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Developing Participation and Understanding Through Community Engagement

Engaging with the Kitsumkalum Land Code Policy

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Master thesis in Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern and Indigenous Areas
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Abstract

Kitsumkalum Nation is an Indigenous community located in Northwest British Columbia, Canada. They are working to redefine their relationship with the Canadian Government by pursuing a major policy change through Land Code. Kitsumkalum Nation realized that they needed to undertake community engagement strategies about the proposed Land Code policy change, with the goals of increasing community awareness of this complex technical issue and securing First Nations' input into the decision-making process. This research, designed to contribute to the scholarly literature on community engagement processes, was based on the expressed desire of the Kitsumkalum Nation to determine the best way to communicate with community members. After review of the options, the Nation decided to create a Land Code video aiming to improve communications and community engagement around their proposed Land Code policy change.

Frustrated with Canada's colonial past and the resulting governance system imposed upon them, Kitsumkalum Nation is seeking to gain decision making authority over their Reserve Lands through Land Code. After several meetings with Kitsumkalum Nation staff, I conducted a literature review on community engagement. As a result of my preliminary research on this topic and extensive consultations with community leaders, the Kitsumkalum Nation decided to experiment with video communications as a method to share information more efficiently and to engage the community in discussions and decision making. Typical methods of communicating information to Kitsumkalum Band members, such as public meetings, have not met the Nation's needs or expectations. They hoped that the shortcomings in earlier communications methods may be overcome in part through the use of video communications as a community engagement tool.

At their request and based on my research and discussions with the community, I worked with the Nation to produce a Land Code video that would address the limitations facing community engagement brought forward by the literature. The limitations included social barriers, institutional failures, decentralization, power differentials and delocalization. Once completed, the video became the center piece for Kitsumkalum Nations community outreach efforts. The video subsequently played a major role in First Nations education on the topic. It was uploaded to Kitsumkalum's Facebook page and YouTube channel in order to make information regarding Land Code more accessible to band members. The proposed Land

Code policy was ratified on Dec 6, 2019, increasing Kitsumkalum Nations decision-making authority over their Reserve Land (Kitsumkalum, 2019). The communications strategy involving the Land Code video was seen by Kitsumkalum Nation as an effective means to better inform and engage the community in discussions about their proposed Land Code Policy change.

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1 Introduction

Indigenous communities around the world face a steady stream of momentous decisions. They have to decide whether to start a court case, accept a settlement proposal, agree to a self-government treaty, sign a modern treaty or accept a formal proposal from a resource company to develop a project on Indigenous land. All of these decisions require input from the community and can place high pressure on the Nation's capacity to manage themselves while adequately informing and engaging their members. Indigenous communities deserve to have a voice and in Canada, they are demanding to be heard. As they approach each decision, key questions come forward: how will final decisions be made and how will the Indigenous government inform its members about plans and options? This thesis focuses on the last element: Indigenous community decision-making and the best means of educating community members on crucial local governance decisions.

More and more, Indigenous communities are playing active roles in Canada's resource economy and political processes. Coates, Holroyd & Leader (2014) argue that Indigenous engagement and the inclusion of Indigenous values are integral in the development of more sustainable economic and political models in Canada. As doors open up for the inclusion of Indigenous communities in Canadian processes, Nations must decide how best to educate their members and secure their participation in formal decision-making processes.

Kitsumkalum Nation (Kitsumkalum) is an Indigenous community located approximately 5 km West of the City of Terrace, British Columbia, Canada. In September, 2016, Kitsumkalum Nation began the process of Land Code development in order to establish themselves as the governance authority over their own reserve lands, replacing related sections of the Indian Act (Kitsumkalum, 2019). The Nation believes that the proposed Land Code policy change would benefit their community. For Land Code to come into effect, the community of Kitsumkalum needed to become informed about the implications of adopting the new policy and they had to participate in the Kitsumkalum First Nations Land Code Ratification Vote planned for Dec 6, 2019. The Nation expressed the view that they had an immediate need to expand communications and community engagement methods for informing their community about the proposed policy change.

As part of the program requirements for the GENI program, it was decided that I would help Kitsumkalum First Nation with a project of importance to them, in keeping with the principles and aspirations of community-based research. The Nation decided that it would be most helpful for their community if I spent my time researching and applying my skillsets exploring ways to better inform and engage their community over their proposed policy change. As an initial step towards helping increase community engagement and awareness around what Land Code would mean for the community members of Kitsumkalum Nation, I was invited to sit down with Land Code Coordinator, Mag de Grace, to discuss communications options for their proposed Land Code policy change. We discussed the urgent need to encourage band members to:

- a. learn more about how Land Code could affect their community, and;
- b. participate in the Kitsumkalum First Nations Land Code Ratification Vote.

Following initial meetings with Kitsumkalum, I conducted an extensive literature review on community engagement to better understand the most appropriate context and best practices for moving forward with communications initiatives. The literature review on ‘community engagement,’ looked specifically for scholarly works that identified both the barriers facing community organizations seeking to educate and improve participation by community members in local decision-making. My particular interest was encouraging participation in community votes, with a priority for identifying best practices and assessments of innovative approaches. This literature review revealed numerous limitations facing community engagement including: social barriers (Head, 2007; Israel et al., 1998), institutional failures (Nabatchi, 2012; Love & Tilly, 2014; Christens, 2012; Head, 2007); power differentials (Christens, 2012; Head, 2007); delocalization (Ojha et al., 2016) and; ambiguity (Chamorro-Koc & Caldwell, 2018; Johnston, et al, 2018; Aiyer, et al., 2015), among other themes.

Furthermore, the examination of scholarly work revealed considerable divergence of basic definitions, including the core issue of “community engagement.” To demonstrate the divergence of thought on this question, I reviewed definitions of community engagement and related terms by various scholars (presented in Table 1 below).

Table 1. Defining Community Engagement

Term	Definition by scholar(s)
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A group of actors that, while not necessarily sharing a common geographic space, act together for some common goals.” - (Ojha, Ford, Keenan, Race, Vega, Baral, Sapkota, 2016, pp. 275)
Local Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “group(s) of people sharing a common geographic space and having common goals around the management of natural resources.” - (Ojha, et al., 2016, pp. 275)
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Empowerment is thought to be an active, participatory process through which individuals, organizations, and communities maximize control of themselves and of their environments, while simultaneously strengthening both individual and community efficacy.” - (Aiyer, et al., 2015, pp. 138) • “a group-based, participatory, developmental process through which marginalized or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization” - (Maton, 2008, pp. 5). • “community empowerment refers to the readiness, willingness, and capacity of a community to take the social actions necessary to get things done for the collective good” - (Aiyer, et al., 2015, pp. 142).
Community Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “community empowerment refers to the readiness, willingness, and capacity of a community to take the social actions necessary to get things done for the collective good.” – (Aiyer et al. 2015, pp. 142)
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Engagement is defined as a dynamic multidimensional relational concept featuring psychological and behavioral attributes of connection, interaction, participation, and involvement, designed to achieve or elicit and outcome at

	individual, organization, or social levels.” – (Johnston, 2018, pp. 19)
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Community Engagement is defined as a relational process that facilitates understandings and evaluation, involvement, exchange of information and opinions, about a concept, issue or project, with the aim to build social capital and enhance social outcomes through decision making.” – (Johnston, et al., pp. 173) • “a participatory process that is led with a bottom-up approach and that is distinguished by the sharing of knowledge as an indispensable component for community participation in social innovation projects.” – (Chamorro-Koc & Caldwell, 2018, pp. 301)
Social-Level Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Social-level engagement is defined as a collective state of engagement that can be represented in behavioral forms (collective action, group participation), cognitive (shared knowledge), and affective forms (orientation, intention, and experience) and is an outcome of a dynamic socially situated system.” – (Johnston, 2018, pp. 26)
Authentic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Authentic engagement is founded on virtues of trust, transparency, power sharing, and communication reciprocity, and addresses inequities of power in organization-stakeholder relationships.” – (Johnston, 2018, pp. 27)
Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Social capital represents the social resources and trust within a community related to the quality of their interpersonal relationships, the institutional linkages that foster social organization, and the investment people have to help one another in times of need.” (Aiyer, Zimmerman, Morrel-Samuels, Reischl, 2015, pp. 141). • “Social capital (SC) is generally defined and measured at the interpersonal, community, institutional, or societal levels in terms of networks (bridging) and norms of reciprocity and trust (bonding) within those networks. SC should be analyzed in a

	<p>multi-level ecological framework in terms of both individual psychological and behavioral conceptions (sense of community, collective efficacy—or empowerment, neighboring, and citizen participation) and institutional and community network-level conceptions.” (Perkins, Hughey, Speer, 2002, pp. 33)</p>
Social Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Social cohesion refers to the presence of strong social bonds among neighborhood residents and additionally represents interpersonal connectedness, sense of community, mutual moral support, and the sharing of resources” (Aiyer et al. 2015, pp. 140)
Deliberative Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>deliberative civic engagement</i> denotes processes that enable citizens, civic leaders, and government officials to come together in public spaces where they can engage in constructive, informed, and decisive dialogue about important public issues.” - (Nabatchi, 2012, pp. 2).
Community Engaged Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Community-engaged research (CER) has emerged as an evidence-based approach to conducting research that uses community–academic partnerships to better address the complex issues that affect the health of marginalized populations” – (Goodman, Thompson, Johnson, Gennarelli, Drake, Bajwa, Witherspoon, Bowen, 2017, pp. 18).

This table sifted through the literature to more clearly define community engagement, related, and often interchangeable terms within the context of this study. In recognition of the limitations facing community engagement to this point, my research focused on matching community needs with international best practices, and emerging technologies, with the goal of helping the community achieve their objectives. This led, through the processes described below, to the exploration of video communications as an innovative means of improving community engagement.

1.1 Problem Definition

This research project started by defining the core problems and the issues at hand. Kitsumkalum was seeking to discover new methods of communicating information to band

members regarding the proposed Land Code policy change. The Nation was looking for new measures to supplement community meetings, the centuries-old First Nations decision-making system. Community meetings have been the typical method of communications for information sharing regarding Land Code. However, as a communications tool, public meetings face much criticism (Boholm, 2008). In the case of Kitsumkalum Nation, of the 722 band members, the majority live off reserve lands (266 on-reserve vs 466 off-reserve) (Kitsumkalum, 2020). This geographical separation, makes it much more difficult to coordinate and facilitate community meetings that engage off-reserve band members. Furthermore, due to life's day to day demands, not everyone may be able to attend public meetings. In addition, if a meeting needs to be cancelled then sharing information becomes more difficult. Finally, technology savvy youth may not find a public meeting about issues like the Land Code of peak interest. However, they may be drawn to the information if it was presented through a different, more modern medium. By taking the key messages surrounding the Land Code, bundling it into a video and then posting it online, the information is available to people at their convenience.

As a professional in the media arts, I have seen first-hand how the process of collaborating and sharing information through stories can inform individuals and communities while sparking deeper more constructive conversations. The time required to develop and share information through video on an online platform allows the creators to polish the messaging before sharing it. In addition, video communications can be used to bring diverse interests together to collectively address issues or concerns, such as matters of policy and governance.

Creating a video can also be an inclusive process allowing for diverse expression within a community. Where division exists in a community over a specific topic, conflict and emotion can often serve to prevent constructive conversation. Through video communications, parties with diverging positions and opinions on a matter can express their concerns in a non-threatening, conflict-free environment. This, at the very least, allows both sides of the story to be told and shared. Once digitized, video can be shared with individuals or communities with access to basic computer technology. This is particularly useful in the case of sharing information about issues like the Land Code with Kitsumkalum band members as not all members live in the local community and not all members have the time or interest to attend public meetings. But still members may seek to learn more about the Land Code process and its implications. In consideration of the problems outlined above, this research explores

additional communications options for Kitsumkalum Nation to inform and engage their band members over their proposed policy change.

1.2 Key Research Objectives

Upon the request of Kitsumkalum Nation I conducted research to:

1. Assess major limitations to community engagement revealed by the literature.
2. Explore video communications as a tool for community engagement over the Kitsumkalum Nations' proposed Land Code Policy change.

After several meetings with Kitsumkalum Nation discussing community needs, the impending vote about the Land Code and the search for improved communications methods, we agreed that I would conduct a literature review on community engagement, looking for specific limitations of public engagement techniques. Upon identifying these limitations through the research, the literature review was extended to explore digital storytelling as a form of video communications, with the expectation that it might address many of these limitations. I agreed to volunteer my time to create a video for Kitsumkalum as part of my research to help the community share information about the proposed Land Code policy change. The video was created at the request of the Nation. The project served as a case study by which video communications were applied as a tool for community engagement in formulating First Nations policy.

While developing, shooting and editing the video used in this research, I worked closely with my community supervisor, Heather Bohn and Mag de Grace. Mag is responsible for carrying out the process of working towards Land Code for Kitsumkalum Nation and Heather played an active role in coordinating video interviews with select Land Code Committee Members. Once complete, the video was given to Heather, who posted it to the Kitsumkalum YouTube channel and the Kitsumkalum Facebook page. By making this video accessible online, Kitsumkalum opted to share their Land Code story with community members as well as with a broader audience. To measure the extent to which this video helped share information, basic analytical data was collected from both online platforms, as well as from the Kitsumkalum website. The research process, however, started with an examination of scholarly work on community engagement. The following research will explore the limitations facing community engagement revealed by the literature, then assess the efforts of Kitsumkalum

Nation to address these limitations by using video as part of their Land Code communications strategy.

2 Literature Review - Community Engagement

Community engagement is driven by either local actors or non-local actors (see Figure 1). When propelled by local drivers, community engagement strives for unity, local empowerment, cooperation, healthy relationships and shared vision among local community members, who through collective action can increase the local social capital, sense of community, political voice and economic development for the community (Head, 2007; Ojha, et al., 2016; Maton, 2008). As seen in Figure 1, the process by which the Land Code Video was created places it on the side of local drivers, as it was driven by the community of Kitsumkalum for the community of Kitsumkalum. The idea to create a video came from the community, as did the narrative. My role in the process was to provide the tools and skill set necessary for the video production process while being sensitive and informed of the community’s history and background. The end goal was to engage the community of Kitsumkalum on the issue of the proposed Land Code policy change.



Figure 1. Tug of war: contexts of community engagement based on local vs non-local drivers.

2.1 Defining Community Engagement

Many scholars recognize that the literature around community engagement is saturated with a collection of loosely used terminology across many disciplines and that clearly defined consensus regarding the meanings, contexts for usage and applicability does not exist (Chamorro-Koc & Caldwell, 2018; Johnston, et al, 2018; Nabatchi, 2012; Aiyer, et al., 2015; Ojha, et al., 2016). In light of this, it is further recognized that in order to advance the study, scholars should strive to establish more careful use and consensus around the terms,

cautioning that a failure to do so will result in perpetual ambiguity at the detriment to the discourse (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Nabatchi (2012) describes deliberative engagement “as if the puzzle pieces have been dumped and scattered on a table, with the box lid showing the picture thrown away.” (pp.2-3). Some of the terms often referred to when discussing various forms of community engagement include: community, local-community, empowerment, community empowerment, engagement, community engagement, social-level engagement, authentic engagement, social capital, social cohesion, deliberative civic engagement, and community engaged research, among others (see Table 1).

In recognition of the ambiguity that exists with regards to a clear and agreed upon definition of community engagement, it is important to select a definition that suits the goal of this study. To best support the direction of this research, when referring to community engagement within the context of this study it will be as defined by Chamorro-Koc & Caldwell, (2018) as: “a participatory process that is led with a bottom-up approach and that is distinguished by the sharing of knowledge as an indispensable component for community participation in social innovation projects.” (pp. 301). This definition of community engagement is to a great extent exactly what Kitsumkalum Nation aimed to achieve by developing and placing the Land Code video as the center piece of their communications strategy for the proposed Land Code policy change.

2.2 Social barriers

Head (2007), recognizes that “community engagement is supposed to solve community problems” (pp. 447). However, in recognition of the inequalities and diversity that exist within a community, he suggests that it is unrealistic to expect equal participation, capacity and representation for participation in new governance models given all sectors of organized and unorganized interests. In further recognition of the diverse challenges facing community engagement, Israel et al., (1998) point out issues related to representation, as in “Who represents the community and how is it defined?” (pp. 185). The limitations to community engagement that exist within the community itself as identified by Israel et al., (1998) and Head (2007) may serve to upset social capital and cohesion within the community as well as create frustration and confusion for those seeking to consult with the community. An example of this that has taken place in British Columbia, Canada, is where you have a Nation with multiple governing authorities such as an elected chief and band council as well as various

hereditary chiefs. Both and all parties may demand consultation from industry and the Government of Canada over a proposed resource development project but may take different positions. This disagreement can create divides in the community and put question to who is the rightful governing authority within the Nation (Hereditary vs Elected). The most recent example of such a disagreement to take place in British Columbia, Canada involves the Wet'suwet'en Nation and their divided response to LNG Canada's plan for a natural gas pipeline and an LNG Canada processing plant located near Kitimat, British Columbia, an hour away from Kitsumkalum.

As he explored some of the main reasons for the worldwide elevated interest in community engagement over the past two decades, Head (2007), brought forward a degree of skepticism, regarding government intentions, which in turn, place serious limits on the ability of community to influence decision making. Heads' (2007) main argument is that although community engagement has seen a dramatic increase in popularity, due to a lack of power sharing on behalf of government, it is by no means leading to an evolution or revolution of political-citizenry relationships, processes and outcomes. Although it is with doubt and skepticism that Head (2007) concludes his investigation, he does bring forward some interesting and insightful frameworks for discussing varying levels of community engagement in public participation and empowerment. One of the frameworks Head (2007) brings forward draws on the International Association for Public Participations' (2005): 'Public Participation Spectrum' (see Table 2). This framework assesses the degree to which community engagement is being realized in practice.

To advance community engagement in research, the literature identifies and recognizes relationship building steps recommended by researchers for researches (Israel, et al., 1998). However, little guidance exists on how to advance community engagement by local community for local community. Communities would do well to develop such steps and apply them amongst themselves in order to engage within themselves. In order to fill gaps in the literature, future research is needed to examine what local social barriers exist within the community, and how can they can be overcome to mobilize community. These barriers are recognized by the literature to exist but they are not explored in depth.

By attempting to solve a communications problem within the community, Kitsumkalum Nation looked to expand upon their methods for informing and engaging community. In response, the Nation created a Land Code video as a community engagement tool and was

able to meet Head's (2007) assertion that community engagement is supposed to solve community problems. Israel et al., (1998) recognizes the value of community participation in achieving community engagement while providing caution around who represents the community. In response to the limitations presented by Israel et al., (1998), those interviewed in the Land Code Video were elected Land Code Committee Members from the community of Kitsumkalum, in addition to the elected Chief Councillor, Don Roberts; Fish & Wildlife Guardian, Jim Webb; and Land Code Coordinator, Mag de Grace. All of these individuals are Kitsumkalum Band Members with the exception of Land Code Coordinator, Mag de Grace. Given that the Chief Councillor and Land Code Committee Members were chosen by the community to represent the community, it can be assumed that the community has chosen representatives who hold majority values from within the community. Therefore, the community is represented by the community and the voices expressed in the Land Code video come from the community.

The creation of a video allows the narrative to come from within the community which is an empowering process addressing Head's (2007) concerns with regards to power sharing on behalf of the government. According to the International Association for Public Participations' (2005): 'Public Participation Spectrum' (see Table 2), the process by which the Land Code video was created contributed to the empowerment of the community of Kitsumkalum by implementing an additional communications avenue for Kitsumkalum Land Code Committee Members to inform their community about the implications of Land Code and their right to participate in the Land Code Ratification Vote. Should Land Code be ratified, the Nation would be granted decision making authority over their own reserve lands. I believe that the creation of the Land Code video as part of the Nations communications strategy followed a process that could help overcome the above described social barriers to community engagement.

Table 2. Levels of public participation and empowerment. Source: International Association for Public Participation (2005).

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<i>Public participation goal</i> To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	<i>Public participation goal</i> To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<i>Promise to the public</i> We will keep you informed.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	<i>Promise to the public</i> We will implement what you decide.
<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Fact sheets Web sites Open houses	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Workshops Deliberative polling	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Citizen advisory committees Consensus-building Participatory decision making	<i>Example techniques to consider</i> Citizens' juries Ballots Delegated decisions

2.3 Institutional Failures

Community engagement is an ongoing outcome of ongoing communications. A lack of communications will lead to a lack of community engagement. In order for community engagement to be achieved, communications avenues must be open, inclusive and clearly laid out. Nabatchi (2012) recognizes that communication between scholars and practitioners have been weak and only recently are efforts being made to improve these communications. Love & Tilly (2014) argue that engagement simply serves as a legitimizing device “for practices of engineering public consent” (p. 34). Christens (2012) maintains that: “The near omnipresence of terms like ‘participatory’ and ‘empowerment’ has served, in part, to blur distinctions between truly grassroots processes through civic or voluntary associations, professionally driven processes that have incorporated community participation, and top-down processes that have merely disguised themselves under a veneer of community participation” (pp. 547). The assertions made by Nabatchi (2012), Love & Tilly (2014) and Christens (2012) are consistent with the institutional failures of community engagement identified by Head (2007) and Eversole (2010). Head (2007) proposed that the unyielding organizational and regulatory structures of traditional bureaucracies dominating each policy arena in the public-sector places continuing challenges for the public sector regarding whether or not government agencies possess sufficient enough capacity to coordinate internally, let alone invite “joined up” government arrangements. Eversole (2010) adds to the identified institutional failures of

community engagement by pointing out that: “Those invited to participate on other people’s institutional turf not only start out at a disadvantage (they do not necessarily know the rules of the game) but they are also likely to end up disenchanted with the promise of participation” (pp. 8). Israel et al. (1998) adds another institutional barrier to community engagement by recognizing that broader social inequalities concerning class, race/ethnicity and gender reflected by disadvantaged populations are portrayed through unequal access to information, time, wages and formal education.

The decision to explore innovative community engagement tools as part of their broader Land Code communications strategy came from the Nation of Kitsumkalum. By choosing to create a Land Code video, Kitsumkalum Band Members were able to control the narrative.

Addressing the concerns expressed by Christens (2012) and Eversole (2010), the Land Code video allowed Kitsumkalum to play on their own turf and not have to feel disempowered by the status quo top down approach often applied by Federal Governments.

Video communications, when shared on an online platform, allows people to speak freely to the world in an open forum, which is an empowering experience. It can serve to put the voice of minorities into the public sphere where previously these voices were muted or controlled by the mass media.

The literature around community engagement clearly recognizes serious institutional barriers and limitations within government and today’s societies. By deploying a communications strategy using video as a tool for community engagement, Kitsumkalum Nation addressed many of the limitations to community engagement presented through the institutional failures discussed above. However, the limitations facing community engagement do not end with institutional failures. To advance the critique around community engagement even further, the literature brings forward issues regarding governments perceived unwillingness to share power and decision-making authority through decentralization.

2.4 Decentralization and Power Differentials

Adding to the governing institutional chaos that plagues community engagement are issues regarding decentralization resistance on behalf of government. Christens (2012) urges that “If our goal is to promote well-being in communities, power must be taken into account” (pp. 549). Head (2007) recognizes that government has always catered to organized elites but a

new community engaged approach seeks to open doors for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and broad constituencies. However, Head (2007) stresses that:

“There is little evidence that the widespread advocacy and adoption of ‘community engagement’ and ‘partnership’ approaches have yet involved substantial power-sharing. There are two reasons for this. First, governments tend to retain control of these processes through funding, service contracts and regulation. Government institutions find it difficult to devolve power and control. Second, the capacity and motivation of citizens to participate effectively, or to create alternative forums, remains a weakness in community engagement strategies” (pp. 452).

Kitsumkalum Nations Land Code communications strategy aimed to open communications doors for their communities. By choosing to create a Land Code video, the Nation was able to address concerns regarding power sharing and control brought forward by Head (2007), as the video narrative was developed and controlled by elected Kitsumkalum Land Code Committee Members. The video provided an alternative forum and inclusive communications line directly to Kitsumkalum Land Code Committee Members, allowing them to speak freely about their views on Land Code. This video was then shared on the Nation’s online platform - Kitsumkalum Facebook page, Kitsumkalum YouTube channel and Kitsumkalum website. These avenues provided alternative means for Kitsumkalum band members to participate in dialogue around Land Code. By controlling the narrative through their communications strategy for Land Code, Kitsumkalum Nation was able to overcome decentralization and power differential barriers to community engagement discussed by Head (2007) and Christens (2012).

According to the Government of Canada (2019), development and operational funding will be available for Kitsumkalum as they pursue and eventually implement Land Code. I would challenge Head’s (2007) argument that this would be seen as a barrier to community engagement in this specific case. On the contrary, development and operational funding can be empowering especially if it leads to better capacity, knowledge and skillsets through training. Whether or not video as a communications tool will be considered part of the operational funding available remains to be determined. However, should Kitsumkalum continue to use this modern form of communications in the information sharing and

community engagement process, then funding for training to build communications capacity is required.

2.5 Delocalization

Ojha et al. (2016) argue that when it comes to community engagement, there are two forms of community (local and non-local) (see Figure 1). They suggest that to continue to examine community engagement in the local sense is ineffective and ignores the modern-day influences from non-local actors (Ojha et al., 2016). By examining case studies from Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, and Papua New Guinea, Ojha et al. (2016), propose a framework for examining how communities interact with the wider world through a term they refer to as “delocalization of communities”- a process through which non-local interests in natural resources have served to “delocalize” communities. Although these authors bring up valuable points, non-local interests that influence the local community is hardly a new reality. In fact, in Canada, they have defined relationships since the fur trade. The evolution of resource based economies in Canada and the history that took place strongly point to the emergence of a non-local alternative world view that influences and dominates the behavior of many Canadians today (Halseth, G., Ryser, L., Markey, S., Martin., 2014).

Ojha et al. (2016) claim that they have demonstrated how community-based natural resource management is being “delocalized”. However, as non-local interests have been influencing communities around the globe for hundreds of years, if not more, this claim lacks impression. I would challenge them to establish a benchmark for “local” at any point in human history that is impervious to external or “non-local” influences. When discussing community engagement, does the term “local” no longer have relevance in this globalized world or is there a definition of the term that still holds value? Ojha, et al., (2016) define a “local community” as: “group(s) of people sharing a common geographic space and having common goals around the management of natural resources.” (pp. 275). Under this definition, in order for a community to pursue a locally driven goal with regards to natural resources, the goal needs to be shared by and come from within a community joined by geographical boundaries. However, the limitations facing community engagement presented by Ojha, et al., (2016) are not so much in how we define local but instead in how we measure the influence placed on local communities by non-local actors. The value of their research becomes evident when they suggest that a nuanced “de-localized” framework for examining research, policy and

practice associated with community engagement and natural resource management be adopted (Ojha et al., 2016). In other words, when measuring community engagement, consideration should be given to “non-local” influences.

The Kitsumkalum Nation Land Code communications strategy represents a local process, empowering local people to share a local narrative regarding the proposed Land Code policy change. In considering the concerns presented by Ojha et al. (2016), the community of Kitsumkalum is not immune to influence from the wider world. However, this reality does not prevent the Nation from engaging with their local community. Through Land Code, Kitsumkalum Nations wants to regain decision making authority over their reserve lands and they need to engage their community in order to do so. Although “delocalization” may be present in the community of Kitsumkalum, the goal to establish community engagement over Land Code has been locally established and driven using local voices and modern technologies.

The opinions of individuals and communities should be open to change based on the drivers that propel the world we live in. To remain static and unwavering in any worldview is to be blind to the realities that surround us. In this regard, the concerns brought forward by Ojha et al. (2016) are not particularly novel. Where their claim does provide useful insight and concern, is when the influence of non-local interests dominates local-interests, suppressing local needs while providing non-local opportunity. In response to this concern, it is important for local communities to define what their needs, values and interests are. Land Code Committee Members, Troy Sam expresses in the Land Code video that: “Right now we have to beg, ask permission to do stuff with our own resources, where when we have our own control, we will be able to make these decisions on our own and control our own destiny.” Kitsumkalum Nation believes that Land Code will lead them towards a more locally driven governing process with regards to the management over their reserve lands. The creation of their Land Code communications strategy serves to help the Nation voice these beliefs. Kitsumkalum Nations Land Code policy goals and adjoining communications strategy serves to address the limitations to community engagement presented by Ojha et al. (2016).

2.6 Summary of Community Engagement Limitations

It is evident through the literature that many obstacles stand in the way of community engagement. These limitations challenge the discourse surrounding community engagement

and create skepticism and criticism of the practice. Best practices around community engagement seem to suffer from a focus on scholars tirelessly attempting to define community engagement in theory and as a result, the literature is lacking assessments and measurements of approaches that strive to apply community engagement on the ground. Israel, et al., (1998) state that “Despite the extensive body of literature on partnership approaches to research, more in-depth, multiple case study evaluations of the context and process (as well as outcomes) of community-based research endeavors are needed” (pp. 194). Needless to say, achieving community engagement is a process that often proves to be quite difficult. The question of how to be successful in increasing community engagement is likely a question with more than one answer, needing to be approached on a case by case basis. In light of the limitations facing community engagement and in consideration of the specific communications goals of Kitsumkalum Nation, the dissertation will explore video communications as an innovative tool for engaging community over proposed Land Code policy change.

2.7 Innovation in Community Engagement

An important component of community engagement is storytelling. A merging point between community engagement and storytelling is recognized by Nebatchi (2012) as she explores the benefits, challenges and processes of deliberation in civic engagement in “Democracy in Motion: Evaluating the Practice and Impact of Deliberative Civic Engagement.” Nebatchi (2012) maintains that deliberative civic engagement and related terms are centered around “respectful and rigorous communication about public problems” (pp. 8) and as a consequence modes of deliberative civic engagement “generally proceed through—or at least contribute to—the following (often iterative) steps:

1. The creation of a solid information base about the nature of the problem at hand, often beginning with *storytelling* and the sharing of personal experiences;
2. The identification, weighing, and prioritization of the key values at stake in an issue;
3. The identification of a broad range of potential solutions to the problem;
4. The weighing of the pros, cons, and trade-offs of the solutions through the systematic application of relevant knowledge and values to each alternative;
5. The arrival at the best decision(s) possible in light of what was learned through deliberation (if in a decision-making body), or the arrival at independent judgment(s)

(if not in a decision-making body). This is sometimes followed by an action planning process that allows participants to decide how they can help implement the ideas and recommendations they have generated” (pp.9).

Furthermore, Nebatchi (2012) points out that “Advocates assert that deliberation can help cultivate skills such as rhetorical expression, eloquence, *empathy*, courtesy, imagination, and reasoning ability. Through the active and reflective exchange of ideas and perspectives, participants can help clarify, understand, and refine their own positions on public issues” (pp. 9). Perhaps it is through the formal process of seeking to engage with people that we can observe similarities in the processes of deliberation and digital storytelling.

According to Herman (2013) people use stories to learn, organize, understand, remember and communicate about the world. Many Indigenous peoples, as highlighted by Cardinal & Hildebrand (2000), recognize that story is law in passing on connection to land and governing how to behave. Storytelling is a useful communications tool in creating community engagement and empowerment. Digital storytelling as a method of video communications, uses modern technologies to provide a communications platform for community engagement. Storytelling has been around since the time of the first peoples, and it is used today as a way of connecting communities on a local and global scale. Sharing stories has been foundational in the advancement of community development all over the world. Bruner (2010) maintains that stories are a fundamental and universal form of human communication and learning. Storytelling allows us to share with each other, relate to each other and understand each other. Lambert (2013), Bruner (2012) and Herman (2013) maintain that empathy is made possible through sharing stories between individuals, cultures and or countries and when empathy is achieved, relationships can be built, communities enriched and diversified and cultures strengthened. In order for cultural bridges to be crossed and communities united, empathy is required (Bruner, 2010; Herman, 2013; Lambert, 2013).

Digital storytelling provides a modern-day platform for connecting people. Storytelling can take many different shapes and serve many different purposes. The dawn of the digital era has created a landscape, or rather cyberspace, for stories to be more easily created, distributed and accessed worldwide. Digital storytelling can be used to increase community engagement and empowerment by sharing community values and triggering healthy conversations and empathy among stakeholders. In *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*, Joe Lambert (2013) explores in great deal the extent to which stories connect us to each other.

Lambert (2013) proposes digital storytelling as process through which people gather their stories into short forms of media as a means of expression. It is recognized by Lambert (2013) that “Many more people, and communities, are waking up to the power of their own voice in the media, and are finding the means to express themselves, for themselves and their communities through the new media” (pp. 4).

To summarize, storytelling literature offers a realm from which we may be able to draw from to address concerns and overcome limitations to community engagement presented by the literature. Empathy, achievable through digital storytelling, may prove to solve many of the far reaching social problems that exist and impede relations and political processes in Canada such as between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous stakeholders.

The Land Code video was created using the above described methods of digital storytelling with the aim of sharing information and opinions from within the community of Kitsumkalum regarding Land Code. The goal was to better inform and engage the community of Kitsumkalum on Land Code by expanding on their typical communications methods while encouraging participation in the Land Code Ratification Vote. The interest on behalf of Kitsumkalum Nation to explore video communications as tool for community engagement has served as a case by which the utility of video can be explored as an innovative means to overcome many of the limitations facing community engagement presented by the literature while broadening information sharing methods within the community around Land Code.

3 Research Methods

On March 25, 2018, as part of the requirements for the GENI program, I began a series of meetings with Kitsumkalum Nation’s Land Code Coordinator, Mag de Grace and my community supervisor and Kitsumkalum Band Member, Heather Bohn. We discussed the current needs of the community and how I could help as part of my research for my degree requirements for the GENI program. It was shared with me that the Nation had an urgent need to extend their communications methods for informing and engaging their community over their proposed Land Code policy change. In an effort to help the Nation improve upon their typical communications methods, I worked with Land Code Coordinator, Mag de Grace to develop a Land Code overview (see Appendix 1 – Land Code Key Messages). Following initial discussions, it was decided that I would conduct research aimed at unmasking the limitation facing community engagement and explore the potential of video communications

in overcoming these limitations. A literature review was conducted using ‘community engagement’ as a keyword in Google Scholar and the University of Saskatchewan online library system (search engine “Web of Science”) This literature review revealed numerous limitations facing community engagement including: social barriers (Head, 2007; Israel et al., 1998), institutional failures (Nabatchi, 2012; Love & Tilly, 2014; Christens, 2012; Head, 2007); power differentials (Christens, 2012; Head, 2007); delocalization (Ojha et al., 2016) and; ambiguity (Chamorro-Koc & Caldwell, 2018; Johnston, et al, 2018; Aiyer, et al., 2015). In an attempt to gain clarity around the many overlapping terms often used in the study of community engagement I developed a table containing definitions of popular terms used in such studies by various scholars (see Table 1). After discovering the limitations facing community engagement revealed by the literature, I extended my research to explore how video communications could be used as an innovative means to overcome these limitations.

Recognizing the importance of this topic and seeking to maximize members’ input, the Nation decided that they would like to explore the effectiveness of producing a Land Code video (see Video 1) as a means of addressing their communications challenges. As part of the research process, the Nation agreed that the Land Code video would be tested as a new communications method for engaging the Kitsumkalum community over complex, technical and fundamentally important decision-points, in this case, the proposed Land Code policy change.

The Nation’s standard method for communicating information to band members has been through public meetings, which fit with Indigenous cultural practices and the long-term operations of the Indian Act government in the area. This method has been less effective over times. The majority of the Nation’s band members now live off reservation (266 on-reserve vs 466 off-reserve) (Kitsumkalum, 2020), a situation that is becoming increasingly common among First Nations. Individuals living off reserve may find it difficult to attend public meetings for various reasons including those of availability and distance. Furthermore, several academic studies indicated that community members often did not like to collect information in public settings (Boholm, 2008). Kitsumkalum leaders confirmed this observation. They indicated that many members had expressed the view that they would be interested in information presented using more modern communications methods.

In order to assess the benefit of using the Land Code video to solve the Nation’s current communications problems, we tested several key elements:

1. Can the material be presented in a video format? Is it fair, unbiased and easy to understand by community members?
2. Will the material and content reach the target population in an accessible and reliable manner?
3. Will the availability of the material help ensure that band members participate in the community vote?
4. Will the video help the community reach an informed decision about a crucial proposed policy change?

While making the Land Code video we interviewed several people active in the Land Code process including:

Don Roberts, Chief Councillor;

Mag de Grace, Land Code Coordinator;

Troy Sam, Committee Member;

Jeanette Spalding, Committee Member;

Jim Webb, Fish & Wildlife Guardian; and

Charlene Webb, Committee Member.

Video interviews were filmed with a Cannon C100 cinema camera and an audio-technica boom mic on Kitsumkalum Reserve Lands. Once video interviews were edited into a valuable background story and overview of the Land Code, they were compiled with additional visuals and posted as one (5 minute, 14 second video). It was designed to be distributed online through YouTube, Facebook and the Kitsumkalum website for community members to conveniently view on their own time. The Land Code video was subsequently used by Kitsumkalum Nation as a tool to share information with and engage Kitsumkalum community members before the voting period ended on Dec 6, 2019.

At the end of the project, Land Code Coordinator Mag de Grace observed that the Land Code video served as a valuable tool in the Nation's communications strategy for the proposed Land Code policy change. Furthermore, the success experienced by Kitsumkalum in utilizing video communications to reach their community members led the Nation to begin developing

a broader “Communications Plan” that will include video production as an essential engagement tool moving forward. The community’s conclusion re-enforced the interpretations embedded in literature review that indicated that video information materials were effective in reaching community members. Having designed video content based on Kitsumkalum Nation’s request and input, I argue that this approach is an effective means of educating members and securing their participation in key local political decisions.

3.1 Timeline

This section outlines the steps taken to complete the research project.

Step 1. Meet with Kitsumkalum. (March 25, 26, 27, 2018 and ongoing)

- Learn of an interest to improve information sharing methods and engage community about Land Code, in addition to typical community events.
- Identify current communications problems and urgency around informing community about proposed Land Code policy change.
- Discuss intention, goals and possible communication strategies.
- Explore how video communications can be used a community engagement tool while improving information sharing regarding Land Code.

Step 2. Conduct literature review. (May, 2018 – October, 2018)

- Conduct literature review on community engagement based on discussions with Kitsumkalum Nation and as part of the GENI program internship requirements.
- Reveal appropriate context and limitations facing community engagement.
- Discover that video may serve as an innovative tool for community engagement around Land Code.
- Receive letter of support from Kitsumkalum Nation for Land Code Video.
- Begin process of seeking ethics approval from University of Saskatchewan to produce a Land Code video for Kitsumkalum Nation as part of my internship project.
- Receive Letter of Exemption (Beh ID 995) from University of Saskatchewan’s Behavioral Research Ethics Board on March 20, 2019.

Step 3. Create Video. (May, 2019 – Aug, 2019)

- Film and edit Land Code video seeking feedback and approval from Nation.
- Launch video on Kitsumkalum YouTube channel and Facebook page.

Step 4. Kitsumkalum Land Code Vote. (Dec 6, 2019)

- Kitsumkalum Land Code Ratification Vote on Dec 6, 2019.

Step 5. Review and discuss results (Dec 6, 2019 – May 1, 2020)

- Results reveal 152 in favor and 73 oppose.
- Discuss value of video as an innovative tool for community engagement around Land Code for Kitsumkalum Nation.

3.2 Land Code Video



Video 1. Land Code Video. (Barabash, 2019)

Links to watch Land Code Video online:

- Kitsumkalum Website: <https://kitsumkalum.com/about-kitsumkalum-land-code/>
- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYzXEW9UQDU&feature=emb_logo
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/kitsumkalum/videos/2278958489081613/>

The making of the Kitsumkalum Land Code communications strategies involved typical phases of production:

1. Pre-production (May 1-May 21, 2019)

- Meet with Land Code Coordinator, Mag de Grace
- Establish story, key messaging, questions and list of interviewees.

2. Production (May 25-26, 2019)

- Coordinate and conduct and film interviews. Review interviews and add supportive footage. s
- Ensure that story flows and that key messaging is achieved.
- Submit first draft to Kitsumkalum for review and notes.
- Edit based on feedback and resubmit final draft.

3. Upload Online

- Kitsumkalum YouTube channel (August 7, 2019) and Kitsumkalum Facebook page (Aug, 29, 2019).

Before production could start, we first had to establish an overview of what Land Code would mean for the community. Over the course of three weeks in May, I met up with Mag de Grace and Heather Bohn to discuss the key messaging to be portrayed in the Kitsumkalum Land Code communications strategy (see Appendix 1). Once the key messaging was established I worked with Heather Bohn to schedule interviews for the Land Code video. During the interviews, interviewees were prompted to share their insights, knowledge and perspectives regarding Land Code. Effort was made to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere by giving interviewees time in advance to think about and prepare themselves before filming took place. The presence of Kitsumkalum community member and employee, Heather Bohn also helped to create a comfortable atmosphere for interviewees as she has a long-standing relationship with each interviewee.

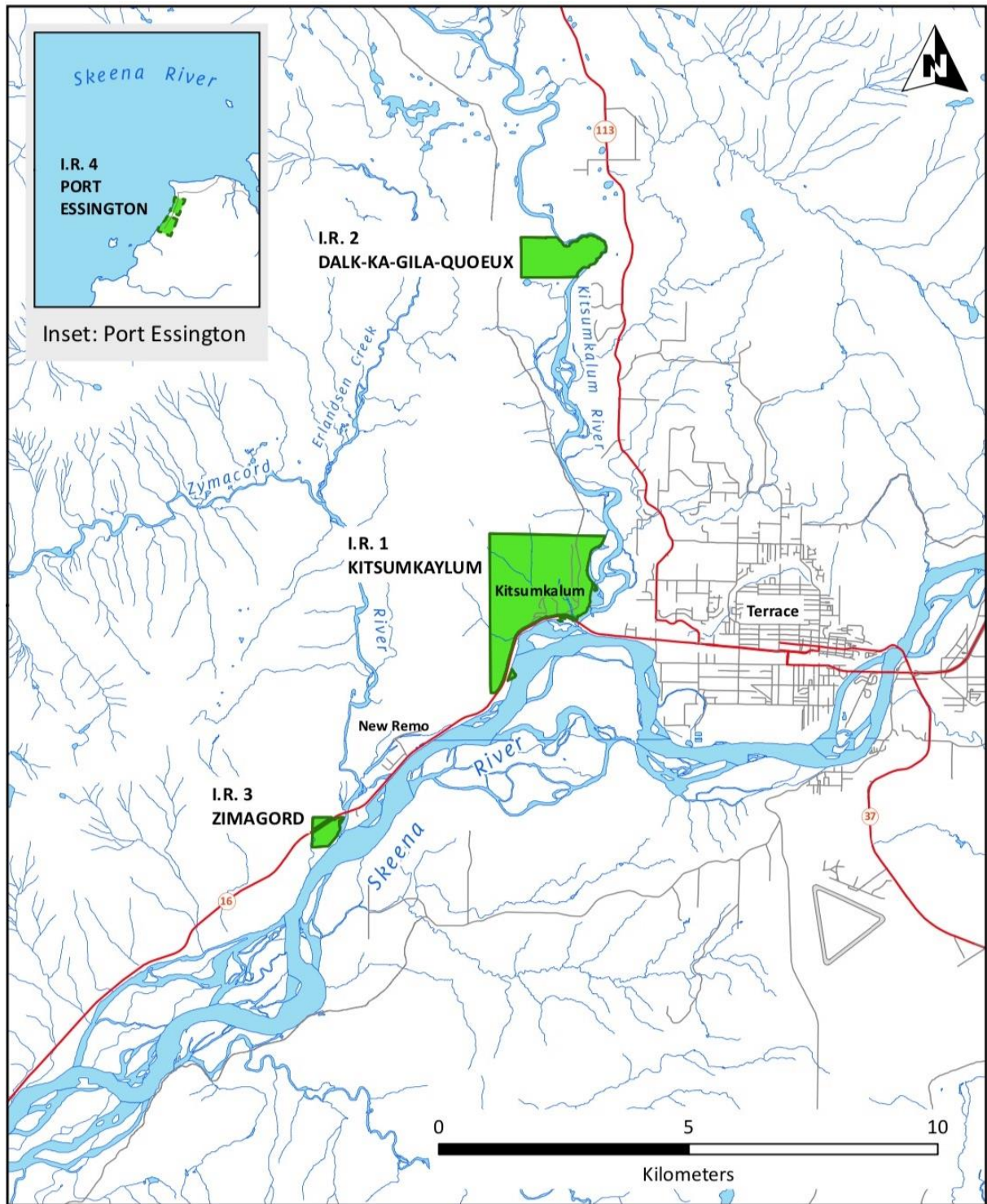
The Post-Production phase involved ensuring that key messaging was included in the overall digital story and that it flowed clearly. Additional footage of traditional territory and cultural practices were added to the interviews to enhance the culture significance expressed in the interviews. Once the first draft was completed, it was submitted to Kitsumkalum for review and comments. Upon receiving feedback from Mag and Heather, the video was re-edited and the final draft was re-submitted back to Kitsumkalum for final review and uploading to Facebook and YouTube. The video was uploaded to YouTube on August 7, 2019 and Facebook on August 29, 2019. Viewership on both platforms was monitored up until the Land Code Vote on Dec 6, 2019.

3.3 An Introduction to the Kitsumkalum Nation

Kitsumkalum Nation (Kitsumkalum), one of over 630 recognized First Nations in Canada, is located in North Western British Columbia, Canada. According to Kitsumkalum (2020), in 2015, Kitsumkalum had a total registered population of 722; 256 band members were living on Kitsumkalum Reserve Lands, with 466 living off the Reserves. As of 2020, there are 108 homes on Kitsumkalum Indian Reserve 1 and community infrastructure includes offices for Administration, Economic Development and Management, Hereditary Chiefs and Treaty, a Health Centre, NAGK School, Aboriginal Headstart/Day Care, Fire Hall, Public Works-Maintenance, First Nations Arts & Craft Store (House of Sim-oi-Ghets), Water Treatment Plant, Community Hall, Tempo Gas Bar, RV Park and Boat Launch, Rock Quarry, and Industrial Park (Kitsumkalum, 2020).

Kitsumkalum Nation is part of the Tsimshian cultural group and Kitsumkalum elders recognize and treasure a common heritage with all Tsimshian members from Alaska down British Columbia's central coast. According to Statistics Canada (2016) and the United States Census Bureau (2018), there are 5,910 Tsimshian living in Canada and 2,222 Tsimshian living in Alaska. Tsimshian, in Kitsumkalum's traditional Sm'algyax language translates as "Inside the Skeena River" (Kitsumkalum, 2020). Kitsumkalum First Nation greatly value and honour their connections to the land.

Regarding the management of Kitsumkalum land, Chief Don Roberts states in the Kitsumkalum Land Code video (see Video 1): "We are people with a mind now and that's where we are moving, to make our own decisions." Frustrated with the colonial past and the *Indian Act*, Kitsumkalum First Nation has pursued a Land Code policy change in order to take control over decision making on their own Reserve Lands.



Kitsumkalum Reserve Lands Map

Date: 2017-01-31

- Kitsumkalum Reserve Land (Land Code would apply)
- Kitsumkalum Reserve Land (Land Code would not apply)

Figure 2. Kitsumkalum Reserve Lands. (Kitsumkalum, 2019).

3.4 Background to the Land Code

In 1991, out of frustration with 40 identified provisions of the *Indian Act*, a group of First Nations approached the Government of Canada with a proposal to opt-out of the land, environment and resource provisions (Government of Canada, 2019). As a result, the Framework Agreement of First Nations Land Management was negotiated in 1996, coming into effect in 1999 through the *First Nations Land Management Act* (Government of Canada, 2019). Assisting First Nations in managing their own land outside of the Indian Act, the framework established the; Lands Advisory Board, and the; First Nations Land Management Resource Centre (Government of Canada, 2019). The Government of Canada (2019) recognises that once First Nation Land Codes come into effect, under First Nations Land Management, land administration is transferred to First Nations, including the authority to enact laws and local bylaws regarding the environment, resources and land. After joining First Nations Land Management regime, the Government of Canada (2019) acknowledges that any Nation is able to receive three types of funding:

1. Developmental funding for developing a land code, negotiating an individual agreement and holding a ratification vote;
2. Funding to facilitate the transition from the developmental phase to the operational phase; and
3. Ongoing operational funding for managing land, environment and natural resources as determined through negotiations between Canada and First Nations.

This framework paved the way for other First Nations communities to develop their own community-based land management regimes. According to the Government of Canada (2019), as of January 2019, 153 First Nations have entered into Land Management and are working towards or already operating through their own Land Codes.

Kitsumkalum First Nations became a signatory to the Framework Agreement of First Nations Land Management in May of 2016. Under this agreement, they will gain the legal status and powers needed to govern and manage their reserve lands should the community vote to pass their Land Code and Individual Agreement (Kitsumkalum, 2019). In order for the vote to be passed, community members need to be informed and vote in an organized and well-supervised fashion. In order for members to do these things, they need to be engaged. Through Land Code, Kitsumkalum aims to take back decision-making authority over their

own lands and increasing community engagement. “You have the community involved in making the decisions so they have an ownership on it” stated Kitsumkalum Chief Councilor, Don Roberts in Land Code Video (see Video 1).

3.5 Land Management in Unceded Territory

It is important to appreciate how the questions over land management and control are of foundational importance to First Nations in Canada. To understand the desire for Kitsumkalum to pursue Land Code policy changes to their governance model, it is helpful to first look at historic Nation to Nation relationships between Canada and First Nations. Kernaghan & Siegel (1995) argue that the degree of happiness and prosperity, or poverty and misery experienced by civil society is conditioned in part by the day to day decisions made by government. Relationships between Canada and the First Nations of Canada began with treaties. The origins of Treaties within Canada date back to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the original object of which was to protect Indigenous peoples in Western North America while confining European settlement to the seaboard (Wallace, 1925). However, European settlement did not remain at the seaboard and Indigenous people have not been protected. Furthermore, Canada failed to establish treaties with many First Nations, which has led to further complications between the Crown and these Nations.

Kitsumkalum Nation, like many First Nations in British Columbia, does not have either a historic or modern treaty. The land that they lay claim to is all “unceded” territory, meaning that their traditional territory has never been surrendered or acquired by the Crown. When dealing with First Nations living in unceded territory, the Government of Canada still must recognize Indigenous rights under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution. However, this has not stopped the Crown from managing lands in the area in a manner that has led to the further frustration of First Nations. Some Nation to Nation relationships between Canada and First Nations are characterized by frustration and confusion regarding governance and decision making on the land base. The more frustration builds on behalf of First Nations in Canada, the greater the tendency becomes to pursue steps towards self-governance.

The desire of First Nations to manage their own lands and people and make their own laws becomes apparent when such policy proposals as the Land Code come into effect. The Land Code does not represent a complete step back on behalf of Canada, in fact, Canada supports First Nations moving towards the Land Code by providing financial capacity. However, when

it comes to management over the lands, the Land Code allows Canada to take a step back as First Nations engage their own local communities in decision-making over land matters. In the Land Code video (see Video 1), Kitsumkalum Land Code Committee Member, Jeanette Spalding expresses her frustration with the status quo Nation to Nation relationship between Kitsumkalum and Canada: “After being held down for so long and not able to make any of our own decisions, it’s about time that we have a voice.” The Kitsumkalum government and the elected Kitsumkalum Land Code Committee Members believe that the Land Code will provide opportunity for their Nation as well as relief from certain frustrations. However, in ratifying the Land Code, they first had to successfully inform and engage their community enough to participate in the Kitsumkalum Nation Land Code Ratification Vote by Dec 6, 2019. In order to do so, Kitsumkalum Nation made a choice to use video as a tool to overcome limitations facing community engagement revealed by the literature while expanding upon their typical communications methods.

4 Implementation of the Research Plan

The implementation of the research plan produced substantial evidence of the success of the adoption of video communication as the key piece in the Kitsumkalum communications strategy for the Land Code ratification process. The vote provided a useful test of the reception, use and impact of video communications as a means of conducting community engagement.

As of Dec, 2019, there were 641 eligible voters within Kitsumkalum Nation who could participate in passing the new Land Code (Land Code Results, 2019). For the Land Code to be approved: (a) at least 25% plus one of eligible voters participate in the vote and (b) at least 50% plus one of the eligible voters who participate vote in favor (Land Code Results, 2019). On Dec 6, 2019, Kitsumkalum First Nations Land Code Ratification Vote results declared that:

- (a) a majority of electors have voted “yes”
- (b) the threshold of the eligible voters has been reached and therefore,
- (c) the motion has been passed (Land Code Results, 2019).

The goal of Kitsumkalum Nation was to ensure that their community was well informed and engaged over Land Code. To that end, they tracked the basic analytics of the Land Code video on their online platforms.

According to the results posted by Kitsumkalum (2019), of the 225 ballots cast, 152 people voted yes and 73 voted no. On the final day of voting, Dec 6, 2019, Heather Bohn shared insight on the Land Code video. From the date that it was posted up to the voting deadline, the Land Code video received 120 views on YouTube and 761 views on Facebook. Between YouTube and Facebook, the video was viewed in excess of 900 (see Table 3). For reasons of confidentiality, the data does not show how many viewers were Kitsumkalum band members but it does show a concentration of viewership within the local geography suggesting that most of the viewers live in or near the Kitsumkalum community. The results indicate that the video experienced more viewership than eligible Kitsumkalum voters, but the analytics provided are not sufficient enough to determine whether or not it resulted in a more engaged and better-informed community.

Table 3. Land Code Online Video stats – YouTube and Facebook

ONLINE PLATFORM	DATE	VIEWS
YOUTUBE	As of Dec 6, 2019	120
FACEBOOK	As of Dec 6, 2019	761
TOTAL	As of Dec 6, 2019	881
KITSUMKALUM.COM WEBSITE TRAFFIC -LAND CODE PAGE	As of Dec 6, 2019	187
TOTAL KITSUMKALUM BAND MEMBERS	As of Dec 6, 2019	641
TOTAL KITSUMKALUM BAND MEMBERS WHO VOTED	As of Dec 6, 2019	225

Additional analytics were shared by Heather from the Kitsumkalum website (www.kitsumkalum.com). Data from this website reveal that there is a strong likelihood that a percentage of people who watched the video followed up by accessing more information from the website. As I was not granted administrative access to Kitsumkalum’s YouTube channel, Facebook page or website, I have to trust that the data shared with me is accurate. I did make a request for more analytics regarding geographic region, age and gender of the viewers but this request was not met. In addition to online traffic, Mag de Grace received a number of

phone calls regarding Land Code. Since her phone number was listed in the calls to action at the end of the Land Code video, it is likely that the video led to further engagement.

By working with Kitsumkalum Nation on their communications strategy for their proposed policy change, we were able to:

1. Package the Land Code material into a video format in a fair, unbiased and easy to understand fashion.
2. Reach target population through more accessible information sharing options.
3. Ensure that band members participated in the community vote by making material available.
4. Help the community reach an informed decision about a crucial proposed policy change.

In order to more accurately gauge the demographic reach of Kitsumkalum Nation's Land Code communications strategy, more specific analytical data is required from their online platforms. The limited analytics provided for the Land Code video by Facebook, YouTube and the Nations website does not provide a full picture. For example, we know that 741 people viewed the Land Code video on the Facebook platform but we do not know how many of those people were Kitsumkalum eligible voters or band members. Suggestions for the future in order to gain more insight as to the effectiveness of using video in this way would be to poll those who attend meetings or show up to vote and gather information from them to see how many viewed the video and or found it to be a helpful information sharing tool. In addition, it would be interesting to see whether or not people felt as though the video led to greater discussions and engagement within their community.

When considering Head's (2005) 'Public Participation Spectrum' (see Table 2), as part of the Nations communications strategy, the Land Code video is clearly moving towards empowering the local community of Kitsumkalum. The Land Code video can be seen as a valuable addition to typical communications methods used by Kitsumkalum Nation, making information more accessible to the diverse audiences that exist within the community. However, further research is required to determine the full extent to which the video engaged and better informed the community of Kitsumkalum.

Regardless of the specific viewership analytics, consideration needs to be given to collective expression from within the community that was allowed through the Nations communications strategy. In the Land Code video, Fish & Wildlife Guardian, Jim Webb states that: “It is essentially a mechanism that would enable us as First Nations, Kitsumkalum Band Members to make decisions on our land, as oppose to waiting for decision to be made in Ottawa.” In addition to Jim’s statement, Land Code Committee Member, Charlene Webb shares that: “What Land Code means to me, as an aboriginal woman, is giving us the authority to move forward with decision making that’s from the heart of the community.” Charlene also shares: “I wanted to be able to look at my grandchildren in the eyes and say that I played a role in this, I did what I needed to do to ensure that our cultural perspective was included in the black and white document that needs to be signed off on, I needed to look at the next generation and say, I did my part, respectfully, truthfully and with the values that was taught to me as a child, that I in turn pass it on to the next generation because it’s their footprints that will be walking the land and I need to do it in a right respectful way.”

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Kitsumkalum Nation had an urgent need to share information and make sure that members understood the implications surrounding their proposed Land Code policy change. The Nation needed to successfully inform, engage and mobilize their community to participate in the Kitsumkalum First Nation Land Code Ratification Vote by Dec, 6, 2019. I conducted a literature review that revealed limitations facing community engagement. In order to meet the Nation’s goals, we developed a Land Code video to be used as a tool for community engagement while expanding upon typical communications methods. Considering the feedback provided by Mag de Grace and Heather Bohn, as well as the general analytics collected through Facebook, YouTube and the Kitsumkalum website, it can be determined that the Land Code video contributed to the success of Kitsumkalum Nations communication strategy for their proposed Land Code policy change. However, in order to gauge the full extent to which the Land Code video was successful, more detailed analytics and perhaps a survey could be conducted targeting those who viewed the video.

As a tool used to address the Nations communications problems, the Land Code video provided a platform compatible with successful community engagement defined by Chamorro-Koc & Caldwell, (2018) as: “a participatory process that is led with a bottom-up

approach and that is distinguished by the sharing of knowledge as an indispensable component for community participation in social innovation projects.” (pp. 301). To a large extent, this was the outcome that Kitsumkalum Nation aimed to achieve. As mentioned earlier, Head (2007), recognizes that “community engagement is supposed to solve community problems” (pp. 447). Given that the Land Code video was created to address issues regarding the communications of Land Code information to Kitsumkalum Band Members who were unable or unwilling to attend Land Code public meetings, it stands to say that the making of the Land Code video did solve an information sharing problem within the community, ultimately resulting in more accessible information to band members.

In addressing, Israel et al., (1998) concern facing community engagement of: “who represents the community and how is it defined?” (pp. 185), the participants represented in the Land Code video should be considered. All participants were and are Kitsumkalum Band members with the exception of the Land Code Coordinator, Mag de Grace. Of those participants, three were female and three were male, resulting in a gender equal voice. To answer the question put forward by Israel et al., (1998), the Kitsumkalum community is represented by Kitsumkalum band members, with a 50/50 gender split, an elected Chief and an elected Committee. It has to be assumed that since these individuals were elected by the community that they do in fact represent the majority values and opinions of the Kitsumkalum community at large.

Considering the concerns expressed by Christens (2012) and Eversole (2010), the Land Code communications strategy allowed Kitsumkalum to play on their own turf and not have to feel disempowered by the status quo top down approach often applied by Federal Governments. They were allowed to speak freely and openly about Land Code and then share the information as they pleased. By controlling the narrative through their communications strategy for Land Code, Kitsumkalum Nation was able to overcome decentralization and power differential barriers to community engagement discussed by Head (2007) and Christens (2012). It was a community driven process through which I contributed the technical knowledge and skillsets required to produce a video. The video came at no cost as I volunteered my time for this project. However, the cost of future video communications should be considered.

Digital storytelling as discussed by Lambert (2013), Bruner (2012) and Herman (2013), provides a modern-day platform for connecting people and engaging community. Drawing on

digital storytelling best practices, the Land Code video allowed for free expression to come from within the community of Kitsumkalum regarding Land Code. By utilizing video as a communications tool, Kitsumkalum Nation took an innovative approach to engaging their community over proposed Land Code policy change. The Nations unique Land Code communications strategy for community engagement may serve as a case study for future research on community engagement. The means by which the video was produced encouraged community engagement on a local level (see Figure 1). Video communications can provide an innovative approach to community engagement while improving information sharing methods within a community. Consideration should be given to the capacity of First Nations to access and develop skillsets applicable to more modern communication tools. Ongoing support as determined necessary by the Nations should be accommodated on behalf of the Federal Government until the needs of the First Nations are met.

As a typical methods of communications, public meetings presented several challenges that Kitsumkalum Nation needed to overcome in order to effectively inform their community about Land Code. Many scholars verify the challenges facing public meetings as a method of communications (Boholm, 2008). By using video, Kitsumkalum Nation's Land Code communications strategy allowed for expression from within the community that is not subject to impediment from variables tied to community meetings. For example, if a meeting is cancelled then the information is prevented from being delivered to the community and community engagement is impeded. If a meeting turns into a yelling match due to polarized views and opinions within the room, then productive conversation and rational expression is halted. If individuals are unable to attend the meeting, whether as presenters or attendees then the information sharing and expression is stifled. Furthermore, in the event of a global pandemic where social distancing may be required, video communications provides a safer means for sharing information. Once the Land Code video was created and shared online, these limitations were overcome. However, it should be noted that video communication also has its own set of unique variables that need to be considered, such as who has access to the required technology and capacity to produce, share and view online video. Ideally, multiple forms of communications would be accessible providing various avenues for ongoing communications that are open, inclusive and clearly laid out.

Ultimately, Kitsumkalum Nation made a successful adaptation using an innovative community engagement tool. The Land Code video was seen by Kitsumkalum Nation as a

valuable addition to typical communications methods. By using the Land Code video as a tool in their broader Land Code communications strategy, Kitsumkalum Nation was successful in achieving their goals while overcoming many of the limitations facing community engagement brought forward by the literature. The full extent to which this was achieved is difficult to measure without further research.

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Appendix 1 – Land Code Key Messaging

WHAT IS A LAND CODE?

In a nut shell, the Land Code process is about formalizing Kitsumkalum’s role as the rightful decision-maker and law-maker over reserve lands. It removes the government of Canada from land management on reserve lands.

The Land Code process involves:

- Taking down land-related sections of the Indian Act.
- Replaces sections of the Indian Act but allows to design, modify, update and customize land management.

Key features of Kitsumkalum Land Code:

- Is being prepared by the Lands Committee.
- Uses a community-based approach (outlines role for lands staff, lands committee, membership and Council, no Indigenous Services Canada or Minister)
- It’s a way to organize land management to suit Kitsumkalum values and practices.
- It does not mean no rules apply. It means Kitsumkalum establishes their own rules via their land code, and is responsible for implementing and enforcing them.
- Is voted on by the community, does not happen without consent of community.
- Today, there are over 80 First Nations that have accepted Land Codes for their communities, and 58 more that are currently developing their own Land Codes.

HOW WOULD THINGS CHANGE?

- Authority and jurisdiction
- Canada no longer has a say
- We determine the policies, processes and procedures

HOW DID THE LAND CODE PROCESS START?

Land Code process started in the 1990s:

- Born out of frustration with the Indian Act
- Seeking direct control and decision-making over land use, development, and protection.
- Access to funding

WHY “GO” LAND CODE?

Some important reasons communities prepare a Land Code:

- Have direct control and decision-making power.

- Can make own laws, policies and procedures.
- Access funding for land management.
- Timelier decisions - develop businesses and generate money (streamline without Canada's involvement).
- Improve stewardship.
- Include Members in land management decisions.
- Provide clarity and certainty around how we use, manage, and develop our reserve lands.

Challenge? We would be responsible for land management. Big transition. Learning curve with roles and responsibilities.

HOW ARE WE DOING IT?

To draft a Kitsumkalum Land Code our Lands Committee has been meeting routinely over two years to:

- Work with the FNLMRC and legal counsel.
- Training through FNLMRC.
- Hosting community events to inform and get feedback.
- Reviewing other community land codes, technical advice from other communities, experts, etc.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

Our process has involved:

- Background stage
- Workplan
- Drafting
- CURRENT: Land Code Review
- NEXT: Community Vote (2019) watch for voter information packages!
- IMPLEMENTATION: Entail setting up a Lands office or position to implement Land Code and Land Use Plan, build lands information, and be a resource to community and leadership on lands.

HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED?

- Community events – once legal review complete – community input and review.
- website (information)
- Talk to Mag / Member of the Committee

