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Aboriginal values and resource development in Native Space: Lessons from British Columbia



Titi Kunkel

University of Northern British Columbia, Canada

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ABSTRACT

In British Columbia, Canada, resource development takes place within the traditional territories of Aboriginal people, often without signed treaties or agreements. This frequently sparks opposition from local Indigenous communities, even in locations where economic benefits are promised in exchange for access to land. This paper casts light on this subject through a case study of resistance among the Tsilhqot'in Indigenous people, who are protesting against the development of a multi-million dollar gold-copper mine within their traditional territory. Drawing on findings from Community-Based research and a review of documents from Tsilhqot'in court cases, this paper provides a deepened understanding about the relationship the Tsilhqot'in people have with their land. The major themes covered are as follows: (1) Aboriginal community values, which are critical to the survival of such people; and (2) the contemporary culture of the Tsilhqot'in people, including profiling how some women continue to survive on the land. The study captures the dynamics of Aboriginal values at the project location and how these are affected by resource development activities.

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1. Introduction

For millennia, Canada's Indigenous populations have sustained themselves on the land through traditional and subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and the gathering of foods and medicinal plants. The land, which is a geographic, social, and historical space used by the people, is commonly known as their traditional territory. This space had been the subject of the Native land question throughout the history of British Columbia (BC) in particular. The areas within which the country's Indigenous groups have traditionally sustained themselves has been termed 'Native Space' (Brooks, 2004; Harris, 2002; and Morris and Fondahl, 2002). There are several studies which explore the engagement of Aboriginal¹ communities and resource development within Native Space in Canada (e.g. Anderson et al., 2006; Dana et al., 2008; Gibson and Klinck, 2005; Hipwell et al., 2002; Keeling and Sandlos, 2009). While some communities have welcomed development, others have resisted it within their space.

This paper details a case of the latter, exploring the relationship the Tsilhqot'in people have with their Native Space, and offering

explanations for why they have resisted resource development. The Tsilhqot'in people are mainly traditionalists, and their history of resisting resource development within their Native Space dates as far back as 1864 (Bhattacharyya et al., 2012). The recent proposal for a gold-copper mine project presented an opportunity to learn more about the people, their relationship with the land, and why they resist resource development. This paper captures the dynamics of the resistance of the Tsilhqot'in people within their Native Space in the Cariboo Chilcotin region of BC. Drawing on findings from Community-Based research and documents from Tsilhqot'in court cases, this paper provides insight into why these people resist resource development within their traditional territory. The major themes addressed are: (1) Aboriginal community values, which are critical to the survival of such people; and (2) the contemporary culture of the Tsilhqot'in people, including knowledge of how some women continue to survive on the land. The paper captures the details of Aboriginal values at the project location, and how these are affected by resource development.

2. Research objectives, methods, and methodology

In this study, a hybrid methodology and mixed methods were employed. It combined Indigenous ways of 'knowing' with grounded theory, as a cultural insider approach was necessary

E-mail address: Titi.kunkel@unbc.ca (T. Kunkel).

¹ Aboriginal people are the Indigenous people of Canada. The three broad groups of Aboriginal people are First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. In this paper, Aboriginal and Indigenous people have been used interchangeably.

within the traditional setting of the Tsilhqot'in community. This approach is more sensitive and responsive to non-verbal cues, the ability to ask more meaningful questions, and to hear and see through a different lens (Bishop, 2005).

Data collection for the study included my participation in the two federal Environmental Assessments conducted for the gold and copper mining project, one in 2010 and the other in 2013. A review of 37 transcript volumes from the 2010 Environmental Assessment (EA) of the gold and copper mine project was conducted as part of the study. Content analysis of these transcripts consists of quotes from 101 First Nations participants. The participants ranged in ages from community elders, adults, to youth. These participants were mostly Tsilhqot'in people and other Aboriginal people who used the lands in areas which were to be affected by the mining project. The Panel Hearings were taped and transcribed as part of the process, and the transcripts were made publicly available.

Data were also gathered via participant observation at two community gatherings, through 'chats' and semi-structured interviews. The Tsilhqot'in have not been the subject of much research. Most of the work conducted within the community over the past 25 years has been for the purpose of legal actions taken against the provincial government. Content and thematic analysis of extant data, which included documents and transcripts from the *Tsilhqot'in Nation vs British Columbia* court case, was used. The Tsilhqot'in were seeking declaration of an Aboriginal title and Aboriginal rights to an area of their Native Space (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2007). The case commenced in the Supreme Court of BC in 2002 as an amalgamation of other court actions against forestry activities, first started in 1989, which then led to the "Nemiah Trapline Action" of 1990 and the "Brittany Triangle Action" of 1998 (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2007). A vast amount of oral history and traditional evidence as well as a number of historical documents were presented at the trial which lasted 339 days (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2014). A review of these court case documents was conducted to develop an understanding of patterns and trends which were then affirmed by other data sources. These documents also provided information about historical and current lands and resource usage by the Tsilhqot'in people within the region.

Participant observation was employed to further understand the cultural lens of the Tsilhqot'in people because of my different indigenous background and knowledge. As a result, I attended two Tsilhqot'in community gathering events, one at Fish Lake and the other at Brittany Triangle, in the autumn of 2012. Both events were held at different locations within the Tsilhqot'in territory. The locations were sites of historical and contemporary significance to the people. Community members, including those who lived in urban areas, and guests camped at these locations for the duration of the events. At the events, I had numerous conversations with Tsilhqot'in people and listened to speeches made by various community members and leaders.

Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indigenas (2006) reported on how resource development activities on Indigenous lands affected women. It was therefore important to hear from some Tsilhqot'in women. I, therefore, interviewed five Tsilhqot'in women as part of this study. Three of the interviews were conducted at Fish Lake. The other two were conducted at the Brittany Gathering. Key questions asked at the Fish Lake Gathering were as follows:

- How do Tsilhqot'in women utilize their ancestral lands?
- How much moose, fish, berries, and medicinal plants do families require for food and for other purposes?
- How do the women preserve and use their harvests?

The answers complemented what was presented by Tsilhqot'in people at the Environmental Assessment Panel Hearings. Key questions asked at the Brittany Gathering were as follows:

- How do Tsilhqot'in people enhance their knowledge of the land?
- How do the people know what they know?

During the interviews, I took notes as the participants spoke. At the end of the interviews, these notes were reviewed with individual participants.

This study was conducted following a framework for the ethical conduct of research involving Aboriginal people, as set out by Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statements (Government of Canada, 2014). Major aspects of the framework included community engagement in the research process, and respect for the community's customs, traditions, traditional knowledge, and their governing authorities. The Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) principles of data involving Aboriginal communities were also applied (Schnarch, 2004). For this particular research, a significant amount of data gathered and the research outcome became public information. However, informed consent was obtained from the Tsilhqot'in National Government and the Xeni Gwet'in community prior to conducting the study. In addition, this study received approval from the university's Ethics Review Board.

For the data collection and interpretation methodology, a framework for understanding Tsilhqot'in epistemology, which was developed for a different project, was used (Kunkel, 2014, 184). This framework, present in Fig. 1, guided the data collection, the interpretation and analysis. The framework also provided a means of situating oral histories and stories within different eras, as dated by anthropologists.

Transcribed data from the EA were reduced and coded for cultural themes using QSR NVivo 9 software. To bring together the cultural themes generated, inductive elaboration was needed (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). A grounded theory approach was used throughout the data collection and analysis to generate theory (Charmaz, 2005).

Triangulation of meanings and interpretations was important in this research because of the Indigenous setting. Participation in community gatherings was equally important as it provided a setting for me to gain better understanding of the traditionalist lifestyle and worldviews of the Tsilhqot'in people. The interviews with the women and the many conversations with community members provided clarity, accuracy, interpretations, and validation for data in addition to providing more information.

3. Resource development and Aboriginal space in BC

The history of Aboriginal usage of land in BC has not been well-documented. In the early days, the settlers assumed that the

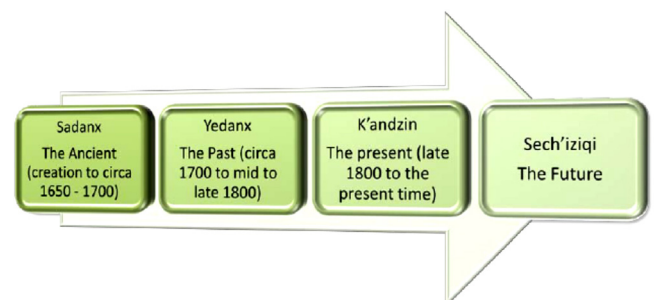


Fig. 1. Tsilhqot'in epistemology framework.

Source: Kunkel, 2014, p. 184

Indigenous people who did not have treaties had ceded their lands when BC joined the confederation. However, this was not the case. In 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled, in the *Delgamuukw* case, that the Aboriginal people without treaty in BC had not ceded their lands. There are now Aboriginal rights and title in the province. The court also ruled that Aboriginal title consists of the right to exclusively use and occupy land including the right to choose how the land can be used (*Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, 1997). The ruling acknowledged that Aboriginal people have asserted rights and title to their Native Space which consequently changed the landscape of decision making over these lands. Subsequently, the Province of BC was legally obligated to consult with First Nations people and to accommodate their interests on land and decisions governing resource extraction which could impact Aboriginal interests.

After the *Delgamuukw* case, the BC Treaty process was established to address land claims. However, this was expensive and time consuming. A small number of communities have since managed to sign treaties in BC, several are in progress, and still a significant number of communities have opted not to participate (*BC Treaty Commission*, 2001). The presence of asserted Aboriginal title to resource rich locations in BC has called into question who has jurisdiction over development activities. The *Tsilhqot'in* court case ruled that the province had no jurisdiction over resource development on Aboriginal titled lands:

Aboriginal title land is not “Crown land” as defined by provincial forestry legislation. The provincial **Forest Act** does not apply to Aboriginal title land. The jurisdiction to legislate with respect to Aboriginal title land lies with the Federal government pursuant to s. 91(24) of the **Constitution Act, 1967**.

The Province has no jurisdiction to extinguish Aboriginal title and such title has not been extinguished by a conveyance of fee simple title (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2007, p. iv).

The unsettled land claims and jurisdiction issues continue to be a unique problem for resource developers and Aboriginal communities in BC.

The constraint within Native Space was not limited to unsettled land claims in BC but also shrinking spatial boundaries (*Bruyneel* 2007; p. xv). Native Space was the foundation upon which the Aboriginal people without treaty in BC intended to rebuild their economies (*Anderson et al.*, 2006). The boundaries of this space had been shrinking due to the land and resource development needed to sustain the growing settler population (*Bruyneel*, 2007; *Harris*, 2002; *Marsden*, 2005). The majority of Native Space in and around Central Interior BC had become reconfigured and relocated into the market economy, and now requires permits and licenses to develop (*Harris*, 2002; *Willems-Braun*, 1997). For the most part, Aboriginal use of land has been relegated to reserve lands – tracts permanently preserved for them (*Harris*, 2002; *Hipwell et al.*, 2002; *Woodward*, 1989, p. 222). The people have continued to assert their Aboriginal title and rights to the tracts of land by virtue of being the sole original occupants of this space prior to colonization (*Morse*, 1985, pp. 48, 617). As a result, several resource development activities within Native Space have culminated in court cases, some of which have ruled in favour of Indigenous people (see *Missens et al.*, 2014).

The failure to build human capacity for Aboriginal communities located in remote and isolated regions has contributed to their economic marginalization. With little or no economic bases, the people have continued to sustain themselves by relying on harvesting wildlife and natural resources within their Native Space (*Hipwell et al.*, 2002). As *Keeling and Sandlos* (2016) explain, the prevailing sentiment from industry and government in Canada was that exclusion of Northern Indigenous communities from the benefits of mining had become history. But despite this change in

attitude, mining and resource development jobs in Central Interior BC have done very little to improve the lives of the Aboriginal people in that region.

Resource extraction activities which compete with First Nations people for land threaten the traditional and cultural activities of Aboriginal people and their environmental ethics (*Keeling and Sandlos*, 2009; *Sandlos and Keeling*, 2016; *The Human Rights Clinic*, 2010). Some Aboriginal communities have engaged successfully in pipeline development activities in Canada's North West Territories (*Meis Mason et al.*, 2012). However, *Sandlos and Keeling* (2016) found that the impacts of mining activities on Aboriginal communities did not end with mine closure but continued beyond remediation, reclamation, and restoration. Aboriginal people believe that it is essential for development activities to accommodate their epistemological, ontological and historical vocations (*Hindle et al.*, 2005).

There have been some reports of communities having increased their participation within the resource economy (*Missens et al.*, 2014, 2007). This, however, had not been the case with most Aboriginal communities in the Cariboo Chilcotin region of BC (see Fig. 2). There have been mines such as Gibraltar and Mount Polly established in the region but these Aboriginal communities have received few tangible economic benefits from these projects. This in part explains why the proposal for a gold-copper mine project in the region was met with opposition from Aboriginal communities. The project was proposed within the traditional territory of the *Tsilhqot'in* community, an Indigenous First Nations Aboriginal group in the Cariboo Chilcotin region of British Columbia. This proposal provided an opportunity to understand firsthand what the values of the *Tsilhqot'in* people are and how their culture is intertwined with specific geographic locations.

4. *Tsilhqot'in* engagement in development activities

The *Tsilhqot'in* people comprised a nation which consisted of six First Nation communities namely Esdilaigh (Alexandria), Tsi Del Del (Alexis Creek), Tl'esqox (Toosey), Tl'etinqox-t'in (Anaham), Xeni Gwet'in (Nemah Valley), and Yunesit'in (Stone) Bands. These First Nation Bands were formed under the Indian Act of 1876 and each was governed by the same Act. All of the communities had been relegated to rural and remote reserve lands within their Native Space. Back in 1864, they had successfully stopped the



Fig. 2. The Cariboo Chilcotin Region of British Columbia, Canada (BC Stats, 2011).

construction of a road through their lands into the gold field of the Cariboo which led to a war (Bhattacharyya et al., 2012; Lutz, 2008). Paradoxically, stopping the road had led to the isolation of their communities which subsequently led to the preservation of their lands, language, and culture from incumbent settler activities. The Tsilhqot'in people relied on forest resources and wildlife for their subsistence, for their cultural and traditional activities, to meet the needs of their daily lives, and also for their wage economy. The threat posed by the logging of marketable timber and exploration activities for gold and copper discovered within their Native Space and at close proximity to the Xeni Gwet'in community was, therefore, met with resistance by the people.

Led by Chief Roger William of the Xeni Gwet'in community, the Tsilhqot'in Nation sued the provincial government in a case which lasted 25 years. The 2014 outcome of the case was a landmark victory for the Tsilhqot'in Nation and Aboriginal communities in Canada. The people received a verdict of the declaration of Aboriginal title to an area of their Native Space which was approximately 1750 km² in size. This was the first declaration of Aboriginal title in Canada. In the same year, the community was successful in warding off Taseko Mines, a mining company that had proposed to develop a gold and copper mine in an area of cultural and spiritual significance to the people within Nemiah Valley.

Nemiah Valley and its surroundings are at the heart of the ancestral lands of the Tsilhqot'in people. Lakes in this valley are pristine and fed by glaciers. The Xeni Gwet'in people, who lived in this valley, had taken a traditionalist position with regards to resource development within their Native Space. They had worked with the provincial government to set aside lands within their Native Space as provincial parks. Over 233,000 ha of land in the valley had been set aside as a provincial park in 1994 (British Columbia, 2016). An additional 779,000 ha were also set aside as wilderness preserves and protected areas. This remote area formed part of a region in which the Tsilhqot'in people had proven Aboriginal rights and also had asserted Aboriginal title. (Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia, 2007). Taseko Mines proposed the gold and copper Prosperity Mine Project at Fish Lake (locally known as Teztan Biny) and the Little Fish Lake watershed in Nemiah Valley in 1990 (Turkel, 2007). The multimillion dollar gold and copper project was proposed in a location 25 km from one of Xeni Gwet'in's reserves. The company commenced its EA of the project in 1993. This process would become a part of the newly enacted BC *Environmental Assessment Act* in 1995. But by then, the company had spent more than CAN\$40 million on exploration (Turkel, 2007). The EA under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* started as a comprehensive study in 1997 (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010b; Turkel, 2007). The Tsilhqot'in people had always maintained that the project area was of cultural significance to their communities and they did not support the mine's development. The project was put on hold by the proponent due to weak market prices and then re-visited again in 2002. Taseko Mine evaluated several options for developing the mine and proposed the best financial option which involved the loss of Fish Lake, a fish-bearing resource containing thousands of trout. The potential for the development to cause significant adverse environmental effects that could not be readily mitigated and also the loss of Fish Lake which was of cultural and spiritual significance to Aboriginal people required that the project be referred to the Minister of Environment (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010b). The provincial government proceeded with its own independent assessment of the project and issued a license to the proponent in 2008. In January 2009, a Review Panel was assigned by the federal government for the project. This superseded the provincial approval. The federal environmental assessment proceeded in 2010. The outcome of the assessment was negative and the project did not proceed. However, in an

unprecedented move, the company amended the project plan and re-submitted it as a new proposal for another assessment. The amended project was assessed in 2012 and was rejected on the grounds its assessors believing that it will have irreversible adverse effects on the culture of the Tsilhqot'in people.

5. Lessons learned

5.1. Collective nature of Aboriginal values

It has been determined through various court cases that Aboriginal rights are invested in communities as shared and collective rights rather than in individuals. Equally, Aboriginal titles are also community titles and not individually owned. The six Tsilhqot'in communities are working together toward achieving self-government and jurisdiction over their lands and resources. While the fight against the mining company and the court case were led by the Xeni Gwet'in community, the six communities worked together. As a result, the Aboriginal values that emerged in this study were that of collective communities rather than those of individuals (see Fig. 3).

The Tsilhqot'in Aboriginal values which emerged in this study were linked to activities which connected the people to land, wildlife, water, air, and the landscapes. These values, shown in Fig. 3, were found within the context of resource development and observed in the way in which people use lands. In every aspect of how the people used their Native Space, Tsilhqot'in people spoke about values such as benevolence, transferring knowledge from generation to generation, sustainability, kinship, sacredness, cultural stability, cultural identity, self-identity, inter-connection, stewardship, spirituality, health, respect for the land, and security in the land. The Aboriginal values present at the Fish Lake location include protection of land and wildlife, local accessibility, sustainability of wildlife, kinship relationships, ancestral connections to the land, spirituality and rituals at the location, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. These values were seen to transcend generations as people shared stories of the land and some of their collective histories.

5.2. Place-based assets in Native Space

Resource development which alienates Aboriginal people from their Native Space quite often seeks to mitigate or accommodate cultural activities through relocation to other areas. However, the value of these locations as assets is often overlooked. Analysis of

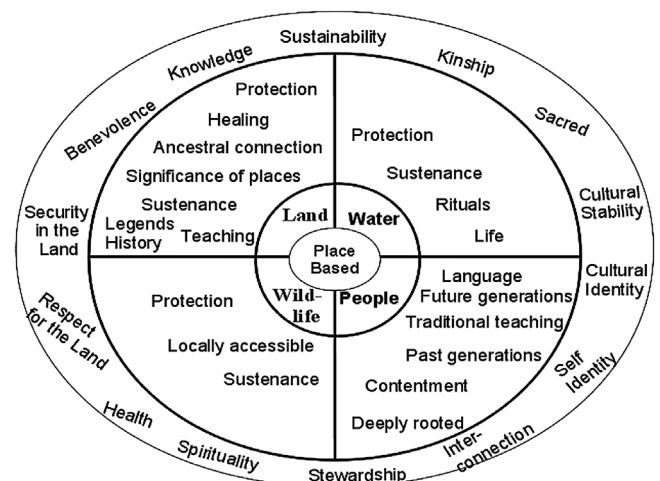


Fig. 3. Aboriginal values of the Tsilhqot'in people (Kunkel, 2014, 188).

data showed that place-based values are not transferrable. It also revealed that Aboriginal values are location-specific within the Native Space of the people. Specific geographic locations are seen by the people as their local assets. These are best defined as 'place-based' assets. Tsilhqot'in place-based assets are crucial to the sustenance of the people and to the survival of their culture. The values associated with the assets are, therefore, referred to as place-based values. Place-based assets provide the communities with a natural endowment of capital for which the Tsilhqot'in people are stewards. Fish Lake is an example of a community place-based asset. The expressed place-based assets at the Fish Lake location include specific cultural practices, healing powers at the location, ancestral connections to the site through stories, significance of the place to the continuity of their culture, potent nature of the medicinal plants and food gathered at the location, the presence of artifacts and cultural landmarks which authenticate community legends and stories, and traditional teaching and songs which were birth at the location. The study revealed the presence of Aboriginal assets and values at certain lakes, creeks, rivers, and other water bodies. While these assets and values are similar to those found at Fish Lake, they are different in that the stories, oral histories and cultural activities at each location is unique thus adding to the body of traditional ecological knowledge of the community. Different locations offer distinctive language usage, cultural teachings and learning, and, therefore, irreplaceable intergenerational transfer of knowledge. These locations are also unique assets serving as cultural pharmacies, locations for the manufacture of tools such as fishing gears, place of reverence and spiritual practices, and storehouses for different foods.

The Taseko Mine project at Fish Lake proposed to build a new lake for the people at a different location. While this may seem like a good way to mitigate the loss of fishing and the sustenance value of Fish Lake, other values such as healing, spiritual and cultural practices at that location in addition to stories and legends that were born at Fish Lake are not transferrable. The creation of a new lake would inevitably result in the loss or death of some Tsilhqot'in cultural practices which are only associated with Fish Lake. The study revealed that Native Space not only provides natural capital but also has spatial and temporal cultural connections for the people. The spatial dimension relates to the extent or the geographic location of the asset. For example, community members described the high potency of some medicinal plants at Fish Lake as opposed to the same plant gathered elsewhere:

When you make the medicines around here, they are kind of contaminated. But when you make the medicines up there in the mountains around Fish Lake and all that area, they have more strength in them. They give you that energy that you need. If you look at it today, you see the beetle kill down around here. But if you look around Fish Lake, look at the trees, there's hardly no beetle kill. Somehow it's been protected, because it's a sacred area for us. Agnes Haller, Yunesit'in. (*Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency*, 2010a, p. 2681).

People spoke about how certain places are storehouses for spiritual purposes and about the sacredness of others. These statements show the temporal dimension of the Tsilhqot'in culture. The study revealed that spiritual dimension and connection is of cultural significance to the people. This was evident in the testimonies of several community members at the Panel Hearings. For example, Betty Lulua explained how certain activities only happen at certain places within Tsilhqot'in Native Space:

All areas surrounding Ts'yl'os, Mt. Tatlow area is our sacred ground, for all the communities that use that area. Ts'yl'os is the heartbeat of our land. Our First Nations communities has [have] used all of these areas year-round, spring, summer, fall, and winter. Teztan Biny, Fish Lake, we do fishing, hunting,

harvesting wild plants, medicines, tea leaves, berries, and it is very sacred ground with pit houses and burial grounds. Betty Lulua. (*Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency*, 2010a, p. 2735).

The study revealed the importance of place-based assets in meeting the daily needs of the Tsilhqot'in people. The use of these natural resource assets and their significance to the survival of the people cannot be over-estimated. The remote and isolated location of Tsilhqot'in communities necessitates their continued dependence on natural resources to meet their daily needs. Statements from some community members convey very clearly this dependence:

Fish Lake and Nabas area may just seem like a place in the middle of nowhere. All some people see is the rough roads, no electricity, and no civilization. To us, the Tsilhqot'in, it is our home, it is our backyard. Loretta Williams, Xeni Gwet'in. (*Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency*, 2010a, p. 1889). This is our natural resources that we've always lived on. And I've always grew up doing this. Caught Chinook, Sockeye. This is my traditional rights. And I don't want to lose it ever. James Lulua Jr., Xeni Gwet'in. (*Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency*, 2010a, p. 1804).

Sixty percent of my moose and deer come from the backyard. And we always fish, hunt where there is good area for moose, a good area for trout. In the wintertime, we ice fish, and we know which lakes to ice fish at. Joanna Haines, Yunesit'in (Stone). (*Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency*, 2010a, pp. 2752–2753).

An analysis of statements made at the Panel Hearings reveals how these place-based assets have sustained these communities for millennia. The loss of place-based assets can have a major impact on the language, cultural practices, and ancestral connection of the people at that location. Furthermore, assets such as pilgrimage sites, histories, the knowledge, oral stories, and other values associated with the location will be permanently lost as these cannot be mitigated. At Fish Lake, mineral exploration and development activities are now seen as a threat to the place-based assets which are integral part to how the Tsilhqot'in people meet the needs of their daily lives.

5.3. *Traditional libraries in Native Space*

Recent studies have shown how traditional knowledge varies from place to place and can remain relevant throughout all stages of mine development and reclamation (Haalboom, 2016; Sandlos and Keeling, 2016). This study revealed that the Tsilhqot'in people transfer Aboriginal knowledge and culture, including traditional ecological knowledge, when engaged in activities on the land. The role of traditional teachings in the intergenerational transfer of communal values and in the survival of the people was expressed by Joyce Cooper of Tsi Del Del (Alexis Creek):

In our Tsilhqot'in tradition, everything has its place. We have legends on how the rainbow came to be and its purpose. The Denisiq Service Society, as a child and family organization, teaches all Tsilhqot'in descendants about respecting their home and territorial lands. This allows our organization to keep the connection to our only means of survival in keeping family together. Our service begins by teaching the families our traditional ways, from when a child is born to adulthood. Keeping a child in a traditional willow baby basket teaches a child to have patience and assists in structuring their bones to endure all aspects of life. Traditional parenting is one of the many programs we offer to our People within our organization. Spending time on traditional lands teaches young and old to

assist one another while harvesting for the winter months. Joyce Cooper. (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 3913).

The study also revealed that cultural teachings are place-based as specific Tsilhqot'in knowledge can only be transferred at certain geographic locations. These geographic locations are natural classrooms and are the origin and repositories of traditional knowledge. Place-based classrooms are natural infrastructures used by elders and community members to transfer specific knowledge:

My schooling, my formal schooling was in the traditional way. I was brought up on the land. I was brought up on how to survive on the land. I know the history of the land by being brought up on the land. That was my schooling. My schooling was done on the land. Elder Minnie Charleyboy of Tsi Del Del (Alexis Creek) as translated by Mr. O. Charleyboy. (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 3779).

As such, these classroom locations are 'libraries' for specific information and for teaching certain aspects of Tsilhqot'in language and culture. These classrooms can also be described as cultural 'mouthpiece' and places where the land speaks to the people. This had been the case for millennia.

The landscapes and ecosystems are integral to the intergenerational transfer of Tsilhqot'in cultural knowledge. Resource development activities that alter landscapes or deprive access to certain locations can break the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, as explained during the cross examination of one of the community members by a Panel Hearing member, Ms. Morin:

MS. MORIN: Thank you. I just have two questions. Mr. Charleyboy, you had talked about teaching the Tsilhqot'in language. I have two questions. Is the landscape and its features important to teaching the language, the Tsilhqot'in language?

MR. O. CHARLEYBOY: Yes, it is. Without the land, you can't teach the language. Without the language, you don't have the land.

MS. MORIN: Thank you. My second question is, has resource development activities such as logging impacted teaching the Tsilhqot'in language?

MR. O. CHARLEYBOY: Yes, it has. In certain areas, such as berry picking, medicinal plant gathering, Labrador-tea gathering, you actually have to go out on to those sites and teach the children what you're picking. You can't do that in these areas anymore because of the devastation of logging practices. (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 3961).

Overall, the community leaders acknowledge the need for some resource development. However, it should not require destroying storehouses and place-based assets to make happen:

We have been consistent throughout this entire process [Environmental Assessment process] in saying that we are not willing to sacrifice an area of such profound spiritual and cultural importance for the sake of profit. Crystal Verhaeghe, Executive Director of the Tsilhqot'in National Government. (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 7041). I also want to say that we are not anti-development of the resources in Tsilhqot'in region. This is evidenced by the purchase of a mill near Hansville and development of a biomass energy plant in the same area. All the First Nation communities in the Tsilhqot'in are developing economic strategies and always have been. Our people have the same hopes and dreams as the Canadian society in general. We want our children to receive an education, become productive members of society. Our members want jobs like everyone else. They want a colour TV, a satellite dish, a nice vehicle in the driveway, have money to go on holidays. But we will not create jobs at any cost to the environment. We will not create

economic development at the expense of a sacred lake. We will not destroy anything valuable that relates to our teachings of our cultural and spiritual connections just for the sake of a new Dodge 4 × 4. Chief Percy Guichon, Tsi Del Del (Alexis Creek). (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, pp. 165–166).

Turkel (2007, 76) stated that material traces of past events are everywhere in the landscape. This study revealed that the material traces are not only that of events which are relegated to the past, but are actually integral cultural linkages which ties the stories from the ancient times to the present and are essential vehicles and necessary mouthpiece in transmitting Tsilhqot'in culture to the future generations. Battiste (2002) reported that certain aspects of Aboriginal cultures and oral traditions, such as the proper recital of stories and knowledge, can only be authenticated at certain locations. Within the Native Space of the Tsilhqot'in people, there are several unique rock formations. For example, there are rock formations shaped as animals and people. The origins of such formations were traced back to legendary times. The locations of these unique formations are sacred sites which continue to authenticate legends and mythical stories of the Tsilhqot'in people. These areas are also pilgrimage sites and are central to the culture and belief systems of the people. A tremendous amount of transfer of intergenerational knowledge, through stories, takes place at such locations. These stories are the bonds that keep the people tied to the locations and help them to maintain their ancestral connections:

I have been raised to show and practice mutual respect. I have also been raised to respect my cultural and spiritual values that have connections to the environment. Many of my Elders who are my connection to my culture and spiritual values are passing on. We as First Nations struggle every day to keep our identity and cultural values. In losing Elders, we lose important traditional knowledge about our culture and connection to the land. Once the last of our Elders has passed on, what do we have left to carry on our cultural beliefs? And more importantly, what do we have left to teach our children? What is left is the land itself, the water, the trees, the fish, the animals, and the stories that connect them. This is why we strongly oppose the destruction of important lakes such as Teztan Biny, as it represents our spiritual and cultural connection to our ancestors. Percy Guichon, Tsi Del Del (Alexis Creek) (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 164).

The testimonies of the Indigenous Tsilhqot'in people revealed why they will not sacrifice their place-based asset locations for financial gain. The material traces of the past and the areas which are repositories of cultural knowledge are integral to the survival and contemporary lifestyle of the people. However, these place-based values and assets are not given as much prominence in the EA process. EA measures Valued Ecosystems Components (VECs) which are environmental attributes or components identified during a social scoping exercise. These VECs broadly classify and measure components such as plants, wildlife, and ecosystem services. However, the impact of development activities on socio-cultural values as described in Aboriginal values are not measured. The study underscores the importance of developing Valued Socio-Cultural Components in the environmental assessment of projects on lands used by Indigenous people.

5.4. *Tsilhqot'in women and Native Space*

Studies and reports show that Indigenous women play a key role in transmitting oral culture and traditions from one generation to another (Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indigenas, 2006; Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Roy, 2004; Sen and Grown, 1987). Furthermore, they often bear the burden of resource development on lands they rely on for sustenance (ibid). Census data show that more than 30% of Aboriginal women living on reserves in the Cariboo Chilcotin region were unemployed (Statistics Canada, 2007). Tsilhqot'in women, along with other Aboriginal women, depend on wildlife and natural resources within their Native Space for their wherewithal. These women engage in cultural and traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, and berries to provide food for their families. During the EA, one healthcare worker for the Tsilhqot'in community detailed the valuable nutrition families derive from these food sources (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 2038). The people eat harvested foods and drink water from lakes, creeks, and rivers in their pristine surroundings and ecosystems. Interviewed women confirmed that harvesting and using medicinal plants is an important contribution to their health and well-being.

The utilitarian values of Native Space is important for Tsilhqot'in women. The women use several locations for the different values as shown in some statements:

Teztan Biny [Fish Lake] is special, like Xení. The Xení Gwet'in survive from that land. Most of us go hunting there, and most of us go fishing there. There's medicine there. I was there this summer between Teztan Biny and Xení. It's like Vancouver and Victoria, people travel back and forth. Teztan Biny is not damaged. It's a place where we go to be alone, do fasting, things like that. Teztan Biny was the Reserve up there. We were back and forth from Xení to Teztan Biny on a sled in the wintertime, even on a saddle horse. The Xení people benefit from Teztan Biny. We go hunting up there, we go fishing, we gather medicine, everything. Catherine Haller, Xení Gwet'in. (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 2639).

You have your Hawaii where you relax. It's our Hawaii over there where we relax and to keep that spiritual energy we need. You go on your holidays to wherever to get your spiritual energy. Ours is up there [Red Mountain]. Agnes Haller, Yunesit'in (Stone). (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, p. 2676).

Tsilhqot'in women interviewed as part of this study, depend on the land as their storehouses. They harvest salmon from rivers in the summer. These are dried or smoked and store for months. The lakes are considered their refrigerators as these are valuable sources of trout and other fishes in the winter months should they run out of salmon. Some of the women interviewed explained that they feed their large families and make modest income from their local harvests. The women talked about how they use every part of animals hunted and how they trade by barter some of their local harvests. Access to certain locations is important for them in order to maintain their lifestyle and livelihoods:

Teztan Biny, Fish Lake, we do fishing, hunting, harvesting wild plants, medicines, tea leaves, berries, and it is very sacred ground with pit houses and burial grounds. Cattle and horses graze in the area. Non-natives use this area when fishing season is open for them. Little Fish Lake, our community members still use those areas for fishing, hunting, camping, hay meadows for horse and cattle, grazing and trapping in the winter. Red Mountain, hunting, wild game, meat, birds, not the birds you see flying around in the air today, it's like blue grouse and wild chicken. Harvesting wild berries, medicines. At Onion Lake, they have Elders' Gatherings, fishing, they do net fishing, harvesting wild berries, medicines, horseback riding. They have cultural camps there. Nabas area is a moose habitat area. Hunting, we still do hunting, camping, we harvest wild berries and medicines, horseback riding and fishing. Taylor Windfall

area is a pristine mountain area for trail rides, hunting, harvesting wild berries, medicines, wild bird game. Anvil Mountain is a deer and moose habitat area, harvesting berries, medicines. Taseko Lake and rivers and the narrows is a good location for fishing, net fishing, hunting, harvesting berries, medicines, trail riding, camping, hiking, trails, salmon spawning area and many trout and it's also a deer and moose crossing. Chilko Lake, that's down in Xení Gwet'in, Chilko Lake, we still do our fishing, net fishing, camping, hiking, trail rides on horseback, cultural camp sites, sweat lodge, camp, and Xení have cultural camp gatherings there. Vick's Mountain, they still do hunting for moose, deer, wild groundhogs, wild birds, blue grouse, wild chicken, and to harvest medicines and berries, mountain goats and many other small wild animals. That's the area where we also pick wild potatoes. There's some good camping spots up there. Yohetta Wilderness area, is a guiding trail, riding. They have hunting trips and fishing, camping, boating, swimming, hiking, harvest berries and medicines area, wild moose and deer, goats, Bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and wild groundhogs live in that area. Or they migrate through that area. Our Tsilhqot'in People still use these lands areas year-round. Betty Lulua. (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2010a, pp. 2735–2737).

Without access to certain places within their Native Space or ownership and the ability to determine resource development options, the Tsilhqot'in women interviewed said they would not be able to make ends meet. Furthermore, the women confirmed that the loss or degradation of pertinent locations would lead to the extinction of some potent medicinal plants. Therefore, resource development at the Fish Lake site and some other areas within their Native Space was considered a threat to their food and medicine security.

One of the women interviewed for the study stated that the children are taught the different mountains and the trees so that they would always find their way around without getting lost. The landscapes and mountains are living and are visual maps, each with its own unique legend or mythical story. The unique shapes of each mountain and its location formed natural borders between communities. These valuable landmarks are resources for teaching the history and telling stories from the past and ancient times. These stories are integral to the oral culture of the Tsilhqot'in people.

Women interviewed for this study were already grieving the potential loss of some areas they depend on for their food and medicinal plant sources. The land provides sustenance as such these women have the most knowledge of traditional forest food items, their nutritional value, and their uses as herbal medicinal plants. The loss of pertinent places would lead to the loss of vital Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. These women talked about the trauma they are starting to experience as a result of the EA.

6. Discussion and conclusion

6.1. Discussion

Dana et al. (2008) highlight some of the social impacts of the development of non-renewable resources within the traditional space of Sahtu Dene Aboriginal people and ability of the people to sustain themselves moving forward. Like the Sahtu Dene people, the identity of the Tsilhqot'in people is locked into their Native Space. The people depend on this space for food, medicine, for some modest income, and for cultural and spiritual practices. A key finding is that the isolation of the Tsilhqot'in communities and the inadequate development infrastructure within rural and remote

regions has required that the people continue to depend on their Native Space for subsistence and for their social, cultural, spiritual, and economic needs. This dependency further locks their identity into their Native Space; consequently, the native spatiality of the Tsilhqot'in people is 'un-erased'. The study revealed that the inadequate infrastructure as defined by Western standards also limits what economic development activities can happen within the space, thereby further contributing towards maintaining the status quo.

The highlights of the study include how Tsilhqot'in women survive on the land within their traditional territories and Native Space. Numerous studies showed that Indigenous women hardly benefit from resource development activities within their ancestral lands, however; this study has shown how women live and survive in remote and isolated locations. The study also highlights how resource development at certain geographic locations would directly impact the storehouses of these women and consequently threaten their food security, their health, their ability to make ends meet, and to teach or pass on Traditional Ecological Knowledge to the next generation.

This work generated new insights into Aboriginal values and how these values are embedded within traditional activities and within landscapes at specific geographic locations. The values are place-based and located within areas considered assets by the local Indigenous people. The significance of the place-based assets, however, was not captured by the Valued Ecosystems Components of the Canadian Environmental Assessment process which was used in assessing the mine proposal within the Tsilhqot'in Native Space. An appropriate Valued Socio-Cultural Components, scoped out with the Indigenous community, is recommended. The inclusion of a detailed Valued Socio-Cultural Components in EA would provide a process to measure values which are important to other users of lands who would be impacted by resource development activities. Valued Socio-Cultural Components in EA would also serve to enrich the process. Working with the Indigenous people to identify socio-cultural attributes during the social scoping exercise will ensure that their voices are heard and can bring huge cost savings for project developers at the onset of EA. Indigenous communities would have the opportunity to work with developers to address concerns, which could help in securing a social license.

Aboriginal traditional activities are essential vehicles for transmitting oral cultures from generation to generation. Furthermore, certain locations and landscapes within Native Space are necessary mouthpiece for the communities. These places authenticate stories of the lands and the legends of the people. If these locations are destroyed or degraded, this Indigenous group would be unable to authenticate their stories of the land. The landscapes and cultural activities on the land are also essential vehicles in intergenerational transfer of knowledge as it has been for millennia. Resource development activities which alter the landscapes, degrade the environment, or deny access for the people to these locations will essentially cause a break in the transfer of knowledge to the next generation. In addition, this would lead to a loss of associated culture and language as in the case of the Tsilhqot'in people.

6.2. Conclusion

Development activities within the resource hinterlands of British Columbia generate wealth for the province. These lands also provide the means for subsistence and moderate livelihoods for the Indigenous people who depend on it. The gap in socio-economic conditions between people living in the isolated Indigenous communities and mainstream society has prevented inhabitants of the former to participate equally in job

opportunities created by resource development activities. Resource developments at these locations which impacts Native Space continue to expose a collision of values arising from western and Indigenous use of natural resources and lands. This is because Aboriginal values are embedded in traditional activities within Native Space. As a result, Indigenous groups seek to protect their Native Space from resource exploitation and development activities.

In conclusion, this work has been an important contribution to the knowledge of Aboriginal values and how these influence resource development decisions within the Native Space of Tsilhqot'in people. The study further highlights the critical Aboriginal socio-cultural values which should be considered prior to resource development activities within Native Space. However, further studies are required to understand resource development options which are compatible with Aboriginal values. Aboriginal communities want to be a part of every stage in the development process and to have a say in what happens on their lands. This is still a work in progress in British Columbia.

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