

**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 decentralization 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 NGOs are better attuned to the local community and so can better respond to the challenges they face.

To shed light on this view, this paper examines the case of the Port Alberni community in British Columbia. The immediate aim of the paper is to interpret how the community's (first level) leadership has interpreted how the 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 decentralization with a case example of its actual practice.

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