

**THE ENVIRONMENT, THE ECONOMY, AND THE COMMUNITY:
New Approaches to Rural Community Development in British Columbia**

Abstract

From highly developed nations such as Japan to newly industrializing countries such as Korea and Malaysia to the relatively isolated island states of Oceania, many nations are experimenting with a shift toward devolution in their approach to community development--toward the decentralization of public responsibility from higher to lower levels of government and to community based non-governmental organizations. The thought is that local governments and CBOs are better attuned to the local community and so can better respond to the challenges they face.

To shed light on this view I have been investigating the case of the Alberni Inlet and Clayoquot Sound area in western Vancouver Island, focusing on the community of Port Alberni, British Columbia. The immediate aim of my study is to interpret how the community's first-level leadership understands Port Alberni's 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.