



The extractives industry: (un)likely and (un)welcome partners in regenerating Indigenous cultures in Canada?

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we critically examine the ways in which the extractives industry in Canada is engaging in partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations that promote Indigenous cultural practices through leisure and cultural programmes. We examined two cases in Canada, the Northwest Territories On The Land Collaborative that partners with Dominion Diamond and Diavik Diamond Mines, and the Urban Native Youth Association, an organization that is partnering with Suncor Energy Inc. to develop a Native Youth Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. Our findings reveal that these extractives companies are being framed as positive partners for the regeneration of Indigenous cultures in Canada, while at the same time continuing to have negative environmental and social impacts on Indigenous communities. These findings build on a growing critical consensus that corporate social responsibility practices are part of a strategy that allows corporations to gain legitimacy and access to resources whilst protecting their economic bottom line.

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Introduction

The goal of this research is to examine the ways in which the extractives industry (i.e. mining, oil, and gas) in Canada is engaging in partnerships with Indigenous¹-led organizations to support Indigenous cultures. We examined two different cases that involve an extractives company/ies partnering with an Indigenous-led organization to promote Indigenous cultural practices through the provision of leisure and cultural activities. In the first case, we examined the Northwest Territories On The Land Collaborative ('The Collaborative'), which is a collaborative that includes government, charitable organizations, community representatives, and corporations, including two extractives company partners: Dominion Diamond Mines and Diavik Diamond Mine. The Collaborative provides funding for cultural and leisure programmes for northern communities in Canada, and it has a particular focus on programmes that promote rebuilding relationships with the natural environment. In the second case, we examined the proposed building of a Native Youth Centre in downtown Vancouver, a project that has been spearheaded by the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) and includes a partnership with the City of

Vancouver and Suncor Energy Inc. (Suncor), an oil and gas company. The Native Youth Centre is proposed to provide educational, leisure, and cultural programmes to Indigenous urban youth, and also housing for Indigenous families.

We engaged in a critical analysis of these two cases by examining the way in which the extractives companies framed their involvement in the respective projects and also how the non-profit organizations in turn framed the involvement of Dominion, Diavik, and Suncor in promoting Indigenous cultures and well-being. We were interested in how these framings might shape understandings of Indigenous self-determination, and reconciliation via these programmes. We analyzed publicly available documents, media articles, annual reports, and meeting minutes. Our findings reveal that through these partnerships, the extractives companies are being framed as positive partners for the regeneration of Indigenous cultures and well-being in Canada, while at the same time continuing to have negative environmental and social impacts on Indigenous communities. Additionally, we also found that the extractives companies utilized the concept of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples as a framing practice to legitimize their roles within these cultural and leisure programmes. Much of the lay public do not have first-hand experience with extractives companies and obtain much of their understanding about the industry from texts such as the media, company websites and documents, and also websites and documents from organizations with whom they work. These texts provide an opportunity to analyze how these extractives companies are being framed to the public. The findings of this research build on a growing critical consensus that corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices are part of a strategy that allows corporations to gain legitimacy and access to resources whilst protecting their economic bottom line (Du and Vieira 2012; Taylor and Friedel 2011). This research holds potential in promoting social change by considering the possibilities of funding leisure and cultural programming that promote Indigenous self-determination and reconciliation without a reliance upon the CSR of extractives companies.

We begin this paper by reviewing histories of the extractives industry in Canada and its impact on Indigenous communities; the role of the extractives industry in promoting the wellbeing of communities through their CSR activities; and discussions concerning the promotion of Indigenous cultures and self-determination in Canada. Following the literature review, we provide an overview of the research methods used. Next, we present our results, which focus in particular on the ways in which extractives companies are framed as positive partners for Indigenous communities as well as the utilization of the reconciliation frame to legitimize companies' roles within these leisure and cultural organizations. In discussing these findings, we raise concerns about the extractives industry promoting its role in the regeneration of Indigenous cultures throughout Canada and the impact this could have on the reconciliation process.

Literature review

Extractives industry and Indigenous communities in Canada

The extractives industry has played a lasting role in the continued colonial oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada. For many years, with the federal government's support, the extractives industry gained access to Indigenous lands for the extraction of natural

resources without much input from the communities where the extractives industry operated (Barsh 1994). This has contributed to loss of lands, lack of access to food and clean drinking water, and has generally created a challenging environment for Indigenous communities and cultures to thrive (Preston 2013). Significant parts of Canada rely heavily on the economic benefits of the oil and gas industry, specifically Alberta and the Northwest Territories (Slowey 2008; van Luijk et al. 2020). In 2016, Statistics Canada found that energy production made up approximately 20% of the Albertan provincial GDP, and mineral and mining production made up approximately 20% of the Northwest Territories' GDP (Alexander et al. 2018). This has resulted in increased pressure to engage in resource extraction even when there is resistance to it. The extractives industry continues to impact communities across Canada and Indigenous communities are usually those that are most impacted by them. Preston (2017) describes the landscape of the Athabasca oilsands in Alberta, and the impact the extractives industry has had on this environment:

The extraction sites are industrial wastelands visible from space – where once boreal forest covered the region, toxic tailings lakes, surface mining moonscapes and massive bitumen processing facilities stretch for hundreds of kilometers. Pipelines crisscross the region, disrupting caribou migration patterns, disturbing generations-old Métis and First Nations traplines that feed communities, and occasionally bursting and leaching toxic diluent and bitumen into the earth. (366)

It is because of these numerous impacts on Indigenous communities, and rising resistance to resource extraction that extractives companies have worked over the years to create support from Indigenous communities throughout Canada, specifically through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Corporate social responsibility

Extractives companies have worked in different ways over the years to demonstrate and create connections with Indigenous communities in Canada. This comes as no surprise, as many of the lucrative minerals such as diamonds and also extractable oil and gas that have been found throughout Canada are nearby Indigenous communities and on Indigenous lands. For many years, with the federal government's support, the extractives industry gained access to Indigenous lands for the extraction of natural resources without much input from the communities where the extractives industry operated (Preston 2013). More recently, this way of operating has become less popular, mainly because Indigenous communities have protested against the use of their lands without their input and agreement (Kirsch 2010; Slowey 2008; Taylor and Friedel 2011).

The current trend adopted by extractives companies within Canada has been to increase involvement with willing Indigenous communities through engagement with CSR. The concept of CSR has been popularized in recent years and viewed as a way to ensure corporations are 'giving back' (Frynas 2005). This is particularly popular with extractives companies that have broad ranging impacts on communities. CSR is a way of increasing perceived legitimacy and social acceptance of these corporations (Wanvik 2016). Types of CSR initiatives range from providing grants for infrastructure and community programmes, creating partnerships with community organizations, to pledging support for environmental guidelines. In Canadian extractives companies located near Indigenous lands, CSR is often used in conjunction with binding Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs).

IBAs are 'confidential bilateral agreements, negotiated between mining corporations and aboriginal communities to address a multitude of adverse socioeconomic and biophysical impacts that can arise from mining development' (Fidler and Hitch 2007, 50). These agreements generally provide communities with promises of enhanced environmental protections, funding for social, educational, and health programmes, and infrastructural support (among other things) (Gilmour and Mellett 2013). Gilmour and Mellett (2013) explain that IBAs are 'increasingly used by resource developers to encourage Aboriginal participation in, and support for, proposed projects where such projects may potentially be hindered by issues which arise out of community concerns' (387). While it could be argued that an IBA is not technically the same as CSR, as it can be mandatory, these IBAs are commonly referred to by these companies and Canadian governments as part of their CSR initiatives (Natural Resources Canada 2017).

Taylor and Friedel (2011) explain that Indigenous communities have become more amenable to partnering with extractives companies in recent years because of insufficient government funding for social, educational, and health services in many of these Indigenous communities. Taylor and Friedel (2011) raise questions about the influence of extractives companies in these partnerships in shaping community-based programmes to support industry objectives. IBAs and other CSR agreements generally occur without the involvement (or responsibility) of the Canadian Government, this has been critiqued by some as it potentially means extractives companies can become influential in shaping communities, which is generally the responsibility of different levels of government. For example, extractives industries have been involved in providing training for employment programmes in communities for many years now as a way to 'mitigate tensions between local communities and resource developers' (Hodgkins 2017, 122). These programmes benefit industry as they provide access to labourers and are ostensibly beneficial to community members as they enable them to gain training and employment. However, Hodgkins (2017) questions the role that these programmes play: 'by partnering with local communities, companies also fulfil "reputational risk management" objectives intended to appease resentment over land dispossession and environmental pollution, which in turn helps maintain shareholder confidence' (122).

While these researchers have been interested in how industry is reshaping educational and training programmes through its involvement in public/private partnerships, in this paper we are interested in examining how partnerships with industry in promoting and funding Indigenous cultural and leisure programmes might shape the framing of extractives companies' role in promoting Indigenous self-determination, and reconciliation.

Framing and the extractives industry

The extractives industry gets framed in a variety of ways depending on the context and the message that the author/s of the text are attempting to produce. Davine, Lawhon, and Pierce (2017) explain how some dominant framings engaged in by the Canadian government, for example, portray the tar sands (in Alberta) as 'an ethical industry with responsible social and environmental practices that provides jobs and prosperity for Canadians nationwide' (432). Conversely, others portray the tar sands as having negative lasting impacts on the environment and local people, especially Indigenous communities. Maintaining power over framing can be a useful way for corporations to influence the way in which they are

viewed by the general public. While the connection between CSR and framing may not be as readily obvious as framing and media or public relations, researchers have shown how corporations use CSR specifically to support public relations initiatives (Wanvik 2016). In this research, we are interested in examining how these extractives companies (involved with Indigenous-led organizations and initiatives) are framed by the non-profit organizations and the companies themselves to highlight their role in promoting Indigenous self-determination and reconciliation and in turn we are interested in examining how this could be linked to legitimacy building for corporations that have historically had negative impacts on Indigenous communities and the environment.

Truth and reconciliation and Indigenous self-determination

Over the past 10 years, there has been an increased effort in Canada to acknowledge the rights of Indigenous peoples and also to acknowledge the impact of Indian Residential Schools on Indigenous cultures. Residential schools were an assimilatory system created by British Colonialists in the twentieth Century. Indigenous children were taken (often forcibly) from their homes and were often subjected to horrific conditions and abuse. Residential schools created a legacy of trauma and ‘accelerated the loss of native cultural traditions and languages’ (Donnelly 2012, 1). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008 to document the impacts and history of Indian Residential Schools and, in 2015, 94 Calls to Action were created for non-Indigenous and Indigenous Canadians to come together ‘to address the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation’ (TRC Canada 2015, 3). A section in the Calls to Action is dedicated to ‘Business and Reconciliation.’ It called upon the corporate sector in Canada ‘to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP] as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources’ (TRC Canada 2015, 10). It is within this context – of Indigenous push back due to lack of consultation that occurred in the past – that we are seeing extractives companies in Canada announce their commitment to working with Indigenous peoples, including through leisure and cultural programmes, such as those offered by The Collaborative and promised through UNYA.

Indigenous leisure and cultural programming

Leisure and recreational programming has been utilized in Canadian Indigenous communities in different ways. Leisure practices endorsed by the Canadian state have historically worked to marginalize Indigenous communities by controlling Indigenous leisure practices such as potlatch² and gambling (Fox 2007). However, leisure and recreational programming has also been utilized by Indigenous communities in Canada to challenge relations of power. Forsyth and Wamsley (2006) explain how Indigenous peoples have utilized alternative leisure activities as a form of resistance and to promote self-determination. Indigenous-led recreational organizations and programmes, such as The Collaborative and The Native Youth Centre present opportunities for programming that is created by, supported by, and used by Indigenous communities. For this paper, we sought to critically examine the potential impacts on these programmes (and beyond)

of having extractives companies partner with these organizations. Next, we provide an overview of the two case studies for this paper.

The Collaborative and the Native Youth Centre

In the first case study, we examine The Collaborative, which operates in the NWT, one of the three territories that comprise northern Canada. According to the 2016 Census, the NWT has a population of 41,786. Just over half of NWT residents identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, or Inuit) (Statistics Canada 2016). The Collaborative is comprised of Community Advisors, appointed by local Indigenous governments, Funding Partners, and an Administrative Team. The Collaborative provides funding for different types of programmes in the NWT that place 'significant emphasis on supporting on the land programming, particularly initiatives delivered by Indigenous organizations and communities' (The Collaborative 2017a, 1). Both Dominion Diamond Mines and Diavik Diamond Mine are partners with The Collaborative. Diavik mine is located approximately 300 kilometres northeast of Yellowknife in the NWT and is co-owned by Rio Tinto, which owns 60% interest and operates the mine, and Dominion Diamond, which owns the other 40%. Dominion Diamond owns and operates the Ekati Diamond Mine, which is located close to Diavik mine.

The second case study involves the proposed development of a Native Youth Centre in downtown Vancouver. The Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) began to develop this project in the early 2000s. UNYA is an Indigenous-led organization, its Board of Directors are made up of Indigenous representatives from around Vancouver. In 2016, it was announced at a City of Vancouver meeting that Suncor had donated a land site, previously used as a gas station, to the City of Vancouver to support the development of the Native Youth Centre. At a City of Vancouver meeting on October 5, 2016, the proposed building of the Native Youth Centre was described as a partnership between Suncor, UNYA, and the City of Vancouver. Suncor is one of Canada's oldest oil and gas companies. Although it is now predominantly foreign-owned, much of its operations have been situated on the Athabasca oil sands in Alberta, Canada. It also has operations in eastern Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, Libya, and Syria.

These two cases are very different in terms of how the extractives companies are involved and what the ultimate goals are; however, both of these cases illustrate how extractives companies are inserting themselves into Indigenous-led cultural and leisure developments, and also how they are framing these partnerships as a way to '(re)connect' with Indigenous communities for the purposes of promoting Indigenous cultures and well-being. We chose these specific cases because they are Indigenous-led and have a focus of supporting Indigenous communities through their leisure programming. It is important to acknowledge here that we do not seek to advocate that Indigenous peoples not partner with extractives companies. We recognize that non-Indigenous Canadians have benefitted from the extractives industry and thus a valid argument can be made that encourages Indigenous peoples to partner with industry to benefit from something that has taken so much from them. There are several prominent Indigenous leaders and groups throughout Canada that promote Indigenous involvement in extractives industry projects (Snyder 2016). In this paper, however, we seek to question the growing expectation and involvement of extractives industry in promoting Indigenous well-being through cultural and leisure programmes, especially in the ways that it contradicts with the impact that everyday company operations

have had and continue to have on Indigenous communities in Canada and the potential impact this might have on the framing of these extractives companies and their role in supporting Indigenous communities.

Methodology

Case study

We utilized an exploratory case study methodology for this research. Yin (2011) defines the case study method as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used’ (23). An exploratory case study is designed to better understand an emerging phenomenon to generate new ways of examining it. In this research, we are examining two cases that represent different ways in which extractives companies are partnering with Indigenous-led organizations to promote Indigenous cultures through leisure. Few researchers have examined cases such as those presented in this paper, thus our goal has been to explore the potential impact these partnerships could have and how we might want to continue to critically examine them in future research and to promote social and/or political change.

Method

We began collecting data for the research by utilizing google.ca as a search engine. As we were already somewhat familiar with the cases in question, the initial search terms that were used were Northwest Territories On The Land Collaborative; Diavik Diamond Mine; Dominion Diamond Mines; Urban Native Youth Association; City of Vancouver; Suncor. From this initial search, we accessed a number of websites, documents, annual reports, video recordings, and media articles of interest for the two cases, we did not use a specific time frame, rather, we considered all findings relevant in our data collection process. Following the initial search, we continued to utilize the search engine with new search terms to obtain additional information. We also utilized proquest.com to gain access to media articles for our media analysis. In addition, we utilized the City of Vancouver’s archival records for City Council meetings to access video recording of meetings that involved discussions about the proposed development of the Native Youth Centre. For the Vancouver case, we also gained access to some data through a Freedom of Information request from the City of Vancouver. Overall, we examined over 50 (English-only) texts (this included organizational reports, blog posts, news articles, academic literature, and other documents) for each of these cases.

Framing analysis

In analyzing the documents, we engaged in framing analysis by specifically looking at the ways in which the corporations (Suncor, Dominion Diamond Mines, and Diavik Diamond Mine) and the non-profit organizations, UNYA and The Collaborative were framing and (re)framing the inclusion of extractives corporations as partners to Indigenous-led projects that promoted cultural and leisure activities for Indigenous communities. Framing analysis is described as the way in which ‘public discourse about policy issues is constructed and

negotiated' (Pan and Kosicki 1993, 70). Framing is most commonly utilized in the context of the media; however, it is also prevalent and relevant in other public policy texts (such as annual reports) where the purposes are to communicate information to others in a certain way. Framing analysis is useful in helping to sensitize researchers to how certain topics are presented and why, and, also importantly, what is left unsaid. This type of analysis can also help to 'reveal the underlying institutional, social, and cultural factors that underpin such frames' (Ofori-Parku 2016, 749).

The analysis involved a close reading of the texts and the context surrounding them, and included a continual expansion of the texts until there was an in-depth understanding of the cases and their relevant context. The majority of the data were collected and analyzed concurrently utilizing NVIVO (qualitative data analysis software) to both code the data under emergent themes (frames) and to store the documents. We adopted some of D'Angelo's (2002) framing analysis techniques by focusing on what claims were being made, what keywords and catchphrases were relied upon, what was missing and the ways in which specific issues were identified within the data. This assisted in identifying the framing approaches utilized by the organizations and corporations. We were specifically interested in how these extractives companies were discussed knowing the broader context of the impacts of extractives companies historically and currently on Indigenous communities in Canada. Thus, we focused on how these extractives companies were presented within the texts e.g. as 'good partners', as having similar values and goals as Indigenous communities, as having positive impacts on communities and the environment – we then juxtaposed these framings with the current and historical political, social, and environment contexts within which these framings were occurring. What was not framed was also important to us as it provided information as to what was intentionally or unintentionally left unsaid to assist in the framing and (re)framing process. In the analysis, we coded every instance that extractives companies appeared in each text. These codes were then analyzed to understand how they were part of the framing process. We also coded sections of the texts that discussed other topics, such as those related to 'reconciliation,' 'self-determination,' and the 'environment.' This enabled us to gain a further understanding of when extractives companies were left out of the framing process, which plays a part in (re)framing.

We identified two overarching frames, which are explained in detail in the discussion section: (1) Extractives as positive partners frame, and (2) Indigenous rights through reconciliation frame. The 'extractives as positive frame' can be described as the way in which extractives companies and the non-profit organizations worked to present the extractives companies as being positive partners to Indigenous-led organizations. The second frame, the 'Indigenous rights frame', was utilized by these extractives companies to ostensibly (re)gain legitimacy in terms of their relationships with Indigenous communities by utilizing terms and concepts that promote Indigenous rights.

Results

In this section we provide an overview of the results from our data analysis. Firstly, we discuss The Collaborative and the ways in which The Collaborative and Diavik and Dominion Diamond Mines describe the role of The Collaborative and frame the inclusion of these mining companies as Collaborative partners. Following this, we provide the results for the

Native Youth Centre project and the ways in which The City of Vancouver, UNYA, and Suncor framed the inclusion of Suncor as a partner on this Indigenous-led project.

Northwest territories on the land Collaborative ('The Collaborative')

The Collaborative was launched in 2015 out of meetings hosted by the Government of the NWT Department of Health and Social Services and Tides Canada 'to explore the feasibility of a collaborative funding model for land-based programming in the territory' (The Collaborative [n.d.](#), 3). The Collaborative 'provides funding, resources, and support for programmes that centre land-based education and cultural revitalization' (The Collaborative [n.d.](#), 6). In 2018, The Collaborative will provide one million dollars in grants to 48 projects in the NWT. Projects that have been funded by The Collaborative include camps that promote traditional cultural and lifestyle practices of local communities.

A partner of The Collaborative, Erin Kelly, from the GNWT Department of Environment and Natural Resources, explains in a Partner Profile on The Collaborative website that, 'Part of the healing work that on the land programmes do is about being one with the environment.' Kelly also acknowledges the need for reconciliation, 'land based programmes help give people back the bond that they have with the land and the water and the animals' (The Collaborative [2017b](#), 5). Nicole McDonald, another Collaborative member representing the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, also highlights the ways in which funds like The Collaborative can contribute to reconciliation by bringing different organizations together. She explains, 'One of the ways in which we get at reconciliation is through reculturalization and being on the land is a huge part of that' (The Collaborative [2017c](#)). Additionally, the Government of the NWT framed The Collaborative as a way of 'healing from the harms caused by residential schools' in a document discussing its commitments to Reconciliation (GNWT [2017](#), 11).

The funders/partners of interest to this case study include two extractives companies: Diavik Diamond Mine and Dominion Diamond Mines (Tides Canada, the organization that helped to create The Collaborative, is also funded in part by these two corporations). Diavik Diamond Mine became a partner with The Collaborative in 2016 and contributed \$30,000 to The Collaborative that year (Rio Tinto [2017](#)). The Collaborative 2017 Annual Report reads: 'Supporting land-based programmes that promote cultural revitalization and sustainability fits well with the company's [Diavik] broader commitment to being a responsible and respectful operator in the NWT' (The Collaborative [2017a](#), 5).

As a partner with The Collaborative, Diavik is involved in all aspects of the decision-making process. For example, a member of Deninu Kue First Nation and Diavik Diamond Mine employee, is Diavik's representative on The Collaborative. Her position of 'advisor in Community and External Relations at Diavik Diamond Mine' (The Collaborative [2017d](#), 2) is demonstrative of the level of involvement of Diavik representatives within the Collaborative: Diavik is not just providing funding to support on-the-land programmes, but is involved in everyday decision-making and in promoting The Collaborative in other capacities.

Dominion Diamond Mines is also a funding partner at The Collaborative and has been since The Collaborative's inception in 2015. Dominion is represented on The Collaborative by their Community Development Advisor, a member of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. Dominion Diamond explains on The Collaborative's blog that it

is pleased to be able to contribute to an initiative such as this, which emphasizes collaboration and partnership, enabling projects to come to a single place for funding. We believe the NWT On The Land Collaborative will be a key resource in the sustainability of on the land projects in the North (The Collaborative 2017e, 4).

Dominion Diamond Mines has also addressed the concept of reconciliation more generally, in a document for the Government of Canada outlining its support for 2017 Federal Budget directives. Dominion Diamond argued that the government must work with Dominion Diamond to ensure that the government's commitment to Indigenous reconciliation and climate change policies are realized:

Enabling sustainable economic development in remote and northern Canada is fundamental to the government's Aboriginal reconciliation and climate change policy objectives ... The government should work with Dominion Diamond and the broader mining industry to combine the delivery of these objectives for the benefit of northern, Aboriginal and all Canadians. (Dominion Diamond 2016, 2)

There was no information on The Collaborative's website or its reports that referred to the impact of the extractives industries on the NWT. This omission is of interest in light of the undeniable impact and role these industries have had and are having on northern communities and the surrounding environment (Gibson and Klinck 2005; Hall 2012). The stated goals and values as outlined by The Collaborative – of encouraging re-building relationships with the environment, promoting health of the natural environment, and reconnecting Indigenous communities with cultural traditions on the land – and the impact that some of its funders have on the environment highlight some tensions that we unpack in more detail in the discussion section. In the next case study, we provide an overview of the partnership between Suncor, the City of Vancouver, and UNYA in a bid to build a Native Youth Centre in downtown Vancouver.

Native Youth Centre in Vancouver

Over the past 15 or more years, UNYA³ has been working to fulfil its goal of creating a Native Youth Centre in downtown Vancouver, which is intended to provide a

Diverse curriculum of culturally informed, youth-focused programs and services, including: a health and wellness centre, alternative school programs, recreation facilities, social enterprise, spiritual and ceremonial spaces, an arts studio, and more. (UNYA n.d.)

Vancouver sits on the traditional unceded territories of three First Nations communities: Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh (City of Vancouver 2014). Metro Vancouver's Indigenous population is 52,374, the overall population of Metro Vancouver is 2.5million. For various reasons, UNYA has struggled to obtain the funding required to build the \$90 million of the Youth Centre, most notably a lack of adequate funding from all levels of the Canadian governments. In October of 2016, the City of Vancouver and UNYA announced that they would partner with Suncor, an oil and gas company. Suncor owned an unused plot of land that used to be a Petro Canada gas station next to where the current UNYA building is located in Vancouver. Suncor announced that it would donate this piece of land, worth \$9.5million (in 2016) to UNYA to build the long-awaited Youth Centre. As a point of clarification, Suncor officially donated it to The City of Vancouver but city officials have stated that they will work in partnership with UNYA to develop the Centre.

A 2005 newspaper article announced UNYA's campaign to raise \$30million to build the Centre, and it also mentioned Petro Canada's (Suncor now owns Petro Canada) support for the project by donating its empty lot valued at \$1.2 million at the time (Birmingham 2005). In 2007 the media coverage focused on the lack of support from the Provincial and Federal governments, which meant that the project was stalled (Burrows 2007). The proposed NYC created headlines again in 2016, when the City of Vancouver announced a partnership between UNYA, the City of Vancouver, and Suncor to build the Centre. The costs for building the Centre in 2016 reached \$90 million⁴ and there was still reliance upon the Provincial and Federal governments to provide this funding, which they had yet to offer (and continue not to offer as of 2019). Suncor had merged with Petro Canada and was now the owner of the empty lot on East Hastings street in Downtown Vancouver. It is unclear from the information available to the public, but it seems that the donation that Petro Canada pledged in 2005 was not finalized because in 2016 Suncor was able to again donate this empty lot, now worth \$9.5 million (nearly 9 times the earlier valuation in 2005). At this time, Suncor made a presentation to the City of Vancouver, and Suncor was announced as one of the partners of the Native Youth Centre project, alongside the City of Vancouver and UNYA. In UNYA's presentation, it described Suncor as an important partner: 'We are incredibly excited that Suncor has stepped up to provide such a tremendous investment for native youth ...' (City of Vancouver 2016).

The Suncor representative, Tracey Wolsey, took the opportunity at the City of Vancouver meeting to talk about Suncor's relationship and commitment to Indigenous peoples. Suncor framed the donation to UNYA as part of its commitment to reconciliation:

we have had the wonderful good fortune to work alongside many Indigenous communities across Canada including the nations here on the Salish Coast, and what we are beginning to learn is how deeply we are all connected, and it is because of this connection that spaces like the Native Youth Centre, where we can all join together, and learn from young people that are so important ... (City of Vancouver 2016)

Wolsey also announced that one of Suncor's goals is a focus on its relationship with Indigenous peoples of Canada, She continued:

It's a continuation of our journey, but with a new focus on changing the way we think and act so we can strengthen relationships and ultimately increase the participation of Indigenous people in energy development ... *This unique partnership is a tangible example of reconciliation in action ... Working collaboratively and bringing our best ideas to the table will help find solutions to complex social situations, after all, we are all connected.* (emphasis added) (City of Vancouver 2016)

During the question period of the Council meeting, City of Vancouver representatives were questioned by City Councilors about whether or not this unprecedented partnership with an oil company would present a conflict of interest for the City. This question was particularly important considering the BC government's stated opposition to the creation of oil pipelines through the Province. The response from City of Vancouver's Chief Housing Officer was that he did not see a conflict of interest: 'This was a polluted site that Suncor was looking at their options to address, we believe this was a win-win for both the company and the City and the non-profits who were a part of this' (City of Vancouver 2016). The discussions at City Council revealed that the site donated by Suncor had been

sitting empty for all these years because it was contaminated after previously operating as a gas station. Suncor recently remediated the property to commercial standards.

It is important to note some context here. Vacant gas station lots are common throughout Canada. There are at least 14 in Vancouver alone, and they number in the thousands across the country (CTV British Columbia 2013). The number of gas stations in Canada has been declining since the 1990s; as a result – because of the high costs involved in remediating the polluted sites – there are many lots that remain unused. At the City of Vancouver meeting, it was made clear that the City of Vancouver would take on the responsibility for continued remediation of the donated land to ensure the site is ready for development of the Native Youth Centre and housing.⁵ In the ‘Deed of Gift’ document released by the City of Vancouver in a Freedom of Information request by the first author, it states that The City releases Suncor from any and all claims resulting from ‘presence of any contaminants in, on or under the Suncor Lot ...’ (City of Vancouver, FOI 2017–523, p. 113). This includes Suncor being released from any claims for remediation costs.

In return for this donation, the ‘Deed of Gift’ states that Suncor would receive a donation tax receipt, in addition the Deed states that ‘The City and UNYA agree to work cooperatively with Suncor to develop a plan whereby Suncor receives public recognition of the gift of the Suncor Lot to the City ...’ (City of Vancouver 2016, 710), which would include ‘Suncor being recognized as a key contributor to the UNYA project; Suncor receiving periodic updates during the planning and construction of the UNYA project; Suncor being invited to participate in UNYA’s and the City’s marketing and communication plan for the UNYA project; Suncor being recognized in any opening ceremonies that are held in connection with the UNYA project; and A plaque or other form of recognition being placed in a prominent place in the UNYA project recognizing Suncor’s gift of the Suncor Lot’ (City of Vancouver 2016, 710).

This results section has provided an outline of how these companies are partnering with non-profit organizations and governments, and the framing that they are engaging in to gain legitimacy by promoting Indigenous cultural practices through leisure and cultural programmes. In the next section, we engage in a discussion and implications of the framing processes that were revealed in the findings. First, the framing of industry as positive partners for Indigenous communities, and second, the use of a reconciliation frame to re(gain) legitimacy.

Discussion

In this section, we analyse the framing practices engaged in by the extractives companies and the Indigenous-led organizations. We focus in particular on the framing of extractives companies as positive partners for Indigenous communities and the framing of reconciliation to (re)gain legitimacy. In addition, we examine the contradictions at play in the framing of extractives companies in these ways while they continue to engage in resource extraction on Indigenous lands.

Industry re(framed) as positive partners for Indigenous communities

In the abovementioned examples, Dominion, Diavik, and Suncor are not only presenting their involvement with Indigenous groups as a way of ‘giving back’ to the communities,

they are also presenting themselves as having similar ideals and values to Indigenous communities. This re(framing) obfuscates the reality that these are corporate entities where profitability remains paramount – even in spite of the potential environmental and social harms that result from extractives processes in and around Indigenous communities. In our research we did not find any mention of the negative impacts that extractives companies have had on the environment nor their ongoing role in colonialism of Indigenous lands and resources. Ultimately such a (re)framing of industry as part of the solution to ‘reviving’ Indigenous cultures and communities works to brush over the negative impacts that industry has had and continues to have on Indigenous communities and their surrounding environments.

The Collaborative’s website does recognize the importance of environmental stewardship to northern communities. It also discusses the negative impacts of colonialism on these communities, which has separated Indigenous communities from the land and often hindered engagement with traditional activities. However, within our research we did not find mention of the role that extractives companies have played and continue to play within this. To make the presence of extractives companies more palatable, funded organizations can inadvertently contribute to the glossing over of histories and current realities of how extractives companies have affected Indigenous communities and cultures. For example, The Collaborative refers to Dominion Diamond Mines and Diavik Diamond Mine as its representatives on various occasions, such as in its Annual Reports and on its website. In doing so, The Collaborative engages in framing of these companies as being committed to ‘cultural revitalization’ and ‘sustainability’ and, specifically in relation to Diavik, as ‘a responsible and respectful operator in the NWT’ (The Collaborative 2017a, 5). Diamond mines within the NWT have had significant impacts on Indigenous communities by affecting their abilities to engage in traditional cultural activities on the land (Hall 2012). This is caused by either limiting access to the land or by making it more difficult to hunt animals (that have been driven away by mining operations) (McDonald 2018; Shigley et al. 2016).

Certainly, there are tensions in understanding how The Collaborative and its industry partners can reconcile these goals and values with the negative consequences that extractives companies (including Diavik and Dominion Diamond Mines) continue to have on the natural environment and on Indigenous communities (Gibson and Klinck 2005; Hall 2012; Slowey 2008). For example, Rio Tinto, the company that operates and owns 60% of Diavik Mine, which is one of the five largest mining companies in the world, has been widely criticized for its impact on the environment around the globe (Alberici 2008). Rio Tinto has also been criticized for its role in ignoring and participating in human rights and labour abuses.⁶ The framing of the corporation as a positive partner for Indigenous communities (at the same time ignoring the negative impacts) is similar to the way Plec and Pettenger (2012) have pointed out that corporate campaigns have utilized environmental framing to present themselves as environmentally friendly, arguing that ‘these campaigns often mask harmful qualities and emphasise an image of environmentalism intended to inspire consumer confidence’ (460). Rio Tinto uses its practices in Canada – framing itself as a corporation dedicated to sustainability and Indigenous rights – while conveniently ignoring its (egregious) practices in other countries.

Similarly, Suncor was also presented as a positive partner on the Native Youth Centre project with limited discussions about the role Suncor continues to play in negatively

impacting Indigenous communities with its operations (Kairos 2013; Vancouver Observer 2014). Two Vancouver City Council members did reference the potential conflict of interest in having the City partner with an oil company; however, there were no considerations about the potential contradictions of Suncor's involvement in partnering on a project to promote Indigenous cultural practices. In short, we suggest that the ways in which extractives companies are promoting their involvement in support of Indigenous cultural and leisure programming deflects attention away from and contradicts the ways that they utilize Indigenous lands for their extractives purposes. Taylor and Friedel (2011) argued that extractives industry donations to, or partnerships with, educational programmes are not simply benevolent, but are rather utilized by industry to obtain or maintain power over the types of programmes that are promoted and developed. Our work extends this argument to leisure and cultural programmes.

While the Indigenous-led organizations on which we have focused in this research do support and promote Indigenous cultural practices, we wonder if there is room for critical engagement with these extractives companies when they are present as decision makers in these organizations. It is important to note that there are Indigenous peoples and communities that are critical of extractives industries, both in the North where The Collaborative is situated (Hall 2012) and throughout British Columbia and Vancouver where the proposed Youth Centre will be built (CBC News 2018). There is a diversity of voices, opinions, and ideas about what is best for the future of Canada and its inhabitants. This is potentially lost when extractives companies become partners of programmes that support Indigenous cultural practices, especially when we reflect on the fact that Dominion and Diavik Diamond Mines not only provide funding but also operate as decision-making partners alongside representatives of other organizations and government departments. Despite not contributing to the monetary funds needed to get the Native Youth Centre project up and running, Suncor has already stated that it has plans for increased partnership with UNYA that will be revealed in the future, suggesting that Suncor will be further involved in Indigenous focused programming.

Reconciliation as a framing practice to (re)gain legitimacy

As explained in the literature review, the concept of reconciliation (in recent years) has been engaged with by Canadian governments, organizations, and the general public alike to acknowledge the harms of settler colonialism to Indigenous peoples and lands, and to begin to look at ways to make amends for the harm that occurred and continues to occur. The UNYA case study demonstrates how Suncor used such a concept to frame its donation and partnership in an arguable attempt to regain legitimacy. In 2005, when Petro Canada (now owned by Suncor) originally announced that it would donate the empty piece of land, there were no discussions of a partnership and nor were there mentions of how this donation had meaning linked to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. However, in 2016, Suncor utilized this opportunity to (re)frame the donation as a way for the corporation to 'right the wrongs' that it had enacted upon Indigenous peoples. This donation was used as part of a framing strategy to enable the oil company to present itself as a supporter of Indigenous cultures (arguably) in an effort to deflect attention away from its responsibility for the historical and continued negative impacts it has on Indigenous communities throughout Canada as a result of its operations.

It is not lost on the authors of this paper that this opportunity of a partnership and (re)framing of Suncor's impact on Indigenous peoples and their lands has come about as a result of a donation of a polluted piece of land that had been unused for more than 20 years. It is also important to point out here that the polluted lot is located on unceded Coast Salish⁷ Territories. This means that the Indigenous peoples have never surrendered or handed over this land in any way. In fact, many would argue that this land is stolen land (Meiszner 2014). Suncor is effectively 'giving back' a piece of land – that is unceded, and that it has polluted – to Indigenous community members and is framing this donation as part of their 'reconciliation journey' to regain legitimacy. Additionally, at the same time that Suncor is framing its support for Indigenous communities, it is also supporting the development of oil pipelines in Canada, which has been a contentious issue for many communities across Canada because of the potential impacts this could have on the natural environment and particularly on Indigenous communities throughout Canada (Cecco 2018).

On its website, The Collaborative also utilized the term reconciliation to describe the goals of the organization and to explain how The Collaborative reflects the ideology of reconciliation by bringing different organizations together to promote Indigenous cultures and being on the land. Additionally, the Government of NWT also frames The Collaborative as part of the reconciliation process in its discussions about The Collaborative's potential to contribute to 'healing the harms caused by residential schools throughout Canada'. While there is no reference to Dominion Diamond Mines and Diavik Diamond Mine specifically within these discussions about reconciliation, these framings arguably lend legitimacy to these extractives companies because of their role as partners and representatives on The Collaborative. These extractives companies become framed as being part of the solution to promote reconciliation and at the same time there are no discussions of actual operations that involve extraction of natural resources for corporate profit and what this means and has meant for reconciliation.

Additionally, it is notable that both Dominion and Diavik representatives on The Collaborative are Indigenous peoples from the NWT who work for these companies. Du and Vieira (2012) explain that a strategic approach to obtaining legitimacy through CSR relates to the controllability and credibility of communication channels: 'the less the channel is perceived as company-controlled, the more credible the CSR message' (416). In this way we can view Dominion and Diavik Diamond Mines' strategy as part of the process to maintain or obtain credibility – these corporations can benefit from the perception that the representatives are removed from the impact that the corporations have on Indigenous communities – without having to reconcile the impact of their corporations on Indigenous communities more generally. We do not argue here that the Diavik and Dominion representatives do not have agency in these positions; rather, we are pointing out that the appointment of Indigenous people as representatives could be a strategy to gain more legitimacy without having to give up power. These representatives are still employees and representatives of these extractives companies. In other words, these appointments do not negate the fact that these private, for profit extractives companies hold decision making positions in determining how funding gets utilized to promote Indigenous cultural practices through on-the-land programmes.

Conclusion

CSR is a result of the pressure put on extractives companies (by communities) to consider their role in promoting the well-being of communities and lands that they impact. One of the consequences of this pressure has been a response from these industries to promote their role in supporting Indigenous communities. In this way, extractives companies have worked to maintain power and control by using criticisms to reframe their companies as having a positive impact, rather than a negative one. In this research we critically examined the role of three extractive companies in Indigenous-led cultural projects and programmes. While a genuine concern for – and involvement with – the Indigenous communities with which they work is commendable, the findings in this research suggest that the involvement of extractives companies in Indigenous leisure and cultural programmes has the potential to obfuscate the broader consequences of extractives corporations on Indigenous communities and the natural environment through the use of different framing strategies. We have found that this can occur through both what is said and also what is left unsaid.

The authority gained through the framing of being committed to reconciliation and Indigenous peoples raises some serious concerns about how this might shape the focus or sustainability of these programmes, and also how this might provide legitimacy for industry to continue extraction projects. Obtaining Indigenous peoples' support for extraction is crucial to extractives companies' work in Canada. The involvement of these corporations as partners in organizations that promote Indigenous cultural practices has the potential to shape conceptualizations of reconciliation and how we view the role of corporations within the reconciliation process. Reconciliation is arguably about ceding control back to Indigenous peoples so that they are able to exercise their rights over their lands, territories, and resources. However, the framing of reconciliation that we have uncovered in these cases is not about the extractives companies ceding control, but about these companies using reconciliation to maintain control and power over the extractives operations.

There is clearly a need for more Indigenous-led cultural programming and projects across Canada. These organizations require funding, and obtaining funding from extractives companies that have taken so much from Indigenous communities does make sense. However, this paper has highlighted some of the concerns with involving extractives companies in efforts – particularly at decision-making levels, to contribute to Indigenous cultures and communities and also the problematic nature of relying upon corporate funding to support such activities. It has also raised questions about what the governments' role in funding these types of programmes might be, could there be other avenues to gain access to funds that do not involve private, for-profit companies? The framing strategies utilized within these cases leave certain experiences and perspectives unexamined, and it is important for researchers to continue to critically question the impact that the involvement of the extractives industry in promoting Indigenous leisure and cultural programmes could have on the development of Indigenous cultural programming and projects that are affiliated closely with extractives companies.

Notes

1. The term Indigenous is utilized in this paper to refer to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples of Canada. Throughout the paper you will also read the term Aboriginal to refer to Indigenous Canadians when we have utilized quotes from other scholarly sources.
2. Potlatch is a ceremony practiced by First Nations along the Northwest coast of Canada that plays an integral part of the social and political system.
3. UNYA is registered non-for-profit organization that provides a range of services, resources, and programmes to support Indigenous youth in Vancouver.
4. It is not clear why the cost has increased but presumably it takes into account increase in prices for land, taxes, construction, etc.
5. Land used for housing requires higher level of remediation than to commercial standards. In addition the environmental documents stated that any construction on the site might unearth contaminants that would consequently need to be dealt with.
6. Rio Tinto ultimately won this court case in the USA because the judge determined these violations occurred outside of US territory, and he lacked jurisdiction to consider the claims (Stempel 2013).
7. Coast Salish are the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast, which includes Vancouver, BC.

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