Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of
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M.Sc. (Université de Montréal, 2008)
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“Standing up for sputc: Nuxalk eulachon management and well-being”

Social Dimensions of Health

Thursday, April 11, 2019
10:30 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Grant Murray, Department of Geography, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Bernie Pauly, School of Nursing, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Christopher Darimont, Department of Geography, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Jennifer Silver, Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics, University of Guelph

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Fraser Hof, Department of Chemistry, UVic

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

The coastal landscape currently known as British Columbia, Canada represents a complex and rapidly evolving site of collaboration, negotiation, and conflict in environmental management, with important implications for Indigenous community well-being. I ground this work in the understanding that settler-colonialism and its remedies, resurgence and self-determination, are the fundamental determinants of Indigenous health and related inequities. In particular, I take interest in systemic mechanisms of dispossession and resurgent practices of (re)connection and knowledge renewal as mediators of the relationship between environmental management and Indigenous health and well-being.

This work is based in over four years of observation, participation, and leadership in a case study of the Nuxalk Sputc (Eulachon) Project, a community-directed process that aimed to document and articulate Nuxalk knowledges about eulachon (Thaleichthys pacificus). Functionally extirpated from the region since 1999, these highly valued fish provide an example of contested management jurisdiction and resurgent Indigenous environmental practice. The Sputc Project therefore served as an ideal focal point for the interrogation of relationships between Indigenous well-being, research methodologies, engagement and representation of Indigenous knowledges, and environmental management.

Applying a critical, decolonizing, community-engaged approach, this work comprises four papers, each drawing on a particular thread of the knowledge generated through this case study. In Paper 1, I seek to establish the connection of eulachon and their management to Nuxalk health and well-being. Detailing three stages of this relationship (abundance, loss, and resurgence), I show how the effects of environmental management, and resulting dispossession or reconnection, are mediated by cultural knowledges, practices, and relationships. Turning to research methodology in Paper 2, I examine how Nuxalk people and knowledge systems guided the Sputc Project process, interrogating the role of critical, decolonizing, Indigenous theories in the elaboration of Indigenous research methods in environmental management and beyond. In Paper 3, I consider how the Sputc Project respectfully articulated and represented Nuxalk knowledges in order to retain relational accountability and strengthen Nuxalk management authority, while promoting values, practices, and relationships essential to Nuxalk well-being. In Paper 4, I demonstrate how the Sputc Project strengthened Nuxalk management authority from the ground up, detailing the practical
management priorities that arose through the project process, including those related to interjurisdictional engagement of Indigenous leadership.

As a resurgent research and management process, the *Sputc Project* re-centered Nuxalk knowledges, voices, priorities, and leadership while advocating Indigenous leadership in environmental management. This work ends with a reflection on its implications for decolonizing health equity and environmental impact assessment frameworks, research methods and engagement with Indigenous knowledges, and environmental management processes. I highlight how Indigenous health and well-being is supported by ancestral knowledges and reconnecting relationships, including those involving people, places, and practices related to environmental management. In so doing, I emphasize the importance of Indigenous leadership (vs. knowledge integration) in environmental management. A final section seeks to inform decolonizing community-engaged research, sharing limitations and learnings related to appropriate engagement, articulation, and representation of Indigenous knowledges by Indigenous people.