

social order and seeks to use or change it in order to help the community gain more control over its economic future. My broader purpose is to explore the idea of devolution with a case example of its actual practice.

I begin by examining some of the thinking behind devolution in community development and the reasons for choosing Port Alberni as an appropriate case example. Next I present an economic history of Port Alberni, to show the specific context for community development in that area. Then I report and comment on Port Alberni's recent economic development activities, based on community planning documents and a series of in-depth interviews with local government officials and leaders of CBOs in Port Alberni. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of devolution both in Port Alberni and more generally.

Single Industry Towns and Devolution

Natural resource-based small communities are in crisis around the Pacific basin.² The proximate causes are the interrelated problems of economic change and population loss. Resource extraction activities are under heavy pressure. In many places minerals, timber, fish, and other natural resources have been exploited to exhaustion. In others changing societal values have reduced or eliminated access to the resources. And even in those

²/ There is a vast literature on the background and current situation of natural resource-based communities. The classic on British Columbia is Marchak 1983. See also, e.g., Brown 1995; Knight 1994; Friedmann and Rangan 1993; Berck et al. 1992.