



ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM ON THE GROUND:  
Small Green and Indigenous Organizing  
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# Environmental Activism as Anti-Conquest: The Nuu-chah-nulth and Environmentalists in the Contact Zone of Clayoquot Sound

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Clayoquot Sound, on the western edge of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, is a renowned ecotourist paradise replete with temperate rainforests, sandy beaches, and, increasingly, luxury resorts. Additionally, for environmentalists, Clayoquot Sound stands out as one of the legendary sites of the Canadian environmental movement's coming-of-age victories. Beginning in the summer of 1993, thousands of environmental activists, representing myriad local/small-scale and major international organizations, from the Friends of Clayoquot Sound to Greenpeace respectively, journeyed to a hastily constructed "Peace Camp" in opposition to the provincial government's decision to permit the powerful forestry corporation MacMillan Bloedel (in which the province owned a majority of shares) to conduct extensive clearcut logging throughout the area. Environmentalists would eventually claim at least partial victory after the government and industry bowed to public pressure to change forest-management standards and limit clearcuts. While environmentalists fought for an end to this logging practice, much of their campaign hinged on recognition of the local Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations' Aboriginal rights to their traditional territories.

Throughout the campaign and afterward, the former patted themselves on the back for what they considered staunch advocacy on behalf of the area's Indigenous peoples. It is the nature of Aboriginal-environmentalist relationships in Clayoquot Sound that I explore here.

Environmentalists from all organizations involved in Clayoquot Sound throughout the 1980s and 1990s depicted their relationships with the Nuu-chah-nulth as two marginalized groups uniting for a common cause—the liberation of both Aboriginal peoples and environmentalist ideology.<sup>1</sup> But, as geographer Bruce Braun observes, “That few Natives [actually] joined the protestors on the blockades is a topic that has still not received the attention it deserves.”<sup>2</sup> Case in point: Margaret Horsfield and Ian Kennedy's recent, voluminous *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound: A History* largely writes First Nations out of the narrative when discussing the 1993–94 protests, smooths out the differences between the two groups and instead highlights only the joint First Nations–environmentalist efforts to protect Meares Island in the mid-1980s.<sup>3</sup> Braun goes on to say that environmentalist support for First Nations was actually ambivalent and sought to erase Indigenous peoples' presence from the land because of the former's focus on virgin, untouched spaces; environmentalism depends upon colonialism because its ultimate goal is to remove permanent settlement from “wild” spaces.<sup>4</sup> Niamh Moore contends that Braun pays too little attention to environmentalists' strategies and the role of the media in framing events.<sup>5</sup> The chapter presented here overcomes these shortcomings. It focuses specifically on environmentalist, as well as Indigenous, strategies and tactics, and relies heavily as well on discourse analysis of environmentalist-authored publications, over which they would have had full control, in order to provide balance to what may have been biased and/or sensationalist media coverage.

Other scholars, whether focusing on Clayoquot Sound specifically or similar cases elsewhere, have echoed Braun's position. Drawing attention to what is sometimes referred to as “green” or “eco-” imperialism, they have largely appraised environmentalist-Aboriginal relationships in the same light: environmentalists are prone to authoritarian thought; their focus on their own culturally specific conception of environmentalism above everyone else's often erases Indigenous peoples (among others) from supposedly “natural” spaces; and even though environmentalists

have criticized colonialism, they still question the ability of Indigenous peoples to manage natural resources and reserve the right to criticize them when they act in ways contrary to environmentalist ideology.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Greenpeace's Tzaporah Berman, one of the key environmentalist organizers during the 1993–94 protests, recognized in her recent autobiography that environmentalists made many missteps in their relationship with the Nuuchahnulth, but she still contends that environmentalists have a moral authority to criticize the practices of First Nations writ large.<sup>7</sup>

While both images of environmentalists as benevolent heroes or as neo-colonialists have some basis, the former problematically represents Aboriginal peoples as little more than environmentalist sidekicks, while the latter portrays them as victims overwhelmed by the structurally entrenched forces of colonial elites. In either situation, environmentalists remain at the centre of history and Aboriginal peoples are denied any significant measure of agency. Using Indigenous and environmentalist activism at Clayoquot Sound from the early 1980s through the 1990s as a case study demonstrates that post-colonial critiques of environmentalists' strategies are justified. But it also reveals that the Nuuchahnulth capitalized on both the presence of environmentalist organizations and the protest events to create new political, economic, and discursive spaces for themselves within numerous colonial structures. They then employed these spaces to assert control over their traditional territories and the natural resources therein. In other words, the Nuuchahnulth, far from being caught between and injured by the competition for dominance between various colonial forces, managed to use these competitions to their advantage and sometimes even orchestrated them.

The Nuuchahnulth (formerly referred to as Nootka) consist of fourteen First Nations, divided into three regions. Those who would be most involved in the Clayoquot Sound protests were from the Central Region, which includes the Ahousaht, Hesquiaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, and Ucluelet. The Nuuchahnulth—as with all Indigenous peoples—far from living in a “pristine wilderness,” have inhabited, inherited, managed, and enhanced an environment ample in marine and forest resources since time immemorial. They were highly proficient whalers, and relied, and continue to depend on, both marine and terrestrial resources such as salmon, shellfish, forest animals, and plants. Equally as important for the

Nuu-chah-nulth, “the forests and waters of Clayoquot Sound were and still are the source of food, medicine, and history; they provide sustenance, education and a connection to the spiritual world.”<sup>8</sup> The same giant cedar and Sitka spruce forests that environmentalists sought to protect, and many came to worship with religious fervour, were central to the Nuu-chah-nulth world.<sup>9</sup>

While non-Aboriginal newcomers and the Nuu-chah-nulth have long encountered one another—the Nuu-chah-nulth were, after all, some of the earliest Indigenous peoples in the Pacific Northwest to interact with Europeans, beginning in the 1770s—their exchange with environmentalists since the 1980s would mark episodic revivals of what Mary Louise Pratt terms the contact zone: the space of colonial encounters where peoples once separated establish ongoing relations, “usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict.”<sup>10</sup> A wide range of scholars have utilized the “contact zone” to frame analyses of places where white Westerners, as agents of colonialism—whether conscious of their position or not—occupied the space of colonial encounter between Aboriginal peoples and newcomers, although I am unaware of any that apply the concept to environmentalists or spaces of environmentalist activism.

The “contact zone” was established between some of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations and local environmental activists in the early 1980s in response to logging interests. In 1980, MacMillan Bloedel announced it would log much of Meares Island (*Wah nah jus/Hilth hoo is*)—on which Opitsaht, the main community of the Tla-o-qui-aht, sits—after obtaining a timber licence to a portion of it. As with the majority of land in British Columbia, neither the provincial nor federal governments had negotiated a treaty with the local Indigenous population to acquire it; Meares Island was unceded Indigenous territory. Unsurprisingly, the Nuu-chah-nulth immediately opposed the plan. The same year, the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council presented a land claim to their traditional territory, including Meares Island, to Canada’s federal government. Non-Aboriginal residents in Tofino, which has a view of Meares Island, were also concerned, given that logging the island posed a threat to Tofino’s only source of domestic water, as well as the area’s lucrative tourism, fish, and mariculture (the cultivation of marine organisms for food and other products) industries.

Three years later, the federal government accepted the Nuu-chah-nulth's claim for negotiation and the provincial government approved MacMillan Bloedel's logging application, though it stipulated that the part of the island visible from the resort town of Tofino was off limits for twenty years.<sup>11</sup> In response, both the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht nations then asserted their jurisdiction over the whole of the island. Utilizing the settler-colonial rhetoric of conservation and park creation as a benevolent means of laying claim to territory, the Tla'o'qui'aht Band Council and hereditary chiefs drew on the discourse of environmental conservation and declared Meares Island a tribal park on 21 April 1984. Such action was especially poignant given that Canada's Pacific Rim National Park, established in 1971, was located within unceded Nuu-chah-nulth territory and went around reserve lands, thus denying those First Nations access to resources therein. The Tla'o'qui'aht distinguished a tribal park from other such settler-colonial spaces, however, in that the Nuu-chah-nulth could continue to use and manage the environment as they saw fit. It also provided the opportunity for joint use with non-Aboriginal people, though noting in no uncertain terms that the Nuu-chah-nulth controlled Meares Island. As the proclamation stated, "native people are prepared to share Meares Island with non-natives" dependent on a number of conditions, including adhering to "the laws of our forefathers," as well as outsider recognition of Nuu-chah-nulth land claims.<sup>12</sup>

Both the Friends of Clayoquot Sound (FOCS) and the Western Canadian Wilderness Committee (WCWC) threw their full support behind the designation. The FOCS was formed in Tofino in 1979, largely in response to the threat of logging Meares Island, while the WCWC was founded in Victoria in 1980—after getting assistance from Greenpeace at its headquarters in Vancouver—with a broader mandate to protect and preserve wilderness.<sup>13</sup> When loggers employed by MacMillan Bloedel headed toward the island in 1984 to begin cutting, they were preceded by a number of Tla'o-qui'aht and non-Aboriginal environmentalists, mostly those from Tofino belonging to the FOCS, who prevented the crews from landing by occupying strategic areas of the island. The Tla'o-qui'aht invited the MacMillan employees to visit the island provided they left their chainsaws behind.<sup>14</sup> Thereafter, the FOCS helped to maintain a "forest

protectors' camp," established by the Tla-o-qui-aht at Heelboom (*C'is-aquis*) Bay (the proposed logging site).<sup>15</sup>

A local, non-Aboriginal, environmental activist campaign, again led in large part by the FOCS—then around sixty members<sup>16</sup>—and the WCWC intensified, with environmentalists sometimes working on their own, and at other times with the Nuuchahnulth. Among other activities, environmentalists handed out protest leaflets,<sup>17</sup> produced and distributed newsletters regarding the area's importance for those living in and beyond Tofino, and published their unequivocal support for the Nuuchahnulth.<sup>18</sup> Tofino resident William Tieleman—a MacMillan Bloedel shareholder—even presented a motion at the company's annual meeting to request that logging on Meares Island not proceed.<sup>19</sup> Local activists convinced the Tofino Village Council to formally oppose the logging decision.<sup>20</sup> Some activists spiked trees.<sup>21</sup> The Tla'o-qui-aht and FOCS constructed a trail on Meares Island so visitors—notably journalists—could access some of the oldest and largest trees.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the most visible example of joint Nuuchahnulth and non-Aboriginal activism was the protest held on 20 October 1984, outside the provincial legislature in Victoria, British Columbia's capital, where the 23-foot-high welcome figure *Haa-hoo-ilth-quin* ("Cedar Man") carving (the image on the cover of this volume), by Nuuchahnulth artist Joe David, was on display.<sup>23</sup>

The issue ultimately went to the courts, beginning in 1984, for a lengthy, expensive legal battle, which successfully quieted the chainsaws in a quagmire of litigation that dragged on for years. As legal scholar Douglas Harris explains, "the case came before the courts in the form of requests for injunctions, one from MacMillan Bloedel to stop the protestors from blocking its access to the island, another from the Clayoquot and Ahousaht . . . to stop the company from logging pending the resolution of the claim to Aboriginal title."<sup>24</sup> Even though the activists at Meares Island amounted to a relatively small number of people, estimated around fifty or sixty for both Nuuchahnulth and non-Aboriginal,<sup>25</sup> the resistance, along with its eventual movement of the "contact zone" to also encompass the courts, was nonetheless profound. It allowed the Nuuchahnulth a highly visible public forum—both in the courts and in the media the cases generated—to express their claim to their traditional territory and its multi-faceted importance to them. In short, the range of the contact

zone expanded to both encompass the physical space of the courts and extend into peoples' homes via the news media.

Defeat in the courts for the First Nations seemed likely at first. The chambers judge held that “the claim of the Clayoquot and Ahousaht to Aboriginal title had no prospect of success at trial. . . . [It] had been too long in coming” and that the injunction against logging would, if granted, have “‘potentially disastrous consequences’ for the provincial economy given the extent of unresolved claims to Aboriginal title and the possibility that the grant of an injunction in this case would set a precedent that would spread across the province.”<sup>26</sup> However, the British Columbia Court of Appeals disagreed.<sup>27</sup> Recognizing the island’s importance from a Nuu-chah-nulth point of view, Justice Seaton, in justifying the Court of Appeal’s order for MacMillan Bloedel to stop logging pending the outcome of the Nuu-chah-nulth’s claim to Aboriginal title, wrote, “It appears that the area to be logged will be wholly logged. The forest that the Indians know and use will be permanently destroyed. The tree from which the bark was partially stripped in 1642 may be cut down, middens may be destroyed, fish traps damaged and canoe runs despoiled. Finally, the island’s symbolic value will be gone.”<sup>28</sup>

Some accounts have criticized environmentalists for essentially abandoning the Nuu-chah-nulth after the injunction and turning their attention to battles elsewhere; such a generalization is not entirely accurate and requires a more nuanced explanation.<sup>29</sup> Local environmental organizations continued to work to prevent the island’s logging and coordinated with the Nuu-chah-nulth. For instance, the WCWC built a network of trails on Meares Island in order “to attract hikers and others to the area and gain public support for its campaign to halt logging.”<sup>30</sup> Such trails were, according to former Tla-o-qui-aht band chief Moses Martin, fully supported by the Nuu-chah-nulth. The WCWC also undertook a seven-month project with the Ahousaht to train twenty First Nations and non-Aboriginal youth in ecotourism.<sup>31</sup> Local environmental activists who supported the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht legal action also established the Meares Island Legal Fund to help offset expensive litigation costs; nonetheless, the brunt of these were born by the First Nations themselves. At times the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council even came close to withdrawing from their legal battle due to lack of funds.<sup>32</sup> Claim costs for the Tla-o-qui-aht



and Ahousaht bands, as of 1991 when the case returned to the courtroom in the hopes of making the injunction permanent, were reportedly \$1.5 million, and they were preparing to spend another \$1 million.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, once the injunction successfully halted logging and Meares Island was considered safe for Tofino residents, it appears that many in the community discarded their impromptu alliance. For instance, Tofino's Village Council opposed a 1988 Nuu-chah-nulth proposal to redesignate former residential school land on a small beach near Tofino as an Indian Reserve because non-Aboriginal residents felt a reserve near the town would scare tourists away. The Nuu-chah-nulth, in turn, organized a boycott of Tofino businesses.<sup>34</sup> Many in the Nuu-chah-nulth community, feeling betrayed, were thus wary of local non-Aboriginal interests and well aware of the possible limits of their support, and of environmentalist organizations' limitations, well in advance of the major protest events of 1993–1994.

As British Columbia's "war in the woods" became more caustic through the rest of the 1980s, then Premier William Vander Zalm, expressing shock at clearcut scars, set up a task force with representatives from industry, environmentalist organizations, government agencies, First Nations, and unions in 1989 to come to some sort of compromise. The task force proved ineffective, meeting for the last time in 1990 when it failed to come to an agreement, and fell apart in 1992. In April 1993, with newly elected Premier Mike Harcourt in power, the provincial government released its now infamous "Land Use Decision," without consulting First Nations, which put forward a plan to allow substantial clearcut logging in Clayoquot Sound. Thereafter, Clayoquot Sound would once again become a space of colonial encounters where thousands of environmental activists, representing myriad environmental organizations, converged to (re)establish relations with the local Indigenous population. Environmentalists knew that they needed to develop a plan that would legitimize their cause and to separate themselves from other colonial, non-local entities seeking to exploit this hinterland for their own purposes, as well as—for at least those familiar with the regional context—to escape years of animosity generated between the local settler-colonial population and the Nuu-chah-nulth. While environmentalist organizations are, of course, varied, in 1993 the organizations present at the protest ended up, to borrow from Pratt again, practising a form of "anti-conquest" whereby they

represented themselves as innocent witnesses of human and environmental injustices at the same time as they asserted their hegemonic view of how people should, and, equally importantly, should not, interact with the environment.

Part of this feigned innocence included environmental groups claiming to act on behalf of, and thus speak for, many others. Among these others were Aboriginal peoples writ large who were denied title to their traditional territories and politically and economically marginalized by industry and the state. Simultaneously, as during the 1980s, the WCWC and the FOCS, as well as other environmentalist organizations such as Greenpeace, strategically sought to link the resolution of their goals with those of First Nations; if their goals were the same, then environmentalists could speak and act on their behalf. Both these aspects are evident in a book of essays titled *Clayoquot & Dissent*. In its introduction, Berman, then an organizer for Greenpeace, wrote, “The first protests were the beginning of a growing relationship between First Nations and the environmental community. . . . We are at a point of consensus between the environmental and native communities—that clearcutting irreparably damages our ecological, social and cultural landscapes.”<sup>35</sup> In another essay provocatively titled, “Clayoquot: Recovering from Cultural Rape,” Loys Maignon argued that “environmentalists comprise a distinct group with cultural similarities to First Nations,” and, after pointing to some similarities in ideology and history which “ha[ve] led to common positions regarding environmental issues,” asserted, “These similarities also leave environmentalists open to the same system of societal abuses.”<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, Robert Kennedy Jr., of the American-run Natural Resources Defence Council, proclaimed, “In Clayoquot Sound the fight to save 1000 year old cedars and hemlocks intertwined with the Aboriginal peoples’ struggle to control traditional lands and their economic destiny.” The Clayoquot protestors’ greatest inspiration, he continued, “was the dissolution of ancient boundaries as the First Nations of Clayoquot Sound made partnerships with local and international environmentalists to defend age-old forests. . . . The power of their partnerships will not subside until the clear-cutting stops and the Native land rights are permanently ensured.”<sup>37</sup>

In order to further establish themselves as allies fighting for a common cause, environmentalists regularly emphasized Nuu-chah-nulth title over the Clayoquot area even as they also claimed possession of Clayoquot Sound for non-Aboriginal peoples. Environmentalist organizations, from the small-scale, including the FOCS and WCWC, to the larger, international ones, such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club, proclaimed Clayoquot Sound as a national—not just a local—treasure that all Canadians needed to protect and control. The Sierra Club and Greenpeace went even further, arguing that Clayoquot Sound, due to its ecological importance and aesthetic beauty, actually belonged to the world. Vicky Husband, representing the Sierra Club of Western Canada, stated that “Clayoquot Sound does not just belong to the Alberni and Clayoquot district anymore. It belongs to the world.”<sup>38</sup> As such, non-locals had a stake in what happened to *their* land and were thus entitled to determine how the land was used; environmentalists, conveniently, proclaimed themselves as the representatives of this national and international voice. Instead of being logged, they argued, Clayoquot Sound should become a protected area that relied on ecotourism for its economy. This would be best, they believed, for everybody involved, including the First Nations. Husband paternalistically remarked that only “limited logging by native bands” in the area was acceptable.<sup>39</sup> Along similar lines, Gordon Brent Ingram acknowledged that while environmentalists needed to provide “unconditional support” to the Nuu-chah-nulth, he wrote in the context of doing so to “counter the pressures and enticements of the logging companies” and to support the Nuu-chah-nulth’s environmental conservation activities.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the assumptions of environmentalists regarding Nuu-chah-nulth political and cultural desires came from the former’s often uncritical belief in, and reproduction of, the stereotype of the “Ecological Indian.” Environmentalist-authored literature, produced throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, equated Natives with nature, referring to both as “pre-historic” or “ancient” and in need of saving from extinction. An excellent example of such rhetoric is a WCWC publication titled *Clayoquot on the Wild Side*, written by Cameron Young, a journalist and environmental activist, and full of lavish, full-colour photographs taken by Adrian Dorst, a resident of Tofino. When venturing on the ocean, one section of the book romantically explains, one is “never alone. Paddling *like the wind* beside

[you] are the spirits of the Nuu-chah-nulth whalers, slim and sinewy men fired by a long-lost passion, powering their way through the unforgiving waters in exquisite canoes crafted from the trunks of centuries-old western red cedars.<sup>41</sup> The book reproduces colonial stereotypes of the “vanishing Indian” through its depiction of traditional—pristine, even—Aboriginal culture as being in its twilight, if not faded completely. When exploring an abandoned village, Young writes tragically,

The light is fading on this long summer day, and during that slow ebb into darkness, Adrian can faintly imagine the sounds of cedar canoes being hauled up on the beach, the chatter of fishermen unloading their halibut, and the strong smell of smoking salmon in the air. For a brief moment Adrian is able to conjure up these ghostly images, and the beach seems to come alive. But out at Pachena Point, evening sports fishermen have tired of riding the ocean swells and are racing back to Bamfield. The roar of their outboards drives the ghosts back into hiding.<sup>42</sup>

For Young, the Nuu-chah-nulth ghosts are literally fleeing modernity, fleeing contact, and, in essence, erased from the present. Out of sight, however, is the fact that such events as described above still occurred among the Nuu-chah-nulth, or that, until the collapse of the west coast fishery in the 1980s, Aboriginal peoples including the Nuu-chah-nulth were heavily engaged in the industry and often owned their own commercial fishing fleets. In a twisted, though certainly not intentional bit of irony, the only good Indigenous person, in this section of the book where the author seeks to resurrect pre-contact life, is a dead one. Not only did such rhetoric reproduce colonial categories of Indigeneity, but it also effectively created a *terra nullius* in Clayoquot Sound where environmentalists could stake their claims.<sup>43</sup>

In arguing these positions, environmentalists alerted the Nuu-chah-nulth to their intentions, and the latter perceived the limits of their supposedly solid support for First Nations land rights, sovereignty, and decolonization. Indeed, even Premier Mike Harcourt’s April 1993 Land Use Decision—the very decision that sparked the wide-scale protests—included

many concessions for environmentalists, such as protected areas, but few for First Nations. Chief Richard Lucas of Hesquiaht First Nation responded to the Land Use Decision by saying that environmentalists and loggers, though both unhappy with it, at least received some concessions, but for the Nuu-chah-nulth, “after parks, wilderness and logging areas had been designated, there was little of our traditional homeland [remaining].”<sup>44</sup> Two years later, George Watts continued his opposition to such park creation, arguing it was merely another land grab by the provincial government to keep such spaces off the table for treaty negotiations.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, environmentalists were upset only with the small amount and poor quality of land to be preserved.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the WCWC was simultaneously pressing the provincial government to preserve 30 to 40 percent of the land in British Columbia, including areas in Clayoquot Sound, in the form of parks and wilderness spaces at the same time that Nuu-chah-nulth council members were condemning state park creation as neocolonialism.<sup>47</sup> An environmentalist group called the UVic Temperate Rainforest Action Group criticized (in vain) Greenpeace, the FOCS, the WCWC, and the Sierra Club for ignoring the mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples when calling for the establishment of a park in Clayoquot Sound that would be run largely by, and for, non-Aboriginals.<sup>48</sup> Though one cannot forget that environmentalists established many long-term friendships and partnerships with the Nuu-chah-nulth, and that the environmental movement did not express a unified voice, all sides were working to meet their own agendas.<sup>49</sup>

The Nuu-chah-nulth, in turn, had plans of their own. While environmentalists argued that they supported Aboriginal rights without question but in reality sought an end to clearcut logging by any means, the Nuu-chah-nulth made it abundantly clear that they wanted control over their traditional territories and that part of this control included plans for industrial-scale logging. The Nuu-chah-nulth did not, however, reject environmentalist support out of hand. Aware of their allies’ economic and popular influence, the Nuu-chah-nulth were able to capitalize on environmentalist protests and presence to access, change, and even take control of some existing colonial structures, including those of the government, the logging industry, and environmentalist organizations.

Throughout the protests in 1993, Harcourt's New Democratic Party (NDP) government was reeling in response to the sustained and completely unexpected size and strength of the environmentalist campaign. While within British Columbia communities and individuals were divided over the issue, across Canada and abroad popular opinion tended to side with the environmentalists. Furthermore, the international community increasingly criticized British Columbia for its colonialist policies, and a number of European importers cancelled millions of dollars' worth of contracts for Clayoquot Sound wood products. The NDP leadership knew they had to act fast in order to quell the protests and, more importantly, halt the economic damage being done. Outright force using police to break up the protest—its first tactic—had failed despite the arrest of more than 800 activists, and protests were ongoing.<sup>50</sup> The government then turned to negotiation, and the Nuu-chah-nulth saw their opening. While they certainly appreciated environmentalist declarations of support for Aboriginal title and had worked with environmentalists on a number of projects such as trail building and ecotourism, the Nuu-chah-nulth also recognized the key position they held in sitting between warring parties. They were willing to negotiate with the government toward a middle ground, whereas environmentalists were far more uncompromising in their demands.

In October 1993, with environmentalist blockades still in place, the government's first concession came when it established the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound. The panel, which excluded government, industry, and environmentalist members, was mandated to combine First Nations' traditional knowledge with Western scientific practices in establishing "world class logging standards."<sup>51</sup> So while the Nuu-chah-nulth had benefited from their own and environmentalist pressure for the government to include Indigenous people in the ecological management of their traditional territories, it was the environmentalists who were subsequently excluded from the Nuu-chah-nulth's gain. While the Nuu-chah-nulth perceived this gain as a fracture in colonial control, environmentalists dismissed the panel's creation as a stalling tactic designed to "divide and conquer" supposedly staunch allies.

In some ways, environmentalists had a valid point. Logging in Clayoquot Sound was ongoing at this time, and the Scientific Panel had only an advisory capacity. However, the Nuu-chah-nulth did not trust the

government either and had over a century of experience dealing with a provincial government that continually broke its promises to First Nations, so they continued to maintain their strong links to the environmentalist movement. They also threatened to launch a court injunction that would halt logging in the region entirely if the government did not agree to more substantive measures. The NDP thus had little choice but to sign an Interim Measures Agreement (IMA) in December 1993, after more than a month of negotiations with the Nuu-chah-nulth, that secured the Nuu-chah-nulth a greater grip on both government and logging activity in the area until the Scientific Panel could complete its work. Among other measures, the IMA recognized Nuu-chah-nulth traditional governance structures and a government-to-government relationship between the Nuu-chah-nulth and the province. Most significantly, the agreement provided the Nuu-chah-nulth with, according to Tla-o-qui-aht Chief Francis Frank, a veto on logging operations, and logging was to continue at a reduced capacity and according to Nuu-chah-nulth standards.<sup>52</sup> When Premier Harcourt was quoted saying that the IMA merely provided the Nuu-chah-nulth with an advisory role, Frank threatened to call in his environmental allies, in particular Robert Kennedy Jr., for support.<sup>53</sup>

Threatened with significant opposition and more blockades, Harcourt was forced to bend. He agreed to support a Nuu-chah-nulth logging veto and then provided them with additional funding for both tourism and logging development. Prominent Nuu-chah-nulth council member Clifford Atleo hailed the agreement as “the beginning of change in terms of the management of resources in that it’s going to provide an opportunity for First Nations to have a say—something that we’ve aspired to for over 125 years.”<sup>54</sup> Based on extensive fieldwork in 1997 conducting interviews with Nuu-chah-nulth co-managers, leaders and community members, Tara C. Goetze found that the IMA was well received among the community, and she argued that the IMA gave the Nuu-chah-nulth “determinative authority *to make decisions* about resource use in Clayoquot Sound.”<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, most environmentalists were less than enthusiastic about the agreement and recognized that they were being pushed aside. The IMA provided for no input from any environmentalist organizations, though the Nuu-chah-nulth offered them a token advisory role on the management board, with no decision-making power.<sup>56</sup> Environmentalists had, as

one reporter wrote on the Agreement, “throughout the entire Clayoquot controversy . . . claimed to have the Natives on their side. [Natives] meanwhile, maintained they were on nobody’s side but their own.”<sup>57</sup> Some environmentalists decried the IMA as merely a stalling tactic while logging continued, and Ingram referred to it as a “pact of semi-colonization.”<sup>58</sup> All these criticisms effectively implied the Nuu-chah-nulth were merely being beguiled by a more politically savvy opponent and delegitimized the Nuu-chah-nulth’s decision to act on their own. Yet, the IMA symbolized much more than that; it was one of many steps the Nuu-chah-nulth would take to further entrench their authority within the province’s bureaucratic and legal structure. Additionally, it was more proof that the Nuu-chah-nulth would not be controlled by anyone else’s agenda or romantic stereotypes regarding how they should act.

Nowhere was this independence more apparent than when former Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council chairperson George Watts travelled to Europe with Premier Harcourt on a promotional tour for British Columbia’s logging industry and the Nuu-chah-nulth’s economic ties to it.<sup>59</sup> Though met by Greenpeace opponents at every stopping place on the ten-day tour, Watts, it was reported,

moved an audience of environmentalists and academics with an emotional speech, saying a boycott would cripple the already anaemic economies in Native communities. [Watts] told a packed university in Hamburg: “Most of our people get up in the morning and think about how they are going to be fed and clothed. They don’t have the luxury of sitting in some bloody office dreaming about what the environment should look like.”<sup>60</sup>

Watt’s defence of the government, the reporter continued, “appeared to sideswipe the environmentalists, who have traditionally viewed aboriginals as allies in their fight.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, while apparently most of the Nuu-chah-nulth never opposed logging outright, only their exclusion from it along with the practice of clearcutting, and Nuu-chah-nulth activists had avoided using uncomplicated assertions of being “Ecological Indians” throughout the campaign, environmentalists continued to be surprised



by this stance. At a Clayoquot benefit hosted by the Sierra Club at the University of Victoria, some Aboriginal leaders reportedly stunned many of the 800 people in attendance. Clifford Atleo, spokesman for Ahousaht, told the crowd, "We are not opposed to logging and we are not opposed to jobs." He continued that "Natives become annoyed when non-native environmental leaders make public statements such as 'not another tree will fall' in Clayoquot Sound."<sup>62</sup>

It does need to be recognized that the Nuu-chah-nulth, as with the environmentalist community, was not wholly united, and non-Aboriginal environmentalists no doubt appraised Nuu-chah-nulth culture and politics in the context of many Nuu-chah-nulth who simultaneously identified as environmentalists and campaigned alongside non-Aboriginal environmentalist organizations. Joe Martin (Tla-o-qui-aht) undertook a six-week tour of Europe with environmentalists to call for a boycott of logging products from Clayoquot Sound.<sup>63</sup> Annie George, a Kwagiulth artist who married into an Ahousaht chiefly family, had to defend her active support of the environmentalists against other Nuu-chah-nulth who wanted group cohesion.<sup>64</sup> Willie Sport, a seventy-year-old Ohiat Band member and activist, was recorded telling environmentalists, "I am proud of you, proud of what you are doing. I look at what you are doing compared to members of my tribe and other tribes who are so afraid to speak out because they fear it will affect their native land claims. . . . The protest movement has had an effect. . . . The land claims are keeping many of my people from speaking out about forest practices. It's sad, but true."<sup>65</sup> While Sport's observation may have been correct and many Nuu-chah-nulth were cognizant of ongoing litigation and land claim negotiations, the Nuu-chah-nulth's strategic positioning did lead to political gain.

In addition to moving into government circles, the Nuu-chah-nulth also entered into other structures from which they had been largely excluded. For example, the BC Federation of Labour, largely composed of loggers and positioned against both First Nations and environmentalists, saw the opening for a working relationship with the Nuu-chah-nulth and for economic stability in the region. They pledged support for the Clayoquot First Nations' treaty process and promised to integrate them into the logging economy.<sup>66</sup> Soon thereafter, various bands within the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council began negotiating with logging companies

themselves. The Ahousaht, for example, created a joint-venture company with MacMillan Bloedel called Isaak Forest Resources Ltd. on terms that the Ahousaht felt were favourable to them: they owned 51 percent of the company and received a timber sale licence as well as infrastructural and institutional assistance for entering into the logging business.<sup>67</sup> Environmentalists, mostly unaware of these negotiations until they were released to the press, were angered that their “allies” were working with the “enemy,” but they really could not do anything to prevent these kinds of negotiations taking place.<sup>68</sup> While most environmental organizations endorsed the deal, the FOCS refused to endorse anything that allowed for old-growth forests to be logged.<sup>69</sup>

Nonetheless, First Nations of the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council realized that they could, even acting independently of environmentalists and often counter to their goals, still threaten the government with environmentalist support. Having forged an alliance with the influential Natural Resources Defence Council and Robert Kennedy Jr., for example, the Nuuchahnulth continued to use its and his influence. They frequently invited Kennedy Jr. to visit Clayoquot Sound—something that he and the Nuuchahnulth knew kept the pressure on Harcourt because of Kennedy’s vocal criticism of British Columbia’s logging practices along with the legal advice his association provided to the Nuuchahnulth in their land and treaty claims.<sup>70</sup> In another instance, Larry Baird of the Ucluelet band threatened the government that should anything happen to derail the treaty negotiation process, “We will go to the markets of the world and tell them what you are doing. We are well connected . . . and we will use these relationships to harm this province if you are going to harm us. . . . I have some influential friends who would dearly love to tackle you head on.”<sup>71</sup> The Huu-ay-aht First Nation at Bamfield threatened to create another “Clayoquot Sound” unless the provincial government and the forest industry negotiated terms with them.<sup>72</sup> This strategy kept both the government and environmentalists in check. The Nuuchahnulth used these groups’ respective structural constraints—for the government, its legally binding agreements and its dependence on a stable political situation within the forest industry from which it received a significant portion of its operating budget and, for environmentalists, their position of



FIGURE 8.1: Adrian Raeside's editorial cartoons, here and in Figure 8.2, highlight the hypocrisy of environmental activists proclaiming support for First Nations while simultaneously attempting to control their actions with respect to resource use. *Victoria Times Colonist*, September 10, 2006.

anti-conquest via pledges to support Aboriginal rights and land management while decrying colonialism—to their advantage.

All groups in Clayoquot Sound were involved in competing strategies of self-representation for political manoeuvring. For environmentalists, this meant that they had to come up with a strategy that would give them the authority to stop clearcut logging, but to do so without recolonizing the Nuuchahnulth's space. In some ways, they were quite successful. Environmentalists helped to bring issues of colonial injustice to the forefront of the public's attention in British Columbia, in Canada, and internationally; the Nuuchahnulth's plight was suddenly thrust onto the world stage and logging operations did decline. The Nuuchahnulth, who have always proclaimed their hereditary right to manage the resources

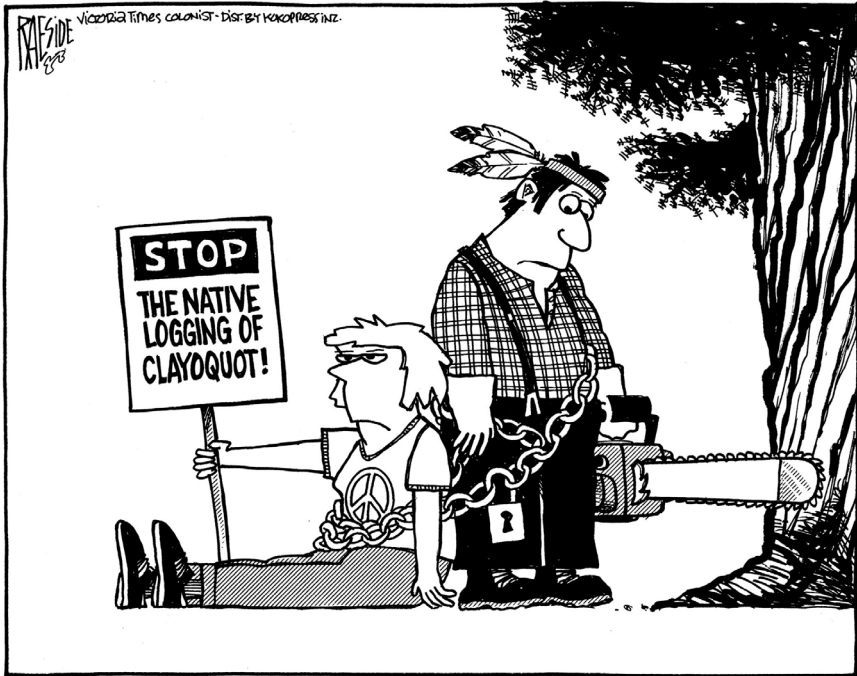


FIGURE 8.2: Adrian Raeside's editorial cartoon. *Victoria Times Colonist*, February 3, 2010.

in their traditional territory, seized the opportunity to draw power from the environmentalist organizations' support while distancing themselves enough from environmentalists that the provincial government and the logging industry considered the Nuu-chah-nulth as the only respite from the environmentalists' pressure. The Nuu-chah-nulth were thus able to break, in significant ways, into government and industry structures that had for so long kept them out.

Environmentalists, in turn, received much widespread support, but they also severely restricted themselves in the extent to which they could interfere with Nuu-chah-nulth decisions without appearing as hypocrites. In fact, the Nuu-chah-nulth even determined the direction of environmentalist actions in many ways. For example, the WCWC only

conducted activities that were pre-approved by the local Tla-o-qui-aht. The Nuu-chah-nulth had also publicly denounced Paul Watson, former Greenpeace member and founder of the confrontational conservation organization the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, for advocating a tree-spiking strategy.<sup>73</sup> They banned Greenpeace from their territory and shut down a Greenpeace and FOCS blockade that had been erected without Nuu-chah-nulth permission.<sup>74</sup> Overall, Berman would later recount of the protests that environmentalists were continually caught off guard by Nuu-chah-nulth actions that defied the former's expectations of the latter.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, environmentalist groups who attempted any actions on their own without consulting with, and getting approval from, the Nuu-cha-nulth were quickly forced to withdraw when the Nuu-chah-nulth complained or be seen as hypocrites and no different than other colonial actors. Indeed, when the FOCS, among other environmentalists, opposed Nuu-chah-nulth logging in 1996, 2006, and 2010, they faced just such criticism.<sup>76</sup> (See Figures 8.1 and 8.2.)

Environmentalists, striving to be the principal authority on human-nature interactions and who had largely directed the momentum of the protest campaign during the summer of 1993, arguably ended up being furthest away from the levers of power. Though they always had popular support, they ended up losing control where they wanted it the most: official government policy and legal decision-making circles, spaces the Nuu-cha-nulth increasingly occupied. Environmentalists could only, if they wanted to be effective and considered legitimate, offer support to the Nuu-cha-nulth and take what advisory roles the Nuu-chah-nulth offered them. Ultimately, this case study provides an important instance of Indigenous peoples using all the tools at their disposal, including the support of small green organizations with whom they are often in regular contact, to direct their own history as well as that of settler-colonists.

## Notes

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- 2 Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 8.
- 3 Margaret Horsfield and Ian Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound: A History* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2014).
- 4 Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest*, 6–8, 27, 81, 107.
- 5 Niamh Moore in *The Changing Nature of Eco/Feminism: Telling Stories from Clayoquot Sound* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 18–19.
- 6 See, for examples: Roger Hayter, “The War in the Woods’: Post-Fordist Restructuring, Globalization, and the Contested Remapping of British Columbia’s Forest Economy,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 3 (2003): 711–12; Karena Shaw, “Encountering Clayoquot, Reading the Political,” in *A Political Space: Reading the Global through Clayoquot Sound*, ed. Warren Magnusson and Karena Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 25–66; Alx Dark, “Public Sphere Politics and Community Conflict over the Environment and Native Land Rights in Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia,” (PhD diss., New York University, 1998), 137; Paul Drissen, *Eco-Imperialism: Green Power, Black Death* (Bellevue, WA: Free Enterprise Press, 2003); Ariffin Yohan, “On the Scope and Limits of Green Imperialism,” *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 22, no. 4 (2010): 373–81; and Mark Dowie, *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).
- 7 Tzeporah Berman, *This Crazy Time: Living Our Environmental Challenge* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2011), 94. Much work remains to be done examining the ongoing, often conflictual history of relationships between Greenpeace and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. This chapter only scratches the surface, and it is beyond the scope of Zelko’s chapter (this volume). For further reading see: Frank Zelko, “Scaling Greenpeace: From Local Activism to Global Governance,” *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 2 (2017): 318–42; David Rossiter, “The Nature of Protest: Constructing the Spaces of British Columbia’s Rainforests,” *Cultural Geographies* 11 (2004): 139–64; John-Henry Harter, “Environmental Justice for Whom? Class, New Social Movements, and the Environment: A Case Study of Greenpeace Canada, 1971–2000,” *Labour / Le Travail* 53 (2004): 83–119; Aaju Peter et al., “The Seal: An Integral Part of Our Culture,” *Études/Inuit/Studies* 26, no. 1 (2002): 167–74; George Wentzel, “‘I Was Once Independent’: The Southern Seal Protest and Inuit,” *Anthropologica* 29, no. 2 (1987): 195–201.
- 8 Tara C. Goetze, “Empowered Co-Management: Towards Power-Sharing and Indigenous Rights in Clayoquot Sound, BC,” *Anthropologica* 47, no. 2 (2005): 250.

- 9 Umeek (E. Richard Atleo) provides a detailed explanation of Nuu-chah-nulth culture and history in *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).
- 10 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.
- 11 Claudia Noezke, *Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resources in Canada* (Concord, ON: Captus Press, 1994), 98.
- 12 Noezke, *Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resources in Canada*, 249.
- 13 George, *Big Trees Not Big Stumps*, 1, 19.
- 14 Dimitri Portier, "The Meares Island Case: Nuu-chah-nulth vs. the Logging Industry," *Native American Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 31.
- 15 Paul George, Western Canadian Wilderness Committee letter to editor, *Sunshine Coast News*, 7 July 1985, 15.
- 16 "Community fights plans for logging on B.C. island," *Globe and Mail*, 21 November 1984, N4.
- 17 Ian Mulgrew, "A Nice Place to Visit—and Hard to Leave," *Globe and Mail*, 5 May 1982, 8.
- 18 Western Canadian Wilderness Committee, *Meares Island News*, Summer 1985.
- 19 "Workers' Appeal on Plywood Plant Fails," *Globe and Mail*, 26 April 1984, BC1.
- 20 Ian Mulgrew, "A Long Battle to Avoid Scars," *Globe and Mail*, 8 August 1984, 11.
- 21 "Logging Firm Gets Injunction Against Meares Protesters," *Globe and Mail*, 4 December 1984, 3. Tree spiking refers to the act of inserting a metal rod, nail, or similar material into a tree trunk, where it is difficult to see, rendering the tree potentially dangerous to cut or process. For sources on Meares Island tree spiking, see, for example, Mike Roselle, "Meares Island: Canada's Old Growth Struggle," *Earth First! Journal* 5, no. 3 (2 February 1985). Paul Watson claims to have invented tree spiking; though this is not possible, he certainly claims to have spiked the trees on Meares. For more reliable sources, see Rik Scarce, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2006), 75; and Dave Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1991), 33, 133. For a good definition of tree spiking, see Dave Foreman and Bill Haywood, eds., *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*, 3rd ed. (Chico, CA: Abbzug Press, 2002).
- 22 Horsfield and Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound*, 503.
- 23 Jeanette C. Mills describes the work of Joe David and other Nuu-chah-nulth artists who supported the Meares Island campaign in "The Meares Island Controversy and Joe David: Art in Support of a Cause," *American Indian Art Magazine* 14, no. 4 (1989): 60–69.
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- 26 Harris, “A Court Between,” 148.
- 27 “Appeal Court Prohibits Meares Island Logging,” *Globe and Mail*, 28 March 1985, 1–2.
- 28 Justice Seaton, cited in Harris, “A Court Between,” 149.
- 29 Claudia Noezke identifies, and repeats, these accounts in *Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resources in Canada*, 101.
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- 32 “Legal Costs Imperil Meares Island Case,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 February 1986, 5. See also Shaw, “Encountering Clayoquot, Reading the Political,” 32; and Horsfield and Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound: A History*, 502–5.
- 33 “Natives Spending Millions to Defend Meares Island Claim,” *Vancouver Sun*, 15 August 1991, A13; and Marc Edge, “Fight for Meares Trees Resumes,” *Vancouver Province*, 1 October 1991, A12.
- 34 Shaw, “Encountering Clayoquot, Reading the Political,” 30; and Horsfield and Kennedy, *Tofino and Clayoquot Sound*, 512.
- 35 Berman, “Takin’ it Back,” in Berman et al., *Clayoquot and Dissent*, 3.
- 36 Loys Maignon, “Clayoquot: Recovering from Cultural Rape,” in Berman et al., *Clayoquot and Dissent*, 164–65.
- 37 Robert Kennedy Jr., “Foreword,” in MacIsaac and Champagne, *Clayoquot Mass Trials*, ix.
- 38 John Hogbin and Richard Watts, “Persistent Furor Over Tree-Cutting in Clayoquot Surprises All Sides,” *Victoria Times Colonist*, 4 October 1993.
- 39 Hogbin and Watts, “Persistent Furor.”
- 40 Gordon Brent Ingram, “The Ecology of a Conflict,” in Berman et al., *Clayoquot and Dissent*, 58–59.
- 41 Adrian Dorst and Cameron Young, *Clayoquot: On the Wild Side* (Vancouver: Western Canadian Wilderness Committee, 1990), 20.
- 42 Dorst and Young, *Clayoquot*, 42.
- 43 This discursive trope was certainly not unique to the WCWC publication, nor to others produced surrounding Clayoquot Sound. For instance, David A. Rossiter describes how, in environmentalist publications meant to protect nature on Haida Gwaii in the early 1990s, “the dominant representation throughout the book of a pristine natural environment under threat has the effect of marginalizing the importance of Haida land claims; within the cultural politics of nature, the Haida voice was being pushed aside by the loud and clear discourse of ecology and romantic appeals to a pristine, non-human natural world.” See Rossiter, “The Nature of a Blockade: Environmental Politics and the Haida Action on Lyell Island, British Columbia,” in *Blockades or Breakthroughs*:



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- 45 Dirk Meissner, "Parks a Ploy, Natives Say—Govt Rushing to Grab what is Left," *Victoria Times Colonist*, 28 April 1995.
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- 59 Braun, *Intemperate Rainforest*, 107.
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- 61 Kennedy, "Harcourt."
- 62 Adrian Chamberlain, "Native's Pro-logging Stance Startles some in UVic Crowd," *Victoria Times Colonist*, 5 November 1993.
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- 65 Bill Smith, "Ohiat Native Supports Protestors," *Victoria Times Colonist*, 6 August 1994.
- 66 Gerald Young, "Natives Hail Clayoquot Backing," *Victoria Times Colonist*, 2 December 1993.
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