



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

DEIDRE ANN CULLON

MA (University of Victoria, 1995)

BA (University of Victoria, 1993)

“Dancing Salmon: Human-fish Relationships on the Northwest Coast”

Department of Anthropology

November 1, 2017

11:30 A.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B017

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Brian Thom, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Ann Stahl, Department of Anthropology, UVic (Co-Supervisor)

Dr. John Lutz, Department of History, UVic (Non-Unit Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Mario Blaser, Department of Geography, Memorial University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. John Dower, School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, UVic

Abstract

With its myriad of relationships, my study considers the Laich-Kwil-Tach enlivened world in which multiple beings bring meaning and understanding to life. Through exploration of Laich-Kwil-Tach ontology I engage with the theoretical concepts of animism, historical ecology and political ecology, in what I call relational ecology. Here, I examine the divide between the relational world and what Western ontology considers a natural resource; fish. Through an analysis of ethnographic texts I work to elucidate the 19th-century human-fish relationship and through collaboration with Laich-Kwil-Tach Elders, based on Vancouver Island on the Northwest Coast of North America, I seek to understand how the 19th-century enlivened world informs 21st-century Laich-Kwil-Tach ontology. In this ethnographic and ethnohistorical account of the relationship between Laich-Kwil-Tach people and fish I grapple with the question of how, within a framework of ontological difference, we can better understand foundations of Indigenous rights and find ways to respect and give agency to multiple forms of knowledge in practice. In the spirit of reconciliation, decolonization and a renewed understanding of ontological multiplicity we are challenged to create analytical frameworks that include both human and nonhuman interests and relationships. Doing so requires engagement with any number of ontological propositions and it requires a confrontation with hegemonic ontological assumptions inherent in the Western scientific, bureaucratic and legal paradigm. By accepting western-based science as one among many ways of producing knowledge, space is made for other forms of knowledge. In the process we are better able to respect Indigenous land and marine tenure systems, as well as the Indigenous right to maintain a long-standing and on-going relationship with other beings and all that this entails.