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REMAKING A FORESTRY TOWN: THE MULTIFACETED CHALLENGES OF TRANSITION IN PORT ALBERNI, BC

Emily Catherine Galley

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REMAKING A FORESTRY TOWN:
THE MULTIFACETED CHALLENGES OF TRANSITION IN PORT ALBERNI, BC

(Spine Title: Socioeconomic Transition in Port Alberni, BC)

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By

Emily Galley

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The thesis by

Emily Catherine Galley

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**Remaking a Forestry Town: The Multifaceted Challenges of Transition
in Port Alberni, BC**

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ABSTRACT

Since the early 1980s, British Columbia's forestry sector has undergone widespread restructuring in the face of increasing international competition, resulting in the loss of thousands of relatively low-skilled but high-waged jobs in the province's logging and milling operations. For the dozens of communities throughout the province which have historically been heavily dependent on the forestry industry, this restructuring has been an extremely difficult process, resulting in high rates of unemployment, increased poverty, and an array of social problems, which are complicated by significant cultural dimensions of economic dislocation, such as the loss of identity and changing familial roles. The problems with this transition have tended to be compounded by existing characteristics of forestry-dependent communities, including low levels of educational attainment and the lack of local economic diversity. This thesis aims to explore the difficult transition beyond forestry dependence in Port Alberni, British Columbia, and argues that in order to understand the contemporary challenge of community re-development, it is important to appreciate the place-specific character of the profound social and cultural changes stemming from economic decline and transition. Given the concern with the social and cultural dimensions of transition, the research focussed on in-depth qualitative research with key informants who have extensive experience in social and employment services and education. Ultimately, through an assessment of these insights and interpretations, the thesis seeks to provide a critical examination of the process of community transition and to interpret the key constraints, current failures, and future opportunities which are laden in it.

Key words: forestry dependence; restructuring; community development; British Columbia

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Catherine Galley. I wouldn't be where I am today without her endless patience, enthusiasm, support, warmth and intelligence; this is her degree too. All my love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACAWS - Alberni Community and Women's Society
CCC - Compliance Coal Corporation
CED - Community Economic Development
EI - Employment Insurance
FRBC - Forest Renewal British Columbia
IWA - International Woodworkers of America
LED - Local Economic Development
MB - MacMillan Bloedel
NDI - Northern Development Initiative
SE – Social Enterprise
TFL - Tree Farm Licence
TSL - Timber Sales Licence

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Forestry dependence, restructuring and social change

This chapter introduces key elements of British Columbia's forestry policy during the 20th century and summarizes the province's attempts to regulate and manage its forest economy, which is central to understanding both the construction of communities dependent on the forestry sector and the problems they have faced in recent decades as the sector has declined. This provides the necessary foundation for understanding the motivations, objectives, and key questions that underpin this research.

1.1. The growth of the BC forestry sector

Forestry has been a fundamental staple of the British Columbia (BC) economy since the mid-19th century. Early management of forestry in BC involved the outright granting or sale of forest lands to interested parties, with the basic hope that railways and other companies would clear the land and attract settlers to new areas (Marchak et al. 1999). Land grants were typically stripped of their stock as quickly as possible and left to regenerate naturally, and extractive activities were not linked to any well-planned or regulated industrial strategy. The early industry was characterized by minimal regulation, export orientation (predominantly to the US), and production premised on a large number of small-scale operators.

By the early 20th century, forestry production had become the most profitable natural resource sector in the province (Hayter 2000). The phenomenal growth of the industry can be seen in the fact that while BC boasted only 27 sawmills in 1871, by 1911 the number had grown to 224 (Marchak 1983). With this growth came concern that forest resources were being over-exploited, and these fears combined with the provincial government's desire to cash in on the growing industry, contributed to the province's first

Forest Act in 1912 (Marchak et al. 1999). The Forest Act replaced outright grants with Timber Sales Licences (TSLs), parcels of land allotted for a predetermined period of time and awarded through a competitive bidding process. Though one of the expressed goals of this legislation was to encourage competition within the industry (by opening up the bidding process), the effect was much different as larger, established companies tended to win out and increase their holdings (Marchak 1983).

Prior to the First World War, the industry was relatively limited spatially, concentrated on Vancouver Island and parts of the coastal mainland (Hayter 2000). However, by the 1940s increased competition from Northern European producers led a number of forestry companies to expand beyond the diminishing coastal resource base (Hayter 2000; Marchak 1983). The 1945 Royal Commission on the Forest Resources of British Columbia (the Sloane Commission) established a new framework to manage the province's forest resources in the context of diminishing old-growth coastal forests and increasing US demand for pulp, paper and dimensional lumber. The central premise was 'sustained yield', defined as "a perpetual yield of wood of commercially usable quality from regional areas in yearly or periodic quantities of equal or increasing volume" (Marchak et al. 1999, 59). The Commission foresaw the conversion of existing supplies of old-growth wood into agriculture-style cultivated forests of equally proportioned age classes to be harvested on a set rotation (Prudham 2007). This was accompanied by a system of Tree Farm Licences (TFLs) which strongly favoured large, integrated corporations. The belief underlying this restructuring was, in essence, that "long-term leases covering huge forest areas allow permanent, large-volume supplies of wood while permitting harvested areas sufficient time to renew," and that "large firms with major

investments would be committed to forest renewal and would have the capability to follow through" (Hayter 2000, 49).

1.2. The long-term competitive decline of BC forestry

The premise of sustained yield was that as well-managed tree farms replaced old-growth stands it would provide a perpetual harvest of commercially valuable wood. However, in spite this goal, pre-1940s-style liquidation continued largely unabated with corporations moving further into the interior as previously inaccessible stands of timber became available. This was facilitated by the fact that new species were incorporated into production, which "allowed the industry to grow and the volume of lumber to expand enormously, without seeming to use up the original supply of wood" (Marchak et al. 1999, 63).

Another failure in practice was that there was an over-reliance on the natural regeneration of cut-blocks, resulting in lower than projected restocking (Markey et al. 2005). As a result, the anticipated decline in harvesting old-growth stands never materialized. The continuing emphasis on expansion and exploitation over sustainable harvest, in turn, was seen to have discouraged the diversification of forest economies and the development of value-added forest products needed to support them (Stedman et al. 2007).

Young (2008) suggests that 1982 marks a 'watershed' for BC's forestry sector, and the beginning of a prolonged downward spiral which continues to the present. While temporary closures and lay-offs had historically been common and cyclical in the industry, the lay-offs and mill closures of the early 1980s were widespread and typically permanent (Hayter 2000). Rapidly changing patterns of international supply and demand

were an important part of this story. A number of Southern economies, primarily in Southeast Asia and South America, made significant investments in their forest-products industries, and developed competitive, fast-growing tree farms (e.g. eucalyptus and radiata pine). Scandinavian forest economies were also gaining greater access to European markets through continental integration, at the same time as their existing policies and operations were restructured to enhance competitiveness (Marchak 1997). Long dependent on strong export demand, BC's forestry sector quickly found itself less competitive in this rapidly changing international context, particularly since it had some of the highest labour costs in North America (Hayter 2000).

The net result was that demand from previously large purchasers of Canadian forest-products was already in decline, much before a trade dispute threatened the most important destination for BC softwood exports: the US market. In this dispute, American forestry corporations accused the BC government of essentially subsidizing the forest-products industry through exceptionally low stumpage rates.[1] More recently (especially since 2007), the stagnation of the American economy in general – and its housing market in particular – has further reduced US demand for BC forestry exports.

While the US-Canada softwood lumber dispute has tended to dominate recent explanations of the crisis of the BC forestry sector, Markey et al. (2005) argue that it should not overshadow the internal problems of the sector, particularly given the competitiveness of the global forestry industry amidst increasingly liberalized international trade. Driving these problems, they argue, is the legacy of a provincial

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[1] Stumpage refers to the 'rent' paid by forestry companies to the provincial government to operate on Crown lands.

forestry policy which encouraged short-term gains over long-term stability. This contributed to such things as: the over-exploitation of forest stocks; the concentration of productive control in the hands of a small number of largely foreign corporations; the failure to invest in technology and diversification; and high costs of labour and production accompanied by low stumpage. The net result was a system which was neither environmentally sustainable nor economically competitive, particularly in the face of new international competition and the increased mobility of capital which accompanied neoliberal trade policies.

These competitive problems were further magnified by the challenges presented by two increasingly assertive groups: the environmental movement and BC's First Nations, whose struggles have often aligned. Both environmental organizations and First Nations have consistently sought to strengthen the control exerted over the forestry sector, and over public lands and 'natural resources' in general. The most well-known expression of these movements was the Clayoquot Sound blockades, which began in the 1980s with protests led by the Nuu-chah-nulth nation, and drew international attention and support in the 1990s as many environmental groups became active in the defence of the old-growth forest (Stanbury and Vertinsky 1997).

The initial response to the economic crisis of the forestry sector was, according to Young (2008), a 'typical' Fordist response: increased production of low-value commodities based upon increased mechanization. This was abetted by a 'sympathetic administration', as the BC government allowed companies to over-harvest their stocks and blatantly disregard set harvest limits and environmental regulations (Marchak et al 1999). Though there was a short rebound in the 1980s, it proved temporary and the long-

term decline continued. The next response by forestry corporations was to reduce work forces, shut mills, and increase flexibility in employment and production. The impact of these cost-reduction strategies was most severe in coastal communities with the longest histories of forestry, as they had the most out-dated mills and technology, under-utilized capacities, and the strongest unions (Young 2008; Hayter and Barnes 1997).

This corporate restructuring was accompanied by government policy which sought to remove the policy barriers which were seen to impede competitiveness. Through a process Young (2008, 14) refers to as spatial liberalization – in essence, the "freeing of industry from attachments to specific places" – forestry companies' obligations to local communities were diminished. One example of this is that the dubiously-named Forestry Revitalization Plan (introduced in 2003) removed the regulations which had previously required companies to process harvested trees in the same region in which they had been harvested. The result was an increased de-linking of employment and production, as well as a high degree of spatial and temporal variation in harvest levels, which has negatively impacted the stability of regional and local economies. Such policies essentially treated resource communities as an impediment to corporate profitability. The International Woodworkers of America (IWA), one of the province's largest unions, describes this attitude as "the severance of the long-standing social contract between workers, communities, government and industry in British Columbia" (quoted in Young 2008, 14).

1.3. Resource dependence and the legacy of the one-industry town

Resource-dependent communities are primarily defined by their heavy reliance on the extraction of a single natural resource (e.g. mining, fishing, and forestry), and/or its

processing (typically into minimally-refined commodities), as well as by the dominance of that resource sector over all other sources of employment and income in the community (Randall and Ironside 1996). Frequently, this production has had a large orientation towards export markets (Hayter and Barnes 1997).

Beyond this simple definition, dependence is not a unitary phenomenon, but rather one whose depth, quality and consequences vary not only between resource sectors but within them, and according to the temporal and spatial characteristics of extraction and processing. In other words, some level of generalization can help in understanding broad processes and patterns, but there is also a need to be cautious: it is at best unproductive and at worst misleading to assume a high degree of uniformity within resource dependent communities, even ones which depend on the same resource like forestry and the production of forestry goods (Stedman et al. 2004). Still, at the same time as it is important to be sensitive to this diversity, there are a number of important characteristics which have historically been associated with forestry-dependent communities in BC. These include:

- a predominantly male work-force and highly gendered division of labour (Egan and Klausen 1998);

- low levels of formal educational attainment (Gale and Gale 2006);

- high rates of poverty and cyclical unemployment (especially since the sector's decline after the early 1980s) (Stedman et al. 2004);

- a highly specialized economy dominated by large corporations (Hayter and Barnes 1997);

- poor performance in a number of socio-economic indicators (Markey et al. 2005), and,

- the presence of a strong historical relationship with a single corporation.

BC's forestry communities have historically served as 'nodes of extraction' (Randall and Ironside 1996) of forestry goods, and have been heavily influenced by the changing relations between government, capital and labour (e.g. from the Fordist wage bargain discussed below to the restructuring associated with neoliberalism) and government policies which focused on short-term economic gains over other considerations. Hayter and Barnes (1997) describe the province's resource communities as having been heavily shaped by the Fordist mode of production, with large corporations (mostly based outside of the province) controlling vast tracts of Crown land as well as highly integrated cutting and milling operations, which in turn produced high volumes of minimally processed commodities destined for export. This arrangement also involved a 'wage bargain' between capital and labour mediated by powerful unions, in which workers received high wages, good benefits and relative employment stability (though they were not entirely immune from some cyclical downturns). The corporations, on the other hand, maintained control over labour through Taylorist principles of production (i.e. highly specialized piece-work). The state's role, at various levels of government, was essentially to provide: infrastructure such as roads and utilities; a social safety net for workers during times of cyclical unemployment; and legislation (e.g. environmental policies, taxation) favourable to industry.

The 'golden age' of this set of relations was from the 1940s to the 1970s, during which time forestry communities boomed and experienced significant improvements in

the general quality of life (Young 2008). However, the flip-side to this Fordist wage bargain was that communities became utterly dependent on forestry corporations. The high wages earned by forestry and mill workers provided a disincentive for younger people, particularly young men, to pursue higher education, resulting in a serious educational deficit that now faces many forestry communities (Gale and Gale 2006). The dependence upon a single resource and single corporation also contributed to a high degree of corporate paternalism, whereby the company was expected to contribute to everything from sports venues to community aesthetics. Additionally, the high degree of specialization of forestry communities resulted in limited entrepreneurialism and economic diversification, and left dependent communities highly vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and the long-term industry decline described above.

Markey et al. (2005, 65) suggest that as a result of these relations, "governments have [historically] framed social considerations of community well-being exclusively in narrow economic terms: if the forest sector was strong, the community economy would be strong." This in turn produced the erroneous assumption that such communities could only be sustained with strong exports which, as noted, was deeply embedded in the evolution of forestry policies. In short, with productivity and export growth overwhelmingly defining the terms of development, internal dynamism, and hence diversification was largely stifled.

1.4. Industry restructuring and socio-economic instability

As discussed in section 1.2, the first response to the forestry sector's competitive challenges in the 1980s was to increase the volume of production, which involved forestry companies being permitted to over-harvest in order to keep the mills running

(Young 2008). This resulted in a brief recovery in the 1980s, but ultimately failed to either make the industry more competitive or stave off the loss of employment in forestry communities. Since this time, in the face of fluctuating export demand and prices, there has been a steady disarticulation between labour and production as forestry corporations have responded through mechanization, technological innovation, and the spatial consolidation of production.

Young (2008, 1) suggests that it is important to recognize how these changes were also influenced by the government's increasingly neoliberal policies which effectively broke the 'wage bargain' of the 'golden age' noted earlier, and served to "disaggregate corporate and community level economies" by reducing corporate responsibilities to communities and facilitating the spatial liberalization of production. Another facet of neoliberal restructuring has been the rolling back of government social services and the introduction of business-oriented programs designed to facilitate entrepreneurialism and locally-driven economic development in place of corporate paternalism (Hayter and Barnes 1997). Young (2008) refers to this as a 'roll-back/roll-out' policy, designed to free government and corporations from their historical obligations to communities and labour, and instead to spark private sector responses.

These policy changes have not impacted the province's forestry communities uniformly. One reason for this is that the varying extent of forestry dependence has meant that communities have differential capacities to respond to the challenges of economic restructuring, forestry job losses, and associated the social and cultural dislocation. Other reasons are that the pace and scale of job loss has differed between communities, and that communities have varying degrees of geographical isolation.

1.5. Research motivations and questions

The complexity of transition in Canadian resource-dependent communities

In the broadest sense, this study is motivated by an interest in the collapse of a set of economic, social, environmental and cultural relations associated with economic decline and restructuring in resource-dependent communities across Canada, and community-level responses to this change. While natural resource production remains a significant component of the Canadian economy and export base – forestry, energy, agriculture[2] and mining products accounted for 65% of total exports in 2008 (Cross 2008) – it is increasingly disconnected from employment and the rural communities which have traditionally connected "the physical resource with the wider economic, social and political system" (Barnes et al. 1999, 781).

Resource-dependent communities constitute "culturally distinctive [economic] landscapes" (Randall and Ironside 1996, 18), and a major question which many now face is what will step into the vacuum as employment in extraction and processing operations declines. In approaching this question, I am particularly interested in how community institutions and individual actors are addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by these changing circumstances. From mill towns in coastal BC to mining towns in northern Quebec to fishing towns in Newfoundland, many resource-dependent communities are facing profound economic challenges, as well as the destabilization of cultures and social problems influenced by high unemployment. Community-scale studies can provide a valuable window to understand these challenges. Beckley (2008)

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[2] While agriculture is sometimes grouped with natural resource products (e.g. in statistical figures), agricultural production does not parallel the production of primary commodities and is not characterized as a 'staple' commodity. Staples production will be discussed in the following chapter.

suggests that while the problems facing resource dependent communities can be seen to exist at multiple scales, the community level of analysis in an invaluable one to understand the nuances of dependency. Similarly, Barnes and Hayter (2005) stress the importance of examining local expressions of dependency (this will be explored further in Chapter 2), while Reed and Gill (1997) emphasize the importance of recognizing – and learning from – the 'successes' and 'failures' in cases of resource-dependent communities as they undergo economic transition.

The setting: why Port Alberni?

Port Alberni is a community of 25 297 located at the confluence of the Somass River and Vancouver Island's Alberni Sound (see Fig. 1).[3] In the heart of BC's older coastal forestry sector, Port Alberni is one of the province's oldest sites of forest-goods production, its first sawmill having been established in 1861. It was also one of the key production sites for BC's first corporate forestry giant, MacMillan Bloedel (MB), which emerged from the establishment of Bloedel, Stewart and Welsch's milling operation in 1935, and its subsequent merger with H.R. MacMillan Export Co. in 1951, and was sold to US-forestry giant Weyerhauser in 1999. For the decades between its establishment and its sale, MB dominated the economy of the Alberni Valley. In addition to being one of BC's oldest forestry communities (with the province's first integrated sawmill operation and Kraft pulp mill), Port Alberni was also once one of its most productive and most profitable. By the 1970s, Port Alberni was second only to Vancouver as an export site for forestry products and boasted one of the highest per-capita incomes in all of

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[3] The weight of statistical information available is at the level of the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot which has a population of 30 664 (BCStats 2010a).

Canada (Barnes et al. 1999). During the town's 'hey-days' of the 1960s and 1970s, an

estimated 50% of Port Alberni's labour force was employed in some capacity by the

forest products industry (Barnes et al. 2001).

Figure 1. Southern Vancouver Island
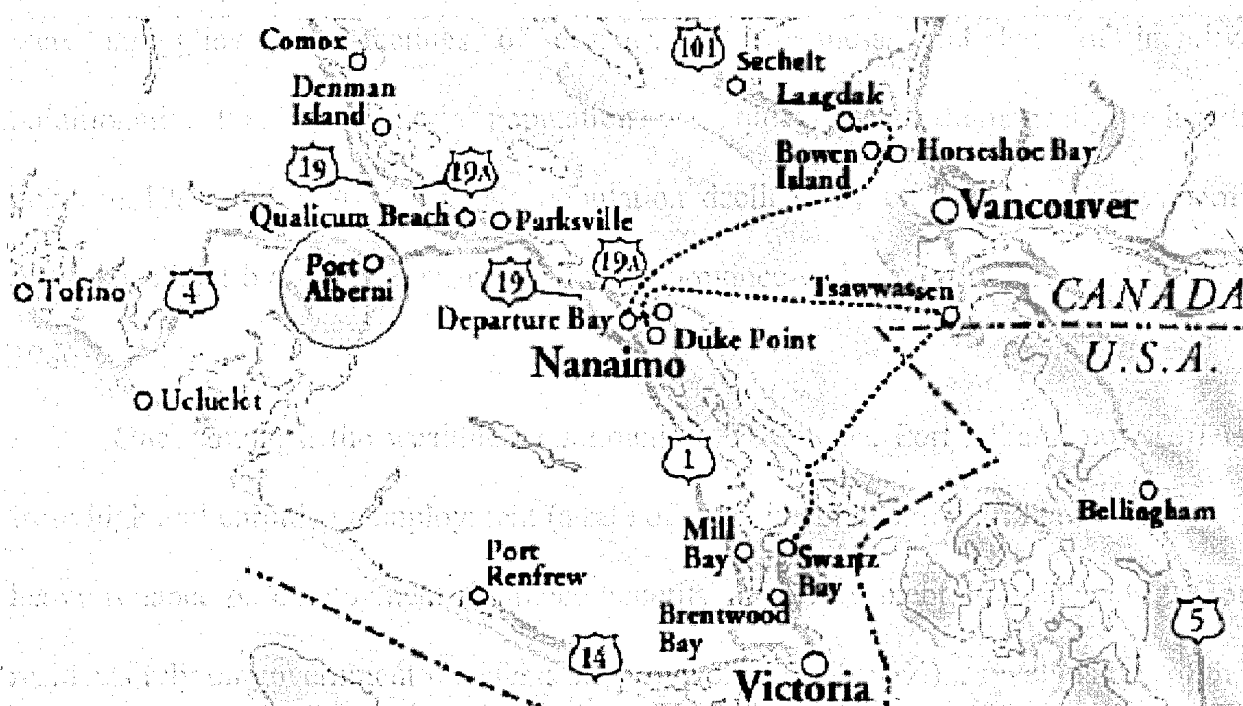
(Source: Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce 2011)

As a result of the extent of Port Alberni's dependence on the forest sector, the

industry crisis of the 1980s hit the community particularly hard. In addition to slashing

payrolls, MB permanently shuttered several of its Port Alberni operations, including

Alberni Plywoods, the Somass A sawmill, and its Kraft mill. Job losses were rapid and

drastic: between 1980 and 1996, more than 2600 jobs were terminated across MB's

remaining Port Alberni operations, representing a 50% decline in employment (Barnes et

al 2001), a figure which does not include jobs lost in support activities such as

transportation and manufacturing. In the wake of this steep and rapid decline, former

forestry workers and residents of the community reported experiencing a range of

problems including: personal financial difficulties (e.g. the inability to make mortgage payments); elevated levels of domestic conflict and abuse; increased rates of divorce; and increased consumption of alcohol and drugs and associated addiction problems (Barnes et al. 1999). As well, Egan and Klausen (1998) found that many laid-off forestry workers were struggling with feelings of despair, powerlessness, and loss of identity. Additionally, the community's population was quickly and dramatically reduced: between 1981 and 1986, the area's population declined by 6.8%, while Port Alberni proper declined by 8.3%, in sharp contrast to province-wide growth of 5.1% (BC Stats 1986).

Once amongst the wealthiest communities in Canada, Port Alberni now suffers from high and chronic unemployment (a rate of 7.7% in contrast to 6.0% provincially), a heavy reliance on employment insurance benefits and government assistance (14.9% of residents rely on government transfers; the provincial rate it 9.6%), as well as one of the lowest average employment incomes in BC ($28, 388 in contrast to the provincial average of $34, 976) (BC Stats 2010a). Other current socioeconomic indicators are similarly distressing, including below average levels of formal education (over 20% of adult residents have not completed high school and the region has one of the lowest levels of per capita university degrees in the province), the highest infant mortality rate in BC, the highest proportion of youth receiving income assistance, one of the lowest life expectancies in the province and over twice the provincial rate of teen pregnancy (BC Stats 2010a; BC Stats 2009). Additionally, Port Alberni has historically been not only economically dependent on forestry, but tied extremely heavily to MacMillan Bloedel in particular, and its sale to a distant transnational corporation has magnified the sense of

social and cultural dislocation in the community (Barnes et al. 2001; 1999; Egan and

Klausen 1998).

In sum, Port Alberni represents a case of the crisis in BC forestry writ large. The extent of the town's dependence on forestry, the scale of the industry's decline, and the fact that economic restructuring has been ongoing for more than a decade all suggest that Port Alberni constitutes a case study that is potentially illustrative of the economic and social problems facing other resource-dependent communities. My hope was that in learning about these problems and the experience of restructuring, in a locally-grounded and nuanced way, it might ultimately present lessons for other communities facing similar challenges.

Research questions

The primary objective guiding this thesis was to learn about Port Alberni's restructuring process through the experiences and interpretations of long-term community residents, which was pursued through in-depth, qualitative interviews. This objective may be broken down into two main questions:

1) How do residents of Port Alberni perceive the social, cultural and economic changes experienced by the community following the decline of the forest industry and during the contemporary period of transition?

2) What do residents of Port Alberni identify as the community's principal challenges and opportunities in facing the challenges during this period of transition?

My hope is that this thesis provides a richly detailed portrait of a resource-dependent community in BC that is still struggling with the process of restructuring that

has been playing out for more than two decades. But I also hope it goes beyond this, and provides insights into the challenges, opportunities, and constraints that are pertinent to the BC forestry sector and beyond, and poses questions that are of pertinence to policy-makers and future researchers who are seeking to improve economic and social conditions in resource communities across the country.

Thesis Outline

This chapter has sought to establish a broader context for understanding the contemporary circumstances of forest-dependent communities in BC, as well as complex relationships linking communities, capital, labour and government. Chapter 2 will further explore the nature and implications of dependency, as well as potential responses to the legacies of resource dependency and the present-day challenges of transition. In Chapter 3, I will explain my choice of a qualitative approach before discussing specific techniques employed in data collection and analysis. Major findings are discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter is focused around two key themes: how participants perceived the changes taking place around them, and the key opportunities and challenges presented to the community by those changes. Chapter 5 concludes by considering some of the significant issues in Port Alberni's contemporary experience of transition, and by suggesting policy considerations and directions for further research.

2. Transitioning from Dependency to Development

This chapter begins with a discussion of the concepts of place and community, as well as their relation to resource dependency. It then examines some influential interpretations of dependency, giving particular attention to the staples theory of Howard Innis and to the historical relationship between resource dependency and government policy. At the centre of the chapter is an examination of how the priority placed on community stability served to reinforce the narrow dependency on forestry and inhibited the resiliency and adaptability of these communities. The concepts of resiliency and adaptability, along with social capital, are seen to be key factors in reversing relations of dependency and achieving more lasting and meaningful economic and social development. The chapter then concludes by emphasizing the importance of having a flexible and contextually-sensitive approach for assessing community economic development.

2.1. Place and Community

'Place' is an important, ambiguous, and contested concept within the social sciences, particularly human geography. Trentleman (2009) suggests that the literature on place is frequently criticized for being 'messy' and for the tendency of researchers to employ whatever definition of the concept best suits their purposes, which can result in the inconsistency of its usage and can inhibit the comparability of different studies. Nevertheless, given the emphasis on place within contemporary research on dependency and development, it is necessary to situate myself in the fray, and identify how I define place in this thesis.

I accept Tuan's (1971) classic definition of place as humanized space,[4] and a locality on which subjective understandings, meanings and experiences are imposed. Low and Altman (1992, 5) echo this interpretation, defining place as "the environmental setting to which people are emotionally and culturally attached [which has] been given meaning through personal, group or cultural processes." In essence, these definitions emphasize the importance of both physical location and the meanings and processes attached to it.

The notion of 'community' represents a particular manifestation of place, and one of evident importance in discussions of community dependency and development. Like place, community is a much-debated concept which may be premised on such things as a physically defined and bounded locality (e.g. a municipality or neighbourhood), a common occupation (e.g. 'the medical community'), or on a perceived commonality, as with Benedict Anderson's imagined communities.[5] For the purposes of this study, I define community primarily by locality (the City of Port Alberni), while at the same time acknowledging that the city as a localized social system of intertwining relationships may reach beyond the physically-defined community itself (Lee et al. 1990).

Place and community are particularly relevant to understanding resource dependence and community development. Resource dependency, which will be discussed in greater depth below, is inextricably bound-up with place due to the spatially

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[4] The concept of 'space' is hardly less debated than that of 'place' (see Gregory 2009 for a summary of contemporary and historical discussions). However, for the purposes of this discussion, space may be understood as the three-dimensional realm in which objects are located and events occur.

[5] Anderson (1983) posited that modern nation-states are 'imagined' communities. The members of even the smallest nation can never be acquainted will all other members of that nation; instead, they constitute a community to the extent that they perceive themselves and their fellow citizens to be part of the same political community.

fixed character of natural resources. Thus, communities dependent on a given resource are necessarily bound to locations of extraction (and historically processing as well), and this spatial fixity of resources and their extraction and processing tends to shape the character and qualities of associated communities (Hayter et al. 2001; Lee et al. 1990).

Larsen (2004) suggests that place-based identities in BC's resource communities were heavily conditioned by the province's Fordist period, while the post-Fordist period of the late 20th and early 21st century has served to increasingly disaggregate the fixed resource bases and their associated communities. For example, when the provincial government abolished appurtenancy rules for forestry companies in the late 1980s, corporations were no longer required to process timber in the same region from which it had been extracted (Young 2008). At the same time, government reduced its previously interventionist approach to rural development planning. This meant that, in effect, the restructuring of the industry maintained forestry-dependent communities' economic positions of resource dependence while simultaneously diminishing their connection to their historical resource base (Markey et al. 2008).

Markey et al. (2008, 410) assign particular importance to place in order to understand both dependency and contemporary development in rural resource communities, recognizing that "the combinations of assets, populations, histories, and circumstances mean that general processes are always modified by the matrix of place." While the post-war Fordist industrial structure was premised on a model of development which treated forestry communities as homogenous entities, the failure of this model presents an opportunity to reassert the importance of place. Put another way, communities wishing to move away from historical conditions of dependence can strive

to move away from one sector-based development models premised on comparative advantage, and plan future social and economic development around the idea of place-based competitive advantage. In contrast to comparative advantage, which depends on the quality and existence of fixed resources, competitive advantage involves "the inherent assets *and actions* (to capitalize on those assets) of a particular place to attract and retain capital and workers that have become much more mobile" (Markey et al. 2008, 410). In considering what aspects of a given locality might attract and retain capital, skills and other resources necessary for development, giving renewed emphasis to place may also help avoid homogenizing development policies by allowing space for the difference and diversity of rural resource communities to assert themselves.

2.2. Interpreting Dependency: Staples Theory

While familiar characteristics associated with resource dependence may be found in mining, fishing, or mill-towns in different parts of the world, some fundamentally unique features about resource exploitation and dependence in Canada gave rise to distinctive theory. The unique quality of Canadian economic development has been attributed to various factors, including its immaturity as a national economy (relative to most other advanced industrialized countries) and its historical status as a dominion of the British Empire. In his seminal *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown,* Lucas (1971) contrasted British and American resource communities, which began largely as agricultural communities that underwent varied experiences of industrialization, with those in Canada. Canadian resource communities, by comparison, were seen to be much newer, largely

...Twentieth-century products of an age of industry and technology...

[whose] very existence depends upon advanced technology, a complex division of labour, and a sophisticated system of exchange. With few exceptions they have a short past, because they were born of technology; the oldest of the communities are products of the coal and rail age; the newest have been created to supply industrial metals (Lucas 1971, 20).

Additionally, most Canadian resource communities did not so much develop into dependence as they were created dependent. This can be seen throughout British Colombia, from communities like Port Alberni which grew up around a single resource corporation, to company owned towns such as Ocean Falls, and instant towns such as Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge, which were co-established by government and industry with the exclusive goal of resource extraction (Gill 1989; Marchak 1983; Bradbury 1978).

Though initially formulated in the 1930s, Harold Innis' staples theory remains relevant for those seeking to better understand the nature of resource exploitation and dependency in Canada. Innis sought to establish a framework for understanding the relationship between resource extraction, dependency, development and marginality in a manner which meaningfully reflected the Canadian experience and which explained the Canadian economy's reliance on the export of primary commodities. Innis argued that existing market models, such as those of comparative advantage, were premised on assumptions which were absent from Canadian experience or were inappropriate for Canada's historical status as a peripheral resource economy[6] (Barnes and Hayter 2005). To start with, Canada was never the "primordial market in waiting" assumed by most

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[6] Innis argued that Canada's economy was 'peripheral' because it was premised on the export of minimally processed primary goods to 'metropolitan' centres of power, principally the United Kingdom and the United States. As it was in the interests of industrial and financial powers that primary resources remained cheap and accessible, countries which were heavily dependent upon the production of such resources were seen to be likely to fail to achieve meaningful industrial development and remain marginal to the global

traditional economic models, but rather represented an economy which "emerged from a web of historical and cultural contingencies, and not from generalized, law-like movements of supply and demand" (Barnes et al. 2001, 2133). Canada's resources had, since European conquest, been exploited for the benefit of external markets, and its resultant resource economy was subject to "the costs of transporting raw materials over long distances (causing weakness in other lines of development), dependency on external industrialized areas for markets and supplies of manufactures good, and dependency on external sources of capital to cover the high costs of resource development" (Markey et al. 2005, 51). The result, in short, was that Canada became a node for branch-plant production, controlled by a handful of large and often foreign corporations, and failed to develop and diversify its economic base to the same extent as did many of the world's wealthiest countries[7] (Barnes et al. 2001).

The circumstances described by Innis are reflected in David Harvey's notion of *structural coherence.* Harvey (1985) described a circumstance where resource exploitation relied on a contextually specific set of mutually reinforcing relationships which were established around a dominant technology and set of class relations. In the case of BC's forest economy, "the specific political and economic geography of both capital accumulation and capitalist regulation...that prevailed for much of the period subsequent to the Second World War...underpinned a spatially extensive and

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economy (Barnes et al. 2001).

[7] It is worth noting that Canada's economy retains, in relative terms (for a very affluent country) a significant, non-industrial basis. For example, in 2010, energy, mining and forestry products, along with agricultural products, accounted for almost 60% of the country's exports (Statistics Canada 2011). Today, however, in an era of increasing resource limits and rising commodity prices across many sectors, this resource dependence may have different implications than in Innis' time.

environmentally intensive model of commodity production as well as a particular geography of social life" (Prudham 2008, 87). Both Innis and Harvey concluded that such an arrangement was inherently unstable for communities, and held within itself the seeds of its own destruction. To give one example, the very institutions and relationships which maintained the Fordist wage bargain between capital and labour were the same characteristics which would inhibit its adaptation and competitiveness in the face of domestic and international economic transition, making periods of traumatic and destructive socioeconomic upheaval inevitable for resource-dependent communities (Barnes et al 2001; Lucas 1971).

2.3. Dependency: Stability and Resilience

Forestry policy in BC historically sought to promote stability in forestry-dependent communities. This meant striving for sustained and perpetual yield and reliable (if cyclical) employment and income, which was aided by favourable government intervention and regulation. Ecologically, stability refers to a dynamic equilibrium and to the capacity of an ecosystem to resist or adapt to stressors (Machlis and Force 1990). In contrast, mid-century forestry policies consistently treated the stability of forestry communities as a strictly economic relationship whereby it was assumed that stable employment would result in stable, healthy communities (Stedman et al. 2007), which reflected a static understanding of stability (i.e. essentially maintaining the status quo) rather than something that was dynamic and adaptive.

A purely economic understanding of stability is highly problematic, because it omits considerations of cyclical demand, technological advancement and migration

trends, and relies on antiquated ideas of community as little more than a source of labour for industry (Nadeau et al. 2003). Additionally, it reduces dependency and stability to uni-dimensional phenomena, ignoring the complex relationships which exist between local cultures and the resources they rely on (Machlis and Force 1990). Randall and Ironside (1996) employ the term 'local dependency' to express the circumstances by which local actors become dependent on the reproduction of a very particular set of relations, which are themselves the product of the intersection of economic, cultural, environmental and social dimensions of dependency. Similarly, Cox and Mair (1988, 310) underline the ways in which the non-economic aspects of dependency are lived and perpetuated in the everyday lives of resource communities, suggesting that:

> Interaction is commonly channelled through some few interaction sites, or locales: the mine or plant, the union hall, the church, the bar, the neighbourhood and the home. These locales are the major contexts in which knowledge and experience of the world is gathered, common awareness engendered, and common meanings imputed.

One of the central themes which emerges in these various conceptions of resource dependence is the need to be sensitive to contextual and geographical differences. Innis emphasized the centrality of place in understanding the development of Canada's staples economy, asserting that the character of resource extraction and dependency was inescapably defined by geography, and the complex intersection of space and time (Barnes et al. 2001). Stedman et al. (2004) demonstrate that social indicators in resource dependent communities vary widely not only across resource sectors, but within sectors themselves. For instance, while timber extraction and processing are frequently lumped together as 'forestry' or 'forestry products', communities that rely on logging possess markedly different social and economic characteristics than those that rely on milling.

Beckley (1998) similarly points to the importance of place and scale of analysis in his discussion of the 'nestedness' of resource dependence. Nestedness refers to the idea that the quality and extent of dependency vary according to the level of analysis chosen, and so too does its meaning and generalizability. Thus, understanding dependence at a community-level should not be extrapolated to apply to a greater region, while regional-level analysis may mask community-level vulnerabilities.[8] Both Beckley (1998) and Machlis and Force (1990) acknowledge that the conflation of regional and local analysis is not always the result of poor or careless research, but can stem from the absence of appropriate data.[9]

In order to foster contextually-sensitive and locally meaningful analyses of dependency, Barnes and Hayter (2005, 455) propose a local model which "admits a diverse vocabulary, acknowledges ambivalent definitions and nonlinear logic, allows conceptual ambiguity, and presumes only a limited correspondence between the terms of the model and the world." In this model, they suggest that attention to four key characteristics can help to understand social and economic change in forestry communities:

- **industrialism**, which involves focusing the organization of the local economy according to the demands of private, often corporate, capital;

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[8] Beckley (1998) examined forest dependency in the northeastern United States, breaking his analysis down by region, state, county and community, and found that indicators of dependency varied significantly between units of analysis.

[9] In the case of Port Alberni, most of the data on social and economic conditions are only available for the regional district of Port Alberni, which incorporates not only Port Alberni but communities such as Tofino and Ucluelet, towns which do not have significant histories of forestry extraction or processing, and which today are heavily reliant on tourism.

- **regulationism**, which highlights the impacts of state regulation at all levels of resource production";

- **environmentalism**, which means giving consideration to the influence of environmental concerns and organizations; and,

- **aboriginalism**, and the increasing influence of land claims settlements and the growing role of Aboriginal people in the ownership and use of natural resources.

In short, this model seeks to draw attention to the ways in which conflict and change play out through various social groups, pressures, and institutions, and allows space for conceptualizing how the same set of factors can intersect in a range of ways to create divergent circumstances in different places.

Given the dynamic and contextual nature of resource dependence, both communities and researchers have increasingly become concerned with understanding resiliency rather than stability. The notion of resiliency is closely tied to dependency, and may be considered a dynamic alternative, reflecting transition and development, in contrast to the static aspiration implied by 'stability'. Conceptually, resiliency entails a given community's ability to "adapt, to inform themselves, and to organize, and is the quality that gets things done to improve their lives and ensure their survival" (Markey et al. 2005, xiii). Nadeau et al. (2003, 72) more directly associate resiliency with "the capacity for humans to change their behavior, redefine economic relationships, and alter social institutions so that economic viability is maintained and social stresses are minimized." In this, they emphasize that resiliency is something much different than

seeking to maintain or restore the status quo, which stands in marked contrast to how the objective of stability historically guided forestry policy in BC.

Marshall et al. (2007) identify four core measures of individual and community resiliency in dependent communities: the ability to plan, learn and reorganize; the perception of risk in approaching change; the perception of ability to cope with change; and the level of interest in adapting to change. In addition, they explicitly recognize the relationship between dependency and resiliency, and argue that any assessment of resilience needs to consider the legacies of dependence, such as attachment to employment, employability of individuals, attachment to place, local business size and approach, and the level of individual and community specialization. In other words, developing a clear understanding of the meaning and implications of dependency in a given community is necessary to assess the capacity for change and development that exists there.

2.4. Adaptation: Community Capacity and Social Capital

Community resilience represents one basic framework for understanding and assessing the adaptive capacities of resource communities. This can be augmented by two additional relevant frameworks, community capacity and social capital, which will be explored in this section. The notion of community capacity involves identifying and assessing a given community's strengths and weaknesses, particularly with consideration to how such factors may facilitate or impede development initiatives (Nadeau et al. 2003). Nadeau et al. (2003) suggest that important considerations here include physical and financial infrastructure, civic participation and responsiveness, and human and environmental capital, but also stress that what is key is not so much the degree to which

any given factor is present or absent, but rather how existing factors intersect and interact with one another.

Markey et al. (2005) advocate a similar assets-based approach to community assessment, suggesting that it may be more productive to start from a focus on a community's strengths – which represents an inversion of more traditional needs-based approaches that start from identifying and targeting local weaknesses. They argue that while deficiencies are relatively easy to identify and target, it can be harder to assess strengths since they are sometimes intangible or amorphous, but doing so successfully can help to build on existing capacities and thereby constitute an important part of successful development initiatives.

Bruce (2003) acknowledges the increasing popularity of assets-based approaches to development planning, which focus on building capacities rather than filling in gaps, at the same time as urging caution in their application. The two principal reasons given for this caution are that such assessments may be overly inward-looking and ignore important trends and influences outside the community (which may impact its abilities to take advantage of identified strengths) and that it may tend to produce rose-tinted assessments marked by similar lists of positive local characteristics. One possible response to this is given by Che (2006), who suggests that the real challenge is less in identifying assets, and more in tapping into the latent potential of those assets in a manner which will effectively differentiate a given community from another which possesses similar advantages.

Reimer (2006) suggests a middle ground for capacity assessment, arguing that both community assets and weaknesses or 'liabilities' cannot be meaningfully considered

in isolation either from each other or from broader contextual constraints and opportunities. In this view, communities should still begin by identifying significant local assets and liabilities, which would then be considered within the context of local, external and structural drivers and influences such as resource dependence, existing level of economic integration, institutional capacities, provincial and federal policies, and jurisdictional boundaries. Assets and liabilities can then be organized by identifying the processes by which desired outcomes may be achieved, which ideally will "not only contribute to the general understanding about asset-outcome processes, but identify specific place-related characteristics that can modify these processes" (Reimer 2006, 157).

Discussions of community capacity, capacity building and development have been heavily influenced by the concept of social capital. Social capital may be described in its most basic form as human relationships, their qualities and the extent to which they constitute a resource for practical action (Field 2003). Roseland (1999, 193) provides a more detailed definition, depicting social capital as "the shared knowledge, understandings, and patterns of interaction that a group of people bring to any productive activity," comprising the organizations and social relationships which have typically been established independently of state or corporate initiative or control. It is essentially characterised by the following:

- a formal or informal set of internal networks and norms;
- a presumed high level of trust amongst those who share it;
- a long building process (which cannot be created by external intervention);
- an imperviousness to material or financial scarcity; and,

•   a tendency to grow through use, and decline if unused.

Field (2003) proposes that the presence of social capital is on display when individuals or groups by-pass formal mechanisms in favour of informal means (i.e. someone or a group they know) where they believe the latter to be faster, less stressful or more effective. Indeed, in response to strong displays of social capital, formal networks may be constructed and employed in order to "control the excesses of mutual informal cooperation, which can lead to forms of indirect discrimination against others who do not belong to the charmed circle" (Field 2003, 3).

Social capital is generally understood to have played a central but under-acknowledged role in maintaining resource communities. In investigating the role of informal relationships in rural communities, Tigges et al (1998, 204) emphasized "that social *relationships* of production and reproduction are important for understanding how rural residents experience, respond to, and shape local changes [italics original]." Markey et al. (2005) identified how social capital tends to be manifested in the use of informal support networks and community coping mechanisms during periods of economic difficulty. However, the positive value of social capital should not be taken for granted. Field (2003) notes that while high levels of social capital have been associated with improved educational and health outcomes, decreased crime rates and the exit of individuals from social assistance programs, it can also be found amongst street gangs, lobbyist groups and criminal organizations. This, he suggests, is due to the fact that those who possess high levels of social capital tend to use it for their own exclusive benefit, pointing out that if it "fosters mutual co-operation for the benefits of members, then social capital is in principle as likely to promote co-operation for negative ends as well as

positive ends" (Field 2003, 72). Other negative implications are that it may also reinforce existing relationships of inequality (Roseland 1999) or exclusion (Larsen 2004).

Roseland (1999) suggests that social capital might be most constructively used where networks are loose and comprise a high degree of diversity. 'Closed' networks are typically comprised of individuals who all know one another and share a particular identity or characteristic which qualifies them for membership in a given group or network (e.g. a church congregation, extended family or union). In contrast, networks which lack 'closure' may comprise a larger group of individuals or small groups who are not necessarily acquainted with other group members (e.g. patrons of the same café, park users), and though they may not recognize themselves as part of the group at all, "they can be a useful resource for each other and an immense reservoir of energy and imagination if it can be accessed and organized" (Roseland 1999, 198). This parallels Putnam's concepts of bonding and bridging capital. Bonding capital tends to be inward-looking, exclusive and reinforcing of existing, shared identities. Bridging capital, on the other hand, comprises a wider variety of networks, individuals and identities – akin to a number of over-lapping circles representative of various groups and interests – and typically allows greater space and opportunity for collaboration, cooperation and learning (Field 2003). Such concepts, and the different ways that they are manifested, have clear implications for effective community capacity-building and development initiatives.

2.5. Community Economic Development: A Potential Framework for Transition

Community economic development (CED) is a framework through which communities seek to harness the latent potential of local assets and capacities in order to enhance local economic and social development. Markey et al. (2005, 102, 105) describe

CED as a process "concerned with improving, in a quantitative and qualitative manner, the social, economic and environmental conditions of communities," and suggest that it is essentially something that is community-based, participatory, sustainable, asset-based and self-reliant, at the same time as being disengaged "from unequal and destructive economic relationships with external economic interests." CED planning initiatives have become popular in both urban and rural areas, and the key tenets and goals are particularly relevant for resource-dependent communities whose economic, social, cultural and environmental histories have been so defined by external economic interests to the detriment of meaningful local development, diversification and growth.

The premise of self-reliance in particular distinguishes the ideals and aims of CED from the goals of local economic development (LED). While CED emphasizes the use of local assets and resources to address local needs, LED seeks to achieve local economic development primarily by attracting and retaining outside capital (Reed and Gill 1997). LED typically hinges on a narrowly economic perspective, oriented towards interests outside of the community, and as a result it often requires significant local concessions such as the provision of land and infrastructure and tax breaks to attract business and investments. A further criticism of the LED approach is that it rarely has significant, meaningful or productive connections to local social, cultural and environmental concerns, and therefore risks perpetuating local dependence on external capital and decision-making (Markey et al. 2005). Yet despite these disadvantages, LED may still be enthusiastically pursued by resource communities desperate for employment and tax dollars (Markey et al. 2007), or who find their local development potential

limited by government funding structures which encourage an extra-local focus to development (Young 2008).

CED may be seen as a response to failed and inappropriate regional development initiatives which were common during the post-World War Two period (Reed and Gill 1997), the withdrawal of government commitments to rural communities starting in the late 1980s (Bruce 2003) and a desire for local empowerment and control over local affairs (Markey et al 2007). Markey et al. (2007) additionally position CED as a more comprehensive alternative to the 'growth approach' to development which, in common with past policies designed to maintain community stability, equate economic growth with positive local development. Instead, Roseland (1999, 200) argues, there is a need to not only acknowledge the necessity of social development, cultural sensitivity and environmental sustainability, but to "shift our economic development emphasis from the traditional concern with increasing growth to *reducing social dependency on economic growth* [italics original]" (Roseland 1999, 200).

CED is not, however, a magic bullet. Markey et al. (2005) identify a number of key considerations to take into account in order to successfully apply this approach, which include: evaluation; access to financial capital; the tools to develop necessary community capacities; political conflict; and the role of governments. Further, as Bruce (2003) suggests, there is reason for concern that the promotion of CED may serve to provide provincial and federal governments with a conceptual justification for reducing their financial and institutional commitments to rural communities beyond what they already have. This is a considerable risk because there remains a key place for governments in CED, including maintaining necessary infrastructure, contributing to

capacity-building programs and services, and providing expertise and other human resources.

Bruce and Halseth (2004) emphasize the central role that small business can play in CED, though current policies often encourage entrepreneurs to develop an external rather than a local focus (Young 2008). Thus, Markey et al. (2005) suggest that policies which create more favourable and enabling conditions for locally owned, operated and focused small business can positively contribute to community-level development by fostering local decision-making, expertise and resilience, as well as minimizing the leakage of local capital (Markey et al 2005).

Ultimately, one of the central problems plaguing policy responses to resource dependence, development and community stability is that the communities themselves have been treated largely as undifferentiated pools of labour for industry, with development approached strictly in terms of economic growth, which has largely proven to be neither economically nor socially sustainable. Thus, analysis and planning for future re-development needs to be approached from a perspective which values local experiences and differences, and which acknowledges that this process cannot be achieved in isolation from social and cultural considerations, a view which led me to seek to learn about the process of community transition from experts who have active roles in social services and education. The next chapter details how I targeted my key informants, why I chose to employ qualitative interviews as my core method, and how I organized and analyzed my findings.

3. Methods

This chapter will explain my methods of data collection, and my reasoning behind these methodological choices. It will then discuss how participants were identified and how data was collected and analyzed. In the course of this discussion, I will also address a number of the challenges I encountered during the research process and reflect on how they impacted the final design of the study.

3.1. A Qualitative Approach

Research on resource-dependent communities in transition has employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. For instance, qualitative interviews were used to explore resident responses to job-loss in Port Alberni (Barnes et al. 1999) and the role and experiences of women in BC's forestry sector (Reed 2003). Two good examples of quantitative studies are Stedman et al.'s (2004) evaluation of the relationships between social indicators and dependence which assessed the impact of different resource industries on the well-being of associated communities, and Beckley's (1998) framework of multi-level dependencies, which was developed through an economic analysis of forestry dependence in the north-eastern United States. Thus, I recognize that research into the dynamics of economic transition and social change following the decline of forestry in Port Alberni might have been approached in a range of ways.

However, I was drawn to a qualitative approach by what most interested me most about this transition: how people's lived experiences and perceptions of place and space were changing, particularly with respect to gender, a subject which involves a level of complexity and nuance that I felt could not be adequately understood through quantitative or survey methods. Further, to have attempted such methods, I felt, would have resulted

in the imposition of my own preconceptions and biases on participants rather than allowing them the flexibility to frame their narratives which open-ended interviewing provides.

I approached my fieldwork with an assumption that knowledge and meaning are socially and inter-subjectively constructed by the researcher and the research participants. The essential premise for this is that meaning does not exist independently of consciousness and experience, but that its construction is necessarily social, context-bound and partial (Schwandt 2000). This meant that I fully acknowledged the impossibility of removing all of my own biases from the research itself, and felt that any attempt to do so could be counter-productive and might even undermine the integrity of the work. In other words, my central concern in the research process was not to discover and objectively reproduce the singular truth of participants' responses, but rather was to reconstruct the narratives I had been presented with – and had participated in creating – as authentically as I could, such that participants themselves would identify with them, and that it would resonate in a meaningful way with both participants and readers.

An important element of the research process was to be immersed in the social and cultural life of Port Alberni as fully as I could while I was engaged in the study. Certain forms of cultural and social knowledge can only be accessed through experience. As Marshall (2002) points out, if knowledge is situated and socially constructed, then the way to gain a better understanding of situated knowledges is to physically situate oneself where they are being created. My immersion was further aided by my many years of tree-planting experience in BC, through which I had spent a great deal of time in a number of forestry-dependent communities (including Prince George, Quesnel, Golden

and Vanderhoof), as this experience afforded me a certain measure of cultural knowledge relevant to the research.

Ultimately, I believe that my experience living in Port Alberni provided me with a level of cultural and social knowledge of the community which facilitated rapport with participants, allowed me to situate our conversations in a detailed and appropriate socio-cultural context, and gave me opportunities for meaningful interactions with community members outside of more formal interview situations (Baxter and Eyles 1997).

3.2. The Case Study

This research consists of a qualitative case study of a single forestry-dependent community in BC, undergoing a process of transition in response to the declining production and employment in that sector. A useful way of thinking about a case study is as "the study of a single instance or small number of instances of a phenomenon in order to explore in-depth nuances of the phenomenon and the contextual influences on and explanations of that phenomenon" (Baxter 2010, 81). Case studies may be intrinsic or instrumental (illustrative). Intrinsic cases are seen to have value as a stand-alone example of a given phenomenon, while instrumental case studies involve a single case or small number of cases which are seen to have the capacity to provide insights into a broader circumstance or phenomenon (Stake 2000). In the latter instances, a case may serve to corroborate, falsify, or offer alternatives to existing interpretations or theories about a given phenomenon.

Though case studies typically incorporate attention to both what is unique and what is generalizable in a given setting, Stake (2000) cautions that direct comparisons should not necessarily be the goal of a single case study, suggesting that this can risk

shifting attention from the case on its own terms and focusing instead on the comparison. A better goal for research, Stake (2000) argues, is to focus on the chosen case or cases and aim to generate sufficiently meaningful and authentic descriptions which allow for readers of the study to draw their own comparisons and conclusions – which may, in fact, differ from those of the researcher(s). This reinforces the idea that single case studies may be intrinsically valuable regardless of how generalizable they are with respect to other manifestations of the studied phenomenon (Baxter 2010).

In this research, I identified Port Alberni as being illustrative of a Canadian resource-dependent community struggling with the challenges of economic transition, and the associated processes of socioeconomic restructuring and cultural displacement. In common with other resource-dependent communities, Port Alberni's history has been defined by an economy dominated by a single industry/single employer, along with a rigid gender order and low educational achievement. Also like many other resource-dependent communities, decline of the dominant industry has led to high unemployment and a range of contemporary social problems. Such commonalities suggested to me that Port Alberni would provide an excellent site to gain a better understanding of the issues which characterize resource communities, and the process of restructuring and re-development. However, Port Alberni also possesses a number of unique characteristics, including the age of settlement and industry operations in the area, a relatively stable population base (in comparison to the high transience of many resource towns), its proximity to major metropolitan regions and significant tourist attractions, as well as its relatively high degree of forestry dependence and the rapidity and scale of recent decline. Thus, my hope in identifying Port Alberni as my research study site was that it might

provide some insights to other resource-dependent communities in transition, at the same time as being aware of the need for caution in making direct comparisons with other resource-dependent communities (even other forestry-dependent and/or BC communities) and to not take commonalities for granted.

3.3. Adjusting in the Field and Selecting and Contacting Participants

This study's original design was premised on the assumption that severely declining employment in BC's forestry industry would be undermining the historical gender regimes of forestry-dependent communities, and my initial intent was to examine the impacts of economic restructuring of the industry with regards to changing gender roles and expectations. More specifically, I hoped that by examining the challenges and opportunities experienced by young women living in Port Alberni, my research might shed light on the roles and needs of women living and working in resource-dependent communities across British Columbia and Canada.

The initial working hypothesis was that the decline of forest employment and the restructuring of Port Alberni's economy towards service provision and tourism would have begun to open up new spaces for women in local labour markets and to destabilize the 'male-as-breadwinner' household model, which has historically typified Canadian resource communities. I saw this as filling a useful gap in the literature, as existing research on Canadian forestry- and resource-dependent communities have typically focussed on the process of transition (Hayter 2000; Barnes et al 1999) or on gender dynamics (Reed 2003; Klausen 1998), but I saw the intersection of the two as being understudied and underappreciated. My initial design called for in-depth interviews with young women between the ages of 18 and 35, who were long-term residents of Port

Alberni, and who were either currently employed outside of the home or who were seeking such employment. Beyond that I had also planned to target key informants involved in the community's social, educational and cultural agencies in order to gain a broader understanding of pertinent local gender issues.

However, after several weeks in the field during the summer of 2010, it was clear that my research plan was not materializing. One of the first barriers was that I was unable to obtain a volunteer position with a relevant agency as anticipated (e.g. The Alberni Community and Women's Society), finding instead that the relevant social agencies were not interested in or able to support volunteers, and that the local volunteer agency had recently folded. The net result was to remove a key avenue through which I had hoped to access potential study participants. This problem was magnified when my attempts to independently contact potential participants through less formal channels (e.g. a local 'crafters' group and a nascent local 'zine focussed on women's lives in the community) also proved fruitless.

At the same time as I was struggling to access my targeted demographic, I was also beginning to question my initial framing of the problems. Both my early interviews with key informants and my personal conversations and experiences in the community were suggesting to me that my hypotheses and expectations were not as relevant to members of the local community as I had anticipated. For example, while questions surrounding the intersection of economic transition and gender engaged participants when asked directly (for example, "how have you seen women's roles in the community change over the course of your time here?"), the more indirect or open questions ("how has dependence on forestry defined Port Alberni?") typically generated responses that led

in different directions. In particular, it became clear to me that the challenges and opportunities presented by the process of transition were very complex, and that gender comprised only one element which could not be considered in isolation from a broader picture of cultural dislocation and social dissolution.

Thus, in short, I felt compelled to reframe the process of data collection in a way which reflected my strong sense of this socio-cultural complexity. A key aspect of this reframing was to reconsider my participant selection. My early key informant interviews clearly indicated the value of learning from people who could speak from both personal and relevant professional experiences, and could situate their own perceptions in the context of an organization involved in the social and cultural aspects of the community's transition. This led me to target participants who were both long-time members of the community and professionals involved in related social, educational, cultural, and government organizations in the community.

My initial contacts were based upon my targeting of relevant organizations as well as length of time resident in the community, information which was largely acquired through personal communication with a variety of community members. From this starting point, further participant recruitment was accomplished through chain- or snowball sampling by which participants recommended potential contacts who they felt could provide valuable information. Ultimately, my approach to sampling was also opportunistic, and required a high degree of flexibility and a willingness to take advantage of new and unexpected leads (Bradshaw and Stratford 2010).

3.4. Data collection: In-depth Interviews and Grounded Theory

The primary method employed for data collection in this study was semi-structured in-depth interviews. I retained my initial expectation that participants' responses would be diverse, wide-ranging, and nuanced, and felt that this method would best allow for an open and conversational dialogue which would facilitate the 'give and take' nature of meaning-construction. The data-collection process was informed by grounded theory, a methodology which is premised on the simultaneous collection and analysis of data, privileges flexibility, reflexivity and experience in the research process, and exhorts researchers to build their theoretical analysis as they accumulate data in order to focus further data collection according to emergent themes and subjects (Charmaz 2000). As a result, a primary aim in my interviewing was to allow participants to articulate and frame issues they feel are relevant with minimal imposition of the researcher's own theoretical preconceptions.

As noted, the interviews were semi-structured, which involved including certain key topics and questions in all interviews, and avoiding closed-ended or forced-choice questions in order to provide a better opportunity for participants to frame their concerns according to their own perceptions, experiences, and vocabularies. I continuously refined the process over the research period in order to reflect emerging concerns, issues, and themes. This flexibility was helpful in creating a meaningful dialogue with participants, allowing for the emergence of new ideas and topics, and minimizing the effects of my own preconceptions and expectations on the direction of the interview. It is the creation of such spaces which can make depth-interviews such a powerful tool in qualitative research, as it can give voice to participants' perceptions and experiences, and

emphasizes the centrality of the interaction between researcher and participant as an inter-subjective process of knowledge and meaning construction (Miller and Crabtree 2004).

In total, thirteen participants were interviewed between early July and late September 2010, with the bulk of interviews occurring between mid-August and mid-September. The group included educators, social workers, employment counsellors, directors of local cultural institutions, and members of local government; participants' responsibilities included managing worker training programs, assessing applicants for social assistance services, providing counselling for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, and over-seeing local economic development projects. All were college- or university-educated and had resided in Port Alberni for long periods of time, ranging from about ten years to their entire lives. Twelve participants were female and one male, a skewed gender ratio that was not by design but rather was the result of the fact that a majority of relevant agencies were both managed and staffed almost exclusively by women. Interviews were conducted in participants' places of business, usually in their personal offices, ranged from approximately 45 to 90 minutes in length and were recorded digitally. Digital recording not only facilitated accurate data transcription, but allowed me to give all my attention to the conversation, enabled deeper listening and engagement, and fostered a comfortable and natural flow to the discussion.

3.5. Data analysis and Interpretation

Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the texts were then tagged individually with an initial set of codes that identified relevant or potentially significant themes, anecdotes, phrases, and sections. This was accomplished using 'line-by-line' coding, a

strategy intended to minimize the imposition of my own extant knowledge on the data (Charmaz 2000), and to facilitate the emergence of *in vivo* codes, those which appear in the text and are made up of respondents' own words (Cope 2003). Codes which appeared particularly relevant, or which appeared frequently in the texts, were then applied to the data in a process of 'focussed' coding, allowing me to refine the dozens of initial codes into a set of broader categories (Charmaz 2004). This was not, however, an entirely linear process as this description suggests, but rather required frequent revisiting of the data and reassessment of the appropriateness or usefulness of established codes and categories.

The texts were then examined collectively and categories were grouped according to emergent themes. This stage of the analysis was particularly challenging as many initial codes could easily fit into multiple themes. For example, 'hunger' and 'homelessness' straddled 'access and availability of resources' as well as 'perceived socioeconomic changes'. As will be seen in the following chapter, this challenge could only be partly resolved, as some themes were utterly entangled and some had to be artificially separated for the sake of analytical clarity. My regular use of 'memos' also helped me tease out processes and assumptions in the data, and facilitated the step from categorizing key themes to interpreting and analyzing them.

Another significant challenge in analyzing and interpreting the data involved minimizing the influence of my preconceptions and theoretical knowledge on the coding process. I attempted to pre-emptively address this, in part, by minimizing my theoretical literature review prior to entering the field, as recommended by Charmaz (2004; 2000). Additionally, I did my best to maintain openness and flexibility regarding emerging issues even, or especially, where they contradicted my existing knowledge or beliefs.

The frequent over-turning of my expectations during the course of this research under-lined the necessity of allowing the voices of participants to speak on their own terms, even while acknowledging that my position as the researcher and interpreter ultimately gives me the power to decide who and what is heard. As will be seen in the following chapter, one of the major ways I have attempted to minimize this influence, and maximize the voices of the participants, is through the extensive use of direct quotations.

4. Analysis: Understanding the Challenges and Opportunities of Transition

4.1. Problematizing Initial Assumptions

As discussed in chapter 1, the primary assumption that had initially motivated this research was a desire to examine how the reorganization and restructuring of British Columbia's forest-products sector -- and with it, the widespread loss of male-dominated jobs – was influencing the gender dynamics of forest-dependent communities such as Port Alberni. Historically, employment at nearly all levels of the forestry production chain, from the logging camp to the green-chain to the pulp mill, has been overwhelmingly dominated by low-skilled but highly-paid male labour. The contraction of the forestry sector dealt a major blow to this employment structure in these dependent communities, which coincided with the increased participation of women in the formal labour-force. I thought that there would be much to learn about the dynamics of this by learning from the experiences of long-term female residents of Port Alberni employed outside the home.

However, as discussed in chapter 3, it became apparent to me early in the data-collection process that while Port Alberni had indeed experienced extensive changes due to the decline of forestry, changes in gender dynamics were also influenced by more generalized economic, social and cultural upheaval. The perceptions of change and of the ongoing processes of transition related by participants suggested to me that gender dynamics were not only inextricably bound-up in a community whose economic, social and cultural identities have been shaped by the area's dependence on the forest industry, but one which is equally tied to contemporary experiences of change which are every bit

as defined by the community's status as a 'forestry town'. Put simply, one of the dominant themes which emerged from my interviews and experience was that Port Alberni was in the midst of a period of transition, from a past defined by forestry, relative prosperity, paternalism and a widely-shared sense of common experience, through a contemporary period of uncomfortable and disorienting change, towards an uncertain future which the community is struggling to define and control, and it would be difficult to disentangle gender from this.

The following three sections (4.2 to 4.4) explore respondents' perceptions and experiences of change, as both long-time residents and workers in related social, cultural, and educational fields, during Port Alberni's transition away from forestry dependence. While economic, social, and cultural change are thematically separated here, as will be clear in the discussion respondents repeatedly highlighted their unavoidable intersection. Section 4.5 then goes on to explore how participants perceive the community's assets, and the limited extent to which they are being parlayed into local development initiatives. In contrast to this, section 4.6 discusses the community's perceived liabilities, including poor leadership and persistent racism, and how they are negatively impacting local development opportunities. While the first three sections focus on how participants view the drivers of local changes, and their largely negative manifestations, the last two look at how they interpret the key responses being made by local residents and government (4.5) and some of the serious barriers to community re-development (4.6).

4.2. Economic Change, Rising Poverty, and the Limitations of Services

Participants associated a number of significant changes in the community with the significant loss of forest industry jobs, such as: higher levels of poverty; widespread

under- and unemployment; increased homelessness; and increased violence and substance abuse. However, these problems were not linked exclusively to forestry job losses but rather were attributed to an intersection of multiple factors, including: the prevalence of low-waged seasonal and employment; the limited nature of educational services and resources; the in-migration of low-income individuals and households; and certain persistent local attitudes towards employment (such as what constitutes a 'good' job), problems which were seen to be particularly acute amongst certain populations, especially youth, Aboriginal peoples, and former forestry workers and their families.

A number of participants described the widespread forestry job loss from the perspective of personal or family engagement with the industry as many, not surprisingly, had (primarily) male relatives with histories of long-term employment in the sector. For example, one participant described how a brother who had spent his entire working life in the forestry sector was now struggling with reduced benefits and job security:

> ...he's at the point to take retirement... [and] they're yanking all their holiday, all their benefit, all their time, wages, everything. So, it's really kind of scary, 'cause he's got two young boys and... not that they can't make it, but it's unstable for sure. [P04]

Another participant with multiple family members either currently or formerly employed in forestry described some of the ways in which her family had been impacted by local job losses:

> My fiancé works in Fort McMurray [Alberta] because he was laid-off here. He can't get work because the logging industry has gone down so much...we can't be a family full-time...[my dad's] working his whole life in the bush, and we always had things growing up, everything was fine. But I look at [my parents] now, and I worry about them and how they're going to make it through their retirement years. And the options are slim, because the work was so plentiful that they didn't bother with education,

you know? You just showed up with work boots, and there was work; and you have seniority and you get paid well. [P13]

Education and retraining challenges

The last insight in this quote draws attention to the problems surrounding local levels of education and the historical availability of labour jobs. The unskilled nature of many forestry jobs meant that multiple generations of workers did not complete their formal educations, frequently choosing relatively stable and highly-paid mill work over a high school diploma, sometimes even over completing elementary school. One social worker described having clients with only sixth grade education and clients in their forties and fifties who remained functionally illiterate, and suggested that in this context, conventional retraining programs or those designed to enable former forestry workers to enter college or university programs were out of reach for many unemployed workers. She explained:

> *One of the programs I used to deliver was through Forest Renewal – FRBC[10] – and there was so many men on the bubble, you know – just, really, too young to retire but too old to go back to school, and a lot of them had grade six... 'cause they've just been doing it [forestry] all their lives, right? And they just never even finished high school...I've dealt with thousands of guys, and they couldn't fill out the basic [job application] form...we're talking basic [literacy]...and, you know, by the time they upgraded to getting into college, or to taking something that they wanted – forget it! [P04]*

Others described how some individuals were reluctant to seek out services or aid because, as one put it, "it's embarrassing to admit that you have a grade six education" [P09]. This sense of shame as a barrier to retraining was echoed by another respondent, who suggested that laid-off workers were "not addressing the barriers [to retraining], they're

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[10] Forest Renewal British Columbia (FRBC) was a Crown corporation responsible for delivering programs in support of the forestry industry from 1994 to 2002.

not disclosing them. And those typically are the lack of education – some of them can't read or write, and it's too embarrassing for them to say anything so they would just not show up [to training workshops]" [P13]. Others felt that the frequent reluctance of displaced workers to pursue education or training was at least partly the result of their difficulty envisioning a new career:

> *There was a strong sense from a lot of the folks there...a lot of folks said, why would I – what courses am I going to take? I'm 55, I've been in the industry since I was 16, I walked into the mill with my dad, with my lunch kit and I got a job; and now you want me to take computer courses? What are you talking about? So, in some ways it was completely irrelevant to some of those folks there...[They were] over 50 and the thought of retraining was beyond anything they could even think about.* [P10]

One participant working with an employment agency described this as a "fear of the unknown," pointing out that: "A lot of actual forest workers probably don't have a high education, didn't do well in school, and... don't wanna go back to school. They feel it's not for them...People who work in an industry where you know your job, you've done this for twenty years, they just don't know what to do; they are just stumped" [P06].

The need for and challenge of education and retraining was framed in the context of not only forestry-job loss, but the loss of low-skilled manual labour jobs in general, what one participant described as "physical skill jobs" but "not always cognitively high levels of jobs" [P11]. Another participant explained it this way:

> *There has been quite a few men that have been in the forest industry that had – because the jobs were so plentiful, there was so many – I don't wanna call it this, but more menial jobs... [for people who] didn't have a lot of skills, but if you told them 'here's your task for the day, go do it', you know, there was a job for that. Whereas there isn't that anymore.*

She went on to note how she had seen "a lot of men in that situation come in where they do not have their education, but they've worked the majority of their lives doing these

jobs," and now had a deep sense of reluctance and confusion, feeling "too old" and unsure of what they could do. [P13]

Even when former forestry workers were interested in retraining or in pursuing any higher education, it was pointed out that there was little opportunity to do so locally, particularly beyond the post-secondary level. Port Alberni is home to North Island College, which offers a small variety of applied courses such as practical nursing and office management as well as pre-university preparatory courses, and there is one alternative public school through which adults can complete their high school education. There are also a few focused certification programs, (e.g. First Aid) and employment training programs (e.g. Bladerunners[11]), but in general the more extensive training opportunities available elsewhere on Vancouver Island and on the Lower Mainland of BC are not currently available in Port Alberni, and to pursue anything beyond high-school or a small range of post-secondary courses must either relocate or commute to Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. As one participant put it simply, "There's a lack of educational resources. Port Alberni doesn't have a lot to offer." [P13]

Participants also identified a lack of financial resources as a serious obstacle for individuals to pursue training or education. This was seen to entail student debt, which many are reluctant to take on, especially since provincial support for training had recently been cut. Participants who are engaged in employment services felt that the general barriers to education and re-training noted above were aggravated by the tendency of many to 'wait out' periods of unemployment. As one put it, "many people wait [until

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[11] Bladerunners is a provincially funded program designed to provide unemployed, marginalized and at-risk youth with job skills and on-the-job training, primarily in the construction industry.

their EI runs out], unfortunately...they feel they have lots of time, and they don't, and maybe they just don't know how to go about it" [P06]. Another participant discussed her own experiences of struggling with denial about losing a previous job, which makes her better able to recognize it in the people she's assisting now. This tendency to 'wait out' periods of unemployment probably has roots in the historically seasonal aspect of some forestry jobs. It used to be common practice that during periods of low supply or demand in the case of mills, and in the off-season in the case of bush work, workers would be laid-off and draw Employment Insurance (EI), assuming they would return when the market improved or the snow melted. Though this relatively reliable cycle of employment and unemployment no longer exists in Port Alberni, many respondents suggested that its legacy persists amongst some, who still believe forestry jobs will return. As one participant put it: "People are still living in hope that...they'll get off EI and they'll get those jobs back, and they'll hire...[and] have 400 people working there again" [P01].

This attitude was perceived as problematic for two main reasons: first, it inhibited the pursuit of training or education (in spite of the generally acknowledged limitations); and second, it increased household level financial difficulties. One participant, who once ran training programs for the now-defunct FRBC, observed that many just attended training "because there was a weekly stipend available to them, and that was important in order to eat. But it was essentially seen as a kind of bridge until the next time they got called back out into the woods" [P10]. Another participant in an employment agency echoed this observation, adding that such attitudes might make retraining programs reluctant to accept certain individuals:

> They keep hoping they'll go back to work. And that is a problem, 'cause

for them to come in and not be certain that their job is over – they don't wanna lose that attachment to the employer. Their seniority and that is tied to that. So if they do get called back, that often keeps them from going into training. We won't put them into training for a new career unless we're sure that they're gonna work in that new career. So, it's kind of a wasted investment in training if they go back to their job afterwards again or get another job in the same industry. [P06]

This observed reluctance to sever an attachment to the industry was further seen to increase financial problems:

They should be looking for work as soon as they get on EI, but some people take their time and just relax. And then it becomes a crisis – they've used up all their savings – your spouse is after you, whichever side it is, your kids need new clothes, they're going back to school, there's lots of expenses. And this year in particular, we've heard lots of crisis situations, people just don't have any money to do anything. [P06]

While several participants expressed frustration with such circumstances, they felt that this may be a product of fear and despair rather than simple reluctance on the part of workers to 'move on'. As one put it, "I think what happens is when you're desperate, you don't necessarily have clear thinking," suggesting that for some, when, "their EI runs out...there's not a sense of hope" [P07]. Participants described unemployed workers as "just stuck", and not "know[ing] what to do, where to go" [P06]. Another participant noted how after the layoffs started to hit, there was "a lot of scared people" who were confused about what they were going to do next, especially since

...a lot of those people have been there forever...just like my brother, because there's no reason for them to leave... there's benefits, there's wages, there's all of those kinds of things, so that's being sort of taken out now... And they have no control over any of that and I think there's a lot of fear there...[and] there's a lot of uncertainty. [P02]

In general, most felt that the training and education programs available to unemployed workers were largely insufficient for the nature of the problems.

Job opportunities and attitudes towards employment

Where education or training was both desired and accessible, concerns remained about the relevance of available educational opportunities to the community's economic context. One participant suggested that the narrowness of local training opportunities risked producing a surplus of labour for certain jobs or sectors, noting how there was funding for some local college programs such that, suddenly, "everybody was going into computers. Unfortunately, only so many people can find a job that way" [P01]. Another observed that a high number of women seeking to improve their employment opportunities were entering long-term care programs, and wondered if "we're training too many people – and it's not that easy an industry to get into, often it's casual, part-time work to start with until you get seniority. But people see that as an easy, quick way to get work" [P06]. In addition to the mismatch between training and employment opportunities, this latter observation points to the fact that a significant issues in the community is under- rather than unemployment.

Local job opportunities were typically viewed against a history of forestry and mill jobs which paid enough to support entire households. One participant, an educational professional who worked at a local mill as a student, recalled how she once "got called back one time for five days, and I made enough for my tuition for the semester...I certainly made more money than I do now" [P02]. In contrast to the well-paying jobs of the past, jobs currently available were largely perceived as insufficient for meeting the needs of the average household. As one put it, today many "people [are] making 12, 15 dollars an hour...try to raise two kids on that," which was contrasted with

work "at the mills, where you can make 25 [dollars] and hour, it's for eight dollars at Walmart...It doesn't feed an individual, period, let alone a family of four" [P03].

Yet while the expectation that a single job should be enough to support a household was echoed by some participants, others felt that the idea of a single-income household was out-dated and out of touch with contemporary economic realities, which might require multiple members of a household to work outside the home. The latter expressed a degree of frustration with persistent attitudes regarding the feasibility of supporting a family through a single high-waged, low-skilled job. One participant suggested that the community's history of wealth premised on low-skilled labour had created unrealistic expectations about the market value of such labour, and that most labour jobs are "not gonna make that kind of money" that they would at the mill, which also points to an issue some raised about local attitudes of entitlement (which will be discussed in greater depth in section 4.6). Another participant, who contrasted the lack of low-skill labouring jobs in Port Alberni today with their historical availability, also highlighted the masculine nature of that labour and persistent attitudes regarding what constitutes appropriate work for men:

> *This town, it's really frustrating, because a lot of these guys – not even just forestry workers, but guys in general – they wanna do labour work. They don't wanna be working in dress pants and tie and stuff in a store – that's not where their mentality is at, right? But it's very hard, because we try to tell people, you gotta think outside the box now, 'cause those labour jobs just aren't there.* [P12]

Increased poverty and the working poor

Along with changing employment and income dynamics, participants observed significant increases in poverty, hunger and homelessness in the community. One

participant described the loss of jobs with "the down-sizing of the pulp mill, and the loss of the sawmill, and the plywood plant, and all kinds of industries," as having "the bottom fall out, and everybody's scrambling and everybody's in the same boat," a problem that was aggravated because many tried "for a long time...to maintain that lifestyle, and got into incredible debt" [P03].

Many participants commented on how well-paying jobs were being replaced with low-paying ones, fuelling what one described as "really large numbers of working poor," which they estimated at a wage level of roughly 12-15 dollars an hour [P09]. Related to this, some participants also perceived local poverty to be largely hidden, and described it as 'invisible'. As a result, many participants felt that the severity of poverty was underappreciated in the community (which they saw through their professional and/or voluntary involvement with local social agencies and charity organizations). One participant spoke to the ensuing difficulties involved in drawing attention to these problems in the community:

> *Community awareness really lacks here...you know, my friends don't wanna know...a lot of people don't want to know how bad it is, right? Because then you have to face that...there's a lot of people that really got their head in the sand about poverty, and they really don't wanna know the worst...people don't really know how bad it is until they need the service themselves.* [P09]

Throughout the course of my research in Port Alberni, the high demand for social services was very apparent, as were their difficulties in meeting local need (this point will be addressed in greater depth below). Port Alberni is currently home to a single food bank, run by the Salvation Army, and one soup kitchen, called Bread of Life. One respondent suggested that "we have starving people" in Port Alberni who are "using

Bread of Life for their main eating area. They go there 'cause it's free, they can eat there five days a week," inferring that they must then "starve on weekends" [P09]. The same participant expressed concern regarding a lack of affordable housing and long-term shelter space in the community:

> *The Rusty Anchor and the Beaufort*[12] *are taking our poorest people – that's who's housing our poorest people...The thing that really makes me upset – I don't know about the Rusty Anchor, but I do know about the Beaufort – they don't even have cooking facilities there. So, if you're there, you're getting 610 a month* [currently the maximum amount available to those who qualify for income assistance in BC], *you're paying 450 to live there – that leaves under two-hundred dollars and you can't cook.* [P09]

Additionally, participants felt that domestic dynamics had been negatively impacted by the stress of frequently having to juggle multiple low-wage jobs. One described how some "people...have two, three jobs just to make ends meet. And then that's where the fighting starts – 'you're never home,' 'I can't go out with the girls,' 'I can't go out with the boys'...They're running from one job to the next, and they work twelve, fourteen hours a day, and got three, four kids at home – it's a tough life" [P01].

Youth poverty and homelessness

One aspect of the increases in working poor households and generalized hunger and homelessness is the heightened manifestation of these problems amongst the community's youth. Several participants employed in social services or agencies pointed to multi-generational poverty and dependence on social assistance and the particular

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[12]The Beaufort Hotel and the Rusty Anchor are two hotels located in the South port neighbourhood. The area surrounding the Beaufort is avoided by many locals as it is associated with frequent incidents of violence, prostitution and substance abuse.

difficulties faced by children and youth in breaking the cycle. One participant who works in education highlighted this cycle in a dramatic way:

> *I had a little boy sitting there yesterday, he's 13-years-old, he looks after his three younger brothers and sisters, mom and dad are both alcoholics, there's no food in the home. Sometimes when there is food, the money comes in, it's gone the next day...If a kid isn't eating, you sure as hell don't have any chance of moving him up the ladder.* [P11]

Multiple participants also suggested that there is a significant relationship between youth poverty and youth engagement in criminal activities, with one suggesting that for some there was even an incentive to commit crimes and go to jail, "because you get a roof over your head, you get three meals a day, you have access to a gym, you've got the biggest TV, and you get paid" [P01]. This was not a phenomenon that was perceived to be confined to the community's youth. One participant described how they have seen some men essentially using a "rotating door" between "the ministry income, jail, out...It's really sad – I look at the court list...every week and I recognize a lot of the same names a lot. A lot of my clients...they come out heavier than when they go in" [P09]. Another described their relationship with some young people who have served time in prison who, "have basically said, straight out, 'we'll be straight for six months or so, it's too tough, so we commit a crime'" [P01].

One educator spoke about the rising extent of youth homelessness, indicating that "We probably have half a dozen students in this [alternative education] program right now that are new to us this year, that when they registered their addresses, the Port Alberni Shelter...There's a lot of students couch-surfing" [P11]. Another participant suggested that there is lack of local resources available for young people who leave their homes: "My next door neighbour, there was a kid sleeping... in his lawnmower shed – he

was probably about 16 – so he'd just kind of had enough of home, and decided to go

sleep outdoors for a while, or almost outdoors. So he was there for most of the summer"

[P03].

One participant working with a local social agency felt that not only were

resources for youth lacking, but that existing resources may not be entirely appropriate

given the unique challenges involved in reaching and helping homeless and otherwise

marginalized youth:

> *I think there's a huge gap in service around supporting children that are*
> *in transition from child to youth-type services to adulthood, and I think*
> *that speaks to teen pregnancy issues,*[13] *foster care break-down, things of*
> *that nature... It's not sufficient to meet the need, and I think there's a lot of*
> *at-risk youth that are close – that are street involved and really close and*
> *really vulnerable... These kids, though, are highly marginalized, highly*
> *vulnerable, and not likely to walk in the door and receive counselling from*
> *us because that's not the way they work....they don't always know where*
> *they're gonna sleep tomorrow night, so coming in for regular, scheduled*
> *counselling sessions doesn't work for these kids.* [P10]

The limitations of local services

These increases in poverty, hunger and homelessness, amongst both youth and

adult populations, were perceived to be occurring at a time when local services' and

agencies' abilities to meet demand is diminishing as a result of decreased funding, the

elimination of previously existing programs and resources, and unpredictable surges in

demand. Participants almost uniformly felt that there had been an increased local

demand on social, educational and employment services over the course of the 1990s and

early 2000s.[14] As one put it:

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[14] This observed increase is largely anecdotal. While there have been widespread cut-backs to government
services (Young 2008) during this time period, and certain programs have been eliminated entirely (e.g.
FRBC), there is frustratingly little concrete information (i.e. numbers) available regarding either cuts to or
increased demand for existing programs. A few services in Port Alberni (such as ACAWS) were willing to

There are a lot more people in need of our services that there have been in past years. Back then, four, five years ago, six years ago, it wasn't a big deal. We never had a wait-list, ever. We always had enough time to do research and develop groups and do all that kind of stuff. Last year was the first year that we ever had to have a waiting list, and we had up to 35 people waiting. It was like, holy cow. [P03]

Though job loss in the forestry sector was widely acknowledged to be a major factor in the growing demand for social services, not everyone felt it was a sufficient explanation for the changes, and some were unable to account for the degree to which demand on services had grown. A few suggested that social problems may have been exacerbated by the movement of low-income individuals and households into the area, as a result of the lower cost of living in Port Alberni, or because of the loss of EI benefits, stemming from the dependence on seasonal, part-time or contract work. As two participants put it:

These guys get laid off and come back in a different role, as a contract worker...[in which] they don't have any security, but they were working, and working a lot. And so this group of people were thinking...they're scabs, you're coming back and taking positions that could be union people. And yet, they might have been working beside them not that long ago, like last week, right? But you gotta make the money. [P04]

A large percentage of our clients are fish plant workers – there's seasonal work. A lot of retail, and then restaurant work and a lot of customer service. Very entry level positions, and often it's part-time, on-call and seasonal...Some people it is [enough for EI], and that's if they've put in over-time. [P13]

Simultaneously, local agencies and services found their traditional sources of funding cut or their funding structures rearranged, which some participants described vividly:

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provide me with their own records of user numbers which indicated increased use of services. However, as I did not have access to their financial records, it was not possible to verify that demand had risen out of proportion with funding. Additionally, certain organizations had not been operating in the region long enough for their records to indicate any significant trends in use.

We were universally accessible at one time, but we're not now...meaning that anyone [used to be able to] walk in and participate in any of our programs. But now our funders have given us guidelines about who you can see and who you can't...Someone will call and say, you know, they're having real difficulties. And we have to say, well, we can't see you...It's really heart-wrenching...[to see] a young person that doesn't have a lot of money, and they had a miscarriage, or some kind of thing has happened to them and [we can't assist them]. [P03]

I've seen things get way tougher. The ministry...monies, like people who are on assistance, there's not as much grey area anymore for people...The fact is that policy and legislation have made it so there's no loop-holes anymore. So it's really hard. [P09]

Time and again participants expressed frustrations about: lost funding; stricter regulations on remaining funding; the inability of local agencies to reach groups and individuals who were previously able to access programming; the loss of personnel; and demands being placed on agencies to act in capacities for which they do not receive support or funding.

The economic changes, rising poverty, and limitations in education, retraining, and social services capacities described in this section are intimately entwined with changes to local social and cultural dynamics, described in the next section, though they have been separated for the sake of analytic clarity. In general, the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of change are intensely intertwined. For example, it is difficult for community planners and development and social agencies to separate economic and social problems in responding to rising poverty. Several participants were keenly aware of this, particularly when it came to seeking funding and other forms of governmental support.

4.3. Changing Social Dynamics and Sense of Community

As noted, participants were long-term residents who were well-placed in educational, social and employment services to observe changes to the community's

social and cultural dynamics over the course of several decades, spanning the 'golden age' of widespread forestry-generated wealth, as well as the recent period of forest-sector decline and economic downturn. The interviews revealed a high degree of agreement on many of the major changes and problems. For example, participants almost universally expressed a sense that the community was not as close-knit as it was in previous decades when there was prosperity and widespread employment. One of the most commonly cited aspects of this change was demographic, with increased out-migration of long-term members of the community accompanied by the in-migration of new residents from outside the area. Closely related to these perceptions of demographic change were shifts in participants' sense of well-being and safety within the community, as well as changes to the availability of local resources. Many participants also discussed social problems arising from racist attitudes towards local Aboriginal individuals and communities, though this was not perceived to be a problem which had arisen in the context of contemporary transition, but one which had been present in the community for a long time, a problem which will be discussed in greater depth in section 4.6.

Community identity and demographic change

One participant suggested that the former closeness of the community was at least in part related to a sense of shared identity experienced by a significant portion of the community as a result of common association with the forest industry:

> *...it's just not as strong of a community anymore...it was a tighter-knit community growing up with the forest industry. I mean, you talk about MacMillan Bloedel, and I remember them putting on huge events for all their workers, and barbeques and...all the kids getting together and playing. And it wasn't like a small group, we're talking huge. And all of that went by the way-side. [P13]*

One suggested that there is now only small "pockets like that...Almost like separate little communities that are tied together" [P04]. One of the ways that some participants indicated how much the community had changed was their diminished knowledge of their neighbours and of other members of the community. Port Alberni was historically distinguished from a number of resource dependent communities by the relative stability of its population, which was characterized by multigenerational families rather than transient workers. One participant described how in the past "you knew everybody that walked down the street. If you didn't know them, you recognized them," but noted that "that's just not the case anymore... not at all." [P04]. Other participants described the population as "more transient now" [P13] and spoke of new residents as "outsiders" [P04], which was seen to threaten Port Alberni's perception of itself as a small and caring community. As one put it, a huge part of Port Alberni" is that "we've always been a community," while suggesting that "this is being lost with so much migration" [P09].

As noted, the increased migration of people perceived as 'outsiders' was observed to be occurring in tandem with the increased out-migration of long-term residents in search of better employment opportunities for themselves or their family members. One participant in her early forties observed that "there's not a lot of people my age that I went to school with that are still in town, [as] they've had to go elsewhere to find work" [P02]

Participants similarly placed migration into the community in an economic context, citing Port Alberni both as a relatively inexpensive place for low-income families and individuals to live as well as an attractive site for people looking to invest in

real estate or to purchase a retirement home.[15] Participants observed that "a lot of people are coming in because [of] cheap rent" and "cheap housing," which rank amongst "the cheapest on the Island" [P13], with one noting that "when you only get 375 [dollars a month] from the ministry for your rent, where're you gonna go? You can't be living in a place like Victoria" [P09].[16] It was also felt that migration to Port Alberni was actively encouraged by provincial social services because:

> ...it's cheaper to look after somebody in Port Alberni than it is to look after them in Vancouver and Victoria, where rents and everything is high...The provincial government welfare system [says] ... Port Alberni's a cheap place to live, we'll put you on the bus and send you to Port Alberni. And they have done this throughout the province, it's been documented. [P01]

Conversely, some (largely older) newcomers were perceived to be relatively wealthy individuals taking advantage of the area's affordable housing stock for investment or retirement purposes. As one participant described it, "when the housing prices dropped significantly...people were coming in, outsiders...buying up all the houses to retire here," suggesting that this had created "a bit of a rift" [P04].

Another expressed concern was that these older new migrants were generally less engaged with local civic and social affairs than younger or long-term residents. As one put it, "a lot of these guys [were] not employed in the industry and so they're doing their own thing," and are "not particularly active in the community at all" [P10]. Ultimately,

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[15] In 2010, the average price of all homes in the Port Alberni/West Island real estate district was $233,157. By comparison, in nearby Parksville-Qualicum and Nanaimo the average price was $389,523 and $363,985 respectively (VIREB 2011); in December 2010, the price of single-family home in Greater Victoria was $647,063 (VREB 2011).

[16] While it was earlier noted that an individual on welfare currently receives $610, this is divided into a $375 maximum for housing with an additional $235 maximum 'support payment' (Ministry of Social Development 2008).

participants tended to paint a picture of newcomers as a mixed blessing for the community in that they brought a certain amount of economic activity, but their lack of community engagement potentially threatened Port Alberni's established and historically coherent identity.

Some neighbourhoods were perceived to have been more significantly impacted by demographic changes than others, particularly the more urban or 'uptown' neighbourhoods.[17] Conversely, rural neighbourhoods such as Beaver Creek, which are populated by a large number of multi-generational families, were perceived as having changed less, suggesting that family connections might be a significant factor in residents' decisions to remain in the area. One participant who had been raised just outside of Port Alberni and who maintained an extensive family network in the area observed that "a lot of families that we grew up with are still there...my brothers' kids are hanging out with their kids...it's generation after generation, so there's a different sort of safety and familiarity in that" [P04]. It was also suggested that land ownership on the part of family located in the region played a role in decision to stay or leave and that such ownership might allow area families to endure economically bleak periods better than families whose income derived solely from the forestry industry and its associated businesses:

> *[It's about] the foundation we have here...we're lucky enough, fortunate enough to have the farms and the property and the security and those kinds of things. I mean, I've gone down 3rd Avenue before... when we were in a bust, and all the stores are empty, there's no one in the street...But because we had our own property, and things like that...we could stay [P04].*

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[17] Contemporary Port Alberni is the product of the 1967 amalgamation of the communities of Alberni and Port Alberni. The commercial district of the former community of Port Alberni is referred to as 'uptown', while 'downtown' refers to the commercial area of the former town of Alberni.

Conversely, some participants felt that having close ties to the community could be financially detrimental when unemployed people chose not to leave because of their family and community ties. One participant suggested that some unemployed people refuse to leave because "this is where their roots, and where their family" are [P07]. Some suggested that long-term residents were far more likely to accept low wages or underemployment as a trade-off for being able to stay in the community. As one suggested: "I think most people, if you asked them...would you like to stay here and make less money or move somewhere else and make more money, I think more people would say 'I'd like to stay here'. There [are] a lot of generations, too, that have stayed" [P02]. While commitment to community was generally perceived to be a positive thing, the unwillingness to leave the area to find employment was also seen, by some, to place a burden on local resources while contributing minimally to the local economy. Clearly, many long-term residents have strong attachments to Port Alberni despite the declining employment opportunities and changing social and cultural dynamics.

Safety, public space and crime

Another social problem identified by participants was increased concerns for personal safety. One participant noted how, in her youth, she "always felt safe here," but whereas she "used to walk to school and not have to worry about anything," today she would never let her son walk to school: "there's no way; there's just too many thing that go on now" [P12]. This change was associated with both changing demographics and the arrival of "outsiders," as well as with the decline of the local economy. Another, who grew up in Port Alberni and now lived nearby, noted that she: "always felt like it was a

safe place to raise children, and it was. Economics have changed things a bit in the last few years...I'd be more cautious now...I grew up in Port Alberni. I love Port Alberni. I would not walk there at night anymore," and she made sure to advise me to "never walk around Port Alberni in the evening with a purse" [P09]. Another noted how her son, who lives in Uptown, told her that every night that "they have to make sure everything's completely locked up, because if it's not...they'll go into your vehicles, steal whatever they can," in addition to being concerned with "a couple of drug houses" and prostitution [P05].

Participants also linked Port Alberni's economic decline to shrinking public resources and changes in social relationships, including heightened levels of emotional instability and associated problems like substance abuse. Public spaces were seen to have dramatically worsened in comparison to the 'golden age' of the forestry sector, either overridden by things like crime, drugs, and prostitution, or neglected by the local government and the community. As one put it: "There used to be a lot more parks, and the parks used to be kept up," but "slowly, they just started taking the play-equipment away, not mowing the lawns, not having the [recreational] programs available," with the result that "Port Alberni has become quite a dirty town" [P13].

However, not everyone concurred with this generalized sense of decline, and a few expressed a high degree of satisfaction with community resources such as sports fields and community centers, particularly in contrast to other Vancouver Island communities. The extent to which such resources have historically been a product of MacMillan Bloedel's paternalistic relationship with the local government will be discussed in greater depth in section 4.6.

4.4. Changing Cultural and Gender Dynamics

Changing gender roles and expectations

Participants who grew up in the Port Alberni area frequently spoke of being raised in 'traditional' male-breadwinner households, in which the men worked and the women were stay-at-home wives and mothers. Where mothers did participate in activities outside of the home, in this period, it was often in the volunteer sector or once their children reached high-school age, and where they held jobs outside of the home, it was generally in things like education, retail, waitressing, or secretarial or lower ranking office roles. It was, in short, clear that women "were always the secretary...or maybe even the treasurer...but you never got to be the president" [P01].

One participant related her difficulties when she was a young woman seeking to work both outside of the home and in a predominantly male industry (as a first aid attendant in bush camps), and further doing so even though her husband was employed:

> *I actually got some looks...like, 'what are you doing working, your husband makes a good living, why do you want to work?'...my next door neighbour, she said 'why are you taking a job that some guy can do?'... [implying the attitude that] you can stay home because your husband makes lots of money* [P03].

Further, whether women worked in traditional or non-traditional fields, they were generally expected to maintain the bulk of household responsibilities. As one put it, "my mom...always worked – but in that generation, the wife was always responsible for taking care of the house and raising the children" [P05].

While these circumstances are certainly not the exclusive terrain of forestry-dependent communities, many participants did suggest that gender roles and expectations

were particularly strong and durable in the community, stemming from its status as a

forestry town. One participant explained this very clearly: .

> *I think part of what has defined this community in the past has been...*
> *gender [relations]...This community has had a lot of experience with*
> *family structures where the man has gone to work, and he's made a shit-*
> *load of money, and he's come home at the end of the day and his wife has*
> *supper on the table for him. There's some strong gender-role stuff that I*
> *think happens in resource-based communities, more so than might be in*
> *knowledge-based communities, or urban centres that are larger and have*
> *a much more diverse population, immigrant experience, and employment*
> *and economic experiences.* [P10]

In addition, they also characterized historical gender norms with "hunting and guns and

alcohol and a belief in the role of women and a sense of entitlement" [P10]. Another

described this in terms of a typical (if somewhat exaggerated) father-child relationship:

"...we make you, and then we'll see you when you're twenty-one or twenty-two and you

can go out into the bush and go shooting and hunting and fishing and whatever with me.

That was the attitude then" [P01].

In contrast, participants described significant changes in the community's gender

dynamics, including an increasing number of women working in the formal economy and

holding leadership positions in the community. One suggested that this shift began

roughly 20 years ago, when some women began to start small business and "were getting

to be on boards of directors," going on to note that today "women are out there more,

they are taking the lead...thirty years ago, that would not have happened" [P01]. Another

participant agreed that there were "way more women working" today than in the past,

partly because of the changing economic necessity: "lots of people have to work because

the jobs that are available now don't support a family," which implies that "you have...a

two-income family to make ends meet in a lot of cases" [P03].

Working women and stay-at-home fathers

In short, the entrance of more women into the work-force was frequently framed in terms of the loss of jobs and income from predominantly male forestry workers. As one put it simply: "Mom [has] to work because Dad can't find a job usually," and further than this "Mom may hold down two jobs" [P01]. However, while economic necessity might require the entrance of more women into the workforce, there remains a sense that despite the loss of traditional male employment, men's labour remains more highly valued that women's. For example, one participant explained why it made sense for the female head of the household to work a low-waged job while the male head remained at home, since men's labour is of higher monetary value and therefore low-wage employment may be viewed as degrading, and not worth holding at all. This was echoed in a range of ways. For example, one participant suggested that masculine pride might stand in the way of men taking lower-wage work, and many would rather hang on to the possibility of going back to work at the mill than take a job at Wal-Mart or a grocery store: "I'm sure the pride part is stronger for men... particularly if...[in] the generation before...the man went out and got the money [for the family]" [P02].

There were a number of phenomena seen as running concurrent to the increased participation of women in the workforce, including the increased incidence of stay-at-home fathers and the rise in grandparents acting as unpaid caregivers for children, which one participant described in the context of a young couple in which both are holding "eight-dollar-an-hour jobs" with four kids: The math doesn't work, so grandma and grandpa look after the kids, they're not paying them" [P01]. At the same time, some pointed to the increase of single-mother households due to an increasing number of men

choosing to leave town to find work. As one explained: "There's a lot of people I know that the male is working somewhere else, or away at a camp or something, and then coming back" [P02]. Another participant similarly observed that "a lot of the men who have been laid-off...are leaving town to go have jobs elsewhere. But the family is staying here...Your kids are happy here, they've got their friends, you really don't want to move them. So the women choose to stay here" [P01]. Several participants opined that such circumstances could have negative impacts on family dynamics and domestic relationships. As one participant, whose partner was away for weeks at a time, lamented: "I really value the family dynamics, and they've certainly gone downhill – we can't be a family full-time" [P13].

Persistence of gender attitudes

Participants also related suggested that attitudes were also changing about what are considered appropriate activities or roles for girls and young women, expanding the range of recreational opportunities into things like fishing and hockey, while women's hockey has grown dramatically. Still, in spite of many changes, participants nonetheless reported the persistence of certain highly gendered behaviours and attitudes amongst segments of the community. One participant felt that despite the visible increase in female business owners and operators, where there was a man associated with the running of the business, many people would still choose to deal with the male partner: "for example, in [Mrs. A's] business...Okay, you look at some of the community and they say, okay, this is a husband-wife, they own...this. Ninety percent will go to [Mr. A] before they'll go to [Mrs. A] because he's a man" (at the same time as she complained

about the fact that "women are too busy doing their business stuff that they really don't have that maternal instinct anymore") [P01].

One participant suggested that there was some uneasiness about the rise of stay-at-home fathers, especially amongst older members of the community who "are saying to their kids, 'Well, men don't do that'," noting that it's "taking a bit of getting used to in the community" because it carries the connotation that the person "can't get a job" [P01]. Another described the generational attitudes about gender roles and expectations as follows:

> *I do see it in some of the seniors in our community, senior women...very traditional. Used to drive me nuts. In terms of seeing what their roles were, and the whole thing around conflict [and]...conflict avoidance... [and accepting] not having a voice. I've see a lot of that.* [P07]

In spite of the increased number of women working outside the home and in non-traditional gender roles, and rise of stay-at-home fathers noted above, some suggested that the expectation for female members of households to retain the weight of domestic responsibilities persisted widely. While it is true that women outside of rural resource-dependent communities typically maintain a greater degree of responsibility for household management, participants suggested that in Port Alberni, the uneven weight of domestic responsibility carried by many of the community's women was at least in part affected by the number of fathers and husbands who had left the area in order to find employment and to financially maintain their households, potentially having a negative impact on household dynamics: "Mom's raising teenagers and she can't cope...and she can only talk to Dad for half an hour on the phone everyday maybe and he comes into town and he supposed to set everything straight. And then the kids get resentful" [P03].

This sort of migration for work appears to be dominated by men, as no participants observed a significant number of women leaving the community to seek employment elsewhere while their male partner remained to look after the home.

Sex workers and sex-trafficking

Another problematic aspect of the community's overall gender dynamics surrounds the rise of local sex-work and sex-trafficking, and the absence of social services for these women. One participant working with a social services agency described that while prostitution has an undeniable presence in the community, there are few services or programs for sex-workers:

> *I have no doubt in my mind that there's a lot of women – invisible women*
> *– out there – [who] are really, really suffering...It really makes me sad*
> *because I see young girls on the street or women on the street, and I think*
> *they need to start looking into who's utilizing that service. Who's using*
> *those services? But [they're] giving them twenty bucks. If they're lucky.*
> *[P09]*

The failure to address issues surrounding sex-work was attributed to several factors, including the lack of financial and human resources at agencies that would be inclined to support sex-work and sex-workers, as well as the challenges inherent in reaching a marginalized population. Poor understanding on the part of social workers and law enforcement officials about the nature of local sex-work and sex-trafficking was also cited as a challenge by one participant, who noted that:

> *We've been working as an agency on that issue for probably almost a*
> *decade – we did a needs assessment a few years ago, we held the first ever*
> *conference in this community on sexual exploitation. There were social*
> *workers at the time who didn't realize it was going on – they didn't define*
> *it as sexual exploitation, they defined it as kids that were sex trade*
> *workers. But...the underlying context and reality of sexual exploitation, is*
> *that these kids are trading sex for food, or shelter, or addictions support.*
> *And a lot of the kids that are sexually exploited don't even get that it's*

exploitation. There's a boyfriend, and he's 32 years older than they are, and 'that's okay because he loves me and he takes me to Nanaimo and he buys me great things, and once in a while I sleep with his friends because he asks me to.' [P10]

Like a number of other local problems, participants described a general reluctance on the part of the community to acknowledge or confront the existence of sex-trafficking in the area. As one put it: "If you think family violence is hard to say to people, 'this is going on in this community', sexual exploitation of children is almost impossible for people to hear about that. But there are houses in this community that we've known of in times past where one individual will have several kids living with him, and those kids are selling their bodies to have a place to live" [P10].

Finally, the flip-side of sex work and sexual violence is the perpetrators and consumers, and several participants working as counsellors and social workers complained that there are few resources for male community members seeking emotional or psychological help. "One of the gaps that I see in my employment and for resources is for single, white men. It's really difficult to find resources for that specific group... Really difficult to find a man...[who has access to] counselling services that are paid for, unless you have a child or unless you're First Nations or unless you're a woman" [P13]. Others expressed frustration with the fact that counselling and others services for men were often excluded from agencies' mandates by their funders, despite an increasing demand. As one put it:

...the statistics are still clearly predominantly that men are perpetrators and women are victims when we're talking about domestic violence. And so predominantly, almost overwhelmingly, the resources from public policy are going to those victims. But that doesn't necessarily address the fact that some of those perpetrators actually wouldn't mind finding a different way to deal with things...The number of men coming into [the

agency] and getting referrals, support, a little bit of emotional support, conversation, a cup of coffee, free phone, free computer, those kinds of things, is on the rise...We have offered in the past, and it's been extremely well-received, a men's support group for men that are perpetrators of violence. And we are directly working with them to change the way they're to change their beliefs and attitudes and behaviours...We have no funding for that – we do that off the side of our desk. [P10]

4.5. Local Assets: Community and Future Economic Development

Despite the range of economic, social, and cultural problems discussed in the preceding sections, participants consistently expressed a belief that the community possesses a number of strengths which could be assets in Port Alberni's efforts to rebuild its economy amidst the decline and restructuring of the forest economy, as well as a high degree of optimism regarding the future.

Commitment to community

Participants almost universally cited the closeness of community as Port Alberni's greatest strength, frequently referring to it as "a community with a heart" and its ability to "come together", "pull together" and be "resilient". Charity and out-reach were perceived to be an integral part of local identity; as two described it:

> *This is a good community for people coming together...they do go out of their way to help each other and to help people who need it...last weekend, there was just a dance for somebody who was in a quad accident, for example...If anybody needs an extra help, or a help up, we're there. I think that's a big part of who we are.* [P02]

> *...the business community and personal volunteers are always out there to support anybody who needs help. I mean, I think this community's unbelievable – like, sometimes almost too nice when it comes to things like that.* [P05]

This perceived closeness and generousness on the part of the town was expressed in the context of strong commitment to community – even as many described how there was a

gross shortage of many desperately needed social services for the poor, homeless, hungry, and prostitutes. Participants almost universally expressed their intention to remain in Port Alberni over the long-term, reflecting in comments such as: "I love this community; I wouldn't wanna leave if I don't have to" [P02], and "I've seen a lot of change in it that concerns me, but I still really love Port Alberni" [P09].

Additionally, many participants felt that their personal level of commitment was shared widely amongst other members of the community, describing a "small town feel" that is distinct from many urban communities. Community members were perceived to have remained generous and open-hearted even in the context of recent economic difficulties, as one put it: "It is a community with a heart: those that have, they will give" [P01]. Others noted similarly:

> If you've got a great harvest on your cherry tree this year, they'll bring the spare stuff to Bread of Life... I've also seen lots of examples of when an individual has a crisis in their life and it becomes public, folks rally around them – they hold a dance or they contribute to a fund or something like that. [P10]

> Love the community – the community's amazing, the way they pull together for special things....Like the cancer...fundraising, the M.S. Society – just people pulling to help people they don't even know. [P12]

However, this generosity and inclusiveness does not necessarily extend beyond certain social and cultural boundaries, such as to those living marginally at the Beaufort Hotel and the Rusty Anchor, and towards the Aboriginal communities, as will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.6. Several participants appeared to be aware of such contradictions: for example, two participants described the community as "clique-y", while another expressed that they didn't think "that Port Alberni is so welcoming" [P04].

Several participants also spoke about the great sense of local pride, particularly in the area's working-class, forestry past, and suggested that this pride constituted an important local asset. One participant expressed a belief that: "a community that respects its heritage says something about it as well, and...we have a first-class museum and library and all those types of things" [P07]. Another noted now many community members are proud of their background in the forest industry,

> *...because we're a hard-working community, a blue-collar community. But that's something to be proud of; I don't think that's anything to be ashamed of. But what I don't like is, outside of Port Alberni, we're still seen as a stinky mill-town, and I really hate that connotation...I really resent that. But...locally, culturally, I think we're proud of that background.* [P05]

Benefits for families

Participants with children additionally felt that despite recent changes, Port Alberni remained an exceptionally good community in which to raise children: "I thought it was a fabulous place to raise kids. I couldn't have asked for a better place just because...the outdoor lifestyle, the recreational activities my kids have been able to participate in, the affordability" [P05]. In direct contrast to many of the fears for worsening safety described above, safety was nevertheless frequently cited as one of the community's assets when it comes to raising children, as in this explanation:

> *Safety with the kids is really important to me. I feel that the kids are safe...we still watch and we're still vigilant. We never leave out kids alone, but it's certainly more of a feeling of I know their kids, they know our kids.* [P02]

Participants attributed their high degree of commitment to the community not only to widespread civic engagement and strong family and social ties, but also to a perceived abundance of local resources, particularly for families: "The facilities we have

are second to none, probably anywhere" [P05] – though, as noted earlier, many felt

public spaces were deteriorating and key social services were wanting. The feeling that

Port Alberni was a desirable place to raise children was of particular concern to several

respondents, particularly those who had spent time living elsewhere on the Island. One

participant noted how she decided to move back to Port Alberni "as soon as I found out I

was pregnant, I knew I was coming back to Port Alberni...I knew we had community

resources here. I wanted my kids to grow up with ice arenas, pools, playing on the street"

[P09]. Another noted how she "remember[s] thinking... I can't wait to get out and...it's

so small and what-not. But very quickly I grew to appreciate how much Port Alberni

does have to offer in a recreational sense...As a kid, it was...good place to grow up"

[P13]. This accessibility of built (e.g. swimming pools, water parks, sports fields, hockey

rinks) and natural recreational resources was a commonly noted community asset.

Tourism and diversification

In conversations about the community's potential for future economic

redevelopment, the most commonly discussed option was the expansion of the local

tourism industry, which most saw as having a significant role in the community's future

economy. One participant noted the need for being "flexible and adaptable" and thinking

beyond forestry, and suggested that "tourism is a great option consider[ing] we have the

capabilities of having...the cruise ships coming in, and we're surrounded by water and

mountains" [P13]. Others echoed this sense that "it's time to move forward" beyond

forestry, with one suggesting that,

> *Our trees are probably worth more now left standing than cut down,*
> *because of the future opportunities in tourism. I think Port Alberni now*
> *has to learn what Tofino and Ucluelet are doing, and what can we do to*

make those next steps in tourism, 'cause...I think we have a lot of potential here. [P05]

Port Alberni has in fact begun to actively promote itself as a tourist destination in and of itself rather than merely a stop to destinations further afield – namely Tofino, Ucluelet, Pacific Rim National Park, Clayoquot Sound, the Broken Group Islands, and Bamfield (the head of the West Coast Trail) – at the same time as attempting to capitalize on its affordability, its close proximity to these existing tourist destinations, its picturesque natural features including Sproat Lake (home of the famous Mars Water Bombers), Mount Arrowsmith (the highest peak on southern Vancouver Island), and local wildlife such as the millions of salmon which pass through during spawning season each year.

However, counter-balancing this clear enthusiasm was a measure of caution towards pursuing tourism too single-mindedly. For example, participants expressed concern regarding the quality of potential employment which would come with the growth of a tourist industry. "I think there's definitely room for tourism...I like tourism...But...it doesn't pay enough money...You can't live on it" [PQ9]. Another warned against the notion that

> *...tourism is the answer for Port Alberni. That's a huge mistake, in my opinion – I think tourism is a piece of the answer, absolutely, but tourism jobs are traditionally incredibly low-paid jobs; they're entry-level as far as skills are concerned unless you happen to be the business owner. And I think if we think we're going to base our economy on moving to tourism only, then we better be very, very good at tourism, and we're not yet.* [P10]

There was additional concern that focusing solely on attracting tourists might prioritize the needs of visitors over the needs of residents, and some participants cited the lack of

built recreational and community resources in Ucluelet and the failure of local

infrastructure in Tofino.[18]

Rather than primarily focusing on tourism, most participants saw it as having a

complimentary role, and advocated the necessity of diversification and the value in

maintaining a resource base and space for small businesses oriented towards residents as

well as visitors, as reflected in the following quotes:

> *I think somewhere in between [industry and tourism] is what is more...*
> *sustainable, environmentally, economically, and social-economy in this*
> *community...I think the majority of people in this community see it as a*
> *blend. And recognizing that tourism and other types of employment need*
> *to be – and the infrastructure needs to be developed to support it in this*
> *community. [P07]*

> *...there's a large contingency of people in this community that think*
> *[tourism is] the next best thing. And I think if we don't find a way to*
> *diversify – which includes resource income – it's [the local economy] just*
> *gonna continue to drop lower and lower. [P10]*

> *I don't think we can hang our hat on one thing in particular...there are*
> *lots of tourists that are going through and people are going to Tofino and*
> *to Ucluelet...And I think tourism is going to be one thing in our future, but*
> *there has to be a broad base of other things to offer people too\ [P02]*

4.6. Local Liabilities: Perceptions of Local Leadership and Community Initiative

While participants widely felt that Port Alberni possessed a number of valuable

social assets and that it was well-placed to pursue future economic development projects,

particularly in tourism, they also perceived poor local leadership and a low level of

initiative on the part of both community leaders and members as significant obstacles to

such development. In particular, participants identified a lack of vision and

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[18] In August 2006, Tofino suffered from a severe water-shortage, forcing the closing of all hotels, restaurants and food-service businesses in the community. At that time, the local government asked tourists to refrain from visiting during the crisis, which was blamed on a prolonged dry-period and a local water-reservoir system which had not kept a pace of recent residential and commercial growth (CBC 2006).

accountability on the part of local government, a lack of coherent economic development goals, poor coordination of and support for existing local development initiatives, and persistent paternalistic attitudes on the part of community members. Further, many also highlighted the problems posed by persistent racism and the low degree of communication and collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

Lack of leadership in local government

In expressing frustration about local government and its lack of vision for local social and economic development, many suggested that it largely remained stuck in the past, with comments like:

- they still have a "forest mentality" [P06];

- "our local mayor and city council still wanna look at the trees. They don't wanna move forward into other areas, other economic development" [P05];

- "in transition towns, I think [inappropriate development] probably often goes on unless you have local government leadership that has a clear vision and that marches towards it. And I don't think – I don't see that here" [P10].

One participant was critical of the fact that even where development frameworks existed, they were rarely adhered to:

...I've never seen such lack of focus [as in the town council]. They have a strategic plan, and...it states very clearly that they will operate using a triple bottom line approach [incorporating economic, social, and environmental considerations] to all their decision making. And they almost never do that. [P10]

Even further, local government was seen to be actively detrimental to development in certain instances by failing to support local social services agencies and small business owners, reflected in the following comments:

> *One of our largest barriers has been our own city council, putting up road-blocks. So I really think our city council has to be more open and more supportive of small business where they haven't been in the past...They always seem to put up obstacles. Instead of saying, "How can we help you?" they say, "No, you can't because..."* [P05]

> *The city would not allow us [a local development committee] access to a meeting room, because the cost of that room was fifty bucks an hour, or twenty bucks and hour or whatever it was...And I get that they need to cut expenses...and I get that on the books, there's paper cost to letting [us] meet for an hour in a room. But I just don't know if that's the most logical way for them to be cutting costs...I also see huge amounts of 'talk to the hand; if you don't have money, we're not interested in talking to you'.* [P10]

One participant felt that local government officials remained too focussed on attracting outside investment and business interests at the expense of dealing with local problems, lamenting that "if you don't focus on the social impacts [affecting the climate] of business such as poverty, family violence, drug and alcohol addictions, mental health issues and so on, you're not gonna be successful" [P10].

Additionally, respondents cited a widespread lack of co-ordination or integration of local development efforts, as well as a potential lack of willingness or capacity to improve integration. Some issues surrounding integration were not placed solely on the shoulders of community members and leaders, but also on extra-local organizations, such as the provincial government, who were failing to address social and economic development in an appropriately holistic manner. As one described it:

> *Government agencies I find are very silo-oriented...this pot of money is for this only, and this pot of money is for this only, and this pot of money is for this only, and they're not looking at the global picture...Where, if you*

looked at it in a humanistic kind of way, you could address all of these problems
if you pooled your resources. [P03]

One respondent felt that the lack of integration was a not a cause but rather a consequence of the community's economic difficulties: "we used to have a lot of formalized networks, and they haven't happened over the last number of years. And I think part of it is crisis mode, because people have been too busy and...the sustainability of those systems wasn't built in" [P07].

The Raven Coal project

Many community members, both in formal interviews and informal conversation, expressed concern regarding Raven Coal's recent proposal for a new coal mine on Vancouver Island's east coast. The Raven Underground Coal Project would involve opening a metallurgical coal mine in the Comox Valley on Baynes Sound, just north of the Alberni Valley. Port Alberni itself has been identified as the preferred port through which the coal would be transported to overseas markets, namely Japan and South Korea (Compliance Coal Corporation 2011). Significant and vocal opposition to the project arose in 2009 when the Compliance Coal Corporation's proposal was first made public and several organizations, such as Comox's CoalWatch, continue to monitor the status of the proposal as well as to research and publicize the potential consequences of the project should it be given the go-ahead (the project is still in the 'pre-application' stage, meaning it has yet to undergo environmental assessment).

Opponents are concerned that the Raven Coal project represents the wrong kind of development for the region, one which neglects major environmental considerations for narrow and poorly defined economic benefits. For example, while Compliance has

promised that the project would create upwards of 500 new jobs, most will be located at the mine itself, minimizing the potential employment opportunities in Port Alberni (Compliance Coal Corporation 2011). And while the company says the project could mean 'up to' 70 jobs in Port Alberni itself, it is worth noting that many of those jobs, such as longshoremen, are still covered by union rules regarding seniority and priority hiring, meaning that such jobs would be open to relatively few people and would not necessarily be filled by local workers at all.

Other concerns include increased noise and traffic (potential transportation routes include 3rd Avenue, one of Port Alberni's principle through-fares, and the only road from the east coast to the popular west coast destinations of Tofino and Ucluelet), and the negative health effects of coal dust and damage to the community's nascent tourism industry (the coal storage sheds would be located in relatively close proximity to several popular tourist spots, and some small business owners have asserted that if the coal were to come through town, they would seriously consider leaving the area).

Community members remain divided on the topic: "some people have already decided it's not good for the environment and for the community; other folks... they're willing to observe and wait and see what's being done to address the environmental potential risks, and would it be better if it was rail versus truck, and...[if] it could be an interesting economic driver; and there's a group that says, oh my gosh, don't come near" [P10]. Many respondents felt that the project didn't affect them, or that they knew too little about it to comment, but those that felt informed enough to offer an opinion were generally sceptical: "My personal opinion is on the surface, I would say it's a bad

idea...from [a] publicity perspective, or a marketing perspective, I think it's negative

for the town" [P07].

Lack of widespread community support and initiative

Participants also cited a frequent lack of wider community support for

development initiatives, local social services and small business. One participant felt that

support for new businesses and tourism development was an generational issue: "you've

still got old farts like me and they go, 'No, we don't wanna do that' or 'we tried that

twenty years ago and it doesn't work,' and... and you've got a lot of naysayers there... It

has to change" [P01]. Other respondents echoed this sense, with one noting that "its

really gonna take a lot of work from...from our younger generation... [to] change ways of

thinking" and foster a more creative development climate [P05].

Another aspect of this sense of the older generation stifling new development

noted by one participant was the lack of involvement in community affairs by "some

wealthy folks here in this town" who don't support the "non-profits in town" [P10]

(which again contrasts with the image of some, noted above, about the community having

a great sense of charity and the business community always being there to help someone

in need).

Persistent union mentality

An additional local characteristic perceived to be a legacy of the strength and

pervasiveness of the forest industry in the community was the persistence of unionist

sentiments. Like many coastal British Columbian forestry communities, Port Alberni

maintained a high level of union membership throughout the 'golden age' of its forestry

boom. Given the security and benefits which came with belonging to one of the

province's major labour unions and the power those unions exerted on the part of workers, it is small surprise that union loyalty was particularly strong in Port Alberni, which one participant described as having "always been a real union town" [P05]. Another suggested that "there are certainly people who won't shop at some grocery stores because they're non-union and Safeway is union. So, people will go to Safeway... because they believe that it's a union shop...union members support other union members" [P02].

One respondent whose family owns a small business locally felt that this persistent "union mentality" was having negative impacts on local non-union small businesses: "I find that a lot...people come in and [think], 'oh, well, they're rich, they own their own business.' So, that's still sort of a hurdle we have to get through" [P05]. At the same time, unionism was perceived as being in decline and more likely to be found amongst older members of the community.

Corporate paternalism and attitudes of entitlement

The legacy of corporate patronage was also cited as a persistent obstacle to development. When MacMillan-Bloedel had a powerful position within the community, as noted earlier, it had often taken on the responsibility of sponsoring local events and funding projects such as parks, green-spaces and recreational facilities, and its departure from the community in 1999 meant the withdrawal of such support. In its absence, some participants felt that other businesses and community members had largely failed to step in to the space left, and as a result were struggling to maintain the community's quality of life. Two extensive quotations illustrate this perspective:

The reality is the quality of life in this community back from MacMillan-Bloedel days is a result of the forest industry...[To give an example]...[the city] decided not to put flower boxes on the streets...So, if I was in small business – and I think this [reflects] this paternalistic thing and reliance – I'd be thinking, it adds to my business, why don't I go buy some flowers and plant the planter? Why do I need to rely on the city to do it? But no, it becomes this hue and cry and petitions and all of that kind of thing. Council maintains that we're not putting the planters in there. And so that restaurant does not have a planter outside...that to me is one of those kinds of examples of why don't we pull together, why don't I...have some independence and that whole entrepreneurial spirit. I don't see it as strong here as I do in other communities. And I think it is that reliance on someone else, it's always someone who's responsible, whether it was the forest company when MacMillan Bloedel was here, they did this and...that kind of thing. Well, hey, gang, guess what, it's your community. And I'm also involved in the Rotary Arts district. So, the Rotary Arts district has been going now for about six months in terms of an idea out there. Have we had one business person from Third Avenue or Argyle approach us at Rotary around that and wanting to get involved? No. [P07]

[In] 1996 to 2000, I was part of a group that lobbied to get the new multiplex built, the dual ice-sheet arena. And I remember being on an open-line TV debating a couple people who were anti-multiplex and...some people were anti-multiplex for a variety of reasons, but some were because, well, industry should pay for this. Because that was the history [with] MacMillan-Bloedel...And that has...caused all sorts of issues for our community, and has really stymied our community's ability to move forward. [So I said in that debate]... now it's time - if we think the people should be investing in our community, we think our community needs to grow and move forward – if we're not prepared to do it ourselves, nobody's gonna do it for us. [P11]

Participants related the community's paternalistic relationship with MacMillan-Bloedel to lingering attitudes of entitlement amongst some, and the general persistence of an expectation that there would be high wages and excellent benefits informs of labour which required little formal education or training. For instance, one described their initial impression about

...this sense of entitlement in the community, that you were entitled to a good-paying job, that you were entitled to cars and the cabin and the this and the that. And you don't necessarily have to work that hard for it. And

it was a bit of a shocker for me, quite honestly, when I first came to this town, and it worried me at the time because I can remember teaching kids in junior high school where I was teaching them and saying, 'Hey, you wanna consider doing this [teaching]?' [And them saying] 'Why would I do that? How much do you make...as a first-year teacher?' And I think I was making $16 000 in the first year teaching...[while] they could make $20 000 working clean-up at the mill on the weekend. [P11]

Other participants described how many community members felt they were "owed" jobs and benefits, and that their children deserved the same; as one put it: "I think that certainly those 'hey-days' that many people remember... some people find that hard to let go. They think that their kids should be entitled to that same career, same future, that they had" [P02].

This perceived sense of entitlement was frequently linked with an inability to imagine or articulate an alternative model of development for the community, as well as a certain sense of powerlessness, with some participants noting how many held onto the idea that Port Alberni would be 'saved' by a large employer. To that end, the local government has "spent a fair amount to money and time searching for that employer" [P10], and the current "mayor is still firmly in the camp that 'a big new employer to hire everyone at high wages' is what we need" [P10b] – an attitude which suggests part of the allure of the Raven Coal project for some. Another participant expressed a sense that community members "are willing to pull together and work together on [some] issues and projects," but ultimately still have a great reliance on an external actor coming in to take care of the community [P07].

And yet it is equally important to note that not all participants felt this attitude remained pervasive, and some identified concerted efforts of forestry workers and others to work against such attitudes, and move beyond both their own and the community's

industrial past. One gave as an example "a laid-off worker from our pulp-mill who's always done a bit of tiling on the side, who decided...it's time to move forward – I wanna be self-sufficient, I don't wanna be reliant on the mill for my income. And he has done extremely well," with help from a local development funding agency [P05]. Others strongly rejected the suggestion that forestry-workers possessed an attitude of entitlement, one citing her uncle who "was a grader out in the bush for probably 25, 26 years, and now he's pumping gas. And he's in his retirement, and it works for him...and he's gracefully accepting it" [P13]. There was the concession, too, that while such attitudes did persist, it was important not to take this generalization for granted:

> *There's a strong sense of entitlement from some of the individuals that I worked with, and at the same time, there were some that were like, 'Oh my gosh, free training and money while I got to school. I want it, I'm going.' And some folks went for practical nurse, or long-term care aide, or whatever it was that they wanted to do. Start their own business or whatever...Somebody else wanted to be a golf pro, someone else wanted to be a missionary – so a real wide range. [P10]*

Similarly, while most participants expressed support, and even enthusiasm towards increased tourism development, they widely acknowledged that many were indifferent and even opposed to such developments. As one described it,

> *...[for] some of the elders of the community, I find that it's negatively received because they don't want the population, they don't want the tourism...My parents live on the river and, growing up, people always used to inner-tube down the river, and you'd be lucky to see another person on the same day going down with you. And now it's hundreds of people...[or] thousands of people that are heading down the river almost every day of the summer. And the garbage and litter that's left behind is incredible. So, the complaints I hear is that's gonna pick up, or people are gonna be on Sproat Lake and ruin the lake and they're gonna ruin our natural resources. [P13]*

Others worried that even where the desire to attract more tourists existed, the community did not necessarily possess to abilities or acumen to market itself properly:

> *...we have never been a tourist-oriented town. So, we've always been able to stand along and take care of business and 'we don't need you' kind of thing...I think a lot of people are supportive of the idea, but...they don't know how to look attractive to tourists...if you're a little community like Parksville or Qualicum, it's beautiful... Here, it's kind of a corridor and you just drive through.* [P03]

In short, it became apparent that even where there is desire to diversify the local economy, there remains a high degree of uncertainty regarding the capacity of the community to pursue it.

Race and racism

Through both my interviews and experiences living in the community for several months, it became quickly and starkly evident that race and racism are prominent, every-day presences in Port Alberni, in cultural, social, economic and even physical divides between the area's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (largely white) communities. While Aboriginal people are widely absent from the community's non-Aboriginal businesses and services, levels of unemployment amongst Aboriginal residents of the Alberni Valley consistently overwhelm those of the region's non-Aboriginal residents.[19] Historically, the Aboriginal people of the region were largely excluded from employment in the region's forestry industry, and its associated wealth, while having their land rights denied.[20] Derogatory language towards Aboriginal people – 'chugs', for example – is not

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[19] Statistics for Aboriginal people are not available at the level of the Regional District. However, for Vancouver Island, the unemployment rate in 2006 for Aboriginal individuals 15 years of age and up was 23.8% on-reserve and 10.1% off-reserve; for non-Aboriginals, the rate was 5.3% (BC Stats 2009).

[20] The Alberni Valley and surrounding area is claimed as the traditional territory of both the Tseshaht and Hupacasath Nations. Both are members of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council which is in the midst of treaty negotiations with provincial and federal governments (BC Treaty Commission 2009.) Despite the Royal Proclamation of 1763 requiring the crown to negotiate with Aboriginal peoples in order to obtain land, most of British Columbia was never legally ceded. Contemporary treaty negotiations largely began after the formation of the contemporary BC Treaty Commission and the 1997 Delgamuukw decision by the Supreme Court which recognized the legitimacy of Aboriginal land titles.

uncommon, as is the propagation of old and negative stereotypes about their economic and social lives. There is a clear divide between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, as most of the town and the majority of its non-Aboriginal population are located on the south side of the Alberni Canal and the contiguous Somass River, while the Tseshaht reservation is located on the north side, over what is locally known as the Orange Bridge (or simply 'the Bridge'). To cross the bridge is to cross not only a physical boundary but a social one as well.

While the nature of the divide between the Aboriginal and white communities of the Alberni Valley are not unique to British Columbia, or Canada, my research suggests that it is a highly problematic and contradictory one for the town. As discussed earlier, participants frequently described Port Alberni as a socially conscious and caring community, and yet this generosity was generally not seen to extend beyond highly racialized boundaries. Additionally, while the desire for a higher degree of understanding and collaboration between communities was widely expressed by participants, few institutional or social mechanisms seem to exist to foster better relations. One aspect of these circumstances which make this absence especially notable and concerning is the high proportion of local residents who identify as Aboriginal, comprising 12.9% of Port Alberni's residents, in contrast to only 4.8% in the province as a whole (BC Stats 2010).[21] The continued lack of healthy community relations, dialogue, and cooperation stands as a

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[21] By comparison, the forestry communities of Campbell River, Prince George and Terrace have Aboriginal populations of 8.6%, 10.7% and 20.4% respectively (BC Stats 2006). It is also of note that several participants expressed the opinion that the local Aboriginal community had grown significantly in recent years; however, in 2001, the proportion of Aboriginal residents of Port Alberni was 13.2%, slightly higher than the current population (BC Stats 2003).

potentially significant barrier to the renewed social and economic development of both the Alberni Valley and the community of Port Alberni itself.

Participants universally and strongly felt that racism and poor race relations were a significant problem in Port Alberni. One participant noted that "the level of racism and intolerance in this community is high" [P07]; another described it as "insidious" [P08]; and one went so far to describe Port Alberni as "a nasty little town" when it came to race issues [P08]. Particular economic and social conflicts occasionally bring long simmering race tensions to the foreground. One example of this was the dispute over the salmon fishery in the summer of 2010 when Aboriginal fishers were accused of illegally selling salmon caught without commercial fishing licenses and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans threatened to step in and shut down parts of the Aboriginal fishery. Members of the Tseshaht Nation responded with threats to blockade the highway which runs through their land, while many non-Aboriginal community members expressed anger that Aboriginal fishers were taking unfair advantage of their fishing privileges. Another example was the recent dispute over a local building project where the Hupacasath community wanted to build a centre on the lands of Clutesi Haven Marina, as opponents felt that the project would negatively impact the viability of the marina.[22] As one participant described it,

> ...there was a real mobilization of...white racists in this community who are – and I'm doing that, I'm labelling them – who...are quite well-known in the community and seen in some circles as leaders. And the rhetoric was racist, was pure racism. They didn't see it that way, but it really created a divide as well. [P07]

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[22] It is also noteworthy that members of the Tseshaht community also objected to the project on the basis that it constituted an encroachment on their lands. While both members of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, the Tseshaht and Hupacasath Nations have competing land claims over certain parts of the Alberni Valley.

This story clearly points to the pervasiveness of racist attitudes, not only in the fact that prominent members of the community would feel comfortable expressing racist views in a public forum, but that such views might not even be perceived as racist at all. The story conveyed by a member of a local Aboriginal community reinforces the everyday nature of local racism: "My husband would be a prime person to say that he can still walk into a store today and be ignored...I've left restaurants because we've been ignored...They're looking at somebody and judging them by the colour of their face. So in my book that's racism" [P08]. The absence of visibly Aboriginal individuals employed in non-Aboriginal businesses and services was also described by participants as evidence of routine and normalized racism in the community, which one contrasted with her experiences in another British Columbian community with a significant Aboriginal population:

> *I think when you're shopping around Port Alberni you'll find the you wouldn't see equal representation of employees in this town of First Nations or Aboriginal people... up until Wal-Mart [opened], you very rarely saw Aboriginal people working. The difference between here and Prince Rupert...[where she also worked] is that there Aboriginal people are working in the hotels, working in restaurants, working in retail.* [P07]

Another described her sense that "there's a stigma attached to First Nations people with the white people here, absolutely. A lot of people still think, oh, yeah, they're on welfare 'cause they don't wanna work, or they're lazy" [P12].

While it was widely agreed that discrimination against Aboriginal people remained a serious problem in Port Alberni, some also felt that it is a two-way street and that the Aboriginal communities actively discriminated against non-Aboriginal residents: "I believe that as much as us white people still have a prejudice against First Nations,

they still have a prejudice against us as well" [P12]. Another recalled "being a young

adult in this town and going out and hearing racial slurs against myself" [P13]. A white

member (by marriage) of a local Aboriginal community related that while she largely felt

accepted by her adopted community, there remained persistent pockets of discrimination:

> *If my husband had married someone from Bella Bella, that's outside the*
> *[local Tseshaht] culture, but because they have a brown face, they're*
> *immediately accepted. Because I see some things, like some people call me*
> *auntie and don't think twice about it, it rolls off their lips. And other people*
> *call me [by my name], even though I'm their auntie. So there's a bit of*
> *racism in there because I am their auntie and they should be addressing me*
> *as auntie; but because they see me differently on the outside. [P08]*

The persistent levels of racism in Port Alberni were attributed, at least in part, to a

serious lack of interaction and meaningful social and economic relations between local

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. This lack of social and economic relations

was perceived as both fuelling and being fuelled by a lack of mutual understanding

between the communities. In particular, participants spoke of the generally high degree

of ignorance which white community members have about significant issues within the

Aboriginal communities, such as land rights and the legacy of residential schooling (the

region was home to several residential schools, including one in nearby Ahousaht, the

Alberni Indian Residential School located on what is now Tseshaht territory, and a school

on Meares Island in Clayoquot Sound was only closed in 1983). In addition, while there

appeared to be a high level of awareness regarding the acuteness of particular

socioeconomic issues within local Aboriginal communities, such as high levels of

poverty and teen pregnancy, this was accompanied by a comparatively poor

understanding about what might be driving those problems. For example, one participant

described the "disconnect", lack of understanding, and dismissive attitude of that many

white people have towards the emotional, psychological and social legacies of residential schooling, as though, "it happened in the past, we didn't mean it, just get over it and get on with your life" [P07]. The Alberni Indian Residential School had a particularly notorious reputation as being one of the most brutal residential schools in Canada, known for incidents of physical and sexual abuse, starvation and neglect, as well as numerous student deaths. The school was closed in 1973, but was not torn down until just over two years ago, when former students and their families came from across Canada and the United States to witness its immolation. Having been the site of such a great degree of misery, the burning of the school was believed by the local Tseshaht people to release the spirits of that suffering, and some attendees draped themselves in traditional blankets to protect themselves from the released spirits.

Participants also indicated that there are significant issues surrounding poverty, intimate violence (such as physical or sexual abuse on the part of a family member) and substance abuse, and recognized existing discrepancies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in the occurrence and significance of such problems. One participant powerfully described the poor level of understanding and limited social and economic interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, along with the stark physical divide between the communities:

> ...when I meet people that aren't Aboriginal or First Nations, a lot of them will eventually say that they don't know anybody that's First Nations. Even if they've been a long-term resident of Port Alberni, they don't know what goes on past the bridge. They're not invited often to know what goes on past the bridge, and maybe they don't want to know what goes on past the bridge. So there's a high level of ignorance...a lack of understanding... Total lack of connection, total lack of understanding...[and] a lack of mutual, physical connectedness to each other...I've actually been at

different [Aboriginal] cultural events where I was the only non-First Nations-looking person there [P08].

Participants commonly expressed a desire for a higher degree of dialogue and interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Port Alberni, and one pointed out the hypocrisy of claiming to be a caring community amidst the pervasive exclusion and prejudice:

> *....if we don't start integrating and...communicating, each generation is gonna grow up and nothing's gonna change.... Which is very sad...And it's bizarre because it's that way because this community comes together so well with other things, you would think they'd be able to embrace their own and come together that way.* [P12]

Even those who expressed a certain degree of optimism regarding the current state of affairs in the community felt that without a change to widespread attitudes, whether subtlety or overtly racist, improved social and economic interactions between communities could remain little more than an ideal.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the complex intersection between economic, social, and cultural change that is inherent in the process of attempting to transition away from forestry dependence, and how associated problems are frequently difficult to extricate from one another. These changes and problems were seen to be a necessary foundation for then discussing the key community assets which participants identified and potential opportunities for economic development, as well as many of the significant barriers to moving beyond the traditional resource base – discussions which illuminated both possibilities and contradictions in the struggle for re-development. The final chapter will examine the core themes and tensions arising in Chapter 4, and from

this offer some policy recommendations of relevance to Port Alberni and which might

also have merit for other resource-dependent communities in the process of transition, as

well as pointing towards additional directions for research suggested by this study.

5. Conclusion: Approaching the Challenge of Transition

One of the major themes that emerged in the course of this research was that the process of community transition and re-development in the wake of resource dependence and decline is a complex and multifaceted process, and is heavily influenced by local history. As chapter 4 sought to emphasize, in explaining the challenges of community transition, participants painted a picture in which social, cultural and economic changes stemming from the decline of forestry were deeply entangled,, and linked not only to the legacy of the sector itself but also connected to wider economic and social influences, such as declining government funding for social services and changing attitudes towards gender. The community's future opportunities for development were also understood in the context of other economic changes unfolding, including the rising demand for tourism and the long-term profitability of natural resource exploitation. All of this points to the importance of conceptualizing and analyzing the legacies of dependence and contemporary experiences of transition in a manner which is both informed by broader structural processes yet sensitive to place-based differences.

One of the clearest impacts of long-term resource dependency on Port Alberni is in its limited community capacity, in the sense of its ability to identify, enhance and mobilize local skills, resources, relationships and opportunities according to its needs and interests which, as discussed in chapter 2, is an important aspect of community economic development (Markey et al. 2005). This lack of community capacity was rooted in a range of factors associated with the historic dominance of forestry in Port Alberni, such as the low degree of economic diversification, the limited educational achievement, the extensive dependence on external expertise and capital, and the culture of entitlement

through paternalistic practices. The absence of such capacities is now being acutely felt as the community attempts to diversify its economic base and resolve worsening social problems, including high levels of poverty, homelessness and hunger.

5.1. Social Assets versus Social Capital

One unexpected finding, given the community's significant social and economic problems, was the strong sense of community that was consistently expressed by participants and other residents. Participants universally felt that the community possessed significant assets which could facilitate development if they could only be effectively and inclusively marshalled. One of the community's greatest perceived assets, in the eyes of participants, was its close-knit social fabric, spirit of voluntarism and charity, and general willingness to extend a hand to those in need which might be seen to reflect a potentially high level of social capital.

However, I came to recognize that while the community evidently possesses a number of positive social attributes, such as those discussed in section 4.5, these are not at present reflective of a broadly-based social capital. As noted at various stages throughout Chapter 4, participants implicitly and explicitly drew attention to a number of contradictions in local social and cultural life which are inhibiting the translation of the community's social assets into positive dynamics for economic or social change; that is, they remain mostly fragmented or atomized in the face of worsening problems. For instance: while community members were often described as unusually generous and charitable, participants simultaneously described how many residents were unwilling to confront or even acknowledge some of the severe social problems in their midst; at the same time as Port Alberni was described as a 'community with a heart', it was routinely

and openly seen to discriminate against its Aboriginal residents and be very leery of 'outsiders'; and residents who were credited with resiliency and enthusiasm were simultaneously seen to be lacking in vision or initiative, unsupportive of small business and maintaining an inflated sense of entitlement.

What this suggests is that to the extent that Port Alberni possesses a degree of social capital, it bears more resemblance to the limited 'bonding' capital described in Chapter 2, than to the more flexible and inclusive 'bridging' capital which Field (2003) suggests is more conducive to diversity, inclusiveness and development. It is limited in its inclusiveness, frequently inflexible and expressive of a reluctance to acknowledge or accept change. Participants observed that residents of Port Alberni maintained a great deal of pride in their community and in its history as a small, working-class forestry town, but whether or not this particular place-identity was universally shared or merely dominant is debatable. Either way, this identity, and the social networks which comprise a part of it, was historically premised on the strength of the forestry industry and the set of relations it engendered. In the context of transition, when the material basis for this identity is weakened or undermined, Larsen (2004) suggests that established place-identities may be consolidated or even strengthened by a perceived threat to the relations which maintain that identity. In short, the maintenance of place-identity may constitute a form of resistance to change, particularly to change which is perceived to be outside the control of a given place or community.

Viewed this way, Port Alberni's stubborn if increasingly imagined grip on its past becomes understandable, particularly when 'change' over the past two decades has often had negative impacts on the community and this imaginary may be seen to pose a serious

barrier to community re-development, especially in light of how consistently participants identified the desperate need for 'fresh blood' and 'new ideas'. It seems clear that existing social networks in Port Alberni will need to become more inclusive, flexible, and collaborative if they are to constitute a positive resource for diversification and development, which involves not only increased acceptance and inclusion of 'outsiders' but also of individuals and groups who have long been excluded from community life. It may also involve finding ways by which the community can retain a sense of pride in its heritage without perpetuating the exclusive relations which undergirded that heritage. Additionally, if the strong attachment to past identities and attachments is a response to the negative consequences of contemporary change, the prospect of building social capital in Port Alberni will also require addressing other dimensions of the community's capacity to confront and control the process of transition, including building local human resources and entrepreneurial opportunities.

5.2. Fostering Skilled Labour, Entrepreneurialism and Investment

Resource communities like Port Alberni typically do not possess high levels of well-educated, technologically skilled labour, innovative and risk-taking entrepreneurs, or significant, locally-oriented financial resources. As was discussed in chapter 2, provincial forestry policy has historically addressed these deficiencies in resource dependent communities by recruiting foreign capital and importing expertise from outside the community. Although this model was conducive to economic growth for a period of time, but in the long-term it did not prove to be a stable basis for the development of local capacities and long-term community sustainability.

One key problem many participants identified was the lack of appropriate educational and training resources which would enhance the community's pool of skilled workers and potential future entrepreneurs. They suggested that this was a particularly acute problem amongst former forestry workers and adults wishing to upgrade existing skills or qualifications. Many available programs assume a pre-existing skill- or education level which many former mill workers do not possess, in some cases even just basic literacy and numeracy. This indicates that there is a need for programming and educational services which account for existing skill levels, and which target the basic deficiencies that are preventing individuals from taking advantage of available educational and training opportunities.

Another clear barrier to enhancing skill and education levels and entrepreneurial capacities in Port Alberni is the prohibitive cost of education for many. For example, provincial rules regarding income assistance do not permit those on assistance to attend school full-time, producing a frustrating cycle where individuals require qualifications in order to obtain an income which would permit them to get off assistance, but are not able to obtain such qualifications while receiving assistance. Where students are eligible for educational loans, many are unwilling to take on the associated debt. Additionally, several participants felt that the courses and programs available, either through the local college or through government-funded retraining programs, were not appropriate for the existing local job market, or not conducive to creating new jobs. One example of this which was given was how a government-funded program had put a large number of individuals through computer training, apparently failing to recognise that there was insufficient local demand to absorb such skills. In other words, there was a clear failure

to connect the resources devoted to training with the community's needs, which reflects a disjuncture in levels of planning, an insufficient internal capacity of the community to identify, target and address its skills and knowledge demands, or both.

While Markey et al. (2005) caution that reliance on government programming may foster rather than diminish local dependence, at the same time it should be recognized that small communities frequently do not possess sufficient resources for assessing their skills and training. This is an area where government resources and expertise can play a crucial role in fostering community-based development initiatives, but as emphasized in the preceding paragraph, there must be effective dialogue between different scales.

In addition to fostering new skills and education, it is equally important to retain and nourish the small pool of skilled labour and small-scale entrepreneurs which already exists, which may involve strategies to coordinate between training and local job markets. In regions such as southern Vancouver Island, the role of government may also extend to the coordination of regional development initiatives, in order to expand the pool of available skills and resources.[23] Regional coordination may also enable a collaborative rather than competitive relationship between communities working to expand and diversify their economic bases and achieve social development goals. Government may also play a role in encouraging local investment by maintaining and expanding key infrastructure, as well as through policy which encourages diversification and local

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[23] For example, between 1996 and 2006, the provincial government brought together local governments, industry representatives, First Nations and other stakeholders to devise a collaborative regional plan for the Great Bear Rainforest which incorporated local interests and capacities, and sought to balance economic, environmental and social values. A comprehensive regional plan was adopted by consensus in 2006 (McGee et al. 2010).

ownership. Young (2008) argues that the current provincial policy environment tends to favour small business start-ups oriented towards extra-local markets over those concerned with fulfilling local demands and needs. For example, both BC's Northern Development Initiative (NDI) and the Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) (which has an office in Port Alberni) give priority to new businesses which provide products or services to extra-local markets. Thus, facilitating the growth of new small businesses will require support for locally-oriented entrepreneurs, including facilitating access to capital and training.

5.3. A New Resource Dependence?

As discussed in chapter 4, the prospect of the Raven Underground Coal project is a significant development issue in the Port Alberni area, which illustrates a number of enduring problems with resource dependency and community development. Coal extraction and processing is notoriously damaging to surrounding ecosystems, as well as being a major source of carbon emissions. Thus, for a community like Port Alberni seeking to build its tourist economy, the Raven Coal project could be a major barrier, not only health in terms of ecosystem health, recreation, and aesthetics, but also in terms of the negative stigma associated with coal as the antithesis of sustainable development.

The Compliance Coal Corporation's (CCC) proposal has galvanized vocal opposition in the areas surrounding the proposed mine, from area residents of Courtney-Comox in the north to Port Alberni in the south. But it also has a number of supporters who hope the project will bring increased jobs, tax revenues and economic activity to the region through the growth of associated services such as transportation and accommodations. While the new mine would surely bring investment and jobs into the

area, it remains debatable to what extent the community of Port Alberni as a whole would stand to benefit from the operation. CCC expects the mine to be productive for only 16 years and would export raw coal overseas for processing, given the BC law against the use of coal in the provincial energy supply. The company itself is based in Vancouver, and 40% of the project itself is controlled by overseas investor groups in Japan and South Korea (Mickleburgh 2011). Whatever gains might arise must be set against the fact that the mining and transportation of coal would threaten to have potentially serious implications for existing sectors, including the salmon fishery, the commercial shell-fish industry and the region's nascent tourism industry which is heavily premised on the surrounding natural beauty and outdoor pursuits such as camping, boating and sport-fishing. In short, the project could have serious implications for the area's surrounding environment, and thus this potential return to a new form of resource dependence threatens the very basis of some of the key prospects for local economic diversification.

The prospects of the mine occurring is unsettlingly reminiscent of the conditions which maintained and reinforced Port Alberni's dependence on the forestry industry for so many decades. Rather than a new foundation for a stable economic base, the project would bring a new reliance on external capital and control, and one with a very short expected life-span and long-term environmental and economic consequences. Additionally, the project would threaten the on-going treaty negotiations with the K'moks First Nation, which claims a portion of the area as their territory. Unfortunately, despite local opposition which includes Port Alberni's District Labour Council and the community's mayor, the decision to permit or deny the mine's opening rests with the

provincial and federal governments[24] and not with the desires or interests of affected communities. Thus, clearly in this case, other scales of government beyond the local will play a crucial role in making influential decisions that will affect community-level development in Port Alberni, and hopefully these decisions will value local concerns and perspectives.

5.4. The Need for Place-sensitive Development Strategies

The issues discussed above – social capital, human resources and natural resource exploitation – may all be seen as manifestations of the unique confluence of economic, social, environmental and cultural factors in Port Alberni; they are reflective and constitutive of a particular place and community. As discussed in Chapter 2, place may serve as an important node around which community development may be conceptualized and executed. Markey et al. (2008) suggest that putting place at the centre of development policy and initiatives not only permits communities and regions to address their unique sets of challenges and liabilities, but also allows space for local strengths and assets to assert themselves.

Crucially, pursuing a "policy of place" (Markey et al. 2008) requires identifying a community's particular assets and liabilities. Given the complex and tightly intertwined nature of Port Alberni's social and economic problems, any development policy designed to address the community's needs must acknowledge this complexity if it can be reasonably expected to succeed. Several participants, particularly those involved with

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[24] The management of most natural resources, including forestry and mining, is the purview of the provincial government, but the federal government holds jurisdiction over the country's oceans and inland waters, which means that the Raven Coal project must pass environmental impact assessment at both the federal and provincial levels.

social service provision, skills training and employment services, expressed frustration with the 'siloed' nature of conventional government policy and funding structures which often attempt to address interwoven social and economic problems in an atomistic manner. While formulating effective, inclusive socio-economic policies that are conducive to diversity presents a formidable challenge, there are already numerous frameworks in use across the country which strive to do just this. One such example, which is becoming increasingly common, is that of social enterprise.

Social enterprise (SE) occupies a space between conventional for-profit business models and social agencies or charitable organizations. SEs operate as revenue-generating businesses which "produc[e] goods and services for the market, but manag[e] operations and redirect[t] surpluses in pursuit of social and environmental goals" (BC Centre for Social Enterprise 2011). SEs not only allow for the integration of social and market demand, but allow for the targeting of community-specific needs and assets. Additionally, they can help community-based organizations increase their capacities for self-sufficiency, allowing for greater local control over finances and the use of resources. They also often employ individuals who may have difficulty obtaining work, such as those with physical or developmental disabilities, youth-at-risk, former prisoners and individuals struggling with mental illness or addictions.

The most well-known example of such enterprises are charity thrift stores which serve local demand for affordable clothing, household items, and small consumer goods, and then direct profits to social services such as shelter and soup kitchens. However, SEs are not limited to charity shops: other successful examples include Toronto's artisanal St. John's Bakery, whose surpluses are channelled to an associated mission and social

services; and Vancouver's Potluck Catering, which directs revenues to a number of

social and educational programs including skills training and free meal programs in the

city's Downtown East Side. Given the chronic and extensive nature of socioeconomic

problems such as poverty, hunger, homelessness and substance abuse in struggling

resource communities like Port Alberni, their histories of dependence on extra-local

actors and institutions and the contemporary need for integrated and inclusive

development strategies, social enterprise may hold the potential for these communities to

pursue developmental goals according to their existing assets and liabilities.

5.5. Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Since this study focused on the insights and interpretations of a particular group of

experts in Port Alberni, it omitted a number of potentially divergent or contradictory

voices. One group in the community which may offer substantially different perspectives

on the challenges and constraints to community re-development than those of the

participants in this study is relative new-comers to Port Alberni. Many relatively recent

arrivals to the area have no personal or familial relationship with the forest industry, and

have instead been attracted to the community by the area's natural beauty, affordable real

estate prices and small-business opportunities. Participants spoke of local attitudes

towards 'outsiders' and the tensions which their arrival has engendered, but obviously

could not speak to the experiences of those 'outsiders.' In this period of transition and

development, the perspectives and experiences of those who do not share the

community's historical identity or its more recent history of socio-economic difficulties

may be particularly relevant for a community struggling to move beyond its forestry-

dependent past.

Another area of potentially valuable research is the effects of race relations in the future development of resource communities. The level of racism and racial discord in Port Alberni surprised me, and it was not until I had spent several weeks in the community that the topic entered my conversations with participants. Many resource communities in British Columbia (as well as in other Canadian resource hinterlands) have high proportions of Aboriginal residents, and many have correspondingly high levels of racism towards Aboriginal peoples. There currently exists a dearth of literature or empirical work on both racism in BC's resource communities, and on its relationship with transition and development.

The challenges of transition in Port Alberni are myriad, as broader socio-economic trends, from long-term adjustments in the global forest-products market to changing attitudes towards gender and the environment, have been compounded by powerful legacies of the community's history of forest dependency. While Port Alberni shares many characteristics with other struggling resource communities, its circumstances are distinguished by a particular intersection of social, economic and cultural institutions and experiences, including its historic relationship with MacMillan Bloedel, its significant Aboriginal minority, and its proximity to some of the province's last remaining stands of old-growth timber. Its future, too, will be inescapably influenced by its place-based characteristics, including the Alberni Valley's spectacular physical attributes and its relationship to future sites of resource extraction, such as the Raven Coal project. What all of this underlines is the necessity of approaching research on resource dependency and dependent communities with an awareness of place and a sensitivity to its meaning and implications. The same holds true for all initiatives seeking

to challenge and alter historic relationships of dependence in the interests of more

lasting, collaborative and comprehensive socioeconomic development.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

Office of Research Ethics

The University of Western Ontario
Room 4180 Support Services Building, London, ON, Canada N6A 5C1
Telephone: (519) 661-3036 Fax: (519) 850-2466 Email: ethics@uwo.ca
Website: www.uwo.ca/research/ethics

Western

Use of Human Subjects - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. T. Weis

Review Number: 17155S   **Review Level:** Full Board

Review Date: June 04, 2010   **Approved Local # of Participants:** 30

Protocol Title: Women's Work: Gender and economic transition in a forestry-dependent community

Department and Institution: Geography, University of Western Ontario

Sponsor:

Ethics Approval Date: July 07, 2010   **Expiry Date:** September 30, 2010

Documents Reviewed and Approved: UWO Protocol, Letter of Information and Consent.

Documents Received for Information:

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information. If you require an updated approval notice prior to that time you must request it using the UWO Updated Approval Request Form.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the subject or when the change(s) involve only logistical or administrative aspects of the study (e.g. change of monitor, telephone number). Expedited review of minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered. Subjects must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation.

Investigators must promptly also report to the NMREB:
a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

If these changes/adverse events require a change to the information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment advertisement, the newly revised information/consent documentation, and/or advertisement, must be submitted to this office for approval.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

Chair of NMREB: Dr. Riley Hinson
FDA Ref. #: IRB 00000941

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information			
☑ Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)	☐ Janice Sutherland (jsutherl@uwo.ca)	☐ Elizabeth Wambolt (ewambolt@uwo.ca)	☐ Denise Grafton (dgrafton@uwo.ca)

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

cc: ORE File

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Women's Work: Gender and economic
transition in a forestry-dependent community

Background Information
- Age (might want to give them broader categories 20s/30s/40s, etc:
- Employment status/Occupation:
  - *If unemployed, period of time seeking employment:*
- Number of years resident in Port Alberni:
  - *If from elsewhere, identify hometown:*
- Education and training:
- Work Experience:
- Parents' career/ work background:
- Marital status:
- Children: *If yes, how many/age/gender:*

1) Personal Background and General Views about life in Port Alberni
- Did you grow up in Port Alberni?
  - o If yes, tell me about your experience growing up in Port Alberni (eg family dynamics, cultural experiences)
  - o If no, tell about how you came to live in Port Alberni.
- Do you plan on residing in Port Alberni over the long-term?
  - o Why or why not?
  - o Is there anything that might cause you to reassess?
- [*If respondent has children*] Do you feel like PA is a good place to raise your children?
- [*If respondent does not have children*] Would you choose to raise your children in Port Alberni? Why or why not?
- In your eyes, does Port Alberni have any major social or economic problems?
  - o *If yes, do you feel that some people or groups of people are disproportionately affected by these problems?*
- How does the forestry industry influence life in Port Alberni?
- How do you feel the closure of the mills in Port Alberni have impacted the community?

2) Education and Training
- Have you completed any post-secondary education or training?
  - o *If yes, please explain.*
  - o *If no, what are the main reasons for not doing so?*
- What opportunities exist in Port Alberni for post-secondary education, training, or retraining?
- Do you feel that these opportunities differ for men and women in Port Alberni?
- Would you consider leaving PA to pursue education or training?

3) Employment history

- How would you describe the main employment opportunities in PA?
- Can you describe your work history to me?
- Have you had difficult finding work in the past?
  - o *If so, please elaborate.*
    - *-what have been your major barriers? (prompts: domestic/community/other responsibilities?)*
    - *-do you think there are any factors which might improve employment opportunities? (prompts: education/training? child-care?)*
- Have you found your work to be rewarding? (fairly compensated?)
- Do you feel like employment opportunities differ for men and women in PA?
  - o *If so, please elaborate?*
  - o *If not, why not? Has this changed?*
- Do you feel like men and women face different barriers to employment?
  - o *If so, how?*

4) Household dynamics

- In terms of total hours spent, can you estimate the relative contribution to housework within your household?
- (*If there are children*) Can you estimate the relative contribution to childcare?
- Do you discuss the division of household responsibilities with your spouse/partner/family?
- Is this affected by the sort of jobs you or your spouse/partner has?
- Is anyone in your household involved in the forestry industry at present, or in the past?
  - o *If yes: in what capacity?*
    - -has this affected how household responsibilities are divided?

5) Community involvement and services

- Do you participate in any community/political/social organizations?
  - o *If yes, tell me about your participation/organization.*
  - o *If no, why not?*
- What kind of social or community services are available in PA?
  - o do you know of any specifically geared towards women?
- Have you ever used/accessed any of these services or programs? Which ones?
  - o Tell me about your experience with them.
- Do you feel like available services and programs fulfill the needs of the community?
- What sort of 'gaps' do you feel exist in terms of service availability and access?

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT DOCUMENT

Letter of Information: Women's Work: Gender and economic transition in a forestry-dependent community

Researcher: Emily Galley
Department of Geography
The University of Western Ontario
London, ON, Canada N6A 5C2
Email: (---------------)

My name is Emily Galley and I am a graduate student at the University of Western Ontario. I am conducting a project to understand how gender roles and perceptions are changing in the context of economic restructuring in the province's forestry industry.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in an interview and to provide you with the information you require to make an informed decision on participating in this research. This interview will take roughly 1 to 1.5 hours, and will take place at a time and location that are convenient for you. Should you choose to participate, the topics that will be discussed during the interview include employment opportunities and constraints, community involvement, household dynamics and responsibilities, the role of the forestry industry in shaping the economic, cultural and social aspects of community life, and the availability or lack of services and programs relevant to the needs of individuals and the community.

Participation in the interview is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate, decline to answer any questions, retract information given, or withdraw from the study at any time. With your permission, I would like to digitally record this interview. This interview will be one of roughly 15-20 other young women seeking work or recently employed in Port Alberni.

Participation in this project presents minimal risk to you. While the interview involves questions of a personal nature, please be aware that you are under no obligation to answer them should you feel uncomfortable doing so. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, please inform me as soon as possible so I may pause or terminate the interview as necessary; it is by no means my aim to cause emotional or psychological distress. All information collected for this study will be kept strictly confidential. Your research records will be locked in a cabinet in a secure office, and only I and my co-

supervisors will have access to the digital recording and transcripts. Transcripts will be destroyed and digital recordings deleted after the project is complete. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent to the disclosure.

Please note that while interviews may involve questions regarding or discussions involving personal issues, I possess no training or qualifications as either a counselor or social worker. Any discussion involving incidents of depression, domestic abuse or similar sensitive issues will be handled in the strictest confidence and, should the participant desire, information regarding available services and sources of support will be provided. I am, however, legally obligated to report any incidents of suspected abuse or other illegal activity involving individuals under the age of 18.

In terms of the ultimate benefits of this study, my hope is that it might help to better understand women's experiences in the labour market in the wake of the decline of the forestry-industry, and its varied social and cultural dimensions, and through this provide some insight and suggest directions for community services, policy, and future research.

If you have any questions about this study please contact me, Emily Galley (email: --------------) or my academic co-supervisors Dr. Tony Weis (email: ---------------) and Dr. Jeff Hopkins (email: ---------------). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the study you may contact the office of Research Ethics at 001-1-519-661-3036 or email ethics@uwo.ca.

Finally, a few other pertinent points of information:
- You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.
- You do not waive any legal rights by signing the consent form.
- If you wish to receive a copy of the results of this study, please provide me with your contact information on a separate piece of paper.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Emily Galley
MA Student
Department of Geography
University of Western Ontario

CONSENT STATEMENT

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate in the workshop. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Research Participant:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer obtaining informed consent:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

You will be provided with a copy of this letter once it has been signed.