



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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.