# Putting Words into Action: Negotiating Collaborative Research in Gitxaala

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*This article is written from the vantage point of an Indigenous scholar located in a major research institution (UBC) about the process of negotiating and carrying out respectful research relationships with a First Nations community. The actual process of consultation, accommodation, and negotiation important in establishing and growing a respectful research relationship between the University of British Columbia and Gitxaala Nation (north coastal British Columbia), is described. Ethical issues and procedures, methodological innovations, and considerations about Indigenous knowledge demonstrate transformative action for research.*

The last decades of the 20th century were tumultuous ones for anthropology. The traditional fields of anthropological research—the external and internal colonials of imperial powers such as Britain, France, and the United States—began a process of decolonisation which challenged past research practices. During the 1960s and 1970s essential aspects of anthropology and related social science and humanities disciplines were subjected to intense scrutiny. By the 1980s a generalized sense of crisis and malaise had settled over the discipline. While many turned away from research to concerns about how research was expressed in text, others found a path out of the late 20th century malaise by changing the way in which they conducted their research. This is perhaps most apparent in the Indigenous studies and applied fields of anthropology. Here participatory research methodologies, encouraged and initiated by new left progressivism, became widely adopted as the principled approach to research in subaltern communities. The new focus on community involvement marked an important turning point in anthropological research and has gone a long way toward shifting anthropological practice from research *on* subaltern peoples to research *with* communities of people.

In our research with the Gitxaala Nation of north coastal British Columbia we have worked to actually put in place a research relationship that meets both the needs of collaborative research and looks beyond the immediate horizon of academic research (which is typically locked on the project and publication timelines necessitated by the dynamics of an academic career and funding agency). This paper describes the process that we entered into and the implications, as we understand it, for similar research projects and community partners such as Gitxaala.

A pivotal moment in our process of negotiating collaborative research occurred during a meeting between John Lewis, then Treaty Coordinator for the Gitxaala Nation,[1] and myself. We were sitting in the Gitxaala Band

office working out the details of consent and approval for the *Forests for the Future* project (FftF).[2] Mid way through our discussion of the wording of the consent form John paused, and then asked: "So Charlie, what happens with your notes after you die?"

John's question brought home to me the implications of social science research projects such as FftF and its predecessors. Stacked on the wall across from us were binders filled with copies of Tsimshian ethnographer William Beynon's notes; now the copyrighted property of a variety of foreign museums, universities and archives. The histories, names, and events recorded in Beynon's fieldnotes remain within the local understanding as the private property of house groups, villages, and clans. Yet, the legal framework of the colonizers has systematically ignored the laws of ownership and use rights of the Gitxaala and other Tsimshian peoples. Whether knowingly or not academics and others who have benefited from Beynon's work without seeking community approval have participated in the continued colonial appropriation of Indigenous peoples.

As anthropologists many of us may harbour inner hopes and aspirations that our work will outlive us. This is not, however, normally phrased in such a way as to focus on the negative aspects of our trade or the implications for the people being studied beyond the most immediate of concerns.[3] Who among us, as anthropologists have not looked eagerly through some other anthropologist's fieldnotes, brushing aside the dust as we look for new insights and clues to both the people being written about and the anthropologist themselves. Our professional writings engage with issues of lost field notes, vocabularies of fieldnotes, the interaction between notes and writing articles (Sanjek, 1990). Yet, our notes do have a life beyond our own work and the problem with this other life was brought starkly to light by John's question: "So, Charlie, what happens to your notes after you die?"

The power of the question resonates with my own experience as an Indigenous researcher whose family history is in part rooted in Gitxaala and nearby Lax Kw'alaams. I grew up listening to stories about my grandparents and their families. These stories played a role in shaping how I think about concepts of the past and my own work in the present. Just as the names that my Tsimshian and Tlingit ancestors carried live beyond the earthly bodies who carry them, so too our written words live on. What we write in our fieldnotes and published papers has the potential to be more than simple private jottings, debates over key concepts, or unique insights into the social world around us; they in fact contain living moments of the worlds we describe and the power of these words extend beyond ourselves. The world of the anthropologist may well be that of Geertz's (1998) "world of lecterns, libraries, blackboards, and seminars" (p. 129). However our words do sometimes live beyond this cloistered anthropological world. Thus, we have an obligation to the people we work

with to take care when we commit words to paper. We have an obligation to think beyond our own lives and to the implications for those we write about.

In what follows I turn to the practical and immediate process of negotiation and establishment of appropriate research protocol. Elsewhere I have described the general outlines of how research might best be conducted with, for and among Indigenous peoples (Menzies, 2001). Here I am primarily concerned with how those more general principles were enacted in practice and what researchers can learn from this specific case. The discussion below is guided by a consideration of what we have learned about collaborative research in an Indigenous community. While many anthropologists and other community-based researchers may recognize much of their own practice and experience in what follows, the purpose of writing this history down is to remind ourselves that commitment to truly decolonised research must be more than fine words: it must be an act and demonstrable in practice.

*Process of Negotiation*

Many researchers working with Indigenous peoples are sincere in their efforts and intentions. They work hard to ensure their research proceeds in a manner respectful of local protocols and concerns. Yet, as large as this group of researchers may be there are still those who are not willing to engage in sincere and respectful research relationships with Indigenous communities. Some researchers master the form of respectful research, but do not follow it through in any meaningful way. For such researchers, being able to solicit a letter of support is to them sufficient proof that they have "consulted" and included community interests. Other researchers do what is asked, but only grudgingly and only in cases where they are forced to do so. Both of these approaches to research do much to continue the legacy of colonialism. Building meaningful and respectful relationships needs to take precedence over the egoism of the researcher. In the establishment of the FftF project we undertook a series of meetings, negotiations and consultations to ensure that what we were doing went beyond simple compliance with politically correct fashions or the basic criteria of our funding agency. In this process we made mistakes, faced set backs, and ultimately set in place the beginnings of a powerful and important research relationship between UBC and Gitxaala Nation.

Establishing community-based collaborative research involves a range of differential levels of access and permission in order to proceed. In the FftF we built upon my ongoing and long term research in the region, my personal contacts as a native son of the region, and the funding opportunities then available. Though this project began as a researcher inspired project it was designed to complement ongoing community research needs and critical issues identified by Tsimshian community members.

Starting in 1998 we initiated three projects in cooperation with the Tsimshian Tribal Council. These projects were funded by the provincial funding agencies, Forest Renewal BC and Fisheries Renewal BC. They explored such issues as Tsimshian involvement in the forest sector (Butler & Menzies, 2000; Menzies & Butler, 2001) and traditional Tsimshian fishing gear (Menzies & Butler, n.d.). In addition First Nations relevant curriculum materials were also produced for use in local schools (Ignas, 2003; Orlowski, 2003; Thompson, 2003; www.ecoknow.ca). These projects built upon my ongoing work in the region (see, e.g., Menzies, 1994, 1996).

As part of the preparations for the FftF project I met with Bob Hill, then president of the TTC, during the fall of 2000.[4] Our previous projects had been designed to complement work being conducted at the level of the Tribal Council. This new project, however, required a different set of permissions as it was directed more specifically to the level of the member communities and household groups of the Tsimshian. The project as developed for submission identified three possible village partners: Gitgia'ata, Kitsumkalum, and Gitxaala.

External factors, unrelated to the internal structure of the project,[5] made our collaborative research negotiations more tenuous then they might have been and ultimately resulted in delays in the overall research project. While all research projects will face issues related to timetables and the production of research deliverables the structure of year-to-year research funding introduced by the new provincial government creates a context in which research projects become "mainstreamed." That is, the lack of funding certainty and then the rush to complete project deliverables on time in accordance with a business cycle mentality compels researchers to focus on results readily producible, that do not challenge funding agencies, and that rarely advance the state of knowledge. In the face of the complications of political regime change we were nonetheless intent on maintaining a process of respectful research relationships that fully incorporated not simply the external funding agency's changing expectations, but also met the expectations of our community partners in terms of research protocol. Though our efforts resulted in effective community relationships it ultimately undermined our administrative effectiveness from the perspective of the funding agency.

The initial research proposal conceived of the project being based in three Tsimshian communities (Gitgia'ata, Kitsumkalum, and Gitxaala) and one non-Indigenous community (Prince Rupert). Through the process of discussion and negotiations during the period between the announcement of funding and the funding being put in place (April 2001-August 2001) the project team concentrated on working with Gitxaala and Kitsumkalum.[6] And, as the project developed we found that we would only be able to effectively meet our community-based obligations by concentrating on Gitxaala alone of our First Nations partners. In terms of the

non-Indigenous community partner we found ourselves concentrating on the small homesteading community of Oona River.[7]

The process of negotiating collaborative research with Gitxaala involved moving among three different aspects of community organization: administrative institutions such as the Tribal Council, the Band Council and the Treaty Office; Indigenous institutions and offices which include the Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a of the community and housegroups, and; individual community members.

*Administrative Institutions*

The three administrative institutions that had a bearing on the FftF research project were the Tsimshian Tribal Council (TTC), Kitkatla Band Council, and the Gitxaala Treaty Office. Each of these organizations has specifically defined responsibilities that are at times overlapping in nature. The TTC has been the umbrella organization that has coordinated treaty negotiations between the seven Tsimshian villages and the governments of Canada and British Columbia.

Kitkatla Band Council is legally defined under the Indian Act of the federal government as the representative of Gitxaala people. The Band is charged with managing the formally defined reserves belonging to Kitkatla—in contrast to the Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a—who are the actual Gtixaala leaders and representatives and are responsible for the traditional territory of the Gtixaala. The Band also administers various social, health, and educational programs on behalf of registered band members.

The Gitxaala Treaty Office formally operates under the authority of the Band council and the hereditary chiefs (the Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a; see below for a more detailed description of these Indigenous institutions). The Treaty Office is responsible for organizing the Gitxaala negotiations with the governments of Canada and British Columbia.

Given the nature of the FftF research project and its focus on local ecological knowledge, the Gitxaala Treaty Office was the primary institution through which access and research protocols were negotiated. Meetings prior to the submission of the grant were conducted with the President of the Tribal Council (as described above) and subsequent meetings following the award of the research grant were held with the TTC Executive Council, but these meetings were more formalistic than detailed.

One of the dilemmas for university based researchers involves the very pragmatic costs of negotiating research agreements. Prior to a grant being awarded there are few if any funds to ensure that the research project meets with community needs and/or reflects community concerns. While it is possible to work out such details in advance there is also the possibility that funding may not be forthcoming. Thus researchers confront

the difficult question: should they work out an agreement in advance of funding and pray that the moneys come through, or do they wait until funding is in place and then run the risk of not completing the project by its end date? In our case we found ourselves suspended between these two options. Based on my ongoing research in the community I was able to meet with and discuss the dynamics of the proposal far enough in advance to at the very least have the basic structure in place (meetings were held with representatives of the Treaty Office in the spring and summer to establish the basic protocols). Yet, in the absence of the full funding commitment the detailed process of negotiating and establishing the actual research process was delayed until the grant funding was in place in late August, 2001, five months after the initial announcement of the grant funding.

Two meetings were held with members of the Kitkatla Band Council. An initial meeting that involved two councillors and the treaty coordinator was held in Prince Rupert in September, 2001 and a second formal meeting with the entire council was held in November, 2001. At the first meeting a detailed plan was presented to the Councillors in which the three project streams were described (policy research, ecological knowledge research, and public education development). As this was a project that originated from the University it was critical for the project team members to be able to present their plans and then adapt these plans in accordance with the input of the community representatives. From this initial meeting permission was granted to proceed to the next step in the process. This involved negotiating the details of the research project in terms of the wording of the consent form, the structure and type of research questions community members would be asked, and the recruiting of community-based researchers to work with the project team.[8]

Subsequent meetings between myself and John Lewis (acting on behalf of the Treaty Office) took place at Gitxaala during the months of October and November, 2001. These meetings were instrumental in establishing the research process.[9] These meetings refined the informed consent form each individual participant would sign, established and fine tuned the nature of the research questions, and helped identify appropriate community researchers to work on the project with us.

Following the discussions with John Lewis a formal meeting was set up to meet with the Band Council on November 21, 2001. At this meeting we presented a summary of the research project, an overview of the types of questions that community members would be asked, a copy of the consent form individual band members would sign and a letter from me outlining the project team's commitment to maintain Gitxaala protocols (see Appendixes A and B for copies of the letter of intent and the consent form). John introduced the project and described what progress we had made in setting the terms of the research project. Then I summarized what we

intended to do and outlined our anticipated outcomes. Our presentation was followed by several questions from the Band Council.

The subsequent discussion by the Band Councillors focussed on the importance of the educational aspects of our project. Several councillors spoke strongly in favour of the effort that we had put into consulting with the community and in our efforts to respect community feelings. They also spoke about the immediacy and need of working with the community Elders so that community knowledge could be preserved and transmitted to future generations. John and I were both given counsel as to the importance of consulting with the Elders, Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a (the hereditary leaders, high profile men, and elderly women in the community). The meeting concluded with the council granting their approval for the research project to continue.

From the perspective of many other university-based researchers the meetings and consultations that were held with members of the TTC and the Band would have been considered sufficient to begin the research. These meetings had in fact been sufficient for the granting agency and the University ethics board to release the project funds. However, two factors held us back, one social the other methodological. In the first case our long term research and social connections in the community are more lasting then the project itself. My family ties and the strong social ties built up by project team members mitigate against our acting in a manner that would put the interests of the funding agency or outside research institution in front of the well-being and wishes of the community. Secondly, and of greater importance to those readers interested in issues of research methodology, the ultimate results of research conducted respectfully and in full accord with local protocols and expectations is more nuanced, more relevant, and ultimately more accurate than any research that is forced through with the barest of community approval.[10]

*Indigenous Institutions and Offices*

The next step in our process was a meeting with community Elders and Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a. This involved a community meeting with Elders in November 2001 and individual meetings between myself, other project team members, and specific Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a to request their approval and permission. This process is of particular importance within Gitxaala society as the effective level of authority and decision making is at the level of the wilp or housegroup, a matrilineal descent group that is the social institution vested with the ownership of land, resources, history, and powers.

The unique form of social organization amongst the Gitxaala and other Tsimshian peoples will differ from Indigenous peoples in other places. Nonetheless, parallel local institutions will undoubtedly exist, which should be consulted. In terms of Gitxaala our discussions and meetings

with Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a were instrumental in setting the stage for the interviews of individual community members.

In our meeting with community Elders in November 2001 we again presented an overview of the research project goals and aims. John reviewed the informed consent form in detail. For the benefit of Elders who spoke Smalgyax, a community member fluent in English and smalgyax was present to translate as required.

The concerns of the Elders and hereditary leadership diverged somewhat from that of the Band Council. Whereas the Band Council had focussed on the positive benefits of the project, the Elders and Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a were primarily concerned with issues of intellectual and natural resource property rights. While they recognized and discussed the educational importance for future generations of Gitxaala, they wanted to ensure that the issues of proprietary rights was fully understood and appreciated by all members of the project team. They were very concerned about the issue of copyright and trademarks. Several of the Elders who spoke to us during this and subsequent meetings spoke at length on the importance of Gitxaala maintaining all rights involving potential copyrights, trademarks, and other forms of ownership. This was accomplished by reference to experiences of past research conducted by government, industry, and other researchers.

One local experience stood out among others. At the heart of the account was a government sponsored research project into the health and location of abalone conducted in the recent past. The government researchers explained that their project would benefit the local community. This would be accomplished by collecting location and population data that would make the job of protecting the abalone grounds from over harvesting and poaching more effective. After some consideration community members agreed and a number of surveys were completed. Following the departure of the researchers a fleet of commercial dive boats turned up on the abalone grounds that had been described to the researchers. The end result was the complete degradation of the local grounds and ultimately a complete closure of commercial abalone fishing on the coast. The community members who had participated in the study felt betrayed by the process.[11]

Many researchers may recognize the genre of oral stories to which the abalone story belongs. The details of particular stories may vary. The specific facts may become merged or elaborated from telling to telling. Yet, the essence of these stories is unassailably true: outsiders have come, they have preyed upon the good hearts of their Aboriginal hosts, and then they have left often leaving nothing behind but new headaches and difficulties. This is the living legacy of colonialism as experienced by many Indigenous communities.

For the Elders and community leaders in Gitxaala this was a cautionary story told for our benefit. While they expressed interest in the project and were willing to extend hope that our work would be beneficial and would be conducted in an appropriate fashion, they also wanted us to hear very clearly their concerns about process. The abalone incident underscored for them the importance of maintaining control over the data gathering process and the manner by which the data might ultimately be used. For FftF the abalone story was a constant reminder that our work could contain within it the potential to cause real harm and that we therefore had an obligation to ensure that it did not.

We put in place several mechanisms and restrictions on our research to ensure compliance with the concerns of the Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a. We restricted the research questions to non-medicinal plants, animals, and sea resources. We also committed to avoid naming the specific locations where scarce or important resources could be found. Given the nature of our research project this restriction did not unduly constrain our research aims. At a later point, a year later we were able to request and receive approval to use place names and more specific data relating to locations for the production of the educational and extension component of the project. This came after having established a relationship of trust. Had we pushed for unfettered access or resisted any form of control or oversight it is unlikely that we would have received any support or approval for the research project.

As the meeting wound its way through the concerns with outsiders, variants of the abalone story, and cautions to us, the tone began to change to one of counsel and advice. After our initial statements John and I remained silent, except for answering the occasional question, and listened to what was said. This meeting was really a discussion amongst the Elders, Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a who were gathered there. And, as Benjamin says of the storyteller (1969), they had counsel for their audience: a university researcher and an emerging community leader. The task undertaken by the community Elders was one that went beyond agreeing to or approving our project; it involved instructing us on how best to conduct ourselves throughout the research process. Without this instruction and ultimately support of those at the meeting the success of the interview and research aspect of the project would have been in jeopardy.

Securing and maintaining the support of Elders, Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a was an ongoing and evolving process. From this first formal meeting in November of 2001 we were granted the ability to continue the research and proceed to interviewing community members. As our research continued we had informal and formal meetings with Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a and other community members. This allowed us to maintain a public face in the community (as per Smith,

1999) and to remain able to alter research processes in accordance with community advice.

*Individual Community Members*

Contemporary liberal society is predicated upon notions of individual freedom and rights. Thus, most researchers and research ethics guidelines are premised upon notions of individual approval. Letters of support from community organizations or associations may be required, but the pivotal legal document for most research projects is the individual informed consent form. In our research with Gitxaala (and this experience is echoed in conversations with other researchers working in similar communities) the issue of individual permission is very different than in the adjoining non-Indigenous society.

Having received the formal approval of the Band Council, the Treaty Office, and the Smgyigyet, Lik'agyet and Sigyidmhana'a the project was finally ready to move to actual interviews with individual community members. We were very aware of the fact that even with formal approval community members themselves may not wish to participate in the research process. We also recognized that how we approached community members was important in ensuring their comfort and in building their trust. At several points, for example, individuals deferred participation until they had consulted with their Smgyigyet and house Elders. Others ensured that members of their extended family were present during interviews.

The combined university-community research team was integral to our interviewing process. Following advice given during our meetings with community Elders initial contacts to set up interviews were initiated by one of the community-based researchers. This was especially important for interviews with Elderly community members, many of whom spoke s'malgyax as a first language and were uncomfortable conversing in English. All interviews were conducted by two team members, one community-based and the other university-based. Most interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. Following the interview the transcribed interview was reviewed by the interviewee for accuracy and to ensure that the information provided was appropriate.

Much effort was made to ensure that the interviewees were as comfortable as possible. Most interviews were conducted in the interviewee's home or, if they preferred, at the Band Office. When appropriate the interviews were conducted in S'malgyax with the translation assistance of community-based researcher Sam Lewis. Even with such care the research and the researchers still carried with them the possibilities of danger, disruption, or—perhaps—entertainment.

At one point during the research process one of the community-based researchers told one of the university researchers that his elderly auntie had asked him if that little "ba'as" was coming back. When she asked him

what ba'as meant he explained that it was a monkey. Immediately understanding *monkey* to be the chimp variety of the Curious George type she was not sure if she liked being identified with the image of a mischievous, troublesome, but ultimately good intentioned little chimp. Upon later reflection and discussion it became apparent that while in English, *monkey* was like a chimp, in S'malgyax, ba'as, was a more malevolent and dangerous figure, more commonly know in English as a Sasquatch. Both notions of the researcher—innocent but troublesome/malevolent and dangerous—are aspects of research that must be confronted. Through collaborative research conducted with community protocols in mind we can mitigate some of the more dangerous and malevolent aspects of research. Ultimately, it is better to be seen as a troublesome monkey, than as a dangerous ba'as.

*Complexities, Difficulties, and Benefits*

The key difficulty for researchers lies with the multiple level of approvals necessary to achieve a respectful research relationship. As described above three different levels of approval were required to clear the way for research to proceed on the FftF project. Refusal and redefinition is possible at every level. This is further complicated by a changing and evolving political context within which it is often necessary to renegotiate approval while the project is ongoing. All of this is then exacerbated by the wider history and legacy of colonialism that is a constant backdrop to any engagement in an Indigenous community (Menzies, 2004).

The legacy of colonialism is manifest in a palatable feeling of distrust and unease toward university-based and other external agencies, especially when they come asking for something from the Indigenous community. Even when one is an Indigenous researcher the connection to an external agency is a potential difficulty that needs to be negotiated. But beyond this wider background context is the real material and immediate impacts of colonialism as measured by social economic indicators such as levels of unemployment, social assistance, wage levels etc. This can create serious difficulties when a project arrives with cash in hand and wishes to hire local people. It is very important that the implications of hiring local researchers are thought through. How is this to be done? How will the jobs be advertised? Who will do the hiring? What pay rates will be used? While each local situation may be different the obligation to ensure that appropriate and fair hiring processes are in place rests with the researcher.

Establishing collaborative research is not a simple process. Yet, there are real academic and socio-political benefits to doing so. Academically, the research results have the potential to be more robust, more detailed, and ultimately more accurate than research conducted in the context of distrust and subterfuge or inequality. Admittedly the research process will very likely be slower and more drawn out than if it was a non-collaborative project.

It is also very likely that in the absence of collaboration this research project would not have been possible at all. There has been precious little research conducted and published that concerns the Gitxaala since the arrival of K'umshiwah. While researchers have been active in other Tsimshian communities over the course of the previous century, Gitxaala community members have been very resistant to any research activities within their community. Even the Tsimshian ethnographer William Beynon, referenced earlier, was not able to record many interviews from Gitxaala during nearly 50 years of recording oral histories among the Tsimshian peoples. The fact that FftF was able to proceed was, in part, the result of a collaborative approach which linked research with the development of educational materials for use in the local schools (Ignas, Orlowski, & Menzies; Thompson, this volume).

*Conclusion*

The FftF project was made possible by a confluence of funding opportunities, my ongoing research in north-coastal British Columbia, and the hard work of a group of researchers, educators, and community members who made up the project team. As with all such projects, the path from inception through funding to implementation, was not a simple one.

Research is inherently a political endeavour whether we wish to acknowledge it or not. As anthropologists, we have spent much of the preceding three or more decades agonizing over the place of our research in the life of the communities within which we choose to work. From Vine Deloria's caustic criticisms of "the anthro" (1969, 1997) through Kathleen Gough's call for political engagement (1968), to James Clifford's post modernist critiques (1988), we have argued and debated what we write, for whom we write, and ultimately why we write as we do. As Gavin Smith has remarked, many of these debates have needlessly shifted our attention away from the *how* of our research to fetishize the process of writing as the essence of the anthropological endeavour (1991).

So, what will happen to my notes after I die? As I go along my notes are copied and placed in the care of Gtixaala. All of our interview cassettes, video tapes, and transcribed interviews are also housed in Gitxaala. Ultimately, all of those things written about Gitxaala that I produce are to be maintained in the community.

As an Indigenous scholar I share the concerns and scepticisms of community members when faced with yet another request to do research (Menzies, 2001). Indigenous peoples' experience of newcomers, settlers, and researchers has been one mediated by more than 500 years of colonialism in the Americas. The history of the ongoing colonial encounter is inscribed in a host of stories similar to the abalone story recounted earlier in this paper. Such stories capture the history and legacy of colonialism. While the *Forests for the Future* can not be presented as an end to colonialism's research legacy, it is one small part of the decolonising

project. Irrespective of whether one is an Indigenous scholar or not we all share a responsibility to conduct respectful research that demonstrates not just the form, but the actual content of respect and honour.

*Notes*

[1]John Lewis is currently the Chief Negotiator for the Gitxaala Nation.

[2]FftF was a two year project funded by the now defunct provincial agency, Forest Renewal BC. The underlying goal of the project was to conduct community-based research into local ecological knowledge in the Gitxaala territory. The various end products included curriculum materials (lesson plans and videos), published reports and academic papers such as this one. For further information see: www.ecoknow.ca.

[3]There are of course exceptions to this. For example the realization that anthropologists were actively aiding the US government's acts of organized state terror and counter insurgency planning in Thailand during the Vietnam War (Wolf & Jorgensen, 1970; Fluehr-Lobban, 1991; Walkin, 1992) led to intense debate and strife within the American Anthropological Association in the 1970s. An earlier botched attempt by the US government to employ social scientists in counter insurgency in Latin America, the infamous Project Camelot (Horowitz, 1974), had previously resulted in a creation of a statement of research ethics being adopted by the AAA. In recent years, concerned anthropologists, such as Avi Bornstein, have worried over the implications of writing fieldnotes and staying with community members during armed occupations. In Bornstein's case his work was with Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. The possibility of direct repression by the Israel state was a real and present danger throughout his field work (Bornstein, 2002). While the mainstream debates about ethics have, during the period of post-modernist reflection, turned to individual concerns and the bureaucratization of university-based ethics committees, the underlying issues of the complicity—conscious or otherwise—of social science remains a critical concern for social scientists. This is of particular importance in work in Indigenous communities.

[4]Bob Hill was replaced as TTC President in the general assembly, fall 2000 by Deborah Jeffrey. He returned to the office of President in the fall of 2002.

[5]The initial proposal was submitted for funding in January 2001 to the British Columbia government agency, Forest Renewal BC (FRBC). The funding decision was made in April of that year but, due to a change in the provincial government, was not actually funded until late August of 2001. The new governing party had criticized FRBC during its election campaign as an agency of "social engineering" ("Liberals fire Forest Renewal Bosses" *Vancouver Sun*, July 4, 2001). They promised a major review of all of its operations. Upon winning the May 17, 2001 election they immediately placed a hold on all FRBC research projects. Final approval for the 2001-2002 budget year was received in August, 2001. Similar delays occurred for what was to be the final year of funding (2002-2003) for what was originally a three year project.

The electoral history of BC is not directly germane to this discussion. However, it is instructive to point out that the then newly triumphant BC Liberal Party government initiated a review of all government spending and agencies and in the immediate period following their electoral win cut personal income tax, social assistance spending, funds to daycare, reorganized provincial ministries, began unheard of layoffs of provincial government employees, and a radical programme of privatizing most major assets of the provincial government (including public parks, the provincial ferry service, health care delivery, and the provincial hydro electric authority among the most obvious). The fact that funding was eventually restored for two of the original three years committed for the FftF is a small miracle in the face of the widespread cuts to similar programs.

[6]There is an underlying "political economy" of research that also has an influence on how projects develop. For example, the north coast of BC is a major temperate rainforest, referred to as the "Great Bear Rainforest" by environmental multinational NGOs. As part of

their global campaign a number of groups, such as EcoTrust, Rainforest Solutions, the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, and the Suzuki Foundation, have invested in research projects of some magnitude with First Nations and coastal communities south of Prince Rupert. In addition, there are large scale University-based research projects consisting of large groups of scholars and community members who have research agreements with First Nations and other communities along the coast. To this mix one can add the research and corporate relations and partnerships between the major resource industry firms with First Nations and other coastal communities. All of these factors shape the playing field of research and have implications on the ability of small-scale research projects such as the FftF project to achieve their project goals.

[7]Please note that while the negotiations of collaborative research were similar in terms of setting up the Oona River component, there are necessary differences between research with an Indigenous community and a community comprised for the most part of members of a colonizing population. This paper is concerned only with the process of negotiating collaborative research with Gitxaala. Elsewhere we discuss the research with Oona River (Menzies, FftF final report; see also the video *Oona River: Between Forest and Sea*, 2003 www.ecoknow.ca).

[8]The involvement of community-based researchers has been a key methodological feature of all of my north coast research. The initial idea for this approach has its origins in an undergraduate course taught by Dr. Marilyn Gates at Simon Fraser University in the early-1980s. During the course Jim Green, a long-time community activist and currently a member of the centre-left municipal council of Vancouver, gave a presentation about the social impacts of development on the residents of the downtown eastside of Vancouver. At the end of the talk he issued a challenge that we should do more than just talk about these issues. Along with a small group of my classmates I embarked upon a class project that grew into a major residential housing needs survey of the downtown eastside of Vancouver (Green, 1989). As part of our commitment to community needs, each team of survey researchers include one student and one community member. The result was a far more interesting and detailed research product than might otherwise have been expected of an undergraduate program. Since then I have found that the combination of local expertise with the technical expertise of university training offers mutual benefits to all who are inclined to learn from the experience.

[9]It is important to point out that even though my family is connected to Gitxaala and that this opens more doors to me than might have ordinarily been the case for other university-based researchers my responsibilities were if anything more detailed and involved. With these family ties come responsibilities and obligations that can not be ignored or sloughed off.

[10]This is not to say that research must always be carried out with full and complete approval of a particular community. There may in fact be good examples of when such approvals are not appropriate. However, in the context of colonialism and the movement toward decolonisation and sovereignty working to ensure community protocols are maintained is critical. This does not however imply that research conducted in this situation is suspect or necessarily reflects the "official" view of community. Researchers who obscure or hide uncomfortable facts, who tidy up their work, or who abdicate their critical faculties are helping no one but those who wish to continue the subjugation of Indigenous peoples.

[11]In the project video *The View From Gitxaala*, John Lewis describes the abalone incident in greater detail and the protections that the community now demands as a consequence of previous unethical research. The video was screened in Gitxaala during March 2003 at a community fair. Immediately adjoining the Forests for the Future table and video show were representatives of the same research agency who had conducted the abalone study. Apparently unaware of local feelings regarding their research on the abalones, they had prominently displayed leaflets and posters warning people not to gather abalones.

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I acknowledge the support, assistance, and advice of Sm'ooygit Hale (Russell Gamble). Thank you to Marvin and Roberta Gamble for opening their home to me and offering advice and support throughout this project. John Lewis of the Kitkatla Treaty Office facilitated community meetings and provided opportunities to meet with community members. Thanks to members of Gitxaala who provided feedback and commentary throughout the research period and beyond. A special thanks is due Caroline Butler, who was a pivotal person in all aspects of this project. Thanks also to community researchers Sam Lewis and Raven McMahon, UBC anthropology graduate students Morgen Smith and Kim Brown and the project Extension Coordinator Veronica Ignas. You have all contributed to the success of this project. Without the hard work and good will of all of these people and many others unnamed the project would not have been as successful as it has been. Funding for the project this paper arises from was provided by the former Forest Renewal of British Columbia.

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## *Appendix A: Letter of Commitment*

Charles R. Menzies
Department of Anthropology and Sociology
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6303 NW Marine Drive
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z1

November 21, 2001

Chief and Council
Kitkatla First Nation
Kitkatla

Dear Council Members,

Thank you for your time and consideration of the research project, Forests for the Future during your meeting this afternoon. I appreciate your comments, suggestions and, most importantly, the trust you have placed in me to carry out this research project.

The following points summarize the research project, procedures, and research protocols that I commit to. These points are based on my commitment to research protocols that clearly identify the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of researchers to the communities within which they work.

As was stated in the meeting today the purpose of this project is to document local ecological knowledge and environmental values in order to produce educational materials to be used in the community school and as a basis for written articles and reports.

This will be accomplished by inviting individual community members to describe their use of local resources and local/traditional management structures. If the community member agrees, these conversations will be tape recorded. Each community member will receive a tape and transcript of their conversation with the research team. They will have the opportunity to review and edit the conversation if they wish.

The original tape recordings and copies of all transcripts and data will be stored in the Kitktala Band Office and copies of tape recordings, transcripts and data will be kept in my office at UBC under my direct care. Access to tapes, transcripts, and data is restricted to the project team under my direction and Kitkatla members as

per community protocols. I understand that the content of taped interviews and transcripts is the intellectual property of the interviewee and the community of Kitkatla. Tape recordings, transcripts, or data collected will not be reproduced or distributed in any form without the prior written consent of Kitkatla. All copies of tapes, transcripts and data will be returned to Kitkatla at the point at which they are no longer actively being used by myself. Every effort will be made to ensure that no copies of any of these materials will be housed permanently or temporarily in any archive other than at Kitkatla.

The material is being collected in order to produce a report on local ecological knowledge that will be used to create educational materials. Additional written articles will also be produced from this information. Drafts of all documents produced from the interviews will be made available for review and approval by Kitkatla First Nation prior to publication. None of the tapes, transcripts, or data collected for this research project will be patented or trademarked at any time by myself, any member of the research team, or the University of British Columbia. I recognize that the authority for applying for patents and trademarks of any data produced is the sole responsibility and right of Kitkatla. Copyright of the interviews will be held by the interviewee and Kitkatla.

All information resulting from this research will be documented anonymously unless individual community members explicitly request that their real name be used.

Questions or requests for further information regarding this study should be directed to me. Any concerns about the treatment or rights of community members in their capacity as a project participant should be addressed to the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia.

Thank you again for your consideration. I look forward to speaking with you again as the project develops.

Yours truly,

Charles Menzies

*Appendix B*
*Informed Consent Form, Forests for the Future—*
*Ecological Knowledge Research Project*

*Principal Investigator:* Dr. Charles Menzies, Dept. of Anthropology, UBC

*Purpose:* To document local ecological knowledge and environmental values.

*Study Procedure*: You will be asked to describe how you use local resources and about local resource management. The interview will last about one hour. If you agree, the conversation will be tape-recorded.

*Review of Tape and Transcript:* You will receive a tape and transcript of the conversation. You may review and edit the conversation if you wish.

*Storage and Access to Tape, Transcript and Data:* Original tape recordings and copies of all transcripts and data will be stored in the Kitktala Band Office and copies of tape recordings, transcripts and data will be kept in the AnSo Building, University of British Columbia. Access to tapes, transcripts, and data is restricted to the project

team under the direction of Dr Menzies and Kitkatla members as per Kitkatla protocols. The content of taped interviews and transcripts is the intellectual property of the interviewee.

*Use of Tapes, Transcripts and Data:* This material is being collected in order to produce a report on local ecological knowledge. Additional written articles and educational materials will also be produced from this information. Tape recordings, transcripts, or data collected will not be reproduced or distributed without the prior written consent of Kitkatla. Drafts of all documents produced from this interview will be made available for review and approval by Kitkatla First Nation prior to publication.

*Confidentiality:* Participants will not be identified by name in any reports or articles produced unless you request in writing to have your real name used.

*Contact:* If you have any questions or desire further information about this study, please contact Dr. Menzies. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a project participant, please contact the Director of Research Services at the UBC.

Consent: I, _____ understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. I consent to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date Witness Signature Date