

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON SPORT HUNTING, CONSERVATION, AND  
ECOSYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

by  
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## Abstract

Hunting as a wildlife conservation tool has been the centre of much debate as climate change, the decline of carnivores, and increased pressure from human encroachment threaten wildlife species globally. There has also been increases in the popularity of sport hunting and heightened editorial coverage of conservation stories. This has led to polarizing views on hunting for wildlife management. This thesis takes a critical look at these issues from the perspective of hunting stakeholders. The objective was to emphasize the importance of acknowledging diverse stakeholders in these discussions as they have unique knowledge of land and wildlife systems that are integral to sustainability. A community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodology was utilized in order to access the complex relationships within the hunting industry. This methodology enabled the effective engagement of hunting communities in order to identify their key concerns and recognize the knowledge and abilities of participants. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with resident hunters, conservation officers, wildlife biologists, guide outfitters, hunting suppliers, and Indigenous hunters. Topics of stereotyping, sustainability, inclusion, stakeholder relationships, and the power of social influence within the hunting industry were investigated. The findings were divided into four distinct chapters. Chapter one identifies the current gaps in literature that exist regarding hunting and wildlife management as well as provides an overview of the methodology utilized. Chapter two, establishes an overview of B.C.'s hunting industry from the perspective of resident hunters. There is specific focus on the lack of consultation of stakeholders in decision-making and policy development and stereotypes created in the media. In the third chapter, the complexity of relationships between humans, wildlife, and contemporary stakeholders within B.C.'s hunting industry are examined. Additionally, the role of humans within ecosystem structures are contemplated by the participants. How contemporary issues associated with hunting in B.C. relate to larger concerns regarding land-use within the province are discussed in the final chapter. This research provides insight into the current state of the hunting industry, hunting's role in wildlife management, and the sensitive needs of stakeholders in their efforts to promote the health and conservation of wildlife populations. The results inform inclusive policies that

balance the needs of local peoples, communities, and ecosystem conservation. The findings also educate the general public on the role of hunting in B.C. in an effort to produce solutions that ensure the long-term health of both regional ecosystems and hunting economies within the province. This research contributes to the further development of sustainable sport hunting and conservation economies as well as to the broader discussions surrounding land-use in the province. As climate change, ongoing land-use conflicts, natural resource extraction, and the expansion of the global human population threaten ecosystems, leaders are facing a growing dilemma around how to balance sustainable use of B.C. lands while supporting provincials and federal economies. Amidst this crisis, it is even more imperative to consider stakeholders in decision-making processes because their unique perspectives on wildlife and ecosystems, could be critical to evaluate and eventually determine the future of provincial land-use management.

**Keywords: hunting, wildlife conservation, community based participatory action, sustainability, interviews, British Columbia**

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## Dedication

*This thesis is dedicated to my father, Larry Boulé. Thank you for sharing your enthusiasm and passion for hunting and the outdoors with me - you were the true inspiration behind this project.*

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Hunting as a wildlife conservation tool has been the centre of much debate as climate change, the decline of carnivores, and increased pressure from human encroachment all threaten wildlife species globally. In the last five years, there has been heightened editorial coverage of controversial trophy hunting incidents that have internationally called into question the necessity of the practice. Many of the arguments fixating on the consumptive nature of the sport. However, hunting has been a part of Canadian cultures for millennia, beginning with Indigenous peoples and later part of emerging Euro-Canadian economies like the 18<sup>th</sup> century fur trade (Colpitts, 2002; Burgin, 2015). In the last 10 years, there has been an increase in the popularity of resident hunting particularly in the western Canadian province of British Columbia (B.C.). This has further polarized views on the role of hunting in wildlife management. Hunting has also remained an important part of Indigenous peoples' subsistence and cultural practices throughout the country (Robidoux & Mason, 2017; Shanley et al., 2013; Pal et al., 2013). Additionally, many rural communities in B.C. rely on both the sustenance and economic benefits of hunting (Dowsley, 2009; Foote & Wenzel, 2007). This highlights the complexity of the hunting industry and its role, not only in ecosystem management, but B.C.'s cultures and economies.

Previous studies have investigated hunting industries across the globe in terms of ethical implications (Nelson et al., 2016; Gunn, 2001), stewardship of the land (Yasol-Naval, 2017; Saslis-Lagoudakis & Clarke, 2013), and ecosystem structures (Wallach et al., 2015; Sergio et al., 2008). A great deal of conservation literature considers the necessity of hunting as a wildlife management tool and how it affects the sustainability of ecosystems. Sport hunting has been examined regarding historical practices (Colpitts, 2002; Binnema & Niemi, 2006), economic viability (Dowsley, 2009; Honey et al., 2016; Poudel et al., 2016), and the sustainability of hunting tourism (Fisher et al., 2015; Foote & Wenzel, 2007). Despite these developments, there seems to be a complete lack of scholarly literature that examines the hunting industry over the last two decades in Western Canada. Many international researchers have considered the opinions and motivations of resident hunters (Reis, 2014; Morris, 2013; Nygård & Uthardt, 2011), as well as how to balance the needs of local stakeholders with the conservation of wildlife habitat (Reis & Higham, 2009; Shanley et al.,

2013). However, questions remain surrounding stakeholder opinions and perspectives on the hunting industry in B.C. and how hunters view their role in wildlife and ecosystem management. There is insufficient literature that assesses stereotypes presented in the media of hunters and hunting practices in the province. There is also a lack of research on how related social issues impact regulation and policy decisions in B.C.

This study addresses this gap in scholarship by examining the cultural viewpoints of participants in B.C. who have a vested interest in hunting, including their outlooks on the complexity of the practice. The objective of this research was to consult with key stakeholders to not only understand the role of hunting in wildlife management, but also the unique relationships between wildlife, humans, and current stakeholders within the industry. This study utilizes a community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodology and semi-structured interviews with resident hunters, conservation officers, wildlife biologists, guide outfitters, and Indigenous hunters in order to integrate the opinions and needs of this diverse group of stakeholders. Topics of stereotyping, sustainability, inclusion, stakeholders' relationships between themselves and wildlife, and the power of social influence within the hunting industry were explored in the context of hunting policy development and conservation management.

Overall, the goal was to emphasize the importance of acknowledging diverse stakeholders in policy management as they have unique knowledge of land and wildlife systems that are integral to sustainability. This research critically evaluates the hunting industry, policy-making, and sustainability from the viewpoint of local hunters. The results will inform inclusive policies that balance the needs of local peoples and ecosystem conservation, help to educate the general public on the role of hunting in B.C., and find solutions that benefit local hunters and surrounding communities in the ongoing development of hunting economies. This will demonstrate that sustainable hunting practices are vital to the successful development of sport hunting economies and conservation practices in B.C.

The following key questions were addressed in this study: 1) Do stakeholders value hunting as a conservational tool?; 2) How do B.C. hunters feel about current policies, trophy hunting, and the sustainability of the sport?; 3) How does public discourse, stereotyping, and anti-hunting groups affect hunting policy-making in B.C.?; 4) What relationships exist between stakeholders and do they work together to ensure sustainability?; 5) How does sport

hunting affect Indigenous peoples' cultural and subsistence practices?; 6) What are stakeholders' views on regulation changes and how they are created?; 7) Are the perspectives and knowledge of stakeholders being integrated in policy-making decisions?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Hunting wildlife has been a controversial and highly polarizing topic in both broader society and in academic research internationally. This has been especially apparent since the death of Cecil the lion by a trophy hunter in Zimbabwe, Africa in 2015 that caused outrage globally<sup>i</sup>. While there seems to be heightened interest in this debate concerning the value of hunting, questions persist as to whether it is necessary and if it effectively benefits provincial ecosystems. For millennia, humans have played a central role in ecosystems, influencing patterns and processes that in turn affect them; this includes wildlife, fire, and flood management practices (Grumbine, 1994). Aldo Leopold's seminal essay, *Land Ethics* (1949), had a major influence on conservation literature. It argues a similar vision in which people and land are intertwined and thus should be preserving the biotic community. The integration of humans into ecosystems is further demonstrated in Leopold's *Land pyramid* (1949), which showcased his theory that not only are humans part of the greater system, but there is an interdependent relationship between them and the natural world. These fundamental teachings have been the philosophical platform for much of the research completed over the last few decades, as researchers continue to argue about the ethical responsibility of humans to help restore and manage wildlife populations (Warren & Kieffer, 2010; Manfredo et al., 2016; Schwartz, 2006; Field, 2009). Other studies have discussed the importance of analyzing how humans view and manage wildlife, and shifting their values from domination to mutualism, in order to achieve changes in behavior that support conservation efforts (Manfredo et al., 2016). Despite these established arguments in scholarly literature, there is a lack of research that examines how different groups value and perceive wildlife in Western Canada.

Hunting has played a key role in Canadian history and the development of diverse cultures across Canada. In Western Canada, it has been a fundamental aspect in the formation of Euro-Canadian identities since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as the fur trade extended to western parts of the country (Colpitts, 2002; Burgin, 2015). Hunters—particularly Indigenous

hunters—have thrived off the land for hundreds of years, balancing the health of wildlife populations while hunting for subsistence (Pal et al., 2013). Despite this, controversy surrounding the sport of hunting dates as far back to the period before the First World War and was the source of conflict between hunters and non-hunters, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Manore & Miner, 2007; Colpitts, 2002). As early as 1885, when local Indigenous communities were first excluded from hunting in Canadian national parks, government representatives enforced laws and regulations that dictated when, how many, and which animals local inhabitants could harvest. These regulations, while made in the name of preservation of the resource, were motivated by few conservation objectives. Many of these decisions were justified by targeting Indigenous subsistence practices and blaming local Indigenous communities for the decline in wildlife populations (Binnema & Niemi, 2006; Sandlos, 2007). This began at Rocky Mountains National Park (which became Banff National Park in 1930), but also occurred in several locations throughout the country in or around newly formed parks and protected areas. At Banff, the hunting practices of local Nakoda peoples were the focus, as key members of the colonial bureaucracy, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), conservation officials, Indian agents, missionaries and tourism entrepreneurs, all collaborated to exclude Nakoda hunting from the park and eventually position their subsistence practices as intolerable and illegal (Mason, 2014). While these justifications for exclusion contended that Nakoda hunting and fishing depleted local resources, the desire to conserve fish and mammal populations was not to preserve the ecological integrity of the region, but rather so those natural resources could be used by developing tourism industries. In Banff townsite specifically, sport hunting and fishing was a critical part of early tourism economies, where outfitters guided affluent tourists from primarily urban centres to fish and hunt in the Canadian Rockies (Mason, 2014; Snow, 2005).

The policy-makers who chose to exclude Indigenous hunting and fishing from the parks failed to take into account the value of the local Indigenous communities' extensive expertise in the protection of mammal and fish populations in local ecosystems. With millennia of experience living in, migrating through, trading and hunting in the Rocky Mountains, the Nakoda, as well as other Indigenous groups, became key components of regional ecosystems (Snow, 2005). In addition to the impact of losing the long-established

human presence in local ecosystems, such as shifting patterns of harvesting ungulates to prescribed burning, there were also significant consequences for the Indigenous communities who were marginalized from the lands that were rebranded as protected. For cultures that practice oral tradition, not having access to traditional territories meant reduced access to critical food sources and also caused fissures in educational strategies. Therefore, the impact of these displacements and exclusions from park lands also brought about a loss of local traditions, languages, cultures, and knowledge (Mason, 2008; Gougeon, 2012). Although there are aspects of Leopold's theories that are still relevant and should be utilized in contemporary wildlife management, acknowledgement of stakeholders' perspectives on conservation, especially the traditional views of Indigenous hunters, need to be addressed.

Despite the controversial past of hunting in Western Canada, the sport continues to be a major economic driver. This has become more evident across the globe as the main purpose of hunting has shifted away from the historical necessity of hunting for subsistence to hunting as a sport and leisure activity (Reis, 2014; Colpitts, 2002). Regardless of the extensive literature on the historic importance of hunting in Canada and its large contributions to the Canadian economy, there has been a complete lack of scholarly literature that examines the hunting industry over the last two decades. A noticeable absence from the studies that do exist is the voice of sport hunters on the different factors that affect the viability of sport hunting economies.

A few international researchers have looked at creating frameworks that balance the conservation of wildlife habitat with the needs of contemporary subsistence hunting and trophy hunting in order to create more sustainable practices (Shanley et al., 2013; Creel et al., 2016). Other sustainability studies have paid particular attention to the needs of local stakeholders and communities, essentially the social sustainability of the sport (Reis & Higham, 2009). While many of these studies have used statistical data created from surveys (Gamborg & Jensen, 2017; Nordbø et al., 2017; Campbell & Lancaster, 2010; Eliason, 2016), economic analysis techniques (Poudel et al., 2016), group interviews (Øian, 2013), or secondary research and data (Saayman & Rossouw, 2011; Creel et al., 2015; Tremblay & McKercher, 2001), few have actually used in-depth personal interviews as a method for understanding the hunting industry. Those that have integrated this method have used interviews that concentrate primarily on relationships with animals, hunting cultures, and

social sustainability (Hicks, 2017; Watts et al., 2017; Reis, & Higham, 2009). Research has adequately addressed conflicts between different user groups. This includes visitors and recreational users such as hikers. This scholarship argues that to understand the future of sport hunting and hunting tourism, we need to consult these groups as well as their opinions and needs (Eliason, 2016; Lovelock, 2003). Muboko et al. (2016) have also argued that the concerns of tourists should be considered and included in conservation policies and strategies, especially when they are visiting protected areas for leisure. They contend that these opinions are important in order to understand tourists' pre-conceived perceptions and knowledge of wildlife conservation that is obtained through media. However, this study only notes the perceived knowledge and awareness of tourists that assists in tourism ventures, yet it does not add to understandings of wildlife conservation and hunting in Zimbabwe, the location of the study. While there has been sufficient literature that considers conservation and hunting in North America, most of the research centres on a specific species such as wild sheep and wild turkey (Hurley et al., 2015; Hughes & Lee, 2015).

Numerous academics have considered the role of hunting in North American conservation efforts, as to the historical importance of hunting and its role in maintaining sustainable wildlife populations (Krausman & Mahoney, 2015; White et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2013). While this research provides insight into the continent as a whole, it fails to look in detail at conservation in specific countries and regions as there are notable differences in management plans. In respect of wildlife management, there has been research that has examined the perspectives of hunters when discussing issues within the hunting industry (Kaltenborn et al., 2013; Reis, 2014). One study looked specifically at the perception of hunters in Norway of their role within the ecosystem concerning management, recreation, predation, and poaching (Kaltenborn et al., 2013). While many of the hunters felt they had a role in the ecosystem, there were differences among hunters surrounding environmental orientation and attitudes. This suggests that the word "hunter" is not a homogenous category but instead it is diverse in orientation as the participants have differing motivations and perspectives. This illustrates a gap as a significant amount of the literature that concentrates only on "hunters," as someone who engages in the practice, fails to differentiate between the types of hunters and stakeholders. While there is some research that investigates the opinions of local residents on trophy and sport hunting management, many of these studies utilize

surveys and highlight geographic regions in Asia and Europe (Nordbø et al., 2017; Gamborg & Jensen, 2016). Once again, there is a lack of work that has been done in Western Canada. The research in this study addresses this by looking at the perspective of hunters in B.C. and utilizing interviews to decipher between the groups of stakeholders and demonstrate the diversity within them.

One of the key debates around the economic sustainability of hunting, centres on whether or not it is a viable way of using mammals for economic benefit, especially in comparison to other tourism options such as wildlife viewing or photography. The scholarly literature covers many different geographic locations worldwide. While some researchers contend that hunting is a promising economic driver that helps rural communities (Dowsley, 2009; Environment Canada, 2011; Poudel et al., 2016), others argue that it is a threat to biodiversity. The researchers that are concerned with hunting practices potentially compromising biodiversity, base these views on the practices that target endangered mammals, especially large carnivores. Their argument is that this practice potentially outweighs any economic benefit offered to local communities as ecosystems are so fundamentally impacted (Gunn, 2001; Honey et al., 2016; Economic Impact, 2014). However, based on findings that trophy hunting does provide some form of economic benefit, other scholars have investigated the conditions in which this variety of hunting could facilitate both a benefit to conservation and local economies (Fisher et al., 2015; White & Belant, 2015; Arnett & Southwick, 2015). Researchers have indicated that trophy hunting has improved the social, economic, and cultural lives of local communities by providing more employment opportunities and increasing local revenue in South and East Africa (Saayman et al., 2011; Petrus et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2015). This is noted in rural Canada and the United States, where economic benefits help with wildlife habitat improvement, support the economies of Indigenous communities, as well as aid in the conservation of endangered species (Dowsley 2009; Poudel et al., 2016). Of particular note is Wenzel's (2011) study that centred on the controversial use of polar bears for tourism hunting expenditures, despite the fact that the species faces an increased environmental stress due to climate change in Nunavut. The Clyde River Inuit, who provide this seasonal activity, defend the continued trophy hunt based on the resources earned playing a substantial role in Inuit subsistence. It is also viewed as a type of business in a place with a very high unemployment rate. Moreover,

all activities were considered sustainable and in compliance with the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, providing little threat to the species population (Wenzel, 2011). In B.C., the hunting industry generates approximately \$350 million<sup>ii</sup> in economic activity; \$116 million coming from tourism hunting and guide outfitters expenditures, another \$230 million from resident hunters annually (British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, 2016). While the provincial government has provided these numbers, researchers have critiqued the figures as they appear to be inflated regarding the direct value added and they do not align with the analyses done by the Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia and the B.C. Government's official statistical agency, B.C. STATS (Honey et al., 2016). These inconsistencies showcase the lack of information and research done on the actual impact hunting has on the provincial economy.

While some research has examined the positive economic impact of hunting, there is still a lack of consultation with those who are most affected by changes within the hunting industry. This includes those who rely on hunting for subsistence, to those who value the sport as a leisure activity. As large mammals yield high economic, cultural, and subsistence benefits, it is necessary to create policies and management practices that are scientifically sound, regarding population and harvest numbers, to ensure wildlife is being protected while balancing the needs and desires of local citizens (Creel et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2016). However, more research is needed from the perspectives of local residents and hunters concerning these major issues.

An abundance of research has been conducted that explores ethical debates in hunting. Several researchers argue that the key to the morality debate is uncovering some of the varied motivations of hunters to determine the ethical standpoint of the practice (Nelson et al., 2016; Morris, 2013; Reis, 2009). Researchers contend that when hunters are questioned about their motivations, intrinsic feelings, and values for the sport, the responses contradict the moral argument that they are killing merely for the sake of it (Morris, 2013). Reis (2009) demonstrated this in a study conducted in New Zealand which highlights the importance of considering the ethical issues when analyzing hunting. Through primary research, in the form of participant observation and in-depth dialogues, the study reveals that killing is not the core motivation to participate in the sport but instead it is viewed as a method to engage and create unique relationships with animals as an embodied experience. Ethical arguments

against hunting in academia fixate largely on the idea that the meaning of hunting is to kill. Thus, hunters inflict suffering and deprive animals of their right to live (Gunn, 2001; Cheyne & Alder, 2007). However, this research does not consider other human impacts on wildlife, including recreation, agriculture, and natural resource development (i.e. mining and forestry) which can be quite severe and cause greater loss of habitat (Reed & Merenlender, 2008; Scruton, 2002; Schuttler et al., 2017). Cahoone (2009) discusses the importance of examining all human factors that impact the livelihood of animal populations in order to compare conservational efforts to protect and control species populations (Cahoone, 2009; Scruton, 2002).

Some research argues the importance of creating management policies that combine sound conservation and welfare practices, regardless of hunters' assumed motivations (Nelson et al., 2005; Womack, 2013). It cannot be ignored that many rural communities, as well as communities across the Global South, rely on the meat obtained from hunting as a major source of subsistence (White & Belant, 2015; Kendrick, 2013; Heffelfinger et al., 2013). Freeman et al. (2005) argue that hunting has the potential to improve the conditions of not only rural communities in Northern Canada, but also overall ecological well-being of a society. This is because it increases the value society places on both land and wildlife, certainly an important consideration in the ethical debate (Freeman et al., 2005; Dowsley, 2009; Foote & Wenzel, 2007). Perhaps most notably, many of the researchers who debate the ethics of hunting emphasize that addressing these moral issues will help with policy-making and management of wildlife populations (Nelson et al., 2005). Peterson (2014) argues that more explicit consideration of how wildlife should be harvested, and what makes it morally justified in regulation documents, may lend legitimacy to hunting practices (Peterson, 2014). While it could be as simple as the distinction between subsistence and trophy hunting that allows us to assess the appropriateness of the actions of hunters, ethics and emotion should also be integrated into conservation efforts, communication, and decision-making in order to make ethical policies (Nelson et al., 2016).

As the human population continues to grow, there are concerns surrounding the unparalleled changes in the condition of our planet that has led to higher demands on nature and negative impacts on wildlife populations (Warren & Kieffer, 2010). Stewardship is a concept that has been prevalent when discussing management approaches that aim to achieve

a sustainable environment. Land stewardship refers to the collective responsibility of all people to manage the natural world in a way that protects and conserves the environmental, socio-economic, and cultural values of ecosystems (Yasol-Naval, 2017). It suggests that in order to preserve our wildlife and land, we must not only consider the environment but also other aspects, such as stakeholders, community involvement, and knowledge to ensure long-term success in monitoring and restoring natural ecosystems (Saslis-Lagoudakis & Clarke, 2013; Herrick et al., 2010; Wehi & Lord, 2017; Feldpausch-Parker et al., 2017). The involvement in wildlife management is also seen as a right to the public that is essential to the uniqueness of the North American system. Under this system it is vital that the public have a vested interest in the protection of and access to wildlife (Geist, 1988). This has major implications for the hunting industry as each stakeholder is, under this concept, a steward of the land and should not just conserve or manage the resource for one's personal use but for all of society.

However, as carnivores are in decline worldwide there continues to be polarizing opinions on the recreational harvest and management through lethal tools, including hunting and trapping (Raithel et al., 2017; Creel et al., 2015; Lindsey et al., 2016; Lewis et al., 2017). Many researchers argue on behalf of protecting large predators with regard to trophic cascades<sup>iii</sup> and the strong influence they have on the functions and structures of ecosystems (Wallach et al., 2015; Sergio et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2017). This is because ecological communities are often driven by a synergy of bottom-up and top-down processes, the latter being determined by the health of apex predators (Lewis et al., 2017). Apex Predators are animals that are at the top of the food chain. As such, no other animal preys upon them as they have few or no natural predators. Therefore, researchers have recommended top-down processes and a privileging of apex predators in management strategies (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Estes et al., 2011). Research has found that hunters argue for protecting both these processes by considering themselves as apex predators, as well as calling for the rehabilitation and protection of habitat (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Some researchers have considered the idea of humans as apex predators (Dorresteijn et al., 2015), however, it is still an under-researched and controversial idea in both practice and scientific discourse (Schuttler et al., 2017; Cromsigt et al., 2013; Ordiz et al., 2013). Notwithstanding the arguments against the killing of these predators, in respect of biodiversity loss, hunting has continued to be used

as a management tool to support the conservation of apex predators worldwide (Ordiz et al., 2013).

The hunting of predators is also a traditional and cultural practice throughout Western Canada (Colpitts, 2002; Burgin, 2015). This makes it necessary to continue to research apex predators and create policies and management practices that are scientifically sound, as to population and kill numbers (Creel et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2016). Despite this, restoration management often excludes the cultural aspect of sustainability, especially Indigenous needs and perspectives (Field, 2009; Wehi & Lord, 2017). According to Wehi and Lord (2017), it is imperative to incorporate Indigenous practices, including their traditional harvesting rights, within restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems. The present study addresses this issue by considering Indigenous cultural usage of wildlife as well as the viewpoints of other groups in B.C. who also have a vested interest in hunting. This will ensure that wildlife is being protected while balancing the needs of residents, including the cultural practices of Indigenous communities (Field, 2009; Robidoux & Mason, 2017).

The above literature establishes a framework to understand the hunting industry in connection with historical and contemporary wildlife and land uses. A solid foundation of the importance of including stakeholders when discussing the hunting industry is identified. However, a comprehensive analysis of these central issues in B.C. is needed. Specifically, research that privileges the opinions of stakeholders and examines stereotypes fostered in forms of public discourse is critical. This study addresses these identified gaps by accessing the perspectives of local stakeholders on the core issues regarding hunting and its role in provincial ecosystems.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) was the approach taken in order to access the complex relationships within the hunting industry. The researcher relied on CBPR as it allows for the effective engagement of communities in order to identify their key concerns and recognize the knowledge and abilities of participants (Stanley et al., 2015; Frerichs et al., 2016; Ablah et al., 2016). This methodology is most frequently used in health fields, particularly understanding health equity challenges (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010;

Frerichs et al., 2016; Stanley et al., 2015). However, the use of the central components of CBPR were valuable in this study to understand the knowledge and perspectives of experienced hunters. As this type of research concentrates on the specific values and practises of participants, it is conducive to the development of policy that truly considers their needs and perspectives. In particular, this is consequential in helping to identify the experiences of the diverse groups of stakeholders who are discussed in this study and to bridge the gap between academic research and local knowledge (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010; Jagosh et al., 2015).

As a leader in promoting the use of CPBR, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) endorsed a number of key principles essential to this methodology in 2011. Of these, the following were critical to guide this study while adhering to the philosophies of CBPR (O'Fallon & Dearry, 2002):

*Promote active collaboration and participation at every stage of research.* According to CPBR approaches, it is crucial to work with the group directly affected by the study. As this research concentrates on the state of the hunting industry, it was the stakeholders who I engaged with, as it was their ability to participate in hunting that could be impacted by the results. The collaboration with stakeholders was done primarily in an in-formal matter. Conversations took place over several months prior to data collection, to understand and identify the main issues and concerns from their perspectives. Particularly, discussions centred around suggestions on the most valuable and useful method of data collection and what should be the focus of the study. This helped to form both the direction of this project as well as shape the questions and subjects that were utilized in semi-structured interviews. Participants were also actively engaged in recruitment, as snowball sampling was employed in this study. Informal conversations continued throughout the project as a way of ongoing engagement and re-affirming the direction of the research. This was done in order to empower and instill ownership throughout the process; ensuring that the findings improved the knowledge of stakeholder salience.

*Ensure projects are community driven.* As this project included several different groups of stakeholders, it was not only essential that participants felt that they were active collaborators on the project, but that there was also a measure of participation and ownership throughout the study. For this reason, I relied on several different connections to access

stakeholders, as relying solely on snowball recruitment stemming from my own circle would not ensure the proper representation of the hunting community. This included, as stated above, reliance on participants themselves to engage with the recruitment process. Moreover, with CPBR, it was essential to respect cultural values through the building of trust, mutual community benefits, and the prioritization of the well-being of the contributors (Townsend et al., 2015; Lichtveld et al., 2016). Therefore, interviewees were given a high level of control over conversation through the use of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews. Throughout the interviews, participants were also encouraged to share their feedback, which allowed them to further inform the study- aligning the project as closely as possible with community needs.

*Ensure the research process is culturally appropriate.* An iterative process was created in which participants were encouraged to share their feedback and questions throughout the interviews, which helped to support cultural sensitivity. This gave the interviewees the ability to change or adjust questions they felt were pertinent to the hunting industry and ensured that the appropriate concepts and subjects were being addressed. Any apprehension expressed by the hunters to participate in the research was partially removed through the use of snowball recruitment. It instilled a higher level of trust as a friend, colleague, family member, or hunting partner had recommended that they participate and indicated that it was a worth-while project; one that respected diverse cultural viewpoints. Furthermore, interview transcripts were made available for feedback to make sure that their opinions and concerns would be accurately represented. Participants were given the opportunity to edit content for clarity and remove areas they were not comfortable with sharing. This was especially pertinent when collaborating with Indigenous participants who were sensitive to the accurate depiction of their beliefs and cultural practices surrounding hunting and conservation.

*Community as a unity of identity.* Perhaps one of the more difficult tasks of this project was defining the hunting community within B.C. Across academia there seems to be a lack of consistency when describing who is considered to be a key stakeholder, and how to define the different types of hunters. Research often focuses on a singular group of hunters instead of including the larger community. As a result, this project heavily relied on the formal and informal discussions with participants to determine who should be involved in the

study. In the case of this hunting community, it was evident that contributors felt that any person with an active concern about and participation within the hunting industry was seen as a key stakeholder. This meant widening the participant base from only resident hunters to include several other stakeholder groups in order to accurately depict the hunting community.

*Disseminate results in useful terms.* It was essential that this document highlighted the voices of the participants. As such, the following findings heavily rely on interviewee quotes to lead the results of the study. This was further important to highlight the useful and accurate dissemination of the results. Part of the collaboration throughout the research process was understanding how best to share the findings after the project was completed. It was evident that the participants felt creating a document, such as the following, would be a great tool to share the results as it could be easily distributed to decision makers. At the advisement of participants, these findings, driven by stakeholder perspectives, have been thoughtfully shared at community symposiums, and continued to be discussed with hunting and trapping clubs, with government officials, and non-profit, hunting organizations such as the B.C. Wildlife Federation.

This study benefited extensively from applying the principles of CPBR. It allowed for the building of trust between myself, the researcher, and the community as well as greater engagement of stakeholders in this research project. The on-going collaboration with the participants shaped this project to accurately depict the hunting community in B.C. As a result, there was an increase in both the quality and quantity of data received from each interview. These meaningful interactions and shared cultural knowledge added to the richness and validity of the findings.

## **RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY**

I, the researcher, am a middle class female in my mid-twenties. These are important facts in order to establish my role in conducting this study. I grew up in an urban area of Vancouver, however, I was raised in a family who was highly involved in the hunting community. My father and his siblings are generational hunters, who were raised in a rural community and learned the practice of hunting from their father and grandfathers. In my family, hunting is seen as a way of life and an important part of our history and culture. As such, I was provided with a cultural understanding of what hunting in B.C. is, or at least what

it means to our family. This included pertinent rules and regulations as well as the realities relating to tag draws, hunting seasons and the importance of respecting wildlife. Hunting has always been integrated into my life. As well, having a family cottage in rural B.C. gave me an appreciation of both the land and animals native to the Cariboo Chilcotin region. This knowledge was imperative in conducting this study as it assisted in overcoming the challenge of accessing the primarily male dominated hunting community. As a young non-hunting female, I recognized that I had to prove myself in order to effectively engage with the hunters; much more than a male hunter would have, as participants looked at me with both intrigue and concerns of naivety. My ability to speak their jargon, be up-to date on current issues surrounding the sport, and demonstrate a shared investment in hunting, greater than just a researcher, was crucial in accessing the knowledge within the hunting community. Who I am presented a challenge in some of the interviews which made it necessary to showcase my genuine and empathetic motives and overall awareness of the sport of hunting. My own personal background aided to establish the purpose of the study and to conduct interviews. As participants realized they did not need to explain the finite details of hunting in B.C., they were able to focus on their opinions and perspectives instead. This supported the richness of knowledge that was gained in each interview and the quality of the data. My position as a hunter's daughter, also created more participant buy-in, as they trusted me to fairly depict the hunting industry from their perspectives. So in this case, my life experiences were seen as a positive when conversing with this community and this helped to overcome the difficulties that were presented related to my gender and age. Yet, it is important to note that subjectivity was further a challenge. While researcher bias can rarely be completely avoided, it was essential to consider and acknowledge how my positionality affected this study. As a result, findings in this study are based solely on the opinions and perspectives of my participants, with little reference to my own ideas on these issues. Consequently, as a researcher, I have attempted to utilize my background, previous experiences and knowledge to interpret and integrate the opinions and issues surrounding the hunting industry in B.C.

## **THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis is divided into four distinct chapters. Chapter one identifies the current gaps in literature that exist regarding hunting and wildlife management as well as provides an

overview of the methodology utilized. Chapter two, establishes an overview of B.C.'s hunting industry from the perspective of resident hunters. The goal of this chapter was to understand key industry issues including stereotyping, sustainability, and inclusion through the voices of local sport hunters. These hunters were the main participants in order to highlight their similar positions regarding hunting within the province. There is specific focus on the lack of consultation of stakeholders in decision making and policy development and stereotypes created in the media. Especially, in consideration of hunting tourism and conservation economies. In chapter three, the researcher uncovers the complexity of relationships that exist within B.C.'s hunting industry. Specifically, between humans, wildlife, and contemporary stakeholders. This chapter utilizes a larger participant base including guide outfitters, resident hunters, Indigenous peoples, conservation officers, hunting supplies business owners, and wildlife biologists- showcasing the diversity of opinions and stakeholders that exist in the hunting industry. Through the use of Aldo Leopold's *Land Ethics*, human's role in ecosystems are contemplated by the participants; evaluating hunting/hunters' contribution to wildlife management. Recent regulation changes surrounding B.C.'s grizzly bear hunt is utilized as a case study to dissect the creation of hunting regulations within the province and the power of social influence on these decisions. In the final chapter, I discuss how these contemporary issues associated with hunting in B.C. relate to larger concerns regarding land-use within the province and the importance of utilizing stakeholders' knowledge of land in policy decisions.

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## Chapter 2. Stereotypes, sustainability and inclusion in British Columbia's hunting industries

### INTRODUCTION

Hunting wildlife was one of the first forms of tourism in British Columbia (B.C.), Canada, and an integral part of the province's history and economy. Hunting, as a wildlife conservation tool, has been the centre of much debate. There have been a number of issues with international scope surrounding sport hunting practices as climate change continues to affect wildlife populations globally (Creel et al., 2015; Lindsey et al., 2016). In the last ten years, hunting in B.C. has increased in popularity with resident hunters by twenty percent,<sup>iv</sup> while the number of tourist trophy hunters<sup>v</sup> visiting B.C. has decreased over this period (BC Wildlife Federation, 2015; Canada Newswire, 2015). This reduction in tourist hunters could be in light of the several controversial regional, federal, and international incidents which have caused global outrage and called into question the validity of the sport. As both print and social media have increasingly covered wildlife conservation stories such as Cecil the lion (Sachgau, 2015), a professional ice hockey athlete poaching a grizzly bear (Burgmann, 2016),<sup>vi</sup> and the recent banning of trophy hunting for grizzly bears in B.C. (Johnson & Lindsay, 2017),<sup>vii</sup> hunting has become a heated, and heavily debated, subject internationally. This has emphasized the polarizing views on hunting for wildlife management and as a tourist activity.

Previous studies have investigated the history of sport hunting (Colpitts, 2002; Binnema & Niemi, 2006), the sustainability of land and animal resources (Tremblay & McKercher, 2001; Deere, 2011), and the effects of hunting tourism on both the environment and local economies (Foote & Wenzel, 2007; Fisher et al., 2015). Although some research highlights the motivational factors that entice hunters to participate in the sport (Reis, 2014; Morris, 2013) and their attitudes towards hunting tourism (Nygård & Uthardt, 2011; Komppula & Gartner, 2013), there is a lack of work that considers both how key ethical issues impact hunting economies and the perspectives of central stakeholders in growing hunting tourism sectors. This chapter addresses this gap by taking a critical look at the core ethical perspectives of resident hunters as a method to better understand three central hunting industry issues in the context of hunting policy development and tourism: stereotypes about

hunting and hunters; environmental sustainability of the practices; and the inclusion of hunters in decision-making processes. The results accentuate the importance of integrating local hunters' opinions, experiences, and knowledge in the ongoing development of sport hunting practices and industries. Through the use of community-based participatory research (CBPR) and semi-structured interviews, I demonstrate the need to consult local hunters in order to create ethical and effective policy recommendations. This is imperative in the northern and interior regions of B.C. While experiencing a decrease in population numbers of key species, such as moose, these regions, including several rural communities, depend on both the subsistence and economic benefits of hunting. The results could inform inclusive policies that balance the needs of local peoples and tourism economies, increase awareness of the general public on hunting, and find solutions that benefit local B.C. hunters and communities in the ongoing development of hunting tourism. Despite circulating discourses on hunters and hunting practices, the inclusion of their perspectives and knowledge of the land is central to the sustainability of both hunting industries and the regional ecosystems.

The following key questions were addressed in this chapter: 1) How does stereotyping in the media affect perceptions on hunting? Is this different depending on Urban/Rural?; 2) What are hunters' true motivations to hunt and how does that play into sustainability of the sport?; 3) What is the role of hunting in the economic, environmental and social sustainability of wildlife resources; 4) How does hunting tourism affect the resident hunting industry? Sustainability?; 5) Are hunters being included in decision making and is their knowledge and perspective being considered?

## **METHODS**

To understand the topic, I first conducted an analysis of both scholarly literature and popular press articles. I searched popular press depictions of hunting in the media from 2013-2017. Articles were examined from national, regional, and international sources to understand how hunting was being discussed in current media sources in the province, country and throughout the world. The purpose of this analysis was twofold. The first, was to understand how hunting was being conceptualized and discussed in contemporary media- focusing on the use, or lack thereof, of local stakeholder opinions. Specifically, resident and Indigenous hunters were examined when discussing policy and regulation making. Articles

were also analyzed for the use of terminology and stereotypes that appeared within the media. This was necessary as interviewees mentioned stereotyping in media as a major issue in the hunting community. The second purpose of this analysis was to be well-informed in order to engage intellectually with the participant base. During the interviews, it was pertinent that I was aware of the current state of affairs within the hunting industry- including controversial media coverage as well as policy and regulation changes. This analysis helped provide context for this study on current issues as well as validate my own knowledge and awareness of the hunting industry when conversing with the hunting community.

The articles that were analyzed were chosen in a systematic way. Two provincial newspapers: *The Vancouver Sun*, and *The Province*, two national news sources: *The Globe and Mail*, and *CBC news*, as well as two International public press: *The Guardian* and *National Geographic* were selected to search for popular press articles. The online data bases of these news sources were utilized in finding relevant articles. As the international sources were utilized in attempt to highlight the global outrage that was caused by the death of Cecil the lion in 2015, articles that were written in 2015-2016 were the focus of the search. The provincial and national sources were used to understand a more local context of hunting within the last five years. Thus the search was limited to articles written between 2013-2017. Key terms including hunting, sport hunting, grizzly bear, and 'Cecil the lion' were used when searching through these data bases to find contemporary articles. This was not the thrust of this work but was an important aspect in order to compare and contrast the circulating discourses surrounding the sport. Especially as this topic has been the centre of many everyday conversations while making numerous headlines during this period of time. The articles that were utilized were ones that discussed current hunting controversies (Pynn, 2017a; Actman, 2016; Johnson & Lindsay, 2017) and general public opinion on these incidents, which included descriptions of hunters and hunting practices (Howard, 2015; Goldman, 2016). This material is integrated throughout this chapter to provide background information for the reader and context to the primary research findings.

Primary research, in the form of semi-structured interviews, are utilized and participant voices are integrated into the text of the chapter as often as possible. The objective was to give hunters a voice in the discussion about ethical practices and the importance of hunters to hunting economies and environmental sustainability. Fifteen

interviews were conducted with current sport hunters in the Cariboo Chilcotin<sup>viii</sup> region of B.C. (Refer to Appendix A). This area was chosen due to several contentious hunting regulation changes made in 2014-2015 to the region. In particular, one controversy included changes to the allotment of hunting tags to non-Indigenous peoples as a result of negotiations with Indigenous groups and the creation of the Dasiqox Tribal Park.<sup>ix</sup> These changes have affected the industry as hunting by non-Indigenous peoples has been eliminated in the region as outlined in the B.C. Wildlife Limited Entry regulations starting in 2015 (British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, 2014; Dasiqox Tribal Park, 2015).

To recruit resident hunters, snowball sampling was utilized. All fifteen participants identified as male and ranged from the ages of 23 to 74. While all of the men had hunted in the Cariboo Chilcotin region, only four of them were residents of the area; nine lived in Greater Vancouver, and two were from Kamloops. In B.C., hunters are considered resident hunters if they live within the province. As such, all of the men interviewed are considered resident hunters regardless of the location of their homes. Furthermore, ten of the fifteen interviewees have deep hunting roots in the Cariboo region due to family connections, generational hunting, owning second homes in the area, or being born and raised in the region. Twelve of the hunters also identified that they return to the same Cariboo hunting region year after year giving them a higher level of knowledge, appreciation, and investment in the health of the ecosystem due to their time spent there. They also self-identified with a variety of hunting experience, from new hunters to those who have been lifelong hunters. Fourteen of the fifteen interviews took place via telephone and one was a face-to-face interview. The interviews lasted 10-45 minutes, during which each participant answered fifteen questions pertaining to their views on ethical hunting and hunting tourism in B.C. (Refer to Appendix B). All of the interviews were conducted within a 24-month period. Seven of the interviews were conducted from October 2015 to December 2015, six were conducted from March 2016 to August 2016. The remaining two were conducted in October 2017. The conversations were recorded and transcribed verbatim in order to provide accurate and comprehensive opinions. The interviews were analyzed to identify significant themes. Interview texts were coded into a number of key themes that included: sustainability, stereotypes, economics, and inclusion. The researcher tried to integrate direct quotes which

have been inserted in block text format to best represent interviewee voices. Anonymity was offered to all interviewees, but all chose to associate their perspectives with their names and, consequently, their actual names are used below.<sup>x</sup>

## **ASSESSING PUBLIC DISCOURSE: THE PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT HUNTING AND SPORT HUNTERS**

As with many forms of tourism, recreation, and sporting practices, the motivations of those engaged in them are studied and questioned (Komppula & Gartner, 2013). In the first few decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century Canada, Loo (2001) indicates that many hunters identified themselves as being bourgeois, and highly masculine, as killing for animal trophies was seen as a sign of manhood. These historical perceptions of hunting have led in part to the creation of current stereotypes of hunters as frivolous, irresponsible killers, and has also sparked debate and controversy around the practice of hunting as a sport (Goldman, 2016; Cahoone, 2009; Heffelfinger et al., 2013). In recent media, many hunters are viewed as cowards for getting a thrill out of killing (Howard, 2015) and as backwards outdoorsmen with archaic beliefs (Mason, 2015). This was portrayed recently during the 2015 controversy over the illegal shooting of Cecil the lion. This event led to greater scrutiny of hunting, specifically trophy hunting, as the sport was being described as immoral and disgraceful (Actman, 2016; Sachgau, 2015). Regionally, B.C. has had its own controversial incidents when a professional ice hockey athlete poached a grizzly bear in Kwanta River in 2013 (Ball, 2013). Once again, media outlets were concentrating on this isolated event and vilifying the hunter while animal activists tried to use this as leverage to end trophy hunting (Burgmann, 2016; Prystupa, 2015). While these descriptions do fit some hunters, academics have theorized the relationship between hunters and their prey as being filled with complex power relations (Reis, 2009). Research, however, has not examined how media has shaped these perceptions, especially in consideration of these recent events. Contrary to the discourses produced historically and currently circulating in the media, the men interviewed for this study revealed that the kill was not the main factor motivating them to hunt. As Chris states:

In fact, the actual kill is not important to me ...it is the ability to get out into some areas of the country that most people don't ever get to...that is the most important thing to me. (Chris, 2015)

These feelings were affirmed when speaking with Larry. He acknowledged that the kill was part of his hunting experience, but for reasons dissimilar to those perceived in the media:

Although the kill is somewhat important to me...what is important to me is not the actual act but the result of harvesting of meat. It really is the matter of the freedom you have when you are hunting. (Larry, 2015)

As Larry alludes to above, Clint also spoke about the idea of killing for subsistence and meat when discussing his reasons for hunting:

One of my motivators is health and understanding the quality of my family's health in terms of being naturally organic...knowing where your food source comes from as opposed to store bought meat. (Clint, 2015)

Similar feelings were shared by Kevin:

Killing isn't the most sought after or most important part of the hunting trip.... For me it is not about killing specifically.... It's nice to have harvested an animal because it is great for meat. The meat is a driving factor with the prices the way they are for beef and these sorts of things you buy in the grocery store...it does help out. (Kevin, 2016)

While research in Canada has revealed that being on the land and engaging in hunting can be very costly and, in some regions, often more expensive than shopping locally at grocery stores (Pal et al., 2013), hunters often argue that hunting saves resources. While this is particularly the case in rural Canada where access to healthy and affordable food is limited and hunters have to travel less distances to be on the land (Robidoux & Mason, 2017), many hunters in B.C. travel great distances from urban centres to engage in these practices. Despite these motivations of subsistence and engagement with nature, many of the hunters encountered negative stereotyping and misperceptions regarding hunting. Campbell candidly talked about some of the stereotypes he has faced:

The gun-crazy murderer, the trigger happy, and the misconceptions of why people hunt. (Campbell, 2015)

Clint elaborated on this stating:

Absolutely...I think there are a lot of stereotypes about it, there is way too much emphasis put on the killing and too much misperception about what trophy hunting is versus sustainable hunting. (Clint, 2015)

These ideas are reiterated by Parker when he discusses his perceptions of stereotyping:

Yes, I think everyone thinks anyone who hunts is just a brutal redneck beast who would shoot any animal anytime... and I think, not everybody, but I think the stereotype would be that we are the least animal ethical in the bush which I strongly disagree with... I think there are two types of hunter... and the hunter who spends the most time in the bush are the most ethical, environmentally sound person... compared to the unethical hunter who doesn't spend that much time in the bush anyways and really doesn't make a huge factor but probably makes the most presence known being as that redneck type. (Parker, 2016)

Wayne shares similar sentiments when discussing how media seems to only portray one type of hunter and how this does not accurately represent hunters in general:

No it sure isn't how hunters in general behave... just the odd incident... you know it is a lot of the news media... it's all one sided they don't explain the other side of the equation eh... to me hunting... it's a win-win situation but in the media boy hunters are just wrecking the whole eco-system. (Wayne, 2017)

While there certainly are hunters in most regions of the world who fail to follow written and unwritten protocol as well as legal regulations regarding hunting policies, all interviewees emphasized that the poaching redneck-hunter is rarely encountered, or at least in this part of rural B.C. Despite the discourses about rural hunters that sometimes circulate in urban media, participants outlined that poaching and other unethical behaviour is more of the exception than the regular observable practice.

The interviewees were all asked how they think media affects the production of negative stereotypes of hunting and hunters. Their responses showed that they all agreed that the media often only reports on and sensationalizes the adverse side of the sport, which has the effect of spreading misconceptions. Due to the power of these negative stereotypes in shaping public discourse, many hunters specifically resented this media profile of the sport. As Clint explains:

You don't see the media reporting ethical safe hunting, good stewardship... you don't see them reporting the positive contributions that conservation groups provide in the province... or the access to otherwise inaccessible areas. (Clint, 2015)

Jeff expanded on the subject by discussing how social media can also influence the portrayal of hunting:

I am aware of social media and how it negatively portrays hunting and now more than ever I am way more vigilant of what is being posted on Facebook.... Definitely I have an increased awareness of the fact that people may express their views if I were to post something ...and so I avoid subjecting them to graphic images to avoid the

controversy.... Less in my daily life, as it is an activity a lot of people in this town engage in... but certainly in the media. (Jeff, 2016)

Martin describes how this can affect the perception of hunters and the B.C. hunting industry in general:

I think there is a certain amount of sensationalism in the press... and I think that creates some negativity. Should people be concerned?...yes they should because of the negativity, because you will always get people that don't read up on it, and don't understand. (Martin, 2015)

However, not all participants faced similar experiences. There appears to be a difference on how the media affects perception based on the geographical location of the hunter. This is noted when comparing Clint's opinion as a resident of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, and Kevin who lives in a northern, more isolated, city with many rural areas surrounding it in every direction:

Not currently. Prince George is a pretty outdoorsy...pretty hillbilly...pretty northerner mentality and it works here so you can have that in conversation...no big deal. (Kevin, 2016)

This divide in perception based on urban or rural societies is further explained by Michael:

Yes, in the lower mainland hunting is deemed as socially unacceptable... and kind of a caveman status... why would I go hunting when I can procure my meat from the local grocery store.... So, kind of ignorance and uneducated people dictating their opinions and the misconception of what a hunter does and what hunting is.... So being in a large population base where hunting is not common I think hunting and poaching is the same amongst the general opinion.... There isn't a big distinction between poacher and hunter when it comes to Joe on the street in the major urban centre.... There is a difference when I am in Prince George... hunting is very socially acceptable actually, very common... its great way to talk business... it's ingrained and sewn into society that it is the way of the world.... But in the major urban city is it very frowned upon?... and I am looked upon as almost a criminal?... Yes, oh my goodness yes! (Michael, 2016)

While the interviews did expose a gap between common stereotypes of hunters and what they actually think and practice, it is critical to understand the core values and morals of the participants of the sport when contemplating growing hunting economies through hunting tourism. This is especially important when considering how the sport is imagined by the general public in urban centres, where a large percentage of the population resides in B.C.<sup>xi</sup> Furthermore, it is imperative to examine the context based on geographical area in

which they reside in B.C. and how different communities view sport hunting. As noted by the participants, stereotypes and how they affect them as hunters and the industry is quite different depending on where in the province they live. It was demonstrated that those who resided in urban centres, such as Vancouver, faced a higher level of scrutiny, whereas participants who lived in rural areas saw hunting as societal norm and a way of life. This should be considered when the government of B.C. is communicating changes to policy and whether they are addressing residents of a large urban area or a rural town. This is relevant in light of recent policy changes that banned trophy hunting of grizzly bears in B.C., a law passed by the provincial government effective November 30, 2017 (Johnson & Lindsay, 2017). This decision comes in the wake of the controversy surrounding trophy hunting and public protest (Pynn, 2017b). This not only highlights the increasing urban/rural divide on many policy issues in B.C., which were alluded to by participants, but also how public discourse can weigh heavily on policy making without the consultation of resident hunters.

## **RETHINKING SUSTAINABILITY IN SPORT HUNTING PRACTICES AND ECONOMIES**

Some of the concerns surrounding the idea of increasing hunting tourism are whether the sport can be sustainable and if a growth in the industry would present a threat to land, ecosystem, and animal resources. In many articles, hunting is referred to as a consumptive activity in comparison to other wildlife tourism activities, such as nature viewing or ecotourism, as it involves the harvesting of animals (Tremblay & McKercher, 2001; Novelli et al., 2006). Despite the consumptive side of hunting, other scholars contend that when managed properly, the hunting industry can be sustainable (Wenzel, 2011; Deere, 2011; Mahoney & Jackson, 2013). One of the key points argued is the necessity to include the opinions and experiences of local residents and hunters in the development of sustainability policies for hunting tourism (Fischer et al., 2015; Foote & Wenzel, 2007). This is especially the case when considering how traditional ecological knowledge of wildlife populations can aid in better resource management techniques (Gougeon, 2012; Kendrick, 2013). Currently in the entire province of B.C., there are only 148 conservation officers (COs) located in eight regions covering the entirety of 944,735 km<sup>2</sup> (British Columbia Ministry of Environment, 2017b; Destination BC Corporation, 2017b) These COs are responsible for the compliance

and enforcement of environmental legislation, public safety, and stewardship in the matter of human/environment interaction. This includes the regulating and monitoring of hunters in B.C. With so few COs throughout the province, and many responsibilities, hunters must be self-sufficient and take initiatives to ensure sustainability. As revealed in the interviews, hunters want to play a role in protecting and conserving hunting resources and the environment. Des described the importance of the landscape to his personal hunting experience:

The Cariboo, in particular, is a very precious place to me and my fellow hunters. It's just a beautiful area...it goes from pine woodland to almost semi-desert. (Des, 2015)

Adding to the discussion Chris describes how this translates into better conservation of the land:

Absolutely! I think hunting and conservation go hand in hand, it's not just lip service that you hear people say to rationalize their hunting...I think it is real... I think hunters have a real sense of responsibility to the environment and to the game animals they are looking to harvest. (Chris, 2015)

Larry reinforces the idea that hunting can actually aid in conservation efforts by explaining the high level of importance hunters place both on the physical environment and the mammals they hunt:

Some of our best conservationists of land and animals are hunters themselves...as they are right out in the environment...not just judging from an arm chair and they themselves do not want to destroy the very thing they like to do... So yes I do think hunting tourism can positively affect the sustainability of both land and animals. (Larry, 2015)

Some researchers have drawn a clear correlation between hunting education, economic drivers, and conservation practices. When citizens are educated on how hunting as a tourism activity is a major economic benefit, they are then more likely to invest in the protection and longevity of the wildlife (Deere, 2011). The concept that the economic boost resulting from hunting tourism would have the added benefit by leading to better conservational efforts was an idea many of the interviewees touched on. Larry confidently suggests that:

It is all about fair allocation of the animal resources to all hunters. Proper controls and more funding due to hunting tourism dollars will produce far better management and policing of resources allowing the resource to thrive.... This in turn would give more resources to allocate.... Basically, I believe hunting tourism can put more money into

the system to make it far more sustainable and allow for a greater allocation of animal resources back to the local hunters. (Larry, 2015)

He then further connects the ideas of conservation, sustainability and the support of local communities:

Hunting tourists are charged a lot more than local hunters to hunt...so as a result they bring tremendous amounts of money into the province and communities. Hunters spend more dollars per person than the average tourist as they support the lodging, food, retail outfitters, and transportation industries on top of their high licensing and guide fees. This allows the province to spend more money on conservation and with more conservation you actually end up with more animals... which then allows more hunting and in turn to more funding and support for local communities. (Larry, 2015)

This idea of hunting increasing the amount of conservation dollars in the province was a sentiment echoed by several of the hunters as a way of communicating how hunting tourism supports conservation. However, many of them were also concerned as to how this money was currently being allocated and if it was being used to support conservation, especially with so few conservation officers. Others had apprehensions on the potential growth of the sport hunting industry and what that could mean for local hunters and mammal populations.

Jeff starts the discussion by considering both sides of the debate:

Yes, they should [increase the marketing of hunting tourism], it is a great B.C. activity. If they are going to market it, however...they should do more research on the quantity of animals being harvested to ensure it is ethical and sustainable. They need to set up wildlife traps and do DNA sampling for animals.... How else can the province guarantee and ensure it is being done in a sustainable way and not being detrimental to population numbers? (Jeff, 2016)

Mario continues the conversation by discussing the importance of protecting different species based on population size when he was asked about the role of hunting in conservation management:

I think it can be positive...but on the other hand it is not a positive thing. It depends... in my opinion on what you hunt.... I don't think you go after populations of animals which are not big...you shouldn't hunt those animals. (Mario, 2016)

This showcases his passion to preserve certain species based on population size and his concern for not hunting mammals that are seen as endangered or at risk, a philosophy he incorporated into his own hunting practices. However, when asked about hunting as a tourism activity, he raises major concerns:

No they shouldn't! I don't think hunting tourism just in general is a good thing... it is different. I feel like if you live here and have some sort of connection to the country and the land you are living versus someone to fly in and take something or pay a horrendous price for it.... It comes down to the trophy hunting in the end where people actually shoot those grizzly bears and what have you and... I don't like that... I think hunting tourism should be limited and trophy hunting should be prohibited! It is a good sport, but it needs to be managed. There needs to be room for both animals, and hunters and ecotourism... There basically needs to be room for everyone. (Mario, 2016)

It was evident that the preservation of land and animals is very important to the hunters, especially with the potential growth of the sport through tourism. The interviewees believe that growth in this sector poses the highest potential to aid economic and social sustainability of the environment and the communities where the sport is based. As stated by Chris:

It's a huge benefit obviously... and a lot of that goes towards the conservation efforts as well and the province needs to pay conservation officers to manage and monitor what is going on. (Chris, 2015)

While many of the interviewees acknowledged the economic benefit of sport hunting and hunting tourism, there was also some concern about whether it was only positive and how to balance the needs of resident hunters. This was depicted well in Jeff's statement:

The increase of hunting tourism has already impacted local hunters...it declines the number of tags local hunters are receiving... I mean how do you manage the economic benefit versus manage local hunters who hunt to fill their freezers? Overall, we have these big game hunters and they pay a big trophy fee which is desirable...but they do affect the number of tags allocated among resident hunters every year. (Jeff, 2016)

It is clearly seen through the voices of the resident hunters that they have a deep concern and passion for both the physical environment and the mammals that are essential to their hunting experiences. This care for the environment is what has encouraged the adoption of more sustainable hunting practices that considers the health of species populations and the ecosystems in which they hunt. Furthermore, many of them have decades of experience where they have witnessed first-hand the changes to the land and mammal populations. With such a low number of conservation officers in B.C., this knowledge of the environment is essential in supporting the sustainability of the industry and the land itself. This puts resident hunters in a powerful position to elicit change and act as conservationists. It is further evident that their experiences participating in hunting give them a unique view on the effects of

hunting tourism on not only the land, but also resident hunters themselves. These important perspectives and practices need to be addressed when considering the sustainable threshold that the environment can withstand if there is an influx of hunting tourists, as their record and understanding of the land is essential to ecosystem health and sustainability.

### **INCLUSION OF LOCAL PERSPECTIVES IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

In the late 1880s, when locals were first excluded from hunting in Canadian national parks, federal and provincial governments and conservation officials enforced laws and regulations which dictated the conditions of harvesting animals in the name of sustainability and preservation of the resource (Sandlos, 2007). These decisions failed to take into account the value of the knowledge and experience of local residents in the protection of resources as well as the loss of traditions caused by displacements from, or limited access to, newly formed park lands and protected areas (Mason, 2014). While a great deal has changed since the early days of hunting tourism and sport hunting, the inclusion of local hunters in the expansion of conservation efforts is still a controversial topic. International literature has noted resident hunters' concerns regarding how growth in hunting or hunting tourism could increase the price to partake in the sport, result in less hunting opportunities, and a loss of traditional hunting methods and practices (Nygård & Uthardt, 2011). Despite the knowledge of these controversies and the current research about these concerns, the Guide Outfitters of B.C., which primarily caters to affluent hunting tourism, obtained a higher percentage of the allocation of hunting tags at the expense of resident hunters in 2015 (BC Wildlife Federation, 2015). In part, this led many interviewees to express concerns about their ability to obtain hunting tags and the further impacts these decisions have on their ability to hunt. Des talks about the feelings he has interpreted from his circle of hunters:

We need to be careful that if we do increase hunting tourism...that we do it in a way that isn't going to impact the local hunters, because they seem to be getting squeezed out from everything. (Des, 2015)

Martin voiced his apprehension about what growth in the business of hunting tourism could mean in regard to opportunities for locals to obtain tags:<sup>xii</sup>

I think eventually there is a possibility that hunting tourism could take the ability away from the regular person to go hunting...because it would become such a big business. (Martin, 2015)

The hunters were asked about their opinion on how a potential growth in the sport and tourism industry could affect their ability as residents to hunt. Mario continued on the discussion about his fears of hunting becoming too business centred:

It would have negative effects...it's all a numbers game in my opinion...the more tourism that gets in there the less tags for the locals because tourists pay much more for the same tag...so the seller would actually like to see more tags sold to tourists because they get more money out of it...which means there will be less in the end for local people. (Mario, 2016)

These feeling were reiterated when speaking with Parker, who emphasized his passion for the sport of hunting and the suitability of these practices in the province of B.C.:

Yes.... I would worry it would become more of a business to the province than it would be about a traditional hunting perspective.... I believe we live in the best part of the world for our ability to be able to hunt vast amount of species, in an open season concept where you could do it every year...you could hunt sheep every year...go hunt deer every year, moose every year, every species you can hunt except for grizzly bear without a draw. So, we are pretty fortunate in that way, I would hate to see us lose that benefit.... I believe hunting pressure has really damaged that in the masses. I think region by region...in specific areas hunters could mess up certain areas due to over killing...but that is just poor management... and with proper management it could continue forever. (Parker, 2016)

While voicing concerns about preserving animal numbers, Clint states:

I think it is just a matter of policy.... I think as long as locals are given priority for access to tags, and if a species is in abundance in a particular region in a particular year, then allowing others to come in from outside of that region to our province would be a positive thing. (Clint, 2015)

Rod agreed with Clint, declaring that an increase in hunting tourism could be viewed as a positive or a negative, depending on how resident hunters are treated:

I don't see where hunting tourism would be a negative except when outsiders get too large of a share and the locals would not be happy. (Rod, 2015)

During the interviews, a common theme emerged about possible repercussions by local hunters if hunting tourism were to grow. Des states it simply:

If not managed properly...yes...there will be retaliation by local hunters to hunting tourism. Ultimately it may have a positive effect, but certainly to begin with there is

no question that the feeling is going to be that there is going to be fewer animals and there will be a reaction from locals...guaranteed. (Des, 2015)

While agreeing that some form of retribution could be possible, Larry offers up some solutions on how to promote the idea of increasing hunting tourism economies while satisfying resident hunters:

Yes, I think it could lead to some retaliation if it is not sold properly to local hunters. It is all about educating people about the positives. Part of good tourism management programs must be to do local marketing as well. With proper marketing, it may be possible to show positive effects of hunting tourism to the resident communities...reducing the retaliation you would get from local hunters. (Larry, 2015)

There are a number historic and contemporary examples in Canada, particularly around the formation of protected areas, where a lack of consultation with local hunters and their lobby groups have led to forms of protests, conflicts between resident and tourist hunters, as well as unregulated harvesting of animals (Loo, 2001; Colpitts, 2002; Sandlos, 2007; Mason, 2014). During the interviews, this also became a central issue and a reoccurring theme among the hunters. The lack of inclusion and opportunities to voice their opinions concerning the growth of hunting in B.C. was discussed at length by almost all participants. This was an area Martin seemed concerned about when asked if he felt hunters were being included in the decision-making process:

No, I don't necessarily think local hunters have much say in B.C.... But many would like to be involved in it.... I know I would be...because I think it is important if hunting tourism is going to be a major part of what goes on in B.C. in the future.... I think it is important to involve as many of the people who hunt as possible because those people want to keep enjoying it and they don't want to have to pay more. (Martin, 2015)

While Jeff's opinion is similar to those expressed by Larry and Martin, he also acknowledges that not all stakeholders in the industry are going to be content with all decisions, as it is a balance:

No, I do not think local hunters are being involved.... I think all stakeholders in the hunting industry need to be on board and have a voice in the conversation from the First Nations, to the resident hunters, to the outfitters.... Not everyone is going to walk away being happy no matter what the decisions are... but I believe the deals where no one walks away super happy or gets exactly what they want are the best...because it means it was fair! (Jeff, 2016)

As the growth of the hunting industry, including hunting tourism, continues to have potential positive impacts on both the region and province, the ability of residents to partake in hunting is an important aspect to consider when policy is being made. Moreover, the inclusion of hunters in consultation and decision-making could provide sound information for both ethical and sustainable growth of hunting with commensurate economic benefits. The findings from this research suggests that hunters, who have proven they have a vested interest, should be given the opportunity to share their opinions and knowledge to help shape future policies and management practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

As hunting continues to grow as a sport and a tourism economy at international, national, and provincial levels, it is essential that managers of hunting industries better understand the ethical implications of the sport. This includes perspectives of hunting stereotypes, how local hunters inform decision-making processes, as well as the economic and environmental sustainability of the sporting and conservation practice. Extensive research has been done on the subject of hunting as it pertains to the sustainability of the sport. As indicated in the literature cited throughout this chapter, this research spans the globe from North America, Europe, the Pacific, and Africa. It highlights diverse views from different cultures on hunting as a conservation method and as a sport. Evident from the research is that several debates and controversies exist surrounding the sport and its ability to be a conservation tool for managing wildlife. This includes ethical implications, economic viability, social perspectives, and the overall sustainability of the sport. However, there has been little research that highlights key stakeholder views on these issues in B.C. and Western Canada. This chapter helps address this gap by demonstrating the importance of local opinions and knowledge as a contributing factor in the creation of hunting tourism management policies. In addition, much of the literature emphasizes on only one dimension of the sport and rarely uses in-depth interviews of local residents; therefore, local perspectives and cultural knowledge are underrepresented. This chapter provides a more holistic view by considering diverse aspects of sustainability, including the voices of those most affected by and invested in hunting industries.

By integrating a CPBR approach, cultural perspectives and knowledge are represented in the depiction of, and recommendations for, the hunting industry in B.C. Interviews conducted with the hunters centred on their opinions regarding current policies and sustainability practices, as well as modern stereotyping and inclusion of resident hunters in decision-making processes within the hunting industry. The first theme that emerged was the stereotypes of hunters and the reasons they hunt. It was recognized that the media sensationalizes notions of unethical hunting. The hunters that were interviewed debunked these perceptions by revealing their reasons for participating in, and passion for, the sport that differs from dominant discourses circulating through the media. It was also observed that these men believe that they are among the best conservationists as the preservation of both land and mammals is imperative to the longevity and growth of the sport. Hunting is viewed as a sustainable activity by the hunters as they believe that with a combination of local inclusion, fair tag allotment, and proper funding to conservation efforts, hunting can continue to grow without a detrimental impact to ecosystems or animal populations. Finally, it was evident from the conversations that hunters feel strongly that the inclusion of resident hunters in decision-making processes is necessary to avoid conflict and create sustainable practices when considering an increase in hunting tourism.

This research was able to provide insight into the current state of the hunting industry as well as highlight the opinions and needs of resident hunters whom are key stakeholders in the success of the province's hunting economies. It is apparent through this new knowledge that considering and integrating their opinions will arguably lead to the successful development of sport hunting and tourism economies within British Columbia, throughout Canada, and perhaps in regions that face similar challenges internationally.

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## Chapter 3. The complex relationships between wildlife, humans, and contemporary stakeholders within British Columbia's hunting industries

### INTRODUCTION

Hunting has been historically practiced and culturally ingrained in societies across the globe. This relationship, between wildlife and humans, is both ancient and complex stemming from early hunter-gatherer societies. The motivations to participate in hunting however, have in many cases evolved from an initial necessity for subsistence to a sport or hobby (Reis, 2014; Colpitts, 2002). Hunting has brought economic prosperity to rural communities across the world (Dowsley, 2009; Environment Canada, 2011; Poudel et al., 2016) and it has also remained an important part of Indigenous peoples' subsistence and cultural practices (Robidoux & Mason, 2017; Shanley et al., 2013; Pal et al., 2013). In Western Canada, subsistence hunting and sport hunting continue to be a part of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Furthermore, over the last decade, there has been a notable increase in the number of resident hunters partially due to a higher interest in harvesting organic meat (BC Wildlife Federation, 2015; Canadian Newswire, 2015). Despite an extensive history of widespread participation, there is a high level of controversy surrounding the sport. Particularly in B.C., the debate surrounding hunting has intensified with the recent regulation change in 2017 that banned the harvesting of grizzly bears (British Columbia Government News, 2017). This has led to a discussion about the role of hunting in ecosystem management. (Please see notes iv and v for descriptions of the different hunter typologies). In this chapter, the impact hunting stakeholders have or are having in the health of wildlife and ecosystems is considered. Scholarly literature has argued that humans have an ethical responsibility to help restore and conserve wildlife populations (Warren & Kieffer, 2010; Manfredo et al., 2016; Schwartz, 2006). Researchers also demonstrate the importance of local knowledge in ongoing conservation efforts (Wehi & Lord, 2017; Pal et al., 2013; Creel et al., 2015). As early as the 1940s, Aldo Leopold revealed the significance of human involvement within ecosystem management in order to ensure sustainability (1949). However, there is a gap in research that considers the role hunters play in ecosystem health and their unique relationships with wildlife in Western Canada. Moreover, the research that

does examine stakeholder perspectives (Komppula & Gartner, 2013; Reis, 2009) usually fixates only on one group. This chapter aims to address these two gaps by highlighting the complexity of the relationships between different stakeholders and how this affects wildlife management and conservation. A community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodology guided this study and interviews were conducted with 25 participants in order to gain the perspectives of stakeholders. A diverse group of participants were consulted including resident and Indigenous hunters, guide outfitters, conservation officers as well as wildlife biologists. The varied opinions of the stakeholders, and at times conflicting outlooks, on hunting were reflected which indicates that hunters and managers are certainly not homogenous groups. The importance of communication among the different groups and how that can impact sustainable management practices was emphasized. With regulation changes being influenced by public opinion and media (British Columbia Government News, 2017; Pynn, 2017b), it is critical to comprehend how hunting stakeholders work together to create a cohesive voice in ongoing debates about the sustainability of hunting practices. Understanding the complex relationships between wildlife, humans, and current stakeholders is crucial to support land management, conservation and the long-term health of provincial ecosystems and economies.

The following key questions were addressed in this chapter: 1) What is the relationship between hunters and wildlife in terms of ecosystem management?; 2) what is the state of relationships between key stakeholder groups; are they working together to ensure sustainability?; 3) how do these relationships affect sustainability and the management of wildlife in B.C.?; and, 4) how is communication of both social opinion regarding hunting and the hunting industry itself affecting regulation and policy making in B.C.?

## **METHODS**

The objective of the chapter was to understand the hunting industry in respect to stakeholder and wildlife relationships, as well as overall conservation from the perspective of hunting participants. These perspectives of stakeholders, including conservation officers,<sup>xiii</sup> wildlife biologists,<sup>xiv</sup> resident hunters, Indigenous hunters,<sup>xv</sup> hunting supplies business owners and guide outfitters,<sup>xvi</sup> is integrated below using detailed and direct quotes. It must be acknowledged that there are overlaps between stakeholder groups and very few belonged to

only one of them. Identifying hunters is far more multifaceted than urban/rural divide or stakeholder groups. Instead, these are fluid categories as people who live in urban communities can also come from, or spend time in, rural regions. This added to the complexity of these discussions and the role the participants play in hunting economies. Non-hunters and activists were not consulted in this study as this was a delimitation set at the beginning of the project in order to focus on these intricacies and those with a vested interest in B.C.'s hunting industry.

Data was collected through primary research in the form of 25 semi-structured interviews. Of these interviews, two of the 25 participants were female, the remainder were male. Participants ranged in age between 23 and 74. All interviewees had connections to the B.C. hunting industry through business, family members, as hunters, or as government employees/contractors. Fifteen of the interviewees were resident hunters, three self-identified as Indigenous peoples, two were conservation officers, two owned businesses in the hunting industry, and three were wildlife biologists, two were employees of the B.C. government and one was a contractor hired by the provincial government. One of the resident hunters is the Director of Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program for the British Columbia Wildlife Federation (BCWF). All of the participants are residents of B.C. and embody the diversity of motivations, values, and opinions that exist within the industry. This diversity ensured that a variety of opinions were included. In particular, this study focused on stakeholders who either reside or have hunted in the Northern Interior areas of B.C. This included the Cariboo Chilcotin (Region 5), Thompson Okanagan (Hunting Region 3),<sup>xvii</sup> Kootenay Rockies (Hunting Region 4),<sup>xviii</sup> and Northern B.C.,<sup>xix</sup> Omneca and Peace (Hunting Region 7a and 7b), B.C. regions (Refer to Appendix C). These areas were chosen to highlight the unique hunting needs and motivations within rural communities of the province.<sup>xx</sup>

Snowball sampling was used to recruit all participants in the study. Each interview lasted between twenty minutes and two hours in length. Four of the interviews were conducted in person with the remaining twenty-one done via telephone. Questions centred on three themes: wildlife conservation and the role of hunting in conservation; stakeholder relationships; and, regulation and policy making. All of the interviews took place during a 27-month period between September 2015 and January 2018. As semi-structured interviews were the method of choice, each conversation and the questions asked were tailored to the

particular participant and their involvement in the hunting industry. For those who were government employees or business owners, interviews also included questions pertaining to how hunting affected their work life. As Indigenous peoples have different rights when it comes to hunting in B.C.,<sup>xxi</sup> questions were designed to better fit their position within the industry. Similar customization was done for questions asked of the resident hunters. The interviews were conducted with flexibility in the conversations to ensure each participant was in control of the process and able to express their unique perspectives. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data from the interviews was then coded and analyzed for themes. The key identified themes included: hunters as a vital component of the ecosystem; stakeholder relationships; the necessity to work together; and, the power of social influence within the hunting industry. All participants were offered anonymity, which three participants insisted upon due to the nature of their occupation. Consequently, their names and the regions in which they reside and work have been removed from the chapter. The remaining participants chose to be associated with their opinions, therefore their names have been included below.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WILDLIFE AND HUMANS: THE ROLES OF HUNTERS IN ECOSYSTEM HEALTH**

Humans have a significant relationship with wildlife, one that is both ancient and complex (Lewis et al., 2017). This connection has major implications for the natural world, including wildlife populations, as a whole. Much of conservation science is based on the idea that the land is a biotic mechanism and consequently there are multiple parts that must work together. In order to be ethical in conservation, we must understand all of the parts of the natural world, including all flora and fauna, all the way to the apex layer (Leopold, 1949). The key point in this argument is that humans are the ones who are both altering and benefiting from this system and more importantly, draining its resources. Thus, there is a need for broader citizen involvement in re-establishing a better functioning ecosystem (Feldpausch-Parker et al., 2017).

It is a concept generally accepted and researched in in respect to Indigenous groups and their role within ecosystem health. For example, in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, Nakoda peoples have millennia of experience living and migrating through this mountain ranges,

trading, fishing, gathering and hunting. This has integrated them as central components of regional ecosystems (Snow, 2005). Local knowledge such as this, garnered from centuries of experience and knowledge of the land, is crucial for environmental management and monitoring (Herrick et al., 2010). Some research takes this idea further by considering humans as apex predators. Managing an ecosystem by controlling the top predators, known as top-down management, is a well-received and researched strategy of wildlife management as top predators have the ability to influence the function and structure of ecosystems to achieve greater biodiversity (Wallach et al., 2015; Sergio et al., 2008; Eisenberg et al., 2013; Estes et al., 2011). The ability for humans to act in this role is still an under-researched concept. However, Lewis et al. (2017) suggest that humans have a unique position as they have the ability to both reduce species populations on several of the trophic levels as well as impact the availability of key resources, including habitat, on the landscape. The authors are implying that society has a responsibility and stewardship to the land due to humans' ability to not only participate in food webs, but also make ethical decisions and choices. During the interview process, many interviewees agreed with the notion that humans are a key part of the ecosystem and consequently affect it. Sean, a Wildlife Biologist in B.C. states:

We are part of the ecosystem right?... That is the main view that I would have that we aren't separate from it ... we are part of the ecosystem ... we always have been ... if it wasn't for hunting you probably wouldn't be here... none of us would be. (Sean, 2018)

Paul, another Wildlife Biologist, suggests a similar concept:

I think it's part of our nature, to be honest... that is how we evolved as hunter gatherers and if people are involved in that and still taking part, I think they have more connection to the resource and they understand that harvesting is something that should be done and that it is part of what we do. (Paul, 2017)

Many of the hunters argued passionately for the idea that they have a role to play. In this discussion, some of the hunters do suggest that humans are apex predators, and have concerns about the removal of humans in the natural world:

Environmentalists ... who are primarily urban people, sort of put the planet on a pedestal but there is a difference between preservation ... and conservation and wise use ... And they forget that we are as much a part of this planet as any animal ... and if we want a healthy world we have to continue to be a part of it and interact with it ... in a healthy manner and not put it under glass ... you can't put it under glass ...

you put it under glass you disconnect yourself, you do yourself a disservice and you do the natural world a disservice. (Scott, 2017)

I think people are detached too ... they are detached from where their food has come from, they are detached from basic life really ... I mean we are apex predators ... and these people don't get it ... and if the power were to go out tomorrow what do they do ... they will not survive this but people who get it can grow peas and carrots and potatoes ... they will survive it. (Jason, 2018)

Most of the participants pointed to this detachment as a divide between rural and urban populations. As Scott and Jason, both hunting supplies business owners, discussed hunting allows these participants to be involved in the natural world. Sean, points out that regardless of how detached people may be from the natural world, everyone is utilizing its resources:

We are definitely not separate from [the ecosystem] ... The other thing is some of the stuff we have done on the landscape that everybody benefits from ... Logging, you know people that even live in urban centres ... people who are removed from this kind of way of life benefit from that stuff right ... but we have done things to the landscape that in some cases necessitate hunting too...so I think a lot of those people just don't realize that part of it. (Sean, 2018)

How we are using our resources and the exploitation of them is what makes Aaron, an Indigenous man from Skwlax, B.C., who is the fisheries and aquatic manager for North Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band, hesitant about how involved humans should be in the natural world:

Some of me says yes... and some of me says no.... The way we should be involved is helping keep the populations strong but at a steady pace ... but the part of me that says no to humans being involved is because we are causing more damage to the environment than anything ... and it's a sad thing to say but people, when they want something they will go and do anything at any cost to get what they want .... Hurting the environment in many ways. (Aaron, 2018)

Jeremy, who has made his career as a contracted wildlife biologist, fears that one of the biggest threats to ecosystem sustainability is the fact that society seems to no longer be active participants in the ecosystem:

Underlining that the threat would be just ... the growing disconnect ... people are even maybe afraid to go into the woods ... they didn't grow up with it ... maybe their parents did but they missed that and every generation that goes by I think it is harder and harder to build those connections so I think there is a lot of different initiatives

out there that are trying to connect youth with nature and kind of make these reconnections. (Jeremy, 2018)

The stakeholders emphasize the idea of connectedness to the land as an important aspect of conservation. In Leopold's essay, "The Land Health Concept and Conservation," he discussed a need to not only look at the science but connect this knowledge with society to help create goals for healthy ecosystems (1999). This concept of combining both the scientific knowledge and societal objectives in order to sustain the land is a theme echoed in the interviews. Many of the participants viewed their position as hunters as one that allowed them to have a better understanding of the natural world and its sustainability. Jesse, a resident hunter and the director of fish and wildlife restoration at the BC Wildlife Federation, states:

I think as a hunter or an angler ... you end up being in situations where you get to experience wildlife kind of when wildlife is most active .... And as a consumptive user you get to understand the trends in abundance because sustainability is what dictates your ability to hunt .... And so if there are fewer animals it is going to affect your hunting ... so you are maybe more tied into the sustainability thing ... because your ability to hunt and fish is determined by what is available. (Jesse, 2018)

This highlights the level of value hunters place on wildlife as an essential part of their hunting experience. Jack, a conservation officer in B.C., believes most hunters do have a commitment to the conservation of wildlife:

As a whole I think that hunters have a vested interest in wildlife conservation if they enjoy hunting or they enjoy feeding their families with wild game... or even for the trophy hunters that enjoy that opportunity ... they want to see that opportunity available for future generations... so it is in their best interest to do things responsibly ... they are not preservationist per say ... they don't want to preserve the wildlife and make sure nothing ever changes but they certainly want the wildlife to be there, and in many cases they want more wildlife to be there in the future. (Jack, 2017)

For Jeremy, a contracted wildlife biologist, hunting is not only a hobby, but a vital part of his ability to do his job effectively:

The perspective that hunting has given me as a wildlife biologist is profound.... I know a lot of government biologists who are also hunters ... and I think they are better biologists for it.... Especially when it comes to making management decisions .... I don't know if I could really articulate it but ... it creates a connection beyond what I think you would be able to learn in a class on population ecology.... When you are out there, spending time hunting I think it gives you a much more rounded perspective ... a much more realistic perspective on what is going on. (Jeremy, 2018)

Jeremy alludes to how much knowledge can be gained from spending time on the land as a hunter. This connectedness to nature creates a unique relationship between hunters and wildlife. As wildlife biologist Sean explains further:

I mean hunters tend to know a lot more about wildlife than non-hunters ... they spend their days with them ... or looking for them in places they should be ... spending their days in places that those animals live and seeing how they live and learning about them... I think they definitely have a unique relationship with them ... there are hunters out there that don't see it that way but a lot of them do. (Sean, 2018)

While Sean explains hunters' relationship with wildlife, he is not ignorant to the fact that not all motivations are the same among hunters. As expressed by Aaron, this relationship and respect comes from a long history of traditional teachings and a reliance on animals for subsistence:

I was raised by my grandmother who always taught us to only take what we needed to survive .... And not be greedy on over taking ... and we were always taught never to sell our food for money ... we are always told to only barter with it ... trade ... so that is my take on wildlife and this is my connection with them... I will only take what I have to so I am not going to go out and shoot 20 deer.... I am only going to shoot one to three deer for me and my sisters ... or one moose or something that we can all split up and I am not going to over-fish my take .... The way I look at it is if I am leaving more than I take then there is always going to be some there to ... to breed and keep their populations going strong as well .... I know that I have to... follow those rules that my grandmother taught me and just to take what we need to keep surviving so those populations are always going to be there. (Aaron, 2018)

Rochelle, an Indigenous woman from the Tahltan Nation in Northern B.C., reiterates how this level of respect leads to better conservation:

It's a very deep respect that is what hunting is about, it's about learning respect... that is one of the biggest lessons you get from hunting ... Respect the land you are on and respect the animal you take... And you respect it by utilizing it all and not wasting or not taking too much. (Rochelle, 2017)

Both Rochelle and Aaron emphasize their subsistence practices and how respect and sustainability in hunting comes from a lack of wastefulness. This stewardship for wildlife leads to more concern about sustainability as hunters become more involved in organizations that advocate not only for game species, but overall ecosystem health:

There is the advocacy piece ... advocating for wild places and science-based management.... Restoration of habitat and fish and wildlife populations.... There is

advocacy right ... used to funding it of course ... which ties into the science part .... so of course, hunters pay license fees which is a form of rent .... You will find hunters are helping pay the bill through conservation organizations.... In terms of license fees, you will see that they are investing in ecosystem-based management ... and underneath that you also find a volunteer component.... The BC Wildlife Federation estimates that their members spend 3,000 hours a year of volunteer time on stewardship activities ... so those are some of the big ones. (Jesse, 2018)

The link between hunters and wildlife is more than just a love of nature and the practice of hunting. Hunting is engrained in Canadian culture and has played a vital role in Canadian history. In Western Canada, it has been a fundamental aspect in the formation of Euro-Canadian identities since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, as the fur trade extended into western parts of the country and nature was seen as a material used for human needs, including sources of food and developing economies (Colpitts, 2002; Burgin, 2015). During this time, men participated in hunting as it was not only a way to provide income and subsistence, but also became a hobby that allowed them to escape the conventions of the city and reconnect with a lifestyle that predated the agricultural revolution (Loo, 2001). For Indigenous peoples in Canada, wildlife has been central to their cultural practices, including traditional harvesting through hunting, a skill passed down from generations of Indigenous Elders (Snow, 2005; Mason, 2008; Gougeon, 2012; Pal et al., 2013). The importance of hunting to their culture was depicted by the Indigenous participants and hunters:

Hunting is part of our culture and its one of our main rights in British Columbia that we have for First Nations people... is to still go out and hunt to feed our family ... for the cultural side we do hunt for other family and friends ... if we have someone lose a family member in our culture they are not allowed to hunt for one year .... Their sons aren't allowed to hunt and someone in the community will go out and get them their animal for the year, so they have their meat as well ... so I kind of do it mainly for sustenance and some cultural values in there as well to help with the people in our community. (Aaron, 2018)

I think it just comes down to a cultural understanding of why it is important.... I don't think people realize how much it affects ... especially our elderly going back to that ... because they keep stock all year because of the meat that is given to them ... if you weren't to give that meat to Elders, fill their freezers, like they wouldn't have that to eat. (Janelle, 2017)

Here, Rochelle speaks to her personal motivations to hunt and how that is intertwined with her Indigenous culture:

To keep my culture alive and in my life ... because my family history is so tied to hunting ... both my dad and my mom's side ... so it was a way of survival for my mom's family... and it was a way for survival of my dad and his dad and I am sure his dad before him. (Rochelle, 2017)

Generational hunting was discussed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters as expressed by Scott, a hunting supplier:

Hunting has always been a part of our culture ... and especially where I grew up ... I grew up in Northern Saskatchewan and in my ... family both my mom and my dad's family were pioneering families who developed that part of the world, so they created a community there and hunting was a part of their lives while they were building that community ... so hunting has a very long history going back probably many centuries probably thousands of years in my family if we were ever able to trace it ... I just kind of joke that it was built into my DNA thousands of years ago and it's just continued forward ever since, it is something that my dad did with his dad, and he did with his dad, and now my son and my daughter both do with me. (Scott, 2017)

Scott goes on to explain how this cultural value ties into his respect for the land and views on the need for a sustainable future:

It gives you a respect and connection to the land that you otherwise wouldn't have and that respect and that connection can force you to think into the future ... to think about the future of the resources itself as well as the future of your own culture ... so you know you think about the past and you think about the present and you think about the future and you tie it all together and so ... it sort of becomes an integral part of your life as a result. (Scott, 2017)

It is clear that these participants feel hunting is engrained in their culture and heritage. This motivates them to protect the resource for their own families and communities. Scott is not the only hunter that spoke about their growing concern for the state of the B.C. wildlife and his perceived threat for the ability of future generations to hunt. As many of these hunters have spent extended amounts of time on the land, they have observed major changes in the ecosystem in their lifetime, which has heightened their concern regarding the future of B.C. ecosystems. This fear for the future of the hunting industry and wildlife populations is something that Rochelle was equally passionate about:

I just don't want to see Canada end up where Belize ended up ... a lot of countries around the world have ended up where they are not allowed to practice their traditions anymore that would be ... really, really sad ... our generations wouldn't survive honestly if it gets to a point like that. (Rochelle, 2017)

It was evident throughout the interviews with the various stakeholders that hunting holds cultural value for them. This value-driven perspective gives most hunters a significant interest in sustainable practices and conservation management. Likewise, their experiences as hunters and providers have fostered unique relationships with wildlife that have led not only to a profound connectedness to the natural world, but also knowledge that positions them to help shape sustainable practices. For some of the hunters, this connectedness comes from a long tradition of being integrated into the ecosystem, a role they feel needs to be preserved. Connecting scientific research with these perspectives will help protect the health and function of both land and wildlife in addition to acknowledging the connectedness and cultural values associated with each. Despite the shared view of hunters as a part of the ecosystems, there are complex stakeholder relationships that prevent joint initiatives to protect and support B.C.'s hunting industries.

#### **UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS**

Considering stakeholder perspectives is seen as one of the most ethical ways to study complex and controversial topics (Nelson et al., 2016). In B.C., the hunting industry stakeholders consist of resident hunters, guide outfitters, hunting equipment vendors, Indigenous communities, and government officials—including wildlife biologists and conservation officers. These are the groups who seemingly have the highest level of interest in the hunting industry as they have the most to lose; whether it is their right to practice the sport, obtain subsistence, or have a business or career in the field. As a result, they have an inherent need for the wildlife and the environment in which they live to remain healthy in order to ensure the longevity of the hunting industry, especially considering they are all sharing the same resource. While conflict amongst user groups who share natural resources is a well-researched issue (Reis & Higham, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2016), little academic attention has been paid to it in the hunting industry. When it has been considered, emphasis has been put on hunting in conflict with other nature groups, such as wildlife viewers, and hikers (Eliason, 2016; Lovelock, 2003). Research has demonstrated that there is a need to balance the needs of locals and communities to ensure sustainability (Reis & Higham, 2009); however, these studies seem to use the term hunter homogeneously, therefore stakeholder groups are not differentiated despite their diverse motivations and perspectives (Kaltenborn

et al., 2013). What is not clear is how inline motivations and perspectives are amongst these different groups and the state of the relationships between them. In B.C., several of the main hunting species are in decline in certain regions, including moose, elk, and mule deer (British Columbia Ministry of Environment, 2017a); yet they continue to be hunted. It is important to understand how these different groups, with ostensibly different motivations, interact with one another in order to assess the appropriateness and possibility of them to work towards sustainability goals. It was revealed in the interviews conducted for this study that these relationships are far more complex than previous literature has acknowledged. For example, wildlife biologist Sean discusses his relationship as a government employee and regulation maker with the resident hunters and the impact of the policies he puts into place:

We have a good relationship in this region with resident hunter groups ... some regions don't depending on the decisions they have made in the past and the credibility they have with stakeholders ... if you don't have that credibility with stakeholders they don't trust what you are doing ... if they trust what you are doing ... it's easy... it's basically trust what you are doing so there is no big push backs on the decisions that are made ... so we don't have to deal with a lot of that here which has been really good ... compared to some of my neighbors. (Sean, 2018)

Sean believes it is the trust built between himself and the various hunting groups, as well as the fact that he is an experienced hunter, that gives him credibility within the industry. His vested interest in hunting helps him maintain an open and effective relationship with the different stakeholders. This was the case not only for resident hunters, but similar opinions were made in regard to guide outfitters and members of Indigenous communities. Paul, a wildlife biologist, attributes this healthy relationship to the stakeholders' commitment to conservation:

Well I think because most resident hunters they make conservation their priority as much as they love hunting, if their hunting activities aren't deemed sustainable then they don't want to participate in them .... And I think most people respect that and if there are regulation changes needed to promote conservation they are fine with that. (Paul, 2017)

This obligation towards sustainability is what can also help make the relationships between conservation officers (COs) and resident hunters relatively positive. As CO Jack indicates:

You know you always have outliers on either side of the spectrum but overall I think that the conservation officers' service motivations are ... the same as hunters' motivations ... so typically when you have people with similar...or agencies who

have similar values ... then they have similar motivations ... so they tend to get along ... and hunters are usually happy when they see conservation officers. (Jack, 2017)

Currently, there is a shortage of conservation officers in B.C. with only 148 to cover the entire province (British Columbia Ministry of Environment, 2017b). Many of them are overworked and unable to cover as much land as is necessary to ensure regulations are being followed and, as a result, much of the conservation responsibility has been put on hunters themselves. Jack depicts what this means for him as a CO:

I think that an honest hunter ... which most are ... is a huge asset for us and our jobs as enforcement officers because there is only so many CO's... even if there were lots of us we still can't be everywhere at once ... and the hunters that are out there they want to keep their cohorts honest ... So, when there are people out there breaking the rules, hunters are often the first ones to see them and they are the ones that call us and let us know what is going on and where so that we can go out there and do our job. (Jack, 2017)

While it appears that regulation-makers and enforcers overall have positive relations with resident hunters, the relationship is inherently different with Indigenous people. They have a right to the land as stated by the amended Indian Act in 1951, which means that in B.C., they do not follow the same regulations as resident hunters. While legislation states First Nations peoples are allowed to hunt as they traditionally have throughout the province, this does exclude federal and provincial parks, and protected areas (British Columbia Government, 2016; Legal Aid BC, 2013). While some First Nations enjoy a somewhat less regulated hunt, many of their traditional lands are part of these areas and as such they are excluded from hunting on them. As well, government officials and Indigenous communities maintain a partnership when it comes to wildlife sustainability. Especially as wildlife biologist Paul describes what that relationship looks like within his region:

For us, if we have a regulation change it goes through consultations like the formal submission of a regulation proposal ... then it goes with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and they actually consult with the different bands and ... we have a committee, and we meet every couple months and discuss wildlife management issues. So, I think that is where most of the meaningful consultation occurs and where they can bring up any issues or concerns they are seeing out there. (Paul, 2017)

Jeremy agrees with his fellow wildlife biologist, that this consultation is imperative in order to ensure sustainability of wildlife:

I think we have a lot to learn from Indigenous perspectives on hunting ... especially historically ... I think it's a basic idea. You have a group of people who have been living off this land for tens of thousands of years and there are stories ... histories there that we would all benefit from knowing ... so that's kind of a philosophical perspective I guess on the practical wildlife management side of it ... I know that First Nations' hunting is not regulated. That is a real difficult factor to work into a formula for wildlife managers who are trying to kind of set sustainable limits on big game animals that we hunt. (Jeremy 2018)

Although Jeremy is in support of consultation and recognizes the unique value Indigenous knowledge and perspective brings to wildlife management, he also notes the downfall of unregulated hunting. This was a sentiment shared among many of the participants as they had concerns surrounding the ability to create accurate regulation without the willingness to share harvest numbers. This resistance to work with government officials likely stems from the hostility that has developed out of the unjust policies that worked to displace Indigenous communities and exclude Indigenous hunters from key harvesting sites in the past. This occurred in numerous locations throughout western Canada (Mason, 2014; Snow, 2005). Controversy surrounding the sport of hunting dates as far back to the late 19th century and was the source of conflict between hunters and non-hunters, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Manore & Miner, 2007; Colpitts, 2002). In 1885, Canadian government officials created and enforced laws and regulations that dictated the conditions—including when, how much, and which animals—Indigenous communities could harvest throughout Canadian national parks. At the time it was justified in the name of conservation as Indigenous subsistence practices were blamed for declines in wildlife populations (Binnema & Niemi, 2006; Sandlos, 2007). This exclusion negatively impacted the ability of many communities to access critical food sources and resulted in a loss of traditional culture and practices and yet, at the same time, resources were being used for commercial and tourism purposes that did not preserve the ecological integrity of the landscape (Mason, 2008; Gougeon, 2012). Despite this disturbing past, Sean looks for ways to work with different Indigenous bands:

One of the things we are working on right now ... is to first see if five bands would actually make an attempt at trying to gather their harvest information ... and if so, would [they] sit down and manage wildlife in [a] broader area together ... or the harvest anyways so we know what these five bands are harvesting so it is easier to allocate the rest to the other groups. (Sean, 2018)

This desire to work together to manage wildlife health and numbers is echoed by Indigenous man Aaron, who is trying to build relations in his own community:

I am just starting to create a relationship with conservation officers ... in the order of we do need to do something about certain things, and we need to start working together because I find that is the only way changes are going to happen.... And I find if we just sit back and don't do anything than we are just leaving ourselves out of things ... So I find that the only way that the First Nations communities can kind of be involved in things in every way is to have these relationships with government agencies ... so that we know what they are doing and they know what we are doing so that we can be on the same page. (Aaron, 2018)

While there appears to be a movement towards government agencies and Indigenous bands working together, the relationship between Indigenous hunters and resident hunters, two of the main user groups, appears more multifaceted. It was evident that a major point of contention is the different regulations for non-Indigenous hunters. Jesse touched on this idea from his perspective working at the BCWF, yet he felt the conflict was not the same in all areas of the province and it was diminished when sustainable measures were being taken:

I think anytime you have different groups you have conflict ... but spatially across the province it just depends on the area ... there are areas where you go ... from extremes where there are no discussions of sustainability and harvest is unregulated. A lot of heavy on the female and on the antlerless ... and it's not reported and that sort of thing ... although there is the other side of the spectrum where you have First Nation communities that have tagging and licensing systems that are monitoring their harvest that are agreeing to allocation numbers.... It's just going to vary spatially. (Jesse, 2018)

Jesse demonstrating that relationships between these groups really depends on the people themselves, and their willingness to work towards more sustainable practices. Aaron shares his perspective as a Skwalx man on the topic:

I know a lot of non-Native hunters look at First Nations badly about [being unregulated] .... I know there are a lot of people out there that do know First Nations are very conservational towards preserving wildlife as well... And I find that the relationship between those hunters are really good because they know we are not out there to kill every animal.... And then there has always been haters no matter what ... I kind of find it challenging for First Nations sometimes because of that view ... that we don't have to follow rules and we always get stereotyped for...different things.... And it's a challenge trying to explain to people that we are not that way. (Aaron, 2018)

The responses demonstrated that relationships and communication between the different groups are key factors to a positive or negative situation. As well, it seems as though most of this conflict comes from a lack of understanding of Indigenous traditional practices and land rights:

[There is] definitely a little bit of clashing between the predominately white town and the First Nations communities ... it's kind of drama back and forth of whether the land is being used for the right purpose or whether the community is being selfish for hunting more than communities or whether you are kind of taking it for granted that they can ... those kinds of things. I think it's kind of misinterpreted ... it creates a lot of racial tensions between the communities because they think they are getting special treatment or something but it's something that is traditional in the community and it has been going on for hundreds or thousands of years. (Janelle, 2017)

I think myself it's just ... a lot of the non-Native cultures are uneducated about our people and our cultures ... it is not taught in schools properly in British Columbia how the First Nation peoples of British Columbia are.... And our agreements with the government and ... I think it is just a misunderstanding and under-education of the cultures in British Columbia. (Aaron, 2018)

The rights to the land is an area of major contention between these groups. Many First Nations people feel resentment towards upper middle-class hunters from urban centres, such as Vancouver, for the exploitation of their resources. Particularly, as some of these Indigenous communities have trouble with harvesting enough food for their community; questioning what right someone from another region has to hunt in their traditional territory when they do not rely on the wild game for subsistence. For Rochelle, it is not just the lack of knowledge and understanding that causes turmoil between her community and resident hunters, but this lack of resources:

I guess that [feelings of frustration] stems from more when I was seeing moose after moose getting hauled out of one of the most prosperous and nicest regions by hunters ... and now it is on the decline and with all the oil and gas, there is just sick moose all the time getting hit by traffic... that should be taken into account and distributing licenses ... I guess just coming from the outside and kind of benefiting from somewhere that you don't live all year round ... or pay to live to be able to fill your freezer down there when there are people in the North who cannot afford to go to the grocery store and that is their main source of food and if we over hunt there is not going to be any. (Rochelle, 2017)

Rochelle highlighting the frustration that stems from worries over food security for northern Indigenous communities. This growing concern over the lack of resources is exactly why Jesse emphasizes the importance of hunting groups starting to work together:

I think there are a lot of synergies and there are a number of projects that are getting started and I think that the issue ... or maybe the realization that everyone needs to come to is that ... we fought over this ... the licensed hunters and the non-licensed hunters fought over who got what for 30 years... and everyone is getting less.... So you know at some point hunters need to recognize that there is going to be nothing left for them to harvest because they don't have priority access to the resource and under that First Nations right ... becomes pretty hollow when there is nothing left to harvest either so... The two groups need to figure out how to take care of the resource. (Jesse, 2018)

It is evident much of the conflict seems to centre around misperceptions and concerns around each groups' practices and questioning their sustainability. This highlights both Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters' commitment and passion towards conserving the wildlife; yet their ability to communicate and work together still needs to be improved across the province.

Animosity between guide outfitters and resident hunters was also noted throughout the interviews. This conflict is similar to that between resident hunters and Indigenous hunters as these groups fight over dwindling resources:

Guide outfitters and resident hunters tag allocations ... that is always going to be a big contentious thing when we are trying to divide up smaller and smaller pieces of the wildlife pie. (Jeremy, 2018)

Wayne explains why allocation is the reason for conflict and shares his views on the right of resident hunters to hunt within B.C.:

I'm not happy with the allocation process, you know ... to give to foreign hunters and all that ... With the allocation process it's just that how much... how many animals they say the guide outfitters can harvest... If they give more to them then they are going to cut back on us, the resident hunter ... on how many animals we can harvest ... they have to keep close track of it and actually it's a British Columbia resource ... so I think they have to look after the resident hunter.... Sure, have some out of province and out of country hunters... but I don't think they should really be increasing it if they are going to cut back on what we are allowed to harvest. (Wayne, 2017)

While there are various opinions and issues amongst the different groups, it seems that at the core of all of it is a concern for both the sustainability of wildlife as well as the longevity of

hunting within B.C. Jack also acknowledges that there have been historical issues between these different groups:

Rather than making it an us versus them in any case, whether it be the hunters or the policy makers or the Indigenous groups ... certainly the benefit to wildlife comes from everyone working together for a common goal.... I think there is probably a responsibility from everyone involved to try and build those relationships ... and it can be tough at times because relationships have been damaged in the past in various places ... And a lot of it is individuals. Just like everything else if you have a specific individual who is chief of council and specific individual who is a wildlife biologist or a conservation officer and they are able to work together ... than that works for wildlife. (Jack, 2017)

Despite any issues that exist amongst the groups, Rochelle shares her passion for protecting wildlife and is seeing positive steps within her Indigenous community:

I think starting in the community as well, which I have seen, I have read some articles, where nations are taking those steps, they are re-teaching their culture to ... their own local hunters ... to try and get them to be on the same page. We need to be mindful of how much we harvest and sharing it amongst the members that live in that community.

Yet, she still feels that there is a lack of effort to include Indigenous peoples in wildlife conservation:

More efforts in conservation and collaborations with First Nations groups. So having members from communities that know the area, that have tradition passed down to them to be able to utilize that in positions, such as conservation .... And be able to have more say on how things are regulated and how tags are dispersed. (Rochelle, 2017)

Aaron is personally seeing the need for more sustainable harvesting efforts in his community, which is why he is looking to implement more policy:

We are actually just talking at work ... my co-workers and I, on how to write a hunting policy for First Nations people on our reserve here .... So, we are working on that and how to preserve our deer for future generations so that our younger kids will have food when they get older .... It's kind of a worry because I do know there is some people who aren't going to like that.... But in the end, we are just going to have to try and explain to them that... we need our deer populations to stay strong for future generations.... Or, if you don't want to protect them, then we won't have deer for future generations to hunt and survive on! (Aaron, 2018)

It is clear that there are complex relationships between the different groups as they all face a declining wildlife and resource base, changing regulations, and different rules and

rights being implemented. There seems to be a fair bit of stereotyping and blame placed on different groups of hunters, which only intensifies animosity between them. This renders the dire need for communication between the groups, a sentiment expressed by the stakeholders interviewed, as well as a willingness for these groups to work together to ensure the sustainability of the resource. It is evident that when relationships are amicable, it increases the ability to have a cohesive message among hunters as they work towards the same goal of wildlife prosperity and longevity of hunting practices. This is also of vital importance as the pressure of social groups to end the practice of hunting has increased, and controversial regulation changes and hunting incidents have called into question the validity of hunting practices and industries.

### **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT CONCERNS AND THE NECESSITY FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

As climate change continues to threaten wildlife populations globally, researchers and activists continue to assess the necessity of consumptive wildlife activities in the name of preservation (Creel et al., 2015; Lindsey et al., 2016). Hunting, a consumptive activity, is questioned in particular due to its direct mortality of wildlife (Tremblay & McKercher, 2001; Novelli et al., 2006). The controversy around both the sport of hunting and the conservation of wildlife species climaxed recently in relation to grizzly bear hunting in B.C. The large apex predators have been an integral part of North America's ecosystem, a symbol of ecological integrity, and an important part of First Nations culture, especially in B.C. and throughout Canada's west (British Columbia Environmental Reporting B.C., 2012). Currently, the species has been put on the national Species at Risk Public Registry in Canada due to their dwindling numbers (COSEWIC, 2012). While grizzly bears are in decline continent-wide, B.C. is home to 15,000 bears, a quarter of the total population in North America. Additionally, nine of the 56 population units in B.C. are classified as threatened (British Columbia Environmental Reporting, 2012). Besides a one-time season ban in the spring of 2001, the hunting of these bears has been permitted in most of the province (Bears in B.C., 2016). The province has allowed a small number of hunting tags to be allotted, with an average of 297 bears harvested annually, a practice that is highly regulated and monitored.

This includes the economically lucrative activity of trophy hunting. However, a new regulation came into effect in the late summer of 2017 that garnered much controversy.

The British Columbia New Democratic Party (BC NDP), which was elected as the provincial government in June 2017, promised to put an end to the grizzly bear trophy hunt (Pynn, 2017a; Givetash, 2017). As social concern grew, the polarizing controversy was heavily covered in the news media (Johnson & Lindsay, 2017). The December 18, 2017 announcement of a ban on the hunt was based largely on the governments' public consultation that found the hunt did not align with the general public's values in B.C. as most people were against the hunt (British Columbia Government News, 2017). Many guide outfitters and hunters were concerned about the repercussions of this decision, as they argued the ban was dictated by social influence and pressure as opposed to scientific evidence (BC Wildlife Federation, 2017; Pynn, 2017b.) The controversy serves as an ideal case study on the dispute that surrounds how regulations are made, the role of media in these processes, as well as wildlife conservation and the future of the hunting industry. Sean starts off the conversation with a discussion of the recent regulation change and how it affected him as a wildlife biologist:

With the grizzly bears it's crazy ... it's entirely a social political decision [the government] made ... we have a lot of great science on grizzly bears ... [the regulation change] kind of undermines our jobs ... and over time, due to the pressure from these anti-hunting groups and the rest of them ... like we even manage grizzly bears at a way lower level than we could ... to keep their numbers stable ... and so it had nothing to do with us ... I mean we learned about it the same day everyone else did ... its crazy... there are not too many of us who are happy about that. (Sean, 2018)

Sean is genuinely confused about the regulation change as he states that there seemed to be no real threat to these bear populations. Jesse has similar sentiments about the disingenuous approach:

At the end of the day you have to separate it into two issues ... the ethical issues and the sustainability piece ... and I think the science... in the world of science on the sustainability piece generally said... you know this is ok ... on the ethical thing ... I think after 20 years and probably tens of millions of dollars ... or more than that from the Suzuki and Rain Coast and all those folks ... they have managed to socially engineer ... a society that is really not supportive of grizzly bear hunting so... that is what got us here. (Jesse, 2018)

While Jesse argues from his perspective as a resident hunter that this was a social issue, not all hunters were upset by the actual ban, but rather how the regulation was made. Aaron explains,

I kind of sit on both sides of the fence ... even with that grizzly bear change ... I see it as a good thing and a bad thing cause... it's not going to take long for grizzly bear populations to re-populate ... and before we know it we are going to have problems of too much grizzly bears again ... the way I see that being a problem is ... the hunters are going to say well that's your fault ... you made that change ... there is nothing to regulate these populations from getting too big and we have to leave them ... So I could see that causing a riff again because ... there is going to be people saying oh man, this population is out of control now ... so that is kind of why I sit on both sides of that agreement ... I mean I like it ... but I also think it has its pros and its cons. (Aaron, 2018)

The most important concern for many of the hunters interviewed seemed to be how this type of regulation change could impact future policies and hunting rights. Jeremy relays his apprehension about this as a wildlife biologist:

I think the danger is ... especially with this grizzly bear closure ... not that I am pro hunting of grizzly bear, but the scary part of that is that is really seems like it is a decision that is made by.... You know for the most part people in large urban areas that are completely disconnected ... with these wild places and that ... I think that has put a lot of fear in the hunting community because it's a slippery slope ... it's a thin edge and a wedge ... and I am focusing on that grizzly decision ... but it goes against all the scientific understanding of grizzly bears in the province ... it's just a social decision not a scientific decision and you know the fear is ... I think in the hunting community is once you are making decisions from urban areas that we aren't going to make the right decisions and there will be consequences from that I guess ... you know that affect the wildlife that we are trying to conserve. (Jeremy, 2018)

The stakeholders, regardless of being for or against the grizzly bear hunt, seemed to be in agreement in their vocalization of the key issues with the regulation ban: decisions being made that do not focus on science, are derived from social pressures, and only consider the short-term repercussions. Wildlife biologist Paul states that the grizzly bear hunting ban is not the only time activists and media have shaped how regulations are made:

There are definitely some circumstances where there has been a ton of negative media attention and it changed the regulations or the proposals were dropped... like the liberalizing of wolf season in the interior, that was one that generated a lot of controversy and it was eventually shut down and just the simple increase of LEH grizzly bear tags in the Peace that's another one that caused some controversy and didn't go through ... I think it is a problem especially if we are trying to manage for

species at risk like caribou and there is good evidence that there is a predation problem and we can't implement a regulation change to address that...I see that as a huge issue. (Paul, 2017)

It appears that societal influences and pressures have affected other regulation changes than just the recent grizzly bear policy and, according to many of the interviewees, impacted the effectiveness of policy makers to make science-based decisions. However, anti-hunting groups are not the only ones lobbying the government. Groups such as the BCWF are powerful hunting lobby groups who have influenced policies in B.C. for decades. While many of the hunters have concerns over the science utilized in decision making, it is important to note that not all hunters are better positioned to assess wildlife science than many of these other groups. Moreover, both groups seem to utilize science that supports their argument, which demonstrates that science also has its own discourse and can be anecdotal.

Despite both sides arguing on behalf of their beliefs, hunters have concerns about media's role in the ongoing hunting debate. Especially as media has heightened their coverage surrounding the controversy, many argue the reporting was biased:

I cannot tell you why but as long as I have been alive ... and I am 44 years old ... the media has never been friendly towards hunters or the culture that exists surrounding hunters and ... all I can tell you is that in this stage of my life I believe it is intentional and that I believe it is meant to pull the culture apart at its core. (Scott, 2017)

Scott was not the only one to mention biases found in media. For many of the participants they noted that major news sources, including newspapers and newscast TV, reported negatively towards hunting. This was of particular note in more urban centres. These participants believed this came from reporters' needs to market their pieces and felt that hunters as the antagonist were easy targets. These factors influence the general public's opinion on the hunting industry. As a long-time resident hunter, Wayne is also very aware of how the different anti-hunting groups utilize this type of media in efforts to discredit hunting:

Well they sure get a whole bunch of PR on them ... just because [a hunter] screws up or whatever ... the anti [hunter] they sure pick up on everything and anything and exploit it, expand it ... way out of proportion and everything ... But I guess that's their job, they are trying to shut down hunting ... Yeah, I think the antis are pretty organized and are passionate about it ... I think more hunters should get involved in all that. (Wayne, 2017)

This demonstrating hunters' concerns regarding media and anti-hunting groups influence on the communication of the hunting industry. In particular, there is trepidations regarding how this will affect their ability to hunt in the province if these opinions are affecting wildlife regulations.

Currently, in regulation making and wildlife policy changes, wildlife biologists consult and consider the opinions of the general public. They do this by creating regulation committees that have stakeholder representatives and allowing them the opportunity to discuss objectives brought forward to the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRO). This includes the consultation of current policy and science that helps to support or deny the request, thus highlighting how many regulations start out as a social objective and then science is utilized in order to evaluate the request. While it is important to have the opinions and needs of the general public understood, there is a question of when science should outweigh social pressures. As wildlife biologist Jeremy admits, the social aspect plays a larger role than some may expect in wildlife conservation:

That is probably one of the biggest surprises for me as I have kind of crept into the field longer and longer you realize ... more and more human social stuff and less actual science ... the stuff we learn in university ... doesn't have as big of a role as I naively thought it did. (Jeremy, 2017)

Jesse, BCWF director of fish and wildlife restoration, feels similarly in respect of the grizzly bear hunt and states there is very effective communication that is outweighing the science when it comes to regulation and public support:

[It] has nothing to do with the science piece ... they tried to cast doubt on the science regularly ... but even the Auditor General's Report that came back and said that science confirms that the B.C. grizzly bear population is sustainable and environmental issues are more of a factor than hunting in its sustainability... but anti-hunting groups, like Rain Coast, has the science communication piece figured out... but it is heavy on the communication quite often and light on the science. (Jesse, 2018)

With evidence that regulation is highly influenced by social perception and media seemingly biased against hunters, it is imperative that these stakeholders learn to effectively communicate their involvement in wildlife conservation. Not only do they need to be actively involved, but also to work together to add diversity. This is especially important as it was

noted that that there is not a clear hunting community that effectively communicates between different stakeholders, thus hindering the ability to efficiently work together. Instead, there seems to be specialized groups that concentrate primarily on their own needs, as Jeremy discussed above. Aaron agreed there is a need for all hunters and stakeholders to work together in the face of wildlife conservation:

When it comes down to it we are all trying to do the same thing ... and I just wish all the hunters could be on the same page because we're conserving but still hunting .... And they just need to see that everyone is on the same page for that .... It would be good to have all these groups sit down and meet ... and probably even involve conservation officers and government agencies that want to help conserve these ... animals... so that we can all be on the same page .... Because I find if we are all on the same page that it is probably going to work better.... Instead of having groups fighting about this and that ... I think if ... even from First Nations to non-Native if we are all on the same page it will work way better. (Aaron, 2018)

First Nations women, Rochelle seemingly agrees that more opinions and voices need to be heard:

It would be nice to see a healthy debate to come up with conflict resolution... To come up with a solution on how to better deal with [wildlife conservation] .... Even if it's not every party that is getting exactly what they want, at least their voices are being heard ... and what they experience on an everyday basis is valid and depicted in regulation .... And without exclusion, right, it's not just First Nations opinions that matter too, its everybody! (Rochelle, 2017)

Her thoughts highlight not only the need to work together, but greater inclusion of hunters in regulation making. Sean feels that this starts with refocusing on what the main concerns are:

I mean if everyone can get past the finger pointing and laying the blame on each group ... because the problems that we have aren't related to hunting.... But they each point their finger to each other saying it's your hunting it's your hunting, it's your hunting ... you are killing too many or whatever ... you have to get past that first ... but I think in terms of government listening to hunters they need to be organized ... I mean you will have a bigger voice if you are. (Sean, 2018)

As a wildlife biologist, Sean is passionate about groups working together to protect wildlife. Particularly as Jesse makes the point that despite what is said in the media, the general public are not largely anti-hunting:

Hunting still enjoys wide-spread public support, but what hunters I think don't get ... is that you are not trying to convince anti-hunters or hunters ... other hunters ... that what you are doing is good ... you are trying to convince the public and politicians ... that what you are doing is good... so I think in terms of the media and hunters.... I

think hunters haven't understood how media works ... and so that affects their relationship with media ... and media likes to sell controversy ... they like to sell... quite often they like to see what's interesting to the public as opposed to what's in the public interest. (Jesse, 2018)

It is evident that many of the stakeholders agree that media is not depicting hunting in a realistic way. This puts the onus back on the hunting industry to understand how to better communicate with hunters. It was clear that many of the participants agreed that this communication starts with the government educating the general public on the role of hunting in wildlife management strategies; however, hunters also need to improve their messaging. In a time where social media dominates communication, it is imperative that the hunting community is aware of what they are posting. For Jesse, this is the clear solution to improving the general public's impression of hunting:

The non-hunting public doesn't understand a picture of a hunter holding an animal's head on social media.... They don't get that ... [the] hunters challenge is not that you are trying to convince the public.... The public is probably already supportive of what you are doing ... it is really about not turning them off ... and where hunters really miss the boat is telling their story about ... their hunting experience or their hunting trip ... so hunters need to recognize that the public doesn't understand the grip and grin ... but the public does understand if you talk about the experience and why you hunt and all those sorts of things ... so that's where the hunting community needs to get to ... or needs to think about.... Consider what they are putting out there as a message to the public, when they are talking about their hunting experience, so... the first thing they are seeing isn't a dead animal, but they are hearing a story. (Jesse, 2018)

Here, Jesse is illustrating the need for hunters to reconsider and change their messaging as a way to gain greater wide-spread support. The reality is that hunting is not the biggest concern when it comes to our wildlife populations, regardless of people's ethical stance. As conservation officer, Colin suggests:

Well certainly... habitat protection is a pretty key part of wildlife management and without habitat of course there is no wildlife ... so money in that direction and enforcement of the various rules that protect habitat, whether it be foreshore protection or river grate, and other lake type species in relation to fish population or population type activities...so habitat protection is pretty high on the list, and of course, we can always use more personnel in the field so it seemed to make more sense to me that there be more than 100 conservation officers in the field for a province our size so I would say staffing would be a big deal. (Colin, 2017)

The effects of other industries, such as forestry, mining, and tourism on wildlife populations and habitat are of major concern for the interviewees. As wildlife biologist Paul suggests:

[Hunting] is not a threat ... yeah with regulated harvest like we have, I would say there is no threat to conservation ... there are a bunch of industries like mining, forestry, tourism industry... Yeah when you look at the mines in our area like Elk Valley and they aren't paying any type of money for conservation for removing entire mountains ... it's like really? ... I think its lobbying for the right cause. Trying to make change on some of the industries that are impacting the wildlife negatively. (Paul, 2017)

The participants agreed on the fact that hunting did not pose a real threat to the ecosystem health. Instead, they recognized the destruction of habitat and the lack of industry support in its protection. In B.C., increases in human populations globally have necessitated a growth in several large industries, including logging and forestry throughout the province.

Multinational companies continue to exploit provincial resources utilized in these industries in order to meet international demands. This has put pressure on wildlife habitat as humans continue to encroach and fragment the land, diminishing the survival rate of wildlife populations across the province. This was witnessed especially by those participants that resided in rural communities that have seen increased forestry and logging roads that are displacing animals. Regardless of a person's opinion on hunting, it is clear that the real concern for the continued decline in wildlife is habitat destruction. This is why Sean and others challenge the effort of anti-hunting groups:

Even the groups like Rain Coast direct all their energy into shutting hunting down... But there are bigger things to direct your energy and money at—such as lobbying for environmental policy changes... I think hunting is just the easy thing to point fingers at ... something that causes direct mortality so it's the first thing a lot of people go to ... The thing is ... I mean the wildlife in a lot of places are not doing great right now ... but it's not due to hunting ... hunting is a very small part of it ... so yeah there is all the finger-pointing. (Sean, 2018)

While Sean is suggesting that everyone, including both hunting and anti-hunting groups, should reconsider where conservation efforts should be directed, it is evident that many of these activist groups, including Raincoast, have also been lobbying against big oil and forestry in B.C. Despite hunters' perceptions and the fact that many of these groups are not in favor of hunting, it is not as simple as activists against hunters. As Jesse points out, hunters also need to rethink where they are putting their efforts too:

I mean this is the other interesting thing ... hunters have been so focused on hunting regulations in B.C. for the last four years is all they have done is change them but not advocated for the things that actually grow wildlife.... The regulated hunting side, it is not what is driving the bus ... the evidence and the way of evidence and the way the ecologists tell us ... changing the hunting regulations only are not going to fix your problem. (Jesse, 2018)

This is interesting as it alludes to the idea that hunters must consider their own biases, based on their needs, and consider what is affecting wildlife populations. What is suggested is the need for funding to support the science and the protection of the wildlife, not more regulations. This is why Sean feels that there is a need to get back to the science rather than fixating on the social issues:

If we were to [rely on social opinion] ... it would be a mess everywhere ... everyone knows ... everybody is an expert, everybody has an opinion from you know one end of the spectrum to the other ... I mean who would you even listen to if you were going to do that I mean it's crazy.... The perceptions of hunters are heavily influenced by all kinds of things ... so I think it has to be science based. (Sean, 2018)

When it comes to wildlife conservation, many of the government officials felt confident that funding may be the answer to ensuring sustainability:

I think it all starts with funding ... like we need to start to have funding that goes back into the resource, money generated from hunting license sales ... and I think the industries that aren't hunting related but still impact wildlife I think they need to pay in as well. (Paul, 2017)

Well I think the interest is there ... from the top down ... to make sure we are being responsible ... and I think there is a current, I think a new trend I guess for more funding to allow for studies, I mean when you look at moose for example that have been struggling in the province for quite some time, more dollars are becoming available ... so I think that things are headed in the right direction as far as providing ... the funding for the policy makers to have the studies they need to properly manage wildlife. It is really tough to manage a wildlife species unless you have funding to find out how many there are and how many can be removed from the population every year and still be sustainable. (Jack, 2017)

Not only does the initiative need to come from government, but from Jeremy's perspective as a wildlife biologist, an increase in funding will allow for effective decisions that are founded in science and also help end some of the animosity:

I think that the idea of putting more ... tax money into strengthening wildlife science ... wildlife biologists within government... supporting them with more funding... to not just straight up inventory work although ... there is a lack of that in a lot of areas

of a lot of species ... but actually driving the research we need to answer some of these questions and put to bed some of these debates ... you know that is the best thing for a lot of issues that are just... kind of stalled... and people are just kind of in corners arguing back and forth and its mostly rhetoric but when you bring in science into those arguments...it just clarifies. (Jeremy, 2018)

It is evident that the controversy surrounding the hunting industry runs deep and is only further intensified by recent socio-political regulation changes. What is clear is that many of the stakeholders fear the absence of scientific evidence in regulation changes. These types of anti-hunting objectives are currently seeing success as they are effectively lobbying the government through high levels of funding and organized communication. This cohesiveness in messaging by anti-hunting groups and a lack of partnership amongst different pro-hunting stakeholder groups is where the hunting industry is failing to communicate their opinions and stance on several of these key issues. It is imperative to consider this because regardless of a person's ethical stance on hunting it is clear that our wildlife numbers are in decline and hunting is not playing as large of a role as many of the anti-hunting groups are depicting in the media. What is necessary is more funding from the government to increase the amount of research studies conducted on B.C.'s wildlife that can better inform the policy-makers of what is needed to support ecosystem health. For hunters, it is their responsibility to become more involved, work together, and effectively communicate their initiatives if they want to ensure the sustainability of hunting industries and the natural environments they rely on.

## **CONCLUSION**

As higher demands on nature and human encroachment have increased the impact on ecosystems, the role of hunting in wildlife management needs to be examined. It is essential that ecosystem managers consider the complexity of relationships between wildlife, humans and current stakeholders within the industry, when assessing and creating wildlife policies and regulations. Evaluating these relationships will improve the communication of the hunting industry throughout B.C., as well as help to ensure the long-term health of both regional ecosystems and hunting economies within the province. As indicated throughout the chapter, scientific literature has evaluated the hunting industry across the globe including North America, Europe, Africa, and across the Pacific Ocean concerning ethical

implications, stewardship of the land, and ecosystem structures. Much of the conservation literature considers the necessity of hunting as a wildlife management tool and how it affects ecosystem sustainability, yet it does not consider how stakeholders value wildlife resources. This chapter addresses this gap by examining the cultural viewpoints of participants in B.C. who have a vested interest in hunting, including their perspectives on the complexity of the practice and its role in ecosystem management. Literature also concentrates on hunters as one homogenous category, rather than acknowledging different stakeholder groups and their diverse opinions. This research included six main stakeholders: guide outfitters, hunting supplies business owners, resident hunters, Indigenous hunters, conservation officers, and wildlife biologists in the research. The results emphasized the diversity of perspectives in these industries.

By integrating a CPBR approach, researchers were able to collaborate with stakeholders to identify the specific knowledge and cultural perspectives that a diverse group of hunters bring to policy and management recommendations. Interviews conducted underlined stakeholder as well as wildlife relationships, conservation of ecosystems, and policy-making in B.C. Their perspectives were compared and analyzed for conflicting and non-conflicting themes, to examine motivations, hunting and conservation, and the ability for these groups to improve communication among themselves and with the general public. It was evident that across these participants, they share a deep appreciation and investment in wildlife. Through their time spent on the land, they gained unique vantage points which allowed them to observe changes in the landscape and wildlife populations over longer periods. Despite a growing disconnect with urban populations to the natural world, hunters felt passionate that humans have a vital role to play to ensure the longevity of ecosystem health.

Hunting holds a cultural value for stakeholders that leads to a higher value of wildlife and a passion to conserve the land for future generations to enjoy. While these groups seemed to share this perspective, it is clear that there are complex relationships between the different groups as they face a declining resource base, changing regulations, and different sets of rules and rights. The conflicts result from a concern around the sustainability of the practices of other stakeholders. This is due in part to a lack of understanding and communication between the groups. As controversial regulation changes and hunting

incidents have called the validity of the sport into question, it is essential that stakeholders work together to effectively communicate their role in ecosystem health. This is essential as it was apparent throughout the interview process that there are larger concerns for wildlife, such as industry and habitat destruction, that need to be addressed in order to ensure sustainability. Stakeholders need to be acknowledged in policy management as they hold unique perspectives of land and wildlife systems.

Despite complex stakeholder relationships, it is necessary for them to work together and consider forming cohesive and inclusive groups that foster better communication and wildlife management. It is recommended that effective communication through provincial marketing of hunting is necessary as broader social opinion of hunting continues to affect policy decisions. This research was able to assess the diversity of perspectives within the hunting industry to better understand how to support the longevity of regional ecosystems and hunting economies. It is evident that examining the complexity of relationships within the hunting industry will improve communication and lead to more sustainable hunting economies, practices and provincial ecosystems.

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## Chapter 4. The salience of stakeholder partnerships to address land-use management in British Columbia

As hunting continues to grow as a sport and a tourism economy both internationally, and across Canada, it is essential that managers of hunting industries better understand not only the sport but the sub-culture of hunting in B.C. This includes participant perspectives regarding hunting stereotypes, how local hunters inform the decision-making process, the role of hunting in wildlife management, communication between stakeholders, and the economic and environmental sustainability of the practice. Extensive research that spans the globe has been completed on the subject of hunting as it pertains to the sustainability of the sport. It highlights the diverse views from different cultures and countries on hunting as a conservation method and as a leisure activity. Yet the human spirit of hunting is missing in these discussions of the sport. In B.C. hunting is more than a sport or leisure activity to a large group of participants. It emphasizes a way to connect with land and culture, comradery among participants, and a passion to preserve a sport that has transcended generations. This formed a strong culture of hunting throughout the province and fostered persistent and thoughtful observation of land and wildlife systems – producing knowledge that differs from that in many discourses of science research. This emphasizes the importance of not only understanding the role of hunting in wildlife management, but also the unique perspectives of those who choose to participate in it.

Despite the existence of new scholarship regarding the hunting industry internationally (Creel et al., 2016; Gamborg & Jensen, 2017; Hughes & Lee, 2015), there has been little research that highlights key stakeholders' views on these issues in B.C. and Western Canada in general. The intent of this study was to address this gap by demonstrating the importance of local opinions and knowledge as contributing factors in the creation of conservation management policies. Previous literature has acknowledged the perspectives of hunters across the globe (Eliason, 2016; Øian, 2013), but few have used in-depth interviews with various groups of hunting stakeholders. This is a perspective offered in this study. Most significantly, this project contributes to the lack of literature that acknowledges and discusses the perspective of Indigenous peoples regarding hunting in B.C. This adding to the diversity of the participant groups and findings. In addition, much of the literature focuses on only one

dimension of the sport such as economic viability (Dowsley, 2009; Honey et al., 2016), historical practices (Colpitts, 2002; Binnema & Niemi, 2006), sustainability (Foote & Wenzel, 2007; Fisher et al., 2015), ethical considerations (Nelson et al., 2016; Gunn, 2001), and ecosystem structures (Wallach et al., 2015; Sergio et al., 2008). This project provided a more holistic view by considering sustainability in a broad manner. Furthermore, adding to scholarly discussions on hunting typologies, this research indicates why hunters should never be considered a homogenous group. These findings providing a clearer understanding of the hunting industry and the unique knowledge and standpoints of different stakeholders within the province.

The use of CPBR when researching the hunting industry was found to be highly valuable. It is recommended that future studies consider this methodology as it allows for projects that not only reflect the perspective of stakeholders, but leads to greater ownership of the work by participants. The inclusion of hunters throughout this project increased the enthusiasm for the research and the number of interviewees. This was especially significant when attempting to work with groups, including government employees, and Indigenous peoples, who could have been wary about participating. The use of interviews was also well received by participants as they had the ability to share their thoughts and influence the project. Research that utilizes only surveys or secondary research methods misses the crucial opinions of hunters who should be considered a distinct sub-culture in Canada. In turn, this method leads to the formation of stronger connections between researchers and communities to establish meaningful projects which will be more readily accepted due to the involvement and consultation of stakeholders. Due to the sample size of participants, these findings are certainly not generalizable, as they represent only the stakeholders consulted. The number of participants was set as a delimitation as the value in this data collected was in the richness gained from in-depth interviews. A general survey or other methods, while also valuable, could not achieve the same results.

This research highlights the diverse motivations of participants to hunt, whether for leisure, sustenance, to engage in a cultural practice, or to connect with the natural world. It provides a clearer understanding of what hunting means to various groups in the province, as well as demonstrates the unique knowledge of the land that hunters exhibit. It was evident that stakeholders have a deep connection with wildlife that drives them to be stewards of the

land and adopt their own conservation practices to preserve wildlife resources for future generations. Despite the narrative presented in public discourse, this research reveals the commitment of hunters to sustainability. The integration of these perspectives is central to the sustainability of both the hunting industry and the environment.

This study also highlighted the complexity of relationships among hunting industry stakeholders. While it appears that there are shared views on the role of hunting in conservation practices, it was clear that conflict does exist among user groups as they face a declining resource base, changing regulations, and different sets of rules and rights. Furthermore, feelings of exclusion from decision-making processes left many stakeholders frustrated with policy-making in the province. The inclusion of hunters in consultation and decision-making will provide sound information for both the ethical and sustainable growth of hunting with commensurate economic benefits. Furthermore, it will elucidate the differing perspectives and complexities among the diverse stakeholders, thus garnering more effective communication in the hunting industry and broader conservation efforts.

As controversial hunting stories lead to greater scrutiny of the hunting industry, participants stressed the necessity of stakeholder groups to work together. In particular, the collective communication of their motivations to participate in hunting and their role in ecosystem management. This is especially the case since hunting as a consumptive activity has been questioned due to the direct mortality of wildlife, contributing to concerns about the health of ecosystems worldwide. Editorial media has intensified its coverage of sport hunting, leading to the production of modern hunting stereotypes. Despite this, hunting is viewed as a sustainable activity by the participants as they believe that with a combination of local inclusion, fair tag allotment, and proper funding to conservation efforts, hunting can continue to grow without detrimental impacts on ecosystems or animal populations. Moreover, it is clear that stakeholders feel they have an integral role in ecosystems that is central to the health of natural systems. As B.C. hunting regulations continue to be heavily influenced by public social opinion, it is imperative that the hunting industry is able to effectively communicate the role of hunters in ecosystem management. The responsibility lies on hunters to become more involved, work together, and effectively communicate their initiatives if they wish to ensure the sustainability of hunting industries and the natural environments they rely on.

This research provides insight into the current state of the hunting industry and the sensitive needs of stakeholders in their efforts to promote the health and conservation of wildlife populations. Based on the results, it is recommended that the provincial government and policy-makers consider these opinions in future regulation making as it will help to ensure more ethical hunting in B.C. Specifically, a stronger marketing and communication plan should be established to educate the general public on the hunting industry in B.C. Importantly, there needs to be further long-term commitments to funding that supports both research and management of wildlife populations. For stakeholders, consideration of more inclusive hunting associations that are diverse in participants will aid in the sharing of knowledge and creation of common goals or initiatives. This strengthens the hunting industry and forms a more cohesive voice to lobby for progressive hunting regulations. This will contribute to the further development of sustainable sport hunting and conservation economies within the province.

Ongoing research should consider the ecological and conservation aspects of hunting, focusing not only on the economies and growth of hunting, but also include the standpoint of ecological and conservation disciplines. This includes analyzing population numbers in order to understand how hunting affects species development and their livelihoods. Reviewing current methods used to determine the number of animals allotted for hunting will increase the general public's understanding of the industry and policy-making. Further evaluation of the public's opinion on hunting should also be assessed to foster clearer communication between hunting stakeholders and the public. The participant base should also be expanded in future studies to allow for more diverse perspectives. Due to delimitations on this project, this research did not engage with non-hunters and activists. However, future studies should consider these groups as this would add greater breadth to the findings. There are significant gaps that still exist, for example if you consider that very few studies are centred on the perspectives of female hunters, a growing stakeholder group. Research should also expand sample size through focus groups and surveys to gain a broader viewpoint of the industry across the province. While it is evident that sustainable hunting practices are integral to the successful development of sport hunting economies and conservation practices in B.C., more research that considers food security in rural and Indigenous communities would deepen understandings of the significance of these practices by profiling the cultural connections to

regional lands that are maintained through engaging in hunting and harvesting of local resources.

Currently throughout the province, polarizing debates deepen concerning the implementation of new oil pipelines to connect the Tar Sands in Alberta to Pacific coast transportation networks. As the province is divided on the economic benefits versus consequences to natural landscapes of this proposed megaproject, it seems that issues surrounding hunting and grizzly bears are only a symptom of larger problems afoot – most notably land-use management and habitat destruction. B.C. is a province that relies heavily on natural resource extraction. However, leaders are facing a growing crisis around how to balance sustainable use of our lands while still supporting provincials and federal economies. This crisis is arriving at a tipping point as climate change continues to threaten ecosystems. Ongoing conflicts between natural resource development, protected areas, First Nations unceded territories, wildlife conservation, and rapidly growing tourism industries only further complicate these issues in B.C. This leads to further degradation of nature as we destroy wildlife habitat and influence migration patterns of especially birds, fish, and mammals to support a growing global population and their increasing consumption of resources. This leaves critical questions regarding what is the best use of our land as well as furthers debates around the role of humans in regional ecosystems. In this very moment, it is even more imperative to consider stakeholders, some of whom have decades or generations of experiences and knowledge on the land, in decision- making processes. Regardless of their orientation – hunters, Indigenous leaders, nature enthusiasts or researchers – their unique perspectives on wildlife and ecosystems, could be critical to evaluate and eventually determine the future of provincial land-use management.

Perhaps that is where hope lies for the future of the natural world within B.C. In the groups of people, who previously were at odds, coming together for the greater protection of land and wildlife systems. Amidst a crisis, a province comes to a resolve where consultation of stakeholders, with both similar and dissimilar views, is done in order to find solutions that benefit and integrate humans and ecosystems. There is an opportunity to change the way we treat the natural world, a way to support rural communities by diversify away from natural resources that are becoming more necessary as wildlife continues to decline. As long as environmental sciences and social sciences, researchers and community members, continue

to come together in project such as this, there is hope that solutions to these types of crises can be found in an ethical and meaningful way.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Regional Map of British Columbia

Map of the British Columbia developmental regions, British Columbia Statistics, 2014, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/geographic-data-services/land-use/administrative-boundaries/census-boundaries>. Public domain



British Columbia Statistics. (2014). *Map of the British Columbia developmental regions* [PDF image]. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/geographic-data-services/land-use/administrative-boundaries/census-boundaries>

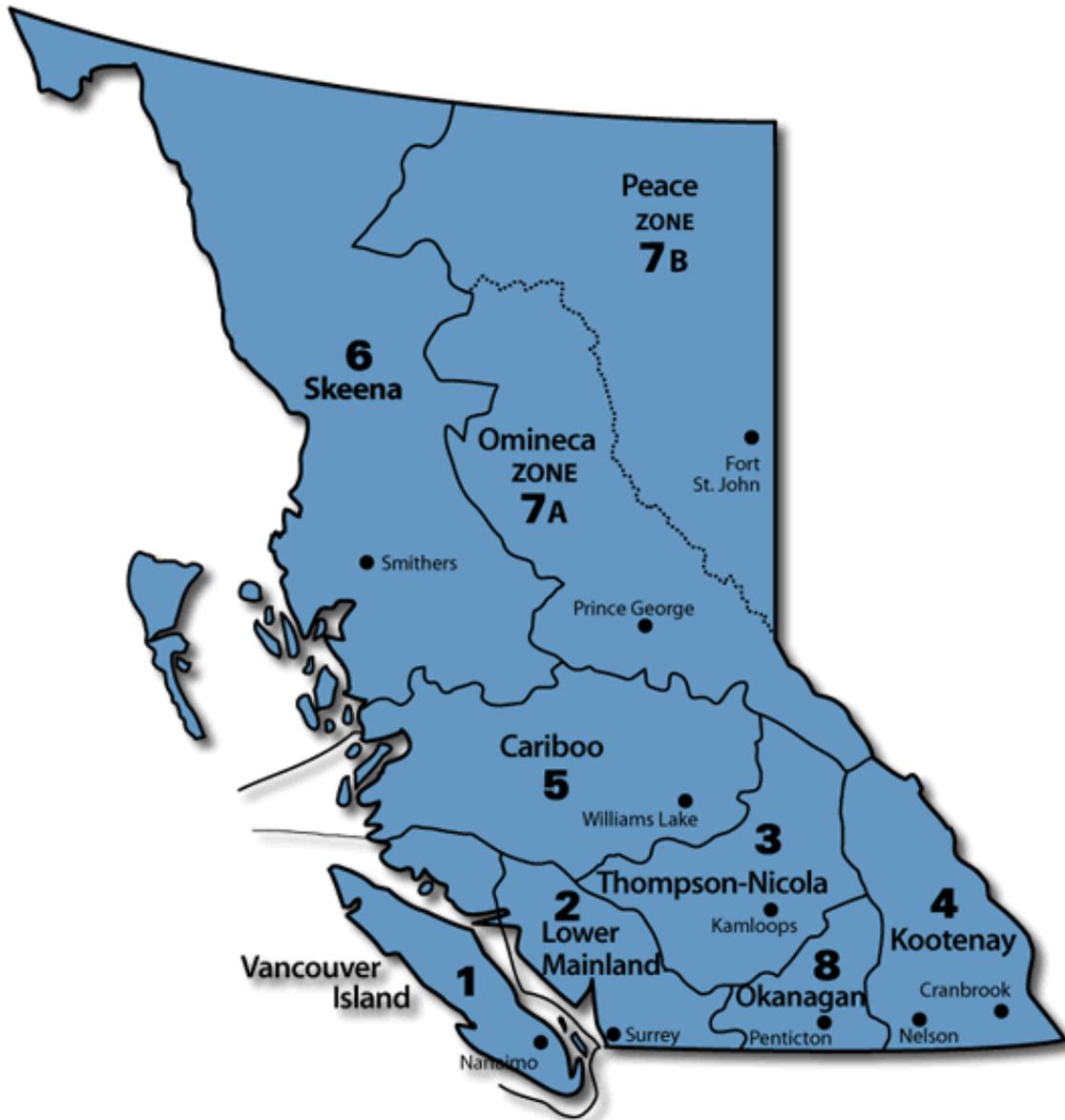
**Appendix B: Interview Questions**

- 1) What age were you when you started hunting? Who did you go with?
- 2) Do you hunt only big game or upland and migratory birds as well?
- 3) While the Kill is an import aspect of the hunting experience, what other aspects are important to your overall experience and motivate you to hunt year after year?
- 4) What areas of Canada have you hunted in? How important are these locations to your overall hunting experience?
- 5) Do you consider hunting a sustainable sport/food source?
- 6) Have you even engaged in hunting tourism either as a guide/outfitter or a tourist? Do you have a desire to do either or both?
- 7) How, if at all, do you think hunting tourism effects B.C.'s economy? If yes, in what ways?
- 8) Should the province of B.C. consider marketing hunting as a core tourism activity for the province? How do you think they should go about increasing tourism through hunting in a more sustainable way?
- 9) Do you think an increase in hunting tourism will positively or negatively affect the sustainability of both land and animals?
- 10) Do you believe an increase in hunting tourism will positively or negatively affect local's ability to hunt and acquire hunting tags or through proper allocation of tags could it be controlled?
- 11) Do you have any major concerns regarding exclusion? (keeping our hunting resources to ourselves)? Do you think sharing hunting resources would lead to retaliation from local hunters?
- 12) As a hunter, do you face many stereotypes and misperceptions in your daily life regarding your participation in hunting? Do you often see these stereotypes depicted in media?

- 13) Do you believe that international incidents such as Cecile the Lion, will affect the B.C. hunting industry? Should B.C. be concerned about such incidents? Do you think these types of incidents aid to the stereotyping of hunters?
  
- 14) Do you think Hunting Tourism marketed as a more cultural adventure, downplaying the size of animal harvested could be successful? For example, an adventure that featured more of the local heritage and history of an area (not necessarily just first Nations) camaraderie and even family oriented?
  
- 15) Do you think local hunters are currently being included in the decisions of growing hunting tourism in B.C.? Would you like to the opportunity to be more involved in the growing market of hunting tourism in B.C. so you can voice your opinions and be included in decision making?

### Appendix C: Hunting Regions

Map of B.C. hunting regions, British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, 2016, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/fishing-hunting/hunting/regulations-synopsis>



British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. (2016). Hunting & Trapping Regulations Synopsis. B.C. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/sports-recreation-arts-and-culture/outdoor-recreation/fishing-and-hunting/hunting/regulations/2016-2018/hunting-trapping-synopsis-2016-2018.pdf>

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> On July 1, 2015, Walter Palmer, a bow-hunter from the United States, illegally shot Cecil the lion on Anotinette Farm in Gwaai Conservancy, Zimbabwe, Africa. This event caused a massive global reaction to a wildlife conservation incident. Soon after the event was made public, protests erupted, and social media and editorial media coverage exploded as global citizens were outraged by the death of the lion. This led to a desire for action to internationally ban the hunting of lions and the importing of trophies to the United States and other Western countries. Animal rights activists and conservationists worldwide worked in collaboration to further this cause (Macdonald et al., 2016; Lindsey et al., 2016; Sachgau, 2015).

<sup>ii</sup> There are over 105,000 resident hunters in B.C. On average, these hunters on average spend \$2,900 each generating an estimated \$230 million in economic activity each year. Within the province there are approximately 250 guide outfitters servicing 5,000 tourists hunting and employing 2000 people. These tourist hunters account for 7% of basic hunting licences sold and they harvest 9% of the large game in the province. Through these expenditures, guide outfitters are generating approximately \$116 million in economic activity each year. The two industries combined totals to an estimated \$350 million generated by hunting in B.C. (British Columbia Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, 2016; Canadian Tourism Commission, 2012).

<sup>iii</sup> Trophic cascades occur when an apex predator is shaping ecological relationships by creating strong top-down effects on the rest of the food web by directly affecting its prey and indirectly affecting flora and fauna of the ecosystem (Eisenberg et al., 2013).

<sup>iv</sup> Resident hunter/hunting is done by those who are residents of the location in which they are hunting. In B.C., hunters are considered resident hunters if they live within the province. They have the historical right to hunt in all provincial hunting regions of the province as long as they are following proper protocols and policies, even if they live in a different region than they hunt in. These include restricted seasons, bag limits, and hunting tag allocation. They can be both sport and/or subsistence hunters. Tourist hunting is done in another province or country by a non-resident. This type of hunter relies on other tourism infrastructure and businesses, such as guide outfitters, in order to participate in hunting (British Columbia Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, 2016; Canadian Tourism Commission, 2012).

<sup>v</sup> Terms used to describe hunters and their practices vary across disciplines and scholarly literature. For the purpose of this article, the following definitions are relevant. Hunting can be divided into two categories, either subsistence hunting and sport hunting. Subsistence hunting is done to secure meat for oneself, family, and/or community's livelihood. Sport hunting is done as a hobby or leisure activity, not out of necessity. Within sport hunting there are two types of hunting, trophy hunting and conservation hunting. Trophy hunters are viewed as participants who may be concerned with the act of the hunt and/or the environment, but are also focused on securing a specific trophy (i.e. antlers, furs, heads). Conservation hunting is seen as those who have a higher appreciation for local environments

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and want to contribute to the sustainability of both ecological and cultural systems, while enjoying other hunting aspects such as tracking and the provision of meat. For the purposes of this paper when the terms hunters/hunting are used it will be in reference to conservation hunters/hunting.

<sup>vi</sup> Clayton Stoner, a professional ice hockey athlete in the National Hockey League's (NHL) Anaheim Ducks, was charged with the illegal killing of a grizzly bear on B.C.'s central coast in May 2013. While he is a former resident of Port McNeil, B.C., he is no longer considered a resident as he lives in California, USA. This event caused public outrage and it became symbolic of all that appeared unethical in trophy hunting practices. The public in general was calling for a full ban on grizzly bear hunts in the province to align with every other jurisdiction in North America, with the exception of Alaska and the Yukon Territory. In 2016, Clayton Stoner was deemed guilty of illegally killing the bear and currently faces a three-year ban from hunting and a \$10,000 fine (Burgmann, 2016).

<sup>vii</sup> The New Democratic Party (NDP) of British Columbia, who were elected into office June 2017, announced a provincial-wide ban on the trophy hunting of grizzly bears to be effective November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017. This law has appeased many activists in B.C. as the public seemed to be no longer in favour of the grizzly bear trophy hunt. This new law did, however, still allow for the hunting of grizzly bears with a legal permit, yet it is expected to negatively affect the Guide Outfitters Association of B.C. as they will get zero percent of the allotted tags for the bears which will shut down a large portion of their business. On December 18, 2017 the government then decided to place an all-out ban, effective immediately, on grizzly bear hunting in B.C. This leaving hunters frustrated with the decision making process that lacked consultation and appeared driven by social influence and pressure (Pynn, 2017b; Burgmann, 2016; British Columbia Government News, 2017).

<sup>viii</sup> The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast is a region of B.C. that covers 105,000 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 63,111 residents. It features a diverse landscape including deserts, sandstone canyons, evergreen timberlands, deciduous woodlands, forests, alpine mountains, and glaciers. It stretches from the Cariboo and Columbia Mountains in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. This region consists of rivers, lakes, grasslands, and plateaus. The Cariboo and Chilcotin regions have a drier, continental climate with cold snowy winters and warm summers. A variety of species can be found here including mammals (moose, mule deer, and northern woodland caribou), amphibians and reptiles (painted turtle and rubber boa snake), birds (great blue heron, and bald eagle), and fish (salmon and trout) (Destination BC Corporation, 2017b; British Columbia Ministry of Environment, 2014).

<sup>ix</sup> The Dasiqox Tribal Park is a 3000 km<sup>2</sup> protected area in the Chilcotin created as a result of a recent Supreme Court of Canada decision on June 26, 2014. The decision unanimously awarded title to the Tsilhqot'in Nation to determine how the land is used, and who has access to hunting in the area (Dasiqox Tribal Park, 2015). This new category of park is precedent-setting in the North American context as it exists outside established national, provincial, and municipal park frameworks. It also does not follow the co-management models that have been commonly pursued for parks and protected areas in Northern Canada and internationally.

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<sup>x</sup> This research project was reviewed and approved by Thompson Rivers University's Research Ethics for Human Subjects Board. September 2015; July 2017.

<sup>xi</sup> As of 2016, there are 2.5 million people living in the Greater Vancouver region who are densely living in 2700 km<sup>2</sup>. Whereas the Cariboo region is home to only 63,111 residents across 105,000 km<sup>2</sup> (British Columbia Statistics, 2016; Destination BC Corporation, 2017b).

<sup>xii</sup> Tags is the slang term used for the species licenses that are necessary for hunters to harvest specific animals in B.C. Hunters are also required to hold a hunting license which allows them to acquire species licenses and states how many animals they are allotted to harvest each year (B.C. Resident Hunting, 2017).

<sup>xiii</sup> Conservation officers (CO) are the infield enforcement personnel in B.C. Currently, only 148 COs are stationed throughout eight regions of the province, covering the entirety of 944,735 km<sup>2</sup>. Their responsibilities include the compliance and enforcement of environmental legislation, public safety, and stewardship in terms of human/environment interaction. This includes the regulating and monitoring of hunters in B.C. (British Columbia Ministry of Environment, 2017b; Destination BC Corporation, 2017c).

<sup>xiv</sup> Wildlife biologists help to maintain and conserve B.C.'s wildlife populations. They research habitat relationships, population dynamics, disease, and nutrition as well as the impact of environmental change to wildlife populations. This includes the factors that affect species survival and growth rates. Based on this information, they assess land use decisions and the necessity of regulation or regulation changes in order to support the sustainability of ecosystems.

<sup>xv</sup> Indigenous hunters are also referred to as First Nations, Aboriginal, Native, or their own self-appellations such as Secwepemc or Tsilhqot'in. Depending on the band location in the province, hunters who identify as Indigenous assert the rights outlined by the Indian Act (1951) to hunt in regions as they traditionally have prior to European presence in B.C. However, many provincial hunting regulations also apply to Indigenous hunting practices.

<sup>xvi</sup> Guide outfitters are businesses that employ hunting guides who provide equipment, supplies, licensing tags, and field guidance to non-resident hunters who partake in hunting expeditions. As regulations in B.C. state that non-resident hunters have to be accompanied by a guide outfitter or a resident who holds a permit to accompany non-residents, many choose to utilize a guide outfitting business when hunting in B.C. (British Columbia Government, 2018).

<sup>xvii</sup> Thompson Okanagan features the Canadian Rockies, southern desert environments, and the rich valley of the Okanagan. It has pronounced seasons as it is considered a continental climate, yet is varied in landscape from the rocky mountain terrain, to arid deserts. The region is 71,600 km<sup>2</sup> and home to over 90 communities with 444,000 residents (Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, 2017; Destination BC Corporation, 2018c; Work BC, 2018).

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<sup>xviii</sup> Kootenay Rockies is home to four of B.C.'s national parks and features rivers, lakes, alpine meadows, and mountain ranges. The weather fluctuates drastically throughout the seasons with mild summers and cold winters. It is home to 170,000 people and stretches across approximately 76,000 km<sup>2</sup> (British Columbia Ministry of Environment, 2018; Destination BC Corporation, 2018a).

<sup>xix</sup> Northern B.C. is the largest region in B.C. comprising more than half of the province, approximately 569,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It features mountains, deep green valleys, rivers, serene lakes, coastlines, and ancient islands. As varied as the landscape, the climate of this region is very diverse, but overall cooler than the more southern regions. It is also home to approximately 253,521 people (Destination BC Corporation, 2017a; Destination BC Corporation, 2018b).

<sup>xx</sup> As of 2011, there were 4.4 million people living in B.C. Of this number, 3.7 million were residents of urban centres, with 609,363 people living in rural settings. This means only 14% of B.C.'s entire population live in rural environments (Statistics Canada, 2011).

<sup>xxi</sup> As part of the Constitution Act (1982), the rights of Indigenous people across Canada are outlined. One of the provisions is their inherent right to hunt, trap, and fish for food during all seasons of year. This means they can hunt without requiring a license to hunt as long as they are hunting for food. They can utilize any type of method, on any unoccupied crown land or any other land they have the right to access, without bag limits, and do not follow any hunting season regulations. However, the government still holds the right to assert regulations, including bag limits, when it comes to conservation and species of concern. These regulations could include First Nations acquiring special licenses to hunt specific species, regardless of traditional practices (British Columbia Government, 2016; Legal Aid BC, 2013).