# CENTRING COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

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RESEARCH THAT VALUES local knowledge by inclusion, rather than by extraction, is now a popular practice. Variously called community-based, participatory, or collaborative, this kind of research is very much a mainstream tendency within social science approaches today. In anthropology such approaches have a long genealogy (see reviews by Lamphere 2004, 2018), but it wasn't until fairly recently that collaborative and participatory methods took on a mainstream tone (Lassiter 2005). While early collaborative/community-based approaches were often linked to social activism (Gough 1968; Tax 1975), collaborative methodologies are today just as likely to be found in government agencies as in community activist organizations.

Menzies's own community-based methodological approach was strongly shaped when he was an undergraduate student in a 1980s course on social impact assessment taught by Dr. Marilyn Gates at Simon Fraser University. Gates built the course around a set of activist, consultant, and social impact assessment practitioners and community-based researcher presentations. This many years later, Menzies will confess to only re-membering one of the speakers in any detail – the late Jim Green.

> What stood out for me was Jim's unabashed expectation that students had to do more than just study: we had to act. Jim wasn't interested in just any kind of action, though. He wanted action that benefited the community he worked with. Simply doing good research wasn't sufficient. For Jim there needed to be a social value in the work. His talk focused around residents in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver who were facing a wave of renovictions in the lead-up to and aftermath of the 1986 world's fair as developers raced to gentrify and redevelop the area. He was describing to us the situation for residents in the single room occupancy (SRO) hotels and what

his organization (the Downtown Eastside Residents Association [DERA]) was doing. He outlined the kinds of data that were needed to coordinate a push back, to show that there was a real community with needs living in the DTES. At the end of the talk Jim challenged us: "so, what are you going to do?" We didn't immediately jump up and accept his challenge. It seemed, at first, to be a kind of rhetorical challenge. It quickly became clear he actually expected us to do something "useful," as he put it. Four of us volunteered. We ultimately designed and implemented one of the very first detailed surveys of DTES residents ever conducted (Green 1989). But Jim had more to offer than simply recruiting student researchers.

Several weeks into our project we had the survey ready to go and, with Jim's direction, had secured funding for the project from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission (CMHC). We were meeting with Jim at the DERA offices and were talking about recruiting students to conduct the surveys. Jim had been quietly listening to our plan when he interrupted the discussion to tell us how it was going to go.

"You are going to have teams of two. One student, one DERA member."

One of us was about to say something but Jim cut them off.

"It's important. First, there's an equity thing here. Students need jobs, but our community needs money. So for every dollar spent on a student there's got to be a dollar spent on a DERA member. But then there's a safety thing, a local knowledge thing. You guys don't know this neighbourhood. You don't know how to talk to us, you don't know how to be safe. So the DERA member gives you that local knowledge, that understanding of what's happening on the ground."

Jim paused, checking to see that we got it.

"Okay, but you also have knowledge – technical knowledge. You know how to do this survey, how to collect and analyze the data. So the key is linking those two knowledges – they are equal, not one better than the other – equal. With only one of them the project fails."

This was a revelation. The idea of combined expertise. It was an approach that balanced different knowledge systems without valuing one over the other. It was an approach that linked social engagement to advance the well-being of people with local knowledge and university knowledge systems. Our terminology has changed over the

past decades, but Jim's approach is one shared with many collaborative research endeavours today. In my research since then I have tried to follow Jim's approach, adapting it to specific situations as required.

(Menzies)

Almost twenty years later, Butler took an applied sociology course at the University of British Columbia, taught by Dr. Brian Elliot, that partnered with Jim Green to link graduate students with community-based organizations in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for service-learning projects. Green found value in these partnerships as they provided volunteer labour and research interns to community groups.

> The lesson I learned from Jim was that the skills we were developing in graduate school were the tools we should be putting into service as volunteers and community members. While the course focused on applied methods and collaborative approaches, Jim's message to us was to go beyond collaboration. He emphasized that while all projects should benefit the community in addition to the researcher, our work should leave room for community-driven projects that do not necessarily support our career advancement. We should be volunteering our skills as researchers to organizations in need, without publishing or otherwise benefiting personally from the work. For example, rather than, or in addition to, handing out meals at a food bank, we should be writing grant proposals for that organization; we should employ our academic skills in service as well as in collaboration.

> I was partnered with an organization that provided outreach and support services to male sex workers in Yaletown. The project they gave me was a literature review of articles relating to their client populations and their needs: LGTBQ youth, sex work, transgender and transvestite sex workers, youth at risk, and safe-sex outreach strategies. My project was the only one in the class that did not involve direct social research with community participants. The important lesson that I learned as an eager young ethnographer was that I shouldn't get to interview people unless that is what they decide is helpful and important. The service learning project did not give me what I had anticipated – ethnographic experience – rather, it gave me better insight into the importance of community control over research design and practice, and the potential for truly community-focused research where the researcher is an asset but not a partner.

(Butler)

Following Menzies's appointment at UBC in 1996, his research drew him back home to the north coast of British Columbia, where he established research collaborations with Indigenous communities (like his home community of Gitxaała [Menzies 2004]). Butler relocated to Prince Rupert in 2001 and participated in several of these initiatives, first as a student assistant and later as a research partner. In these projects, methodological approaches have foregrounded Indigenous participation and values. More important, in writing up the research, the focus centres the Indigenous vantage point over extractive colonial practices (Menzies 2013; Menzies and Butler 2019). These research practices have brought us into applied areas where the questions are focused on how to be guided by, and use, Indigenous ecological knowledge. When we first started this kind of research in the 1990s, government officials were open to admitting the potential value of Indigenous knowledge, but this openness was limited by a general reluctance to move beyond gesturing towards the importance of such knowledge. It is now common for the value of Indigenous ecological knowledge, also called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), to be recognized as an important contribution to resource management plans (Berkes 2017).

There remain pragmatic and political difficulties with meaningful collaborative implementation (see, for example, Cruikshank 2004; Nadasdy 2004). Jana Kotaska (2019) argues against collaboration being the best option in every instance (note that she is not against collaborative research as such – she simply contends that it isn't always the best approach). In fact, we would agree that there are projects that should be under the direct authority and jurisdiction of Gitxaała and that, in these instances, integrating knowledges is less important than direct community control. La Salle (2010) critiques the ideology of collaboration, pointing out that many collaborative projects that are based in the ideology of integration remain more driven by outside interests. There is a wide and detailed literature that explores both obstacles and opportunities behind the idea of "integrating" Indigenous knowledge and settler-state resource management approaches. For example, Berkes (2017) focuses on the opportunities within characterizing TEK as Indigenous science. Nadasday (2004), however, documents many of the obstacles to this, while highlighting the dynamic of colonial power relations as being the most critical. Our point in this article is not to engage with this debate in detail, even if we are theoretically disposed to take a critical view of "integration"(Menzies and Butler 2019); rather, we seek to document how, in practice, we have tried to prioritize

community knowledge and, in so doing, to integrate it with settler-state resource management practices on occasions when this makes sense to our community partners. Despite all of the critiques, the integration of Indigenous knowledge, or TEK, has become a standard part of many Crown government resource management structures and initiatives. Furthermore, the rights of Indigenous communities to design and direct research conducted in their own communities have been increasingly recognized and respected, with collaborative approaches becoming common practice. The pragmatic reality is that integrating TEK into resource management plans (often directed by First Nations themselves) is standard practice, but many questions remain concerning exactly how one goes about doing this.

In this article, we argue that the lessons learned in Indigenous knowledge research projects and partnerships can inform and improve community-based research in general. In the early 2000s, Menzies and Butler were involved in two very different research projects: one a community-based, collaborative Indigenous knowledge partnership between Gitxaała Nation and UBC, the other a Crown government-sponsored local knowledge documentation project. The application of Indigenous knowledge methods and approaches to a government planning process provides key insights into the advancement of collaborative research methods and enhances the integration of community values and knowledge into resource management and regulation. Our approach to community-based research is shaped by our service-learning experiences and the community-driven research philosophy of Jim Green as well the protocol demands of collaborative research in Gitxaała territory. It has been informed by our joint research since the 1990s, and it has been refined by our real time applications and work experiences (Butler with Gitxaała and Menzies as a Gitxaała-based university researcher) on British Columbia's north coast (Menzies and Butler 2019). This combination of community activism and Indigenous rights has shaped a research approach that we believe is relevant and valuable to all research contexts that seek to respect community values, rights, and knowledge.

## LOCAL CONTEXT

The north coast of British Columbia stretches about 402 kilometres north to south and 121 kilometres east to west. Geographically the region encompasses majestic fjords that cut deep into the mainland, high coastal mountains, and a low-lying coastal archipelago that runs

along the mainland. The primary settlement is the coastal community of Prince Rupert (population of about twelve thousand), established in 1911. A handful of settler and Indigenous communities dot the surrounding coast, making for an overall population of about fifteen thousand. Within the North Coast area are four coastal Indigenous villages: Lax Kwa'alaams, Metlakatla, Lach Klan (Gitxaała), and Hartley Bay (Gitga'at) (listed north to south). Each of the village communities shares what has been defined by anthropologists as a common Tsimshian culture, but they are politically separate entities. There are also a handful of small settler villages with twenty to fifty people each (Oona River, Hunts Inlet, Osland, and Dodge Cove). The primary focus of this article is the Gitxaała Nation's traditional territory, which extends from about Prince Rupert south to Aristazabal Island.

Prior to incorporation within the Euro-American world system, the primary lines of communication, trade, and social relations of the North Coast stretched coastwise south to northern California, north to the Aleutian Islands, and eastward along key river systems several hundred kilometres inland. Indigenous histories hold accounts of travellers whose origins are very likely from parts of Asia, northern North America, and the interior of the Americas (Menzies 2016; McDonald 2003; Roth 2008).

Menzies established a research partnership with Gitxaała Nation in the late 1990s, and, in 2001, with funding from Forest Renewal BC, he initiated a TEK research project with the community. The goal of the Forests and Oceans for the Future project was to document Gitxaała ecological knowledge of marine and terrestrial territories and resources, including traditional conservation methods and resource management structures. Early in the development of the project the research team organized a meeting in Prince Rupert, which was held in a venue immediately adjacent to the inaugural meeting of the North Coast Land and Resource Management Planning process. Gitxaała Nation was participating in this collaborative land use planning process, as were the provincial government, other First Nations, locally operating businesses, and other stakeholders. Informal lunchtime discussions with provincial planners about local knowledge resulted in a research contract that included Forest and Oceans for the Future's participation in the Coast Information Team (CIT) research initiative. The collaborative project with Gitxaała had inadvertently led to a data collection project for the province. Both Forests and Oceans for the Future and the Coast Information Team expressed a valuation of local knowledge, but they did so from very different perspectives. The former prioritized collaborative

engagement and process, while the latter focused on data collection from "local experts." As we will show, the Gitxaała project influenced our approach to the local knowledge research contract in ways that offer valuable commentary on the centring of community knowledge in natural resource management processes.

Locating the research projects and our operational solutions for integrating local knowledge within the local context is critical in terms of establishing a basis of comparison for others working in different regions. If these solutions are to have more than a particular or idiosyncratic application, one needs to understand the context within which we worked and how this may have shaped our outcomes. Indigenous knowledge is specific to its home territories, but it also has underlying principles that have translocal applicability. Indigenous-driven approaches can offer productive pathways for community-based research in any community.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS AND METHODOLOGIES

Forests and Oceans for the Future was a collaborative community/ university research project conducted by the University of British Columbia and Gitxaała (Menzies 2004). The central objective of this project was to conduct research and extension activities to facilitate the incorporation of core community values (Indigenous and settler) into local sustainable forest management. This project incorporated three central components: applied research into local ecological knowledge, policy development and evaluation focused on achieving the meaningful participation of all peoples and organizations reliant upon the common forest resources, and extension activities designed to facilitate mutual respect, effective communication, and knowledge sharing between First Nations and other natural resources stakeholders.

The cultural spatial analysis (CSA) of the Coast Information Team was a multi-sector assessment primarily based on GIS mapping techniques. The Coast Information Team and its research agenda emerged in response to concerns regarding the need for unbiased, objective sources of data for use in the development of regional land use planning processes in British Columbia. The Coast Information Team was designed to provide assistance and recommendations to planning tables on ecosystem-based management, resource analysis, community transition and diversification, and other topics as requested by the table membership. It was funded by the Rainforest Solutions Project (comprised of several environmental organizations), the provincial government of British Columbia,

and industry (Canfor, Norske Canada, Western Forest Products, and Weyerhaeuser). The stated aim of the Coast Information Team was to bring together the best available scientific, traditional, and local knowledge; environmental expertise; and community experience to develop information and analyses to support the development and implementation of ecosystem-based management on the central and north coasts and Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands. As one component of this process, the CSA was designed to identify priority areas for maintenance of cultural values. The research design incorporated the understanding that these values may differ from one cultural group to another.

## PROJECT METHODOLOGIES

Both of these projects placed local knowledge at the core of their research methodologies but from divergent perspectives. The Forests and Oceans for the Future project was designed to emphasize local understandings and to take direction from local processes and protocols. The Coast Information Team, with its cultural spatial analysis, was involved in an externally driven research project in which a systematic approach to data collection was developed aimed at revealing key community values and then ascribing degrees of importance and priorities as revealed to the outside researcher. Both the Forests and Oceans for the Future's project and the Coast Information Team's project relied upon close collaboration with community-based researchers. However, the Forests and Oceans project was a partnership with local communities and First Nations while the Coast Information Team employed local people as an "efficient way to capture local knowledge."[1]

## FORESTS AND OCEANS FOR THE FUTURE

The development of the research protocol for this project is dealt with elsewhere (Butler 2004; Lewis 2004; Menzies 2004). Here we outline the structure of the Indigenous knowledge research with Gitxaała Nation and how our methodological approach contributed to the successful development of multiple research products.[2]

Resource use-focused interviews constituted the primary method used in the Indigenous knowledge research component of the Forests

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[1] From cultural spatial analysis (CSA) terms of reference, in co-author's files.
[2] This section draws upon and abridges Butler (2004).

and Oceans for the Future project. The key aspects of these interviews are discussed below. However, it is important to emphasize that these interviews were complemented and supplemented with other research techniques. The university researchers participated in community events, including feasts, treaty and community meetings, bingo, basketball, and traditional harvesting practices. Attendance at these events established a presence in the community, which contributed to research participants' comfort and familiarity with the team. Participation in community events also provided another forum for learning about the context of resource use and a greater understanding of community issues and relationships.

The research team was set up in the same way as was Jim Green's DTES research teams: one university researcher plus one community member for each interview team. The idea was borrowed directly from Green's approach: combine the expertise of locality with the expertise of technique. Combined teams ensured a degree of comfort for those being interviewed, but, more important, they ensured a linguistic and culturally appropriate form of conversation with research participants. Further refinement of the research approach and methodology was achieved through consultation with the band council, hereditary leaders, and Elders. The following values, insights, and priorities determined the research path.

1. *Protocol:* The research team was directed to commence interviews with house leaders and Elders. *Walps* (lineage-based house groups) are the title-holding entities in Gitxaała Nation. The hereditary leaders of these *walps* manage, care for, and have the authority to speak about their *laxyuup* (territory). The Elders of the community are also looked to for leadership and expertise regarding traditional practices and structures of governance. In most cases the category of Elder overlaps with the hereditary system of house leadership, which includes not just house leaders but also other named members of the house with lifelong experience and knowledge. In the early phase of our collaborations with Gitxaała, our selection was significantly guided by local elected leadership and administrative staff. As our research relationships developed, and as we became familiar with community leaders and experts, we took a larger role in recruiting individuals to participate in our projects. The guiding principle for asking people to participate was their experience and knowledge of the particular subject under study. We elaborate on this in the next section, which deals with the differentiation of knowledge. It is important to note that, while we invited research participants according

to Gitxaała protocols and community identification of experts, actual participation was determined by individual comfort both with research in general and with the project topic in particular.

2. *Differentiation of knowledge:* The research involved two rounds of interviews over the course of the first two years of the project. The first year of research focused on the experiences and knowledge of Elders and hereditary leaders. Community experts were also suggested as potential research participants. These were individuals or families who were highly involved in resource harvesting and processing. Specific people are often associated with specific resources: one person might be an avid duck hunter, another might focus on seal and sea lion meat, while seaweed might be the specialty of yet others. While all community members had valuable contributions to make to the research, particular individuals and families were considered to be especially knowledgeable about specific resources and/or practices. The community researcher and translator contacted potential research participants and arranged the interviews. Interviews were primarily conducted in the homes of the participants, although some of the younger participants preferred to meet at the band council offices. During the second year, interviews were conducted with younger members of the community in an effort to understand the changing context and experience of resource harvesting in Gitxaała territory. Each group of participants provided different vantage points that clarified the ways in which knowledge is distributed differently through a community of practice.

3. *Interview participation:* Most interviews were with individuals, some were with married couples, and a few involved up to four members of a family. There are benefits to both individual and group interviews. The individual interviews allowed for more detailed questioning and provided information regarding life history and resource use history. Talking to couples often highlighted the gendered perspectives on resource use and provided complementary data regarding harvesting and processing. Talking to multi-generational groups allowed the researchers to explore intergenerational differences and connections. Often the children reminded their parents of stories that they had related at other times. Younger family members tended to direct the questions towards subjects in which they were interested, primarily regarding changes over time and Sm'algyax words and concepts.

4. *Scale:* The first round of research involved two scales of interviews with key participants such as leaders, Elders, and active harvesters.

The initial interviews were designed to identify key resources, seasonal patterns, and areas of activity. Open-ended questions about harvesting activities allowed Elders and hereditary leaders to catalogue species, to discuss harvesting and processing methods, and to establish the seasonal and geographical structure of Gitxaała subsistence. The secondary interviews were more directed and structured, and questions were drawn from the initial transcripts. Participants were asked to elaborate on topics they had mentioned in the first interview or were asked to discuss issues or species about which other participants had talked.

5. *Frameworks:* Although the interviews were highly participant-directed and semi-structured, two general frameworks were utilized to provide an implicit structure to each round of interviews. An activity-based framework structured the primary interviews. This framework provided information regarding general resource harvesting and processing patterns as well as the basic-level data required to develop more detailed questions. The secondary interviews were structured by a resource-based framework, which provided detailed information regarding species used in Gitxaała territory. This framework was used to generate a catalogue of species and to develop an educational field guide.

6. *Translation:* Translation was necessary for most participants over seventy years of age. Questions had to be translated more frequently than answers; however, some participants found it difficult to describe certain concepts, activities, or resources in English. Even younger participants, who responded primarily in English, used Sm'algyax words to refer to most of the species. Fluent Sm'algyax speakers participated as community researchers and translators whenever possible, particularly for interviews with Elders.

The overall research protocol and the detailed content of interview questions were refined through an ongoing iterative process of community engagement and consultation. Limits were placed on the scope of the project; the mapping of resource use was not permitted,[3] and traditional medicines were not documented. This resulted in a research project that was driven by Gitxaała values and priorities and attended to community sensitivities and unease regarding cultural research (see

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[3]  The hereditary leaders were not comfortable mapping resource use areas with UBC researchers in a collaborative project; however, the First Nation did hire consultants to facilitate a traditional use study to inform Gitxaała participation in the provincial land use planning process. Complete community ownership of research products is sometimes preferable to a collaborative academic research agreement.

Menzies 2004 and 2016 for a discussion of the legacy of extractive research practices).

## COAST INFORMATION TEAM AND CULTURAL SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Cultural spatial analysis was one of three analyses conducted by the Coast Information Team, the others being socio-economic and ecological, respectively. Given the nature of cultural data some overlap between the CSA and the other analyses was anticipated. The Coast Information Team's underlying intention was to integrate these three types of assessment through a "conversation of maps," in which the values inscribed on each could be overlaid to identify potential conflicts. The research was designed to produce a management tool for land use planning.

First Nations participated to varying degrees in the CSA, and it was decided to focus on existing cultural information for First Nations communities rather than community-based research. Some First Nations did not participate at all, some provided point data, some provided polygons, and some provided feature counts by water shed (Lee 2004, 8).[4] A protocol was developed for data collection in "Other Communities" (non-Indigenous communities) through semi-structured map-based interviews. Local researchers were hired to conduct local-level research in each of the land use planning subregions: Central Coast, North Coast, and Haida Gwaii. Menzies was contracted to organize the North Coast research.[5]

The overall purpose was to elicit community values pertaining to land and water by representing them on maps and then comparing them with economic and ecological values. Valued attributes of places were referred to as "cultural features," or "features." The geographic areas with which these features are associated were delineated on maps. These delineations were referred to as "places" when talking about how community residents felt about them and as "polygons" when represented spatially in the datasets. Information on cultural features was supposed to provide regional planning tables and other decision-makers with the knowledge needed to examine compatibilities, conflicts, and trade-offs in implementing sustainable development of the region, now and into the future. This "conversation of maps" would enable the implementation

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[4]  Due to a lack of existing spatial information, mapping interviews were conducted with Nuxalk community members as per the protocols for "Other Communities."

[5]  Menzies was also contracted to document non-Indigenous resource harvesting and subsistence practices for a report on the "informal economy" of the North Coast. See Butler, Mattson, and Menzies (2016). That project was independently designed by Menzies.

of ecosystem-based management by providing a level playing field on which cultural values could be considered along with ecological and economic values.

Community values were identified and mapped according to the following procedures:

1. Identify and map sites of cultural or social value to the First Nation or local group concerned, specifying the cultural or social practice or practices associated with the site or other cultural or social significance of the site.
2. Indicate the persistence of the cultural or social practice or practices associated with the site (since when or how long has the site been used for the practice?).
3. If possible, indicate participation rates in the cultural or social practice or practices associated with the site (how many people or what proportion of the group [all, most, some, few] participate in the practice? How many people or what proportion of the group participated at one or more specified points in the past?).
4. Indicate the condition of the site (e.g., intact, minor damage or degradation, moderate damage or degradation, major damage or degradation, destroyed) and the nature of any damage or degradation.
5. Indicate the degree to which the site is at risk of damage, degradation, or destruction (e.g., high, moderate, low) and the likely source of risk.

On the basis of the above information, the CSA:

1. Identified sites or groups of sites (megasites) in terms of irreplaceability and vulnerability.
2. Analyzed conflicts and compatibilities among the values concerned.
3. Assembled the sites or groups of sites into portfolios that would secure the full range of cultural and social values (especially those that are most important or most vulnerable) with the minimum of conflict (Lee 2004).

From the start of our involvement in the CSA we expressed methodological concerns to the project and sector leads. We took issue with the idea of fitting research participant responses into reconfigured categories

(or, as the Coast Information Team called them, values). It seemed more reasonable (and more respectful) to first identify the local classification and then see if there was any congruence with the preconfigured values. Our other concern related to how "places" were to be evaluated. The CSA used a matrix that compared the extent of a community's use of a place against the integrity of the place. A place used by 80 percent of a community but that was degraded to only 10 percent of its original ecological value was deemed less of a priority than a place with 50 percent community use but that retained 90 percent of its ecological value. The CSA thus employed a metric that allowed an external assessment of places, external to collective community concerns, which could assign priority for preservation in the context of land use planning.

We had committed to carrying out the North Coast CSA, so we continued. However, we modified our approach to bring it more in line with community participant interests. This did make integration into the Central Coast component more difficult for the project lead. We focused on local knowledge holders (not politicians). We followed the lead of our research participants in the identification of values and places.

While the maps and the overall approach were similar for both the Central Coast and North Coast, we departed from the research protocol to create a set of more refined, community-based values for attribution to the places identified by respondents.  In both subregions, the general types of "values" were derived from a post hoc examination of respondents' maps and answers to our questions. However, the Central Coast protocol lumped these values into a restricted sequence of values (sustenance, heritage, recreation, natural features, and other) that closely mirrored the Coast Information Team's initial perception of the most "likely" categories of values expected. For our part, on the North Coast, we generated an extensive sequence of "values" that emerged directly from the experiences and practices of the individuals we interviewed. At the end of our data collection one of Menzies's graduate students collated our information and simplified it to fit with the prefigured set of values that the CSA required. While the Coast Information Team ignored our community-grounded categorizations to make the North Coast data comparable with the other subregions, its report identifies this approach as having perhaps resulted in a greater number of features being assigned to delineated places than on maps from the Central Coast (Lee 2004, 4).

A further difference stems from the types of people interviewed and the way in which these interviews were conducted. On the North

Coast, we identified resource users and knowledge holders with practical experience on the land. Each interviewee was presented her or his own map on which to record important sites and values. This resulted in our having multiple entries for single places with different ascribed values. Central Coast respondents were more likely to be selected from the ranks of community leaders than were respondents on the North Coast, where direct experience and ongoing harvesting practices were key selection criteria. In interviews with Central Coast respondents, the CSA principal investigator did not gather frequency data on individual places or features. If a site or value was mentioned once, it was deemed equivalent to other sites mentioned multiple times. Whereas for the North Coast data, we highlighted the importance of frequency and the ways in which members of different communities and subcommunities generated different sets and assemblages of culturally important places and values.[6]

The CSA followed a fairly standard mapping protocol that relied upon expert knowledge holders as identified by local community leaderships. However, on the North Coast we focused on interviewing local ecological knowledge holders: resource harvesters, recreational hunters, fishers, and backcountry users. We actively asked people to identify those they thought held specific types of knowledge and then reached out to them in a manner similar to that described by Anthony Davis for recruiting fisherfolk knowledge holders on Canada's East Coast (Davis and Wagner 2003). We did not include local leadership figures unless they were acknowledged ecological knowledge holders.

## LESSONS ON CENTRING COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

A considerable amount of applied research over the past few decades has had as its goal the integration of local knowledge into resource management. This is an important project and we support all efforts to carry it out – even while we may take issue with industry/university-led projects that have tended to be more extractive than collaborative (Menzies and Butler 2019) – but our research experience indicates that it is difficult to properly and fairly integrate these different knowledges and, thus, it is important to acknowledge the limits of any research

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[6] These differences in data collection, respondent selection, and data analysis highlight some of the critical difficulties involved in bridging epistemologies for the purpose of multi-scale analyses. Based upon our long-term research relationship with Gitxaała (both professional and personal) aspects of the Coast Information Team's fast-track research program were not appropriate for working with a First Nation.

initiative attempting to do so. Drawing upon our discussion above, we find three critical lessons from our experience that help us more effectively centre community knowledge: selecting research participants, establishing the time frame of a project, and knowing how a project's conceptual categories are defined internally or externally with regard to a small-scale community.

**1. Selecting research participants** is at the core of any research project design (Russell 2011). It is important that we know whom we are selecting, how they situate the knowledge we are looking for, and the reason that we have selected them. This should go beyond simple methodological discussions of sampling to consider how a perspective that centres Indigenous knowledge differs from one that merely draws from Indigenous knowledge as yet one more piece of data (Menzies 2013).

The CSA methodology used by the Coast Information Team produced mechanically useful results that could be plugged into a government land planning process. It did this by sampling expert knowledge (focusing on local area political leaders) and then generalizing from that to produce a conceptual map of culturally significant places. Individual variation or elaboration was absorbed into a frame that meshed with existing planning categories, which simplified planning processes but did so in a way that understated variability and local particularities. For the purposes of land management, from the perspective of the state, this was sufficient and reasonable.

Participants in the Forests and Oceans for the Future project were selected following advice from Gitxaała Nation's political leadership, reflecting customary protocols of governance, authority, and jurisdiction. We began with hereditary leaders, matriarchs, and Elders. This selection of research participants mirrored, in one respect, the selection of participants in the CSA: people in positions of leadership. But there the similarity ends. Gitxaała participants in the Forests and Oceans for the Future project were selected because of their specific knowledge and the variability of the knowledge they could offer. This involved detailed knowledge of their territories, which they drew from their lifelong responsibility for these places. This specificity and particularity of knowledge was also carried forward into our research and analysis, where we were instructed to be very careful about making generalizations that averaged individual's contributions into an aggregate overview. The implications can be seen in how we conducted our portion of the CSA, whereby we selected participants for their specific knowledge

and followed the conceptual models embedded in their descriptions of significant places.

Social science discussions of methodology are focused on eliciting underlying patterns of knowledge and on being rigorous and accurate. These are laudable principles. Yet the premise of this intellectual legacy is that the outside expert is prioritized as being better placed to conceptualize, organize, and distil the knowledge of the people, who are themselves transformed from knowledge holders into research subjects. To centre community knowledge requires prioritizing community knowledge holders not as subjects but, rather, as experts in their own rights. This has important implications for how one selects participants in a research project. The CSA followed standard social science protocols with the intention of generalizing from a sample of people. In the Forests and Oceans for the Future project, our intent was to be guided by Gitxaała's own intellectual tradition, and this required selecting participants based on local protocols, not on external scientific methodologies.

**2. Research time frames** are critical to how one selects research participants and collaborators. It is important to set a time frame that provides the space and opportunity to effectively centre community. Yet in today's efficiency-driven world, rapid appraisal/research techniques are often heralded as innovative solutions to the assumed deficiencies and inefficiencies of long-term community-based research. These conflicting perspectives create obstacles for meaningfully engaging with and centring the knowledge of research participants.

In our segment of the CSA, we found the fast-track approach of the project was a barrier to gaining the support of our existing First Nations partners. The members of each community had questions and concerns they wanted addressed. They also had ideas about how to best mesh the CSA with internal community research projects already under way. However, the CSA was under a fairly tight timeline and did not have the flexibility to accommodate any thorough consultation that would have involved the modification of either the methodological approach or the analytic frame. The result was that Gitxaała Nation did not participate in the project. Other First Nations participated to various limited degrees by providing existing data. The CSA project was like the proverbial train that has already left the station, and Gitxaała would not jump on. In contrast, the Forests and Oceans for the Future project began with a detailed process of community-based discussions and community consultations during which modifications and alterations in method, approach, and framing occurred multiple times. It is important to note

that participants recruited from "Other Communities" did not present the same kind of resistance to the proposed timelines and methods. North Coast participants in the CSA generally seemed to accept the approach and were happy to provide input into the planning process; the response rate to the interview requests was almost 100 percent. Non-Indigenous North Coast residents did not have the extensive exposure to socio-cultural research that First Nations had, nor did they have the more recent experience of driving and defining community-based projects.

Since most academic and private enterprise researchers, Indigenous or otherwise, have been trained in mainstream social science disciplines, it takes time to learn (or relearn) processes and practices that might more effectively centre Indigenous knowledge. Elsewhere we have spoken about the lack of capacity intrinsic to researchers (Menzies and Butler 2019) – the gist of the argument is that, counter to the capacity-building claims of university and private enterprise researchers (i.e., we are building Indigenous capacity), what is actually occurring is that our capacity to work with Indigenous peoples and communities is what is being developed and built – and that takes time.

Rapid time-limited studies driven by the time logics of capitalism (Thompson 1967) implicitly disrupt the specific and particular of any given locality. In the rush to complete studies, we deploy concepts that are quick to hand, select participants because they are available, and turn knowledge into an average from which we produce generalizations that disassemble connections between local knowledge and place, thus rendering the detail and specificity of community knowledge into charts, tables, maps, and summaries that are transformed into foreign objects of knowledge. This brings us to the third point – the critical importance of rooting one's work within a local perspective, of prioritizing the internal over the external conceptual framework.

**3. Whether a project's conceptual framework is defined internally or externally** shapes one's ability to centre community knowledge throughout the project. We are not claiming that an Indigenous framework is necessarily or always required: we are saying that there is a serious difference in sensibility between treating a community as a data source (the external approach) and treating it as a guiding intellectual frame (the internal approach) (Menzies 2013). The Coast Information Team collected data from communities as a side effect of the larger goal of creating useful planning documents for the province. This contrasts with how the Forests and Oceans for the Future project focused on com-

munity knowledge as a way of understanding the ecological constitution of Gitxaała's marine and terrestrial territories.

The Coast Information Team worked with a predefined typology of places and then attempted to evaluate the integrity of those places in order to prioritize them for preservation or development. Informed by our work with Gitxaała, we sought to modify the CSA methodology to reflect community typologies and values. This modification was only partially successful due to the way the North Coast data were reclassified during analysis for consistency with the other subregions.

Lurking behind the ideals of preservation and conservation that guided the Coast Information Team was a set of values that prioritized unique exemplars (species, geographic features, ecological niches, etc.). While there are debates about the appropriate number of these to preserve, there is general agreement that value can be determined by the integrity of the place and the extent to which it is used. This perspective is tied to ideologies of extractive industry and economic development. If we have a place with an important mineral deposit, that has previously been clearcut, and that less than 10 percent of the community visit, then it is low on the priority list for preservation. This approach ignores values that arise from an Indigenous intellectual tradition. For example, a place may have significant cultural value but never actually be visited by community members – in fact it might be deliberately avoided. Or a site that has been degraded through an extractive industry might rank very high with regard to a community's significant places regardless of how much it might cost to restore the site to its pre-extractive condition. When the Coast Information Team arrived with its pre-set typology and triage model, it essentially replicated the same problems extant with long-standing colonial processes without engaging with community-based definitions of value and priority. We would suggest that assuming the values and priorities of a community because they are ostensibly part of the dominant culture or part of the researcher's culture is not great research practice.

We began this journey reflecting upon the lessons learned from long-time social justice activist Jim Green and his approach to acknowledging expertise through collaboration. We have taken Green's ideas to heart and merged them within an Indigenous approach that values knowledge and how it is located within people and places. This is an approach that calls upon researchers to respect local protocols, to move at a pace that honours one's research partners, and that draws inspiration from the intellectual tradition of the community within which one is working.

The lessons and insights from collaborative research with Indigenous communities can be applied to local knowledge research, resulting in the centring of community knowledge and values. The centring of Indigenous knowledge that is expected by Indigenous communities, and that is increasingly standard practice for academic researchers working in Indigenous communities, can improve our engagement with other communities. Our research with Gitxaała improved our understanding of collaborative, community-based approaches and improved our other research initiatives. We applied the lessons we learned from working with Gitxaała to our research contract for the Land and Resource Management Plan in an effort to make that project better reflect the values and priorities of local knowledge holders. We have made great progress in how we approach collaborative research with Indigenous partners. Taking these lessons of protocol, pace, and framing and implementing them in other research contexts makes sense.

Centring Indigenous knowledge contributes to decolonizing research practices (Smith 2012) and is linked to the strategic acknowledgment of Indigenous authority and jurisdiction over one's own territories (conceived here in both tangible and intangible senses). It reflects a mode of respect for Indigenous peoples (Kovach 2009; Menzies 2001). It transforms the relational aspects of research, turning an extractive enterprise into a collaborative practice (Wilson 2008). Not all of these issues are relevant to community-based research, and our argument is not meant to erase the specificity of Indigenous research issues (in the manner that "All Lives Matter" undermines the message of the Black Lives Matter movement) and calls for change. The politics of research in Indigenous communities are unique, and the legacy of intrusive and extractive research in Indigenous communities is extensive. The issue of jurisdictional recognition is a critical component of establishing research relationships with Indigenous governments and communities. What we are suggesting is that there are lessons that are being taught to us and insights that are being shared with us as we navigate the new ground of collaborative research with Indigenous peoples. We saw the way in which our research approach was altered by our experience in Gitxaała and how our approach to the CSA came to mirror our Forests for the Future project. We resisted the proscribed methodology because, once one has done collaborative research, it is very difficult to participate in a project that is not community based.

The lessons that we have learned may well be prosaic – just stop and listen, be respectful, and appreciate that knowledge comes in many forms

and packages. But if things were in fact so obvious we wouldn't continue to hear so many stories about blundering researchers who have ears of tin (Pinder 1999). Simple lessons are often the hardest to learn. We share our research experiences here to document how modest changes can lead to profoundly different outcomes and how these small changes can create conditions for transformative, progressive change.

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