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

of

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BSc (McGill University, 2012)

“Borders don’t protect areas, people do”: Multi-scalar insights to promote the development and support of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas

School of Environmental Studies

Monday, June 15, 2020
11:00 A.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Natalie Ban, School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Jonaki Bhattacharyya, School of Environmental Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Jenn Burt, BC Marine Program Lead, Nature United

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Claire Cutler, Department of Political Science, UVic

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

Given the ongoing biodiversity decline during a time of Indigenous resurgence, Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) are garnering interest from the academic community, Indigenous and state governments, and protected area practitioners. Though Indigenous forms of land and sea protection have existed for millennia, these actors are exploring how IPCA development and support can meet needs to protect biodiversity and respect Indigenous rights and roles in conservation. My main research objective was to advance academic and practical applications of IPCAs by drawing from global IPCA research while assisting the Kitasoo/Xai’xais Nation’s IPCA planning process. I investigated two research questions: 1. What are the key successes, challenges, and lessons from IPCA research globally? 2. What can we learn from the Kitasoo/Xai’xais Nation’s rationale and process for developing an IPCA?

To answer my first question, I reviewed 58 papers, describing 86 specific IPCA initiatives involving at least 68 Indigenous Peoples across 25 countries. Indigenous Peoples established IPCAs independently and through local- and broad-scale partnerships. Where state IPCA support existed, it was through formal legislation, agreements, and policies, and informally through local relationships and shared values. IPCAs created socio-cultural, political, and ecological benefits. Challenges limited benefits while demanding additional resources for mitigation. I recommend that states and other external actors create/improve IPCA policies, legislations, and resources as defined by Indigenous Peoples; facilitate Indigenous leadership to shape external IPCA establishment and development mechanisms; and create internal Indigenous engagement/partnerships mechanisms. I suggest that Indigenous Peoples would benefit from building partnerships to support and manage their IPCAs. Finally, I recommend that IPCA managers commit more resources, particularly in monitoring and management that integrates management priorities with local and larger scale social-environmental issues.

To answer my second question, in collaboration with the Kitasoo/Xai’xais Nation, we used participatory action research to assist efforts to plan a land-and-sea IPCA in Kitasoo/Xai’xais Territory. Together, we used mixed methods to summarize the Nation’s rationale and process. IPCA development is an iteration of ongoing efforts to address limitations of state protected areas to better reflect Kitasoo/Xai’xais rights and responsibilities while preserving culture,
biodiversity, and economic opportunity. The Kitasoo/Xai’xais process is rooted in long-term Territory planning and contemporary stewardship capacity building, has benefitted from global IPCA research, and has ongoing multi-generational engagement. The Nation faces challenges similar to other protected areas and is additionally burdened by ongoing colonization impacts. To address these challenges, the Nation is seeking state legislative IPCA recognition, applying Indigenous and complementary western stewardship approaches, and pursuing responsibility-based partnerships.

This research makes both practical and academic contributions. It assisted the Kitasoo/Xai’xais IPCA process by contributing to planning and documentation, to be used and modified by the Nation to implement current and future IPCAs. Other Indigenous organizations can adapt the lessons and processes described for their IPCA interests. Additionally, this work provides recommendations for states and other actors at various scales to improve IPCA support and recognition. This work also contributes to literature which highlight Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, including IPCAs, as potential pathways towards supporting biodiversity conservation and Indigenous resurgence.