

‘Capital-C’ Consultation: Community, Capitalism and Colonialism

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ABSTRACT: Drawing on ethnographic research based in Gitxaala, British Columbia during 2007, this paper focuses on the theory and practice of consultation undertaken for development in British Columbia. I specifically address the local impact of the consultative process on the Indigenous community, and relate this to larger themes of capitalism and colonialist expansion.

KEYWORDS: consultation, capitalism, colonialism, collaboration, Traditional Use Study, Aboriginal Rights and Title

Introduction

In the summer of 2007, I conducted ethnographic research based in the Reserve town of Gitxaala (Figure 1) near Prince Rupert as part of a university field school. My time in Gitxaala coincided with a week-long training session held by Golder Associates, a multinational corporation offering consulting services for developers. The Katabatic Power Corporation had proposed a wind farm development in Gitxaala territory, and Golder had been hired to train community members to undertake a Traditional Use Study (TUS) as part of the Environmental Assessment for the wind farm. I therefore chose to focus my research on the issue of consultation – what it is, how it works in practice and its impact on Indigenous communities.

This paper discusses the results of that research, with a particular focus on the relationships of consultation; the larger power dynamic this reflects and

contributes to; and what it tells us about both the potential and limitations of individual practice, for those now operating within the paradigm of collaboration. For this research, I attended the week-long TUS training sessions and other related meetings, and interviewed Gitxaala community members who were involved in the training process, as well as employees of Golder. The names of all informants have been removed for confidentiality.

Consultation, in Theory

Before discussing what consultation in Gitxaala looked like in practice, the following review provides some context for this concept of “consultation” and where the idea comes from.

When a decision about land use is being considered by the Crown that might affect the exercising of Aboriginal Rights or Title, the Crown has a duty

to consult with Aboriginal people prior to making the decision. This duty stems from the *Constitution Act* (1982) and means that the Crown must try to reconcile with First Nations, an obligation detailed further in *The New Relationship Trust Act* (2006). The obligation to consult, and accommodate if the decision will mean an infringement of Aboriginal Rights, was recognized with the *Delgamuukw* (1997) case that reaffirmed the existence of Aboriginal Rights and Title, including right to the land itself. This obligation was further clarified in the *Haida Nation* (2004) and *Taku River Tlingit* (2004) cases as being proportional both to the strength of the Aboriginal claim to the area and to the potential adverse impact that the decision will have on that claim. In circumstances where the strength of claim is high and the potential impact is significant, the Crown must “in good faith” try to reconcile with the Aboriginal group and reach an agreement that balances their concerns with other societal interests.

This is where consultation comes in, which involves initiating a dialogue for information sharing between two groups, usually the proponent of a project and the local Indigenous community. Often, the proponent writes to the First Nation to initiate a relationship, after which multiple meetings are held to discuss both parties’ interests and concerns. Critically, although the duty to consult and accommodate is placed on the Crown, in fact the actual legwork of this process is usually delegated to a third party, most often the developer or proponent of the proposed project. For example, in the case of the Banks Island wind project, Katabatic wrote to Gitxaala to initiate the consultation process, which involved ongoing discussions and meetings between them.



Figure 1. Location of the Gitxaala community in British Columbia, Canada.

Before land development can happen, the government requires that impact assessments be conducted, to see what the effects of the development will be on other resources. Most consultation happens in relations to Environmental and Archaeological Impact Assessments, and this is where the consultants fit in. In this case, the Golder consulting firm was hired to do an Environmental Impact Assessment, to see how the wind farm might affect the plants and animals living around Banks Island. The consultants are not *officially* part of consultation, as this is a formal legal and political process that takes place between Gitxaala and the developer who in a sense represents the Crown. However, the consultants’ work, and specifically the Traditional Use Study being proposed, relates to questions of Aboriginal Rights and Title, which will help determine the extent to which the developer is obligated to accommodate Gitxaala’s claim to the land (Tobias 2000, 2009). The relationship formed between the consultants and the

community is therefore a critical component of the consultation process.

Consultation in British Columbia is complex. It is directly related to questions surrounding Aboriginal Title and sovereignty, the legality of colonization and the authority of Canadian law. It is an evolving concept, informed by every legal decision and relationship established between Aboriginal groups, government and/or businesses. This has contributed to a feeling of uncertainty, in particular amongst the business community who seek to invest in British Columbia but want to ensure that there will be no barriers to development. A group of major business and industry associations therefore drafted their own “how-to” guide on consultation, wherein they advocate that “consultations should not debate or attempt to resolve the existence, extent or limitations of Crown and aboriginal rights and titles,” but instead focus on the extent of consultation and accommodation required based on the strength of Indigenous claim to an area (Figure 2; NRMC 2007:9,6). Meanwhile, The New Relationship Trust, an “independent non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening First Nations in BC through capacity building” (NRT 2011), has compiled their own guide (Meyers Norris Penny 2009). More recently, the federal government produced a document titled “Aboriginal Consultation and Accommodation: Updated Guidelines for Federal Officials to Fulfill the Duty to Consult” (Canada 2011).

These larger issues of Aboriginal Rights and Title and treaty negotiation are critical to address in the consultation process; however, consultation *in practice* has a major impact on the local First Nation community, which is less acknowledged. Throughout my research, there is one issue that was highlighted in the interactions between people involved in the consultative process, and that is this: *intentions do not necessarily translate into realities*. Likewise, what few government regulations exist to assist developers and First Nations through the process of consultation, do not necessarily address how this negotiation takes place in practice. The position of the project proponent in this process is disconnected from the impact on the local community, where the effects of consultation trickle down into every home in one

way or another. Therefore, my research has focused on how being in the process of consultation for land development has affected the Gitxaala community on a very local level.

Consultation, in Practice...

While the “theory” of consultation involves the duty of the Crown to Indigenous peoples, in “practice” much of this process is delegated to the proponents of whatever development is on the table.¹ This is particularly the case when it comes to “gathering information about the impact of the proposed project on the potential or established Aboriginal or Treaty rights” (Canada 2011). The proponent initiates this dialogue during impact assessments, and negotiates the distribution of project benefits, should the development proceed.

Markey (2001:7) provides a comprehensive analysis of the development and use of Traditional Use Studies as a means “to develop a cultural component for existing impact assessments,” which tend to focus on environmental impacts and be based on Western scientific methods and theories. After the *Delgamuukw* decision, the TUS became a commonly employed means to record “Aboriginal perspectives” and assess the level of consultation and accommodation required for any given project. As Figure 2 illustrates, the extent of consultation and accommodation is determined based on the resource use and significance of an area to the First Nation, and directly related to Aboriginal Rights.

Also called Traditional Land and Occupancy Studies, such research is framed within assessing Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), with a view towards implementing this knowledge in contemporary resource management strategies (Houde 2007). These studies are effectively inventories, creating maps of locations of significance, and typi-

¹ The recent Enbridge Northern Gateway Project Joint Review Panel (JRP) highlighted the problems with consultation as formally the responsibility of the Crown but practically delegated to project proponents, for whom there is an inherent conflict of interest. In the Final Written Arguments submitted by several First Nations opposing the Enbridge pipeline, the point was repeatedly made that the JRP was not consultation and did not absolve the Crown of its still unfulfilled duty to consult with Aboriginal groups. I expect this project to have significant impacts on how government and business approach consultation in future; in the interim, it has demonstrated that the meaningful relationship implied in consultation is an ideal far from being realized.

cally involve interviews with community knowledge holders and site visits and surveys (Tobias 2009). Although archaeological and heritage sites are often included, framed in the United States as Traditional Cultural Properties (King 2003), the focus of a TUS is typically on resource use (e.g., berry-gathering sites, fishing spots etc.) because of their primary use within the environmental assessment process.

This is where my research comes in. The TUS training session that I attended in 2007 was designed to teach Gitxaala people how to do much of the work that is involved in a TUS, and in anthropology more broadly – interviewing people about traditions, plant use and harvesting locations, good hunting spots, and then mapping these all out along with place-names for important sites (see Tobias 2000, 2009). I sat in the training sessions for a week, listening to questions from the community, and watching the consultants teaching trainees how to talk to people. For the consultants, this was a key issue they returned to again and again: *how do you make people feel comfortable so they will talk to you?* However, just as the TUS trainees were taught how to put people at ease in order to conduct their interviews, I came to see how the process and impact of consultation itself mirrors that power dynamic, with disturbing consequences.

...according to the Proponent

The absence of a formal interview with representatives from the proponent was supplemented by background research on the company called North Coast Wind Energy (NCWE), which is comprised of Katabatic Power Corporation and Deutsche Bank AG who funded the project. The company was commonly referred to as “Katabatic” by the Golder employees and the Gitxaala community, a reference that has been maintained in this report to avoid confusion.

On their company website, Katabatic (2007a) devoted a section to the Banks Island project, which includes a section affirming their dedication to the consultative process:

Consultation Process: Banks Island North Wind Energy Project is committed to a comprehensive consultation program that will build strong rela-

tionships with community partners and ensure that all stakeholders are informed of Project developments in a timely manner.

The project itself is described by the proponent (NCWE 2007a) as consisting of approximately 234 wind turbines on Banks Island capable of generating 700 MW of power, with supporting infrastructure of access roads, buried cables, a substation and transmission line to Kitimat. This is no small project but rather a massive development valued at approximately \$1.4 billion (NCWE 2007b:5) involving a host of permits and impact assessments. Indeed, as Rodman (2013:44) discusses, the wind farm was viewed locally as linked to the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline, an enormous project with potentially astounding impacts socially, culturally and environmentally. Unlike the massive panel established for that development, however, only a small part of the Katabatic project (3 paragraphs of a 63-page document, NWCE 2007b:24) relates to consultation with the affected First Nations, including Gitxaala.

In their News section, an article written by a corporate public relations firm dating January 25, 2007 titled “Katabatic Power and the Gitxaala Nation Working Together on Banks Island Wind” is featured, wherein it is stated that Gitxaala Nation and Katabatic “are working together to make wind power on Banks Island, located south of Prince Rupert, a reality.” The article states (Katabatic 2007b):

A letter of understanding, designed to guide the relationship between the Gitxaala and Katabatic on the proposed Banks Island wind power project, is being drafted. The document provides a framework for developing future cooperation agreements in areas such as environmental and cultural protection, training and education, employment, and partnerships.

In the absence of a Katabatic representative to interview, one of the Golder consultants offered his view, noting that this large TUS project was only possible because Katabatic supported it, as it is a very costly process. Such a comprehensive TUS as proposed for Gitxaala is unusual, he said, and was deemed to be beneficial to the community:

APPENDIX 1 **First Nation Consultation Intensity Matrix**

Activity or Project	Major Disturbance	No Notification	Moderate Consultations	Intensive Consultations	Intensive Consultations	Intensive Consultations	In Accordance with Treaty Provisions
	Large Project or Large Area	No Notification	Limited Consultations	Moderate Consultations	Moderate Consultations	Intensive Consultations	In Accordance with Treaty Provisions
	Small Project or Small Area	No Notification	Limited Consultations	Moderate Consultations	Moderate Consultations	Intensive Consultations	In Accordance with Treaty Provisions
	Previously Disturbed Area	No Notification	Information sharing	Limited Consultations	Limited Consultations	Moderate Consultations	In Accordance with Treaty Provisions
	Ancillary Permit, License or Tenure	No Notification	Notification	Notification	Notification	Limited Consultations	In Accordance with Treaty Provisions
	No Demonstrated Impact	No Notification	Notification	Notification	Notification	Notification	In Accordance with Treaty Provisions
		No Interests	Occasional Use	Economic Use or Opportunities	Intensive Use	Intensive Use and Advanced Treaty Negotiations	Established Treaty Right or Title
First Nation Interests							

Figure 2. From *First Nation Consultation and Accommodation: A Business Perspective* (Strategic Aboriginal Consulting Inc. 2007) report Appendix 1, illustrating the degree of consultation “required” depending on the impact and First Nation interests in the area. This represents a “checklist” approach to consultation that prevents meaningful relationships and is designed to expedite development. (This graphic is used with permission but does not necessarily reflect the views of the New Relationship Business Group or the Business Council of British Columbia, who commissioned the 2007 report.)

Anything that can be done that gives the community confidence that the work is being done well, and the work is being done by the right people, and that the community’s interests are being taken care of...that’s a good thing.

Yet this was not exactly the proponent’s main concern. As described by one Golder consultant, when TUS training was proposed, Katabatic’s response was, “is it going to slow down the work?” For Katabatic, time is money, this is business, and their bottom line is also the bottom dollar.² Yet it was still in their best interests to keep Gitxaala satisfied with the process to avoid a breakdown in the relationship, which could

² One reviewer of this paper commented that such “economic mentalities” are commonplace and the concern of corporations over all facets of development, not just the TUS. This highlights precisely my point, that the real concern is always financial, despite how it was often framed by the consultants as relationship-building, language that Katabatic also drew upon.

end up in the courts, slow everything down, and cost more money.

During a conference call between Katabatic, Golder, and the Gitxaala Chief Councillor and wider community, representatives of Katabatic repeatedly expressed that their primary concern was to have a product to submit to the government for the Environmental Impact Assessment. They explicitly stated that the information for the TUS belonged to Gitxaala – “it’s your people’s knowledge” – and agreed that they would not release confidential information; however, they added: “we ask that Gitxaala will not unreasonably withhold the information that we need for [the report to the province].” Succinctly put, they said: “our concern is that we proceed with the project and do an EA that is acceptable to the province and Gitxaala.” For Katabatic, this is simply business, and they were clear that the question of Aboriginal

Rights and Title was “not a decision for [them] to be involved in.”

...according to the Consultants

In the case of the proposed Banks Island wind farm project, Katabatic represents one side of the consultation table and, as the company proposing development, it is in their interest to have this work completed in as timely and cost-effective a manner as possible. This is where the consulting firm, Golder, comes into the picture, hired by the proponent to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment. This relationship is one of sub-contractor, as described by one of the consultants:

I had things to say in representing Golder and to a degree representing the company that’s hiring us, the project that’s put forward ... not advocating for it, but communicating about it, about what is being proposed.

He further clarified:

My number one obligation is to the people in the communities that I work with. I’m also paid by a particular company, but that ... shouldn’t affect my ability to work with the communities here, to develop strong research that will stand up.

For both Katabatic and Golder, the issue of consultation was conceived of entirely within its legal framework. Although the TUS research could help determine Gitxaala’s claim to the land and thus the extent to which they would benefit from the development (the “accommodation” part of the “consultation and accommodation” process), Katabatic and Golder made it clear that Aboriginal Rights and Title was not their concern, and that the TUS was merely informing the required Environmental Assessment. On the first day of the TUS training, the consultant was very clear to communicate that the training session was not about what he called “capital-C” consultation, describing this as follows:

The word consultation ... that sets off alarm bells for a lot of people. Consultation is a legally defined field with legally defined processes. What we are doing here today is not consultation. This is train-

ing. ... And even the studies, traditional use studies, is not consultation. It’s all sort of, provides information and provides capacity in the community so that consultation can happen better, but it is not consultation. And I want to make that extremely clear ... I want, again, I want everybody to feel very comfortable in this room, in training and working together and discussing. And so, I want to make very clear that that whole issue of consultation is outside of here. We’ll talk about it, we’ll talk about what it means, and about how the information is collected and used in consultation – but in terms of legally defined consultation, this is not it.

In this way, the political ramifications of the training session and even the TUS itself were dismissed by the consultants as both not part of formal or what they called “capital-C” consultation, and thus as “outside” of the room.

Still, the consultants did feel “there were also political dimensions to the other intersections in the room. ... There are these bigger picture issues that, absolutely, they’re right in the room with us too.” The intent of the training, however, was not to engage in these issues other than to inform people of the proposed project, what the Traditional Use Study would consist of, and figure out “how this work should be done.” This, they insisted, was not part of “capital-C” consultation. Yet, towards these goals, they frequently deferred to community Elders who attended the training sessions, which they noted was strategic:

It’s supposed to be set up so that there are two sets of experts in the room that the trainees learn from. There’s experts who are Golder who are social science experts, and there’s experts who are Gitxaala, who are traditional knowledge experts... They’re there to talk about, how do you approach the knowledge? How do you ask those questions? What’s appropriate? How do you make people feel comfortable? How do you follow the cultural protocols? And also, how have projects either worked or failed in the past in the community? A lot of these elders have been involved in those projects and so their feedback is vital, it’s an opportunity for them to basically tell us, how do they want it done.

Despite their assertion that consultation was “outside”



Figure 3. Village of Gitxaala as seen from above facing roughly north-east. Photo by author.

of the TUS training process, one consultant admitted that this training session *did*, in fact, serve a consultative role since, as he said, “there’s also information that we’re sharing that I’m hoping will make people feel more comfortable with what’s going forward.” They also stressed the need to make the community *trust* the TUS data so that they could later make an informed decision about the wind farm project. One consultant felt that,

[if] you’ve got community members that are involved in [the Environmental Assessment], in the science, and doing it, not only is your work improved massively, and for something like traditional use studies, you could never do it without, like it’s, it’s a fundamental requirement that you have community members working with you. You know, the elders just won’t talk otherwise.

Ultimately, their asserted neutrality put the consultants in a precarious position. Golder’s reputation is in part based on their ability to conduct unbiased research, yet they were *paid* by the developer, and they worked *for* the proponent; they admittedly wanted to “make people feel more comfortable with what’s going forward.” This primary relationship with

Katabatic fundamentally shaped the consultants’ interactions with Gitxaala people from the beginning. In the end, just as the proponent could not remove politics from what they construed as “just business,” likewise the consultants were unable to keep politics out of what they labelled as “just training.”

...according to the Community

For the community of Gitxaala, consultation is an integral part of the decision-making process when considering any future developments. Clifford White, then-Chief Councillor for Gitxaala, explained:

Consultation, for Gitxaala means being able to get preliminary information in advance of an agreement being made. This information must be provided in a timely fashion which gives Gitxaala an opportunity not only to digest it and to be able to make informed decisions based on all relevant information and resources ...which would not only include the elected Chief and Council, but also including our hereditary leaders, elders and community members.

In my interviews with Gitxaala community members, three topics were specifically discussed: the

TUS training session and how Golder and Katabatic were interacting with the community; how the project was going to work and how people felt about the wind farm itself; and how the project would affect internal community social relations in Gitxaala. The following sections deal with each aspect separately.

The TUS Training Sessions

During the week of TUS training, discussions about the TUS and the interviewing process stressed that the gathered information would not only assist the Environmental Assessment for the wind project, but would also be beneficial to the community in having their knowledge written down. This, it was suggested, would both help with future negotiations and be of value as simply a record of their cultural knowledge. One community member reflected on these ideas:

I kind of didn't like it the first day, but when all that stuff came about what we need to know, that, our language, our culture, our traditional ways, when all that came, that hooked me, what we have to do. Our food, everything. Because I'm traditional.

Others were more cautious about the consultants' attempts to engage with the community on issues such as what questions would be asked for the Traditional Use Study:

I think the dialogue is starting to appear through the Golder Association, but again it's a long arm of wind power. They're talking about interviewing our elders, okay what questions to ask them, our elders? And the questions they're going to ask are one-sided...

Thus although the consultants had said the training is not "capital-C consultation," these questions and topics were felt to be intricately related to the issue of Aboriginal Rights and Title, and to the larger consultative process. One informant stated,

I'm not happy with the process of Katabatic because they seem to take things for granted... we're still in the consultation process but they're making announcements already, and that's kind of a concern to me, they're assuming that we accept it, their presence in our territory and they need a vehicle to do this...

In this sense, there was a fundamental concern expressed about the relationship between the consultants and the proponents. As one community member put it,

Sitting in that Golder meeting, there's the long arm of the Katabatic wind power. They were not talking about the protection of the food, they were for the wind power. They strongly endorsed the wind power project.

Indeed, Golder, Katabatic and the government were frequently referred to as one entity or interchangeably – the point being that they were seen as representing the same interests. One informant described these connections:

Katabatic hired Golder to come in and consult with the community and do the Environmental Assessment and gather information to, to try and help them move ahead and Golder is, my understanding is, Golder is the vehicle.

Conceptually, then, the relationship was between Gitxaala and "them" – the outsiders – coming in and wanting something. Thus, Gitxaala's position was framed as a matter of *protection*.

Just as the consultants, the proponent, and the government became simply "them," the TUS, the training for the TUS, the Environmental Assessment, the wind farm project and resulting potential jobs were conflated to represent one endeavour. One community member described feeling positive about "the project" in general because of its connection to her heritage:

That's our land too, so I want to be a part of it. I live here. I grew up here. I was born on this island. So I just want to be a part of it because of my grandkids, my future family, my children.

"The project" also became reduced to one of its end products: employment. When asked specifically about conducting TUS interviews with the wider community, this informant explained that

A lot of people want to be, want employment, so they'll open up their homes if they know what it's all about, you know. Let them know how much

people are going to be employed. This town's going to be booming for a while, for fifteen years. Lots of money here.

Thus, the Gitxaala community tended to focus on how all of these things – consultants, proponents, TUS, wind project, employment, environment, and Aboriginal Rights and Title – are interconnected. Conversely, Golder, and Katabatic, consistently attempted to draw lines between the various parties, issues, activities, and processes at hand. In this way, what the training session represented for Gitxaala reached far beyond what perhaps was intended by Golder, as one informant described:

Every time I talk about our land, our water, our seas, the *Delgamuukw* [court case]. And now the government is trying to water it down...the meeting we had last week from the Golder. It's a prime example there of them watering it down...the chairman of that project said it'll be non-political to start with. When we first sat down he said this is a non-political area, and the next breath he took it was all political. It was all political. So this is where we have to be very careful.

The Wind Farm Project

At the beginning of the TUS training sessions, one of the consultants described the wind farm project in detail and speculated on its potential results – again, focused on the promise of employment:

[Katabatic is] expecting that it's going take ten to fifteen years to build this, of continuous construction, and they would be doing it in phases ... likely with a workforce, just the construction, of around two hundred people. ...This is not a small project we're talking about. It's a large project ... and certainly for the local community here, if it goes forward, it would mean a lot of change. There would be a lot of jobs. There would be social and economic effects around it ... great if there's jobs, [but] how do we make sure that the communities here are the ones that are getting the jobs? Because that's in everyone's interest. This company does not want to be flying workers in from Newfoundland to be doing this stuff. They would like for it to be local people. What I'm trying to say is that this is

a big project, and it has the potential, it has lots of opportunities in it, but it also has the potential to be done the wrong way, in which case all this development might not help.

One consultant then described what he felt were the three different kinds of accommodation: accommodations within the project, such as changes to the where the turbines are built; indirect economic benefits, like jobs and training; and direct benefits, such as monetary payments and revenue-sharing. He stated that “all of those are on the table,” but that the goal of the TUS training session and resulting Environmental Assessment was “to provide good information to leadership” and enable them “to make good decisions.”

For the community of Gitxaala, concerns about the impact of the development on the environment were in tension with the economic potential of the wind farm to create jobs – all of which was set in the larger context of depleting food resources and an ongoing high unemployment rate. There was a pervasive tension between wanting to protect the environment, upon which their people have depended for subsistence for so long, and wanting to take advantage of economic opportunities, without which Gitxaala may continue to suffer as the reach of Western capitalism and the market economy grows ever longer. As one person put it, there are “lots of us dying to work in this community.”

All Gitxaala community members who were interviewed expressed this tension between economic opportunity and maintaining their way of life, and at times seemed to be almost willing away the possibility of environmental damage:

Where the site's going to be, where the project's going to be. That's where all our food is. So we just have to prove that our food won't be damaged or that it'll still be there. And they did say that if there is damage then we could be compensated. But there's a ninety, ninety-nine percent chance that there won't be any damage.

I'm positive this wind energy thing is not gonna damage all that food we have out there. It's gonna be still there, we're still going to be picking [our food].

Such confidence in a negligible impact of the wind farm was not expressed by everyone, and there was real concern felt by some that people were already accepting the “accommodation” without knowing yet what they were losing:

It’s almost like saying, what are you prepared to give up to get some of the benefits? You know, it’s exactly what they’re asking when they do this environmental survey.

Exactly what benefits would result from this project and how these would be managed by the community were also questioned, based on one person’s previous experience elsewhere:

So much money came into the community that the Nation never saw that before. The individuals, you know, their self-esteem came right up to a high. But what do they do with this money? They didn’t know and they were just spending, spending ... so there’s more than just the consultation process for the jobs, you know, or the project rather. There’s a lot of other aspects that we have to consider. So the two hundred jobs, well, hopefully they’ll get the training, those that want to participate.

This tension between protecting the environment while pursuing economic opportunity was frequently framed as paralleling “traditional” and “modern” values, addressed more directly by another community member:

Where do we draw the line for so-called progress? I’m for progress. I’d like to see change in the village. But what do we give up? Do we give up our traditional way? For a long time, we regard the inlet, the Gitxaala inlet, as our grocery store. Well, how long’s the grocery store going to last if that high-powered line goes through the water, in our water? I think I can see the change already. We depend on Safeway, you know, Safeway grocery store, we depend on big chain food stores. Where do we draw the line? This is what I want to know. We depend on abalone for hundreds of years, thousands of years, and now it’s disappearing.

In this context of competing values between tradition and progress, strengthening cultural and social bonds

by documenting cultural knowledge and combating social problems in the community became seen as one of the key benefits of economic opportunity generally, and specifically the wind farm. These sentiments were expressed in connection with the colonial appropriation of lands and policies of cultural genocide:

What injustice they’ve done to us, what the government has done to Gitxaala people ... all that land has been just taken away from us. Our culture just about died, just about gone. Our language is just about gone. All our, the way of life changed drastically. That’s why I’d like to see Gitxaala change in a very positive manner.

Internal Community Relations

Throughout these interviews, there were comments made about exactly who in the immediate community was involved – in the training, the consultation, the potential employment—and how future social interactions might unfold. In these social interactions, clan alignment and hard feelings between families were often mentioned, and there was clearly competition for employment:

If Golder didn’t come out and do what they did, I probably wouldn’t have been an interviewer ... I’m so glad that Golder came here and did that with us, and hired me. *(pause)* Because I’m going to be a part of that project, guaranteed *(laughs)*. I’ll do everything I can do to help them and spread the word, I already started.

Several people expressed that they hadn’t heard about the wind farm project before the TUS training session was announced, just days before it took place. They felt there was a lack of public notification about such events that affect everybody, and there was suspicion that some people were intentionally withholding information in order to secure access to any potential resources that came from the project.

As part of this discussion, the role of “off-reserve” Gitxaala people was mentioned by several community members, who were concerned that the off-reserves were already against the wind farm project because they would be outside of the potential benefits:

It's like, 'if it's not my project you can't have it,' sort of thing. You know, and I think that's why the old people were wise in saying, unless you live here, you know, you can't really have a say.

People considered this ill-feeling between on- and off-reserves to be partly responsible for the demise of a previous development proposal, which had come under attack from environmental groups and off-reserve Gitxaala members. As a result of this, one person described,

The damage is done already in the spirits, and the relationship of the people, families, families are split ... any other project comes along, that's what's going to spark the continuous split [in the community].

Despite this division in the community, another community member recognized potential in this project to bring Gitxaala people together:

Our off-reserves are going to have to move home and live here to get employed, so this town's going to be full of people, and that's going to be awesome for this community because they have to live here to work. So if our off-reserves come home, it'd be all the better for the community...most of them have their own houses here, they're just sitting empty. They move to [Prince] Rupert for employment.

To understand these concerns, context is critical. In 2007, Gitxaala had a population of about 500 people, most lived off the reserve for employment, and the unemployment rate in Gitxaala was 75% (Stats. Can. 2006). People continue to be impacted by government policies that systematically undermine Gitxaala's ability to engage in and benefit from the economic system of the colonial society. Thus, "the project" seen as a whole came to represent employment, with the attendant promise of improved quality of life and a future for their grandchildren.

Yet it meant even more than this. Since European contact, the disruption in the community has been profound, and the incredible tension between concepts of "tradition" and "progress," mirroring concerns for the environment and culture versus economic opportunity, are felt perhaps most pointedly by the younger generations. Everyone I spoke with com-

mented that the youth and the elders are not talking, meaning that cultural knowledge is not being passed on. This relationship is strained in part because the youth are torn, influenced by Western values of gross material wealth, modernity and urbanism – considered the measures of "success" – so that tradition comes to be seen as backwards and old-fashioned, a relic, and poor – in a word, as "failure."

The importance of training youth was stressed by several people, who felt that "they are our greatest resource if we give them the right tools." In particular, the communication gap between elders and the youth was repeatedly emphasized as a primary concern, and it was felt that the TUS could be used to improve this. Yet although the youth were often the subject of discussion, they were not represented in attendance at the meetings. Among youth I spoke with, there was some resentment that they were being left out of the conversation:

When it comes to taking the time, training us and giving us the jobs that we apply for, we're not old enough or smart enough yet, I think they just look at us like we're little stupid kids or something (*laughs*). And they always say we're the backbone of this community, we're the ones that are going to take them to the top and everything, they don't even give us that chance to do anything like that.

Reflecting both on the consultants leading the TUS training, and the ethnographic project of which I was a part, he also commented that

It takes other people to come out and others to teach us the things that we think we need to know.

This feeling of resentment was intimately connected with a deep sense of isolation from the wider society, again expressed by pitting "impoverished" tradition against modernity, aligned with wealth and "progress":

[Our great grandparents] tried to get this place, this village ahead of the times instead of leaving us back in the 1800s like they are now. Because I feel like we're still living back in the caveman days. It's just, everything, all our laws and stuff out here have to do with years and years ago...I think we're the

only village that's laying at the bottom of the chain. Everyone else is forward like they're supposed to be, Port Simpson is making money off of their own village, and like the Nisga'a are their own government now, and us, we're still stuck.

Ultimately, negotiating through internal social conflict was recognized as one of the main hurdles resulting from the community being in consultation over economic development. The way through this negotiation, according to one community member, was to be unified in purpose by looking to the *aywaax* (oral history and traditional teachings):

It's got to be revived totally and implemented totally so it'll dictate effectively exactly what we have to do, not just for personal gains, it's got to be the well-being of generations to come because that's why it was set up in the first place. You know, it's brought us to this point, and [our ancestors] entrusted a huge territory to us, and we are obligated now to do the same for the future generations. We've gotta look thousands of years down the road, not just at the tip of our noses, you know, not just two generations, thousands of generations.

The Context of Consultation: Capitalism and Colonialism

Whatever else consultation may be, it is certainly a relationship – but what exactly is its dynamic? Katabatic wanted something from Gitxaala that might have made the company a lot of money, but Gitxaala could have also benefitted from this project, as was pointed out repeatedly by the consultants. Yet consultation for the wind farm project is not just about “consultation for the wind farm project.” It is part of a long legacy of outsiders coming in, making promises and asking for something, and then, more often than not, leaving with whatever they wanted without fulfilling their promises. This is the historical context in which the wind farm project must be situated – and it is one of colonialism, and capitalism, and the social context is one of disruption. One question, then, is this: if the TUS proposed was well beyond the scope of any *required* consultation, why was Katabatic paying for it?

For Gitxaala, the TUS became a way to document cultural knowledge of places and practices – to

record tradition and thus in a sense save, preserve and protect Gitxaala culture, what it is to be Gitxaala – while still pursuing economic development, ensuring a future for the community. By extension, the TUS, Environmental Assessment and wind farm, viewed as one project, was seen as a way to mend existing divisions in the community, bringing people together with a common purpose. Yet competition to access project benefits also exacerbated conflict in the community by playing on old rifts, especially between those living off-reserve and those in the village. This produced a tension that prevented Gitxaala from engaging in consultation as a united front. On the one hand, this may ease the way for “outsiders” to drive a hard bargain, while on the other, internal community conflict may actually prevent the proponent from achieving the consensus it needs to proceed. In this complicated political and social arena, the need for protection for Gitxaala was quite real.

Although the TUS was arguably designed to bring Indigenous perspectives to the fore, within the framework of consultation for development, Indigenous priorities, concerns and cosmology are devalued and de-privileged (Markey 2001). As one Gitxaala member put it, “both the federal and provincial government, they don't know how to use [Traditional Ecological Knowledge] in the system because [we're] not experts according to their standards.” In this context therefore, the TUS is little more than a modern-day trade-bead—a goodwill gesture to make the community trust the consultants and developers, by showing them that they respect Gitxaala culture, values and traditions, and that *these values, not profit, are driving development* (Bakan 2004:32). Katabatic and, by extension, Golder were therefore directly appealing to Gitxaala's fear of losing their cultural knowledge when their Elders pass on. Likewise, the offer of employment was one that a community with one of the highest unemployment rates in the province, simply could not refuse. Thus it was a compromise, for what was really being asked was, what are you prepared to give up?

Therein lies the crux. In a community with high unemployment, that is still coping with the effects of colonialism, feeling divided and alienated both within and without, and trying desperately to hold onto their

culture and teach their children the language and the traditional foods while their kids want McDonald's and iPods – in this context, the TUS ceases to be a tool of empowerment, and becomes instead grease for the wheels of development. It capitalizes on the vulnerability of the community, playing on their hopes for their children's future and their fears of missing that one golden opportunity that will both save the past and secure a future.

In this context, and regardless of their personal beliefs or intentions, consultants are put in the position of representing the proponent *and their interests*, and those interests are wholly financial. Several times, the consultants stressed that, if the people of Gitxaala completed the TUS and still did not want the wind farm to proceed, then that would be it – it would not proceed. At the time, I felt this was being said as reassurance, to emphasize that Gitxaala was in control, and I do think this was the intent. But after speaking with community members, and thinking about the unemployment rate, social problems, poverty – I realized that, when it was said that “if Gitxaala doesn't want this, it won't happen,” it was not perceived by Gitxaala people as reassurance: rather, it was seen as a threat:

They were saying ‘if, if, if,’ that kind of turned me off, because I want, you know, all this training, is it going to be for nothing ... I want it here, for our future. *We need it*. So now we just have to persuade the public. Get them to buy in and ... like it too, and I'm sure they will because it's positive to me, something that we need out here.

From Consultation to Collaboration

Throughout this research, I often reflected on the concept of accountability in anthropological research, and it was in studying the consultants at work, as practising anthropologists, that I became concerned about my own “collaborative” research and the relationships I was forming in the Gitxaala community. From the beginning of the TUS training session, the consultants frequently repeated how important it was for TUS interviewers to “make people feel comfortable” in their discussions. Increasingly, I came to see this tactic as a form of social manipulation (La Salle 2010), and it was the following comment uttered by

one consultant that finally confirmed my suspicions and deepened my discomfort, both with Golder's role in the process of consultation, and more broadly with anthropology in general. He said:

for something like traditional use studies ... it's a fundamental requirement that you have community members working with you. You know, *the elders just won't talk otherwise*.

Colonialism can be defined as the exploitation by a stronger country of a weaker one, and the use of the weaker country's resources to strengthen and enrich the stronger country. My position is that the relationship of consultation is predicated on precisely such exploitation, wherein the TUS becomes a tool of manipulation, used to placate the disenfranchised Indigenous community to ensure development can proceed. Within this larger ideological structure of imperialism, it does not matter how well-intentioned the consultants are, where their sympathies lie or what personal values and beliefs they hold. They, like all of us, are operating in a structure that is premised on growth and stops for no person.

Lest I throw stones at glass houses, I came to recognize that academia as a knowledge economy is subject to the same critique as any other venture under capitalism. Academic research can be analysed in much the same way – making people feel comfortable so “we” can continue “our” research. The buzzword today is “collaboration” (Lassiter 2005; Nicholas et al. 2011), commonly viewed as more “ethically conscious” research (Fluehr-Lobban 2008:175), and while “collaboration” may include more community input than “consultation,” both remain on the spectrum of *sharing* power, not relinquishing it (La Salle 2010; La Salle 2013).

Thus, it may not matter how honestly researchers are committed to collaborative research so long as they are operating within and rewarded by a structure that is premised on social inequality (Dabulkis-Hunter 2002). Can this exploitative power dynamic really be disrupted simply by inviting the people, the “objects” of study, to become partners in it? Or is this a form of cooptation (Alfred 2009), one that just makes everyone *feel better* about perpetuating the exploitation that may be *inherent* in anthropology?

Conclusions: Community Control

“Capital-C” consultation is a complicated process that impacts everyone involved. For the developers, consultation is not just business: it is one step in the long historical march that is imperialism and exploitation, a path they may not even be aware they are treading. For the consultants, consultation is not just business; it is a platform for an internal struggle between the ethics, values and intentions of the individual, and the structuring framework that restricts the ability of these same individuals to always do what they feel is right.

And for the community, consultation is not just business: people’s whole lives are affected when outsiders come in wanting something, when their community leaders engage with outsiders in negotiation, when the promise of employment is on the table, and the threat of lost opportunity looms large in the background. These are complex issues involving concepts of “tradition,” “progress” and social well-being, and these impacts will not be lessened when outsiders insist that it is not political or it is just business. It never is *just* business.

When I left that summer, Gitxaala had just mobilized their own community-based company, Gitxaala Environmental Monitoring (GEM), which they hoped would take over Golder’s role on this project and those to come³:

I think the Gitxaala should be in control of their own studies and what’s going to happen in Gitxaala. The Gitxaala people will do their own survey for their own survival for Gitxaala’s sake.

It cannot be stressed enough how critical it is for Indigenous Nations to have control over any research being conducted on, for or about themselves, particularly when it comes to documenting cultural knowledge and heritage, which are the building blocks of all social identity – the past, present and future of a people. In this engagement, the people of Gitxaala are right to feel that they need to protect themselves, and the best protection comes through

projects like GEM, designed to ensure that the Nation has control – over who is involved, what research is completed and how the information is used.

Like Gitxaala, other First Nations have established departments in their Band offices or even their own corporations to handle any environmental or archaeological impact assessments required in their territory (e.g., Katzie Development Corporation, Nl’akapxm Nation Development Corporation). Such companies effectively replace consultants-hired-by-proponents with internal staff, First Nation and non-Indigenous alike, to design culturally-appropriate research strategies and prepare reports and make suggestions based on the Nation’s own interests (Bunten 2011:68).

Do these First Nation-based consulting firms and development corporations actually give the Nation control over decision-making in the development process? Or is the main benefit that of local employment, essentially a form of pre-emptive accommodation? The answers are uncertain as these examples are still the exceptions that prove the rule: First Nations still largely have the role of *responding* to letters of consultation rather than leading negotiations, TEK remains mostly unincorporated into assessments and management plans despite the many traditional use studies completed (CIER 2009), and First Nations are significantly hindered by a lack of staff and funding to engage in what is often a complex, lengthy and legal process (Levesque 2010:8). Significantly, these barriers to participation are not shared by either government or private industry.

For anthropologists involved in this process, facilitating approaches that challenge the consultative model and replace it with a relationship where the Nation is in control, is one way to contribute. A critical step is to situate ourselves in history. When anthropologists go into Indigenous communities, they are not simply individuals, nor do they only represent one company, corporation or university. They represent *every* outsider who has ever come into the community – manipulated them, lied to them, stolen from them, and betrayed them – for their own benefit (Thomas 1994; Smith 1999). Anthropologists must therefore be critical of their involvement in and

³ The Katabatic wind farm project has not yet proceeded and remains in the pre-application stage, the first stage of the Environmental Assessment process. It is also unclear whether Golder ever completed the Traditional Use Study discussed in this research. I have been unable to confirm details surrounding these events beyond hearsay and speculation.

approaches to working *with* communities *for* developers. Likewise, they must be sure that the work done in the name of “collaboration” reflects a *real* shift in the power dynamic rather than empty rhetoric. Social change simply is not that easy, and my research on consultation in Gitxaala demonstrated just how difficult it is for individuals, no matter how well-meaning, to overcome the exploitative structures in which we *all* operate.

In large part because of its legacy of collecting information to ease the takeover of lands and people by colonial governments, anthropology has been called the handmaiden of imperialism (Asad 1973). My greatest fear is that we still are, especially when the bottom line is the bottom dollar of big business. Central to this role has been the perhaps unwitting manipulation by anthropologists, academic and applied, of communities, in practising a discipline that “mimics friendship, but isn’t friendship.” So perhaps “greasing the wheels” by making people comfortable is not the best approach for anthropologists to assume, for this manipulates, and becomes a vehicle for capitalism, for colonialism. Perhaps insisting that training or research is not “capital-C” consultation, and that issues of politics are “outside” of the room, is not only naïve, but is actually lying. If being frank and honest with people results in their discomfort, in their being armed with caution, and ultimately in the creation of Indigenous-controlled research projects...well, perhaps this is a good thing. It is at least a good place to start.

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