



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

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

of

ERYN FITZGERALD

BA (University of Alberta, 2008)

**“Powering Self-Determination:
Indigenous Renewable Energy Developments in British Columbia”**

School of Environmental Studies

Friday, December 14, 2018

9:30 A.M.

David Turpin Building

Room B255

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Karena Shaw, School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Judith Sayers, School of Environmental Studies, UVic (Member)

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Dr. Matthew Murphy, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Aaron Devor, Department of Sociology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Indigenous peoples are increasingly using renewable energy technologies to meet a variety of objectives. In so-called Canada, there has been a dramatic rise in Indigenous renewable energy projects due to economic, environmental, and legal trends. Nowhere are these trends more evident than in the province of British Columbia (BC). In the early 2000s, the colonial government privatized the electricity system, sparking a rapid expansion of run of river hydro projects on Indigenous lands. Over time, and with much effort, First Nations in BC began to participate in and ultimately benefit from the shift to independent power production. However, just as they increased their involvement in the renewable energy sector, the government withdrew its commitment to purchase private power for the foreseeable future. One way to understand the implications of this policy reversal is to examine it through the lens of energy justice. Using a justice framework, this research explores how First Nations are involved in renewable energy developments in BC as well as the significance of this involvement for Indigenous self-determination. Drawing from two case studies and survey data from First Nations across the province, I argue that the decline in power procurement programs is not simply a barrier but an injustice.

I first illustrate how provincial energy policies have shaped and been shaped by Indigenous renewable energy ambitions. While First Nations were not the intended beneficiaries of these policies, they nonetheless seized the opportunity to sell electricity to the grid. I also compare the approaches of two Indigenous power producers, Kanaka Bar Indian Band and Sts'ailes First Nation, arguing that they have generated important economic benefits by strategically navigating the private power industry. Lastly, I document how members of Kanaka Bar have leveraged the Kwoiek Creek hydro project to address the adverse impacts of colonization and further their aims of self-determination. Based on these findings, I conclude that Indigenous renewable energy projects are themselves forms of energy justice and as such, must be supported through a variety of means.