



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

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

of

DANA COOK

BSc (Simon Fraser University, 2011)

**“A Powerful Landscape: First Nations Small-Scale Renewable Energy
Development in British Columbia”**

School of Environmental Studies

Monday, January 14, 2019
12:30 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B021

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Karena Shaw, School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Judith Sayers, School of Environmental Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

External Examiner:

Dr. Emily Eaton, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Regina

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Patti-Jean Naylor, School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Action on climate change will require an increase in renewable energy projects to support electrification in the transition away from burning fossil fuels. Indigenous peoples throughout Canada are developing community-owned small-scale (below 1MW) renewable energy projects and are interested in developing more. Despite First Nations' involvement and interest, there is a lack of research into the impact of these projects for communities. This thesis explores how small-scale renewable energy projects developed by First Nations communities in British Columbia (BC) might contribute to supporting a just energy transition. The main sources of data drew from a province-wide survey (First Nations Clean Energy Survey), and the case study with a remote First Nation with multiple small-scale renewable energy projects in operation—the Village of Skidegate on Haida Gwaii. This research found that small-scale projects are a distinct experience within the renewable energy sector, one that is offering First Nations communities an accessible form of power production that provides myriad of benefits. Some benefits were easy to measure, such as cost savings and greenhouse gas reductions, while the majority of benefits were not as easy to quantify such as increasing connection and engagement with energy, increasing self-sufficiency, providing a vision of a future free of oil and gas reliance, community pride and education. Both these immeasurable and measurable benefits add up to one important method that First Nations are using to enforce self-determination and build community resilience.