

Lyell Island (Athlii Gwaii) Case Study: Social Innovation by the Haida Nation [Abstract]

Suzanne von der Porten

The logging blockade on Lyell Island in British Columbia, Canada in 1985, together with the events surrounding it, was an important indigenous-led social innovation by the Haida Nation. The social innovation itself was three-fold: (1) it changed the way indigenous nations in Canada reasserted themselves as self-determining; (2) for the Haida Nation to assert their Aboriginal rights and title to the land and resources of Haida Gwaii was an important step, the first of many; and (3) it changed the way environmental campaigns were conducted, both in Canada and internationally.

In the 1980s relations between indigenous nations and the British Columbian and Canadian governments were embedded in an enduring, patriarchal-colonial sociopolitical and legal context. The Haida Nation's assertion of land rights and title was an initiative that changed the basic routines, authority flows and beliefs of the social system in British Columbia and Canada. The message that the Haida Nation's traditional territory was not to be exploited in a way that was incongruent with their visions of stewardship of their land had broad and lasting impact that clearly changed a larger institutional and sociopolitical context. The Haida not only created a precedent, but also a catalyst for action with regards to co-management, environmental advocacy, indigenous governance and Aboriginal rights.

Key Words: Indigenous; social innovation; First Nations; emergence; self-organization; Lyell Island; Aboriginal rights; Haida.

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