

The Place of the Informal Economy in the North Coast LRMP Process

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1. Introduction

In 2001 the BC government endorsed the initiation of the North Coast Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) process. The objective of the LRMP is to support sustainable economic development by enhancing the economic well being of First Nations and coastal communities as well as protecting environmental values. The planning process attempts to consider all potential uses and functions of land and resources and invites stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process. Therefore, the Province commissioned this study, which seeks to establish the significance of the land and resources to the North Coast District's non-indigenous population. Drawing upon interviews with non-indigenous residents this paper seeks to determine the extent to which the region's land and resources influence the livelihoods and lifestyles of the region's residents. The analysis of their responses is informed by the literature on informal economies as well as, albeit to a lesser degree, the literature on traditional land-based economies. To explore the importance of resource use on the North Coast this paper will:

- 1) Define the concept of an informal economy;
- 2) Explore the extent and importance of wild food harvesting in the North Coast Region, using the concept of an informal economy and the conditions that support it (i.e., resources; skills and knowledge; social networks; social norms that support informal exchange; and economic need);
- 3) Make visible the values (e.g., alternative source of goods and services; expanding the capacity of communities and individuals; promoting social and cultural well-being; and contribution to the formal economy) of the informal economic activities that occur in the forests of the North Coast; and,
- 4) Examine how future land and resource management plans can serve to facilitate the operation of this informal economy.

2. Study Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Study Objectives

This report was originally conceived as part of a wider project including First Nations and non-indigenous community members. As the project developed, the First Nations communities began independent land planning processes. Following the recommendation of the Tsimshian Stewardship committee the First Nations component of this project was set aside to afford First Nations communities to develop their own research agendas.¹

¹ See Methodological Review and Approaches for Local/Traditional Knowledge Research, Sept. 20, 2002, Charles Menzies and Caroline Butler. This methodological review was prepared for the NCLRMP and as a

The non-indigenous component of this project was guided by the following three questions as initially set out in the letter of agreement between UBC and the NC LRMP (March 2002).

1. How can the value of sustenance activities and other elements of the informal economy be incorporated as part of the information for the planning table, including the socioeconomic analysis?
2. What are ways that cultural heritage values might be considered during LRMP analysis? Cultural heritage is often described as consisting of tangible assets, monuments, archaeological remains, moveable items, cultural landscapes, rural or industrial sites and settings (see: http://www.mpicchu.org/whc_definition.html).
3. How might traditional and/or local knowledge be effectively included in LRMP information and analysis? Traditional knowledge can be thought of as "[a] cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationships of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment" (Berkes 1999: 8; see also, <http://www.terralingua.org/Definitions/DTek.html>).

This study describes the extent of non-indigenous informal economic activity that relies on the land base. Our specific focus is the extent and importance of wild food harvesting and the reliance on the North Coast land base for these activities. In this report we examine the informal economy from the point of view of the activities involved rather than undertaking a currency-focused approach that measures in dollar terms the economic inputs of wild food harvesting (see, Ellison, Arsenault, Reimer 1997; Reimer 2000). One of the key reasons for doing this is that many of the exchanges that take place in informal economies or in the wild food harvesting process do not involve the exchange of money and/or do not have monetary benefits. Rather, their 'value' lies in the development and maintenance of social networks.

2.2 Study Methodology

Data for this study was collected through ethnographic research methods. This approach to social research differs from survey and questionnaire research in two crucial aspects: (1) research tends to be longer term and more nuanced in terms of details of social activity, and: (2) qualitative rather than quantitative.

Ethnographic research has the advantage of providing extensive details of social behaviour and, over time, a detailed 'thick description' of social behaviour. Ethnographic research is based upon 'friend-like' relations (see Menzies 2001). This is both a strength and a weakness. Its strength resides in its ability to effectively and holistically describe human action. Its weakness lies in the

guide for community-based research into local/traditional ecological knowledge. While not specifically applicable, the TEK methods paper does provide insight into the research process on the informal economy.

difficulty of generalizing beyond the specific set of people studied. As long as researchers understand that what is being described is in effect a social network of people who interact within conditions set by history, economies, and social structures then these difficulties can be effectively dealt with (Wolf 2001:xx-xx).

Anthropological methods include long term residence in the community of study as opposed to the 'hit and run' style of survey methods or short term research in which a research and/or a team drops into a community and attempts to gather as many interviews as possible in the short time available.

Anthropological interview data is complemented by participant-observation in which the research lives in, visits, socializes, and participates in the life of a community.

The primary research this study draws upon was conducted in Prince Rupert, Oona River, and Dodge Cove between August 2002 and January 2003. The primary field researcher was Caroline Butler. Her work was supplemented by research conducted by Daniel Dawson, Rebekah Leakey, and Charles Menzies.

Research participants were selected by snowball method: the research began with names suggested by the LRMP table representatives and the researchers' pre-existing contacts. Several participants were contacted by Butler during a fortuitous visit to an acquaintances home where a hunting party was dressing a moose in the garage. This provided an opportunity to discuss general issues of wild food harvesting. Twenty-five primary interviews were conducted, supplemented by participant observation in Prince Rupert

Interviews were conducted at the research participant's home or, in the case of self-employed, at their place of work. Several interviews were group interviews, the largest being a gathering of 5 recreational hunters in their 30s-early 40s. The majority of research participants were men.

Interviews were primarily structured around the seasonal round, starting in November or January, and then following the harvest activities throughout the 112 months of the year.

3. Informal Economy – Working Definition

Informal economy is defined in various ways in non-academic and academic literature. Terms such as the 'invisible', 'irregular', 'secondary', and 'irregular' economies are often found in popular discussion. In the academic literature, distinctions are made between 'market' and 'non-market', 'paid' and 'unpaid'. As is apparent, given that informal economies are multifaceted, both the popular and academic literature remains vague as to its exact definition (Berkes 1994; Ellison et al 1997; Kuhn and Sweetman 2002; Nichols and Dyson 1983; Reimer 2000; and Shende n.d.).

In general terms, informal economy refers to the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services that have economic value, but are neither protected by a formal code of law nor recorded for use by government-backed regulatory agencies (Ellison et. al. 1997:256-257; Reimer 2000:2). To simplify

and compare, formal economy is essentially economic activity that is counted whereas informal activity is not. Given that informal economic activities are not counted “[p]articipation in the informal economy must be inferred from information regarding the activities of the respondents” (Reimer 2000:7).

Informal economic activities are generally performed for self-consumption or for relatives, friends, and/or acquaintances (Ellison 1997:257). Furthermore, and of relevance to this study, because informal economic activities are not recorded and therefore undetectable to conventional economic analysis, their value is also invisible (Berkes 1994:357). This could be of consequence in planning and policy processes, resulting in the creation of plans and policies that have the potential to be detrimental to the operation of informal economies. This view is elaborated further in the section on land use planning.

In the following passages, an examination of the informal economy (i.e., wild food harvesting) is undertaken from the point of view of activities rather than currency. However, currency as it relates to the various harvesting activities will be identified.

4. Conditions Necessary to Support the Informal Economy

Social scientists Barry Ellison, Michel Arsenault, and Bill Reimer (1997:257), who write about the informal economy in rural Canada, maintain that a number of specific conditions are required to advance the operation of informal economies. These conditions are analogous to those required for operation of formal economies, “but they have some special aspects that favour the more informal approach to economic behavior” (Ellison et al 1997:258). The conditions that augment informal economies are: resources; knowledge and skills; social networks; social norms that support informal exchange; and economic need (Ellison et al 1997:258-259; Reimer 2000). Each of these components is developed in the passages that follow. Later in this document these conditions will be directly related to wild food harvesting on the North Coast.

The first important factor in the operation of the informal economy is the “availability of *resources* that make production possible”(Ellison 1997:257). Ellison, Arsenault, and Reimer (1997:257) explain, “[t]hese resources may include the availability of land, work space, tools, transportation, cash, and time. Land provides the opportunity to produce or procure food for consumption or exchange. Workspace is frequently essential and could be used to repair tools, product a product, and/or process food. Tools are required and may be either simple or complex. Modes of transportation (e.g., boats, trucks) are consequential for access to harvesting sites or for distributing a product. Although, informal economies appear to function outside of regular economies, the availability of some cash is required for them to operate. Finally, time is an important resource for the process (Ellison et. al. 1997:258-259).

A second condition that serves to enhance the operation of the informal economy is “access to the *knowledge and skills* relating to various product and service activities”(Ellison et. al 1997:259). For example, in order to hunt a deer or catch a sockeye salmon certain knowledge and skills are necessary, including specific and detailed information about resource areas and species-specific understanding.

A third significant element in the operation of informal economies is the “availability of a social network” (Ellison et al 1997:259). A social network creates “contacts for exchanges, access to resources, information, and skills, as well as the conditions for enforcing obligations” (Ellison 1997:259).

These social systems identified in the preceding passage advance the fourth element of the informal economy: “social norms [mutual aid, honouring commitments, self-sufficiency] that support informal exchange” (Ellison 1997:259). The thesis is that enduring norms are “particularly important since the informal economy operates largely outside of the protection of law” (Ellison 1997:259).

The final element, economic need, also supports the growth of the informal economy. The literature suggests that the informal economy “provides an alternative source of goods and services when exclusion from the formal economy occurs” (Reimer 2000:6). Engaging in informal economic activities may become a way to supplement one’s income or to provide some form of security in an uncertain job market.

4.1 North Coast - Operation of Informal Economy and the Conditions That Support It

Drawing upon interviews with wildlife harvesters who use the land and resources on the North Coast, this section discusses the conditions (i.e., resources, knowledge and skills, social network, social norms, and economic need) that support an informal economy in the region. Engaging in such an exploration enables an analysis of the nature and extent of land use in the district.

4.1.1 Informal Economy - Required Resources – Land, Tools, Vehicles, Cash, Time

First, an examination of those resources (i.e., land, tools, transportation, cash, and time) available to those who hunt, fish, and gather. The exploration begins to unfold with a focus on the relationship between a land and resource base that supports an informal economy (i.e., wild life harvesting) on the North Coast. As the following excerpts reveal, those individuals who harvest wild food are able to do so because of access to specific areas and the renewable resources within those locales:

Stephens and Porcher Islands - It's where I gather my food and take my family for recreation. It's close enough to Prince Rupert so that people can go there for the weekend and enjoy it.

We spend \$20 in gas for each day trip to hunt bears. They are close [to Prince Rupert]; it's very convenient.

The local [deer] hunt would be between here [Prince Rupert] and the Khyex River, Tuck Inlet.

I go to Dease Lake for 2 caribou; Smithers for 3 moose; Cabin for a deer.

I don't bother around here for deer.

In October, I did a 10-day trip with 4 guys to Houston for moose.

Two days ago I went for ducks and geese in the harbour. I go up to Tuck Inlet, the mainland coves. A 5km radius.

Locally, [I] just deer hunting on various logging roads. On the big trips we go as far as the Kootenays, in behind Radium Hotsprings, upcountry Houston area, and North and South of Vanderhoof.

I undertake 20 hunting trips annually, with one other person to Khyex, Lower Skeena, Pitt Island, Queen Charlotte Islands and Babine area.

Generally [I] fish in Chatham Sound.

Kingkown Inlet: one of the best harbours on Banks, we used to use it for log storage, bird hunting (geese, ducks) and recreational fishing. There is a historical aspect as well, guys from Oona River used to get logs all along Banks Island.

I undertake one hunting trip a year, alone to Kumealon or Porcher Island for Black tail deer.

Then there is moose hunting. The location varies but takes place somewhere within a 100-mile radius of Dease Lake.

Khtada – sports fishing. Logging is a concern. Selective logging would be okay. You can catch 10 rainbow trout there. We use airplanes. A few people hike in there. There are goats and bears too.

Logging is a threat to Khtada Lake. But we need logging too. I would like to see both go hand in hand—logging and other uses.

Hayward - best local moose. The whole Skeena has the ability to sustain quite a hunt.

Ecstall - one of the best goat hunting areas in North America. Ducks, geese, moose, bear, goats.

Big Falls – if they flood it more, they will lose the moose habitat.

The Skeena waterline along both shores is important. We walk the tracks looking for deer.

Skeena, Kasiks - fairly good moose area, goats on the mountains. There has been logging, a pipeline. It should be protected because lots of fish spawn on the river.

Deer hunting has dropped off drastically in the last 4 years on the mainland south of the Skeena. It think they are moving into the slash where it has been logged. With all the slashes, there are so many deer where there is logging, the wolf population went up and they are cleaning out my area.

We make our living working the entire coast so everything is important to me. The whole coast, all the way from the Alaskan border down to Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands is our work and our pleasure.

The regions that harvesters access vary and are determined, in part, by the type of resources they are seeking to harvest.

The second element in the resource component is the equipment required to harvest wild food products. Specific harvesting activities require particular tools. For example, harvesting land animals involves binoculars, decoys, rifles, scopes, and possibly bows or chest waders. In, addition, meat-cutting equipment (e.g., meat saw - \$200; meat grinder - \$200; and compressor cooler - \$400.) is required to process the larger game animals. Fishing requires rods, boots, jackets, and pants. Hunters and fishermen provided the following inventories of the tools require:

A rifle with a scope is \$1200, and that's not even a good one, just middle of the road.

The decoys [for ducks and geese] are \$10 each.

[For] ducks I use a 12 gauge, for moose a 7mm Remington Mag, and for deer a 243. They are \$800 each or so. I have \$500 binoculars for animal ID [i.e., identification].

Investments in hunting and fishing: clothes - \$5000; raft - \$500; guns - \$5000; rods - \$200 x 10 rods, tents, telescopes, chainsaws, etc.

Fishing: Even the lesser gear adds up. My boots are goretex, \$260. Jacket and pants are \$450, survival suit for fishing is \$1200.

It is clear that harvesting game and fish has the potential to be an expensive undertaking. Harvesting berries, mushrooms, and wood involves simpler and less expensive tools and at times is engaged while hunting for example, thereby diminishing fuel costs of traveling to a harvest site. One hunter stated that:

We do other activities like berry and mushroom picking when hunting. Your prime hunt is in the early morning or evening.

Third, hunting and fishing require access to transportation. Hunters and fishermen provided the following summary of their investment in various modes of transportation used for hunting and/or fishing:

The investment in hunting is considerable. You need a truck, so instead of a \$15,000 vehicle, you have a \$45,000 truck.

I have 2 boats: a 15.5 ft. zodiac and a 14 ft. aluminum [boat]. That is strictly for hunting and fishing. I bought the zodiac second hand and it was \$6300, and the motor was \$4000.

Investments in hunting and fishing: truck - \$50,000; boat - \$50,000; jet boat - \$15,000.

For me it's cheap now. I have the boat, ATVs, guns, travel trailer, truck. The last 25 years that stuff has been paid for.

The fourth required component in an informal economy is related to the second (tools) and third (transportation) elements. The inventories of tools and means of transportation represented in the preceding passages indicate cash is required to participate in hunting and fishing. This section complements the preceding passages by recording the additional costs incurred in fishing and hunting activities:

The investment in hunting is considerable. ...It costs approximately \$18 for 5 gallons of gas, which is 1.5 hours of running. The bullets for a shotgun are over \$1/shot. For a high-end rifle, they are \$3/shot.

I do a 10-day trip south of Houston. I've done that for 34 years. The gas bill for the truck and boats is \$425.

January is the end of the migratory bird season. I hunt locally with my tin boat. I use a tank of gas a day. The last 2 weeks of the season I will go out 4 times. 2 of us go. 12 shots at \$1.25 a shot. \$18 for a tank of marine gas plus oil. Times 4 trips. If lucky I get 3 geese (they feed 4 people each) and 15 ducks (1 duck = one meal for one person).

Crabbing, I go 4 trips – one tank of gas for 2 trips. We get 6 individual meals each time.

February [includes a] 10-12 day trip to the Charlottes. We never calculate food as an expense - you're going to eat anyway. I do 2 trips to the Charlottes each year. For an over height vehicle and a boat it's \$300, plus \$50 for a stateroom. (\$122 each way, plus \$19 per person plus \$6 x 20ft for boat) = \$318 for 4 guys one way. Fill up with gas once: \$90.

Boat run – Trotter Bay. 2 boats, 4-5 guys. Last year a plane dropped in another hunter.

Plus the Alliford Bay ferry. \$17.25 plus .90 x 20ft, \$4 per passenger: \$51.25 each way for 4 people. Boat gas is considerable: 5 x 14 gallon containers at \$0.73/gallon. = \$73.65

A hunting license is \$20. Tags are \$22 each. We spend \$20 in gas for each day trip to hunt bears.

The cash that is required for the purchase of hunting and fishing equipment, links both the informal and formal economy within the region.

Fifth, time is an important resource for the operation of an informal economy. The individuals interviewed are generally long time residents of the region who often list more than one significant occupation. Furthermore, their occupations, current and former, allow a certain degree of flexibility in regard to time dedicated to work in the formal economy (carpenters, coastguards, commercial fishermen, construction workers, firemen, labourers on fish farms, and loggers). To illustrate the relationship between time and informal economies, the annual round of one of the harvesters interviewed is presented:

January: *End of the migratory bird season. ...The last 2 weeks of the season I will go out 4 times. 2 of us go.*

Crabbing, I go on 4 trips...

February: *10-12 day trip to the Charlottes. Deer: we take 18 animals.*

March: *Nothing but crabbing once a week. Big tides: cucumber- bag limit is 12 each. Go twice a season. Starfish – for fertilizer for garden. 6 each trip limit. Go 3-4 times a year.*

***April:** is a dead month - only crabbing.*

***May:** Khtada Lake, bear hunting, fishing.*

4 or 5 of us do a May fishing trip for rockfish, prawns, king crab. In 2 boats, 4-days to a week. South of Rupert.

***June, July and August:** are dead months for hunting.*

*When I was younger I went goat hunting in **August** but the mountain got too high for me.*

***September:** Start hunting in a little more earnest. Duck hunting up the river. The local deer hunt doesn't amount to much. The younger guys put in 3-4 hunts where I put in one. If things are good, I get one deer.*

***October:** This year, I did a fly in trip at the end of the month to the east of Dease Lake. ... We just got fish. There were 5 of us.*

*The rest of **October**, I did a 10-day trip with 4 guys to Houston for moose.*

***November:** I go to the Charlottes on November 11 for a 10-day trip, 3 of us. We are talking about shipping back deer so we can take more, because we didn't get a moose.*

I'll go bird hunting and crabbing once a week or so.

That's all I do now. I have that free time. I'll be retired 6 years in May.

4.1.2 Skills and Knowledge

Having examined the required resources that make harvesting and consumption of game meat, fish, berries, and mushrooms on the North Coast possible, the discussion shifts to the second requirement for the operation of informal economies: knowledge and skills. The literature on informal economies suggests that the range of skills and knowledge may be greater in rural areas as opposed to urban areas because:

The relatively high level of commodification in urban areas is likely to result in a decline of the knowledge and skills that are important for such activities. [Reimer 2000:5]

Furthermore, in the last few decades there has been an increasing recognition that traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) can contribute substantially to resource management planning. The work of anthropologist M.M.R. Freeman

(1979) being one of the earliest of such studies, proposed that aboriginal management systems differed from 'scientific' management but were ecologically viable. Since then further studies have been and continue to be undertaken (Berkes 1993, 1999; Berneshawi 1997; Bombay 1996; Borrows 1997; Fast and Berkes 1994; Freeman 1979; Inglis 1999; Johannes 1993; Lui 1995; Nadasdy 1999; Palsson 1997; Ruddle 1994; Wavey 1993; and Wolfe 1992).

Informed by both the literature on informal economies and traditional ecological knowledge, this paper examines the skills and knowledge that wild life harvesters in the North Coast apply in the harvesting process. For one, knowledge of where to go to access the resources is required:

We do other activities like berry and mushroom picking when hunting. Berries we do a couple dozen pines of jam and jelly. Terrace is a better area for that. From here to Burns Lake we get some. Salmon berries are great here. We'll do a local, specific trip for berries and mushrooms (mostly Sept).

Kwinamass, Union Inlet, Port Simpson Peninsula (Pearl Harbour, Big Bay, etc.), - they are all important to me for food gathering and recreation. I fish, hunt and berry pick there.

May: I am spring salmon fishing, angling up the river. It's a short window for springs. You need to be out there before the water gets too high.

I go crabbing, in the river. There is not so much halibut around Smith Island now, not like it used to be. I used to stop for halibut on the way to the trap line in December. I would average 2-3 a year while I was waiting for the tide at Gamble Point.

In addition, knowledge the wild life (e.g., habits, characteristics) itself facilitates participation in harvesting activities:

I usually take a spring bear- they are easiest to butcher. The fall bears are feeding on berries. They have a great flavour but the meat is marbled and the fat goes rancid quickly.

For the population dynamics, because of the wolf population, the bag limit is reasonable. The wolf population is getting bad. When we were hunting, we gave the stressed fawn call to lure a buck. 2 wolves showed up. Now we find wolf tracks where there used to be only deer tracks.

March/April: start gearing up for bear season, which starts mid-April. ...I am looking for a good hide. I like to use every thing I can, other than the stomach. We make sausage, roasts. I want to make bear hams – they are supposed to be very tasty. In a 250 lb bear, you lose 50 lbs to skin and fur, 30 lbs to head, 40 lbs guts, and 40 lbs bones, unusable. That's what, 90lbs left over. That's generous in terms of edible meat. ...Spring bears are good – they have good coats. 3-4 weeks into the season they lose patches of fur – to rubs. They are nice and lean at the beginning too. Bear fat, ... if you render it down, it is great for waterproofing leather, and I'm told that the lard is fantastic for baking.

We do some berry picking. Soapberries- we give those away, blueberries, mushrooms for home use. Some years we jarred a few cases.

The interviews undertaken with harvesters in the region reveal an intimate and developed knowledge of the region's land and resources. This knowledge is vital to participating in harvesting practices.

4.1.3 Social Networks

The third significant element in the functioning the informal economy is the availability of a social network that provides opportunities for informal exchange of goods and services. Factors that facilitate the development of social networks include geographic proximity, kinship, and the sharing of interests (Ellison et al 1997:259). Interviews with wild food harvesters reveal that a social system in which informal exchanges take place exists in the region and is facilitated and in turn facilitates exchanges of goods and services related to wild food harvesting. The following excerpts illustrate this social system and its operation:

The end of June I'll go for halibut, rock cod, and lingcod. As the weather gets better my fishing partners change. At first it's hardier people like my Dad and then others who have less patience to focus on Chinook and need more action in ground fish.

The last part of the month I'll do a major hunting trip. Can be for goats, sheep, caribou, elk or moose. Often we'll rent a plane out of Dease Lake or Fort Nelson. 2-3 people. For goats we'll go from here on Inland or Harbour Air to above the Kutzemateen River. ...Average one animal per trip. Often a moose. Divided for 2 people.

Early in the year I go to the Charlottes for deer. 5 or 6 of us went over last February and got 18 deer for lunchmeat and sausages.

Fishing: I go out 3 times a year with other people for salmon and I can it.

October: ... I did a 10-day trip with 4 guys to Houston for moose. We helped another group get their moose out of a lake, and got half of it.

I go to the Charlottes on November 11 for a 10-day trip, 3 of us. We are talking about shipping back deer so we can take more, because we didn't get a moose. We will take around 15. But it depends on the whims of nature, and the amount of hunting pressure. We have never come back with less than 9, usually 12.

The interviews reveal that harvesting tends to be an extremely social activity. Most of fishing and hunting that interviewees spoke about happens in pairs or larger groups of family and/or friends. Many of the more distant hunting trips are organized well in advance and provide an opportunity for friends to spend time together, often friends who live in different communities. Some of these kinds of trips are repeated every year – there is an annual moose hunt in Dease Lake, or a mountain goat trip in the Kutzemateen.

The social groups that go hunting together are built in a variety of fashions. Some are based on kinship; brothers or brothers-in-law often hunt and fish together. Others are built around groups of people who work together in the formal economy, such as a number of mill workers. One deer hunting group consisted entirely of commercial fishermen who were finished fishing for the season. Some of these fishermen work collaboratively when fishing, other members of the group were family or simply acquaintances from the dock. Some participants suggested that they have sought out other retired individuals for hunting partners. Other groups reflect residency patterns, for example, a group of Hunts Inlet residents hunt together yearly on the mainland. Similarly, Oona River residents often hunt together close to the community. Harvesting activities thus reinforce ties of kinship, community, and work.

Furthermore, many community members jar sockeye. This fish appears to move primarily through the informal economy – sockeye is bought directly from a salmon gill-netter for jarring. People buy fish from the same fishermen every year, an acquaintance or family member.

4.1.4 Social Norms That Support Informal Economy

A fourth element of an informal economy is social norms (e.g., mutual aid, honouring commitments, and self-sufficiency) that support informal exchange. The thesis is that:

Since one cannot expect the immediate repayment of most exchanges or services, it is necessary to have the confidence that one will benefit over the long term. This can only be accomplished through informal norms and constraints that maintain the value of helping one another. [Ellison et al 1997:259]

Based on the interviews it would appear that exchanges as they relate to game, fish, mushrooms, and berries take various forms. However, all of these exchanges appear to lack a formal accounting system, such as one would find operating in a formal economy. For one, food is traded for food.

Crab – gives away 6-12 every time I go out.

Salmon and halibut- basically I take what I need. I eat it fresh, give it away, send it to my parents, and smoke it. I freeze it to send away or to smoke.

We can the sockeye. 16 cases, but we'll only eat one. My parents get 4.

I smoked 15-20 fish, most were given away.

I send 100s of crab to Prince George, live, on the bus, to my family.

Fishing: Now I do very little. My friends bring me fish. We eat it twice a week in the summer.

Second, food is traded for services. For example, one individual stated that his household provided fish to family members in exchange for assistance around his property. Third, there are exchanges of materials (e.g., skins) derived from the harvest animals for a service to be determined. One gentleman explained that he had given the skin from a bear he had harvested to his friend. The friend used the skin to make a drum. Fourth, given that hunting and fishing are expensive undertakings there also appears to be a sharing of resources such as vehicles, in the sense that two or more individuals may hunt or fish together. There are instances as well where individuals who do not own their own boats or all terrain vehicles go hunting and fishing with friends. Fifth, in a group of people, sometimes only one will receive a moose tag in the license lottery. A group or pair will go out to hunt that one tag. Therefore, the resource that is shared is access.

4.1.5 Economic Need

The final condition to be explored is economic need. The argument is that participation in an informal economy becomes “an appealing, perhaps necessary alternative” to involvement in a regular economy. For example, one of the seniors interviewed claimed that harvesting did supplement his income:

I like wild game. It has no additives, no hormones I don't enjoy killing anything. Harvesting does supplement my income, which is meager for senior citizens. My moose costs \$4.50/lb, not including the vehicle, the gun etc. We can berries, and mushrooms. We pick all kinds except pine mushrooms. We can them or dry them – a dozen cases. We pick black seaweed on some beaches and dry it. It is twice as good as that east coast dulse. ... We take all the seafood legal to us. Salmon, ground fish, sole, red snapper. If it is edible, we'll eat it.

However, various individuals also pointed out that harvesting big game in particular was not cost-effective. As discussed earlier in this document, the cost of big game hunting and fishing can be considerable. In regard to the procurement of game meat, hunters argue:

It's a heck of a lot cheaper to go and buy meat. I hunt for both meat and recreation.

The investment in hunting is considerable.

Therefore, in terms of economic need, interview data suggest that hunting is not related primarily to economic need. Most participants emphasized that hunting is an extremely expensive recreational activity – a luxury. Price per pound, game meat is usually more expensive than store-bought meat. Most participants suggested that their hunting activity decreases in times of economic hardship. Several noted that there are few people hunting this season because the pulp mill in Prince Rupert has been shut down and many people are out of work. Several suggested that this was quite noticeable in the fewer number of people traveling to Dease Lake for moose.

Other activities, like fishing, are less expensive. For commercial fishermen particularly, using some of their catch as “food fish” is a key source of winter food. This would reflect both a preference for eating fish, and the benefits of ‘free’ protein. Although it was not possible to quantitatively analyze the changes over the last few years, one can estimate that take-home sockeye has increased slightly due to the lower prices harvesters receive for their catch – the economic gap between selling a fish and taking it home as food has decreased.

The shift of some fisheries to quota has also impacted fishermen's ability to take home fish for food. In the halibut fishery, all fish must be weighed and validated. Those fish that are not validated are illegal. Most fishermen lease halibut quota at approximately 60% of the market value of the fish. If a take-home fish is validated, it effectively costs them \$2.50/lb- it is not free. The quota system has thus limited the ability of non-Aboriginal fishermen to secure a winter supply of fish.

The preparation of take-home fish is interesting. Participants can/jar, freeze and pickle their own fish. Those living in Prince Rupert cannot usually smoke their own fish. A number of licensed smoking facilities exist in Prince Rupert.

For approximately \$2.00/lb they will smoke your fish for you. So some of the fish put away is not free at all.

Harvesting of wild foods also includes gathering of mushrooms, berries and wood. Harvesting these wild foods tends to be more cost-effective because the process requires simpler tools. Furthermore, as state previously gathering berries and mushrooms is sometimes engaged in while hunting, thereby decreasing site access costs.

4.2 Identification of the Values of the Informal Economy (Processes and Products of Wild Food Harvesting on the North Coast)

As stated earlier, informal economic activities are generally not recorded for use by government-backed regulatory agencies and therefore undetectable to conventional economic analysis. As a result the benefits of participating in an informal economy to individuals, communities, and the formal economy are also not recorded. This results in the exclusion of those participating in such economies from planning and policy processes.

This section strives to make visible the value of the informal economic activities that take place on the North Coast. It will be argued that: wild food harvesting provides an alternative source of goods and services; the process of wild food harvesting expands the capacity of communities and individuals; wild food harvesting promotes social and cultural well being; and wild food harvesting contributes to the formal economy.

4.2.1 Value of Informal Economy: Alternative Source of Goods (Wild Food)

The thesis is that informal economies, such as the one operating in the North Coast region and influenced by the forest and forest resources that define the landscape, provide an alternative source of goods and services. The study reveals that one of the reasons that an informal economy operates in the region is due to access to the renewable resources (i.e., wild food) harvested by the area's residents.

In this section we examine the resources that are harvested in the region, beginning with land-based animals. Interviews with the area's residents reveal that the following land-based species are harvested for consumption: bear, deer, ducks, geese, grouse, and moose. The data suggests that caribou, elk, goat, and sheep are also harvested, but harvesters travel outside the North Coast boundaries to do so. Of the larger land-based species harvested, interviews reveal that the area's residents most frequently harvest deer, closely followed by moose. However, a moose (i.e., 450lb) yields more meat than the deer (i.e., 40-45lb. of edible meat per animal.

Interview data indicates that those who do harvest game animals are a part of households that generally consume game meat at least twice a week. Fish harvested in the region and store bought chicken and/or pork supplement this. However, there are households in the region that buy little or no commercial meat. Those that do harvest and consume game meat appear to use it as a replacement for beef and maintain that it is superior to store bought meat. This belief is articulated in various ways. One resident, whose household of two eats fish once a week and game meat twice weekly, supplemented with store purchased chicken claims that:

...The game meat is leaner and healthier than store bought beef for example. Everyone is pushing free-range animals, yet they are still against hunting.

A second resident, whose household of four consumes game meat four times a week states:

I believe game meat is better for you—less additives, injections.

People, who participate in berry and mushroom picking, hunting, and fishing, maintain the following regarding the benefit of game animals:

...it [game meat] has no additives and hormones.

Wild game has no cholesterol. And with red meats, there is a definite health concern for older people.

We bought some commercial meat but very little. Over 75% of our protein, I caught. It is way better for you, high protein, and low cholesterol.

I have 2 older daughters who have moved out and they complain about T-bone steaks being too greasy.

We have all the meat we eat, except for chicken. As my brother put it: It's caught or shot, not bought. My daughter moved out and went to buy a big roast to have a party. Then she looked at the price and bought a tiny one. Now she wants meat from home. She never realized what it cost.

As stated previously, households on average consume game meat weekly. Protein is also derived from a weekly consumption of fish. The fish is either procured by household members or given them by family, friends, or acquaintances. Residents of the region harvest both freshwater and saltwater fish. Salmon (Chinook, Coho, pink, and sockeye) is the primary resource harvested and consumed. In addition residents harvest, exchange, and consume cod, halibut, red snapper, sole, trout (rainbow, cutthroat). Shellfish, including crabs, clams, prawns, and shrimp are also eaten. Some residents also harvest seaweed.

In addition, the area's residents also use the region's forest to pick berries (e.g., blueberries, huckleberries, soapberries), fiddleheads, and mushrooms.

4.2.2 Value of Informal Economy (Wild Food Harvesting) - Expanding the Capacity of Individuals and Communities

This section proposes that informal economies, such as harvesting, serve to expand the capacity of individuals in the communities as well as the communities themselves. Interviews reveal that participation in an informal economy creates an opportunity for both greater self-reliance and co-reliance (Nicholls and Dyson 1983:157). In the scholarly literature Reimer (2000:19) claims that:

The exchanges and service activities of the informal economy require a level of reciprocity that affirms trust and continued interaction. It is a context in which new relationships can be formed and tested without high risk, information is passed between and among employers and employees, and new ventures can be explored.

Returning to the North Coast specifically, in the preceding passages the social networks within which wild food harvesting, consumption, and distribution occur were revealed. These social networks need not only be used for harvesting purposes. In fact these social systems can be maintained beyond the activity of hunting or fishing and may instead be transformed to fulfill many purposes and functions. As stated previously, the social groups that go hunting and fishing together are developed in a variety of fashions. Some of these alliances are established and nurtured around groups of people who work together in the formal economy, such as a number of mill workers. One deer hunting group consisted entirely of commercial fishermen who were finished fishing for the season. Some of these fishermen work collaboratively when fishing, other members of the group were family or simply acquaintances from the dock.

More explicitly, the formation of alliances in the wild food harvesting processes provide opportunities for individuals who are seeking work to create an impression or to establish contacts. For those individuals who work together in the formal economy, harvesting provides an opportunity to strengthen social bonds that will of consequence in the work environment. The formation of productive alliances and the building of capacity the individual level ultimately enhance the capacity of the community.

4.2.3 Value of Informal Economy - Wild food Harvesting Serving to Promote Social and Cultural Well-being

The third value of the informal economy expands builds upon the notion of harvesting practices expanding individuals and communities capacities. For one,

harvesting enhances the quality of life by getting people out on the land in a social activity. Those interviewed emphasize how healthy this is—not just in the healthiness of the meat, but of the activity itself. One participant said he began hunting because he didn't like the bar scene. Further, some of the men interviewed were in their 60s and 70, but continue to be physically active out of doors. One of the interviewees explained:

I go hunting to get up into the mountains. I enjoy it. I go often just for the hike. It's more for fun at my age.

Second, harvesting serves to strengthen family ties and provide and opportunity for the transfer of knowledge and skills about the land and resources. Many interviewees spend a great deal of time hunting and fishing with their children. One of the hunters interviewed stated:

I take my 4 grandsons moose hunting and my 4 granddaughters wanted to go. I started taking the girls to the Charlottes. I'll go for goat soon, with my daughter.

Harvesting activities are often incorporated into family vacations.

May: Long weekend is a traditional family outing. We go camping in the Kitwancool area and target cutthroat fishing in the lake. We keep an ice cream bucket full and smoke them, fry them. We go motor biking and have small boat. I have a jet boat, fiberglass boat, cartopper and a raft.

Each of these resource dependent activities serves to strengthen family ties and provide opportunities for the transfer of socio-cultural knowledge, in particular knowledge about the land and resources.

Third, it can be argued that harvesting has the potential of improving an individual's quality of life by enhancing an individual's sense of self-worth. Being in a position to harvest one's food is empowering. This notion of procuring food as empowering is articulated in the following ways:

Hunting is not a finance thing. I can buy all I need from Safeway. It's a preference. 75% of it is because it is fun and I enjoy it. However, if you take away the incentive [procuring meat], I wouldn't be out there as much. ...Meat is definitely the driver. ...Bringing something home for the table is part of your nature.

There is no such thing as[pure] subsistence in this day and age. . . . Because everyone can afford a freezer and can afford to buy meat. It's about priorities. At the same time, while it is a sport, it is critically important because it is ingrained in people, this hunter-gatherer instinct. Still bringing something home for the table is part of your nature. It's a bit hard to describe.

Before I hunted harder because I had a family to feed. I kill less now because I don't need it. My kids were brought up on wild meat. If you thought about what it cost, financially, you would do something else. I am not a trophy hunter. Everything I take, we eat. The meat hunter shoots anything he has a recipe for.

My daughter moved out and went to buy a big roast to have a party. Then she looked at the price and bought a tiny one. Now she wants meat from home. She never realized what it cost.

We have all the meat we eat, except for chicken. As my brother put it: It's caught or shot, not bought.

It is 100% about the food, sure it's fun but that's not why we're out there.

It's[hunting] a lot of work. We're in it for the meat. I think it's an old hunter's instinct we all have.

Fourth, harvesting has the potential to improve one's quality of life by creating a sense of belonging:

Kwinitsa and Exchamsiks. The biggest threat to the area is increased access. The animal population would decrease. Logging couldn't impact it. Every one of these river valleys, I've hunted and fished up. They are beautiful. There are so few people interested in accessing them. But the more we talk of ecotourism, the more we should protect these places. Especially the narrow, scenic valleys where the wood is of marginal value. The more the rest of the world goes crazy, the more people will want to see our systems.

We make our living working the entire coast so everything is important to me. The whole coast, all the way from the Alaskan border down to Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands is our work and our pleasure.

This section concludes with the work of anthropologist Dr. M.M.R. Freeman (1993:246) who writes:

It is through the seasonal and annual repetition and transfer of appropriate knowledge and behavior to succeeding generations that important aspects, indeed core values, of the culture of the group are reproduced over time, and the cultural identity of the individual and society thereby assured...

Harvesting on the North Coast facilitates the process Freeman speaks of. Albeit difficult to measure and quantify harvesting does enhance the social and cultural well-being of the individuals who participate in the process and eventually the communities they inhabit.

4.2.4 Informal Economy (Wild food harvesting) Contributing to the Formal economy

It has been established that harvesting of game animals in particular is a costly undertaking. It has the potential to inject a great deal of money into a region's formal economy. Robert Wolfe, who has addressed the myths concerning subsistence practices in Alaska, supports the interview data. He writes:

Subsistence is not a welfare system for people with low incomes. In fact, households with the highest incomes in rural communities usually produce the most subsistence foods. Households with the lowest incomes usually produce less subsistence foods. ...

The households who produce the most subsistence foods in a community are usually households with large, mature labor forces, which have equipment for hunting and fishing. Usually, these are households with mature parents and several mature children. They have the labor and equipment to harvest wild foods. They typically produce extra subsistence food to share with elderly relatives, the less fortunate, and young adults. The mature households also usually have greater monetary incomes because there may be several household members with jobs.

It should be noted that in Alaska “[s]ubsistence has been legally defined to include the customary and traditional uses of fish and game in all of Alaska’s rural areas. If a person moves into a rural area and adopts that way of living for their own, then that person, whether Alaska Native or non-indigenous, may legally fish and hunt for subsistence.

5. Land Management Planning Process

In preceding passages it was proposed that activities associated with the informal economy are not measured and therefore their value is largely invisible. Focusing on harvesting from the point of view of activities rather than currency this study sought to make visible both the informal economic activity as well as the benefits of participating in wild food harvesting. This study demonstrates the

extent and persistence of wild food harvesting on the North Coast as well as the significant benefits gained. Furthermore, it was reinforced that harvesting is dependent upon the land and resources within the North Coast boundaries. More specifically, an informal economy exists on the North Coast because a significant resource of the land is wild food. Therefore, the land management plan should ensure the sustainability of this renewable resource, hereby enabling and supporting wild food harvesting as a contribution to the formal economy and the general good of the region's residents.

Robert Wolfe, writing about subsistence practices and regulations in Alaska identifies factors that have the potential to threaten subsistence. He claims [n.d.]:

...any change that depletes wild resources, reduces access to wild areas and resources, or increases competition between user groups can create problems for subsistence.

Wolfe's outline of threats to subsistence practices in Alaska is useful in discussing the situation on the North Coast. What is required is a land and resource management plan that ensures the continuity of wild foods, that provides access to wild areas and resource, and that addresses the issue of competition between user groups. Those that use the land for harvesting take the following position regarding the preservation of the informal economic exchanges that they are currently engaged in:

Access is a concern for the future. There was an article in the Daily News that said that people were willing to pay more to use resources. Not everyone is.

The Gitnadoix River is classified water – you need a separate license to access that area. The guides wanted that to happen. They got so many hours on a license to take people there to fish. The areas are reserved for guides. I am worried that will happen with hunting and only the wealthy will be able to afford to do it. Any kid making \$2.50/hour should be able to do this.

I have no problem with the guides but I wouldn't want to see us kicked out of areas.

Hunting and fishing and the resources we can all access should be available to every Canadian citizen and every landed immigrant of less than 5 years. The rest can pay for it. The fees for non-citizens should be higher than they are. (Immigrants over 5 years – if they don't want to become Canadian citizens they should have to pay too.)

Problem with limited entry –the odds change. If you don't get one your odds are better for the next year. It should be a pure lottery.

And conservationists are buying tags too. I don't care about that, as long as the lottery is fair.

The cost is the issue. A guy who hasn't had work this year should have the same right to hunt as I do. But the tags, licenses cost more than \$100.

The number of people from Rupert that went up north this year was much less. People here can't afford it.

It doesn't matter what the committees decide, the government will do what they want. My concern is about access – where can I put a boat in the water.

A prime example is Exchamsiks. I think they cooked the numbers to say it lost money. I know people who would leave their RVs there and go home and work 6 days and come back. They paid \$12 a day so they wouldn't lose their spot. They closed the parking lot right here for Tall Trees Trail because it was on the other side of the highway and they were worried about people crossing. Now there are cars parked on both sides of the highway instead of in a lot.

Maps: I value any place that's accessible. With the FPC the government has done everything they can to keep us out of areas. They make the forest companies remove the culverts and the roads. They deactivate those roads and then they can't get in to fight forest fires.

I see a threat from too much access. Logging roads, mining roads. The creatures have no place to hide and there will be overexploitation of the resource. Plus the environmental impacts of mining and logging. Excessive clear-cuts cause slides into the river. There is leaching from mines. The worse thing for wildlife is access. Often logging does more good than harm in terms of habitat.

Exchamisks Park closed. There were only 2 parks along the highway, now one. ...All the road deactivations are a problem. The road behind Kwinitsa was great for moose, bear, goat hunting. Then they dug it up. ...Along the river we have no access except by boat.

Logging is a threat to Khtada Lake. But we need logging too. I would like to see both of it go hand in hand – logging and other uses. I have friends who are loggers. The only real complaint about logging is that they don't clean up enough sometimes.

Logging is a threat to trapping. A large clearcut could mess it up for some time. But selective logging is okay. There is still cover for marten. For hunting, logging chases animals away from the immediate area. But when they're done, it goes back to normal.

Fish farms, fish sport camps. Any coastal development that limits access or pollutes. These places are sensitive because they are major areas for salmon migration, holding, etc. There are limited anchorages on the coast and they would be impacted by development. Consider where the anchorages are!

Fishing is very different when I first started out, there was so much more opportunity. Resource space was very much more open then, as compared to now. Part of the problem in fighting for this kind of stuff is that kids growing up now won't have lived it, so they think that the way things are now is as good as it gets. The resource base has shifted away from local use to southern or international, not that the resource has diminished much. For example, the way southern-based sport fishing has taken over from northern community based commercial fishing.

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In conclusion, Reimer (1997:20) in his discussion of informal economies in rural areas writes:

The recognition and integration of the informal economy into our analysis and policy formulation will have significant benefits. It will provide a more accurate picture of the interdependence of formal economic activities with the informal, improve the accuracy of our expectations and models, and provide a more appropriate base for policy development. It will also give recognition to the many ways in which Canadians contribute to the general economy in ways that are invisible to current accounts. It will highlight the importance the informal economy plays in rural Canada, and it will valorize the many ways in which people create, exchange, and support one another outside of the formal economy”.

Making accommodations with the North Coast LRMP for wild food harvesting practices will benefit both individuals participating in the practice as well as the community of which they are a part.