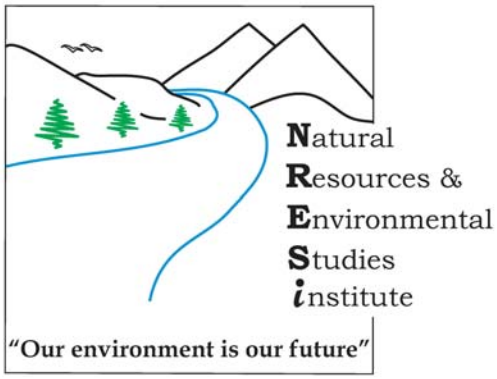

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INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY VALUES AND COMMERCIAL FORESTRY: A CASE STUDY OF TL'AZT'EN NATION.

BY
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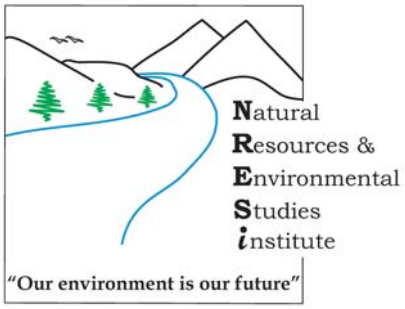

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Abstract

This study examines the experiences of Tl’azt’en Nation, a Canadian indigenous community that became an early participant in industrial commercial forestry. In doing so, Tl’azt’en Nation encountered challenges that reverberate today for indigenous peoples seeking timber rights in Canada. The authors demonstrate that considerable tensions exist between traditional First Nations' values and the values of a commercial forestry operation and that finding reconciliation between these different values is not easy. Tl’azt’en Nation's experiences suggest several key factors for communities to consider and address in undertaking forestry operations that meet indigenous community values and goals, including reconciling commerce with culture, developing better mechanisms for integrating any resource activity with traditional values, improving community engagement, working with community members to ensure expectations are realistic, and ensuring that community politics does not unduly interfere with community economic ventures. Further, forest companies looking to work with First Nations should understand some of the concerns First Nation communities face in planning for community supported forestry operations.

Introduction

By the numbers, Canada's indigenous population ranks well below other Canadians by almost any socio-economic indicator chosen. Whether reviewing life expectancy, child mortality rates, education levels attained, employment, income or housing, First Nations [1] are statistically disadvantaged when compared with the general Canadian population (INAC, 2008; Cooke et al., 2004). In response, the Canadian government has spent decades attempting to improve the social and economic conditions of First Nations by a variety of mechanisms with mixed success. Given that poor social conditions are strongly related to poor economic conditions in First Nation communities, great attention has been paid to developing jobs and businesses accessible to First Nations. As almost 80% of First Nation communities are located within Canada's extensive forests (Gysbers and Lee, 2003), it is not surprising that there has been considerable interest in increasing First Nations' participation in the forest industry (Parkins et al., 2006). However, First Nations interested in participating in the commercial forest industry face several challenges, ranging from business development in remote geographical locations to serious conflicts between traditional cultural values and the requirements of commercial timber extraction. This paper examines some of the challenges faced by First Nations in general and then offers a case study of the experiences of one British Columbian First Nation which became an early participant in an industrial forest tenure. We examine how Tl'azt'en Nation's experiences confirm other research on First Nations and forestry but also raise other challenges rarely discussed in the literature.

The Challenges of Commercial Forestry and First Nations

One of the key challenges identified within the existing literature examining First Nations and resource development is the challenge of economic development in general. Economic development within First Nation communities (as is often the case for non-native rural and remote communities) is constrained by several factors. Many First Nation communities are geographically remote and lack easy access to both processing facilities and markets. Reliance is therefore often placed upon primary resource production, such as forestry or fisheries, high value market goods (such as art or specialized clothing and goods), or on ecotourism (INAC, no date). Such enterprises can be fraught with risk, start up costs, a demand for a specialized labor force which might or might not be available, and is highly subject to the unpredictable fluctuations of the global economy (Merkel, 2007; Parkins et al., 2006). Access to an exploitable resource is a first economic consideration.

Almost 80% of First Nation communities are located within Canada's extensive forests (Gysbers and Lee, 2003), and there has been considerable interest by First Nations in participating in the forest industry (NAFA, no date) and by the federal government in encouraging that participation (Parkins et al., 2006). It is worth noting that this growth in interest comes at a time when studies suggest that participation in the forest industry in Canada has <u>not</u> benefitted rural Canada

[1] Canada legally recognizes three indigenous groups: Indians, Inuit and Métis (INAC, no date). Collectively Indian groups are referred to as First Nations. Depending upon their status, treaties and various court cases, different rights belong to different legal groups (Booth and Skelton, 2004).

economically in general, as reliance on single resource industries fails in the face of global economic changes (Stedman et al., 2005). As a strategy, focusing on encouraging First Nation communities to enter the forest industry as a sole economic development activity might not produce the anticipated long term benefits.

Currently, participation by First Nations within Canada's forest industry is relatively restricted. A 2003 study by the National Aboriginal Forest Association indicated that First Nations across Canada hold only 4% of Crown[2] Timber licenses. While a 2007 review by Natural Resources Canada indicates that over 1,000 forestry operations are operated by First Nations (NRC, 2007), most are small operations. NAFA found, for example, that only 5% of major forestry operations (large volume with long term leases) were operated by First Nations (NAFA, 2003).[3] Research suggests that several constraints limit First Nations' ability to operate larger tenures:

a) the land base readily available to First Nations, their Reserve lands, is too small (White-Harvey, 1994), and reserve lands are legally the responsibility of the federal government while the commercial forest base is largely under the management of the provincial governments (Graham and Wilson, 2004; Wilson and Graham, 2005; Ross and Smith, 2002);

b) most Crown forest land is already allocated to non-native commercial forestry companies (Wilson and Graham, 2005);

c) a lack of aboriginal experts in non-indigenous forestry science and practice forces First Nations to rely on professional outsiders with different values (Parsons and Prest, 2003);

d) forestry operation and development costs are often prohibitive (Brubacker, Gladu and Bombay, 2002; Ross and Smith, 2003);

e) the government imposes and enforces regulations surrounding conventional forestry operations, including the volume of logs to be harvested, road building, stream protection minimums, etc., which cannot accommodate, or accommodate poorly, Aboriginal ethics, values, culture, uses (especially of non-timber forest products), constitutionally recognized treaty rights, and particular understanding of the land (Bombay, 2002; Booth, 2008; Kremar et al., 2006; Lewis and Sheppard, 2005; Parsons and Prest, 2003; Ross and Smith, 2002).

These considerable constraints can be difficult for First Nations to meaningfully resolve. Access to commercial forest is strictly controlled by the provincial governments. First Nations must compete with other groups, industrial or otherwise, for existing forest tenures as they become available. Several provinces have taken steps to specifically allocate volumes of timber, sometimes quite substantial volumes, to First Nations, but a one-time volume allocation is not the same as a long term tenure as it offers little in the way of long term certainty or level of economic return. The National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA, no date) has long advocated for a specific First Nation tenure and improved long term access to forest lands; however in the face of growing economic uncertainty in the forest industry in Canada, few industries are willing to part with their tenures and few governments are willing to destabilize a shaky industry through tenure reform (Wyatt, 2008). One

[2] Ninety-four percent of Canadian forests are publicly owned and managed by either the provincial or federal Crown ("Crown lands") in trust for its citizens (Ross and Smith, 2002).

[3] These were found in only three provinces, rather than evenly distributed across Canada (NAFA, 2003).

exception to this is in areas where treaties with First Nations were not historically settled. Modern treaties under negotiation appear to include both greater land settlements than did historical treaties, but can also include provisions for additional access to timber rights (see for example the Nisga'a Treaty (http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/agr/nsga/isspap_e.html).

Co-management agreements and joint venture agreements between First Nations and forest industries, provincial or territorial governments are another method of obtaining access to timber and at least partial control over forest management. The nature of these agreements can vary widely, but generally include some form of shared responsibility for, and control over, forest management and harvest activities as well as profits (Curran and M'Gonigle, 1999). Some scholars argue that such agreements represent a reasonable method by which First Nations can gain access to timber rights (Ross and Smith, 2002; Tresesder and Krogman, 2000; Wyatt, 2008). Others point out that co-management usually requires First Nations to conform to non-native management structures, may or may not incorporate First Nation values, does not acknowledge or recognize the complicated terrain of legally contested but constitutionally and court recognized title and rights, and perpetuates continued submission to a dominant culture (Rodon, 2003; Stevenson, 2006; Wyatt, 2008). Certainly any such agreements need careful consideration and negotiation but even so might achieve only partial success (Grainger et al., 2006; Mabee and Hoberg, 2006).

Technical requirements are also a significant hurdle. Even if access to a large tenure is achieved, the development requirements within a tenure may be prohibitive for an economically strapped First Nation. While some funding might be available through the federal First Nations Forestry Program (http://www.fnfp.gc.ca/), not all Nations will receive it, nor will all costs be covered. Developing internal professional expertise also poses challenges. Industrial forest operations require the oversight of Registered Professional Foresters, a legally protected profession in many parts of Canada. Achieving the designation requires a four year university degree and a period of apprenticeship. Parsons and Prest (2003) estimated that in 2002 less than 20 First Nation were Registered Professional Foresters. While that number might well have increased in recent years, it will take substantial time before all First Nations have indigenous expertise available to them. A similar case can be made for access to professionals with strong business and marketing skills who also understand and/or share First Nation values. Economic development that does not reflect aboriginal values is often fraught with difficulties (Anderson et al., 2006; Cornell and Kalt, 2006; Williams and Bootsman, 2008).

Finally, and most critically, research suggests that First Nations look for many values in forestry operations, very few of which can be met under traditional industrial forestry regimes (Beckley, 1998; Bombay, 1993; Booth, 2008, 2003, 1998; Booth and Jacobs, 1990; Graham and Wilson, 2004; Kosec, 1993; Lewis and Sheppard, 2005; Merkel, 2007; Michel and Gayton, 2002; Middleton and Kusel, 2007; NAFA, 2002a; NAFA, 2002b; Parsons and Prest, 2003; Sherry et al., 2005; Smith, 1998; Treseder and Krogman, 1999; Wyatt, 2008). While some First Nations will make the choice to conform to standard industrial forestry requirements, for the sake of employment and income opportunities, many are looking for some form of compromise that would permit both timber extraction and an intact ecosystem that supports constitutionally

protected rights[4] (and often treaty protected rights) to traditional hunting, fishing and gathering into perpetuity. Of particular importance for First Nations is the respectful treatment of the land (Booth, 2008; Ross and Smith, 2002). While there are particular sites that are properly considered sacred, for many it is the entire land base that must be treated as sacred, with consideration and with respect. In addition, provision must be made to ensure the survival of fish, wildlife and plants. Many species are required for spiritual and cultural maintenance; others are still vital parts of a land based diet. Preservation of culturally significant sites, including archaeological sites, historical sites, traplines and berry gathering spots, are vital for First Nations (Bombay, 1993; Merkel 2007; Parsons and Prest, 2003; Ross and Smith, 2002; Smith, 1998). Activities that irreparably damage the land irreparably damage First Nations cultures and many Nations are fighting to ensure the survival and transmission of their culture to the next generations. In the face of multiple resource extraction activities, including industrial forestry, maintaining access to a functioning land base is a serious challenge for most Canadian First Nations.[5] Thus, when they choose to participate in forestry, they often seek tenure and operational structures that will facilitate the integration of multiples values into extraction activity, an "aboriginal forestry," rather than mere participation in conventional forestry (Parsons and Prest, 2003; Ross and Smith, 2002).

Aboriginal forestry, state Parsons and Prest (2003):

> *"…encompasses sustainable forest management…and can be further refined as the application of sustainable forest land use practices learned over time that incorporates the respectful interaction between the forest and Aboriginal people of today for the benefit of generations unborn." (p. 780).*

While there is growing interest in aboriginal forestry within the Canadian government, few industrial forest companies have moved to adopt its tenets (Wyatt, 2008). This leaves First Nations interested in forestry as an economic activity with few easy choices.

Forestry and Tl'azt'en Nation

Our case study considers one First Nation's experiences with operating a large industrial forest tenure in British Columbia while also attempting to protect the multiple forest values demanded by their community. In 1982 Tl'azt'en[6] Nation was granted the first Tree Farm License (TFL 42) in British Columbia to be operated by a First Nation (operated as Tanizul Timber, Ltd). They subsequently developed a sawmill (Teeslee Forest Products) in the early 1990s. Our findings demonstrate that while many of the challenges discussed in research literature were encountered, the community also encountered challenges rarely discussed in the literature. Our research confirms that an aboriginal tenure, implementing aboriginal forestry principles, while not a consideration for this First Nation, can potentially address some, but not all, of the issues that First Nations must contend with in reconciling traditional values with commercial resource extraction, but that finding reconciliation between these different value sets is not

[4] Canada's Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35.

[5] As an example, the authors are working with a BC First Nation that in 2007 was working around 30 existing and proposed industrial developments within their traditional lands (Muir, 2007).

[6] Tl'azt'en First Nation serves as a descriptor for the socio-political group. Tl'azt'en is the singular form referring to a member. Tl'azt'enne is the plural form of Tl'azt'en.

easy. However until such reconciliation can be negotiated, indigenous peoples will continue to face barriers in entering the commercial forest sector.

The Study Methodology

In 1996, researchers at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) were approached by Tl'azt'en Nation to document their experience with TFL 42 in a collaborative initiative between Tl'azt'en Nation and UNBC. [7] Researchers and Tl'azt'en Nation were interested in two areas of research: documenting the events and decisions leading to the acquisition of the TFL and the mill, and determining past and current community views about the impact, consequences and value of engaging in a commercial forest tenure and the conflicts and tradeoffs.

During this qualitative research project, forty three interviews were conducted between 1996 and 1998 with Tl'azt'en members who had been involved in the establishment and operation of TFL 42 (Tanizul Timber Ltd.) and the mill (Teeslee Forest Products Ltd.), or whom held a significant interest in the TFL operations (for example, those whose traditional territory was affected). Additional interviews were conducted during this period with non-Tl'azt'enne who had been involved in the TFL in various capacities. Eight focus groups with community groups were conducted, including Elders, Tanizul and Teeslee Board members, and youth. Researchers made best efforts to interview participants with a wide range of views on the TFL both within and outside the community. Individuals were selected through the recommendations of key personnel, through reading through secondary documentation, and as individuals expressed an interest in contributing to the project. Roughly 11% of the adult population participated through focus groups and interviews.

Interviews and focus groups were audio taped with permission and each tape transcribed. Each interview and focus group transcript was reviewed by at least two researchers and key ideas and themes were individually identified. Researchers then determined through discussion those themes and ideas that seemed significant or representational of many participants. Themes and ideas were compared both within and across individual interviews and focus groups. Quotes used in this article are taken from transcriptions and were chosen for their reflection of these key ideas and themes. To honor privacy concerns, we identify the speaker only by their role (i.e. administrator or community member). [8] While we were not able to interview all community members, we believe we did identify many of the perspectives that existed within the community, encompassing both positive and negative perspectives, those both critical and supportive of the TFL and the mill and of Tl'azt'en Nation itself.

Readers should be aware that the ideas and opinions expressed within the interviews and focus groups are relevant within the period that the data was collected, 1996-1998. Tl'azt'enne are likely to have different viewpoints regarding forestry and related issues in the present, given changing experiences, knowledge and circumstances.

The researchers were given access to the Nation's extensive secondary

[7] The study was funded by Forest Renewal BC. Research assistance was provided by Beverly Bird (Tl'azt'en Nation), Christine Callihoo, Phil Morris and Cheryl Pierre (Tl'azt'en Nation).

[8] This was the agreement reached in our Informed Consent requirements at the time of the research.

documentation, which provided records of correspondence on the acquisition of the TFL, letters from community members, and other material useful in identifying political process and community interest. Extensive use was made of the Provincial Archives to develop an understanding of the provincial government's perspectives.

Research findings were checked and confirmed by Tl'azt'en authorities in 1999. However, the authors maintain sole responsibility for any errors and omissions. While every effort has been made to represent the views of the Tl'azt'enne fairly and accurately, the authors acknowledge inevitable problems with linguistic and cultural translations.[9]

Tl'azt'en Nation

The Tl'azt'enne's Traditional Territory is located in north-central British Columbia around the Stuart and Trembleur Lakes. Their traditional territory (over five thousand square kilometers) is centered in the communities of Tache, Binche, and K'uzche (Grand Rapids). Four reserves are permanently inhabited with a total population of 1,281 (2004), most of whom live in Tache. Most Tl'azt'en economic patterns follow an articulated mode of production combining hunting, gathering, fishing, as well as, full time, part time, and seasonal wage labor (Hudson, 1983).

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, Tl'azt'enne were self-sufficient hunters and gatherers. Recognizing the importance of natural resources, Tl'azt'enne had a system known as *keyoh*, which organized and regulated the ownership and use of natural resources within their territories. *Keyoh* are land planning units carefully managed through an extended clan/family system with strict rules about who could use the area and how; unauthorized use was a serious infraction (Aasen, 1992). Rights of use were managed through the *bahlats* [10] system (more commonly known as a potlatch system), where conflicts were resolved and resources re-distributed between Tl'azt'enne. Tl'azt'en continue to use both systems in modern resource management initiatives.

Hunting, gathering, and fishing, and the forest industry (and its attendant employment and business opportunities) rely upon a healthy forest ecosystem. Sustainable, healthy, and productive forest management is an essential goal for Tl'azt'enne. They were, and are, extremely concerned about managing their forests to preserve ecological integrity and to provide maximum benefits to community members still actively utilizing the land and its resources (Morris and Fondahl, 2002). The decision in the 1980s to participate in an industrial forest tenure, with its attendant operational requirements, was therefore not an easy choice for the community and created significant community tensions without necessarily delivering the benefits the community expected as part of the economic-traditional values trade-off they had condoned. These tensions, and failure to achieve significant benefits were, in part, the product of the unique circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the TFL. However, in part, they illustrate the reality of the challenges alluded to previously, which might affect many First Nations

[9] Researchers interested in an alternative presentation of the data might wish to view a video produced as a part of this project, which allows Tl'azt'enne to speak for themselves. See **Without the Forest, We Are Not Tl'azt'enne**. (Booth, 1999b).

[10] The *Bahlats* is a system of resource governance and resource distribution, societal recognition and identity, law and justice, and title inheritance (Aasen, 1992).

entering into mainstream industrial forestry, and so warrant consideration.

Acquiring Tree Farm License 42 and Creating Teeslee Forest Products

During the 1960s, the British Columbia government supported the construction of a rail line west from Prince George to Fort St James to provide the forest industry cheap transportation of logs and chips east and south. A further round of construction was announced extending the rail line north and west out of Fort St. James to allow access into remote forests. The route proposed would cross seven Tl'azt'en Reserves. Throughout the 1970s, the Nation negotiated with British Columbia Rail for adequate compensation for lands that would be affected by the rail line. At the same time, negotiations were being held with the provincial government over other encroachments on traditional territories. Frustrated by the slow pace of negotiations with the province, Tl'azt'en Nation blockaded the rail line on April 28, 1975. The blockade lasted three and a half months, considerably impacting the region's economy (Morris and Fondahl, 2002).

The Nation felt that access to timber rights would provide long-term benefits to the community and began, in 1977, to negotiate with government for timber rights. In 1981, the Nation was invited to bid on a tree farm license within their traditional territory. A legal corporation, Tanizul Timber Company, was established by the Nation to bid on and operate TFL 42. Tanizul was owned by the Nation and shares were held in trust for all band members by a six- member Board of Directors. In February 1982, Tanizul was granted TFL 42, an area based, twenty five year, renewable license with exclusive rights to harvest timber on 54,000 hectares of crown land. Of key interest for Tl'azt'en Nation was the opportunity to include seven parcels of reserve land within the TFL (at the time, reserve lands were scattered) (Morris, 1999; Morris and Fondahl, 2002).

While Tl'azt'en leaders had some understanding of the immense challenge they were undertaking, they had given considered thought as to perceived benefits:

> *"In the long run, our community is interested in being more self-sufficient than we are now. We have a tremendous amount of dependence on government grants. …this dependency is not helpful to our communities in the long run. What we need to do is to continue to work with what resources we have to establish viable enterprises that can help build our own nation back to where it was once … to survive into the future as a people."* (Tl'azt'en political leader 1997)

Tl'azt'en also had reasons for taking on a TFL instead of another type of tenure. The TFL is the largest tenure available in British Columbia, usually held by large forest companies. It offers a long term renewable lease and a larger volume of wood than other tenures, given that it is area based (rather than based upon volume of wood):

> *"In the forestry circles, a TFL is the best tenure you're going to get. It's a pretty special thing… This is much more something to be proud of, something sort of flattering even, that the Province of British Columbia did this."* (Tanizul Registered Professional Forester 1997)

As it became clear that the TFL would not provide many jobs, and that those jobs that might become available would require experience and expensive equipment, Tl'azt'en Nation decided to investigate the possibility of establishing a lumber mill.

"Now it was our belief from day one that we wanted to build a mill and to utilize the volume that we had.... Government said you couldn't do it so they put a restriction that we could not build a processing facility. What we did was to set up a sister company and went ahead and did it anyway. The Deputy Minister of Forests kind of kids us about it." (Tl'azt'en political leader 1998)

"The federal government, they put conditions on the money that we received. We could not add to existing processing facilities; …we couldn't buy new equipment. We had to buy old equipment. That particular condition, in effect, it forced us into a high level of inefficiency and ...we couldn't compete in the normal business market." (Tl'azt'en Administrator 1997)[11]

Teeslee Forest Products was opened in 1990 with twenty year old equipment. At its peak it employed forty people. However, many felt that the mill had been set up by the government to fail, given that they could only use old equipment. The equipment could not handle logs off the TFL, given their size and the size of the available saws, so Teeslee had to buy logs while Tanizul sold on the open market. Teeslee also suffered from mismanagement. While Teeslee survived during a good economy, poor markets in the mid-1990s caused a crisis. When it was discovered that a massive debt had been created by mismanagement, the Nation had no alternative but to close Teeslee. It was a serious blow to the community:

"The boys really enjoyed that sawmill there, over 40 of them worked. It made them feel good. Then they had financial commitments. They were buying furniture and buying vehicles. And now that their job is gone, I don't know but maybe they'll be losing their vehicles and things like that." (Tl'azt'en Elder 1997)

The mill has not yet been re-opened. The TFL continues to operate in 2008, but has rarely done so at a profit or with the employment opportunities community members expected. The operation of an industrial tenure has proved challenging for Tl'azt'en Nation for several reasons, some of which are supported by existing literature, while others need better examination.

The Challenges of Running an Industrial Tenure

Access

The literature identifies in general five challenges which face First Nations interested in operating an industrial forest tenure. Two challenges asserted in the literature regard the restricted access First Nations have to a suitable land base. While on the surface, this finding was not upheld by Tl'azt'enne experience, a closer look reveals how Tl'azt'en Nation was the exception that proved the rule. Our research indicated that the Tl'azt'en were successful in their bid for a TFL only because the provincial government had illegally allowed the rail line to intrude onto reserve lands. Without that first legal violation, with an accompanying blockade, increasing federal concern, and an awareness of the American Indian Movement in the United States with its accompanying violence, it is doubtful the government would have considered the Tanizul bid, let alone encourage Tl'azt'en Nation to submit it. Several industry professionals familiar with the circumstances of the TFL (interviewed as they were involved in early Tanizul operations) stated so categorically and

[11] A few Tl'azt'enne also stated that there was intentional interest in an older mill that would provide more jobs than a modern mill.

independently, adding that the Tanizul bid would not have succeeded in a conventional bid process. At least two also stated that many in the government expected that Tl'azt'enne would fail in their efforts to operate an industrial tenure. This sentiment was echoed by many Tl'azt'enne, who felt that they were set up by the government to fail, thereby proving First Nations were not capable of meeting industrial forest demands. While these statements were speculative, the fact is that it was not until the late 1990s that another BC First Nation successfully bid on a TFL, and few Nations across Canada operate other, larger tenures. Independent access to large, long term tenures remains a significant issue for many First Nations (NAFA, no date).

Running a Forestry Operation

The prohibitive nature of an industrial tenure's operating costs and a lack of community expertise are other challenges raised in the literature, and the Tl'azt'en case study confirms these are significant.

As an industrial tenure, TFL 42 had several crucial differences from any other TFL in BC, which had consequences for Tl'azt'en First Nation. TFL 42 was in area the smallest TFL in British Columbia and at the time had a comparatively small Annual Allowable Cut (a government dictated required timber harvest volume). The amount of wood allotted turned out to be too small to meet all of the Tl'azt'en's goals:

> *"The TFL is pretty limited in the area. And what we'd like to do, given the fact that it's limited in size and the allowable cut has been reduced year by year, that we expect that in …about 10-15 years the allowable cut will be about 80,000 [cubic] metres compared to where we started at 125,000 metres a year."* (Tl'azt'en political leader 1997)

The size restricted the amount of timber that could be harvested every year, which in turn limited the number of harvesting contracts that could be offered. In turn, this resulted in limited opportunity to acquire the expensive machinery needed by a contractor. As a consequence, few Tl'azt'enne had the opportunity to start a contracting business, as there was not enough volume to offer the long-term commitments financiers wanted to see before lending money. Further, according to one forester involved in the TFL's establishment, while the area had some excellent stands of timber, much of it was located over challenging terrain, which required considerable experience and expensive equipment to safely log. This meant logging costs quickly exceeded market prices for raw logs, and that even more contracts had to be given to outside experts. The lack of in-house expertise, as raised in the literature, did indeed prove to be a difficult challenge that was never really overcome by the Tl'azt'en.

However, it is unclear that a larger area or larger AAC would have benefited the Tl'azt'en. The TFL also came with some expensive baggage. Tanizul paid for the costs of road construction, bridge building, forest planning, and reforestation as part of the cost of operating a TFL. Much of this professional work was contracted to non-Nation companies as few Tl'azt'enne had either the training or the necessary equipment. This meant any profits tended to be swallowed up by costs and or flowed out of the community rather than circulating within. Without huge economic reserves, the ability to acquire operating loans, or the ability to employ community members, a TFL of any size would have been a difficult venture for many First Nations. Further, a larger AAC might have had a greater impact on cultural and social values, values of significant concern under the smaller AAC.

Government policies regarding TFLs were also problematic without economic reserves or existing expertise. Every year at least fifty percent of the AAC must be logged, without regard for the price of raw logs, or the desires of the community. Many Tl'azt'enne felt that too much timber was cut every year, but Tanizul could have lost the TFL if the logging was not done. Because of the requirement to log within a restricted timeframe, time could not be spent training people on the job or on alternate forestry practices. Further, the wood had to be sold, even at a loss, and it had to be sold on the open market. Finally, the Tl'azt'en had to pay stumpage[12]:

> *"…last year we paid close to 60% of our total revenue into the government for stumpage. This year, it's the same or more. It's about 62% this year that we've paid into Crown stumpage …and it's killing us, you know."* (Tl'azt'en Administrator 1997)

Without the deep pockets available to major multinational forest companies to ride out economic ups and downs, the Tl'azt'en, as would likely be true for other First Nations, were and are extremely vulnerable to global market conditions (Tl'azt'en Administrator 1997). This is a factor often overlooked by smaller companies, but one that can doom a smaller forest operation. A more flexible tenure, with less rigid cutting requirements, would have significantly assisted Tl'azt'en Nation's efforts and would be an important component of an aboriginal forest tenure. Advance planning focusing on building in-house expertise and equipment subsidies would have also greatly enhanced retaining revenues within the community, creating economic development spin-offs and improving community acceptance of an industrial tenure.

Traditional Values and Resource Extraction

The last challenge commonly identified within the literature is the potential for conflict between traditional values and uses, which rate a functioning ecosystem and a more spiritual relationship with the ecosystem highly, and the demands of an industrial tenure, which focuses almost exclusively on maximum timber production. Our research with the Tl'azt'enne demonstrates that this was not only a significant challenge, but was also a considerable source of tension within the community.

In contrast with a corporation, a First Nation community has a very different view of the land and the community's relationship to that land. A multinational corporation has no loyalty to a locale and will move on once the resources are extracted. This is not usually true for a community, First Nations, or otherwise. British Columbia is littered with resource towns that died, or struggle terribly to survive once a major resource is exhausted. For First Nations, however, geography is about more than economic survival. The Tl'azt'enne, for example, have resided in their territory for an estimated four thousand years according to anthropologists (Aasen, 1992), or since time immemorial according to Tl'azt'enne, and thus have ties to the landscape, its natural and human history, that are almost unimaginable to a culture with at best a two-hundred year history. Unlike a corporation, they cannot nor will not "cut and run" from their forests. A resource extraction activity that significantly impairs the ability to continue to successfully reside within the traditional territory or limits the ability to practice culturally vital and constitutionally and/or treaty protected rights to hunt, fish

[12] Stumpage is a tax imposed on timber companies by the government to cover various costs and to benefit public coffers.

and gather is not easily reconciled with First Nations culture. TFL 42 was the cause of much bitterness amongst the Tl'azt'enne for its impacts on the land.

> *"I feel for the people who have their traplines, for people who use the place for … plants, for berries, and for the moose, where the moose and the bears live off the land, and then when the logging comes in, and it's our own people logging off the areas, there is a lot of concerns...Whenever we go out for traditional medicines, we can't do it right in our back doors anymore because of all the spraying and all the logging that's done."* (Tl'azt'enne community member 1997)

This community member told us that she believed that her father had chosen to die after his trapline had been logged by Tanizul.

By their own analysis the biggest failure the Tl'azt'enne have faced in operating Tanizul Timber is in integrating Tl'azt'en values into a commercial forestry operation.

> *"There's a conflict right there. …trying to look at a bottom line and manage in a traditional way - and we haven't really been able to marry those two successfully ... when you go into the bush to take a plant for medicine, you return something back. And then in logging you go in there and clear-cut an area, you don't put anything back except new trees ... it bothers me …because you have different thinking about how that forest should be managed."* (Tl'azt'en political leader 1997)

The conflict is not surprising. The restrictions placed upon a commercial license such as a TFL would make any integration a tremendous challenge. To keep the TFL, Tanizul had to harvest a minimum amount of timber regardless of whether the community thought that the amount was too much. Practices such as pesticide or herbicide use or logging close to a stream edge, were required by the government at that time, again regardless of what community members thought (in 2008, the Tl'azt'enne have achieved a herbicide/pesticide ban in their traditional territory). But, some argued, the Tl'azt'enne should be able to take into consideration the need to meet community concern:

> *"The government in the early 80s was really not too impressed with this Tl'azt'en idea of no herbicides. They weren't too tolerant of it and even now there's some that may not be very tolerant of it… Why don't we do a little special thing here and just say okay, TFL 42 is a no herbicide area?"* (Tanizul Registered Professional Forester 1997)

Similarly, the elders were worried about logging going too close to lake and river banks. In the 1980s, the Ministry of Forestry had riparian setbacks of 25 metres, the Elders wanted setbacks of 100 metres. However when the new Forest Practices Code came into effect in the early 1990s, it supported the Elders' position.

> *"I was told, 'well the Elders don't like to log right to streams and we don't like to do that here at Tanizul!' … Alright, I'll put up with that kind of innovative thinking. Ten years later, under the Forest Practices Code, that's full blown illegal for that stream, that piece of timber. It's really quite a humbling little story for me but I think it's good for people to hear it so that they understand that foresters, forestry, forest technicians, it all sounds pretty scientific, especially if you read the Forest Act or some policy manual or some guide book. ….ten years from now*

we could be laughing at it." (Tanizul Registered Professional Forester 1997)[13]

The role of traditional values could also be a point of conflict between native community members and non-native forestry professionals:

"Our cultural values are so important and we keep saying that it is so important. So you bring somebody in that is not aware of our true cultural values and they think of it in …a totally different aspect, and they come in not understanding us and that's where this conflict starts happening." (Tl'azt'enne Elder 1997)

However, several people told us that there was a change in how people viewed the forest after the arrival of the TFL:

"…Tl'azt'en First Nation people, now view the forest as a financial resource that they can use, or that they can look at to providing for their family. So it has changed some values, family values, or traditional values." (Tl'azt'en community member 1997)

Tl'azt'enne we spoke with were highly uncomfortable with this change, particularly as it began to pit community members against each other and exacerbated splits between Nation Elders and younger community members.

Without an aboriginal tenure that can permit flexibility in how many logs are removed and how they are removed, that can permit alternative forest management options, and that allows successful continuation of traditional activities through the protection of the ecosystem, industrial forest tenures will always present a significant challenge for a First Nation and can lead to choices that might compromise both community unity as well as community economic development.

Community and Forestry: A New Challenge

One fundamental difference between TFL 42 and any other TFL is that the Tl'azt'en Nation required and requires the operation to be responsive to Tl'azt'enne community goals and concerns. This requirement presented the Tl'azt'en with challenges not well documented in existing literature on forestry and First Nations. Further, little attention has been paid to the challenges of instituting new developments within a small, politically tightly knit community nor of the unintended consequences of new economic development.

Community based natural resources development has usually been discussed in the abstract, and is often presented in a relatively positive light. Natcher and Hickey (2002: 350) suggest that the concept of community in resources management is recognized on an international scale and that: "the values and wisdom of local knowledge, and time-tested traditions of communal stewardship melded to a course of asserting rights of use and authority over traditional lands, indigenous peoples, are now beginning to re-position themselves with the institutions most responsible for the management of these homelands." They assert that this will produce a more equitable role where decision making shifts to a more localized level. However, little is said about the significant difficulty in meaningfully engaging a community over the long term.

Engaging the Community

Some Tl'azt'enne told us that, in the beginning, the community was involved in

[13] It is worth noting that, where it could, Tanizul did try to exceed standard harvesting practices and protect or enhance sites within the TFL.

the discussion leading to the application for TFL 42.

> *"They had community meetings and a lot of people used to show up… the hall used to fill right up because everyone wants to know what Tanizul was all about. So they were informed really well plus they went out to the Elders and met with the Elders."* (Tl'azt'enne community member 1998)

One speaker clearly offered support for the value of the role the community plays in long term resource management initiatives like the TFL:

> *"Why I think Tanizul will succeed … is because [the people] take pride in what they have. They'll push to make it work and they'll push that much harder than anybody else would from the outside."* (Tl'azt'enne community member 1998)

Yet, in spite of best efforts to include community members in the decision to acquire the TFL, it was very clear that many community members had an unrealistic idea about what they could really expect from operating the TFL:

> *"[Tanizul] was a life time thing that was going to last and it was always going to be our Band members working …it was going to get most of our people off welfare …having jobs. It was going to produce later on. It was going to get bigger and bigger, they were going to add onto the sawmill, and people were going to get into buying their own machines…"* (Tl'azt'en Elder 1997)

There was a great sense of promises-made in early meetings regarding jobs and community improvement:

> *"…where's all the production that they promised and where's all these things that they promised the Band and the Band members that they were going to give, that they were supposed to give us a big portion of money to each community."* **(**Tl'azt'en community member 1997)

In this sense, members of the community were greatly disappointed, TFL 42 simply could not meet all community needs in a way community members were often led to expect. The biggest error that Tl'azt'en Nation committed was in not being crystal clear with community members on what this economic development could in reality produce. This is likely an issue of which any First Nation government must be wary. False hopes about the benefits of any proposed economic development can lead quickly to bitterness and political unrest when those hopes are dashed.

Any community, as Burda (1994:4) illustrates, suffers from a: "vulnerability to corporate rationalization, mergers and dependence on a single industry". Given the reliance that many community members had on the TFL solving all community problems, it is no wonder that many felt a vested interest in its operations and felt particularly betrayed when the TFL surprised them by operating like a business (as it had to, to meet government requirements). For example, one manager (1997) noted that what was important in planning was to recognize that traditional values were often at the heart of what otherwise is an unexplainable community response. Further, respect for traditional values is at the heart of needing to establish a good working relationship with traditional users of the land like the *Keyoh* holders. Yet, several people interviewed felt that Tanizul had not dealt well with the *keyoh* holders in terms of notifying them when parts of their trapline were to be cut or in terms of offering compensation. In this arena, they felt that Tanizul Timber Company should be

showing non-native forest companies the way.

> *"…if I had a Keyoh in that area, I would have spoken out quite loudly. I would have put a lot of effort into what I was saying. I would have expected a lot of tangible, meaningful, results from my own Band…"* (Tl'azt'enne community member 1997)

The research literature has also addressed poorly the importance of a regular, on-going community engagement strategy over the life of an industrial development, as well as the difficulty in achieving it. People we spoke with remember being told many things about the tree farm license early on in the acquisition process. Many Tl'azt'enne also were aware of the establishment and operation of Teeslee. What was remarkable to us in our interviews, however, was people's lack of knowledge regarding current operations of the TFL and the mill, and the need for community input. We spoke to many people who stated that they had little idea about what was happening with the TFL and no idea about the mill. A number of the younger Band members told us they were not really aware of the TFL or the mill until they began working at one or the other. One reason given for this was that benefits were hard to see in the community, an indication of how many of the original promises were not fulfilled:

> *"If it's making money it's a good thing and I want my piece of it. If it's losing money, I don't even want to hear about it and if it's just breaking even, it's boring."* (Tl'azt'enne community member 1998)

Older people had different reasons for why there was little knowledge or interest in the TFL:

> *"I don't think I own it, like as a person… We were told at the beginning that we were the owners and we all had shares in it, but I think it's sort of faded away. People don't feel like that. We've sort of lost track of it, I think, is the general feeling."* (Tl'azt'en Elder 1997)

Others cited cultural constraints:

> *"Most of the First Nations, they don't like to ask questions too much. Like when the sawmill was on a rocky road, they just let things happen to them. They aren't really asking questions… Maybe you'll offend him."* (Tl'azt'en Administrator 1997)

Many community members felt at the time of our research that the lack of interest in Tanizul and Teeslee was driven by the failure of the management personnel and of the Boards of Directors to allow or encourage that interest. The community did not participate if their opinions and ideas are not sought out. On the other side, it was apparent how frustrated management was when they told us how hard they worked to get the community to give them clear goals: The Tl'azt'en study demonstrates both the crucial nature of a clear community engagement and communication strategy/strategies, but also some of the challenges implicit in a community engaged in a long term venture and which might have other issues with which they are occupied.

> *"Oh, it's been a problem for years and as far as I'm concerned, if anybody doesn't come to a meeting… definitely is not going to know. And we've tried every way that we have now, communication on our TVs, when we have a meeting we'd hook up onto it. Even that, well they'd just say, well okay, shut it off!"* (Board Member 1997)

The Social Costs of Doing Business

A second challenge poorly addressed in the literature is the often unintended consequences of bringing an industrial

development into a community. There were a number of social consequences for Tl'azt'enne when the TFL and the mill came to the community. For example, until a gravel road was put through into Tache in the mid 1970s with the advent of the railroad, Tl'azt'en Nation was relatively isolated and necessarily self sufficient. We were told that community members supported each other and shared resources. As access to the reserve grew so too did social change. Many of the Elders and others we spoke with were dismayed by the outlook and attitude of the kids and teenagers who never had to work to survive:

> *"And people worked hard for their living. In 1972, the power came in, the Hydro came in, ...for many different reasons it was good. I think that was the beginning of getting spoiled. Like you didn't have to worry about your food anymore. Like your food could be kept cold in freezers or in fridges so people began to forget about doing dry meat and things like that... Nowadays, the young people, they all figure that it was like this all the time. It was never. We had to work."* (Tl'azt'en Elder 1997)

The acquisition and operation of TFL 42 and the mill added to the basic changes to Tl'azt'enne life style.

> *"I think when we looked at the business, we should have been very aware of the social impacts it would have on our communities. Because having jobs is good, but when you have the other things like the addictions to drugs and alcohol, that was another area we just sort of pushed aside and we didn't really focus on how it would affect our people."* (Tl'azt'en Administrator 1997)

While few indigenous communities are currently so isolated from main stream culture, a new influx of money and increased access to goods and services, including drugs, can have serious impacts on a community that has not planned for an increase in social support services. Further, provision needs to be made for sudden downturns in a one industry economy. Tl'azt'en Nation was poorly prepared to deal with downturns in the price of logs and the loss of the mill had devastating impacts of families that had invested in new trucks or home improvements and then lost the income.

Family Politics in the Boardroom

A challenge that has only been addressed rarely in the literature (Davis, 2000) is the significant issue of community politics. Tl'azt'en Nation, like many Carrier Nations, was once a collection of semi-nomadic extended families that occupied their keyoh and came together on various occasions for social and economic purposes. The federal government forced these families in to permanent shared settlements as a community without regard for cultural norms and expectations. Small community politics can be unpleasant at the best of times. When long standing, historical family ties, loyalties and disagreements are added, politics can become personal and problematic. Family politics became a serious issue affecting Tanizul; it was difficult trying to run a business with families occupying the Boardroom.

> *"Tanizul Timber is a small company. Bit of planning, bit of a clear vision and mandate, and it would be pretty easy but you stir in the politics and the family and all the rest of it, it gets wildly complicated."* (Tl'azt'en Elder 1997)

One person described the problem he faced in hiring a crew in that he couldn't hire more than two members of any one family. The competence of individuals became less of a concern then ensuring all families felt an

equal opportunity for employment. Given the scarcity of employment, many of the worst conflicts in the community were over who got a job and who did not:

> *"…prominent members of the community, councillors, and various other people were continuously at the Board of Directors meeting or banging on the general manager's door wanting to know why my son isn't employed, why my daughter can't work here, what the hell are you doing with this white guy in this job."* (Tl'azt'en Administrator 1997)

Telling people "no" is difficult and a very difficult task for a manager or supervisor. It is more complex in a small, close-knit community:

> *"The community has to make decisions and it's difficult for First Nations communities to make those calls because of the relationships. It's hard for an individual to tell his uncle or his aunt that they're fired. It's hard for them to make that decision... So somewhere along the line, they have to make that icy decision. You may not be popular but you know it's the health of the community that's at stake."* (Tl'azt'en Administrator 1997)

Finally, sometimes the greatest challenge was in simply trying to run the TFL and the mill as businesses, regardless of community expectations. The literature makes reference to the importance of community appropriate economic development (Anderson et al., 2006; Cornell and Kalt, 2006), yet the reality of achieving community appropriateness within the expectation of meeting community goals is not always straight forward.

Keeping Revenue at Home

Another problem that isn't well addressed in the literature is how to keep revenue in the community. Tl'azt'enne went elsewhere to shop, and earned income quickly left the community:

> *"We contribute to the local economy in the neighborhood of $23-24 million dollars revenue every year. But in our community, we don't have very much to show for it. We don't have stores that are community-owned or individually owned. We have some small concession outlets and that's pretty much all we have. So what is happening is that the money we generate flows...into the neighboring communities to help build those economies up."* (Tl'azt'en political leader 1997)

All of these issues needed to be thought through, yet these were issues that Tl'azt'enne had little time to consider before suddenly trying to run an industrial forest tenure. Steering a course between demands of traditional culture, community needs and business requirements is one of the toughest issues a First Nation will face in operating a timber business, and a continuing challenge to Tl'azt'en Nation. Any type of business needs to recognise the full scope of the demands that need to be met. The Tl'azt'enne were given little time to fully consider the many decisions they needed to make and so ran into problems.

Managing Management

While the general intent of Tanizul and Teeslee was clear, what was not clearly hammered out was the management structure, the goals, and the community's vision and goals for each business. Not thinking through long terms goals meant that even the one clear goal, jobs, was difficult to meet and in fact created false expectations on the part of community members:

> *"…nobody really sat down and said: 'Okay, if you want employment, first of all, let's look at the types of employments.' Let's just look at the types of positions this*

TFL can sustain, right? Nobody asked the question: 'Well how are we going to ensure these things happen?'" (Tl'azt'en Elder 1998)

The problem was that the long term goals were imprecise. There was, for some time, confusion as to the reporting structure between the community, the Chief and Council, and the Tanizul and Teeslee Boards. Who had the authority for decision-making was never clearly established (Tl'azt'en political leader 1998).

One of the outcomes of this situation was that the operations manager never had a clear mandate to direct his decision-making:

"You cannot run a company where the manager doesn't know his mandate, doesn't know the objectives of his Board, his Board doesn't even know its own mandate. He doesn't know if he's reporting to the Board of Directors or the Chief and Council, or the Tl'azt'en people in general." (Tanizul Registered Professional Forester 1997)

The Tl'azt'enne faced other challenges in ensuring they had knowledgeable people in two key areas: the governing Boards and the management staff.

"You have to trust the judgement of those people who are there. You have to rely on their abilities and their judgements given their backgrounds, …and trust that they will make good decisions... because it's a community based company, … [the direction] every Board member comes in from is for the welfare of the community, for the welfare of the people, and the well-being of the company." (Tl'azt'en political leader 1997)

Running a business meant making the hard decisions, the ones that pit the business against community desires and expectations. This required the courage to make unpopular decisions. The other groups that needed expertise were the governing Boards. Both Tanizul and Teeslee decided on appointed Boards of Directors to oversee operations. Some Directors had more expertise than others:

"Yeah, all the loggers. They've got knowledge here. There's people who have been … there since year one. But other people like the elders, they are on the Board but they've never been logging. They've never been in the bush except for trapping and hunting... Pretty hard to sit on the Board without any knowledge of logging and you don't know what a cubic metre is, you know. … What the hell is this cubic metre. I didn't know stuff like that." (Board Member 1997)

The requirements for a Board position need to be carefully considered. The expectation must be clear, the Board actively oversees the operations of the company and they need knowledge to do this well.

Conclusion

Tl'azt'en Nation was offered an unusual opportunity in 1982, a community controlled tree farm license. In 1992, they were able to add their sawmill. Given the challenges they have met, from outside the Nation in the form of commercial forest values and those challenges from within, in the form of "land as identity" values, the fact that Tl'azt'en Nation has not been completely successful as a commercial forestry operator is overshadowed by what they have succeeded at, the maintenance of traditional values in the face of outside influence and in continuing to operate TFL 42. Their persistence in striving to better the Nation is demonstrated in their undertaking other ventures, including the John Prince Research Forest, in collaboration with the University

of Northern British Columbia. Their experiences, however, contribute significantly to our understanding of key challenges which First Nation's face in choosing to participate in industrial forestry or in seeking to amend the compromises and opportunities aboriginal forestry tenures might offer in the future.

The interlocking challenges of community politics, community expectations, community knowledge and community expertise are challenges than can confront even the most politically astute and well advantaged Nation. Engaging in a large industrial development must be thought through carefully and planned for thoroughly, an option that Tl'azt'enne did not have. Some areas of concern, such as the impact of community politics, are often difficult ones to even raise, let alone plan solutions for, as few wish to admit that such circumstances exist within their own community. Yet a Nation that does not confront and address the sorts of challenges faced by Tl'azt'en Nation does itself and its community members a significant disservice.

Some of the challenges discussed in this and other studies have the potential to be solved through the acceptance and implantation of an aboriginal forestry ideal and an aboriginal tenure system as advocated by NAFA and others. Such systems facilitate access to the resource base and encourage operational requirements that permit the necessary flexibility to meet First Nation values, goals and rights. Better funding envelopes and training programs could offset the issues of operational costs, access to equipment and contracts, and in the development of community expertise (although not protection against global economic swings). What an aboriginal forestry tenure will be challenged to address is the social circumstances of a community and its expectations. That challenge remains the responsibility of each Nation wishing to engage in industrial forestry; one that each must plan to resolve.

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