

Environmentalism in an Age of Reconciliation

Exploring a New Context of Indigenous and Environmental NGO Relationships

by

Charlie Gordon
B.A., University of Victoria, 2014

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

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As Canada's courts recognize and redefine the scope of Aboriginal title and rights in the country, alliances between Indigenous communities and environmental groups are playing an increasingly central role in the fight to stop fossil fuel infrastructure projects and address the global threats of climate change. Recognizing the importance of relationships between environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO) and Indigenous peoples to environmental campaigns in Canada, and the need to include land-politics into the national conversation of reconciliation, this research project aims to investigate the role of reconciliation efforts in environmental campaigns in BC. Indigenous-ENGO relationships offer important opportunities to learn how actions and language of reconciliation are (or are not) being expressed in environmental campaigns, and to learn how ENGOs are approaching their work with Indigenous communities in an era of reconciliation. Using two campaigns as my case studies I explore these topics by interviewing ENGO staff and Indigenous peoples working collaboratively on the Site C Dam campaign in the Peace River region of Treaty 8 in northeast BC, and the Pacific Northwest liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal project in the Skeena River watershed region in the traditional territories of the Tsimshian, Gitksan, and Wet'suwet'en nations of northwest BC. Informed by Indigenous and anti-colonial research methodologies, a principle of *relational accountability* is used to center relationships with land as a foundation for reconciliation, and for recommendations on how Indigenous-ENGO relationships can be improved.

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Dedication

To the lands, waters, and relatives with whom we share our home.
For the healing journey we walk along in the face of troubled times.

“When you heal the land, the people will be healed.”

- Yvonne Tupper of Saulteau First Nations, excerpt from Site C campaign interview

“Land is an important conversation for Indigenous peoples and Canada to have because land is at the root of our conflicts. Far from asking settler Canadians to pack up and leave, it is critical that we think about how we can better share land. [...] How can we “advance the process of Canadian reconciliation” without talking about land?”

- Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in “Land and Reconciliation”¹

Chapter 1: Introduction

Upon the election of the Liberal Party of Canada in December 2015, Justin Trudeau announced that the most important relationship of all is the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Trudeau won the federal election on a campaign that promised to restore nation-to-nation relationships based on recognition and respect; launch an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women; full implementation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and the adoption of all 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) report on the residential school legacy and reconciliation in Canada. One month later Trudeau was in Paris for the UN talks addressing climate change and championed the importance of respecting Indigenous rights in addressing climate change and announcing to the world that “Canada is back”.² Within the short period of a month the new Liberal government’s actions seemed to indicate that the old ways of disregarding environmental protection and the welfare and rights of Indigenous nations and peoples – which had defined the last eight years under Stephen Harper and the Conservative party – were over.

¹“Land & Reconciliation: Having the Right Conversations,” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, <https://www.leannesimpson.ca/writings/land-reconciliation-having-the-right-conversations>.

² “‘Canada Is Back,’ Says Trudeau in Paris. ‘We’re Here to Help’ | The Star,” <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/11/30/busy-day-for-trudeau-at-paris-climate-change-talks.html>.

It was almost as if the political landscape for both Indigenous peoples and environmental groups had changed overnight. In the fight against climate change these political shifts were significant. As Canada's courts increasingly recognize and redefine the scope of Aboriginal title and rights in the country, alliances between Indigenous communities and environmental groups have increasingly held a central role in the fight to stop fossil fuel infrastructure projects. Many of these fossil fuel projects occur on, and impact most directly, Indigenous lands and peoples, making constitutionally-protected Aboriginal and treaty rights powerful tools in stopping industrial resource projects that frequently disregard Indigenous peoples and their lands.

The critical urgency with which the international community needs to act to stop run-away climate change is well documented³, as is the need to keep remaining fossil fuels in the ground and transition towards renewable, clean energy sources.⁴ From this perspective the importance of relationships between Indigenous communities and environmental groups working together on climate initiatives seems self-evident. This research project looks at the importance of relationships between Indigenous communities and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO) and the role of reconciliation in environmental campaigns in British Columbia (BC), Canada. Using two campaigns as my case studies I explore these topics by interviewing ENGO staff and Indigenous peoples working collaboratively on the Site C Dam campaign in the Peace River region of Treaty 8 in northeast BC, and the Pacific Northwest⁵ liquid natural gas (LNG) terminal project in the Skeena River watershed region in the traditional territories of the Tsimshian, Gitksan, and Wet'suwet'en nations of northwest BC.

³Richard A. Kerr, "How Urgent Is Climate Change?," *Science* 318, no. 5854 (2007): 1230–31.

⁴"IPCC Digested: Just Leave the Fossil Fuels Underground," *New Scientist*, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn24299-ipcc-digested-just-leave-the-fossil-fuels-underground/>.

⁵ The Pacific Northwest terminal project, along with the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission supply pipeline, were commonly referred together as the 'Petronas' project, after the project's major stakeholder, Malaysian state oil and gas company Petronas. I have reflected the same commonly used reference in this thesis.

The federal approvals of the Site C dam and the Petronas LNG projects in July and September of 2016 respectively, drew strong criticisms that despite Trudeau’s promises on climate action and reconciliation, the Liberal government is showing the same disregard for environmental protection and Indigenous peoples and their rights as the previous government. While the Petronas project was eventually cancelled by the proponents in July 2017, both projects were heavily challenged in court by Indigenous nations for inadequate consultation, and in the case of Site C (which at the time of writing is still going ahead with construction) there is still a pending Supreme Court challenge for violation of treaty rights. These two case studies exemplify the tensions between “reconciliation” of a nation-to-nation relationship, and the economic development and interests of the Canadian state.

As environmental groups move from campaign strategies traditionally focused on resource and ecosystem conservation to an inclusion of justice issues that address colonization, Indigenous title and rights, what role do Indigenous-ENGO relationships play in reconciliation efforts in Canada? Questions of environmental protection – i.e. *How are land and water-use decisions made and who makes them?* – are central to conversations about how Indigenous peoples and settlers share these lands and waters equitably; and until very recently Indigenous peoples were largely left out of these conversations, including conversations with environmentalists. Both the environmental and Indigenous resurgence⁶ movements have the protection and survival of the natural world as a primary objective; as many Indigenous participants shared in interviews, the survival of Indigenous worldviews and cultures is inherently linked to the wellbeing of their homelands. This research project aims to explore this new context of Indigenous-ENGO relationships in attempts to provide new insight and direction for the

⁶ I use the term ‘Indigenous resurgence’ to refer to the actions of Indigenous nations and peoples reclaiming and regenerating relationships and practices with their homelands – directly challenging forces of ongoing colonization.

environmental and Indigenous resurgence movements to advance the process of reconciliation in Canada by focusing conversations of reconciliation on relationships with land.

1.1 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into four chapters. This first chapter introduces the project, provides background to the research, and describes the research methodologies used, reviews previous literature on the subject, and details the methods of data collection and analysis. Chapters two and three present each case study by highlighting the challenges and opportunities that Indigenous-ENGO relationships provide, in participants' own words. Chapter four concludes with a discussion and analysis of the case studies' main themes, implications for Indigenous-ENGO relationships and the environmental movement moving forward, and final recommendations for ENGOs on how to improve their relationships with Indigenous communities.

1.2 Background

Environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) have recognized the political leverage and opportunities of collaborating with Indigenous peoples and are increasingly partnering with Indigenous communities in their climate campaigns.⁷ Some Indigenous communities see opportunities in working with environmental groups while defending their territories and asserting their Indigenous rights; collaboration can increase the strength of their political voices, energies, and resources. However relationships between environmentalists and Indigenous peoples in Canada have historically been fraught with tension.⁸ The early environmental movement in North America and the creation of national parks both played roles in the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands. More recently there have been instances of environmental groups using Indigenous rights when they

⁷ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Knopf Canada, 2014).

⁸ Lynne Davis, ed., *Alliances: Re/Envisioning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships*, 2 edition (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2010).

have helped achieve campaign goals and ignoring them when they did not.⁹ Current Indigenous-ENGO relationships not only face the challenges of reconciling historically strained relations, but also of building new relationships that recognize the importance of reconciliation in Canada's environmental and political landscapes.

Central to reconciliation initiatives in Canada and BC are commitments from both the federal and provincial governments to implement the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and TRC's Calls to Action. The U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples "establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world"¹⁰, and "constitutes a principled framework for justice, reconciliation, healing and peace".¹¹ The TRC advocates for UNDRIP as "the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society", and calls on Canadian society to embrace reconciliation guided by the principles of the UNDRIP.¹² Many governments, educational and religious institutions, and other sectors of society have begun to officially change their policies and practices to promote reconciliation, but in my opinion the environmental movement is a step behind. How are ENGOs incorporating reconciliation into their work with Indigenous communities? And what role do Indigenous-ENGO relationships play in reconciliation initiatives in Canada? These are some of the questions I set out to explore.

⁹ For examples see For examples see Charlotte Cote, *Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah and Nuu-Chah-Nulth Traditions* (Seattle : Vancouver, 2010); Damien Lee, "Windigo Faces: Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations Serving Canadian Colonialism," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 31, no. 2 (2011): 133; Bruce Braun, *Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2002).

¹⁰ "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | United Nations For Indigenous Peoples," accessed August 20, 2018, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>.

¹¹ Human Rights Council (EMRIP), "Access to Justice in the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Restorative Justice, Indigenous Juridical Systems and Access to Justice for Indigenous Women, Children and Youth, and Persons with Disabilities: Study by the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," 2014, <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/27/65>.

¹² Truth and Reconciliation Canada, What we have learned: Principles of truth and reconciliation, n.d., www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/.../Principles_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf.

The previous section outlined some of the academic justification for this research but equally, if not more important to me, is to share how the origins of this research came about through a request from the ENGO community. Early in my Master's program I was discussing ideas for my thesis project with a friend, Caitlyn Vernon¹³. Caitlyn is the Campaigns Director for Sierra Club of BC and has many years of experience working on environmental campaigns in BC with Indigenous communities. I was describing to Caitlyn my interest in the intersections between environmentalism and reconciliation in Canada, when Caitlyn said to me: "Charlie there are many of us working with ENGOs who want to work with Indigenous peoples in better ways, and are trying to but don't necessarily know how or have the resource to do so. If you could provide some kind of resource on how to do that it would be very helpful".

After talking with other contacts in the ENGO community and hearing confirmation of Caitlyn's experience, I accepted Caitlyn's suggestion for this project because one of the challenges I have with academic research is the tendency to theorize about topics without considering the needs of, or impacts on, the communities of people whose lives are closely-linked to the issues studied. As a researcher in environmental studies, the most important thing to me in choosing a thesis project was to create something of benefit to the people and communities dedicated to the protection of lands and waters, and the healing of our relationships to Earth and each other. Coming as a request from someone in the ENGO community who has extensive experience with these issues, this thesis is a humble attempt at fulfilling Caitlyn's request and giving something back to you – my research participants – who are fighting for what I consider true Reconciliation: the healing of our relationships with the Earth.

¹³ All research participants have willingly consented to being named in this thesis.

Recognizing the importance of relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous peoples to environmental campaigns in Canada, the importance of reconciling these historically-strained and ongoing colonial relationships, and the need to include land-politics into the national conversation of reconciliation in Canada, my research project aims to investigate the role of reconciliation efforts in environmental campaigns in BC. Indigenous-ENGO relationships offer important opportunities to learn how actions and language of reconciliation are (or are not) being expressed in environmental campaigns, and to learn how ENGOs are approaching their work with Indigenous communities in an era of reconciliation. The best way for me to examine relationships between ENGOs and First Nations, and their larger implications for the movements of climate justice and Indigenous rights was to speak with people who are currently engaging in these relationships. I started with the following simple research questions:

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) *What role is reconciliation playing in environmental campaigns in BC?*
- 2) *What is working well in Indigenous-ENGO relationships? What are the challenges?*
- 3) *And finally, how can these relationships be improved?*

1.4 Locating Myself in the Research

In order to explain the context of the research I also feel the need to introduce myself and my connection to these ideas. My English name is Charlie Gordon and my Chinese name is 子健.¹⁴ I was born in Hong Kong when it was a British colony and my heritage reflects this: my Mother is Chinese and my Father is British. When I was seven my family moved to eastern Canada – in what my current understanding is the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, Wyandot, and Anishinaabeg peoples,

¹⁴ Which means 'Healthy Son'.

an area now known as the Greater Toronto Area – although I was not taught this while growing up. My education of Canada’s history consisted solely of romanticized accounts describing the first European settlers’ relationships with Indigenous peoples. It was not until I graduated from high school and moved to the Coast Salish territories of BC that I learned of the colonial displacement and oppression still imposed on Indigenous peoples in Canada today. I attribute this to the prominence of Indigenous communities and cultures in BC, where compared to the rest of Canada, the government signed very few treaties with Indigenous nations before taking their lands¹⁵. I have been living as a settler on the territories of the Lekwungen peoples (Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations) and W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations for 12 years, and it is here that for the first time in my life I have experienced a connection to lands and waters that I can only describe as feeling like home. To me this means I have a responsibility to develop a relationship with these lands and waters and their original inhabitants, the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, to know what it means to be a good visitor on these lands, and to change my status on these lands from that of an uninvited settler to an invited guest. This research project is part of that work.

I’ve always considered myself an environmentalist and have always had a deep love and connection with the natural world. These sentiments were cultivated in me by my parents who fostered a love for the outdoors in their children. But as an immigrant to this country I have also thought a lot about questions of privilege: Why do some people have freedom of mobility but others do not? What does it mean to have a connection to a place, and to call a place home? What are the histories of these lands before the creation of Canada? These questions intensified the more I learned what was not taught to me in school: that the exploitation of Indigenous lands and people in the name of developing and settling Canada continues to this day. As a new comer to this country I also saw how settlers

¹⁵ Before the BC Treaty Process was created in 1991, only 14 land purchases, known as the Douglas Treaties, were made in BC on Vancouver Island between 1850 and 1854. In 1899, during the ‘Klondike Gold Rush’, the federal government signed Treaty 8 with eight First Nations in northeastern BC.

disproportionately benefit from the ongoing land theft in ways that may be harder to see for the average non-Indigenous citizen. As I pursued an undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies I found that studying 'the environment' only intensified my queries of the links between colonialism and 'protecting nature'. It was not until my final undergraduate year that I took a course called 'Decolonizing Environmental Politics' with Ahousaht/Tsimshian scholar Clifford Atleo Jr., that I developed a fuller understanding of Canada's colonialism and the role that environmentalism – the development of parks and wilderness in the name of conservation – has played in perpetuating the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands.¹⁶ To me environmental studies is the study of human interactions with our environment in the interest of solving the complex contemporary environmental challenges we face. The alarming reality of our planet's climate and ecological state is evidence that our human systems are dangerously out of balance with the natural systems which we rely on. Another way I think of environmentalism is the attempt to achieve a balance, or harmony between human systems and natural systems, which I ultimately view as Reconciliation.

1.5 The Trouble with Reconciliation

Historically reconciliation has been an offering by the Canadian state to Indigenous peoples as an atonement for prior wrong treatment. Indeed reconciliation is often thought of simultaneously with The Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was established to address the legacy of residential schools and provide compensation for survivors. The TRC's 94 Calls to Action draw attention to how Canada can move forward in reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

¹⁶ For examples see Charlotte Cote, *Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah and Nuw-Chah-Nulth Traditions* (Seattle : Vancouver, 2010); Damien Lee, "Windigo Faces: Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations Serving Canadian Colonialism," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 31, no. 2 (2011): 133; Bruce Braun, *Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2002).

*“For over a century, the central goals of Canada’s Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as “cultural genocide.” [...] **The Canadian government pursued this policy of cultural genocide because it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people and gain control over their land and resources** (emphasis added).”*

- From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report¹⁷

Although the TRC’s Final Report locates the origin of the residential schools and other policies of cultural genocide in the desire to gain control over Indigenous land and resources, decolonization and the repatriation of Indigenous lands is still missing from the conversations of reconciliation from the government. This was a strong theme in participant interviews.

“I don’t have a lot of confidence in truth and reconciliation. Depending on what side of the country you’re on, it’s been 300 to 500 years of colonization. And there’s been so many opportunities for the government to do what’s right: to give us our land back, [and] give us more power when it comes to deciding what happens to our resources. And we’ve never given up our land. As far as I’m concerned this is Gitksan land. And anybody [Indigenous] you talk to will say the same thing, but unfortunately we are being dictated by this government. So with the truth and reconciliation, you know again, words are just words. Until there’s actions put to those words, and real sincerity and truth, I don’t see anything changing.”

- Kirby Muldoe, member of Tsimshian and Gitksan nations, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, excerpt from Petronas campaign interview

Kirby’s quote articulates what many Indigenous participants shared with me in our interviews: what the federal and provincial governments of Canada call “reconciliation” completely fails to address the root of the conflict: the on-going theft and colonial exploitation of Indigenous lands. As Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson says in the opening quote of this

¹⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, [Second printing]., Book, Whole (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2015), 1,3

thesis, reconciling relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians fundamentally requires centering this issue of land before any healing of relationships can happen. To reflect this discrepancy between colonial governments' views of reconciliation and the perspectives reflected through Indigenous voices in these pages, in this thesis I distinguish the government's lip-service reconciliation with a small 'r', from capital 'R' Reconciliation which centers the healing of Indigenous lands and peoples as the root of our conflicts.

At the start of every interview shared with Indigenous participants I always made sure to begin the conversation with a recognition that the words "reconciliation" and "environmentalism" can be very loaded – even dirty – words to Indigenous people.¹⁸ This is because both words have historically represented the continued displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands and disregard of their rights to them. There are two parables that are useful illustrations of the Canadian government's approach to reconciliation. The first is the opening quote from the 1983 commissioned report on Indian Self-Government in Canada, generally known as the Penner Report:

*"I sit
on a
man's back
choking him
and making him carry
me and yet assure myself and
others that I am sorry for him
and wish to lighten his load by
all possible means – except by
getting off his back."
- Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?*, 1886¹⁹*

The second parable comes from Andrew Rigby's *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence*:

*"There were two friends, Peter and Joan. One day Peter steals Joan's bicycle. Then, after a period of some months, he goes up to Joan with outstretched hands and says 'Let's talk about reconciliation.'
Joan says, 'No, let's talk about my bicycle.'*

¹⁸ It was with great deliberation that I include both words in title of this project.

¹⁹ As quoted in Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson, *The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy* (Toronto: Lorimer, 2017), 270.

‘Forget about the bicycle for now,’ says Peter. ‘Let’s talk about reconciliation.’
‘No,’ says Joan. ‘We cannot talk about reconciliation until you return my bicycle.’”²⁰

As the quotes in this section and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s at the beginning of this chapter demonstrate, reconciliation from the government fundamentally fails to address the underlying reason and cause for residential schools in the first place: the forced removal and assimilation of Indigenous peoples from their lands in order to acquire the necessary land base and resources for Canada’s nation-building project. Until land repatriation and renewal of Indigenous sovereignty is included in the national conversation on reconciliation, it will continue to be a dirty word – a reminder of broken promises and Canada’s unwillingness to return stolen goods.

1.6 Literature Review

Partnerships between ENGOs and Indigenous communities have been central to the environmental movement in BC since the ‘War in the Woods’ era of protests in the 80s and 90s. The significance of, and tensions between, Indigenous communities and ENGOs were highlighted in the old-growth logging protests on Haida Gwaii, in Clayoquot Sound in Nuu-chah-nulth territory on Vancouver Island, and the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) region of the central coast. These events attracted attention from researchers looking to understand the evolution and complexity of these campaigns but little research was done on the nature of the relationships themselves. Over two decades later, echoes of the ‘War in the Woods’ era are still being felt in today’s conflicts over pipelines and other resource projects with significant impacts on Indigenous lands and peoples as well as climate.²¹

Two important works that came out of these War in the Woods studies are Lynne Davis’ ‘Alliances’ research project,²² and Bruce Braun’s The Intemperate Rainforest. Davis’ case study of the GBR

²⁰ Andrew Rigby, *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2001), 142.

²¹ “Twenty Years Later, the ‘War in the Woods’ at Clayoquot Sound Still Reverberates across B.C. | Globalnews.ca,” August 11, 2013, <https://globalnews.ca/news/774070/twenty-years-later-the-war-in-the-woods-at-clayoquot-sound-still-reverberates-across-b-c/>.

²² See Davis’ chapter in Davis, *Alliances*, 334. and Lynne Davis, “The High Stakes of Protecting Indigenous Homelands,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, no. Journal Article (2009): 137.

agreement is the only study of relationships between environmental groups and Indigenous communities. Braun's book does not include a case study of environmentalist-Indigenous relationships, but does highlight the problematic ways that ENGOs failed to engage with the Nuu-chah-nulth communities during the Clayoquot Sound campaign. This section will briefly describe their works and show how my project builds upon these earlier studies by incorporating the new contexts of climate change and reconciliation as outlined in the previous section.

Lynne Davis – Alliances project

Davis' case study of the Coastal First Nations' Turning Point Initiative (now known as Coastal First Nations), examined the relationships between the environmental groups and Coastal First Nations during the Great Bear Rainforest campaign. Davis' research explored these collaborative relationships within the broad context of First Nations' pursuit of self-determination. Upon the signing of the Great Bear Rainforest agreement Davis identified that the relationships that had formed over ten-plus years were now entering a "new and risky stage"²³ that would be determined by the environmental groups' ongoing solidarity with First Nations' pursuing self-determination. It has now been over ten years since Davis' work, and as I described in the previous section, the new context of Canada's prominent discourse on reconciliation further defines the broad context of Indigenous self-determination that Davis was working with. This is where my research picks up from Davis' work, however the added context of climate change (which was much less prominent during the decade of GBR relationship developments) requires shifting the lens of analysis from the resource oriented environmental campaigns of the 'War in the Woods' to the climate change oriented campaigns that define today's environmental and political landscape. To me this requires looking at how the recognition of Indigenous

²³ Davis, "The High Stakes of Protecting Indigenous Homelands," 152.

rights are being articulated as an integral component of sustainability, and thus how reconciliation is being articulated by ENGOs in their climate campaigns.

With the importance of reconciliation in Canada's environmental and political landscapes, and the added urgency of addressing the challenges of climate change, works such as Braun's The Intemperate Rainforest are useful for looking at the historical tensions of relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous communities in BC, and helps contextualize the challenges present in current ENGO-Indigenous relationships.

Bruce Braun – The Intemperate Rainforest

Unlike Davis' works, Braun does not explore the dynamics in relationships between environmental groups and the Nuu-chah-nulth during the Clayoquot Sound forestry protests. Braun's work is a more theoretical and philosophical examination of the different ways that we understand and give meaning to 'nature' – in this case BC's west coast forest – and how these differences were at the heart of the intense political and ideological struggles. But in the book's third chapter, Braun does examine the campaign strategy and approaches to working with the Nuu-chah-nulth by one of the main ENGOs organizing the campaign against the logging of old-growth forests in Clayoquot Sound.

This chapter is an illuminating example of the deeply ambivalent historical relationships between BC environmental groups and Indigenous peoples. Since the War in the Woods in the early 90s ENGOs were increasingly present in traditional territories of Indigenous peoples where goals of protecting so-called "pristine wilderness" from resource extraction resulted in tensions with local First Nations. In some cases, ENGOs campaigned without consulting First Nations or consulted only when their objectives aligned, which resulted in conflicts with Nations in their continued efforts to articulate ownership and control over their traditional territories.

Braun noticed that during the Clayoquot Sound protests environmentalists frequently claimed to speak and act on behalf of nature, in the same yet slightly different ways that industry and state would speak for the rainforest and its futures. Braun was interested in why and how environmentalism perpetuated colonial relationships to lands and their original inhabitants. Recognizing that the destruction of old-growth forests and other environmental threats are rooted in a view of nature as *external* (e.g. nature as a site of resources for capital production), Braun called for an environmental politics that does not reduce all of nature and culture into commodities. Braun argues that the common environmental view of nature needing saving from humans reinforces the idea that humans are separate from nature, which allows us to commodify and exploit it.²⁴

However, a crucial failure in Braun's treatment of the subject is the complete lack of Indigenous voices in his study. Nowhere are the experiences of Indigenous peoples with environmentalists, nor the voices of Indigenous thinkers present in his analysis, despite his recognition of environmental groups ignoring the voices of Indigenous peoples, and the necessity of Indigenous peoples' right to speak *as* Indigenous peoples for *their* lands. Sadly Braun's work serves as an example of the perpetuation of colonial approaches in academic work. Braun may be asking the right questions: "*What does a radical postcolonial environmentalism look like? How do we renovate our ideas of nature and culture to achieve this?*"²⁵ and "*How do we align ecopolitics with other political struggles, including the anticolonial struggles of Canada's First Nations?*"²⁶ but his methods were flawed. For his approach to truly be anti-colonial, I would argue the proper question to ask is "*What does a radical anti-colonial environmentalism look like?*", and requires centering Indigenous voices and ideas and engagement with Indigenous peoples in the research.

²⁴ Braun, *Intemperate Rainforest*, 13.

²⁵ Braun, x.

²⁶ Braun, 13.

However flawed Braun's methods were, my motivations for this research project align with his objectives: to strive toward a new environmentalism that is aware of not only the impact of people *on* the environment, but also how our histories and current realities of power and domination – our dominant systems of capitalism and colonialism – are at the heart of how we understand ourselves and the environment. Braun argues that how we develop this new concept of environmentalism and how we dismantle our systems of power and domination must be thought of as the same project, just as I argue that resolving climate change and Reconciliation are ultimately the same project: restoring harmony to our relationship with the Earth and each other.

Building off of Davis' and Braun's work, this project applies these ideas to the new contexts of today's Indigenous-NGO relationships by exploring how and why NGOs need to incorporate reconciliation efforts into collaborative relationships with Indigenous peoples through the stories and experiences of those involved in the Site C and Petronas campaigns.

1.7 Research Methodology

In this section I briefly explain my process for choosing the different research methodologies used in this thesis.²⁷ Research methodologies are the ways in which researchers approach answering their questions to gain knowledge about reality. For example, how do I research about Indigenous-NGO relationships so I can provide a resource for these two communities to work better together? As a non-Indigenous researcher conducting research involving Indigenous peoples, and having the objective of gathering knowledge of practical benefit to environmental and Indigenous communities, my thesis was informed by Indigenous research methodologies, anti-colonial research methodologies, and movement-

²⁷ The difference between research methodology and research methods is an important but terribly boring distinction; but it is also a confusing one since they are sometimes used interchangeably. I am distinguishing between the two by calling methodology the way in which we approach the framing of research questions, and research methods as the steps taken to answer research questions. These will be described more in this chapter.

relevant theory. I will not describe each of these in detail as much as give you an understanding of how they informed my research.

1.7.1 Indigenous Research Methodologies

Conducting ethical research involving Indigenous peoples requires a responsibility to understand the long and damaging history of academic research *on* Indigenous peoples, and having an understanding of Indigenous research methodologies – research *by* and *for* Indigenous peoples. Having said that, as a first generation immigrant Canadian I do not feel it is appropriate to simply adopt an Indigenous research paradigm as my own since my understanding of Indigenous knowledges, cultural values and practices is limited. I also do not believe that I am capable of understanding and embodying these aspects of Indigenous research methodologies in the ways that Indigenous people or communities do. But as an environmental studies scholar undertaking research dedicated to the healing of our relationships to the Earth and each other, and more specifically through the decolonization of the environmental movement’s colonial relationships with Indigenous lands and peoples, it is crucial that my research is conducted in ways that don’t reproduce the colonial violence against Indigenous peoples and lands that I am working against.

In his book *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson (2009) describes that Indigenous peoples demand that research in their communities “follows our codes of conduct and honours our systems of knowledge and worldviews”.²⁸ In order to conduct my research in ways that do not reproduce the historical harms I seek to avoid, I have a responsibility to understand not only how the European tradition of the university has played a role in perpetuating and promoting colonial worldviews and the oppression of Indigenous peoples for centuries, but also the ways Indigenous research methods differ

²⁸ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point, N.S: Fernwood Publishing, 2009), 8.

from dominant Western research methods. In Wilson's view, Indigenous research is a ceremony that *brings relationships together* (emphasis added).²⁹ I am not Indigenous to these lands now called Canada, but my research aims to help with the process of healing the land and ourselves. As I quoted at the beginning of this thesis, Yvonne Tupper, a Site C activist from Saulteau First Nation said it clearly to me during our interview: "When you heal the land, the people will be healed".

The fundamental differences between Indigenous research methods and conventional research methods speaks to the fact that each are grounded in different worldviews, or views of reality. There are many great resources on Indigenous research methods³⁰ but the one that I came back to over and over again was Wilson's *Research is Ceremony*. Wilson's book describes an Indigenous research paradigm that is based through his study on the shared aspects of Indigenous research methods used by Indigenous scholars in Australia and Canada. A short summary of his findings are:

- 1) The shared aspect of an Indigenous worldview is relationality. Relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality.
- 2) The shared aspect of an Indigenous research ethic and methodology is accountability to relationships.
- 3) The shared aspects of relationality and relational accountability can be put into practice through choice of research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information.³¹

²⁹ Wilson, 8.

³⁰ For example see Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, Reprint edition (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2010); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd Edition (London: Zed Books, 2012).

³¹ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 7.

Wilson also provides a helpful explanation of a fundamental difference between an Indigenous research paradigm and what he calls the dominant paradigms³² of academia:

“One major difference between those dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that those dominant paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore, knowledge may be owned by an individual. An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared by all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subject I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos; it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge...you are answerable to *all* your relations when you are doing research.”³³

While I resonate with Wilson’s description of being answerable to all your relations when engaging in research – in fact this aligns with what it means for me to be an environmental studies scholar – this passage provides an opportunity to highlight the limitations of settler researchers using Indigenous research methodologies in their own work. Explanations such as Wilson’s are helpful for understanding the differences between Indigenous research paradigms and dominant research paradigms, but as a person raised and educated in the dominant Western cultural paradigm I am limited in my ability to understand the cosmologies Wilsons describes which inform Indigenous research paradigms. A practical consequence of these limitations is the potential of projecting my Western perspectives onto the perspectives shared with me by Indigenous research participants – a form of colonization that academic research has a long tradition of. Because of these limitations an important process for me has been to look for aspects of Indigenous worldviews and values that align with my own and work within this common framework in my research design, and doing this in consultation with my committee member

³² Wilson defines ‘research paradigms’ as “sets of underlying beliefs or assumptions upon which research is based. These sets of beliefs go together to guide researchers’ actions. What is reality? How do we know what is real and what is not? How can we find out more and explore our reality? What moral beliefs will guide the search for reality? These questions are at the heart of what research paradigms are.” (33) Wilson uses the term ‘dominant’ to describe the culture of European-descended and Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexist, male-dominated Canada.” (35)

³³ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 55.

Dr. Jeff Corntassel, Tsalagi (Cherokee Nation). As mentioned in Wilson’s third point above, Indigenous research methods inform research design, but as a non-Indigenous researcher I also used anti-colonial research methodologies to inform these considerations.

1.7.2 Anti-Colonial Research Methodologies

To address the limitations and inappropriateness of using Indigenous research methods in settler research I drew upon anti-colonial research methodologies articulated by both Indigenous writers such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and the non-Indigenous writer Elizabeth Carlson.³⁴ Elizabeth Carlson outlines principles for settler researchers conducting anti-colonial research in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, and proposes that research undertaken by settlers that promotes “anti-colonial, decolonial, and solidarity content and aims must occur in relationship and dialogue with Indigenous peoples, involve meaningful consultation with and oversight by Indigenous scholars and knowledge keepers, and draw upon work by Indigenous scholars.”³⁵

Relational Accountability

One of the principles in common with Wilson’s description of Indigenous research methodology and anti-colonial research methodology is relational accountability. In the three-point summary of the shared aspects of Indigenous research methodologies listed above, Wilson identifies accountability to relationships as a natural expression of an Indigenous worldview of relationality – relationships being reality. I also feel that the second passage I quoted from him above, the idea of being answerable to all your relations (plant, animal, cosmos) during research also speaks to relational accountability. In Elizabeth Carlson’s paper, eight principles of anti-colonial research methodologies for settler researchers

³⁴ Leanne R. Simpson, “Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2004): 373–84, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2004.0107>; Elizabeth Carlson, “Anti-Colonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 7, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 496–517, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2016.1241213>.

³⁵ Carlson, “Anti-Colonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies,” 6.

are described; three of which are different articulations of relational accountability: Relational and Epistemic Accountability to Indigenous Peoples; Land/Place Engagement and Accountability; and Self-Determination, Autonomy, and Accountability. I will briefly outline them here, as described by Carlson, since I reference them in the discussion of my research methods later in this chapter.

“Relational and Epistemic Accountability to Indigenous Peoples: Anti-colonial research on the part of settlers occurs within the context of Indigenous sovereignty. It requires relational accountability with Indigenous peoples. Standpoints, epistemes,³⁶ perspectives, and experiences of Indigenous peoples are honoured, foregrounded, and valued. Researchers engage with indigeneity and Indigenous people respectfully, learning and observing context-specific cultural norms, protocols, and languages. It is important that settler peoples who engage in anti-colonial research maintain relationships and dialogues with Indigenous peoples in general, and regarding our research in particular and at all stages of research. Research is congruent with the well-being of Indigenous peoples as they define it.³⁷

Land/Place Engagement and Accountability: As connected to relational accountability to the Indigenous peoples of the lands where we reside and research, anti-colonial research is accountable to the land herself. Anti-colonial research acknowledges, respects, and engages with the protocols and natural laws of the Indigenous lands where it is conducted. It attends to narratives of place and place-based memories, and to specific land-based histories. Research avoids causing further harm to the land and works directly or indirectly to return lands to Indigenous peoples. Further, anti-colonial research honours relationship and connection with non-human beings on the land.³⁸

Self-Determination, Autonomy, and Accountability: Anti-colonial research seeks to safeguard the self-determination and autonomy of those involved in research. Those involved make choices regarding their involvement, anonymity, and participation. Research methods are flexible so as to promote self-determination in sharing and control on the part of the participants. Participants may take part in the analysis of their data and have the final say regarding how they are represented in the research. Efforts are taken to meet those who contribute to the research in a location that is convenient and comfortable for them. Where people who are not from the white settler researcher’s own culture/social location are involved in the research, efforts are made to learn and observe the protocols, cultural norms, and languages of participating peoples.”³⁹

Not only did I refer to these principles in designing and carrying out my research, but I also came to understand the idea of relational accountability as a useful way to frame my research project.

³⁶ Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. ‘Epistemic’ means relating to knowledge and ‘epistemes’ are systems of knowledge.

³⁷ Carlson, “Anti-Colonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies,” 6.

³⁸ Carlson, 7.

³⁹ Carlson, 7.

Researching how and why ENGOs need to work in better ways with Indigenous peoples could also be framed as how can ENGOs incorporate relational accountability into their campaign work with Indigenous peoples? Many of the ideas in the three principles above (not to mention the other five principles left undescribed) can be applied to working relationships outside of the research context, i.e. between settler ally groups and Indigenous peoples. These same principles could also be helpful in shifting from government's "reconciliation" to Reconciliation of relationships between each other and the Earth.

Coming back to principles of relational accountability in settler research, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has this useful reflection to add:

Academics who are to be true allies to Indigenous Peoples in the protection of our knowledge must be willing to step outside of their privileged position and challenge research that conforms to the guidelines outlined by the colonial power structure and root their work in the politics of decolonization and anticolonialism.⁴⁰

As a non-Indigenous settler scholar, drawing upon anti-colonial research methodologies – especially principles of relational accountability – is not only an attempt to “challenge research guidelines outlined by the colonial power structure” as described by Simpson above, but also to center land, Indigenous voices, and relational accountability into the conversation and understanding of Reconciliation in this country in response to Simpson’s quote in the opening to this chapter: “Land is an important conversation for Indigenous peoples and Canada to have because land is at the root of our conflicts. [...] How can we “advance the process of Canadian reconciliation” without talking about land?”

There are two major ways in which I attempt to embody these principles in the writing of this thesis. The first is to center the voices of my participants. As much as possible I have attempted to allow your voices and our conversations to the surface of the page rather than center my own voice and

⁴⁰ Simpson, “Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge,” 371.

analyses⁴¹. The second is to write with my participants as my audience rather than an anonymous academic reader since this project came out of a request to provide something of practical use to the ENGOs and Indigenous communities and peoples engaged in relational work. This is also connected to Carlson's point about Land/Place Engagement and Accountability, and Simpson's call to bring land into the conversation on reconciliation. At the heart of the Site C and Petronas campaigns are relationships to, and with, places: lands and water; and people: plants, animals, and humans. To be accountable to these relationships means to avoid theorizing and abstracting them from the land (and water). Practically this means I have attempted to write using as accessible language as possible by avoiding the use of specialized and theoretical academic language. Most importantly, writing this thesis to my participants is my attempt to reciprocate the generosity that was shared with me, and a way to offer my reflections and recommendations back to my participants in an accountable way.

1.7.3 Movement-relevant Theory

My priority of providing something of practical use to the ENGOs and Indigenous communities and peoples who shared with me, and of following anti-colonial research methodologies also aligns my research with Movement-relevant Theory⁴², which prioritizes the relevance of social movement research to the movements themselves. I have attempted to do this by consulting the people engaged in these relationships, centering their experiences and recommendations, and communicating the information in a form useful and applicable to those engaged in movements of environmental protection. My hope is that this will add to the conversation of Reconciliation in Canada, and the healing of the land and people.

⁴¹ I describe this process in more detail in my Research Methods section below.

⁴² Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon, "Movement-Relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism," *Social Movement Studies* 4, no. 3 (2005): 185–208, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742830500329838>.

1.8 Research Methods

The research methodologies above influenced the framing of my research questions and the research methods used to answer them. In this section I explain the methods that were used to answer the research questions.

1.8.1 Case Studies and Research Participant Selection

To determine the criteria for my case study and research participant selection, as well as to answer my first research question: *What role is reconciliation playing in environmental campaigns in BC?* I started by identifying ENGOs in BC that:

- 1) Have an official policy or acknowledgment of reconciliation which informs their organization's work with Indigenous peoples.
And,
- 2) Are actively working with Indigenous communities in an environmental campaign.

Of all the many ENGOs active in BC the only organizations that meet the first criteria are Sierra Club BC (SCBC), David Suzuki Foundation (DSF), and Greenpeace Canada. Of these three organizations only Sierra Club BC and David Suzuki Foundation meet the second criteria of actively working with Indigenous communities in a BC campaign.

Looking at SCBC's and DSF's campaigns I found both organizations have been involved in the campaign to stop the construction of the Site C dam, so that campaign was chosen as my first case study. At this point in my research the Pacific Northwest LNG terminal project had just been approved (September 2016), with massive implications for climate emissions and reconciliation initiatives in Canada. The terminal would be the largest single-emitter of greenhouse gases in all of Canada⁴³ and had significant opposition from some of the Indigenous communities at the terminal site, as well as along its

⁴³Pembina Institute, "Pacific NorthWest LNG Could Become Largest Carbon Polluter in Canada," Pembina Institute, <http://www.pembina.org/media-release/pacific-northwest-lng-could-become-largest-carbon-polluter-in-canada>.

pipeline route. Choosing the PNW terminal project as the second case study offered an interesting comparison of analysis. As opposed to the Site C dam campaign which, from the ENGO side, was predominantly headed by two of the largest, urban-based ENGOs in BC (DSF and SCBC), the two ENGOs spearheading the campaign against Petronas were the much smaller, and community-based organizations SkeenaWild Conservation Trust,⁴⁴ and Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition (SWCC). Although neither organizations have official policies outlining their approach to working with Indigenous communities, both work intimately with the nations and communities of the Skeena region, including the Gitksan, the Wet'suwet'en, and the Tsimshian.

So while SkeenaWild and SWCC didn't fit my original criteria for selecting ENGOs, choosing the Petronas campaign as my second case study was a great opportunity to compare ENGOs of different sizes, locations, and approaches to their work. In addition, the proposed Site C dam in Treaty 8 territory is located in one of the very few treaty areas in BC, while the resistance to the Petronas project terminal and pipeline was centered in the Skeena river region, where no treaties have been signed. These differences in dynamics between the Site C and Petronas campaigns offer rich comparisons for discussion, which are explored in the final chapter.

And finally, having the Site C dam and Petronas campaigns as case studies naturally lead to the inclusion of RAVEN Trust as an ENGO to interview. RAVEN (which stands for Respecting Aboriginal Values and Environmental Needs) Trust is a unique ENGO whose sole mandate is to raise funds for First Nations engaged in legal cases in their attempts to enforce their rights and title and protect their traditional territories from industrial developments. The legal challenges to the Site C dam and the Pacific Northwest LNG terminal were both fundraising campaigns of RAVEN Trust. Since all of RAVEN Trust's work is done in conjunction with Indigenous communities, they do not have a policy of how their

⁴⁴ Commonly referred to simply as SkeenaWild.

work involves Indigenous peoples, as Sierra Club BC and David Suzuki Foundation do, but their inclusion brings an added perspective and experience to the discussion.

At the end of the day my interviews with ENGOs included Sierra Club BC and David Suzuki Foundation for the Site C campaign, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, and Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition for the Petronas campaign, and RAVEN Trust for both. For my interviews with their Indigenous collaborators, on the Site C campaign my interviews included Treaty 8 members of West Moberly First Nations, Prophet River First Nation, and Saulteau First Nation; and the Petronas campaign participants included people from different house groups in the Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en, and Tshimshian nations. Each participant will be introduced in their respective case study chapter to follow.

Why BC?

BC is an ideal study location because 80% of the lands in BC are not covered by treaties,⁴⁵ making the province an important site of many prominent legal decisions defining Aboriginal rights in Canada. For example, the 1973 Supreme Court ruling in the Calder decision on Nisga'a territory was the first time that the Canadian legal system acknowledged the existence of Aboriginal title to land, establishing that Aboriginal title existed outside of, and was not derived from, colonial law.⁴⁶ With resource extraction traditionally being the foundation of the provincial economy, BC has long been a concentrated site of battles over resource use and land claims. This is reflected in BC's environmental and political history as well as current affairs, and its high concentration of ENGOs working with First Nations.

1.8.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

To answer my last two research questions *What is working well in Indigenous-ENGO relationships?* *What are the challenges?* and *How can these relationships be improved?* I conducted 19 semi-structured

⁴⁵ Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 371.

⁴⁶ Hamar Foster, Heather Raven, and Jeremy Webber, eds., *Let Right Be Done: Aboriginal Title, the Calder Case, and the Future of Indigenous Rights* (UBC Press, 2008).

interviews with ENGO staff and their Indigenous partners on the Site C and Petronas LNG campaigns. 10 interviews were conducted with Indigenous participants and 9 with ENGO staff.

I had 3 groups of interviewees: 1) ENGO management-level staff (e.g. Executive Director or CEO), 2) ENGO campaigners, and 3) Indigenous peoples working with the ENGOs in campaigns. Since the ENGOs involved in the Petronas campaign are smaller organizations than the Site C ENGOs, the staff I interviewed from SWCC and SkeenaWild often held the roles of both Group 1 and 2.

Choosing to use a semi-structured interview format meant I had a list of questions that were the same for each group, but allowed for each interview to unfold naturally in a more conversation-like style. The order of interview questions varied according to the flow of conversation and responses of the interviewee. There was one occasion in which I chose to use a mostly unstructured approach during an interview with Gitksan hereditary Chief Gwininitxw because it felt more culturally appropriate to do more listening than interviewing. This is an example of trying to practice relational accountability in my research by attempting to honour the cultural norms and protocols of my participants.⁴⁷

With each ENGO I conducted interviews with a senior staff (Group 1) to discuss issues of the organization's policy and strategy working with Indigenous communities, and with campaign staff (Group 2) working with Indigenous communities to discuss how these policies and strategies are carried out in campaigns and relationships on the ground. For each campaign, interviews were conducted with the Indigenous person collaborating with the ENGO campaigner (Group 3).

The interviews with staff of the David Suzuki Foundation and Sierra Club BC, were conducted in Victoria, Vancouver and Toronto, with the remaining interviews being conducted on two field research trips to the Peace region for Site C and Skeena River watershed region for Petronas. This allowed me to

⁴⁷ See 'Relational and Epistemic Accountability to Indigenous Peoples' in Relational Accountability section Anti-colonial Research Methodologies above.

see the land, the people, and the proposed projects first-hand. Without this experience it would be extremely challenging to understand the issues thoroughly and do justice to perspectives and experiences shared with me. My own experience of these trips were a highlight of my Masters, and are described in more detail in the respective chapters.

For all the reasons I wrote about earlier in this chapter, I knew that being able to develop a sense of trust with my research participants was crucial for my project. With the sensitive topics of Reconciliation and relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous communities it is completely understandable that people may be wary of outsiders asking to hear their experiences. For this reason I began by contacting ENGO participants first, and through these contacts I was put in touch with their Indigenous partners to request their participation in the research. By being put in touch with Indigenous participants through their ENGO partners, I hoped they would be more willing to speak with me than if I had contacted them myself. This also made me very aware of the responsibility I had being associated with their contacts and conducting myself and my research in ways that held me accountable to those relationships to avoid jeopardizing relationships.

1.8.3 Building Relationships with Land and People

Ken: "People need to know and put a face to who they're talking to over the phone. Like me this morning, I didn't really know who you were (laughter). Because we get tons of phone calls. I would never call myself a politician business man. We are business people, but to do stuff over the phone I don't think is right. Because face-to-face, like you said, is probably the best thing because then we know who you are, what you're doing. Anybody can phone...I'm glad you're doing it this way.

Patty: We can see your heart.

Charlie: Exactly! And that's important.

Patty: Ya it is important."

- Excerpt from Petronas campaign interview with Ken Lawson and Patty Dudoward of the Gitwilgyoots and Gitando tribes of Lax Kw'alaams

Most interviews were conducted in-person. This was an important aspect of relationship building and gaining trust, but as mentioned above was also the highlight of my work. As another example of

relational accountability⁴⁸ I felt it was crucial not only to meet participants in-person for them to get a sense of who I am and why I am doing this work, but also to visit the Peace and Skeena regions to see the land and issues for myself. In every case I was interviewing incredible people doing great work, and these experiences were important motivations in helping me complete this project. Only two interviews were conducted by phone when the participant's availability did not align with my field trip travel times. Interviews ranged in duration from one to three hours, and all interviews were recorded with permission using a digital recorder for the production of transcriptions. These were offered to participants for their assurance and verification of the data being used for analysis.

1.8.4 Privacy and Confidentiality

The topic of Reconciliation and the subject of working relationships between predominantly non-Indigenous ENGOs and Indigenous communities can be, and often are, very sensitive. The need for Reconciliation in this country is tied to the violent history and ongoing reality of the colonization of Indigenous peoples and lands. I was keenly aware that discussing these issues with participants required great care and understanding for the diversity of experiences and needs that may arise. These colonial histories and realities are also at the heart of the challenges experienced by relationships between environmental organizations and Indigenous peoples in Canada and BC. What this meant for my work was that it was most important to me that participants felt safe to express themselves without fearing risk of potential negative consequences or repercussions from their words being attributed to their name. All interview data has been kept confidential, with all quotes and analyses of participant responses being verified with each individual prior to publishing.⁴⁹ Each participant was offered the

⁴⁸ See 'Land/Place Engagement and Accountability' in Relational Accountability section of Anti-colonial Research Methodologies above

⁴⁹ See 'Self-Determination, Autonomy, and Accountability' in Relational Accountability section of Anti-colonial Research Methodologies above.

option of having their data published anonymously; at the time of writing all participants have agreed to have their names associated with their interview data.

1.8.5 Analysis by Listening

“You know quite often, and I’m guilty of this myself, [...] when people come in and want to help you they usually come with their idea of how to help you or what you need. But as Indigenous people we’ve been told what to do and what’s best for us ever since contact. And I always say we’ve been studied to death, we’ve been told what to do, how to do it, and what’s best for us for hundreds of years. And it’s time that other people listen. Although, we need to listen too because we have to explore all the different ideas, different avenues, our options. So that’s kind of what I’m getting at is...that our voices need to be heard, but we also need to hear the other voices. And come to some sort of mutual plan that’s going to [achieve] our goals.”

- Excerpt from Petronas campaign interview with Kirby Muldoe of Tsimshian and Gitksan nations and SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Early into my interviews one theme emerged repeatedly from Indigenous participants: the need for *listening*. Kirby’s quote above echoes sentiments I heard from many Indigenous interviewees, and as I heard this over and over again I began to reflect on how to embody this in my work. One way I did this was to repeatedly listen to the audio recordings of my interviews, a minimum of three times each. By doing so I became familiar with my interviews in a much deeper way than if I had only analysed them using text-based transcription – which I find tends to flatten an interview. Gone are all nuances in a voice: when I transcribe “(laughter)” - was that a full belly laugh or a nervous laugh? Is there confidence in their voice or uncertainty? All these subtleties are flattened, lost in the singular dimension of text. By listening in this way I felt I committed to memory a fuller representation of my participants’ *voice*, which informed successive interviews by enabling me to learn what had worked and what had not worked well in previous interviews. This therefore enabled me to ask better questions or ask questions in better ways, informed by my previous interviewees. This iterative approach was also informed by Movement Relevant Theory as described in the section above. In order to provide relevant analysis and reflections, I needed to *listen*, learn, and adapt in all stages of the research.

1.8.6 Analysis by Text

Interviews were also transcribed verbatim then analyzed textually using NVivo software to identify common patterns and themes of success, failure, challenge, and learning opportunities across all interviews. In combination with my reflections from repeated listening, my analyses and observations were sent to each participant for feedback, giving you opportunity to further engage with my ideas or verify my interpretations of your quotes. In a sense it was a way to ask: *Did I hear you? Was I listening correctly?* These analyses form the foundation of each case study chapter by presenting your experiences in your own voices that illustrate the main patterns of themes I identified from all the interviews. To help you engage with this long document here is a brief summary of findings to orient you to the ideas presented in this thesis.

1.9 Brief Summary of Findings

1. Reconciling relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is fundamentally about addressing the colonization and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands. Because of Turtle Island's colonial history, environmental issues in Canada and the rest of Turtle Island are inherently issues of social justice; and Reconciliation is an integral part of environmental issues in Canada.⁵⁰
2. Reconciliation needs to involve discussion over how decisions regarding lands, waters, and resources are made and who makes them. Environmental campaigns are an important voice in these discussions, therefore Indigenous-ENGO collaborations are important to both environmentalism and Reconciliation initiatives in Canada.
3. Environmental and conservation groups have played a historic role in the colonization and dispossession of Indigenous lands by undermining Indigenous peoples' rights and title to their lands and waters. ENGOs need to address this history through their own process of Truth and Reconciliation to build healthier relationships with Indigenous peoples moving forward.
4. One aspect of this Truth and Reconciliation process is for ENGOs to publicly and clearly define their working relationships with Indigenous communities and their commitments to Reconciliation. An important way of doing this is to have an official organizational policy.

⁵⁰ Turtle Island is a common name for North America for numerous Indigenous peoples.

1.9.1 Limitations of the Research

My intention is to allow your voices to illustrate the patterns of themes that emerged from all of the interviews put together. However my role was to select a handful of quotes out of the roughly 27 hours of interview audio, then arrange and present them in a way that paints a bigger, more complete picture of these relationships than each individual voice on its own. There were countless ways in which this could have been done and organized, and it has been a challenge presenting a small fraction of quotes while trying to do justice to all that was shared with me. With all of these constraints I was unable to present each participant's voice equally in the text, however each of our conversations greatly informed my analysis and was crucial to the final outcome of this thesis.

The recommendations made at the end of this thesis are suggestions to ENGOs based on these two case studies. As many of you said to me, there is no one-size-fits-all approach or best practices when it comes to Indigenous-ENGO relationships; each place, each community, each issue, each organization and each person, is unique and brings different histories and dynamics to a relationship. While the relationships represented here cannot and do not represent the complexity and dynamics found in other Indigenous-ENGO relationships, my hope is the learnings and experiences from what you shared with me can inform the building and healing of relationships between Indigenous communities and environmental organizations beyond these campaigns; and be a contribution towards Reconciliation in Canada – the healing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and our relationship with the land.

In the next two chapters I present overviews of each case study and excerpts of interviews that highlight experiences of Indigenous-ENGO relationships. I begin with brief stories of my own experiences during my research journeys to bring my voice to the conversation, before providing some background to the campaign and issue. I then profile both Indigenous and ENGO experiences of these working

relationships before highlighting how ideas of Reconciliation were present in the campaign. In the final chapter I identify and discuss the main themes from the case study chapters, with a focus on addressing the challenges identified by participants, implications for Indigenous-ENGO relationships and the environmental movement moving forward, and final recommendations for ENGOs on how to improve their relationships with Indigenous communities.

Chapter 2: Site C Campaign Case Study

“I’m reminded of this one lady, I think it was in South Dakota. She went to this event and they were talking about pipelines, and she told them “If you’re going to be talking about the land, then you need to be talking about the women too. Because what happens to the land happens to the women”. And I think there’s definitely a lot of work to be done and relationships to be built in regards to reconciliation, but it’s also understanding that, yeah it’s land but then also if the land and body are inseparable then there’s the holistic view of what is connected to land too, with the land being a part of body. [...] The river and the land have been entwined with my own healing journey. It’s helped me heal and also reconnect to who I am as an Indigenous woman from this territory.”

- Helen Knott, Community Activist, Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8

2.1 My Journey to the Peace

“We’re sorry, the number you are calling is unavailable. Please hang up and try your call again”. I had already tried again, three times. As I ended the call on my phone my heart sank as I realized that after driving 14 hours from Victoria to the Peace River valley, the sole interview I had loosely arranged wasn’t going to happen, and I would likely be going home empty-handed having driven almost 30 hours without having done a single interview. I had been attempting to reach Julian Napoleon – a Dane-zaa community activist working tirelessly against the Site C dam – on his home landline, the only way to reach him as there is no cell service on his reserve. We had planned to have an interview that morning but hadn’t set a time and now I had no idea how to find him. I knew this morning was his only available time as he would be leaving for a hunting trip in the bush for the rest of the week while I was there. I had contacted other potential participants before leaving Victoria to inform them of my visit but none of them had replied back to me except Julian.

Two days earlier, after receiving ethics approval for my project from the university, having one interview confirmed was all I needed. I spent the night cooking up food to bring as gifts to my potential interviewees, and the next morning I packed up my car with my dog Kalum and we hit the road. Now here I sat with my phone in-hand weighing my options, before deciding that, somehow, I would try to find Julian. All I knew was that he lived near Moberly Lake, half an hour outside of Hudson’s Hope where I was camping. There are two First Nations near Moberly Lake – West Moberly First Nations and Sauteau First Nations – so I figured I’d just have to head out there and start knocking on doors. I drove to West Mo first, and with the assistance of a kind elderly lady I was directed down the road to the Sauteau First Nations reserve and told at which house I might find Julian.

I arrived much to Julian’s surprise: phone service to his home was down which meant he didn’t expect I’d be able to reach him before his hunting trip. He took me out for a walk on his land to have our interview overlooking the Moberly River, one of the tributaries of the Peace that is slated to be flooded in the creation of Site C’s reservoir. We walked along his family’s old trap lines, lines his family has used for generations, and as we sat overlooking the river Julian pointed out areas where his family has harvested plants and animals for food and medicine for generations, and what the destruction of the valley and its

river meant to him, his family and community. It was a powerful experience for me, one that confirmed the proper way to conduct my research when possible: in-person, face-to-face and heart-to-heart, to experience the land, the people, and the issues for myself. While of course it's possible to conduct interviews over the phone – and in the end I did do that twice when participants weren't available during my research trips – my experience with Julian reinforced the importance of conducting interviews this way.

After our interview Julian put me in touch with another community activist, Helen Knott, who – thanks to Julian's referral – was willing to meet with me the following day after her shift of work. The next day I drove out to Fort St. John where Helen took me to have our interview at Protester Point, a site on private land across the river from the Site C dam. Protester Point has a sweeping view of the dam construction and valley destruction – a view BC Hydro had purposefully hidden from the public. After my conversation with Julian the day before, standing at Protester Point looking out over the river valley and the huge swaths of clear-cut logging and earth being demolished for the dam's construction was heart-breaking. Seeing the destruction with my own eyes and having our interview with Site C in the background was a powerful and visceral experience. When I listen to the audio of our interview, sounds of heavy machinery and construction can be heard in the distance.

Earlier in the day before meeting Helen I decided to drop by the lands office for Prophet River First Nation and West Moberly First Nations, the two nations challenging Site C in court. The Site C campaigner for Sierra Club BC had suggested I contact the Chiefs of these two nations as potential interviewees. I had received research approval from the office to interview Chief Roland Willson of West Moberly First Nations shortly before leaving for the Peace, but I was informed that due to his extremely busy schedule it was unlikely Roland would be available during my visit. With spare time before meeting Helen I wanted to introduce myself in-person to the staff member I had been corresponding with regarding my research approval. The office was closed, but just as I was turning away to get back in my car a person unlocked the door and shouted out to me, "Are you Charlie?!" It was the staff member I had come to see! He mentioned that the office was closed all week but he just happened to be working in the office that day. Knowing I was there for my research he guessed the only person who would be knocking on the door would be me. He also said it was just my luck that Chief Willson would be dropping by the office to sign some documents, and he had a one-hour window before leaving for the airport – just enough time to sit down for an interview with me.

My time in the Peace with Julian, Helen, and Roland reinforced the importance of being on the land and in community to create connections and build relationships of trust and understanding.



Figure 1: The Peace River and Site C construction Site.

As seen from Protestor’s Point – interview site with Helen Knott. The construction site is on the far shore of the river on the left hand side. August 2016.

2.2 Background to the Site C Dam Campaign

The objective of this section is not to provide a comprehensive study of the Site C dam nor the campaign itself, but to provide enough information for the reader to understand the dynamics of the relationships between the ENGOs and Indigenous peoples involved in the project.



Figure 2: Location of the Site C Dam

(Source: <https://physicshydropower.wikispaces.com/>)

The Site C dam is an early-stage BC Hydro hydroelectric mega dam being built on the Peace River in northeastern BC, Treaty 8 territory. Site C is located about 7 kilometers southwest of Fort St. John, BC, and is the third major dam on the Peace River (hence the name Site “C”), the first being the

W.A.C. Bennett dam constructed in 1968, located 19 kilometers west of Hudson's Hope BC; and the second, the Peace Canyon dam was built in 1980, 23 kilometers downstream of the W.A.C. Bennett. Construction of the Site C dam began in 2015 and is planned to begin operation in 2024.

Controversy and uncertainty has plagued the project since its beginnings. First proposed in 1980, Site C failed to gain approval from the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC) due to BC Hydro's inaccurate power forecasting and resulting lack of evidence supporting energy demand. Thirty years later in 2010 the BC Liberal government passed the Clean Energy Act, and announced plans to proceed with Site C at an estimated cost of \$5 to \$6 billion, while exempting it from further BCUC review. After an environmental assessment and review from both the provincial and federal governments in 2014, Site C received official provincial government approval with an estimated cost of \$8.8 billion. With the election of the NDP to the provincial government in May 2017, Premier John Horgan sent the project to the BCUC for review. The BCUC's final report stated that construction was behind schedule and over budget; the power was not likely to be needed; and pursuing alternative energy sources to Site C could be equal to, if not lower than the cost of building the dam.⁵¹ The report ultimately did not make a final recommendation to either cancel or proceed with Site C, and in December 2017 the provincial government announced its decision to continue construction of Site C at an estimated cost of \$10.7 billion, the most expensive public infrastructure project in the history of BC.

The project has been highly contentious since its announcement in 2010, with critics opposing the need for the project especially in light of the impacts caused by flooding 83 kilometers of the Peace River valley. These impacts include the infringement of Treaty 8 First Nations members' rights to hunt,

⁵¹"B.C. Government to Decide Fate of Site C by Year's End | CBC News," CBC, November 1, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/site-c-bcuc-report-1.4382106>.

fish, and trap as formerly; the loss of valuable agricultural land and the resulting forced displacement of farmers and other land owners; and the destruction of sensitive and rare ecosystems.

The campaign against the construction of Site C has been led by Treaty 8 member nations and community activists, non-Indigenous community organizations of the Peace River valley,⁵² and a coalition of supporting environmental⁵³ and social justice⁵⁴ NGOs. Since gaining provincial approval in 2015 the project has been legally challenged over its infringement of treaty rights by two Treaty 8 nations: West Moberly First Nations and Prophet River First Nation⁵⁵.

2.2.1 Treaty 8

Signed in 1899, Treaty 8 is one of eleven numbered treaties made between the Government of Canada and First Nations after Confederation, one of the very few historic treaties signed in BC. Covering land from northeastern BC across northern Alberta, northwestern Saskatchewan, and a portion of southwest Northwest Territories, at 840,000 square kilometers Treaty 8 is almost as large as BC itself (925,000 square kilometers), and home to many different Indigenous peoples and cultures. The area of the Peace River valley where all three dams are located is the traditional territory of the Dane-zaa.

⁵² The Peace Valley Environmental Association and Peace Valley Landowners Association

⁵³ The coalition of ENGOs that have been involved in the campaign against Site C include Sierra Club BC, Wilderness Committee, David Suzuki Foundation, Yellowstone to Yukon, RAVEN Trust, and CPAWS.

⁵⁴ LeadNow and Amnesty International have also been active in the campaign. Amnesty International has been drawing attention to the numerous human rights violations the project would have on the Indigenous peoples of Treaty 8, with a particular focus on highlighting the links between industrial resource extraction and violence against Indigenous women.

⁵⁵ A third Treaty 8 nation, Blueberry First Nation, originally filed a court challenge against BC Hydro but dropped that case in favour of a different strategy.

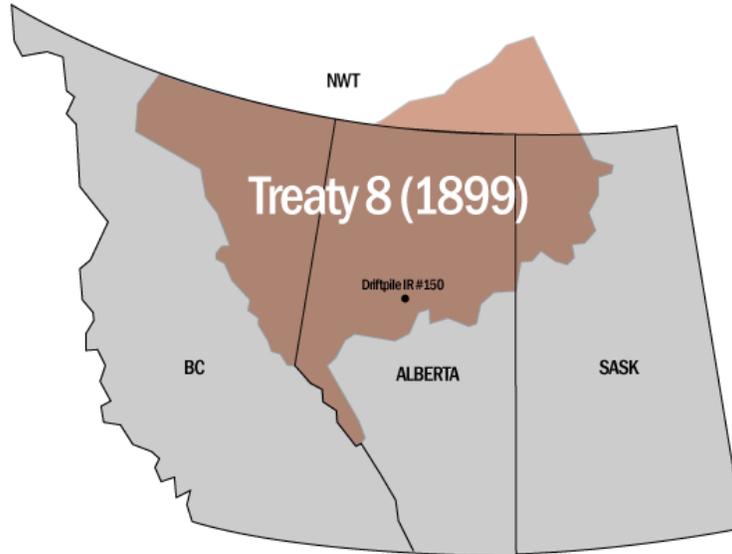


Figure 3: Treaty 8 Territory

(Source: <https://canadianhistoryworkshop.wordpress.com/treaties/treaty-eight/>)

“When you look at that river valley there is no other river valley in our territory that equates to what that system is. They look at the WAC Bennett and the Peace Canyon as impacts; all that river is already taken up so [they] might as well use the rest of it. [But] we look at that and say “Well look you’ve taken up three quarters of our river, all we have left is one quarter, it’s more important, not less important, because everything is focused in that area.” [...] We identified from the very beginning that it’s not just going to be an impact, it’s going to be a treaty infringement. They’re wiping out fish populations, caribou populations, and those are identified under treaty [that] we have the right to fish and hunt and carry on our way of life as if we never entered into it. [...] The Dane-zaa are the people that are from this land, we are directly connected to the land. Whatever happens to the land happens to us. Caribou need to have their calving areas protected, they have critical habitat. Well the Dane-zaa are no different. We have to have these habitats and these zones in order to exist as Dane-zaa.”

- Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations, Treaty 8

2.3 Research Participants

There have been numerous ENGOs working on the Site C campaign, but the only two ENGOs with official statements regarding their work with Indigenous peoples are David Suzuki Foundation, and Sierra Club of BC, both of which have been involved with Treaty 8 nation leaders and community

members in their campaign work. However one of the other ENGOs integral to the Site C campaign as well as Petronas campaign is RAVEN Trust, which due to their involvement in both campaigns was interviewed for both case studies.

David Suzuki Foundation

Named after its founder and well-known scientist, environmental educator, and media personality David Suzuki, David Suzuki Foundation is a national organization that promotes sustainability in Canada through research, education, and policy analysis. Founded in 1990 David Suzuki Foundation has its roots as one of the founding ENGOs of the Great Bear Rainforest campaign, along with Sierra Club BC and Greenpeace Canada. DSF has done a lot of work in the Boreal forest region of Canada where the Site C dam is located, and has worked with numerous Treaty 8 nations on cumulative impact assessments of industrial resource projects in Treaty 8 territory, including LNG, forestry, and the Site C dam. I interviewed their CEO at the time, Peter Robinson, as well as Faisal Moola, then Director-General of Northern and Western Canada, and the staff member who worked most closely with Treaty 8 First Nations.⁵⁶

Sierra Club of BC

Due to its association⁵⁷ with one of the oldest environmental organizations in North America, Sierra Club US, Sierra Club BC is one of the most prominent and long-standing ENGOs in the province. Founded in 1969, and based in Victoria BC, the organization focuses on provincial issues of biodiversity conservation and climate change action. Sierra Club BC has a long history of working with Indigenous

⁵⁶ Peter Robinson has since retired, and Faisal has moved on from the organization.

⁵⁷ The association is in name and logo only. SCBC is completely independent from Sierra Club US and Sierra Club Canada.

communities in BC: from the ‘War in the Woods’ campaigns of the Clayoquot Sound and Great Bear Rainforest protests against old-growth logging, to the more recent ‘Pull Together’ campaigns against the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline and Kinder Morgan TransMountain expansion pipeline, as well as the Site C dam. As I mentioned in the ‘Introduction’ chapter, the seeds of my research were sewn in a conversation with Campaigns Director Caitlyn Vernon, who was a lead organizer of the “Pull Together” campaign against the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline. In addition to interviewing Caitlyn, my other participants included the Executive Director at the time Bob Peart, and Peace Valley campaigners Ana Simeon and Galen Armstrong⁵⁸.

RAVEN Trust

The final ENGO participant in the Site C case study was RAVEN Trust. Unlike most ENGOs who traditionally campaign on environmental issues such as conservation and climate change, which may or may not include involvement of Indigenous peoples, RAVEN Trust is unique in that their sole mandate is to raise funds for First Nations which are engaged in legal cases in their attempts to enforce their rights and title and protect their traditional territories from industrial developments. Since all of RAVEN Trust’s work is done in conjunction with Indigenous communities, they do not have a policy of how their work involves Indigenous peoples, as Sierra Club BC and David Suzuki Foundation do. I interviewed RAVEN Trust’s Executive Director Susan Smitten.

Members of Treaty 8

Through my interviews and contacts with ENGO participants I was put in touch with members of Treaty 8 working with these organizations on the Site C campaign. Interviews with Treaty 8 members

⁵⁸ During my research Ana Simeon left her position at SCBC to work with RAVEN Trust and was replaced by Galen Armstrong.

included grassroots community activists Julian Napoleon, Helen Knott, and Yvonne Tupper, and Chief Roland Willson of West Moberly First Nations. Julian is from Saulteau First Nations and has been involved with speaking tours and media appearance for Sierra Club BC and RAVEN Trust. Helen, from Prophet River First Nation, has worked with Sierra Club BC, RAVEN Trust, and Amnesty International, and was one of the prominent participants in the Treaty 8 Stewards of the Land cultural camp at Rocky Mountain Fort, a land-based resistance which blockaded logging for the Site C construction in the winter of 2015. Yvonne Tupper, from Saulteau First Nations was also a participant in the Stewards of the Land camp at Rocky Mountain Fort, and active with speaking tours with Sierra Club BC. I didn't get a chance to interview Yvonne during my time in the Peace but we had our interview over the phone.

2.4 ENGO Policies on Working with Indigenous Peoples

I began my Site C case study by interviewing senior management staff members and Site C campaigners of the David Suzuki Foundation and Sierra Club of BC regarding their perspectives on the importance of working with Indigenous peoples in their campaigns, as well as the development of their official positions regarding Reconciliation in their work. David Suzuki Foundation has their "Indigenous Peoples Policy", and the Sierra Club of BC has their "Acknowledging Title and Rights" statement.

2.4.1 David Suzuki Foundation's Indigenous Peoples Policy

As one of its "Guiding Principles", David Suzuki Foundation's "Indigenous Peoples Policy" states:

"The David Suzuki Foundation recognizes the rights and title of Indigenous Peoples, guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). We commit to respectfully engage with Indigenous Peoples when our work concerns their interests."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ "David Suzuki Foundation - About," David Suzuki Foundation, <https://david Suzuki.org/about/>.

At the time of our interview Peter Robinson was the Executive Director of DSF⁶⁰. In his recounting of the development of DSF's 'Indigenous People Policy', Peter emphasized that the organization's origins were strongly built upon relationships with BC's Coastal First Nations during the beginning of the Great Bear Rainforest campaign in 1990. Over time, DSF grew into a national organization and began working on other campaigns in Canada with less emphasis on the coast, and Peter identified the 2009 Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement as the experience that spurred the development of DSF's 'Indigenous Peoples Policy':

"[The Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement] seemed to have been at the time, if you look back at the records, an agreement to celebrate. And then I went to a board meeting in Montreal, and David [Suzuki] was madder than hell. I've never seen him so mad. He said "What's wrong with my Foundation that they would sign on to this? There are hundreds and hundreds of First Nations in the Boreal and none of them were consulted in this". And I thought "Of course, that's right, nobody had actually consulted with the people living on that land". And it was a turning point for us, we recognized we had to relearn what David and Tara (Cullis, David's wife) had learned back in the 1990s, which is that the authenticity of these relationships has to be really genuine. They can't be just superficial, you really have a duty to consult. So I thought "Alright, if we're going to re-embed this back in the organization, then let's start with an Aboriginal Peoples Policy."⁶¹

- Peter Robinson, former C.E.O., David Suzuki Foundation

Peter's explanation of DSF's 'Indigenous Peoples Policy' indicates its origins began from an awareness and recognition that the organization had begun to embody the earlier criticisms of the "War in the Woods" campaigns of ENGOs not consulting Indigenous nations on matters relating to their traditional territory, and the need to change its ways. This theme was elaborated on in my interview with Faisal Moola. Faisal, then the Director General of Ontario and Northern Canada for DSF, was the staff member who had worked most closely with the Treaty 8 First Nations in DSF's campaigns. In his account of the

⁶⁰ Peter has since retired.

⁶¹ The policy has since been renamed the Indigenous Peoples Policy.

Boreal agreement, Faisal identifies the “direction more indicative of other ENGOS” that Peter mentioned as a colonialist approach:

“The Boreal agreement, while its intentions were laudable – to protect caribou habitat, to modernize forestry so it’s much more sustainable according to ecosystem based management – the process replicated all of the disrespectful, and to be honest, colonialist approaches that have been used with regards to making decisions on Indigenous lands, without Indigenous consent. And so the agreement was negotiated, signed, announced and implemented without Indigenous support. So what happened was that Peter, myself, and David Suzuki organized a major meeting in Prince George, where we apologized to the First Nations for our participation in the agreement.”

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

Faisal went on to describe how the experience with the Boreal agreement lead to the DSF’s work on the Site C dam campaign:

“Out of that Roland [Willson] approached us and said “Well, here’s an opportunity to work with us with [in] our territory, which is in the Boreal,” and he told us the story of the Site C dam, and cumulative impacts in their territories. Coming out of that project, which has been a very different approach to doing work with Indigenous peoples, without knowing it, we’re essentially doing reconciliation work, and we’re doing reconciliation work according to gold standards articulated by Indigenous people themselves in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. [...] And we didn’t know we were doing this, but we were working consistent with free, prior, and informed consent, specifically. That project then had a huge influence on the foundation, and Peter decided to work with the Board to pass an Aboriginal Peoples Policy, which has been renamed the Indigenous Peoples Policy, that enshrines our commitment to do all the work of the foundation consistent with UNDRIP. So we’re taking this one project and scaling it up across the organization, which is great.”

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

In Peter and Faisal’s quotes we see the creation of the ‘Indigenous Peoples Policy’ as an effort to address the environmental movement’s colonial tendencies, with the policy reflective of these aims and intentions of the organization. Faisal mentioned that DSF works with the principles of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of reconciliation, and the Declaration is in

the 'Indigenous Peoples Policy' in addition to the TRC's Calls to Action. Both UNDRIP and the TRC's Calls to Action outline principles – such as “free, prior and informed consent” that Faisal mentioned above – and actions towards reconciliation that have become the minimum standards for reconciliation initiatives in Canada. Both UNDRIP and the Calls to Action were often mentioned in interviews, and after exploring how these documents were talked about and engaged with in each case study chapter, I consider what implications UNDRIP and the TRC's Call to Actions have for environmental campaigns in BC moving forward in the final chapter of the thesis.

2.4.2 Sierra Club of BC's Acknowledging Title and Rights

Sierra Club BC's “Acknowledging Title and Rights” statement begins with an acknowledgement of the “First Nations on whose traditional lands we work and live”, and then goes on to state:

“In striving to protect B.C.'s wild spaces, we understand that land and people are not separate and honour the First Nations leadership that guides and informs many of our campaigns. Sierra Club BC both recognizes our responsibility and affirms our commitment to working towards reconciliation.

Sierra Club BC recognizes that land in B.C. is subject to Aboriginal title and rights, much of it unceded, and that land use decisions cannot occur on First Nations territory without free, prior and informed consent.”⁶²

SCBC's acknowledgement does not specifically mention UNDRIP but does reference the principle of “free, prior and informed consent” which is a strong component of the Declaration. The statement finishes by referring readers to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission website for more information regarding reconciliation in Canada.

In my interview with Campaigns Director Caitlyn Vernon, Caitlyn explained how the acknowledgement came about through a visioning exercise the organization undertook to frame how SCBC's unified approach to climate and conservation campaigns would be communicated to the public

⁶² “Acknowledging Title and Rights,” Sierra Club BC, <https://sierraclub.bc.ca/about/acknowledging-first-nations/>.

on their website.⁶³ Through this visioning process the importance of recognizing Aboriginal title and rights featured prominently throughout the exercise, at which point it was decided that an acknowledgement was an important statement to add to their website as well.

Just as my interviews with Peter and Faisal demonstrated DSF's desire to address ENGOs' problematic colonial heritage, Caitlyn's description of the development of SCBC's 'Acknowledgement' demonstrates a similar self-reflection as well:

"I would say that it's an ongoing process of learning our history, questioning our assumptions, looking at that as individuals as well as an organization. Trying to shift the way we do things to be more respectful. Making mistakes, trying to learn from those mistakes, and I see it as an on-going process, that having an acknowledgement on our website is a super basic thing to do. And it's not the end of it, right? It's just a step of learning how to be more respectful."

- Caitlyn Vernon, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club of BC

Implied in Caitlyn's passage is the recognition of ENGOs' history of acting disrespectfully in relations with Indigenous peoples. For her, a key step in addressing this history is building in an on-going process of learning and self-reflection at both the individual and organizational level. A theme that came up in many interviews was the deep personal work needed for reconciliation to be possible at the societal level. In my interview with Ana Simeon, Sierra Club BC's Site C campaigner at the time, Ana spoke to how the perspectives and statements in SCBC's 'Acknowledgement' informed her campaign work:

"I would say it's the bedrock, it's the lowest common denominator that you have to have. Nothing happens without that, and it's kind of the foundation upon which everything else rests. It's too general to actually inform specific decisions, but the spirit of it I always carry with me. And that's why I do this work, personally, is to be part of the reconciliation with the First Nations and reconciliation with the land."

- Ana Simeon, former Site C Dam Campaigner, Sierra Club of BC

⁶³ This process culminated in the document "The Future Is Here," *Sierra Club BC* (blog), <https://sierraclub.bc.ca/take-action-centre/future-is-here/>.

Ana's response not only provides an example of how SCBC's 'Acknowledgement' influences the organization's work at an individual level, but in the last line of this passage Ana describes this further by drawing a connection between reconciliation of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and the reconciliation with the land. In the next section I further explore this connection and others' ideas of reconciliation in the campaign, as well as the influence of DSF's Indigenous Peoples Policy and SCBC's 'Acknowledging Title and Rights' on Treaty 8 members' and ENGO staff's experiences of their relational work.

2.5 Experiences within the Campaign

2.5.1 Relationships with ENGOs: Indigenous Perspectives

From interviews with Indigenous community members involved in the Site C campaign, whether the grassroots community activists or Chief Willson fighting Site C in court, the importance of collaborative relationships with ENGOs consistently revolved around the role of ENGOs amplifying Indigenous voices.

"I think [ENGOs] definitely elevate and amplify the voices and the issue itself. It gets it out to places that we probably don't have, or didn't have the access to. It gets it out in different ways, through NGOs and through the networks and sometimes just through the different ideas or approaches that people can take, I think it has helped a fair amount."

- Helen Knott, Community Activist, Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8

"The joint review panel clearly stated [the former BC Liberal government] didn't do a cumulative impact assessment. They didn't do a regional strategic environmental assessment, or anything like that. They just made a political decision to build Site C. That message being out and getting all that information out so people can see it and understand what's going on, I think that is [ENGOs'] role. They can get that information out there, and they have the media contacts, stuff that we don't have. We don't have the time, we're putting fires out every day with this thing. Because we're in a big fight, we're fighting BC and BC Hydro, the 2 biggest entities in BC. We're fighting the big fire, and all these other little things that are going on, just derails us. If it's in conjunction with what we're doing, [working with ENGOs] is very powerful, it's very helpful to us."

- Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations, Treaty 8

However, while the strength and successes of these relationships were found in ENGOs' role in amplifying Indigenous voices, it is also where challenges have arisen in these partnerships. In multiple interviews, participants shared experiences of ENGOs issuing media releases without verifying the information with their communities. These experiences included inaccurate or misrepresented quotations of participants, inappropriately using photos of sacred sites, and promoting differing campaign agendas and strategies without community input. In my interview with Chief Willson, Roland identified a lack of mutual understanding between ENGOs and his nation as a challenge:

*“One of the things that also needs to happen is **they** need to understand the nations. Because of our governance structure and how we operate, nobody is taking the time to understand that, and that our decision making process is quite a bit different from everybody else. So, we tried to explain that to [them], and I don't think [they] still get it right. I think [they have] this opinion that I'm the boss, and that what I say happens. And so when we have a talk, I have to go back to the council and get a decision out of the council before anything happens. But [they] think that because we had this talk that's [their] mandate to go ahead and do stuff, right? So while I'm back talking to council, [they're] off implementing something, and I come back and say “No they don't want to do that” and [they're] already way down the road doing something. Like some of them, we have a conversation and they nod their head (laughter) and they go away like we never had a conversation. And they just keep doing what they're doing. And that causes a problem. So we need to understand how they operate, and they need to understand how we operate, and each nation is different. And that's caused quite a bit of friction with us.”*

- Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations, Treaty 8

After emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding in the Site C campaign Roland identified a potential reason for ENGOs' behaviour: differing agendas.

“NGOs tend to have their goals that they want to meet, and they attach themselves with First Nations 'cause we have somewhat of the political leverage to get things done. But they're not trying to meet our goals, they're trying to meet their own goals. Sometimes they don't line up, right? And we have to be careful that it doesn't become [their] campaign, and we lose our focus of what we're

trying to do. You know lots of information gets put out there that we hadn't approved. We tell them, but then they don't listen. Or they don't hear us. [...] We need to be informed of what's happening, you can't just go making statements and decisions and stuff like that. So every once in a while we have to kind of pull on the reins and bring people back in and kind of do a spot check and make sure we're all on the same page."

- Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations, Treaty 8

In both of these quotes Roland mentions experiences of communication challenges, and particularly a lack of listening on the part of ENGOs. Differing agendas between ENGOs and Indigenous communities wasn't always due to a lack of clear communication though, as Chief Willson's second passage illustrates he is aware that ENGOs may see partnerships as strategic, having something to gain through the political leverage Indigenous communities may hold. The question of whether ENGOs work with Indigenous communities out of strategy rather than solidarity was a constant theme throughout ENGO interviews too, and will show up in the next section's experiences of ENGO staff as well as the final discussion at the end of the chapter. However one quote that is important to share here demonstrates how different agendas between ENGOs and Indigenous communities can affect those living with the direct impacts of a project. Julian Napoleon shared his experiences with me as we sat over-looking the Moberly River, looking at what will be lost with the flooding caused by the Site C dam:

"I've been troubled with the whole campaign that everyone's waging, the kind of mainstream campaign because I feel like I don't want to justify [it] by any other means anymore. And I don't think that as Indigenous people we should even have to. But I guess when you collaborate with these folks they can talk about those other [environmental] issues. Site C is such a big issue for everyone, and there's a real tendency for people to gravitate towards those issues that are relevant to as wide an audience as possible. And even myself as a farmer, and someone who's been involved in food justice type of work, I myself have fallen guilty of constantly bringing up the points around the agricultural potential of the Peace River Valley, that's something that the Sierra Club campaign focuses on a lot – that everyone focuses on a lot."

Julian's story highlights how, what seems like differing opinions on strategy, have very real effects on the lives and hearts of those fighting for their land and survival. Continuing on he said:

"You know I just realized over the past year of seriously campaigning that, for me, the real fight is this project directly attacking our people and our identity. That is such a huge issue. Like, nothing else should even matter. The cultural genocide of the Dane-zaa people, that is so so huge, and for me that's now where my heart lies in fighting that fight. And I just don't see how it could go forward with that issue [being left out]. So I kind of, I've kind of burned out, I'm trying to justify this thing under all the different reasons when in my heart I'm like "How could they do this to our people?" And how could anyone support doing this to a distinct race of people? I don't know, to me it almost seems rude to even think about other issues when that is there. You know, it's so wrong. So so wrong."

- Julian Napoleon, Community Activist, Saulteau First Nations, Treaty 8

Julian's passage echoes the quote from the TRC in the previous chapter which identified the residential school system as a part of Canada's policy of cultural genocide to its gain control over Indigenous land and resources.⁶⁴ The approval of Site C demonstrates these policies continue to this day, and that while Canada talks of "reconciliation" it continues its blatant disregard for the rights of Indigenous peoples through the destruction of their lands. Amnesty International has a Site C campaign of its own owing to the numerous human rights abuses the dam is causing including increased violence towards Indigenous women and children due to the rapid industrial development and influx of temporary workers, infringement of treaty rights, and forced displacement. Alex Neve, secretary general of Amnesty International Canada has been quoted saying,

"By any measure, it is the rights of Indigenous people that is our biggest challenge and our most serious responsibility when it comes to improving Canada's human rights record. [The] Site C [dam] is really an iconic example of the long-standing failure to show proper regard for the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and how readily and easily governments across this country seem on one hand to be able to talk aspirational and inspirational things when it comes to the rights of

⁶⁴ See Introduction chapter page 9.

Indigenous peoples, and then turn around and make decisions that simply do not live up to those words.”⁶⁵

The Indigenous voices in this section show how the strengths of Indigenous-ENGO relationships lie in the power of effective communication and the challenges that arise in its absence and differing agendas. The last passages from Chief Willson and Julian speak to the tensions that can arise when ENGOs align themselves with Indigenous communities for environmental reasons without fully allying themselves with communities’ priority of defending their Indigenous rights. These tensions are at the heart of the intersection between environmentalism and Indigenous rights, and relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous communities. The tensions and the discussion of strategy versus solidarity was a prominent theme in my conversations with ENGO staff which will be explored in the next section.

2.5.2 Relationships with Indigenous Peoples: ENGO Perspectives

The background to each ENGO’s policy and statements were covered earlier in this chapter, and in this section I highlight deeper aspects of the conversations I had with DSF, SCBC, and RAVEN Trust staff about their perspectives and experiences working with Indigenous communities. In interviews with senior staff, many conversations often brought up the issue of strategy versus solidarity, with varying perspectives expressed. One of my first interviews was with Bob Peart, the Executive Director of Sierra Club BC at the time of our interview,⁶⁶ who shared an honest and reflective perspective during our conversation:

“From an NGO perspective, it’s a very interesting question about the sincerity [towards] First Nations, and are we really honestly doing this because we really honestly care and respect [them], or are we doing this because we know it’s the only way to get stuff done? I would say it’s getting more and more sincere, [and] I think that people recognize it isn’t just something that if you haven’t got that

⁶⁵ “Indigenous Rights Canada’s Biggest Human Rights Challenge: Secretary General of Amnesty,” DeSmog Canada, accessed April 26, 2018, <https://www.desmog.ca/2018/03/21/indigenous-rights-canada-s-biggest-human-rights-challenge-secretary-general-amnesty>.

⁶⁶ Bob has since retired from SCBC.

ticked or checked off, you can't move on. I think it really is moving towards a sincere conversation and a sincere understanding of respect and I think that there are instances where it sometimes is really sincere and instances where it sometimes isn't, depending on the situation."

- Bob Peart, former Executive Director, Sierra Club of BC

Bob's quote touches on themes that also came up in conversations with many other participants, such as the insincerity of previous approaches of ENGOs working with First Nations (as mentioned above in earlier DSF quotes from Peter Robinson and Faisal Moola). In both their interviews Bob and Caitlyn emphasized the urgency of climate change as a complicating factor in approaches to campaigning. However, another unique perspective on this issue was shared by Faisal Moola, who challenged the notion of strategy **versus** solidarity, and how the two need not be in opposition:

"It is through the exercise of [Indigenous peoples'] constitutionally protected Indigenous and treaty rights, that we actually have the greatest opportunity to protect and restore the land. Treaties that were signed with First Nations are inherently predicated on the ability of the land to continue to sustain Indigenous peoples, so it's actually a relationship that obligates the crown to ensure that the land is not degraded to the point where Indigenous peoples can no longer be Indigenous. And at the heart of that is actually an ecological question, which is to what extent can the land continue to support Indigenous peoples if it's being degraded functionally, in terms of its ecology?"

So I would argue to my environmental colleagues that it's actually in our interest to support Indigenous people as much as possible, FULLY to support them to regain their sovereignty over their land because they're offering an alternative way, a much more sustainable way to be living in relationship with that land than we have, blessed with all of [our] lofty environmental regulations and policies.

[...] And so that's really where I'm hoping that the environmental movement is going to go, and it's beginning to shift that way, but if it's going to succeed it will mean that environmental groups will have to come to terms with some basic principles articulated in policy; things like [the] UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People, [and the] Truth and Reconciliation [Commission's] Calls to Action."

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

In the first section of this passage Faisal makes the same connection between reconciliation and environmentalism that Ana Simeon mentioned above, by drawing parallels between supporting Indigenous sovereignty and the environmental movement's goals of realizing sustainable relationships with the Earth. At the end of this passage Faisal also hints at the importance of reconciliation in this work by mentioning UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action as documents that need to inform this work. Faisal's quote also demonstrates how these ideas are reflected in DSF's approach to working with Indigenous communities, and my interview with Peter Robinson provided more insight to this:

"We want to learn from, help, support and amplify Indigenous voices because we believe those voices and that perspective are a more appropriate framework for what we do. If environmental organizations really believed that a highly engaged Indigenous community would help in the outcomes of what environmentalists are trying to achieve then the perspective would be – if it was authentic – to provide resources to those communities to do the work themselves. But that's not what's going on. So there's more work that the environmental community has to do about what this looks like because at the moment I don't believe we're at the position where environmental groups and environmentalists recognize that. The way they go about this is largely from a colonial perspective. It's an unfortunate fact, but it's still that way."

- Peter Robinson, former C.E.O., David Suzuki Foundation

The theme of amplifying Indigenous voices comes up again as Peter addresses the problems of prevailing colonial attitudes in environmentalism, and how centering Indigenous voices and perspectives is an important aspect of DSF's work towards decolonizing their work with Indigenous communities. I asked Peter how DSF's Indigenous Peoples Policy influences the campaign work on the ground, to which he replied:

"It was a big shift for DSF because most organizations [...] go in and push everybody aside and say we have all the expertise and we're here to champion the project. The work that we did in the northeast part of BC related to cumulative impacts in the Peace River, the Site C dam, forestry and agriculture those kinds of things. In order to embed the type of relationship that we want, we have to lose our ego. [...] We can't be the dominant player here. So Faisal for example, worked with the Moberly band up in Peace Country, and Doig River and Blueberry, to do research, but it's their information. They are the ones that release it, [and] use it as they see fit. Even though we put a lot of effort and money [into] the research,

we said “This is what we’re seeing”, and we had long relationship building to get to that point. And then they use that information in their campaigns, lawsuits, information and education, and it gives them 100% agency on what they can do with the information.”

- Peter Robinson, former C.E.O., David Suzuki Foundation

Peter and Faisal's quotes demonstrate DSF's approach to working in solidarity with, and behind, Indigenous communities. An example of "losing their ego", as Peter put it, is providing technical and scientific support to assist communities in making informed decisions regarding development proposals, like Site C, on their traditional territories. The Sierra Club of BC's role in the Site C campaign has been much more public, as part of a coalition of organizations educating the public, pressuring government, and supporting the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nation's legal case to protect their treaty rights. In my interview with Ana Simeon she described the importance of working with Indigenous communities to SCBC's Site C campaign:

“Well for the Sierra Club as a whole, I’m sure there are campaigns where First Nations work is less crucial, [...] but for my work I can hardly separate it. And why this [Site C] campaign, is also because the people in the Peace Valley themselves are modeling reconciliation, and they’re really standing together with each other which is so beautiful to see.”

Here Ana elaborates on her earlier quote above where she made a connection between Reconciliation and environmentalism, and her response reminded me of wording in SCBC's 'Acknowledgement of Title and Rights' which states: *“In striving to protect B.C.’s wild spaces, **we understand that land and people are not separate** and honour the First Nations leadership that guides and informs many of our campaigns. **Sierra Club BC both recognizes our responsibility and affirms our commitment to working towards reconciliation**” (emphasis added).* When I asked Ana about this idea she responded:

“Well to me, [environmentalism and reconciliation] are part of the same thing. The same ethical or, I for myself use the word spiritual concern, although I don’t necessarily talk about it to people [in those words]. But it’s the same spirit that pervades both things, and one without the other will fail. So of course there are trade-offs and there are short-term and long-term decisions, [...] but so much of

what we need to do to save the climate, or even protect forests or specific species is actually very much long-term.”

- Ana Simeon, former Site C Dam Campaigner, Sierra Club of BC

Ana’s perspective of environmentalism and Reconciliation being “part of same thing” reflects an understanding that “land and people are not separate” as stated in SCBC’s acknowledgement. To further explore this idea the next section looks at how ideas of Reconciliation in the Site C campaign were reflected in interviews.

2.5.3 Perspectives on Reconciliation

As I discussed in the ‘Trouble with Reconciliation’ section of the Introduction chapter, from my interviews it was clear that participants often distinguished between “reconciliation” as promoted by the federal and provincial governments, and Reconciliation of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, which inherently requires reconciling our relationship with land – “When you heal the land, the people will be healed” as Yvonne Tupper said in our interview. Julian Napoleon summed it up very clearly in our interview:

“These days you have a lot of talk of reconciliation – sometimes people get optimistic that it’s sincere. But this [Site C] project going through is 100% crystal clear reaffirmation that there is no change whatsoever; that the government is continuing forward on the same path it always has; and that the entirety of the reconciliation platform is lip service. You know they’ll undertake these massive month or many year-long inquiries into this or that, because really for them that’s the type of thing that actually doesn’t impact whatsoever what they’re doing on the ground. It doesn’t slow down the total devastation of the land that represents our own well-being. That’s the type of thing they’re willing to do, and that – I feel in my heart and soul – is merely a tactic to distract and appease while they continue forward, never changing their practices on the ground.”

- Julian Napoleon, Community Activist, Sauleau First Nations, Treaty 8

Not only does Julian point out the hypocrisy of governmental “reconciliation” talk but importantly he also identifies the approval of the Site C dam and the destruction of the Peace River valley as a

continuation of Canada's policy of cultural genocide to control Indigenous peoples' lands and resources.

In contrast to "reconciliation" talk, Julian went on to describe what he calls "true reconciliation", and how it has been taking place in the Peace:

"For true reconciliation to happen within a colonial country, that country has to cease to exist. [...] But where I do engage in what I feel is a true process of reconciliation is the drawing together of the people who are here, and have been here for generations, and want to be here forever, and want to raise their kids here. And those are not just the Indigenous people, it's the farmers in the Peace River Valley, and the concerned citizens. This fight has brought together these historically quite segregated communities, and has built these really strong relationships and true friendships. And I find it kind of funny how the government talks about reconciliation, and in a roundabout way they have helped us work through some reconciliation processes here by uniting in our fight against them."

- Julian Napoleon, Community Activist, Sauleau First Nations, Treaty 8

From both of Julian's passages we can see a common theme: Reconciliation of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people fundamentally lies in our relationships to the land, and particularly in resistance to colonial control and destruction of Indigenous land. Julian's description of true Reconciliation in the Peace River valley comes from communities of people rallying together to defend themselves and their land from the government (and BC Hydro). The take-home message in Julian's passage above is quite clear: decolonization is a prerequisite to achieving Reconciliation in Canada. The perspective of Reconciliation being rooted in relationship to land and the need to address colonization's impacts on Indigenous peoples and lands was also demonstrated in some of the conversations I had with ENGO staff:

"As an environmental organization it's all about land and water, and who has the power to make decisions and what are the decisions being made? And so to my mind that's entirely the focus, is how are we working in such a way that we are recognizing and respecting Indigenous governments, Indigenous laws, title and rights to the land? And [how are we] trying to build and work towards conservation solutions within that context, which is a different context than we've

been in before. And we're feeling our way to some extent, but to my mind when I'm talking about reconciliation I'm talking about the land."

- Caitlyn Vernon, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club BC

Caitlyn's quote speaks to a unique role that environmental groups can play in the process of advancing Reconciliation in Canada. In this new context of environmentalism which recognizes the need to respect Indigenous title, laws, traditions, and rights to the land, ENGOs engaging in Reconciliation work create opportunities to center the conversation on relationships with land. Faisal Moola of DSF had this to say on ENGOs' role in Reconciliation:

"Fundamentally it's about solidarity, it's about standing in support of Indigenous peoples. So when Indigenous peoples talk about the legacy of colonialism, having an organization like the Suzuki Foundation, or Greenpeace, or whoever, say "yes we stand in solidarity, we understand that [Site C] is a legacy of colonialism, AS IS the destruction of environmental factors, as is the destruction of the land", I think it's really, really important. And I cannot diminish how significant that is. I think there is also an opportunity to use our influence and our brand to help educate Canadians about how a true commitment to reconciliation can actually be this path to sustainability. How sustainability can actually benefit from Indigenous people regaining control of their land and their future."

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

ENGOs have a role to play in educating the public on the connection between environmentalism and Reconciliation, in particular the connections between environmental destruction and the ongoing colonial violence experienced by Indigenous peoples. In my interview with Susan Smitten, the Executive Director of RAVEN Trust, Susan described RAVEN Trust's perspective on Reconciliation:

"If we're going to talk about truth and reconciliation there has to be truth before there is reconciliation. And from our perspective, the truth is the land is the basis of everything. And so we will continue to support nations who want to – not just hold on to their land – but to maintain sovereignty over their land, and be able to be the stewards of, and decision making power on their land."

- Susan Smitten, Executive Director, RAVEN Trust

The need for truth before there can be Reconciliation was a theme that stood out to me during my time visiting the Peace. While I was there many people told me that in order to understand Site C, I had to visit the first two dams on the river, and understand the history of destruction in the valley that Site C continues. In the quotes from Treaty 8 members in this chapter we see a repeating message of Indigenous identity being tied to the land, and a focus on the connections between the destruction of their territories and cultural genocide of their people were strong messages and reminders of the truth-telling needed before Reconciliation can happen in the Valley.

“They haven’t apologized for the Peace Canyon dam or the WAC Bennett dam. They haven’t reconciled those two dams that destroyed our caribou, that destroyed our animals’ pathways, destroyed our fish, and destroyed our traditional territories. There’s a massive grave with our ancestors in that grave, and BC Hydro hasn’t even honoured that. [...] My Elder George said “they took away our fish, they took away our caribou, [and] they slaughtered our buffalo. [...] The buffalo was in the mid-1800s, the caribou was in the 1960s and our fish at the same time, and now we’re 40 years later and it’s the moose and our deer and the elk.” That’s pretty scary. If you’re going to genocide our culture, that’s what you do. You take away the food sources.”

- Yvonne Tupper, Community Activist, Saulneau First Nations, Treaty 8

There is a parallel here between the need for truth before there can be Reconciliation, and the role that ENGOs need to play in educating the public on the connections between Reconciliation and sustainability. However what we see in these passages from ENGOs interviews is that in order for ENGOs to step into this role, there is a recognition that the environmental movement needs to go through its own process of truth and Reconciliation in its attempts to work in better ways with Indigenous peoples. The quotes from ENGO staff in this chapter have demonstrated that a recognition of the colonial history and attitudes of environmentalism was central to re-orienting their organization’s approach to working with Indigenous peoples in more respectful ways. Without this recognition, without this truth-telling,

NGOs risk perpetuating the same colonial relationships to Indigenous lands and peoples which are responsible for the environmental destruction that they are fighting.

This chapter focused on the experiences of ENGO and Indigenous participants' working together, as well as different perspectives of Reconciliation within the campaign. The next chapter will similarly look at Petronas campaign experiences, and in the last chapter I will engage more deeply with the major themes that came up in both campaigns, with a focus on addressing how to improve relationships between Indigenous communities and ENGOs.

Chapter 3: Petronas Case Study

“People from hundreds of years ago have been telling a story. It’s been one of those stories that gets handed down from one generation to the next generation. They talked about a serpent – a huge serpent that would go through our lands and its head would be at the ocean. They talked about this hundreds of years ago and they always told our people to beware of the serpent, because it was going to destroy the land and it was going to destroy the people. So we have the serpent coming. We have to fight the serpent because the serpent is going to kill our people. It’s an environmental concern, you know, it’s everything – our food’s going to be impacted, our climate is going to be impacted. How many tons of gases are going to go off from where they have these blow pipes and they blow all the excess gas off? And everything around it is dead. The wildlife come in because it’s got salt, and they start licking the salt. They start developing tumours, cancerous tumours. Next thing, it will decrease our population of wildlife. People are eating those animals that have tumours in them. How is that impacting them? So yes, LNG is definitely going to impact our people. It separated our people and it’s done exactly what the old people said. It’s going to separate the nation.”

- Hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, House of Gwininitxw, Gitxsan territory

3.1 My Journey to the Skeena

“Who’s hungry?!” After our friendly and candid hour-and-a-half-long interview discussing the importance of community building to SWCC’s work, Executive Director Shannon McPhail announced lunch time to her colleagues. Turning to me she said “If you’re interested in some seafood chowder, halibut and lingcod, we’re going to my house right now to eat it up”. I was keen to continue talking with Shannon and meet the other SWCC staff, and also – I love seafood chowder. Over lunch Shannon shared more about SWCC’s work and gave me the latest updates on Petronas’ activities with their proposed pipeline through Gitxsan territory. SWCC was working with two Gitxsan house groups who opposed the Pacific Northwest LNG terminal on Lelu Island and the connecting pipeline that would be built through their traditional territories without their consent.

I had been in touch with Shannon before leaving Victoria, as well as with Greg Knox, Executive Director of SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, the other ENGO spearheading the fight against the Petronas project. Shannon and Greg both gave me names of Indigenous community members working with them on the Petronas campaign as suggestions for potential interviewees. But while the two of them had both confirmed their availability with me before I drove the 16 hours to the Skeena, only some of their Indigenous partners had replied to my email request expressing interest in speaking with me, and none of them had mentioned whether they would be able to meet with me in the one-week window I had while there. With my trip to the Peace fresh in my mind, I decided to make the drive anyway and hope that things would work out once I got there.

We had just finished lunch at Shannon’s house when there was a knock at the door. As Shannon invited her guest in she said to me: “What great timing, Charlie this is Richard Wright, spokesperson for

the House of Luutkudziwus". Richard was one of the people Shannon suggested I contact for an interview since he is the main organizer of the camp at Madii Lii – one of two Indigenous land-based resistances to the Petronas project, and one which SWCC was supporting. Richard had responded to my initial email requesting an interview but coordinating our schedules had proven difficult. Following my gut to take the opportunity to continue chatting with Shannon (the chowder was delicious) just happened to allow my chance meeting with Richard, and we arranged to have an interview later that week.

Two days later I met Richard at our arranged meeting point, not really knowing what to expect. He pulled up in his truck and called out "Hop in, let's go." I was slightly confused as to what was going on, but Richard continued, "I'll take you out to the camp so you can see Madii Lii. Hopefully Kenny's home too so you can ask him some questions." I ended up spending much of the day with Richard, visiting Madii Lii and stopping-in at Kenny and his wife Nabby's off-the-grid homestead in the Suskwa valley. Richard's generosity with his time allowed me a brief but rich experience of the land and issues of the Petronas project – there was lots of time for conversation driving out to the camp and spending time with Richard and Kenny "helping" them do a repair on Richard's truck. Once again I was generously invited for lunch, over which we discussed the Petronas project and their experiences working with ENGOs.

After a busy week of interviews I was ready to make the long drive back home to Victoria. I had managed to have interviews with all but one of the people I had contacted – hereditary Chief Na'moks John Ridsdale of the Tsayu (Beaver) Clan of the Wet'suwet'en nation. I was under the impression Chief Na'moks was in Smithers, which I would pass through on my way back to Victoria from Terrace where I was staying. I was very happy with the way the trip had unfolded and was eager to head home, but made a quick stop in Hazelton to say goodbye to a friend. While there I decided to call Chief Na'moks to pass on my regrets for not getting a chance to connect during my visit. Being the weekend I didn't expect him to answer his phone, and I was so eager to hit the road I actually was hoping he wouldn't pick up!

Of course he answered on the first ring. After introducing myself (he remembered my email request), Chief Na'moks said "Well I'm just about to head out the door for a walk. Where are you?" I explained that I was an hour away in Hazelton, expressed my regret for missing the opportunity to meet, and requested a phone interview after I returned to Victoria. "I work in Smithers but I actually live here in Hazelton. Come join me on my walk and we can chat". Given the circumstance and having already had numerous serendipitous experiences on both trips to the Peace and Skeena regions, I knew this wasn't an invitation to turn down. In another gracious act of generosity, Chief Na'moks spent 3 hours with me that day, inviting me on his walk around Hazelton and to join him for lunch. All the while he shared many stories of Wet'suwet'en history, traditions and territory, and his experiences working with ENGOs fighting the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline and now, Petronas.

3.2 Background to the Petronas Campaign

The objective of this section is not to provide a comprehensive study of the Petronas project nor the campaign itself, but to provide enough information for the reader to understand the dynamics of the relationships between the ENGOs and Indigenous peoples involved in the campaign.

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) LNG project was a proposal by Malaysian state-owned oil and gas company Petronas to build a natural gas liquefaction plant and export terminal on the coast of northwest BC, in Tsimshian territory (near the town of Prince Rupert). To supply the terminal, a 900 km pipeline called the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT) project was planned to connect the Montney gas fields in northeast BC to the coast⁶⁷. The project was first proposed in 2013 and soon after received provincial and federal permits of approval. However in July 2017 Petronas cancelled what was at the time the largest planned private investment in Canadian history, citing unfavourable economic conditions for the \$36 billion project.⁶⁸

The construction of the terminal and pipeline received both support and opposition from affected Indigenous communities. Those that publicly supported the project welcomed the economic benefits to their communities, while opposition from other Indigenous communities as well as environmentalists focused on concern for the negative impacts on the Skeena's migrating salmon, the second largest sockeye salmon run in Canada behind the Fraser River,⁶⁹ on the generation of acid rain, and for the climate implications of the project's massive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – if constructed the project would have been the largest single-emitter of GHG emissions in all of Canada. Indigenous opposition to the Petronas project was spearheaded by two land-based resistances in two different areas: one at Lelu Island by hereditary leaders of the Gitwilgyoots tribe of Lax Kw'alaams, whose traditional territory includes Lelu Island; and a second on the pipeline's path in Gitxsan territory by the House of Luutkudziwus in their territory of Madii Lii. Both groups also put forth court cases against the project; the Gitwilgyoots hereditary leaders filed a judicial review of the federal

⁶⁷ In my interviews both the PNW terminal and PRGT pipeline were commonly referred to together as the "Petronas project" or simply "Petronas". I have reflected the same usage in my writing.

⁶⁸ "\$36-Billion Pacific NorthWest LNG Project Dead | Globalnews.Ca," July 25, 2017, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3623401/36-billion-pacific-northwest-lng-project-dead/>.

⁶⁹ "Skeena River Sockeye Returns at Historic Lows | CBC News," CBC, accessed April 28, 2018, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/skeena-river-sockeye-returns-at-historic-lows-1.4176967>.

government's approval of the project due to lack of proper consultation, and the Gitksan houses of Luutkudziiwus and Gwininitxw filed a federal court lawsuit against Ottawa's approval of the project citing the terminal's impacts on the salmon would threaten their food supply and infringe on their Aboriginal fishing rights.⁷⁰ SkeenaWild Conservation Trust also filed a judicial review of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's and Department of Fisheries and Ocean's conclusions that the terminal could be built with minimal impact on critical salmon habitat.⁷¹ Each of these court cases had fundraising support from RAVEN Trust.

The site of the terminal on Lelu Island, a small island in the estuary of the Skeena River, was widely criticized due to the island's offshore area, Flora Bank, being a critical habitat for migrating Skeena salmon.⁷² The unique eelgrass beds of Flora Bank at the mouth of the river provide sanctuary and sustenance for all juvenile salmon as they adjust from fresh water to salt water on their migration journeys to sea. Although the federal government had declared the area unsuitable for development in the 1970s due to its ecological importance,⁷³ the project received final approval permits from the federal government subject to 190 conditions of the environmental assessment report, a decision that was largely criticized by independent scientists.⁷⁴

The construction of the PNW terminal atop Flora Bank would have adversely impacted all Skeena salmon, which are not only integral to the health and wellbeing of the lands, waters, and inhabitants of the entire Skeena watershed – the river and all its tributaries encompass an area 54,000

⁷⁰ "Luutkudziiwus and Gwininitxw File Judicial Review to Save the Wild Salmon of the Skeena- and Stop the Petronas LNG Pipeline," *RAVEN*, January 10, 2017, <https://raventrust.com/2017/01/10/luutkudziiwus-and-gwininitxw-file-judicial-review-to-save-the-wild-salmon-of-the-skeena-and-stop-the-petronas-lng-pipeline/>.

⁷¹ "First Nations File for Judicial Review of Petronas LNG," *Business in Vancouver*, accessed April 28, 2018, </article/2016/10/first-nations-file-judicial-review-petronas-lng>.

⁷² Charmaine Carr-Harris, Allen S. Gottesfeld, and Jonathan W. Moore, "Juvenile Salmon Usage of the Skeena River Estuary," *PLOS ONE* 10, no. 3 (March 6, 2015): e0118988, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0118988>.

⁷³ Canada. Environment Canada, "Preliminary Environmental Effect Assessment, Superport Development, Prince Rupert Region" (Ottawa: Dept. of the Environment, 1973).

⁷⁴ "90 Scientists and Climate Experts Call on Trudeau to Reject Pacific NorthWest LNG," *Vancouver Sun*, May 30, 2016.

km² larger than the size of Switzerland – but also integral to the identity of the Indigenous peoples of the Skeena – the Tshimshian, Gitksan, and Wet’suwet’en nations. In addition to the concerns of the impacts from the terminal, the construction of the supply pipeline from northeast BC, Treaty 8 territory, was also opposed by some of the communities whose lands the pipeline would cross. Some of the reasons for that opposition that came up in interviews were: concern for the impacts of the terminal on salmon upriver and thus their own livelihood; resisting the development of oil and gas infrastructure and drilling in their territories; and protesting against the continued lack of consultation by industry and government regarding development on their territories.

3.2.1 Complicated Regional Politics

Both sites of Indigenous resistance to the Petronas project, Lelu Island and Madii Lii, exist within complicated regional and community politics between traditional hereditary leadership and the contemporary Indian Act band council leadership. In both cases of Lelu Island and Madii Lii, the resistance was led by hereditary leaders on whose territory the projects were impacting but who were not consulted by either Petronas or the provincial and federal governments. The PNW terminal consultation occurred with the Lax Kw’alaams First Nations band council but not the Gitwilgyoots tribe, and for the PRGT pipeline through Gitksan territory consultation occurred via the Gitksan Treaty Society, not with the individual Houses. Both the Lax Kw’alaams First Nations band and the Gitksan Treaty Society signed on in support of the project. As a researcher coming into these communities from outside I feel it is not my position to comment on nor take sides in these internal affairs, but since my research was limited to studying the relationships between Indigenous communities and ENGOs working together against the Petronas project, it is important to note that I was only exposed to the perspectives of hereditary leadership.

3.3 Research Participants

In order to get a full picture of the relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous peoples in the Petronas campaign I interviewed the main actors involved in both sites of resistance to the pipeline and terminal at Madii Lii and Lelu Island; staff of the two main ENGOs working with them; and other hereditary leaders of Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en nations prominently involved in the campaign against the project. The two locally-based ENGOs working with the Indigenous-led resistances were SkeenaWild Conservation Trust who work with the Gitwilgyoots at Lelu Island, and Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition (SWCC) who work with two Gitxsan house groups opposed to the Petronas project: the House of Luutkudziiwus and the House of Gwininitxw.

My initial contacts were made with SWCC and SkeenaWild, as a close friend of mine Greg Horne had worked for SWCC on the Petronas campaign and recently moved back to Victoria. Greg had encouraged me to take up the Petronas campaign as a good (which is to say, complicated) case study of relationships between ENGOs and Indigenous communities, and wrote to the Executive Directors of SWCC and SkeenaWild introducing me and my project to make our acquaintances. Thanks to my relationship with Greg, both Shannon McPhail of SWCC and Greg Knox of SkeenaWild replied positively to my research participation request and each forwarded a list of Indigenous community members they worked with whom I could contact for interview requests. My experience in making these connections highlighted for me the importance of trust when doing community engaged research. Shannon McPhail and Greg Knox trusted me because of my friendship with Greg Horne, which in turn resulted in favourable responses from their contacts that I also took as a sign of the relationships of trust they've built in the communities they live and work in.

Madii Lii, Gitxsan Territory – Houses of Luutkudziiwus and Gwininitxw and SWCC

I started my Petronas campaign interviews with Shannon McPhail, the Executive Director of Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition, which is based in Hazelton, BC, Gitxsan territory. SWCC was founded in 2004 by residents of the Kispiox Valley who came together over concerns with development in the area, including a Royal Dutch Shell fracked gas project in the headwaters of the Skeena, Nass, and Stikine Rivers in the territories of the Tahltan.⁷⁵ According to its website, SWCC and its board and members “are united in understanding that short term industrial development plans [...] will not benefit our region in the long run if they undermine the social and environmental fabric that holds the watershed and communities together.”⁷⁶

Shannon was my main contact point in the Skeena region. Born and raised in the Kispiox Valley in Gitxsan territory, Shannon’s family has six generations in the Skeena region and she is well-known and well-informed of the environmental and social issues of the region. She was very helpful in getting me – the outside researcher – up to speed as quickly as possible, and put me in touch with two Gitxsan members that SWCC worked closely with over the Petronas project, Richard Wright, spokesperson for the House of Luutkudziwus, and hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie of the House of Gwininitxw.

My last interview, as mentioned in ‘My Journey to the Skeena’ story at the beginning of this chapter, was with Wet’suwet’en hereditary Chief Na’moks John Ridsdale of the Tsayu (Beaver) clan. Although the Wet’suwet’en were not directly involved in the campaign against the PNW terminal or the PRGT pipeline, the Wet’suwet’en were opposed to the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline, and are still contesting numerous other pipelines and projects that are proposed to be constructed across Wet’suwet’en territory without consent. Chief Na’moks was actively involved in the campaign against Enbridge and was prominent in his support of both the Lelu Island and Madii Lii sites of resistance to the

⁷⁵ Commonly called the Sacred Headwaters campaign.

⁷⁶ “About - Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition,” accessed April 28, 2018, <http://skeenawatershed.com/about>.

PNW terminal and pipeline. Chief Na'moks is also a trustee on the board of SkeenaWild and has served on boards of other ENGOS.

Lelu Island, Tsimshian Territory – Gitwilgyoots and SkeenaWild

SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, based out of Terrace BC, is an organization dedicated to the protection of wild salmon, “the backbone of the diverse cultures, economy and ecosystem” of the Skeena region.⁷⁷ With more than \$100 billion in developments proposed in the region,⁷⁸ SkeenaWild’s work focuses on creating strategies and long-term solutions for responsible development for the Skeena River watershed which does not put wild salmon populations at risk. I interviewed SkeenaWild’s Executive Director Greg Knox, as well as their First Nations Coordinator Kirby Muldoe. Kirby, Hup-Wil-Lax-A, provided a unique perspective in my Skeena interviews being of both Tsimshian and Gitxsan heritage and working for an ENGO. Kirby’s mother is from the Tsimshian community of Gitxaala and his father is from the Gitxsan community of Anspayaxw. He is a member of Wilp Wii Gyet.

The protection of Lelu Island was led by Gitwilgyoots hereditary Chief Yahaan Don Wesley, Gwishawaal Ken Lawson, the house leader of the Wolf Clan whose traditional territory includes Lelu Island, and Ken’s wife Patty Dudoward from neighbouring Lax Kw’alaams tribe Gitando. I only managed to get an interview with Ken and Patty and Chief Yahaan after Kirby Muldoe of SkeenaWild kindly offered to put me in contact with them after we finished our interview. As he gave me their phone numbers he said “Tell them I gave you their number. They might be more willing to talk to you if they know that”, and that is exactly what happened. Ken and I managed to coordinate a time for me to visit them in their home in Prince Rupert in the short time I had there, but due to foul weather and the long

⁷⁷ “OUR STORY,” SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, accessed April 28, 2018, <https://skeenawild.org/story/>.

⁷⁸ Greg Knox in conversation with the author, November 4 2016.

ferry journey needed to get to the Lax Kw'alaams reserve I was unable to visit Chief Yahaan in person and had to interview him over the phone during my time in the Skeena.

3.4 ENGO Perspectives on Working with Indigenous Peoples

In contrast to the ENGOs profiled in the Site C campaign, neither SWCC nor SkeenaWild have official policies or acknowledgements of their work with Indigenous peoples, however being much smaller organizations rooted in their communities working with Indigenous peoples is central to much of the work they do. In this section I highlight SWCC's and SkeenaWild's perspectives on working with Indigenous communities, and not having official organizational policies.

3.4.1 Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

"We don't have a formal policy because we're a small crew. It's easy for us to not have a formal policy because we talk about it, we share this office space, and when we hire people we don't necessarily hire people with the hard skills – those we can train. But what we can't train is how to interact with the community, and that's what we're looking for in the organization."

"We're people who are connected to land and care. But many people [at SWCC] grew up on unceded traditional Gitksan territory, and so it's a major component of our work. We have two Gitksan board members, and we do a lot of collaborative work with Gitksan house groups. [...] Part of that work is working with [them] to prove historical use and occupation of their traditional territories, and then in some cases helping support those house groups to have continued use of occupation – cabin building, trail building – so they can better assert [Aboriginal] rights and title."

I asked Shannon to explain the connection between SWCC's work as settlers caring for and connecting to the land, recognizing they live on unceded Gitksan territory, and support Gitksan house groups' continued occupation of their lands.

"Part of this work is ensuring that people have the opportunity to be connected to land, and that's something that we see disappearing. And then you see decision makers who don't have connection to the land – or that recognition of place, or place-based learning – and they're making decisions about it. So a major drive in

our organization is to facilitate those connections to land, to each other, and to other communities. [...] When we help people connect to land, they are going to be better stewards for them, they're going to make better and more sound decisions. And sometimes they might make a decision to support an industrial project, but they'll make it in an informed way."

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

Similarly to Faisal Moola's perspective in the previous Site C chapter, Shannon also mentioned the importance of Indigenous peoples maintaining connection to their traditional territories to the health and stewardship of both the land and community. For Shannon, Indigenous nations are the decision makers on their lands, so as a small, regionally-based organization focused on healthy ecosystems and healthy communities, relationships with Indigenous peoples are central to SWCC's work. Shannon also acknowledged that Indigenous nations are not always opposed to industrial development on their territory, and this was mentioned by many ENGO staff as a challenging dynamic to navigate in working with Indigenous communities on environmental issues. This topic will be engaged with more deeply in the next chapter exploring major themes of this project.

3.4.2 SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

In my interview with Greg Knox, Greg described similar characteristics between SkeenaWild's and SWCC's work with Indigenous communities and contrasted the realities of regionally-based work to the larger, urban-based ENGOs of the south.

"Living here in the northwest and doing this work we are integrated into Indigenous communities here. Much more than I think people are, especially [in] Vancouver. I think we have a lot of understanding already, and we live with Indigenous people, we work with them, so we have a higher level or understanding of the culture. So I think that's probably one reason we don't need or haven't felt the need to have an official policy. We're also not as big of an organization.

Some of [the larger ENGOs] are doing it as effectively as we are, but they've also spent a lot of time building those relationships over many years. And so some of

those organizations are very effective, very good and respectful in working with Indigenous groups. But I think it generally is harder, it's not as easy [for them] because Indigenous community and non-Indigenous community aren't integrated together."

- Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Differences between the smaller, regionally-based organizations of the Petronas campaign, and larger ENGOs of the Site C campaign, such as the importance of an ENGO having an official policy or not, present interesting comparisons between the Site C and Petronas campaigns. These will be explored more in the next chapter's discussion using the experiences from both case study chapters.

3.5 Experiences within the Campaign

3.5.1 Relationships with ENGOs: Indigenous Perspectives

In my interviews with Indigenous participants involved in the campaign against the Petronas PNW terminal there was widespread recognition that working together for a common cause was vital to the campaign, and an appreciation for the support that SkeenaWild and SWCC provided to their efforts.

"It's very important, in my mind, to work with the environmental groups because they kind of share a lot of the same concerns that we do. Everyone's concerned about the fish, and the environment, and the air. So therefore we do share the same concerns. Their fight is the same as ours, pretty much. [...] So yeah, we'll work with the environmental groups as much as we can to make sure that this goes in the right direction, and we're all happy by the time we're finished."

- Gwishawaal Ken Lawson, House Leader of the Wolf Clan, Gitwilgyoots tribe of the Nine-Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, Tsimshian territory

"Well the success of Lelu Island today, Lelu Island is now in the world's spotlight, we've had all walks of life come to the island – we've had lawyers, doctors, teachers, kids – and it is now recognized as a place that can't be touched. And Ottawa knows there's going to be a backlash. They know very well that this thing is going to explode. And I don't think they want to be arresting any grandmothers any time soon, but we have put it on the map now and it's for our courts to decide how this is going to play out. The environmental groups have been very helpful in getting us to this point."

- Hereditary Chief Yahaan Don Wesley, Gitwilgyoots tribe of the Nine-Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, Tsimshian territory

"It's vitally important [to work with ENGOS] because they have the same goals. They have good outreach. If we worked in isolation, people could brand us whatever they want. [Former Prime Minister Stephen] Harper, he branded us a number of things, and without educating the public they would believe it. So you get out there, you prove to them you're human. We come from the same place, the same heart, the same soul. And that opens that door to "Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you do?" Without the NGOs we wouldn't have had the opportunity. [...] These people work very hard with us. I respect them."

- Hereditary Chief Na'Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet'suwet'en nation

"The relationship and the importance is huge. You know, as First Nations we have rights and title, we have court decisions like Delgamuukw and Tsilhqot'in and Haida. We've gone to court many times and have won on different occasions. And quite honestly I think we all have more power when we all work together. ENGOS are very powerful allies of ours."

- Kirby Muldoe, Tsimshian and Gitxsan nations, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Similar to the responses of the Indigenous participants of the Site C campaign, there was an acknowledgement that working with SkeenaWild and SWCC was an important part of the resistance to the Petronas project. Whether it was the ability to increase awareness by getting the message out to a wider audience, ENGOS' role in connecting communities to outside resources – be they organizations or funding – or create opportunities to build bridges and foster respectful dialogue, a common perspective was it was more effective to work together than in isolation.

"I'm glad that we connected with Shannon because through Shannon we've connected with other environmental groups. I've gone to meetings down in Seattle and went to another meeting over in Tofino. And you know I go to different meetings and I talk about our culture and how we connect, and what we as a house group are trying to do."

- Hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, House of Gwininitxw, Gitxsan nation

Overall there was appreciation for the ENGOs and also recognition of the significance and challenge of being able to find common ground.

“Right now, [the challenge is] continually staying on track. Letting people know that working together is the only way we’re going to move forward. We cannot dissociate one from the other. You know, the commonality has to be brought up constantly. When I first started on this, it was First Nations one group, fisherman another, farmers another, mining another, and we found that there is a commonality. And that’s what you have to keep doing and that’s a challenge.”

- Hereditary Chief Na’Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet’suwet’en nation

A prominent topic in Petronas campaign interviews with Indigenous participants was the issue of ENGO funding. While ENGOs in the Site C campaign have a strong component of supporting Indigenous treaty rights, such as fundraising for the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations’ court case against BC Hydro and the province, as Julian Napoleon mentioned in the previous chapter it hasn’t necessarily been the prominent strategy of environmental groups’ campaign against the Site C dam. A main difference with the Petronas campaign was that it largely focused on the on-the-ground, Indigenous-led sites of resistance – the camps at Lelu Island and Madii Lii. ENGOs were important sources of funding for the camps but this also brought challenges too.

“[SWCC] assists and helps us generate some funds, and it goes towards empowering the people, it doesn’t go towards controlling the people. And that’s the significant difference between SWCC and a lot of other environmental organizations. [...] One of the things that we have done in ensuring that we have a good relationship with those that want to work with us and support us, is we have identified and set out the priorities of the house group. And not all environmental groups appreciate that, I think that they like to call the shots if they’re going to be paying the bill. That’s where we have a different approach and a different view of things, and sometimes we don’t always see eye-to-eye and don’t form a relationship with certain organizations.”

- Richard Wright, spokesperson for the House of Luutkudziwus, Gitxsan nation

“Having gone through European contact First Nations were a little leery about becoming involved with environmentalists, because it always seemed like there was a lot of money coming in but there was no flow to First Nations. It was all to

run these organizations that weren't based on the land. But you know, when you have someone come in telling you what to do with your land, or what they think about it, it's like "Hey man, you don't live here, you don't know what's happening. You have no idea how everything is connected. How can you tell us what to do? Or how can you make decisions [and] tell us where you're going to be spending money?"

- Hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, House of Gwininitxw, Gitxsan nation

Both Richard's and Yvonne's passages highlight experiences of outside environmental groups coming into their communities and attempting to take control of decision-making through the allocation of funds. These are prime examples of the kinds of colonial attitudes and behaviours that ENGO staff demonstrated an awareness of in the previous chapter, and that lie at the heart of the long history of tensions between environmental groups and Indigenous communities. Richard identified the distinguishing factor and success of his partnership with SWCC as empowerment and not control. Other participants made similar comments by speaking of the need for respect, open communication and listening.

Ken: "We know what our job is, [and ENGOs] know what their job is – if they want to help that's fine. But don't come in here dictating to us on our territory. It's not going to happen.

Patty: I have to say that you know, if we didn't work with the people we've worked with, we wouldn't be able to do what we're doing. There's no way we could have done this on our own. There's just no way. So it's really, really important that [there] has to be respect on both sides – we have to respect them and they have to respect us. And we do, we do respect everyone's part in this. [...] I don't know how the southern larger [ENGOs] communicate with tribal people, but I know with Greg Knox and Shannon, and everyone that's involved, it's hands-on. We communicate one-on-one, you know we all share the same concerns. So I think it's a really good, healthy relationship."

- Ken Lawson and Patty Dudoward, Gitwilgyoots and Gitando tribes of Lax Kw'alaams

"The role of NGOs working with us is responsibility. I know their hearts are in the right place, but again if you get into a situation where somebody is making all the decisions without the input of the affected people? You're not listening to the people. And then it goes to you speaking at them and that's not the way to move

forward. I know that without working together we're not going to make progress in maintaining what we have. If we decide as First Nations people not to have anything to do with NGOs, then we're going backwards. And if NGOs say that, or think that they can move forward without the support of First Nations, the courts will prove them wrong. And that's unfortunate, but that mindset of splitting us up is exactly what [Stephen] Harper tried to do."

- Hereditary Chief Na'Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet'suwet'en nation

In my interview with Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, she drew upon her long experience with ENGOs involving themselves with her territories, and she made a point of emphasizing that for the most part her experiences with ENGOs had not been positive before working with SWCC. A main reason for this was the lack of inclusion of Indigenous peoples by environmental groups, as well as the lack of diversity – in particular the whiteness – in the environmental movement.

Yvonne: "I walked into the meeting and I was uncomfortable because it was all white faces, there wasn't a brown face in the room. And the moment I walked in I sort of had an idea of what they were going to be talking about. It was the territories. And I really thought about what I had to say, and I sat and listened to everything that they said. All the planning work they were doing in regards to try and protect our territories. I waited, and waited, until towards the end I stood up and I introduced myself. And I told them, "You're talking about the land that belongs to the Gitksan people. The Wet'suwet'en people. Where are they? How come they're not here? How come they're not involved in what you're talking about?" I said "This land belongs to them. They need to be here. They need to have their input." And that was the beginning of my relationship with environmentalists.

Me: How long ago was this?

Yvonne: It was probably, I'd say over 15 years."

- Hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, House of Gwininitxw, Gitksan nation

This issue also came up in interviews with Indigenous participants during Site C interviews, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

The experiences of Indigenous participants in this section highlight the complexities of relationships between Indigenous communities and ENGOs in the Petronas campaign, but also

demonstrate the ability of SkeenaWild and SWCC to navigate these complexities, which I largely attribute to both being smaller regionally-based organizations with close connections in the community.⁷⁹ In the next section I profile the experiences of SWCC and SkeenaWild and their relationships with their Indigenous partners.

3.5.2 Relationships with Indigenous Peoples: ENGO Perspectives

In my interview with Greg Knox, many of the same themes came up in our conversation as those mentioned in the previous section above. Greg spoke to the importance of working across differences and ENGOs' crucial role of bringing people together.

"[The relationships are] absolutely foundational to the work we do. The reality is that we couldn't do the work we do without our relationships and partnerships with First Nations. And I think to a large degree they also couldn't do a lot of stuff that they want to do without our help. So it's mutually beneficial.

[...] How does an Indigenous group which has capacity to work around fisheries and scientific assessments, but all of a sudden is faced with a couple hundred billion dollars' worth of development – how do they have the capacity to deal with that? How does anyone have the capacity to deal with that? Something that ENGOs can bring is real capacity to help organize and bring people together. [...] I think to bring [people] together so there's different Indigenous groups, ENGOs, community groups, [and] together they feel strong, they feel like they have a voice, they feel like they have real power. And if they're just doing it individually, it's just not nearly as powerful. And so that's one of the keys, the most important thing is to simply bring people together, and that convening role for ENGOs has absolutely proven effective time and time again."

So one of the big successes in this was part of the Pull Together campaign when we had a big kick-off event in Vancouver, and we had the Chiefs [of] Heiltsuk, Kitasoo/Xai'xais, Gitxaala, the president of the Haida Nation, all these people in the SAME ROOM. And he goes "Wow, I don't think you guys realize what you pulled off! Do you know how hard it is for us all to agree on anything? This is amazing!" [...] And for the chief of the Heiltsuk Nation, who stands up and says "Pull Together has made it so that we don't have to impoverish our communities and it means that it's easy for us to make decisions to go forward because we

⁷⁹ At the time of my research trip to the Skeena region (November 2016), participants from both the Lelu Island and Madii Lii camps said that no larger ENGOs had offered support to their efforts. In later discussions with Richard Wright I did learn that Sierra Club BC did provide some support to Madii Lii after our interview.

don't have to rob from Peter to pay Paul, and we can stand proudly in court and know that we have the best".

- Susan Smitten, Executive Director, RAVEN Trust

I asked Greg about other sources of success in these collaborative relationships, to which he replied:

"At the end of the day it's respect, right? You have to respect people for all their challenges and faults (laughter). And it doesn't matter whether they're Indigenous or whoever they are, there's a certain level of understanding and forgiveness around these things which helps people here in the northwest working together, whether that's working with other conservation groups or community groups, or Aboriginal groups. And I think because we need to work with Indigenous groups in an effective way we built these relationships over years, we started small with smaller projects and slowly built those relationships. And that's been absolutely key to our work and our success, is really putting a lot of energy into developing these relationships."

- Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Being a smaller organization that's rooted in community has been integral to SkeenaWild's ability to develop lasting relationships of trust, and these same themes were prominent in my interview with Shannon McPhail, Executive Director of Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition. Shannon focused much of our conversation on the motivations and learnings drawn from relationships with the community – especially the mistakes.

"You don't just get to be in the community to talk shop, to have meetings, to achieve your agenda. That's not what happens. You are there because you have supported, and through years of support you've been recognized as somebody who isn't just here to achieve outcomes. [...] And I mean obviously there are difficult aspects because you can't deliver that kind of relationship constantly with every different house group or issue that comes across your desk. But where you benefit is that we disagree with each other all the time because we have that relationship, and that trust. We disagree constantly, and I get my ass whooped all the time. I'll go in – "Here's the plan, I've thought it through, this is the strategy, this is it. This is a 10 outta 10". And then you go and sit with the Elders and they're like "No, we're not interested in that strategy at all (laughter), here's our strategy". And then we work and we debate and we argue and get upset, but we love and respect each other just like you do in your own family. We'll get angry and upset and feelings will get hurt, but we have a relationship and it's important to be able

to disagree and still have each other's backs. And ultimately that is how we engage. So it doesn't mean that we always get along, it doesn't always mean that things are tickety boo. Often it isn't."

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

What strikes me about these passages from both Greg and Shannon, are how the strengths and successes of their work with communities reflect an ability to be accountable to their relationships. Part of this comes from having a deep understanding of the communities they live and work with, and also an increased trust and depth of relationships that is necessary to navigate the challenges inherent in any personal and professional relationship, but particularly around the complexities of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. Shannon went on to emphasize how it's this quality of relationship that is required to be able to disagree, make mistakes, and learn from them without necessarily breaking that trust.

"It was through the school of hard knocks, and it was through screwing up, and making statements or doing things on behalf of people. I mean, we learned from people in the community – the Gitksan [and] the Tahltan – from the First Nations communities who were tolerant enough and patient enough, and cared enough, to walk us through these things. So you know, in some cases it had to be explained to us, and we had to get a kick in the pants – that we earned fair and square! – for being unconsciously incompetent. And it's because of our close personal relationships in the community that we have that opportunity, where people are honest enough with us to give us the kick in the pants. And so one of the biggest learnings is that once you engage and work with a community, you're not there because that's your job. You're there because of a relationship."

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

Shannon's passage demonstrates a process of self-reflection and honesty that was needed to unlearn the colonial and paternal tendencies common to environmentalism. Integral to SWCC's approach is not separating an environmental agenda from the health and well-being of a community and relationships within it; not choosing to work in community strategically but out of an understanding that environmental issues and social issues are interconnected. In describing this perspective and the motivations behind SWCC's work Shannon provided this anecdote:

*“There’s a guy up the road who every week is dropping off apples from his fruit tree and potatoes and carrots. And [he says] “I can’t pay you for this work that you’re doing, but I can bring you traditional foods.” Which for us they’re the ultimate gift! So it is the spirit of reciprocity more than trying to achieve environmental outcomes; it’s being there for your community and them being there for you. We always judge our work [by] are we doing something **for** the community, or are we doing something **with** the community? And if the answer is for, then we don’t do it. We don’t need our logo on things, we don’t need our face on things. We don’t need to be more empowered, we are. What we need is for our community to be empowered. [...] It is the relationships in community that give [us] strength, and it’s dysfunction and conflict in community that make [us] weak. The only reason [SWCC] has power is because of our community. Because of where they hold us, not because of where we hold them.”*

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

Shannon’s passage provides insight into Richard’s comment above about SWCC empowering the Indigenous communities it works with, not controlling them like other outside ENGOs as Richard described. Richard’s comment on the tensions around funding from ENGOs was a topic that Greg brought up as well.

“Sometimes a lot of money flows into our organizations to do this work, and Indigenous individuals or groups say “Why are the ENGOs getting all this money to do this work?” and they get frustrated, and understandably. But we are working in a system where we are accessing money from donations and individuals because we have charitable status. We can do that and foundations need organizations like ours to be able to put money into. They can’t just give it to an individual or a non-charity; they can’t do that under Canadian law. I think on their side they need to have that understanding too, [and] I know it’s frustrating for some of them sometimes, but there’s this reality to deal with. And also, you know, going out to get that money is a lot of work. It just doesn’t show up on the doorstep. We do a lot, our organization works hard to get those resources to be able to do what we do. So I think that sometimes can cause friction.

Sometimes we bring resources into these situations, and sometimes it’s easy to set up expectations that we can’t necessarily follow through on. And I think that’s something that we have to be really careful of, because you know if you start, you have resources to have meetings and do things and all of a sudden that money is not as much money or the money isn’t there anymore, then they’re still asking for these things and expecting it to be delivered, and then you’ve gotta deal with that.”

- Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

The experiences of the Indigenous people and ENGO staff working together on the Petronas campaign provides a rich comparison to the discussions that emerged from the Site C case study which will be explored more in the final discussion of the next chapter. The ways SkeenaWild and SWCC are able to build relationships in their communities and campaign work also inform the perspectives on Reconciliation that came up in the interviews, which will be explored in the next section.

3.5.3 Perspectives on Reconciliation

Many of the perspectives on Reconciliation shared with me in the Petronas interviews were similar to those presented in the previous Site C chapter. One of the strongest themes that came up from participants was an emphasis on communication and education as crucial components to the process of Reconciliation.

“When you can get worldwide attention on what you’re doing, and why – it opens those doors to education. Education is the key. That understanding part comes with education. Reconciliation comes with education. But again, reconciliation depends on who you’re talking to. What [the government] thinks of reconciliation is absolutely different from the way we view it. How do we get there? That would be a success right there. And they’re going to bring in people and they’ll start another study, they’ll start another group, another panel, but then they’ll influence the outcomes. It’s like science, you can’t do science with a pre-determined outcome. That’s not science. So they shouldn’t do reconciliation with a predetermined outcome where they have the upper hand, and your voice is silenced. That’s not reconciliation. That’s a domination.”

- Hereditary Chief Na’Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet’suwet’en nation

In this passage Chief Na’Moks’ identifies the same lip service about “reconciliation” from the government and their predetermined outcome of maintaining domination over Indigenous peoples and lands. Throughout our three hours together Na’Moks repeatedly emphasized the importance of education to Reconciliation, and the role of Indigenous-ENGO relationships in bringing these issues to

the public. Other participants also identified the role, if not responsibility, that ENGOs have in our interviews process and Chief Na'Moks went on to add:

“Personally I believe if [ENGOs] are working with First Nations that is a step towards reconciliation. Reconciliation is a conversation right? Without conversation how can you get to reconciliation? It all ties back into the education part of it. [...] So I believe it's up to people to make that difference, and that's what ENGOs and First Nations are doing by working together.”

- Hereditary Chief Na'Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet'suwet'en nation

Greg Knox brought up similar themes in our conversation, emphasising the theme of amplifying Indigenous voices, and the role of ENGOs in creating public awareness of the government's dominating and underhanded ways of dealing with Indigenous communities over industrial projects.

“I think that these large campaigns around big issues [and] big projects that threaten [Indigenous peoples'] way of life are probably one of the quickest ways to get to reconciliation in this country. Or at least start down the path, and in a meaningful way, because it's giving them a voice. The traditional way of the Canadian government coming in and only talking to the people that they want, buying them off, manipulating them, saying that if you don't sign this agreement we're not going to give you money for health care, or whatever it is – all these really low-life type of things that are happening – the only way we can really break that down is for Indigenous communities to amplify their voice. And I see that as a central role for ENGOs, is to really help them amplify their voice so that government can't just come in and walk all over them as they have been doing for over a hundred years.”

- Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

This sentiment was echoed by Patty Dudoward in our interview as well, emphasizing a theme at the heart of the opposition to the PNW terminal on Lelu: inadequate consultation.

“They know exactly what they're doing, it's divide and conquer. Nobody has ever come to the Gitwilgyoots tribe and said “Is it ok? What do you think?” They have gone to – what they call First Nations – every band council around this area here, and all the villages are angry at each other. All the people in the villages are angry with each other. It is really, really bad.”

- Patty Dudoward, Gitando tribe of Lax Kw'alaams

If amplifying Indigenous voices is a needed element of the education and public awareness needed for Reconciliation, how do ENGOs do this in respectful ways that don't reproduce the paternal patterns of environmental groups speaking for, or on behalf of Indigenous communities? Greg talked about what this process has looked like for SkeenaWild and the considerations in navigating these tensions.

"One of the foundations of reconciliation is that [Indigenous people] have a voice. So in our work if we don't respect and recognize and hear their voice, then how can [reconciliation] go to the next level? I think that's absolutely important. And quite often, some Indigenous people we work with are quite reluctant to put themselves out there all the time, so sometimes it's easy [for us] to dominate the conversation. So you really have to kind of step back and ask for their perspectives and their guidance, and they need to really be a big part of being in the driver's seat in these campaigns. They need to be the ones giving direction. I mean it goes both ways, 'cause often times, we might have the expertise in doing some of this stuff – like communications work – that they might not necessarily have, and we might have to push back and say "Hey I think this is important for these reasons". But generally speaking it's important to really ask them their opinions and get their direction with how we're going to go on these different issues."

- Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

The importance of taking leadership from Indigenous communities was also brought up in my conversation with Shannon McPhail.

"Reconciliation is not an Indigenous issue, it's a non-Indigenous issue. And as a society I think we put too much pressure and we put the onus on Indigenous people to facilitate a reconciliation plan when I think it's actually up to us. And the best way to figure out how [to] achieve a sort of reconciliation with the communities you're working with or want to work with – [for example] how do you collaborate with First Nations on environmental or climate change issues? – my answer to that question is always: you ask. If I want to do work with the Gitxsan, then I'm going to go to the Gitxsan and ask if they even want or need me. What do they need me to do and can I align that with what I would like to do? And take responsibility to change how I walk in the world, and if there are ways that I can support a path towards reconciliation, then I'm going to do that."

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

My conversations with both SWCC and SkeenaWild demonstrated an understanding of the interconnections between environmental and social issues, and this understanding appeared to emerge from relationships rooted in the communities they live and work. As Chief Gwininitxw described in her story at the beginning of this chapter, the Petronas PNW terminal and pipeline – the serpent – was a manifestation of the colonial domination of land and peoples by the government and corporations. Driving home the connection between the environmental and cultural destruction that the Petronas project would bring, Chief Gwininitxw continued her story of the serpent:

“We’re fighting the biggest battle of our life, and that’s government. But we’ve been fighting government, like, forever. And you know, the government always says “We did wrong by taking the children from the parents. We done wrong”. Ok, they apologized, but what are they doing? They’re doing everything else – it’s genocide. It’s genocide, no matter how you look at it. You put this pipeline through you destroy – not only the people, you destroy the food source. The people survived because they always had the food. They took the Indian out of the child, we lost our culture – a lot of it. We lost our language. Probably 90% of it. But take away our food, what are you going to do with the people? You’re going to destroy them. You’re going to succeed. Genocide will have been completed. You now have control of the land.”

- Hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, House of Gwininitxw, Gitxsan territory

3.5.4 Messages to ENGOs

After finishing my trip to the Peace River region and my Site C campaign interviews, one of the themes that stood out most prominently in my mind was the importance of, and need for ENGOs to *really* listen to the voices and experiences of Indigenous communities. From both sides of the relationship came an acknowledgement that the colonial ways of environmentalists believing and behaving as if they had the knowledge and answers, was at the heart of repairing and improving the relationship between Indigenous peoples and environmental groups moving forward.

So one of the things I started doing for my interviews with the Indigenous participants in the Petronas campaign was to give them an opportunity to share a direct message to ENGOs at the end of our interview. Since I hadn't done this with my Site C participants, I planned to offer them the same opportunity during follow up interviews over the phone and then compile the audio clip messages for ENGO participants to hear. Many of the Madii Lii and Lelu Island folks had messages for the ENGOs at the end of our interview, but understandably some wanted more time to think about it, and I offered to record their message over the phone at a later date. However, not surprisingly, everyone was busy with their campaign work fighting Site C and Petronas, and I didn't get to record any messages over the phone. Here are the messages that were shared me.

"I think the environmental groups need to be more proactive and start working with First Nations. Not coming in and telling us what to do, but letting us know "This is the information that [we've] heard, here's the paperwork that backs it up. Now how are you as First Nations going to deal with it?" Not telling us "Now you've got to do this, you've got to do that". Allow the environmentalists to have their say, but also allow First Nations to be able to step up to the plate, because that's our responsibility, not the environmentalists' responsibility. It's our responsibility to protect our land, no one else. Yes we need your help, yes we need your support, yes we need your bodies. But they shouldn't be the ones that are leading the show, they should be the ones that are providing the support. That's how I see environmental groups."

- Hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, House of Gwininitxw, Gitxsan territory

"Well if they support some activities and want to protect the environment, that's a responsibility that we have inherited. And rather than control, empower the people to continue doing their work on the ground."

- Richard Wright, spokesperson for the House of Luutkudziiwus, Gitxsan nation

"So yeah, just having an understanding of how hereditary [systems] work, how tribal people work, and who they need to be talking to, who they need to be working with. It's just a matter of education. Educating people on what tribal people are. What all our roles are. All the roles are like what our law is. That territory is Gitwilgyoots territory, and our law says that Ken is the head person of that territory, and he has to protect that territory. So if people understood how or where we're coming from, it would probably make it a lot easier for them to come in, you know, and be able to work in a respectful manner. And so on the

environmental side of things, it's like how do you go about finding the right people? I think it's listening, you have to really listen."

- Patty Dudoward, Gitando tribe of Lax Kw'alaams

"I would like to relate that the Indigenous groups throughout Canada – and not just myself – it's the Inuit and the Eskimo that are suffering up in the north, you know the diamond mines that are going in around up in the places like that, and their lands are being stripped away. If the ENGOs, and the Prime Minister and our Premier Christy Clark, and industry were to sit down and we mapped out guidelines of how we perceive things for our land and our water and air, then we could work in harmony and there won't be no big fight, no waste of millions of dollars and people's time and effort. And it all boils down to sitting down with the proper people and negotiating in everybody's best interest at the end of the day so the environment stays intact. That's what I would like to relate to them."

- Hereditary Chief Yahaan Don Wesley, Gitwilgyoots tribe of the Nine-Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, Tsimshian territory

"Always be simplistic. Speak with, not at First Nations. Respect who you're talking to and why. Know that you have a common goal. And try not to direct us. Again, I can only speak as Wet'suwet'en because this is where I grew up. We know what we have to do, but we also can't do it on our own. But we will simply not rely on somebody to do it for us. We will rely on somebody to do it with us. To come in with, "We're going to do point 1, point 2, point 3, point 4". That's not any way to approach us – that's an agenda – but how you get there is more important. We still have that same goal."

- Hereditary Chief Na'Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet'suwet'en nation

Chapter 4: Discussion of Major Themes and Lessons learned

Having presented the experiences and perspectives of both sides of Indigenous-ENGO relationships from Site C and Petronas campaigns, in this chapter I engage in deeper discussion of the major themes that came up. This is also a chance to add my perspectives on the whole body of conversations informed by my experiences of the whole research and learning journey. Going back to the Introduction chapter's section on Indigenous worldviews and research methodologies, I start by drawing upon Shawn Wilson's concept of relational accountability to help frame this conversation and attempt to address the challenges that appeared in the previous two chapters. I have organized the discussion into two main sections: Cultivating relational accountability in Indigenous-ENGO relationships, and Barriers to relational accountability in Indigenous-ENGO relationships.

I conclude the chapter and this thesis with my thoughts on the implications for environmental and Reconciliation initiatives in Canada going forward, and some recommendations for ENGOs to improve relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities. I wish to re-emphasize that there are limitations to the scope of my observations and recommendations. As a research project that looked at two case studies, this thesis provides a snapshot of the diversity of experiences happening in relationships between Indigenous communities and environmental groups in BC. Having said that, I also want to honour the cumulative knowledge and wisdom in the shared experiences compiled in the stories shared with me.

4.1 Cultivating Relational Accountability in Indigenous-ENGO Relationships

4.1.1 Listening and voice

Fairly early into the interview process with both Indigenous and ENGO participants a major theme already made itself apparent: Environmentalists need to start listening to the voices and

experiences of Indigenous peoples. This may sound easy and over-simplistic, yet again and again, from both sides, I heard descriptions of environmental groups' reputation of coming into communities and behaving as if they had the knowledge and expertise to make decisions regarding issues on Indigenous lands, while disregarding the knowledge, expertise, authority, and protocols of the Indigenous people whose territory they were on.

"You know it's the old oxymoron: I'm from the government I'm here to help. Well it's [been] the same thing, "I'm from an environmental organization and I'm here to help" – and go in and push everybody aside and say we have all the expertise and we're here to champion the project.

[...]The problem is that the story of western environmentalism is not very inclusive, it doesn't acknowledge a multitude of other voices. Environmental justice voices don't substantially appear until the 1990s and those are largely based on colour, poverty and other attributes, and other cultural perspectives are not really incorporated. And Indigenous voices have largely been marginalized in the environmental community. If you think about it, a lot of the conservation activities that go on in North America are based on a colonial perspective."

- Peter Robinson, former C.E.O., David Suzuki Foundation

Environmentalism's historical and continued colonial and paternalistic attitudes were recognized in interviews by both ENGO staff and their Indigenous partners as the cause of tenuous relationships between Indigenous peoples and environmentalists, and a significant barrier to the repairing and improving of Indigenous-ENGO relationships. This recognition and awareness was present from ENGOs, but if the goal is to move towards the establishment of respectful relationships, ENGOs need to be accountable for this history and behaviour. A loud message from Indigenous participants was that this starts with listening to Indigenous voices and experiences and moving beyond the one-sided relationship where governments and Canadian society have not been held to account. As demonstrated in both case study chapters, it was identified that ENGOs have a role and responsibility to amplify Indigenous voices to educate the Canadian public on the connection between the Reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, and reconciling our relationship with the land.

“When did we become a society to hate things? They hate Indigenous people so much they’re going to kill off our moose? And destroy our lands forever? You know, that’s not a good place to be, but that’s how I see it, and so when you have Sierra Club, and you have Raven Trust, and you have the David Suzuki Foundation, and Amnesty International, they’re [amplifying] our voices to the larger masses. I really appreciate them.”

- Yvonne Tupper, Community Activist, Saluteau First Nations, Treaty 8

Central to this theme was an understanding that Indigenous voices have been silenced and ignored for far too long, and in a time of Reconciliation it is crucial that their voices are listened to and heard. A resounding message from the Indigenous participants in this project is that violence against Indigenous peoples and Indigenous lands are both rooted in the ongoing colonial dispossession, control, and exploitation of the land for its resources. Until this colonial relationship to land is brought to the center of the national conversation of Reconciliation, no healing will occur. The interconnections between the environmental and social destruction caused by large industrial projects like the Site C dam and Petronas LNG projects presents ENGOs with a responsibility to amplify these messages from Indigenous voices, particularly in light of the need to reconcile their relationships with Indigenous peoples.

4.1.2 Open communication

“I think successes, [come from] the emphasis on clear communication. It would be like how you explained the beginning of your project, right? We’re always going to go back and check, and make sure it’s ok, and you can change your mind. Having that open, flexible, and fluid relationship is important.”

- Helen Knott, Community Activist, Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8

Listening to Indigenous voices is an integral component of fostering open communication and conversation, which many participants emphasized as key to both healthy Indigenous-ENGO relationships and Reconciliation more broadly. The Site C chapter described the negative past experiences some Treaty 8 members had with ENGOs, including environmentalists pursuing differing

agendas, publishing media releases with inaccurate or inappropriate information without consent. In the Petronas chapter participants shared how important it is for ENGOs not to dictate the terms of engagement and respect the authority and responsibility of Indigenous leadership. Shannon McPhail described SWCC's approach in this way:

“When working with First Nations and wanting to best understand how to support and engage them, first: ask them. There isn't a one way fits all method, so it's built on relationships. Ask them, but also be honest about what you can and can't do. Being honest about what we're capable of, and not capable of, while maintaining an open mind is sometimes a hard thing to do. When you want to work with First Nations in a way to achieve effective long-term conservation outcomes, you need to ask. If you don't have the relationship to do that, then you support those who do.”

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

Another way to frame the need for open communication is the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (or FPIC for short), a major principle of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁸⁰ The UNDRIP, along with the TRC's Calls to Action, is named or referenced in both David Suzuki Foundation's "Indigenous People's Policy" and Sierra Club BC's "Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Title and Rights", and was mentioned by some ENGO staff as a guiding document for Reconciliation in Canada.

Free, prior, and informed consent

Free, prior, and informed consent is mentioned in multiple articles of the Declaration (of which there are 46 in total). One of the primary articles in the UNDRIP concerning FPIC is Article 32.2, 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

⁸⁰ For a brief description of the UNDRIP, see the 'Background' section of the Introduction chapter.

*free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.*⁸¹

Although the wording of the U.N. Declaration is directed to states, the TRC's Call to Action number 92 applies the same principle to the corporate sector. From perspectives shared in interviews, ENGOs advocating against industrial development projects on Indigenous lands have the same responsibility to obtain Indigenous peoples' free, prior, and informed consent to engage in campaigns which affect their lands, territories and resources. The importance of ENGOs communicating openly and honestly about their campaign agendas and strategies was demonstrated in the previous chapters, and is an important foundation to consulting and cooperating in good faith.

During our interview Chief Na'Moks described how he relates to his Elders as a useful parallel to how ENGOs need to approach working with Indigenous communities, and the importance of open communication through free, prior, and informed consent.

"I always go back to the basics: when in doubt I call my Elders. And I've spent so much time with my elders and my Chiefs that I know what their responses [will be] but I don't take it for granted. I need to talk to them, that's called respect. You better ask them. If you simply say something off the top of your head, and even though you know that's what they're going to say, they're going to be offended because you better listen to them. They are the ones that have a responsibility to the areas that they are responsible for, the people they're responsible for. If I just circumvent them, as I've seen done in the past, they'll lose respect for you and they won't trust you again. So building trust, education, and communication. Have it. If you've got that, you've got to move forward that way."

- Hereditary Chief Na'Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet'suwet'en nation

4.1.3 Mutual understanding, respect, and trust

⁸¹ UN General Assembly, "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : Resolution / Adopted by the General Assembly," October 2, 2017, www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.

Sincerely listening to Indigenous voices, and open communication through the principle of free, prior, and informed consent are prerequisites for developing the mutual understanding and respect needed for developing strong relationships. As Chief Na'Moks' quote demonstrates above, it is important for ENGOs to understand a community and its culture, traditions, and protocols not only to work effectively together but also to develop and maintain the respect and trust needed in relationship. This was especially emphasized by Treaty 8 members whose relationships are primarily with ENGOs that are based far away in the urban south.

"It seems like the only time we get to work together is when there's a fight. And had we spent some time working together on initiatives, we probably would have had a better understanding of how to work together. And the First Nations are so busy, we're in this big fight with Site C but we're still running a nation, and we still got all these other things that we're having to deal with. [...] We were never involved with CPAWS and Sierra Club up until this fight. I didn't really know, other than their newsletter, what they did, and did not really fully understand what their mandate is, what it is that they do, how we could work with each other."

- Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations, Treaty 8

Chief Willson's passage demonstrates how important it is for organizations to be open and forward about their mandate and approach to working with Indigenous communities. From this perspective it is especially important that larger, urban-based ENGOs that are not based in the communities they work with, have official policies like David Suzuki Foundation's 'Indigenous Peoples Policy' or Sierra Club BC's 'Acknowledging Aboriginal Rights and Title', so their principles for working with Indigenous communities are clearly and publicly communicated.

Greg Knox described his understanding of the importance of mutual understanding and respect by emphasizing the time it takes to develop trust in relationships because of the history of colonization.

"It's totally understandable that they don't have a whole lot of trust, or have open arms to whoever comes into the community. Even if they are on the same page around some of these issues, trust factor is absolutely huge, and it's not something that happens overnight, it takes time. And so if you respect people and you work

with them and you kind of accept and appreciate the cultural differences – and understanding those differences and why – goes a long way to help in getting to a place where you can actually pick up the phone and phone someone and have them answer.”

- Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Chief Na’Moks also spoke to how trust is built in relationship and the importance of genuine relationships that move beyond utility.

“Not all relationships are perfect, but we manage to cultivate some very good ones, some very close ones, some very trusting ones. But that never happened over night, and it’s definitely not a 9 to 5 job. A lot of people have come up to our feasts, been with us in times of sorrow. And then with us in times of conflict. That’s where you build that trust, that’s where that real step comes from. One thing you can’t do, and it probably would be something NGOs can learn from – you cannot go to someone’s door only when you need something. You’ve got to go there when you just want a visit, when you just want to talk, and you just want to be human. But if they just come knocking on your door “I’d like you to sign this document, or that document” or “I’d like you to come and do this for us” – that’s an ask. It cannot always be an ask. Anyway, that’s our way, and again you’ve got to learn that.”

- Hereditary Chief Na’Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet’suwet’en nation

The importance of being in community to building relationships

As was demonstrated by the Petronas campaign chapter, relationship dynamics are more easily navigated by organizations when they are located in the area and the communities with which they work. Geographically, it is more challenging for southern-based ENGOs to develop the same depth of relationships without spending significant amounts of time in the communities they work with, but this was identified as a crucial part of being able to work effectively and respectfully together.

“Community rapport is essential, and a crucial element is the time for building [relationships] and being able to understand the people, and the issues and how they manifest.”

- Helen Knott, Community Activist, Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8

“Not completely understanding our lifestyle, that could be enhanced. That’s one of the issues with First Nations, is you have to spend time with us, we have to become comfortable with who you are, with your thought process, how you make your decisions and stuff like that. It has to be a relationship. And that takes time to do. We were kind of forced into it, I think.”

- Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations, Treaty 8

Even though it may be harder for larger organizations to develop close relationships in communities, during my time in the Peace there were numerous times that participants gave an example of good work that had been done in Treaty 8 communities. Amnesty International is an organization that was mentioned by both Helen and Chief Willson as an example NGO that worked respectfully and effectively by spending the necessary time in community to understand the issues and demonstrating free, prior, and informed consent.

“With Amnesty I know that treaty rights [are] one of the front-running issues when it comes to Site C and what they will highlight. They’ve done a lot of work in terms of coming here and understanding the issues fully and how they impact people. I think they came like 3 or 4 times to interview people and sit with people. And always [creating] that warm space by coming to community events as well. So [they] kind of established relationships within the community too, which I think is awesome and is a big part of being able to even move forward in those ways. What ENGOs can do is to have those relationships in community, to sit with them and take that time to give space for voice.”

- Helen Knott, Community Activist, Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8

“Amnesty International came on board, they took a look at what the situation was, they talked with us, they got a pretty good sense of what’s happening, and then they put together their communications, and they came back and talked to us and said “This is what we want to say, what do you think?” and I said “Yes, that’s good.” And that has happened with [ENGOs], and we’ve sat and we’ve talked, but it’s like every once in a while they stray off and they get going doing something and we have to kind of rein them back in. I think a lot of First Nations just give them the ability to do all these things, right? And then they lose control of it. This is our lives, and we’re going to maintain the message and the control and if you’re going to work with us then that’s how you’re going to do it. We’re not going to tolerate you promoting your own campaign on our behalf.”

- Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations, Treaty 8

These passages contrast experiences with the human rights organization Amnesty International with environmental NGOs, and echo comments mentioned earlier in the Site C chapter on the differing agendas of ENGOs. They highlight the importance of open and transparent communication and free, prior, and informed consent, especially for large organizations based far from the community. In the Site C chapter I framed the question regarding the motivations of ENGOs partnering with Indigenous peoples as an issue of ‘strategy versus solidarity’. In the next section I will explore this topic further in a discussion of barriers to relational accountability in Indigenous-ENGO relationships.

4.2 Barriers to Relational Accountability in Indigenous-ENGO Relationships

4.2.1 Colonial attitudes in environmentalism

One of the topics that came up in my very first interview with Peter Robinson of DSF, was that of differing generational perspectives on environmentalism.⁸² To put it very simply, the different views/foci of environmentalism can be generally categorized into three different themes: conservation of wilderness; sustainability and green technologies; and environmental justice. While these categories are not mutually exclusive, Peter’s research showed that younger generations of environmentalists tend to view environmentalism as fundamentally entwined with issues of justice. This concept frequently entered my mind during subsequent interviews with ENGO staff about questions of strategy versus solidarity in Indigenous-ENGO relationships, as well as during interviews with Indigenous participants as they recounted some of the challenges working with environmentalists. Both of these topics were briefly explored in the previous chapters, and as the perspectives in this thesis have demonstrated, the environmental destruction of the Site C dam and Petronas LNG project cannot be

⁸² This subject was the topic of Peter’s PhD dissertation “Voices of Young Environmentalists: A Generational Perspective on Environmentalism”. My apologies to Peter for reducing his research topic so crudely.

separated from social issues such as colonization and genocide. If Reconciliation is fundamentally an issue of addressing the injustices against Indigenous people on Indigenous lands, so too is environmentalism in Canada, particularly in BC, fundamentally an issue of justice.

From this standpoint it is imperative that the environmental movement in Canada undertakes its own process of Truth and Reconciliation and by addressing its colonial history and attitudes, and educate Canadians on the colonial connections between environmental issues and Reconciliation. This point was made strongly by Julian Napoleon who brought up the need for environmentalism to address its colonial heritage and discussed how it affects his relationship with Sierra Club BC.

“You look at the history of the Sierra Club in America, and it’s all based on the extremely harmful idea of Terra Nullius. Of this pristine land, and preserving it in its pristine state. And Terra Nullius is a myth; the landscapes here are the way they are because of the relationship with those that live with them, and depend upon them. And the history of Terra Nullius ideology, and the creation of parks is definitely a perpetuation of colonial ideology, and it’s a history of displacement. Looking more at that history, I was like “If this is an organization that has this as their foundations, is that something I really want to be putting a lot of energy and time into?” And I kind of reconciled that within myself because the person I work directly with is a good person. But I don’t really see that organization taking on the harm within their own history. You know they put themselves and John Muir and all those naturalists, like the first generation of environmentalists on a platform, and from an Indigenous perspective those guys actually did a lot of harm. I think that if these organizations really want to look at reconciliation, then they need to look at themselves and their own history, and work through that in whatever way they need to so they can be up front about it, and maybe apologize. And I don’t know what that process would look like.”

- Julian Napoleon, Community Activist, Saúlteau First Nation, Treaty 8

Environmentalism’s colonial history was often associated with conservation, not only by Indigenous participants but by ENGO staff as well. In my conversation with Caitlyn Vernon, Caitlyn demonstrated a strong recognition of the problematic colonial history of the Sierra Club US, and the need to address this history in Sierra Club BC’s attempts to work with Indigenous peoples in better ways.

“The foundation of the Sierra Club in the US⁸³ was primarily urban white men, who were trying to find themselves in the wilderness. And, in so doing they basically erased Indigenous peoples from the landscape; and it was this talk of quote-unquote pristine wilderness, untouched, and so-on. It kind of setup the history of environmentalism in two really problematic ways. One being the people who lived there for thousands of years were erased and devalued and not recognized. And the other was this real sense that wilderness is something out there, so wilderness is not where we live, we have to go somewhere else to find it. It kind of serves to disconnect us from nature, right?”

So I think it’s useful to try to contextualize what we’re doing now in that historical context, and that we’re trying to shift that from both perspectives. Of one, recognizing that there are people that have lived on this land for thousands of years, and that any solutions need to work for the people who have and do live there. And also at the same time, that it’s not that there’s people and industry and development on one hand, and pristine, untouched wilderness on the other. We need to be more reconciled with Indigenous peoples, but we also need to be reconciled with our connection to nature.”

- Caitlyn Vernon, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club BC

Addressing environmentalism’s colonial history and recognizing social justice as integral to the movement is a fundamental part of the Reconciliation process for ENGOS. In my conversation with Faisal Moola, Faisal framed this process as a paradigm shift, especially in the way environmentalists think of traditional environmental concepts such as conservation.

Reconciling social justice and conservation

“I’m talking about paradigm shifting, from acre-saving which was the conservation based priority, to this idea which would include a fundamental focus on justice. And on supporting Indigenous sovereignty, and recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact we will become a much more effective advocate for the planet if [we] promote justice, and if you promote continued relationship of people in place. And you know, I get challenged by this quite often by my science colleagues, who do see the world in a much more reductionist way. And I’ll tell you that there is strong empirical data to support the idea that if you support Indigenous people to live and thrive on their lands, the quality of biodiversity actually is improved. And there’s everything from the fact that we

⁸³ The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 by preservationist John Muir.

know that tribal protected areas in the Amazon are much more effective at stemming the loss of biodiversity than traditional parks and protected areas.”

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

In her quote above Caitlyn also identified the roots of North American conservation and environmentalism in the concerns and anxieties of urban white men. This observation highlights another issue that was prominent in both Site C and Petronas interviews: the Eurocentric concepts of wilderness and conservation, and the resulting whiteness of the environmental movement. As identified in the passages above, together these colonial attitudes have served to continually deny Indigenous peoples' relationships with their homelands, and are a major barrier to respectful relationships between environmental groups and Indigenous communities.

4.2.2 The whiteness of the environmental movement

The lack of diversity in the environmental movement was seen as a significant limitation and barrier for ENGOs trying to engage with communities, and adequately address issues of social justice. In my interview with Helen Knott, Helen used the example of the site we were having our interview,⁸⁴ as well as her experience as a community health worker to identify the limitations of well-intentioned individuals who don't engage with Indigenous community members or spend enough time in the community.

“I think some of the [initiatives] that have happened in the past here were driven by good intentioned individuals, but were created by people that are from organizations [that] are non-Indigenous, [and] some of them haven't been so successful. And that's with anything, even with wellness things, if you go into a community and be like “This is the program and I want to make everybody healthy” and if you're not prior and active with community and priming it with solutions then it's never going to work. And so some of the things have fallen flat because of that, for not having that level of community engagement that should have happened prior, because they weren't created by community members but from

⁸⁴ I briefly described Protester Point in the 'My Journey to the Peace' section of the Site C chapter.

other people. Like even this place (Protester Point), I came out to the opening of this and I was the only native person amidst like 60 white people. Then me and my son felt out of place and left and I was like “What the fuck?!” (laughter) Where are all the Indians?!” (laughter)

- Helen Knott, Community Activist, Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8

Julian Napoleon shared a similar experience of attending the Paddle for the Peace, a yearly community event to display opposition to the dam and solidarity with the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations’ court actions.

“I was at the Paddle for the Peace here this year, and I think like 90% of the speakers were white representatives from academia and NGOs, speaking here to us. And I’m like, scratching my head, What?! I don’t even care! I want to hear that Elder there speak. I want to hear those youth there speak, and [other] people from here. I don’t care about these folk, they can do their work down there, and that’s good, but I was actually deeply troubled by the representation they had amongst the speakers at the Paddle for the Peace this year.”

- Julian Napoleon, Community Activist, Sauleau First Nations, Treaty 8

Helen and Julian’s stories echo the experience that Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie shared in the Petronas chapter. These anecdotes connect the whiteness of the environmental movement with the colonial and paternalist tendencies of privileging white knowledge and expertise over the voices and experiences of Indigenous people, and demonstrate that this is an issue that ENGOs need to address.

This issue was acknowledged by some of the ENGO staff I spoke with, and was most deeply engaged with in my conversations with Peter and Faisal of DSF. During my conversation with Faisal Moola he and I talked about our experiences as people of colour who are minorities within the environmental movement. Faisal mentioned that before engaging with environmentalism he identified as an anti-racist activist, and his long time – 15 years – with DSF was due to social justice being at the heart of DSF’s work, something Faisal attributed to David Suzuki’s own family experience of internment

camps during the Second World War. Faisal described the general lack of diversity in the environmental movement as an issue that potentially limits ENGOs' ability to effectively engage with Indigenous issues:

"I don't frame the environmental problem the way that a lot of environmentalists do. I don't see it necessarily from the perspective of what motivates a lot of environmentalists around endangered species, and wildlife, and biodiversity and these sorts of things. I see it much more about a relationship of Indigenous people with these animals, with their land, as something that is around their need for justice, for social justice, for reciprocity to those communities. I think that some of the barriers that the environmental community is facing with difficulty understanding these issues is because of that lack of analysis, is that lack of understanding of social justice. And part of that, it's about the lack of experience [with] social justice campaigns and issues. And I don't know if that means we need to fill the organizations with people of colour and Indigenous people, and maybe that's what we need to do, I don't know. But I think that a lot more time needs to be spent by the environmental community to understanding issues of environmental justice and social justice. I think we would have a better time engaging in these issues if we do that."

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

Faisal's words expand on his perspective presented in the Site C chapter. For him, it is vital that ENGOs stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, amplify Indigenous voices, make the connections between colonial control and exploitation of land, environmental destruction, and the destruction of Indigenous peoples and culture. To reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples, ENGOs need to be accountable for their participation in colonial domination of Indigenous lands and take responsibility for educating the public on advancing the conversation on Reconciliation in Canada. ENGOs that have relationships with Indigenous peoples have a key role to play in this, but in order to address the interconnecting issues of Reconciliation and colonial destruction of land, they need to engage in their own process of Truth and Reconciliation.

4.3 Addressing the barriers: ENGOs' own process of Truth and Reconciliation

Caitlyn Vernon demonstrated a strong recognition of the need for ENGOs to address colonial influence and actions in environmentalism. At points in our interview I thought of my conversation with Julian Napoleon, as it almost seemed as their comments were in dialogue with each other.

“Why does an organization like Sierra Club need to change our relationship to First Nations? One: Because it’s the right thing to do from a justice perspective. There’s a whole horrible history that we need to take responsibility for. Two: Because in this current political climate First Nations hold more power than ENGOS. So by working together we can further conservation goals. Three: Yeah we need to take responsibility for our part in colonial history. We need to educate ourselves, apologize, change our ways. I think there’s an important role for an organization like Sierra Club in educating our supporters about the importance of learning our history and apologizing, [and] taking responsibility. The onus shouldn’t be on First Nations to educate settlers all the time, we can actually play a role in educating ourselves and our supporters.”

- Caitlyn Vernon, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club BC

Caitlyn compellingly lists many of the reasons why ENGOs need to take responsibility for improving relationships with Indigenous peoples. After reflecting on all the interviews I shared with participants, and contrasting the Site C and Petronas campaigns, I feel that having an official policy outlining an organization’s commitment to working with Indigenous peoples is an important component of ENGOs demonstrating relational accountability to Indigenous peoples and a commitment to Reconciliation.

4.3.1 The importance of having a policy on Reconciliation

“The truth is hard. Reconciliation is harder.”

- Senator Murray Sinclair, at his keynote speech for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ 20th anniversary gala⁸⁵

⁸⁵ “Senator Murray Sinclair: The Truth Is Hard. Reconciliation Is Harder.,” Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/multimedia/senator-murray-sinclair-truth-hard-reconciliation-harder>.

In their accounts of the development of the 'Indigenous Peoples Policy' and 'Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Title and Rights', DSF and SCBC staff described the processes as important opportunities of self-reflection and growth for the organization collectively, but also for employees individually.

"[The] process of talking about it at staff meetings was awesome, because it was a process, and we all had that discussion. Now that you bring it up, I think it's something that we should bring up again and have more often. [It] meant a lot to me because it wasn't my idea to bring that up, and probably wouldn't have ever occurred to me. But then I was part of this conversation, and was like "Oh wow, this is important, I'm glad we're doing this". So I think that it's kind of, you know, we were all bringing it to the centre and saying we want this to be part of our work, and so yeah, I would say since then it's something I think about more."

- Galen Armstrong, Site C campaigner, Sierra Club BC

There was also strong recognition from ENGO participants that at both the individual and organizational level this is not an easy process, as it requires facing deep-seated biases, beliefs, and even ignorance of issues like colonialism, systemic racism and gendered violence.

"You know, [named ENGO] runs mandatory anticolonial training programs for their staff. Everyone has to go through it. [A well-known charitable foundation in Canada] looked at this, and put their entire board through a workshop on Truth and Reconciliation. It fundamentally changed the way they see things. They asked questions, there were tears, people uncovered biases. So the real challenge is that you can't pay lip service to this, you actually have to get into it, and then you have to get in to your own biases and assumptions. The whole idea of truth and reconciliation was never meant to be just about residential schools. It was supposed to expose systemic inhibitors in the country to [reconciling] the relationship with Indigenous people and then find a way to go forward to break that cycle. This is not easy stuff."

- Peter Robinson, former C.E.O., David Suzuki Foundation

In order to work respectfully with Indigenous peoples and engage in the deep personal work of Reconciliation ENGOs need to provide their staff with appropriate education and training on the historical impacts of colonialism, Indigenous cultures and protocols, and Reconciliation frameworks such as the UNDRIP and TRC's Calls to Action. Both Peter and Caitlyn also spoke of how the process of

developing the policy and acknowledgement provided opportunity to look closely at their organizations' structures and other policies, and in the case of DSF, it prompted even deeper review after recognizing that the organization wasn't meeting the vision it held for itself.

"I think the question is always what's the next step? [...] It's not actually enough to say the words, it is how does it actually influence the choice of our campaigns, what our goals are, what are strategies are? But also things like what are our hiring policies? Who's on our board? It's how do you take more steps as an organization, as individuals, and then within the campaigns. So to my mind the interesting thing is not so much that we have it on our website, but what do we do next? How do we deepen this? And it's not easy."

- Caitlyn Vernon, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club BC

"DSF is struggling through this, and we had the Aboriginal Peoples Policy in place for 3 or 4 years, but I was still hearing these comments that it hadn't really substantially changed the organization. [...] We didn't have Indigenous people employed by DSF, which is a great mismatch for me. [...] The policy should guide us, and it's done a good job, but it's not gone deep enough. So last year about this time I said ok, this isn't working, we're going to do a deep review of what we're doing, and it will look at our internal culture, all of our practices, the kinds of relationships, and the kind of work we do. [...] From then we've been continuing down this path and we're in the midst of a final report that should substantially change the way DSF engages with Indigenous peoples. Everything from our internal culture, our hiring practices, the kinds of work we do, the relationships that we hold, it will fundamentally change DSF, and we're all anxious and willing to bring this on."

- Peter Robinson, former C.E.O., David Suzuki Foundation

DSF shared their internal document with me and its scope demonstrated the organization's serious commitment to addressing many of the themes of this section, and to Reconciliation itself. Importantly it ensures all staff are aware of the organization's commitments and guides internal policies such as those mentioned above such as hiring practices, board make-up, and future vision.

In the Site C and Petronas chapters we also heard from Indigenous participants about how transparency and openness regarding organizational mandates and policies are important to working relationships between ENGOs and communities. As public documents, having a policy can foster the

mutual understanding and open communication that participants identified as crucial to relational accountability, and form an important part of following protocols that Indigenous leaders mentioned as integral to their communities. It was identified that many of these issues are best achieved by being in community, but as the case studies demonstrated, ENGOs have differing abilities of to do this based on their location, size, and the nature of campaigns. Lastly, as public documents, having official policies serve as an organization's public declaration of commitment to principles and frameworks of Reconciliation – namely the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, working with free, prior, and informed consent, and the TRC's Calls to Action.

4.4 Other Important Issues

In the interviews there were other important issues which don't fit in the larger narrative of relational accountability but I think are still important to this discussion. Like many of the themes already explored in this thesis, these are challenging issues that have no easy or correct answers as each situation, relationship, community, and circumstance is unique. What I can do is present the different perspectives that were shared with me to inform what ultimately needs to be an on-going conversation for environmental groups and Indigenous peoples addressing issues of Reconciliation and solidarity.

4.4.1 What to do when communities say yes to industrial development?

One of the topics that some ENGO staff mentioned as a particularly challenging issue was how to support Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination when a community decides to support environmentally destructive industrial development on their territory. Perspectives seem to be framed in different ways between the two campaigns.

“So when I say we're committed to UNDRIP, and I say we're committed to the TRC's principles of action, I feel very confident [David] Suzuki Foundation will do our work in partnership with First Nations with free, prior, and informed consent. And that it's not going to be the old way of running roughshod over Indigenous

peoples. Now, that may change, and to be honest, we have yet to face the really tough decisions that I am sure are inevitably going to happen where we may come to terms of a community that wants to develop their territory.”

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

“We can't rely entirely on First Nations leadership to ensure ecological outcomes. Partly because that's not fair, and [also] we have a role to be making sure that our governments represent environmental interests when they enter government-to-government negotiations with First Nations. And partly because not all First Nations make ecological decisions, and that gets a lot harder to talk about. [...] The ecological urgency tends to lead towards more old school style campaigning that doesn't leave space for building relationships, but the political context is an incentive to build those relationships. But then you get different problems, because then you're building relationships as a strategy, rather than because it's the right thing to do. So then it's like environmental organizations are building relationships with particular nations who can further particular ecological goals. And that raises a whole lot of other questions.”

- Caitlyn Vernon, Campaigns Director, Sierra Club BC

Caitlyn's passage speaks to the different nature of campaigning for larger ENGOs that don't only work in their local communities. Questions of campaign selection and the strategy 'versus' solidarity theme pose different realities for larger ENGOs whose campaigns may encompass large areas of the province (or country in the case of DSF) in which relationship building and working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples is not done in one's own community.

“There's another house group who's enabling a coal mine and they're not doing it because they're greedy, or because they're bad people. They're doing it because the company came to them and is making them a partner and they see it as an economic solution. Job training, skills development. So you know, when that house group came to us and said “Will you help us figure out how to make this the best mine possible?” I said yeah, and at the end of the day I couldn't figure out how to do it and be honest. And that was really, really hard, because I really respect where they're coming from, and why they want to do it. [...] I will always support that house to do development on their territory that's going to help their community out. And I would never disrespect them, or say that they're sell-outs, or that they're wrong. Because they're not, that's not why they're doing it.”

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

“One of the realities is that these communities sometimes do have different perspectives than we do, and sometimes they’ll want the pipeline or they’ll want the LNG or whatever it is. Maybe not in its current form or location, but that doesn’t mean that they don’t want it. And so we have to accept that to a certain degree. And when they go and sign an agreement about pipelines or something, but they’re against the site, and getting angry at them or taking it personally isn’t helpful. And it’s not always that respectful because these communities, they really need the money to come in or the jobs. You have to put yourself in their shoes to understand. So I’ve seen that happen and that’s the situation right now with these pipelines. You have to be understanding that they’re going to sometimes endorse projects and stuff that you’re not necessarily that keen on. That’s part of it. I think ENGOs have to compromise too.”

- Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Understanding the harsh economic realities of many Indigenous communities as a result of colonial dispossession and exploitation of Indigenous lands is perhaps easier when ENGOs live in the same region of the communities they work with.

“There are those who want to facilitate development, and so there’s that aspect of the relationship in the community, with those people who disagree completely with you. You know those who will say, “The fish are toast. We as Indigenous people need to be making money off these developments. And you’re standing in the way of us getting out of poverty.” And it’s actually a legit statement, right? We, instead of saying no to really bad projects, we push things that we can say yes to. So we started a whole different wing to our organization, Skeena Energy Solutions. And when I talk with funders, foundations, when we’re doing strategic planning, any of that stuff, I want to make sure that we recognize unless there is investment at the community level, there’s no achieving any kind of conservation outcomes.”

- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

“We’re not against development. You know, I think if there’s free, prior, and informed consent, early and often consultation, I think a lot of these projects would move forward a lot smoother. We’d spend a lot less time in court. [...] I’m not against oil and gas, I’m against the destruction of critical salmon habitat, critical wildlife habitat. [...] The most important thing to me is a healthy environment. Because there’s an old saying that’s been around for a long time, I’ve often heard my grandfather say that you can’t eat money. At the end of the

day you've got to make sure that you have a healthy environment with drinking water and healthy land."

- Kirby Muldoe, Tsimshian and Gitksan nations, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, excerpt from Petronas campaign interview

Many ENGO staff mentioned what Shannon did in the passage above, that it is not enough for ENGOs to oppose an industrial project, and especially to ask communities to say no to a project without having alternative opportunities for economic development; that it is just as important – if not more important – to put energy into “Yes” campaigns than to “No” campaigns.

"[Sometimes these projects] are the only source of employment, and so as an ENGO walking in there, what can I even offer? Why would anybody even sit at the table with me? Because until we change the dominant economic system and the government, the only option for these nations, sometimes, is to go along with resource development, [and] get the best deal they can. The other option would be to fight and starve, [and] I can't ask anybody to fight and starve."

- Ana Simeon, former Site C Campaigner, Sierra Club BC

The importance of supporting alternatives to unsustainable industrial projects

A powerful perspective I heard from a few ENGO staff was that the failure to articulate alternatives to industrial resource extraction is one of the biggest failures of the environmental movement. Faisal emphasized the importance of pushing renewable energy projects not just for sustainability reasons, but for reconciling Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships too.

"You can look at the fact that yes it is true, working with Indigenous peoples may be a very effective way of keeping carbon in the ground, and thereby saving the planet. But that prescriptive analysis is problematic if you don't recognize that Indigenous peoples are not just a source of fossil fuels which can harm the planet, they are also blessed with enormous potential for renewable energy. And we as an environmental community also have a responsibility to unlock that renewable energy potential. It's not about Indigenous peoples forming a relationship of convenience with environmental groups to save the planet, it's also about Indigenous peoples working with environmental groups to promote and profile

and bring innovation and prosperity to these communities through renewable energy.

[...] This idea of reconciliation must include redefining the relationship to the land, and so I think these projects around renewable energy, [are] a real possibility for us to think about reconciliation beyond addressing past injustices, beyond addressing current injustices, but creating a future where we don't replicate those mistakes that we've made in the past when it comes to developing an economy with Indigenous peoples on their territories."

- Faisal Moola, former Director General – Ontario & Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation

4.4.2 Which leadership to follow?

Another sensitive issue that came up related to the previous themes in this section was regarding the complications around band council and hereditary leadership in Indigenous communities. This was a particularly strong theme in conversations with Indigenous participants of the Petronas campaign where both resistance camps at Lelu Island and Madii Lii were led by hereditary leaders on their traditional territories, but band councils had given support to the PNW terminal and pipeline. ENGO staff also spoke to this challenge, with many recognizing the controversy and delicate nature of the subject. In one of the cases an ENGO staff member requesting anonymity had this comment to share:

"Which leadership do you honour? If they themselves are at odds, or there are grassroots people and Chief and Council, and each is responding to the set of challenges that's unique to them, there is no right and no wrong. And sometimes you just have to pull out and not be in the mix of that, because it could divide the community further. And sometimes you have to take a stand, so..."

- Anonymous ENGO staff member

This was one of the interesting comparisons between the two case studies, as the Site C dam is located in Treaty 8 territory – one of the few treaty areas of BC – where Indigenous communities and leadership are predominantly organized by the band council system. The resistance to the PNW terminal and PRGT pipeline in the Petronas campaign was centered in Tsimshian and Gitksan territories where no

treaties have been signed, and traditional governance systems of hereditary house groups and leaders is still strong.

“[It’s] really, really important for anyone that’s coming in to understand that you’re not dealing with band councils here. You’re dealing with the tribal people, we’re the hereditary people that are defending our rights. So that is really important for groups to understand the hereditary system. Band council’s responsibility is to their jurisdiction on reserves. This is not reserve. This is tribal lands. And there are some really healthy communities that band council does honour the hereditary system, they do work together, and it is getting better in some places, but that’s not so where we’re connected. So yeah, it’s really, really important for environmentalists to come together and get the truth of the area before working with people, [...] to know how our tribal hereditary system is organized, who it includes, and who they need to be speaking to, and they just have to be really, really clear for it to work for both parties.”

- Patty Dudoward, Gitando tribe of Lax Kw’alaams

“I think that’s another reason environmental groups are having a hard time dealing with the issues, because the environmental groups are with the activists, sort of speaking. We [house groups] are considered the rebellious ones of the Gitxsan Nation because we want to live in harmony with Mother Earth rather than against it.”

- Hereditary Chief Gwininitxw Yvonne Lattie, House of Gwininitxw, Gitxsan territory

“Right now you’ve got bands and reserves. Like you see where I live, well [when] we walked out of the edge of the reserve, well that’s the end of their authority. The territory belongs to the people. I speak for Tsayu, my Chiefs ask me to speak in public with their consent – they tell me what to say and I go out there and I say it. But that authority relies on the people, the houses, and the clans.”

- Hereditary Chief Na’Moks John Ridsdale, Tsayu (Beaver) clan, Wet’suwet’en nation

“We want that government-to-government relationship, and that government-to-government isn’t band council-to-government, that’s inter-governmental. Government-to-government is the Canadian government speaking to the Gitxsan hereditary leadership, it’s not band office to Federal government or the Provincial government.”

- Kirby Muldoe, Tsimshian and Gitxsan nations, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, excerpt from Petronas campaign interview

There certainly is no right or wrong answer, but as Patty made clear in our interview together, it is crucial that ENGOs understand the regional politics of the areas they are working in, which includes the differences between hereditary and band council leadership and their jurisdictions. This will be different for every area and every nation, but clearly this is easier for locally-based organizations who not only have the benefit of first-hand knowledge but also have greater ability to navigate challenging dynamics through close relationships of trust developed in community. It is understandably harder for larger organizations to build these kinds of relationships with the communities they work with, and it likely that larger organizations with more public profile need to be careful about not adding to or creating divisions within Indigenous communities they work with.

Some organizations have a policy of only working with band councils in order to avoid creating divisions or conflict. While this simplistic approach is understandable, it can also be interpreted as perpetuating colonial relationships with Indigenous lands and peoples. As the voices of the Gitksan and Tsimshian participants demonstrate, this issue is both simple and very complex. Perhaps larger organizations need to avoid the controversy of being involved in communities where band councils and hereditary leadership are divided. In those cases they may need to rely on the strengths of locally-based ENGOs to do that work.

4.4.3 Involvement of Grassroots Activists

The last topic that is related to the themes in this section is the importance of including the voices and participation of grassroots individuals in Indigenous communities. This was a strong theme in the Site C case study, where three of the Indigenous participants were grassroots community activists.

“There were plans and stuff in place from different meetings that I was never a part of, and I think that level of participation could have been extended more to grassroots people because there’s Chief and Council – and I come from a nation that is against Site C – but there are grassroots people from the communities

that have signed on with projects that could be very valid voices at the table. And I believe in grassroots versus elected officials often.”

- Helen Knott, Community Activist, Prophet River First Nation, Treaty 8

“I’m asked to do things all the time. And people I know are asked to do things all the time. And that’s always the scenario, is you have paid professionals looking to collaborate with Indigenous people, and those people are not getting paid for their time. And I think that’s a serious problem that people should be mindful of, for sure. I see a lot of my friends who are just so burned out from the work they’ve been doing. And they just express to me over the years their struggles with that exact problem. They’re telling me “be careful, be careful what you take on, be careful what you do”. So I think that’s something that’s been identified by a larger community as a problem, but obviously there are people that are willing to do it for free because they’re fighting for their very existence.”

- Julian Napoleon, Community Activist, Sauleau First Nations, Treaty 8

An awareness of the potential for inequality and exploitation between paid ENGO staff and unpaid Indigenous peoples in Indigenous-ENGO relationships was clearly demonstrated in my interview with Galen Armstrong. Galen used to work as the volunteer coordinator at Sierra Club BC, and when he described his current role with SCBC he acknowledged that,

“Even starting out saying [my job] is 2 days a week or 1 day a week, that’s totally 100% true in reality, but it’s also like, it’s kind of a joke. Most of the people [fighting Site C] don’t get paid a cent, you know?”

- Galen Armstrong, Site C campaigner, Sierra Club BC

In my interview over the phone with Yvonne Tupper, she reminded me of the responsibility that those of us who engage with Indigenous peoples in our environmental work have to remain accountable to the relationships we’ve formed:

“On the challenge side, it’s kind of hard, sometimes we don’t see how we’re affecting other people. We don’t have that reconciliation ourselves, right? I like it and I enjoy it when people private message me, or people say in person or hug me. Because sometimes we don’t see our effects on others, or we don’t see what others have taken and picked up, or planted that seed, or took that seed and spread it some more – we don’t see that. Because being here in the north, especially right now on a cold winter’s day, it’s just you and me and my phone at

my house (laughter), right? I don't see the effects of this interview, and what your thesis is, or what your thesis is over the next few years. I won't see the effects of the teachings, right?"

- Yvonne Tupper, Community Activist, Saulneau First Nations, Treaty 8

I have taken Yvonne's words to heart throughout the process of doing this thesis, and now that I'm wrapping up my writing, her words remind me to check in with everyone who participated in this project and share the effects of the teachings that were so generously shared with me.

4.5 Recommendations for Cultivating Relational Accountability in Indigenous-ENGO Relationships

4.5.1 Communication

Listening and Voice

- ENGOs have a long history of perpetuating colonial relationships to Indigenous peoples and territories by not respecting their rights and title, nor recognizing their authority as rightful decision makers on their territories.
 - To shift this colonial attitude ENGOs need to start by truly listening to and honouring Indigenous peoples' voices, experiences, leadership, and relationships with their homelands.
 - A major role of ENGOs working with Indigenous peoples is to amplify Indigenous voices and experiences of colonization and environmental impacts on their lands, not speak for or on behalf of Indigenous communities.

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

- To build respectful relationships ENGOs need to be open and transparent about their motivations and intentions for working with Indigenous peoples. A fundamental principle for open communication is free, prior, and informed consent before and during engagement with Indigenous peoples on projects on or concerning their territories. This is in following with UNDRIP Article 32.⁸⁶

4.5.2 Developing Trust

- ENGOs need to spend time in communities to understand a nation's culture, protocols, governance, and legal traditions; and that these are founded in the relationships to their homelands. This time is also needed for communities to get to know organizations.
 - Understanding and respecting cultural differences while finding common ground is foundational for building relationships of trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

⁸⁶ See Appendix A

- If an organization doesn't have the ability or resources to work in this way, partner with an organization that does.

4.5.3 Truth and Reconciliation within the Environmental Movement

Connecting Environmentalism and Reconciliation as an Issue of Justice

- Reconciling Indigenous-ENGO relationships requires ENGOs to acknowledge and address the colonial histories and behaviours that have defined previous relationships between environmental groups and Indigenous communities.
 - ENGOs have a unique role and responsibility to play in Reconciliation initiatives in Canada to amplify Indigenous voices and experiences of the connections between on-going colonization of Indigenous lands, violence against Indigenous peoples, especially women and children, and environmental destruction.

Education and Training

- ENGOs need to provide Indigenous-led training to their staff to foster abilities that build respectful relationships with Indigenous communities.
 - This requires receiving education on the history of Indigenous peoples, the history of colonialism in Canada, obligations to Indigenous peoples under treaty, Aboriginal rights and title and the Canadian constitution, and Reconciliation initiatives including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and training in intercultural competencies, human rights, and anti-oppression.
 - This is in following with TRC Call to Action 92.3.⁸⁷

Having an Official Policy on Working with Indigenous Peoples

- An official public policy demonstrates an organization's commitment to working respectfully with Indigenous peoples, and transparently communicates protocols to guide and inform relationships with communities.
- Larger ENGOs may have greater need for an official policy, however in light of the lessons learned above ENGOs of all sizes should adopt an official policy as a meaningful gesture of commitment to Reconciliation.
- Formal endorsement of international and national frameworks for Reconciliation such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action are a meaningful demonstration of commitment to building respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples.

4.6 Conclusion

⁸⁷ See Appendix A

I began this research project looking at the importance of Indigenous-ENGO relationships and the role of reconciliation in environmental campaigns in BC. The two case studies of the Site C dam and Petronas PNW LNG campaigns clearly demonstrate that the environmental issues and ecological impacts of these two development projects cannot be separated from the impacts of colonization, genocide, and issues of Indigenous rights and title. This highlights the perspectives of the voices that opened the introduction of this thesis: When it comes to the Reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, land is at the root of our conflicts. To heal our relationships we need to heal the land.

This means Reconciliation is an integral part of environmentalism in Canada, and ENGOs have an important role to play. With land largely being left out of the national conversation on “reconciliation”, ENGOs collaborating with Indigenous communities in their campaigns need to amplify Indigenous voices to bring these issues forward to the public. Considering environmentalism’s colonial history, failing to integrate these justice issues into environmental campaigns risks perpetuating colonial relationships to land by undermining Indigenous peoples’ rights and title to their lands and waters.

A lot of ground was covered in all 19 interviews – there was no way that all topics could be fully explored. However through my interview process there were two topics that struck me as important areas for future research. The first is the issue of funding. Funding is a vital component to environmental campaigns and the relationships of the Indigenous communities and ENGOs working in them. A hugely important missing piece from this thesis are the perspectives of the funders of these campaigns and partnerships. What are their perspectives on the important of Reconciliation in environmentalism and vice versa? The second topic is the importance of ENGOs supporting and promoting alternative energy economies in Indigenous communities. This was mentioned numerous times in interviews, and research of Indigenous alternative energy projects could explore the intersections of Indigenous rights and title, economic development, and climate change.

The lessons I learned from these two case studies are framed as suggestions for ENGOs looking to work in better ways with Indigenous communities. As many of you mentioned in our interviews, there is no one-size-fits-all approach or best practices when it comes to Indigenous-ENGO relationships; each community, each issue, each organization and each person are unique and bring different histories and dynamics to a relationship. The relationships represented here cannot and do not represent the complexity and dynamics found in other Indigenous-ENGO relationships; ultimately these conversations need to be discussed on a much broader scale. My hope is that through compiling the wisdom and experiences of those involved in the Site C dam and Petronas campaigns these learnings can inform the building and healing of relationships between Indigenous communities and environmental organizations beyond these two campaigns; and ultimately to be a contribution towards Reconciliation in Canada – the healing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and our relationship with the land.

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Appendix A – Referenced UNDRIP articles and TRC Calls to Action

UNDRIP Article 32⁸⁸

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.
2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.
3. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.

TRC Principles of Reconciliation⁸⁹

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada believes that in order for Canada to flourish in the twenty-first century, reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canada must be based on the following principles.

1. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.
2. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.
3. Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.
4. Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
5. Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

⁸⁸ UN General Assembly, "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : Resolution / Adopted by the General Assembly."

⁸⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Canada.

6. All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
7. The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.
8. Supporting Aboriginal peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.
9. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.
10. Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.

TRC Call to Action 92⁹⁰

92. We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.
- iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

⁹⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*.