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

of

OLIVIA BURGESS

BA (University of Victoria, 2012)

“Reconciling Indigenous Exceptionality: Thinking Beyond Canada’s Petro-State of Exception”

Department of English

Monday, December 9, 2019
2:30 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room C316

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Nicole Shukin, Department of English, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Heidi Stark, Department of Political Science, UVic (Outside Member)
Dr. John Borrows, Faculty of Law, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. John Lutz, Department of History, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Karen Urbanoski, School of Public Health and Social Policy, UVic

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

This thesis is concerned with the Canadian state’s rhetoric of reconciliation, the logic of exceptionality that supports it, and the ways this logic helps soften Indigenous communities for resource development. In formulating my theoretical framework, I draw from Agamben’s theories of sovereignty and states of exception, Mark Rifkin’s reworking of Agamben’s theories to accommodate a settlercolonial context, Pauline Wakeham’s application of the logic of exceptionality to rhetorics of apology and terrorism, and Glen Coulthard’s concepts of translation (as the attempt to bring Indigenous discourses and life ways into the realm of a Western/settler-colonial discourse of state sovereignty) and grounded normativity (as a way of making visible the contingency of such narratives of state sovereignty). Following the work of James Tully and John Borrows in *Resurgence and Reconciliation*, particularly the argument that transformative reconciliation must involve reconciliation with the living earth, my project aims to show that official reconciliation actually prevents the possibility of transformative reconciliation because of the role it plays in furthering an extractivist agenda by “exceptionalizing” Indigenous peoples and life-ways to rhetorically contain Indigenous anti-colonial or anti-industry actions, physically contain Indigenous dissenters during moments of crisis (i.e. states of exception), pre-emptively frame Indigenous dissenters as terroristic, and foreclose discussions of ongoing colonialism.