

Building Relationships Before Development: Free, Prior and Informed Consent in the case of Group One West on Vancouver Island

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di Linda Armano, Trevor Cootes, Sam Kirsch, Namrata Chadha []*



Vancouver island coast (ph. Sam Kirsch)

Introduction

In recent years, ecological transition has become a central theme, shifting attention from strictly technical and environmental aspects to the social, political, and moral dynamics that accompany the reconfiguration of relationships between communities, territories, and resources.

Since 2010, transition has become a priority both in international public policies (OECD, UNEP, etc.) and in the social sciences, where it has been progressively interpreted as a multidimensional process involving practices, institutions, and value systems (Clarimont et al., 2024). Within transition studies, one of the main theoretical points of reference is the analysis of socio-technical systems proposed by Geels (2010), which has subsequently given impetus to the development of a plurality of interpretative approaches (Köhler et al., 2019). Among these, the multi-level perspective is particularly important, interpreting processes of change through interactions between three levels: the exogenous landscape, the dominant socio-technical regime, and innovation niches.

The socio-technical regime encompasses the technologies, infrastructures, actors, practices, and institutions that regulate a given sector and is supported by established norms and rules (Geels, 2010). Transformations emerge from the interaction between this regime, external pressures – such as climate change, energy or health crises – and innovation niches: spaces in which social actors' experiment with alternative practices and models to the dominant ones. Alongside this perspective, other lines of research have developed, including Transition Management, the technological innovation systems approach and strategic niche management, which analyse the innovation and governance processes of socio-ecological transformations (Clarimont et al., 2024). At the same time, the institutional

approach to transition focuses on the tensions, conflicts, and forms of institutional dynamics that permeate the dominant regime and affect its capacity for adaptation and change (Fuenfschilling and Truffer, 2014).

In the tourism sector, these perspectives have supported an understanding of the ecological transition as a situated process, strongly influenced by territorial and sectoral specificities. From this perspective, attention focuses both on the constraints and forms of dependence that characterise the existing socio-technical regime and on the transformative possibilities offered by external pressures and the innovative practices emerging in local communities (Hatt and Claeys, 2024). Interest thus shifts from the idea of a linear transition to an analysis of the negotiations, resistance and experimentation through which local actors reinterpret and redefine tourism development models.

Reflections on tourism's transition trajectories are now closely linked to the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the context of the climate crisis. Mobility is a constitutive element of the tourism experience (Clarimont et al., 2024) and, at the same time, a major contributor to the sector's carbon footprint. By its very nature, tourism involves the movement of people to destinations at varying distances from their usual places of residence, still relying heavily on carbon-intensive modes of transport. This has raised questions not only about the technical possibilities of decarbonisation, but above all about the cultural representations of mobility, travel, and tourism consumption, as well as the processes through which new imaginaries and practices of sustainability are negotiated and embedded within local communities and territories.

Interdisciplinary research, including work in political ecology, environmental justice and anthropology, has also highlighted how the spread of themes, approaches, and policies related to the ecological transition represents a transformation that redefines power relations, regimes of access to resources, and forms of participation in decision-making processes. Its expansion affects rural areas, agricultural landscapes, coastal territories and inland villages, impacting spaces already marked by histories of marginalisation, exploitation and resource extraction. In this scenario, ecological transition brings to the forefront an urgent question made even more relevant today by the challenges of decarbonisation: who has the power to define the future of territories and their resources, and according to which criteria are the costs, benefits, and opportunities arising from transformation processes distributed (Bindi et al., 2026)?

From this perspective, transition-related practices cannot be interpreted solely as tools for economic or technological reconversion, but must be understood as arenas for the production and negotiation of power relations, territorial claims, and competing

visions of development. Transition paths are deeply situated processes, in which global objectives, institutional strategies, and local practices interact through dynamics of cooperation, conflict, and adaptation, giving rise to the forms of friction described by Anna Tsing (2004). It is precisely in these negotiating spaces that the imperatives of decarbonisation engage with the memories, practices, and energy histories of local communities, highlighting the asymmetries between global sustainability goals and the concrete ways in which they are received, reinterpreted, or contested in local contexts.

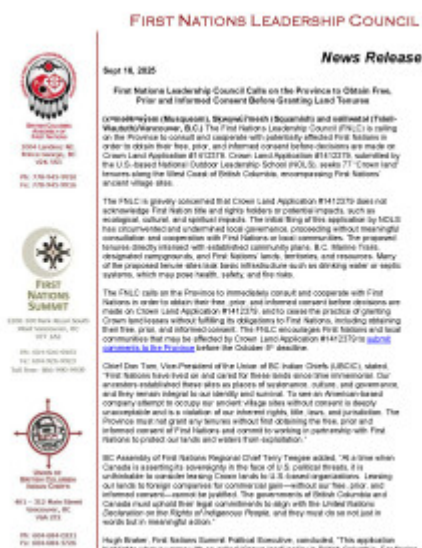
These tensions are particularly evident in the tourism sector. Since the 2000s, the spread of carbon-intensive forms of tourism, such as cruise tourism (Howitt et al., 2010), has further accentuated the sector's environmental and climate impacts, fuelling debate about the need for profound restructuring. From this perspective, the transition to low-emission tourism not only entails introducing technological innovations and more sustainable practices, but also requires revising the paradigms that have thus far guided tourism development, challenging the assumption that a destination's success should be measured solely in terms of visitor growth. As Gössling and Higham (2021) highlight, a scenario oriented towards "high-value, low-carbon, and resilient" tourism opens up new perspectives for the sector's sustainability, but at the same time raises questions about the transition's social and distributional implications. A model based on reducing volumes and increasing the economic value of supply risks accentuating inequalities in access to tourism experiences, making an analysis of how the costs, benefits, and opportunities of the transition are distributed among actors, territories, and communities even more crucial.

Given the critical issues outlined above, Group One West (<https://www.grouponewest.com/>) proposes an alternative model that rethinks the relationship between tourism, ecological transition and regional development. Conceived by Sam Kirsch, Namrata Chadha, and Trevor Cootes [1], the project is designed to be developed on Vancouver Island as a hybrid regional initiative, in which tourism, research, energy production and governance converge in a single process of socio-ecological transformation. Rather than simply reducing the environmental impact of tourism, Group One West intends to redefine its meaning, transforming it from a primarily consumption-oriented activity into a genuine infrastructure for climate action and regional care. The initiative brings together a non-profit Institute for Climate Research and Cultural Stewardship and a Living Discovery Campus focused on hospitality and education, integrating renewable energy systems, regenerative agricultural practices, sustainable water management, and scientific research into a single experimental setting. In this context, buildings, infrastructure, and everyday practices become spaces for encounters between different forms of knowledge and

ways of inhabiting the territory, where visitors, researchers, students, and local communities participate in developing new sustainability practices and new representations of the ecological future. A distinctive element of the project is the central role of Indigenous communities and their forms of governance, which are not conceived as external interlocutors or mere stakeholders, but as holders of rights, knowledge, and decision-making authority who help to define and direct the initiative from its initial stages. Indigenous self-determination is one of the initiative's guiding principles and encompasses objectives such as cultural heritage protection, natural resource governance, climate action, and economic reconciliation. Within this framework, this paper focuses on the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as the preferred tool for analysing how ecological transition combined with a new tourism project is concretely negotiated. As enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), FPIC is not intended as a procedural requirement following project definition, but rather as a prerequisite that guides the entire decision-making process (Short et al. 2021). Consistent with this principle, Group One West has not identified a definitive site or formalised partnerships with specific First Nations: any initiative involving Indigenous territories, waters or knowledge can only be developed with the prior consent of the affected community, respecting its protocols, timelines and decision-making methods.

Developing a strategic framework for implementing Free, Prior and Informed Consent in British Columbia

In recent years, British Columbia has begun reforming its conservation policies and recognising the rights of Indigenous peoples. A significant step forward was the adoption, in 2019, of provincial legislation implementing the UNDRIP. This was followed by the postponement of logging activities in large areas of primary forest identified as conservation priorities and, in 2023, the signing of a tripartite agreement between the Government of British Columbia, the Government of Canada, and the First Nations Leadership Council, aimed at strengthening biodiversity protection policies through significant economic investments. At the same time, the province is developing a new strategic framework for biodiversity and ecosystem health. These initiatives, however, are not a completed process, but the result of ongoing negotiations between public institutions, environmental organisations, and



Free prior and informed Consent Source
First Nation Summit

Indigenous governments, which continue to exert pressure to ensure effective implementation of the commitments made.

In November 2023, British Columbia's Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship submitted the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework for public consultation. This strategic document aims to redefine the province's approach to land and natural resource management through a perspective grounded in overall ecosystem health. The consultation process, which concluded in January 2024, involved First Nations, local governments, industry representatives, civil society organizations and citizens, and received over 7,000 submissions. The Framework has not yet been formally adopted, but it represents a significant step towards transforming the province's environmental policies. The proposal incorporates UNDRIP and the British Columbia Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), recognising the role of First Nations as central stakeholders in shaping land management practices. The document promotes a model structured around three main dimensions: intergovernmental coordination to integrate the expertise of different institutional levels; participatory governance involving Indigenous governments, local communities, universities, the private sector and non-governmental organisations; and an evaluation system grounded in transparency, knowledge sharing and the use of scientific data for ecosystem monitoring.

The Framework is part of a broader initiative to invest in nature conservation in British Columbia, characterised by the creation of new financial instruments and multilateral agreements between the provincial and federal governments and First Nations representatives. If a site is identified and a formal partnership is established with an Indigenous community, activities such as ecological research, habitat restoration, environmental monitoring, and management practices guided by Indigenous knowledge could be included among the priorities supported by these programmes.

The Indigenous reinterpretation of the FPIC in the Group One West project on Vancouver Island

Within this evolving institutional landscape, Vancouver Island offers a particularly relevant context in which to examine how new approaches to conservation governance are negotiated in practice. The island is home to one of the world's largest temperate rainforest ecosystems, characterised by the close interdependence of terrestrial and marine environments. Annual salmon migrations constitute a fundamental element of this ecological system, transferring marine nutrients to river basins and forests and sustaining complex relationships between landscapes, species and human communities. However, these socio-ecological balances have been increasingly affected by the reduction of primary forests, the decline in salmon populations and the growing impacts of climate change on coastal ecosystems.



Group one west, logo

Before the expansion of industrial logging in the second half of the nineteenth century, approximately two thirds of Vancouver Island were covered by primary rainforest, characterised by exceptional biodiversity and deeply intertwined with the ecological practices, cultural traditions and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples. Today, only around 20% of these old-growth forests remain, with less than 8% under permanent protection. A significant exception is Clayoquot Sound, where the leadership of the Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht and Hesquiaht First Nations has played a decisive role in shaping land stewardship practices and protecting extensive areas of primary

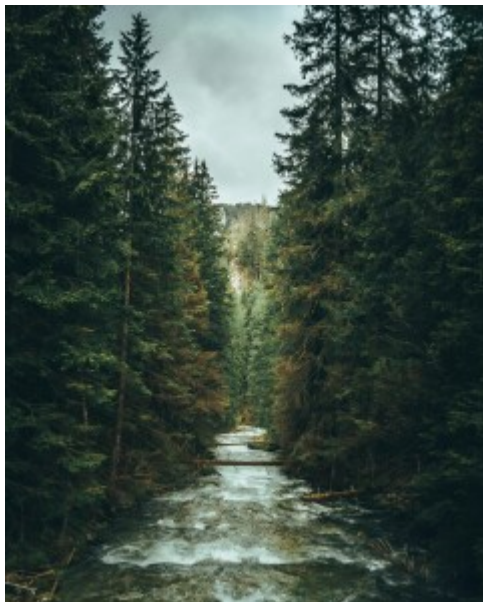
forest.

The experience of Clayoquot Sound demonstrates that the conservation of coastal ecosystems cannot be separated from the recognition of Indigenous authority and governance systems. For millennia, First Nations have developed forms of territorial stewardship based on reciprocal relationships with lands and waters, generating situated forms of ecological knowledge and management. From this perspective, environmental protection and Indigenous self-determination are not separate objectives but mutually dependent processes. Conservation initiatives must therefore be understood within the broader socio-ecological relationships through which territories are inhabited, governed and continuously transformed.

Within this context are situated the Institute for Climate Research and Cultural Stewardship and the Living Discovery Campus of Group One West. The initiative reflects emerging approaches to conservation that seek to connect ecological research, territorial stewardship, and long-term partnerships between Indigenous communities, academic institutions, and other political and entrepreneurial actors. It also aligns with the principles of collaboration and co-governance promoted by recent provincial frameworks, while raising questions about how these principles are translated into concrete relationships and decision-making processes. For this reason, adopting the FPIC principle represents a central analytical perspective for understanding the development of Group One West. Rather than being treated as a procedural requirement to be fulfilled after key decisions have been made, FPIC frames consent as a relational process through which authority, legitimacy and responsibility are negotiated. In practice, this requires recognising the decision-

making autonomy, legal frameworks, cultural protocols and timelines established by the First Nation concerned. Although Group One West is aligned with broader objectives related to biodiversity protection, climate action, and Indigenous self-determination, no formal partnership with a specific First Nation has yet been established. The project is therefore in a preparatory phase, in which identifying appropriate partners, building relationships of trust, and negotiating consent are essential steps before any site selection or implementation process can proceed. Examining this process offers an opportunity to explore how emerging models of conservation governance attempt to integrate scientific research, Indigenous knowledge, and self-determination in pursuit of more equitable pathways for ecological transition.

FPIC From a West Coast Indigenous Economic Development Lens



Vancouver island hinterland (ph. Sam Kirsch)

The perspective developed in this section draws on the practical experience of Trevor Cootes, a Huu-ay-aht entrepreneur and founding director of the Group One West Institute for Climate Research and Cultural Stewardship, whose professional trajectory has been closely connected to the lands, waters, businesses, and communities of the west coast of Vancouver Island. This experience includes work in forestry and tourism, seven years of service on the Huu-ay-aht Executive Council with responsibilities for economic development and external affairs, and sustained engagement with hereditary and elected leadership, citizens, business partners, industry, and government. More recently, this work has

involved bringing First Nations, Indigenous entrepreneurs, industry, government, and capital together around economic opportunities. In this context, FPIC should not be treated as an additional requirement within an approval process, but as a principle that begins from the recognition that First Nations have their own governments, laws, territorial responsibilities, priorities, and expectations concerning future generations. The central issue is therefore not simply whether a Nation has been consulted, but whether its participation occurs sufficiently early for the conversation to alter the project itself.

This situated experience suggests that the starting point for understanding FPIC is relatively straightforward: a project may have strong technical expertise, adequate financing, competent partners, and well-developed environmental objectives, while nevertheless beginning from the wrong point. If a location has already been selected,

the business model established, financing secured, and public narrative developed before the Nation is meaningfully involved, the Nation is effectively being asked to respond to a project defined by others rather than participate in determining what the project should become. From this perspective, FPIC changes the temporal and institutional architecture of development. Table 1 summarises the meaning of FPIC rooted in an Indigenous perspective.

<i>Free</i>	The principle of “free” concerns the conditions under which a Nation is able to participate in decision-making. Participation should not be shaped by artificial deadlines, political pressure, financial dependence, or implicit suggestions that employment, contracts, investment, or other economic opportunities are conditional on support for the project. A meaningful process must allow a Nation to respond according to its own priorities and decision-making structures, including the possibility of saying yes, no, not yet, or yes under different conditions. Freedom of consent therefore concerns more than the absence of explicit coercion. It also requires attention to the structural conditions under which negotiations take place. Where significant asymmetries of resources, information, or institutional capacity exist between proponents and First Nations, the ability to make an autonomous decision may be constrained even in the absence of direct pressure.
<i>Prior</i>	The temporal dimension of FPIC is particularly important. Engagement should take place before major decisions become effectively fixed, including decisions about the location, design, scale, capital structure, regulatory strategy, and public commitments associated with a project. Once these elements have been established, changing them may become financially, institutionally, or politically difficult. Meaningful prior engagement therefore requires that Indigenous participation precede the consolidation of the principal parameters of development. If the essential features of a project have already been determined, subsequent consultation risks becoming chiefly a mechanism for responding to an established proposal rather than a process through which the proposal itself can be transformed.

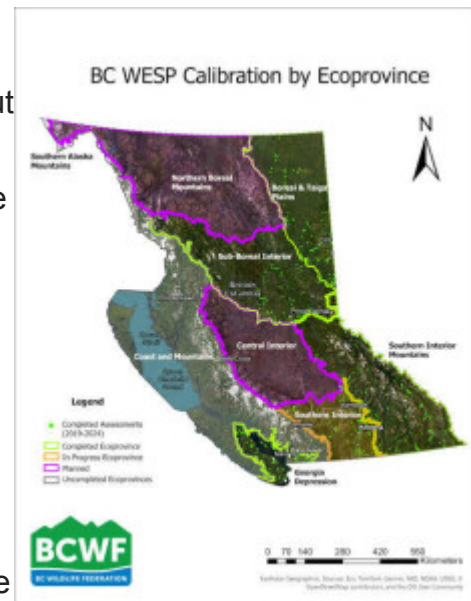
Informed	The principle of “informed” consent requires more than simply transmitting information. First Nations need access to sufficient, appropriately structured knowledge to assess the environmental, cultural, social, legal, and economic implications of a proposed development. This includes information on risks and benefits, possible alternatives, ownership structures, financial flows, responsibilities, potential consequences in the event of failure, and the implications of proceeding or not proceeding with the project. Information must also be accompanied by the capacity to evaluate it. Depending on the nature and scale of a proposal, this may require access to technical advisers, legal counsel, environmental expertise, community engagement processes, and sufficient time for leadership and citizens to consider the available information. Capacity funding can therefore play an important role in enabling informed decision-making. Such funding, however, should support the Nation’s ability to assess a proposal independently rather than function as an indirect incentive to provide consent.
Consent	The meaning of “consent” cannot be separated from the governance structures of the Nation concerned. First Nations are not institutionally homogeneous, and their decision-making systems may involve modern treaties,^[2] elected councils, hereditary leadership, development corporations, land-use plans, resource-management institutions, community approval processes, or combinations of these structures. The determination of who should be involved in a consent process therefore cannot be made solely by the project proponent. The Nation itself must determine the appropriate decision-making process and the authorities that need to participate. FPIC should consequently not be understood as a single Indigenous model that can be transferred unchanged from one Nation to another.

Table 1: Meaning of FPIC from an Indigenous perspective

The Huu-ay-aht First Nation experience provides one situated example. Depending on the nature of the decision, processes may involve the Executive Council, the H̱awíiẖ, citizens, the People’s Assembly, and other components of the Nation’s governance system. Such arrangements reflect Huu-ay-aht laws, values, responsibilities, and historical experience. Other First Nations may organise decision-making through substantially different institutional configurations. The broader principle is therefore not that other Nations should reproduce the Huu-ay-aht model,

but that the Nation concerned must retain authority over the process by which consent is determined.

This distinction is also important in discussions about whether FPIC constitutes a veto. Framing the issue primarily in terms of whether a Nation possesses the power to stop a project risks reducing the broader question of Indigenous authority to a binary relationship between proponents and governments. A more productive starting point concerns the territorial and political conditions within which development is proposed: whose territory is involved, what responsibilities and priorities have already been established, who has authority to make decisions, and whether the proposed development is compatible with the direction in which the Nation intends to develop.



Biodiversity and ecosystem Health
Framework Sorce Advancing Wetland
Conservation

Approached in this way, FPIC can also contribute to the substantive development of a project. Early involvement may allow a Nation to identify opportunities or risks that would otherwise remain outside the project's design. Location, infrastructure, ownership structures, environmental safeguards, procurement arrangements, employment strategies, and forms of participation may all be reconsidered through this process. Indigenous knowledge and territorial responsibilities may also influence how a project is designed and operated. Equally, an early process may demonstrate that a proposed development does not align with the Nation's priorities. Such an outcome must remain a legitimate possibility within a meaningful consent process.



Wildlife on the Vancouver Island Coast (ph. sam
Kirsch)

How Group One West approaches an Indigenous reinterpretation of FPIC

In the context of large-scale resource development, the meaning and practice of consent have become increasingly contested across political, legal, corporate, and Indigenous arenas. The question is no longer limited to whether consultation has occurred, but extends to how consent is positioned within the temporal and institutional architecture of a project: whether it constitutes a procedural requirement added to an already defined development model, or whether it helps

determine the conditions under which development can take place in the first instance (Martin et al.2025). This distinction is particularly relevant to the approach articulated by Group One West. Rather than adopting an ESG framework as the initial organising principle and subsequently incorporating Indigenous consultation within its environmental and social commitments, the project is described as emerging from a prior concern with the relationship between First Nations, territory, and decision-making. Within this approach, respect for First Nations' rights and territorial authority is not conceived as one component of a broader ESG agenda, but as a condition shaping the project from its earliest stages. Environmental, social, and governance considerations consequently arise not as an externally imposed reporting framework, but as dimensions of a more fundamental concern with the terms of participation, authority, and reciprocity on which development might be constituted.

The distinction is significant in light of growing criticism of the ways in which Indigenous consultation and FPIC are incorporated into corporate ESG practices. Research on corporate climate disclosures, for example, indicates that FPIC remains largely absent from corporate reporting. One recent analysis found that only 11% of issuers referred to FPIC in their filings, while only five issuers – approximately 2% of the total – made a public commitment to obtaining FPIC before initiating a project (Whitford, 2026). Such findings point to a broader institutional tendency whereby Indigenous rights are addressed within reporting structures that have already established the principal objectives, indicators, and parameters of development. From this perspective, consultation risks becoming detached from the processes through which projects are actually defined.

Interdisciplinary scholarship on FPIC has similarly emphasised that consent cannot be reduced to a discrete procedural event or to evidence of formal compliance (Buxton & Wilson 2013; Newman 2017). Genuine consent requires attention to the asymmetries of information, resources, institutional authority, and negotiating power that shape encounters between Indigenous communities, corporations, and state institutions. Where ESG commitments are established first and FPIC is subsequently incorporated as one element within an existing framework, consultation may therefore become a form of procedural closure: a meeting, agreement, or signature through which an otherwise predetermined development trajectory is retrospectively legitimised. This has also generated criticism concerning forms of corporate greenwashing or social washing, in which the appearance of consultation functions as evidence of responsibility without substantially altering the distribution of decision-making power (Sustainability Directory 2025).

The approach articulated by Group One West can instead be understood as reversing this conventional sequence. FPIC is positioned as a principle that determines whether, how, and under what conditions development proceeds. Such

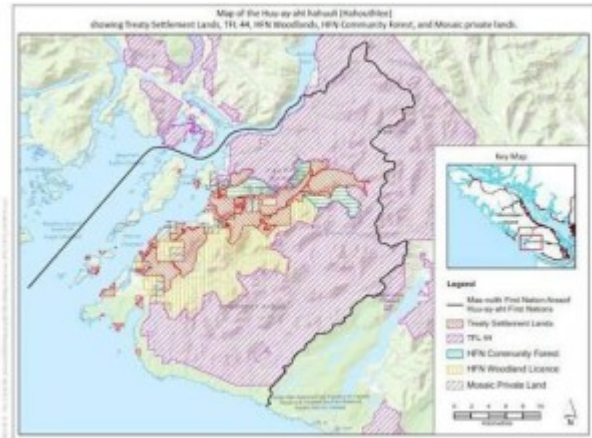
an orientation has the potential to transform the meaning of partnership. If consent is constitutive of the project rather than supplementary to it, engagement with First Nations cannot be confined to a stage of stakeholder consultation. It becomes part of the process through which the project itself is defined, including its environmental premises, social relationships, governance arrangements, and potential forms of economic development.

This distinction also highlights an important gap between procedural compliance and the broader question of legitimacy. Securing consent through a formally established process does not necessarily lead to the development of trust, durable relationships, or what has sometimes been described as a community's social licence to operate (PracticalESG, 2022). This gap is particularly consequential because relationships between corporations and Indigenous communities are not produced solely through formal procedures. They are shaped by longer histories of territorial dispossession, governance, recognition, economic relations, and encounters with state and corporate institutions. Consent must therefore be understood within these historical and political relations rather than as an isolated administrative event.

The policy work undertaken by First Nations organisations in British Columbia further demonstrates that Indigenous governance cannot be reduced to participation in corporate decision-making. The British Columbia Assembly of First Nations has developed policy work addressing FPIC and its relationship to economic development in the context of Aboriginal title, while its governance initiatives seek to support First Nations to develop or rebuild governance institutions according to their own priorities and at their own pace (BC Assembly of First Nations, n.d.-a; n.d.-b). These initiatives shift the analytical emphasis from the question of how corporations can satisfy consultation requirements to the more fundamental question of how Indigenous peoples exercise authority over the conditions under which development takes place. Seen in this light, the significance of the Group One West approach lies less in its adoption of ESG terminology than in the ordering of the principles through which the project is conceived. Rather than treating Indigenous rights as one dimension of environmental, social, and governance performance, the project positions relationships with First Nations and the principle of FPIC closer to the foundation of its proposed development model. ESG consequently appears as a possible articulation of principles that are already grounded in questions of territorial respect, participation, governance, and partnership. The analytical distinction is therefore not simply between one ESG framework and another, but between two different ways of conceiving development: one in which consent is incorporated into a predetermined project architecture, and another in which the conditions of consent participate in determining the architecture itself.

Conclusions

The case of Group One West illustrates how ecological transition can become a site for rethinking not only tourism and regional development, but also the relations of authority through which territorial futures are defined. Rather than treating Indigenous participation as an element to be incorporated into an already established development model, the project places FPIC at the beginning of the process, making consent a condition for determining whether, how, and under what circumstances development may proceed.



Location of huu au aht First Nation territory on the west coast of Vancouver Island British Columbia Canada

This approach shifts the focus from procedural consultation to the relational and political dimensions of consent. In this sense, FPIC is not simply a mechanism for ensuring compliance but a framework through which questions of territorial authority, Indigenous self-determination, knowledge, and governance become part of the project's design. The relevance of Group One West therefore lies less in the adoption of ESG principles than in the possibility of reversing their conventional sequence: rather than defining environmental, social, and governance objectives first and subsequently incorporating Indigenous rights, the project proposes to allow relationships with First Nations and the conditions of consent to shape the development model itself. At the same time, the preparatory status of the initiative makes clear that this orientation remains an ongoing process rather than an accomplished outcome. No definitive site or formal partnership has yet been established, and the capacity of the model to translate its principles into durable relationships and shared decision-making remains to be demonstrated. Precisely for this reason, Gruppo Uno Ovest offers a useful case for examining the ecological transition as a process of negotiation in which different forms of knowledge, authority, and territorial responsibility interact to define and guide the development of the project itself.

Dialoghi Mediterranei, n. 81, Settembre 2026

[*] Abstract

Questo articolo analizza il rapporto tra transizione ecologica, sviluppo turistico e autodeterminazione Indigena attraverso il caso di Group One West, un'iniziativa in fase preparatoria nell'isola di Vancouver che propone di integrare turismo, ricerca, produzione energetica, agricoltura e governance territoriale in un unico processo di transizione socioecologica. L'articolo assume il principio del Free, Prior and Informed Consent come prospettiva analitica per interrogare non soltanto le modalità della partecipazione Indigena, ma soprattutto le condizioni in cui essa interviene nella definizione di un progetto di sviluppo. In questo modo, il FPIC viene inteso come processo relazionale e

politico, fondato sul riconoscimento dell'autorità delle First Nations sui propri territori, delle loro strutture di governance, dei loro protocolli e delle loro priorità di sviluppo. Attraverso il caso di Group One West l'articolo mette in luce come il FPIC sia un principio capace di orientare la stessa architettura dello sviluppo, attraverso il coinvolgimento delle comunità Indigene sin dalla fase di progettazione.

Note

[1] Sam Kirsch is a consultant with over fifty years' experience in the hospitality and food industry sector; Namrata Chadha is a trained lawyer and MBA; and Trevor Cootes is a Nuu-chah-nulth entrepreneur and President and CEO of Cootes Consulting and Indigenous Economic Pathways.

[2] Modern Treaties are legally binding agreements between the Canadian government and certain First Nations, defining Indigenous rights, territories, resources, and forms of self-government. In many areas, they have replaced earlier historic treaties and establish a

negotiated framework for relations between First Nations, Canada, and the provinces and territories.

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Linda Armano, si occupa di antropologia estrattiva e business anthropology, concentrandosi su temi quali l'industrializzazione mineraria, le catene del valore, l'etica aziendale, la sostenibilità e gli studi indigeni. Le sue ricerche si sviluppano principalmente nei contesti canadese e italiano. Tra le sue ricerche più recenti si annovera un'analisi antropologica delle diverse interpretazioni attribuite al concetto di eticità, lungo la filiera produttiva, in relazione alla certificazione dei diamanti estratti in Canada. Linda Armano è inoltre co-fondatrice di Re-Con-Figure Foundation e direttrice scientifica di Secondary Extraction Association.

Trevor Cootes, (Hiyiqhsath) è un cittadino Huu-ay-aht e un leader indigeno nello sviluppo economico, con esperienza in diversi settori quali silvicoltura, turismo, governance, investimenti e sviluppo di partnership. In precedenza, ha fatto parte per sette anni del Consiglio esecutivo Huu-ay-aht, con responsabilità per lo sviluppo economico e le relazioni esterne. Trevor è fondatore e presidente di Indigenous Economic Pathways, fondatore e CEO di Cootes Consulting e presidente del Group One West Institute for Climate Research and Cultural Stewardship.

Sam Kirsch, ha oltre cinquant'anni di esperienza in ruoli di leadership nel settore dell'ospitalità e nello sviluppo di progetti in tutto il Canada occidentale. È il fondatore di Group One West, un istituto di ricerca e un'iniziativa di eco-resort sulla costa dell'isola di Vancouver, nella Columbia Britannica, basata sulla convinzione che il turismo possa fungere da vera e propria infrastruttura per il clima e la riconciliazione, anziché rappresentare una versione a basso impatto del business tradizionale. Il progetto si fonda su ricerche accademiche indipendenti e sul principio che qualsiasi futura collaborazione

con le Nazioni Indigene debba basarsi fin dall'inizio sul consenso libero, previo e informato. Vive sull'isola di Vancouver con la sua compagna Angela.

Namrata Chadha è un'avvocata con formazione internazionale, il cui lavoro unisce la pratica legale alla strategia di sostenibilità. Ha conseguito un MBA in Sostenibilità e un diploma post laurea in Diritto della proprietà intellettuale e si avvale di entrambe le discipline per applicare un approccio sistemico alla governance, alla strategia climatica e allo sviluppo organizzativo. In qualità di direttrice del Group One West Institute, promuove la preparazione all'ottenimento di finanziamenti, il turismo sostenibile e lo sviluppo di partnership. Ha esercitato la professione legale per oltre sette anni in India, rappresentando clienti dinanzi alla Corte Suprema dell'India e all'Alta Corte di Delhi, con esperienza in contenzioso, diritto societario e commerciale e proprietà intellettuale.
