

# Seeing the forest through the trees: Collaborative climate-informed forest governance in Quesnel, British Columbia

Dane Pedersen<sup>1</sup>, Shannon Hagerman<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The University of British Columbia, Faculty of Forestry, Department of Forest Resource Management, Vancouver, British Columbia.

## Problem Context

- Forest-dependent communities across Canada are grappling with how respond to the effects of climate change.
- As climate adaptive forest management advances, it is critical to understand the social and institutional context and implications of new approaches so as to support ongoing efforts toward equitable, just, and effective forest management.

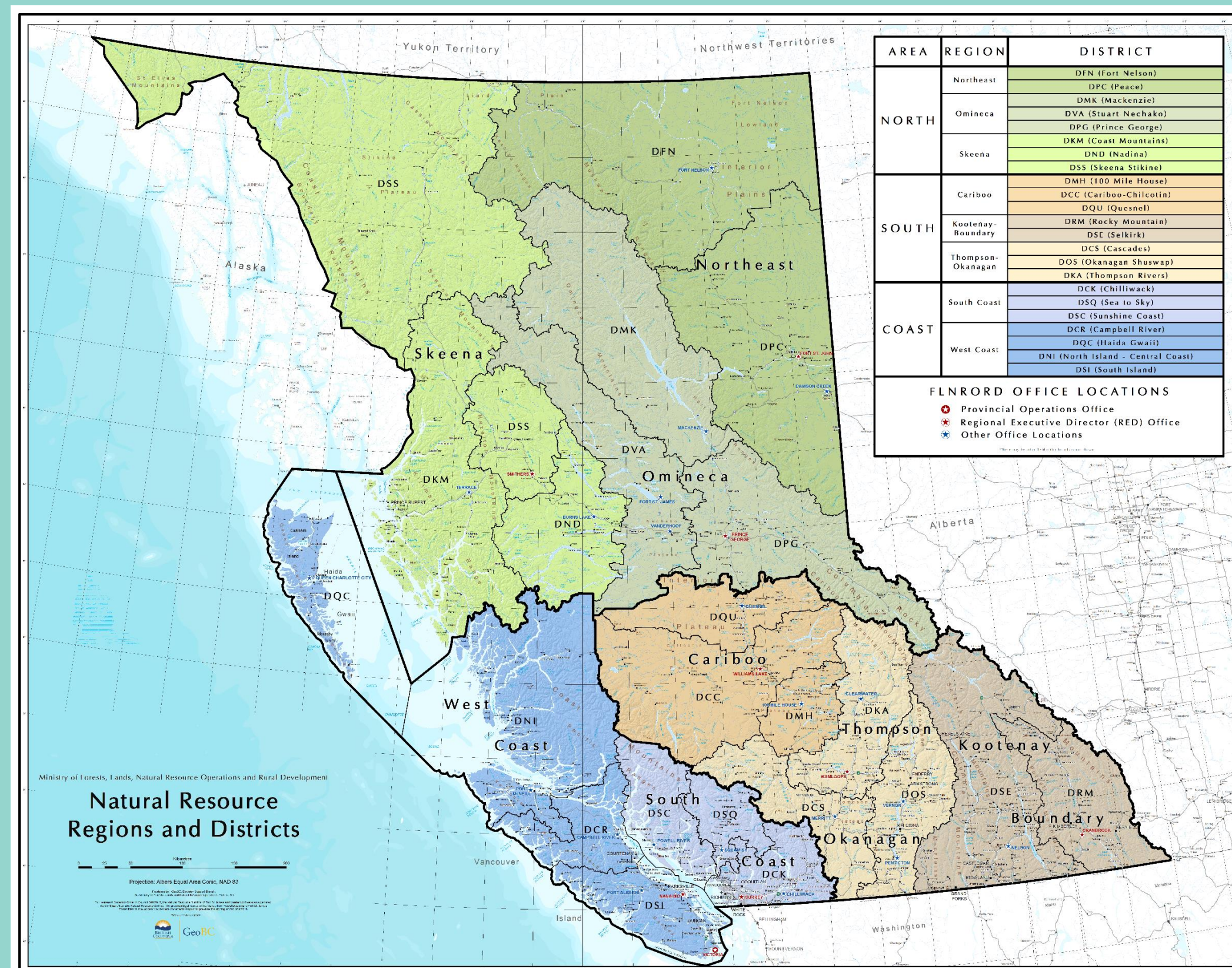


Figure 1. The natural resource districts of British Columbia. The orange section labelled "DQU" indicates the Quesnel Timber Supply Area (QTSA). Image from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/>.

## Study Site

- The Quesnel Timber Supply Area (QTSA), located on the traditional territory of four First Nations: Lhoosk'uz Dene (Kluskus Band), Lhtako-Dene (Red Bluff Band), ?Esdilagh (Alexandria Band) and the Ndazkhot'en First Nation (Nazko Band).
- The QTSA is experiencing significant climate-induced ecological change, such as increasingly frequent and severe wildfires [1, 2], pest epidemics [3], warming temperatures, and variable precipitation patterns [4].
- There are at least three major forest-related policy shifts currently taking place in British Columbia and the QTSA:
  - Adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP; provincial)
  - Forest Landscape Planning (FLP) Pilot Project (provincial)
  - City of Quesnel Future Forests Think Tank Initiative (municipal)



Figure 2. The City of Quesnel Future Forests Think Tank Initiative, hosted May 2023.

## Research Objectives

**Analyze shifting society-nature relationships as forest-dependent communities seek to adapt forest management practices to the impacts of climate change amidst the backdrop of efforts towards collaborative governance, meaningful reconciliation, and potentially, transformative change.**

- 1) Analyze the historical context and development of the current governance regime (e.g., actors involved, use of different forms of knowledge, processes of decision-making, perceived threats) and evaluate the presence or absence of known key factors for enabling collaborative governance in the QTSA.
- 2) Driven by the goals of First Nations partners, co-design a deliberative process for the identification of key values, visions, and priorities as they relate to land management and future forests, and develop a policy/legislative roadmap for supporting transformative change.
- 3) Assess levels and logics of support for climate adaptive management interventions in the QTSA, including testing the extent to which decision heuristics are or are not shifting toward a greater sense of "anthropogenic responsibility" in response to climate change.

## Methodological Approach

- This project crosses epistemological boundaries by braiding [5] together traditional Western (Objective 1, 3) and decolonial (Objective 2) research approaches. This approach does not mean combining Western and Indigenous worldviews, but recognizing each as unique and travelling parallel "down the River of Life together" (p. 82), like the rows of dark beads on the Haudenosaunee Two-Row Wampum Belt [6].
- Data collection and analysis:
  - Document analysis (Obj. 1)
  - Semi-structured interviews (Obj. 1, 2, and 3)
  - Co-designed deliberative engagement process (Obj. 2)
  - Survey (Obj. 3)

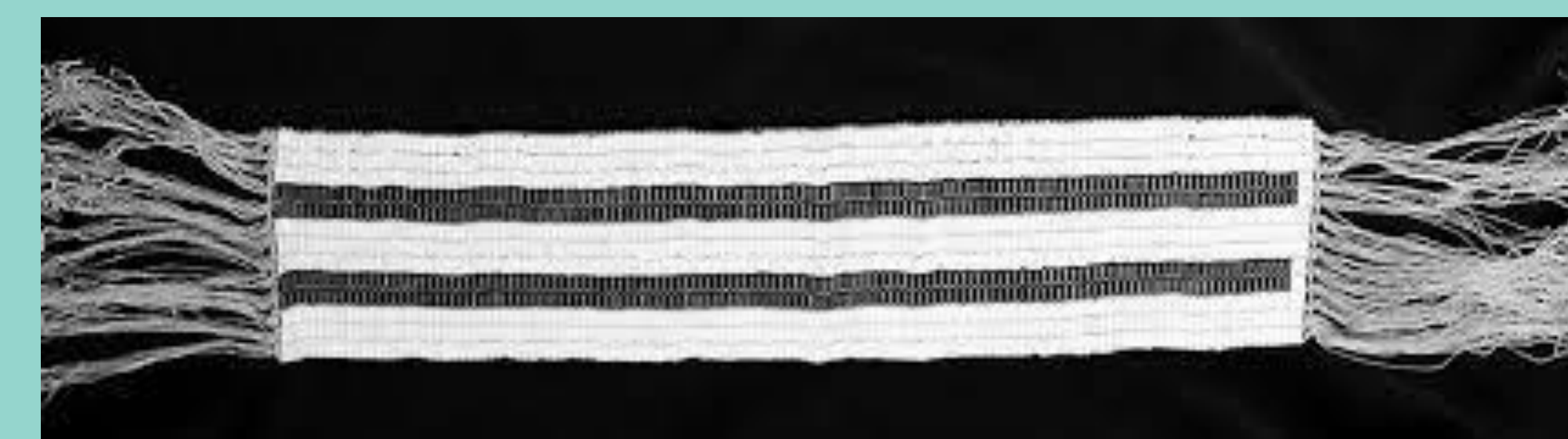


Figure 3. A Haudenosaunee Two-row Wampum Belt. Image from: <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/a-short-introduction-to-the-two-row-wampum>.

## Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced government, stakeholder, and public dialogue about the historic trajectories, ideological commitments, institution structures and collaborative governance in the QTSA.
- Support First Nations land management initiatives that foster forest stewardship and community wellbeing.
- Advance knowledge about risk perceptions and decision heuristics for novel climate adaptive forest management.

## References

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## Author Bio and Contact

Dane Pedersen (she/her) is a PhD student in the University of British Columbia Faculty of Forestry in the Social-Ecological Systems Research Laboratory. Dane was born and raised on the Secwepemcúl'ecw territory (Kamloops, British Columbia). She holds a B.Sc from the University of Victoria and an M.Sc from McGill University, where she studied the network governing the endangered Southern Resident killer whale.

Contact: [dp2641@mail.ubc.ca](mailto:dp2641@mail.ubc.ca)



## Funding and Project Partners



## Conceptual Framework

### Political Ecology

### Collaborative Governance

### Sociocultural Risk Perception

### Social-Ecological Systems