Wild nature, disciplined aesthetics:

Framing environmental justice in the case of the Northern Gateway Pipeline project

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May, 2012

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

This thesis explores how the preservation of wilderness serves as a focal point for environmental opposition to petrochemical development in Canada. It examines a selection of documentary films that critique the Northern Gateway project: a proposed pipeline infrastructure that would deliver crude oil from Alberta's tar sands to the west coast of British Columbia for export across the Pacific Ocean. The research describes and analyzes how the films frame their respective political messages through depictions of B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest as a pristine wilderness landscape. I argue that these aesthetic representations of wilderness construct an ideological divide between nature and culture that reflects colonial and post-colonial imaginings of the Canadian landscape. As such, these representations reproduce disciplinary formations that secure the privilege of institutional authorities as custodians of the environment. In considering progressive theories of political ecology, this thesis suggests that the aesthetic of wilderness, and its normative boundaries between human and natural worlds, presents a significant limit to the struggle for environmental justice.

Ce mémoire porte sur la façon dont la protection des étendues sauvages sert à diriger les interventions écologiques contre la croissance de l'industrie pétrochimique au Canada. Plus précisément, ce mémoire examine une série de documentaires qui critiquent le projet Northern Gateway: un gazoduc prévu pour livrer le pétrole brut d'Alberta à la côte ouest de la Colombie-Britannique, pour fins d'exportation trans-Pacifique. Cette recherche sert à décrire et analyser la manière dont ces films dépeignent l'environnement du Great Bear Rainforest comme une étendue sauvage immaculée afin de véhiculer leurs messages politiques. Je soutiens que cette esthétique sauvage crée une fracture conceptuelle entre nature et culture qui révèle l'esprit colonial et post-colonial du Canada. De telles représentations consolident l'assise et les prérogatives des autorités institutionnelles en tant que gardiennes de l'environnement. Se basant sur des des théories écologiques progressives, ce mémoire suggère que l'esthétique de la nature immaculée et les distinctions normatives que celle-ci entretient entre l'espace humain et l'espace naturel présentent un obstacle à la réalisation d'objectifs écologiques.

Acknowledgements

I take this opportunity to recognize my supervisor, Darin Barney, for his generous support and guidance throughout the writing of this thesis.

Introduction

Industrial bids to intensify petrochemical development in Canada present new challenges for communicating the stakes of continued fossil fuel production. Environment and climate science point to the decidedly complex risks of oil sands development for atmosphere, land and water, and the human societies they sustain. However, public scrutiny of the petrochemical industry suggests a growing concern over the transformation of Canada's natural landscapes, and particularly Canadian wilderness. The politics of oil sands expansion are increasingly bound to the fate of Canada's last remaining borderlands of wild, 'untouched' nature. I argue that political interventions inspired by the preservation of wilderness present a critical area of inquiry for contemporary understandings of ecological politics. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how environmental advocacy constructs an intelligible link between wilderness conservation and oil politics. It examines how the concepts of wilderness that enter into the debate on petrochemicals establish sensibilities of nature and human activity, which together serve to naturalize a particular narrative of environmental justice.

I situate this research problem in relation to the aesthetic mobilization of wilderness in civil society activism. Specifically, the research of this thesis examines representations of British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest, as framed in recent activist films opposing the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline project. Enbridge Inc. proposes the construction of new pipeline infrastructure joining Alberta's oil sands to the west coast of British Columbia, to deliver crude oil for export across the Pacific Ocean. This bid to accelerate the production of Alberta's oil sands has provoked strong opposition among local communities, environmental advocates and First Nations groups. Within this

opposition is an outstanding concern for the future of B.C.'s unique coastal ecology. This environmental concern is particularly demonstrated in a number of short documentary films including *Spoil (2011)*, *Oil in Eden* (2011), *Cetaceans* (2011), *Tipping Barrels (2011)* and *the Pipedreams Project (2011)*. The films' critiques of the Northern Gateway project defend B.C.'s coastal landscape by placing aesthetic importance on its pristine forests, sacred waters, iconic wildlife and traditional indigenous cultures.

These film productions and their rich aesthetic representations of B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest serve as the core research materials of this thesis. I approach these materials by producing a thick description of their content, followed by a critical analysis that asks: how does the showcasing of wilderness and wildlife function in configuring normative relations to the natural landscapes of British Columbia? And how do iconic depictions of wilderness, through wildlife figures like the Spirit Bear, contribute to an idea of frontier which proposes to delineate the boundaries of human activity? In short, the research asks how the representation of a particular relationship between people and wilderness – one that is otherwise threatened by industrial planning – is part of an aestheticization of landscape that intervenes politically in the contested field of petrochemical development in Canada. By way of these questions, this thesis addresses how representations of human-wilderness relations serve to encapsulate the environmental and political stakes of the Northern Gateway pipeline.

Chapter One:

Nature, culture and wilderness: A review of the literature

Deciding how petrochemical development should fit into Canada's national energy policy presents an opportunity to consider anew the meanings of sustainability. How we choose to communicate environmental interests in Canada will have a critical influence on how we see the land as a site of resource extraction. This is also, implicitly, to decide what forms of cultural presence are appropriate in the Canadian landscape. This chapter focuses precisely on how we forge relations to the 'natural' world. It explores how these relations function in the political organization of western industrial society. Critical studies of environment theorize how relations between the human and non-human reveal an ideological division between nature and culture that lies at the heart of some of the most pressing political struggles facing the industrialized world. This insight is expressed across sociological, postmodernist and eco-political literature that situates 'nature' as an historical artifact of Western thinking. Placing these theories in dialogue with one another, the following chapter investigates how they respectively question, deconstruct and defend the language with which we encounter the environment as a force outside ourselves.

This discussion indicates how unstable, heterogeneous relations to the natural world appear stable and unified through discrete representations of nature and culture. It considers theoretical interventions which understand the struggle for environmental justice as a demand for the re-working and re-articulation of such dualisms between nature and culture. The discussion will then shift towards an examination of wilderness as a construct of the Canadian colonial and post-colonial imaginary, in which the defense of nature is argued to secure particular interests through time and space. These arguments

are explored in case studies on conservation initiatives along the west coast of British Columbia.

It is important to acknowledge some fields of scholarship that, though relevant, fall outside the scope of this review. For example, research on the public relations of environmental rhetoric uses models of interpersonal, cultural and institutional communication to unpack how environmental campaigns disseminate their "messages" (Corbett, 2006). Here, environmental advocacy is situated within practices of mass communication as "image events," examining how particular media platforms such as the "televisual public sphere" produce a visual rhetoric of environmentalism (DeLuca, 1999). Political economies of the media highlight the role of corporate and institutional filters in deciding the "newsworthiness" of environmental events. The particular branch of news studies critiques the hegemonic role of mainstream journalism in environmental claims-making (Hansen, 2010).

Another related area of scholarship deals strictly with the affective capacity of animal representation in environmental communications. This area of work evaluates the psycho-social effects of wilderness, animal and wildlife representations. For example, Soper-Jones argues that the "affective appeal" of wildlife stories trigger a "phenomenological appreciation" for animals, and consequently "raise awareness about the implications of our attribution of consciousness to them" (2007:270). She suggests that sentimental narratives of animal as "protagonists" evoke "affective" reactions to their struggles and vulnerability in nature (2007: 270). In her discourse analysis of the Canadian television series *The Nature of Things,* Wall observes how anthropomorphic

depictions of wildlife are used to instill feelings of respect for nature, for example "elephants were described as eminently civilized, caribou were endowed with ancestral wisdom..." (1999: 69). The symbolic emphasis placed on B.C.'s Spirit Bear and other iconic wildlife, may represent a similar kind of affective intervention in opposing the Northern Gateway proposal. While this discussion does not include theories of affect, it does however address how a sensibility of human-animal relations falls within the broader discourse of Canada's wild landscape. In short, this project does not intend to assess the effectiveness of communications strategies, but to first understand how wilderness sites such as the Great Bear Rainforest, are made tangible objects of environmental interest.

Part I: The social construction of nature

As Kate Soper has argued, "landscape, wilderness, plant and animal life" become the empirical surfaces and domains upon which the social relations of nature tend to be inscribed (1995: 180). Soper's approach hints at two key features of environmental ideology; its indebtedness to the positivist tradition which identifies nature as a discrete object of calculation, and the irretrievably social meanings that make nature intelligible in the first place. A useful starting point to unpack these critiques is with the tradition of naturalism that has historically informed environmental argumentation. Soper's description is but one example that will be considered here, alongside the work of Donna Haraway, Andrew Biro, Ramachandra Guha, Val Plumwood, John Sandlos and Bruno Latour. Together, their work offers an overarching critique of 'nature' as an external reality, separate from the ostensibly immanent realm of human culture.

The context of naturalism

Broadly, naturalism includes a range of aesthetic, literary and philosophic practices that assume an empirical orientation to the non-human world and its life forms. Through scientific observation, natural history or the natural sciences seek to uncover empirical evidence of the world as a system of natural laws. Early colonial geographies of the Canadian landscape for example, reflect a "Victorian passion for natural history" through their taxonomic practices of "naming, mapping and classifying all aspects of the natural world" (Sandlos, 2003: 395). Museums of natural history serve as repositories for such empirical data, gathering collections of artifacts and organic specimens for public exhibition. Natural history is perhaps more widely encountered in genres of nature photography (*National Geographic Magazine*), documentary film and television broadcasts like the CBC's *The Nature of Things*[1] or BBC's *Planet Earth*.

Extrapolated from the physical sciences, natural history has a structural role in the economic and social sciences, informing their understandings of the social world. Marxist sociology for example, relies on a certain degree of naturalism or realism by using empirical categories of natural use values (Biro, 2002). The critique of the capitalist mode of production requires a sense of an objective, natural world, prior to human mediation, or social construction. Donna Haraway cautions that the traditional ideology of social science constructs a conceptual split between nature and culture, such that

1 See Wall, G. (1999) longitudinal study on *The Nature of Things*, one of Canada's longest running TV programs since the 1960s exploring the use of science in understanding, managing and controlling nature.

"natural" knowledge is discretely incorporated into techniques of social control over the body politic (1991: 8).

Drawing from her professional expertise in the biological and zoological sciences, Haraway has devoted particular attention to the ways in which patterns of human life are naturalized and explained in the field of primatology, here she isolates some of the mythic "stories" and "fictions" that make up naturalistic assumptions (1991). She argues that primatology, as an apparatus of natural science, has a particularly influential effect in reproducing social meanings of human nature, survival and sexual difference. She examines how monkeys and apes (simians) have been historically "enlisted as natural objects" in what she refers to as the "political physiology" of the biological sciences (1991: 14). She argues that scientific observations of animal life not only place "limits on the permitted explanations of the body, "but also place limits on the "body politic" (1991: 24). Here the physiological anatomy of the body is made into a metaphor for hierarchical political organization. She argues that studies of animal societies have often been used to naturalize "oppressive orders of domination" that legitimate the patriarchal structure (1991: 14). For Haraway, the popular fascination with animal behaviour reveals much about their role in explaining the "evolutionary origin of human beings" (1991: 12). She explains how the myth of humanity's "fall" from nature into culture is traced to evolutionary tipping points where man and his cultural tools can be divorced from their archaic, natural prototypes.[2] In this teleological narrative, animals serve as "natural

2 Haraway refers to this as the "man-the-hunter" hypothesis in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (1991: 27).

objects that can show people their origin; their pre-rational, pre-management, pre-cultural essence" (1991:14, 30).

Thus, Haraway allows us to interpret biological, "organicist" explanations of social life as a kind of narrative of the Western tradition of natural science (1991: 174). Contrary to its claims of objectivity, Haraway insists that the field of biology serves as an appendage of political discourse, as socially shaped, value-laden "myth" (1991: 92, 98). She argues that we can trace the myth making of natural science from Aristotle to Galileo, Bacon, Newton, Linnaeus and Darwin (1991: 72). Similar observations have been made by French philosopher of science and technology, Bruno Latour, in his distinction between 'Science' and 'the sciences,' where Science represents the political ideology that attaches to the practical work of the sciences. What Haraway describes as myths of political physiology seem to align with Latour's description of the "disputable": theory, opinion, interpretation, and values (2004: 244). Myth then is the opposite of what Latour refers to as the "matters of fact," or indisputable, sensory data. Latour argues that "Science" polices our understanding of nature through a social, mythic apparatus that is made to appear objective and indisputable. Science, he argues, plays a very powerful political role in separating values from facts, making it particularly difficult for the collective to recognize the social world and external reality as part of "a seamless cloth" (2004: 10-12).

Considering the above critiques, it becomes particularly critical to situate how environmentalism relates to the institutional power and politics of nature. Critiques of Western modernity have carefully traced the ideological manipulation of nature to enlightenment thinking, scientific rationality and industrial modes of progress. The

following discussion will map out some of the critical overlaps shared between environmentalist, sociological, postmodern and progressive understandings of environment, while also examining their respective theorizations of nature.

Environmentalism: The defense of nature

The intellectual transformation brought about by the scientific revolution and Enlightenment thinking marks a turning point in conceptualizing nature separate from ethical contemplation (Jones, 2000: 275). This is precisely the attitude that environmental philosophy seeks to overturn through its revaluations of nature. The popularization of the scientific method, shaped by philosophers such as Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon, allowed for the "rationalising and hardening" of the concept of nature (Jones, 2000: 275). It offered an empirical account of the world in which all matter, organic and physical, could be managed as calculable units within a universal science (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1987). This intellectual movement was understood to have emancipated reason from the subjective values of myth, belief, ethics and religion. The scientific rupture between subject and object enabled the technical domination of both human and non-human nature. This was a crucial step in expanding the capitalist mode of production and for the large scale industrialization of labour. Owain Jones' work on ethical geographies illustrates how this form of scientific rationality has proven to be a "key maneuver within processes of modernization," where modern factory farming for example, depends on "the rendering ethically invisible of the non-human other" (2000: 275).

Environmentalist responses to the instrumental rationality of industrial modernity are often characterized by "dramatic revivals of nature" (Biro, 2002: 203). Such revivals

seek to re-enchant nature's subjective qualities, or essence, by situating nature as the anti-thesis of culture, cleansed of all its human, cultural and industrial entanglements. While environmentalism does not necessarily comprise a unified or cohesive message, it tends to embrace an anti-modern defense of nature**.** That is, it contrasts places of nature with modern, capitalist culture, from subtle juxtapositions to extreme antagonisms.

Kate Soper (1995) offers a thorough exploration of the spatial and temporal configurations that split nature from culture. For example, she argues that nature is often a way of "thinking the relations of the older to the newer" (1995: 187). She writes that,

> Nature is both a present space and an absence...a retreat or place of return, to which we 'go' or 'get' back, in a quest not only for a more originary, untouched space, but also for a *temps perdu*...a time that never was, a time prior to history and culture (1995: 187)

Thus, getting back to nature is about a temporal transition "away from progress" and "into wilderness" (1995: 188). It is also conceived as a spatial transition where nature is expressed through a normative relation of distance from civilized, industrial and urban landscapes. Here, the meanings of nature and culture reflect discrimination between the functions or purposes a particular environment serves. For example, the countryside is associated with more "primary" or "basic" forms of consumption, where the urban is associated with the servicing of more historically developed or "luxury requirements" (1995:183).

Rural, pastoral environments tends to be perceived as "natural" landscapes on the premise that they are sites for strictly "reproductive activities," for example, the care of

soil, livestock, and forestry (Soper, 1995: 183). Whereas the urban landscape is typically presumed to be the cultural antithesis to nature: the site for the "production and consumption of new commodities" (1995:183). Soper points to the political-economic conditions that complicate such neat distinctions. She uses the example of modern agricultural landscapes, which support basic life-sustaining functions but operate on an industrial scale of commodity production.

Within environmentalist revivals of nature there have also been efforts to revive a gendered construction of nature. The metaphor of nature and earth as a sacred mother is foundational for certain eco-feminist perspectives. Feminist scholars Carolyn Merchant (1996), Mara Mies (1993) and Vandana Shiva (1993, 2008) establish links between environmental justice and gender politics. Their critiques of industrial modernity draw parallels between the domination of mind over body, man over nature, man over woman, and machine over animal. As such, the environmental defense of nature is argued to be an essential means for female empowerment, insofar as they are both understood to resist the same relations of domination.

Vandana Shiva's eco-feminism presumes a commonality or solidarity between environment and women, grounded in the universal necessity of "preserving a subsistence base" (1993: 12). She refers to this as the "feminine principle," the mutual (biological) work of women and nature in sustaining life. Under capitalist development, she argues that the feminine principle is subjugated, "nature and women are reduced to being resources" (2008: 297). Carolyn Merchant's model of eco-politics also develops a parallel between women and nature in their life-sustaining capacities, where activities of

the private sphere and home making are encompassed in the domain of nature, in the work of "earthcare" (1996).

Shiva also points to the technological developments of capitalist economies in subjugating both nature and women, which she locates in the large-scale commodification of agriculture (2008: 295). For instance, she describes corporate agricultural bio-technologies and genetically modified seeds as violations of the integrity of ecological and cosmic cycles (1993: 169). Shiva suggests that "real wealth" is produced by both nature and women, in the labor of satisfying basic needs and ensuring sustenance (2008: 297). Further, Maria Mies articulates how the technological rupture of "progress and civilization" from nature, indicates a kind of loss characterized by modern environmental crises (1993: 92). The solution for this loss is situated in the recovery of a prior cultural authenticity and the return to basic use (Mies, 1993).

Environmentalist revivals of nature also include deep ecology perspectives, in which nature is argued to be "a domain of intrinsic value, truth or authenticity" (Soper, 1995: 6). For deep ecologists, nature is the central locus of environmental concern; it is seen as the "independent variable" in relation to which political action must mobilize (Biro, 2002: 206). This form of eco-centrism espouses a supposedly objective valuation of nature, grounded in the truth claims of the biological sciences (Biro, 2002: 204)**.** To maintain an ostensibly objective position as the transparent representatives of the environment, eco-centrism denies the role of human mediation in the social construction of nature (Biro, 2002: 203). As such, the eco-centric perspective claims to transcend human interests altogether, or rather, it chooses not to draw divisions between the human and non-human (Biro, 2002). Biro argues that this claim to an objective, non-

anthropocentric ecological reality can have “self-serving implications in the social realm” (Biro, 2002: 206). It therefore presents a number of difficulties for the socio-political dimension of environmental struggle.

Sociological understandings of environmental justice

Some critical sociologies of the environment are interested in precisely these social, political and economic dimensions of nature. Sociological critiques emphasize how particular cases of ecological struggle reveal larger, more fundamental struggles against capitalism (Harvey, 1993). Their critiques of environmentalism are particularly attentive to the ways in which capitalist relations of production (wage labor, alienation and commodity exchange) work to configure hegemonic concepts of nature (Talbot, 1998).

This perspective argues that capitalism produces a normative set of spacial relations which in turn shape the capitalist subject's understanding of nature (Talbot, 1998: 330). Soper (1995: 186) suggests that nature tends to be expressed through a degree of distance from capitalist relations of production. Similarly, Carl Talbot argues that our understanding of nature is configured “to meet the spatial, economic, and psychological needs of capitalism” (1998: 327). Talbot argues that contemporary relations to nature reflect the worker's "faustian" bargain with capitalism, in which individuals tolerate alienation from nature in daily work experience, in exchange for an idealized nature in leisure time. In a citation of David Harvey, Talbot writes (1998: 328),

> The 'facts of production' that entail alienation from nature are concealed by a romantic mystification of nature, which banishes any imaginary opportunity for

> an un-alienating relation to nature to the realm of leisure, so that the alienating relation to nature in capitalist production goes unchallenged

Harvey also argues that the political co-optation of environmentalism under the profit interests of the culture industry threatens its oppositional force, insofar as it becomes a kind of dominating worldview (1999: 171). Soper points to contemporary practices of marketing as the key site where ideologies of nature get reproduced, where environmentalism is reduced to "the eco-lect" of the advertising industry (1995: 194).

Soper also argues that the "pastoral imagery" of nature circulated in the public sphere can "screen out the actual conditions of production and protect the consumer from a too direct confrontation with the facts of modern industrial process" (1995: 195). The public representation of nature is abstracted from the "realities of technological modernity" (1995: 196). Here the temporal configuration of nature as an idyllic, primordial environment symbolically cleanses it of its social relations. Soper argues that this enacts a kind of "historical repression" in which romantic appeals to peasant villages elide the "sweat and toil of the agricultural labourer" (1995: 119).

Furthermore, sociological critiques have juxtaposed struggles over nature with struggles for social equality. Harvey frames describes the movement for "environmental justice" as putting "the survival of people in general, and of the poor and marginalized in particular at the center of its concerns" (1999: 175). In his "third world" critique of Western "ecologism" Guha directs critical attention to matters of social inequality. He argues that,

> until very recently, wildlands preservation has been identified with environmentalism by the state and the conservation elite; in consequence, environmental problems that impinge far more directly on the lives of the poor e.g. Fuel, fodder, water shortages, soil erosion, and air and water pollution-have not been adequately addressed (1989: 235).

Guha describes environmental intervention as increasingly the work of an "international conservation elite" who mobilize nature as a kind of instrumental reason, through a combination of moralizing and scientific arguments (1989: 75). As "representatives of the natural world" biologists mobilize their rhetoric of nature in what Guha has cautioned as a "wilderness crusade" (1989: 236). In short, he suggests that the nature-endorsement practices of environmental politics can serve to reinforce hegemonic power relations, and therefore obscure matters of social inequality.

Postmodern critiques of environmentalism

Postmodernist critiques of environmentalism are primarily concerned with the linguistic construction of nature, examining how discourse "mediates access to the reality it names" (Soper, 1995:4). For example, French semiotician Roland Barthes argues that nature is always a "mystification of the social," that our understandings of "nature" can be understood as myths, socially constructed over time (Biro, 2002: 195). Biro describes how postmodernist scholars understand nature as "always already conditioned by the social arrangements from which they have emerged" (2002: 206). Environmentalism is thus seen as problematic because it appeals to nature as a reality somehow beyond textual, linguistic mediation (1995: 6).

Haraway's post-modern critique of eco-feminism argues that the epistemological divide between nature and culture, animal and machine, has the regressive effect of reinforcing the oppressive myths of 'natural' science (1991: 8). Haraway argues that it is particularly problematic when feminism seeks to affirm "categories of nature and the body as sites of resistance to the domination of history" in their struggle to preserve nature from the industrial modernity (1991: 134). Catriona Sandilands (1997) develops a similar postmodern critique of environmentalism. She emphasizes how encounters with nature mark the limits of symbolic language in penetrating its "unspeakable complexity" (1997: 9). She argues that nature is fundamentally inapprehensible, that it cannot be made fully knowable and therefore cannot be the basis for a complete selfhood (1997: 5). She argues that eco-feminist efforts to make nature familiar and intimately knowable through a universal female subjectivity have forced the path of political resistance into stale metaphors of "women-as-nature" and "women-as-home" (1997: 15).

Haraway has used the figure of the cyborg as a conceptual tool to re-think the categorical boundaries of capitalist modernity and its narrative of rupture between nature and culture (1991: 151). She argues that the cyborg's machine-organic hybridity makes it a useful political fiction to destabilize the certainty with which we perceive categories of knowledge as essential and totalizing. She emphasizes how "human bodies and technologies actually cohabit each other in relation to particular projects or lifeworlds" (Haraway, 2008: 262).

However, Soper has expressed hesitation about postmodernist deconstructions that risk "evading ecological realities" and may consequently prove "irrelevant to the task of addressing them" (1995: 13). She further argues that eco-politics will inevitably be

anthropocentric to some extent, given that we cannot conceive our relations to nature "other than through the mediation of ideas about ourselves" (1995: 13). In defending the concept of nature, Soper argues for the importance of a language capable of addressing those worldly phenomena which cannot be traced to human creation. The following discussion will unpack what alternative concepts of nature can offer to environmental politics.

Progressive ecological politics: Models of continuity

There remains a critical task for environmental politics to challenge the dominant logic of indiscriminate industrial progress and its impacts on the global environment (made increasingly clear by climate science), without reverting to the problematic ideologies of nature discussed above. Widespread uncertainties over the state of nature cannot simply be dismissed as ecologically irrelevant (Soper, 1995: 199). We can consider how such insecurities related to nature and environment characterize what Latour refers to as our "non-modern, ecological" moment in history. We find ourselves in a period of transition, struggling to recuperate what modernism externalized and what post-modernism suspended altogether (2004: 244). For Latour, the most pertinent task is to unburden political ecology from the "wars between realism and social constructivism" (2004: 42). Scholarly meditations on this epistemological tension have begun to indicate some potential avenues for eco-politics that do not oscillate between the "simple backwards look" and the "progressive thrust" forward (Soper, 1995: 206).

Val Plumwood offers a keen understanding of the disparate effects of environmental politics, which can be "dualistic and colonizing, as well as liberating and subversive" (1998: 658). In her studies of Australian environmentalism Plumwood

observes that though environmental activists replaced “the imperial concept that denigrated wilderness” with an “American-centered concept” that honored wilderness, ultimately they failed to challenge the meaning of wilderness as “absence; emptiness, or virginity” (1998: 658). For Plumwood, the re-articulation of nature is a critical step. Yet, constructions of nature as “Other” do not necessarily warrant an attitude of “wilderness-skepticism.” Plumwood suggests that skeptical perspectives abandon concepts of nature entirely and with it, all efforts to protect wilderness areas from industrialization (1998: 659).

The social considerations involved in nature conservation seem to reflect the contemporary logic of sustainability that now defines much of the environmental movement.[3] For instance, Soper cautions environmentalists that when discussing 'nature' we are not “simply talking about a collection of beauty spots or endangered species but about the resources through which alone human needs both now and in the ...future can be met” (1995: 207-208). Thus, in order to take adequate responsibility for human life it is imperative that nature become an object for which we must take equal responsibility.

Plumwood, Biro, Haraway and Latour demonstrate the possibilities for framing a progressive defense of nature that encourage a relation of ethical consideration. Plumwood proposes a gradational framework for conceptualizing nature that delineates “the ground of continuity” between both natural and human worlds. This framework redirects our attention to nature's continuity with and dependency on culture, without

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3 Sustainable development is defined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

falling into a frozen polarity of nature-culture or a model of endless hybridity (1998: 670, 672). Her suggestion then is that we need concepts that can articulate the difference "between the slightly altered ecosystem and the landscape which is totally reconstructed, a thoroughly human product." The aim is to liken these particular environments on the same scale of equally non-virginal or 'spoilt' transformation (1998: 669). William Cronon's work in *Reinventing Nature* (1995) makes a similar proposal, calling for a

> common middle ground in which all of these things, from the city to the wilderness, can somehow be encompassed in the word 'home.' Home, after all, is the place where finally we make our living…the place for which we take responsibility (1995: 24).

Certainly, this is echoed by contemporary naturalists, seeking to understand the complex inter-connections of human and non-human worlds are increasingly aware of building more inclusive models of community.[4]

Andrew Biro's model for a "de-naturalized ecological politics" represents a more recent attempt to theorize the continuity between nature and culture. His model looks specifically to the progressive potential of dialectical thinking. Drawing from the critical, dialectical theory of the Frankfurt School, he argues for "the naturality of the social and the social constructedness of all of nature" (2002: 208).[5] He invites us to reconsider

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4 In the documentary, "The Last Grizzly of Paradise Valley," British Columbian wildlife photographer Jeff Turner has argued that the steady force of urban sprawl and industrial incursions into B.C.'s "wild" landscapes requires that we re-think our sense of community, to include non-human beings as "neighbours."

5 Biro (2002) also uses Adorno's theory of non-identity (a form of realism) as a means to articulate that which appears outside human existence, but cannot be assumed as a given, fixed identity. A grasp of the process of social construction remains essential to this theory.

urban landscapes (using the example of Manhattan) as natural environments, where the "socially induced transformations of labour do not necessarily represent a devaluation of nature" (2002: 210). Biro's model thus recognizes the ways in which transformations of natural environments are "not only natural but also necessary for human survival" (2002: 212). To that end, Plumwood has also argued that "many wildernesses can only now survive if they are supported by an appropriate system of culture which fosters their protection and respect" (1998: 668).

Refusing 'nature' as the organic standpoint of resistance, Haraway's vision of progressive social change calls for political solidarity between partial identities or "partial real connections" (1991: 161). She reveals how the epistemological distinctions between human and animal, animal and machine, and physical and non-physical, are fraught with "leaky boundaries" that enable a "sideways traffic" of permeability. For example, she considers the qualities of "human-animality" that distinguish the kinship between humans and animal species (1991: 152).

She is particularly interested in how the social relations of science and technology comprise "an historical system depending upon structured relations among people" while at the same time "providing fresh sources of power" (1991: 165). For example, she argues that technologically mediated societies present the conditions for opening up "geometric possibilities" in compassionate kinship between animals, machines and humans (1991: 154, 174).

Haraway re-articulates this vision with the concept of "nature-cultures" in her more recent work *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003). In place of the cyborgian

figure, she turns to dogs, as a more historically concrete example, to point towards "co-evolution in natureculture" (2003:12). She argues that the historical partnerships between dogs and people demonstrate relations of significant otherness that implode neat boundaries between nature and culture (2003:16). Where deep ecology identifies relations of domination in the domestication of animals and nature, Haraway sees relations of co-evolution, which cannot reach back to a wilderness "before the Fall into Culture" (2003:28).

Latour also critiques the political uses of nature for their "unjustified process…of [the] distribution of the capacities of speech and representation" (2004: 245). This is the premise from which he argues that nature becomes the anti-thesis to the collective. He writes that there are only "Nature-cultures...collectives that seek to know...what they may have in common" and no group, be they Westerners or non-Westerners, are "distant from or close to nature" (2004: 46). Latour argues that the assimilation of nature into existing political practice is not as novel as it might seem. The difficulty with political ecology, he argues, is not that it "finally introduces nature into political preoccupations that had earlier been too exclusively oriented toward humans" but that it continues "to use nature to abort politics*"* (2004: 19). Where ancient epistemology described a "cold, grey nature," ecology has simply "substituted a greener warmer nature" (2004: 19).

Where Plumwood finds 'nature' useful in situating ourselves in the ground of continuity, Latour seeks to eradicate the concept from ecological politics entirely. If nature is a category through which it is "possible to recapitulate the hierarchy of beings in a single ordered series" then political ecology should, in practice, seek "the destruction of the idea of nature" (2004:25). Here, Latour proposes a more inclusive, heterogeneous

practice of political ecology, that replaces the moral obligation to protect an idealized nature with the taking charge “in an even more complete and mixed fashion, of an even greater diversity of entities and destinies” (2004: 21). There are two distinct suggestions in Latour's model of political ecology worthy exploring here: his theory of externality and the composition of the common world.

While “letting go” of nature might seem premature, Latour retains a concept of externality that need not be definitive, but still capable of addressing the domestication, recruitment and socialization of “new non-humans....that have never before been included in the work of the collective” (2004:39). This externality, he argues, is “essential to the respiration of the collective” but does not have to corroborate “some great drama of rupture and conversion.” A concept of externality is particularly essential to promote the collective understanding of how the sciences mediate knowledge of and access to, the 'natural'. Once witness to the ideological work of the sciences, it becomes increasingly possible to realize the collective, unified associations of humans and non-humans (2004: 41).

For Latour, the integrity of political ecology hinges on what he calls “the progressive composition of the common world” (2004: 18). He urges political ecology to ground itself in the relations between human and non-humans, rather than humans and 'nature' (2004: 231). The composition of such a collective requires that we reconfigure the parameters of citizenship based on the associations that exists between human and nonhuman beings. To redefine the parameters of citizenship would require the apportionment of the “capacity to act as a social actor” as well as an “apportionment of capabilities” through the re-distribution of speech between human and non-humans

(2004: 231). Keeping these theoretical propositions in mind, I want to shift the discussion towards a more situated politics of nature, in the historical practices and narratives of wilderness preservation, valuation and rehabilitation. The latter half of this chapter turns to the matter of wilderness to help illustrate the theoretical exegesis presented thus far.

Part II

The politics of wilderness:

Colonial and post-colonial practices of wilderness conservation in Canada

The following literature examines how wilderness conservation actively intervenes in, mediates and polices the epistemological binary of nature and culture. It depicts places of wilderness as critical sites for the articulation of human-nonhuman relations. As such, this literature emphasizes the practical importance of Latour, Plumwood, Biro and Haraway's political propositions. Plumwood has described wilderness as "the extreme end of spectrum of mixtures of nature and culture, of humanized and wild land" (1998: 669). However, outside this spectrum, uprooted from its historical context, wilderness is made into a potent aesthetic. Seemingly detached from the relations and interests of power, wilderness appears as a kind of free-floating ideal, a source of intrinsic value, and a national asset. It is therefore the purpose of this discussion to locate the historical conditions scholars have traced to the ideal of wilderness that is still ardently defended today.

Exploring a range of material that includes historical narratives of explorers, naturalists and intellectuals, as well as scholarly interpretations and case studies, I examine how the aesthetic of Canadian wilderness emerges from a particular relation of encounter between human and nonhuman worlds (but also human-human relations) that

is inseparable from historical modes of imperial and colonial expansion. As such, I argue that wilderness discourse always entails a practice of extending particular interests over time and through space. I argue that the literature indicates these interests may be those of "Science" (as Latour and Haraway have argued), those of the culture industry (insofar as wilderness reserves and parks become institutions of eco-tourism and leisure) and those of state sovereignty (the project of nation-building). And further, I argue that these interests are bound together in discrete, yet powerful ways.

My discussion uses the environmental histories produced by John Sandlos (2000, 2003) to frame the historical context of Canadian wilderness conservation. Focusing on the late colonial period, Sandlos examines the national narratives of wilderness used to construct an image of Canada's northern landscape.[6] His work examines how state-sponsored naturalist surveys played a pivotal role in shaping an aesthetic of the Canadian landscape. Sandlos is particularly interested in bureaucratic forms of wilderness conservation and their often contradictory effect of securing other modes of resource extraction.

Sandlos identifies a troubling disparity between imagined wilderness and the actual socio-economic context of environmental conditions. He explains how the Canadian "imaginary" of wilderness, an offshoot of the British imperial imagination (2000:11), often proved incompatible with and antagonistic to the lived realities of the Canadian landscape. To perceive wilderness as an aesthetic object of distanced

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6 Sandlos details the "flourishing" of wilderness policy in the early twentieth century with the Commission on Conservation (1909) and the Advisory Board on Wild Life Protection (1916) that imposed regulations on caribou, musk-ox and arctic fox hunt (2003: 404) as well as the creation of Wood Buffalo National Park in 1922 to protect bison herds in the Slave-Athabasca landscape (2000:12).

appreciation required a relation of autonomy from wilderness.[7] The understanding of wilderness as an “imaginary” is described in other literature as the “specific habits of thinking” linked to wilderness or as a "state of mind" (Cronon, 1995: 17, 23).

For Sandlos there is much at stake in the “public imagination” of the Canadian landscape. It serves as a repository for visions of 'wild' geography that work to legitimate the hegemonic goals and interests of state administration (2003: 396). In his work “Burried Epistemologies,” Willems-Braun (1997: 5) explains that "geographies can be understood as regimes of knowledge, a 'material-semiotic terrain' bound up within histories of past colonial practices" (1997: 5-6). Yet, the presence of these historical underpinnings go largely unnoticed, "buried within the conventional categories; 'nature', 'resource', 'nation'” (1997: 6). Willems-Braun is therefore highly suspect of Canadian wilderness politics, which risk "re-enacting" colonial legacies.

Having a distinct concept of Canadian wilderness was strategic in extending the reach of state power during the late colonial period. Since much of Canada was still sparsely settled by colonizers, the landscape was seen as an obstacle to the extension of sovereign authority. Sandlos argues that the aesthetic distance created by “over-imagining” the great Northern landscape created a gap in the ecological understanding of its environment. In other words, the aesthetic of the Northern frontier was dislocated from its “primary reference point,” abstracted into the constellation of “Canadian culture” (2003). This aesthetic was shaped by the “enlightened” interests of the intellectual,

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7 In *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Nash (1967) explains how the romantic perception of America's wild landscapes were felt most strongly in later generations of Americans who did not themselves have to colonize and settle the land, but enjoyed the security and comfort of industrial, urban living.

leisure class, the “student of nature” and the “pleasure tourist” (Nash, 1967). For instance, Sandlos notes how the Group of Seven depicted an “iconic image of a dehumanized northern wilderness” (2000: 8). Other exploration narratives during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emphasize the vastness of the landscape, the scale of mountains, cliffs, horizon, depicting a sublime aesthetic in the same style as William Wordsworth and Edmund Burke (Sandlos, 2000: 7).

To interpret wilderness as sublime suggested that a wild landscape held a trace of the supernatural “just beneath its surface” evoking a mix of emotions, from awe to terror (Cronon, 1995: 10-11). Roderick Nash (1967) situates the sublime interpretation of wilderness as part of the transcendentalist philosophy of early American conservationism. According to Nash, the nineteenth century was a critical period for the revaluation of wild nature and the transcendental conception of man, famously expressed in the writing of Henry David Thoreau, William Wordsworth and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Briefly, the transcendental perspective saw human existence divided between object and essence. Wilderness was revered as the site in which the individual could transcend the object world into a higher, more sublime state of being (Nash, 1967). Wilderness was therefore understood as a spiritual resource for the leisure class. Thoreau believed wilderness harboured the capacity for man's basic goodness, while Wordsworth's poetry attested to the "moral impulses emanating from fields and woods" (Nash, 1967: 86). However the sublime aesthetic required that the objects of nature act as a counter-force to the civilized, empirical world. Cronon (1995) argues that these philosophical expressions of nature can still be found in contemporary eco-centric or “deep ecology” politics, where sublime

depictions of wilderness reinforce the opposition of nature and culture, re-situating the human subject "entirely outside the natural" (1995: 17).

Equally foundational to the aesthetic of Canadian wilderness is the concept of frontier. "Frontier" held the promise of resource potential, a reserve to be exploited (for its natural resources) but also conserved for profit (Sandlos, 2000:16). In 1907, the federally sponsored exploration document "Canada's Fertile Northland" cultivated a sense of Northern frontier in cataloguing the landscape's reserves of timber, minerals, arable land, oil and gas deposits (Sandlos, 2000: 8). In America, the association of the wild frontier with resource abundance conveyed a symbolic space for "national renewal" (Cronon, 1995: 13). As wild land was increasingly seen as an ephemeral and finite resource, the frontier aesthetic provided critical impetus for conservation ideology. Sandlos argues that the Canadian psyche was imprinted with the sense of a normative boundary between "frontier and farmstead, wilderness and baseland, hinterland and metropolis" (2000: 9). These normative boundaries forced particular "wild" landscapes to align with the anti-modern image of frontier. Cronon however points to the danger of frontier nostalgia in reproducing primitivist understandings of Otherness (1995:20).[8] As Cronon writes, "the very men who most benefited from urban-industrial capitalism were among those who believed they must escape its debilitating effects" (1995: 14). In short, the divisive work of frontier thinking makes the implication that natural resources come from necessarily uncivilized, non-modern places.

8 Cronon argues that current deep ecology advocates including the popular organization Earth First! tend to risk the reproduction of primitivist sentiments (1995:20).

If frontier nostalgia is formative in the wilderness aesthetic then we can consider how wildlife are used to trigger that sentiment. Wild animals play an important role in staging the resource potential of frontier, as Philo & Wilbert (2000: 12) explain, it is commonly presumed that "wild lands beyond the circle of normal human activity are and should be, stocked with all manner of large, and/or dangerous animals with whom humans would not normally wish to have encounters." Sandlos looks specifically at how natural scientists have depicted wild herds of caribou crossing the tundra and how these depictions became a "profound symbolic marker" of the Northern Canadian landscape (2003: 398).[9] In excess of simply depicting the presence of wildlife, these images laid claim to "an edenic past…slowly slipping away" (2000: 22).

Cronon traces depictions of a fragile wilderness to the contemporary interest in animal species at risk, who "serve as vulnerable symbols of biological diversity while at the same time standing as surrogates for wilderness itself" (1995:18). Thus, depictions of wildlife also served to denote the parallel fragility of a non-modern, untouched nature. Sandlos indicates how the "anti-humanist" implication of wildlife portraits rationalized state-imposed restrictions on native hunting practices. He refers to a particular CWS report conducted in 1948 by mammologist A.W.F Banfield, which confirmed scarce caribou populations despite ambivalent scientific data. The report detailed the complicity of aboriginal (Dene) hunting practices in causing the caribou "crisis." The report featured an infamous photo of a hunting "massacre" at Duck Lake, Manitoba, which depicted

9 Sandlos cites A. Radclyffe Dugmore's *The Romance of the Newfoundland Caribou* (1913): "There is something indescribably beautiful in watching wild animals that, free from all suspicion, are behaving in a purely natural way, following their habits with no disturbing condition to influence their behaviour....it makes a lifelong impression on anyone that has been fortunate enough to have the opportunity of observing the animals under such conditions" (2000:21).

caribou carcasses “scattered over the barrens, some bloated and rotten, others eaten...by ravens” (Sandlos, 2000:20).

The public relations strategy of Banfield's survey supported the racially based logic that indigenous peoples required the guidance of the federal government. Many of the Dene communities were relocated following the controversial caribou crisis (2000:13).[10] Sandlos however has pointed out the latent “anti-local” perspective in the condemnation of excessive slaughter of wildlife, which supposedly “betrayed the sacred nature of a pre-modern wilderness” (2003: 396). He contrasts these anti-local observations of late colonial scientists, with recent anthropological studies that explain mass hunting practices as deliberate, intentional events based on local, firsthand knowledge of the long term dynamic of wildlife populations (2003: 401).

Sandlos is therefore particularly cautious of the set of actors and institutional powers responsible for shaping Canada's official geographies, namely federal policy makers, civil servants, naturalists and wildlife conservation bureaucrats. The colonial expeditions during this period were largely sponsored by the Geological Survey of Canada. Sandlos argues that such conservation initiatives not only extended their sovereignty over the northern landscape but also implicitly spread the bureaucratic method through “scientific expertise, rationality, and centralization” (2000: 17, 21). Willems-Braun (1997) refers to the work of George Dawson, one of the earliest geographers to work for the Geological Survey of Canada, who abstracted space into separate categories of "primitive culture" and "pristine nature," a critical distinction for

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10 Sandlos is also referring to the document, *The Migratory Barren-ground Caribou of Northern Canada* written by J.P Kelsall in 1968.

the development of forestry in British Columbia (Willems-Braun, 1997: 14). Dawson's surveys actively "re-situated landscapes within new orders of vision and visuality, and within regimes of power and knowledge that at once authorized particular activities and facilitate new forms of governmentality" (Willems-Braun, 1997: 16).

The highly influential, pastoral narratives of wild buffalo and caribou came from biological surveys produced by the Canadian Geological Survey and the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) who employed the British hunter-naturalist Warburton Pike and famous naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton (Sandlos, 2000:21). They enjoyed the privileged perspective of the "author/explorer" with joint interests in travel and hunting (2000:10).[11] More importantly, this perspective of hunting was one of leisure, the Victorian ethic of hunting that rejected indiscriminate, "wasteful slaughter" as poor sportsmanship (2000: 10). Thus, hunting appeared irrational when associated with survival practices and wild animals were properly the objects of aesthetic and scientific interest rather than a source of cultural subsistence.

In his study "Hunting with the Camera," Ryan describes the historical co-emergence of naturalist photography with colonial practices of hunting and taxidermy, methods used "to capture and reproduce 'wild' animals" (2000: 205). [12] Ryan describes the emergence of naturalist photography for scientific documentation as a practice of "camera-hunting" defined as "a field of investigation" in which the camera becomes "an

11 Sandlos is referring to Warburton Pike's travel narratives, *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada* (1892) and *Through the Subarctic Forest* (1896).

12 Ryan argues that "practices of hunting and photography in colonial African territories constructed both the "wildness" of African animals – especially animals known as 'big-game' – and landscape as part of an untouched world of pristine nature" (2000: 205).

alternative weapon to the rifle" (2000: 211-212). Photography was the cultivated man's sport and thus a class-distinguishing practice (Ryan, 2000). In short, the lens or "visuality" of science picks up where sport hunting left off, insofar as it maintains the distance between the " 'wild' and the 'non-wild'...the 'civilized and the 'savage" (2000: 217).

According to Sandlos, late-colonial aesthetic constructions of wilderness culminated in a disavowal of the Canadian landscape as an already inhabited homeland (2000:11). The official, scientific rationale for wilderness conservation produced a regime of knowledge that marginalized local knowledge of the land. By condemning Inuit and Dene subsistence practices of land management, the aestheticization of wilderness proved a paradoxical discrimination against modes of exploitation associated with dwelling, and ultimately survival. As the legitimate custodians of nature, state conservation disavowed indigenous practices of occupying the landscape. Yet the interests of conservation supposedly reflected the collective interests of the nation; "game and forests belong to all the nation" as part of Canada's "original wilderness heritage" (Sandlos, 2000: 13, 22). Thus, we see how the extension of national interests through space (in the physical displacement of indigenous communities) was also part of a temporal reconfiguration of the Canadian landscape as an ahistorical place to be inherited by the nation. Where late colonial conservation initiatives can be interpreted as an anti-local in this respect, contemporary non-state conservationists demonstrate a growing sensitivity to local, cultural geography. The remaining discussion will consider configurations of place and space in contemporary studies of conservation in British Columbia and how they continue the sublime aesthetic of the wilderness frontier.

The contemporary staging of wild places

The early period of nature conservation in North America provides an important referent for the framing of contemporary environmentalism. Loosened from the European colonial tradition (Torgerson, 2000: 190) current practices of wilderness conservation are more closely tied to civil society and activist mobilizations against industrial exploitations of environment. In many cases, environmental activism challenges practices of nation-building, exerting regulatory pressure on national policy and economic development. Torgerson points out the goal of current eco-politics to counteract the industrial concept of indifferent space with the strategic defence of place (2000: 192). Rather than use an abstract, all-encompassing discourse of wilderness, Torgerson argues that political ecology movements are focused upon the particular values of place. Yet, this shift does not mark an end to the marginalizing forms of conservation seen in the late colonial period. When using traditional aesthetics for the romantic, sublime staging of wilderness, contemporary conservation movements re-produce the binary of nature and culture, with the effect of reducing understandings of nature to ahistorical, non-modern and culturally devoid landscapes.

Defending nature in B.C.'s Clayoquot Sound

Environmental opposition to commercial forestry in British Columbia demonstrates a particularly interesting flashpoint in contemporary wilderness activism. By 1990 approximately "64 percent of Vancouver Island's temperate rainforest had been logged" with the related effects of "soil erosion, watershed degradation, and wildlife endangerment" (Luke, 1997: 99-100). The particular site of controversy was the Clayoquot Sound, the geographic region of coastal inlets and old growth temperate

rainforest surrounding the town of Tofino, where the forestry giant MacMillan Bloedel was granted a clear-cut logging license. In 1993, environmental activists blockaded the logging site, in an act of protest that led to one of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history.[13]

The environmental campaigns were deeply invested in publicizing an image of the Clayoquot Sound as a place of wilderness, of "unspoiled land and water in relatively undisturbed eco-systems" with a "pristine allure" (Luke, 1997: 104). Willems-Braun's looks specifically at the photographic interventions of *Clayoquot: On the Wild Side* (Dorst & Young, 1990) a coffee table book published by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, which sought to counteract the industrial perspective of the landscape (1997:19). By staging the Sound as a "theatre" of wilderness, the book reproduces historic (colonial) practices of representation that abstract wilderness from its "set of cultural relations" into commodified images of ancient trees, crescent beaches and killer whales (Willems-Braun, 1997: 7, 19). The photographs organize wilderness through a particular optic or "technology of vision," portraying the natural scenery as devoid of its human, cultural traces (1997: 19).

Willems-Braun draws our attention from the absent representations of the Clayoquot's native inhabitants to the ways in which they are given representation. He argues that native culture was presented "in narrowly circumscribed ways" so as not to exceed the "bounds of the traditional." This effectively allowed Dorst & Young's

13 A total of 856 activists were arrested south of Tofino. The event was surpassed only recently, with the arrest of 900 protestors during the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto. Source: http://www.tofino-bc.com/about/tofino-history.php

photography to conform with the "pure" aesthetic of nature (1997: 21-22). In short, to photograph the Sound as a kind of primeval oasis from the modern industrial world, the cultural representations of Clayoquot's native communities also had to break from technological modernity (1997: 21).

Torgerson's (2000) study of the Clayoquot protests highlights the environmentalists attempt to depict a smooth, natural alliance between ecological protection and native interests. Environmentalists defending the Clayoquot Sound attempted to assimilate the Nuu-chah-nulth's perspectives of the land, particularly their regard for the "earth as a living entity," as an essential form of eco-centric logic (2000: 96). [14] However, native support was largely absent from the mass protests. Torgerson explains that the environmental cause did not reflect the Nuu-chah-nulth's "unique images of place" tied to their distinct interests in settling land claims (2000: 197-198). Torgerson adds that native cultures often "invoke a more nuanced understanding of nature as a 'spirit world' against which conflicts arise in contest for power" which may in fact be inconsistent with eco-political interests (2000:199).

Guha (1989) has similarly criticized how deep ecologists appeal to non-Western spiritual traditions as a strategy to "construct an authentic lineage and ...present deep ecology as a universalist philosophy" (1989: 237). This consequently functions to re-situate non-western cultures as "wholly separate and alien to the West" defined by uniquely spiritual non-rational "essence" and innocent of the kinds of ecological impacts

14 The Nuh-chah-nulth are a confederation of First Nations that reside on Vancouver Island's West Coast (Willems-Braun, 1997: 7)

wrought by Western civilization (1989: 237). Willems-Braun identifies the imposition of the wilderness aesthetic upon native peoples as an authorial practice claimed by environmentalists, permitting them the role of "modern, scientific and enlightened" subjects (1997: 23).

While the environmental struggles against clear-cut logging were successful in protecting some of the Clayoquot landscape, their scenes of the region's pristine wilderness remain a lucrative site for photographic promotion and "envirotisement" (Luke, 1997). Following the protests, Luke describes how the Clayoquot Sound is an increasingly popular wilderness "destination" within the global eco-tourism industry. Through the gradual de-industrialization of its heavy processing, it has transitioned from a relatively rural, peripheral region into a locale for "attractive" types of industry that appeal to the "adventure market" of outdoor leisure, whale watching, beach-combing and sporting (1997: 94). Yet, the new "attractive" industry required a change in the capitalist mode of production that benefited some, while jeopardizing others. He points out that service-based economies offering nature tours, hunting trips, vacation hotels and tourist restaurants, are often associated with low-wage, non-union, and precarious working conditions (Luke, 1997: 98). On the other hand, the tourist economy has marked great success for entrepreneurs like Maureen Fraser, a white-collar "lifestyle refugee" from the city, now recognized as one of Tofino's most important environmentalists (1997: 97). By capitalizing on the region's "nature experience," Fraser's bakery-café business helped jump start the town's "attractive" industry (Luke, 1997).

Opened up to the competitive pressures of a global market, the strength of Clayoquot's service economy rests on its ability to accommodate tourist niche markets.

Thus the wilderness aesthetic needs to be actively sustained and preserved for a global audience. Luke describes a particular genre of ecological advertising, or "envirotising" used to circulate the wilderness aesthetic through the mass media, with the dual purpose of attracting tourism and support in protecting the ecosystem (1997: 104). In this form of "envirotisement," 'wildlife,' 'the environment' and 'wilderness' are exploited as selling points to attract the global market (1997: 104). The paradox of the Clayoquot Sound as a site of wilderness enchantment is underscored by the fact that it must carefully mediate its sublime aesthetic alongside the continued presence of the timber industry, which remains a critical component of the region's economy (1997: 106). Eco-tourism therefore presents the contradiction of condemning one form of capitalist exploitation by replacing it with another, in this case, that of the culture industry. This is possibly an example of what Guha criticizes as the "institutions" of conservation and their commodification of the "nature experience," (national parks) which function to support the "the consumer society" (1989: 239).

A central component to contemporary defenses of wilderness is the use of particular wildlife icons to mobilize popular support. Cronon (1995) points out that when an entire environmental impetus inheres in such fetishized figures, they are made easy targets for critics of the environmental movement. He refers to the use of the Endangered Species Act in the case of the Spotted Owl as an example of how "single-species preservation efforts" are easily attacked (1995: 18). Alec Brownlow (2000) describes how conservationist efforts to re-introduce wolf populations in the Adirondack region promoted the wolf as a novel "cultural icon" marketed to urban, leisure-seeking communities. However, the local residents and communities of the Adirondack area

resented the efforts of wolf reintegration as a novelty that undermined existing uses of the land use, local economies and even property rights (2000: 153-154).

Interestingly, the fetishism of wildlife and wilderness is increasingly supported with a biological rationale, such that we see a fusion of aesthetic appeals with the scientific values of biodiversity. For instance, Hintz explains that the biological rationale for American wilderness reserves place critical importance on "the presence of keystone species": larger mammals which, though fewer in number, have a fundamental impact on the functioning of an ecosystem. "Elephants, rhinos, gorillas, tigers and other charismatic mega fauna" are argued to be particularly valuable species insofar as they represent the kind of "biological diversity with integrity" found in truly wild places (Foreman, 1995: 571, 573). Conservation biologists also describe such wild places as hot spots of "rich biodiversity which often occur at the intersection of biomes" (Callicott, 1996). Yet, as with the aesthetic rationale, the notion of biological "integrity" is complicit in sequestering and relegating the appreciation of wild nature to the peripheries of culture, leaving the nature encountered in daily life (nature modified or tainted by human dwelling) somehow less spectacular and thus less deserving of our ecological respect. Thus, the notion of biological integrity encourages reverence for ancient, old growth forests and their miraculously rich concentration of primeval biodiversity (Nash, 1967: 98, 259-260) while leaving the more humble nature of the trees in our backyard as somehow more contemptuous (Cronon, 1995).

The literature discussed in this chapter highlights two key processes within environmental politics: its reproduction of the ideological opposition of nature and culture, and the aesthetic work of 'wilderness' in mediating this ideology through state,

scientific and cultural institutions. As an aesthetic ideal, wilderness is appealed to as a kind of bargaining chip in the ecological defence of nature. While these efforts to extend cultural respect for the non-human world are indeed integral to the goals of a progressive political ecology, their stubborn depiction of wilderness as an idealized realm of otherness appear counter-productive to contemporary practices of environmental management. This is particularly apparent with the increasingly central role of scientific research, photography cultural recreation and tourism for the defence of particular landscapes. Certainly, Haraway's vision of science and technology as the potentially empowering means for expanded relations of kinship, forces us to step back from sublime idealizations of wilderness ingrained in the popular imaginary.

This is not to suggest that we must also step away from the work of representing environment. Willems-Braun notes that representing nature remains a critical "political responsibility" (1997: 25). Heeding the suggestions made by Latour (2004), Plumwood (1998) and Cronon (1995), the ways in which we choose to represent environment, nature or wilder places, should reflect the ground of continuity shared between human and non-human beings. Perhaps the most effective strategy for relinquishing the aesthetic of a pure and pristine nature is by foregrounding the daily relations of living "in-place." As Cronon (1995) emphasizes, understanding the intricate set of relations from which we make our homes allows us to encounter the environment as both an object of visual interest and a resource on which we depend for survival. This re-situation of our environmental politics might open the space for ethical contemplations of nature, at once external and internal to culture.

Overview: chapters to follow

The discussion in Chapter Two turns to the west coast of British Columbia, to contextualize the eco-political tensions surrounding the Northern Gateway pipeline proposal. It first outlines Enbridge Inc.'s Northern Gateway project, its assigned regulatory review process, as well as the general criticism made against the project. It then situates the research materials in relation to these criticisms, particularly their shared concern that Northern Gateway jeopardizes the wilderness and peoples of B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest**.** Here I summarize the film materials, highlighting their production, content and distribution. I provide an individual synopsis for each of the films, describing the role of the film makers, their narrative structures and the content of their advocacy. I indicate how the films have been distributed through screenings in various communities in B.C. and throughout Canada, as well as their recognition by various eco-adventure and environmental film festivals.

In Chapter Three, I analyze how aesthetic representations in the film materials reveal patterns in the oppositional framing of nature and culture, as described in the review of literature. I examine how configurations of the natural and cultural, human and non-human, work to rationalize opposition against the techno-industrial activities of crude oil export. As such, the method of analysis consists of exploring how the films represent particular issues (wildlife, culture, economy) and how these representations are used to mobilize particular arguments. Here, I isolate overarching themes in the portrayal of animals and animal-human relations, and forms of human culture, represented through the protagonists, environmental professionals and local inhabitants. The analysis also isolates themes of industry and technology, economy and capital, and the way in which

they are anchored in nationalist constructions of landscape as part of a Canadian wilderness heritage.

In Chapter Four, I synthesize the research observations in relation to colonial and post-colonial imaginings of wilderness, explored in the review of literature. In so doing, I argue that wilderness is part of a contingent historical practice in which the ideological opposition of nature and culture also serves as a force of domination. As such, it risks the re-inscription of disciplinary formations between institutional, colonizing authorities and local, indigenous inhabitants. The thesis concludes by revisiting theories of progressive environmental politics to demonstrate the limitations of a political ecology framed by the aesthetic values of wilderness. I argue that the films' political critiques of the democratic infractions of the Northern Gateway project are constrained by their discourse of essential unities and natural identities, as well as their antagonistic narratives of technology and industry. I suggest that the goals of a progressive environmental politics are in deep contradiction with the values of wilderness as represented in the films

Chapter 2:

Representing wilderness in the Northern Gateway project

The discussion in this chapter turns to the west coast of British Columbia, where a surge in eco-political activism has brought concepts of wilderness, the sublime, and frontier into sharp contrast with Canada's oil sands industry. The proposal to increase oil export off the Pacific coast by way of the Northern Gateway pipeline has stimulated new interest in the ecological values of B.C.'s 'natural' landscapes. Environmental advocates see the proposal as a critical turning point for efforts to conserve British Columbia's coastal rainforest. Advocacy campaigns are a particularly important locus of activism, where the political discourse on Northern Gateway intersects with established environmental and conservation initiatives. In particular, documentary film making is proving an increasingly popular strategy for promoting greater ecological awareness around the environment charted for pipeline construction. A recent string of eco-adventure film campaigns attempt to catch the audience interest by condensing the complexities of Northern Gateway into a short documentary format.

I argue that these films present documents of Canadian wilderness that reflect the kinds of conservation expeditions, campaigns and photographic publications described in the preceding chapter. As such, I want to examine how the representational practices of these documentary films craft a particular order of vision - or aesthetic - around the wilderness of the Great Bear Rainforest. This chapter presents the corpus of research materials from which such an interpretation can be made intelligible. The discussion will first provide a detailed synopsis of the Northern Gateway proposal, its economic rationale

as well as the general criticisms made against it. The discussion will then contextualize the eco-political debate as it is represented in a number of documentary film campaigns including *Spoil* (2011), *Oil in Eden* (2011), *Tipping Barrels* (2011), *Standup4GreatBear* (2011) and *The Pipedreams Project* (2011). The goal of this chapter is to provide a thick description of the research objects in question, their production details and the extent of their distribution and reception.

The Northern Gateway Pipeline

In May of 2010 Enbridge Inc. submitted a proposal for their largest infrastructural project to date, the Northern Gateway Pipeline. The project proposes the construction of a new underground pipeline to bring crude oil reserves from Alberta to the west coast of British Columbia, for export across the Pacific Ocean. The pipeline would carry bitumen, a raw, tar-like form of petroleum, from the city of Bruderheim, Alberta to the marine terminal of Kitimat, B.C. From the terminal, the bitumen would then be exported by large tanker vessels across the Pacific Ocean to refineries in Asia and California. Northern Gateway is a strategy to increase the extraction of Canadian oil deposits for processing and consumption beyond domestic borders. It is rationalized by the economic interest in capitalizing on foreign energy markets. Enbridge has promoted the pipeline as a crucial opportunity to fortify the national economy, with particular benefits in stimulating the economic life of Northern communities. If granted approval, the construction of Northern Gateway would allow for the economic development of Canada's fuel resources, without necessarily resolving the matter of a national energy policy.

The proposed pipeline would measure 36 inches in diameter and would traverse a route of 1,170 kilometres with a capacity to carry approximately 520,000 barrels of bitumen per day. The infrastructure would include a smaller twin pipeline 20 inches in diameter to carry 193,000 barrels per day of petroleum condensate, a product used to refine crude oil, from B.C. to Alberta. The project also requires the construction of two new docking facilities at the marine terminal in Kitimat, which currently processes container ships and bulk vessels delivering supplies to the Rio Tinto Alcan aluminum smelter.

The project's current estimated cost is $5.5 billion. It is the biggest project to be proposed by Calgary-based Enbridge Inc., Canada's largest natural gas distribution company and transporter of crude oil. Enbridge pipelines export 65% of the oil in Western Canada. It's Alliance and Vector Pipeline systems carry natural gas to the U.S. Midwest and to customers in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ontario. They own the U.S. subsidiary Enbridge Energy Partners which gathers and processes natural gas in America. The company also operates roughly 2,400 kilometers of offshore pipeline to transport natural gas from the Gulf of Mexico. The company is further investing in renewable and alternative energy technologies, with a number of projects in wind, solar and geothermal energy. Enbridge Chief Executive Officer Patrick Daniel envisions the Northern Gateway pipeline as a "nation-building" project for Canada, with lasting economic benefits estimated at $270 billion in GDP over thirty years (Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines).

The construction process will involve the installation of pipeline infrastructure through a range of geographical landscapes, charting a route through the Northern Rocky

Mountains ending in B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest, one of the most significant rainforest ecosystems in the world. The route will also intersect three major watersheds (upper Fraser, Skeena, and Kitimat) and approximately one thousand waterways, including multiple salmon-spawning rivers. At its terminus, Northern Gateway would bring close to two hundred and twenty-five new tanker vessels per year into the port of Kitimat. The rugged coastline makes for an arguably hazardous route to navigate for Very Large Crude Carriers. In addition to these environmental liabilities, the pipeline route will also pass through more than fifty First Nations communities, many of which have pending land claims still to be settled with the Supreme Court of Canada.

The review process

Industrial projects that present such complex socio-environmental implications as that of Northern Gateway must first pass through federal regulation. In this case a Joint Review Panel was appointed in January 2009 to review the Northern Gateway proposal. This independent regulatory panel was mandated by the Minister of Environment and the National Energy Board (NEB) to conduct a review process based on public hearings before pipeline construction can be granted approval. Two of the panel members represent the National Energy Board; Ms. Sheila A. Leggett, the Panel chair, and Mr. Kenneth M. Bateman, a Canadian energy lawyer. The third panel member is Mr. Hans Matthews, a professional geologist with experience in mining, minerals and resource management as well as aboriginal community development.

The National Energy Board is a federal agency that regulates energy industries in Canada to ensure that their practices are synonymous with the public interest. The public

review process allows all interested parties, registered interveners and citizens, to sound their questions and concerns about the project. The project will first be evaluated under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the most rigorous review procedure in place for projects that generate public concern over environmental risk. Ultimately, the Joint Review Panel (JRP) will weigh the potential environmental impact against the pipeline's potential socio-economic advantages. The panel will submit their environmental assessment report for an external, government examination which will guide the panel's final recommendation to approve the project under the *National Energy Board Act* (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency).

The series of public hearings which began in Kitimat on January 10th of 2012, and will continue until the final hearings tentatively set for April of 2013, provides the official sounding board for oral testimonies and evidence brought forth by the public. Thus far, news coverage off the testimonies has emphasized a number of overarching concerns that have been associated with Northern Gateway since its initial release of project plans. The general criticisms made against the pipeline point to a range of potential impacts and risks.

Criticisms

Given that Canada's oil sands industry is one of the single largest contributors to the country's greenhouse gas emissions, projects proposing to intensify oil extraction, such as Northern Gateway, pose considerable stakes for global climate change (Environment Canada, 2011). While some groups claim that Canada provides "ethical" oil for international markets, others have argued that the bitumen extracted from

Alberta's oil sands is one of the dirtiest fuel sources in the world, requiring energy-intensive mining and upgrading. This refining process currently requires significant inputs of water and natural gas**.** In their 2011 report "King Carbon," Environmental Defence Canada estimates that oil being shipped through Northern Gateway would contribute 6.5 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year (Environmental Defence Canada, 2011).

Opponents to Northern Gateway argue that investing in pipeline infrastructure will foster national dependence on fossil fuel development, increasing greenhouse gas pollution and its impacts on global climate change, while detracting from efforts to develop more sustainable, 'clean,' energy economies. Much of the apprehension over Northern Gateway is linked to the pipeline infrastructure itself, a conduit technology that has proven faulty in a number of cases across North America. Enbridge alone was responsible for eight hundred spills between 1999 and 2010, including the devastating spill of 20,000 barrels of oil into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan (Girard, 2010).

There are also concerns that Northern Gateway proposes to 'sell out' Canada's national resources to the disadvantage of Canadians and the resilience of the Canadian economy. This is part of a larger argument against the corporatization of the oil industry, where the majority of profits go to foreign corporate stakeholders or "big oil". There is further concern that the rising price of oil will have counter-productive effects for the Canadian economy, or what is otherwise referred to as the 'Dutch disease.' In short, building a greater market for oil raises the value of Canada's "petro-dollar" causing an inflation of prices that will hurt the domestic manufacturing sector, making it less competitive in the global market. Further economic concerns suggest that the presence of

oil tankers in B.C.'s coastal environment could potentially threaten local industries and jobs in fisheries, tourism and recreation, all of which depend on a relatively stable ecosystems and an attractive environment. There is further scepticism over Northern Gateway's promise to open up new job prospects for northern economies. After the initial phase of pipeline construction, the project will leave only a small number of permanent, ongoing positions (Lee, 2012).

An eco-political gamble

Alongside these concerns over Northern Gateways national, economic, and industrial implications, is a particularly dominant critique that the pipeline risks the imminent and irreversible destruction of British Columbia's pristine landscapes. Debate over the pipeline is consistently linked to the pipeline's controversial incursion into the fragile 'wilderness' and 'sacred' waters of the Great Bear Rainforest. Here, iconic images of the rainforest's rare wildlife species and salmon bearing waterways, serve as rallying points for anti-pipeline sentiment. With the associated ecological risks of oil spill contamination, British Columbia's coastal wilderness is foregrounded as the crucial bargaining chip in deciding Northern Gateway's future. As David Suzuki (2012) has stated, "the battle lines are drawn and Northern BC's pristine wilderness is the latest front." For conservation advocates, the struggle against Northern Gateway is "the defining Canadian environmental battle of our time" (Gillis, 2011).

This conviction alone is used to frame a number of campaigns, petitions and events seeking to mobilize opposition to Northern Gateway. These actions both amplify and gather support from ongoing conservation campaigns and their organizations. Most

notably, the Sierra Club of B.C., ForestEthics and Greenpeace, established advocates for the protection of old growth forest from logging in the Great Bear region, have collectively launched the "Take it Taller" petition against pipelines and tankers on the west coast.[15] Campaigns pressuring for a ban on oil tanker traffic seek to re-introduce a once voluntary, federal agreement from the 1970's to support a moratorium on 'very large crude carrier' traffic in the Hecate Strait, Dixon Entrance and Queen Charlotte Sound. This moratorium is the objective of the Dogwood Initiative's "No Tankers: Our Coast Our Decision" campaign, with support from the Living Oceans Society and PacificWILD (The Dogwood Initiative). There is also the web-based campaign "Pipe up Against Enbridge." This advocacy network provides updates on current events and actions related to Northern Gateway through a news feed, blog, Facebook page and twitter account, encouraging Canadians to engage in the discussion and participate in community events. The campaign is supported by grassroots groups such as the Sea to Sands Conservation Alliance, Friends of Wild Salmon, NGO's as well as Coastal First Nations, Office of the Wet'suwet'en and the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council.

There is a strong affiliation between First Nations groups and the environmental activism against Northern Gateway. Because the designated pipeline route intersects with numerous indigenous territories, First Nations communities have invoked their treaty rights and land claims to defend their voice in the decision making process for Northern Gateway. Protest from within First Nations communities is also one of the primary sources of eco-political argumentation. There is particular concern that the increased potential for a coastal oil spill will disrupt the marine ecosystem to such an extent that the

15 According to the "Take it Taller" Rainforest Solutions Project, the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement in 2006 permitted 50 percent of the forest to be off limits for logging.

traditional subsistence practices of current and future generations will be eradicated. The fate of Northern Gateway is therefore linked to the fate of First Nations identity, specifically their legacy of careful stewardship of the land for food and survival. The "Save the Fraser Declaration" represents a gathering of First Nations who have petitioned to protect the Fraser River, a major migration route for salmon spawning, from oil contamination. Their declaration describes the Fraser River and watershed as a critical lifeline for the health of First Nations communities and their ability to sustain themselves as they have since "time immemorial" (Save the Fraser Gathering of Nations).

Representing wilderness: documentary film

In this section I argue that the eco-political representations of wilderness that have characterized opposition to Northern Gateway appear most explicitly in a succession of independent documentary films produced in the last two years. While these productions each represent distinct narratives, they share a commitment in bringing visual exposure to the Great Bear Rainforest to reveal the true stakes of Northern Gateway. The films direct the audience's attention to the coastal landscape as the real front line in the 'battle' to defeat the pipeline proposal. I look primarily at a group of films released in 2011 including *SpOIL*, *Tipping Barrels*, *Standup4GreatBear, On the Line*, and *The Pipedreams Project*. This concentration of film campaigns reflects a growing trend where the role of documentary and media production in the work for social change is increasingly popularized and taken on by "independent social investigators" (Druick, 2010: 353). Contemporary practices of "online media sharing" permit greater access to the means of documentary film production in communicating advocacy interests (2010: 353). As

Druick explains, these cultural productions are invested in the assumption that "a politicized viewing public might bring about change" (2010: 353).

Documentary productions are particularly interesting objects of analysis considering how their factual, informative genre (supported by news and interview clips) is used to frame partisan interpretations or individual interests in socio-political issues (Druick, 2010). The films described below combine photographic documentation of wilderness landscapes with factual reports and case analyses of the pipeline proposal. They draw upon interviews with local stakeholders representing science, conservation, government, and first nations groups. At their core, they pursue an eco-political agenda: to showcase the environment by constructing a particular sense of place to counteract Enbridge's vision of the landscape as the abstract space of industrial development. To this end, the films offer distinct ways of approaching the Great Bear Rainforest, through first-person experiences of kayaking, stand up paddle boarding, recreational surfing, conservation activism and "shooting" world class wildlife photography. The films attest to an ostensibly unwavering opposition to Northern Gateway, from which more widespread grassroots support and engagement should follow.

1. *Spoil* (2011)
Runs 44 minutes and 10 seconds

Spoil takes a pragmatic, self-reflexive approach in its advocacy strategy. By merging photojournalism and science, the film frames its ecological message through a naturalistic angle. The purpose of the film is to showcase the Great Bear RAVE, or a "Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition." The RAVE is carried out by the international League of Conservation Photographers (iCLP) who were invited by the conservation group

PacificWILD, to produce an arsenal of photography depicting the wilderness of the Great Bear Rainforest. The narrative of the film contextualizes that project in relation to the Northern Gateway proposal, through the narrative of PacificWILD conservationist Ian McAllister. He argues that images play a pivotal role in swaying the course of an issue.

The film begins with McAllister hiking through the forest tracking black bears, with his camera in hand and tripod over his shoulder. His goal is to glimpse a "pure white bear". His introduction explains that the region has somehow escaped from the scale of industrial modernization that has largely transformed planet earth. It is therefore a valuable place for its natural history, beauty, intact ecology and First Nations culture. It is an area that requires continued conservation efforts, not an oil pipeline. Here McAllister explains how scientific research, documentation and mapping are essential measures in protecting and conserving the region.

The film then introduces the small community of Hartley Bay, home of the Gitga'at First Nation "living sustainably in the great bear rainforest since the beginning of time."[16] Here the focus is on their subsistence culture of fishing, traditional art and their non-exploitative uses of the land, explained in an interview with wilderness guide Marvin Robinson. The narrative then broaches the issue of the Northern Gateway Pipeline, its associated risks of oil spills and contamination, Enbridge's history of oil spills, the disastrous spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and the destructive industry of tar sands extraction.

The film then lays out the model of action developed by PacificWILD and the iLCP, to mobilize international awareness and therefore popular support against Northern

[16] In the opening titles the film is dedicated to the Gitga'at First Nation.

Gateway. In an interview with Cristina Mittermeier, president of the iLCP, we learn that the purpose of the RAVE is to capture images and bring back stories through an intimate portrait of the environment that will “create tipping points around conservation issues” in the media. The film then follows the photographers in their challenges to capture evocative photographs of the region's “iconic” wildlife, wolves and bears, and underwater shots of jellyfish, sea lions and salmon.

The latter half of the film is largely focused on representing encounters between the photography team and the Kermode Spirit Bear. We learn that the bear is part of a spiritual nature experience, sought by tourists and visitors. One of the iLCP photographers, Paul Nicklen reveals that the most memorable experience of his career was getting within a few feet of the Spirit Bear to take a rare snapshot. Nicklen pays great credit to Marvin Robinson, for helping him get in such close proximity to the bear. Nicklen explains that Marvin is a kind of “bear whisperer,” and that he has known the bear since it was a cub, gaining its trust and friendship.

McAllister argues that the presence of Spirit Bears actually reveals the importance of the ecosystem's foundation species: salmon. He explains that the real stakes of the pipeline proposal is the life cycle of salmon. The film closes with a reminder that Northern Gateway will force the continued extraction of the world's “dirtiest” oil, rather than use it sparingly as a strategic reserve. The closing titles urge the audience to take action with PacificWILD and pressure the federal government to support a moratorium on oil tankers on the west coast.

Spoil is the most acclaimed of PacificWILD's documentary film productions, which also includes two shorter films, *Oil in Eden* (2010) and an animated short, *Cetaceans of the Great Bear Rainforest* (2011). PacificWILD's Ben Gulliver and Ian McAllister were also involved with the production of *Tipping Barrels*, and *Standup4Greatbear*. PacificWILD is a non-profit organization for the conservation and defence of British Columbia's coastal wilderness regions and wildlife, with specific interest in the Great Bear Rainforest ecosystem and its keystone species. In the last twenty years PacificWILD has demonstrated an ongoing effort to protect the rainforest from logging of timber industry by lobbying for conservancy designation. In *Spoil*, McAllister relates his personal discovery of the Great Bear Rainforest during a sailing expedition up the coast, at which time there was little scientific data with which to dispute plans for unrestricted logging and fish farming. After years of research, McAllister and his wife Karen McAllister published their book titled *The Great Bear Rainforest: Canada's Forgotten Coast* (1998) which showcases their photography and personal impressions to raise international awareness about the industrial interests that threatened the unique region.

Since the McAllisters founded PacificWILD, the organization has been actively involved in supporting conservation field research and public education. The group has highlighted priorities in their ongoing struggles against the trophy hunting of Grizzly Bears, fish farming, and energy industries of oil and gas, wind farms and hydro-electric projects. Their approach is based in scientific and biological conservation models that work in collaboration with First Nations interests. They are currently working a research strategy that involves non-invasive surveillance of wildlife by using cutting edge camera and hydrophone technology that allows researchers to monitor wildlife from remote

locations. *Spoil* was produced with the help of EP films, an independent production company that supports projects of conservation through exploration.

2. ***Oil in Eden: The Battle to Protect Canada's Pacific Coast*** (2011)
   Runs 16 minutes and 45 seconds

Produced by Damien Gillis, Oil in Eden offers what PacificWILD describes as an "essential summary" of the critical issues related to Northern Gateway. The film begins by introducing the Great Bear Rainforest as "one the last great wild places on the planet." We then see president of King Pacific Lodge (Princess Island), Micheal Uehara, who describes the region as "virgin rainforests, wild fish, wild places." We then hear the voice of Helen Clifton who explains how the forest is home to the ancient lifestyle of the indigenous peoples. It is made even more distinctive by iconic land and marine wildlife species including the Spirit Bear, "roaming wild wolves", "majestic grizzlies", wild salmon, orca and humpback whales. The narrator then explains that all these things are at stake with the expansion of the tar sands and specifically, with Enbridge's plans for the Northern Gateway Pipeline.

The film transitions into photos of the tar sands, super tankers as well as clips of climate change activist Andrew Nikiforuk. The film describes tar sands as the "most polluting industrial project on the planet," responsible for ecosystem contamination. The film also highlights the issue of precarious pipeline technology and the introduction of new tankers to the Pacific coast, referring to the example of the devastating oil pollution from the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska.

While the film touches on a range of risks, disadvantages and concerned stakeholders, the narrative is shaped around the goal of protecting B.C.'s wild coast: to keep the "last

bastion" of Canadian wilderness "wild and oil-free." The film focuses particularly on the ecological value of the Great Bear Rainforest as the largest intact temperate rainforests left on the planet. In an interview with whale researcher Hermann Meuter from the cutting-edge Cetacea Lab, the film explains how submarine noise pollution from tanker vessels will fundamentally alter the coastal waters, which are designated as critical habitat for threatened species like the humpback whale.

3. ***Cetaceans of the Great Bear Rainforest***
   Runs 6 minutes and 21 seconds

This film uses digital animation to depict the Great Bear Rainforest as a refuge for cetaceans. It juxtaposes animated scenes of dark industrial infrastructure, billowing streams of smoke and scenarios of burning tanker ships against a predominantly green mountainous terrain and deep blue coastal waters. The film describes the region as "a rare natural sanctuary" for 'cetaceans': whales, dolphins and porpoises, who risk being "starved and suffocated" by an oil spill. The film is structure by an educational narrative, explaining the ecological processes that still function "as nature intended."

The most pressing threat animated in the film is the noise pollution of large oil tankers, leaving an "acoustic footprint" that can travel a distance of twenty kilometres. This industrial noise is said to poison the cetacean environment, regardless of a spill. Because whales have evolved a "highly specialized physiology and behaviour for using acoustics to live in their marine world" their critical ability to use sound will be impaired with the increase of industrial noise, creating vast areas of "acoustic dead zones." Their song and survival will be "drowned out by the industrial roar." The film ends with an

appeal to the audience to lend their support to PacificWILD in their efforts to protect this "pure and pristine habitat."

3. ***Tipping Barrels: Journey into the Great Bear*** **(2011)**
   Runs 19 minutes and 59 seconds

Described as a combination of "surfing and environmental journalism" the film follows two young surfers, Arran and Reid Jackson, as they leisurely explore the West coast in their search for good waves or "barrels". The documentary is largely an exposure of the recreational values of the Great Bear Rainforest and was sponsored by Sitka, a Canadian surf and skateboard manufacturer and retailer. The film title suggests a kind of a kind of ultimatum or contrast between Northern Gateway's plans for oil development and the wilderness recreation associated with surfing.

In the first five minutes of the film, scenic pans of the coastline are paired with acoustic folk music to stage Arran and Reid's surfing adventure along the coast and the kind of lifestyle it involves. The film chronicles their day to day excursions in the Queen Charlotte Sound. The camera follows them as they integrate with the environment, using axes and driftwood to build a lean-to shelter, making their campfire, drinking whisky and eating berries in the bushes. They are also featured using still cameras, among the other essential items brought with them. They are seen wearing clothing and merchandise featuring the Sitka logo.

The film mostly consists of surfing footage, following Arran and Reid in their quest to scout out good surf conditions. Their practices of surfing and camping appear non-disruptive and harmonious with the coastal environment. No other human presence is

featured in the film's footage of the ocean, beaches and forest, allowing the two surfers to appear diminutive and insignificant against the vastness of the landscape.

The film does however feature brief interviews with Ian McAllister, sharing his expertise on the ecological values of the region. McAllister's narrative serves to develop the film's genre of environmental journalism. He explains how the region has somehow escaped industrialization, remaining an "incredibly bio diverse and rich interface" of land and water, a truly "global treasure." McAllister explains that we cannot rely on the government to protect the region, and that Enbridge is far more interested in turning it into an "oil depot." There is also a clip with Helen Clifton, from the Gitga'at First Nation of Hartley Bay, emphasizing the whales, wolves and Spirit Bears unique to the region. She asks, if the pipeline goes through, what will be 'great' about the great bear rainforest? McAllister refers to the Spirit Bear as a kind of symbol for the "mystery and greatness" of the coast, it represents what is put at stake by oil interests.

Overall the film takes a much softer, less foreboding narrative that the other productions. Only after ten minutes does it broach the political context of the tar sands and fossil fuels. The film's final message is voiced by Ian McAllister, suggesting that "environmentalists and first nations alone cannot save the coast," it will require the action of a broader public, arguing that we all "have to come together." This suggests an interest in gaining the support of new groups in the opposition to Northern Gateway, likely younger generations of adventure-enthusiasts who can identify with the protagonists.

4. ***Standup4GreatBear*** **(2011)**
   Runs 35 minutes and 4 seconds

This film is an eco-adventure documentary that follows Norm Hann, an outdoor expedition guide and stand up paddleboard (SUP) instructor, as he completed a 385 kilometre SUP expedition from the harbour of Kitimat to the community of Bella Bella in May of 2010. The purpose of the expedition and film documentary is to raise awareness about Northern Gateway's associated risk of an oil spill, its potential impact on the coastal environment, its First Nations people and the critical relation between the two. Hann relocated from Ontario to Canada's "adventure capital" Squamish, B.C. twelve years ago to work as an outdoor expedition guide and helped to establish the adventure tourism programs at the King Pacific Lodge (since 2000) on the coast of the Great Bear Rainforest (Mountain Surf Adventures).

His film places particular focus on Northern Gateway's proposal to introduce super tankers into the Douglas Channel, through which Hann makes stops at the communities most vulnerable to environmental disaster. He begins his journey paddling out from Hartley Bay, where the film foregrounds Hann's 'insider' relation with the coastal First Nations people, having been "adopted into the community in 2006" given a traditional name for "steer man of the canoe," for his work with the school's student mentorship program. His role in the community offers a rapprochement with indigenous perspectives. His expedition is supported by the "matriach" Helen Clifton, Dollores Pollard (who sang and drummed for their departure ceremony) and Gerald Amos who introduces them to the coastal ecology by boat (relating his childhood memories of fishing).

He describes the two objectives of his journey, to observe the traditional food harvesting areas of the First Nations people and to document the wildlife. Later in the

film, when he is welcomed by the community of Hartley Bay, he realizes that the "real reason" for his expedition is the defense and protection of First Nations communities and their traditional lifestyles. Towards the end of the film he reiterates that it's the people who he is paddling for. At one point during his expedition through the Douglas Channel, Hann meets with guides who bring him to see coastal petroglyph sites, though he does not fully explain the significance of these artifacts to his mission. Hann is seen being welcomed with a large Heiltsuk ceremony and feast when he reaches the final destination of Bella Bella on May 18th 2010.

The film features various scenes where Hann is interacting with the local communities, greeting children and speaking with elders. First Nations members are featured in highly traditional ways, in various ceremonial settings, with "beaded blankets and regalia," song and drumming performances, as well as preparing traditional foods including halibut, seaweed, crabs, clams and mussels. Hann relates that, "here we are eating traditional foods, dungenous crab from their traditional territory." Hann places particular emphasis on the vulnerability of traditional harvesting practices to the threat of large oil tankers. He explains that if First Nations lose their connection to the land, their identity will be compromised. The marine ecosystem is featured as an abundant dietary resource for first nations and their traditional harvesting practices. The film also features scenes of the site where the Queen of the North sank, but does not actually show Hann himself making this visit. Instead, the tour and story comes from Marvin Robinson as one of the guardian watchmen for the Gitga'at people, relating how he does not fish in that area since the wreckage of the ferry still leak fuels.

Hann also makes a visit to the Cetacea Lab on Gill Island, introducing biologists Janie Wray and Hermann Meuter, who track whale populations using underwater microphones to identify whale songs, a "low-impact" kind of scientific research. Regardless of a spill occurring, Hann argues that the presence of tanker ships will disturb the waters through which transient killer whales come to feed. We learn that the magnitude of noise from large crude carriers far exceeds the current industrial shipping traffic. Meuter then plays sound clips, contrasting the song of a humpback whale with the noise of tanker vessel. The navigational risk of super-tanker traffic is illustrated with the example of the Queen of the North. Much of the film features scenes where Norm is seen as the lone figure navigating the waters, aside from the brief appearances of killer whales, sea lions, and intertidal marine life.

Also involved in this production is Hann's sister Shannon Hann, orchestrating public relations for the expedition through social media. Brian Huntington of the Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition was responsible for the actual filming and photographic documentation of the expedition, following Hann by sea kayak. Hann is currently producing another film, set for release in spring of 2013, titled *Stand: A SUP Adventure Through the Great Bear Rainforest*, to bring "additional awareness to the threat of oil tankers" on the West Coast (Mountain Surf Adventures).

5. ***The Pipedreams Project*** **(2011)**
   Runs 28 minutes and 32 seconds

The film was written, directed and produced by Ryan Vandecasteyen and Faroe des Roches. Vandecasteyen works as an outdoor guide and educator and is a recent UBC graduate in Environment and Sustainability and Des Roches is a Kayak instructor in

Vancouver. Both describe themselves as adventure-enthusiasts. The third member of the paddle team is Curtis White, videographer and certified instructor with Paddle Canada (Pipedreams).

The film offers a similar eco-adventure angle as *Standup4GreatBear*, in that they both incorporate forms of paddling to execute their expedition, using their firsthand experiences to shape their advocacy narrative. The film chronicles the three activists' kayaking journey from Kitimat to Vancouver, with the purpose of encountering the west coast and its people face to face, to get an intimate sense of the real risks and stakes of Northern Gateway. As the kayak team proceeds down the coast, they gather insights from the local people and communities they encounter on their expedition.

The film features the footage taken by the kayak team (Faroe, Ryan and Curtis) interspersed with interviews and news clips that explicitly emphasize the local stakes of pipeline development and oil tankers. As with the films described above, the risks of oil tanker traffic are traced to the examples of the 2006 sinking of the Queen of the North and the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill. From these clips, the films transitions back to kayaking footage. The team is seen paddling through the waters, camping, navigating with maps, overcoming logistical challenges and facing the elements. Most spectacular are their encounters with whales, whose fins emerge from the water only meters away from their kayaks. They also encounter other regional wildlife including grizzly bears, sea lions, eagles, the remains of "wolf kills" and underwater marine life.

Much like *Tipping Barrels* and *Standup4GreatBear*, the film depicts the kayakers as the lone figures in the vast ocean waters and coastal landscape, often shrouded in misty

waters or with the setting sun on the horizon. The camera's point of view oscillates between the paddlers gaze onward over the tip of the kayak, and a view facing the kayak team as they paddle through their journey with the forested coastline behind them.

The film's narrative is densely packed with interviews and clips of various concerned parties. It features leaders of the Haisla, Heiltsuk and Coastal First Nations groups, with representatives including Gerald Amos, Frank Brown explaining the First Nations responsibilities of stewardship and Dollores Pollard, expressing concern for the quality of life of future generations during a speech at a community event. The film also includes interviews with conservationist Karen McAllister of PacificWILD. The kayak team also visits the Cetacae lab on Gill Island, where they meet with Hermann Meuter inside his acoustic studio. There are further clips of NDP Member of Parliament Nathan Cullen giving a speech at an event where he encourages the audience that "together we are many." Finally, there is an interview with David Suzuki who explains British Columbia's legacy of environmental activism, an inspiring history of resistance that shapes the values of British Columbians. Here we see clips of earlier logging protests in the Great Bear Rainforests and references to the Clayoquot Sound protests.

The film summarizes with an urgent appeal to citizens to stand up for themselves and against government and corporate power, to cultivate the power of community solidarity. The kayak team argues that older forms of activism are no longer compatible with the kinds of "harmful mega-projects" happening in Canada. Instead, they call for civil society activism. As Gerald Amos predicts, there is a "folkstorm brewing." The major insight of the Kayak team is that the strength and determination of coastal communities can serve as an example of how the wider public, particularly residents of

Vancouver, can come together as individuals in a collective desire to take responsibility for their lives and to stop the Enbridge project. The film finishes with scenes of the team paddling back into Vancouver with the cityscape the horizon.

Circulation and audience

Given their thematic overlap and the proximity of their releases, the above films have been screened in similar festival circuits and are promoted within the same networks of environmental NGO's and advocacy groups, including PacificWILD and Pipe Up Against Enbridge. The RAVE photography featured in *Spoil* appears in the Pembina Institute's report "Pipeline and Tanker Trouble." Work from iLCP photographer Paul Nicklen appeared in the article "Pipeline through Paradise" in the August 2011 issue of *National Geographic Magazine* (Johns, 2011).

Most of the films have been made available for purchase. *Spoil*, *Oil in Eden* and *Cetaceans* are combined in a DVD package that can be purchased through PacificWILD. *Tipping Barrels* was released by Sitka, who also helped raise funds for PacificWILD by selling surf apparel, merchandise and by holding silent auctions for Great Bear RAVE photography at their Victoria and Vancouver store locations. *The Pipedreams Project* is set for DVD release in the spring of 2012. There is little circulation of the films through television broadcasting. *On the Line* is the only documentary to air on CBC and was broadcast across Canada in April 2012.

Community screenings

The film screenings are primarily concentrated within the province, but are gradually finding a nation-wide audience, as well as some audiences in the U.S.

Community film screenings have been publicized in towns across B.C., including Bella Bella, Shearwater, Denny Island and Sointula. *Spoil* and *Tipping Barrels* were presented at UBC, hosted by the Forest Sciences Centre, who advertised the films to "surfers, kayakers, hikers, nature lovers" and all members of the Vancouver community. *Spoil*, *Oil in Eden* and *Cetaceans of the Great Bear Rainforest* were also screened together at the University of Winnipeg. *Spoil* had an official multimedia premiere and press conference in Vancouver. The Great Bear RAVE photography was also presented in Ottawa by a delegation of stakeholders from B.C. making a case for legislation to enforce an oil tanker moratorium.

Norm Hann has shown *Standup4GreatBear* in grade schools, where he has also spoken with school children. The film has also been screened at the Okanagan College in Kelowna, and well as the Ecomarine Ocean Kayak Centre on Granville Island, Vancouver. A "Standing up for the Great Bear Rainforest" film night was scheduled in Revelstoke at the Royal Canadian Legion, to show *Oil in Eden, Cetaceans*, *Spoil*, *Standup4Greatbear* and *On the Line*. Screenings for *The Pipedreams Project* will be hosted in cities across Canada at community venues, libraries and college theatres. These screenings are largely facilitated in concert with a number of film festival tours.

Festivals

The films are largely circulated within a niche of environmental, eco-adventure and humanitarian film culture, as opposed to a mainstream film audience. In 2011 *Spoil* was recognized with numerous awards including 'Best Film on Mountain Environment' by the 2011 Banff Mountain Film Festival, which showcases environmental adventure

films around the world. One of the festival's jury members praised that “the imagery is gorgeous, story engaging and the stakes couldn’t be higher. That the film ends in pure magic is... perfect” (Banff Mountain Film Festival, 2011). *Spoil* was also recognized as the ‘Best Environmental Film’ by the 2011 Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival and as the 'Best Environmental Preservation Feature' by the Artivist Film Festival, which promotes awareness for humanity, animals and the environment. Other awards for *Spoil* include 'Best Human Interest' by the Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival, 'Best Environmental Film' and 'Best Photography' by the 2011 CINE International Film Festival, which recognizes media productions that contribute to the knowledge and awareness to “wildlife, habitat, people and nature” (The International Wildlife Film Festival).

The Pipedreams Project is promoted through the Reel Paddling Film Festival tour, which recognized the documentary as “Best Environmental Film” of 2012. The festival will be screened at paddling shops, clubs, schools and theatres across North America. The festival's mission is to showcase the best paddle-sport films of the year, encouraging audiences worldwide “to explore rivers, lakes and oceans, push physical and emotional extremes, embrace the lifestyle and appreciate the heritage of the wild places we paddle” (Reel Paddling Film Festival). *The Pipedreams Project* also received the People's Choice Award and Grand Prize by the Mountain Roots Festival in Revelstoke. It made the official selection for the Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival (VIMFF) which screened the film at the Centennial theatre in North Vancouver on the same day as *On the Line* and T*ipping Barrels*. The VIMFF recognizes climbing and adventure films based around Squamish, Whistler and the Coast Range, geared towards

an audience of "sport climbers, alpinists and mountain wanderers" (Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival).

I want to understand how the aesthetic of wilderness constructed in these films intervenes in the political protest against the Northern Gateway proposal, by configuring normative mappings of human activity. The goal is to examine how the activities of subsistence, recreation, sporting, tourism and photography, represented in the films, fit within an aesthetic of wilderness. This requires an examination of how the films' aestheticization of wilderness in the Great Bear Rainforest represents relations between humans and non-humans, and how those relations in turn rationalize opposition to techno-industrial work of pipeline development and trans-oceanic oil shipping. My goal is to understand how the relations between human and non-human beings, nature and culture, represented in the wilderness of the Great Bear Rainforest, inform a sense of environmental justice in the Northern Gateway debate.

To approach these questions, I will interrogate the film texts by investigating the following themes, articulating the concepts of nature and culture outlined in the previous chapter. I will consider how animals and animal-human relations are represented in these materials and what work is done by these representations. Equally important, I will discuss how humans and forms of human activity are represented in these materials. Here I will pay particular attention to the sorts of culture that are present (and absent) in the films' documentations and what makes these cultural practices permissible. This will require an examination of the forms of technology represented in the films and how they

are cast in relation to "nature." It will also consider how forces of economy and capital are represented in the film texts.

Lastly, I will examine how landscape and wilderness are represented and what aesthetic investments are being made in these representations. For instance, I will examine how wilderness landscapes link to the representation of ecological politics. Altogether, I will consider how the above themes can be situated in relation to the historical and contemporary mobilizations of wilderness in Canada's national, colonial and post-colonial imaginaries.

Chapter 3

Imagining nature and culture in the Great Bear Rainforest

In this chapter I analyze the documentary practices through which the films represent the environmental politics of the Northern Gateway Pipeline proposal. Through a close examination and interpretation of the films *Spoil* (2011), *Oil in Eden* (2011), *Cetaceans* (2011), *Tipping Barrels* (2011), *Standup4GreatBear* (2011) and *The Pipedreams Project* (2011), I argue that there is much at stake in how they articulate the environmental encroachments proposed by oil sands expansion. Their respective advocacy for B.C.'s coastal rainforest involves the re-inscription of identities, roles, boundaries and relations, or as Haraway puts it, deciding the basic question of "who belongs where" (2008:41). Specifically, I argue that the films' narratives of the coastal environment and its local inhabitants entail an ideological deepening of the nature-culture dualism. I further argue that this separation of nature and culture implicitly serves to affirm the institutional power and authorial privilege of conservation and ecological science over the coastal environment.

I explore concepts of nature and culture as they are configured through the aesthetic lens of wilderness. That is to say, in the way the films frame the values of environment through sensorial experiences of the Great Bear Rainforest. In particular, I examine how the films' representations of wilderness are used to express an appreciation of landscape as a frontier of sublime nature, and how these aesthetic values intervene in the political discussion of Northern Gateway.

The following analysis interrogates the research materials by first examining how concepts such as wilderness, community, technology and economy, are represented in the

films. And secondly, it examines how these representations contribute to the films' narratives and arguments, and the implications that arise from these representations.

The observations are organized into a number of themes. Considering how the films place particular importance on animal life in their narratives and scenic footage, I examine how animals and animal-human relations are depicted, and how they indicate values of wilderness. Accordingly, I consider the ways in which human subjects and their activities appear in the films: as protagonists, environmental professionals and as local inhabitants. I then broach the related themes of industry and technology and how they contribute to the aesthetic construction of the coastal environment. I further examine how the films depict economy and capital as forces that threaten the wilderness of the Great Bear Rainforest. Last, I trace the aesthetic of wilderness to the concept of landscape and its staging of collective, "Canadian" environmental values.

Animals and animal-human relations

Animals are represented in very particular ways in the films, and are integral to the kinds of narratives the films develop. I argue that the films' depictions of animal life as 'wild' life, is a key strategy that constructs the landscape of the Great Bear Rainforest as primarily a wilderness destination. I further argue that the aesthetic used to showcase wild animals confirms a normative separation between nature and culture, and as such it proposes how human individuals should relate to nature and wilderness. Here I identify three consistent representations in the depiction of wildlife: as symbols of the sublime wilderness frontier, as biological specimens at stake or "species at risk," and as markers of cultural identity and traditional lifestyles.

The films present a fairly consistent cast of wildlife species: bears, whales, wolves, eagles, sea lions, fish and marine life. These animals are described as tokens of the pipeline controversy, as Ian McAllister explains in *Spoil*, the Spirit Bear is one of the symbols "in the bid to protect this coast." Marvin Robinson also describes the Spirit bear as "the icon of this whole pipeline issue, it's like an exclamation mark" (*Spoil*). The suggestion that an animal can embody the complexity of a contentious industrial project reveals how the films' critique of Northern Gateway is oriented towards the valuation and affirmation of the Great Bear Rainforest as a pure, majestic and timeless wilderness. Iconic wildlife thus serve as instruments for bringing to life an idyllic understanding of wilderness as the domain of sublime nature. The representations of wildlife appear to exhibit a trace of the supernatural and spiritual, evoking a mix of emotions, "from awe to terror" (Cronon, 1995). In *Tipping Barrels* Ian McAllister describes the Spirit Bear as an iconic symbol of the rainforest's "mystery and greatness." In both *Spoil* and *Tipping Barrels* Helen Clifton describes the "roaming wild wolves" and "majestic grizzlies" as the crucial features that make the Great Bear Rainforest "great."

The photographic practices seen in the films are a particularly strong example of how wildlife are instrumentalized as spectacular objects of the sublime. Here, the symbolic use of wildlife for the films' aesthetic construction of wilderness is made explicit: they provide "portraits" of the coastal rainforest (*Spoil*). For example, the photography produced from the Great Bear "Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition" (RAVE) present highly surreal images of the wildlife in their environment. During the RAVE, one of the photographers describes the "wild scene" of being submerged in a river full of jellyfish as "primal," "dark," and "mysterious." The same photographer later

discovers one of the world's largest sea stars, with an appetite so voracious it "devours everything in its path" (*Spoil)*. Thus, animals represent the sublime, beastly places of wilderness that Philo &Wilbert describe as "stocked with all manner of large…dangerous animals that humans would not normally encounter" (2000: 12).

The condition for this sublime aesthetic of wilderness is that animals must appear fully separate from the human world, and thus requires the affirmation of nature as Other to culture. As Haraway argues, animals are often used as markers of nature's "pre-rational, pre-management, pre-cultural" essence (1991:14, 30). Exposure of wildlife to the human sphere of activity is consequently framed as a threat to that natural essence. For instance, Spirit Bear guide Marvin Robinson reveals that "up until recently the First Nations rarely spoke of the Spirit Bear," they kept it a secret, since the more people knew about it the more vulnerable it would become. He adds that, "even in Hartley Bay now, a lot of elders haven't seen one." In both *Spoil* and *Oil in Eden* the narrators compare the rareness of the Spirit Bear to that of the Panda Bear.[17] The value of wildlife is therefore increased by its supposed isolation from human spheres of activity.

The elusive, isolated nature of wild animals is essential to the films' construction of the wilderness as frontier. Here the films use wildlife to stage the kind of resource potential promised in the concept of frontier: the raw nature that lies just beyond the boundaries of known, cultural landscapes (Sandlos, 2000). The notion of frontier is fundamental to the films' normative construction of nature as space to remain untouched, unmodified, and thus preserving the potentiality for experiences of the unknown. The

17 Unlike the Panda, the Kermode "Spirit Bear" is not a distinct species, but a subgroup of black bears with a distinct genetic composition that triggers white coloured fur.

narrator in *Oil in Eden* calls upon the audience to protect B.C.'s wild coast as the "last bastion" of Canadian wilderness. Similarly in *Spoil*, McAllister conveys the "amazing" experience of exploring a river valley and the possibility that you can turn the corner and spot a "pure white bear." [18] Where wildlife are normatively situated as rare and elusive, there thus appears a contradiction insofar as the landscape is also described as a frontier for the nature experiences sought by the adventurers, filmmakers and photographers. The photographer Paul Nicklen explains that his intimate observation of the Spirit Bear was the most memorable experience of his career. Similarly, during Norm Hann's exploration of the intertidal marine life he remarks, "most people would never get a chance to see an area like this."

This normative frontier between human and animal worlds is also rationalized by the films' conservation narratives. Here the value of rare wildlife is further amplified through their role in larger ecological processes. Factual details and research on the behaviour, habitat and feeding patterns of wildlife thus become strategic for the defence of environment. For instance, *Cetaceans* constructs a natural history of the coastal environment to indicate the vulnerability of its wildlife inhabitants. The coast is described as a "sanctuary" for cetaceans that face the risk of being "starved and suffocated" by oil tankers. The films establish the wildlife as 'endangered' species, particularly through the research on humpback and killer whales, presented by the Cetacea Lab biologists. Here we are told that the quiet coastal waters are critical habitat for humpback whales, a species recognized as "at risk" by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

18 McAllister reiterates this same experience in *Tipping Barrels:* "it is remarkable to be travelling up a river system and turn the corner and see a pure white bear emerge out of the rainforest."

The ecological fragility of the Great Bear Rainforest and its species 'at risk' consequently forms an antagonism between human activity and animal life. Wildlife become the passive, victimized and oppressed subjects threatened by human industry. *The Pipedreams Project* uses images of beached whales and oil soaked birds to describe the devastation of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. In *Tipping Barrels* Helen Clifton raises the concern for all those animals (cited above) that "can't speak" for themselves, framing the wildlife as the helpless victims of a potential pipeline disaster. These victimized representations of wildlife therefore legitimate the role of conservation science in policing the boundaries of the animal world, and cautioning the encroachments of the human world.

Maintaining this nature-culture separation, the researchers emphasize their distance from their objects of study. For instance, the hydrophone recordings allow the whale biologists to survey and identify particular whale pods by their vocal signals, all from the safe distance of the lab. This "non-intrusive" observation of the marine environment is described as giving the biologists direct access to an authentic, unmediated understanding of wild nature.[19] Here, animals are presented as objects to be tracked, glimpsed and passively observed, but not themselves to respond to their observers. While scenes of wildlife observation are integral to the films, the kinds of encounters featured anticipate an established relation between the human subject and the animal object. Alternate ways of relating or "becoming with" that also account for the

19 Remote monitoring practices are an increasingly important component of PacificWILD's research approach. They use pan-tilt-zoom and underwater cameras as "non-invasive video techniques to showcase coastal ecology." PacificWILD.org

agency of wildlife as they react to their observers are denied in advance (Haraway, 2008: 18).

Distanced observations are also seen in the protagonists' encounters with wildlife. These encounters can be summarized as a kind of crossing of paths that do not provoke further questions or discussion, beyond the reaction that to lose such spectacular forms of life would be a tragedy. The experience of witnessing alone sufficiently consummates the protagonists' awareness of the environment. This is apparent in the *Pipedreams Project* with the kayakers' exceptionally close encounters with whales, much in the same way that Hann encounters killer whales, sea lions and intertidal marine life on his paddling expedition. In short, the films framing of the wildlife as attractions of the environment reflect the spectacular value of wilderness as captured in the RAVE photography. In this sense, the films present the protagonists' direct encounters with wildlife in such a way that they can be commodified through visual media as vicarious experiences for the audience. The implication then is that ethical human-animal relations amount to the production and consumption of images and scenery.

The distanced relation between nature and culture suggested by these wildlife observations is fully realized in *Tipping Barrels,* which does without human-wildlife encounters altogether. The conservation narrative is developed in separate clips with Ian McAllister, accompanied by scenes of grizzly bears rolling in grass, salmon spawning upstream, wolves roaming the waterfront, and a Spirit Bear cub amongst his black-furred siblings. These scenes of wildlife are entirely separate from the footage of the surfers, situating wilderness as the background against which the surfers pursue their recreational interests. The isolated scenes of animal life from the surfers' activities indicate the strictly

symbolic function of wildlife and abstracting nature experiences from the kinds of power-infused "entanglements" of human and animal worlds (Haraway, 2008: 106).

In short, potential human-animal relations beyond those of spectator and spectacle, protector and protected, oppressor and oppressed, are not fully explored. A particular exception is made however, in representations of indigenous relations to wildlife. This brings us to the exceptional kinds of encounters represented between wildlife and First Nations people. In *Spoil,* Gitga'at adventure guide Marvin Robinson is described to have a kin-like relation with the Spirit Bears. As the photographer Nicklen assures us, Marvin and the bears have "grown up knowing each other." Marvin's exceptional access to the Spirit Bears is established through his reciprocal relation to the bears. We learn that he has gained their trust and friendship over time. On the other hand, the photographers' and adventurers' relations to the wildlife consist of brief, exceptional experiences that do not result from conditions of co-habitation or companionship.

Wildlife are therefore a critical means for constructing indigenous culture as closer to nature. In *Spoil*, the community of Hartley Bay is introduced with scenes of Gitga'at men catching Rainbow Trout and Coho Salmon, then skinning and preparing the fish. The closeness between the inhabitants and their environment is further expressed in Hann's descriptions of the wild fish and intertidal life upon which First Nations depend for their dietary staples. Hann argues that the vulnerability of marine life to industrial contamination is analogous to the vulnerability of First Nations culture. The indigenous "dependence" on wildlife thus serves to identify them in the same endangered position as the wildlife (*Oil in Eden*). These representations construct a parallel between the conservation discourse of endangered species and colonial representations of the

"vanishing indigene" insofar as they both designate value and "evoke death and extinction" (Haraway, 2008: 18). Haraway describes the tendency of such conservation discourses to "collapse all of man's others into one another" (2008: 18). In this case, both the wildlife species and the indigenous inhabitants are joined within the otherness of nature.

Humans, human activity and culture

Representations of human subjects, their sensorial experiences and cultural practices, contribute to the film's aesthetic construction of the Great Bear Rainforest. In situating human subjects either outside or internal to the wilderness landscape, the films maintain the normative boundaries between nature and culture. Humans are either the beholders of nature, upon which they impose their cultural agency, or they are the partners of nature, implicated in wild nature. I explore this normative mapping of activity in three basic categories of human representation: as the non-local protagonists, as environmental professionals and as the local inhabitants of the First Nations communities.

a) The Protagonists

Nearly all of the films are told through the first-person narrative of the film makers, as exponents of opposition to Northern Gateway.[20] As the films' central protagonists they assume the role of interpreting the Northern Gateway project, identifying the boundaries of debate, and representing the demand for environmental justice. As such, they possess the authorial power in the films' narratives. For instance, in *Standup4Greatbear,* Hann designates himself as a representative of the interests of the First Nations communities.

20 *Oil in Eden* and *Cetaceans* are exceptions. They are told through omniscient narratives written and produced by PacificWILD.

He defends this authority through his personal knowledge and experiences within the region and its peoples. This representational authority is also substantiated by the protagonists' external cultural agency. Their media projects and advocacy campaigns bring new forms of publicity to the local context of struggle. As such, their work proposes to contribute the kind of rational public dialogue necessary for making an effective, urgent defense of the Great Bear Rainforest.

The protagonists therefore relate to the environment from a non-local perspective. Though Norm Hann alludes to his leadership role within the indigenous communities, he explains that he relocated from Ontario to Squamish, B.C. Similarly, Ian McAllister explains that he left Ontario to sail the west coast of B.C. The kayak team from *Pipedreams Project* includes a younger group of university graduates and outdoors educators working in Vancouver. Though we are not fully introduced to the two protagonists in *Tipping Barrels*, they are seen arriving and departing from the coastal region by powerboat. Their respective journeys and expeditions therefore represent a liminal or transitional experience to establish their connection to the environment. These liminal experiences reflect the symbolic narrative of rupture, where civilized man is "fallen from nature," marked by a loss that can only be recovered through the return to nature (Haraway, 2003:28).

The protagonists' seek local experiences to enhance and authenticate their understandings of the complexities of pipeline development. These understandings are obtained through sensorial experiences of the landscape, from the protagonists' subject positions as explorers of the environment. The scenes of McAllister in the landscape follow him hiking through the rainforest, crossing over rivers, or navigating the waters by

powerboat and sailboat. It is significant that the protagonists appear challenged by their journeys, struggling against the elements, using maps and navigational devices as well as obtaining assistance from local guides. The protagonists' role as explorers suggests how the audience might also relate to the environment of the Great Bear Rainforest. The activities of the protagonists can be interpreted as a kind of advertisement for the adventure tourism of the region.

Their chronicles of the wilderness 'experience' contribute to the aesthetic framing of wilderness as a frontier of wild nature. As explained earlier in Chapter one, the frontier experience is also part of an historical (and colonial) relation to landscape, in which the privileged subjects of modernity can escape from their everyday lives and release their instinctual energies in the domain of wild nature. I suggest that the wilderness environment is depicted as a space for playful, impulsive and less rational behaviour, as a kind of playground for reckless exploration. In *Standup4Greatbear,* Huntingon suggests that Hann had not clearly thought through his zealous plan to paddle such great distances between islands. In *Tipping Barrels*, we see the surfers test the limits of their abilities in the waves, and later roaming the forest free of inhibition. In the *Pipedreams Project*, we see the crew playfully “sneaking up on eagles.”

It is also significant that these activities appear as non-threatening intrusions into the wilderness environment. The environment lies open and readily accessible to the protagonists, inviting their practices of documentation. They are often seen as the only individuals in otherwise untouched, uninhabited lands. Though we are shown other human inhabitants in the region, they do not feature in the scenes of the protagonists' adventures and explorations. Their activities of ocean kayaking, sailing, surfing and

stand-up paddle boarding thus appear unique and exceptional in the landscape. These representations can be further interpreted as part of the frontier aesthetic, as a kind of re-enacting of historic, colonial exploration of virgin land.

b) Environmental professionals

Another significant group of individuals appearing in the films are represented as environmental professionals, or the authorities associated with the institutions of conservation and natural science. The PacificWILD founder and conservationist Ian McAllister appears in three of the films. The Cetacae lab biologists Herman Meuter and Janie Wray are also key figures in shaping the ecological imperatives of the conservation narrative, and the Cetacae Lab itself is featured as a key institution for carrying out those imperatives**.** I further include the iCLP (international Conservation League of Photographers) in this group, since they are introduced as some of the world's best conservation photographers, contributing their global expertise to the conservation objectives of the Great Bear RAVE.

The above individuals are represented as official authorities in the ecological management of wildlife and wilderness. Their role in the stewardship of the environment, gives them privileged access to landscape, and mandates their surveillance and monitoring activities. They are depicted in the most intimate corners and depths of the Great Bear Rainforest. Meuter explains that the Cetacae lab uses hydrophone device to record and listen to whale signals "24/7." We see the iCLP members with elaborate camera equipment, raft boats and scuba gear, McAllister hiking through the forest with a tripod under his arm. These depictions work to naturalize the imposition of professional agency over the region's animal life, and permits them forms of intrusion (and

disturbance) somehow different or unrelated to the kinds of human disruptions that conservation science seeks to mitigate. Further on, I discuss how the films represent other forms of technological activity as contaminating and threatening to the pristine environment.

Yet, the films develop the argument that the future survival of the rainforest hinges on the ways it is studied, documented and photographed. The iCLP crew is particularly interested in getting an "intimate portrait" of the animals that will have affective consequences in the media sphere. Though McAllister and the iCLP emphasize the importance of images in changing the course of an issue, they do not address how exactly "close, intimate portraits" elicit a greater political response from the audience.

While the photography is meant to provide an authentic glimpse or window onto the essence of the wildlife, we see the elaborate and highly constructed process required to capture this essence. The photographer Paul Nicklen explains that his job is to bring people into his "story," and another photographer admits that he sometimes observes an animal for an hour before taking his first shot. In seeking to capture the animals in their most extreme and evocative states, the photographers participate in the construction of landscape as 'wilderness,' and animals as 'wild' life. Thus, to effectively communicate what's at stake in the environment, the photographers must craft a mythic story about its wildlife. As Willems-Braun suggests, wilderness becomes the "authorial domain" of environmentalists (1997: 23).

Similarly, biologist Hermann Meuter brings a moral dimension to the ecological rationale, emphasizing that the impact on individual whales is just as important as overall

impact on whale populations. According to Meuter, to ignore such isolated impacts, as Enbridge proposes to do, is fundamentally "wrong." In *Oil in Eden,* Meuter explains how local humpback whale populations have fluctuated over time and that only in the last decade have the whales "miraculously" returned to the region. Similarly, much of the killer whale pods in the region are "transient." The desire to secure and preserve these otherwise uncertain, fluctuations in wildlife migration therefore indicates an intervention of the biologists' personal research interests. This desire to cultivate an abundance of wildlife in the Great Bear Rainforest, in spite of otherwise unpredictable natural processes, demonstrates how conservation science also entails the imposition of its institutional interests.

In *Spoil,* McAllister makes an interesting argument for the particular attention focused on the Spirit Bear. He justifies this interest by arguing that the bear actually symbolizes the interconnections within the coastal ecosystem, in which salmon are the foundation species: "that's what we're trying to follow here, the life cycle of salmon." By situating the Spirit Bear as a component to wider ecological processes, McAllister elides the fetish value of the bear that is so instrumental to the conservation rationale. A similar claim to objectivity appears in the narrative of *Cetaceans,* which calls for the preservation of marine ecosystems so they can continue to function "as nature intended."

This demonstrates the kind of ideological role of "Science" as described by Latour, insofar as it separates value from fact, shaping nature as an external reality to the social world (2004: 10-12). The environmental professionals' appeals to ecological science allow them to present conservation interests as objective, rational imperatives, and thus, naturalizing and securing their own research access to the Great Bear

Rainforest. Thus, the full stakes of Northern Gateway include the endangerment of coastal wildlife species or "ecology," as well as the conservationists' role in presiding over that ecology.

c) The local inhabitants

The films situate the potential human impacts and risks of Northern Gateway in relation to the "local people" of First Nations communities and villages (*Pipedreams Project*). The films do not focus on non-First Nations inhabitants and communities around the Great Bear region who also stand to be impacted by pipeline development.[21] This representational absence of non-First Nations inhabitants points to the absence of the wider network of stakeholders implicated in Northern Gateway, in the fishing and tourism industries situated in and around the Great Bear Region. As Frank Wolf explains in his documentary *On the Line* (2011), approximately 50,000 people are employed in the north coast fishing industry. This representational imbalance works to devalue the modern, industrial stakes and interests existent in the Great Bear coastal region.

One of the major themes in the films' representations of First Nations communities is the particular significance placed upon "traditional" activities and lifestyles. This is apparent in interviews with First Nations members (Helen Clifton, Gerald Amos, Marvin Robinson, Frank Brown) and in the scenes explicitly depicting their cultural activities (ceremonies, singing, drumming, harvesting, fishing, guiding). These representations of the local inhabitants appear as opportunities for them to testify

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21 The extent of non- First Nations presence is an interview with a "community organizer" in the *Pipedreams Project* and an interview with Karen McAllister. However, McAllister is introduced as a representative of PacificWILD, and therefore distinguished from the "local people."

to their traditional identities and their ecologically harmonious lifestyles. The first mention of “local inhabitants” in the *Pipedreams Project* is followed by a scene of Kitima'at First Nations singing and drumming in traditional dress, giving a ceremonial blessing to the kayak team on the day of their departure. In *Standup4Greatbear* Hann and Huntington visit the “big house” in Klemtu, where Hann remarks how the men of Klemtu are “incredible singers, very powerful singers...the dancing was incredible and powerful.”

It is not clear how these of scenes of spiritual, ceremonial traditions directly relate to the struggle over Northern Gateway. They do, however, demonstrate how “traditional” qualities establish difference between local First Nations and modern mass culture. Traditional representations are often used to establish continuity between the local inhabitants and the distant past. During Hann's expedition, he describes an indigenous community as **“**still one of those areas where they've been harvesting traditionally for centuries and centuries.” When Hann and Huntington cross through Meyers Passage they excitedly point out the petroglyphs and pictographs, where Huntington shares that “you could feel the energy and the spirit,” and Hann explains, “you could almost see the old traditional canoes passing through there.” These traditional representations of First Nations communities as primal and ahistoric link them to the spatial and temporal domain of 'nature'.

These traditional representations also romanticize the First Nations village communities as humble and remote. In both *Spoil* and *Standup4Greatbear* it is contextually significant for the audience to know that the village of Hartley Bay is

comprised entirely of boardwalks, there are no gravel roads. The towns and villages appear as small, self-enclosed communities, relatively untouched by modern infrastructures. The trace of First Nations life appears light, remote and quiet. In *Spoil*, Marvin Robinson tells us "a lot of the stuff we do now doesn't involve extraction." Subsistence lifestyles appear romanticized in the films, insofar as they do not actually address the labour and difficulties associated with fishing and hunting. Furthermore, the emphasis on traditional dietary practices effectively separates or marginalizes First Nations communities from the consumption of commercial food commodities.

Traditional, non-modern forms of cultural activity appear as the condition for First Nations ecological intuition as stewards of the environment. In *Pipedreams* there is an interview with Frank Brown of Coastal First Nations where he states, "we (Heitsluk) are very committed to our responsibilities of stewardship." In *Spoil,* Gitga'at fisherman Daniel Danes explains how, "the bush is connected to the water…and that's why the Indians believe in the circle… everything is in the circle…everything is joined together in the world." The affirmation of indigenous practices in the ecological management of nature is also an important strategy for corroborating the science of conservation objectives. The result is that wilderness conservation appears credible as both a scientifically rational and historically intuitive practice. In short, these representations establish the interests of sustainable land management as universal to First Nations people and, further, assimilates these interests into the interests of conservation research.

In *Oil in Eden*, Helen Clifton of the Gitga'at First Nation explains that, "we're a rich people, rich from the bounty of the sea." This emphasis on ecological identity further allocates the First Nations communities a unique kind of prosperity that does not imply

economic or capital wealth. Indigenous communities can ostensibly sustain themselves without the activities of capital accumulation found in larger society. Hann paraphrases Clark Robinson who explains "everything that we need for our community is in this one Bay." In *Spoil* one of the fishermen expresses, "what I like about Hartley Bay is everything is here, that we need to survive on." This implies that by maintaining and preserving the kind of lifestyle they've had "for thousands of years," indigenous peoples can exist outside the economic networks of capital. In other words, the strong emphasis on ecological identity marginalizes the inhabitants' potential interests and motivations in their struggle against Northern Gateway. For instance, the films do not relate the significance of how local tourism is dependent upon international markets or how fishermen depend upon commercial buyers to sell their fish.

Instead, the stakes of Northern Gateway for the local inhabitants appear to be the cultural heritage and identity of their people. There is particular concern for the traditional skills and know-how of future generations of children and grandchildren. In *Spoil* McAllister warns that a coastal oil spill could mean that "a way of life that has evolved for thousands of years is no longer." Hann's film particularly features scenes of youth learning the traditional practices of their parents. Hann also starts a project to make new wood paddleboards for a group of students in the community of Bella Bella. The film promotes the sport as a free, silent, efficient and environmentally sustainable way for them to "explore their territorial waters." Hann's narrative therefore presents the interests of First Nations as uniform by constructing a normative understanding of the indigenous peoples as bound to their traditional heritage as natural stewards of the land. His narrative

further attests to “quiet,” non-impactful forms of cultural activity, like stand up paddle boarding, as culturally appropriate ways for the youth to use the landscape.

By presenting First Nations identity as one of the key stakes in Northern Gateway, the films develop a sense of need for the protection and preservation of such culturally marginal lifestyles. As a kind of representative of First Nations interests, Hann tells us that he is paddling on their behalf, “helping the coastal people.” This presents another analogous relation between the local inhabitants and the wildlife, insofar as they appear Other to and endangered by industrial development. McAllister explains, “this pipeline is yet another example of the devastating exploitation of native people and their lands in our pursuit of fossil fuels.” As Hann makes his departure from the village of Klemtu, we hear the leaders thank Hann for what he is doing. These representations create further contrast between Hann's external cultural agency and the more spiritual and thus non-rational kinds of agency depicted amongst the local inhabitants.

Where the *Pipedreams Project* highlights the inspiring activism of indigenous communities, there is much less explanation in *Standup4Greatbear* of how First Nations communities play an active role in the protest against Northern Gateway, defending their treaty rights or their efforts in conserving the temperate rainforest (Haisla First Nation). Furthermore, in *Tipping Barrels* McAllister tells us First Nations and environmentalist campaigns alone are not enough to protect the coastal rainforest and in *Spoil,* emphasizes the importance of photographic documents, “inventories, publications and science reports” in changing the outcome of such struggles. Thus, while the films represent First Nations' opposition to the pipeline proposal as uniformly unequivocal, the power to

create effective advocacy does not lie within the indigenous localities, but must come from an external cultural intervention.

Industry and technology

Themes of technology and industry are fundamental to the films' constructions of the natural landscape of Great Bear Rainforest. As suggested above, modern forms of infrastructure and industrial technology appear antagonistic to the construction of the coastal region as a frontier of sublime wilderness. For instance, the Queen of the North sinking, the Exxon Valdez and BP oil spills serve as key examples in the films' cautionary narratives of industrial tanker traffic. They are framed as "warnings" or omens of the technological failure to come with the Northern Gateway project (*Spoil*). In *Standup4Greatbear* Hann reveals how the documentary on the Exxon Valdez spill *the Black Wave* (2009) was pivotal in motivating his activism against Northern Gateway. The *Pipedreams Project* frames the desire to bring crude oil carriers to the west coast as a kind of blind confidence in our technological abilities, in which "human error" and "equipment failure" are a near certainty.

The theme of technological risk is also linked to the pipeline infrastructure itself, a highly unpredictable transport technology which is illustrated by examples of Enbridge Inc.'s recent track record with major leaks and ruptures (*Oil in Eden*). This cautionary narrative of technology however, contrasts with the celebratory framing of technology used by the environmental professionals who see technological advances as crucial for expanding the possibilities of biological research. For instance, the Cetacae Lab is described as "cutting-edge." This description reflects the paradox of a conservation practice to protect wildlife from human-induced impacts by bringing new forms of

exposure to their "pure, untouched" environments. The use of sophisticated hydrophone and acoustic devices for remote monitoring present a technological intervention that allows the biologists to turn the coastal environment into a kind of living laboratory.

However, in this case, we do not see the mediation of the devices as a technological disruption or impact, but instead as a natural extension of human perception. The hydrophone technology seemingly opens a direct channel between the aquatic environment of whale species and the human researchers. In short, the technological advances of acoustic monitoring appear as enhancing the researchers understanding of whale behaviour, where scientific understandings are presented as critical interventions for environmental justice.

This framing of scientific technology proves exceptional to the films' broader critique of industrial technology as impact-intensive and disruptive of the natural environment. The films focus specifically on the degree of impact tanker vessels would have upon river ecosystems and marine life. The presence alone of tankers in coastal waters would introduce new acoustic reverberations that would disrupt cetacean life. Meuter tells us that even these slight environmental disruptions are unacceptable intrusions. Yet, the kinds of impacts introduced by conservation research and photography appear insignificant. In *Spoil* we see the photographers submerged in a salmon spawning stream with their camera equipment. There is a particular scene where a salmon jumping upstream collides with McAllister's camera, falling back downstream. The incident appears trivial and non-consequential for McAllister, giving us the sense that it is merely part of the photographic process.

Technology is also situated within a spatial and temporal antagonism with the natural, traditional atmosphere of the coastal communities, demonstrating part of what Haraway calls the "Great Divides" between the organic and the technical (2008: 15). We are told that the ecology and peoples of the Great Bear region have long pre-existed the recent industrial pursuits of companies like Enbridge. This spatio-temporal antagonism is achieved through the symbolic cleansing of industrial presence from the representations of the coastal environment and communities. Furthermore, this symbolic cleansing of techno-industrial presence reflects how the policing of nature-culture boundaries becomes the condition for the defence and protection of wilderness in the Great Bear Rainforest and, as such, the condition of environmental justice.

In many scenes we see how representations of nature "abstract from the realities of technological modernity" (Soper, 1995: 196). Pipelines are a form of "industrialization" that has supposedly yet to touch the Great Bear region. Pipelines are a either a future possibility or a distant reality. For instance, the industry of oil sands extraction and distribution (pipelines, oil carriers) is represented as something practised in a distant corner of Canada. The films disassociate the coastal environment from the "corrupt" tar sands, eliding the ways in which oil is the principle fuel source for human societies nation-wide, indigenous and remote communities included.

The representation of bitumen as the world's "dirtiest" oil (*Oil in Eden*) indicates the kind of divide between dirty industry and "clean" nature also found in discourses of environmental pollution. In *Cetaceans*, the Alberta tar sands appear as a dark, ominous concentration of activity, spewing out clouds of carbon emissions that have ostensibly yet to touch the west coast of B.C. In stark contrast, the landscape of the Great Bear

Rainforest is depicted entirely free or "clean" of industrial activity. There is no human presence animated in the unmodified, pristine landscape. The film then depicts scenarios of impending disaster, with huge black tanker ships squeezing through the Douglas Channel. The language of pollution used to describe technological and industrial forces indicates the purism underlying the films' political arguments. As Haraway cautions, such purist ideology comes close to the language of "eugenic cleansing promoted in scientific racism and colonialist discourses" (Wajcman, 2004: 81).

In addition to this distancing of petrochemical production and consumption, the films also represent an absence of the existent industries in the Great Bear region. As McAllister remarks in both *Spoil* and *Tipping Barrels*, the coastal areas of the Great Bear Rainforest have somehow "escaped" the forces of industrial modernization. He explains that "this place has been hidden away from all the craziness that has happened on planet earth." Yet, the films do not explain that the city of Kitimat, eleven kilometres north of Kitima'at village, is home to the Alcan Aluminum smelting company, whose industrial facility has been operative for over fifty years.[22] The aluminum smelter is supported by hydroelectric facilities, transmission lines as well as deep sea terminal processing large volumes of aluminum ore imports. The coastal region has an historical role as a "Pacific Rim" gateway, established with its international deep sea port. The region's industrial history also includes the presence of timber companies, Crown Zellerbach and MacMillan-Bloedel, logging in Kitimat valley prior to its designation as Crown Lands in 1978 (District of Kitimat). Interestingly, later in *Spoil,* McAllister relates his personal

22 Rio Tinto Alcan was previously the Aluminum Company of Canada. The industry required the building of a hydroelectric dam on the Nechako River, and the construction of water tunnel through the Coast Mountains.

efforts to reduce allowable logging in the Great Bear, which he tells us was previously, designated the Mid-Coast Timber Supply Area.

Economy and capital

Economy and capital are largely treated as external forces of oppression, seeking to intervene in the region of the Great Bear Rainforest. They are abstracted as the corporate interests of "big oil" and powerful companies like Enbridge. In the *Pipedreams Project*, Frank Brown of the Coastal First Nations, relates his concern about short-sighted, "corporate interests" in "quarterly profit margins." Economic interests and capital accumulation are framed as the underlying culprits behind the environmental devastation of industrial development. Accordingly, Northern Gateway is described as a situation in which communities throughout the province "have everything to lose and nothing to gain" (*Pipedreams Project*). These statements reflect a theme developed throughout the films in which the economic interests of resource development are represented as parasitic to the environment and local communities. The films do not discuss how resource development is one the primary forms of economic growth for the northern communities of British Columbia. For example, the Alcan Aluminum smelting industry remains one of the largest employers in the district of Kitimat, and has established economic partnerships with First Nations communities.[23]

23 The Rio Tinto Alcan metal operations in B.C. provide opportunities for "mutually advantageous economic and capacity-development initiatives" as well opportunities for economic development for the Haisla Nation, by way of land transfers (Rio Tinto Alcan).

Although the films indicate the "economic risk" of oil tanker traffic, specifically citing the devastation of commercial fisheries in Alaska following the Exxon Valdez spill, they do not specify how similar impacts would affect commerce in communities around the Great Bear Rainforest. At one point in *Standup4GreatBear* Huntington explains that the wild salmon economy in the Skeena watershed "is valued at over 120 million dollars...it's an industry, it's a resource." Yet the film itself frames fishing and harvesting practices as strictly traditional practices of subsisting off the land (as discussed above). First Nations fishermen are represented as the "stewards" of nature, rather than commercial fishermen or industrial labourers.

As such, the films do not demonstrate how relations to landscape and environment are also shaped by capital exchange, or how non-exploitative relations to the land are themselves part of a resource development strategy for First Nations communities.[24] The films construct a gap between such economic realities and the actual communities and individuals implicated in those realities, such that they appear unrelated. The discourse of "resources" is separated from the wilderness discourse of nature. This gap between economy and the local people consequently reinforces the discrete categorization of culture and nature.

A similar gap is constructed between the economic interests in wilderness tourism and those who participate in and depend upon tourism. In *Oil in Eden* there is a scene of the King Pacific Lodge, during a statement from its president Michael Uehara. The

24 The Coastal First Nations "Economic Initiatives" outline the task of balancing sustainable land management with their interests in economic independence. To "develop economic opportunities in the areas of forestry, fisheries, renewable energy and tourism" (Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative).

subtitle explains that the Lodge is the "largest community employer on the tanker route" and was voted the *"*number four resort in the world" by *Condé Nast Magazine*. These details indicate how 'wilderness' itself has significant economic value for the tourism industries surrounding First Nations communities. Moreover, First Nations communities themselves serve as a form of cultural capital, adding value to the wilderness "experiences" offered by King Pacific Lodge tourism programs.[25] Yet, the indigenous relations to wildlife are constructed strictly in terms of cultural and spiritual identity. In *Spoil*, Marvin Robinson reveals that the purpose of his work as a Spirit Bear Guide is to facilitate spiritual nature experiences for the tourists, "that's really why I do this, to be there and experience and see people experience when they do see this rare bear."

That the local inhabitants appear disconnected from larger economic realities also serves to abstract from the related matter of economic equality. By celebrating the integrity of the local people's spiritual connection to the land, the films frame First Nations struggle against Northern Gateway as a struggle for their cultural identity. Consequently, there is little representation of the First Nations' struggle for economic development. The films do not represent the socio-economic challenges facing First Nations communities, the wealth disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous communities in Canada, and the related discrepancies in quality of life. Thus economic

25 The Gitga'at nation are described as the "hosts" of King Pacific Lodge recreational services, with whom they've developed business and economic partnerships, providing job training, opportunities and professionalization experience for youth. The lodge promotes the cultural experiences of the traditional Gitga'at territories to prospective visitors (KingPacificLodge).

development is not represented as a means through which First Nations communities secure their sovereignty and democratic rights.

In contrast, however, forces of economy and capital appear to have greater representation amongst the non-local (and non-indigenous) protagonists. Here, the filmmakers appear to have an exceptional role in the economic exploitation of the landscape**.** The commercial interests of eco-tourism are featured explicitly in the films, introduced through the labels and brands that appear on the gear and equipment used by the protagonists and filmmakers. For example, the strategically placed "ecomarinetours.com" on the *Pipedreams Project kayaks*, Werner logos that flash on their kayak paddles, the Sitka apparel sported by the surfers in *Tipping Barrels* and Ian McAllister is seen wearing a *National Geographic* hat in *Tipping Barrels*.

Thus, the filmmakers are implicated in the commodification of the Great Bear Rainforest. The scenic footage captured in the films, their snapshots and "portraits" of the landscape, all serve to package the landscape into sublime, iconic images of wilderness to be circulated within the culture industry. For example, the photography produced from the Great Bear RAVE was also used as content for *National Geographic Magazine.* Furthermore, many of the films are distributed in association with eco-adventure film festivals, which promote the industries of wilderness recreation. In short, the films' present the wilderness of the Great Bear Rainforest as a saleable experience, where images of wildlife serve as advertisements for that experience.

Landscape: concluding thoughts

To conclude the discussion in this chapter I examine how representations of landscape anchor the aesthetic themes developed in the films, in which the coastal landscape serves as a theatre for the staging of wilderness, its ahistoric time and untouched space, as a natural reality. The pristine landscape of the Great Bear Rainforest is affirmed in the scenic footage where the only ambient noise to be heard comes from the gentle sound of the adventurers' paddles cutting the water. This sets the stage for the adventure-bound protagonists, providing the space in which they can "conquer" the forces of wild and unknown terrain. In *Tipping Barrels*, the protagonists seem unsure of their exact whereabouts, "we're…on a beach, somewhere." Much of the landscape footage in *Pipedreams Project* features the coastal waters shrouded in fog, such that the water appears a limitless expanse. The protagonists' experience of feeling disoriented and insignificant in a landscape that humbles their cultural agency is part of a national imagining of Canadian wilderness. The films use these experiences of landscape to establish Canadian values of environment, which are then used to frame their understanding of environmental justice.

Specifically, the wilderness landscape of the Great Bear Rainforest is claimed as a national possession. The landscape is part of a collective wilderness "heritage" to which Canadian citizens can feel entitled. In *Standup4Greatbear*, Hann describes the surrounding landscape as "our" coastline. It is somehow a collective possession, in a figurative sense, insofar as Canadians are invited to project their cultural and political will upon it, without having to actually inhabit (or even necessarily visit) the region. Thus, the landscape of the Great Bear Rainforest is also the space through which Canadian values and identity take shape.

These values are used to situate the critique of Northern Gateway within a nationalist rhetoric of environment. For instance, in *Oil in Eden*, Andrew Nikiforuk explains how the tar sands expansion implicated in the pipeline project will change what we know as the "Canadian experience," to which Ian McAllister adds that it will compromise Canada's international reputation for environmental responsibility. Following these clips the narrative is juxtaposed with a scene of a Canadian flag flying in the wind. The implication is that Canada and Canadians possess an ostensibly more ethical relation to the environment than other national groups, which could be undermined by oil sands and related development.

This nationalist identity is projected onto the audience, strongly encouraging citizens to "stand up" for their supposedly innate environmental interests. This presumption is also voiced by David Suzuki (*Pipedreams Project*) when he explains the values of British Columbians are shaped by the province's legacy of strong environmental activism. This symbolic abstraction of the landscape of the Great Bear Rainforest into a national/provincial heritage situates the audience in a pre-established script of environmental politics where political agency is bound to an equally abstract Canadian identity.

In the concluding chapter to follow, I open this discussion of the aesthetic construction of landscape to colonial and post-colonial theories of wilderness rhetoric in Canadian history, as outlined earlier in this thesis. I demonstrate that the aesthetic construction of wilderness is part of a contingent historical practice, in which the ideological opposition of nature and culture also serves as a force of domination. This nature-culture dualism reproduces systems of difference that have historically

marginalizing, if not dehumanizing effects. I further argue that the institutions of natural science and conservation establish their authority over landscape through these marginalizing systems of difference.

The concluding chapter will synthesize the above research observations in relation to theoretical models developed by Haraway, Latour, Biro and others, to fully demonstrate the limitations of a political ecology framed by aesthetic values of wilderness. Here I argue that the films' political critiques of Northern Gateway's democratic infractions are paralyzed by their advocacy for essential unities, natural identities and their narratives of technology and industry as fallen from nature. I suggest that the goals of a progressive environmental politics are in deep contradiction with the values of wilderness as represented in the films.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

This chapter considers the implications of the wilderness aesthetic, as identified in the films treated in the preceding chapters, for the goals of environmental justice. In these films, the project of representing environmental justice and the project of wilderness conservation appear synonymous. Their defense of the Great Bear Rainforest as the "last bastion" of B.C.'s wild nature is meant to communicate the stakes for democratic relations to the environment. In what follows, I argue that the films' axiomatic divisions of nature and culture in their representations of environment, individuals and power, demonstrate the limitations of wilderness discourse for the progressive work of political ecology. Specifically, this transposing of conservation interests upon environmental justice has the political consequence of obscuring - and thus leaving unchallenged - the structural inequalities inscribed in the historic, idealized value assigned to wilderness.[26]

The focus of this chapter is to indicate how the films elide the specificity of "wilderness" as a contingent historical practice. Far exceeding the benign classification of wild nature, wilderness is an irretrievably human construction, rooted in the colonial, bourgeois imagination. What is elided is how the reproduction of the wilderness frontier also reproduces the disciplinary formations that legitimate and naturalize authority over environment. Specifically, the idealization of wilderness serves to reinforce the relations

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26 To be clear, the intention is to indicate how wilderness conservation *as* environmental justice is problematic. It is not to suggest that the work of conserving wilder areas of nature is itself inherently problematic, or to undermine practices of environmental protection and sustainable development in B.C.

of difference between the authorial colonizing subject and primitive nature and peoples. Wilderness then is made intelligible through relations that are fundamentally undemocratic.

These political consequences have critical stakes for normative understandings of environmental politics and justice. That is, re-tooling the politics of environment to the interests of wilderness conservation suggests that political practice inheres in an established, unified worldview in which nature must be protected from culture. In the remaining discussion, I contrast this model of environmentalism with progressive theories of political ecology as a critical project still unfolding and expanding to articulate the multiple meanings and heterogeneous relations that comprise the common world of nature and culture.

Wilderness as the de-politicization of environment

By "documenting" wilderness as latent within the coastal landscape, as natural and timeless, the films treated here are implicated in the historical erasures that make the idea of wilderness possible. In that sense, the films participate (perhaps incidentally) in wilderness' "flight from history" (Cronon, 1995), in the burying of epistemology (Willems-Braun, 1997) or what Van Wyck (1997:13) has described as a "trans-historical move to the outside," giving their representations of wilderness a kind of concrete objectivity. In so doing, they leave unexplored, and therefore uninterrupted, the relations of domination from which wilderness has historically been perceived as an ideal, and from which it draws its contemporary potency in the public imaginary. So, here, I fill in

the story otherwise missing from the films, but present just beneath the surface of their representations, suggested in the divides they present between nature and culture.

Wilderness is a construction that emerges out of timely conditions, in "particular moments in human history" when human interests are at stake (Cronon, 1995: 1). Its precise genesis comes from the historical challenge of imposing state authority and sovereignty over the landscape that now comprises North America. As discussed in Chapter One, colonial documentations of wilderness secured a space upon which human desires of possession could be projected. The desires of the contemporary Canadian imaginary of wilderness arguably operate as remnants of the British imperial imagination (Sandlos, 2000: 11). State-sponsored documentations of wilderness in Canada's "great" northern frontier secured the bureaucratic administration of territory, and the means through which the landscape was dispossessed from indigenous peoples and "settled" by colonial subjects. As such, the aesthetic function of wilderness was pivotal for the extraction and exploitation of resources.

The films' overarching portrayal of the Great Bear Rainforest as a site of ahistoric nature serves to reproduce this colonizing function of wilderness discourse. In other words, the wilderness of the coastal landscape appears severed from the historical conditions of colonial expansion, and is consequently abstracted from the institutional interventions that have secured the region for the privileged access of natural science, adventure tourism and photography. Rather, acts of violation and exploitation represented in the films are strictly relegated to the forces of corporate capital and industry, and thus cannot be traced to any particular human agency. By emphasizing the "dirty" story behind crude oil production, the films leave the equally sordid history of Canadian

wilderness and the racial persecutions of colonialism, out of the picture.[27] Here, my research intervenes by suggesting that the aesthetics of sublime nature and wild frontier represented in the films effectively mirror, or reflect back, the lingering structures of colonial domination within contemporary eco-politics.

The vestigial subjectivity of the colonial explorer

Though the film productions represent civil society efforts to communicate popular interests, independent from the state, they have critical intersections with nationalist and colonial mobilizations of wilderness. While the period of imperial conquest and the establishment of national sovereignty have past, there remain powerful interests in the control and management of that land**.** These interests represent the institutional complex of ecological science, conservation and recreational tourism. The proposal of the Northern Gateway pipeline thus represents a critical moment where wilderness re-emerges as a strategic discourse to secure these institutional interests.

To that end, the ideology of wilderness retains the same symbolic content operative during colonial expansion. Put differently, the seemingly absent socio-historical fabric of ecological conservation operates as a "phantom limb," present insofar as it "persists in organizing the region it formerly occupied" (Van Wyck, 1997:3). That is to say, the disciplinary formation of the authorial colonizing agent and the primitive, colonial subject re-emerges with political effects. By projecting these identities upon future generations, as seen in the films' concern for the cultural integrity of First Nations

27 As Egan explains, the re-designation of indigenous communities in the first decades of the 20th century left the "rest of the land base, more than 99 percent of the province – as Crown land...and the rich resources it encompassed, provided the economic base for the establishment and expansion of British Columbia's settler society" (2011: 211).

youth, the environmental advocacy for the Great Bear Rainforest secures the political relations required for the continued institutional governance of the landscape.

By framing their politics of environment in the name of the Great Bear Rainforest, the films circumvent the subject positions that give meaning to the rainforest as a space of wilderness. By staging the landscape as an untouched, intact wilderness, the films not only obscure its colonial history, but the agency of the colonizing subject as well. Ian McAllister tells us that twenty years ago, he personally intervened in bringing scientific research, inventories and reports to the Great Bear Rainforest (*Spoil*). He explains how this was pivotal in the power struggle between industrial uses of land (timber companies) and conservation management. Yet, this period of institutional and governmental interventions for the coastal environment does not appear to compromise the allegedly ahistoric character of the Great Bear Rainforest as wilderness. Thus the fundamental power structure between wilderness and the governing (colonizing) agent is flattened out in the films, and with it, the institutional interests that seek to manage the landscape.

While McAllister and the iLCP (*Spoil*) suggest the importance of constructing the wilderness of the Great Bear Rainforest into a photographic story with a strong human response, they do not pinpoint what makes the story of wilderness in particular so powerful. Yet, the desire for wilderness, mirrored in the idyllic construction of the landscape, implicitly situates the protagonists, and through them the audience, in the rudimentary position of the colonial, governing authority. This idyllic construction of wilderness reveals the centrality of a bourgeois subjectivity in the romantic fashioning of nature, as values of sublime nature and frontier wilderness are rooted in the historic imaginary of the bourgeois leisure class.

As Sandlos (2000) explains, the “author/explorer” of wilderness during Canada's late colonial period was also seeking leisure experiences of travel and sport hunting. As Ryan suggests, wildlife photography is a class-distinguishing activity, in which “hunting with the camera” inherits the privilege of the colonial hunter. By positioning the photographers as protagonists, they are implicated in the same privileged subjectivity once occupied by the colonial hunter-explorer. Indeed, photographers and photography comprise the few exceptional forms of human intrusion in the Great Bear Rainforest.

The sublime construction of wilderness reflects the elite, privileged position of the bourgeois individual, whose leisure time permitted the anti-modern (and, thereby, characteristically modern) fantasy of a return to nature (Cronon, 1995). This is reflected in the films’ romanticized depictions of the local, indigenous communities and the labor of their subsistence lifestyles. As Nash indicates, the desire for wilderness was felt most strongly amongst the later generations of Americans who did not themselves have to colonize and settle the land. The ideal of an untouched landscape, as Cronon argues, only makes senses to those individuals of society who have achieved comfortable, secure living, freed from the labour of subsisting off the land (Cronon, 1995:14-15).

Rather, the bourgeois individual relates to wilderness through transcendental experiences of nature, as typified in early American wilderness recreation. As Thoreau saw it, the transcendental experience of nature was best suited for the “enlightened” individual. Essential to this experience of transcendence is a landscape of wild nature that allows for the solitary isolation of the individual seeking enlightenment (Nash, 1967). By affirming the values of wilderness as an empty, uninhabited landscape the films' narrative

perspective implicitly excludes the subjectivity of local, indigenous inhabitants, who consequently do not share in the transcendental experience of nature.

Further, the bourgeois nature experience is situated as a counter-force to the artificiality of modern, urban, industrial life. The protagonists' expeditions, their encounters with wildlife, and the challenges presented in their adventures, enact the bourgeois fantasy of a retreat from urban, industrial capitalism to an idealized primal nature. They indicate a transition to the anti-modern, where the coastal communities appear within a non-industrial landscape, as the strict domain of use values. Sublime nature therefore functions to indicate the ideal of original authenticity inherent in wilderness. Here, the protagonists' liminal adventures reproduce the disciplinary formation of the fully civilized individual and the primitive figure of a nascent, prior humanity.

This central positioning of the anti-modern desire to return to a sublime nature also correlates with the discomfort and insecurities expressed over human-technical relations. This is reflected in the films' framing of technology as essentially compromising human integrity. McAllister explains that somehow the coastal environment has "been hidden away from all the craziness that has happened on planet earth" (*Spoil*). Yet this disavowal of technology as part of our social relations elides the ways in which survival in modern life is secured through technological means. However, the technical mediations of ecological research appear exceptional to the oppressive depiction of techno-industrial development. For instance, the acoustic technology of the hydrophone system is framed as a natural extension of human perception, as authentic rather than artificial. These technological interventions of scientific research appear

appropriate and necessary, and thus establish the normative authority of conservationists to preside over the landscape.

This authority is further made normative insofar as the subjective interests of conservationists (as expressed by McAllister and whale biologists Hermann Meuter) are made to appear objective. We do not see how the field of biology serves as an appendage to political discourse, in its value-laden shaping of nature (Haraway, 1991: 92, 98). Latour argues that this makes it particularly difficult for the collective to recognize the social world and external reality as part of "a seamless cloth" (2004: 10-12). Here, the ideological power of 'Science' masks the isolation of citizens from the ruling institutions of social, political and economic life (Latour, 2004).

Advocacy for defending wilderness appears more persuasive when subjective values are presented as rational, objective "ecological" norms. As such, "objective" scientific research is critical to the political work of environmental justice. The experience of frontier wilderness is also fundamental to the construction of the "pioneer" subjectivity of colonial exploration. Here, the framing of wilderness as frontier reflects the liberal values and democratic possibility evoked during the settling of the West. The sense of an uncharted territory secures for the bourgeois subject the sense of freedom and possibility to escape the confines of modern civilization (Cronon, 1995). As such, the contemporary interest to secure practices of wilderness recreation and exploration, implied in the eco-adventure genre and lifestyle promoted in the films and their sponsoring film festivals also reflect a defense of those liberal democratic values (Cronon, 1995).

Further, the interests to preserve wilderness exploration represents a defense of "rugged individualism" (Cronon, 1995: 14) in which the return to nature is seen to restore authentic qualities ostensibly compromised by the comforts of civilized modernity and its technological apparatus. The representation of the protagonists' adventures, where they appear as the sole figures in the landscape, and their camps the only mark of inhabitation, seem to re-enact the pioneer experience of being the first to inhabit uncharted landscapes. The "frontier individualist" is typically characterized by gendered qualities of masculinity (Cronon, 1995). These qualities are particularly apparent in *Tipping Barrels* and *Standup4Greatbear,* in which the narratives place particular emphasis on the protagonists' physical strength, and their daring pursuits in the environment.

In telling a story about Canada's "last bastion" of wild nature, the films' narratives are also implicitly telling a story about the desires of the bourgeois individual and wilderness pioneer. Framing their advocacy from the perspective of wilderness as the site of authentic, individual frontier experience, they actually serve to re-inscribe the hegemonic authority of the very same governing, colonizing subject that underlies many of the institutions and practices they would otherwise see themselves as contesting.

Primitivism

This structure of the colonizing, pioneer subjectivity is therefore re-inscribed as the normative position from which differences between nature and culture are expressed. The idea of returning to a primal nature in wilderness requires systems of difference between nature and culture, animals and humans, local and non-local peoples. In this anti-modern idealization of wilderness, the "primitive" figure is used to reflect a nascent

state of the human subject, a prototype of man, before the fall into culture (Van Wyck, 1997: 97). In the desire for authentic wilderness experiences, the bourgeois subject, or the deep ecologist, want "to go native" (Van Wyck, 1997: 100).

Similarly, the films' protagonists are represented as seeking to access and interpret that essence of wild nature which separates them from the local inhabitants. As Nash (1967) indicates, the civilized, modern subject possesses the unique capacity for transcendent experiences of wilderness. Consequently, the freedom of self-determination, offered by the wilderness landscape, applies strictly to non-First Nations Canadians. On the other hand, the wilderness landscape functions to pre-determine First Nations' identity. Insofar as the indigenous inhabitants interviewed in the films serve to corroborate the axioms of nature and culture that constitute the wilderness aesthetic, they appear complimentary to the narrative.

As I have argued, the ideology of wilderness presented in the films functions to confine indigenous inhabitants to strict representational categories. Their representations as traditional, spiritual and ecological simultaneously become the requirements for their political representation. They are only recognized as voices of opposition through this system of categorization. Here, their socio-economic concerns as Canadian citizens are traded for a story about their ecologically harmonious existence and their cultural integrity.[28] The condition of their representation as opponents of the Northern Gateway project is an account of their identity that is equal parts culturalist and essentialist and, thus, effectively depoliticized.

[28] As mentioned in the previous chapter, practices of sustainable resource development are also part of First Nations' economic development strategies. The Coastal First Nations economic initiatives outline the task of balancing sustainable land management as well as "develop economic opportunities in the areas of forestry, fisheries, renewable energy and tourism" (Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative).

The ideology of wilderness operates to marginalize First Nations in two ways: first, as Egan (2011: 217) suggests, the "neat and untroubled image of a pioneer settler society" effaces prior indigenous occupation of territory; and, second, insofar as the contemporary framing of First Nations subjects as essentially ecological denies the actual complexity of their economic and political subjectivity. This deeply ideological representation of First Nations peoples appears fully counterproductive to the goals of environmental justice, which are fundamentally linked to social justice. As Harvey argues, the movement for environmental justice puts "the survival of people in general, and of the poor and marginalized in particular at the centre of its concerns" (1999: 175).

Where historical acts of colonization marginalized indigenous inhabitants' local knowledge of land, this traditional knowledge plays a critical role in the ecological framing of wilderness (Sandlos, 2011). There is a contradiction here, insofar as ecology seemingly bridges the interests of First Nations and scientists, while at the same time this relationship hinges on the uniformity and universality of First Nations' identity (as ecologically intuitive). One of the most striking examples is in the collaboration represented between Gitga'at nature guide Marvin Robinson and the iCLP photographer, in which the success of their teamwork is reduced to Marvin's kin-like relation to the Spirit Bears (*Spoil*). Whatever agency or distinction Robinson might in fact possess is instantly effaced by the stereotype of the nature-attuned aboriginal guiding the frontiersman to an authentic communion with the wilderness.

The ostensible partnership between First Nations and conservationists in the defense of the Great Bear Rainforest may also indicate a kind of cultural reconciliation that obscures historical and contemporary relations of domination and inequality.

Similarly, arguments that vilify the exploitative practices of industry often situate First Nations and conservationists as united in mutual opposition to corporate capital, and therefore obscure the privileged position of institutional authority enjoyed by non-aboriginal conservationists and the scientific knowledge they wield. According to McAllister, "this pipeline is yet another example of the devastating exploitation of Native people and their lands *in our pursuit of fossil fuels*," as if the historical and present exploitation of aboriginal peoples can be attributed solely to the petrochemical industry.

Institutional conquests

The films' articulation of the Great Bear Rainforest as part of "our coastline" attest to a sense of a collective heritage that participates in the same claims to territory seen in imperial ideologies that re-configured landscape as an a-historical space, offering "gifts of free land" (Cronon, 1995:13). By re-inscribing the idea of a Canadian wilderness heritage, the films re-inscribe the legitimacy of the very forms of governance over landscape that they seek to challenge in the case of Northern Gateway. That is, their critique of Northern Gateway's imposition of "nation-building" interests should not obscure the fact that these films also project "Canadian" relations to the landscape in a manner that takes symbolic possession over the coastal rainforest.

As Van Wyck argues, wilderness also serves to secure nature as surplus value and a form of capital (Van Wyck, 1997: 83). Where historic constructions of the wilderness frontier promised the extraction of natural resources, contemporary wilderness discourse prepares the frontier for the extraction of recreational and biological capital. As Cronon (1995) indicates, the contemporary practice of "returning to nature" is such that the

modern bourgeois subject returns to nature not as a producer, but as a consumer. Nature is commodified for the wilderness experience. Here, I suggest that the symbolic abstraction of the landscape and its wildlife from their bio-physical reality enable their assimilation into the cultural imaginary of wilderness and are exposed to alternate forms of human exploitation. This parallels what Luke (1997) describes as "envirotisement," a form of ecological advertisement that presents images and scenes of 'wildlife', 'the environment' and 'wilderness' as selling points to attract a tourist market. Wilderness conservation also serves to secure recreational capital, in maintaining the natural aesthetic of the environment.

Similarly, wildlife representations participate in constructing a discourse of scarcity that supports the claims made by conservation science to its unique role as a custodian of nature. For instance, in the ephemeral, elusive representations of wildlife like the Spirit Bear, and the "species at risk" narrative developed around humpback and killer whales, the films portray the marine and rainforest ecosystems of the Great Bear Rainforest as a kind of biological reserve, full of precarious objects of research to which the natural sciences should enjoy a privileged claim.

Models for the re-articulation of nature and culture

The deepening of the nature-culture divide not only functions to maintain the spatio-temporal logic of capitalism, but also re-inscribe supposedly natural identities that essentialize and fragment political agency, effectively closing down the practice of eco-politics to pre-determined categories. Certainly, this concern is expressed by Haraway's (2008) discomfort with the ease in which natural identities and categories re-materialize

in environmental discourse. The intention of progressive environmental thinking should be the de-stabilization of the certainty with which we perceive categories as essential and totalizing.

Latour argues that the political interventions of "nature" have critical consequences in designating "the capacities of speech and representation" (2004: 245). As seen in the films, First Nations ecological identity as intuitive stewards of nature serves to homogenize their political interests. The comparable relations of endangerment constructed between wildlife and indigenous inhabitants of the coastal environment consequently function to restrict the boundaries of political representation for First Nations people. Kobayashi (2011: 8) has argued that more research is needed on the effects of Canada's wilderness discourse, to understand how it re-inscribes oppressive genealogies of nature.

The genealogy of wilderness is reflected in the films' proposed model of political resistance, where the audience in encouraged to "stand up" for their values. Here the assimilation of a Canadian wilderness heritage is staged as a path of political action. This model leaves little room for political action that does not flow from a "Canadian" point of departure. Given the framing of wilderness through the subjectivity of the wilderness pioneer, the films' models of environmental action appears to be directed to particular audience of eco-adventure enthusiasts and, ostensibly, British Columbians who share in the values of a wilderness heritage. This is perhaps a function of what Egan (2011) describes as the synergy between wilderness and the whiteness associated with B.C.'s early settler society. Kobayashi defines whiteness as an "historical form of racism" that reinforces the "centrality and superiority of white cultural, social and aesthetic forms"

(2011: 215). Egan adds that the "adaptability, flexibility, and variability" of whiteness prove to be "key aspects of its power" (2011: 215).

As such, it is unclear how these models of wilderness are also made accessible to First Nations audiences, considering that the films have been screened within First Nations communities and to school children. The lack of representations of indigenous peoples in authorial positions that are not also qualified by an ecological subjectivity, present a troubling barrier to the goals of environmental justice. It also remains unclear how the progressive work of scientific research will be distributed within First Nations communities, and how the professional authority and knowledge involved in that research will include the local inhabitants.

The categorization of identity also conflicts with the understanding of environmental justice as a practice of community or what Latour (2004) describes as the progressive composition of "the common world." Insofar as the films have grounded their politics in the subjectivity of the wilderness pioneer, they prioritize the individual's personal freedom and desires for self-determination as the utmost expression of environmental justice. This conflict appears where the films' protagonists acknowledge the progressive potential of "people coming together" (*Pipedreams Project*) but anticipate that process through unified interests and identities of Canadian nationalism and the privileged subjectivity of wilderness adventurer. Thus, while their advocacy promotes political community, it functions to dissipate and fragment political agency.

These categorizing operations present a significant contradiction with the work of re-articulation that is so central for progressive understandings of nature. In the place of

categorizing practices that police the boundaries of nature and culture, re-articulations should indicate connections between things, objects and beings (Cronon, 1995). Cronon suggests the value of re-articulating our relations of home, co-habitation and dwelling as a middle ground from which to understand wilderness and urban landscapes alongside each other. Plumwood (1998) has similarly emphasized the need for an inclusive gradient of human-nature mixing, in which diverse landscapes and environments are collected within a ground of continuity. Latour suggests the expansion and reconfiguration of the parameters of citizenship to make room for the complexity of human- non-human relations (2004: 231).

Haraway (2003, 2008) urges for a re-articulation of human-nonhuman relations that invites relations of entanglement, "becoming with," and "co-evolution." A progressive politics of environment should seek to implode systems of difference. In contrast, the films' representations of wildlife function to re-inscribe axiomatic subject-object relations, in which wild animals fulfil relations of difference between spectacle and spectator, protector and protected, oppressor and oppressed.

If the objective of progressive eco-politics is to articulate relations of co-evolution, then the form of political ecology demonstrated in the films takes us one step back. By fetishizing the wildness of animals, the films frame human-animal encounters as exceptional, rare and relegated to wild lands. This situates animal life as normatively external to the relations of co-evolution. The matter of environmental justice appears as a moral dilemma that questions *if* humans, as external to nature, should impact natural spaces of wilderness. They neglect the more pressing question of *how* humans and human activities will conduct their interactions and encounters with natural, wilder

environments. This marks a critical hurdle for environmental thought, which will have to respond to the changing landscapes of post-modernity, where urbanization presents ever-increasing opportunities for human-nonhuman encounters. These encounters will require more tolerance in how we relate to the common world shared by human and non-human beings.

Responsible environmentalism

In contrast to the romantic abstractions of wilderness from the technological relations of industrial society, a progressive form of environmental politics should take responsibility for the imbrication of these social relations with the environment. For instance, the entanglement of the social and the technical is demonstrated in the wildlife monitoring capabilities offered by hydrophone networks, which derive from the technological advances of petrochemical sourcing. Further, taking responsibility for the social relations of technology forces the recognition that no landscape is truly untouched or unmodified, as scholars have emphasized. In many cases, spaces of wilderness exist by virtue of human governance, where wild spaces and wilderness reserves are preserved through forms of technological mediation.

The organic-technical divide presents a critical limit then to progressive political ecology, insofar as technology appears to threaten the space and time of nature, they cannot co-exist or share the same spatio-temporal dimensions. As Haraway suggests, technological mediation also provides “fresh sources of power” and further, present new possibilities for ethical relations between animals, machines and humans (1991: 174).

Indeed the films testify to the importance of scientific research technologies for the ethical management of ecosystems.

As such, the spatio-temporal fabric where nature and culture meet must be the point of departure for the practice of environmental politics. This will require an understanding of environment that takes responsibility for the practices of petrochemical production and consumption and how relations to environment are necessarily shaped by those practices. For instance, the facilities and services that make wilderness adventures possible also contribute to demands on the production and consumption of energy. One of the critical objectives for the environmental movement is to de-naturalize energy commodification, to understand the concrete, industrial processes that secure the supply of energy required for the operations of modern life. The "othering" or distancing of techno-industrial realities only exacerbates the challenges of finding more sustainable forms of inhabiting the common world of nature-cultures.

Thus, environmental discourse should open a conceptual space in which environment can be understood as both nature and resource. As Soper suggests, our understandings of nature cannot be confined to a "collection of beauty spots or endangered species" but also as "the resources through which alone human needs both now and in the future can be met" (1995: 207-208). Environmental politics is about taking responsibility for nature in ways that also take responsibility for human society. Describing bitumen as 'dirty" oil aggravates this challenge by fostering a moralizing understanding of energy consumption that imposes guilt. As Haraway (2008) has argued, purist ideologies are not only threatening, but have marginalizing, dehumanizing effects.

In sum, the intervention offered by this thesis identifies some of the obstacles that can arise when trying to formulate persuasive political responses to environmental injustices. These hurdles will prove critical for articulating the timely struggle against rapid oil sands expansion, and the social and environmental costs of carbon-intensive fuel production signaled by climate science. I have demonstrated in the case of the Northern Gateway project, how critical responses to the advance of petrochemical development illustrate not only the stakes for social and environmental interests, but perhaps less overtly, the stakes for the very meanings, definitions and functions of environmental politics. Here I have isolated how concern for environment is articulated through the outdated, ethically deficient aesthetic politics of wilderness. Its fundamental structures of domination present very real effects of marginalization and oppression, which prove incompatible and even hostile to democratic uses of land and environment

Yet, in spite of its seemingly stale, platitudinous language, wilderness appears revived and impassioned in the urgent appeals of environmental advocates. The case of Northern Gateway precisely demonstrates how such grievous appeals for the protection of environment breathe new life into aesthetic imaginings of wilderness, and with it, oppressive genealogies of nature and culture. Indeed, the bewitching symbolic power of wilderness has a strong grip on the popular imaginary. When contrasted with the undoubtedly troubling prospects of such a potentially devastating project as Northern Gateway, the potent image of wilderness and its promise of liberal freedoms are not easily relinquished. The crucial difficulty is that imaginings of wilderness only serve to abstractly reconcile desires for self-determination, releasing political frustrations into capitalist structures of consumption, tourism, recreation and spectatorship. Nevertheless,

the political energies that arise from environmental struggles, as in the Northern Gateway pipeline proposal, remain a promising potentiality for the progressive work of political ecology.

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