the Fort Nelson First Nation. The results are development planning and decisions that better reflect the Fort Nelson First Nation's concerns and interests in the near future.