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"Boreal Forest Prospects and Politics: Paradoxes of First Nations Participation in Multi-sector Conservation"

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This article explores the prospects and politics of indigenous participation in multi-sector conservation—an integrative and proactive new approach to sustaining the integrity of vast natural ecosystems—by presenting the case of the Boreal Leadership Council (BLC), an initiative comprised of Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOs), First Nations groups, resource-extractive corporations, and financial institutions committed to collectively addressing issues impacting Canada's boreal forest. Drawing on multi-sited participant-observation and interviews with BLC members and affiliates, I show how the BLC challenges wilderness-oriented definitions of conservation by undertaking projects that intertwine resource use, land rights, cultural preservation, and political authority, but concurrently perpetuates dominant perspectives by adhering to discursive practices that limit how environmental information can be persuasively presented. Ultimately, I argue that multi-sector conservation creates both new possibilities for indigenous empowerment and new forms of marginalisation through the reproduction of a (post)colonial geography of exclusion in which indigenous participants knowingly and strategically travel from the centre of their own worlds to peripheral positions within a larger—and inherently inequitable—sociopolitical structure. (Text from author's abstract)

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