Defining Land Use in a Context of Proximity: Politics of Community Recognition and Identity Dynamics in Washaw Sibi

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Abstract: In the mid-2000s, in the Upper Harricana River drainage area, the Abitibiwinni and Washaw Sibi groups may be said to have “overlapping claims.” This article presents a historical overview of the area, emphasising interactions between groups and the way group identities were arbitrarily assigned by colonisers and gradually associated with residence. Ethnographic data underlines how family hunting territories played a pivotal social role for the subsistence of marginalised families. The idea that the claims of these groups “overlap” emerged recently, despite documented historical forms of co-existence, kinship ties and hunting partnerships between the Abitibiwinnik and Cree.

Keywords: James Bay Cree, family hunting territories, territorial overlap, Washaw Sibi/Harricana River Cree, intergroup relationships, history of colonialism

Résumé : L’essai est motivé par la situation actuelle d’utilisation du territoire dans le bassin de la Rivière Harricana, caractérisé par un possible « chevauchement territorial » entre les Abitibiwinnik et les Washaw Sibi Eeyouch. Un survol historique discute des interactions entre groupes et la manière dont les colonisateurs ont assigné arbitrairement des identités et les ont graduellement associées à la résidence. Les données ethnographiques soulignent le rôle social des territoires de chasse familiaux la subsistance des familles marginalisées. La notion de « chevauchement » a émergé récemment, malgré une co-existence, une parenté et des partenariats documentés entre Abitibiwinnik et Cris.

Mots-clés : Cris de la Baie James, territoires de chasse familiaux, chevauchement territorial, Cris de Washaw Sibi/de la rivière Harricana, relations entre groupes, histoire du colonialisme

Introduction

Family hunting territories have alternatingly worked as loci of resistance and sites of colonial disempowerment, at times limiting and at other times reinforcing specific collectivities, in particular in the contemporary expression of Aboriginal identities in groups living in relative proximity. This paper is motivated by the current situation in the Upper Harricana River drainage area, which is situated along the northern border between the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario. Over the last two decades, it has been observed that there are “territorial overlaps,” or areas used or claimed by more than one Aboriginal group inhabiting the region. This relatively new perception of local groups’ relationships can be attributed, to a certain extent, to the work of the Washaw Sibi Eeyou Association (WSEA) for political recognition and establishment as a James Bay Cree/Eeyou Istchee community.

The WSEA is a group of Aboriginal people who mobilised soon after the signature of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), in 1975, for recognition as a James Bay Cree/Eeyou Istchee community (Lessard 2015). In 2004, the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) recognised the WSEA as the tenth James Bay Cree community. Since then, the WSEA has worked on establishing a comprehensive membership list and obtaining a Category 1 land base[1] for the establishment of a village community modelled after other James Bay Cree communities, which would enable them to eventually make claim for Category 2 territories. However, there are many remaining hurdles that will have to be overcome before these objectives are met and anchored formally and durably.

The WSEA represents over six hundred members, who are scattered and separated by large distances in the locales of Southern James Bay, Abitibi-Témiscamingue (Quebec) and the Cochrane District (Ontario). About half of the WSEA membership lives either in the city of Amos, Quebec (population fourteen thousand), or in

Pikogan, an Algonquin reserve less than five kilometres north of Amos. Pikogan is currently inhabited by over six hundred people, most of whom are registered under the Abitibiwinni (plural *Abitibiwinnik*) First Nation (Algonquin), or Abitibi-Dominion band. The WSEA does not have a land base of its own (that is, a reserve, or Category 1 or 2 land), and it is still working on mapping out its members' historical land use, seeking out and gathering their histories and the implications of their experiences for the present.

The customary territory of the Washaw Sibi Eeyouch is roughly defined as extending over the Upper Harricana River drainage area. *Washaw Sibi*, "the river that flows into the bay," is the Cree name for this river, which flows from Lac Blouin, Quebec, through the provincial border with Ontario and into Hannah Bay, in Southern James Bay. *Eeyou* (plural *Eeyouch*) is the Cree word by which the Cree refer to themselves and other Aboriginal peoples. Washaw Sibi members also sometimes refer to themselves as the Hannah Bay, Harricana River, or La Sarre Cree.

A review of foundational sociology texts on community defines this concept on the basis of three shared dimensions: an ecology, a social organisation and a set of common cultural and symbolic meanings (Hillery 1968). Defining "membership," "traditional territories" and, when necessary, collective rights to the use of and jurisdiction over such territories is a socially and legally important aspect of community building and key to the survival of Indigenous groups within nation-states (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). These principles are visible in the case of the James Bay Cree, who mostly benefitted from the land regime established by the JBNQA. The latter recognised the Cree Nation's collective rights to a large expanse of territories, and Category 1 and 2 lands have contributed to ensuring solidarity among the Cree, constituting a tangible recognition of their relationship to the land, providing a reservoir of resources for a contemporary way of life inclusive of traditional hunting and trapping activities, and offering a strategy for establishing Cree governance and land management (Feit 2005; Tanner 2002).

Yet the complexity of Washaw Sibi's situation lies in the diversity of individual members' living conditions. Because WSEA members are scattered in different locales and have different social, cultural and political referents and, in many cases, very different experiences of marginality, the WSEA challenges sociological and legal definitions of "community." Compiling a membership list and mapping the community's customary territory is a politically sensitive act complicated by Washaw Sibi's proximity with the Abitibiwinnik,[2] with whom they are also related in terms of kinship and group identity.

As a matter of fact, the WSEA is not currently registered as an Indian band by the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development or as a James Bay Cree community by the government of Quebec. The only formal criterion to become a WSEA member is to hold JBNQA beneficiary status, the attribution of which is under provincial jurisdiction, making it independent from federal Indian status.[3] For instance, many WSEA members are Pikogan residents and registered as Abitibi Algonquin in the federal Indian Register and as Waskaganish Crees in the lists of JBNQA beneficiaries[4] (and also share extended family ties with James Bay Cree communities and other Aboriginal communities in Quebec and Ontario). In parallel, a large portion of what Washaw Sibi Crees consider as their traditional territory could also be claimed by Abitibiwinnik. They nevertheless consider themselves as a group with a distinct membership and territory. We hence need a deeper and more nuanced understanding of historical land use and the formation of senses of collective identity in the area.

Conceptual Framework

In the twentieth century, anthropologists often contributed to theoretical debates on sources and forms of inequalities existing in Western society by using examples derived from ethnographic texts on Aboriginal societies. For instance, Speck (1915) published his historical definition of the family hunting territory at a time when (1) issues of land ownership and property were major concerns in colonial contexts, (2) anthropologists were increasingly critiquing social evolutionism, and (3) governments wanted to abolish all forms of collective land tenure (Feit 1991; Leroux 2004; Speck 1915). It has been argued (Feit 1991) that Speck's ethnographic work, conducted in areas with intensifying colonisation and active political interventions, led him, and other early twentieth-century anthropologists like Cooper and Jenkins, to emphasise an "ideal" model of the family hunting territory. Academically, the concept was received as a challenge to Marxist anthropologists who considered land, like other resources, to be held "communally" in hunter-gatherer groups. This led to important debates on the Aboriginal origins of the family hunting territory that monopolised discussions until the 1950s (Tanner 1986).

In the second half of the twentieth century, social anthropologists focused on the functioning of the family hunting territory in contexts of social change, including increasing state interference, pressure for settlement,

and transforming economic systems and relations of production. This literature was highly critical of the role of colonial and state agencies of the Canadian government in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in legally defining "bands." Some anthropologists highlighted how in subarctic semi-nomadic contexts (which included the Harricana River drainage), "band" mostly referred to an ephemeral assemblage only concretised as a residential body at specific times, an observation that implies that "band" is a concept tied up with colonial hegemonic ambitions concerning Indigenous peoples.

For example, Dunning (1959) described the organisation of the Ojibwa Pekangekum band at a time when many neighbouring groups had become sedentary. He opposed the "regional band," a term applying to people gathered during summer months for social, economic and commercial purposes (and suggesting potential ties to other groups settled in the region), to "co-residential groups," or groups comprising the winter trapping settlement, often made up of about two commensal units, or hunters' families who gathered only during summer months (which suggested that bands could form important subdivisions) (Dunning 1959). Similarly, Leacock referred to four levels of social integration: the "multifamily group," consisting of two to five related families inhabiting a lodge; the "winter band," comprising 35 to 75 individuals who left the trading post together in the fall and divided later on in the winter but still stayed close enough to lend help if needed; the "band" (150 to more than 300 people), which travelled over the same roughly defined territory and occupied a cluster of tents during the summer gatherings; and finally the "gatherings" (consisting of up to 1,500 people and comprising the aforementioned subdivisions), which assembled around the trading posts during the summer (Leacock 1973). This literature reveals vast social and political networks existing within (for example, kinship groups or factions) and beyond "bands" (for example, larger groups of which the kinship group or band is only a segment), and crossing legal, linguistic and cultural boundaries.

To better understand the emergence and maintenance of these networks, Turner and Wertman (1977), from a structural-functionalist perspective, emphasised the socially productive aspect, at all levels, of cyclical aggregation and dispersal of people. In brief, regional bands and co-residential/multifamily groups had their own dynamics and engaged in circumstantial negotiations as social or ecological circumstances dictated. Family groups could thus visit and hunt on different territories every year while remaining attached to the specific tracts of land they frequented most. Other family groups recognised different groups' territorial authority by asking permission for access, avoiding trespassing, and offering meat when hunting there. Negotiating and combining groups in new ways allowed families to make optimal use of the land, broadened individuals' social networks, and ensured the circulation and optimal use of information, knowledge and individual abilities (Turner and Wertman 1977).

Murdoch (2015) invokes the concept of "spontaneous order" to understand these processes of de/recomposition of social organisation among the James Bay Cree. "Spontaneous order" refers to the emergence of a social configuration through the actions of individuals driven by their own interests, yet in the absence of any active planning for a social order. In the case of Aboriginal social organisation, he observes that a strong moral element acts as a gravitational force and maintains continuity and a sense of responsibility to specific territories (Murdoch 2015). The interdependence of the formation of collective life and the ecological environment is delicate, but crucial, and day-to-day, direct forms of engagement with the land should be considered. Descola (2005, 61) perceives territory not as a bounded and exclusive tract of land, but as a set of intersecting itineraries with more or less punctual or regular stops. For Ingold (2008), those itineraries and their cyclical nature are essential elements of forming a place for people: by different groups coming and going on the land, both communities and places form and transform and become associated with ways of life distinctive and meaningful to people.

To consider in more detail how local groups gradually became constructed as "bands," I will now elaborate on how local Aboriginal collectivities have been historically portrayed. I will then discuss key historical aspects of the "overlap" between Washaw Sibi and the Abitibiwinnik, and the pivotal role played by family hunting territories for marginalised families. The data are based on my work documenting community history with the Washaw Sibi Eeyouch, initiated in 2008 (Scott, Morrison, and Lessard 2009) and continued during one-year-long multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (June 2009 to July 2010) (Lessard 2014) in which I investigated social and institutional changes associated with the process of this community's recognition.

Researching Early Land Use: Defining Regional Bands

The earliest written records giving information on occupation in the area include pre-anthropological historical accounts. While anthropologists are interested in developing theoretical understandings of social and political structures of non-Western peoples, early *chroniqueurs*

(that is, missionaries, traders or administrators) needed to know local leaders to establish commercial or military alliances and/or missions, and often exaggerated the extent to which they had succeeded in order to justify their presence to their superiors. They faced language barriers and difficulties in finding interpreters and mostly relied on instrumental interactions with specific individuals in limited contexts (Hedican 2012, 31; Morrison 2002). While they represent unsystematic, biased and partial accounts, they are important to consider to understand the history of land use.

Early Accounts and the Jesuits

Early historical accounts generally reveal a great level of interaction between Aboriginal groups. Jesuit accounts partially describe James Bay in the seventeenth century and, in particular, trade and military routes encompassing the James Bay and Lake Abitibi areas. The word *Kiristinon*, and its variants used by early missionaries and traders (*Christinaux*, *Kilistinos*, *Guilistinous*, et cetera), is said to derive from the Ojibwa word *kirištinos*, which referred to an Aboriginal group in Southern James Bay and was used in 1640 by French Jesuits. The term was quickly adapted by the Jesuits to refer to groups north of Nipissing Lake on whom they had no specific information on language or territory and was shortened into "Cree," the word nowadays used by the Cree to refer to themselves in English or French (Honigmann 1981).

Druillettes, who travelled to Hudson Bay in 1661, but was stopped in Nekouba before reaching it, generally associated Hudson Bay with the Cree:

> In those regions lies that famous bay, seventy leagues wide by two hundred and sixty long, which was first discovered by Husson [sic], who gave it his name ... Upon this bay are found, at certain seasons of the year, many surrounding Nations embraced under the general name of Kilistinons (Thwaites 1896, vol. 56, 249).

Territories frequented by groups identified as Cree were not necessarily directly adjacent to Hudson or James Bay. Father Marest, who went to James Bay in 1693, mentioned Cree country's southward movements:

> The most distant, the most numerous, and the most important are the Assiniboines and the Crees or, as they are otherwise known, the Kiristinnons ... The Crees are numerous and their country is much larger. They reach to Lake Superior whither some go to trade. I have seen some who have been at Sault Ste. Marie and at Michillimackinac. (Tyrrell et al. 1931, 124)

These two settlements were located southeast of Lake Superior. This comment was echoed by Father La Potherie: "They [the Christinaux or Crees] are a numerous people with an immense territory. They extend as far as Lake Superior. At times they go to trade at Sault Ste. Marie and at Michillimackinac" (Tyrrell et al. 1931, 263–264).

However, we cannot conclude from these quotations whether the Cree inhabited these areas. They more probably travelled there as part of social, military or commercial alliances.

It is thanks to long-established commercial and political alliances between the Saint Lawrence River, the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay that the Jesuits knew about James and Hudson Bay. After his trip to James Bay in 1661, Druillettes sent to his superiors a list of six commercial routes from the Saint Lawrence valley, or the Great Lakes area, to James Bay gathered from explorers and traders Radisson and Des Groseillers (Thwaites 1896, vol. 44, 238–244). Father Lalemant qualified Hudson Bay as the place "whither the Hurons and Nipisiriniens formerly were wont to go for trade; and whence they procured a great abundance of Beavers" (Kenton and Thwaites 1956, 309). Father Druillettes, in fact, identified a group as the "the Kilistinons of the Nipisiriniens, because the Nipisiriniens discovered their country, whither they resort to trade or barter goods. They comprised only about six hundred men, that is, two thousand five hundred souls, and are not very stationary" (Thwaites 1896, vol. 44, 249). Bishop and Smith (1975) interpreted this expression (the "Kilistinons of the Nipisiriniens") as an emphasis on trading alliances between Lake Nipissing and the Moose River drainage.

The Abitibi area was part of these trading routes and alliances. The word "Algonquin" (used nowadays to refer to the Abitibiwinni) was used by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century to refer to groups living around the Ottawa River, in particular those attending the Allumettes Island Mission (Campbell 1908). The Abitibi Lake area is located further north of this area; while they may have referred to the Abitibi as "Algonquin" in certain instances, a few records suggest a close relationship between Abitibi and the Southern James Bay Cree. When accounting for his trip to James Bay in 1659–60, the Jesuit Lalemant suggested that the Outabitibek (that is, the Abitibi people) had found refugee from Iroquois raids in James Bay:

> After our Algonkin [guide] had visited all the Nations surrounding the Bay, and had laden himself with various presents sent by those peoples to the French and Algonkins of these regions, – to attract them to

their Bay, in order that they might all fortify themselves there against the Iroquois ... three Nations were overthrown by the Iroquois ... and compelled to seek a refuge. The names of these Nations are the Keapatawangachik, the Outabitibek, and the Ouakwichiwek (Kenton and Thwaites 1956, 311).

Also, in 1708, British historian John Oldmixon met an Abitibi trapper when trading on Moose River: "The Governor having got everything ready for a voyage to *Moose River*, sent Capt. *Gooselier*, Capt. *Cole*, Mr. *Gorst*, my Author, and other English Indians, to trade there. They got about 250 Skins, and the Captain of the *Tabittee* Indians inform'd them the French Jesuits had not brib'd them not to deal with the English" (Tyrrell et al. 1931, 390, emphasis in original).

Briefly, seventeenth-century historical records suggest movements on broad travel routes and alliances. James Bay and Abitibi were part of these, suggesting long-term social interactions between local groups.

The Fur Trade

The North-West Company, the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) and, later, Révillon Frères established trading posts at the mouths of strategic rivers used as transportation and communication routes. Three posts were particularly important for the region in the nineteenth century: Rupert's House (1777–1941; located at the mouth of Rupert's River on James Bay), Moose Factory (1730–1970; located at the mouth of Moose River on James Bay), and Fort Abitibi (1794–1921; located on Abitibi Lake).[5] Secondary posts were established sporadically for shorter periods at different locations within the triangle formed by these three posts, including the Hannah Bay post at the mouth of the Harricana River, which was in use intermittently from 1803 until the 1830s (Chabot 2001). Aboriginal families generally gathered and traded at posts during summer months.

Archival records mention family groups involved in the fur harvests and these groups' territories in at least some areas of the subarctic. For instance, a fur trader from Rainy Lake placed family territories in 1804 within broad networks of solidarity:

> It is customary with them, in the beginning of the winter, to separate in single families, a precaution which seems necessary to their very existence, and of which they are so sensible that when one of them has chosen a particular district of hunting ground, no other person will encroach upon it without a special invitation ... In case of famine, however, any one may abandon his district and seek a better hunt on his neighbour's land without incurring the least ill will or reproach. (Masson 1889, 326)

HBC traders' comments suggest there were varying degrees of organised territory "ownership." Earlier comments by traders emphasised the flexibility of family hunting territories. For instance, it is mentioned in 1814 in the Moose Factory district report that "they have a kind of custom of retaining their own Ground but as to property or exclusive right I think would not be content."[6] Hunters' mobility between posts and hunting areas was crucial for the enterprise, and for a long time, companies avoided interfering with Aboriginal organisation and nomadic patterns (Francis and Morantz 1983).

More detailed descriptions of land "ownership" emerged with time. For example, in 1827, a Moose Factory trader wrote: "These Indians have each a tract of Country to which they claim an exclusive right and are Tenacious of encroachment by other."[7] Comments like the latter are more common from the 1820s and later. For example, a trader at Abitibi Post in 1824 wrote: "The limits of the territory, which belong to each Family are as well known by their neighbours as the lines which separate farms by the Farmers in the civilized world so that very seldom do they encroach upon one another's land to kill the beaver."[8]

Traders gradually developed a sense that families associated with a given post owned specific territories that combined into regional entities relatively exclusive from territories associated with other posts. For example, a chief factor wrote about the Abitibi-Dominion band's territory in 1822:

> To the South and Southwest, it extends beyond the heights of lands, partly in Upper Canada, until it reaches the lands possessed by the Temiskaming Indians. And in Lower Canada joined the hunting grounds of the Grand Lac Indians to the South East. It is bounded by Waswanipie on the North East.[9]

In a few instances, they mentioned the approximate and relative location of individual hunters' grounds. This was the case for the Rupert's House account books for 1834–36, where we learn that Otawinmau has "Hunting grounds up the Eastmain River below Naosquisquan," Woppeenaweskum has "Hunting grounds up the Eastmain River below, like fathers," or Petkaishish "hunts on the vicinity of Miniscaw."[10] HBC traders became increasingly familiar with the movements of hunters who frequented their posts or whom they occasionally visited in their hunting camps.

Traders recorded their transactions with individual hunters to keep their account books in order and to track debts. Merging with the North-West Company in 1821, HBC gained a monopoly, which increased its

ability to document hunters' use of trading posts and movements. They attempted to assign hunters to specific posts to systematise transactions, facilitate trade and business, and avoid situations where hunters multiplied credit accounts at more than one post (Francis and Morantz 1983; Scott and Morrison 2004), with the effect of instilling a sort of territorial order. Hunters regularly trading at a given post were gradually considered as relatively cohesive groups and, in turn, hunters' relative commercial loyalty to certain posts partially regularised their circulation on the land (Bishop 1994).

Nevertheless, many Aboriginal hunters and groups continued to visit different posts to acquire benefits from the credit system, maintain social connections with different groups, and gain knowledge of and experience with different territories. Traders communicated between posts to make sure a hunter's transactions would be registered to the right account. Studies of HBC records indicate movement was common, in descending order of importance, between Rupert's House, Eastmain, Moose Factory (and its Hannah Bay outpost), Waswanipi, Mistassini, Nitchequon and, more seldom, Fort Abitibi. For example, in 1818, a Moose Factory trader suggested a strategy for Abitibi hunters trading at the Hannah Bay post:

> I am glad to hear also that several of the Abbitibbi Indians have visited you (at Hannah Bay) and brought you furs. Encourage them all you can, by trading liberally with them as little debt as possible. Let me have a list of their names and any information respecting them that you can give, also send a list of what may be required for the Trade at Hannah Bay.[11]

These movements led traders to wonder about certain hunters' identity:

> In the records of the late 1700's [sic] and early 1800's [sic] the hunters are named. For example, Pusso was the captain of the Hannah Bay Indians but he came in to trade at Rupert House, in addition to Moose Factory … The question is whether he was a "Rupert House Indian." The same question can be applied to his contemporary, Tishywyae, as well as others. The fact that they were "Hannah Bay Indians" means that they hunted in that general region and in total they formed a small group. (Morantz 1985, 85)

Although initially non-coercive and motivated by commercial concerns, traders' partial associations of social assemblages with trading posts impacted regulations later enforced by state administrators and contributed to the infusion of social identities into specific arrangements.

Treaty 9

From the 1870s to the 1920s, 11 treaties were negotiated between, and signed by, government officials and local Aboriginal bands to mediate relations between Aboriginal people and the Crown. These treaties were crucial in affirming the Canadian federal government's presence on the territory, legitimating its sovereignty over land, and expanding settlements, but they also bore ambiguities regarding Aboriginal people's powers and entitlement to self-governance.

Macklem (1997) and Chamberlin (1997) show that Aboriginal groups sought to safeguard their ways of life by signing treaties. It has been argued that treaties, in their content, established nation-to-nation relationships between Canada and Aboriginal peoples and that the latter did not surrender land, but rather agreed to share it (Asch 2014). Yet their implementation was embedded within broader dynamics of settler colonialism, aimed toward dispossessing Aboriginal peoples of their customary lands (Egan 2013; Banivanua Mar and Edmonds 2010). Initially, through treaties, Aboriginal groups surrendered some of their rights over specific territories in exchange for advantages such as annuities, food rations or reserve lands (Lavoie 2007). Treaties opened the way for settlement and exploitative projects, rendering tracts of land unusable for traditional subsistence activities.

Treaty 9, which covers Northern Ontario, impacted Aboriginal populations inhabiting Northeastern Ontario, the James Bay area (Ontario), and Abitibi Lake. Deputy Superintendent General of Indian affairs Frank Pedley wrote that Treaty 9 would serve in "securing an extinguishment of the Indian title to lands … which may be considered to be necessary in view of railway construction, advancing settlement, etc."[12] Indeed, the recent expansion of Ontario borders to James Bay (1874) and of Quebec to the Eastmain River (1898), as well as the beginning of the railway development, motivated the treaty. The Northern Ontario Railway Commission began the construction of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway in 1902, reaching Cochrane, Ontario, in 1909. The construction of the northern branch to James Bay began in 1921 and finally reached Moose Factory in 1932 (Surtees 1992). In 1914, the federal government completed a branch of the transcontinental railway in Northern Quebec crossing from Amos to Cochrane, with stops in La Sarre, Quebec, and Low Bush, Ontario (Andreae and Matthews 1997).

The federal government approached Ontario and Quebec in 1904 to negotiate Treaty 9, but Quebec refused to participate.[13] Unlike with most previous treaties, federal commissioners stated they did not want to turn affected Aboriginal groups into farmers or compel them

to establish fixed residence (Morrison 1987, 39). Aboriginal groups were increasingly experiencing the encroachment of settlers, white trappers and industrialisation, and generally expected the government to commit to sharing resources and helping them with law and order, schools, money and food (Long 1995; Morrison 1987).

Initial negotiations and signature ceremonies for Treaty 9 involved over 40 administrative bands from 1905 to 1908. Government officials used a definition of "residence" based on the trading post band lists compiled by HBC traders and were aware of the presence of Abitibi, Hannah Bay and Rupert House peoples in Moose Factory (Morrison 1987). In many cases, these people were listed individually in treaty lists under Moose Factory or Abitibi and were thus administratively affiliated to these bands (Scott and Morrison 1993).

A Moose Factory affiliation was the criterion for people living in Southern James Bay to be included in the treaty, while people affiliated with Rupert House, Quebec, were excluded. In Abitibi, officials were aware that the band included people who trapped on both sides of the border, and several groups were represented in the treaty. Officials did not recognise alternative band affiliations, but implemented a distinction between two administrative bands: the Abitibi-Dominion (those trapping in Quebec) and the Ontario-Dominion (those trapping in Ontario) (Scott and Morrison 2004). For instance, treaty commissioners wrote:

> A full list of the Indians was obtained from the officer in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company, Mr. George Dreaver. Mr. Dreaver has thorough command of the Cree and Ojibeway languages, which was of great assistance to the Commissioners at Abitibi where, owing to the circumstances of the Indians belonging to the two provinces, Ontario and Quebec, it was necessary to draw a fine distinction … The commissioners had, however, to state that they had no authority to treat with the Quebec Indians, and that the conference in regard to the treaty could only be held with those whose hunting grounds are in the province of Ontario.[14]

The Ontario-Dominion band was permitted to sign the document and was granted reserve 70, nowadays known as Wahgoshig, Ontario. The Abitibi-Dominion band was first excluded but allowed to adhere to the treaty in 1908 and advised to move to Wahgoshig, which they refused. The non-recognition of the treaty in Quebec extinguished their rights in this province, and Pikogan was established only in 1956 to accommodate the band.

There are gaps between the written text of the treaty and Aboriginal interpretations of it based on oral traditions (Long 1995). These gaps must be examined considering Canada's promises to Aboriginal communities and power differentials between the latter and the government that allowed abuses of trust between parties (Macklem 1997). Treaty 9 was promoted by federal agents as a humanitarian act and a fair set of compensation measures for Euro-Canadian development and resource exploitation: allowing such development projects and economic growth would offer Aboriginal people opportunities to assimilate into Euro-Canadian society. Yet the intensification of colonisation and industrial development in the region had already brought waves of epidemics, increased Aboriginal peoples' socioeconomic vulnerability and reduced the portion of accessible land.

The Cree interpreted the treaty through their ethic of generosity and reciprocity. Paine (1971) defines these values as central to their social organisation and as consisting of mutual expectations to give without expecting anything in return other than in one-to-one exchanges. For example, "at Moose Factory, … the Indian spokesman said they had all been looking forward to treaty for a long time and thanked the government men for promising law and order, schools and money, which would greatly help the poor and needy among them" (Canada 1964 quoted in Morrison 1987, 35–36). Long, in his analysis of treaty signing ceremonies in Winisk, noted that Cree referred to the treaty as *shatamakaywina*, which he translates as "promises" (Long 1995, 27). According to Regina Flannery (quoted in Long 1995, 23), "it seems evident that they had no notion they were giving up their land in return for what they were promised," suggesting that the federal government did not fulfill Aboriginal peoples' expectations.

Treaty 9 negotiations further solidified the associations European and Euro-Canadians traders and administrators had recorded between hunters and posts by implementing administrative associations between posts, residences, families' band identity, and even hunting territories. The government never adjusted the measures included in the treaties, such as annuities or reserve size, which after a few decades already seemed unjust as they limited signatory Indian bands to poverty. The exploitation of the land that followed treaty signing often made hunting territories unusable. Aboriginal people thus often remember treaties as moments when they gave up much more than what they received in return. Finally, Treaty 9 introduced an administrative distinction between "Quebec Indians" and "Ontario Indians," which a few years later impacted Aboriginal

groups using land on the Harricana River drainage, which crosses the provincial border.

Emergence of Contemporary Identities

Defining Traplines and Hunting Territories

The first half of the twentieth century was characterised by an increased policing of the land. Locally, the railway projects mentioned above brought development and industrialisation to Abitibi and Northeastern Ontario, which in turn increased environmental pressure. The federal government passed the Migratory Birds Convention Act in 1918, which restricted Indian hunting (Long 1995, 29); Ontario issued exploration permits for mining and forestry; and Ontario and Quebec hired game wardens to police hunting, fishing and trapping activities (Morrison 1987). Access to game and resources was increasingly jeopardised for Aboriginal groups due to the policing of their movements. Finally, beaver populations dramatically declined in many subarctic areas because their pelts were the most highly valued by traders. This decline had important consequences because the beaver was an important source of food for Aboriginal people at the time.

HBC traders, Indian Affairs officials, missionaries, and ethnographers, including Speck, who defined the family hunting territory, collaborated to develop adequate policies (Cummins 2004). A beaver conservation policy was established in the 1940s–50s to remedy this situation, resulting in increased policing of the land by provincial authorities (Scott and Morrison 2005). Beaver preserves were constituted as administrative districts divided into traplines overseen by "tallymen." Tallymen had to mark, estimate and locate beaver colonies present on their trapline, make sure quotas were respected, and inform the supervisor of the preserve in cases of trespassing by trappers assigned to other districts (see Scott 1986 for a description of their role). Officials attempted to delineate traplines to roughly coincide with the customary hunting territories of the respective Aboriginal groups associated with the preserves; however, these static and rigid delimitations neither accommodated nor replicated the flexibility and adaptability to social and ecological circumstances of the Aboriginal system.

The preserves located around the Harricana drainage were the Abitibi, created in 1928, and the Nottaway, created in 1937. The Nottaway preserve is particularly relevant to the history of the Washaw Sibi group. It had three sections: Rupert House (north of the Rupert River), Waswanipi (south of the Rupert River and north of the Harricana and Samson Rivers), and La Sarre (southernmost part). Because of administrative issues, the La Sarre section was taken over by Indian Affairs in 1941 and became the Abitibi fauna preserve, later assigned to the Abitibi-Dominion band. Just across the provincial border, the Kesagami preserve was also created and assigned to the Moose Factory band.

Catholic priest and ethnographer John M. Cooper was the earliest anthropologist to associate family groups with specific territories (Cooper 1939; Moose 838–43). His notes were based on Moose Factory informant Simon Smallboy, who described the land use patterns of Moose Factory hunters of his grandparent's generation, that is, around the 1850s. Cooper associated the Harricana people with Rupert House hunters and placed them south of Kesagami Lake, in the western portion of the Harricana River drainage. This same general location was attributed to Harricana people in anthropologist William Jenkins's map of family groups' territories (Jenkins 1939). This map shows no clear boundary between hunting grounds and, interestingly, no clear distinction between what are today considered to be typically "Algonquin" and "Cree" surnames. Contemporary Cree surnames (for example, Ruperthouse, Frank, Oshani, Ruben/Ruby, Trout, Trapper, Shiwa, Sinclair) concentrate around the Harricana, south of the Turgeon River, and extend almost to the northern shore of Lake Abitibi, that is, south of some Algonquin surnames (for example, Sakia, Vichany, Mowatt, Cananasso, Polson, Kistabish). These Algonquin surnames extend into what was identified as Rupert House territory by Cooper. Jenkins's map illustrates the interlocking of territories used by families nowadays associated with Washaw Sibi, Rupert House and Abitibi.

This interlocking must be understood in its historical context. Some families from the Témiscamingue and southern Abitibi areas had moved north in the two first decades of the twentieth century because of industrial forestry, Euro-Canadian settlement, and agriculture in Témiscamingue and Abitibi. Elders from Pikogan who self-identify as Washaw Sibi Cree mentioned in informal conversations, during the author's ethnographic fieldwork, that Abitibi (Algonquin) men married Ruperthouse, Reuben and Trapper women and thus accessed sections of their family territories. They also mentioned that epidemics of measles and influenza in 1924–26 decimated the Abitibi adult population (MacPherson 1930, 4), which explains these intermarriages.

Marginalising the "La Sarre Cree"

Meanwhile, the development of railways spurred hunters from James Bay (Rupert House) to trade in La Sarre, near Abitibi, attracted by employment opportunities,

cheaper goods and higher prices for fur. However, Cooper's notes and the oral histories of Rupert House indicate that most of the Cree families who began gathering in La Sarre did not switch hunting territories or use customary relationships and alliances to access new territories. The sudden presence of James Bay "Indians" in La Sarre was noted by the authorities, who perceived them as "new" in the region. Indian Affairs, along with the Catholic Church and the HBC, worked to clear the Abitibi area of hunters who had previously traded in Rupert House but had not integrated into the Abitibi-Dominion band. Members of the Abitibi-Dominion band had signed Treaty 9, spoke French and were Catholic. At the time, they were relatively advantaged by local traders and government officials over James Bay hunters who had formerly traded in Moose Factory and Rupert House, spoke English and had mostly converted to Anglicanism.

James Bay hunters who had begun trading in Abitibi and who had married Abitibi-Dominion band members were pressured into converting to Catholicism and adopting the Algonquin language. A historical example is that of Sally Diamond, a major ancestral figure for the contemporary Pikogan community. In the oral history of Pikogan, she is generally remembered as a Cree woman from Rupert House who travelled to Abitibi Lake in the first decade of the twentieth century with her children, whose biological father was a Rupert House hunter, William Rat.[15] In Abitibi, she married an Algonquin man, Jean-Baptiste Mowatt, at the Catholic mission (Missionnaires des Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, F100). Her children were integrated into the Abitibi-Dominion.[16]

Similar practices lasted for a few decades. A Pikogan elder whom I interviewed during my ethnographic fieldwork, identifying her family as Rupert House Cree, described the conditions for marrying an Algonquin man in Abitibi in the 1950s: "The Algonquins were Catholic, and the Crees were Anglican, you know? … To do marriages between Algonquin and Cree, the priest asked them if they wanted to be baptized Catholic. Even the men: if he married an Algonquin lady, he had to change to Catholic."

A group of these James Bay families affiliated with Rupert House were collectively called the "La Sarre Cree" and were evicted from their hunting grounds in Ontario by game wardens, which created competition for scarce hunting and trapping lands in Quebec. Simultaneously, Quebec's colonisation plan for the region involved reducing hunting territories and access to the land. These families were eventually seen as "trespassers" and "poachers" and increasingly subjected to repressive acts, such as incarceration and confiscation of hunting materials.

In the 1940s, Indian Affairs proceeded to displace the La Sarre Cree to Rupert House; in 1943, a superintendent wrote to the HBC that "the Ruperts House group is, as you know, to be moved back to Ruperts House starting with the Five Trapper families this year with the Reubens and other families to follow."[17] The family groups that were relocated included the Trappers, Reubens (Rubys), Franks, and Mackenzies[18], which are family names mentioned in Jenkins' map. The relocation of the La Sarre Cree changed the way traplines were attributed in the Abitibi beaver preserve. In the "1943–44 Second Annual Report of the Abitibi Preserve,"[19] Reubens, Franks, Ostans, and most of the Trappers did not appear as tallymen.

The relocation had limited results: few actually remained in Rupert House after three years (Scott and Morrison 1993). Subsequent adjustments in trapline allocations show that they moved: traplines were reallotted in 1945, and some La Sarre Cree were attributed traplines, mostly in the Harricana River section, north of Turgeon River.[20] This attribution seems to have been part of an arbitrary strategy to reinforce a distinction between the La Sarre Cree and the Abitibi (Scott and Morrison 2005), although many people previously associated with Rupert House had already integrated into the Abitibi-Dominion band.

Maintaining Connections

La Sarre Cree families experienced other displacements, forced or motivated by economic opportunities or services, and eventually settled in different locales, including Pikogan, Moose Factory and Rupert House. They nevertheless enjoyed relative freedom of movement on the land and autonomy from the Indian Affairs band system and used these freedoms to maintain connections between families and adapt to important social, ecological and lifestyle changes.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Indian Affairs established policies to develop the infrastructure necessary to foster a year-round sedentary lifestyle in reserves, largely through housing programs and social, health and education services. In Moose Factory and Pikogan, parents of or people who are nowadays members of the WSEA remember being among the last families to access services because they registered and settled later in residential band communities. When asked about this period in interviews, young adults and middle-aged members of Washaw Sibi who grew up in Moose Factory often recalled the existence of a distinction between two main groups of people. An adult woman who grew up in

Moose Factory but now lives in Waskaganish described this distinction to me:

> Back then, there was already that notion of the origin of Native people living in one area and this all comes from the Ontario/Quebec border, you know? It came locally to "way up" and "way down." Because way up was off-reserve, people that were not Moose Cree, and way down resided people who were Moose Cree.

A WSEA member who has lived most of his life in Moose Factory told me:

> We were not eligible for housing when we had that Rupert House band number. We lived in a tent frame, with a canvas top and plastic from 1955 or '56, right up to 1968 or '69 ... To qualify for housing, you had to join the band. So [my dad] transferred his band membership from Rupert House to Moose Factory band, and he eventually had a house in Moose Factory.

In fact, these excluded families came, for the most part, from various coastal Eastern James Bay communities and settled in Moose Factory, attracted by commercial interests, access to health care and government agencies, and opportunities for employment. They mobilised soon after the signature of the JBNQA and collectively called themselves the MoCreebec (that is, Moose Cree of Quebec; Kimura 2016). Their membership includes many WSEA members. I have compared Washaw Sibi's and MoCreebec's respective situations elsewhere (Lessard 2015).

Washaw Sibi people living in Pikogan also remember similar distinctions. For instance, an elder told me:

> We lived on the reserve of Pikogan, maybe in '65 or '66. But we didn't have a house. We just lived across from my sister [married to a member of the band]. They called us "outsiders" because we didn't get no health, no kind of service. I tried to get welfare and I was told I was an outsider because my band number was from Waskaganish. We didn't get no service. When we lived in town, we had services from social services, that's all.

The Washaw Sibi group continued to be closely attached to their customary territories, as they continued to depend on a traditional mode of subsistence until well into the 1960s and '70s, approximately a generation later than surrounding groups (Scott and Morrison 2005). Their delayed access to services and housing contributed, to a certain extent, to the maintenance of their traditional subsistence activities and connections to hunting territories. For instance, a WSEA member in her 50s told me about her relationship with her extended family at the time: "Yes, [other Washaw Sibi members of my father's generation] and their family ... From what I remember, it was always in the bush, that's where we grew up and spent time together, in the camp."

Another WSEA member of the same generation who grew up in Moose Factory mentioned in a similar way how his extended family maintained contact when he was a teenager:

> I only found out later in my life that I was related to a lot of people in the Pikogan/Amos area. I was not advised or informed before of my relatives there, or that I have a lot of relatives in Nemaska. My parents, though, used to go on their territory in Abitibi area then and would then visit them, but because of lack of financial resources, they only took my oldest brothers, and I was never included. They were long trips to their camp.

Memories of visits of extended family, on the land and in hunting camps, between Washaw Sibi contemporary members' families abound in WSEA members' narrative of the community's origins. A WSEA member in her 50s mentioned socially important gatherings when I asked her the origins of Washaw Sibi:

> They were born around Washaw Sibi or sometimes closer to Waskaganish. In the '60s, they were all over the place. They didn't really live in a community that I know of. They spent their time in the bush, they travelled from different places in James Bay, Ontario, and Quebec, like Rupert's House ... Travelling with them, I found that my family is identified with the Abitibiwinni, we're very close to the Abitibiwinni people, and the rest of the Crees from the north as well.

These quotations illustrate how the group maintained a relative and fragile cohesion, which played a key role in the recent emergence of the WSEA and its mobilisation for recognition.

Discussion

The contemporary coexistence of Washaw Sibi and Abitibi may be conceptualised as an example of *uncertainty*, a concept invoked by Blackburn (2005) to refer to a characteristic of late modern subjects living in situations of incertitude regarding their group claims to entitlement, sovereignty or economic security. The above analysis of Washaw Sibi's history highlights how this "uncertainty" nevertheless developed from a specific history at the intersection of Aboriginal hunters' patterns of movement and collective life on the land, economic

interests, and land policies introduced by administrators to rationalise Aboriginal presence.

Family hunting territories played an ambivalent role in this history. In the twentieth century, they were instrumentalised via static formal mapping and used to inform policies, impose settlers' interests and facilitate the policing of the land, resulting in collateral attempts to expulse the "La Sarre Crees" from areas granted to newly settled Aboriginal bands. This group was committed to their maintenance of their hunting grounds and resilient relationships between members, but in return they were increasingly marginalised and impoverished. The recent emergence of Washaw Sibi as a distinct Aboriginal group owes paradoxically to members' capacity to adapt in response to land and social policies that were intended to eliminate their identity by seeing them integrate into other Aboriginal communities. This capacity is largely attributable to the stability and adaptability of the family hunting territory – a form of smaller-unit engagement with the land and with the group – and its role in social reproduction.

The idea of "overlap" conveys the notion that the Abitibiwinni and the Washaw Sibi groups are socially discrete entities and that their geographical territories are distinct mapped and bounded entities. Whereas this conceptualisation resonates in a static legal sense, it does not account for actual community-building and maintenance processes that occurred over time and through movements on the land. It suggests that Cree in Abitibi encroached on Algonquins' land, reiterating perceptions of the Cree as "trespassers" and "poachers" that were common in the 1930s. However, the historical record shows that the distinction between the Washaw Sibi and Abitibi communities emerged recently. The two groups have long been socially intertwined, and the emergence of the WSEA is significantly attributable to arbitrary policies to settle Aboriginal groups in sedentary communities. Yet the ways these identities developed have roots in people's customary commitments to the land, and family hunting territories, far from dividing bands, anchor them socially and geographically, acting as channels for communication and solidarity.

Challenges thus remain to effectively discuss territoriality in areas such as the Harricana drainage, characterised by intricate interactions between residential communities', kin groups' and individuals' territoriality. We shall find ways to represent Aboriginal groups' traditional territories in a way that takes into account the day-to-day kinship, travel and sharing practices of contemporary and historical individuals (Thom 2009). A consequence of this approach may be a relatively greater emphasis on the relatedness or kinship between communities. Such an emphasis would not only be a reaction against divisive policies and the impacts of exploitation, but would also yield a deeper understanding of family hunting territories and the role they played for actual people in terms of channelling and improving communication, negotiation and solidarity between families and groups of different sizes. Comparing historical narratives would open an important space in which to share, compare and understand distinct perspectives and colonial experiences of injustice.

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Notes

1. Signed on 11 November 1975, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) settled the claim of the James Bay Cree and the Inuit following the beginning of hydroelectric projects on major rivers of the Eastern James Bay watershed, such as the La Grande, the Great Whale, the Nottaway, the Broadback and the Rupert Rivers. It included financial compensation and a structure for local and regional self-governance. It also established a land regime that included three categories: Category 1 lands (initially eight lots reserved for the exclusive use of the Cree and intended for James Bay Cree residential communities); Category 2 lands (tracts of land attributed to each James Bay Cree community, where the Cree have exclusive rights of hunting, trapping and fishing); and Category 3 lands (the remainder of the James Bay and Northern Quebec region, where the Cree have some exclusive and preferential hunting, trapping and fishing rights).
2. The Abitibiwinni band, unlike the James Bay Cree, has not signed any modern treaty with the governments, and for this reason their land rights are not yet formally recognised or defined.
3. In Canada, the relationship between the Canadian state and First Nations is mainly framed by the Indian Act (passed in 1876) and its amendments, a wide-ranging legal framework covering governance, land use, health care and education, among other things, on Indian reserves. The Indian Act initially defined how bands could operate and who was, or who was not, a holder of "Indian status." Indian status is administered by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (now known as Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development). Each individual holding Indian status is registered under a specific band affiliation recognised as such by the government. An individual can be registered to only one band at a time. Indian

bands are the only collective units to which the federal government is legally and administratively accountable. In most cases band members inhabit a "reserve," that is, a tract of land owned by the Crown and reserved for the band's specific usufruct. As a continuation of British colonial policies, the Indian Act was designed to achieve social control through the dismantling of Aboriginal group sovereignty, and assimilation through the uniformisation of their living conditions (Gibbins and Ponting 1986).

4 The JBNQA shaped new ways of organising all social, economic, political, cultural, educational and health-related aspects of life for the James Bay Cree by creating, for example, the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay and the Cree School Board and initiating economic and community development programs. Individuals enlisted as "JBNQA beneficiaries" can access these services and resources and have access to specific rights (for example, voting for local council and Grand Council of the Crees elections, hunting specific species on Category 2 and 3 lands, et cetera) and social resources (for example, post-secondary education funding through the Cree School Board, the Income Security Program (ISP) for hunters, trappers and fishers, et cetera). The status of JBNQA beneficiary is generally attributed independently of the federal "Indian status," granted to individuals who share one or more genealogical ties with members of the eight initial James Bay Cree communities.

5 Hudson's Bay Company Archives, https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/resource/post_rec/post13.html

6 B.135/e/l: 4, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

7 B.135/e/18: ld, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

8 B.1/e/4:1, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

9 B/1/e, fo. 2-2d, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

10 B.186/d/4, fo. 3d-4, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

11 B.135/a/119a, fo. 22d-23, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

12 "Re Treaty No. 9," Memorandum to Sifton, 17 August 1903, Library and Archives Canada.

13 Prior to the 1970s, Quebec, unlike Ontario, ignored treaty obligations due to the principle that the "Indian title" had never been recognised or surrendered in this province. Quebec thus did not participate in Treaty 9, but with an understanding that the province would outline reserves subsequently (Long 2010; Morrison 1987).

14 Department of Indian Affairs, 1906–1907, "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, for the Fiscal Year Ended 30th June, 1906," http://www.archive.org/details/n11sessionalpaper41canauoft

15 "Saint Peter's Anglican Church," CE801, S2, 52, Registre de l'état civil du Québec, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, http://bibnum2.banq.qc.ca/bna/ecivil/affichage.html?serie=08Y_CE801S2&a=r

16 Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INA), 1945, "Abitibi Indian Agency, Membership Roll," RG 10, vol. 7698, 371/30–1, Library and Archives Canada.

17 INA, 371–30–1, 27074–2, Library and Archives Canada.

18 INA, 371/3Q-1, vol. 1, Jude Thibault to Dr. McGill, Director IAB, 6 February 1942, Library and Archives Canada.

19 INA, 6753, file 420–10–4AB-1, Library and Archives Canada.

20 INA, 1945, "Abitibi Preserve, Third Annual Report," RG 10, vol. 6153, file 420–10–4AB-1, Library and Archives Canada.

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