

REMAKING SPACE IN NORTH-CENTRAL BRITISH COLUMBIA:

The Establishment of the John Prince Research Forest

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INTRODUCTION

IN SEPTEMBER 1996, then Minister of Forests David Zirnhelt announced the pending establishment of the John Prince Research Forest (JPRF).¹ This 13,000-hectare land base would support a working forest, co-managed for research, education, and training purposes by Tl'azt'en Nation and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).² It would be the first of its kind in Canada. The JPRF was, as all spaces are, "the outcome of a process with many aspects and many contributing currents."³ Such "aspects and currents," especially animated in the three years preceding the forest's founding, included diverse and sometimes conflicting ways of seeing and representing the varied potential uses of this space. Such ways of seeing, or "visualizations,"⁴ were rooted in the different spatial assumptions, ideologies, and knowledge of their holders. In this article we document the different and evolving ways of

¹ At that time it was called the UNBC/Tl'azt'en Research Forest; it was renamed in 1999, the date of its formal establishment.

² University research forests are working forests (i.e., they consist of trees that are harvested from the land base) that offer opportunities for research, demonstrations, and education in the field of forestry. Long-term studies of innovative management practices can be carried out. British Columbia has four university research forests. Besides the JPRF, these include the Aleza Lake Research Forest, near Aleza Lake (60 km east of Prince George), co-managed by UNBC and UBC, established in 2001; the Malcolm Knapp Research Forest in Maple Ridge (UBC), established in 1949; and the Alex Fraser Research Forest in Williams Lake (UBC), established in 1987.

³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 110. Lefebvre asserts that space is produced through the processes of visualization, administration, and materialization: thus a tract of land may become a research forest through the process of a group of people "visualizing" it as such, having the power to "administer" it as such (through the passage of rules, regulations, codes, etc.), and "materializing" it through using it as a research forest (e.g., carrying out research activities on the land, establishing trial plots, etc.).

⁴ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*.

visualizing this space that the principal players in the forest's formation inscribed on the isthmus of land between *Chuzghun Bun* and *Tesgha Bun* (Tezzeron and Pinchi Lakes) (Figure 1). We describe the historical context within which this area came to be accepted as a co-managed research forest as well as some of the obstacles encountered along the way – obstacles that arose from competing visualizations regarding the appropriate management and use of the territory. In doing this, we endeavour to show that the process of remaking space involves intricate negotiations between multiple parties with varied interests and differential power.

METHODOLOGY

In order to comprehend the aspirations, experiences, and ideas of different parties with regard to the establishment of the JFRP, as well as the different visualizations of and goals set for it, we examined unpublished minutes of meetings between Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC; meeting agendas and correspondence (e.g., faxes and emails) between actors from Tl'azt'en Nation, UNBC, and the Ministry of Forests (MOF); and draft proposals and Memoranda of Understandings (drafts and final versions) between these parties.⁵ In this way, as well as through interviews, we identified thirty-one important players in the JPRF's history as potential interviewees.⁶ These included Tl'azt'enne as well as people employed by Tl'azt'en Nation, former and current UNBC faculty and administrators, and Ministry of Forests personnel at the local, regional, and provincial levels.⁷ We interviewed seventeen people, and four people provided written responses to our questions.⁸

⁵ Such documents reside in JPRF's office in Fort St. James. Materials from additional internal Tl'azt'en documents were made available to us through a Tl'azt'en research assistant who first vetted the materials to avoid the release of items considered too sensitive.

⁶ Twenty-eight potential interviewees were identified from the archives. Each interviewee was asked to name all the persons he or she considered to be important sources of knowledge with regard to the founding of the JPRF. This process generated an additional three names.

⁷ For the most part, we treat "Tl'azt'en Nation," "UNBC," and the "Ministry of Forests" as homogeneous and unified entities. This is partly due to the fact that the documents upon which this research depends often represent the official positions of these particular groups – positions that were arrived at through internal negotiation but whose final form obscures internal dissent. We also observe that, on most points, those interviewed indicated little disagreement from others in their group. In the penultimate section of this article, we do note some contestations within Tl'azt'en Nation regarding the appropriate locus of control over, and enjoyment of benefits from, the JPRF.

⁸ Others declined to be interviewed or failed to attend scheduled interviews. In the latter case, several attempts were made to reschedule interviews. Gail Fondahl carried out interviews with two key UNBC actors in 2003; Donna Atkinson carried out the rest of the interviews in 2006. Both earlier interviewees reviewed a penultimate draft of this article. Interviewees were questioned about their involvement with the research forest, their understanding of

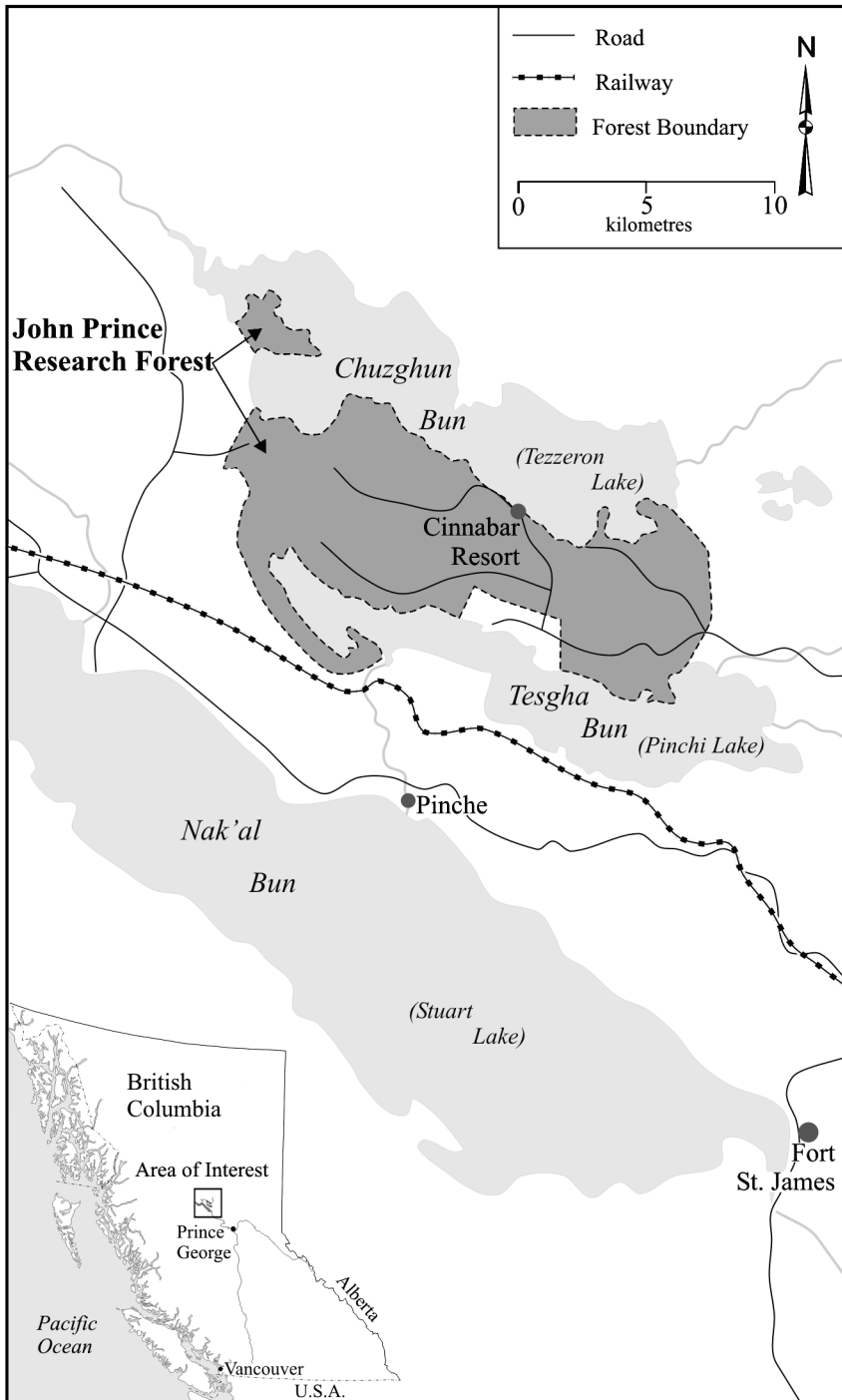


Figure 1: The John Prince Research Forest.

A key player on the Tl'azt'en side, John Prince, had died by the time this research was conducted. Prince had been band manager and deputy chief of Tl'azt'en Nation during the initial stages of the research forest's formation and had been a very active member in the process of its development. It was in honour of his vision, and his efforts to materialize this vision, that the John Prince Research Forest was named. We were privileged to talk with his guardians, Phillip and Josie Felix, who recounted their recollections of his hopes and goals for the co-managed forest that came to bear his name. One goal of this article is to document the interests and strategies that underpinned the formation of the JPRF while the key players are still available to discuss them.

THE INITIAL VISION: A UNIVERSITY RESEARCH FOREST

Founded in 1990 as a “university in the north, for the north,”⁹ UNBC's spatial mandate was to serve the communities of northern British Columbia – those rural and remote areas driven by and dependent upon resource extraction, particularly forestry. Developing a strong, integrative faculty of natural resources and environmental studies (NRES) was a key component of this mandate and the chief task of Dr. Frederick Gilbert, founding dean of NRES. To facilitate the research and education needs of NRES students and faculty, Gilbert advocated the establishment of a UNBC Research Forest. Arguing that “any university with a strong forestry program must have access to a research forest as a field laboratory for teaching and research,”¹⁰ Gilbert envisaged a

the rationale behind its creation, and what they knew about the negotiations required with regard to its establishment. Additionally, interviewees were asked to reflect not only on the JPRF's achievements but also on any obstacles that stood in the way of its successful operation. Via an informed consent form, interviewees were asked to indicate whether or not they wanted to be identified by name when information they provided was quoted or referenced. For interviewees who expressed a desire to remain anonymous, or who failed to express a preference, we note from which group the interviewee came (e.g., UNBC, Tl'azt'en Nation). All interviewees were offered the opportunity to review a draft of this article; six responded with comments.

While, in order to address issues surrounding the subjective and selective nature of memory, we cross-referenced oral information against archival and published sources, we acknowledge that this account relies on imperfect memories (a point frequently conceded by the interviewees themselves!) and selective transmissions as well as on our interpretations as contextualized in our own histories.

⁹ UNBC, *Planning for Growth: Final Report of the University Planning Committee, 3 January 1997* (Prince George: University of Northern British Columbia, 1997).

¹⁰ Fred Gilbert, “A Proposal to Establish a University of Northern British Columbia Research Forest as Part of the Land and Resources Management Plan for the Fort St. James Forest District,” submitted to Ray Schultz, District Officer, Fort St. James Forest District (undated).

research forest that would also serve the teaching and research needs of the other constituent NRES programs (i.e., biology, environmental studies, geography, and outdoor recreation/tourism).

Space is made, and continually remade, by the society that occupies it.¹¹ We can comprehend how this happens by dissecting the process of the production of space into three linked activities: visualization, administration, and use (or “materialization”).¹² Different groups within a society continually apply pressure to have their different visualizations for a given space realized (materialized), often through enabling administrative practices such as zoning, tenure arrangements, and so on. Power is a key variable in each group’s ability to achieve its goals for a given area, yet it must be recognized that spaces are influenced not only by the most powerful but also by resistance to dominant visualizations. Space is thus continually remade through negotiations between various groups.¹³

Given the multiple and diverse interests of land users in northern British Columbia, finding a space for a research forest would be a challenge. Any parcel of land appropriate for a research forest would likely currently be embedded in a provincial system of forest tenures, be enmeshed in the process of treaty negotiations, or be entangled in the recently initiated Land and Resources Management Plan (LRMP) process (see below). It might be subject to trapping and guiding tenures, recreational uses, and other interests. Each interest group would visualize that space and its appropriate uses in specific ways – ways that would have to be appraised, addressed, and, in some cases, challenged to accommodate this new land use. The local First Nation(s) would view the parcel as its territory, rightfully subject to its administration and use. Depending on the forest’s location, recreational users might view it as an area for hiking, fishing, and camping. Locally active forest companies would view it as a source of harvestable timber. Other users and potential users would have their

proposal, 9 pp., c. 1993). Located in Chuzghun Resources Corporation files, John Prince Research Forest Office, Fort St. James, BC (hereafter cited as crcf).

¹¹ Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (New York: Blackwell, 1984); Edward Soja, *Post-Modern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

¹² Lefebvre, *Production of Space*.

¹³ Edward Casey, “The Production of Space or the Heterogeneity of Place: A Commentary on Edward Dimendberg and Neil Smith,” in *The Production of Public Space*, ed. A. Light and J.M. Smith (New York: Rowman and Littlefield 1998), 71–80; Doreen Massey, “Entanglements of Power: Reflections,” in *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance*, ed. J. Sharp, P. Routledge, C. Philo, and R. Paddison (London: Routledge, 2000), 279–85. The idea of negotiated space is developed more fully in Philip Morris and Gail Fondahl, “Negotiating the Production of Space in Tl’azt’en Territory, Northern British Columbia,” *Canadian Geographer* 46, 2 (2002): 108–25.

own visualizations. The space would have to be “remade” into a research forest; that is, the university would have to convince other interested parties to accept and support a new visualization, administration, and use of any territory designated as research forest.

CHOOSING A SITE

Dr. Gilbert judged that a minimum of 10,000 hectares would be required for the research forest to function as an economically viable “working forest” capable of producing the saw logs, wood fibre, and other forest products that would support research and education initiatives. As an outdoor teaching and research laboratory for students and faculty, it would need to be reasonably close to UNBC’s main campus in Prince George. Moreover, it would be desirable to have within this land base a diversity of forest types, serial stages, and biogeoclimatic zones.¹⁴ Thus, Gilbert’s initial spatial criteria for identifying a land base were adequate size, ecological diversity, and relative proximity to its target users from UNBC.

Such sizeable areas of “Crown land” were few, but one, located between *Chuzghun Bun* and *Tesgha Bun* near Fort St. James, was identified as a possibility.¹⁵ This 13,000-hectare territory seemed especially attractive for the purpose. It was not too far from UNBC’s Prince George campus (approximately 250 kilometres). Located in the sub-boreal spruce (sbs) biogeoclimatic zone, and characterized by a continental climate, the land featured old stands of Douglas fir, which “has disappeared from much of its former distributional range within central interior British Columbia”¹⁶ and which, in this location, was found close to its northern limit. It straddled the Pinche Fault, a geological feature of interest, particularly due to its mercury deposits. The forest is home to a wide range of wildlife, spawning streams, vegetation, and wetland areas important to natural resource management and research. Beginning in the 1940s, timber from the forest was felled for cordwood for a mercury mine on the northern shore of *Tesgha Bun* and for bush mills that had

¹⁴ Letter from Fred Gilbert to Cynthia Rushworth, Ministry of Forests, Fort St. James, 4 March 1993, CRFC. Forests proceed through a series of developmental stages (for instance, after a disturbance kills trees). In the Fort St. James area, grasses and shrubs that thrive in clearings or after burns are gradually replaced by deciduous, then coniferous, species, and each set of plants creating an environment that encourages a new group of plants. These stages are referred to as seres, or seral, stages.

¹⁵ Email communication from Dr. Winifred Kessler, first chair of Forestry at UNBC, to Gail Fondahl, 16 May 2003.

¹⁶ Fred Gilbert, “A Proposal to Establish.”

begun to operate on the land base. Over time, the area's silvicultural system varied from selective harvesting based on tree diameter in the 1960s to large-scale clear-cutting in the 1980s and to seed tree cuts in the 1990s. The land base also hosted a number of active traplines and abutted two recreational lodges. Pollution from the mercury mine's tailings remained a local concern. Thus, the land base provided unique and diverse opportunities for research on stand dynamics, forest health, alternative silviculture applications, water quality, and tourism.¹⁷

CONSULTING "STAKEHOLDERS"

Dr. Gilbert approached the Fort St. James District Ministry of Forests and asked its chief administrators to reimagine the area as a research forest. The ministry seemed receptive to the proposal; however, its officials required substantial consultation with the public before any conclusive decision could be made.¹⁸ The newly elected (1991) New Democratic Party's policy, which involved inclusiveness and a community-based approach to re-envisioning the use and management of British Columbia's lands and resources, instigated certain actions by those in charge of land and resource planning at the regional and district offices.

The previous year, in October 1992, the Fort St. James Land and Resources Management Plan (LRMP) process had been initiated.¹⁹ LRMPs, an initiative of the NDP government, resulted from forest district level planning exercises that provided for public involvement in drawing up recommendations on use and management of "Crown Lands." In short, LRMPs recommended zoning their respective areas into different categories that would "specify land use and resource management objectives and strategies."²⁰ The subregional LRMP process followed the Commission of Resources and the Environment (CORE) process (a regional land-use planning exercise). Although it did this in areas of British Columbia where land use conflicts were not seen as substantial, LRMP processes could be initiated without first going through the CORE

¹⁷ "UNBC Needs Scientific Research Forest: Sights Set for 14,000 ha behind Pinchi Lake," *Caledonia Courier* 17 (40), 30 November 1994, 8; Morris and Fondahl, "Negotiating"; Sue Grainger, personal communication, 8 January 2006.

¹⁸ Fred Gilbert, interview, 18 July 2003; Winifred Kessler, email, 16 May 2003.

¹⁹ Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan, <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/lrmp/ftstjames/exec.htm>, viewed 1 May 2003.

²⁰ Greg Halseth and Annie Booth, "What Works Well; What Needs Improvement': Lessons in Public Consultation from British Columbia's Resource Planning Processes," *Local Environment* 8, 4 (2003): 441.

process.²¹ Both CORE and LRMP roles were purely advisory. They were used to ascertain, through discussion and negotiation, the common visions of “stakeholders” for the land base. Stakeholders included local community members and other interested parties, from environmental organizations to industry. How such negotiated visions – if deemed desirable by the relevant ministry – were to be achieved then became the job of ministry planning officials.

To UNBC, the Fort St. James LRMP table seemed a logical venue at which to propose the revisualization of the land between Tezzeron and Pinchi Lakes as a research forest and to ascertain the concerns of the local population regarding the remaking of this space.²² Involving the LRMP Working Group would be one way of garnering community support and demonstrating to the Ministry of Forests that UNBC was genuinely engaged in stakeholder consultations. Dr. Gilbert scheduled a presentation of his proposal at the October 1993 Fort St. James LRMP Working Group meeting. In the meantime, he also initiated the process of contacting those whom he believed would be most directly affected by the creation of a research forest. In September 1993, a letter was sent to trapline holders and to a guide-outfitter noting an upcoming presentation to the LRMP Working Group meeting and seeking individual meetings beforehand.²³

Accompanied by Dr. Winifred Kessler, chair of UNBC’s Forestry Program, Dr. Gilbert gave the first of several presentations on the proposed research forest to the LRMP Working Group. Decidedly absent from the Fort St. James LRMP table, however, were local First Nations who had pulled out of the process in protest several months earlier.²⁴ They asserted that they were not “just another stakeholder” but sovereign nations whose land had never been ceded. They believed that their participation in the LRMP process could prejudice Aboriginal treaty rights. Indeed, First Nations throughout British Columbia challenged

²¹ Halseth and Booth, “What Works Well.”

²² Meetings averaged thirty to forty participants, who had interests in forestry, mining, hunting and trapping, agriculture, tourism and recreation, environmental protection, and cultural issues.

²³ Letter from Fred Gilbert to Jimmy Monk, Kenneth Peters, Gayle L. Tencarre, the Tom brothers (Stanley, Alexander, Peter, Jonathan, Bill, and Lawrence), Jeannie Tremblay, and the Mattess brothers (Joseph, Allan, Louie, Ronald Alphonse, and Bill), 7 September 1993, CRCF.

²⁴ For the Fort St. James area, this included Tl’azt’en, Nak’azdli, Takla, and Yekooche Nations. See “Natives withdraw from Fort St. James LRMP Process,” *Caledonia Courier* 16 (4), 24 March 1993, 1-3; “Land Group Struggles,” *Caledonia Courier* 16 (5), 31 March 1993, 7; “Takla Band Final Pullout,” *Caledonia Courier* 16 (7), 14 April 1993, 3.

the legitimacy of the process and its “assumed jurisdictions” over their traditional territories.²⁵

With the official opening of UNBC approaching in August 1994, pursuit of the research forest temporarily slowed; however, in early 1995, the project was reinvigorated. A timeline showed that UNBC hoped to quickly finish community consultations, rework LRMP Resource Management Zones to harmonize with research forest purposes, and finalize boundaries.²⁶ However, it would soon become evident that UNBC’s plan for a research forest would collide with others’ visualizations of this land in ways that the university had not anticipated.

UNALLOCATED CROWN LAND? TL’AZT’EN CLAIMS TO SPACE

While the BC government delineated the land between *Chuzghun Bun* and *Tesgha Bun* as unallocated Crown land, Tl’azt’enne visualized and claimed this land as their traditional territory. Even if Tl’azt’enne administrative and material control over this territory had been severely compromised over the past two centuries, Tl’azt’enne still widely used the land and its resources. The proposed research forest straddled several traplines registered to Tl’azt’en individuals or families. These traplines roughly followed the contours of the historic *keyob* – the family territories recognized as the fundamental units of Tl’azt’en land tenure.²⁷ Tl’azt’en trail networks, burial sites, plant harvest areas (for food, medicines, and implements), culturally modified trees, and spiritual and healing sites punctuated this landscape.²⁸ Tl’azt’enne recalled using this land and stewarding its resources “since time immemorial.”

Places are continually remade. But different groups can identify different key moments and activities as critical in the revisualization of space. The area of Fort St. James began to experience significant

²⁵ Letter from West Moberly Chief George Desjarlias to all Tribal Councils of British Columbia, the Ministry of Forests, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, “Attention All LRMP Participants,” 24 October 1995; Tl’azt’en Nation Chief and Council Meeting minutes, 27 November 1995, CRCF. Several Tl’azt’en interviewees commented on the flawed process of the LRMP.

²⁶ “Project Plan, UNBC Research Forest, 95-02-22” (typescript), CRCF.

²⁷ Doug Brown, “Carrier Sekani Self-Government in Context: Land and Resources, *Western Geography* 12 (2002): 21-67; Douglas Hudson, “Traplines and Timber: Social and Economic Change among the Carrier Indians of Northern British Columbia” (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1983).

²⁸ Tl’azt’en interviews, March 2006; UNBC NREM 400 Resource Planning Class, “Draft Co-Management Scenarios for Tl’azt’en Nation/UNBC Research Forest.” Report submitted to Dr. Stephen Dewhurst, 19 April 1998.

and sustained non-Native use in the mid-twentieth century. Prior to this, sporadic booms would bring short-lived caravans of non-Natives through the territory on their way to goldfields farther north. The area was mostly conceived of by outsiders as wilderness. It was in the 1940s and 1950s that timber harvesting and bush-milling began to penetrate the neck of land between the two lakes and that the land increasingly came to be seen as hinterlands, ripe for development. A mercury claim was staked on the shore of Pinchi Lake in 1938 and a mine operated from 1940 to 1944, providing mercury for the war effort. It operated again from 1967 to 1975. In the 1940s and 1950s, Tl'azt'en men found seasonal employment cutting cordwood for the mine and working for the various bush-mills – employment that temporally meshed well with the hunting and trapping they continued to pursue.²⁹

By the 1970s increasing levels of mechanization, unionization, and year-round industrial operations at the mills no longer corresponded with Tl'azt'en skill levels and seasonal hunting and trapping lifestyles. The exclusion of Tl'azt'enne from the forestry workforce, concomitant with the intensification of resource extraction and industrialization in the area, encouraged them to challenge these incursions and the assumptions about development that underpinned them – assumptions that ignored Tl'azt'en territorial rights. Tl'azt'enne lobbied for greater control over their traditional territory and its resources in order to provide themselves with the desired employment opportunities and economic development. When construction began on a railway that was to run through several of their reserves, Tl'azt'enne protested, finally erecting a blockade when lesser tactics failed to garner a response from the government. They eventually negotiated a compensation deal, according to which the province granted them three hectares for every hectare lost to a reserve due to being “cut-off” by the railway. The band also successfully applied for a tree farm licence, and in 1982 Tl'azt'en became the first BC First Nation to receive one.³⁰ In that same year, Tl'azt'en Nation, along with other member bands of the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council, submitted a declaration of ownership to the Federal Treaty Negotiation Office and requested that a treaty be negotiated.

Thus, Tl'azt'enne increasingly pursued a strategy of persistently reminding others of their historic and moral claims to their territory, and they continually challenged assumptions about “Crown land” that ignored traditional territorial rights. However, they always did this

²⁹ Morris and Fondahl, “Negotiating.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*

within the parameters of the institutional structures that continued to marginalize them. Relatively trivial actions could become the focus of protest: indeed, although not particularly inflammatory, they often provided symbolic purchase for communicating Tl'azt'en spatial claims. In February 1994, for instance, Tl'azt'en general manager John Prince chose to challenge UNBC researchers' assumptions about their ability to pursue research on Tl'azt'en traditional territory without consulting the band.³¹ Tl'azt'en Nation found that it could exploit for its own purpose UNBC's rhetoric about its commitment "to establishing a co-operative, consultative approach" to research in collaboration with First Nations.³² Tl'azt'en Nation could expect that UNBC's response would be solicitous as, from its inception, the university had made a commitment to the First Nations of the region.³³ Significantly, the university's support of the need to consult was one more step, however small, towards enhancing the legitimacy of Tl'azt'en territorial claims. Tl'azt'en Nation actively expounded a visualized geography of Tl'azt'en tenure that upset perceptions of the territory as "unallocated Crown land."

As early as October 1993, in materials presented to the LRMP Working Group, UNBC singled out Tl'azt'en Nation as the First Nation that held primary interests in the proposed research forest land base. A slightly revised version of the UNBC Research Forest Proposal, to be presented at a subsequent LRMP meeting, set out six objectives, one of which was "to cooperate with members of the Tl'azt'en Nation in the development of management plans and to provide appropriate work and educational opportunities."³⁴ This statement privileged Tl'azt'en interests over those of other parties, both Native and non-Native. However, subsequent documents in early 1994 did not mention Tl'azt'en Nation specifically

³¹ Internal memo from Ellen Facey to Fred Gilbert, 9 February 1994, CRCF.

³² University of Northern British Columbia, *Regional Policy and Implementation Plan* (Prince George: University of Northern British Columbia, 1993), 17. The text goes on to promise that "special protocols requiring First Nations approval of research projects and assuring the sharing of research results with the communities, will be integrated into the University's research procedures."

³³ UNBC had consulted with First Nations throughout northern British Columbia prior to its opening and had included First Nations Studies as one of five key areas of teaching and research. It established a First Nations centre to support Native students and recruited faculty who were involved in First Nations research. Indeed, Gilbert's proposal to work closely with Tl'azt'en Nation on the establishment of the research forest was compatible with the policy and ideology of the university administration and, thus, enjoyed substantial support from senior administrators. The proposal appeared to inspire significant reservations only at the level of the Board of Governors (see below).

³⁴ "A Proposal by the University of Northern British Columbia to Establish a Research Forest Near Fort St. James," typescript attached to Agenda of Fort St. James LRMP Working Group Meeting for Saturday, 2 October 1993, CRCF.

but, rather, noted that First Nations, among others, would potentially be recruited as members of a permanent advisory group – a committee envisioned to provide advice regarding the research forest’s operations.

Recognizing that there were, in fact, “competing claims” to the land base, Gilbert approached John Prince with the research forest proposal and, in turn, was invited to speak before Tl’azt’én chief and council. Gilbert’s address to the chief and council in February 1994 summarized the educational and economic advantages of having a university research forest in the area. Not surprisingly, he emphasized the benefits that he felt it could provide to Tl’azt’enne. These included education, training, and employment in the field of natural resources; the incorporation of Tl’azt’én values and knowledge into forest management; a stronger Tl’azt’én role in land-use decision making, including for *keyoh* holders; and community-directed research opportunities.³⁵ Gilbert appealed to Tl’azt’én government to consider revisualizing this space so that it would benefit them more than it would if it were allocated to other uses and users – a distinct and ongoing possibility prior to treaty settlement.

By June 1994, a draft Memorandum of Understanding outlining UNBC’s intentions to “consult” with Tl’azt’én Nation regarding all activities on the proposed forest already suggested a management structure that privileged Tl’azt’én Nation’s claim to this particular territory.³⁶ Throughout BC history, the term “consultation” has too often been used simply to connote the top-down provision of information to First Nations, with little opportunity for feedback and adjustment of policy or procedure. The 1994 draft Memorandum of Understanding laid out a different meaning for this term. Tl’azt’én Nation would appoint a standing advisory committee to communicate with UNBC’s NRES faculty; through this committee, the NRES faculty would inform Tl’azt’én Nation of all proposed activities and “seek its advice through the Chief clan groups and elders so that any necessary modifications” to research or management plans could be considered. The Memorandum of Understanding also required faculty members to agree to hire Tl’azt’enne to assist with research activities carried out in the forest. Significantly, this and many future documents incorporated the following phrase:

UNBC acknowledges that the Forest is within the traditional use area of the Tl’azt’én Nation and is subject to land claims by First Nations

³⁵ Tl’azt’én Nation Chief and Council Meeting Minutes, 25 February 1994, Tl’azt’én Natural Resources Department Archives, Tache, BC.

³⁶ Draft “Memorandum of Understanding Between UNBC NRES and Tl’azt’én Nation re: UNBC Research Forest,” 22 June 1994, CRCF.

interest. The University through its Faculty of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies intends to respect these interests and use the Forest as a model of sustainable ecosystem-based research and management which takes into account all the values of the forest, its plants, animals and importance to indigenous peoples.³⁷

Yet this promise of consultation still did not fully satisfy the Tl'azt'en agenda to ensure that this space was acknowledged as theirs. Indeed, as one key player from Tl'azt'en Nation later noted, "consultation" was a "meaningless, empty concept" that did little to enhance the legitimacy of Tl'azt'en claims.³⁸ In the Memorandum of Understanding, Tl'azt'en Nation wanted to substitute the term "traditional land" or "traditional territory" for the term "traditional use area." Phone conversations ensued. In the margins of a draft of the memorandum, Gilbert penned a suggestion for rewording – a suggestion that may have come from John Prince. Gilbert's handwritten note states: "This MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] will form the basis for long-term co-management of the Research Forest and can only be altered by mutual consent of the partners."³⁹ This sentence, with its "co-management" terminology, would soon be incorporated into revised drafts of the Memorandum of Understanding. This entailed a momentous revisioning of how the research forest would be managed – a revisioning that, at first, was not fully comprehended by either party but that, eventually, came to define a new and, some would say, radical spatial strategy on the part of both.⁴⁰ By agreeing to the rhetoric of co-management, the UNBC administration proclaimed its support for the validity of Tl'azt'en territorial claims. It chose to pursue a spatial strategy that would at least theoretically share power equitably with Tl'azt'en Nation and diminish the role of others in managing this space.

Tl'azt'en Nation agreed to pursue this partnership despite concerns that, at a later date, such a tenure arrangement might prejudice its claims to full sovereignty over this land. Tl'azt'en members involved in

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Tl'azt'en interview, March 2006.

³⁹ Annotated copy of draft of Fred Gilbert's "Memorandum of Understanding between UNBC NRES and Tl'azt'en Nation re: UNBC Research Forest," CRCE.

⁴⁰ Gilbert had recently completed a co-authored book (Frederick F. Gilbert and Donald G. Dodds, *The Philosophy and Practice of Wildlife Management* [Malabar, FL.: Krieger, 2002]), and, during its preparation, he encountered information on wildlife co-management regimes. With the lack of treaties in British Columbia, it seemed prudent to pursue co-management so as to have a working relationship with Tl'azt'en Nation that would obviate problems down the road. As Gilbert later summed it up: "It was the right thing to do" (Fred Gilbert, interview, 18 July 2003).

the process saw co-management as a way to achieve capacity building, to gain access to revenues from timber, to improve land management based on Tl'azt'en values, and, most of all, to protect Tl'azt'en territory in the face of continued industrial logging as well as to have a role in deciding the future of the territory. One Tl'azt'en member said that the reasons for pursuing the JPRF included

training of Tl'azt'enne ... maintaining the land and protection and learning techniques for working with the UNBC professionals and the students ... we were also calculating that in terms of the revenue it could generate, having control over the land ... we could look at medicinal plants, we could map the area and mark the kind of traditional land use sites and whatnot. So almost [to] have a safe place, I guess, where Tl'azt'en could decide, because the rest of the territory was basically being mapped out and decided and logged ... by the MOF [Ministry of Forests] and the Ministry of Environment. There was, in spite of all that consultation talk, there was nothing that Tl'azt'en could do, really, to decide issues. So [the JPRF] was kind of a safe space, I guess, a protected space.⁴¹

Both parties were taking a calculated gamble: would the provincial government accept co-management? Would Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC be able to work together effectively and to share power equitably? Would other interested groups (e.g., locally active forestry companies and the municipality of Fort St. James) accept an arrangement that relegated them to having merely an advisory role in the research forest's development, with Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC having priority rights to manage this area?

By May 1995, a summary sheet on the "UNBC Research Forest" was created for the public and noted that the forest would be "a cooperative venture of UNBC and the Tl'azt'en Nation. As such the Forest will be held in joint tenure with a co-management Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from UNBC and the Tl'azt'en Nation."⁴² The word was out.

CO-MANAGEMENT: A PROVOCATIVE PROPOSAL

While a relatively new phenomenon in Canada, co-management had already become well known as a strategy that entails the sharing of power, responsibilities, and benefits among two or more parties with

⁴¹ Tl'azt'en interview, March 2006.

⁴² "UNBC Research Forest," two-page summary typescript, 29 May 1995, CRCF.

interest in a joint resource.⁴³ Political developments since the late 1970s had encouraged government-Aboriginal cooperation regarding resource management and had demonstrated that cooperation with Aboriginal peoples was not only feasible but, arguably, the best way by which to obviate potential conflict over land and natural resources.⁴⁴ Through successful co-management experiences, Aboriginal peoples could build confidence and the capacity to manage their resources in post-treaty environments.⁴⁵

Many co-management regimes have arisen within the context of Aboriginal claims to land and resources. Co-management was not totally novel to northern British Columbia: in the early 1990s, First Nations and the Province of British Columbia signed several Memoranda of Understanding establishing the co-management of provincial parks.⁴⁶ At a 1990 Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council (CSTC) meeting, Tl'azt'en leader and CSTC chief Justa Monk remarked that, while it was "impossible to turn back the clock [and] live off the land again," the co-management of natural resources offered First Nations a chance to participate in economic activities on their land and, thus, to "make a better future for our people ... [one] without drugs and alcohol."⁴⁷ Recent changes in the BC forest sector also suggested that co-management such as that proposed by Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC might be seen as a positive departure, as a model for Aboriginal participation and sustainable forest management in an industry plagued by conflict.

While co-management does not necessarily require an *equal* sharing of power, the term tends to imply that it does.⁴⁸ It appears that the portrayal of Tl'azt'enne as potentially both equal and exclusive players

⁴³ Gail Osherenko, *Sharing Power with Native Users: Co-management Regimes for Arctic Wildlife* (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1988).

⁴⁴ Michael Asch, *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality and Respect for Difference* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); J.R. Miller, "Aboriginal Rights, Land Claims, and the Struggle to Survive," in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada*, ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 407-19.

⁴⁵ Peter Usher, "Making Native Space: Separate or Shared Futures?" *Canadian Geographer* 47, 1 (2003): 81-3. Several Tl'azt'en interviewees mentioned capacity-building among Tl'azt'enne as a major goal of their partnership with UNBC.

⁴⁶ Mike Murtha, *BC Parks' Partnership with Aboriginal People*. Unpublished report prepared for Second International Working Seminar on Problems of Northern People, Prince George, 23-28 May 1996, copy in possession of Gail Fondahl.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Holly Nathan, "Aboriginal Forestry," in *Touch Wood: BC Forests at the Crossroads*, ed. Ken Drushka (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1993), 161.

⁴⁸ Fikret Berkes, Peter George, and Richard J. Preston, "Co-management: The Evolution of Theory and Practice in the Joint Administration of Living Resources," *Alternatives* 18, 2 (1991): 12-8; Thomas M. Beckley and Dianne Korber, *Clear Cuts, Conflict and Co-Management: Experiments in Consensus Forestry Management in Northwest Saskatchewan*. Report prepared for the Canadian Forest Service, Northern Forestry Centre (Edmonton NOR-X-352, 1997).

with UNBC when it comes to decisions that would craft the future uses of thirteen thousand hectares some fifty kilometres north of Fort St. James challenged what a significant number of “stakeholders” understood as appropriate stewardship.

Dr. Gilbert certainly wondered about how this revisioning would be received by provincial governmental bodies. His hand-written note on a copy of the summary sheet reads: “I believe this would be an innovative approach to a research forest and a real ‘first’ for co-management in BC. The Tl’azt’en should like it fine. But – I think government and the FSJ [Fort St. James] community will object.”⁴⁹ The note went on to posit that the government would fear setting a precedent during a time when treaties were being negotiated, while the local community would fear mismanagement due to the internal politics of Tl’azt’en Nation.

The Tl’azt’enne did indeed appear to “like it fine,” endorsing the creation of a “Tl’azt’en/UNBC Joint Research Forest” through a band council resolution passed at the nation’s 1995 Annual General Meeting.⁵⁰ Their subtle renaming of the research forest (i.e., putting “Tl’azt’en” before “UNBC,” as is alphabetically proper) indicated their insistence upon having an equal role in the control of this space. Gilbert hoped that new developments at the level of the BC forest sector, as well as at the national level, would bolster support for this new approach to forestry management.

BRITISH COLUMBIA’S FOREST SECTOR IN THE 1990S

After decades of sustained yield forest policy and practice that were fixated on timber value, and dominated by large corporate tenures and strict provincial control over resources, the 1990s ushered in a contentious period in British Columbia’s forest history. Acute economic booms and busts throughout the 1980s, combined with mounting environmental activism and First Nations land claims, sparked a “war in woods” in which various groups collaborated and competed with one another in an attempt to “remap” British Columbia’s forest resources according to their own particular values.⁵¹ Despite their disparate goals and objectives,

⁴⁹ “UNBC Research Forest.”

⁵⁰ Tl’azt’en Nation Band Council Resolution, 29 August 1995, CRCF.

⁵¹ Roger Hayter, “‘The War in the Woods’: Post-Fordian Restructuring, Globalization, and the Contested Remapping of British Columbia’s Forest Economy,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, 3 (2003): 706–29. For an overview of Aboriginal activism in this period, see Nicholas Blomley, “‘Shut the Province Down’: First Nations Blockades in British Columbia, 1984–1996,” *BC Studies* III (1996): 5–35.

the groups challenging the status quo conveyed a consistent message: forest management needed to incorporate a broader range of social and ecological values to ensure sustainability, and this would require the involvement of “stakeholders.”

To broker peace in the woods, the NDP government revamped British Columbia’s forest sector through several key initiatives. It revised stumpage, implemented the CORE and LRMP processes noted above, conducted timber supply reviews, made available new funding through a program known as Forest Renewal BC, and introduced the 1995 provincial Forest Practices Code to address environmental concerns. It also formally recognized the “inherent rights” of Aboriginal peoples over land and resources.⁵²

A renewed effort to enhance Aboriginal involvement in forestry was also evident at both the provincial and federal levels. Two important organizations emerged to guide this process – the National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA), established in 1991 to promote First Nations forestry as a means of economic development, and the First Nations Forestry Council (FNFC), created in 1993 to increase First Nations participation in British Columbia’s forest sector.⁵³

Gilbert hoped that this backdrop might lead to co-management’s being received more positively, but, as he had conjectured, the Ministry of Forests’ initial response was decidedly cool. Noting that the incorporation of co-management into the Memorandum of Understanding was a “dramatic departure” from earlier versions of the memorandum, Fort St. James District Manager Ray Schultz expressed concern that the proposed “joint tenure and timber harvesting commitments cannot be implemented within existing legislation.”⁵⁴ Moreover, he worried “that expectations have now been raised with the Tachie Band [i.e. Tl’azt’en Nation] which can only be followed through on if supported by ministerial or cabinet buy-in ... if we are unable to manage these expectations or follow through I will have another unmanageable issue ... I have enough such native issues without new ones being actively created.”⁵⁵

⁵² Hayter, “War in the Woods.”

⁵³ National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA), <http://www.nafaforestry.org>; “Natives Seek New Set of Forest Rules,” *Province* (Vancouver), 28 June 1991, 64; *Partners in Forestry: The First Nations Forestry Council Strategic Plan*, First Nations Forestry Council, West Vancouver, BC, April 1995; “Tenure Crucial Issue to Natives,” *Vancouver Sun*, 22 January 1993, D2.

⁵⁴ Email from Fred Gilbert to Dan Lousier, 12 June 1995, including message from Ray Schultz to Dan Lousier (then Forest Sciences Team Leader, Prince George Forest Region) and message from Dan Lousier to Fred Gilbert, CRCF.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Reminding the Ministry of Forests that consultation with First Nations was, in fact, a requirement imposed by the Ministry itself, and that the Memorandum of Understanding was indicative of a successful “stakeholder” consultation process, Gilbert doggedly pushed forward. Despite its initial alarm, the Ministry of Forests quickly changed its stance. It acknowledged that Tl’azt’en/UNBC partnership was “a good opportunity, a fairly safe opportunity to see co-management take place,” and its local branch soon became actively involved in moving the proposal forward, even helping UNBC to organize its first community open house and information session.⁵⁶ Yet one interviewee who had been involved in the discussions at the regional level recalled that

not only did the Forest Service [initially] have some objections but also some of the local logging contractors and the companies, and then when it became apparent that this was going to be a co-management thing, then the whole race thing popped out and got ugly on a couple of occasions. But the main objection was ... tying up the land base for a certain period of time and not having complete and ready access to whatever ... the Forest Service wanted.⁵⁷

The Forest Service, local logging contractors, and forestry companies initially resisted remaking this forested area as a co-managed research forest. Co-management, it seemed, would encourage and even promote First Nations claims to the forests of British Columbia. Yet this resistance, more ardent at the local level, increasingly diverged from the evolving provincial policy to engage First Nations in resource management. UNBC and Tl’azt’en Nation enjoyed an opportunity to propose that this space be remade in a novel way – as the first research forest co-managed by a university and a First Nation – an opportunity very much influenced by the political developments in British Columbia and Canada.

ATTENDING TO EQUALITY

In co-management, Tl’azt’enne sought equal partnership in the creation and future management of the forest. This quest proved to be a continual struggle. Even something as seemingly trifling as an informational brochure potentially carried strong messages to its readership – messages that could either encourage or undermine the perception of creating an

⁵⁶ Interview with former BC Minister of Forests David Zirnhelt, 28 March 2006.

⁵⁷ Interview with Dan Louiser, 21 March 2006.

equitably shared space of resource management. The day following the first community open house/information session in Fort St. James, Umit Kiziltan (then research and development director for Tl'azt'en Nation) sent UNBC a pointed missive regarding both the brochure produced for the open house and the open house itself. He even questioned the appropriateness of the name being used: "Would it not be proper to refer to the project as the 'UNBC/Tl'azt'en Nation Research Forest' rather than the 'UNBC Research Forest?'"⁵⁸ He asked why there was no Tl'azt'en contact phone number next to the UNBC number for those who wanted more information; why several "community partners" had been listed before Tl'azt'en Nation had agreed to these; and, indeed, why Tl'azt'en Nation had not been involved in designing, producing, and distributing the brochure. Kiziltan summarized his concerns: Tl'azt'en Nation needed "its fair share of public visibility. In other words, the public and the interested third parties need to understand that Tl'azt'en Nation is an equal and not a token partner in the project, with its own expectations and philosophy."⁵⁹

Kiziltan expressly recognized the possibility of the need for a politics of conciliation, but he appealed for informed joint decisions with regard to such matters: "If for purely strategic reasons, to avoid the attention of certain (anti-native) critics, there needs to be a certain downplaying the role of Tl'azt'en nation in the project, the nature of this approach should be openly discussed by the parties."⁶⁰ Finally, he stressed that the future site of the research forest was Tl'azt'en territory and that this meant that Tl'azt'en Nation had a natural right to participate in its management: "It should be public record that Tl'azt'en Nation has a unique relationship to the land in question; that Tl'azt'en Nation is at a table with the Crown and involved in a treaty process which in both jurisdictional and historical terms transcends the interests of groups such as the LRMP ... I strongly believe that this is a crucial point to get across."⁶¹ Tl'azt'en Nation pressed for the conceptual transformation of this landscape, urging that it no longer be known as "Crown land" but, rather, as "Tl'azt'en territory."⁶² It worked assiduously to encourage others to come to visualize this territory as rightfully administered and

⁵⁸ Memorandum to Fred Gilbert and Winifred Kessler from Umit Kiziltan, 21 September 1995, CRCF.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See Andrew Slyuter, "Colonialism and Landscapes in the Americas: Material/Conceptual Transformations and Continuing Consequences," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, 2 (2001): 410-28.

materialized by Tl'azt'enne. Aware of the power discrepancies that currently limited its ability to effectively control Tl'azt'en traditional territory, the nation nevertheless appreciated the need to persistently assert its right to play a major role in the remaking of any space within this territory.

A DIFFICULT BIRTH: COMMUNITY CONCERNS

In keeping with its mandate to serve British Columbia's northern communities, UNBC sought community support from the Fort St. James Municipal Council. After a presentation by Dr. Winifred Kessler, and led by Mayor Sandra Kovacs, the municipal council voted overwhelmingly in favour of the project at its May 1995 meeting. Stating that the proposed research forest was "like a dream come true," Kovacs assured Kessler that the town would "support you 150 percent in your efforts."⁶³

Local media coverage of the proposed research forest also applauded the initiative. The *Caledonia Courier*, Fort St. James' weekly paper, contrasted the development of a cooperative relationship with the conflict that had recently played itself out in Gustafson Lake.⁶⁴ Yet, the media remained misinformed and, thus, itself became a provider of misinformation. Among other things, it noted that Tl'azt'en Nation would "have a voice in the management of the forest."⁶⁵ Tl'azt'en leaders found this phrase trivializing and, thus, both insulting and alarming.

The Fort St. James LRMP Working Group was not easily won over. In proposing co-management, Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC chose a strategy that would diminish the role of others in managing this particular space. This portrayal of Tl'azt'enne as equal partners with UNBC, and as more important players than other stakeholders in the decision making regarding the thirteen thousand hectares of land, challenged the working group's assumptions about who should rightfully have the power to control and effect decisions regarding this forest. While supportive of the research forest in principle, the LRMP Working Group adamantly refused the premise of co-management as laid out in the Memorandum of Understanding. It argued that UNBC should be the sole tenure holder and manager of the research forest and that Tl'azt'en Nation, which should be regarded as only one of numerous stakeholders, should have

⁶³ "Council Buys Research Forest Idea," *Caledonia Courier*, 31 May 1995.

⁶⁴ Editorial, "A Lesson We Couldn't Learn from Gustafson ... Right in Our Own Back Yard," *Caledonia Courier*, 27 Sept 1995, 6.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

only an advisory role.⁶⁶ It held that interests in the research forest should be managed through a “consultative” process, and it protested the priority economic advantages that the Tl’azt’en-owned mill would enjoy with regard to wood sold off the forest’s land (again, as spelled out in the Memorandum of Understanding). But the LRMP Working Group’s main concern seemed to be that co-management might give “a perception of ownership”; that is, it might imply that Tl’azt’en Nation owned the land base upon which the research forest was situated.

The Fort St. James’ LRMP Working Group’s disapproval threatened to derail the entire research forest proposal. The university, with its mandate to serve the region in general, still preferred to have the support of the main community partners and envisioned the LRMP Working Group as a critical player. Yet the likelihood of achieving consensus regarding co-management of the proposed research forest, even through a formal negotiation process, seemed slim. Until land claims were settled, such struggles would – and will – remain explosive. In a memorandum to Gilbert, Kessler outlined three possible courses of action. UNBC could carry on without the full support of the local stakeholders; it could take further steps to achieve consensus; or it could abandon the proposal, perhaps looking for another area of “unallocated Crown land” elsewhere.⁶⁷ Declaring that UNBC would not carry on without the full support of the community, and that she herself was not inclined to act as a mediator or a negotiator, Kessler seemed to assess the forest’s future as dismal.

Reaction to the LRMP Working Group’s disapproval came from several quarters. The local press carried pieces lamenting the potential demise of the research forest plan.⁶⁸ One editorial bemoaned the irony of the working group’s position: “Instead of the LRMP whining that the natives shouldn’t have an equal say, they might look at it that they are being generous in offering their territory for a purpose that will benefit the town, the local schools (students will be given access to the laboratories as well), the mills, the motels and restaurants.”⁶⁹ This was

⁶⁶ Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan Working Group Meeting Minutes, 13–14 October 1995; Fort St. James Land and Resource Management Plan Working Group, “Working Group Discusses Research Forest,” LRMP Report 17 (November/December 1995), 1–2.

⁶⁷ Memorandum from Winifred Kessler to Fred Gilbert, 15 October 1995; “Research Forest’s Future in Doubt,” *Caledonia Courier*, 1 November 1995, CRCF. Dr. Kessler’s position was complicated by the fact that, in addition to representing UNBC as the chair of forestry while pursuing the proposal for a research forest, she served on both the LRMP Working Group and the UNBC’s Board of Governors (email from Winifred Kessler, 16 May 2003).

⁶⁸ “Research Forest’s Future in Doubt,” *Caledonia Courier*, 1 November 1995, 1; “Seeing the Forest in Spite of the Tl’azt’en Trees,” *Caledonia Courier*, 1 November 1995, 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the very understanding of co-management that Tl'azt'enne proposed. Tl'azt'en research and development director Umit Kiziltan was steadfast in his belief that the LRMP Working Group did not represent the larger interests of Fort St. James.⁷⁰ He noted that "it is very disappointing that the LRMP participants cannot stand to see the Tl'azt'enne take control of their lives and take responsibility for their future."⁷¹

The LRMP Working Group's rejection of a co-managed space evoked similar protests from the Fort St. James Municipal Council. In a letter to working group chairman Earl Wilson, Mayor Sandra Kovacs expressed her concern that the LRMP may have "placed an insurmountable roadblock in the path of the project" and that, if this were indeed the case, it would be a serious disservice to the whole community.⁷² Furthermore, Kovacs argued that "the idea that the LRMP of Fort St. James ... has the mandate to impose rules on the operational aspects of the Research Forest is short sighted at best and destructive at its worst."⁷³ Throwing her support behind Tl'azt'en/UNBC vision, Kovacs reminded the working group that land use planning must privilege local voice and jurisdiction.

At its next meeting, the LRMP Working Group chose to back down. It endorsed the "UNBC Research Forest" as a land use allocation.⁷⁴ It also noted that neither the Memorandum of Understanding (which mentioned co-management) nor the management strategies of the research forest were within its mandate.⁷⁵ The local political obstacles were cleared. On 26 September 1996, then minister of forests David Zirnhelt announced the establishment of the UNBC/Tl'azt'en Research Forest.

Back in Prince George, UNBC's Board of Governors also hesitated. As one senior administrator recounted: "The Board [of Governors] was also keenly aware that the co-management approach was a novel approach ... in the view of many, given the novelty and the history of those kinds of interactions ... there's some risks associated with that, also there's risks associated with the cycles of the resource economy, so they [the UNBC Board of Governors] were cautious in their approach ... there was a very conservative decision-making environment around risk and ventures."⁷⁶ The assessment of Vice-President Academic and Provost

⁷⁰ Memorandum from Umit Kiziltan to Fred Gilbert, 5 November 1995, CRCF.

⁷¹ "Research Forest's Future in Doubt," *Caledonia Courier*, 1 November 1995.

⁷² Letter from Sandra Kovacs to Earl Wilson, 2 November 1995, CRCF.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ "Research Forest Gets the Okay from the LRMP," *Caledonia Courier*, 24 January 1996.

⁷⁵ Letter to Umit Kiziltan from Fred Gilbert, 17 January 1996, CRCF.

⁷⁶ UNBC interview, 2006.

Deborah Poff was more optimistic. Noting the “due diligence” role of the Board of Governors, she characterized the situation as follows: “If somebody was on the outside looking in they might have thought that was resistance, but it never was, it was always about how can we manage this, how can we do this the right way.”⁷⁷ Yet President Charles Jago also remembers “a high level of skepticism” and “reservations”: the UNBC Board of Governors had “very serious concern[s] about financial liabilities that would accrue to the university.”⁷⁸ As he summed up the situation, “The research forest did not have an easy birth.”

TENURE: CHALLENGING THE PROVINCE TO REVISUALIZE “CROWN” SPACE

A management committee was established to manage the research forest, with Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC each appointing three members and one alternate member. The year 1997 would bring significant challenges: Fred Gilbert, the UNBC visionary behind the research forest, departed the university to take on a new position as vice-president academic and provost at Colorado State University.⁷⁹ John Prince, the Tl'azt'en band manager who had pushed the agenda, died in a tragic boating accident on the Tache River.⁸⁰ Sue Grainger, Registered Professional Forester (RPF), was selected as research forest manager. Originally from Prince George, Grainger had had substantial work experience with Native American-managed forests south of the border.⁸¹

While the provincial Ministry of Forests had approved the research forest in principle, the specific type of tenure had to be worked out, as did a stumpage rate. British Columbia's provincial forest legislation did not designate a form of tenure for university research forests. The issue of tenure was “a problem for the JPRF in particular because it was the first new research forest being established, and the provincial government didn't have much in the way of context.”⁸² The two university research forests that existed at the time each held a different form of tenure. The Malcolm Knapp Research Forest, a 5,200-hectare forest

⁷⁷ Deborah Poff, interview, 8 March 2006.

⁷⁸ Charles Jago, interview, 22 February 2006.

⁷⁹ Dr. Gilbert is currently president of Lakehead University in Ontario.

⁸⁰ “Three Die When Boat Flips,” *Calgary Herald*, 3 June 1997; “Tl'azt'en Nation Mourns: Three Men Still Missing,” *Caledonia Courier*, 11 June 1997.

⁸¹ Interview with former UNBC forestry professor and member of the research forest management committee Stephen Dewhurst, 26 April 2006; “Research Forest Names New Manager,” *Caledonia Courier*, 6 August 1997.

⁸² UNBC interview, March 2006.

in Maple Ridge, operated on a fee-simple land grant that the Crown awarded to the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 1949, while UBC's Alex Fraser Research Forest, a 9,200-hectare forest located in Williams Lake, operated under an ad hoc and non-renewable special use permit (SUP) and licence-to-cut (LTC) tenure arrangement that had been granted in 1987.⁸³ While UNBC and Tl'azt'en Nation preferred a fee simple Crown grant because it would provide "freedom to manage" under a government-approved management plan, the government did not want to proceed in this direction.

The SUP/LTC arrangement was problematic on a number of levels. In order to be in compliance with the University Act of British Columbia, the research forest could not lose money. With a sustained annual allowable cut of approximately fifteen thousand cubic metres, if standard stumpage rates were charged, the forest would produce barely enough to support the salary of a forest manager, let alone the research and training that was its goal.⁸⁴ The Alex Fraser Research Forest had received a stumpage reduction, and it was upon this basis that Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC made their case. They began a wide-ranging lobbying campaign for support for their request, soliciting backing from the National Aboriginal Forestry Association, the First Nations Summit, and various tribal councils around British Columbia. The Fort St. James Municipal Council also wrote to the Ministry of Forests to ask that their request be considered. Yet there was concern about a practice known as "waterbedding": "if there is reduced stumpage in any one locality it's increased elsewhere to try to maintain revenues for the provincial government at a fairly even level over time."⁸⁵ However, this appeared to be a red herring: licences-to-cut were not considered in such calculations because, being small, they had a negligible effect on the province's receipts from stumpage payments.⁸⁶ Arguing the issue of scale, UNBC and Tl'azt'en Nation convinced the Ministry of Forests that reduced stumpage would enable the JPRF to pursue innovative research on sustainable forestry practices while remaining solvent. In

⁸³ *University Research Forest Tenure Briefing Note*, prepared by Ken Day, Mike Jull, and Sue Grainger for the Honorable Mike de Jong, Minister of Forests, and Doug Konklin, Deputy Minister of Forests 8 June 2004, CRCF.

⁸⁴ UNBC NREM 400, "Draft Co-Management Scenarios"; Sue Grainger, interview, 23 February 2006.

⁸⁵ UNBC interview, March 2006.

⁸⁶ Sue Grainger, interview, 23 February 2006.

1998, Forestry Minister Zirnhelt granted minimum stumpage of \$0.25 per cubic metre for conifer volume.⁸⁷

Yet the provincial government did not assent to granting the SUP to a co-management committee. Tenure would only be granted to the university as a legal entity. This briefly threatened to undermine the whole process of making the JPRF a fully co-managed space. While the district and regional forest offices and the Fort St. James municipal government had all indicated their willingness to re-envision the area between *Chuzghun Bun* and *Tesgha Bun* as a truly hybrid Tl'azt'en/UNBC space, the provincial government refused to codify this revisualization. The elimination of Tl'azt'en Nation from the final equation was indicative of the exclusions so commonly experienced by First Nations in their struggles to reassert control over their traditional territories. UNBC's president Charles Jago explained that

the government would only enter into a long term license with the University, not with the Tl'azt'en. So we had a problem whereby the university could have essentially owned and operated that land, but we would have had very unhappy First Nations people even though they wanted a research forest, and they wanted employment opportunities within that research forest. And to reconcile all of those differences we moved toward a corporation where UNBC and Tl'azt'en are equal partners.⁸⁸

Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC found an admissible way around this hurdle. A new memorandum, noting that the JPRF would be co-managed, was attached as a schedule to the tenure document that was awarded solely to UNBC. This ensured that the tenure document's validity would be compromised if co-management did not occur. This appeared to satisfy, if not please, all of the involved parties. Over the years, moves were made to establish a co-managed, not-for-profit corporation known as the Chuzghun Resources Corporation (CRC) and to convince the province to transfer the tenure to this legal entity. Yet, the fact that the province excluded Tl'azt'en Nation from the tenure document symbolizes all too well the continued legacy of colonialism that all First Nations face when they attempt to assert greater control – even shared control – over their traditional territories.

⁸⁷ BC Forest Service Revenue Branch, *Interior Appraisal Manual*, Amendment No. 16, 1 November 2006, 125.

⁸⁸ Charles Jago, interview, 22 February 2006.

COMPETING VISUALIZATIONS:
INTERNAL CHALLENGES

As noted above, throughout this article we treat Tl'azt'enne as a homogeneous group. On the Tl'azt'en side, those active in creating the JPRF were mostly elected band officials. Since the JPRF began harvesting operations in 1999, another challenge to the visualization of a shared Tl'azt'en/UNBC space has arisen.⁸⁹ Some of the families whose *keyohs* are now encapsulated by the JPRF boundaries have challenged the right of Tl'azt'en Nation, via its membership on the co-management board, to authorize activities on their family lands.⁹⁰ As Tl'azt'en Nation proposes a reassertion of self-government, often arguing for the need to revive precolonial institutions, some of the *keyoh* holders have appropriated this argument, contending that, as the rightful stewards of these specific territories, they should have had a greater role in deciding whether or not to pursue a research forest on their lands.⁹¹ They argue that they should benefit preferentially from its activities and should be able to determine, or at least to have some veto power over, those activities. These members argue that land is first *keyoh* territory, then Tl'azt'en territory. This struggle may have its roots in a history that, in 1959, saw several more or less autonomous groups from Tache, Binche, Yekooche, Dzitlainli, and Kuzche amalgamated into the Stuart Lake-Trembleur Indian Band, mostly for the convenience of Department of Indian Affairs administrators.⁹² While Tl'azt'en government is situated in Tache, and is dominated by Tache-based members (Tache being significantly larger than any of the other settlements), the *keyoh* holders on what has been designated the JPRF come from the reserve community of Binche.

⁸⁹ The Nak'azdli Nation, the First Nation whose territory borders Tl'azt'en territory to the south, claims an area of overlap involving the southeast corner of the JPRF. While this claim has been stated, as of mid-2007 Nak'azdli Nation had not demanded greater involvement in the management of the research forest.

⁹⁰ We found no evidence that these families protested the creation of the research forest prior to its establishment, nor did we find evidence of other Tl'azt'enne indicating serious concerns about the establishment of the research forest. It may have been the commencing of actual activities (harvesting, clearing, training) that precipitated the *keyoh* holders' demands.

⁹¹ One of the families whose *keyoh* territory lay within the JPRF boundaries was represented on Tl'azt'en Council (as chief) during the research forest's formation; there was no evidence in the minutes of council meetings that he felt at that time that *keyoh* holders should have enjoyed powers or benefits different from those enjoyed by other Tl'azt'en members.

⁹² Morris and Fondahl, "Negotiating." Yekoochee Nation separated from Tl'azt'en Nation in 1994 and was recognized by the provincial government as a separate First Nation. The other communities have occasionally discussed separation.

The CRC has attempted to address the concerns of these *keyoh* holders by modifying its structure and offering *keyoh* members priority treatment in some areas. One of the three Tl'azt'en positions on the CRC Board of Directors has been reserved for a *keyoh* member. In 2003, an impact benefits agreement (IBA) was adopted, whereby *keyoh* holders are given priority with regard to being hired for work carried out on their *keyoh* lands. The IBA also allows for *keyoh* members to apply for funds for property improvements (cabin upkeep, trapline maintenance, etc.). Yet these attempts to balance the rights of *keyoh* holders with the interests of Tl'azt'en Nation as a whole have not fully satisfied all *keyoh* holders: some have continued to argue that the space should be visualized first as *keyoh* space and that privileges from the JPRF should flow accordingly.

CONCLUSION

New representations of space have arisen since the formal establishment of the JPRF. This land base, with its co-management regime, can be seen as negotiated space.⁹³ Tl'azt'en *keyoh* holders have asked the JPRF management board to compensate them for disruption of their traplines, thus challenging the understanding of whom the forest should benefit. Under the aegis of the JPRF, Tl'azt'en youth have erected traditional pit houses and interpretive signage, announcing the intention to privilege recreation and ethno-tourism opportunities as well as forestry. Research into traditional Tl'azt'en ecological knowledge documents Tl'azt'en resource stewardship techniques and values, and the forest has been used to launch science and culture camps for Tl'azt'en youth.⁹⁴ The visions for the JPRF continue to evolve among Tl'azt'enne, UNBC, and the Fort St. James community.⁹⁵ As UNBC president Jago observed:

[Having] a research forest both for research purposes as well as for teaching purposes ... has always remained a primary goal, but over time the working relationship with the Tl'azt'en and the principles of co-management, the incorporation of traditional knowledge, those

⁹³ Morris and Fondahl, "Negotiating."

⁹⁴ See <http://cura.unbc.ca> for information on research and related initiatives.

⁹⁵ See Erin Sherry, Regine Halseth, Gail Fondahl, Melanie Karjala, and Beverly Leon, "Local-level Criteria and Indicators: An Aboriginal Perspective on Sustainable Forest Management," *Forestry* 78, 5 (2005): 513-39; and Sue Grainger, Erin Sherry, and Gail Fondahl, "The John Prince Research Forest: Evolution of a Co-Management Partnership in Northern British Columbia," *Forestry Chronicle* 82,4 (2006): 484-95.

started off as important but secondary goals, and I think they have become more important and more primary as time has gone on.⁹⁶

The goals of the research forest will change over time, not only as Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC re-evaluate their interests and objectives but also as various interested actors – Fort St. James community members and elected officials, recreational users, local forest contractors, Nak'azdli Nation, and others – reassess their visualizations of this territory and begin to act on new visualizations.

This article attempts to document how space was remade in one region, over one short period of time, in British Columbia. While we constantly observe the outcomes of such remakings – a newly designated park, the expansion of a mine, a new research forest – it is useful to better comprehend the *process* that results in these outcomes as one of negotiation. Places are continually remade through complex manoeuvres, resistance, and accommodation as different groups assert their visualizations of a given area. One group or a small number may dominate the process of place-making, but many groups influence the process through challenging, supporting, and/or suggesting modifications to such visualizations. Thus, at any given time, places are the outcome of intricate social relations.⁹⁷ Understanding this allows us to better comprehend the considerable opportunities for contributing to place-making.

We also hope that, by documenting the many contributors to the remaking of the area between *Chuzghun Bun* and *Tesgha Bun* into the JPRF, we have called attention to the influence of contributors whose impact on the JPRF is hard to discern. By doing this we remind ourselves that traces of past activity that have contributed to the remaking of space may be currently hard to detect. Nevertheless, the current spatial outcome would almost certainly be different had these “actors” not asserted their own visualizations and challenged conflicting visualizations. Attending to the details of the complex positioning, challenges, and negotiations surrounding the remaking of places helps us to acknowledge and to better appreciate the significant and persistent role that many groups have played in the continual remaking of British Columbia.

⁹⁶ Charles Jago, interview, 22 February 2006.

⁹⁷ Katharyne Mitchell, “Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15 (1997): 533–54.

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