

ANYOX POWERHOUSE NO. 3
GARETH BRACEWELL

Anyox is situated at sea level, 145 km north of Prince Rupert at the most northerly fjord on the British Columbia coast. The district lies within a temperate rainforest and snow is rare at sea level, but accumulates at higher elevations where the mine is located.

In 1793, British explorer George Vancouver became the first Westerner to visit the region, but it remained largely untouched by outsiders until the discovery of significant copper ore deposits in 1889. To support mining operations, infrastructure was rapidly constructed. In 1911, a wooden and rock reservoir was built 4.5 kilometers upstream of Anyox. By 1912, the company also began constructing the town itself, which was named Anyox, meaning “hidden water” in the Nisga’a language. The Anyox Hospital was completed that same year. Mining operations commenced in earnest in 1914, and the population of Anyox rose to nearly 3,000 residents. By 1922, the company began constructing the Anyox storage dam, which, upon completion in 1923, stood as the tallest dam in Canada until after the second world war.

By 1933, the collapse of copper prices led to a significant wage reduction, sparking a major miners’ strike. The following year, in 1934, the company attempted a large-scale explosion to access new copper reserves. The explosion, however, was severely miscalculated. Rather than improving access to mineralised ore, it linked two existing underground mines, causing a massive collapse. The damage was so extensive that it shattered newly constructed tunnels and rendered the rock too unstable for future excavation.

As a result of this catastrophe, mining operations in Anyox ceased in 1935. The town was left with 50 million kilograms of unsold copper stacked near the harbour. By 1936, Anyox was largely abandoned, with fewer than 20 workers remaining to maintain minimal operations. Environmental devastation was stark; by the time of its abandonment, all trees within a 20 kilometre radius had died due to industrial pollution.

The site was briefly revisited during World War II when a large-scale salvage operation in 1939 repurposed steel and other materials for the war effort. However, in 1942, lightning ignited two wildfires on the hillsides surrounding Anyox, reducing what remained of the town to ashes. The last remaining workers were forced to flee, marking the definitive end of Anyox as a functioning community.

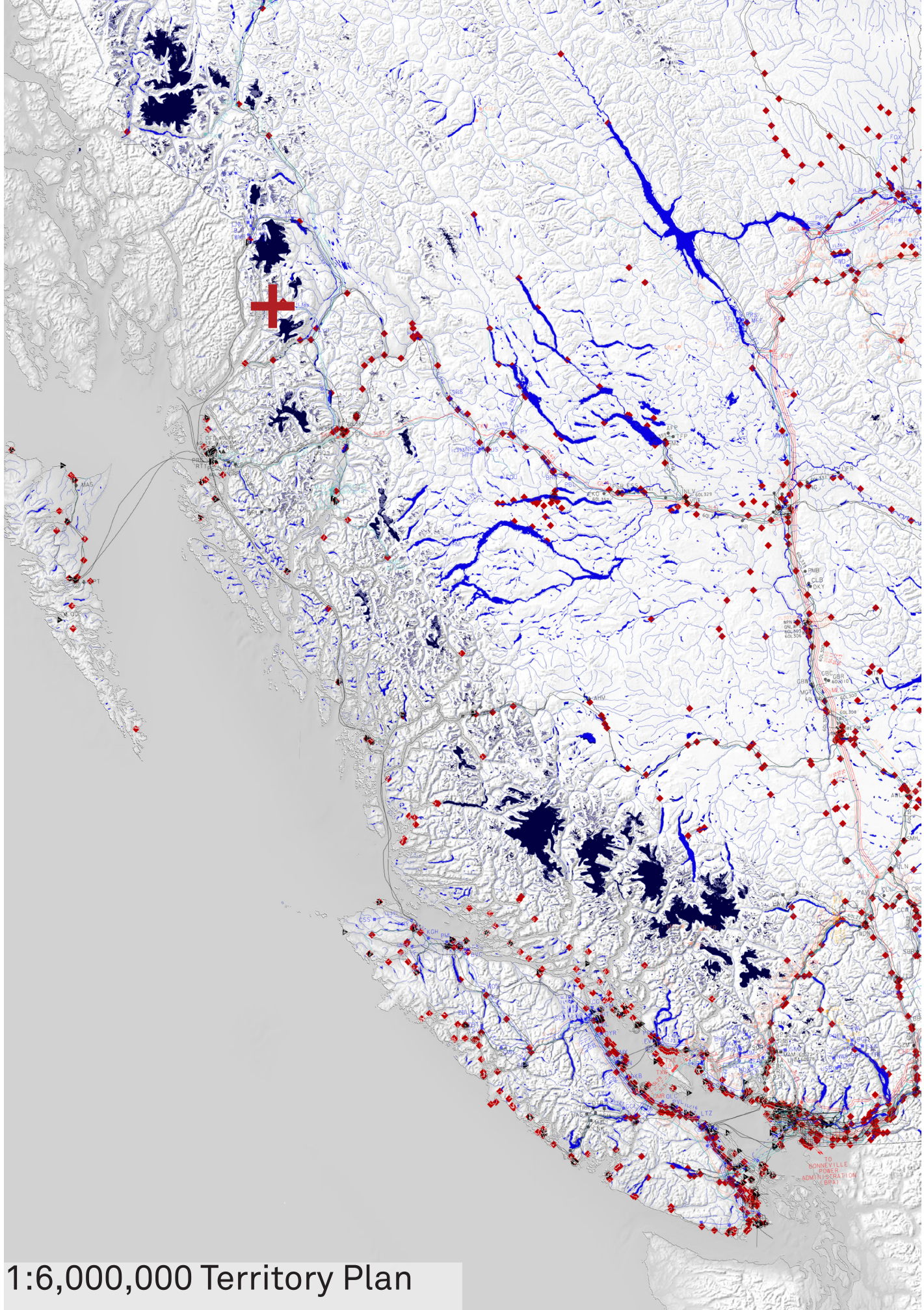


All that is now left at the site of the old town, are the concrete storage dam - which was breached when the Anyox was abandoned - a massive tailings pile of copper ore slag, and the foundations of several crumbling buildings.

In recent years, the old storage dam, has been tested and proved to be structurally intact. My proposal is to revisit the site and reuse the existing infrastructure for the generation of energy. The existing dam is mended, and at sea level, both a powerhouse, and a small dwelling for the necessary on site workers are constructed on existing foundations.

The project is a look to see what happens when we take erosion, breakdown, and decay, rather than novelty, growth, and progress, as our starting points? A site which has is both remote and wildly natural, and yet entirely formed by human action. The dense forest which now stands in the area is of young spruce and pine, only able to grow in the past 40 years once the sulphur had sufficiently left the soil. They can be selectively milled to create both formwork and timber construction, and along with the copper tailings, these make almost the full material palette of the project.

The project supposes a necessity for excess in architecture. Contrary to common notions about efficiency and optimisation, in an open system, energy and matter necessarily exist in abundance and the architectural artefact exists as a dialectic with this system.



- Major Roads
- Transmission Lines
- Ferry Terminals
- Ports
- Municipalities
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Glaciers
- Historical Glaciers
- 0500 kV
- 0360 kV
- 0230 kV
- 0138 kV
- 0069 kV
- Substation
- Hydro Generating Station
- Thermal Generating Station
- Diesel Generating Station