

B8 - The Perfect Storm: First Nations Land Use Planning In The Face Of A Resource Gold Rush In Northeastern BC

Presentation title: The Perfect Storm: First Nations Land Use Planning in the Face of a Resource Gold Rush in Northeast British Columbia

Presenters:

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Roland Willson - Chief of West Moberly First Nations

Abstract

First Nations in northeast British Columbia face a perfect storm of land use conflicts within their territory. Oil and natural gas prospecting and drilling, coal mining, coal bed methane development, pipelines and commercial forestry all occur within a restricted land base upon which West Moberly and Halfway First Nations also live. The scope and size of these developments are increasing exponentially. Treaty rights, aboriginal rights protected within the Canadian Constitution and an undetermined land title theoretically give these Nations significant use and dwelling rights and privileges within this land, yet the rapid rate of industrial development threaten these rights while few options exist for the remediation of these challenges. For example, the BC Environmental Assessment Act provides a highly ineffectual mechanism for addressing First Nation concerns, as do provincial planning processes. In the face of multiple resource extraction activities, efforts at meaningful land use planning face significant challenges. This panel on First Nations land use planning in the face of catastrophic resource extraction will feature the perspectives and experiences of the Chief and land use planners of West Moberly First Nations. A presentation will also be made on the perceptions of Treaty 8 Nations on the BC Environmental Assessment process. The first half of the panel will consist of a facilitated discussion amongst these experienced participants on the challenges they face in land use planning and the strategies they have developed to try to mitigate the impacts on their lands and culture. The second half of the panel will be composed of an open and facilitated discussion with the audience on different strategies for improving First Nations land use planning in the face of resource extraction. With the assistance of the audience the panel hopes to design constructive planning strategies and attempt the re-design of mitigative processes such as environmental assessments and other resource planning strategies to improve their function for First Nations. Strategies for working collaboratively with First Nations will also be developed.

Speaker Biography

Annie Booth is a professor at UNBC. She is currently working on a collaborative research project with West Moberly and Halfway First Nations and Treaty 8 Tribal Association on improving the environmental assessment process for First Nation inclusion and participation. Previous research looked at First Nations forestry, community participation in resource management decisions and sustainable landscaping.