

First Nations, Rednecks, and Radicals: Re-thinking the 'Sides' of Resource Conflict in  
Rural British Columbia

by

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BA, University of British Columbia, 2009

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Anthropology

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University of Victoria

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In 2010 the lands of the Cariboo-Chilcotin became a site of contestation and collaboration. Through media coverage of a Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Review Panel process sources were quick to frame the issue (a potential gold-copper mine and the destruction of a lake in Tsilhqot'in territories) as one between First Nations and development, with 'development' taken as an unquestioned tenet of non-Aboriginal interest. The polarization visible in the media obscured on-the-ground efforts of First Nations and non-Aboriginal people alike to support each other in opposition to this project; a collaboration that saw the application ultimately rejected by the federal government. My research reflects on the review process that acted as a forum for a diverse range of First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples to vocalize concerns outside of the stereotypes or expectations attached to ethnicity. Statements from the opposition covered a breadth of concern, encompassing a social, physical and cultural environment, and addressing larger issues of Aboriginal rights, title, and self-determination. These concerns offered the Panel a remarkably broad base of potential adverse effects to transparently justify their decision that the multi-billion dollar mine not proceed. Establishing visibility for these acts of solidarity and common ground may be a means of re-thinking the perception of division between ethnic communities in rural British Columbia; a perception that often perpetuates tense relationships in the face of large-scale resource development.

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## Acknowledgments

This research would have not been possible without the approval and guidance of the Tsilhqot'in National Government. Thanks are especially due Tribal Chair Chief Joe Alphonse, Executive Director Crystal Verhaeghe, Mining, Oil, and Gas Manager J.P. Laplante.

The contributions of research participants have been invaluable to this work. Thanks to Diana French, John Dressler, Fred McMechan, Russell Samuel Myers Ross, Chief Joe Alphonse, Sage Birchwater, Ramsey Hart, David Williams, Pat Swift, Friends of Nemaiah Valley, and the Williams Lake Chapter of the Council of Canadians for providing engaging commentary and shaping the direction of this thesis.

Thanks also to my supervisory committee at the University of Victoria. Dr. Ann Stahl for her wealth of knowledge and incredible ability to streamline my writing. Dr. Brian Thom for his enthusiasm, his constant belief both in my research and in my ability to pull it off, and for setting the bar as a phenomenal supervisor.

My family and friends have unconditionally supported every decision I have ever made, the one to pursue a master's degree included. Special thanks are due my mom, dad, and brother for their constant inspiration (mocking included).

Thanks also to Kurt, my partner, for supporting and encouraging my studies, for providing me with distraction, and for filling up my life with endless brainstorming and incredible heart. And to Sam, the goldendoodle, a source of constant motivation to go on head-clearing walks and a faithful comfort curled up at my feet as I write.

The lands and people of the Cariboo-Chilcotin stirred the researcher within me, and I am indebted to them.

## **Chapter 1 –Lake of Gold, Lake or Gold: An Introduction**

A lake in the middle of British Columbia, Canada, has become the face of a complicated issue. To many the lake is the doorway to one of the largest gold and copper deposits in North America, pronounced as a savior to a local economy depressed by global recession and a mountain pine beetle that has weakened the support system of the region's forest industry. At the short end of a mining company's cost-benefit analysis, the lake, if not drained entirely, will sit within an open pit mine site for decades (Tukel 2007). To many others, the lake is an integral component of a social, cultural, and physical environment, a site imbued with historical and contemporary significance, and a reservoir of wealth to be passed down through generations. It is water and food, spirit and sanctuary (Baptiste 2010). The lake is Fish Lake, Teztan Biny in the Tsilhqot'in language, site of Taseko Mines Limited's (TML) proposed Prosperity (now 'New Prosperity') Mine, a project that has amended its proposal from draining the lake to make way for an open pit gold-copper mine to 'saving' the lake while placing mine tailings upstream and surrounding the lake with a 20-33 year construction project (see Appendix A for a map of the area).

While Fish Lake serves as an accessible image to draw attention to yet another resource extraction controversy in British Columbia, the lake alone does not encompass the complexity of this issue; it provides rather a looking glass into issues surrounding resource development, Aboriginal rights and title, and the environment. The project brings attention to the relationships between First Nations and non-

Aboriginal peoples in territories where extracting resources draws not only minerals but latent histories, hostilities, and humanities out of the same earth.

Although the parties concerned with this project are diverse, including small business owners, ranchers, environmental activists, residents from nearby Williams Lake and beyond, the debate surrounding the mine has been framed, in minds and through media, as polarized between the Tsilhqot'in National Government and Taseko Mines Limited; between development and environment, ecology and economics; and, unfortunately, between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples. Entrenched dichotomies of knowledge and of practice, as discussed in further detail throughout this research, often limit the compatibility of understandings and interests and, it has seemed, the potential for new relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples. These dichotomies are often reinforced as generalities, and it is often the perception of division that overwhelms reality, makes for a catchy headline, and permeates the lived experience (Henry and Tator 2002).

On November 2, 2010, the federal government announced that, after 17 years of exploration and application process, the Prosperity mine would not be allowed to proceed 'as proposed' (CEAA 2010a). This decision was celebrated throughout the ranks of the project's opposition, who were nonetheless wary of the fine print. A year later, in November 2011, the federal government announced that the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency would review TML's 'New Prosperity', a back-to-the-drawing board rendition of one of the mining company's previously dismissed alternatives. Steeped in a discourse of development, and adrift in neoliberal economic motivators, supporters of the mine, including the provincial government,



the City of Williams Lake, the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, the *Williams Lake Tribune* and a considerable portion of the region's population, have adopted an argument that this mine is the only way to 'save' the city of Williams Lake and the livelihoods of those in the surrounding areas (Cook 2010).

The media provides a means through which opinions, whether held by many or few, seem to set the terms of conversation and also disseminates images as dominant, although they may not necessarily be so (Champagne 1999).

Preconceived and publicly broadcast notions of what it is to be First Nations in Canada, or non-Aboriginal, or an environmentalist, provide the foundations for the multiple understandings that present themselves on all sides of this issue. As Henry and Tator write,

The media do not objectively record and describe reality, nor do they neutrally report facts and stories. Rather, some media practitioners socially reconstruct reality based on their professional and personal ideologies, corporate interests, and cultural and organizational norms and values. (2002:5)

The friction that has arisen between parties in the Cariboo-Chilcotin over this proposed project needs to be considered within a broader scope of social and historical precedents that have precipitated certain types of knowledge and certain abilities, or inabilities, to recognize diverse ways of knowing.

There is a depth to this issue that reaches beyond the destruction of a lake and its surroundings to the very potential for this project upon the land it is planned for, a development imposed by industry and government rather than sought by those who will be most effected. As diverse histories frame and are mobilized within conflicts over land and resources, Canada's colonial history sets the stage for debate; it is as

much an actor in this particular dispute as the people involved. And thus the presence of TML's proposal for Tsilhqot'in territories – uninvited by the First Nation and based on mineral rights, exploration and development permits granted by provincial and federal governments – draws out the questions surrounding Crown sovereignty as well as Aboriginal rights and title to lands. It also highlights a conviction held by many that the issue in need of resolution is land title, rather than how a mining company can mitigate its project enough to placate the locals, or even how diverse peoples can share their interests on the land. As Caitlyn Vernon writes regarding the dispossession of Aboriginal territories and corporatization of land development,

Corporate control and centralized decision-making of resource management has valued short-term profits above ecological integrity and has marginalized both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rural communities... denial of Aboriginal rights and title, socio-economic inequalities, and ecological degradation are the legacy of colonial conceptions of progress that continue to shape the present. (2010:281-282)

A central premise of this study is that there is common ground for establishing new relationships between people, and between people and the resources they live on or within, but not without recognition of the histories that set the stage for disagreement, debate, collaboration, and communication.

The site of Fish Lake and the proposed gold and copper mine provides a case study for looking at the complex relationships, social, interpersonal, economic, between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, industry, and the government that are drawn out through debates over resource development. My research focuses on the 2010 Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) environmental review panel hearings, the testimonies from local residents that surfaced at the

hearings and the juxtaposition of this outpouring of diverse voices to the one-dimensional coverage given to the issue by local media, predominantly the *Williams Lake Tribune*, but also characteristic of provincial and federal media. I examine the public record to see how local media can create and perpetuate ‘realities’ that do not reflect or represent the lived realities of the local readership at the same time as they come to act as a proxy for those lived realities (Henry and Tator 2002).

The Panel hearing process brought a rare opportunity for a rural community to express views publicly without the filter of media bias. While the newspaper exacerbated the perception of community and ‘racial’ divide triggered by the Prosperity mine debates – ‘settlers’-for, ‘First Nation’-against – by obscuring the diversity of opposition (i.e. environmentalists are either meddling retired schoolteachers or ‘urban’ outsiders) the hearings blurred this division and made visible to participants, both for and against, that the lines of contest were and are not so clearly drawn.

## **Research Framework**

Through this research I explore how improved social relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples can emerge through the process of establishing a solid and diverse opposition to imposed development. To do this I begin in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively with an introduction to this research in terms of methodologies and a discussion of the histories of lands and peoples involved in these debates. Following this I conduct an analysis of the stereotypes and preconceptions attached to ethnic identity in rural, resource based economies. These are strikingly visible in the media that covers conflicts over land and resource

development, and that mirrors the apparent ‘commonsense’ that frames expectations, both of First Nations and non-Aboriginal responses to projects like TML’s proposed gold-copper mine.

In chapter 4, I examine the news media to illustrate the prominence and perpetuation of stereotypes, as they effect First Nations peoples opposing uninvited development on their traditional territories, and also non-Aboriginal peoples not conforming to either mould of generic environmentalist or prejudiced ‘redneck’. These stereotypes are invoked and perpetuated through a process of ‘framing’ that shapes the way First Nations peoples are predominantly represented by the press (Wilkes 2010). Founded in a popular ‘commonsense’ that predicts behaviour or represents it based on preconceived notions of identity, the frames I examine here include, for example, First Nations peoples as militant, as anti-development, and as irrationally traditional. The goal of examining these frames is not, however, just a means to expose dominant stereotypes, but rather to illustrate how they act on the lived experience of people and how, as Wilkes writes, “... the media is not merely framing indigenous peoples but creating an “us” versus “them” dichotomy” (2010:43).

Following this illustration of bias and stereotyped ‘norms’, in chapter 5 I document how people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin navigated perceptions of identity and were able to find a forum in the CEAA Panel hearings to negate the polarity consistently portrayed through the media. This section engages with the testimonies of a diverse population as they came before the Panel, and as they vocalized their concerns without any sort of filter to predetermine or overshadow their own voices.

While the frames used by local media were visible in many testimonies from project proponents and supporters, there was enough dissent from these perspectives to illustrate the inability of these frames to represent a diverse public. It is this process that led to TML's opponents becoming visible both to the Panel and to one another, creating solidarity in what had previously been dominated by portrayals of division.

In Chapter 6, I engage a discussion of the CEAA hearings, the media coverage, and the ongoing debates over TML's proposed mine to recognize the instances of common ground that a diverse opposition found within this process. To broaden this discussion I include comments made from those involved within this opposition. Interviews were conducted with key informants who spoke against the mine during Panel hearings and continue to be involved in the project's potential future. Chosen both for their involvement in Panel hearings and their knowledges of the local area, of mining, media, and the people from all 'sides' of these debates, the conversations with participants emphasized the depth and complexity of this project.

This depth confronts issues of rights and title to land, the continuity of colonialism in both policy and the commonsense that guides interactions between diverse people in rural areas, and the need for recognition of both diversity and common ground. Uncovering the potential of common ground gives way to re-thinking a shared future, a critical prospect for area residents. This discussion leads to a brief epilogue outlining events that have occurred in the Cariboo-Chilcotin since the announcement of TML's 'New Prosperity', events that, I believe model the positive relationships that can be formed from a re-thinking of the latent categories, those that frame and shape identity and understanding and come to the fore in times

of conflict. In Chapter 7, I describe these events and follow them with a conclusion summing up the potentials for change and for improved relationships found within the struggle against a mining company and against the given that ‘progress’ is a universal good.

This research begins with a discussion of the lens I intend to bring to this subject, anthropology, and the methodologies I engage to facilitate this process. In the following two chapters I describe how I came to this research and how the research project was carried out, and I give a background to this subject, engaging the process of history within a contemporary debate.

## Chapter 2 – Bringing in Anthropology

### The Research

The collaboration between First Nations and non-Aboriginal voices opposed to the Fish Lake project offered the 2010 CEAA Panel a remarkably broad base of potential adverse effects from which they were able to transparently justify their decision that the multi-billion dollar mine should not proceed. Establishing visibility for these acts of synthesis may be a means of re-thinking the perception of division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in small town British Columbia, as emphasized in then Minister of State for Mining Randy Hawes words,

As the mayor of Williams Lake said, if this mine doesn't go, there are going to be some very severe racial problems because a lot of the people, who are counting on this mine and are looking at it for hope, are going to blame the aboriginal community (Hawes in Alexander 2010).

It is this perception that perpetuates tense relationships in the face of large-scale resource development in rural, resource-dependant areas. The above comment illustrates a taken for granted division between First Nations and non-Aboriginal populations, and at the same time it reinforces a separation, both by prophesizing violence between ethnic communities and by aligning the project's success with the will of non-Aboriginal peoples and their apparent 'hope' for the future in a way that effectively excludes First Nations peoples.

Throughout the Fish Lake environmental review process, discourses converged over a general concern for the environment but were nuanced with considerations for the rights of First Nations peoples, respect for the continuation of cultural practice, and a genuine skepticism for how a corporate interest could

meaningfully benefit local communities with a short-term, high-risk, high-profit mine. Anthropology, the lens I bring to this subject, provides a means of decoding dominant discourses and for speaking across, or through, presumed incommensurability. In the case of the 'Prosperity' project and the tensions that have surfaced throughout the process of TML's application to develop lands claimed by Tsilhqot'in people, the disentanglement of popular opinion from ideas of 'commonsense' to a recognition of the power relations inherent within discourses, be those of environment or development, may create an avenue for diverse ways of knowing to come to the forefront of these discussions, not as trivialities but as legitimate, intricate, and valuable knowledges.

Anthropological criticism of the government's attempts at reconciliation for First Nation concerns, a concept that is repeatedly raised in discussions over lands and resources, highlights the attempt to bring closure to events that are on-going, to restrict to the past the foundations of current inequalities and pretend that they no longer exist (Miller 2006, Corntassel 2009). The term 'reconciliation' is also problematic in the way it can be mobilized within conversations, or policy objectives, without being defined, and with the distinct possibility that different parties may be using the term to mean different things (Corntassel 2009). Anthropology may bring light to the diverse understandings and voices that bring meaning and definition to otherwise ambiguous words, to recognize the agency within dominant structures, the lived experience that is built of nuance and articulation within, and despite, the generalized confines of dominance and marginalization (Clifford 2001:477).



Anthropology also holds potential to speak with resonance outside academia, to abandon the alienating language that inhibits people from change and to confront hegemony without unintentionally reproducing it (Watkins 2006). In the Cariboo-Chilcotin, as in other rural towns, there is little receptivity for an outside academic voice that only condemns local behaviour. Yet for change to happen here communication needs to be broadened and alternatives need to become visible.

Throughout the Panel hearing process and in the debates that continue to flare over this project, there appears to be a misrepresentation of concern, a pervasiveness of stereotype over reality that can inhibit the rural ‘rednecks’ as much as it does First Nations peoples (Struthers 2010). There need to be avenues opened for change, but doing this involves an effective articulation of concern that escapes the confines of the rhetoric or blame that backs people into corners of defense and deafness for the concerns of others. Opposition to this mine was a community effort. Without visibility however, and because of how the media was harnessed by those in support of this project, forces of collective concern became sidelined. Without visibility, common ground is obscured and the perception of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal division is further perpetuated through both the experience of local residents and the expectations of outsiders.

Bringing an anthropological focus to this research intends to re-think the common boundaries that shape conversations over resource development in rural areas. Categories such as ‘redneck’, ‘settler’, ‘environmentalist’, or ‘First Nations’ are often blurred within the lived experiences of people, but are polarized and exacerbated in the headlines, policies, and stereotypes that constantly effect

relationships and communication between diverse groups of people living within the same space. These spaces are imbued with histories and understandings that create for people an attachment to ‘place’ (Basso 1996) and set the stage for engagement when those places become subject to the destruction and change that accompanies resource industries.

Disentangling perceptions of ‘commonsense’ from their own foundations in the process of culture, history, and politics is a step towards seeing difference as a positive measure of diversity rather than a determinant of conflict (Escobar 2006). Making visible the common concerns of people whose relationships may be obstructed by misperceptions, or the media’s portrayal of a divided society, has the potential to effect local settings that may find economic resilience within collaborations, social harmonies, and within the recognition of a common ground and a common future.

### **Graduate Studies in the Cariboo-Chilcotin**

I came to this research in late 2009, having returned to my hometown of Williams Lake after graduating from the University of British Columbia with a Bachelor’s degree in Anthropology and contemplating graduate school applications. The CEAA process regarding this project began in the fall of 2008; in January of 2009 it was referred to a review Panel. This began almost a year of information sessions and public commentary regarding the project leading up to a sufficiency of information declaration and the announcement of the public hearings in February of 2010, with hearings to begin March 22, 2010. As will be discussed further in a section regarding researcher reflexivity, I did not come to this subject as an academic.

On March 10, 2010 the CEAA received my request to present at the public hearings and on March 23, 2010 I spoke before the Panel in opposition to Taseko Mines Limited's proposed project (Wellburn 2010:610-616; Appendix B).

The hearings consisted of four days of general public hearings held in the city of Williams Lake, one day in 100 Mile House, approximately three weeks of community sessions held throughout the Chilcotin, five days of topic-specific sessions held in Williams Lake and one day of closing remarks, also held in Williams Lake. I attended all of the sessions held in the City of Williams Lake, excepting the final day of closing remarks. All hearings sessions, minus a few submissions held in confidence, are available both as transcripts and audio on the CEAA website.

Concurrent to the Panel process and public testimony regarding the potential environmental effects of this project was significant coverage of this issue by media sources: local, provincial and federal. In the region surrounding Williams Lake the main source of local news comes from the *Williams Lake Tribune*, a print and online newspaper and a subsidiary of Black Press. During the time of the review hearings the publisher of the paper sat both on the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce Board and on a group entitled 'Say Yes to Prosperity'. While I do not think that these positions themselves dictated the bias of the newspaper, there is little denying that the paper's coverage was geared toward the project's approval.

This coverage echoed that of the Cariboo-Chilcotin justice inquiry held in the early 1990s. The inquiry was a review of the relationship between First Nations peoples and the Canadian justice system following significant allegations of discriminatory treatment of First Nations peoples by the RCMP. Elizabeth Furniss

followed the coverage of this issue by the *Williams Lake Tribune*; she writes, in a way that is relevant here,

Through newspaper reporting, certain events were framed, and represented in a manner consistent with the dominant conceptual framework through which many Euro-Canadians understood themselves, Aboriginal people, and their relationship with Aboriginal people. By failing to cover certain issues and thus rendering them invisible, by interpreting other events according to prevalent, negative themes by which Euro-Canadians perceive Aboriginal people, and by manipulating the boundaries by which the local community conventionally defines itself, newspaper coverage of the justice inquiry presented a morally defensible self image of the community to its readers despite the cloud of racism the inquiry raised. (2001:3)

Dominant themes that reinforce the sort of stereotypes that First Nations people continually face in Canadian society were prevalent throughout the reporting that followed the ‘Prosperity’ project, as was the theme of division between local peoples, purportedly along the lines of ‘race’ rather than interests. The newspaper did not create the tension that can exist between First Nation and non-Aboriginal populations but, in this instance, it did little to mitigate the perception of that divide between peoples; rather, the coverage exacerbated it.

Local media was quick to frame the issue as one in which First Nations peoples were implicated as impediments to development and the economic success of the region (Cobb 2010, Hawes in Alexander 2010), a sentiment that played well to the stereotype of ‘redneck’ rural communities. This polarization in the media obscured the significant on-the-ground efforts of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike to support each other in opposition to the project, collaboration that ultimately saw the application rejected by the federal government.

The range of opposition brought forward by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants facilitated the federal government's rejection of the project by creating a broad spectrum of transparent adverse effects. Media coverage of the Panel proceedings obscured these on-the-ground acts of quiet collaboration, framing the issue as one of First Nations against development and perpetuating the perception of division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. This portrayal has been pervasive in debates over resource development in rural communities (Larsen 2004). It is a frame that has shaped coverage of disputes over fishing rights in Ontario (Wallace 2010), Canada's longest standing blockade for safe water in Grassy Narrows, ON (Da Silva 2010) an oil pipeline in Northern British Columbia and Alberta (Oliver 2012), and logging in the Clayoquot Sound (Mabee and Hoberg 2006). It has bearing on Indigenous rights issues the world over, for example, a uranium mine in Australia's Northern Territory developed without the consent of local Aboriginal peoples but promoted under the banner of 'national interest' (Banerjee 2000:4).

Without visibility the cohesion of First Nations and non-Aboriginal concern may go unrecognized by the broader public. It is critical to illuminate these cohesive discourses as they present an alternative to the status-quo portrayal of negative relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples. By developing my research around the Panel review process, reviewing the news media, attending public events related to this project, and interviewing participants, I hope to illustrate how common ground became established through the review process, and how the stereotypes that pervaded the news media were negated during the CEAA hearing

sessions. Further, I indicate that mainstreaming these viewpoints may provide a means of extinguishing the prejudice and perpetuation of misconceptions between culture groups that can proliferate in rural areas. I query whether the common ground found in this conflict may be an avenue towards addressing the larger issues at stake here: of rights and title to land. Finally, I also ask whether it can provide a platform for re-thinking both the social and economic structure of the region, from large-scale resource extraction to locally based efforts of community and sustainability.

My research takes place in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, engages with those who were involved in the Federal Environmental Review Panel hearings, and analyzes the significant archive of media, hearing documents, and academic literature that has commented upon TML's proposal. This project intends to give visibility to the interethnic collaborations that are often obscured by the stereotypes and misconceptions attached to culture, identity, and ethnicity, and to make visible the positive relationships that live amidst the disharmonies that persistently dominate the headlines.

## **Methodology**

This research is comprised of three main components: a media analysis, CEAA Panel document analysis, and a discussion synthesizing participant interviews and participant observation conducting after the Panel hearings, during events surrounding the renewed mine application to engage the potential for common ground and the implication of a unified interethnic opposition. These areas of analysis highlight the issues to which I intend to bring attention. The media analysis draws out the common sense notions that predict and potentially predetermine behaviour in

relation to resource conflicts. The Panel documents provide an archive of nuance to problematize the boundaries subscribed to predominantly by media and draw out the diversity of opposition prepared to confront this mine. The discussion of common ground involving participant interviews and public engagement provides commentary on what a visible and diverse opposition means in a rural community, especially in consideration of TML's 'New Prosperity' project and a new CEAA review on the horizon.

### Media Analysis

The *Williams Lake Tribune* is my primary focus for the media analysis as articles, letter, and opinion pieces regarding the proposed project were abundant in the newspaper leading up to, during, and following the CEAA review Panel process. It is the source of news that dominates the rural area around the proposed mine and also demonstrated the explicit bias that led to my research intentions. Despite the obvious, and publicly criticized slant of the paper's journalistic integrity (Dressler, in interview August 16, 2011), the newspaper was also a conduit for the public to voice alternative opinions through letters to the editor. These are significant as they too, as with the Panel documents, negate the stark polarity of apparent 'sides' illustrated through dominant coverage of the issue. It is critical, however, to reflect upon the dominant theme of representation that was visible in the media coverage. As Henry and Tator write,

The occasional positive story about a minority community... does little to offset the everyday negative images and opinions that find their way into news stories, editorials and columns as part of the media's discursive practices. The media's everyday, commonsense discourses

are crucial in the complex process of attitudinal formation and, more specifically, in the formation and confirmation of racialized belief systems. (2002:236)

To that end, I have focused my attention on the news media that furthered the stereotyped scripts that predetermine roles in resource conflicts.

The *Williams Lake Tribune* was not alone in its conformity to the common framing mechanisms that follow environment-resource-development-Aboriginal rights issues in Canada and the ‘delegitimizing’ of actors that can accompany news production (Wilkes 2010:41). Interviewees expressed dismay at how even the CBC latched onto the convenient, or stereotyped at least, portrayal of a complex debate as Williams Lake (or residents thereof as pro development = ‘settler’ =white) versus First Nations people (designated to the conventional scripts that inform dominant media and obscure on-the-ground realities, following a spectrum of ‘popular’ thought from corruption to environmental sanctity (Niezen 2003, Nadasdy 2005).

My mother, who has lived in Williams Lake since the late 1960s, recalls phoning the CBC in response to their coverage of the Panel hearings to comment on their misrepresentation of the issue; her emphasis was on the fact that not all people in Williams Lake support the project, and that the issue was not one of First Nations versus everybody else. In an effort to encompass this broader reaching media coverage I have extensively searched Canadian news databases to locate articles on the subject from both regional and national newspapers. My approach, a comprehensive reading of local, regional, and national papers provides a view of the discourses that emerged over this issue, and tracks where they infiltrate the local social dynamics of a diverse population.



The focus of my analysis of these news sources centers on the way in which they fall into generic renditions of identities associated with those involved in the controversy surrounding the proposed mine: these fall into three overlapping categories 1) First Nations 2) environmentalists 3) settlers. I have looked to see where reporting adheres to perceived categories, where it perpetuates them, and also where it diverges from them. The themes present in media coverage act as a means of ‘framing’ a news item, the proposed mine at Fish Lake for example, within the apparent ‘commonsense’ knowledge of both the news reporters and their perceived public (Wilkes 2010). Dominant frames from the media are reflected upon in coordination with the other components of my research, in particular the vast array of testimonies that surfaced concurrently to the media coverage through the CEAA review. That this outpouring of diverse, and non-category adherent, opinion became public synchronously with the newspaper coverage of events quickly illustrates the taken-for-granted pretences assumed and exacerbated by news media.

#### Panel Document Analysis

The CEAA document record consists of all correspondence involved in the review process regarding Prosperity, from the start in 2008 until the Panel’s final report issued on July 2, 2010 and the federal government’s decision regarding the project announced on November 2, 2010. A wealth of information, this collection of documents exceeds the scope of my research project and needed to be narrowed in order to not overwhelm my research objectives. In order to trace the diversity within the opposition that deviated from media representations, I selected testimonies from participants who spoke outside of the aforementioned categories, or, if not from

outside, then blurring the perceived boundaries of those categories. The intention of this selection was to generate a more nuanced picture of the opposition than was available through the news media, as well as to explore the range of concerns brought before the Panel. I have also examined the hearing documents for the words from project proponents that conform to the trappings of reified identities, and assume a boundedness of culture, history, or affiliation that is easily marked.

The Panel documents provide the foundations for an assertion that media coverage of local debates obscured the people vocalizing concerns outside of stereotypes, and that there is common ground for diverse peoples and their interests within a rural, ‘redneck’ city. As an alternative to division and ethnic polarity the Panel documents provide a story parallel to media coverage that demands reflection on the histories invoked by this issue. Not a history that is cut off from the present, but rather, as Joan Scott indicates, an “effective history” that “...differs from traditional history in being without constants” (2001:96). It is from Panel presentations that I identified participants to interview for individual reflections upon the Panel process, media coverage, and the resultant federal decision regarding the project.

#### A Discussion of Common Ground

A focus on the spaces where opposition to TML’s proposed gold-copper project was able to locate and act in a common interest is invaluable to re-thinking the apparent polarity of this issue. Common ground appeared in: opponent perceptions of TML as a mining company; in recognition of the breadth of concern raised by this project; in an encompassing view of the environment; and a shared interest in

establishing better relationship between local peoples into the future. To deepen this retrospective discussion I engage with members of the opposition and include excerpts from interviews I conducted in the late summer/fall of 2011.

The interviews were intended to augment the public record with individual reflections upon their role in opposing TML's project. Participants were chosen due to their involvement in the hearings as well in public opposition to the project. Interviews were kept within the opposition to explore the diversity within this apparent 'side', not to silence support for the project but rather to explore what had been dominantly portrayed as a caricatured front, and to source out visible alternatives for commonplace portrayals of negative interactions between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples in the Williams Lake area. I interviewed people from local First Nations communities, non-Aboriginal residents of Williams Lake and the areas westward towards the mine site, as well as resident and non-resident environmentalists. Although relatively few in number I believe that the range and content of these interviews reflect a strong sentiment of those involved in the Panel process and among the project's opposition.

This discussion indicates that the issue here is not one of First Nations versus development or Williams Lake, but rather that larger issues and complexities are at stake. These include British Columbia's notoriously unresolved land issue and the sequestering of Canada's colonial history into a closed off past perceived as having no relevance to contemporary debates over resource management or First Nation/non-Aboriginal relations. This hypothesis has been subsequently reinforced in a way I had not foreseen at the outset of my research. This occurred through the ongoing

debates over the ‘New Prosperity’ mine, which has been granted another environmental review process, reigniting public concern.

The most poignant commentary on how the 2010 CEAA hearings affected the positioning of those opposed to the project has been the obvious realization that this opposition is diverse, large, and powerful. While those opposed to the project in 2010 felt isolated from one another by a dominant media generalizing sides – for example, the Tsilhqot’in National Government felt pitted against the entire city of Williams Lake, (some) non-Aboriginal residents felt relegated and misrepresented as supporting the project at the same time as First Nations peoples were assumed to be opposed to the project – the Panel hearings broke down those walls. With those walls down, the opposition is now actively organizing as a whole to meet the upcoming CEAA review. Thus my research, still containing itself to the 2010 review process, must include a retrospective that engages with the ongoing nature of this mine, support and opposition to it, and local resident’s responses over time.

#### ‘New Prosperity’: Ongoing Debates and a Retrospective on Process

On November 7, 2011 the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) announced that they would review Taseko Mines Limited’s (TML) ‘New Prosperity’ project, a revision to the federally rejected ‘Prosperity’ project. This decision marks the first time the agency has ever reconsidered a project, and serves to re-ignite a controversial issue. This section engages with the ongoing events surrounding this mine to provide reflection on the 2010 Panel review, on the dynamism and diversity within the opposition to this project, and to illustrate the opportunity for relationships outside of media-depicted ‘sides’ in resource conflicts.

Reaffirming what was discovered within the forum of CEAA hearings, ongoing debates and efforts towards a unified opposition by local First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples illustrate the possibility of creating new relationships through visibility, communication, and collaboration.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the Tsilhqot'in National Government hosted a presentation by Amnesty International entitled 'Is the Prosperity Mine a Human Rights Issue?' in the City of Williams Lake. The question and comment period following the presentation quickly became a forum for area residents, many opposed to the project and many of whom had been involved in the previous year's review Panel process, to vocalize their concerns for this renewed project and to query what the next steps of opposition should be. The evening set a new tone entering this next round of review, one possible because of the same remarkable process that led to the federal Conservative government's surprising rejection of TML's multi-million dollar gold and copper project in a time of regional and global economic uncertainty.

Ongoing events surrounding the company's renewed application for environmental permitting have provided an opportunity for the 2010 process to be reflected upon both for its successes and for its failings. Without losing sight of the scope of my own research within an ever-evolving issue, I think it is critical to engage with current conversations where they overlap with past events, and where they provide a direct commentary upon them. Rather an epilogue than a primary focus of my research, the ongoing actions of those opposed to this project, and their attempts to meet the new review process as a coalition, provides a relevant retrospective on how the 2010 Panel hearings negated media-spun division to allow residents a vision

of common ground and a platform for communication, co-ordination, and collaboration. Living in Williams Lake, my hometown, I have become increasingly involved with local groups intent on opposing the ‘New Prosperity’, an important part of my own positionality in respect to this project, the local community, and the discourses mobilized around it.

### **Reflexivity, Ethics, and the Collaborative Effort**

A student of anthropology I am ever cognizant, or ever attempting to be, of how I am situated in relation to my research. This process, which Salzman describes as, “...the constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher’s own contribution/influence/shaping of intersubjective research and the consequent research findings” (2002:806), has been perhaps one of the most limiting and enlightening aspects of my research. Limiting because, coupled with ethical protocols and the increasing anthropological intentions towards collaborative research, the process of marking oneself outside of the history of anthropology, one fraught with the ‘best intentions’ of researchers that at times caused harm to Indigenous peoples, can become immobilizing. This is not to discredit the process of each of these considerations – reflexivity, ethics, and collaboration – but rather to recognize that perpetual questioning of one’s intentions can come to limit one’s own particular research interests. I believe there is a balance between anthropology as ‘objectivity’ and, as Knaft writes, “... the navel gazing of New Age ethnographers absorbed in their own abstruse writing” (1996:18). That said, I do think it critical to explain how I came to pursue my research, and why.

Reflexivity (in moderation)

I began this research as a graduate student in 2010, having lived at home in Williams Lake for the previous year. While I do not believe that writing down what I perceive to be my biases somehow relieves me of them, I recognize that my research intentions have been considerably shaped by my lifelong involvement within the communities that have become my research focus. I was born and raised in Williams Lake. As a child my family had a cabin in the Nemiah Valley, west of Williams Lake in the territory of the Xeni Gwet'in, and not far from the proposed mine site. My parents built the cabin in the early 1970s, shortly after the army had pushed through the territories the first proper road. Prior to the road being built the trip into Nemiah took days, after the road it was about a 2-3 hour trip to Williams Lake. Thus, the area was, and still is, remote.

Later in the 1970s my parents lived in the Nemiah Valley full time for a year or so and my mom taught at the small school there. By the time my brother and I were born (1979 and 1982) we lived in Williams Lake. Nemiah, as we referred to both the area generally and our cabin specifically, became a somewhat magical place for me as a child. To my brother, my cousins, and me, Nemiah was a wilderness. Our parents would tell us the story of Ts'il'os (who we usually referred to as Mt. Tatlow, the mountain's non-Indigenous name) who had a fight with his wife ('Eniyut); she left and they both turned into mountains. I had little knowledge of the First Nations peoples in the area, but the stories stayed with me. The Chilcotin is beautiful country. I suppose it is within statements like this that my bias lives.

My primary research focus, while it involves the people and the lands upon which the proposed mine would actually sit, centers on Williams Lake. Born and raised on the outskirts of the city, as a teenager I am sure I made a pact with myself to leave the town behind when I was old enough and never look back. After high school I did leave, and spent the following ten years coming and going; Williams Lake became my home base between stints of university and travel. My mother and father, as well as an aunt and uncle, still live in the homes I knew as a child. My brother now lives in Argentina for six months of the year, but for the remainder he too finds himself back home. When completing my UBC Bachelor's degree in 2009 I felt quite sure I had left the Cariboo for good, but upon returning for a few months one summer I met my partner-to-be, an ex-pat Ontarian who loves Williams Lake. So I moved home.

As an adult I grow particularly aware of the social and political aspects of the city that draw out my anthropological training. While there is much to love about the Cariboo-Chilcotin there is a social dynamic in Williams Lake that needs addressing. As I have seen, relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples become tense when issues arise that seem to fracture this relationship through a construct of 'sides'; more often than not these sides are drawn on the lines of stereotype and in relation to historical precedents or perceptions that predetermine how relationships develop according to scripts of conventional thought.

Williams Lake has the same colonial history as cities and towns throughout British Columbia. Preemption of lands, the reserve system and *Indian Act* legislation, and longstanding residential schools have had impacts on the First Nations peoples of



the area that continue to be felt (Warry 2009). There are negative stereotypes facing First Nations peoples that are commonplace in the city and surrounding area; in many instances these stereotypes are not recognized as negative, however. They are simply (although unfortunately) viewed as apt (Furniss 1999). There is overt racism that goes unrecognized. And when an issue like the Prosperity mine crops up, the lines of opposition and support appear to follow the perceived commonsense notions of ethnic ideals, to negate alternatives, and in the process, perpetuate the status quo division of peoples.

I became involved in the debates over TML's project because I take issue with this, and because the portrayal of division and separation of 'cultures' continues, I believe, to do harm in the area of Williams Lake, and to a relationship between peoples that needs not only repair in certain instances, but recognition. While the negative aspects of First Nations and non-Aboriginal interactions have been well documented, considerably less has been said about the positive relationships developed. Without pretending that racism and prejudice do not exist in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, I believe that making visible the harmonies and strengths developed from shared interests between peoples, ones that permeate the lived experience of residents, fosters an alternative to the perception of division that can dominate debates over natural resource extraction, one that adheres to stereotyped renditions of identity that predetermine and have the potential to self-fulfill the 'sides' of these debates.

As mentioned above I have been vocally opposed to TML's proposed project. I currently attend meetings with those intent on a continued involvement and

opposition to TML's 'New Prosperity'. This stance has shaped my research, and although my bias is clear, I do not think it detracts from my ability to analyze and reflect on these discourses and communications within a frame of current anthropological literature and themes. The tenets of anthropology are worth sharing with a broader public; my goal in bringing this topic into a research focus, as well as bringing the lens of academia to the social aspects of this mining proposal, is to get beyond textbook theorizing into effecting change where it is needed. As Johnston writes, describing her role as activist and anthropologist in relation to human rights/environment related abuses,

The advocacy goal here was to assert a disciplinary voice – not just the individual contributions of a concerned anthropologist, easily dismissed as an activist, thus biased voice, but the powerful statement of the disciplinary voice that emerges through professional organization -- sponsored research and peer review. (2010: S236).

As such, and in addressing the other two components of anthropological research, ethics and the collaborative effort, I have made a significant effort to not bulldoze an agenda onto the subjects, or rather actors, of my research. Further, my project is to highlight their voices and reflect upon the significance they have for breaking down the common sense categories and stereotypes that shape resource debates and presumed Indigenous/settler dichotomies.

### Ethics and the Collaborative Effort

Increasingly in anthropology there is an emphasis on the involvement of the community in which the researcher works. Ethical protocols have been institutionalized to ensure the protection, and to prevent exploitation, of research

participants (Meskell and Pels 2005). While some criticize this as a limitation on communicating the ‘factuality’ of anthropological findings because of the large dose of confidentiality that accompanies testimonies and participant interviews (Johnston 2010), I agree that research intentions should be explicit. And in being clear, those intentions need also be important to those involved.

I bring up collaboration because I know I was not the only research student spun adrift by the concept early in my studies. Hypersensitive to the fear of force-feeding our research onto people for our own gain, the idea of a collaborative project has become the saving grace for non-Indigenous anthropologists interested in working on Indigenous issues (Lassiter 2005). Knowing that I wanted to do my research regarding TML’s project, and involving the Tsilhqot’in people, I looked for the opportunity to build a collaborative project. It became clear that within the slow development of a master’s research project there is hardly enough time to build the relationships and rapport needed to carefully co-develop a program of research with a First Nation with whom I had few prior connections.

But my project produces collaborations, I believe, through the voices of a diverse range of people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, bringing to light the commonality and the resonance of these voices. I have not conducted research on an ‘other’ but rather on ‘us all’, or at least all of us in the path of Taseko Mines Limited. To understand the people involved in this research is to listen to the way in which histories have been mobilized, identities built, and debates waged in lands that stretch from east of the Fraser River, across its waters and along the Chilcotin plateau.

### **Chapter 3 – History/Background**

A clear understanding of this particular resource debate in the Cariboo-Chilcotin begins with the complex understanding that multiple histories can reside in singular locales, and that while history may be associated with the past it lives concurrently in both people's presents and futures (Basso 1996). Thus a clear understanding might begin with the relatively short history of TML's Prosperity project, woven into the Indigenous and settler histories of the area and with recognition that histories converse, collide, converge, and diverge in recollection.

#### **'Prosperity'**

One hundred and twenty-five kilometres southwest of Williams Lake, British Columbia lays a large gold and copper deposit beneath the grounds adjacent to Teztan Biny (Fish Lake); the low-grade nature of the deposit requires, if it is to be extracted, the construction of an open-pit mine to ensure the widely dispersed minerals are most effectively withdrawn from the ground (Turkel 2007). While exploration has taken place in the area since early in the 1900s, TML gained mineral rights to the deposit in the late 1960s and has since become thoroughly invested in their desire to develop the site, which they have named 'Prosperity' (and as of June 2011 'New Prosperity').

Exploration efforts have fluctuated with the rise and fall of copper prices for almost thirty years; in the 1990s TML, having secured some outside investment and with copper prices increasing, reassessed the value of the subsurface ore and increased efforts to develop the site (Turkel 2007). The findings of this study grew the size of the deposit from 1.9 billion pounds of copper to 3.4 billion, with a mine

life of 25 to 30 years, causing the then company director to note, “That makes it probably the largest undeveloped copper deposit in North America” (Franzen in Turkel 2007:23).

By 1994 copper prices had increased again and TML intended to submit its application for a mine development certificate and begin production of the mine in 1997; this proposal, however, was rejected by the BC Ministry of Environment, Land and Parks as well as the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) who stated, as they would again in 2010, that the proposed draining of Fish Lake and the subsequent threat imposed on the lake's trout population would fail to meet DFO's no net loss policy without a comprehensive habitat compensation plan (Turkel 2007). In 1995 TML's project became subject to the newly introduced British Columbia provincial *Environmental Assessment Act*. Through the process of discussing potential impacts of the proposed mine, and despite its promotion by provincial authorities, the federal government decided that the proposal also fell into the purview of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, and thus subject to the scrutiny of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Turkel 2007).

As publicity surrounding the mine increased, so too did the voices of stakeholders in the area. In 1996 members of the Tsilhqot'in National Government and member communities decided to officially oppose the project. The Tsilhqot'in raised an objection that supported that of DFO, arguing that there was no way to compensate for the loss of a lake and the fish that inhabit it (Turkel 2007). By 1998 TML had advanced the project considerably, into the feasibility stages of mining

development, but by 2000 metal prices had dropped significantly and the project was put on hold (Taseko Mines Limited 2011).

A few years later prices for gold and copper began to climb again and energy in developing the project was renewed. In 2007 the company was in conversation with federal and provincial governments and the local First Nations government over establishment of a joint review panel to satisfy both levels of environmental assessment; this effort fell apart in 2008 and the project entered into two separate review processes, provincial and federal. Frustrated at the dissolution of the joint panel, the Tsilhqot'in National Government abstained from participation in the Provincial process. This was because, as Tribal Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government Chief Joe Alphonse notes,

They [TML] figured they were going through the motions and they figured it was a done deal. They had manipulated the provincial process to such a degree that it was, in our eyes, not a credible process at all. It was a rubber stamp process. (in interview, September 16, 2011)

The Tsilhqot'in became very involved in the Federal review, viewed as a more credible, although frustrating, process (Alphonse, in interview, September 16, 2011).

The Xeni Gwet'in and Yunesit'in, Tsilhqot'in communities on whose land the project would sit, became the fore of opposition, supported by First Nations organizations across British Columbia and Canada, and by their connections with environmental organizations formed during protests to logging on traditional territories in the early 1990s (Glavin 1992). Opposition and support for the project inflamed local communities, with lines drawn as for-or-against; some of these, as will be elaborated on, were drawn along lines of perceived identities rather than interests.

In January 2010 the Provincial government approved TML's application through their environmental assessment; in November 2010 the Federal government rejected TML's application 'as proposed' based on the Federal Environmental Review Panel's report, citing, as stated in the final report,

The Panel concludes that the Project would result in significant adverse environmental effects on fish and fish habitat, on navigation, on the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by First Nations and on cultural heritage, and on certain potential or established Aboriginal rights or title. The Panel also concludes that the Project, in combination with past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects would result in a significant adverse cumulative effect on grizzly bears in the South Chilcotin region and on fish and fish habitat. (CEAA 2010b:ii)

TML resubmitted a proposal in June of 2011 entitled 'New Prosperity', appearing to address the adverse effects recognized through the federal review; in November 2011 the government announced that the 'New Prosperity' would engage another round of environmental review with a final decision on the project expected in late 2012 or early 2013.

Amidst the linear timeline of this project's history has been controversy over the potential impacts of building an open pit mine within a watershed at the headwaters of one of British Columbia's largest salmon runs, on lands within the caretaker area of local First Nations, and without the support of either First Nations governments or environmental organizations. The potential of economic stimulus that the mine presents has alleviated the concerns of many in the local area; these advocates for the project cite the need for employment in the area as justification for purportedly mitigable environmental concerns. Atop the argument of environment

versus economics are the layered arguments that draw upon other local histories when mobilized, and provide commentary on how those histories exist within contemporary interactions. Predominant among these has been the framing of this issue as one between First Nations and non-Aboriginal area residents.

The logic behind this framing, that Tsilhqot'in Chief Joe Alphonse describes as, "white against red" (in interview, September 16, 2011), attaches perceptions of identity onto practice, as though the alignment between the environment and First Nations runs parallel to a bond between economics and non-Aboriginal peoples (despite the vocal concerns of environmentalists, many of whom are non-Aboriginal), without room for flux, interpretation, or interaction. That this perception has such currency in contemporary conversations is a testament to the way in which histories become shaped, often, by generalization, and in doing so can become real as a supposed 'norm' rather than a lived reality. Uncovering the complexity in perceived identities and the process of identification within the context of dispute engages mobilized histories, of which there have been many surrounding the Prosperity project and the stories behind both the land and its peoples.

### **Cariboo-Chilcotin/Williams Lake**

Williams Lake is a small city in British Columbia founded on natural resource industries; it began as a stop on the gold rush trail and has sustained itself over time through forestry and mining (Furniss 1997). As described by Furniss,

The city has the distinct ethos of a "working town", where physical labour in the mills or in the bush, and the entrepreneurialism of associated small businesses are the most symbolically valued forms of work. The emphasis on independence, hard work, and competitiveness captures an



essential 'frontier spirit' of the city; it is a town where owning a gun and a chainsaw is part of everyday life, and where the vehicle of preference is not a BMW or Mercedes, but a functional, heavy-duty four by four pickup truck. (1997:8)

Furniss' description of the city is apt; it is a rough and tumble sort of place. The city was the crime capital for BC for several years running, although it has recently handed off that designation (Cook 2010). Mill yards and stampede grounds dominate the views approaching the city; the number of logging trucks that become floats (decorated or not) in the annual Williams Lake Stampede parade (also the busiest weekend of the year) are surely a marker of how resource industries figure in the city's identity. The decline of the forest industry in recent years, following the outbreak of the mountain pine-beetle and disadvantageous U.S. trade regulations, have created economic hardship for many local residents. As such, the prospect of new industry, TML's gold-copper project, has been emphasized by many as a means of 'saving' Williams Lake (Cook 2010).

Supporters of the mine invoke the town's frontier history to advocate for the mining industry and weigh environmental risks against potential economic benefits, with the economy tipping the scale in favour of the mine (Cook 2010). The city is the hub for residents of a vast outlying area; it is where people go to buy their groceries and attend to 'town' business (banking, doctor's appointments, etc.). As such, Williams Lake is inextricably linked with the economies of a vast area and residents see themselves, and their financial/social/environmental well being, as stakeholders in broad territories, and especially in those lands rich with minerals.

### ‘Settlers’

As mentioned above, TML created a public relations campaign that appealed to the ‘pioneer spirit’ of local non-Aboriginal peoples. Settler histories on the land are those of pioneers: frontier histories that invoke wide, empty range and the struggle to tame it (Furniss 1999). The characters who make up these histories are remarkable individuals and families that learned from the land and the people in it, First Nations and non-Aboriginal, how to live there (St. Pierre 1983). Yet the narrative of the glorified settler can effectively silence Indigenous historiographies on the land and also re-write the ‘geographies of exclusion’ that in some cases have united First Nations and non-Aboriginal populations as rurally marginalized peoples (Larsen 2003:75), to effectively alienate First Nations peoples from the ranks of ‘hard working Canadians’ (Harris 2002, Furniss 1999).

While it is easy to criticize these histories and their narrators as the benefactors of colonialism, especially when these histories frame purported ‘truths’ in contemporary mobilizations, it is an inaccurate projection to assume that rural settlers encapsulate all that is wrong with First Nations/ non-Aboriginal relationships. In the Cariboo-Chilcotin First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples have been neighbours since settlement began in the late 1800s. The policies that allowed this settlement were a part of the system that did not recognize Indigenous authority over lands, and have certainly had negative impacts on First Nations options for self-determination. Today people have been living in proximity for almost 200 years, and there have been marriages, friendships, families and business partnerships that have blurred the distinctions between ethnic communities in the area. The settlers in the Cariboo-

Chilcotin identify in relation to the areas First Nations, in either positive or negative terms, or both. Good or bad, histories are entwined now, and neither community exists in a vacuum (Harris 2002, Lutz 2008).

Often, stereotypes maintain themselves as broader generalizations riddled with exceptions, recognized individuals who do not fit the mould, even in the minds of those invoking those generalizations. The image of ‘redneck’ that is quite easily associated with rural British Columbia, especially in regions like the Cariboo where livelihoods are sustained on mining, forestry, and ranching, where the annual Stampede is the region’s biggest event, is another generality that obscures nuance and potentially ascribes identity.

#### First Nations/Settler Relationships

The Cariboo-Chilcotin’s history in relation to its Indigenous peoples reflects the colonial history of British Columbia. The City of Williams Lake is named for Chief William and sits on the traditional territories of the Secwepemc people. West of the city, crossing over the Fraser River, one enters the territories of the Tsilhqot’in, and to the north, both Tsilhqot’in (the community of ‘Esdilagh or Alexandria Indian Band) and Carrier peoples (Furniss 2004). These three First Nations have significant membership living both on reserves in their territories, on the lands surrounding those settlements, and in the city of Williams Lake. The city is the closest business/government center for everyone in the area and as such is ethnically diverse. The city, like those throughout British Columbia, has its history rooted in the discourse of discovery and development that frame the image of ‘Canada’, one that is especially apparent in rural communities.

Non-Indigenous people first came to the Cariboo-Chilcotin during the fur trade around 1815. A trading post, Fort Alexandria, was established just north of where Williams Lake now sits, in Tsilhqot'in and Carrier territories on the Fraser River (Vanstone 1993). Later, when the Cariboo Gold rush began near the end of the 1850s, people of European descent began to come to the territories to stay; subsequently ranches would be built, land preempted, and missionaries would visit, as would smallpox, discrimination, war, and co-existence (Vanstone 1993, Hewlett 1973). These early interactions set the stage for how histories come to frame contemporary relationships, conversations, and debates between residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. They particularly set the ground for the relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss worked with Secwepemc communities in Williams Lake in the 1990s. The city she described was thick with racism, segregated by ethnicity, and unquestioning (primarily on the part of 'white' society) of these divides. Furniss' research precedes my interests by almost twenty years and, discovering her work as a graduate student, I was surprised that such research had taken place in the city in which I grew up, in the food court in which I had worked in as a teenager, and I found her descriptions painfully apt. Where they are limited, however, is not in their truthfulness, but in their ability to reach those who need to see alternatives replace their perceived 'norms', those who need to see stereotypes disentangled from the cultural histories that have shaped them into apparent 'facts'.

I do not disagree with the level of racism Furniss illustrates, and the negative effect this continues to have in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, and throughout Canada. I

worry, however, that giving attention solely to the negative aspects of relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples obscures the positive avenues that exist for peoples to recreate these relationships, and the benefits, both economic and social, that can result from them. In Williams Lake I have witnessed the hostility and fear that discussions around the history of First Nations/settler interactions brings up; I have seen it shut down conversations and close off ears. Rural ‘settler’ and First Nations communities live out these relationships for broader populations within Canada, and the country’s government, that subscribes to an ideal of development and capitalism that perpetuates the consumption of lands and resources at the expense of its people.

Change will happen only when people are able to abandon the filters of stereotype when they begin to engage in new conversations, and these conversations are becoming more and more prominent as old relationships are rethought. Critically, as Haraway writes,

... we do need an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different – and power-differentiated – communities. We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life. (1988:580)

Concepts of progress, ‘race’, and the separation of nature and culture do have currency within settler populations, but these concepts become powerful when they are perpetuated through dominant rhetoric and are not necessarily representative of ‘rural’ communities as much as they are a product of the taken-for-granted norms that facilitate capitalist enterprise and the global economic systems that shape the

pressures rural communities face (Larsen 2006). These norms are enmeshed within histories that inform both upon today and upon shared futures; as Scott writes, “The difference of the past challenges the certainty of the present... and so introduces the possibility of change” (2001:96).

Although Williams Lake, the supposed forerunner of support for TML’s proposed mine, sits on lands of the Secwepemc people, the mine itself would be built on the lands of the Tsilhqot’in, and the Xeni Gwet’in, one of six member communities of the Tsilhqot’in National Government has been at the forefront of opposition to the project. I turn now to introduce these groups.

### The Tsilhqot’in

Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) and the proposed mine that would engulf it sits within the traditional, and contemporary, territories of the Tsilhqot’in. A fluid line draws this territory from just west of Williams Lake, over the Fraser River and across the Chilcotin plateau until the land drops away into the Bella Coola Valley and the territories of the Nuxalk. Through the Chilcotin Mountains to the southwest are the territories of the St’at’imc, to the north the Carrier and to the east Secwepemc. The edges of this territory are not finite in light of overlaps and fluidity of kinship, land use and Indigenous relational ontologies, confusing the solid lines of traditional cartography (Thom 2009). Tsilhqot’in people express a connection to their territories that extends beyond current memory. An Athabaskan language group, it is assumed that the Tsilhqot’in traveled to their lands of current residence from northwestern regions where the language group holds more prominence; this move, documented through linguistics and Tsilhqot’in history, perhaps as late as 1650, has no fixed date

and, excepting the fringes of overlapping territories, there is little question regarding the Tsilhqot'in's longevity in their lands (Matson and Magne 2007).

The Tsilhqot'in National Government, with its office in Williams Lake, represents six autonomous communities spread across the Chilcotin plateau: Tl'etinqox-t'in (Anaham), Tsi Del Del (Alexis Creek), Yunesit'in Government (Stone), 'Esdilagh (Alexandria), Xení Gwet'in First Nations Government (Nemiah) and the Tl'esqox (Toosey Band) (Tsilhqot'in.ca 2010). The Tsilhqot'in identify in continuity with a tradition of being on the land, and living in respect for what the land has to offer, in conversation with lives lived in a 'modern' world. This sentiment has been neatly summed up by Chief Percy Guichon in his address to the CEAA Panel; as he stated,

My question to Taseko is do you realize we cannot transfer our cultural and spiritual connection, which is in the thousands of years in the making, to a man-made lake? It's just not possible. How much do you think in monetary terms would the compensation be for the loss of a sacred lake that would be lost forever. We believe there's no amount of money that can compensate that. I also want to say that we are not anti-development of the resources in Tsilhqot'in region. All the First Nation communities in the Tsilhqot'in are developing economic strategies and always have been. Our people have the same hopes and dreams as the Canadian society in general. We want our children to receive an education, become productive members of society. Our members want jobs like everyone else. They want a colour TV, a satellite dish, a nice vehicle in the driveway, have money to go on holidays. But we will not create jobs at any cost to the environment. (2010:165)

The history of the Tsilhqot'in connection to the land and its resources, and the history of early relationships with the first Europeans in the area, are not regulated to past events, but frame both the present and the future. One of the critical events shaping

the way in which the Tsilhqot'in are perceived through history, both to themselves and to outsiders, is the Chilcotin War. Particularly mobilized in contemporary discussions involving land and resources, the Chilcotin War was a critical moment in the relationship between the Tsilhqot'in, non-Aboriginal peoples, and development in the context of increasing European impacts on the land.

### The Chilcotin War

Periods of hostility with surrounding First Nations had the Tsilhqot'in marked as protective of their lands and suspicious of outsiders, but they were also a trading people and had established networks throughout the region (Lutz 2008). Having founded the Fort Alexandria trading post in 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company thought another fort in the Chilcotin would secure the abundance of beaver pelts coming out of Tsilhqot'in lands. This intention was met with resistance by the Tsilhqot'in who saw to it that the fort was unsuccessful and that it was eventually moved to neighboring territories (Turkel 2007). The footings this interaction had in the relationships between the First Nation and the Europeans intent on both settlement and development set the groundwork for interactions accompanying the increase of human traffic brought by the Gold Rush of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1860 it was proposed that a shorter route to the gold fields be considered. The route, prior to this suggestion, followed the Fraser River and ended up on the Cariboo Wagon Road leading northeast. Alfred Waddington thought it a good idea to streamline this route straight west to the ocean, and then by steamship to Victoria. This new path involved the construction of a road through the heart of Tsilhqot'in territories. Shortly after a road crew arrived to begin construction, so too did the



smallpox epidemic, devastating Tsilhqot'in populations (Lutz 2008). The timing and severity of this sickness, combined with increasing ill relations between Tsilhqot'in people and the road crew, sparked the violence that became known as the Chilcotin War.

Tsilhqot'in warriors, avenging women mistreated by road workers and perhaps hoping to quell further transmission of the smallpox plague, attacked and killed 14 men from the road crew as they slept in their tents. This touched off other deaths; one of a white settler in the territory, and five others bringing supplies to the road construction site. These events were quickly relayed to Victoria, where a small army was commissioned to seek out the Tsilhqot'in offenders. This effort proved futile; the one death resulting from the hunt was a member of the posse, not the Tsilhqot'in. Eventually it was negotiated that Klatassin, leader of the Tsilhqot'in uprising, would meet the government to end conflict. Klatassin agreed to this and visited the camp with seven other men, all of whom were then subject to a surprise judgment, imprisoned, and hanged.

These chiefs are memorialized in Tsilhqot'in history as heroes; they have been recorded as saying, "We meant war, not murder" (Lutz 2008), indicating that the scope of Tsilhqot'in resistance, and their concern at the implications of increased settlement of their lands, saw beyond the few Europeans they had so far encountered. As current Xenigwet'in Chief Marilyn Baptiste has been quoted as saying, "In 1864, they were after gold. If they hadn't been stopped then, we wouldn't be here" (Stueck 2010:A4), and in the words of Chief Joe Alphonse,

Our people have had an impact on how we see the province today. Under a flag of truce our warriors were told to come

in and have peace talks after they declared war, so when they went in to camp to have peace talks they were shackled and they were brought to Quesnel and they were tried as murderers. That's the first thing we're taught as Tsilhqot'in people. Taseko Mine coming in and digging their heels in, they're going up against history. They're going up against the belief of the Tsilhqot'in person." (in interview, September 16, 2011)

### The Xenigwet'in

The shortcut to the gold fields was abandoned after this turmoil, but not without the Tsilhqot'in gaining a significant reputation for conflict and independence, and for the Tsilhqot'in also to maintain their territories and identify through early resistance in their continued relationships to the encroachment of outsiders, and industry (Dinwoodie 2002). The Chilcotin has maintained its isolation into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite a highway now stretching from Williams Lake to Bella Coola. Only three of six Tsilhqot'in communities are visible from the main road; others require intention to get to, and the territories of the Xenigwet'in, wherein the proposed mine site sits, are accessed by further hours spent on a dirt road. This road, branching off to the south from the highway at Hanceville, was a pack trail until the early 1970s. Up until then, when the army pushed a road through, the trip from the Nemah Valley to Williams Lake would take the better part of a week. In the mid-1980s the Xenigwet'in, as Tsilhqot'in people, once again stood against those intent on resources from within the caretaker area (Glavin 1992). This time the gold was in the trees.

Making up the biggest area of 'undeveloped' land in Tsilhqot'in territories, the lands of the Xenigwet'in have gained recognition from more than local residents. Efforts to stave off encroaching logging in the late 1980s-early 1990s resulted in the

increased activity of environmental organizations involved in campaigns of conservation throughout the province, and seeking legal council as a means of protection against the ever-increasing clear cuts, the Xeni Gwet'in engaged their Aboriginal rights in establishing control over their territories (Dinwoodie 2002). In 1989 the Xeni Gwet'in released the Nemiah Declaration, establishing the Nemiah Aboriginal Wilderness Preserve and stating the following:

Let it be known that within the Nemiah Valley Wilderness Preserve:

1. There shall be no commercial logging. Only local cutting of trees for our own needs, i.e. firewood, housing, fencing, native uses, etc.
2. There shall be no mining or mining explorations.
3. There shall be no commercial road building.
4. All-terrain vehicles and skidoos shall only be permitted for trapping purposes.
5. There shall be no flooding or dam construction on Chilko, Taseko, and Tatlayoko Lakes.
6. This is the spiritual and economic homeland of our people. We will continue in perpetuity: a) to have and exercise our traditional rights of hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and natural resources; b) to carry on our traditional ranching way of life; c) to practice our traditional native medicine, religion, sacred, and spiritual ways.
7. That we are prepared to SHARE our Nemiah Aboriginal Wilderness Preserve with non-natives in the following ways; a) with our permission visitors may come and view and photograph our beautiful land; b) we will issue permits, subject to our conservation rules, for hunting and fishing within our Preserve; c) the respectful use of our Preserve by canoeists, hikers, light campers, and other visitors is encouraged, subject to our system of permits.
8. We are prepared to enforce and defend our Aboriginal rights in any way we are able. (Xeni Gwet'in: People of Nemiah Valley 1989)

The result of this effort to protect Tsilhqot'in lands became the groundbreaking William case, one of British Columbia's most significant court cases regarding rights

and title since Justice Lamer's 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision and the recognition of Aboriginal title as a right not on the land, but of the land (*Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010).

The Xeni Gwet'in's defense against clear-cut logging on their territories, as well as the engagement of active environmental organizations and other area residents opposed to excessive cutting, culminated in a 2007 decision by Justice Vickers recognizing Tsilhqot'in rights over the whole territory in question, the lands cared for by the Xeni Gwet'in. Title, ever illusive, was not granted, but rather on a technicality than in defence of Crown sovereignty. Justice Vickers stated that he would have granted title to approximately half the claim area, but, as the case was argued all or nothing, he was forced to grant nothing (*Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* 2007 BCSC 1700). This case is currently in appeals, with hopes that a decision declaring the location and extent of historical title will finally be made in British Columbia, and that the Xeni Gwet'in will have control over the development of their territories. These histories have set the stage for the debates that have erupted regarding the future of Fish Lake, and they are mentioned here because they are present not only in the pasts of people involved in these discussions, but because history has its mark on the past, present, and future.

### **History in Media**

The history of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, and the way in which the people of this area identify in relation to their history, has framed discussions and debates over TML's proposed project. A critical component to these conversations has been the news media, the apparent representative of a dominant view, and certainly a dominant

voice in a rural community. The aforementioned histories, of relationships between diverse peoples and the stereotypes that can continually misrepresent, have been prominent in the media following the issue surrounding Fish Lake. The following chapter draws on the news media archives to illustrate the depth of bias and the false reality created by the ‘news’; coverage that would later be negated through the forum of CEAA Panel hearings.

## Chapter 4 – Media Analysis

Popular media has been greatly criticized for its portrayal of Aboriginal peoples (Harding 2006, Henry and Tator 2002). In this section I examine the media coverage that has followed Taseko Mines Limited's Prosperity and New Prosperity projects. This review has primarily focused on the period that paralleled the CEAA environmental Panel hearings held in the Cariboo-Chilcotin in the spring of 2010. Engaging anthropological perspectives on these accounts draws out the 'common sense' knowledges that frame dominant expectations of identity, how these can be unintentionally perpetuated, and how these knowledges continue to take on different forms (Knauff 1996:19). Unveiling the media 'framings' of resource development issues and the players within them draws attention to the colonial legacies that infiltrate current realities. Recognizing the stereotypes within these frames also disentangles perception from fact, opening avenues towards change.

The preconceptions that illustrate an apparent 'popular will' have been well documented through local media sources. Niezen describes this 'popular will' as, "...ideas, including stereotypes and prejudices, that reflect widely held convictions, or "common sense" ideas that often (mis)inform judicial decisions and motivate political action" (2003:18 ). When these 'taken for granted' go unquestioned they can persist despite their inaccuracy in the lived experience of both groups and individuals (Henry and Tator 2002). And while these knowledges may both feed and recreate certain understandings in the case of TML's gold-copper project, there have also been remarkable avenues for change that have arisen, sparking the need to situate agentive voices in both local and global contexts and to avoid perpetuating inequality

by assuming that those who have been marginalized by dominant society are necessarily without power in any form (Nygren 1999). Generalizations, projected onto groups or individuals from outside, can be more revealing of the preconceptions held by those applying them than it is upon those expected to fit within them.

In the following section I draw out the historical foundations of contemporary media framings, following European ‘enlightenment’ from objectivity infused with taken-for-granted paternalism into a sense of entitlement in the New World. These histories set the stage for contemporary mainstream mobilizations of stereotype, especially those effecting Indigenous peoples. I then illustrate the current frames of representation that were visible in media coverage of TML’s proposed mine in Tsilhqot’in territories. These include First Nations peoples as ‘outside’ of national interest and ‘Canadian’ identity, as anti-development, as undeserving of ‘special’ rights, as dependent on tax dollars (and therefore the tax payer), and/or as idealized, temporalized and either authentic or corrupted. I then invoke media frameworks to examine the portrayal of non-Aboriginal interest that is also shaped by history and imbued with generalizations (as pro-development, disconnected with a holistic environment, as either ‘redneck’ or environmental ‘radical’) indicating that these labels fail across ethnicities. Without visible alternatives media frames remain a commonsense starting point for perpetual inequality and polarity that exacerbates division rather than resolves it.

### **Establishing ‘Common Sense’**

In the case of the proposed ‘Prosperity’ mine, media coverage locked itself into the stereotypes that live in the latent and often unrecognized racism that exists

within Canada. The colonial relationship with the country's First Peoples has not been vanquished by claims to multiculturalism and diversity (O'Connell 2010:539). To briefly summarize a complicated and in-depth history, 'Canada' is a title bestowed upon an area of land 'discovered' and subsequently settled by Europeans throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Blackburn 2007). The land, prior to the arrival of explorers, was, and continues to be, populated by diverse groups of peoples who are today umbrellaed under the terms 'First Nations', 'Inuit', and 'Metis'<sup>1</sup>. In the case of British Columbia, 'First Nations' has come to replace the misplaced term of 'Indian' that served much of colonial history. The ambiguity of this title, as others (Indigenous, Aboriginal, native), reflects the fact that it is a heading that encompasses a broad spectrum of experience, histories and practice (Gagné 2009). Ease risks; this title is not used here to imply that First Nations communities are in any way homogenous, but rather to facilitate an analysis of a trend that, as legal precedents are set and policies applied, affects a diversity of peoples purportedly encompassed under a common term.

As the land known as Canada became a colonized country the federal government constructed treaties that assigned designated pieces of land to First Nations communities. These 'agreements,' as Blackburn writes,

. . . stipulated that aboriginal people cede, release, and surrender their territories and settle on lands reserved to them by the government. As far as the federal government was concerned this process extinguished aboriginal title to large tracts of land, opened those lands for settlement, and legally secured Canadian sovereignty. (2007:623)

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<sup>1</sup> as per the Constitution Act of 1982.



In British Columbia only a few of these treaties were ever signed; the province did not acknowledge Aboriginal title enough to deal through treaty, instead subscribing to a system of land allocation. These reserves, tracts of land ‘granted’ to Indigenous peoples by the government, were kept small to facilitate Aboriginal movement into the labour force and to thus ‘assimilate’ (Harris 2002). This left a vast amount of land, including that of the Tsilhqot’in, unceded by the First Nations who reside there, and also set the groundwork for the land claim and the rights and title issues being raised throughout the province today (Blackburn 2007).

The authority colonial policy assumed to promote itself over the area’s established residents was founded in notions of civilization, progress, property, and paternalism that have had lasting impacts on both the land and its peoples. Lands viewed as ‘empty’ or outside the markers of property familiar to Europeans, were ripe for settlement. As Harris notes regarding British Columbia’s early land policies,

A properly fenced garden was property. It followed from this that those who did not plant gardens, or did not fence them, or did not create landscapes that bore imprints familiar to the English, did not possess the land and could not have property rights to it. (2002:48)

This is not to imply that First Nations peoples did not have their own concepts of property, but rather that they were not recognized by imposing governments and subsequent legislation (Nadasdy 2002). The idea of ‘empty’ lands, coupled with the tenets of a science infused with Christianity, set the stage for Canada’s colonial history.

## **From Enlightenment to Entitlement**

Many settlers, through the history of colonization, were deeply instilled with a sense of 'science' and a naturalization of humankind that had critical implications for the development of power relations between 'colonized' and 'colonizer' (Darnell 2008).

Science had gained considerable steam in the nineteenth century as a means of providing a solid ground for recreating an understanding of human origins, and although it seemed to separate itself from the confines of biblical interpretation, it was nevertheless founded on a model that held hierarchy as a dominant tenet and was steeped in patriarchal 'norms' (Yanagisako and Delany 1995). Thus humankind became naturalized within an evolutionary progression from savage to civilized, along the 'Great Chain of Being' wherein the Euro-American male occupied the highest rung and all others filled in the gaps of a linear history leading to a universal end: civilization (Darnell 2008).

This foundational knowledge has come to shape how many people in Canada's settler society come to identify, as well as how the relationships between diverse peoples in this country have developed, and are developing, both historically and within contemporary dialogues. It has provided the justification for the displacement of First Nations peoples to allow room for settler populations, framed policies intent on assimilation, the development of the residential school system and *Indian Act* legislation for example, and is still, although considerable positive change has occurred in recent years, entrenched within a discourse of development that espouses economic stability as the best remedy for inequality (Harris 2002, Niezen 2003). Throughout early reports and media, published in the mid to late 1800s, First Nations peoples are referred to consistently as 'inferior,' and 'childlike,' but also as a threat to settler populations, "as

'savage wretches' who have 'blood-thirsty instincts'" (Harding 2006:214). These broadly held premises, ideas of the primitive 'Other,' lead the discussion into popular conceptions of Indigeneity that continue to underpin dominant discourses of development, and particularly resource development, in Canada today, and that proliferate in the news media (Henry and Tator 2002).

### **Media Frameworks**

When it comes to media coverage surrounding TML's proposed gold-copper project, it is clear that entrenched 'norms' have shaped the roles that the project's support and opposition take in the media versions of this controversy. Categories of identity comprise the frames used by media reporting on conflicts over resource development. This creates a filter that, as Wilkes writes,

... results from a system of reporting wherein reporters use a particular narrative structure, rely on officials as sources, and invoke public opinion in particular ways that, taken together, serve to marginalize collective actors and their issues. (2010:41)

This framing essentially sets a script for the people involved in these issues, taking for granted that their identities as members of groups (First Nations, environmentalists, non-Aboriginal peoples) predetermines their role within the 'sides' of resource development debates.

Newspapers covering the issues surrounding Fish Lake in the Cariboo-Chilcotin have utilized these frames without question, and in doing so, have shaped not only how First Nations are viewed in relation to this issue, but also non-Aboriginal peoples. The dominant themes that run through media adhere to the spectrum of stereotype associated with Canada's First Peoples, from stewards of the

environment to assimilated degenerates (Nadasdy 2005). While it is critical to recognize these frames, which I intend to illustrate in the following sections, it is even more critical to recognize the broad effect of these ascribed depictions of diverse peoples with varying interests bound to a shared (although certainly not homogenous or static) experience of a colonial history; as Wilkes writes,

These discourses, which essentialize behavior by race, place people on a citizenship continuum. On one side of this continuum are the “real” (read “white”) citizens, while the problem (read “nonwhite”) citizens are on the other side. (2010:43)

This next section focuses firstly on how First Nations peoples have been portrayed through the news media in relation to TML’s proposed mine at Fish Lake, and how these frames perpetuate negative stereotypes in Canada’s social fabric.

I begin this discussion with a description of the common frames that shape media representations of First Nations peoples. Following this I examine these frames not only for their roots in dominant histories but also for their contemporary currency. These frames often provide justification for the marginalization, or need for ‘certainty’ that makes Crown sovereignty non-negotiable and greases an economic machine built on development, profit, and ‘progress’. Frames embedded in stereotype also give colonialism continuity, perpetuating division that ascribes rigid identities, and limiting the options for change without visible alternatives. I then look at how these frames work on non-Aboriginal peoples, homogenizing interests and taking for granted alignment with a glorified national identity, or being radicalized outside of it, without a lens for nuance. Taken together the descriptions of how these frames portray First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples has significant implications

for how people come to understand their own circumstances, how they relate to one another, and also how redundant misrepresentation can in fact become an impetus for change.

Militancy, Environmentalism, Determinism, and Dependency: The ‘Popular’  
Image of First Nations Peoples

There are several frames incorporated into the media coverage surrounding TML’s mine; they all achieve the effect of separating First Nations peoples, and others involved in protest, from the ranks of ‘hard working Canadians’, at the same time as obscuring the diversity of opposition that escapes stereotyped identities or cultural assumptions. The dominant themes present in media conform to ‘popular’ representations of Indigenous peoples and, as will be discussed in a following section, to representations of non-Aboriginal peoples involved in opposition to this type of project. These simplified renditions of complex human networks are not benign ignorances carried through from past misperceptions, but rather serve the interests of a perceived status quo in Canada, of industry and capitalism, and the holy grail of unending ‘progress’ that has been implanted as facet of Canadian identity (Larsen 2003).

This idea of “progress through industrialization” (Larsen 2006:311) conforms to the entrenched linear timeline of civilization that still underpins much of Western thought, and also facilitates the capitalist enterprise consistently espoused as economic necessity (Fabian 1983:17). This construct has led to a view of the environment as a market, but often without vision to the long-term effects of exploitation and perpetual growth. As Larsen writes about British Columbia’s industrial history,

... the past was erased as nature was transformed into profitable commodities, a process that promised the future delivery of a prosperous and progressive resource-based society. Development, however, required an abstracted, objectified vision of space that undermined the myriad of attachments which people – particularly First Nations – held to specific places. (2006:311)

Despite the passage of generations, this separation of nature and culture, even though increasingly questioned, has a hold on the commonsense notions of Canada's mainstream values and even invokes an image of glorified citizenship. This image, essentially a stereotype itself, excludes on a level of 'national interest' those who dissent from it.

#### First Nations Versus

Prior to embarking on a description of the stereotypical frames that dominated media during the Panel hearings (before and after), I first illustrate the most prevalent frame that engulfed the Cariboo-Chilcotin in 2010. This is the prominent notion that the issue surrounding TML's proposal has been one of First Nations *versus* development, and that 'development' serves as a pseudonym for 'Canadian' (non-Aboriginal) interests. This frame set the stage for all others as the media compounded and exacerbated the perception of division in an ethnically diverse rural community.

It seems an increasing tactic of industry, and the government that promotes that industry, is to vilify opposition through both generalizations and by falsifying the intentions of such groups in a way that brings a threat to the ideals of 'Canadians'. While this occurred throughout the debates over TML's project, it has become remarkably visible in the current debates surrounding the Northern Gateway Pipeline,

a project intending to transport bitumen from the tar sands in Alberta to the British Columbia coast, where it will leave the pipeline and be transported down the coastline by tanker, en route to Asian markets.

Paralleling the debates that consumed the Cariboo-Chilcotin, this pipeline is involved in a CEEA review panel process of its own, and protest of the project has been overwhelming. In response to this, Federal Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver, following the development hungry platform of Stephen Harper's Conservative government, filed an open letter addressing the opposition. He writes,

We know that increasing trade will help ensure the financial security of Canadians and their families. Unfortunately, there are environmental and other radical groups that would seek to block this opportunity to diversify our trade. Their goal is to stop any major project no matter what the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic growth. No forestry. No mining. No oil. No gas. No more hydro-electric dams. (Oliver 2012)

While Mr. Oliver might abstain from referring to the First Nations groups across northern BC and Alberta directly as 'radical', his statements effectively separate voices of opposition to intensive resource development and attendant potential for catastrophic environmental effects, as an 'other' outside of whomever fits into being 'Canadian' in this context. This statement embodies both the division of issues along lines that obscure the reality and diversity of opposition, as well as the entrapment of people into stereotypical versions of themselves and their interests.

The repeated argument rallied by those in favour of TML's project, primarily from business community of Williams Lake, was that the Cariboo-Chilcotin was in dire need of the economic boost the mine would provide, that the jobs would benefit everyone in the area, that time was of the essence in securing investment subject to

unstable markets, and that “minerals belong to all Canadians” (Wilson 2010). By incorporating rhetoric that separates First Nations peoples from general Canadians, as was done by local newspapers and project proponents, the perception of division, and tension, has pervaded these debates.

The Tsilhqot’in have been at the forefront of opposition to this mine, but the assumption that the local non-Aboriginal population is automatically on-board with the project has been an oversight. Because environmental groups were dismissed predominantly as ‘outsiders’ or ingrates, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the local perception that this issue was one of First Nations versus the livelihoods of non-Aboriginal peoples set the stage to engage various other stereotypes attached to First Nations identity. Another of the dominant frames sensationalized in media was that of Aboriginal militancy, to which I turn now.

“Violence is not the answer...”

Chief Marilyn Baptiste, of the Xeni Gwet’in, when addressing a Williams Lake audience in 2011 noted that it had taken a mention of violence to engage news media beyond the local attention of the *Williams Lake Tribune*. Reminiscent of the media coverage that erupted in the face of the 1990 Oka crises and that has documented instances of organized resistance or collective action by First Nations people, provincial newspapers engaged in debates once they had found their sensational headline (Knopf 2010). As Knopf writes,

... in situations of conflict between Canada and the Aboriginal population, the news media tend to take the stand for mainstream Canada and present Aboriginal protesters as “gun-toting warriors,” “lawless terrorists,” “stubborn negotiators,” “rebels without a cause,” and



“angry, violent, and hysterical Indians.” (2010:91)

The subject of violence hit the headlines of September 2010 when Chief Marilyn Baptiste said publicly, “As one of my elders had said when we were going through the panel hearings, she will be there on the road in her wheel chair. She will have her shotguns and she will not move” (Baptiste in MacInnis 2010:06). This statement set off a media response that again set First Nations peoples apart from the general public and reinforced the ethnic polarity perception that the *Williams Lake Tribune* had assumed as the foundation of their reporting. In an editorial entitled “Violence is Not the Answer” following Baptiste’s statement, then editor of the *Tribune* Ken MacInnis wrote,

When people resort to violence, the message behind it is lost as people become angry and scared. The cause doesn’t become the focus; the roadblock or standoff or guns do. And when that focus shifts, so to (sic) does some public perception. It’s harder to side with people who have erected illegal roadblocks on public highways or roads or who are occupying what the law says for now is Crown land. We also fear violence from non-natives in the area, frustrated by what they see as interference in a lawful process, and escalation. It is truly a sad thing if Baptiste and other Tsilhqot’in chiefs see no other way to defend Fish Lake if cabinet approves the mine. But there’s nothing to be gained by a confrontation. Absolutely nothing. No one wants another Oka or Gustafsen Lake, or to have a single drop of blood shed. In the end, if the federal and provincial governments want the mine built, and Taseko is still willing, it will be built, barring a judge’s order to the contrary. A confrontation will not change that. (2010:06)

This passage reinforces a dominant perception that non-Aboriginal peoples are law abiding and ultimately, that the state not only knows best, but operates in the best interest of us ‘all’. It also overwrites the violence of colonialism and the acquisition

of land that has led to these instances of defensive confrontation enacted by First Nations peoples. As Nicholas Blomley notes in reference to the violence perpetrated by the state in the guise of private property and colonial cartography,

The fact of dispossession, in combination with racist “Indian” policy and structured inequalities in labour, educational, and housing markets, has relegated many native peoples to the economic and political margins of the colonial map. The violences of the survey still echo in contemporary settler societies... (2003:129).

First Nations peoples, defending their territories against a government that took the land unlawfully and created colonial policies intent on impoverishment and assimilation, thus sit irrationally outside a glorified citizenship that consistently projects a double standard.

Headlines in the *Williams Lake Tribune* during this time read, “Chiefs Warn of Confrontation Over Mine” (September 2010), “First Nation Chiefs: ‘We Will Defend the Land’” (May 2010), “Former Chief: ‘Over My Dead Body’ Prosperity Project Will Go Ahead” (April 2010). A headline in the *Toronto Sun* on September 2010 read “First Nations Threaten Violence Over B.C. Prosperity Mine”; the author, Laura Payton wrote,

Cabinet could decide as early as this month whether the project can go ahead. But one of the chiefs from the Tsilhqot'in First Nations says her members are prepared to give their lives to save the land. "As one of my elders had said ... she will be there on the road in her wheelchair. She will have her shotguns and she will not miss," said Marilyn Baptiste, chief of Xeni Gwet'in. "Our people are very devastated by the fact this is being threatened upon our people to destroy our lands and our way of life," she said. A spokeswoman for Indian Affairs Minister John Duncan said the government respects the right of Canadians to demonstrate peacefully but encouraged protesters to follow the rule of law. A spokesman from Taseko, however, says

Fish Lake is less than 0.04% of the available lakes in the province, and once the mine area is reclaimed 50 years from the start of the project, there will be three lakes left. Brian Battison says the province found Taseko's compensation program would mean a bigger and deeper lake, creating a better fishery than the one that's there now. (2010)

Again, in the structure of this article Chief Marilyn's statements seem to exaggerate the severity of this issue when followed by proponent statements that minimize the effects of the project. I do not intend to imply that Tsilhqot'in Chiefs did not make insinuations of confrontation, but rather that the perception of these statements as 'threats' speaks to the roles that First Nations are often forced to play in dealing with state policies that have granted themselves the authority over British Columbia's lands (Blomley 2003). This vilification of First Nations peoples in relation to the purported social harmonies of Canadian society leads to a discussion of the most prevalent and embittered stereotypes facing First Nations, those that depict Aboriginal peoples as both dependent and abusive of the 'advantages' provided them by the federal government.

#### Dependent, Disobedient, and Anti-Development

This view holds an image of First Nations people as being corrupted by both modernity and the assimilative policies of the state; high unemployment is attributed to individual laziness, dependency on social assistance is conveyed as both weakness and greed. Opposition to projects like TML's proposed mine is viewed as a direct obstruction to progress, an effort to maintain an unrealistic lifestyle at the expense of the majority populations. This perception is well illustrated by a commentator writing in response to an article published in the Province newspaper related to

TML's development: "I'm sick of people living off the tax dollars of hard working citizens, yet benefiting from a society they don't contribute to!" (Fournier 2010).

The stereotypes that have grown out of the *Indian Act*'s section 87 regarding taxation abound; it is assumed by many, as the above comment illustrates, that First Nations peoples simply pay no taxes. Tax exemptions apply on reserve, both to property on reserves and to income earned on reserves; given that close to half of First Nations populations live off reserve and also that First Nations unemployment rates are far above average, the reality is that the number of people exempt from tax is relatively small, and certainly is not an unfair benefit granted an undeserving (or homogenous) population (Wilson 2011).

These malignant perceptions often rely on concepts of ethnicity to provide the criteria by which to assign stereotypical characteristics. First Nations peoples presented with this as a popular version of their own identity, combined with the way these perceptions shape the opportunities that become available, face considerable odds when navigating mainstream systems (Darnell 2008). Some may appear to fall into their predetermined identities, at times a form of self-fulfilling prophecy. Without denying agency, the generalization or assumed homogeneity of diverse populations has considerable implications for peoples' futures (Calliou 1995). Many, if not most, do not conform to typecast renditions of identity, as can be expected of individuals who are, as everyone, involved in a constant process of identification and always negotiating the nested contexts of their own lives (Van Meijl 2008).

Statements that denigrate First Nations peoples as abusers of Canadian taxpayers hard-earned dollars – an exclusion from that idealized group – also draw

out the paternalism inherent in state relations with First Nations, a paternalism that is historical, but more critically, still prevails today. This perception is fed by a severe lack of knowledge regarding how First Nations communities receive and distribute government monies, a myth that First Nations peoples pay no taxes, and neglect for the colonial policies that created these systems (Henry and Tator 2002). The idea that ‘development’ projects, regardless of their effects and who really profits, are espoused as in the best interest of the Canadian public allows both government and industry to parade themselves as economic saviours in hard times. Throughout the debates over TML’s gold-copper project, the continued defence from TML and pro-Prosperity government officials is how much the project will potentially benefit local First Nations in terms of revenue sharing, employment opportunities, and the economic boost it will give the region.

First Nations peoples have been repeatedly represented as wanting to recapture a lost past, one that is not compatible with the demands of modernity. This is often presented as a veiled reference assumed to be shared with the reader. Walt Cobb, for example, former mayor of Williams Lake and current president of the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, has been exceptionally vocal in his support for the mine; he also contributes a regular column in the biweekly *Williams Lake Tribune*, insuring that his opinions carry considerable currency as they are distributed throughout the region.

When the mine was denied its federal permit in November Cobb wrote,

Well, the decision is in and we in the Cariboo Chilcotin who need to work or have jobs have just had the door slammed in our faces. There will be no Prosperity mine in the Cariboo. As mentioned in the media, Christmas has

come early for some but for those who need to work or find a job they had better go fishing. Or, better yet, go find some berries to pick (Cobb 2010a:6).

Cobb has also said publicly that First Nations, “. . . want the resources, they want the welfare, but they don't want to have to pay for them” (Fournier 2010). While Cobb's comments should not be taken as representative of any voice but his own and he has been publicly accused both of racism and igniting tensions in the local community, judging from the comments posted in reply to his statements, many feel his words are justified.

Support for ‘development’ over First Nations concerns reflects the perception that those opposed to the mine are unwilling to move forward from a colonial past. That past is often duly recognized as destructive and inherently hegemonic, but also one that has been, it would seem to some, dealt with. The acceptance of remuneration in reconciliation processes is taken by some to indicate that First Nations people are, consistent with normative perceptions of corruption and greed, in effect willing to be paid for their grievances. As Krech writes, “For many indigenous people in North America, economic concerns trump green issues” (2005:84). This perception regarding First Nations peoples portrays groups as essentially as exploitative as ‘dominant’ society, but simply lacking the power or numbers to achieve 'success' in the form of intensive development, as has the core of the Euro-descendant population (Niezen 2003). Within this perspective, distinct rights for First Nations are seen as a threat to the 'equal' rights of the majority population and as 'unreasonable demands' that give certain communities an unfair advantage on those in competition over resources (Niezen 2003).

The problem being raised here is not whether or not First Nations peoples will or will not choose economic factors over ecological ones; it is that in making these decisions diverse groups often become decontextualized from their circumstances, be those geographical, cultural, historical, or otherwise, and are held to a convention of identity that does not seem to apply to those outside of historically and contemporarily marginalized groups (Nygren 1999). A double standard is invoked and the right to self-determination is overlooked. Support for Cobb's words, espousing the truth in his statements, are noted by commentators, as one writes,

I have to agree with Mr. Cobb.... He speaks of what many are too afraid to come out and say. It's not racist its fact. Its (sic) fact! It's not the natives (sic) faults at all. I would feel the same if money was handed to me. I wouldn't want to work, i'd (sic) be on welfare. I'd protest so my band could have a chunk of money to share with everyone on the reserve. Not all natives are like that though, some are very hard workers and the nicest people who mean well and are embarrassed (sic) by what some people on the reserves do. **Mr. Cobb, you've spoken for thousands of people in BC.** ('Agree' in Fournier 2010, bold in original)

These discussions indicate the broad generalizations, in term of perceived identity, that First Nations peoples are confronted with, as well as the way in which notions towards the neoliberal tenet of individual responsibility – the need to, as one commenter in the same article as above writes, “. . . pick up our socks and get on with it” ('Rhoni pick' in Fournier 2010) – obscures the institutional powers that limit opportunity and perpetuate the cycle of inequality and often with it, poverty.

Mineral extraction, following the decline of the forest industry, is increasingly espoused by some as the only means of ensuring a tax base that can support and sustain certain lifestyles in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. It is often mentioned in

conjunction with the striking poverty that faces many First Nations communities, as well as the abundant social problems that have developed in the wake of colonialism; it is posed as a solution to these problems. This logic views First Nations as dependent on the social assistance of the government, unwilling to work in accordance with societal expectations, corrupted to the extent that funds should be distributed under extreme surveillance, and/or essentially without the motivation or responsibility to better their 'own' situations (Harding 2006). The “discourse of equal opportunity” extends beyond Indigenous peoples to anyone, marginalized by ethnicity, poverty, or circumstance, and yet assumed to have access to a ‘level playing field’. This premise takes for granted that, as Henry and Tator write,

...society’s only obligation is to provide the conditions within which individuals differently endowed can make their mark. All have the same rights and an equal opportunity to succeed. Individual merit determines who will have access to jobs and promotions, to the media, to educational advancement...” (2002:230)

It is this stereotype that provides the rationale to justify the structural violence that confines First Nations people to a constant battle against inequalities. It combines with a notion of neoliberal individualism that presents itself as a conduit for anyone, apparently regardless of social position or ethnicity, to climb the ladder of economic success, in a way that simultaneously makes the individual fully responsible for his or her ability not to do so (Harding 2006). Coupled with the inability of certain parties to comprehend a relationship to the land that involves that land as an actor rather than a commodity, the vocalizations of misunderstanding and incommensurable knowledges, portrayed through the media as prevalent, have had remarkable implications for how inequalities are perpetuated.



Randy Hawes, British Columbia's Minister of State for Mining, mentioned above, has become the visible spokesman for opinions that, while they should not be thought of as held by a majority, are certainly held by many. He has stated to the press, "I would say to the chiefs, 'I get that [Fish Lake] is important to you, but put your kids first.' The day that you put the kids at the forefront is the day you look at this a lot different than just that lake" (Alexander 2010). Hawes reflects a notion of Indigeneity that is some how out of touch with reality, held to concepts that negate practicality, bound to their 'traditions', and essentially separated from both global worlds and modern times. His statements reflect a sentiment that the environment is separable from the historical, social, and political factors that make Fish Lake more than 'just a lake', and also that the Tsilhqot'in are reaching towards an unachievable 'past' at the expense of the national interest's future.

The 'backward' First Nation falls on the stereotype spectrum that also confines the 'ecological' or 'ideological' Indian, this one aligned with environmental organizations but still held to a double standard that demands authenticity to delegate rights, and still dictates identity over identification and self-determination (Nadasdy 2005). Adhering to a universally linear concept of time that places people along various stages towards 'civilization', the idealization of culture both denies its fluidity and authorizes judgment; as Fabian writes, "The posited authenticity of a past (savage, tribal, peasant) serves to denounce an inauthentic present (the uprooted, évolués, acculturated)" (1983:11).

### The “Ideological Indian”

One of the most common portrayals of First Nations peoples is the iconic environmentalist. Implicit in this depiction is the notion of the ‘traditional’ and a temporality that seems to assign environmental stewardship to an idealized past. It is a position seen as contrary to an ideal of development that is naturalized as an impulse of humanity rather than a construct of culture, that adheres, as Escobar writes,

...to a vision of history propagated by politicians, multinational corporations, and mainstream scientific discourses, for which knowledge is what Western science knows, progress what the West’s dominant groups have achieved, and the only life worth living what that knowledge and achievements define (sic). (1991:676)

The assignment of environmental altruism from within this perspective of authority is problematized by the constant surveillance, to ensure 'authenticity,' that accompanies it and, as Nadasdy writes, “The stereotype denies the realities of native people's lives, reducing the rich diversity of their beliefs, values, social relations, and practices to a one-dimensional caricature” (2005:293). It homogenizes and freezes diverse groups into practices and subsistence patterns that may no longer be feasible as the environment and 'traditional' food sources have, with recent climate change and human encroachment, seen considerable change (Cruikshank 2005, Darnell 2008). In this conception protection for distinct rights is bound by 'tradition,' negated by adaptation and is placed under constant scrutiny (Niezen 2003).

Essentialization is tricky business for First Nations peoples. Canadian law requires proof of continuity to establish Aboriginal rights, and while there has been significant ground broken in the alliances formed for First Nations peoples around

these rights, there is also a risk of blanketing diversity and temporally binding cultural practices to be ‘frozen in time’, essentially negated by innovation (Niezen 2003). The issue surrounding Fish Lake, in many instances bound to the lake itself rather than the complexity of rights, title, ecosystems, wildlife corridors, water, and culture, became one of ‘use’ to many people. Thus, a dominant view held, if the Tsilhqot’in had not recently been using the lake, as a space or a thing rather than a place imbued with relationships and infused with history, then what should it matter if the lake became storage for tailings, or was cut off for twenty years as the ore adjacent to it is dug out.

This frame is subtle in the rhetoric of project proponents in the Cariboo, and in the reporting that has given these voices prevalence. In a 2009 *Williams Lake Tribune* article entitled “Battison Urges Chamber to Express Support to Review Panel”, TML’s vice president of corporate affairs, Brian Battison, mobilizes this frame. The article states,

While some First Nation leaders have expressed opposition to the mine, Battison said, he believes that some First Nations hold other, more flexible views. "There are ways to achieve the best of both the traditional and the new, ways that don't abandon the past but rather preserve it, strengthen it, and celebrate it," he said. (MacInnis 2009:05)

Apparently benign, the sentence has an implication that the First Nations opposed to this project, Tsilhqot’in chiefs and their allies, are holding on to inflexible views and an idea that the mine (a proxy here for modernity) will compromise an unrealistic traditionalism. Battison’s statement also mobilizes a generalization of First Nations leadership, obscuring the clear statements, as will be discussed in further detail later in this paper, that Tsilhqot’in Chiefs have made regarding their ability to balance development with culture and tradition.

The perception that First Nations peoples are either resistant or complicit to development projects like TML's proposed mine projects a 'binary opposition' onto diverse interests and obscures the lived ability to navigate complex systems and create "life projects" (Blaser 2004:32). Describing these projects, Blaser writes,

Life projects are embedded in local histories; they encompass visions of the world and the future that are distinct from those embodied by projects promoted by states and markets. Life projects diverge from development in their attention to the uniqueness of people's experiences of place and self and their rejection of visions that claim to be universal. Thus, life projects are premised on densely and uniquely woven 'threads' of landscapes, memories, expectations, and desires. (2004:26)

In another example of the complexity of how this argument came to life in the city of Williams Lake, and the way in which parallel arguments invoke a double standard often critiquing the platforms of the marginalized, an open letter to Brian Battison in the *Williams Lake Tribune* draws out social 'norms' assumed as universal. A long-term resident of Williams Lake writes,

No responsible parent would stand by while their children were denied jobs or opportunities to fulfill their dreams. No responsible parent would ask a community to step in and provide handouts instead of the dignity of fair wages for honest work. And no responsible parent would hold onto the past at the cost of their children's future. (Jones Williams 2010:07).

As the dominant frame in the media was First Nations versus development, this statement also invokes the sense of irrational traditionalism associated with Indigeneity. At the same time it implicitly excludes First Nations peoples essentially from being human, invoking motherhood statements that puts opposition to this project outside a perceived universal good. Never mind that one of the dominant

arguments in favour of the mine was Williams Lake's long 'tradition' of resource development, a history of boom and bust and dependency on increasingly unstable resource industries, or that a primary argument of the opposition was their children's right to clean drinking water and a healthy social, cultural, and physical environment.

The depiction illustrated in the above quote portrays development or adaptation to change by First Nations as compromise, culture loss and "contamination" (Nadasdy 2005:293). Regardless of fit, First Nations concerns and practices are subject to the comprehension and scrutiny of the dominant structures. Their 'authenticity' is under constant question and critical imbalances of understanding and acceptance are lost in discourses of resource development, economics and environment that, although they may provide avenues for change, do so in a limited way that often perpetuates these 'common-sense' notions of identity (Nadasdy 2002). Frames that either denigrate or valorize the actions and interests of First Nations peoples take for granted both the apparent blank space from which frames are cast, and also a "vertical topography of power" that acts upon people as it becomes their 'commonsense' (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Media frames operate in a manner similar to the way Ferguson and Gupta describe the taken for granted authority of the state. They write,

The point is not that this picture of the "up there" state is false (still less that there is no such thing as political hierarchy, generality of interest, etc.), but that it is constructed; the task is not to denounce a false ideology, but to draw attention to the social and imaginative processes through which state verticality is made effective and authoritative. (2002:983)

Drawing out dominant themes in media representations not only illustrates the histories that shape these depictions, but also the contemporary circumstances that maintain them.

### Popular Imagery and Policy

The 'face' of First Nations communities has critical implications for how policy is implemented and how projects, like large-scale mineral extraction, are carried out. Global economic drivers have created open markets that necessitate a government demand for certainty within the resource sector to guarantee investment (Blackburn 2005). This certainty relates to having undisputed access to land and resources for development by corporate interests and becomes considerably 'uncertain' when First Nations announce claims and rights to the areas in question (Blackburn 2005).

Concerns over resource scarcity have led corporations back to the North America from their move to 'Third World' countries that have lower environmental regulations and therefore less costly extraction rates. As Gedicks writes regarding the motivation behind multinational mining corporation's plans in Indigenous territories, like TML in the Chilcotin, "...the scramble for the world's remaining energy and mineral resources continues to fall heavily upon native lands in the advanced capitalist countries" (1993:40). Thus the pressure on governments to resolve disputes over land are critical to an economic success that is heavily reliant on overseas investment and large scale, high profit resource extraction.

To be competitive within the neoliberal market system and to stabilize a shaky economy, the federal and provincial governments are intent on securing access and

ease for development projects (Goulet 2010). This drive has resulted in numerous cases brought before the Canadian Courts by First Nations communities to protect and defend their traditional territories. In British Columbia, where the vast majority did not sign treaties, these cases are making remarkable precedents in how First Nations represent themselves in relation to the land and its resources (Blackburn 2005), as exemplified in the aforementioned *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* case.

Most of the rhetorical examples highlighted here, ones that seem to be infused with grades of 'common-sense' knowledge and taken as some form of 'truth' were presented through media outlets. The role that the media plays, and the way in which it is often perceived as both authoritative and somehow neutral or objective, has a remarkable effect on the way that certain forms of knowledge are disseminated and thus become held as popular (Champagne 1999). The informed and informing nature of the media is a dynamic component of conversations wherein the media provides information in certain ways; Champagne writes,

. . . the media act on the spur of the moment and collectively fabricate a social representation that, even when it is rather distant from reality, persists despite subsequent denials or later corrections because, quite often, it merely reinforces spontaneous interpretation and hence mobilizes prejudice and thereby magnifies them. (1999:47)

Thus, the frames that shape media portrayals of both First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples responding to large scale resource development projects are at once loaded with history and loading history; they perpetuate their relevancy through consistency, visibility, and assumed normalcy.

The *Williams Lake Tribune* has been highly criticized following their coverage of the Prosperity mine controversy. The editorials have been, and were especially in the months leading up the hearings and prior to public criticism, unquestionably supportive of the mine. While editorials are opinion pieces the bias seemed to be reflected in the coverage of panel proceedings and was weighted in TML's favour. The *Tribune*'s one-sided coverage failed to present the complexity of the issue but also left history, as it has effected First Nations communities, out of the picture; as Harding writes,

While devoting considerable attention to reporting on the extreme circumstances in which many contemporary aboriginal people live – poverty, alcoholism, crime, and suicide – news media simultaneously eschew any analysis of the socio-political context of these living conditions and the impact of Canada's long history of colonialism on aboriginal people. By unhinging the present from the past in its coverage of contemporary aboriginal issues, the news media perpetuate damaging stereotypes of aboriginal people and create a supportive environment for state structures and practices that reproduce material and social inequality between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people (2006:296).

The paper was viewed by many in the surrounding communities as instrumental in polarizing the issue and providing the fodder for stereotypes to become emblazoned in the minds of some and for misrepresentation to burden others.

The proposed Prosperity mine project has brought to light the way in which preconceptions related to First Nations identity have become entrenched both within dominant structures and local prejudice. Uncovering the generalities that have been assigned to a diverse population exposes the histories that have shaped these understandings as well as the structures that perpetuate them. The imposition of



colonialism upon First Nations in Canada, shaped by frames of a glorified individualism, development as perpetual industrial growth, and resource extraction as a national and even universal good, is entrenched in a premise of superiority rooted in the social constructs of scientific 'fact'. This is continuing to weigh heavily, and unequally, on those who have already suffered substantially.

Regardless of how 'post-colonial' Canada may espouse itself to be, there are considerable tensions laying beneath the surface, and when conflict arises, as in the case of Fish Lake, prejudice and stereotypes become starkly visible. Frames of representation taken for granted as universal come into focus as issues arise that force people to identify – or find themselves unable to identify – within them. It is critical that misconceptions not become internalized, or further entrenched as 'common' knowledge, that they not serve to limit people based on reified perceptions of identity or confine them to essentialized roles by negating rights outside of them. To many opposed to TML's mine Fish Lake is not just one lake; it is a site where people invoke other lakes, mines, conflicts, relationships, to comment on the breadth of complexity, that for which the lake acts as a symbol.

The lake is neither solely a lake, but rather a place imbued with the history of the lands it sits upon and the people who have acted upon those lands. This issue carries with it the conflicts over resources that have occurred throughout the world, that people draw from to frame their own position on this project, as well as the local histories that have shaped how events related to this mine continue to unfold. While the media is powerful it cannot make a victim of the Tsilhqot'in or the many people who have been misrepresented under its gaze, rather it becomes an example of what

the perception of ‘status quo’ is; the blatant bias can, on a positive note, unintentionally fuel the creation of alternatives through its alienation of diverse players.

### **‘Redneck’ Images: Williams Lake as Pro-‘Prosperity’**

First Nations peoples were not the only ones delegated a ‘side’ in the debates over TML’s Prosperity project. Aligning interests to ethnicity silenced not only First Nations people who may have been in support of the project, but also non-Aboriginal peoples who were against it. Project proponents capitalized on a vision of Williams Lake as a population of homogenous support for economic stimulus, weighing costs to environment against employment and finding in favour of industry. Bylines that read ‘Aboriginals and pro-development groups are on a collision course as they await decision on \$800-million B.C. mining project’ (Stueck 2010), coupled with vocal support for the project from the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, the City of Williams Lake and the *Williams Lake Tribune*, as well as the aforementioned media generalizations, created the perception that local non-Aboriginal peoples were backing this project without question. As a *Globe and Mail* reporter wrote in September of 2010, “The Prosperity Mine may bring prosperity, but it also brings the very worst of divisions: of the West against the rest; native against non-native; environmentalists against entrepreneurs” (Ibbitson 2010).

This exacerbated perception of division obscured the diversity of the opposition (as will be discussed in depth in a following chapter regarding Panel testimonies) and the common ground between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples that needs to be recognized in rural communities, and perpetuates aspects of

‘difference’ that create inequality rather than understanding (Escobar 2006). I do not intend to imply a sameness of all parties involved in this issue, or a naivety that does not see the limitations of what may be common ground founded on different values, but I do believe there is a need to recognize the positive relationships and understandings between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples that are strong in the Cariboo-Chilcotin yet often go uncelebrated. It is clear from my own experience and research in Williams Lake that the opposition did not conform to city limits or to Aboriginal ethnicity. The potential for these media spun images to become self-fulfilling prophecies is concerning. They obstruct avenues towards change within Williams Lake that are visible on the ground, and that present an opportunity towards sustaining improved relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples.

The image of non-Aboriginal people from Williams Lake area as “pro at all costs” development has its foundations in the same rhetoric that trumpets the interests of ‘hard working Canadians’ as a fairness at the heart of resource development projects. The prospect of jobs in the Cariboo-Chilcotin is an undeniable sell to a region that has been hit hard by the economic downturn and has had its once profitable forest industry critically weakened by the mountain pine beetle. TML promises not only employment in the region but life-support for William Lake’s industrial heart and, of course, prosperity. Newspaper headlines clearly expressed the benefits potential from this project’s approval and the juxtaposition of economics against ecology. A few examples, for instance, read “Report: Prosperity Could Mean Hundreds of Jobs for Forestry Workers” (2009), “Donna Barnett: Prosperity in the

Region” (2010)<sup>2</sup>, “Prosperity Would Generate \$388 Million in GDP Each Year” (2010), “Business Leaders Ask Conservative Government to Approve Prosperity Mine (Smith 2010), and “Debate Over Mine Pits Jobs Against Environment” (2010).

### **Politicians and ‘Prosperity’**

It is critical to note the role of local, provincial, and federal politicians in support of TML’s project, a seemingly clear indication of the Canadian government’s (at least the government’s right leaning conservative representatives) propensity for alignment with the interests of industry. Non-Aboriginal advocates of the gold-copper project carried the sole argument of economics throughout debates over the project. These arguments became the face of non-Aboriginal interests in the lands west of Williams Lake. In an era where topics of sustainability and economic diversification curry public favour, proponents of a mine with a 20-33 year life span somehow managed to incorporate these aspects of popular consciousness, apparently at odds with the project, into their platform. The rhetoric of this process has been fascinating and has had significant impact on shaping public perception framed as a ‘national interest’ (Henry and Tator 2002).

In January of 2010, prior to the start of the federal CEAA panel hearings, the province of British Columbia approved TML’s Prosperity project through its own environmental assessment process. Highly criticized by project opposition (both for its lack of consultation with First Nations and because it does not address significant factors under federal jurisdiction; fisheries, for example) this approval reflected the

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<sup>2</sup> Donna Barnett, also responsible for an ‘I ♥ Prosperity’ ad campaign in the WL Tribune, is the Cariboo-Chilcotin’s Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of BC.

political will promoting mineral development and became a foundational argument for those hoping for a speedy federal approval. Visibly non-Aboriginal politicians were at the front of the vocal advocacy for this project's success. Led by then premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell (and taken up by current premier Christy Clark), and backed by regional politicians MLA Donna Barnett and MP Dick Harris, as well as Mayor of Williams Lake Kerry Cook, those seen as leaders of non-Aboriginal populations quite obviously favoured the project.

The mining industry in British Columbia, among other projects related to natural resource development in Canada, has taken full advantage of its position within the dominant and normative construct of Western thought that promotes development as a common goal for all people (Harvard Law 2010, Escobar 1991). Rooted in a history wherein the end goal of humankind is 'civilization' – an often undefined term that seems to encompass and promote industry, development, and a glorified idea of humankind's power over the land and its resources – these projects are justified in terms of economics and a well-being that is directly related to an apparent 'healthy economy'. This economy is thus directly related to consumption and a capitalist ideal (Darnell 2008). Those who may not share this ideal are often at the mercy of both the provincial and federal governments, themselves heavily dependant on and indebted to global capital and neoliberal pressures and reliant on the resources unearthed in traditional territories and rural communities (Larsen 2003).

This history of boom and bust, hardship and perseverance, and the necessity of industry shaped the experience of the colonial encounter. These are prominent motifs in the process of identification for many within the non-Aboriginal population,

especially those in resource 'dependent' areas. This historic identification with resource development and economic dependence has shaped the platform of those who adamantly support the proposed gold and copper development, and express environmental concerns as a necessary 'risk' and see First Nations claims as compromising the greater wealth of the entire area (Battison 2010). Mining has served in the construction of identities in multiple ways. While it may be, in certain forms, something that is implicated by people as a contravention of respectful relationships to the land, it is taken up by others as a direct connection to the non-Aboriginal settlement of the region. It was the gold rush of the 1850s and 1860s that led to the creation of a British colony so far west in the newly explored territory; it was mining that saw the formation of stopping posts that subsequently turned into towns and provided the means for settlers to establish themselves in this 'new' world (Turkel 2007).

There is no question that a 'frontier ethic' exists in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and influences the ways in which non-Aboriginal residents identify; I do not believe, however, that it is non-negotiable or fatalistic. In separating First Nations peoples from 'Canadians' through the alignment of non-Aboriginal interests with resource development, the agency of the individual to assert their own identity appears pre-determined. Project proponents clearly employ rhetoric that is echoed by news media and which typecasts those involved in opposition to projects touted as beneficial to the mainstream (Henry and Tator 2002, Banerjee 2000). In the context of TML's Prosperity, and exemplified earlier in this paper by Natural Resource Minister Joe Oliver's comments regarding the Northern Gateway pipeline opposition, the image

given to environmental organizations is consistent with stereotypical frames that promote dominant interests through subtle rhetoric.

### **‘Radicals’, ‘Outsiders’, and the Role of Environmentalists**

There is a clear indication in the media surrounding the controversy over TML’s gold-copper project that while First Nations front the opposition they are supported by environmental organizations. This may be true, but the designations invoke imagery that needs to be unpacked. Examples of the groups that have been involved in the CEAA proceedings, and that have been instrumental in harnessing broader public attention for this issue and the funding required for recruiting (and paying for) the scientific experts necessary to refute TML’s own set of ‘facts’, include: the Sierra Club, the Council of Canadians, Mining Watch Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Western Canadian Wilderness Committee, the Dogwood Initiative, and Friends of Nemaiah Valley. Local Cariboo-Chilcotin groups include (but are not limited to): the Williams Lake Field Naturalists, the Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society, and a local Williams Lake Chapter of the Council of Canadians. There are also many people, as became clear in the presentations made to the review Panel in 2010, who are not associated with a particular group yet who have concerns for the environment at the heart of their opposition to the proposed mine.

Natural Resources Minister Oliver’s recent comments create an image of environmentalists as ‘radicals’ intent on impoverishing regular Canadians by maintaining opposition to every form of industrial development corporations or the government comes up with; ignoring the fact that the majority of these organizations are Canadian and hold a membership of Canadians. Oliver’s words effectively set

these alternate interests outside of the average hard-working Canadian and vilifies them as the puppets of undefined ‘foreign interest groups’. This is consistent with the same frameworks of categorization that have set First Nations interests and concerns outside of those of Canada’s ‘national identity’ (Henry and Tator 2002:232). The tidy compartmentalization of opposition into First Nations and environmental organizations creates a means for, at least locally, project proponents to mobilize a rural argument against the interference of ‘outsiders’.

### ‘Rent-a-Crowd Types’

Clearly the Tsilhqot’in are not outsiders in their territories, and many have picked up on the irony that Williams Lake, 125 kilometers away from the proposed mine site, has become the forefront of debates over this project: its newspaper a conduit for TML’s advocates to disdain the involvement of urban, meddling outsiders (environmental organizations), and its politicians and business leaders promoting their interests over those who will actually live with the mine in their backyards. Tom Fletcher, columnist for Black Press and BCLocalnews.com (of which the *Williams Lake Tribune* is a subsidiary and publisher of syndicated content from these sources), engaged the rural/urban divide that exists in Cariboo-Chilcotin in an article from January 2010 entitled “Ottawa Make-Work Costs Real Jobs”; in the article, referring to the CEAA Panel hearing process, he effectively sums up the perceived division between opposition and support for TML’s mine, writing,

Professional environmentalists and the more obstructionist aboriginal groups love these delays, and work day and night to compound them. They don't want B.C. to have any more mines, or pipelines, or power projects. They apparently want B.C.'s vast hinterland to depend entirely on



taxpayer-funded welfare, supplemented with politically correct public works like hiking trails, all paid for with money borrowed against those of us still lucky enough to work in the private sector, our children and grandchildren. (2010:08)

While in some communities faced with controversial resource development projects First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples have come together as rurally marginalized peoples to rally against potential negative effects (Larsen 2003), in the case of ‘Prosperity’ it seems that the rural/urban tension was better used to divide people. Dean Fulton and Walt Cobb, both regular columnists for the *Williams Lake Tribune*, also engaged the rural/urban divide in their opinion pieces following the 2010 CEAA hearings. Cobb repeatedly referred to those involved in opposition to the mine, and in attendance at the Panel hearings, as the “rent-a-crowd and high priced help” (2010d:06). The former mayor of Williams Lake emphasized this ‘interference’ throughout his columns covering the hearings; writing in February of 2010, prior to the start of the hearings, Cobb notes,

I have heard the Council of Canadians, the Sierra Club, and Mining Watch from Ontario have funded and possibly accompanied the First Nations groups to travel to Ottawa to make their case for preventing the Prosperity mine from going forward. They are poisoning themselves against those who need to feed their families and prefer to do it by having a job here in Williams Lake. (2010b:01)

And again in March, after the first few days of Panel hearings, Cobb writes,

What appears to be happening in our region is a flash back of the 1990s when we were in the land-use planning process. At that time there were many outside interests allowed at the negotiating table and the discussions broke down. Up until that time we got along as neighbours — whether we were rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, native chief — until outsiders tried to tell us how we should operate and do business.

Then it was a different lot, or at least the names have changed, but I am told they are many of the same rent-a-crowd types. Within 90 days of getting rid of the outsiders the people of the Cariboo came to an agreement. In the Prosperity process we have the Council of Canadians, Sierra Club, Friends of Nemaiah, from Victoria, Mining Watch from back east, which are opposed to any mining. These groups are all suggesting those in favour of the mine are not concerned about the environmental impact and have undertones of racism. (2010c:6)

The ability to balance apparently contradictory stances – the frame of equal rights and national (outside) interest simultaneous with a disdain for ‘outside’ interference of oppositional interests – illustrates the embeddedness of these frames and the inability of many to recognize them. Fulton carries on with the denigration of ‘outsiders’ apparently interfering with an issue that does not concern them. In his own opinion column Fulton takes issue with the female students from a University of Victoria Environmental Sciences class who had come to the hearings to present in opposition to the project along with their professor. He writes,

We also got a free lesson about the importance of an education. The ‘Environmental Science’ students from UVIC who took time out from their obviously important lives to grace the panel with their wisdom, spoke in favour of showing the film ‘Blue Gold ...something along the lines of “It’s not, like, a movie, like, it’s like a documentary, like it’s not scripted and, like, it’s very powerful, and like should be shown and what about, like, the deaf people...?”’ The two young women who approached the panel for this moving, articulate speech sounded much more like legendary Ms. Teen South Carolina, Lauren Upton, than educated university students. Sincerely, ladies, thanks for coming all this way and proving to all us simple rubes here in the Cariboo, that your publicly funded, post secondary education is preparing you so well to lead our great nation into the future. It really put my mind at ease. (2010a:06)

Efforts to narrow this issue as ‘local’ disregard the double standard this strategy

invokes. Residents from outside the Nemiah Valley have certainly considered themselves stakeholders in these discussions, despite their relatively urban context (those from Williams Lake) and distance from the mine site. It also assumes that Taseko Mines Limited, their investors and shareholders, are also somehow local, a perception that TML has put significant effort into.

Taseko Mines Limited incorporated the rural ethic into its public relations efforts, consistently addressing the residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin in terms that both reflect and contribute to the popular image associated with rural Canadian identity. In CEO Brian Battison's initial address to the CEAA Panel he stated,

In this city, there exists a population of some 11,000 citizens. You will find them to be sturdy, industrious, and self-reliant. In the region of the Cariboo, there are some 65,000 people just like them, capable, hard-working people going about their daily lives, working at their businesses, contributing to the community. The economic foundation of this area of Canada was first laid back in the 1860s during the Cariboo Gold Rush. Today, 150 years later, that same spirit of enterprise and discovery continues. You will learn that Williams Lake is a proud community. You will see that pride in the faces of the people you will meet today and in the days ahead. You will see it reflected in the homes they live in and in the families they raise. There exists within the communities of the Cariboo a history of living off the land and caring for the land, ranching, logging, forest manufacturing, mineral exploration, transportation, tourism and recreation. Taseko Mines is proud to be part of this community. (2010:68-69)

TML sees itself as a part of the community in the Cariboo-Chilcotin because of its ownership of the Gibraltar mine. Forty or so minutes northeast of Williams Lake the mine has been in operation since 2004 (TML purchased the mine in 1999; due to low copper prices the mine was closed from 1998-2004) and employs a significant number of people living in Williams Lake and area. Appealing to the pride of area

residents has been an effective mechanism for engaging support for this project, and it is feasible because of the way in which ‘popular’ imaging has been repeatedly framed through dominant news media, and by the dominant interests of resource development.

While the words of industry and local opinion pieces may not necessarily provide a direct indication of the bias of mainstream news media, it is in the normalcy of these commentaries, and the unquestioning of the stereotypes invoked by them, that these structures of perpetual prejudice have influence. Where the concerns of environmental organizations were not discredited as ‘outsiders’, they were generalized locally as the complaints of ‘retired school teachers’, those having benefited enough from the system to now lodge complaint with it from the comfort a stable pension makes possible. Following Cobb’s writing in the *Williams Lake Tribune* that suggests that “those of us who need work had better be prepared to take a little time from work to ensure there is “work” in the future” (2010b:01), TML’s CEO Brian Battison addressed the apparent face of local environmental concern, picked up by the *Tribune*; the paper states,

Battison also addressed retired residents and the Council of Canadians. "Let me assure those members of the Council of Canadians that we too care about the environment," he said. "Let the record show that we have put forth the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars to ensure that our engineering and the application of our technology results in the security of those things that are of concern to you. Through our work and investment, and through the employment we will provide and the economic stimulus we will generate, there will be wealth and stability created to help keep those pension funds from running dry due to a lack of economic progress and growth in this province." (MacInnis 2010:5)

This sentiment was invoked again in an open letter to the local newspaper wherein a resident wrote,

I note that some of the more negative letters have been from people who are at or near the end of their work lives. Over the years they have probably worked at productive jobs, bought houses, raised children to adulthood and are now, I hope, enjoying the fruits of their effort in the form of pensions, savings, etc. What gave these people the opportunity to achieve what they did was the development of the resources of this province and, in particular, the area we live in. Perhaps living in a town with three working lumber mills within its boundaries did not look very attractive but it sure paid the bills. (Menzies 2010:7)

And again echoed by columnist Dean Fulton in a statement that again invokes a sense of who it is that has the privilege to be heard in Canada; he writes,

No one has been brainwashed by the Chamber of Commerce. Contrary to what many of the opponents have been told to believe by their own fervent gurus, left wing university professors and our beloved anti-government media, most of the supporters of Prosperity are free thinking people who just want to work. We understand that Fish Lake will be drained, and we have decided that we are OK with that. No need to dress it up. Polls show that 90 per cent of Canadians are against using lakes for tailings ponds. Duh. What are the other 10 per cent thinking? Having said that, over 90 per cent of the population also support employment, eating, shelter, social services, universal medical care, assistance for the elderly, etc. Many of these things are paid for by people who are working. Very little is paid for by people walking around with placards or sitting through endless hours of rhetoric at federal panel hearings. (2010b:6)

These views, I believe, are facilitated by the constant generalizations available through the news media that cordon off an ideal 'Canadian' image from any form of dissent, while also imbuing this image with the characteristics of hard work and independence that appeal to a resistant pioneer ethic and the glorified Tim Horton's

redneck that exists better as a symbol than in the lived experience of a diverse society.

As O'Connell writes, "The resurgence of the redneck demonstrates how liberal whiteness and frontier narratives remain in the popular imagination as good, clean, Canadian family fun" (2010:557). I believe also that many non-Aboriginal peoples in rural areas see through these categorizations and live their lives outside them.

## Conclusion

The portrayal of First Nations and environmental organizations as outside of what is perceived as 'best for all citizens of the Cariboo-Chilcotin' (Carruthers 2010:8), alienating individuals and groups from each other, and exacerbating the lines of division, has been easily recognized throughout this process. That said, this portrayal need not be seen as deterministic; the media has also been a source for First Nations to engage with a broader public who may find sympathy or common interest in this issue, and for the engagement with environmental organizations who have the capacity and potential funds to negotiate a bureaucratic battle. It has been a place for those opposed to the project to write letters to have their concerns and views heard.

However, as Henry and Tator write,

Dominant codes and representations are difficult to overturn or subvert. Simply adding more positive images to the largely negative repertoire of dominant cultural representations does not necessarily soften the negative impact of the latter. The binary of *us* and *them* often remains in place. (2002:236, italics in original)

The commonplace separation of First Nations and non-Aboriginal interests in mainstream media, combined with the generalized perception that maintains a separation of nature and culture in settler society, became a frame of representation

that continually obscured the nuance of lived experience. Even articles that took a different perspective still predominantly conformed to the ‘sides’ that were the most visible: First Nations, environmentalist, and settler.

The trend in media coverage has repeatedly adopted the stereotypes and preconceptions of identity I have mentioned throughout this section. It took an alternative forum to draw out the diversity that the opposition to TML’s project truly encompassed. This became remarkably clear when the Panel hearings began in Williams Lake and area residents took the opportunity to blur the polarity expected and exacerbated by the news media, as I explore in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5 – A Forum for Alternatives: The CEAA Hearings**

In the spring of 2010, amidst the din of mainstream media threatening to exacerbate tensions within an ethnically polarized community, the people of the Cariboo-Chilcotin found a means to have their voices heard and recorded without the filter of popular bias. In the following section I explore these voices to illustrate the diversity of opposition that formed around TML's proposed project and the ways in which both First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples broke through the perceptions of identity commonly ascribed to them. Residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin were able to circumscribe the frames that media had assumed representative of local concern. The CEAA forum made those in opposition visible to one another as well as to the general public; it laid the groundwork to re-think the commonsense ideas around the relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples in a rural community, and changed the face of opposition from a stereotype to a diverse and powerful force with which to reckon.

### **CEAA Review**

TML's proposed Prosperity project began the process of a two-year Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency review in late October 2008. This began with the release of draft guidelines for TML's required Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and draft terms of reference for the establishment of a Federal Review Panel; the general public was given thirty days to provide commentary on these guidelines. Following this, the public were provided an opportunity to apply for funding to engage in the review process; a period of time to provide commentary on the EIS



once it had been submitted by the proponent; and an opportunity to attend, through the summer and fall of 2009, local information sessions regarding the EIS.

On January 19, 2009 the project was officially referred to a panel comprised of three independent individuals, appointed to their positions by then Environment Minister to the federal government Jim Prentice because of their significant experience with resource industries, environmental assessment, and natural resource management (CEAA 2010b). On February 2, 2010 the Panel concluded that TML had provided them with sufficient information in regards to their EIS and that public hearing sessions would begin in the Cariboo-Chilcotin in late March.

The public hearing sessions consisted of three components: general sessions (held in Williams Lake), community sessions (held throughout the Cariboo, and in particular, the Chilcotin), and topic specific sessions (again held in Williams Lake). Participants were required to submit a request to present at any of these sessions approximately two weeks prior to their commencement. This process began in late March and finished in early May, resulting in 35 volumes of hearing transcripts, a plethora of written comments submitted by both the public concerned by this project and the federal organizations involved in its review, and a considerable amount of documentation provided both by the proponent and the Panel.

As discussed in Chapter 2 a complete review of this entire body of information stretches beyond the scope of my thesis research, and I endeavoured to review the documentation in a manner consistent with my research intentions. Particularly I focused on the material that presented an alternative to the media-projected attributes of ethnic identity in the Cariboo-Chilcotin; I looked to see where First Nations and

non-Aboriginal peoples spoke outside the generalities ascribed to them, and where they spoke in recognition both of each other and of a common future.

Debate and controversy over this project reached its height in the days leading up to the general hearing sessions held in Williams Lake. Editorials in the local newspapers beseeched project supporters to attend the sessions and make clear to the Panel the need for the mine in the local community. Both support and opposition to the mine waged letter-writing campaigns both to CEAA and local, provincial and federal politicians. Tensions were high in the city as the polarity emphasized by the local news media made the prospect of gathering all parties together worrisome. Because Williams Lake had come to represent support for the project, and because it was in the city that testimony ranged the most in variety, it is within the Panel hearings held in the city that I primarily focused my review. That being said there were significant testimonies heard at the community sessions that have blurred the boundaries of for-against categories in meaningful ways, and I have reviewed those statements to augment the focus of this research.

#### Palpable Tension on March 22, 2010

The opening day of public hearing sessions in Williams Lake saw the culmination of controversial build up to the CEAA review and the start of what many saw as a potential conclusion to this ongoing debate between area residents. Those in support of the project mobilized their networks to communicate the need for economic stimulus in the region, coupled with an urgency to secure investment in the area and evidenced by unemployment rates and crime statistics. Opposition to the project harnessed support from environmental and First Nations organizations from

within the Cariboo-Chilcotin and from further a field. Grand Chief Stewart Philip, president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and Chairman of the Okanagan Nation Alliance was in attendance, as were representatives from the Council of Canadians, Mining Watch Canada, the Western Canadian Wilderness Committee, and the aforementioned University of Victoria Environmental Sciences class.

A rally/protest was organized outside the downtown recreation centre where the first few days of the hearings were held; those opposed to the project held signs of written protest and spoke their concerns prior to marching through the streets of Williams Lake. Approximately fifty or so people, a collection of both First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, local and non-local, made up this march that ended at the offices of the Tsilhqot'in National Government. Participating in this march, I was certainly aware that it was the first protest I had ever been involved in within the city of Williams Lake, and we joked at how the police officer attempting to strategically block intersections ahead of us with his car was surely engaging the techniques he had gleaned from watching Hawaii 5-0 (not to indicate that the local RCMP are unfamiliar with crime, but rather with organized protest)<sup>3</sup>. It was the first of what would be many powerful statements on who the opposition were and how involved in that opposition people were willing to be. That said, support for the project was also strong in the city, and there were remarkable instances of support-opposition tension that permeated those first days of public hearings.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted within this anecdote that the first business of the Tsilhqot'in National Government, when involved in organized protest, is to notify the RCMP. The officers referred to above were on duty to keep peace and had been alerted to the event through advance meetings with Tsilhqot'in Chiefs.

Interactions between those opposed and those supporting TML's mine were primarily contained to the hearing room, where people had no choice but to sit amongst each other and listen. The hearings began with moment of clear animosity that echoed a 1980s interaction between the Canadian federal government and Canada's First Peoples. Following the opening prayer and drumming by local Secwepemc and Tsilhqot'in people, a member of the audience stood to announce that they would like to sing the national anthem, O Canada. While this may sound like a benign sharing of custom, in a tense room of high stakes discussion it was a notably political gesture.

In the early 1980s, following the patriation of the 1982 Constitution Act, Pierre Trudeau chaired a series of conferences on the Constitutional Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. It was in these Crown-centric meetings, attended by representatives of Canada's Metis, Inuit and First Nations peoples, that Trudeau initiated the Lord's prayer to overlap the prayer of the Indigenous peoples in attendance, an act mobilizing the 'equal rights' platform that ignores uneven starting points (Keefer 2010). Imbued with similar sentiment, the national anthem became a confrontational gesture at the start of the CEAA hearings, an act reaffirming the separation of this issue as one of 'Canadians' versus, essentially, 'others', be those First Nations peoples or the 'radicals' associated with environmental advocacy (although this discourse of 'radicals' emerged more recently with the Northern Gateway pipeline project, the sentiment is longstanding).

Neglecting the histories that have marginalized Indigenous peoples, members of the project's support demanded tit-for-tat attention from the Panel; this began with

the anthem gesture and was quickly followed by a request, by the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, to be able to show a film should the Tsilhqot'in be allowed to show the film *Blue Gold*, a piece about Fish Lake and the Xeni Gwet'in's connection to it. It did not appear, at that particular moment, that the Chamber had a film they had planned on showing, but rather that they were playing an 'equality' game to ensure no one had the upper hand. This effort echoes the perceptions, yet again, of First Nations peoples having undeserved allowances given them by the state and has been reflected in similar confrontations across Canada.

In an article regarding land disputes in Caledonia, Ontario, wherein a leader of 'anti-native protestors', Gary McHale, based his campaign against local First Nations land claims on the U.S. civil rights movement, the author notes,

In claiming 'equal rights' for all under Canadian law, and in framing the issue as one of 'two-tiered justice' in which Native people are coddled by state authorities while non-Natives are 'terrorized' by violent 'land claim terrorists,' McHale manages to turn the tables on Indigenous people who are, in fact, the true victims of the 'two-tiered' Canadian law enforcement system, and to evade charges of racism by claiming to stand in support of unbiased and universal standards of justice. (Keefer 2010:81)

This perspective, mobilizing a frame of 'equal rights', was taken somewhat as a given amongst the framing of support for TML's project in Williams Lake. It set the initial tone of division at the beginning of the Panel hearings but was soon negated by the overwhelming testimony unconvinced and unrepresented by the dominant rhetoric of for-or-against development, or for-or-against each other.

In the following sections I illustrate, through the substantial public record, the way in which the CEAA Review Panel hearings provided an opportunity for the status

quo in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, heavy industry and strained relationships, to be questioned, for people to voice their concerns without the predetermined filter (or ‘frames’) of media bias, and for communication and collaboration to become unveiled from the perception of division and conflict. First Nations peoples were able to speak on behalf of themselves and define their concerns as individuals and as community members, and the area’s non-Aboriginal populations were able to do the same. With significant fundraising and coordination efforts First Nations and environmental organizations were able to bring forward the science that disputed the ‘facts’ provided by the proponent; without the opportunity of the hearings this information would have neither been seen nor heard.

In the first few days of hearings the myth of ethnic polarization picked up by local media, at least in the room where the panel and public met, began to lose currency. Despite their limitations, the hearings were a place for First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples to come together in a social space, to listen to each other, and to be heard as people rather than perceptions. I begin in alignment with the media analysis presented in the previous chapter of this thesis, firstly, to examine how voices represented themselves in this public, though unfamiliar, forum, to effectively combat and disprove the dominant media representations. This began with the Tsilhqot’in and other First Nations clearly defining their opposition to this project, not as an opposition to ‘development’ as a homogenous entity, and not as opposition to the ‘well-being’ of non-Aboriginal peoples.

## Undoing Stereotypes: First Nations' Voices

The CEAA hearings were far from a best-case scenario for those opposed to TML's project who had to engage with a very unfamiliar process to effectively be heard by the federal government. The government, of course, retains the authority to decide whether or not they listen, not only to the people who spoke during the hearings, but to the Panel itself whose duty it is to critically evaluate the potential environmental effects of such a project. This is incorporated into bureaucratic terms of 'justifiability'. If it is found that the significant adverse effects reported by the Panel are "justifiable in the circumstances" then, as according to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (S.C. 1992, c.37) "the responsible authority may exercise any power or perform any duty or function that would permit the project to be carried out in whole or in part." Infused with formality and bureaucracy, the hearings were an experience that not many in the Cariboo-Chilcotin have familiarity with.

The process reflects a structure that takes for granted its foundations in hegemony, and while it does allow for the diversity of cultures and practice that Canada lauds itself as embodying, it still demands a transparency that, intentionally or not, seems also to emphasize the western 'truths' found in an apparently objective science over the knowledge held by the people living throughout the territories slated for destruction. In letter to the *Williams Lake Tribune* in the third week of hearings, former Chief Ervin Charleyboy addressed the imposition of the hearings, writing,

The Tsilhqot'in Nation people have been monitoring a long series of dog-and-pony shows to prop up development of the proposed Prosperity Project gold mine that will wreak havoc deep in our traditional territory. The so-called

environmental review process has been dominated by cheerleaders from Williams Lake business and political interests. But that process was imposed on us. We have been obligated to attend tedious meetings to avoid losing by default, but we have our own agenda. That is to make sure that all vested interests in railroading this mine and its certain disastrous disruptions and damage to our land and people will only go ahead under our approval. That approval means we call the shots on our turf, and imposed deadlines and conditions by mercenary outsiders will be blocked unless our terms are met. We have seen desecration of our land, forests, and wildlife over the past 150 years while we were held hostage in concentration camp model “reservations.” Never again. The resolve of the nation is absolute about this. So don’t expect a pushover to plunder and steal our resource for your short-term gain. (2010:7)

Despite these limitations, the hearings provided a space in the Cariboo-Chilcotin for people to be heard, to speak against the polarization portrayed by news media, and to effectively make the process work for them, rather than them for it. The Panel members were recognized as human, and everyone knew that despite the demands of transparency the final report would need (in terms of hydrology, ecology, etc.) the three Panel members to take into consideration the stories, emotions, science and culture presented to them. Pending further budgetary cuts that may restrict the agency’s effectiveness (the federal government projects a 43% cut to CEAA’s budget in 2012-2013) (Guttormsson 2011), it will remain a forum where, at the very least, the public record will retain the voices of the public and make visible their concerns.

So people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin participated, and the Tsilhqot’in especially, throughout the months of the hearings. Through the opening statements of Tsilhqot’in chiefs and ongoing presentations by staff and community members, the stereotypes presented in the media continually lost ground. Clear amongst this was



the Tsilhqot'in stance on development, the relationship of culture, tradition, land, and economy, and the role of Aboriginal rights and title within current debates over land and resources.

### Development and a Holistic Economy

As mentioned earlier in a quote by Chief Percy Guichon, it became clear in the Panel hearings that Tsilhqot'in leaders are not opposed to development as per the comments of former mayor Walt Cobb or TML's statements around the inflexibility of views attributed to those leaders. Rather, development and the local economy was an integral component of the statements raised, in conversation with the ecological and cultural tenets held by the Tsilhqot'in and other First Nations peoples speaking in opposition to this project. This sentiment was emphasized by Crystal Verhaeghe, executive director of the Tsilhqot'in National Government, presenting at the general hearings in regards to the TNG's economic development; she stated,

We understand why so many people are so angry at this issue. It seems as though the Tsilhqot'in are not interested in business. It seems as though we do not share the same values. This is not true... We recognize that Williams Lake is searching for an industry to resolve the diversity problem that it has, but there are many other options for economic development besides the mine... The Tsilhqot'in People are interested in pursuing new opportunities in business only if there's an environmentally sensitive approach to respecting the land and the resources. In keeping the air, water and land clean... (2010:1083-1084, 1085-1086)

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, in attendance at the first week of Panel hearings, also spoke to this point in his address to the Panel members. He noted,

... and the resources that the Tsilhqot'in draw from the land and waters in the area where the mine Project (and associated roads and power transmission lines) will be sited cannot be understated. The area supports their traditional land based economy of the people. These deeply significant cultural and economic losses cannot be compensated, they impact upon the livelihood, well-being and health of the Indigenous Peoples... An economic analysis looks solely at the limited economic benefits to industry or the region while ignoring the economic and biodiversity cost to the Indigenous Peoples, including to indigenous salmon stocks, is impoverished and incomplete. The potential of the mining Project to destroy the traditional economy and livelihood of Indigenous Peoples is equally a part of the impact of the mining Project that must be considered. (2010: 921,928-929)

Through these statements, and the many others like them that have been recorded onto the public record, the Tsilhqot'in were able to situate their concerns within the lived balance between culture and economy. They were able to clearly indicate the connectivity of multiple aspects of importance to communities, blurring the defined lines between past and present, tradition and modernity, ecology and economy. Through these statements they were able to indicate both a historic and contemporary need for holistic systems that work for people negotiating enmeshed worlds, 'traditional' and 'modern', economic and environmental. They showed that there need not be an all or nothing approach to projects of this nature (Lutz 2008, Glavin 1992). As Chief Guichon states,

Wouldn't we rather have a mine that lasts for 100 years instead of 20 years? It seems to me that Taseko wants to go in and extract as much as they can as fast as they can in order to satisfy the shareholders' bottom line at the expense of the environment. And, more importantly, at the expense of Tsilhqot'in First Nations cultural spiritual values... In Taseko's Opening Statements this morning it was mentioned that TNG Chiefs are inflexible in their views. I'm just a newly elected chief. I haven't met Taseko, so I

can't say how they can assume that I'm being inflexible. Also, I haven't heard how Taseko plans to help our members. They were speaking about job opportunities earlier today. But there was no mention of what type of jobs or in what capacity they were going to involve Tsilhqot'in First Nations. Are you going to give us burger-flipping jobs in the camp? Or are you going to give us some real wealth by sharing revenues and sharing in the monitoring of environmental impacts? (2010: 166-167)

In communicating their views on how development might take place in local communities, and how that needs to be in balance with concerns for the environment and cultural elements, Tsilhqot'in leaders were able to speak not only to the Panel, but also to those in attendance at the hearings, those who may have not had the opportunity to hear a chief speak to economics before, or to hear how histories frame these contemporary dialogues and can not be compartmentalized to the past. The purpose of this study, however, is not to re-present the voices of First Nations peoples. It is, rather, to illustrate the way in which the news media can exacerbate and perpetuate stereotypes through its portrayal of 'popular will', and also to indicate the forum for alternatives that the CEAA process provided.

In the Panel hearings, First Nations peoples were able to dispel the stereotypes that typecast Indigenous identity in Canada. I hope that drawing out these stereotypes brings one to question their foundations, and at once, question the very nature of what we (as 'settlers') hold as 'common sense'. That said, the focus of this section is not wholly on the way in which First Nations peoples spoke to their concerns about TML's project, but also to how non-Aboriginal peoples in Williams Lake stood outside of the redneck caricature to voice their opposition to this project and, in many cases, to support the Tsilhqot'in.

Debate over TML's proposed gold-copper project has created a moment within a space of shared histories, experiences, interactions, to question and re-think our status quo, our 'created' commonsense. As Scott writes,

By creating, I do not mean making things up, but rather constructing them as legitimate and coherent objects of knowledge. Construction is a complex process that takes place according to standards of coherence and intelligibility that are widely diffused and usually unarticulated (they function as a kind of disciplinary "common sense") except in moments of crisis... when intense conflict breaks consensus, when change threatens or is accomplished, when public scrutiny intensifies... (2001:85)

It is in this moment, I believe, that there is opportunity to reshape negative interactions between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and to recognize the positive relationships, to make visible, and normalize, alternatives to the stereotypes that have framed past relationships and interactions, and to bring these alternatives outside of Panel transcripts into the lived experience of area residents.

### **The Diverse Voices of Opposition**

The lines drawn between pro-Prosperity groups and the alignment between First Nations and environmental organizations, that effectively argue from a standpoint separating the latter from both the national interest and the best interest of local, 'hard working', non-Aboriginal peoples, neglected a significant portion of Cariboo-Chilcotin residents who brought their concerns directly to the Panel.

This diverse list of opposition included First Nations organizations, both local governments and community members, Tsilhqot'in, Secwepemc, and Carrier, as well as other First Nations from across British Columbia, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, for example. The opposition also included those 'outside' environmental

organizations, Friends of Nemaiah Valley, the Western Canadian Wilderness Committee, and the Council of Canadians, and also those locally, the Williams Lake Field Naturalists, the Cariboo-Chilcotin Conservation Society, and a local chapter of the Council of Canadians (glossed as ‘retired school teachers’, as previously mentioned), among others.

The diversity then stretched beyond these organizations to include residents of Williams Lake and area, guide outfitters from the Chilcotin, health care professionals from the Nemiah Valley, and many others who found reason to voice their concerns for this project. In the first few days of hearings, when the tensions between for and against seemed, or were thought, to run along the First Nations/ non-Aboriginal boundary, or as for or against the economy, there came voices that resonated despite the dominant rhetoric of division.

#### Williams Lake For and Against

It is undeniable that the majority of support for TML’s proposed project, at least locally, is centered in Williams Lake. It is misperception however, to assume that there is not also opposition to the project within the city. When considering what to say in my own statement to the Panel, I felt it necessary to state that I was both born and raised in Williams Lake, that I was young (not a “retired school teacher,” as per media/proponent renditions of local opposition) and that I was opposed to TML’s mine. I do not think I was alone in feeling as though the option as to whether we participated in the hearings or not was taken away by the misrepresentation conveyed through the media; the blanketing of support for the project cast my interests alongside those I do not hold, and to remain silent was to let the image of rural, redneck, one-law-for-all prejudice be the face of Williams Lake.

Non-Aboriginal opposition to TML's project has been founded both in the potential for adverse environmental effects as well as in consideration for the concerns of local First Nations peoples, especially the Xeni Gwet'in. To many this project represents a system that is working neither for the environment nor for First Nations peoples. On the second evening of general sessions of Williams Lake, Federico Osorio, a University of British Columbia PhD student who, although not local, had been living in the area at the time of the hearings, spoke to both the uncertainty and certainty raised by the proposal; in the latter half of his presentation he stated,

... if the proposed Project is approved there are very few effects that can be known as certain. These are: Fish Lake will be destroyed in the preconstruction phase. First Nations will be told once again, your traditions are worthless, your values are irrelevant and your livelihood is up for sale. Over 50,000 fish will die. British Columbia will become the mining industry's latest and greatest whore. The life of a legal system resulting from thousands of years of creation will be terminated. And the community of Williams Lake will be torn asunder... The company has created a divisive and toxic atmosphere in Williams Lake by making an "either you're with us or against us" sales pitch...

The Cariboo is no stranger to mining projects. We have several examples of the long-term effects of unsustainable mining projects like the Prosperity Mine project. A quick visit to Barkerville, Quesnelle Forks and Hendricks Lake is a good reminder of one thing: In the long run, mining is an excellent source of revenue for the ghost town industry. Unfortunately, we have enough ghost towns in the Cariboo. In economically weak times such as the recession we are experiencing, the price of commodities like gold increases. Likewise, as soon as we leave the recession, the price of gold will drop once again. We experience times in which a panic-driven profiteering is a common practice...

... rest assured, you're not deciding whether this Project will go ahead or not. The decision to destroy Fish Lake is not in your hands, nor is it in the hands of the Provincial

Government or Federal Government nor in the hands of the courts. Whether the proposed mine is built or not is a decision that will be made by the people who inhabit the area in question. That is the Xeni Gwet'in will have the final decision on whether this project goes ahead or not...

Dear panel, let it be known that God, the Creator, will keep our land and lakes glorious and free. Weak hearts will never prosper on this land. This is a free nation. If Taseko does not like our rules or legislation, and our unbreakable will to ensure justice for all, you're welcome to leave. Beautiful British Columbia, Teztan Biny, Canada, and my dear Mother Earth, we stand on guard for thee. Thank you.  
(2010:604-606,609)

The passion in Federico's speech reflects the emotions that ran high during the hearings. Mandated with a technical assessment of environmental consideration, the Panel were presented with emotion throughout the hearings, a reflection both of the connection of people to the places where they make their lives, as well as to what people felt was at stake for them through the report this Panel would ultimately make and the government decision that would flow from it.

Many residents of Williams Lake did speak in support of the mine, but testimonies from business owners and politicians about the need for the project solely in economic terms quickly became repetitive in a review focused on the environment. In the first few days of general hearing sessions the presentations brought before the Panel seemed a balance between for and against, but as the hearings proceeded to the communities in the Chilcotin and into the technical sessions in Williams Lake, it became quite clear to those in attendance that the Panel was witnessing a strong showing of opposition, and within that opposition, a diverse range of concerns to draw on in their final report.

One of the most poignant testimonies to the Panel came from the family that lives closest to the proposed mine site. Siegfried and Kelly Reuter and their three children

own and operate Taseko Lake Lodge; they offer guided tours through the country that would become an open-pit mine should TML's proposal be approved, and they are the area's registered guide outfitter, thus dependent on wildlife populations and intact habitats to maintain their clientele. Addressing the Panel on March 25<sup>th</sup> in Williams Lake, Kelly Reuter commented both on the misrepresentation portrayed through local media and the opposition her family has to the proposed project. She stated,

Who from this community has been out to Fish Lake? Who from this community has known about or even considered the impact to our lives this mine will have? It wouldn't surprise me that very few are aware of us living out there, for I just recently read an article in the Williams Lake Tribune as late as February 25th with Brian Battison suggesting that the mine would be 40 kilometres away from anyone, where anyone lives. If you've not been out and on the ground, you have no idea of the level of destruction that is proposed.

I am concerned that Taseko Mines, through the media, is forcing their prosperous values and their desires to develop and liberate this ore body on the local community and exploding the region into controversy, neighbour against neighbour. This is big money here and big promises are being made to all. This is played out in the newspapers with racial innuendos such as: "Native uprisings," tree-huggers versus those with 'prosperous values', or the Canadian advantage of money over the environment that we rely on for life. Small interest group versus 70,000 people in the local area. Yet by seeking support, 200 to 500 kilometres away from the mine site, the "local community of 70,000" supports this mine but the people living with the mine are excluded and ignored. It sounds more like a political campaign than news. And yet in all of this, not one real investigative journalist has been on the ground to talk with us three kilometres from that mine. And, boy, we have a story to tell. (2010: 1008-1009)

The Reuter's economic livelihood is directly threatened by TML's project; their business depends on the wildlife and scenery surrounding their lodge and surrounding Fish Lake.



There is little likelihood that, as Ms. Reuter said had been suggested to them, tourists would really be interested in “horseback tours of the open pit mine” (2010: 1014).

The argument of economics as a platform for supporting the mine does not carry much weight with the Reuters, nor have their counter economic concerns registered with any of the media coverage of the debates over this project. Proponent predictions for the economic success of the proposed mine neglect an analysis of effects on existing businesses in direct proximity to the mine site, or the potential for businesses in the region outside the scope of mining (or reclamation) and its spin-offs. From economics to environment, and in blurring the dichotomy between those two categories, opposition to TML’s gold-copper project had reason to come before the Panel and ensure their own concerns contributed to the fate of the mine.

Non-Aboriginal peoples expressing opposition to TML’s project in the first few days of hearings in Williams Lake spoke both to their concern for the environment and for the rights and culture of the Xeni Gwet’in, Tsilhqot’in, peoples. Many people spoke to a concern for a further neglect to recognize the rights of local First Nations peoples, as emphasized by area resident Stephanie Bird in her March 25<sup>th</sup> address to the Panel. She stated,

To begin, I want to voice my heartfelt support for the Tsilhqot’in Nation and their struggle to gain title to the land that is rightly their territory, including the area of the proposed mine site... The Government of British Columbia has already disregarded this process and has ignored the rights of the Tsilhqot’in People by approving Taseko's proposal. The Province did this amidst the Olympic fanfare which highlighted various First Nations cultures and heritage to the entire world, completely obfuscating the Province's glaring disrespect for Indigenous People such as the Xeni Gwet’in. To be certain, development of a mine in Tsilhqot’in territory and without

consultation with the Tsilhqot'in People will do nothing but worsen relations between Canada and their Nation, as well as other First Nations, who will most certainly see this as an act of aggressive imperialism. (2010:972,973-974)

This concern was coupled with concerns regarding potential pollutants and risks to water, wildlife, ecosystems, and residents that the mine might bring. Mrs. Bird, like many others who spoke to the project, had a broad concern for the many potential adverse effects the opposition associated with this project. Continuing her address to Panel, she added,

It is a disgrace that First Nations, environmental organizations and citizens groups must struggle so hard with their governments to fight the foregone conclusions of corporations, corporations whose projects jeopardize the landbase, water and well-being of future generations...

Many, many long time residents of the Cariboo backcountry feel the way I do about this Project. All of us here have a strong connection to our land base. Let's also remember that the sustained traditional culture of the Xeni Gwet'in, that many of these people continue to speak their native tongue and quite a few don't even speak English at a time when languages around the world are rapidly going extinct. I ask the Panel not to make an international mockery of our Nation by favouring the executive and shareholders of a profit-driven corporation over the wilderness, the watersheds, our future, and above all the rights of the Indigenous People in the immediate area.

I ask you to take a stand. Several generations down the road, all of our descendants will appreciate the Panel having heard and fully respected this side of the story. They will appreciate the fact that we did not rob them of their prosperity. Thank you. (2010:979-981)

This testimony clearly does not adhere to the representation of a pro-industry non-Aboriginal Canadian interest expounded upon by media and project proponents. It reflects rather a lived experience in a rural area, a valuing of land and resources outside a

purely economic framework (or rather, within an economic framework that values the land and resources in a different way, and for a longer term), and a respect for First Nations peoples' right to engage in self-determination. The theme of distrust both for corporate responsibility and for the environmental standards of an industry-based government was also common among TML's opposition and ran across cultures, ethnicity and interests.

#### Faith and Distrust: Common Ground in Skepticism and Sustainability

As indicated in the statement of Mrs. Bird to the CEAA Panel, a connection and respect for the land as a resource in itself (not undeveloped but undevastated) is a shared interest between diverse peoples in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Whether people have this connection from culture or experience, or whether a consequence of similar value systems, are questions of specificity on a subject that should be recognized for its possibilities before it is dismissed for its limitations. The call for sustainability, albeit a loaded and potentially co-opted term (Kirsch 2010), amongst those who spoke in opposition looked for a diversification of local economies away not only from forestry, but also mining (in proponent statements mining is offered as a diversification strategy, considered somewhat weak given the other active mines in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, that Williams Lake was founded in the Gold Rush, and because the industry is inherently unstable). This outlook included consideration for generations ahead, both Tsilhqot'in, other First Nations communities, and non-Aboriginal populations, to ensure access to water, wildlife, culture, language, tradition, and improved relationships between peoples.

Support for TML's project also spoke to concerns of sustainability, but in a somewhat different manner. Both the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, and

Williams Lake Mayor Kerry Cook emphasized the mine as a stepping stone to recreating sustainability in the area; in essence, one last hit of industry to give the local economy the boost it needs to wean itself off of this dependency. In the words of the Chamber of Commerce,

The Prosperity Project can provide our city residents and businesses with the economic buffer to maximize our assets, collective innovation, geography and lifestyle opportunities, to realize a transition into a more diverse sustainable economy. Without the Prosperity Mine development, our capacity to make this transition to a more diverse and advanced economic base is significantly diminished. (2010:985)

This sentiment was also a component of the Mayor's presentation to the Panel; she stated, "The City knows we have to diversify the economy. We need to move from a boom/bust economy to a healthier sustainable economy. But this takes time" (2010:346). Others in support of the project deviated further from a definition of sustainability related to ensuring an earth that will support future generations, speaking instead to sustainability in monetary terms.

Taking notes during the initial days of these hearings I recorded several instances where sustainability was mentioned, I believed, ironically in support of a project with a proposed 20-year (or potentially 33 year) mine life. The use of a term like sustainability by those advocating this project, as a frame, especially by TML itself, begs the question of what exactly is being sustained. As Kirsch writes,

The original definition of sustainability focused on the relationship between economy and ecology, although the balance between the two has shifted over time, culminating in the complete elision of references to ecology or biology in the way that sustainability is now deployed by the mining industry. (2010:90)

TML's definition of sustainability involved the money that the mining business would put into the economy, with the implication that would create a stable future for generations to come. Opposition to TML's project brought forward a need for change in the region, away from unstable industries and the same boom and bust cycles mentioned by Mayor Kerry Cook. To the Tsilhqot'in this means continuity of rights related to cultural practices, hunting, fishing, trapping, a history of defending their territories, and a future of self-determination, among others. It also means, to First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, protection for water, for resources to be left for future generations rather than sold off as profit for a few in this generation, for development of local economies, and for a meaningful diversification of industry.

The need to stand in opposition to this project stretched beyond whatever boundaries may be perceived to surround cultural or ethnic identities, as Tsilhqot'in member Cecil Grinder stated to the Panel,

We need to protect the headwaters, the land, for our future generation. One day Williams Lake is going to depend on our freshwater. Let's save Teztan Biny for the Tsilhqot'in People and the Williams Lake People. (2010:1039)

Of course, TML did not neglect to make promises of this nature, but much of the opposition illustrated a lack of faith in the assurances of industry, as well as in the provincial, federal, and municipal governments who are presumed to make their decisions on behalf of all people's interests.

This factor was a significant component of dissent between those for and against TML's project; many supporters of the project exhibited concern for the environment but expressed faith in, firstly, that the provincial environmental review had already approved the project, and secondly, that the federal review process and subsequent federal decision

would ensure no undue harm come to the environment and all that is encompassed within that heading. This was mentioned several times throughout the hearings and was summed up nicely by Lorne Doerkson, then editor of the *Williams Lake Tribune* and head of the 'Yes to Prosperity' advocacy group when he stated,

I'd like to preface my comments by saying that we are not for progress at any cost. And we do not want harm to come to the Taseko or the Fraser Rivers. We are, however, sadly willing to trade Fish Lake for the financial impact it will have on our city... We trust that our governments whom we have elected will have our interests in mind when it comes to the environment and we'll further trust that as this Project progresses that our governments will represent all of us by making sure that this mine operates in a safe and responsible manner. (2010:1050-1051)

Members of the opposition, First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples alike, did not seem to share this sentiment.

Soren Larsen has written on the formation of interethnic alliances based on a rural marginalization that unites local peoples in contrast to the large corporate interests promoted by a global economy, capitalism and by the Canadian government. He writes,

Interethnic partnerships in rural areas are particularly relevant to political ecology because they reveal how the common experience of powerlessness can generate new forms of resource management that synthesize diverse constructions of nature. (2003:74)

There is an increasing demand from within social movements uniting against corporate industry to approach issues without separating aspects of economy, ecology, and culture; these movements, as Escobar writes, "...are no longer willing to subordinate culture to economy or vice versa" (2006:7). While opposition to TML's project recognized the opportunity for collaboration at certain instances (and have more room to recognize it in the upcoming CEAA review for 'New Prosperity', now that the for-against boundaries

have been re-thought), there was geography and logic that sought to hinder effective collaborations. The nested contexts of rural/urban divide (Nemiah Valley-Williams Lake, Williams Lake-Ottawa) as well as mixed perceptions surrounding who exactly was contributing to the powerlessness (corporations and government, or the industry stalling efforts of environmental organizations), made Williams Lake seem an unlikely host to such alliances.

Where support for the project focused on the argument of economy, the opposition took on the breadth of the environment, and spoke to the diversity the environment encompasses (not excluding a healthy economy). From a diverse public, blurring the expectations of ethnicity came forth testimonies that covered a broad spectrum of concern.

### **The Environment**

The CEAA review process mandate is to consider the potential effects of a project on the environment, to evaluate its impacts and advise measures to mitigate those effects where possible. While seemingly a process to ensure the protection of natural resources (water and wildlife included amongst minerals) and the land that houses them, it is also a means of facilitating large scale projects to the baseline of Canada's environmental standards. TML is looked upon to do the core of research regarding its potential impacts in house, and while this information is studied by the federal agencies responsible to do so (Fisheries and Oceans, Natural Resources Canada, Health Canada, Ministry of Transport, etc.) without the Panel process there would be little opportunity to critically review the science brought to the table. It was this aspect of the review that occupied many participating in the Panel hearings; their concerns were for water, for fish, for

grizzlies, for land, and for all that circles out from those seemingly simple things into the life ways of local, and non-local, peoples.

There is a criticism that the ‘ecological Indian’ represents another projected identity onto the First Nations people who have consistently lived in communication with their land base, applying a double standard that can limit internal efforts to engage with changing economies (Nadasdy 2005). There is also significant policy and legal requirements related to continuity of practice (hunting and fishing for example) needed for First Nations to establish Aboriginal rights in a territory (*R. v. Sparrow*, [1990] 1 S.C.R. 1075). Recognizing that there can be limitations inherent in the alliances formed between First Nations organizations and environmental groups, and that caution in collaboration is also prudent, in an instance like the proposed Prosperity project in Tsilhqot’in territories there is significant common ground for these groups, and for the individuals who frame their dissent from this project through or between these lenses. It should also be clearly stated here that using terms like First Nations and environmental groups should not divert attention from the fact that boundaries are constantly blurred by individuals, that there are First Nations peoples involved in environmental organizations, and vice versa, but rather that there is, organizationally, a difference, and there has been conflict between First Nations and environmental groups when interests do not meet (Nadasdy 2005, Krech 2005).

The people who came before the Panel spoke to an environment that included in its scope of water and wildlife the wellbeing of local peoples, and also carried an indication of what direction Canada is headed in regards to its governmental relationship to the environment and its peoples. Environmental organizations, Friends of Nemaiah Valley,



the Council of Canadians, and Mining Watch Canada, were instrumental in bringing to the Panel the ‘experts’ necessary to make a transparent decision in a process heavily weighted in favour of western ways of knowing, that is, ‘science’. The Tsilhqot’in engaged this process, building alliances with environmental organizations, and by coordinating the testimony of these groups with their own articulations of the potential impacts on their entrenched constitutional rights.

When the Panel had heard from people in Williams Lake, and the media-implied polarity failed to represent a diverse public, there was a visible opportunity for those opposed to TML’s project to support one another on a local scale. As Wallace, Struthers, and Bauman write regarding conflicts over fishing rights in Owen Sound, Ontario,

Simply put, effective inter-communal conflict resolution must be addressed not only at the state/global level, but also at the community level through local peace-building efforts and partnerships between communities of interest. Indigenous knowledge, local capacities, and grass roots alliances can combine to offer alternative paradigms and practices about collaboration and inter-group relationships. These collaborations become important intersections of building peace globally and locally. (2010:92)

Following the testimonies in Williams Lake the Panel moved into the communities of the Chilcotin, those lands on which the mine would sit and the territories of the Tsilhqot’in people. Although I did not attend these hearing sessions, I have been told of the force of opposition heard there. The days were spent listening almost entirely to those expressing both apprehension and aversion to the project. Although these objections were primarily spoken by the Tsilhqot’in people who live throughout the territory, the Panel also heard from non-Aboriginal peoples supporting their First Nations neighbours, their own economic issues, and the overwhelming concern for placing an open-pit mine in a

watershed, in traditional territories, in grazing land, in a wildlife corridor, and into the social lives of local peoples.

During these community sessions there was a concern raised that some of the scientists commissioned by Friends of Nemaiah Valley to research factors related to the mine (grizzly bear habitat and the economic subsidies provided to corporate industry, as two examples) might not be able to make the upcoming topic-specific technical sessions due to lack of funding. It was felt that the testimonies of these scientists would be instrumental in creating the transparency that would be demanded of the Panel when creating their final report. A call for donations to fund this science and articulation of rights went out through various means and in the City of Williams Lake, the local chapter of the Council of Canadians decided to organize a fundraising event in the local community.

### **‘Save Teztan Biny’: An Evening of Collaboration**

Held on April 15<sup>th</sup> the ‘Save Teztan Biny’ event was organized and advertised in less than two weeks; the silent auction, held in the Long House adjacent to Williams Lake’s stampede grounds, was flooded with donations reflecting the same diversity of opposition illustrated through the Panel testimonies. The newspaper article announcing the event (the *Williams Lake Tribune*, while guilty of bias, was not guilty of censorship) stated,

Many auction items have been donated for the cause. Taseko Lake Outfitters has donated two packages for the auction. One is two nights accommodation, meals and wilderness adventure valued at \$1,100 and the other is two nights accommodation, valued at \$550. A beautiful hand-forged knife by Cariboo Blades was also donated to the auction. Many generous Cariboo artists and artisans have

donated pottery, paintings, photographs, woodwork, knitting, handmade bags, local veggies, an astrology reading, home-cooked gourmet meals, film club tickets, DVD and more. There will also be limited edition fused glass pendants in honour of Teztan Biny available for purchase. (Save Teztan Biny 2010:7).

Donations for the auction were impressive, but in conversation with a friend involved in the event's coordination that evening, we both expressed concern that the wealth of those in attendance was in what they could give, rather than in what they may be able to afford to bid on. We were wrong.

The 'Save Teztan Biny' auction raised over \$7000, a staggering amount for a small community (economically hard-hit, as we had been repeatedly reminded of at the hearings) and especially considering the relatively spontaneous nature of the event. While the funds raised were impressive, the night itself was even more so. It was an opportunity outside of the Panel setting for opposition to the project to recognize each other and to see that there was support for each other, First Nations and non-Aboriginal, within the local community. It was a powerful evening. Tsilhqot'in member Cecil Grinder called up the assortment of 'retired schoolteachers' from the Council of Canadians onto the stage to drum with him; later in the evening I, among others (young and old) was given a rattle to shake alongside the drums. People bid on everything. Some people bid on items, won them, and then donated them back to be bid on again.

There was so much movement involved in viewing and bidding that the tables were sat at haphazardly; the division between peoples that Elizabeth Furniss (1999) witnessed was absent that night. It was a moment to realize both that it was not commonplace to sit amongst each other, First Nations and non-Aboriginal, and that there was reason to change that. I went home that night with a truckload of alpaca manure, a garlic braid, and

a renewed faith in the community of people among whom I live. I think just about everyone there took home a pendant of a fish emblazoned in glass representing not only the trout and salmon at risk, but also the range of talents, of people, who were willing to stand together in the face of promises and potentials for both economic wealth and environmental degradation proposed by TML.

The funds raised in Williams Lake contributed to those brought in from across the province, across the country, through the networks of all those involved in the opposition; the total raised was something close to 40,000 dollars. There was no question that people were unconvinced by the logic and rhetoric of TML and their supporters, and there was no question either that the Panel would leave the Cariboo-Chilcotin without hearing the technically specific concerns that would augment a public record already heavy with eloquent arguments brought from the less technical lives of area residents. The scientists commissioned by Friends of Nemaiah Valley and other groups attended the hearings, spoke to their research, and evidenced both the need for caution approaching a project of this nature with their words, and with their presence, the need for local peoples to see beyond stereotypes to find solidarity, capacity, and coordination with one another.

### **The CEAA Report**

On July 2, 2010 the Panel released its report regarding Taseko Mines Limited's Prosperity Gold-Copper Project. Close to three hundred pages, the final report was, according to then Federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice, 'scathing' (Payton 2010). In summary of the potential for adverse effects the report states,

The Panel concludes that the Project would result in significant adverse environmental effects on fish and fish habitat, on navigation, on the current use of lands and

resources for traditional purposes by First Nations and on cultural heritage, and on certain potential or established Aboriginal rights or title. The Panel also concludes that the Project, in combination with past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects would result in a significant adverse cumulative effect on grizzly bears in the South Chilcotin region and on fish and fish habitat. (CEAA 2010b:ii)

Consisting of thirteen sections, the report effectively weighs the statements of the proponent, TML, against the statements made at the Panel hearings, to see both where they have been supported and where they have not. In section 13 of the report, the Panel lists a series of recommendations that would potentially mitigate the effects of the mine; despite these twenty-four points, the Panel qualifies their recommendations in relation to local First Nations peoples, stating that "... the Panel believes that these recommendations, if accepted, would not eliminate or accommodate the significant loss First Nations would experience as a result of the Project" (2010b:246).

The Panel was presented with a wealth of information during the hearings held between March and May in 2010. This information facilitated their recommendation that the mine would have significant adverse effects on the area and its peoples. This was the gateway for the federal government's rejection of the project, which occurred on November 2 of that same year. Rejected 'as proposed', this decision was well celebrated throughout the ranks of the opposition. TML however, well invested in this project, went immediately back to the drawing board and, as mentioned earlier, have reworked their Prosperity project into 'New Prosperity' and a new CEAA review was initiated by the federal government on November 7, 2011, the first time the agency has ever reconsidered a previously rejected project.

### **Panel Document Conclusion**

The CEAA Panel hearings held in the Cariboo-Chilcotin in the spring of 2010 tell a very different story than was visible through the coverage of local news media. Residents from across the board blurred the First Nations versus development/ non-Aboriginal 'pro-Prosperity' dichotomy inherent in the perpetuation of stereotypes related to perceptions of Indigenous peoples and rural, 'redneck' communities. The process of uncovering common ground and shared interests for diverse peoples has created new ground as 'New Prosperity' ignites TML's interest in Tsilhqot'in lands once again. The Panel hearings created a forum for local peoples to re-think the lines drawn around tensions over lands and the resources in them. In the months following the hearings, and especially in the months following the announcement by TML that they had submitted their revised project and the government announcement that the CEAA would review this application, the opposition has been able to consider itself as a whole. In the following chapter I document this change, what it means to those who have been involved in the debates over this project, and what it means to the ongoing relationships and futures of local peoples, communities, and economies.

## **Chapter 6 – A Retrospective on Media, the Panel, ‘Prosperity’ and Opposition in Common**

In this chapter I engage the previous two chapters in a discussion of the potential for collaboration and improved relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples living in a rural, ‘resource dependent’ area. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the possibility of change becomes apparent when taken-for-granted frames of reference, of history and of identity, come into question. The concurrent and yet different stories told through the media and through the 2010 CEAA Panel hearings provide a ‘moment’ to re-think the stereotypes, tensions, and conflict that often shape relations between ethnic groups when disputes over lands and resources arise. To facilitate this discussion I examine the instances of common ground that developed between diverse peoples throughout the Panel hearings, and I incorporate into this statements made by key informants, people who participated in the hearings and within TML’s opposition, to provide commentary both on process and on the prospect for change within a Cariboo-Chilcotin ‘redneck’ status quo.

Common ground found footing within a diverse range of concerns brought before the Panel and in contrast to the stereotypical frames invoked by local media. The implications of shared concern, or shared interests, for those opposed to TML’s proposed gold-copper project, have become increasingly visible in events following the federal government’s initial rejection of the ‘Prosperity’ project and the subsequent CEAA review granted to TML’s ‘New Prosperity’. The powerful collaboration of interests, concerns, emotion, culture, and science that proliferated in front of the Panel members

has implications beyond TML's gold-copper project. These include a normalization of positive relationships between First Nations peoples and non-Aboriginal settler population and recognition of local histories, the history of colonization included, in conversation with current events and understandings.

Further implications involve a re-thinking of the taken-for-granted knowledge that shapes much of the news media coverage and that facilitated the polarization of Williams Lake in a way that effectively alienated people into action. Like myself, people sought to represent their own interests in the face of the news media's visible misrepresentations.

As research participant Diana French stated,

...what was bugging me at the time was that there was all this publicity in the paper and nobody was talking to any of the non-natives that were opposing the mine, and I knew quite a few of them and quite a few groups that just weren't saying anything. And I thought it was kind of skewed and it was important for the Panel to know that. (in interview, August 12, 2011)

There has also been clear indication that the larger issues at stake here need to be addressed, including Aboriginal rights and title to territories, entrenched ideals of perpetual growth, high-stake industrial development, and cost-benefit equations that can weigh the environment as a commodity rather than culture. I begin this discussion with an introduction of the participants whose views drew out themes of commonality, concern, and collaboration, and who add the depth of lived experience to this discussion.

### Interviews with the Opposition

In the late summer/early fall (following the resubmission of TML's 'New Prosperity' project but prior to the November decision to grant it a review) I conducted a series of interviews with people involved in the opposition to the proposed mine, from



across the spectrum of diversity illustrated through and involved in the 2010 Panel hearings. These eight interviews represent a cross-section of people who I consider to be “key informants,” who represent articulate and experienced views of the area, TML’s project, and the process of the CEAA review. While these interviews have contributed to the focus and direction of this study in its entirety, in this chapter I engage the conversations specifically within a discussion that synthesizes both media analysis and Panel document analysis to engage with the primary focus of this research: that we may, as Escobar writes, “...find elements for a workable strategy of peace out of the recognition of conflict” (2006:13).

Interview participants were selected because of their involvement in the 2010 Panel review, as presenters and, for the majority, as community members. While several of the participants spoke on behalf of a larger organization, Council of Canadians, Friends of Nemaiah Valley, Mining Watch, Williams Lake Field Naturalists, Cariboo-Chilcotin Conservation Society, and the Tsilhqot’in National Government, six out of eight participants were long-time residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, familiar with the area and its dynamics, both social and economic. As such I thought their inputs would reflect both the knowledge and diverse experience that can share a place, approach an issue from multiple sides, and potentially find common ground there. Two interviews were conducted with participants from outside the local area, providing a ‘outsiders’ view of this issue, and also representing the voices of the oft-maligned urban environmentalist.

Following ethical protocols potential participants were made aware of the focus and scope of my research prior to agreeing to take part. To ensure this awareness, potential participants were provided copies of both my research proposal and a list of

sample questions that would guide the interview process (Appendix C). Once agreeing to take part participants signed a consent form addressing aspects of confidentiality, anonymity, recording of the interviews, and storage of interview materials. As all the people I interviewed were already established on the public record (through the Panel hearings, letters to the editor, etc.) no one expressed any hesitation about signing the form nor did anyone request that their identity or input be kept confidential.

The participants I interviewed include: Russell Samuel Myers Ross, Tsilhqot'in community member from Yunesit'in and Xení Gwet'in, and a recent MA graduate the University of Victoria's Indigenous Governance program; Russell spoke to the Panel on March 23, 2010, has written several letters to the *Williams Lake Tribune* regarding this subject, and has published articles about the Tsilhqot'in relationship to colonization and to the proposed mine at Fish Lake. Diana French, a long term resident of both Williams Lake and the Chilcotin, has worked for the Alkali Lake Indian Band and also is a regular columnist for the *Williams Lake Tribune*; Diana is president of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Conservation Society and an active member of the local Council of Canadians Chapter in Williams Lake; she spoke to the Panel on April 20, 2010 at the community session in Esketemc.

John Dressler is the head of the Williams Lake Chapter of the Council of Canadians; he has been active in opposing TML's project and spoke to the Panel on March 25, 2010. Fred McMechan is president of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists and a longstanding environmental advocate in the Cariboo-Chilcotin; he spoke to the Panel on March 23, 2010. Sage Birchwater is an author and journalist; he worked as a reporter for the *Williams Lake Tribune* until 2009, and spoke to the Panel in Williams Lake on March

23, 2010. Chief Joe Alphonse is the chief of Tl'etinqox, Anaham, and is Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government as well as the organization's political spokesperson; he addressed the Panel when they visited his community on April 12 and 13, 2010, as well as during the opening and closing of Panel hearings in Williams Lake.

Ramsey Hart is the Canada Program Coordinator for Mining Watch Canada; based in Ottawa, Hart attended the hearings held in Williams Lake, both general and topic-specific sessions; he spoke on numerous occasions raising questions throughout the hearings and addressed the Panel specifically on March 24, 2010 and throughout the topic-specific hearings held at the end of April 2010. David Williams and Pat Swift are, respectively, the president and secretary of Friends of Nemaiah Valley (FONV), a not for profit organization formed in 2000 to assist in the protection of lands and wildlife in the Nemaiah Valley,<sup>4</sup> and to support the initiatives of the Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government; FONV was instrumental in raising funds and commissioning research to address the topic-specific component of the hearings; Mr. Williams addressed the Panel April 1, 2010 in Xeni, on April 30, 2010 in the socio-economic topic-specific hearing, and in closing remarks in Williams Lake on May 1, 2010.

These participants were also chosen because they represent different components of the stereotypes that generalized opposition; two participants are First Nations, Tsilhqot'in, people, two are retired school teachers, several identify as environmentalists, two are from organizations located in urban centers outside of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, several are non-Aboriginal residents of Williams Lake, all would, I believe, identify as 'Canadian'; none adhere to the boundaries often ascribed to categories associated with

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<sup>4</sup> The valley of the Xeni Gwet'in is spelled two ways: Nemaiah and Nemiah. I've chosen the more common spelling, Nemiah, to use throughout.

these 'identities' but rather identify themselves through multiple lenses, and always in conversation with the context of their lived experience.

As I had been involved myself within the opposition to this project, and as this was my first experience conducting academic interviews, there was a process of learning during the months in which I spoke to participants. This process became visible during transcription as my own voice became less and less prominent, and participants spoke to their concerns using my research subject as a framework from which to vocalize their own experience. My questions were incorporated when conversation lulled or digressed too far from the research focus. There was no hesitation on the part of the participants I chose to talk about their participation in the Panel process or their position/experience in relation to TML's proposed project. While it may also have been a form of bias, I believe that the participants' knowledge of my own opposition to this mine facilitated their comfort in reflecting up on what has the potential to be a very touchy subject between local residents. That I was born and raised in this area also provided ease to these discussions as local short form (names, locations, histories) could be used without need for extensive explanation.

Common themes arose during these interviews, ones that I expand upon in this discussion. These include a persistent distrust for TML as a corporate mining company, an acknowledgement of the news media's misrepresentation and bias throughout coverage of this issue, a continued concern for and connection to the environment, an emphasis on the collaborative role of the opposition to this gold-copper project, and a need to become a visible alternative to the perpetuated stereotypes and prejudices reinforced by media and grounded by the presumption that unabated 'progress' is a

universal good. I turn now to a discussion of the common ground that brought solidarity to the opposition, that drew this opposition out from the diverse recesses of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, and that highlighted the bias within ‘commonsense’, with the potential to effectively re-frame relationships into the future.

### **Common Ground Post ‘Prosperity’**

Following the Federal Government's November 2010 rejection of TML's gold-copper project, the visible debates and coverage related to the mine died down for a time in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. While no one believed the controversy was over, and the support/opposition remained predominantly unconvinced by each other's arguments, there was, for a time, less notable fervour than when the Panel sat before the public throughout the area. Local politicians and business leaders advocating for the project were vocal in their continued support for TML and repetitive in their conviction that, despite the potential adverse effects found by the Panel, the project was indeed in the best interest of the region.

The ‘what if’ statements that shrouded proponent and political concerns over the project's rejection proved unwarranted: there was no outward violence against First Nations peoples by a non-Aboriginal population having lost their opportunity to ‘hope’ (Alexander 2010) and despite not yet being ‘saved’ by the Prosperity mine (Cook 2010). TML did not pack up and leave, despite the fickle nature of the market and their prior urgency to get this project under way before their investors lost interest and Williams Lake lost its opportunity to prosper. Opposition to the project was bolstered by a decision that reflected the efforts they had put into vocally raising a multiplicity of

concerns, as Sage Birchwater reflected on the 2010 rejection of TML's 'Prosperity' project,

I was totally shocked. I thought that being as it was a Conservative government and the pressure, the huge pressure, to ram it through. I was completely elated and totally shocked. It sort of instilled some faith in the system... (in interview, October 3, 2011)

With the hearings over and the decision made there was relatively little opportunity for local residents to reflect upon the process in which so many of them had been involved. Yet as TML continues to promote their mine, opponents to 'New Prosperity' have found new ground in knowing and supporting each other; this is possible because alternatives to the popular media rendition of 'sides' became apparent through the Panel hearings. Making this solidarity – this alternative to the tensions between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples over land and resources – visible outside of the processes of conflict and to reflect with depth on what a new relationship could really look like (outside of political rhetoric), is a positive new reality for Williams Lake and the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

As Wallace, Struthers, and Bauman write regarding the alliances formed between the Chippewas of Nawash and their non-Aboriginal allies in a time of fishing rights related conflict,

... the shaping and sharing of allies' knowledges and concrete practices become spaces where the vertical hierarchies of global domination and Canadian colonialism can be horizontalized and at times reversed, a place where the local practice creates different possibilities and configurations of relationships. (2010:93)

This is true for the Cariboo-Chilcotin too. But as those authors also note, there are questions to ask. These are poignant queries that transverse issues and localities of conflict to be relevant across Canada; they are,

First, how can non-Aboriginal allies concretely support Aboriginal peoples in securing, and once secured, implementing their sovereign rights? Second, how can non-Aboriginal people transform our own cultural communities' world-views, a paradigm consciously and unconsciously rooted in a history of colonialism, structural violence, and systemic racism? Third, and perhaps most important, how can we (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples) develop a future for relationships between peoples based on equity, respect, and reciprocity that is truly mutually beneficial? (2010:92).

These questions, often hidden beneath the sensationalism of conflict and the relative simplicity of an environment/Aboriginal versus economic development argument, are fundamental to the issues that arise over resource development in Canada. They are foundational to creating an atmosphere where projects like TML's mine do not force people to define their livelihoods in opposition to one another. In the Cariboo-Chilcotin one of the first steps in this new direction is a recognition that people in the area are raising these questions themselves, and that they are prepared to engage in dialogues that disrupt the perception and perpetuation of rigid settler, environmentalist, or First Nation identities. The Panel hearings brought to light the potential for common ground inherent in a solid opposition confronting imposed development and the prospective devastation of territories. While there is much of this shared concern that surfaced through the hearings I begin this discussion with the perceived common enemy, Taseko Mines Limited.

TML: Poster Child for What Not to Do as Industry

I said, 'Well, today I feel almost sorry for Mr. Battison because he so does not understand this community.' He's so out of it. And I said, "Mr. Battison, you have got to stop saying it is only the First Nations. (David Williams, in interview, October 7, 2001)

Despite a continued effort on the part of TML to localize themselves within the Cariboo-Chilcotin, and to indicate that their efforts were for the well being of the local community as much as they were for shareholders or the salary of company CEOs, no one I spoke to or interacted with at the hearings or following events felt the company had contributed to anything but animosity in the area. The repetition of the region's economic hardship, combined with a constant plea for urgent approval to appease investors and secure the company's interests, was recognized as empty rhetoric and a weak justification for an environmentally high-risk project. As Russell Samuel Myers Ross noted,

On the Prosperity side, I was surprised that just money was the foundation of the argument. So whether it was Brian Battison claiming that, 'Look at all the poor people around here; they're all depressed', I thought it was sort of belittling to the community here. I couldn't believe that they set it up that way, as the narrative of 'this poor desolate place'. (in interview, August 9, 2011)

As Russell's comment indicates, not all residents of the area were convinced that those in the Williams Lake area are struggling in the face of industrial decline, nor that their livelihoods are contingent on the development of another mine in the area. The statements from the project proponent that Russell is referring to are those that created an apparent desperation in the local community, taking for granted industry as wealth, economic prosperity as mutually beneficial and framing 'Prosperity' as a stepping stone towards 'progress'. Not swayed by the promises of jobs and economic stimulus the mine



would provide, project opponents were neither convinced that the Cariboo-Chilcotin was in need of the life-support system promised by another boom and bust industry. This sentiment was effectively summed up by Chief Joe in an interview when he stated,

At what point in society do we stop allowing big industry to come in and manipulate a process. We look after the environment and the environment will look after us. (in interview, September 16, 2011)

A genuine sense of distrust, both of corporate interests and of government impartiality, has been a common thread throughout the opposition. This apprehension to believe the assurances of TML has been foundational in the arguments opposing this project, provided an impetus to participate in the hearings, and has remained intact despite TML's numerous presentations throughout the 2010 review and despite their revised 'New Prosperity' proposal. Trust is a significant consideration in debates over this proposed project, and despite being non-technical, provides both a framework and a common ground for people opposed to this project. Distrust is also an exceptionally hard thing to mitigate.

### Gibraltar

The perception of TML in the eyes of local peoples is not without its own set of historical roots. Having purchased the Gibraltar Mine close to Williams Lake in 1999, the company has been an employer of local peoples, has donated funds to local charities and sponsored local events, and has contributed, directly or indirectly, to Williams Lake's economy; the company has set itself up as a “responsible corporate citizen” (Battison 2010:71). It is this face of TML that affirms the faith of those supportive of the project. Coupled with research and guarantees to ensure a high standard of environmental

protection and reclamation post-production, those supportive of the project have difficulty understanding, or listening to, arguments from the project's opposition.

But the history of corporate resource extraction, and TML's own behind-the-scene reputation, precedes their promises of 'New Prosperity'. The Tsilhqot'in, First Nations across Canada, and Indigenous peoples around the world have seen their territories developed, in many cases destroyed, by resource extraction without seeing the significant benefits of revenue sharing often promised as the trade off for environmental degradation (Gregory 2009). Nor is it an established equation that lands rich in resources necessarily result in financial or social well-being for local residents (Hume 2011). Many presenters throughout the hearings, and the participants I interviewed, brought up TML's Gibraltar Mine; as support, recognizing its role in the local economy, and as opposition, citing the mine's own adverse environmental effects.

In 2008 Gibraltar Mines Ltd. was granted, through an environmental assessment, a permit to discharge excess waters from its tailings ponds directly into the Fraser River (CEAA 2008). This discharge pipeline has seen opposition from the Secwepemc and Tsilhqot'in communities closest to Gibraltar, Xats'ull (Soda Creek Indian Band) and 'Edilagh (Alexandria Indian Band), and was raised several times throughout the hearings as an example of the potential for unforeseen environmental effects that large scale mining developments can encounter. It was also used as a commentary on how a company's 'best intentions' may still end up pumping effluent into salmon spawning grounds. Diana French, in an interview, warned of mining based on her experience with Gibraltar; she notes,

There is an experience we [the Cariboo-Chilcotin Conservation Society] had with Gibraltar that made my hair

stand on end... Gibraltar had its storage capacity for the effluent done, finished, so they wanted to put the excess into the Fraser. The Soda Creek Band and our group and a couple of other groups said no way and so the government said no. Well, then we heard that they're doing it anyway, so we didn't know whether they got permission or whether they were just doing it. Well, now we find out from the auditor general's report that there is absolutely no way to monitor. The auditor general has just come out with a report that the provincial government has no way to monitor the mines, any of them. So if they say they'll do this, this, and this, and that's a requirement of their permit, there is nobody to see if they do it; they can do whatever they want.

So we asked Gibraltar what they were going to do with the effluent from the expansion, you know, if they don't have enough room now what are they going to do when they expand? So they sent somebody up from Vancouver and we were really impressed and they invited us to their office here in town, and they had the big shots from the mine here and this person from Vancouver and they showed us a dog and pony show about how wonderful these big trucks... 'One truck can haul as much as three so it'll be great for the environment' and all this stuff, and so when they all finished it we said 'Well, what about the effluent?' Oh, they weren't working on that yet... So that was that, they weren't working on it yet... And this is Taseko." (in interview, August 12, 2011)

It is quite clear, from the presentations brought before the Panel and in subsequent participant interviews, that those within the opposition are not convinced that reclamation could bring back the area surrounding Fish Lake, or that anyone would ever want to eat the fish from the company's man made 'Prosperity Lake' (the lake that would replace Fish Lake in the first proposal; touted by the proponent as 'bigger and better'). Opponents to the mine were unconvinced by the proponent's deflection of their distrust through promises of alleviating poverty, or of offsetting environmental impacts through mitigation. Through the course of the hearings neither TML's science nor their

representative's decorum (adjectives that arose in interviews included rude, arrogant, bullying) could begin to build trust or change oppositional viewpoints concerned over this proposed mine.

This shared distrust of both corporate industry and the governmental processes that facilitate resource development through permitting and, potentially, through environmental review, can open the doorway for interethnic collaboration in the face of large-scale resource development projects (Larsen 2003). Layered into the foundations of opponent arguments were fundamental issues related to human rights, Indigenous rights, First Nations self-determination, and perhaps most importantly amongst non-Aboriginal opponents, a need to prevent a project that embodies the paternalistic relationships of industry and the state to Indigenous peoples that has done such harm in the past and continues to do harm as it generates tensions falsely aligned with ethnicity. As Xat'sull Chief Bev Sellars has said,

The already rejected Prosperity Mine project has become such a lightening rod across BC and Canada, not because it is the only problem First Nations face, but because it is the epitome of those problems. (2011:np)

Project opponents met the depth of this issue with a diverse range of argument, finding common ground further in a breadth of concern that could not be compartmentalized, mitigated with promises, or silenced. In the following section I address the diverse range of concern that extended out from the proposed destruction of Fish Lake to address questions of histories, land, economics and the environment.

### Cumulative Opposition

Fred McMechan, speaking on behalf of his personal opinion, reflected on the outcome of the federal government's 2010 rejection of TML's project, stating, "Let's face it, if it was not for the concerns of the First Nations people I think the mine would have gone ahead. Let's face it" (in interview, September 8, 2011). This statement raises the point that the diversity of opposition was not just a contrast to media depictions of the local social dynamic; it was an integral component to the outcome of the Panel's report and the subsequent federal decision. This has critical implications for a local recognition of the power within shared resistance and the re-thinking of commonplace stereotypes to re-imagine local economic resilience and interethnic social relationships.

Environmental organizations helped to facilitate the research and testimonies of scientific experts, as well as the mobilization of broad public support networks and funding opportunities. This effort was combined with that of local First Nations peoples, who mobilized their own extensive network of provincial and federal First Nations organizations, environmental organizations, and public support, in conjunction with the critical rights of Aboriginal peoples to their territories, the unceded status of traditional lands in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, an appealed title case in the courts, and a holism that made environment, economy, and culture a solid oppositional platform rather than fragmented components of debate. As Russell Samuel Myers Ross notes,

I thought that was one of maybe the only benefits of the whole process, it got some people to kind of wake up and to make a choice of what side they're going to choose and why they're going to choose it. It actually shook up a lot of Native people too... I mean, I always think that Native people are the most political people in the country and I think that even forcing them to realize that they have value in their land and to claim their land again is a huge part of

the decolonizing moment because you're willing to say no to this long line of oppression. (in interview, August 9, 2011)

While First Nations articulated their territorial rights, the support of local peoples for these rights is key to seeing new mobilizations of opposition as a collective voice. Within and between these two components of opposition were the individuals and groups, small businesses like the Reuters, healthcare workers in Tsilhqot'in reserve communities, ranchers, beekeepers, and countless others who stood before the Panel to increase the visibility and viability of a diverse opposition and to stack their concerns on a growing list of potential adverse effects. It appeared that the diverse make up of project opposition needed all the resources this diversity brought, from Aboriginal rights entrenched in Canada's constitution to the research, funding and scientific expertise mobilized through environmental organizations, to the shift in the image of public will brought by non-Aboriginal peoples stepping outside the confines of their own stereotypes, to support First Nations issues and to express environmental values that can not be bought.

There are limits to be recognized here; reifying culture into the transparency check boxes of the government or to an unachievable, or unrealistic, environmental ideal, perpetuating the structural dominance of governmental processes (like CEAA's review) simply through participation, and/or finding contextual unity over an issue without consideration for the varying agendas within that space of common ground. There is also an inherent risk, in the intention of making visible collaborations, to further the "itineraries of silencing"; those that ignore the perpetuity of colonialism at the expense of Indigenous self-determination by authorizing others (scientific 'experts', environmental

organizations, politicians, industry) to “speak for” the perceived best interest of the land and its resources (Williams-Braun 1996-97:7).

When the starting point, however, is a dominant image of racism, division, and culture as a static incompatibility, then the interim steps towards re-thinking relationships are the beginning of a necessary public conversation around what people hold as expectations, what the larger questions at stake in these issues mean, and what people are really asking for. This is something Chief Joe reflected upon as critical for First Nations to be involved in; he notes,

I don't want to sit here and complain that the non-Aboriginal population in and around here don't know what our views are. If I don't go out there and attend different functions to give those people a chance to get to know what our position is... if you're not out there doing that then you don't have the right to turn around and argue, saying the non-Aboriginal population is not in support of us. We have a duty to get our word out. I believe there is very fair and there are some good people in the Williams Lake area and if they are fully aware, and if they are able to get an educated opinion of where we're coming from, we're going to get more support then not from them. (in interview, September 16, 2011)

These conversations are critical despite the potential oversights or misunderstandings that may occur in instances of collaboration. Working together illegitimizes stereotypes and opens discussions for people to speak out and listen to one another as, respective of differences, people. The recognition of First Nations Rights to territories beyond reserve lands by a public that includes non-Aboriginal peoples is new in the discourses surrounding lands and title in Canada, and is a step both towards certainty and self-determination. This is especially critical in an area like the Cariboo-Chilcotin where diverse peoples live scattered throughout vast territories, and where the lived experience

takes shape within an ‘environment’ that is as much cultural and economic as it is physical.

### An Encompassed Environment

Media frames categorizing TML’s opposition by generalization rather than nuance became especially clear in relation to the environment. Received as a threat to an environment inseparable from culture, TML's proposed project was seen by a diverse audience as a marker of colonialism's continuity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, another affront to First Nations peoples and an affront to water, land and wildlife in a time when many are attempting to rectify past relationships and ensure a landscape intact for future generations. The Tsilhqot'in have repeatedly vocalized a need for economic development in coordination with cultural principles of environmental stewardship. As Chief Joe states,

Everything they’re promoting, jobs, opportunity, employment, those are things that as a First Nation we want, those are things we want in our communities, just like any other society anywhere else, but we’re not going to go into anything like that if it means destroying the things that are most crucial to us as Indian people, and that’s the river, clean water, sockeye salmon, fish. That’s our refrigerator system, that is what supplies and that is what enables us to continue to live as people within that area, that region, the province... and to us we have to protect that no matter what the costs. (in interview, September 16, 2010)

It was repeated throughout the hearings that the environment was an integral part of Tsilhqot'in identity. The interconnectivity of local peoples with their environment was something many considered critical for the Panel to hear, as Russell Samuel Myers Ross commented in an interview,



I just wanted to be another voice that said no, and that's really what I came there to say. It was like 'no'. And my main point... I felt that I just wanted to bring up the idea that Native people can make their own decisions about what their land is used for. Which is really simple but I wanted to put this in terms that, kind of like a simple philosophy that we're part of nature, that any time you eat a moose or deer, anything from that area, you become that area, and that the people there are embodied there, whether they're eating the fish, or any animal or any plant there. So I felt that whoever is using that area should have a larger stake in assessing what happens there. (in interview, August 9, 2011)

While environmentalism has been, at times, an avenue for scrutinizing the 'authenticity' of First Nations peoples, another extension of a taken for granted concept that dominant society ultimately holds the right to judgment (Willems-Braun 1996-97), there are parallel perceptions, or frames, that describe non-Aboriginal peoples. These follow that 'settlers' do not connect to their environment in any more than a material way, thus turning a blind eye to destruction in favour of 'progress', draw a line between nature and culture in a way that promotes either preservation or development, as either/or, and support First Nations concerns only when interests meet, while still harbouring the stereotypes that predict and potentially predetermine relationships (Nadasdy 2005, Krech 2005).

These descriptions may be apt in many ways, and certainly facilitate the abstraction of the land from culture and history to open it up for industrial development, so that the lands of the Cariboo-Chilcotin become, similar to Willems-Braun's description of the forests on Vancouver Island, "an uncontested space of economic and political calculation, an entity without either history or culture, where no claims other than those of the "nation" and its "public" are seen to exist" (1996-97:8). While this may

be engrained within the expectations of settler logic as it has been in the frames mobilized by media, it is imperative that this 'common sense' be recognized not only where it is affirmed, but also where it is contested.

In framing their presentations and arguments against TML's project, non-Aboriginal peoples throughout the Cariboo-Chilcotin defined their own connections to the environment, disrupted the image of a redneck/environmentalist dichotomy in a rural area, and displayed a negotiation with place that is loaded with history, personal affiliation, relationships, understandings, and culture as a process rather than a determinant; as Turkel writes about the depth of experience within Chilcotin landscapes,

There are no untainted passages through a place: you always leave something of yourself, and you always take something with you. And there can be no untainted passages, there can be no pristine places either. What there are instead are muddy places, lived places, places filled with the tracks of those who have gone before. (2007:135)

Without distracting from the 'culture rights' component of First Nations' legal platform towards self-determination, there is a need to see the permeable edges of culture, especially where people transverse this fluidity, to recognize that 'impact' is reciprocal (although certainly not all benefit), that colonialism has shaped us all in Canada, and that the projection of rigid identities (via media or industry promotion) obstruct the conversations that lead to change and make real false dichotomies between diverse peoples. For or against arguments steeped in stereotype also trivialize the full complexity of land and resource based conflicts by highlighting caricatured 'sides', both somehow grasping at an unachievable past (traditions of resource extraction through industry or custom) rather than creating pathways to address the foundations of First Nations/non-Aboriginal tensions: land, and a dominantly air-brushed colonial history.

### The Land

I think you have to put a context to everything, and I think it was important to say that there's a fundamental problem here: that Native people have never given up their land. And I think it needed to be addressed before this [the mine] happened or else it would always be disrespectful... you would always have Native people saying no until it was resolved. (Russell Samuel Myers Ross, in interview, August 9, 2011)

The importance of resolving the outstanding questions of rights and title to the lands in the Chilcotin, prior to granting approval for the extraction of minerals beneath those lands was clearly a focus of First Nations peoples expressing opposition to TML's project. This is especially true for the Tsilhqot'in National Government and the Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government who are currently awaiting a title decision from the Supreme Court of British Columbia over the very lands in question. This point however, has been raised by non-Aboriginal peoples as well, both out of respect for the local First Nations peoples and because the 'land issue', unresolved, remains the perpetual elephant in the room for all parties.

In British Columbia especially there need to be conversations regarding what Aboriginal title might look like if recognized by federal and provincial governments and what that would mean for non-Aboriginal peoples living in those territories. Key to this conversation is what the local First Nation envisions for the future of those territories. When non-Aboriginal populations identify with local First Nations as a generic or homogenous First Nation, whether attached to negative stereotypes or not, they cannot know their own position as settlers in traditional territories (Regan 2010). This uncertainty is, I believe, a conduit for fear when the so-called "land question" is raised.

Without questioning the frames that depict First Nations peoples as abusers of the tax system, dependent, lazy, drunk, corrupt, or inauthentic, non-Aboriginal people are left frightened when faced with the prospect of First Nations peoples managing their own territories. This fear is attached to the perception that the only logical outcome of First Nations sovereignty would be a boat ride back to Europe for settler populations and has its foundations in the habit of listening to generalizations and sensationalisms rather than to the actual statements and intentions of First Nations organizations and governments.

This is what Russell Samuel Myers Ross calls “colonial paranoia”; fear founded in a lack of knowledge about the places we live in and people afraid of addressing the negative histories that have led to our living here. As Russell states,

So it's a mine at first but then you go, 'Okay, how did you acquire the land? And the conversation ends up talking about smallpox and how everyone was decimated out there and how white people took advantage of that... You put that history out there and, for the white people that were on the site, all the tension, it became like a fighting matter... But it is strange for me because they want to say 'Why don't you forget about it? Forget about your history', all these things but at the same time, why are they so scared? Why are they so fearful? (in interview, August 9, 2011)

The fears Russell mentions are generated from understandings that envision Aboriginal rights and title because they are collective rights, a relatively unfamiliar concept, as a threat to the idealized individual rights of the broader society (Warry 2007). These fears are especially prominent in relation to land, as Warry writes,

They [neo-conservatists] see rights-based arguments for control of resources (salmon, lobster, or fur-bearing animals) as arguments for race-based rights and therefore a threat to non-Aboriginal sport and commercial hunters, trappers, and fishers. Further, they fear that the gradual expansion of treaty and land rights that would give Aboriginal peoples access to sub-surface minerals or to

forests would limit mainstream corporate use of these resources. (2007:123)

Throughout the hearings and in participant interviews, however, there became clear a need (expressed by First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples) to address both the colonial past and the uncertain future of resource management on Indigenous territories. There appeared also a visible recognition for the capacity of the Xeni Gwet'in to manage their territories without the paternalistic hand of the state and a view that this could be in the interest of non-Aboriginal peoples rather than to their detriment, as per the First Nations versus Canada's 'national interest' frame of dominant media and political rhetoric.

The attention that TML's proposed mine received in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and beyond, and the attention that resource related conflicts garner throughout British Columbia and Canada, can become the impetus to demand governmental resolution to the very foundations of these problems. As Friends of Nemaiah Valley's Pat Swift commented,

I think people started to get really pissed off with the government, like 'Why aren't you dealing with this?' They've [the general public] moved their frustrations from being frustrated with the First Nation to being frustrated with the government, and I think that has to be seen as a positive move. Let's deal with land claims instead of always pushing it off or trying to defer it or work some other way. (in interview October 7, 2011)

Finding a shared struggle, as unfortunate as that might seem, is an opportunity to make visible culture histories on the land, from First Nations and non-Aboriginal settlers, to look for shared resources and to become visible and loud enough to effect popular will, change policy, and address the depth of issues that, like gold and copper, are subsurface to uninvited developments on Indigenous lands. In the following section I address the

language utilized by the proponent and the frames of reference taken for granted by media as another means of alienating a diverse public into action. Consistent misrepresentation and unconvincing rhetoric became another meeting place for the concerns of opposition, finding common ground in a shared complaint of inaccuracy and bias.

### **Sticks and Stones: The Power of Words in Resource Debates**

The language used throughout the debates over Fish Lake and TML's proposed mine has incorporated words loaded with meaning and subject to interpretation, labels defined by generalizations, stereotype, and prejudice, and words to appeal to a presumed national interest. The prevalence of jargon, from politicians and corporate industry, spun into much of the media coverage, effectively masked the underlying complexity of this issue into a broadcasted simplicity. From the very beginning, opponents of TML's project had to present themselves as opposed-to-'Prosperity'; it is a given that 'Say No To Prosperity' is a self-evidently poor protest slogan.

#### Corporate Spin

TML's insistence that the lake they had intended to build, Prosperity Lake, and stock with fish to compensate for their destructiveness, will surpass the natural productivity of Fish Lake uses a logic of 'no net loss', arguing that their "manufactured capital" will balance out the loss of Fish Lake's "natural capital" to produce bottom line economics and a well-being that is measured by monetary income (Kirsch 2010:91). The premise of this logic takes for granted ideals of progress and also the authority of a corporate interest granted mineral rights to 'speak for' the land (Willems-Braun 1996-

97). Stuart Kirsch has observed how mining companies have responded to their critics by co-opting the opposition's discourse (2010:87). TML began this through naming their project to invoke a sense of common good, prosperity, and, as mentioned earlier, by incorporating words like sustainability and concepts of corporate responsibility and citizenship into their public image.

TML, much to the chagrin of the Tsilhqot'in people, also co-opted their company name, Taseko, from the Tsilhqot'in word Dasiqox, which means mosquito river; Mount Taseko in the Nemiah Valley looks over Taseko Lake (and Fish Lake), which headwaters the Taseko River (Dasiqox), a tributary to the Fraser (CEAA 2010b). TML, in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, is generally referred to as Taseko. A linguistic slight of hand on the part of the company's attempt to localize themselves, and their corporate interests, the usurped moniker is considered offensive to many Tsilhqot'in people; they see through the irony of a mining company adopting the name of the very river many feel TML's project threatens (Laplane, personal communication, November 2011). Seemingly benign, the creative discourse of industry capitalizes on the abstraction of land from the social and cultural histories that turn space into 'place' (Basso 1996), and effectively self-authorize themselves to speak on behalf of the land and its resources (Willems-Braun 1996-97).

The dominant images of corporate responsibility, of company interests as national interests, were prevalent throughout the media coverage, and became the face of an apparently polarized rural community, the division between the Tsilhqot'in National Government and TML, between First Nations peoples and the non-Aboriginal population of Williams Lake, between 'hard working' Canadians and those abusing the system, and

in framing and perpetuating negative relationships between peoples simply by reinforcing them in print, in rhetoric, and in the platform of unquestioned support for this project.

Communication is a critical component in debates over resource development, for all parties. It is a pathway to the general public, to clearly convey the matters at stake, and to gain support from that public in the form of 'popular will' that ultimately influences policy (Niezen 2003); it is also a means of negotiating complex situations, counter narrating dominant discourses, and re-creating the appearance of status quo dictated by mainstream media. The language incorporated into forms of communication is a conversation often in itself, as with every aspect of these conflicts, words do not come without intention, or agendas, attached to their use. As illustrated throughout the media analysis, TML incorporated into their discourse this rhetoric of locality, appealing to the pioneer ethnic recognized as influential in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, essentially designing their project description to speak to a 'Canadian' ideal. And whether cognizant or not, filling the negative space, the space between their words, as that outside the common good of all Canadians.

#### The Media as Cheerleader

Picked up by the local news media, through bias or lack of capacity to discover a story beneath the stereotypes, the images that seemed to split the local community over this mine have the power to reinforce what should rather be deconstructed. These are the apparent 'norms' that segregate people based on ethnicity, that make inequality an aspect of culture rather than a marker of systemic discrimination, and that ignore the reality of lived harmonies in favour of the sensationalized headline.



Despite the prevalence of news media that generalized the sides of this issue, the people within those 'sides' – especially after witnessing themselves as a diverse, non-stereotype conforming, influential force throughout the 2010 CEAA hearings – maintained agency within the dominant versions of debate that misrepresented them. In seeing through the media-fueled ascribed polarity, those involved in the opposition also recognized the fiscal agendas of TML cloaked in a neoliberal ethic of hard work, individualism, and capitalism. The people I spoke to in the interviews for my research expressed a break down of the support/opposition dichotomy at times along the lines of those who would benefit from the project, what the risks attached to that benefit might be, and who would be most affected by those risks (despite company promises both of mitigation and minimal impacts). It was clear through the statements from opponents that the perceived risks to the people living in the Nemiah Valley far outweighed the benefits promised by the project proponents and local politicians.

Further from the mine site, however, the *Williams Lake Tribune*, a syndicate of the right wing Black Press (Furniss 2001, Henry and Tator 2002), the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce, the City of Williams Lake, provincial and municipal politicians, and many area residents were convinced by the argument of wealth stemming from the construction of the mine and by the idea of progress and growth as indicators of success; these markers are reinforced as valuable and appropriate in dominant Canadian society daily and consistently go unquestioned.

In an interview with Friends of Nemaiah Valley, a member posed the question regarding the *Williams Lake Tribune* asking, “What's in it for them?” In response to this David Williams brought up the role of advertising and the interests of the Williams Lake

business community in the potential economic stimulus produced by the project. It certainly seemed to him that in the newspaper's quite blatant support of the project the mine's benefit was taken for granted. Ex-reporter for the *Williams Lake Tribune* Sage Birchwater also expressed disappointment at the role the newspaper decided to take; he noted,

I had a real problem with the Tribune, for example, being a cheerleader. I mean, it just threw out the whole impartiality that you sort of expect, the standard of impartiality and objectivity... You had the publisher handing out cheerleading questions to prompt people to ask at the Panel hearings... It certainly promoted the polarization more than anything. They would deny they were biased, they did deny they were biased, they continually denied it, but in the same breath they said, 'But we want the mine to go through'. (in interview, October 3, 2011)

Another of the interview participants pointed out the lack of capacity the paper has, with only one reporter at the time, to cover the Panel hearings or the complexity of the issue with any depth (McMechan, in interview, September 8, 2010). Others reaffirmed this inadequacy and the bias it produces. As John Dressler noted,

The local media were not very professional, not very ethical at all, in my estimation. Beginning with the media program months in advance of the Panel hearings, the 'Save Williams Lake' program that got all sorts of local business sponsors, and was emotional almost to the point of hysteria, and allowed no room, at that point in time, for contrary opinions, and that is what was so gratifying about the review process, that there was finally a forum for the expression of opposition to the [save WL] program. (in interview, August 16, 2011)

People within the opposition expressed dismay over how the media's predominantly one-sided coverage did not represent them, and was seen as taking liberties with the generalizations it employed (i.e. non-Aboriginal Williams Lakers as

unanimously supportive of TML's project). They expressed concern that the bias of the local news was taken for granted as representational by the broader, less informed, public. The reproduction of stereotypes and racism through the media has the potential for normalizing negative images, both those that pretend to depict First Nations peoples, and those that frame and polarize the interests First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, creating an exclusive 'Canadian' image through rhetoric rather than reality (Henry and Tator 2002).

Henry and Tator write, regarding the power of the media,

The stereotypical images constructed by editors and journalists have enormous strength and resilience. When minorities have relatively little power to control or resist those images, or to produce and disseminate more positive images, these misrepresentations seriously weaken their capacity to participate in mainstream Canadian society, be it culturally, economically, or politically.” (2002:235)

In the context of Fish Lake, the media-fed polarization of First Nations and local non-Aboriginal populations, had the CEAA not become a forum for alternatives to become visible, would have potentially lived as a print 'truth', abstracted from its social, political history, and upholding a dominant image simply by being the most prominent and visible voice. For those within the opposition these apparent truths fell short of the lived experience. Unfortunately, for those not having heard the CEAA enabled voices, dominant media renditions can maintain their prominence, sparking the need for alternatives to infiltrate the ‘popular’ consciousness by multiple means. It is critical that alternative discourses find both increased visibility and increased normalcy, those that enable a broader public, as Knopf writes “to “unlearn” and break down images of the

Aboriginal [and I would posit, the non-Aboriginal, pro-development stereotype] from the neo/colonial (mass media) discourses” (2010:89-90).

### **Discussion Conclusion**

While I have focused on a dominant trend in the news media surrounding debates over TML's proposed project and the destruction of Fish Lake, one nested in a framework of assumed interests, ethnic tensions, and within discourses both of development and a glorified (and exclusive) national identity, that does not preclude the media from being a powerful tool towards change. Nor should it be assumed that forms of media (print, social) have not been valuable assets to the opposition throughout this process. Henry and Tator also write that “...public discourse is a terrain of struggle” (2002:235), and while it is harder for alternative voices to find visibility within the prominent news sources often aligned with conservative interests (Black Press, for example), newspapers, websites (Protect Fish Lake, an informational advocacy site that also facilitates an email list serve, for example, and Teztan Biny Newswire, which keeps an up to date record of media related to the project), and social media, can be critical in re-illustrating resource conflict related issues.

Opponents to the project employed these different means to broadcast concerns and mobilize broad networks of support; organizations like R.A.V.E.N. (Respecting Aboriginal Values and Environmental Needs), Friends of Nemaiah Valley, the Council of Canadians, and the Sierra Club of Canada have information regarding TML's proposed project on their respective websites, have been effective in creating email campaigns to lobby politicians against this project, keeping their followers informed about the project, and contributing to publications expressing opposition to TML's claims as a visible

alternative. “Fish Lake Teztan Biny,” as of February 29, 2012, has 1313 friends on Facebook and continually releases status updates related to TML's project. The TNG have been active in releasing statements to the press detailing their actions in relation to this project and publicly documenting their continued opposition to TML's mine. These are published in the *Williams Lake Tribune*, among other newspapers, as have been many letters to the editors written by the project's opponents.

However, it is the negative portrayals of First Nations people in the news media, as commonplace, and the counter illustrations that depict non-Aboriginal peoples as another homogenous population, that have serious implications where, and when, they go unquestioned; as Henry and Tator note, “The media's everyday, common-sense discourses are crucial in the complex process of attitudinal formation and, more specifically, in the formation and confirmation of racialized belief systems (2002:236). But neither the biased *Williams Lake Tribune* nor the TML PR spin-machine exist outside of Canada's social and political worlds; rather, they reinforce stereotypes by believing they are representative of a public majority, that these issues are instances of conflict detached from colonial histories, and that those same colonial histories have no significance in contemporary hegemony. Similar to the ways in which MacMillan Bloedel was able to situate its economic interests in relation to the Clayoquot Sound old growth forests, TML and its media supporters have been able, as Willems-Braun writes “to posit a *singular* body politic, situate the reader *within* it, and thus assume a *unified* collective interest in the forest [or mineral rich lands] that all readers, upon sober reflection, must share. (1996-97:14, italics in original)

While it is easy to reframe opposition to a project within the same simplistic terms mobilized by the projects proponents (i.e. for or against, good versus bad) it is critical to flesh out the depth of these issues, because they exist across the country, consume communities, and stretch into complexities that affect a far broader population than residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Locating common ground within conflict can effectively force an examination of dominant histories, the commonsense that shapes public perception, and the frames that predict behaviour based on a static perception of identity and culture. In these instances of debate, when tensions erupt in a rural community and the foundations of those tensions become a means of framing current interpretation, there is also opportunity to, as Scott writes, "...critically examine the knowledge we are being given and the knowledge we ourselves produce" (2001:87). Finding focus within controversy, to have public conversations over common histories, divergent histories, and the prospects of a shared future, is a step towards re-framing this future in consideration of the diverse peoples who will live it.

## **Chapter 7 – Epilogue and Conclusion**

News media coverage of TML's proposed gold-copper project polarized a community based on notions of identity bound in stereotype. The CEAA Panel process in 2010 helped area residents and 'outsiders' break through these perceived barriers, finding common ground in their concerns for the potential adverse effects of this project, be those related to fish and wildlife, water and land, and First Nations rights and title; there were very few people who did not extend their concern across a wide variety of factors. The review process, although generated from conflict, allowed a forum for a diverse opposition to come into contact with itself; for people, First Nations and non-Aboriginal, to blur the ascribed identities caricatured in popular imagery. Reflecting upon this, the shift from a community self-fulfilling a media-sensationalized prophecy of racial tension in the face of 'development', to a heterogeneous opposition drawing on a wide range of knowledge and experience to solidify its foundations, is a remarkable process. That said, debates surrounding TML's intentions for Chilcotin lands are far from over.

In the following section I reflect upon a series of public events that re-frame TML's opposition as a diverse, powerful, and motivated public – not to indicate that support for TML's mine no longer exists, but rather that the opposition cannot be divided on the basis of stereotype, predicted interests, or perceived identities. The common ground documented in the previous chapter has opened the door to re-think the 'sides' of this issue, and in re-thinking these 'sides' one finds the room to reconsider apparent 'commonsense' and find resilience rather than division in diversity.

## **Human Rights, Indigenous Rights, and a Coalition of Opposition**

On November 8, 2011, the Tsilhqot'in National Government hosted a presentation in Williams Lake by Amnesty International entitled "Is the Prosperity Mine a Human Rights Issue?" The evening marked one of the first opportunities since the 2010 CEAA Panel hearings that opponents to TML's project had the opportunity to sit together again and re-vocalize their concerns in light of the 'New Prosperity' proposal. Approximately 30 or 40 people were in attendance, representing a diversity of ethnicity but a predominantly shared opposition to TML's interest in the region's gold and copper.

The tone of the evening, made most apparent in the question and comment period that followed, was that of an opposition aware of, and supported by, its diverse components. This was a consciousness and sentiment that was not so easily seen in Williams Lake prior to the 2010 hearings when portrayals of division far outweighed those of solidarity, when the interests of a generic 'Williams Lake' were aligned directly with the proponent and, as Chief Joe said "Everybody in the City of Williams Lake, as far as I knew, is out there on a waiting list to go to Brian Battison and Russell Hallbauer's next barbeque party" (in interview, September 16, 2011).<sup>5</sup> Area residents in attendance that evening stood to ask questions of Craig Benjamin, the Amnesty International speaker for the event, conveying support for the Tsilhqot'in by addressing TML's intentions and the federal/provincial governmental relationship to the rights of Canada's Indigenous Peoples, but also to tell their own stories of involvement in the 2010 Panel review, to vocalize their ongoing concern for the Fish Lake area, and to effectively engage with

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Battison is TML's Vice President, Corporate Affairs and Russell Hallbauer is the company's President, CEO, and Director.



others in regards to what the next steps of opposition should be meeting TML's renewed efforts and the decision to re-review 'New Prosperity' through CEAA's review process.

The discussion around human rights, including the United Nation's recently endorsed 'Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (United Nations 2008), has been a theme running concurrent to environmental concerns expressed by the project's opposition. Included in this is Canada's own relationship to the recognized rights of Aboriginal Peoples, as emphasized earlier by participant comments regarding the need to recognize those rights in relation to proposed development and the involvement of local First Nations peoples. When one understands the environment as enmeshed in culture, as inseparable from the well-being of local peoples and local economies, then concern for the environment is a human rights concern.

During the 2010 Panel hearings Ramsey Hart from Mining Watch Canada presented the Panel members, and members of TML's representatives at the hearings, with a copy of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), indicating that the project had implications for harm beyond that to the physical landscape; that, in Mr. Hart's own words "...this project is taking us in a fundamentally wrong direction towards finding a new way of relating to the Aboriginal People of Canada" (2010:789). Hart drew attention to Article 19 of UNDRIP, which states:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them. (United Nations 2008:7)

On March 24, 2010 however, when Hart made his presentation to the Panel, Canada remained one of the four UN member states (along with the United States, Australia and New Zealand) that had refused to endorse UNDRIP. On November 12, 2010 the Harper Government changed this position, endorsing the declaration as an 'aspirational' document. What this means for an international scrutiny of the government's involvement in TML's proposal has yet to be seen, but the possibilities of engaging the international community to assert the sort of moral pressures associated with the endorsement of non-legal, non-binding declarations are something local First Nations are taking seriously. On February 23, 2012 the TNG issued a press release detailing the work of Xeni Gwet'in Chief Marilyn Baptiste in Geneva, Switzerland reporting to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 80<sup>th</sup> Session.

Chief Baptiste's report addressed the Tsilhqot'in experience with federal and provincial policies that have allowed for conflict between the First Nations and resource extraction companies by granting access to lands; she states,

The Tsilhqot'in will continue to call on both the BC and federal governments to uphold their fiduciary duties to protect our rights and title, which means protecting Teztan Biny and Nabas from this dangerous proposal. We are also calling on the reform of BC's outdated mining laws to be compliant with the standards found in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and which result in bad projects being forced upon us without our consent. (Tsilhqot'in National Government 2012)

With the increasing mainstream attention on Indigenous rights, First Nations involved in defending their territories draw from a track record of local resistance (especially true in the case of the Tsilhqot'in as evidenced by their title case and consistent strident

opposition to uninvited forestry and mining), and their connections to the global histories of marginalization that Indigenous peoples have experienced. As Wendy Russell writes,

The struggle that has been brought to life and reproduced through capitalist development for Indigenous communities in the Canadian north is common to the global Fourth World, especially in the recurring loss of land and livelihood to national progress. Indigenous communities in the north have seen their economies and territories decimated by national resource extraction economies, such as hydroelectric development and mining (2004:133).

The ability to mobilize a shared history of marginalization as Indigenous Peoples that has been recognized by the international community is an avenue to seek redress in a broader forum when local avenues prove frustrating. As Chief Joe Alphonse, Chair of the TNG states,

The Tsilhqot'in are prepared to go to the international level to protect our Nation's rights and title... In the case of the rebid Prosperity Mine proposal, we feel that we've nearly exhausted every possible avenue to resolve this at the local level, though we will continue to take our fight to the new federal Panel review." (Tsilhqot'in National Government 2012)

In both the global context and in this local fight before the new Panel, the TNG are not alone. Key partners in other Indigenous communities and, importantly, in high profile international NGOs and local community organizations, have been essential to draw on for resources and solidarity.

On the night of the aforementioned Amnesty International presentation the audience was a diverse mix of First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, from throughout the Cariboo-Chilcotin, and it was clear that people were prepared to reignite their opposition to TML by drawing on the strength of their diverse yet collective voices. This stands in contrast to how their separate voices, initially silenced by the news media,

eventually built up to a resonance of significant concern in the last round of Panel hearings. The apparent new common voice is possible, I believe, because of the 2010 hearings process that drew out a diverse opposition and gave it a forum to present concerns and to find like voices, and to contrast stereotyped divisions.

On the evening of the presentation there was an emphasis, expressed by many in the audience, to be involved in a collaborative movement against 'New Prosperity'. A tentative date was set that evening to harness momentum into ongoing meetings, and to have an opposition communicating effectively on how the new CEAA process was unfolding. Subsequent meetings would also facilitate communication between the Tsilhqot'in National Government and non-Aboriginal peoples engaging with the process, and provide a forum to engage effectively within the stages of the CEAA review, whether to review proponent documents during public review periods or to participate directly in the Panel hearings.

#### A 'New Prosperity' Public Forum

The date set for a follow up meeting was December 8, 2011. Hosted by the TNG with support from the local chapter of the Council of Canadians, the event was billed as a public forum to discuss the 'New Prosperity' proposal, to talk about its difference from the original 'Prosperity' proposal, and for the TNG to speak publicly to their concerns for this renewed application and express their continued opposition. I met with the TNG's Mining, Oil, and Gas Manager, JP Laplante, prior to the announcement of this meeting to discuss what the event's agenda might be, and how to communicate that through an event poster (Appendix D). The goal was to avoid alienating any one in the local community

while carrying the implicit message of opposition to TML's project by way of the Tsilhqot'in National Government heading on the poster.

We had thought the meeting would be an opportunity for the opposition to learn together about the new project and to organize amongst each other. While we were not exactly wrong on this account, the event drew from both support and opposition to the project, a clear reminder that while the opposition is both diverse and strong, support for the potential benefits of TML's project in the Cariboo-Chilcotin remains steadfast as well. The attendance at this event, far exceeding the capacity of the space rented, also indicates the continued relevance and significance of this issue in the lives of area residents.

While the presence of two RCMP officers seemed to build upon the potential for tension between the 'sides' facing TML's 'New Prosperity', and also illustrates a local expectation of these 'sides', the evening generated a respectful discussion between those concerned with the mine's progress. Both Bill Carruthers and Walt Cobb, vocal advocates of the project, were in attendance and some supporters of the project raised issues to JP Laplante and to Chief Joe Alphonse, who hosted the evening. On the topic of reclamation, supporters of the project cited the efforts of mining companies elsewhere, to illustrate the advance in mitigation technologies and faithful in the proponent's responsibility to clean up the project post-production. These comments were received respectfully by the TNG who communicated their concern for the renewed project already rejected as an alternative in the 2010 CEAA process (although repackaged by TML and 300 million dollars more costly than the original plan).

By the end of the evening the TNG had clearly demonstrated its position in relation to TML's new proposal and, regardless if any minds were actually changed (and I do know there were some project supporters who left the event frustrated), provided a space where local peoples were able to engage in a non-confrontational manner over this issue. This was not, I believe, a result of the RCMP presence, but was rather due the diplomacy and discussions that filled the evening. If nothing else, Chief Joe and the numerous other Tsilhqot'in, Secwepemc, and other First Nations peoples in the room who told their own stories in relation to the project were able, as individuals within a collective opposition, to nuance and negate the generic stereotypes continually contributed to them through mainstream media and the generalizations mobilized too often by industry and policy. They were able to do this simply by communicating their position of opposition to TML's project in their own words, directly to an audience of both support and opposition, and without a filter of media bias or any external re-framing of their perceived interests.

Slightly unnerved by the unexpected turnout of TML's supporters at the outset of the meeting, I left feeling positive about the interaction between groups. It was clear that the boundaries did not subscribe to ethnicity but rather to a valuation put onto the environment and associated with how much people were willing to risk in that regard. At the end of the evening Cecil Grinder once again called audience members on stage to drum a closing song, among these he chose one of the RCMP officers and one of the men who had brought up reclamation in support of the mine; they both accepted the invitation. I can not help but think that having some one extend you respect in a potentially tense situation, to listen to concerns from the mouths of those concerned rather than from an

illustration of a blanketed anti-development opposition, is a more significant step towards recreating a social relationship than governmental promises towards that relationship without a deconstruction of the stereotypes and prejudices that continue to negatively shape experience.

### Continuity of Bias

The *Williams Lake Tribune* had been relatively quiet during the lull between the rejection of 'Prosperity' and the announcement of a CEAA review for 'New Prosperity'. With a different publisher and editor, I thought perhaps the criticisms of their biases had hit home, at least in relation to coverage surrounding the proposed mine. The December 8<sup>th</sup> public forum however, sparked an editorial backlash that reaffirmed the newspaper's position. In an unsigned editorial entitled "Base opinions on fact" published in the December 13, 2011 edition of the *Williams Lake Tribune*, the newspaper expressed a concern that the TNG hosted meeting had presented "fear mongering" and "misinformation", and suggested that people wait until TML release its Environmental Impact Statement; as the editorial stated,

We believe that everyone is entitled to their opinion on any issue, including the mine. However, we also believe that opinions should be based on facts, and it seems there was definitely some misinformation floating around the meeting... Before forming an opinion, make sure you have all of the facts first and foremost... The facts will be included in Taseko's environmental impact statement and will be analyzed through the federal environmental assessment, which everyone will have an opportunity to study. (Editorial 2011:7)

This editorial accompanied the newspapers coverage of the meeting, which also included a direct rebuttal of the evening's events by TML's Brian Battison, despite the fact that he was not in attendance that night.

Responding to the second hand information provided to him by the paper's reporter, who had obviously phoned the company prior to writing the article, Battison was able to engage in a one sided conversation with the TNG's concerns and the information presented at the event. To this end, he was also given the last word, and a very public opportunity to contradict statements outside of the context they materialized in. In the December 15, 2011 edition of the *Williams Lake Tribune* Battison wrote a letter to the editor entitled 'Misinformation and bias at mine forum' (2011:7) effectively condemning the public forum itself as having “jumped the gun on the official public forums that are forthcoming as part of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's due process” (2011:7), and condemning the information presented by TNG employee JP Laplante, despite the fact that throughout his presentation Laplante quoted both from TML's own documents and from the 2010 CEAA Panel's final report.

This combination of article, editorial, and letter to the editor reinforce the presumption that industry has been authorized to “speak for” the lands in question and are the only ones capable of presenting 'facts' about the project to the public, and also that the government process is a neutral body with the best interests of all people in mind (Willems-Braun 1996-97:7). Further in his comments Battison states,

These latter forums [CEAA review] are intended to encourage informed and moderated discussion in an environment where accurate information is available to all and questions can be answered by accredited experts on all matters. It is troubling that the facts about a project with such profound benefits for the regional, provincial and



national economies — including thousands of new jobs and billions in new public revenues — should be buried under a program of misinformation and bias, such as it was on Thursday. (2011:7)

Despite the continuity of the local news media's bias, the public forum was a significant event towards re-creating local perception of opposition to 'New Prosperity', towards re-thinking the demographics of that opposition, and towards re-envisioning social relationships in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. At the very least, the *Williams Lake Tribune* managed to record some critical statements from that evening. One of these was Chief Joe Alphonse saying, “I think the word has to be sent out that I don’t want this to be a First Nations versus non First Nations issue” (Lamb-Yorski 2011:2), and Williams Lake Mayor Kerry Cook saying,

We’re neighbours and we need to find ways to listen and to move forward together... I think everyone in this room knows the City has taken the position of pro Prosperity and despite that, we have been able to work together in very respectful ways on issues of common interest. (Lamb-Yorski 2011:2)

The events in the Cariboo-Chilcotin that have followed the Panel hearings, the subsequent rejection of the 'Prosperity', the resubmission as 'New Prosperity', and the granting of a new CEAA review, have provided a thoughtful commentary on how relationships can not be generalized to suit a perception of homogenous populations. There is no homogeneity amongst people, or within cultures, that can serve to predict or define how 'sides' will form in conflict. Recognizing this is the beginning of re-thinking the norms that perpetuate inequality for historically and contemporarily marginalized peoples, for involving histories within our current understandings and not binding them in the temporal brackets that render them irrelevant to today. It is the start to creating

new relationships, recognizing that there are significantly positive old relationships that simply have not made the headlines and that listen to the voices speaking rather than the images attached to them.

## **Conclusion**

In her address to the 2010 CEAA Panel, Tsilhqot'in and Xeni Gwet'in member Geraldine Solomon stated, "Pretty bad time to be Tsilhqot'in. Because of my skin colour, my ancestry, and my heritage, I'm looked upon as the enemy that is against Prosperity" (2010:3757). This statement embodies the harm that lives within the generalizations that describe this issue, TML's gold-copper project on Tsilhqot'in territories, as one between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples. Dominant rhetoric that idealizes an exclusive citizenship, that universalizes and naturalizes capitalism, paternalism, and 'progress', does nothing to improve the negative relationships between diverse peoples that can erupt when land and resources are disputed or towards recognizing the "alternatives modernities" embraced through lived experience (Curry 2003). Rather, these preconceptions add to the imbalance of power that continues to marginalize. As Blackburn writes,

Aboriginal people continue... to struggle against hegemonic criteria of belonging linked with a normative white identity as well as for recognition of their rights to land and self-government (2009:68).

But it is these very disputes, quite often, that draw out the latent hostilities, the entrenched perceptions of dichotomized knowledges unable to be "conversant in the language of both conceptual systems" (Nadasdy 2003:261) and the 'common sense' of a

rural status quo, to essentially ignite the conversations needed to establish improved relationships (Escobar 2006, Larsen 2003).

Limited to the forum of the mainstream news media, however, the diverse ‘sides’ of resource conflict can potentially be obscured by the perpetuation of commonsensical frames. While the media can be an outlet of opposition and alternatives, it is often the dominant trends and coverage that carry the most currency with the general public. It is rare to find a forum for expression that allows those living within the areas of conflict – in Canada the rural lands often rich in resources – to effectively vocalize and have recognized their own experience. In the Cariboo-Chilcotin in 2010 the CEAA review process provided this forum, and voices were able to blur the perception of ethnic division perpetuating tensions in the area. This is not to say that tensions no longer exist or that there is not still polarity surrounding this project – the for-or-against views on this project are particularly entrenched in their positions – but rather that there is room for First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples to negate stereotypes and articulate re-envisioned relationships.

### The Media

In this research I have examined what became apparent to many non-Aboriginal residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin during the media coverage of TML’s proposed project and the CEAA review hearings: that their opposition to the project was not visibly represented. The categorization of all non-Aboriginal dissent as ‘environmental’, in a manner that abstracts the ‘natural’ from the social, political, or historical, limits the platform of opposition that may be concerned for broader aspects of potential adverse effects, or that is simply not affiliated with a recognized environmental organization. As

such, the rigid portrayal of ‘First Nations and environmental groups’ versus Williams Lake (an apparent redneck, pro-industry stronghold), effectively neglected the voices of local non-Aboriginal peoples against the mine, alienated the opposition from each other (initially) based on ethnicity, and exacerbated division based on stereotypes rather than the lived realities of resident peoples. Under the guise of journalistic impartiality, the *Williams Lake Tribune* supported TML’s initiative without question, and, intentionally or not, that support shaped public perception of this issue.

The dominance of the theme of division in media representation became a looking glass to see how ‘normal’ it is in Canada to live in unquestioned social segregation, or to believe that you do because what makes the headlines is always difference, conflict, poverty, abuse, and rarely the common ground, shared interest, potentials in a shared place, and in a shared sense of place. The headlines and statements I have recorded in Chapter 4 of this study subscribe to the gauntlet of stereotypes that attempt to represent First Nations peoples in popular media, especially in relation to those involved in opposition to large-scale, high profit, resource development projects. From militarized to idealized, these representations effectively cordon off both Canada’s colonial history, and the glorified version of what it is to be (and who is considered being) ‘Canadian’.

Ironically, the most vicious of these statements are those advocating ‘equality’, quite prepared to ignore the trespasses of the past that both underpin inequality and give it continuity, and imbued with a neoliberal individualism nudging everyone to, as quoted earlier, “pick up their socks and get on with it” (‘Rhoni pick’ in Fournier 2010). As Willems-Braun notes, First Nations peoples face not only the continuity of colonial practice that has resulted in the dispossession of lands and authority, but, he writes

...they also must confront a growing non-Native backlash that has girded itself in the seductive rhetorics of liberalism in order to question why Natives should be granted “special privileges” to which everyone else is not entitled, or which might limit individual freedoms. (1996-97:8)

Making visible the Indigenous historiographies upon lands that are imposed upon for industrial development is critical to understanding First Nations positionality in relation to these projects, and towards delegitimizing the boundaries that divide local peoples based, unfortunately, on glorifications of equality rather than recognition (Harris 2002, Neveu 2010). As Neveu writes, regarding the imbalance of ‘equal’ rights, “In the theories of recognition, equality does not mean identical treatment for all individuals” (2010:236). But in attempting to understand or recognize the First Nations experience, there is a need to also engage with the cultural foundations of non-Aboriginal ‘common sense’, to question the authorities that take for granted their right to “speak for” both the land and a perceived “national interest” that shapes the experience of a diverse people upon those lands (Willems-Braun 1996-97). The way in which histories inform the present is critical to the prospect of improved relationships and shared futures; to do this is to establish an “effective history” so that, as Scott writes

That which we take most for granted loses its universal or transcendent dimension... “Effective” history’s insistence on the temporality of our conceptual categories denies the totalizing power of any system of thought, any regime of truth. The result does not guarantee progress; but it does support belief in futurity. (2001:96)

Living in Williams Lake both during the build up to the 2010 Panel hearings and throughout them, as a resident of the area, I knew that the portrayal of non-Aboriginal interests in this mining project did not reflect my own, and I knew that I was not alone in wanting to make my own position visible. Although many within the opposition to this

project hold environmental values that can not justify risk to ensure twenty to thirty years of employment, few fit the picture of urban environmentalist intent on impoverishing rural communities to fulfill some sort of bandwagon greenness, perpetually hypocritical as they sip lattes and type letters of protest on their laptops. Rather, people in the Cariboo-Chilcotin brought their experience into their positionality, with the land, with mining, and with their neighbours.

### The CEAA Hearings and Panel Report

The final report issued by the CEAA Panel that listened, for almost two months, to the diverse voices of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, reflected the variety of concern people have about the potential adverse effects of this project, and also the variety of people that brought their concerns to the Panel themselves. The concerns of the Tsilhqot'in people headline the adverse effects listed in the final report, and in communication with the testimonies of experts, funded through the Tsilhqot'in National Government, Friends of Nemaiah Valley, Council of Canadians and the fundraising efforts mentioned earlier by First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, created the 'scathing' potential for environmental and social harms recognized by the Panel.

While the Panel does not explicitly mention the diversity of voices raising concerns, and does indeed note that "The Panel received strong support from the Williams Lake community for the project due to potential opportunities for job creation and diversification of the economy" (2010b:244), it is in the breadth and depth of concerns raised that this diversity becomes apparent. It was the process of the hearings that made these voices visible not solely to the Panel, but to each other and to the people of the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

The final report addresses the project's list of subjects, 'Development of the Water Quality Model', 'Land and Resource Uses', for example, with two components: 'proponent assessment' and 'view's of participants'. This puts the presentations brought before the Panel in the spring of 2010 in direct conversation with TML's Environmental Impact Statement to effectively evaluate the potential for significant adverse effects. At the forefront of the concerns raised are the voices of Tsilhqot'in people, individual community members and organizations. In the list of findings the Panel makes recommendations regarding the potential for mitigation should the project be approved. Within this list of fish and fish habitat, navigation, and the cumulative effect on grizzly bears, First Nations' "current use of lands and resources for traditional purpose and cultural heritage" and the "potential or established rights and title" are presented as unmitigable (CEAA 2010b:ii-iv). The report notes,

It is the Panel's conclusion that despite the proposed mitigation measures and commitments, the Project would result in significant adverse effects. The Panel also notes that while it has provided recommendations that should be implemented should the Project proceed, it does not believe that these recommendations would eliminate or accommodate the significant loss First Nations would experience as a result of the Project. (2010b:245)

While this summation of potential adverse effects is diverse and significant, and proved powerful enough to shape the federal government's initial rejection of this project, there are concerns and voices that did not make the list. These include the concerns for the continued economic success of businesses already operating in the Nemiah Valley. Siegfried and Kelly Reuter, for example, had the risks to their livelihood effectively justified by the report, which in a section regarding impacts to tourism states, "The Panel concludes that the Project would not result in a significant adverse effect on

tourism and recreation in the region, but would result in significant adverse effect on Taseko Lake Outfitters tourism business” (2010b:155). One wonders, at least I do, how there can be a recognized potential significant adverse effect on a tourism business (the main one operating in the area of the proposed mine site) but not on tourism in the area. Although these voices perhaps fell outside the transparency checkboxes of bureaucratically recognized effects, they were still heard as powerful voices blurring the boundaries that predicted opposition/support demographics.

### Alliances

The study I have done does not suggest that the alignment of non-Aboriginal interests with First Nations interests is a necessity within issues of this nature, to be effective within a process like that of the Panel hearings. The Tsilhqot’in, Secwepemc and other First Nations spoke to their concerns with a power and integrity that reflected the depth of experience within respective territories, the need for Aboriginal input into decisions that effect those territories, the inextricable relationship between the environment and culture, and a distrust of industry and government that is due the colonial history of the area, of Canada. But on the ground, outside of Panel hearings and media reporting, the relationships between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples matter. Not because of a colonial naivety or paternalism that wants to ‘make it better’ for First Nations peoples, but rather because improved relationships make it better for us all.

Alliances between diverse peoples, particularly between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples residing in lands sought for resource development without consensual invitation, have been powerful mechanisms of opposition across Canada. The relationships between local peoples, in effecting decision making on behalf of the lands



they live in, is critical to establishing positive interethnic relationships and is often a truer mechanism for change than imposed policy. In reflecting on the theoretical neglect for the power of lower level collaboration, Neveu comments on the potential for “individual-to-individual and community-to-community relationships” writing,

The success of an agreement depends on grassroots relationships between communities and individuals involved in negotiations. Their will to make their environment a better world for both parties is a crucial factor in the success of the implementation of principles of justice... Experience of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples’ working together become opportunities to know more about each other’s realities. This level of study could become a vehicle for genuine mutual recognition. If the communities involved in conflict have the will to reconcile, dialogue, and find solutions to living together better, it will make a significant difference in the negotiations at the political level because of powerful support. A bottom-up approach where people are brought together in improving their lives has more chance of success than an imposed agreement. (2010:243).

These alliances have had effect for communities facing similar circumstances as those surrounding TML’s proposed gold-copper project in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. In Northern British Columbia the Cheslatta T’en found solidarity with their non-Aboriginal neighbours to effectively defeat the Aluminum Company of Canada’s (ALCAN) Kemano Completion Project (KCP) in 1987. KCP was a hydroelectric project in an area that had seen local residents forcibly relocated to facilitate an ALCAN project in the 1950s and who were well experienced with the lived adverse effects of exclusive, large-scale development (Larsen 2003).

As another example, in the mid 1990s a rural Ontario town found avenues for interethnic alliances in the face of fishing rights relating conflict. The Neighbours of Nawash provided a mechanism for non-Aboriginal peoples to support First Nations rights

in a climate of racism and create a visible alternative for the perception of non-Aboriginal interests. As similarly noted in the discussion of Cariboo-Chilcotin residents, non-Aboriginal peoples found impetus to act in the face of having their own identity aligned with prejudice and bigotry. As Marilyn Struthers comments on her experience,

When we formed the Neighbours of Nawash as a small informal group of people prepared to speak in support of Nawash's right to fish, it was not from any strong sense of ideology or conviction about peace-building. Neither was it a strikeout for justice, nor about any ideal about being one's brother's keeper. It was, as I understand it now, an act of identity preservation. Fundamentally, it was about our own dignity and identity; it was not about the right for a First Nation's identity to coexist in our market, but for our own ability to be, as we understood ourselves. (2010:371)

These issues spark a need not necessarily to learn about a perceived 'other', but rather to examine the foundations of our own positions within our own circumstances, realities, and relationships, and then to extend that knowledge to learn about the position, experience, and histories, of each other.

The Panel's final report and the federal rejection of TML's project that followed, despite how the rationale was made transparent, as fish or as culture, was recognized as the cumulative efforts of a diverse and powerful opposition. This has become apparent through the events that have followed this proposed mine from the November 2010 rejection to the June 2011 resubmission of this project as 'New Prosperity', reigniting debates that can no longer be simplified along the lines of ethnicity.

#### Participant Observation and Interviews Post-'Prosperity'

When the federal government rejected TML's project 'as proposed' in 2010 it was clear to the opposition that they had perhaps won a battle, but not the war. In this

research I have incorporated both the media coverage of this issue and the CEAA Panel hearings into conversation with those involved in opposition to this project, to assess their perspectives on the representations given them by the press, the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Panel process, and the implications this has on continued debates over access, extraction, and development of mineral resources in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and in British Columbia. The people I spoke to were First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples, spanning the breadth of stereotypes that do not suit their experience or expectations related to the First Nations/non-Aboriginal dynamic. All of them recognized that the perception of polarity could become toxic in a small, rural community.

From the local peoples I interviewed and interacted with at the various events following the announced CEAA review initiated by 'New Prosperity', I witnessed the determination of opposition, and the strength that can be found in recognizing that there is opportunity to overwhelm the racism that can live in unquestioned status quo simply by listening and getting to know one another (Struthers 2010). Developing collaborative relationships between ethnic groups is not new to the Cariboo-Chilcotin; people have been working alongside one another since settlement began. What we need to find is the balance between recognizing the positive relationships without obscuring the negative aspects of our shared histories that need accounting for. There is a need to recognize colonialism for the way it continues to infiltrate our worlds, to benefit some and restrict others, without subscribing to the generalizations that perpetuate the continuity of dominance. This involves abandoning the tenet that sets non-Aboriginal interests on the

path of ‘progress’ and assumes that First Nations peoples are not prepared to articulate their own futures.

### Williams Lake and the Cariboo-Chilcotin

The Cariboo-Chilcotin is my home, and regardless of how many times I have lived elsewhere, it has always been my home. I can not see this place without the experience of it shaping my view. I can, however, bring to it my education; a process itself that is unsettling as much as it may be enlightening. If anthropology has taught me anything, it is to always query ‘why?’ and to look through my own reactions that, upon inspection, are inevitably founded within my own position in ‘settler’ society. Having grown up in Williams Lake I have seen and heard blatant racism disguised as rural ‘truths’, listened to stereotypes repeated as if they do not do harm, and I have been ignorant of the diversity of my own community. I have cursed the generic ‘redneck’ driving their four-by-four in the creek valley where I walk my dog, and I have disdained ‘city’ people who I have assumed do not even know how to fix my car or light a wood stove. But in mobilizing these stereotypes I also know they do not stand up; they are, rather, just easy.

I discovered Elizabeth Furniss’ book ‘The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community’ (1999) early in my graduate studies. Furniss’ research documents the racism experienced by the First Nations peoples of the Cariboo-Chilcotin as perpetuated by their non-Aboriginal neighbours, those unquestioning of a pioneering ethic that glorifies colonial histories and also of the segregation and violence that exist between the region’s diverse peoples. I thought at first, ‘Well, no need to carry on with my thesis; someone’s already written it.’ But as I

read further, and in light of my recent experience within the Panel hearings held for TML's 'Prosperity', my view changed.

While I knew that addressing the continuity of colonialism into our current social relationships was imperative, I also had witnessed the inability for many parties, particularly those unsympathetic to diverse versions of history, to listen past their own perception of 'blame'. The simplifications we invoke because they are easy or in order to speak generally, have shaped how people have come to understand their own position in the complex relationships between people and the land, its resources, and each other. This is true for First Nations peoples and for non-Aboriginal peoples.

In 2010, when debates over TML's Prosperity Mine consumed headlines and dominated conversation, I began to really learn, to see the power of dominant thought infiltrate expectation and to be taken for granted as 'dominant' simply for lack of a visible alternative. And yet the alternatives are there; they are living in the Chilcotin and in Williams Lake between neighbours, friends, and business partners. People identify through the nested contexts of their lived experience, but often policy and media take the easy route, projecting generalizations onto broad groups, and making something like culture non-negotiable. This is tricky, as groups that have experienced marginalization need to mark out parameters of inclusion to be recognized as legitimate by the perpetually dominant state (i.e. in Canada, granting rights based on a criteria of proof and always with a disclaimer to the authority of the Crown), but at the risk of temporalizing or inauthenticating their lived realities, the 'modality' as John Lutz writes, that cultures transverse through time without losing distinct practices, traditions, and life ways (2008).

The conversations begin when people are able to see through homogeneity to recognize that labels, First Nations, environmentalist, settler, can not predict or predetermine how one designated a label negotiates his or her life. Stereotypes disintegrate when it becomes obvious that they are not representative. When Cecil Grinder invited a pro-Prosperity audience member up on stage to drum at the end of the public forum held in Williams Lake in mid-December 2011, while I would not suggest his opinion on the mine changed, I sincerely doubt that man left that night believing in a generic, anti-development First Nation. The opposition to TML's proposed mine became visible to itself when it was clear that the First Nation versus development, development equals good 'Canadian' values, theme in the news media and in proponent and political rhetoric was alienating residents of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. During the Panel hearings, these residents were able to hear each other speak, to vocalize their own concerns within a resonant opposition, and to re-think the common perception of ethnic tension in relation to interests in the land, and in an inevitably shared future.

### **From Visibility to Normalcy**

On December 1, 2011 I attended a workshop in Williams Lake, unrelated to the topic of TML's mine, entitled *Learning and Planning Together: Building Respectful and Effective Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Relationships*. The event was co-hosted by the Fraser Basin Council and the City of Williams Lake and was well attended, close to 50 people from a diversity of backgrounds, including the Mayor of Williams Lake and two Secwepemc Chiefs. While I did not attend in a research capacity, rather as a director of a local arts and culture organization, I could not help but reflect on the significance of this type of event within the work I have been conducting, and within the possibility for

change within a rural, purportedly 'redneck' community. The workshop brought up some serious questions as to how to recreate these relationships: where and how to begin this process.

The day was another positive marker in my recent experiences at home that shows this process having already begun. Making visible these efforts, the obscuring of a First Nations/non-Aboriginal polarity through a vocal and diverse opposition to TML's mine, the respect being attempted by local peoples recognizing that there is resilience, economic and social, in establishing bonds with each other, is critical to the process, not only of building positive relationships, but of making those positive relationships the new status quo.

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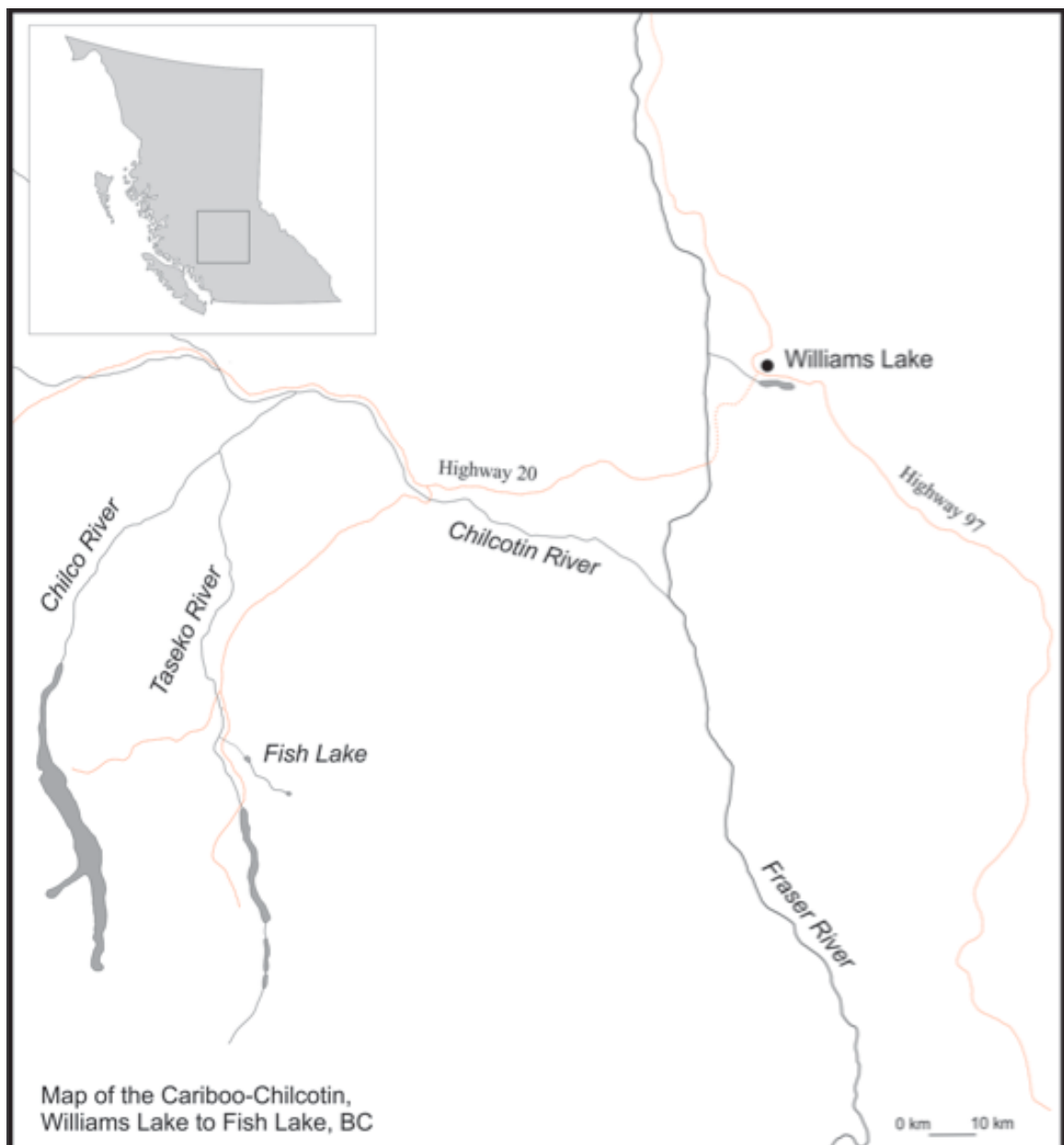
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**Appendix A – Map of the Cariboo-Chilcotin: Williams Lake to Fish Lake, British Columbia**



**Appendix B – Jane Wellburn, Presentation to CEAA Panel, March 23, 2010**

Thank you for listening to us all. I won't take very much of your time tonight, but I felt it necessary to add my voice to an issue that is obviously so important to us all. I'll try not to belabour any of the points that have already been made, and I won't barrage you with numbers and statistics. I do not intend to speak on behalf of anyone else; I have only my own experience to draw from, my own story to tell, and my own questions to ask.

I'll just spend a minute introducing myself. I'm twenty-eight years old and I was born and raised in Williams Lake. I, like every one else here, am concerned about our future. I am unquestionably opposed to Taseko's proposed gold and copper mine development in the Chilcotin.

I have come today to simply ask the panel for a favour, that through your findings and your recommendations, you grant us this opportunity to change. I do not believe that this mine is the be all and end all of Williams Lake. And I do not believe that our status quo, now or ten years ago, is worth the impact this development will have, both upon the land and upon the people living in it. We have spent a lifetime as a town based on resource extraction; it is undeniably our history, but if you take a walk downtown on a weekend, even a weekday, I doubt your heart will swell with the sense of community there. We have devoted ourselves to heavy industry and it has lent many of us the lifestyles that we have become accustomed to today, but I question whether our present now is the same future we want for our children?

I despair the thought of my child, of anyone's child, waking up in twenty years, in thirty-three years, tied by debt to an unstable industry and dependant on the income of a mine near the end of its life. To find themselves faced with the exact situation we are in today, only chronologically further into the uncertainties presented by climate change, the depletion of fossil fuels, and a perpetuated disregard for cultural diversity.

There is an anthropologist, Wade Davis, author of the recently broadcasted CBC Massey lectures, who speaks eloquently to this point, and I will quote him here. He writes,

Our economic models are projections and arrows when they should be circles. To define perpetual growth on a finite planet as the sole measure of economic well-being is to engage in a form of slow collective suicide. To deny or exclude from the calculus of governance and economy the costs of violating the biological support systems of life is the logic of delusion. (Davis 2009:217)

There are other options available to us here. A future that won't see the people of this area indebted, divided, the shutters on the shop windows pulled down. There is opportunity in promoting a localized economy, capitalizing on the knowledge and diversity that we have here in abundance, and working towards sustainability together. True sustainability, that lasts longer than twenty years.

I do not propose this as an easy alternative, as a quick, clean jump from this to that, but rather as a transition. We do not need to abandon technology, or abstain from development in all forms, but create a need for more, with greater diversity, so that alternative sources of energy become easily accessible, cheaper, and that jobs may be created from these new demands; retrofitting old buildings with 'green' technology, planning and designing our communities to function with greater efficiency, re-thinking

waste management, redeveloping public spaces, expanding alternative transportation, food production, eco-tourism, the list goes on.

This isn't an effort that we have to start from scratch; it has already begun here. Our community gardens are expanding every year; demand for space is turning previously unutilized land into healthy meals for individuals, families, and, increasing, as local produce makes its way into cafeterias, our school children. As the popularity of 'eating local' grows so do the health benefits, community connections and the economic viability of our local farmers. Next month a local grower's co-operative opens in town, providing farmers and ranchers with a retail outlet year round. The city itself has issued a declaration of sustainability and has signed a mandate to be carbon neutral by 2012. We need to have faith in ourselves, give ourselves credit as the "sturdy, industrious and self-reliant" people Mr. Battison described us as yesterday. If this mine does not go through it will not be our ruin, but a new beginning.

The definition of prosperity, with a lowercase 'P,' reads as a successful flourishing, a thriving condition, and to that I have no objection. But you can not count that success with money, or in the accumulation of material things. We will count it in our relationships with one another, in our laughter and our tears, in health and well-being that is in balance with the land, the air and the water, and in a respect for cultural diversity that expands the depth of our knowledge, and our experience.

As I near a close I would like to quote Davis once again, for I feel that his words, already crafted, lend well to our discussion today. He writes,

There is a fire burning over the earth, taking with it plants and animals, ancient skills and visionary wisdom. At risk is a vast archive of knowledge and expertise, a catalogue of the imagination, an oral and written language composed of



the memories of countless elders and healers, warriors, farmers, fishermen, midwives, poets, and saints – in short, the artistic, intellectual, and spiritual expression of the full complexity and diversity of the human experience. Quelling this flame, this spreading inferno, and rediscovering a new appreciation for the diversity of the human spirit expressed by culture is among the central challenges of our times (Davis 2009: 34).

It has been said that when the so-called ‘developing’ countries reach ‘western’ levels of consumption it will take five earths to support us. I wonder; when we drain this planet of its resources, will Taseko, or its corporate counterparts, offer to build us a new one?

I ask you to grant us this opportunity to change. Thank you.

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## **Appendix C – Participant Interview Questions**

You participated in the federal review Panel hearings held in the spring of 2010. What were the concerns that you brought before the Panel members?

How effectively addressed were your concerns throughout the Panel process, by Taseko/other members of the community?

Reflecting back on the Panel hearings and the outcomes, what factors of the debate stand out in your mind? How were these heard (or not) by the media, the Panel, other Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal people?

[To Aboriginal participants] What do you think of what non-aboriginal participants in the Panel hearings said in their testimonies, in the media, and following the outcome of the decision?

[To non-Aboriginal participants] What do you think of what Aboriginal participants in the Panel hearings said in their testimonies, in the media, and following the outcome of the decision?

The local newspaper was criticized for its coverage of the Panel hearings, for fanning the flames of division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the area. At the time, then Minister of State for Mining Randy Hawes echoed the sentiment of this divide, predicting racial violence towards First Nations of the mine was rejected; this never happened. How did you feel about the polarization of this issue as one of First Nations versus Development? How did you assert your own views within this framing of the issue? How reflective was this framing of local concerns?

What factors raised by the opposition to Taseko's Prosperity project do you feel led to the federal government's rejection of the proposal?

Many people expressed surprise at the federal government's decision to reject Taseko's proposal. What expectations did you have following the Panel hearings and recommendations, in consideration of the concerns raised throughout that process?

What prompted you to participate in the federal environmental review hearings last spring? What concerned you most about the project? And least?

How did you feel about the media coverage following the Prosperity application? Do you feel that your concerns over the project were represented in the media?

Many supporters of the mine raised employment opportunity and income generation as primary arguments throughout the hearings. Can you comment on these concerns? Do you see mechanisms for sustaining a local economy without the 'traditional' resource industries like mining and forestry?

Do you feel that there was common ground for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents in opposing the mine? Do you think this has implications for how land claim issues or disputes over resource development may be dealt with in the future?

There was quite a range of adverse effects brought to the federal government by the Panel. This seemed to result from the broad range of testimonies brought forward during the hearings. Do you recall collaborations between groups (i.e. First Nations and environmental, etc.) within the hearing process? Do you feel that the diversity of the opposition was recognized (i.e. it was not only First Nations peoples opposed to the project)? Do you think that the process might be different, or the media coverage different, if these collaborations were more formal or obvious?

## Appendix D – Tsilhqot'in National Government Public Forum Poster



**TŚILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

# **PUBLIC FORUM**



### **Tsilhqot'in Presentation:**

- The facts about the 'new' mine proposal.
- What to expect in the 2<sup>nd</sup> public review process.

### **Open Discussion:**

- How to make your voice heard.
- Ideas for public participation in review hearings.

The public and all community groups  
are encouraged to participate.

**Thursday December 8, 2011 7-9pm**  
**Central Cariboo Arts Centre (Old Firehall)**

90 Fourth Avenue North, Williams Lake, BC

Refreshments Provided by W.L. Chapter of the Council of Canadians  
Inquiries: JP Laplante, TNG Mining Manager (Tel: 250-392-3918)