Back to Where It All Began: Revisiting Algonquin Resource Use and Territoriality

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Abstract: This article examines resource use among the Algonquin and its change over time. Archaeological and historical data show that the current importance of the moose for both food and clothing among Algonquin people is a relatively recent phenomenon: in pre-contact times up until the nineteenth century, small mammals such as beaver and hare were the most important animals used. The dichotomy between access rights to moose and fur-bearing animals also seems to be a recent phenomenon. As this dichotomy has been used as a major element in theoretical reconstructions of past territoriality and governance, this re-evaluation thus offers a renewed perspective on the history of family hunting territories among Algonquian peoples.

Keywords: family hunting territories, Algonquin land tenure, ethnohistory, Algonquins, diet change, territoriality, land use, faunal resources, Ottawa River valley, archaeology

Résumé : Cet article examine l'exploitation des ressources fauniques chez les Algonquins et sa transformation historique. Les données archéologiques et historiques montrent que l'importance actuelle de l'original à la fois dans la diète et pour la fabrication de vêtements est un phénomène relativement récent. En effet, à la période antérieure au contact avec les Européens jusqu'au 19e siècle, les petits mammifères comme le castor et le lièvre étaient les espèces les plus consommées. La dichotomie observée entre les droits territoriaux associés aux animaux à fourrure et ceux associés aux orignaux semble aussi être un phénomène plutôt récent. Puisque cette dichotomie a servi d'argument central dans la reconstitution des formes originelles de territorialité et de gouvernance, cet examen offre une perspective renouvelée sur l'histoire des territoires de chasse familiaux chez les Algonquiens.

Mots-clés : territoires de chasse familiaux, régime foncier algonquien, ethnohistoire, Algonquiens, changement de régime alimentaire, territorialité, utilisation du territoire, ressources fauniques, vallée de la rivière des Outaouais, archéologie

Introduction

A century ago, Frank Speck visited the Algonquins[1] in the upper Ottawa Valley. In 1915, he published his landmark memoir, *Family Hunting Territories and Social Life of Various Algonkian Bands of the Ottawa Valley*, along with his article "The Family Hunting Band as the Basis of Algonkian Social Organization," which sparked the beginning of a hundred-year-long debate among anthropologists about northern Algonquian territoriality (Speck 1915b, 1915a). Although the debate on pre-contact territoriality has abated in some circles, it seems to be very much alive for certain Algonquian peoples in Quebec. These peoples are located in the middle range of Algonquian latitudinal distribution, in an area heavily populated by moose, which form an important element of contemporary hunting efforts. In this area, the distinction between access rights for moose and for fur-bearing animals seems to be clear-cut. This resulted in Eleanor Leacock's (1954) theory of a post-contact emergence of family hunting territories having an enduring influence on theoretical reconstructions of past territoriality and governance.

This article examines the historiography of anthropological research on territoriality among the Algonquin. Using an array of archaeological and historical data, it also examines the relative importance of food resources used over time by the Algonquin, especially the moose. This information is then put in perspective through the history of land use by Algonquin people. The result aims to show that this multidisciplinary perspective can be usefully applied to reconsider anthropological theory about original land use and associated governance. The historical data presented here were derived from a doctoral dissertation on Algonquin ethnohistory (Inksetter 2015). The archaeological data come in part from published material and in part from unpublished sources, acquired while the author was working as an archaeologist in Western Quebec.

The Anthropological Problem of Territoriality, Governance and the Moose

The relative importance of moose (and other cervids) in the northern Algonquian diet has been central to anthropological discourse on original territoriality and associated land governance, which can be summarised briefly in the following manner. After studying land use by several Algonquian peoples, Frank Speck observed that family hunting territories were well adapted to local environmental conditions and to available faunal resources, especially small mammals such as fur-bearing animals (Speck 1915b, 1915a). Two decades later, with Loren Eiseley, he examined seventeenth-century documentation (*The Jesuit Relations*) pertaining mostly to more easterly groups (Montagnais, today Innus) to prove that family hunting territories existed at that time. Together, they concluded that family hunting territories must have been a pre-contact institution (Speck and Eiseley 1939). In this model, land management was vested in the hands of extended families. The band, as a political or social unit, played practically no role in land management. The band territory would merely be the sum of the hunting territories associated with the families who gathered at the same summer rendezvous site.

This position was challenged by Eleanor Leacock in the 1950s. Leacock also read *The Jesuit Relations* and came to a completely different interpretation. She noted that in these seventeenth-century documents, the Montagnais (Innus) seemingly preferred to hunt large mammals (cervids: moose or caribou) on a territory held communally. According to her, family hunting territories were the historical result of the European fur trade leading to a segmentation of lands that used to be held communally (Leacock 1954). In this position, family hunting territories observed in the twentieth century are the result of a long historical transformation from a communal land management system based on the exploitation of cervids to a privatised one based on fur-bearing mammals. In this second model, before European contact, there would have been a band territory administered by band leaders. The members of the band would have occupied portions of this communal band territory.

Viewing the matter from the perspective of northerly Algonquian peoples, several anthropologists have shown that this dichotomy between communal and privatised land management regimes did not take into account the fact that several land and hunting regimes exist there (Feit 2004; Scott 1986). Adrian Tanner wrote in the 1986 *Anthropologica* issue that the distinction between a communal right to hunt for food (including moose) as opposed to a privatised right to fur-bearing animals did not adequately represent northern Algonquian ontological views about the land, resources and access:

> Regarding the idea that hunting rights are part of an overarching ownership by the band, little evidence exists that the band as a whole has any corporate land-owning function except through government legislation. The band is not involved in the inheritance of hunting territories from one family to the next. Hunting territories are passed from one actual user to another (ideally along kin lines), without reference to more general rights by the band as a whole. (Tanner 1986, 31)

Toby Morantz (this issue) has also discussed the mixture of land regimes among Algonquian peoples and has also warned against sweeping theoretical generalisations. In the more southerly latitudes of Algonquian peoples' distribution, however, including the Ottawa River valley, the distinction between access to moose and fur-bearing animals is highly relevant: there are both historical and contemporary examples of a clear distinction in customary trespassing regulations regarding fur-bearing animals and moose. As will be illustrated below, this observation has been central in the elaboration of theories on past Algonquin territoriality and its associated governance. For these peoples, then, reconstructing past territoriality has hinged on the distinction between the two categories of animals.

Algonquin People

The term "Algonquin" is most often used to describe Indigenous peoples who live on either side of the Ottawa River and slightly further north, around Lake Abitibi and the Harricana River. The term "Anishinabe" is also used by some. Indigenous communities of Eastern Ontario have been involved in various historical land agreements, such as Treaty 9 and the Robinson-Huron Treaty. A group of ten communities recognised as Algonquin and who were not parties to these treaties are currently negotiating an agreement with the federal government and the government of Ontario under the name "Algonquins of Ontario." For historical reasons, land treaties were not concluded with Indigenous peoples living within the province of Quebec until recently. This is the case with the nine Algonquin communities in Quebec, which are not covered by any comprehensive land agreement. Although no land cession treaties were signed with these communities, six reserves were established – two as early as 1853 (Timiskaming and Maniwaki [also called Rivière Désert, now Kitigan Zibi]) and four more in the second part of the twentieth century

(Kipawa/Kebaouek [also called Eagle Village], Rapid Lake [also called Barrière Lake or Kitiganik], Pikogan and Lac Simon). Three other Algonquin communities are formally recognised as such but are not established on a reserve per se (Kitcisakik [formerly Grand lac Victoria band], Wolf Lake, and Winneway [also Long Point First Nation]). The status of land rights for Quebec Algonquins is still an unresolved issue.

Spread along a north–south axis, the Algonquin have had a rather varied history of interaction with colonial society and ultimately with the state. The Algonquin of the lower Ottawa Valley participated in trade, colonial wars and diplomacy beginning in the early seventeenth century. They also participated in early Catholic missions. Further upstream, however, exposure to colonial administration was much weaker. Catholic missionaries started making yearly visits upstream of the Oka mission only as of 1836. Logging and settlers moved along the Ottawa Valley during the nineteenth century, reaching the foot of Lake Timiskaming in the 1830s, but the logging industry and settler population developed in full only after 1870 in that area. The Algonquins of the Timiskaming area were thus remote from much of colonial affairs until settlers reached their midst during the nineteenth century. The logging industry and settler population didn't develop in the Abitibi region, on the northern side of the height of land, until the twentieth century. As to the eastern arm of the Ottawa River at the upper reaches of the hydrographic system, it was never home to a settler society, although logging was carried on there. All Algonquins were, however, involved in the early fur trade, dating to the seventeenth century.

History of Anthropological Research on Algonquin Land Tenure

When early ethnographers visited the Algonquins in the first half of the twentieth century, they found that family hunting territories were known to all Algonquin people, although they had become a fading memory in certain instances. In 1913, Frank Speck was able to secure information about family hunting territories for the Timiskaming and Temagami areas. He believed the information was of better quality for the Temagami area than for Temiskaming, as the Algonquins had started to turn to farming as a new livelihood in the latter, whereas in the former, hunting was still the main occupation. In the Temagami area, Speck engaged the family heads to discuss matters among themselves and mark the boundaries of their hunting territories on a map. Speck interpreted this resulting map as a community consensus (Figure 1).

During the same trip, Speck was able to collect only partial information on family hunting territories for the Kipawa and Dumoine area, located slightly downstream. He derived his information from one informant, a man who had been raised by a hunter who had occupied a hunting territory along the Dumoine River in the second half of the nineteenth century. This informant had a general idea of where family hunting territories had been, although he was unable to mark their boundaries precisely. Speck attributed the difficulty in collecting information for this area to land encroachment and intermarriage between Algonquin people and settlers, both of which had resulted in a breakdown of the system (Speck 1915b).

In spite of the variability of its quality, the information Speck gathered on this field trip was an important addition to the data he had collected on northern Algonquian land tenure. It contributed significantly to the model he presented in his 1915 paper and that he was to refine over the decades (Speck 1915a, 290–291). Speck strongly believed that the tracts of land called "family hunting territories" belonged to extended families who would inherit them from a family member. Although Speck confusingly used the terms "bands" and "families" interchangeably throughout his 1915 article, it is obvious from his use of both words in that paper that he was referring to extended families who were the owners of distinct tracts of land and not to collective ownerships at the band level. Trespassing on another's family territory to catch fur-bearing animals was prohibited. However, it was permissible to catch fish to feed oneself while travelling through (Speck 1915a, 294–295). He observed that beaver were the object of careful conservation practices. He also noted some conservation measures for moose and caribou in the Timiskaming area (Speck 1915a, 296).

A little later, in the 1920s, when Frank Speck attempted to collect information regarding family hunting territories further downstream, among the Algonquin residing at what was then called Rivière Désert (now Kitigan Zibi), he had such a difficult time in securing information that he was unable to trace the territories themselves and was able to only record general areas used by certain families (Speck 1929).

In 1949, another anthropologist, John McGee, set out to return to the Kipawa area and gather information on Algonquin family hunting territories there. He too had difficulty in collecting precise information. He found that the system was not used by younger Algonquin men, who claimed to hunt where they liked. He did, however, find that the older Algonquin informants knew

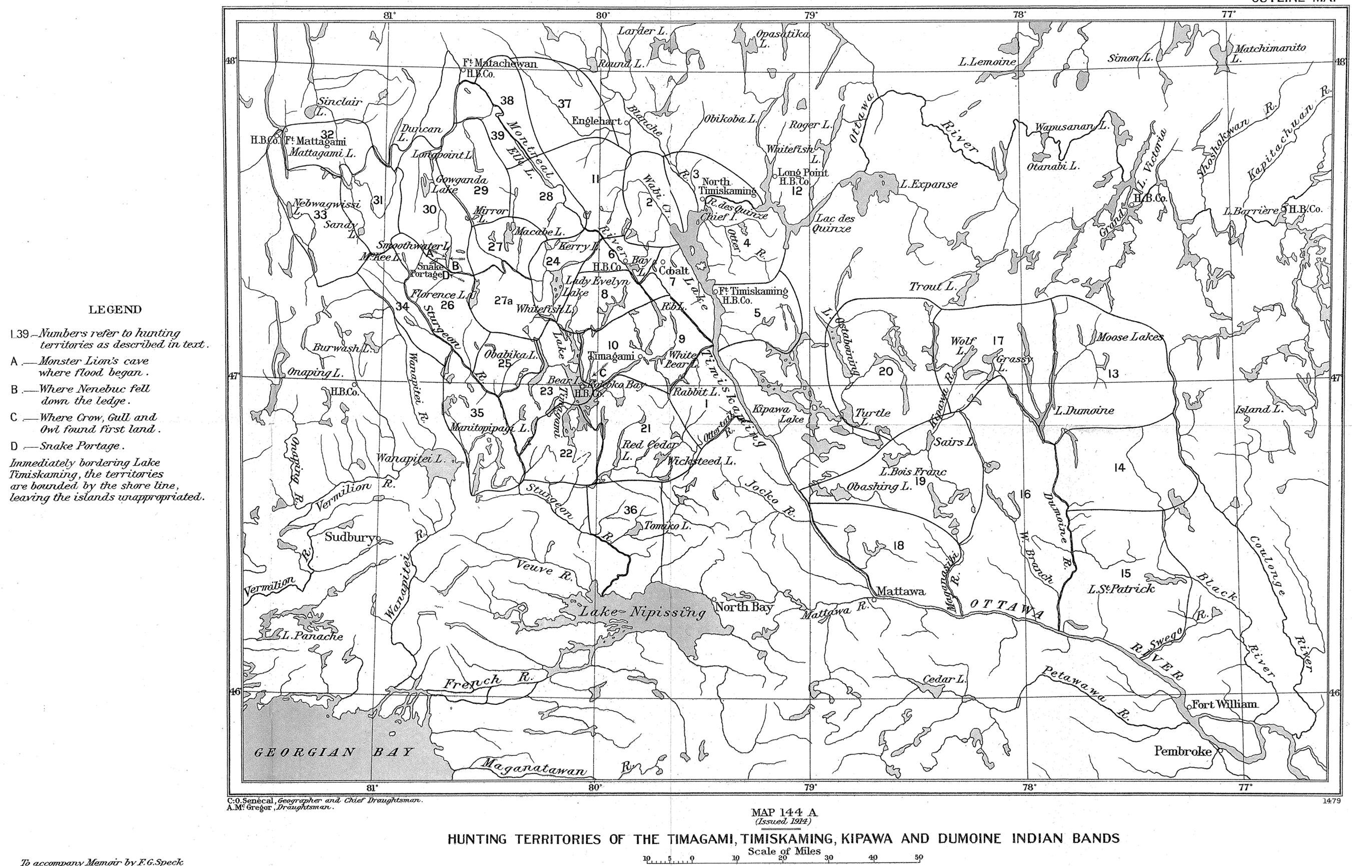

Figure 1: Frank Speck's map of the upper Ottawa, 1915

about family hunting territories that had been used by their fathers or grandfathers. McGee concluded that the system had certainly existed there previously. His older informants also confirmed what Speck had found: that hunting territories belonged to individual families that ultimately decided to whom the family tract of land would be transmitted. McGee believed he would have been able to obtain better information had he had better maps on hand (McGee 1950, 17–33).

Upstream along the eastern arm of the Ottawa River, where encroachment by settlers had not been a problem for Algonquin hunters,[2] family hunting territories remained an institution in use during the twentieth century. In 1926, Sutherland Davidson was able to make a detailed map of family hunting territories still in use in the Grand lac Victoria area (now Kitcisakik community) (Davidson 1928). The quality of his data was recognised at the time, and Irving Hallowell used it to extrapolate theories on Algonquian population densities (Hallowell 1949). For Davidson, it was quite obvious that ownership of the hunting territories rested with extended families. As every hunter could choose to associate himself with one band or another, the band territory was nothing more than the sum of the hunting territories belonging to its members:

> The boundaries of a band, therefore, include all the territory owned by its members. The band, itself, it must be emphasized is not a land owning unit and therefore its limits cannot be indicated as being permanently fixed for they may fluctuate slightly from time to time according to the ownership of the various districts and the affiliation of the owners, as they succeed each other, with one band or another. (Davidson 1928, 80)

Davidson noticed that the shifting limits occurred mostly at the periphery, the core of the band territory remaining intact. Davidson noticed that fur-bearing

game “seemed to be the ultimate motive in land ownership” and that moose could be hunted freely anywhere (Davidson 1928, 86).

Further north still over the height of land, John MacPherson described family hunting territories as being in use in the Abitibi area in the 1930s and having formerly been of primary importance. He recorded the general hunting areas used by certain families around Lake Abitibi but did not map them (MacPherson 1930, 72–74). In 1939, William Jenkins recorded hunting practices and techniques among the Abitibi Indians. He left a rather summary map of family hunting territories as they were used in the 1930s (Jenkins 1939, 28–31).

Early twentieth-century observations of Algonquin land use therefore revealed a north–south cline where family hunting territories were known to all Algonquin but were in at least partial if not complete disuse in the more southerly communities, while still constituting a solid foundation for land use and social organisation in the more northerly ones.

Current Land Management by Algonquin Communities and Political Representation of Past Territoriality and Governance

Two different outcomes for family hunting territories have occurred among Algonquin peoples in Quebec over the course of the twentieth century, due to a combination of factors. In the first instance, family hunting territories have been maintained and are still central to land use and access in certain areas (Bousquet 2016, 292; Nickels 1999, 39; Leroux et al. 2004, 214–217; Hirbour 1969, 18–20). This outcome is associated with areas that were less subjected to land encroachment by settlers and by competing, intruding trappers. Interestingly enough, this outcome also occurred where a program set up by the government of Quebec in 1928 instituted beaver preserves. These preserves were created to help re-establish dwindling beaver populations. Native people could continue to hunt and trap there, but trapping was prohibited for non-Natives. In exchange for an exclusive trapping right on the preserves, Indigenous hunters were asked to keep track of beaver populations. Colin Scott and James Morrison have shown that these preserves are organised along pre-existing Indigenous hunting territories (Scott and Morrison 2005, 42–44). The beaver preserves are therefore a form of state recognition of Indigenous land use practices and in the long run have helped maintain the system, albeit in a more rigid form.

To this day, the Indigenous land use in the beaver preserves north of Lake Abitibi and in the area of Grand lac Victoria show clear continuity with the family hunting territory system. For example, the research conducted by Jacques Leroux and his colleagues on contemporary land use and family histories shows that in spite of many subdivisions to the original hunting territories, families use roughly the same areas as they did in 1926 when Sutherland Davidson mapped them before the creation of the beaver preserves. Leroux and his team also show clear family transmission of the territorial access rights (Leroux et al. 2004, 137–199). Trapping territories in the Abitibi preserve north of Lake Abitibi also show some continuity with the distribution of family hunting territories that were recorded in that area by anthropologists in the 1930s (Jenkins 1939, 28; MacPherson 1930; 74, Larivière 2013, 128–129).

Elsewhere, the outcome has been more complex. Family hunting territories have been difficult to maintain in areas where a settler population has moved in. Moreover, in some forested areas not opened up to agriculture and to settler populations, intruding trappers competed with Algonquin trappers for the same land, creating conflicts. In 1947, the Quebec government attempted to bring some order to the trapping business by creating registered traplines, whereby any trapper, Indigenous or not, who wanted to trap outside of beaver preserves had to purchase a licence. He was then assigned a trapline where he was entitled to trap.

As documented by several anthropologists and Algonquin hunters who experienced the transition first hand, this measure did not go down well. First, Algonquin hunters objected to paying for a licence to trap on lands they considered their own to begin with. They also objected to the fact that non-Native trappers who were owners of such licences were then given permission by the government to trap on land Algonquin hunters considered their own hunting grounds. Overall, Algonquin hunters did not make the same distinction between hunting and trapping that the government did. To them, both were part of the same act of hunting. They objected that the new traplines imposed on them were not big enough to provide sufficient food to feed a family. Algonquin people used them grudgingly and tended to view them as diminished versions of the former Algonquin family hunting territories (McGee 1950, 47; Moore 1982, 42; Frenette 1993a; Pasternak 2013, 126–140).

Although this new system disrupted family hunting territories, Algonquin normativity associated with land use was not lost. Anthropologist Jacques Frenette has shown that in the 1980s, the Algonquin people of Kitigan Zibi used registered traplines according to Algonquin customary law relating to land use rather than the regulations provided by the provincial government and thus

tended to use traplines as they would have used family hunting territories. They would live on the trapline and hunt game there, whereas the governmental licences made provisions only for trapping fur-bearing animals. The licence holder also tended to use the trapline as a family hunting territory head would and gave occasional permission to fellow hunters to come and trap on his trapline. The licence holder also intended to give the trapline to an heir, just as family hunting territories would normally be transmitted (Frenette 1993b).

In the context of ongoing questions about land rights, these twentieth-century concerns about land and resource access play out in the political field, with different representations of past territoriality and governance by the various Algonquin communities themselves. For instance, the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council (AANTC), the association representing six of the nine Algonquin communities in Quebec, envisions family hunting territories as a traditional institution. On its Internet site, the AANTC states that Algonquin peoples returned year after year to family hunting territories, which it presents as predating early explorers and missionaries.[3] Although the site does have a section about the existence of summer band gatherings, it makes no claim about land being governed communally by the band.

In 2013, the Timiskaming First Nation, Wolf Lake, and Eagle Village bands presented their "Statement of Assertion of Aboriginal Rights and Title," in which they made a public claim to their Aboriginal rights and presented a brief history of their communities. In that short press release, they stress that "the social organization of the Algonquin Nation was such that the Band, made up of extended families, was the landholding unit. Some responsibilities lay at the nation level" (Timiskaming, Wolf Lake, and Eagle Village 2013). These communities thus present historical Algonquin social and political organisation as one made up first of a large umbrella political organisation called the Nation, which comprised several underlying bands. It is emphasised that land management was at the band level. In this short statement, family hunting territories are not mentioned at all. At the time of their statement, the three communities involved were not members of the AANTC.

A third option seems to envision both family hunting territories and an overarching communal land management system at the band level. This is the position presented by Shiri Pasternak, who refers to her work as being directly involved with some of the political leaders of the Barrière Lake Algonquin. This third model was presented to her by her informants as the traditional one, to which it would be advisable to return (Pasternak 2013).

Anthropological Theories on Past Territoriality and the Moose Problem

With the exception of Shiri Pasternak, who defines herself as an activist (Pasternak 2013, 51), anthropologists who have worked in the area have not taken overt political positions on behalf of the Algonquins. Instead, anthropological work on Algonquin territoriality has been framed within anthropological theoretical discourse. Within this framework, one remarkable characteristic of Algonquin territoriality has been the focus of attention. This trait concerns a differential treatment between moose and fur-bearing animals. It has been observed by anthropologists, but by other observers as well. As a visiting priest noted for the Abitibi Algonquin in 1881:

> Fishing and hunting of animals that wander and travel such as moose and caribou and in general, hunting to sustain existence is free anywhere; but as to hunting for precious pelts such as those of the beaver, marten and mink, which live in a smaller radius, no one must trespass on their neighbour's lands. (Proulx 1885, 64, my translation)

An identical observation was made by another visiting priest in 1902 for the Algonquin of the eastern arm of the Ottawa River (Latulipe 1902, 37). This is the same observation Sutherland Davidson made a few decades later for the people of Grand lac Victoria (Davidson 1928, 86). This distinction has also been observed more recently by anthropologists working among the Kitcisakik (Grand lac Victoria) and Barrière communities (Leroux et al. 2004, 16; Pasternak 2013, 130). This observation has been a key element in theoretical reconstructions about past territoriality among the Algonquin.

Another important consideration is that this area is now known for being heavily populated by moose. According to the Quebec Department of Forests, Wildlife and Parks, last year, the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region in Western Quebec, which comprises a part of the Ottawa River system, yielded an annual moose harvest of almost two thousand individuals, the third highest of the entire province (Ministère forêts faune et parcs 2017). Not surprisingly, moose are one of the most important species hunted for food by Algonquin people (Bousquet 2002, 76; Larivière 2013, 102–103). One recent study showed that moose meat alone made up about 60 per cent of total food resources harvested by Barrière Lake Algonquins in terms of edible weight (Nickels 1999, 114). Moose hides were tanned and used

frequently in the recent past, and the tanning process is still part of local knowledge (Larivière 2013, 201–202, 216; MacPherson 1930, 44–46; Theriault 2006, 57; Drouin 1989; Bousquet 2002, 79), while moose bones were made into hide scrapers (Bousquet 2002, 79).

Finally, family hunting territories have been disrupted in certain areas, which has led to a new emphasis on "free" community access to territory (Pasternak 2013, 131).

As moose are widely present and much used by Algonquin peoples, and as they are not the object of customary trespassing regulations (as opposed to fur-bearing animals), Leacock's interpretation of an original preference for a diet based on cervids associated with a form of communal land management, followed historically by a more individual form of land tenure, has been favoured by anthropologists working in this area (Viau 1996b, 145–146, 1996a, 108; Bishop 1986, 40–41; Leroux et al. 2004, 21–34; Leroux 2009, 2010, 2016). Although not all these authors make statements about past food choices or availability, they all express the idea that a communal land management system must have existed previous to European contact and that this was subdivided, in historical times, into family hunting territories.

In some cases, the influence of Eleanor Leacock's work is explicit. For instance, in his latest theoretical paper on Algonquin original territoriality and governance, anthropologist Jacques Leroux uses Leacock's interpretations and original data to re-examine Algonquin myths and symbolism (Leroux 2016). Although he does believe some forms of familial transmission of land access rights did exist, Leroux has emphasised, in his several contributions to the debate, the probable existence of an original overarching communal land-holding unit that must have become weakened during historical times (Leroux 2009, 2010; Leroux et al. 2004). Similarly, in her doctoral dissertation on the legal geography of the Barrière Lake Algonquins, Shiri Pasternak states that two levels of land tenure must have existed originally: first, male leaders were responsible for their family territories, which were then embedded in a community-based land allocation system under the leadership of a chief and council. Although Pasternak doesn't take a firm position on whether family hunting territories existed previous to European contact, she does specifically state that Frank Speck's model makes no allowance for the chief's responsibilities in land allocation and thus thinks him to be incorrect (Pasternak 2013, 127–134).

An Archaeological Perspective on the Moose Problem

From the viewpoint of an archaeologist, faunal material recovered from archaeological sites in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, close to the Ottawa River, reveals a confusingly different story. As a general rule, organic material in this area suffers from poor conservation. Bones a few decades old can be found on occasion, but most organic material disappears rather quickly from the archaeological record. One exception to this rule is bones that are found in hearths. Although they are fragmented, these bones tend to be better preserved. They are also clearly associated with an anthropic context and can be used to gather information about the diet of the makers of these hearths. Many archaeological projects have yielded faunal material, some of which has been analysed.

Examination of archaeological data for the upper Ottawa River and the Abitibi area shows that cervids account for a very small fraction of the faunal material recovered from hearths on archaeological sites occupied from six thousand years ago up to the recent pre-contact era. In fact, no site has revealed a pre-contact preference for moose (or any other cervid). Rather, small mammals (such as beaver) are widely represented.

Allumette Island and Morrison Island on the Ottawa River are two major archaeological sites that have been subjected to extensive excavation and analysis. Their main occupations occurred 6,100 and 5,500 years ago, respectively. On the Allumette Island site, mammals represented about 80 per cent of the bones examined. Of these, only a small percentage (7 per cent) were identifiable to the species level, beaver being the most extensively represented, whereas moose, caribou and white-tailed deer represented only a small fraction of the total (Cossette 2003). On Morrison Island, two species represented 78 per cent of over five thousand identifiable bones: the American eel (54 per cent) and the beaver (24 per cent). Whereas beaver bones came from about one hundred different individuals, moose bones came from only one individual and caribou bones from two (Clermont and Chapdelaine 1998, 131–132).

Further upstream, small mammals made up by far the majority of faunal material recovered from sites spanning from five thousand to five hundred years ago (Pollock 1975, 15, 18, 24, 25, 50; Marois and Gauthier 1989, 126–127). In an analysis of faunal material recovered from ten archaeological sites of eastern Ontario extending between Lake Timiskaming to the southeast and Hearst, Ontario, to the northwest, archaeologist John Pollock found that with the exception of two sites (Valentine site, near Hearst, and Snake Arm, near Chapleau), all sites showed an osteological assemblage made up of mostly medium-sized mammals. When identification could be extended to the species level, beaver was the single most identified species in all ten sites, representing up to 84, 90 and 100 per cent of the identifiable

faunal material, whereas moose or caribou represented only a minor fraction of the total (Pollock 1975, 50). The osteological analysis of faunal material recovered at the Réal site on Lake Abitibi, whose main occupations occurred three thousand years ago and one thousand years ago, showed that mammals dominated the assemblage. Of the mammals that could be identified at the species level ($n = 431$), beaver represented 74 per cent of the total. Cervids made up a mere fraction of the total, and of these, identifiable moose bones ($n = 7$) were considered intrusive (not part of the archaeological deposit) (Saint-Germain 2008).

How can we explain the enormous difference between the contemporary use of moose by Algonquin people and its weak archaeological representativity in pre-contact times? As with any form of negative evidence, the rarity of moose bones in archaeological assemblages may not adequately reflect the total diet. However, historical data provide an interesting complement to this observation.

Historical Data on Moose Populations and Their Contribution to Contextualising Territoriality

Early reliable historical data on land tenure are, unfortunately, lacking, and seventeenth-century faunal descriptions are rare. Champlain visited some of the Algonquin groups in the lower part of the Ottawa River in 1613. He documented that they cultivated some corn, beans, squash and peas. However, they made their livelihood mostly by hunting. During his visit, Champlain mentioned fish being eaten along with corn and some unidentified meat (Champlain and Thierry 2009, 79–85). Pierre de Troyes witnessed a moose hunted on Lake Timiskaming in 1686 (Chevalier de Troyes and Caron 1918, 45). De Troyes didn't make many faunal observations in his journal, and a global faunal picture is impossible to draw from it. We can gather only that moose seem to have been present along the upper Ottawa River in the seventeenth century at least up to Lake Timiskaming, but their relative importance in the diet remains unclear for that time. In a document attributed to Father Silvy and dated 1709 and 1710, the author mentioned that northern Algonquian peoples – which included specifically the Algonquin peoples of the upper Ottawa River – hunted caribou along with beaver and other fur-bearing animals such as martens, foxes, otters and lynx, and that fishing was also practised (Silvy 1904, 104, 111).

The earliest undisputed mention of family hunting territories among the Algonquins goes back to 1761 when the trader Alexander Henry travelled up the Ottawa River and wrote:

> In conversation with my men, I learned that the Algonquins, of the lake Des Deux Montagnes, of which description were the party that I had now met, claim all the lands on the Outaouais, as far as Lake Nipissingue; and that these lands are subdivided, between their several families, upon whom they have devolved by inheritance. I was also informed, that they are exceedingly strict, as to the rights of property, in this regard, accounting an invasion of them an offence, sufficiently great to warrant the death of the invader. (Henry 1901 [1807], 23)

The greater availability of historical records in the nineteenth century allows us to observe that family hunting territories were generalised among the Algonquin at the beginning of that century. For example, the Hudson's Bay Company officer for the Lake Abitibi post wrote in 1824:

> The limits of the Terrotiry [sic] which belongs to each Family are as well known by their Neighbours as the lines which separate farms are by the Farmers in the Civilised World so that very seldom that they encroach upon one another's Lands to kill the Beaver and they sometimes in order to preserve the Breed kill the old and leave the young Beaver.[4]

We can therefore conclude that the system was in full effect at the very latest in the mid-1700s. This would imply that family hunting territories existed among the Algonquin well before logging and settlers intruded into the area and well before land encroachment occurred. It is interesting to note that although these early observations were made while the fur trade was in full swing, there was no mention of a difference in territoriality between cervids and fur-bearing animals. In fact, cervids were not mentioned at all. Moreover, company officers made no mention of any form of communal land management: they simply compiled the sum of the individual hunting territories used by their clients and considered this the geographic range for each post.[5]

The picture becomes clearer further in the nineteenth century when several historical sources can be pieced together, such as journals kept by traders and visiting missionaries. At that time, moose were present along the Ottawa River valley up to the Timiskaming area. There, moose coexisted briefly with caribou and then with deer, but all three species seem to have been rather rare during the first half of the nineteenth century. Caribou were the only species of cervid present beyond that point, and they also seem to have been rare and unpredictable. These cervids were hunted by Algonquin peoples when available, but were never the basis of their diet. Rather, early nineteenth-century records show that

around Lake Timiskaming, Algonquin people ate mostly the meat from the fur-bearing animals they caught: fisher, otter, marten, beaver. They also ate fish, hare, grouse, caribou, deer, moose and bear meat (Poiré 1841, 15; Bellefeuille 1840, 44). Over the height of land, meat from fur-bearing animals and hare were the main fare, along with fish. There, hares seemed to have been the staple during the nineteenth century (Poiré 1840, 57; du Ranquet, Ouellet, and Dionne 2000, 185). The abundance of hares was, in fact, the reason the Hudson's Bay Company decided to establish a post on Lake Abitibi in 1794, as this would be the means by which the company men could sustain themselves (Mitchell 1977, 44).

The rarity of references to cervids in general, and to moose in particular, over the height of land is remarkable in early nineteenth-century records, in spite of many references to available fauna to eat or to barter. Accordingly, moose hides do not seem to have been an important component of clothing for Algonquins at that time. Various furs are mentioned as garments, including hare-skin jackets (du Ranquet, Ouellet, and Dionne 2000, 185). This former importance of hare-skin jackets was remembered by community members and mentioned to anthropologist John MacPherson at Abitibi in 1930 (MacPherson 1930, 21). Beaver skins were made into mitts, and scraped beaver hides were used to make footwear (Timiskaming post journal 1823–1825 in Proulx 1998, 37). The absence of moose and the use of beaver hides as garments and footwear in the Abitibi area made the Hudson's Bay Company officer suggest, in his annual report of 1822–1823, that moose hides be sold to the Abitibi Algonquins as an alternative clothing material so that more beaver skins could be turned in to the trade.[6]

A major faunal change then occurred: moose, which had been present in the southern Ottawa Valley became phenomenally abundant (du Ranquet, Ouellet, and Dionne 2000, 132; Moreau 1841, 21). They also expanded their habitat northward, crossing the height of land in the 1880s into an area where they had been unknown until then (Proulx 1885, 71; Johnston 1902, 141). The reason for this rapid expansion is difficult to establish: while the moose population increased in areas where the forest cover was changing because of logging and agriculture, it also expanded into areas where this environmental change had not yet occurred. While causality remains to be determined, the historical record is quite clear on this transition, and it is popular knowledge to contemporary Algonquin people (Comité forêt de la communauté des Anicinapek de Kitcisakik 2009, 7). At the same time, caribou populations dwindled and withdrew further north. The transition was explained to visiting anthropologist William Jenkins in 1939 and was also recorded at Lake Abitibi in 1928 by members of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology (Snyder 1928, 14–15; Jenkins 1939, 18).

Although dwindling caribou populations must have represented a loss to Algonquin peoples, the rarity of that cervid to start with had never made it an important part of the local diet. On the other hand, at the turn of the twentieth century, moose had become so abundant along the upper Ottawa River that the area became known as moose country and turned into a famous sports hunter's destination (Farr 1905, 473). Moose also came to be widely hunted by Algonquin people. As longtime resident Charles Cobbold Farr put it in 1905:

> Though practically ranging from the coast of the Atlantic to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, today the Ottawa River, and its tributaries have the honour of being the locality most favored by the moose, which is a strange fact in the light of history, for fifty years ago it was an unknown animal to the Indians of the Upper Ottawa … Of course, a previously unknown beast of such proportions must have been rather an alarming object to meet at first, but today, the Indian feels about the same alarm as a cat does when it meets a mouse, in fact it has become a staple of food, and in that respect has, a good deal, taken the place of the beaver. (Farr 1905, 473)

Farr's observations are confirmed by other sources. In 1888, visiting priest Jean-Baptiste Proulx was worried about the effects intruding trappers would have on local fur-bearing populations and ultimately the Algonquin of the eastern arm of the upper Ottawa, who relied on them for a living. He was, however, reassured by the abundance of moose that, as he states, formed the staple of their diet (Proulx 1892, 42). In 1930, anthropologist John MacPherson was shocked at what appeared to him to be the carelessness with which moose were shot by the Algonquin around Lake Abitibi (MacPherson 1930, 32–33). MacPherson stated that although the Abitibi Algonquin ate a wide variety of meat sources along with fish and birds, moose and hare formed the most important items in the diet at that time (MacPherson 1930, 32). The northward expansion of moose at the turn of the twentieth century is something that has also been recorded in Northern Ontario (Rogers 1963, 67, 69, 72; Dunning 1959, 27) and in the Eastern James Bay area, although in the latter, moose may have been present briefly in the seventeenth century (Francis and Morantz 1983, 8; Morantz 2002, 53–54, 1983, 23).

During the nineteenth century, the Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley were coping with land encroachment by loggers, settlers and competing trappers, but were helped unexpectedly by an explosion of the moose population, which also expanded its habitat northwards over the height of land. When we piece together the history of settler population movement, the history of moose population expansion and the historiography of Algonquin territoriality as described by various observers, we can make the following deduction: as settler society was moving up the river, it became more difficult for Algonquin people to maintain their traditional family hunting territory system, but it became feasible for them to hunt moose anywhere. This explains the difficulties encountered by anthropologists John McGee and Frank Speck south of Kipawa when attempting to collect data regarding family hunting territories in the early twentieth century but at the same time explains why young men claimed to hunt anywhere they liked at that time. It also helps to explain why in areas where settler society had not yet moved in, such as Abitibi or Grand lac Victoria in the early twentieth century, family hunting territories remained a strong land management system, within which, at the same time, anyone was allowed to hunt moose anywhere, as moose were an abundant and intruding species. It is noteworthy that the earliest historical references to Algonquian territoriality do not mention a dichotomy in access rights between fur-bearing animals and moose. This dichotomy is mentioned for the first time only in the late nineteenth century in the Abitibi area, which coincides with the moment moose population expanded north of the height of land.

Economic and Social Aspects of Algonquin Territoriality

The reasoning used in the theoretical assumption of a shift from a diet relying on large cervids to a diet made of smaller fur-bearing game posits that this shift must have occurred post-European contact with the development of the European/Indigenous fur trade. This line of reasoning is implicitly derived from ecology theory, where territorial defence (such as the trespassing regulations for family hunting territories) implies a cost that must be outweighed by benefits gained from an exclusive access to resources (Dyson-Hudson and Smith 1978; Berkes 1986, 148). In the context of the debate regarding the antiquity of family hunting territories, the gain is assumed to have been the value of pelts resulting from the post-contact fur trade. This reasoning posits that it would have been useful to defend small segments of territory – which corresponded to fur-bearing animals' habitat – only if these animals had economic value.

Interestingly enough, the Algonquins have a long history of trade, which in fact probably predates European contact. Algonquin trade with the Huron, involving the exchange of pelts for maize, fish nets, tobacco and wampum, was documented as early as 1615 by Samuel Champlain (Champlain and Thierry 2009, 158). Charles Bishop has shown that the trading protocol observed in these early Indigenous trade systems was highly formalised and must have been in place many years before European observers witnessed them (Bishop 1986, 48, 56). The finding of Huron-styled pottery predating the seventeenth century over a wide area occupied by northern Algonquian peoples leads to the possibility that this exchange system predated European contact (Côté 1993, 20; Côté and Inksetter 2001, 119–120; Gelinas 2011, 78–80; Guindon 2009, 86–87; Trigger 1991, 354; Noble 1982, 41). It therefore seems likely that Algonquin peoples, along with other northern Algonquian peoples, traded a variety of resources with the Huron, including pelts. There seems to be no historical reason to assume that the fur trade was a post-European occurrence.

When late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century observers noted that Indigenous people could catch moose anywhere but that small fur-bearing animals were associated with strict territorial observances, Leacock argued that the type of territoriality associated with fur-bearing animals must be a recent phenomenon associated with post-contact fur trade and that communal access to moose must have been the pre-contact norm of land and resource access. However, if we use archaeological and historical data, for the Algonquin at least, it may well have been the other way around: fur trade may have predated European contact and diet may have been focused on small mammals, whereas free access to moose may have become possible in the nineteenth century due to a rapid and phenomenal expansion of this intruding species.

Of course, cervids did exist in the areas occupied by Algonquin peoples before the nineteenth century, but they do not seem to have been particularly reliable or important in the diet. Moreover, they are not mentioned in early descriptions of Algonquin territorial observances. It is possible that cervids were just like fish: one could catch and eat them as needed while travelling through. One could even trade them on occasion: barter in moose meat and fish is documented with settlers in the twentieth century (Loiselle and Dugré 2009, 31). This trade, however, always remained marginal.

Conclusion

This article has shown that for the Algonquin at least, there seems to be no reason to believe that the European fur trade or encroachment of settler society led to an important dietary shift away from cervids. On the contrary, as far back as we can tell from archaeological data, the Algonquins from the upper Ottawa River relied on a variety of small mammals. We must also accept as a possibility that Algonquin people engaged in pre-contact fur trade with the Hurons. Thus, up until the nineteenth century, Algonquin peoples seem to have focused their harvesting efforts on small mammals. Although we have no direct proof of pre-contact territoriality or associated governance, this faunal adaptation is certainly compatible with Speck's model of family hunting territories and decentralised land management.

The major historical diet change seems not to have been a shift away from cervids during the fur trade but in fact a shift toward a greater consumption of moose meat during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the moose population exploded and expanded its habitat over the height of land. In areas where Algonquins were struggling with land encroachment, moose became a welcome substitute for the traditional diet. Elsewhere, moose simply became an abundant addition. Thus, when early twentieth century observers noted that moose hunting was not subject to the same trespassing regulations as hunting of other mammals was, many assumed that this was the original norm, whereas it may, on the contrary, have been a most recent one.

Land management practices associated with the habitats of small mammals seem to have been the most stable type of land use by Algonquin people, who have tried to maintain family hunting territories and adapt them to other systems such as beaver preserves or registered traplines. In areas where family hunting territories have been maintained, their importance is reflected in the communities' political representations of past use of family hunting territories. In other areas, emphasis now seems to be given to communal land management systems.

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Notes

1 The term "Algonquin" is often used to describe nine communities in Quebec and ten in Ontario along the Ottawa watershed and slightly to the north. However, the term is problematic as it is not a word in the local language. To some, "Anishnabe" is preferred as a self-identifier. However, this use raises further problems as the word "Anishnabe" refers to a larger concept in the local language: "people" (Cuoq 1886, 48). It is also a term shared by other Indigenous peoples speaking related languages and therefore is not limited to the specific communities of the Ottawa River. To others, in spite of its foreign origin, the term "Algonquin" has become a national identifier and is thus preferred. In the absence of a consensus among the people themselves, the term "Algonquin" is used here, as it is more specific and refers to people living along the Ottawa River as well as the people living around the Abitibi basin.

2 However, intruding white trappers had become a problem at the time of Davidson's visit.

3 http://www.anishinabenation.ca/en/nomadic/.

4 "Abitibi Report," 1824, B.1/e/3, fo. 2, fo. 2d, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

5 "Abitibi Report," 1822–1823, B.1/e/2, fo. 2; "Temiscaming Report on District," 1822–1823, B.218/e/1, fo. 1, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

6 "Abitibi Report," 1824, B.1/e/3, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

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