

## Culture



# Contesting Ideologies of Natural Resource Development in British Columbia, Canada

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### Article abstract

The ideological struggle between pro-development sentiments and environmentalist challenges to them is a complex mix of consciously articulated beliefs and commonsense assumptions about what land is for and how it should be managed. The paper presents an ethnographic approach to documenting expressions of this intellectual contest in contemporary British Columbia. I address the question of how pro-development and pro-wilderness views seek to establish moral authority, focusing on both the symbolic importance of key themes about forestry and mining in Canadian history and the cooption of alleged aboriginal ethics concerning land use.

# Contesting Ideologies of Natural Resource Development in British Columbia, Canada <sup>1</sup>

David S. Trigger \*

Les tenants du développement et les environmentalistes s'opposent dans une lutte idéologique qui prend souvent la forme d'un amalgame de croyances consciemment articulées et de présomptions populaires sur l'usage des terres et sur la façon de les gérer. Par une approche ethnographique, je documente les expressions de cette lutte intellectuelle dans la Colombie-Britannique contemporaine. J'examine comment les deux perspectives, pour et contre le développement, visent à établir, chacune, une autorité morale. L'importance symbolique des thèmes clés tels les industries forestière et minière dans l'histoire canadienne et l'appropriation de l'éthique aborigène concernant l'usage des terres sont soulignés.

*The ideological struggle between pro-development sentiments and environmentalist challenges to them is a complex mix of consciously articulated beliefs and commonsense assumptions about what land is for and how it should be managed. The paper presents an ethnographic approach to documenting expressions of this intellectual contest in contemporary British Columbia. I address the question of how pro-development and pro-wilderness views seek to establish moral authority, focusing on both the symbolic importance of key themes about forestry and mining in Canadian history and the cooption of alleged aboriginal ethics concerning land use.*

In 1992 Canada Post issued four special stamps as part of a Series on Canadian Folklore. Titled "Legendary Heroes," the theme is the celebration of the courage and spirit of those who established the pioneer industries that "settled the country." Prominent among the images on the front cover of the accompanying booklet are a fir tree and a cross-cut saw and the first character discussed is a "legendary lumberjack." This government promoted discourse is commensurate with the importance of Canada's natural resource development industries throughout its history. In British Columbia, the focus of this study, while there have been warnings that the forest industry may not succeed indefinitely as the major economic activity of the region (Marchak, 1991: 4), the view that it is the "backbone" of the economy remains salient (Sewell, 1988: 338).

However, also in 1992, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, dozens of environmentalists were arrested during anti-logging blockades organized by the Friends of Clayoquot Sound. The summer of 1993 saw one of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history with over seven hundred protestors detained for blockading a logging road in the same area (MacKinnon, 1994: 53-4). During a

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four month period, over 12,000 people are said to have visited a "Peace Camp" and "joined the protests" (Berman, 1994: 4). The following year, more than 15,000 forest workers demonstrated outside the B.C. legislature in Victoria, to make the opposite point; they expressed their anger over government plans to preserve a substantial proportion of Vancouver Island from logging (Vancouver Sun, March 22, 1994). This pattern of conflict concerning resource development is just one of the most recent episodes that has occurred in British Columbia during the past few decades (M'Gonigle, 1989-90: 65), encompassing the passions and aspirations of a wide range of people, including politicians and government officers, forest and mining industry professionals, blue collar workers, unions, aboriginal peoples and a variety of groups and individuals asserting their concerns about environmental issues.

In this paper, I seek to pursue an ethnographic approach to the study of this rich field of competing discourses and practices concerning resource development.<sup>2</sup> My first aim is to portray the general nature of an ideological struggle between pro-development sentiments and environmentalist challenges to them. I then address the issue of how these two contesting intellectual positions focus upon, and seek to make legitimate, differing moral propositions about what land is for, and about appropriate human relationships with the natural environment. Without underestimating the critical ways in which economic interests are implicated in the reproduction of ideologies promoting resource development, I seek to break with economic determinist ways of thinking about environmental conflicts (Dunk, 1994: 17). While such disputes inevitably encompass major economic issues they should also be understood as "culture conflicts" (Einarsson 1993: 81). To take this approach is to build upon studies that have focused on symbolic struggles over identity, and the meaning of environmentalism versus development in the cultures of forest workers (Dunk, 1994), fishermen (Knutson, 1989), and aboriginal people (Hornborg, 1994). It is also to embrace a future agenda for ethnographic research that challenges the privileging of economic theory and modelling in studies of important industries (Marcus, 1990).

To carry out ethnographic study with industry personnel and environmentalists entails fieldwork (including interviews) based on everyday

social life as experienced by the researcher. However, it necessarily involves going beyond any tendency to "ethnicize" the cultural distinctiveness of such groups (Ortner, 1991: 166-7), in that there is little sense in which the meanings being investigated can be regarded as self-contained or isolated at a local level. In such societies as Canada in the 1990s, there is a broad national (and global) language and cultural system, encompassing a range of multiple discourses (Dirks et al., 1994: 4), that exercise considerable influence over the constitution of sentiments regarding land and resource development. These discourses can be conceived as "ideological" in that they provide an organizing framework through which people make "sense" of resource conflicts. The process occurs through both consciously articulated debates and the "world of common sense" that is simply "taken-for-granted" (Hall, 1990: 8). Key elements of contesting ideologies about resource development are available to us through recording social action and agency in the form of what people say and do in the presence of the researcher, as well as in a variety of more widely circulating texts, particularly in the print and electronic media, and in various literature promoted by industry groups, governments, environmentalists and aboriginal people.

## CONTESTING CANADIAN SENTIMENTS ABOUT DEVELOPMENT AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Analysis of interviews and documentary texts dealing with the forest and mining industries indicates that many of those holding pro- and anti-development attitudes in Canadian society face each other across a gulf of fundamentally conflicting sentiments about the "value" of land and how it should be managed.<sup>3</sup> Commentators have discussed the more overt expressions of this conflict, including at times the threat of physical confrontations (Sewell, 1988: 335); however, what has received less attention are the more subtle contesting imageries and uses of language to portray the moral failings of the other side. Consider, firstly, an example of the nature of the Green critique of the pro-development perspective.

A 1991 proposal for protection of wilderness throughout British Columbia, prepared by an environmentalist organisation (Valhalla Society, 1992),

comments on the widespread negative effects of the forest industry that are “insidiously invading” people’s lives, turning communities into “visual and economic slums.” This publication suggests that Canadians now wish rivers to be “left wild and free” from industrial expansion, for in the 1990s, people are “jaded” and “technology-sated.” To quote further:

We are engaging in mass destruction of old growth forests despite the fact that they represent a biological legacy billions of years in formation, and have been proven essential for climate control and the natural functioning of whole ecological systems (Valhalla Society, 1992).

In this critique, the industry is constructed as intrusive and insensitive with respect to the “value” of nature. Furthermore, the pro-development position is often portrayed as grossly materialistic. This point was made bluntly by a spokesperson for the activist organisation Friends of Clayoquot Sound. He suggested in an interview that the forest industry does not acknowledge “that there is a wisdom in the way the earth operates,” but rather behaves arrogantly, any sense of “spirituality” being constituted solely in what is perhaps a “worship of money” (T11)<sup>4</sup>.

These kinds of views should not be regarded as being held only among activist environmentalists locked into a marginal political position within Canadian society. The policy document of the political party in government in British Columbia itself states that:

B.C.’s economic growth has been achieved with insufficient regard for our unique environment. ... In B.C. we have created our own crisis. Our forests have been ravaged, watersheds damaged, soil and air poisoned and oceans, rivers and inlets degraded (New Democrats, 1990:1).

The contrary views are expressed with matching conviction and use of persuasive imagery. The Vice President, Environment Section, at the Council of Forest Industries of B.C., argues that the appropriate new image of a forester is of a person who “cares about all the resources, including the timber resource, and is there trying to earn a living, but renewing the crop as the loggers are cutting down the trees” (T1). Loggers themselves are at times portrayed by sympathetic individuals both inside and outside the industry, not as “red-necks” who are callous about the environment, but

rather as people who know the forests and care about the setting in which they pursue the leisure aspects of their lifestyle as well as their working lives. An apposite example is a long feature article in the Vancouver Sun newspaper, describing a particular logger, born in the north area of Vancouver Island where he now works, who has developed a small fish hatchery to return fish to the local river system:

At work, he can drop a 300-year-old cedar within minutes, his chainsaw spitting pungent-smelling wood chips into the green forest. At his hatchery, those same hands *return life to the streams he loves* [my emphasis] (October 19, 1993: D1).

This contest over conflicting imagery can draw passionate condemnation of the other side’s tactics. A Communications Officer with one of the big forest companies remarked forcefully on what he regards as grossly misleading images used to sway public opinion:

I don’t know whether you’ve seen a Friends of the Earth advertisement that was in Europe, ... basically it showed the legs of a child running through a forest, then it showed a pair of man’s hands gripping an axe, then it went back to the child running through the forest and the man’s hands swinging the axe. And then just as the axe hit the tree, you saw this child’s leg in the forest start to bleed. That’s a very, very powerful symbol and it’s absolutely wrong. I think that the anthropomorphization of trees is dangerous. Trees don’t talk! (T1).

They may not “talk,” but nature’s plight, when portrayed in terms of such an emotive environmentalist critique, seemingly engenders considerable condemnation of the resource industries.<sup>5</sup> At least, there is no shortage of pro-industry personnel who believe this to be so, expressing the view that the “value” of what they do for a living is under sustained attack. The comments of a Senior Geologist with the B.C. Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum were typical. He suggested that while exploration geologists were once proud of their work, in the 1990s they typically feel “beaten down ... by the Green movement,” particularly by negative media treatments of their industry. Furthermore, because there is insufficient political will to allow new mines to be developed, he says such people are “in survival mode” because they never know how long they will remain employed in their field of work: “It’s a real tough situation.

The mining industry, quite frankly, is on its knees in Canada" (T2).

In the north of Vancouver Island, the anti-environmentalist rhetoric of the 1990s is particularly blunt. The hostility and bitterness felt towards those regarded as attacking the livelihoods of many citizens is clear from a leaflet distributed publicly by a local organisation known as "North Island Citizens for Shared Resources," and addressed to "Unions, Workers and Businesses":

This is a wake up call for British Columbians!! Thinking people of British Columbia must stand up against Greenpeace, Sierra Club, Earth First and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee. These organisations are dedicated to the destruction of all resource related jobs in British Columbia, without any thought to the economic effect on workers and their families.

Masters in the art of deception; they use half truths and outright lies about forestry, mining and other resource based industries to directly manipulate the media. They hide behind stated objectives of being law abiding, while attracting "rent-a-crowds" to do their dirty work.

This is deliberately inflammatory rhetoric designed for the purpose of organising opposition to environmentalist challenges. Nevertheless, it arguably derives from widespread genuinely experienced fear and resentment on the part of many working in forestry and mining on Vancouver Island. The fear is that their jobs will disappear, because of curtailed access by industry to timber and ore bodies; the resentment is related to their general feeling that Canadian society now regards what they do for a living with at least as much disdain as respect. In the first newsletter produced by the North Island Citizens organisation, a contributor complained bitterly that: "Loggers and the industries they work for have suddenly taken on an image of sub-human slime positioned even lower on the life chain than bugs and micro-organisms" (Citizens' Report, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1991).

As has been shown in studies of forest workers in northwestern Ontario (Dunk, 1994) and fishermen in western Washington State of the United States (Knutson, 1989), this type of sentiment encompasses a defense against what is regarded as an attack on the moral foundations of the identity and lifestyle of those working in the resource industries. The case of the anti-whaling campaign

perhaps illustrates this point most strongly; in Icelandic fishing villages (Einarsson, 1993), people are bitter about threats to their livelihood perceived as caused by the Green movement, but they are also likely to be responding to characterizations of those who whale as barbaric and cruel, the worst of eco-criminals.<sup>6</sup> In these settings, then, hostility towards environmentalism becomes linked symbolically and metaphorically to other social divisions, a good example being the locally understood opposition between those who are co-residents sharing work and leisure and the negatively marked category of "others" who are remote city people. Thus, in the Canadian context, the moral challenge from environmentalism tends to be inverted (Dunk, 1994: 19), such that local practices are celebrated while the "preservationist" critique is regarded with considerable bitterness as inimical to the values that have facilitated the development of local lifestyles and the institutions of the broader society. In this vein, a founding member of "North Island Citizens for Shared Resources," writing in his regular column for a regional newspaper, went so far as to suggest that unless local economic and social costs of disallowing logging in large areas are considered carefully, the conflict over appropriate land use in British Columbia "threatens to destroy the social fabric of our province" (North Island News, March 8, 1992 p. 10).

This vigorous contest over the "value" of land for "development" or "wilderness" finds expression, not only throughout print and electronic media and a host of documents circulated by the opposing organizations, but also in many conflicting images encountered in the course of everyday life. There is competing graffiti; e.g. "stand for the trees" scrawled on a concrete surface in a downtown Vancouver main street, but the counter message is "kill hippies - log Meares," painted on the road kerbing as you approach the center of protests over logging in Clayoquot Sound and Meares Island on the west coast of Vancouver Island. There are contesting slogans: "Have you hugged a tree today?" reads a sign nailed to a tree next to the same road (just above a small cloth figure attached to the tree in the act of hugging).<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, "Hug a Logger" reads the sticker distributed by "North Island Citizens for Shared Resources." "Protect The Working Land," says the same sticker, for in the industry perspective, land "works" for humans by growing trees; but the slogan on the staff member's card at the Western

Canada Wilderness Committee office reads "Working for Wilderness" – for in the Green perspective, it is humans who now need to work to preserve the land.

The entanglement of conflicting sentiments also finds expression in routine everyday conversation. In Victoria and Vancouver during late 1993, people were often emphatic in their divided views about the recent protests over logging. On the one hand, there were scathing comments about the "tree-huggers" (i.e. Green protestors) who were said to lack realistic solutions that will maintain people's jobs; however, others expressed their disgust with the way environmentalists were being sent to gaol for protesting in Clayoquot Sound – their point being that the protestors should not be treated as if they are real criminals. Indeed, in the view of some British Columbians, it is the industry personnel (particularly senior management figures) who are carrying out "criminal acts" against the environment.

Thus, there can be a process of entrenched mutual demonization, whereby exaggerated negative characteristics are attributed to the other side. A staff member in the university department in which I was based expressed considerable emotion when labelling the executives of a big forest company as "those creatures," thereby matching the intensity of dislike evident in the way some industry people on Vancouver Island speak about Green protestors. In one source, there is reference to protestors' "unwashed bodies," and they are dismissively termed "drabbies" – apparently a label intended to connote "young socialists who like being shabby and pursue a mystical, glorifying poverty ... [driving] third-hand cars and always indignant" (Citizens' Report, vol. 2, No. 9, September, 1993). As a report of the B.C. Government's Commission on Resources and Environment office put it when examining the debate about building a mine or declaring a wilderness park in the Tatshenshini River region (in the far north of B.C.), such convictions about the other side mean that these intense arguments concerning appropriate land use are "unlikely to be resolved through consensus negotiations" (CORE, 1993: 4). There is an "incompatibility" (ibid.: 21) about the various perceptions and assumptions involved.

In framing analyses of these conflicting views, a critical issue is how each position appeals

to certain key sentiments or dispositions in order to achieve a degree of acceptance or legitimacy. Pro-development perspectives or environmentalist challenges to them may be embraced by citizens, either with deliberation and reflection about competing ideas, or because particular propositions are connected with some form of historically accepted and essentially unreflective commonsense. But what are the key notions underlying the claims to moral authority of these different ways of viewing landscape and development?

## FRAMING AN ANALYSIS

### Part 1: The Moral Authority of Development Ideology

When considering the nature of development ideology in the early 1980s, Harman (1981: 167) wrote of "a well established and possibly hegemonic ideology of development" that informs "all aspects of political life" in resource rich states such as Western Australia and the western provinces of Canada. This ideology rests heavily on the notion that development of natural resources is economically essential, but of particular importance to my discussion here are the further cultural foundations of pro-development sentiments. Harman's material was concerned mainly with mining in Australia, and in this context she commented that a "frontier ethos" is quite central to the pro-development worldview (Harman and Head, 1981: 14). Development ideology thus entails placing "a high premium on taming harsh, unsettled northern environments" (Harman, 1981: 175), and on opening up a romanticized frontier (ibid.: 179) through the introduction of large-scale and complex technology (ibid.: 171). Moreover, this is a process of social and cultural civilizing and a symbolic progress, apart from the economic achievements involved.

While it might be argued that such sentiments have diminished in importance in the Australian debates of the 1980s and 1990s, the evidence indicates that these notions have certainly not disappeared. The theme that development of the land and its resources is culturally essential, and coterminous with the pattern of historical striving that has produced modern Australian identity, appears still quite central to the defense mounted against environmentalist and Aboriginal critiques (Trigger, 1993: 690-1). While pro-develop-

ment ideology in Australia cannot be regarded as hegemonic in any sense of being reproduced without challenge, it should be recognized as appealing to, and often mobilizing, powerful symbols within the discourses by which many Australians understand their history and culture.

To what extent does, or can, this occur in Canada? Is there any sense in which pro-development ideology seeks moral legitimacy through commonsense linkage to key themes about Canadian identity and the development of natural resources that has been central to the historical formation of that identity? Canadian similarities to the Australian manner of reproducing sentiments about past heroism, in discourses concerning resource development, are not difficult to find. For example, parallel to Harman's study of ideology in Australia is the discussion by Salisbury (1977) of popular perceptions of "development as heroism" in the case of the James Bay hydro-electric project in Quebec during the 1970s. He quotes from the book written about this "project of the century" by the then Premier of Quebec (Bourassa, 1973), who writes enthusiastically of the "conquest of Northern Quebec." The Premier overtly celebrated the development ethos of an earlier period when Quebec society was being created through exploration and the establishment of industries: "Our ancestors' courage will and must live again" (quoted in Salisbury, 1977: 173).

However, as with the celebration of founding exploration epics and myths in both Canada and Australia (Ryan, 1994), in the 1990s, the narratives proclaiming heroic histories of "development" are at least partially contested. As mentioned earlier, the government of British Columbia in 1993 released a very different policy on matters of resource development from that reported for Quebec in the 1970s. The B.C. Provincial policy stressed potential negative environmental consequences of forestry and mining. To what extent then, should themes of past heroism, on the frontier or in earlier logging and mining communities, now be understood analytically as irrelevant to the moral standing of development ideology in Canada?

In one sense, there is little ambiguity about a continuing process of formal celebration of a proud history of "development." The nineteenth century "legendary lumberjack," depicted by Canada Post (1992) in its Series on Canadian

Folklore, embodies qualities of determination and toughness that lead to achievement. Together with his peers, this figure could fell trees "from dawn till dark," live on meagre sustenance through harsh winters and ultimately transport valuable logs to their destination. Similarly, there appears no lack of celebratory museum exhibitions that portray the history of logging and mining in British Columbia. And there are widely available publications such as *Men of the Forest* (Swanson, 1977), a compilation of historical and literary stories about an earlier subculture of logging communities in western Canada – a publication that celebrates the "romance" of logging the woods, a valuable "way of life" (ibid.: 3, 9) and the fact that: "British Columbia was, and to a great extent still is, the last frontier of the Pacific Slope" (Lillard, 1977: 19).

However, during interviews, I could elicit only ambiguous endorsement among contemporary industry personnel for the notion that the current importance of the forest or mining industries can (or should) be linked to a noble past frontier ethic that might be regarded as an important aspect of continuing Canadian identity. The B.C. Council of Forest Industries Vice President of Environment Section commented that "if anything, that's a negative image of the industry that we're trying to lay to rest" (T1). His point was that the industry now defends itself in moral terms by arguing it is environmentally responsible and economically essential, not by stressing a cultural imperative deriving from the long history of logging practices in western Canada.

Similarly, while the Managing Director at the B.C. & Yukon Chamber of Mines suggested that mining constitutes an important form of "heritage" in western Canada, he implied that linking mining in the 1990s to the idea of continuing a tradition of development on new frontiers is likely to be counter-productive in terms of influencing "public opinion" (T2). Nevertheless, his entire perspective on the "value" of mining in society indicated great personal pride in the industry in which he had spent his working life, so that while he remains wary of promoting publicly the symbolic value of resource development enterprises, he did not indicate personal disagreement with this theme as expressed in Federal Government literature distributed in 1992. This material on mining was published by the national Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) to celebrate 150 years of explo-



ration and success in the industry's development. It suggests that there are "new frontiers" for contemporary exploration – "the Arctic, the sea beds off Canada's coasts, and the geology tens of kilometres beneath the surface of the earth." This is sentiment that overtly links current practices in the industry to "the spirit of the early GSC adventurer/explorers" (GSC 1992):

After a century and a half, canoes and pack horses have given way to helicopters, aircraft, and deep-sea submersibles. But like the early explorers, today's GSC scientists continue to roam all over this vast nation, helping Canadians understand the land on which they live. The GSC's adventure of exploration, in the service of Canada's self-knowledge and well-being, continues (ibid.)<sup>8</sup>

In reflecting upon this publication, the Chamber of Mines officer commented that "the general population through the environmental groups doesn't want to open up the frontier ... that's one of the reasons why mining's got a bad name" (T2). Despite his personal favourable inclinations towards such sentiments, his difficulty was that these themes may well not tap in to widely held commonsense dispositions likely to prompt favourable attitudes towards mining in the 1990s.

Thus, people within both the forest and mining industries (and in related sections of government) appeared ambivalent about articulating the significance of meanings attaching to Canadian myths concerning the history of resource development. They did not suggest that Canadians regard these themes as irrelevant to the nature of a national or provincial identity, but rather indicated that they themselves were being pragmatic about what would sway public opinion. There is, then, an apparently ambiguous relationship between the general process of official celebration of these myths, and the capacity of such themes about the past to achieve widespread acceptance of the moral legitimacy of contemporary resource extraction industries.

For their part, the environmentalists interviewed in British Columbia definitely rejected the notion that resource development is defensible in terms of any heroic moral quality that has been, and is now, important for Canadian identity. The person interviewed from Western Canada Wilderness Committee responded bluntly:

I mean it would be outrageous ... because clearly there's been so much damage done, not just to forests, but to species, the decimation of species ... because of that frontier mentality (T8).

And I have already mentioned the refusal by the spokesperson from Friends of Clayoquot Sound to countenance any sense of historically legitimate moral purpose or "spirituality" in the industry worldview; all he would acknowledge was "maybe a worship of money" (T11).

Indeed, the environmentalist view is that it is the critiques of, and challenges to, development ideology that embody the morally respectable set of propositions about land use. In general terms, the Green movement proclaims the moral high ground in this debate through articulation of a wide ranging concern for the environment, its species and so on. However, a further quite central tenet in this case is that environmentalist ideologies are said often to embody what is designated as the "indigenous," "aboriginal" or "First Nations" relationship with the land. This alignment between aboriginal and environmentalist ideologies is often itself challenged in expressions of pro-development positions, and the contest over whose side "the Natives" are on constitutes an intense moral dimension of the broader ideological debate about resource development.

## Part 2: The Moral Authority of Environmentalist Ideology

Despite the apparent diversity of views concerning resource development among indigenous groups (see, e.g., M'Gonigle, 1989-90: 84), aboriginal relations with the environment are characterized quite widely throughout sectors of Canadian society as inconsistent with large scale logging or mining, on the grounds that aboriginal cultures are said to entail an intense interconnection with the forest and the land. Consider, for example, the published comments of a journalist who has worked for six years as Native affairs reporter with the Victoria Times Colonist newspaper: a ideology. Legends and

The culture of the First Peoples is imbued with images of the forest – as a source of spirituality, a place of refuge, a test of manhood and a place of cultural meaning. The concept of mass-scale use of the resource, with the wastage and devastation involved, is simply alien to the culturceremonies alone reflect a tradition of interconnection with



the forest and of dependency on it (Nathan, 1993: 140).

Associated themes are that aboriginal traditions are anti-materialist, more "spiritual" than those of the broader society, and wiser with respect to use of the land.

These propositions are encountered in writings that contrast aboriginal (and environmentalist) land ethics with "the dominant culture's de-spiritualized belief system" (M'Gonigle, 1989-90: 72). They are more publicly evident, however, in a host of romanticizations of aboriginal cultures that find expression throughout the world of popular arts and crafts available for general consumption. Thus, consumers are invited, for example, to purchase "totem pole seeds," enabling people to plant red cedar trees as "living totem poles," thereby incorporating a major aspect of "the natives' unique artistic heritage," and contributing to "the healing of this ailing planet." Part of this souvenir is a booklet containing a New Age "legend" about "an immense, great, great grandfather tree" on an island on the west coast of Canada. Perhaps a more well known example is the "Cree Indian Prophecy," widely presented as a caption on postcards and posters, showing a striking photograph of a beautiful young Navajo woman wrapped in a traditional blanket and standing on a high rock while looking wisely at the camera:

Only after the last tree has been cut down, only after the last river has been poisoned, only after the last fish has been caught, only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.

There is a sense in which such images of aboriginal relations with the environment are promoted eagerly by certain sectors of the dominant culture, seeking confirmation of "spiritual truths" that are felt to be unutterable from within the "dominant cosmology" itself (Hornborg, 1994: 252).

It would hardly be adequate to suggest that the range of environmentalist discourses can be equated entirely with New Age portrayals of aboriginal land ethics; nevertheless, it is clear that many conservationist groups romanticize indigenous cultures in the course of seeking alignment with their alleged "spiritual" connections with the environment (Dwyer, 1994). While a study of environmentalism in Toronto identifies five "shades of green," encompassing a range of political and philosophical positions, the link between the

Green movement and First Nations peoples is appropriately noted as "a special feature of environmentalism in Canada" (Harries-Jones, 1993: 46-49). Consider the views of the interviewee from the Western Canada Wilderness Committee as she explained the closeness between her organisation's notions of land use and those of aboriginal cultures:

I think that our organization ... and I think you'd find other [environmentalist] organizations as well, are much, much more appreciative of the Native relationship with the land. I mean if you had to kind of align yourself with a way of being with the land, most of us would value and support the Native relationship with the land. In other words, you recognize that you depend on it and therefore you take what you need, and you also have a kind of a reverence for the land, that doesn't exist in an industrial mind-set so much. In an industrial mind-set, the land is there to take advantage of, to utilize, to make a profit, or to get something, but ... there's not the same reverence for the towering Sitka spruce or the salmon spawning. I would say that our appreciation is much more similar to the Native – the spiritual, and also just the way that we would, given the opportunity, like to see ourselves living on the land – more simply, more simple lifestyle (T8).

The "spirituality" of the indigenous relationship with land is thus linked to its being more "natural" and "simple" than that of other Canadians. In some texts, there is even an implication that the agency of aboriginal people in the landscape is (or at least, was) akin to the benign presence of other animal species. The First People entering the Tatshenshini River area in northern B.C. (at an unspecified time long ago) are described in these terms – "Like the bears and the eagles, they too fished for salmon, and they too thrived" (Careless, 1993: 21). Such notions thus constitute what is understood to be an aboriginal anti-exploitative land ethic; the implicit assumptions about indigenous cultures rely on a constructed image of the "ecological Native" that has been with us for some considerable time (Francis, 1992: 140-1). In turn, this image functions to bring the environmentalist moral critique of industrialism into sharp focus (Hornborg, 1994: 246).

However, just as there is an obvious diversity of views among those with pro-development sentiments, there are certainly environmentalists who are themselves aware (and somewhat critical) of simplistic romanticizations of aboriginal spirituali-

ty. Comments from the Executive Director of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund are apposite here:

There are two kinds of environmentalists ... there are those who you might call "back-to-the-landers," who romanticize the earliest Neolithic cultures as being somehow in touch with the land, basically because they had no technology. And they tend to feel more kinship with the Natives. But the other type of environmentalist is maybe a commonsense environmentalist who tends to look at the future, and says if we want a future that bears any resemblance to the kind of quality of life that we have now, we have to begin acting in different economic ways. And I think there's a large overlap between those two types, but when you look at a place like Clayoquot Sound, you find arguments from both schools of thought (T9).

Similarly, one of the interviewees from Friends of Clayoquot Sound explained the diversity among environmentalists on this matter of stressing aboriginal spirituality:

... in terms of White environmentalists you have people who are coming to that from an earth based religion spirituality, you have people who are coming to it from a scientific background and valuing of species in terms of a scientific research perspective which is somewhat different ... (T10).

Both these speakers were aware of the actual diversity of views among aboriginal groups and individuals themselves on questions of resource development, with the Sierra Defence Fund lawyer going on to admit the tendency for the Green movement to ignore this diversity and romanticize indigenous spirituality:

I'm sceptical about Native people's relationship with the land. I've acted for a number of Native bands and I've found that there are people in Native bands who are pro-development and people who are anti-development, and there's a spiritual side to the Native peoples and there is a business side. They demonstrably have a stronger spiritual connection to the land than the rest of us immigrants. But I think there's been a tendency to romanticize the Native by the environmental movement (T8).

While the interviewee from Friends of Clayoquot Sound also agreed that there can be such romanticization, he clearly sought to portray aboriginal interests as aligned with the political sentiments of the Green movement. In the early

part of a public lecture he gave to a predominantly university student audience in Vancouver, this activist positioned the environmentalist movement with the aboriginal people in a common fight against the forest industry. For in espousing the Green critique of the companies, he condemned current logging practices on Vancouver Island as a form of "cultural genocide" against aboriginal people, derived from the "profit driven agenda of the large forest companies" (T11). Indeed, he suggested at one point that this genocide was commensurate with earlier forms of deliberate physical attack against indigenous people, practiced by the Europeans who colonized British Columbia.

To this extent then, even those challenging development ideology who acknowledge openly that aboriginal communities are far from united in any consistently articulated opposition to current logging or mining practices, maintain that ultimately the interests of environmentalists are much more consistent with those of indigenous people than are the interests of pro-industry individuals and groups. This proposition is a major theme in environmentalist discourses that seek to establish moral legitimacy for Green ideology.

For their part, those with pro-development sentiments can be quite scathing about attempts among environmentalists to achieve moral standing through coopting either alleged aboriginal land use philosophies or political aspects of the aboriginal cause. A senior officer with the B.C. Ministry of Forests commented on such a strategy among Green activists:

They're just on a band wagon. And the Natives don't like that. You can get one or two [aboriginal people] that come up and be a spokesperson for them [i.e. environmentalists], to support their point of view, [but] when they see they're being used, like in the Clayoquot issue, they don't like that at all (T10).

He went on to describe how aboriginal people, when dealing with resource development issues, have their own agenda that is not equivalent to the agendas of industry, government or the environmentalist movement. While he agrees there is a diversity of aboriginal views, overall, he feels "they want a share of the resource profits" (T10), and this opinion was repeated in interviews with senior officers in the B.C. Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum (T2) and the Mining Association of B.C. (T1). All agreed, as expressed in the words of one informant, that:

the Native people are not that closely allied with the preservationists ... they are far more pragmatic, and they view natural resources as a way out of their particular problems (T2).

In similar vein, two officers with the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum (in Victoria) mentioned that, despite assertions to the contrary from environmentalists – and various other “aboriginal wanna-be’s,” that is, White people who identify with what they conceive of as the aboriginal cause – a desire for resource development under certain conditions is not inconsistent with aboriginal cultural ethics regarding land use: “you can respect a tree but still cut it down.”

There appears to be considerable evidence to support this view. The matter of aboriginal strategies and priorities with respect to resource development involves complex aspects of the politics of indigenous cultures seeking to maintain their distinctiveness within nation states. Opposing or supporting a resource development project will typically entail local politicking around the issue of asserting and maintaining individual and collective indigenous identities, apart from assessments about the environmental, economic and social implications for aboriginal communities (Trigger, 1993; Hornborg, 1994). These matters cannot be dealt with in any detail here. However, with respect to the Clayoquot Sound case, we can note the reported views of an elected chief of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations, the aboriginal population resident in the area of the controversy over logging in that region. The comments of Chief Francis Frank in late 1993 were as follows (quoted in Cino, 1994: 15):

We don’t agree with environmentalists who demand that logging be stopped in Clayoquot, ... nor do we support the full scale plunder of our resources by industry giants. The forest industry likes to portray us as “anti-park” and pro-logging whereas the environmentalists dwell on our spiritual connections with nature. Both views are polarized, and ignore the complexity of native outlook and concerns.

And again, cited in another source, the same man points out:

Our people are not naive ... We are changing with the times along with everyone else. And that means some economic development and logging. There are definitely areas we want to

preserve. But we don’t support the idea of complete preservation (Nathan, 1993: 156).

Despite the relatively wide reporting of such sentiments, it is clear that a substantial proportion of the Green movement continues to identify with what people regard as the authentic aboriginal cultural imperative against large scale development through forestry or mining; in the Clayoquot case, environmentalists and aboriginal peoples have been said to share a common ideological position, a “common ecocentric perspective” (Maingon, 1994: 165). Statements from aboriginal spokespersons to the contrary tend to be dismissed as a kind of infiltration of non-aboriginal thinking. In the words of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee staff member in Victoria:

There’s a real split in the Native communities, and of course that’s been brought about by the destruction of their own cultural systems. So there are some people within the Native communities that have aligned themselves very closely with the industrial model. They’re not operating by traditional Native values. They have bought into, for whatever reason, the values of the industrial kind of mind-set. And they would, perhaps, clear-cut their lands. I asked two summers ago on a course in Clayoquot Sound – we took some students up and I asked one of the chiefs specifically about that – “Will the Native people just log it off?” And he said: “that’s a real concern for us, within our own Native culture.” There’s two very different – there’s the traditional hereditary chiefs and people along with them that tend to want to use the land, live on the land traditionally, low impact, and then there’s others who are shop stewards with the logging companies ... (T8).

Similarly, a staff member in the Victoria office of the Friends of Clayoquot Sound organization acknowledged the different views among aboriginal people, but clearly aligned the environmentalist viewpoint with:

the traditionalists, people with strong spiritual ties to the land, and that’s the people who I would hope to empower the most throughout this whole process in order that Clayoquot Sound might be saved ... with the traditional chiefs as stewards of the land, so that they can oversee the harvesting of the timber (T8).

These sentiments indicate that, in the final analysis, the environmentalist position tends predominantly to only acknowledge the “wisdom” of

those aboriginal "elders" who speak what conservationists wish to hear (Dwyer, 1994: 95).

Some reports during late 1993 indicated that aboriginal people may achieve a key role in the decision making process concerning logging in Clayoquot Sound, through participation on a Board of Management to oversee developments in the region (Vancouver Sun, December 13, 1993: A8; December 14, 1993: A3, A14; December 15, 1993: A3). In the case of this particular instance of ideological struggle between pro-development and pro-wilderness sentiments, it was suggested by one commentator that an agreement between government and aboriginal people "may well drive a wedge between the Natives and the anti-logging forces of the environmental movement" (Vancouver Sun, December 13, 1993: A8). In this vein, there have subsequently been reports of an indigenous leader accusing high-profile environmentalist organizations of having "a patronizing and romantic view of aboriginal people" (Vancouver Sun, February 3, 1994), and suggesting that the poor economic circumstances of his people means they do not "have the luxury of sitting in some bloody office dreaming about what the environment should look like" (Globe and Mail, February 7, 1994: A3). Another aboriginal spokesperson has made it clear that his people seek a strong economic role in the forest industry on Vancouver Island, aiming to control a percentage of the annual forest harvest that is equivalent to the indigenous proportion of the B.C. population (Vancouver Sun, April 28, 1994). To some extent, these types of responses resonate with a point made recently by a researcher in the Ontario context: "Indian leaders object to environmentalists seeing the struggle of First Nations as a sort of surrogate wish-fulfilment of the new environmental age" (Harries-Jones, 1993: 49).

Thus, it is not likely that the only (or, indeed, the loudest) aboriginal voices in this conflict will necessarily espouse sentiments commensurate with the "ecological Native" view held among many environmentalists. Nevertheless, it is also unlikely that the environmental movement will give up one of the major planks in its ideology about land use – namely, the proposition that its models and proposals are consistent with (indeed, take a lead from) what are defined as the genuine traditional aboriginal notions regarding appropriate human relations with land and natural resources. For, to the extent that environmentalism

can be aligned with idealized models of aboriginal relations with land that are given considerable currency throughout sectors of Canadian society, the Green movement proclaims a significant dimension of moral authority in its broad contest with key aspects of pro-development ideology.

## **CONCLUSION: TOWARDS AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF CONTESTING MORALITIES OF LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

In this paper, I have depicted aspects of the nature of ideological struggle between what I have termed pro-development ideology and environmentalism in British Columbia. My intention has been to present an analysis that addresses several issues.

The first is that this is a rich arena for ethnographic investigation. To echo the point made by the editor of a recent volume on anthropological approaches to the study of environmentalism (Milton, 1993: 6), anthropologists are well placed to "become theorists of environmentalism," using cultural theory to complement the perspectives from such disciplines as sociology, political science and economics. However, I would add that theorising the social and cultural dimensions of environmental conflicts necessarily entails including research on pro-development discourses and practices. This kind of "studying up" (Nader, 1974) or, as more recently phrased, "repatriation" of anthropology through ethnographic projects "at home" (Marcus and Fisher, 1986: 111), is hardly unfamiliar to anthropologists in the 1990s, though it perhaps represents only a partially fulfilled promise of what might be achieved (Ortner, 1991: 167; Marcus and Fisher, 1986: 111).

In my view, ethnographic approaches are especially well suited to the study of contesting ideologies concerning resource development and the patterns of social action they encompass. This is, in part, because of the subject matter requiring investigation: complexities and ambiguities implicit in how people think about the economic and aesthetic properties of landscape, how they conceive of human relations with other species, and how they regard the material and symbolic implications of their society's historical patterns of land use. While analysts may have been somewhat

slow to address such complex cultural dimensions of large-scale economic processes, this is increasingly an important agenda for ethnographic researchers who recognize the way "market processes and cultural processes in ... late twentieth-century societies are tightly interwoven" (Marcus, 1990: 338).

Of obvious importance in resource development conflicts is the extent to which Canadians link their material standard of living and general economic interests to particular modes of logging and mining, and if they do, how this factor is considered in the more general context of competing claims about environmental destruction and sustainable development. However, I have suggested that the labile dialectic between acceptance and rejection of pro-development sentiments should also be understood with reference to the socially constructed legacy of forest and mining enterprises within Canadian history and culture. This is not to diminish the importance, in people's thinking, of the short-term economic implications of either proceeding with or abandoning particular development projects. It is simply to also acknowledge the symbolic significance attached to resource development in Canadian society, thereby building this factor into the consideration of how people decide on their view about the importance of jobs versus environmental protection.

For some individuals and groups, developing natural resources may be regarded as a fundamental aspect of what the mining industry organization officer quoted earlier described as "Canadian heritage" – i.e. as an important dimension of the society's history and collective identity. Such thinking may or may not be articulated consciously; it is perhaps more likely to be given unselfconscious expression among forest workers in the north of Vancouver Island than among industry professionals in the city who are cautious about how their pronouncements could be interpreted. Nevertheless, just as many citizens know routinely about such celebratory discourses concerning history and identity that were promulgated by Canada Post and the Geological Survey in 1992, they are likely to be disposed towards believing resource development to have generally been a good thing for Canada. This is particularly the case for those who understand their jobs and sense of personal identity to be related to the resource extraction enterprise. Pro-development sentiments among such people can thus achieve a degree of

moral standing because the meanings of resource extraction enterprises are understood simply as making good "common sense."

In terms of the range of ideological positions we can regard as posing environmentalist challenges to pro-development thinking, I have discussed the significance of alleged aboriginal relations with land in the formulation of Green discourses and philosophies. I have suggested that environmentalism seeks to appropriate a particular (often idealized, if not romanticized) construction of aboriginal land ethics, as part of its establishing moral standing in Canadian society. This cooption of aspects of the aboriginal cause occurs in the context of the more general propositions from environmentalism about protection of aesthetic values and biodiversity in the environment; however, my contention has been that alignment with the alleged land ethics of aboriginal people occupies a position of particular importance in the environmentalist vision presented to Canadian society.

The material in this paper thus deals with one of the major questions of theoretical importance in the study of contesting ideologies and practices concerning resource development; namely, the issue of how pro-development and environmentalist thinking, respectively, seek to achieve a degree of moral authority. In part, this is to seek clarification of the nature of dispositions existing among Canadians which may be appealed to in the course of these ideological positions winning legitimacy. More generally, it is to focus attention on the critically important arena of moral contestation over meanings of natural resource development – an arena of symbolic and cultural contestation in which the more easily identified economic debates about costs and benefits should be understood.

### Notes

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2. This research is based on participant observation fieldwork in Vancouver, Victoria and at a number of locations on Vancouver Island, during October and November, 1993. Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 individuals from government departments, forestry and mining companies, industry organisations and environmentalist groups. These included: Mining Association of BC; Council of Forest Industries of BC; Canadian Forest Products; BC and Yukon Chamber of Mines; Ministry of Energy, Mines & Petroleum (Vancouver and Victoria offices); Island Copper Mine; Friends of Clayoquot Sound; Western Canada Wilderness Committee; Sierra Legal Defence Fund; and several consultants and activists working with environmental and aboriginal groups. Locations visited on Vancouver Island included Woss Lake (Canadian Forest Products Ltd's forestry establishment within the Englewood Logging Division), Port Hardy (BHP's Island Copper Mine) and Tofino.
3. Throughout the paper, I use a number of terms to depict sentiments and actions that challenge pro-development ideology. These labels are themselves polysemic and at times their meanings are contested. For example, those opposing certain forms of logging will argue that they are not "anti-development" in any general sense, but rather against particular forms of resource development. Similarly, some people active in forestry practices such as clear-cutting will insist that they are "environmentalists," challenging the appropriation of this label by those they regard as "preservationists." Nevertheless, in portraying "pro-development" ideology on the one hand, and "anti-development," "environmentalist" or "Green" challenges to it on the other hand, my usage is consistent with general understandings throughout Canadian society.
4. Quotations drawn from tape recordings are referenced in parenthesis with the number of the tape following the letter "T."
5. This example of the anthropomorphization of trees is similar to the case of environmentalist discourses about whales. Einarsson (1993: 78) quotes a passage where a hunted whale is described as a child, "an anthropomorphizing metaphor that serves to reduce the emotional distance between the reader and the fate of an animal."

6. In some environmentalist discourses, whaling has been compared to slavery and cannibalism (Einarsson, 1993: 74).
7. Milton (1993: 10) points out that: "Tree hugging is now commonly used as a gesture of environmental protest, and has been incorporated into green spiritualist practice."
8. This is not an unusual type of discourse concerning the achievements of large scale mining. Making land productive through victory over immensely difficult challenges is a common theme in public relations materials distributed by mining companies. A good example is a video produced by Cominco Alaska (1989) concerning Red Dog, "the largest zinc mine in the world"; the narrative celebrates victory over "impossible" technical obstacles and the resulting creation of "opportunities for the lives of people" from resources in the land.

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