# Bush Garden

by

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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2014

# AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.
I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

# ABSTRACT

To garden is to draw with the land.
This tending is the primary act of culture: to perpetuate a people by negotiating with a place. Gardening impresses hope upon the land, measuring the bounds of sustenance.

A boundary is a necessary condition for a garden. I argue in this thesis that the boundaries of the garden are not always tangible. Indeed, in the case of the James Bay Cree, physical enclosures traditionally held little purpose in their way of life. Through gardening in numerous contexts, I have experienced land not as a commodity, but as a place to cultivate complex relationships. From this understanding, supported by literature and time spent with a First Nations community, I have come to approach "the bush" of the Cree as a garden in the fullest sense.

In this thesis, I first describe a number of externally imposed boundaries that have contributed to the present conditions in remote northern communities. I then position the landscape of the Omushkego Cree of the James Bay Lowlands within negotiable moral boundaries, founded upon reciprocal relationships between a people and a land. These relationships are manifest in the words and markings that trace indigenous movement over the land, which centre around the harvest of food. Through narrative, this text unfolds the map of tradition in which food is a gift from the land, from mythical beginnings to current concerns, taking the practice of gardening as a measure of the Omushkego Cree's relationship to their land.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I firstly would like to express my gratitude to my committee: it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with each of you. Anne, you have been a continual source of grace and compassion, propelling me through this thesis with your inspiring insights and encouragements. Thank you for reminding me what I had and for giving the time needed for this understanding to be found.
Val, I've long remembered your remark, “it's a mystery, my son,” which may provide an argument for much of the complex relationships on the land that I've investigated here.
Don, thank you for your conversations which have led me down various rabbit trails to intriguing places, and strengthened ideas that I hesitated on.
To my external reader, thank you, Jane Holland, for your sincere interest in this thesis and your valuable perspective on the subject. I look forward with anticipation for future conversations.

I cannot express enough gratitude to Andy and Jessie Darlington - for inspiring this journey through a life lived with intent and care; for your open arms and hearts; and for your willingness to search out the potential in people and trust them even through failure. It is freeing and loving.

Thank you to my parents who have encouraged and enabled me always: you have never failed in your support or unconditional love. I know how blessed I am. Thank you for believing in me, even if not in my strange ideas. And thanks for finally letting me plant vegetables on your lawn.

I thank the many mentors and friends who have in some significant way helped me get here. To name a few:
Rick Haldenby, I will forever feel the weight of this great gift of education that you have offered. It has caused me to find a new and profound view of this world as a seamless whole, in which everything comes full circle and will one day find completion. And indeed, success is always a gift, never achieved on our own strength.
Terry Black, you have continued to provide a flow of fresh inspiration and creative insight that I have not seen elsewhere, and which always comes at just the right moment. I’m grateful for our conversations that are productive in many realms.
To the Zwart family, thank you for your selfless gift of time and your pertinent questions, which have been a great encouragement and guide to me. You’ve reminded me that laughter and rest are necessary for work.

Fred Thompson, Bob McNair, and Brian Hunt, I thank you for timely conversations and for the privilege and honour of meeting each of you along your journeys. I look forward to more opportunities to continue this.

What an incredible family is this School of Architecture! I could write another thesis to thank you all, but I'll just offer a few specifics in relation to this one:
Sam, thank you for being the Maker you are. But even more, the Thinker in you gave me joy through our correspondences and provoked my own Thinking in new ways. Virginia, your loyalty and hard-edged friendship have been a comfort and peace. Your timelessness spurs me on. Andrea, thank you for your delight in beauty and subtle things. Your presence and conversation were great encouragements, and I'm delighted to have literally taken your seat in this last stage. Thank you, Shane, for your lyricism and dedication to good work. Mark Tam, thank you for always making me smile, one way or another. And for that one hug I finally agreed to. Tim, your sincerity knows no bounds! This has been refreshing and helpful. Justin, thank you for believing in me and my ideas when I doubted, seeing something in them I could not. Thank you for walking with me through difficulty and driving me onward.

I thank the people of Fort Albany for their hospitality, generosity and optimism.
Thank you to Chief Rex Knapaysweet, for welcoming me into your community to learn.
I am extremely grateful to Edmund and Joan Metatawabin for opening up to me both the space of community and the space of the bush. You have a beautiful harmony of living out life on the land through both of your work. Your time spent with me, in action and in speech, cannot be quantified; know that I am changed.
To Gigi Veeraraghavan and Meshan Sutherland, I am deeply appreciative of your honesty, openness and friendship. Thank you for your interest from the start which made all of this possible. It is a great privilege to have been welcomed so trustingly. And to Susan, thank you.
For precise and meaningful insight, I wish to thank Roxanne Achneepineskum.
I also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Canadian Polar Commission.

I would finally like to thank my gracious and patient Gardener, whose pruning I trust to bring forth greater fruitfulness. He continues to cultivate in me a garden ethic, and a desire to share abundance with joy in all aspects of life. I am continually in awe.

> "Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down... so I will watch over them to build and to plant."
> Jeremiah 31:28

# DEDICATION

For my parents, who have given me the gift that is a portion of themselves.

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# INTRODUCTION

I am a gardener. My search has come from the process of gardening. My qualifications are that I care deeply enough to first observe, then to seek understanding, and finally to act.

It is a most humbling experience to ask to be permitted onto another's territory. It would initially seem that you had to provide very good reasons for being there - preferably some purpose that would benefit the local inhabitants. But what if disillusionment with this 'useful' purpose leads to a different kind of research? To seek to learn from a culture that has more claim to the land I occupy than any of my ancestors and to establish relationships in order to be changed in mind, heart and action: are these acceptable purposes?

How is one, then, to begin? The thread for me is the garden.

Architectural theorist David Leatherbarrow portrays the architect as one who 'seeks to describe': "Lacking a plan, map, or survey, he intends to develop one. His purpose is neither design nor construction, instead understanding. Measurement will be his method."[1] To understand through measuring, we can look to the garden as a place where we order nature so that we can make sense of it. Measuring brings something into our understanding as we subdue it to our abstract and imposed system. While yards and acres can be applied to the natural world, they more often than not end up in approximations, as we deal with rich and complex territory not conceived of by man. What other measures, then, may be of use in the garden?

One may measure the land in *metes and bounds*. This is to traverse the land, marking with words its corners of natural or man-made monuments. This method depends on local geography. It is a practice that records the circuit of boundaries around a parcel of land. It is a discipline founded on directions and distances, translated through running prose. Narrative is the measuring device.

This thesis looks specifically at the rich muskeg territory of the James Bay Lowlands. Here, how does an architect describe the land he faces? Troubled by the present lack of food security in remote First Nation communities in this region, I sought to inquire as to whether there might be a spatial aspect to this issue. Does the spatial character of the

1 Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground*, 2

reserve have an effect on food and health? How do people interact with the land today, and how might that impact the food networks they engage with? How is food perceived from a Cree cultural perspective? What has brought us to this great discrepancy in well-being among Canadians?

I came to an awareness that food insecurity is a symptom of land insecurity. This is partly because food must always come from the land. Without assurance of the ability of the land to provide, there is no assurance in the food supply. This also speaks to the identity of the Omushkego Cree, who do not see themselves as distinct from the land. They are part of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation of Treaty No. 9, which means "The People and the Land," emphasizing the inseparability of the two.[2] Securing food is a central aspect of the continuum of life on the land. When that essential relationship is disrupted, the assurance of the food supply is also affected. It is a careful balance held within a particular cultural paradigm:

> Assimilated to the nature of the land are both the physique and the social characteristics of local inhabitants: for a people and a place, identity is determined by character (ethos), and ethos is known where opposites confront one another and define a boundary or edge.[3]

The garden must be understood as it is cultivated and bounded in the Cree way of life, deciphered through time spent with the people on the land, throwing light on our role in the relation to the land. When considering the land of the Cree as a garden, relationships between people are just as important as those between people and the land.

It may seem paradoxical to think of this northern 'wilderness' as a garden. Etymologically, the garden is inherently tied to an idea of enclosure, originating from the same root as 'fence'. This meaning of enclosure also developed into words for 'town' in languages like Russian and Dutch. 'Court' also derives from other terms for 'enclosure' in Indo-European and Latin, while also being equivalent to Dutch *hof*, meaning 'yard' or 'garden'. The court is not usually enclosed by a fence, but by buildings or walls, and can mean "an assembly held by the sovereign".[4] In her article on the etymological origin of the

2 Grand Council Treaty Nine; Association of Treaty Nine Chiefs; *Nishnawbe Aski: The People and the Land*, pamphlet.
3 Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention*, 35
4 van Erp Houtepen, "The etymological origin of the garden," 227-231

garden, Van Erp-Houtepen concludes that "the fence or wall is a basic and characteristic feature of the garden."[5]

While we often think of the enclosure as a physical and visible boundary, I argue in this thesis that these fences or walls may not always be tangible. Indeed, in the case of the James Bay Cree, physical enclosures traditionally held little purpose in their way of life. Instead, the Cree people rely on intangible moral boundaries that can be understood through the narrative of life on the land. Furthermore, I explore how the different types of boundaries, whether physical or intangible, may also determine whether the garden is perceived in terms of ownership or relationship. Does the delineation of the garden exclude or integrate? In Chapter One, I distinguish between various kinds of relationships with the land that are created by boundaries, both material and intangible. In Chapter Two, I discuss how naming and marking delineate these boundaries. In Chapter Three, a distinction is made between underlying assumptions of land as something to be owned or related to, and I draw this into the practice of the bush garden.

When measuring in metes and bounds, sometimes we discover something on an indirect route. Although issues of food security and Cree narratives are the impetus for the interest of this thesis, my experiences in James Bay also lead me to reflect on the other gardens I have cultivated. These are in the landscape of Southern France, where my ancestors originated, and in the school garden in Cambridge, Ontario, where I have written much of this text. Ventures into a variety of gardens that I have encountered have helped me to understand and interpret what I have seen in James Bay.

The map is a record and a method. The architect simultaneously reveals it and creates it. The garden narrative, then, lays out the metes and bounds of the Cree cultural landscape.

5 van Erp Houtepen, "The etymological origin of the garden," 227 231

[ ii ]
Common Camino garb: backpack, seashell, shoes. All deposited at the first opportunity.

# PORTUGAL

*I stood looking North on the shoulder of the highway leading out of Lisbon with tears streaming down my face and confusion contorting my countenance. I was facing a great frontier and it was unbearably frightening. I had no map or understanding of the land I was trying to traverse; no guide to show me the way. All I possessed was a notion that there was value in walking through a territory, and the physical strength to do it. The emotion that washed over me unbidden betrayed the shallowness of my preparations. What was I doing?*

*Two women from South Africa crossed my path at just the right moment on the Camino de Santiago. While we were on the same road, I was becoming more lost, and they, more found. Their packs were adorned with the indicative sea shell of the pilgrim: the sign of the Atlantic shores of Galicia where the Camino ends. Steeped in metaphor, these tokens are also a symbol of hope: the pilgrims have not yet reached their destination, but already possess the souvenir.*

*The women encouraged me that sometimes changing course is not actually quitting, and may be necessary in order to find the path we were meant to be on, though we didn't know it at first. With those simple words, I felt freed. I didn't have to keep walking. I could go to a place and establish relationships. I could gain an understanding of time and distance by acting in the here and now.*

*And so I changed course. I continued on foot to the next town, where I took a bus to a larger city. My plan then was to take another bus to France where I would work on a farm for my keep. All options open at this point, I considered having a look around. My first stop was the information centre to get a map. As I was browsing there, a woman came in to speak with the travel agent. She then turned and inquired about me. I briefly shared my story, and was immediately invited on an adventure for the day: she ran a travel company and wanted to scout out a new rural location for her tours. Would I accompany her? Being freshly shaken by my trek thus far, I hesitated. I then shook myself some more to wake up to the opportunity before me. She entreated me to not leave Portugal yet. I hadn't really seen her beautiful country; not from the right perspective.*

*Our day couldn't have been better planned. She poured out stories and information of her land and people that drew me over the barricade of my fears and past the threshold of my understanding. She offered me the gift of common ground, in exchange for companionship. I realized that I could never hope to know this place without the relationship she sought with me. My souvenir from our day was a piece of cork bark I picked up as we walked through a village in which buildings and streets were made from the same stone, and talked about urban migration*

*in Portugal.*

*She dropped me off in another city on her way home, where I secured a place on a farm in southern France in a week's time. From there, I continued on to visit Porto, spending Easter in a massive cathedral atop the city. I sat through the service in Portugese, inwardly focused. I was in that moment intensely aware of the gracious gift of relationship, and the hope it provides.*

[iii]

'Cutting into' the soil resulted in 'cutting off' the site from the surrounding expanse. This sort of furrowing, with knife or plough, was both violent and propitious... The artifact resulting from such a cut - a boundary wall - was not a line but a container symbolically equivalent to the wall of a ceramic jar or vase...

David Leatherbarrow
*The Roots of Architectural Intervention*

# IN THE GARDEN
## Boundary and Enclosure

[1.1]
A friend's house, built in the bush, beyond the boundary of Indian Reserve 67, on his grandfather's land.

The garden, etymologically, is an enclosure[6]: a bounded space; a place defined by its enclosure. It is circumscribed, or written around. The narrative, collected by measuring in metes and bounds, is the means by which to interpret the garden. Interestingly, through gardening we can also come to interpret the narrative. The garden can be the apparatus by which the land is measured in James Bay. Food has always been critical in the James Bay Lowlands. Historian Hans Carlson suggests that "one of the larger lessons of James Bay history" is that "Native narrative reality meant material survival in the form of food from the land."[7] Today, issues of food security are of utmost concern as they relate directly to all forms of well-being.

## MORAL ENCLOSURE

The boundaries of place are determined by extents of occupation, which may often be moral as well as physical.

In the garden, moral boundaries refer to the less tangible limitations that inform how to act, delineating right and wrong behaviour. Typically, those intangible boundaries involve constant reconsiderations and continued negotiations. The specific understanding of what these boundaries are may vary as the context varies, but the principles of care and observation remain common and constant throughout these shifts. These principles lead to ever-increasing life and abundance, as all actors are able to thrive in the conditions best for them in relation to others. Agriculturalist Sir Albert Howard said, "The outstanding characteristics of Nature are variety and stability."[8] This delicate balance can be disturbed when intentions are heedlessly imposed. As the living system becomes no longer able to sustain itself, it must rely on external inputs. One cannot continue to take life from the garden without giving back. When we engage in exchange or reciprocity through our cultivation and care of the garden, we allow it to flourish. These intangible values, manifested in action, define the garden ethic. The moral boundaries set the limits for what can be done in a garden to keep it as a fruitful place.

In the Genesis account of the Garden of Eden, the enclosure of the garden

6 Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 10
7 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 16
8 Howard, *The Soil and Health*, 17

became apparent only at the moment of separation from God, after the 'original sin'. Before sin entered the world, there was no sense of physical enclosure. When Adam and Eve sinned, however, the enclosure became suddenly and painfully real. They were cast out of the garden, its gates now guarded by cherubim with flaming sword. There was no way back into the shelter of paradise that was once their entire world.

This brings to light what had existed as a clear boundary within the garden: a boundary of obedience, or a moral boundary. God clearly laid out what was permissible and what was not. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was the only limitation that He placed before the people. Eve was deceived by the serpent into believing that this boundary was not the best for them and that disobeying God would expand their knowledge beyond human limitations. When this boundary was breached, the relationship was severed between God and mankind. A spiritual wall was built between them. This was manifested equally in the physical realm. Paradise was closed off, and man was tasked with tilling the earth, forever reminded of this separation. This physical separation continued to be seen in the destiny of Adam's sons, when Cain who cultivated the land, ended up marking it with his brother's blood: the hand that carves the furrow separates brothers, linking physical and moral bounds.

Similarly, Rome's foundation myth hinged on severance. Disputing the location of their new city, the twins Romulus and Remus each chose a different hill and sought the will of the gods for their selection through augury. Claiming superior augury, it was Romulus who carved the furrow defining the boundary of his city. Spitefully, his brother Remus insulted Romulus and his new city by leaping over the boundary. Romulus then killed him, saying, "So perish everyone that shall hereafter leap over my wall."[9] The furrow severs both land and people.

*Paradise* is often equated with *garden*, as both terms derive from enclosure. A common perception of the 'wilderness' of the 'New World' prior to European arrival is that it was a form of paradise: a place of perfection, safely protected from the damaging effects of colonization. This thesis puts forward a contrary view, however, that, similarly to ideas of wilderness, as described later, the perfection of paradise here is a fiction. The

9 Livy

garden is lived out in negotiation.

This is evident through the Cree myth of the *Windigo* [wih-ti-go], an insatiable cannibalistic figure that exists in the northern landscape. It is a confining force that must be accounted for in life on the land. Its appearance reflects the bitter northern winters, its presence often signalled by a sudden cold wind.[10] This being is unquestionably evil, abject, and universally feared. It is something not to be reasoned with under any circumstances.

The presence of the Windigo provides a basis for moral bounds. It serves as a moral deterrent to extremes of human behaviour that the creature embodies as a spirit of selfishness, such as greed and gluttony. It represents what can go wrong if moral bounds are not heeded. With stories and a cultural landscape including such malevolent beings, we see that it is not a perfect place or 'paradise'. Observing and negotiating these moral boundaries kept people living in moderation. The practice of sharing and reciprocity, rather than greed and gluttony, ensured everyone's well-being. All community members were collectively battling external destructive forces.

For the Cree, the land had few physical boundaries, and the ones that did exist continually shifted. The moral boundaries they possessed more clearly defined life on the land. These include a broad understanding of reciprocity and respect, which provide an underlying motivation from which actions can take various forms.

The practice of reciprocity is common to almost every ethical tradition[11]. It is the expectation that people will respond to each other in similar ways, whether good or bad. The Golden Rule is an example of a maxim expressing reciprocity: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." This reveals a recognition that we are interconnected through our actions.

In the Swampy Cree culture, the principle of *kwachi*[12] is a version of this. It states, "my future depends on the well-being of my neighbour." This is considered to be true economy, or careful management. In one Cree legend, it stands opposed to the "Greedy Older Brother," whose appetite is insatiable.[13] If everyone's fridge is full, and there is heat in all homes, that is enough. "We learn from our gardens to deal with the most urgent question of the time: how much is enough?"[14] A tradition of generosity provides

10 Dillon, "Windigo"
11 Blackburn, *Ethics*, 101
12 From conversation; spelling uncertain.
13 Tanya Talaga, "Rafting down the Albany River to the Ring of Fire," http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2011/06/10/rafting_down_the_albany_river_to_the_ring_of_fire.html (accessed Aug. 8, 2014).
14 Berry, *The Gift of Good Land*, 169


[1.2]
Hitching the sled to the snowmobile before heading out into the bush for firewood.

for those in need. A person would not have to say to others, "I need...", rather others would observe and say, "she needs...". They would then provide from their excess. This would be returned whenever someone was in want, so that no one had to fear not having enough. No one would hoard things for themselves. This expresses a collective mentality, where interdependence ensures the livelihood of all. It relied upon observation rather than assertion.

This ethic was similarly extended toward the first fur traders, who relied upon Native assistance for their survival. Sometimes food would show up at a post without anyone asking for it.[15] The men in the bush knew if it was a hard time, and were acutely aware that the traders would be in need. Observation was a way of life, stemming from and finding expression in care for others. Negotiation is also an aspect of reciprocity. It can occur on the land, or between people as they discuss issues of land and resources. The Cree consider it a form of disrespect towards the land if negotiations are cut off during court rulings: the land deserves every form of effort by them to speak on its behalf.[16] Negotiation pushes and pulls the boundary into a place that considers both sides of the argument.

*Paquataskamik* is the Cree word for all of the environment; it refers to nature and everything it contains. This word "reminds us that Mushkegowuk land is vast; not just the reserve or camp, but an area that ties history, identity and families together from the coasts of the bays to far inland and beyond."[17] As *kwachi* is expressed toward a neighbour, all of the land can be included in its jurisdiction. This marks the moral boundary that makes the land a garden. Here it is clearly encompassed by the principle of right livelihood through reciprocity:

> ... Many garden practices - that is what we do in gardens - 'induce virtues', and ... gardens are 'hospitable' to various practices many of which... invite and attract certain virtues by providing especially appropriate opportunities for their exercise.[18]

There is a constant sense that everything from the land is a gift, rather than a

15 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 76
16 Ibid., 82
17 Paquataskamik Project, http://paquataskamik.weebly.com/index.html (accessed April 23, 2014).
18 Stuart, *What are Gardens For?*, 8

[1.3]
The house is nestled comfortably in the bush. Tree limbs are trimmed past head height for ease of human movement, while maintaining consistent cover and habitat for animals.

right. These moral boundaries allow for flexibility in occupation of the land, which can respond to changing needs and enables spontaneous choices. However, these bounds were rarely acknowledged by outsiders. Frye, in *The Bush Garden*, speaks of a "tone of deep terror in regard to nature"[19] that is present in much of Canadian literature:

> The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values. A sharp-witted Methodist circuit rider speaks of the 'shutting out of the whole of moral creation' in the loneliness of the forests.[20]

He goes on to describe the 'garrison mentality' that was developed in those who resided in the early isolated communities of the settler days, confronted with the formidable physical surroundings of the bush. This perception sees the bush itself as the barrier, often described by settlers as a prison.[21] This encompasses not only the physical reality, that is, the difficulties and dangers of the bush, but also and perhaps more importantly, the intangible world that it manifests. In many cases, though, the experience of isolation was due to lack of engagement with the land and its people both materially and morally. The psychological garrison was self-imposed. James Bay was seen by many missionaries as a limit of existence: the edge of the world. This narrative periphery strengthened perceptions of isolation.[22]

The moral boundaries of the bush are not predetermined laws, but must be negotiated through action on the land. In the act of gardening, the measurement of the land is based on labour and time, rather than abstract numerical symbols. It is bound by actions and intentions rather than by the cartographic definition of a territory, "It is our moral imagination that will shape our futures, as much as any technology or policy."[23] Perceiving the resources of the earth as gifts, the only appropriate response is one of reciprocity.

19 Frye, *The Bush Garden*, 227
20 Ibid., 227
21 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 118
22 Ibid., 118
23 Kimmerer, "Reclaiming the Honorable Harvest," TedxSitka, Aug. 18, 2012.

[1.4]
The edge of the bush around the community is mediated by ditches and waterlogged areas.

## BUSH AS GARDEN

Those who live off the land are genuinely concerned for the future of that land. This is recorded in the cultural narratives that build an understanding of the bush as a garden.

'Bush' refers to the particular type of land this thesis addresses in the Cree territory. Some clarification may be necessary. The bush is not a 'forest.' Originally, forests were hunting grounds for royalty, not necessarily treed, and limited in scale. Today, the term forest can also refer to plantations of trees, as forests are increasingly dominated and determined by humans. The bush is not a 'woodland' or 'woods', which refer to a naturally arising treed area which became managed to preserve or conserve it. The bush is also not a 'wilderness.' This term has various definitions and connotations, as well as incorrect usages, but most commonly 'wilderness' is considered to be entirely unmanaged, unknown and uncontrolled land. The notion of 'wilderness' may be a fiction: there is no land that has not been altered or occupied by humans in some way.[24] The North of Canada is often referred to as 'wilderness', and this is clearly untrue. The indigenous peoples of this continent have travelled extensively throughout it and have known it intimately, though their traces may not always be obvious. In fact, the Cree language contains no word or concept of land that is comparable to Western notions of 'wilderness.'[25]

The term 'bush' can be defined as, "rural, undeveloped land or country areas," and "not on the road system." These vaguely describe its meaning for the James Bay Cree, but it has greater specificity in their usage of it. For the Cree, the bush does not require human absence, nor superficial activity. It is a landscape that is largely set apart from main access routes, though local ones run through it for those who know to recognize them. The bush is occupied and utilized; understood and attended to.

For the Cree, the bush is the garden: they are conceptually and materially inseparable. The boundaries may not be clear to those who do not engage directly with the land, but they are self-evident to those who do. Fences have little purpose here. It is necessary for caribou to move without constraint across the entire North, being able to traverse many different territories and nations. The people themselves hold the boundaries

24 Cannavo, *The Working Landscape*, 2

25 Bertolas, "Cross cultural Environmental Perception of Wilderness," 98 111

that they need. Rather than physical enclosure, it is their practices, actions and relations that bound the land.

There is no separate 'occupation' of hunter or trapper. Cree see themselves simultaneously as artists, explorers, planners, surveyors, scientists and environmentalists. They see life in everything they touch. If one of these lives - plant, animal, waterway, etc. - is abused, it will be no surprise that misfortune will come. Observation and understanding mediate action: "As a trapper, you gauge the heartbeat of the land. You care... that is important."[26] In the bush, moral boundaries, such as those that mark the Cree's relationship to the bush as garden, are lasting and binding, even if they do not rest on legal rationale, even if they are not defined (and often imposed) through clear edges. Everyone is accountable to the community, which includes the land, for their actions.

These boundaries are based upon relationship, rather than ownership, requiring mutual concern and permitting negotiation. They are marked through place names, stories, and patterns of movement etched into the earth. They change through time and season, integrating the specificities of the moment in light of perpetuity.

## EARLY SETTLEMENTS

The relationship between hunters and traders was one of the initial Cree-European connections that was established.

> According to both our traditions, it was somewhere in Rupert Bay, somewhere around the village of Waskaganish, that Henry Hudson met Chakaapash - metaphorically speaking. Here is where it all began: the trade in fur and the sharing of food, the long narrative negotiation over the land.[27]

Initially, traders occupied the bush in much the same way as the Cree hunters. The inland traders set up posts that resembled Native camps, and worked continually to provide food for themselves and their families as hunters did. The settlement served

26 Metatawabin, Hanaway, 76
27 Carlson, Home Is the Hunter, 63

as a place of negotiation between worlds. It created both a microcosm of the hunt, as well as of the wider world from which the settlers came. However, it quickly became clear that the posts and the camps operated according to different patterns over time and space. While the Native camps moved over the landscape, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) settlements began to take on an outward expression that betrayed their custom of stasis. Rather than a continual renewal of appearance that comes with sojourn, a sense of permanence grew at the posts, as log houses and storage buildings were constructed. Climate mediation techniques in buildings were employed to increase comfort year-round, and windows were brought in to make it easier to stay indoors. As the posts grew in size, exploiting the materials in the immediate surroundings, the distance to these resources increased. Especially with the burning of wood for heat during the winter, the clearing became larger and more distinct amid the bush.[28]

The differences in worldview between Native Peoples and settlers, now often perceived as a divide between North and South, have made their effects clear on the landscape. Northern First Nations communities in Canada have long been experiencing the effects of a garden trampled and neglected. How has this happened?

Just as medieval landlords stood at a distance from the land, having their serfs work it under their authority into a clearly defined space, the land that Europeans found in Cree territory was out of their control in its totality. Development occurred in concentrated areas with great intensity, as if over-compensating for lack of understanding:

> Medieval society was not sufficiently in control of its surroundings to be able to afford the luxury of appreciating the beauty to be found in difficulty and danger...
>
> ... The only chance for the gardener was to concentrate all his effort on one chosen plot of land, and try to tame it.[29]

In James Bay, there is a history of understanding the surrounding environment and integrating it into daily life, "appreciating the beauty to be found in difficulty and

28 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 77
29 Henisch, *The Medieval Calendar Year*, 62-63

[1.5]
Selections from "Labours of the Months" Medieval calendars, highlighting the enclosing fences prevalent in agricultural practices.

danger"[30], as depicted in stories told for generations and persisting through architectural forms. The Native tents are spaces that,

> ... open the mind to the bush in a way that a house cannot. Within the tent you are in contact with the earth beneath and the forest outside, even as you are protected from them... In a way, the thin membrane that separates the tent's interior from the outside is analogous to the thin barrier between the human world and the world of the animals. The bush is close and all around.[31]

Supplanting this peaceful tension with fear, European settlers began to reshape their physical surroundings to accommodate their insecurities. The rough trading posts, originally capable of being relocated in favour of more strategic locations, grew into fixed walled towns amid wilderness. The clearer the physical boundaries, the easier it was for settlers to isolate themselves and continue life as they knew it. Wendell Berry wrote,

> As we felled and burned the forests, so we burned, plowed, and overgrazed the prairies. We came with visions, but not with sight. We did not see or understand where we were or what was there, but destroyed what was there for the sake of what we desired. And the desire was always native to the place we had left behind.[32]

To supplement - but ultimately to offset - the hunted game, especially in response to times of scarcity, traders began to set up fields of crops and gardens at the posts. These gardens increased the traders' independence while simultaneously altering the relationships between traders, environment and hunters. Mistrust entered; the need for mutual dependency was eroded; self-preservation was sought. A fundamental difference between settler and Native worldviews can be found in the meaning of 'boundary'. While Europeans brought ideas of physical, quantifiable space in defining boundaries of security and meaning, Native thinkers frequently speak of the land in terms of moral boundaries that defined a nuanced and qualitative understanding of space. The constant negotiation

30 Henisch, *The Medieval Calendar Year*, 62 63
31 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 51
32 Wendell Berry, *The Gift of Good Land*, 82

[1.6] [1.7]
A tent located adjacent to a self built home on the mainland. It serves as a cooking and smoking shelter. The interior atmosphere and scent of evergreen is all encompassing.

previously required for survival, and subsequently trade, shifted to favour the self-reliant, thereby creating a rift between the two cultures.

The act of carving a furrow initiated a process of separation and a cut into reciprocity. It created a divide between what was hoped for and what was feared: between sustenance and wilderness. A deep cultural chasm began to open. Previously, relationships involved mutual reliance. Agriculture marked a first step towards reinforcing a more isolated interest of self-preservation. While hunters did often benefit from the food produced by settlers, a sense of potential power crept in as the settlers had some control over their food supply and could choose to not give their food away if there wasn't enough to share.

Contrastingly, in Cree culture, people accepted the times when the land did not provide - maintaining equanimity in hardship[33] - and trusted that if they acted rightly towards it, it would support them once again. They did not seek to control the environment so that it could be specifically altered to meet their needs at any given time. Food from the bush was seen as a gift for each day. This daily concern tied everyone to the Native subsistence cycle, while also tying the conceptual world of the hunter to the trader's survival.[34]

Although the creation of permanent posts set up a distinction between experiences of the environment, the boundary subsequently produced by agriculture was felt more deeply. It touched the core of Cree subsistence and hence the heart of their cultural narrative on the land. It signified an unbalanced reciprocity through single-minded appropriation of the earth. The settlers brought their familiar conceptual world of control and containment to this new place, a sentiment foreign to 'hope' in the sense understood by the Cree:

> Hope for the Cree is not a passive emotion related to pessimism or to giving up, as it often is in Western culture where we fall back on it when all active means have failed. It is, instead, an active emotion - *speyum* is the word - through which an effective relationship with the environment can be created.[35]

33 Brody, *The Other Side of Eden*, 60
34 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 73
35 Ibid., 54

[1.8]
Canvas tents are set up during the Great Moon Gathering educational conference. One is for cooking bannock on a stick over a fire, and the other for storytelling; exchanges of food and words.

The furrow marks the replacement of hope in the land with control on the land. Through the cultivation of crops, a certain concept of predictability was maintained: the space of subsistence could be contained both physically and psychologically, by creating a sense of constant material well-being.

As early as the 1820s on the James Bay coast, agriculture had become as significant as trading[36]. Gradually, traders' survival on the land came more from their own effort in the soil than it did through negotiation with animals and hunters. Organized cultivation amounted to a disregard and invalidation of the land as benefactor. It also overlooked the incomprehensible complexity of the conditions allowing for the land's provision. By creating gardens at the posts, settlers effectively ignored the reciprocity system of the Cree, minimizing dependency on the hunter's world. While Cree hunters continued to engage with traders and attempted to incorporate them into their world, the traders began to resist this negotiation in favour of the comfort of autonomy, altering the meaning and outcome of their relationship. The Cree approach rested on integration; the settlers' narrative led to segregation.

Differences in perspective towards the land were evident as well in the Native encounters with missionaries who came to live among them. While their structures were clearly expressive of a very different relationship with the land, they also presented their messages with an underlying cultural paradigm which many hunters perceived acutely. One missionary's recorded experience revealed his belief that nomads could never really be Christian.[37] In interpreting the message they received, the hunters perceived this belief, seeing a need for some local connection with the land in the meaning of Christianity. They thus connected it to the agricultural practice that the missionaries had been engaged in.

The enclosed garden presented a convergence of earth and heaven into one contained space, comprehensible by humans. Similarly, the mission settlements' desire to implement agriculture valued a settled and 'cultivated' life of tilling the soil in order to bring heaven to earth. What the missionaries missed was that the Native peoples already had an intimate engagement with the earth, in ways that aided them both physically and

36 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 91
37 Ibid., 104

Agricultural fields near St. Anne's residential school.
[1.9]
The fields today reveal the traces on the land with willows growing in the drainage ditches. The fields are currently in use for research into growing food.
[1.10]
An historical photograph of schoolchildren collecting potatoes from the fields.

spiritually as agriculture did for Europeans. The Swampy Cree of the James Bay Lowlands literally self-identify according to the soil that they live on: Omuskhegowuk, people of the muskeg.

# BOUNDARIES

The following pages describe agents in the creation of boundaries in the Cree landscape. Each reveals a dimension of the experienced enclosure.

## EXILE

An active presence and relationship on the land is equivalent to notions of ownership. This ownership is established and maintained by observance of moral bounds. If the land is "owned" in this way, it is Cree territory and therefore they possess sovereignty over it. If this is ignored or undermined, those who were under the previous authority are now thrust into exile by the usurping authority.

Territory is the fundamental preparedness for sovereign authority, "Authority, of which sovereignty is the most extreme form, is a context-dependent concept."[38] Therefore, the European frontier in Canada precedes White authority in the North. In perceiving the land as an uninhabited wilderness (i.e. context-less), Europeans failed to see it as an existing *place*, or territory. The newcomers believed they were discovering a new territory, evidenced through written records as well as the landmarks and names placed on the land as means of staking claim. Acknowledging no pre-existing constraints, their occupation of the land proceeded without consideration of the inhabitants. While they believed they were pushing their own boundaries outward and preparing the ground for their own sovereignty, they were in fact moving the Cree's intangible ancient boundary markers,[39] causing them to appear arbitrary, and thus subverting an established sovereignty[40]: "if no one obeys, no one can rule."[41] This did not take into consideration that the Cree presence

38 Agamben, *Sovereignty and Life*, 48

39 See Proverbs 22:28 and 23:10. "Do not move an ancient boundary stone."

40 Agamben, *Sovereignty and Life*, 51

41 Anarchist maxim, *Sovereignty and Life*, 50

[1.11]
Some people have put fences around their lots. At the same time, the entire community of Kashechewan resides within the precarious boundary of the ring dyke. Flooding has become more frequent during the spring break up of the river.

on the land was the basis for their authority. The frontier is a process of breaching and imposing boundaries.

In the bush, moral boundaries were observed out of necessity.[42] A person would not survive without discipline. However, when physical boundaries became manifested through settlements, they often replaced the Cree value system. These enclosures challenged the legitimacy of the moral boundary, whether intentionally or not. In one way, newcomers decreased the space of the bush by creating microcosmic settlements, requiring less and less dependence on the bush for survival. In another way, the shifted bounds stretched the territory of influence by funnelling in and out many far off places through trade.

> A necessary condition for the possibility of banishment is a boundary - real or virtual, terrestrial or divine - outside of which one may be abandoned. ... sovereignty came to mean ... : "supreme authority within a bounded territory." The connection between authority and territory is fundamental, and it is precisely on the basis of this relation that banishment is a possibility.[43]

This highlights the importance of boundary markers in defining a place. By moving or removing them, a literal disruption of relationship between authority and territory occurs.

As European settlement changed the territory that Cree once occupied freely, it became difficult to return to the garden as they knew it. New boundaries were set, and the people of the land faced exile. The 'exiled one' is abandoned by the law he once knew to the law now imposed. He is "exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable."[44] He can still belong, but his known means for living are no longer accessible in the place: he either conforms to receive the new necessities, or completes his own exile by seeking livelihood elsewhere. This is contrary to the Cree perception of banishment which focused on restoration of the spirit and morality of an offender as they were banished temporarily into the bush.

42 Brightman, *Grateful Prey*,103
43 Agamben, *Sovereignty and Life*, 47
44 Ibid., 51

[1.12] One of the few self built homes in Fort Albany.

[1.13] New houses built with trees maintained.

## OCCUPATIONAL BOUNDARIES: TRAPLINES

The intangible boundaries of the Cree included those defined through an understanding of the limits of hunting and trapping, rooted in local practices and observation. They set their own quotas, killing animals according to their needs while maintaining a form of cultural respect towards the animals. It was clear that if they were not conservative and respectful in hunting, taking too much, the animals would not return. And so the environment could shift according to the choices made by people. Awareness of these shifts was also a part of the relationship with the environment.

This involved relationship that rested on careful observation is vastly different from the one set up by the Hudson's Bay Company and federal government later on. Attempting to record hunting and trapping activity in order to clarify land claims in their own terms, bureaucrats sought to collect "statistics" from hunters. To these officials, there were many blanks on the maps and charts with regard to Native land use. They wanted the "factual" information at their fingertips, without the complex understanding of the Cree cultural landscape. As lines on maps were never applied to the landscape from within, the "statistics" recorded by the HBC and federal government of Cree hunting and trapping quantities had never been meaningful in their context.[45] Their economic motives were based on profit from furs. This altered the organizational understanding of the land. The higher the price that could be obtained for the furs, the more trappers there were, both native and non-native, who were interested in harvesting them. The supply, however, was limited regardless of price. As more outsiders came into the territory unhindered, the Cree hunters had to respond to the competition. If others trapped all of the beaver, there would be neither food nor fur for the Cree, so they must keep pace or starve. This intrusion and competition led to over-trapping and a rapid decline in the populations of fur and food-bearing animals.[46] These new trappers were not accountable to the informal Cree system of game regulation; they were not bound by the moral code of the Cree. According to Job Bearskin, the key figure in a documentary on the Quebec and James

45 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 223.
46 Niezen, *Defending the Land*, 42


[1.14]
Traplines for Fort Albany and Kashechewan First Nations hunting, fishing and trapping locations.

Bay hydro-electric development, the white men were not using their souls properly - only for their own gain.[47] The Cree system of reciprocity was a foundation for their activity on the land, but the majority of white men did not observe this system. Quotas were set, which were numbers that responded neither to environmental conditions nor human needs, but rather to statistics and probabilities. Coming to a point of near-extinction, something had to be done. Negotiations between the HBC, government bureaucrats, and Cree hunters led to the creation of beaver reserves. This was largely successful because the Cree's cultural role as stewards was upheld, with management of the reserves left to them.[48] When the beaver populations were eventually restored in the 1940s[49], limits were put on non-native trappers and Cree hunters were again able to exercise authority over their traplines.

Registered traplines are areas of land over which trappers have exclusive trapping rights. As defined by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997:

> "registered trapline area" means an area designated and outlined in black on a registered trapline area map, one of a series of registered trapline area maps covering various parts of the Province of Ontario, produced by the Ministry and filed in the office of the Director of Biodiversity Branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources, as such maps may exist from time to time[50]

In practice, it consists of a route that a trapper sets traps along, requiring intimate knowledge of a large tract of land. These family territories existed prior to government intervention, with vaguely defined extents, often overlapping with neighbouring areas. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the traplines were translated onto maps through interviews with hunters and trappers. It was often difficult for them to indicate a hard line as their boundary since the edges were quite flexible. The shape of traplines on maps may look like puzzle pieces, but on the ground, they make perfect sense in their accommodation of topography, waterways and obstacles. With governmental implementation and oversight of traplines, however, they also institutionalize non-native

47 Richardson, *Job's Garden* (film)
48 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 168 169
49 Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*
50 Trapping, O Reg 667/98, http://canlii.ca/t/52bfh (accessed Sept. 1, 2014)

[1.15]
Marten traps being set by trappers in the autumn.

presence on traditional lands, as they appear to give rights to the use of all remaining land areas. At the same time, they do provide legal rights to Native peoples, protecting their use of these areas from infringement.[51]

While the definition of traplines may appear like a fair solution, it is significant that these 'traplines' were one set of lines drawn on paper maps to help non-natives define boundaries of use and occupation. Agencies that desired to know what land the Cree used intended to parcel up the land for greater clarity in terms of ownership. Significantly, these lines replace the need to negotiate or share space. In some instances as well, this visible and recorded mark on paper can offer justification as well as leverage for white man's appropriation of the remaining land. If on the surface the recognition of trapping zones appear to restore the authority of Natives over their own land, it simultaneously undermined their flexible and intuitive system of life on the land. Likewise, the Treaty agreements may appear to guarantee the maintenance of their economic system. However, the trapline registration was at odds with Treaty rights, which declared the right to "pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered."[52] In effect, the prevalent practice of land activities among non-natives threatened Native use of the land if they did not also participate, while altering their way of practicing in the process. Commenting on the traplines and Treaty agreements, anthropologist Hugh Brody explains that trapline registration gave legal rights of ownership to white trappers, providing them security within their own economic system. For Native trappers, it confined them to particular places, amounting to a severe limitation on Native land use with no legal basis whatsoever.[53] He writes:

> "...It is the bitterest of ironies, therefore, to be told that in Canadian law, registered traplines grant no hunting rights and no protection against other activities that would destroy the wildlife on them. Only if the term "trapline" is fortified by the meanings that the Indians give the word can the importance of their traplines be grasped."[54]

The lines drawn were based on approximations through discussions out of

51 Notzke, *Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resources in Canada*, 125-126.
52 "Treaty No. 9," Articles.
53 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, 95.
54 Ibid., 99.

context, without conclusive assertions by trappers. The lines described sharp boundaries where only fluid ones existed and replaced relationship to the land with restrictions of use. The resulting lack of accuracy in the representation of these traplines is dangerous because people rely on their precision for further planning and understanding of the territory. Illustrated in a physical or factual way, the nuance of moral boundaries on the land is not clear. In actuality, these lines are frequently crossed by Cree hunters while they remain within their moral boundaries.

## POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: TREATY

Political lines established on the land, like Treaties and Indian Reserves, are even more restrictive in their regulation than traplines. However, at the same time, they also served the Cree better in securing political power and rights. The treaty serves as a basis for life on reserves, which are areas set aside by the Crown for exclusive use by First Nations. The Indian Act of 1905 determined that legal title of the reserves remains vested in the Crown.[55] The treaty also determines Native use of Crown land. It provides the legal framework for all other land development, even up to the perimeters or virtual encirclement of the reserves. While the Treaty enabled the traditional Native life to continue within its conditions, it also "facilitated the process whereby Indians in so many places have come increasingly to endure in distressed enclaves, on diminishing islands of Indian life."[56]

The James Bay Lowlands are under Treaty No. 9, which affects over half of Ontario's land mass.[57] The terms of this treaty have been contended since its conception in 1905, due to differences in the interpretations of the treaty's intent. Its territory has never been fully surveyed, and it is argued that the land was never actually surrendered.[58]

The manifest intent of Indian Affairs was to remove Aboriginal title to the land. During the inception of Treaty No. 9, there was no prior discussion with the Cree before negotiations occurred in the courts. This lack of consultation with the Cree resulted in disagreements amongst government officials about how to proceed. The Indian Affairs Minister set a deadline prior to the autumn of 1905 in order to finalize the treaty before

55 Long, *Treaty No. 9*, 397
56 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, 68
57 Long, *Treaty No. 9*, 402
58 Ibid., 26

Native peoples would leave the posts for their inland winter camps. The lengthy in-court discussions combined with this deadline required the Commissioners to select the reserve lands before their trip to the posts, rather than negotiating with First Nation leaders. This method of reserve selection was contrary to the requirements set out in the Treaty.[59]

Native elders contend that during the presentation of the treaty to First Nation leaders, there was inadequate translation of the treaty's content into Cree or Ojibway. Furthermore, the oral agreement was altered from what was in the written agreement, largely to pacify Native concerns and avoid negotiation, which would slow the process of acquiring the lands:

> We assured them that the treaty would not lead to any forced interference. The Indians were generally adverse to being placed on reserves. It would have been impossible to make a treaty if we had not assured them that there was no intention of confining them to reserves.[60]

This is one of the reasons why the treaty is contended today, as the implications of its terms were not clearly understood at the time of signing:

> Aboriginal title and Indigenous rights were not knowingly or willingly ceded, released, surrendered, or yielded up by the Ojibwe and Cree. Indigenous peoples agreed to accept presents that to them signified a renewal of their commitment to the fur trade's middle ground of compromise and coexistence.[61]

Ownership and accountability should go hand-in-hand, however, the present lack of this has created much frustration for First Nations as they have experienced that development rarely takes responsibility for its actions. On Crown land, who is responsible? If there is a spill from a tailings pond into a major river, who suffers? When the land is under remote control, the ones directly impacted have little say or leverage when they don't have 'ownership' of the land. This was not the understanding of the Cree who signed the

59 Long, *Treaty No. 9*, 60
60 "Treaty No. 8," 12 as quoted in Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, 69
61 Long, *Treaty No. 9*, 352


[1.16]
Political boundaries of Treaty 9 and Districts outlined. Ecoregions and ecozones shown in solids colour.

treaty. They saw the establishment of a relationship and the offering of gifts in exchange for use of the territory. Through the Cree perception of what was being offered, they may have felt it was more beneficial to accept than to oppose this non-negotiable treaty.

Some significant issues of concern regarding the unspoken 'rules' inherent in treaty-making have been identified by Dr. John Long in his historical work, *Treaty No. 9*: treaty agreements are not an act of benevolence but a shrewd investment to be repaid in land sales, transportation megaprojects, or natural resources[62]; without provincial concurrence, Ottawa was reluctant to engage in treaty-making (on their own, they would have to shoulder all the responsibility and cost of the treaty without obtaining the benefits)[63]; and indigenous territories seldom conform to the boundaries of the state.[64]

The boundaries set out in the treaty may not be legally legitimate and do not function well practically for the region's inhabitants. Though there are many maps of the region, there remain variations on the boundaries, making them vague and not clearly defined. Traplines of bands who signed treaties do not conform to provincial borders[65], but rather tend to follow environmental features, indicating a more indigenous approach to spatial definition. The bounds of the treaty were based on other vaguely defined reference points. The Treaty No. 9 boundaries were described by other treaties to the west and south. The provincial boundaries marked the north and east extents. None of these were ever accurately surveyed.

All of these bureaucratic lines have little bearing upon how the Cree actually live day-to-day. They come into play when political concerns are raised, but are not active forces. During discussions around the James Bay Hydroelectric development in Quebec in the 1970's, Cree leaders expressed their difference in perception:

> Chief William Gull, of Waswanipi, would not put a figure on the size of his territory, telling the Court that he did not think of the bush as an area of square miles and that in the bush there were no boundaries to measure. When asked about how they were measured in the record, he was clear in stressing the lack of boundaries in the bush: 'no, people hunted all over and even traplines were just for beaver when

62 Long, *Treaty No. 9*, 48
63 Ibid., 50
64 Ibid., 64
65 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 400

[1.17]
The first snowfall in October. The rough potholes of the autumn roads will turn into a smooth white surface of packed snow in the winter. Winter is the most accessible time of year for the region's inhabitants.

> they came.' For him, at least, the structure of the reserves had been an accommodation.[66]

> This hesitancy [to give measures] was not due to an inability to understand or to calculate; rather, it was due to a refusal to think about the land and the game in terms of numbers and statistics or to speak hypothetically.[67]

Treaty agreements demonstrated the Federal Government's lack of understanding of Native rights and cultural traditions towards the land that they had occupied and held sovereignty over since time immemorial. This has resulted in ongoing conflict and efforts to regain Native land sovereignty. Current incursions on the land involving land claims have led to a renewed interest in clarifying the terms of the treaty.

## INSTITUTIONAL BOUNDARIES: CENTRALIZATION

The federal government's implementation of centralized control of the Native population and lands imposed a way of life contrary to First Nation cultural beliefs and practices. The modern reserve system now functions as an enclosed garden.

Isolation in the school environment was seen as a necessary step to removing the native from the man. At the same time, it was intended to re-educate Native peoples into the Southern worldview. Starting with children, it would be easier to remove their partially formed identities of their growing up in the bush. The physical removal from the environment of the bush was the initial gesture. The walls of the school stood between the children and the knowledge and experience of the bush. This included outward forms such as hair cutting and being assigned numbers, while more traumatically it involved prohibiting the Cree language and imposing English. Punishment was often given to students who were caught speaking in Cree.[68]

These administrative limitations no longer required personal negotiation within each person in how they would behave, in dialogue with their ancestors' teachings. Life

66 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 216
67 Ibid., 217
68 Niezen, *Defending the Land*, 52

[1.18]
[1.19]
The Albany River as highway in both summer and winter.

became more scripted with clear 'rules' for how to live. This is especially obvious in many residential schools, where punishment was frequently used against 'wrong' behaviour - much of which was not understood by a bush culture and was quite confusing for Native people, having little relevance to the way of learning or living that they knew. This external control was also evident in the political structuring of First Nation bands. The federal government imposed an unfamiliar administrative structure on Native villages through the enforcement of elected Chiefs and Councils. This was contrary to the self-government based on Native worldview and cultural norms that existed prior to centralization. Self-rule appeared to leave power and decision-making within the community. However, the government's institutional presence remained.[69]

Within an enclosure, such as the reserve system, dependency upon the caretaker increases greatly. By being contained administratively, the responsibility for securing a livelihood is shifted from the individual or group to the institution. This removes the need for interdependence within the community and causes long-term cultural degradation. This is observed in how modern conveniences and infrastructure have altered the way that reserves sustain themselves. They now rely on imports of basic needs and exports of wastes. The lifecycle of obtaining sustenance is displaced from the location.

Centralization also affected the health of the community and in some cases led to epidemics (such as tuberculosis) and mental illnesses: "Instead of the neuroses or psychotic episodes associated with winter isolation in the forest, the new villages would become settings in which emotional instability and despondency afflicted those previously unfamiliar with permanent sedentarization."[70] The loss of interdependency through institutionalization has resulted in social isolation, as well:

> On the Island we used to visit each other more and we used to know where everybody lived and we walked from one end of the community to the other because everything was scattered all over the place... But here [in Chisasibi] you have everything centralized and here we don't visit anymore and we don't share kind words with each other. We pass each other as if we were in downtown Montreal.[71]

69 Niezen, *Defending the Land*, 54
70 Ibid., 55
71 Ibid., 89

[1.20] Fort Albany Band Office, recently constructed.

[1.21] Three sections of the community with health facilities and Band administration on disconnected pieces of land during spring breakfup.

The implementation of external control through the reserve's administrative system has created dependency, and therefore reduced self-sufficiency and threatened the cultural identity of Native communities.

Fort Albany First Nation, or Indian Reserve 67, located on the Western coast of James Bay, is one of the three original Hudson's Bay Company trading posts on the Bay. Its location has changed from its original post further downstream, but it retains the centralized organization typical of Indian Reserves. It was actually three communities at its beginning, geographically divided by waterways. Because seasonal changes are critical, this division makes little sense. It is also not very convenient for anyone, with resources for daily life dispersed between the three sections. Each of the three sections ended up containing one of the three characters of the whole community. One section was set apart as a parcel of land to be used by those who have been in the area the longest: those with a band number. This number enables them to access services from the Department of Indian Affairs and other funded agencies. The second section is used by the trading companies with general stores, and the non-status people. Even though some non-status people may have similar histories to the ones with the band numbers, they cannot live inside the boundary of the reserve. The third section was for the Mission and residential school, where the land was neatly laid out in square lots with white fences around the buildings and green grass.[72]

The community was populated along the banks of the river with tents, tipis or log houses. The people who lived in the areas occupied by traditional dwellings did not mean to stay long; they were to return to the bush when their purposes were fulfilled, either trading furs or reuniting with friends and family. The families that decided to stay constructed their own permanent homes.

The community today is arranged very differently than the days of early trading, and shares little of the physical or social qualities it had in its beginnings. Houses are lined along streets arranged in a grid, nearly defying the contours of the land. The dirt roads are

72 Metatawabin, *Hanaway*, 90-91

[1.22]
The view from Sinclair Island to Anderson Island, with the Elders' Housing overlooking Yellow Creek and the boat launch.
[1.23]
[1.24]

frequented by all kinds of vehicles, often merely for the sake of driving. The Albany River is still considered the 'highway', connecting the community to the bush in both summer and winter. Access, however, is now concentrated to a boat launch nestled in between the three sections, and a few snowmobile trails. Though all families would benefit from being connected to the river, only a few houses line its banks and their lot distinction restricts direct access for others. Yards are too small to use for social activities, so any communal events are concentrated at the school.

Often, little regard is held for the boundaries of modern planning. Networks of informal footpaths crisscross the reserve through individual lots, connecting destinations more directly and disregarding the grid street layout. The lots on the reserve serve to organize the community members according to household, but have no legal basis for their spatial separation. As the reserve lands belong to the Crown, they are not able to be privately owned, and therefore are crossed without trespass.

The arbitrary lines that delineate community spaces make little sense to those who interact within and across these artificial divisions on a daily basis. However, because of the inability for private ownership on the reserve, the way in which people occupy the land informally is consistent with Cree concepts of communal land use and intangible boundaries. Territory is defined by the space one occupies.

## PROVISIONAL BOUNDARIES: FOOD SECURITY

Since food necessarily comes from the land, when sovereignty over land is threatened, there is no longer food sovereignty. Since the treaty, First Nations do not have sovereign authority over their traditional hunting territories. This results in a lack of control over their source of food from the bush. This issue is exacerbated by the confinement of the Indian Reserves and the sedentary lifestyle that reserves promote. Food harvesting was once a part of the daily activity of moving through the bush. Most people now take short trips off the reserve for hunting and trapping. These can be very costly as modes of travel for these quick trips require fuel: snow machines, freighter canoes, and four-wheelers.

Such means can also be detrimental to the quality and predictability of hunted game.

During my visit, a moose was sited on Albany Island, the large piece of land between Kashechewan and Fort Albany. A couple of hunters had been out all day on their snowmobiles trying to round it up by circling towards it from two directions. The noise from these machines fills the animal with fear as it tries to run for safety. Finding nowhere to escape the circling hunters, the animal is exhausted from the chase. I never heard the outcome of this incident, but did observe in a number of people the disapproval of such a method. It was explained to me that the scared animal would have built up so much adrenaline in its body, especially in a long pursuit. This would acidify the meat and make it tough. It wouldn't even be that good for eating in the end. The elder that I spoke with considered this to be very bad practice, and not in line with traditional views of respecting the animals. Younger hunters are not always taught the moral bounds of the hunt from their elders, due significantly to the institutionalization of life within communities. Individuals may feel little need to take responsibility for their actions, or to be accountable to others in the community.

Less time is spent on the land if people are to work and participate in the wage economy. This becomes a vicious cycle of having to spend time working in order to afford to be able to go into the bush to hunt, while not being able to spend much time there because of needing to work. Hunting remains an integral part of the Cree lifestyle for many families, but the static nature of the reserve detracts from the cyclical rhythms of the environment which harvesting must respond to. Food must be obtained elsewhere and more immediately. There is a shift from a symbiotic relationship with the land to a consumer culture in which food is imported at great expense. The cheapest foods end up being the ones with the longest shelf life in the store, and therefore are the most processed. This has led to increased rates of diabetes and heart disease on reserves.[73] There is a growing concern within communities to improve health through programs and personal choices.

To address this acute food insecurity, a farmer's market was started in Fort Albany in 2011. It is a locally organized initiative to make fresher and more affordable produce available. A partnership with a non-profit organization in the south provides a more direct

73 Public Health Agency of Canada. "Chapter 6 – Diabetes among First Nations, Inuit, and Metis populations." http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/publications/diabetes-diabete/facts-figures-faits-chiffres-2011/chap6-eng.php (accessed June 11, 2014)

route from the Ontario Food Terminal to the community. Orders are placed bi-monthly and sent up via truck, train and airplane in the shortest time possible. The great success of this market dispels misconceptions that First Nations prefer unhealthy foods. The reality is that healthy options have just not been accessible. A number of neighbouring communities have sought to start their own markets, after seeing the benefits of this one.[74] One community member mentioned to me that the market has really changed people: they think differently now about food, and it's really showing in the children's improved health, as well. Cooking workshops have been organized at the school kitchen, providing a collective environment to share tips on traditional cooking as well as learning how to use less familiar foods. The market has helped to facilitate a gathering around good food.

The market produce is intended to offset locally harvested foods, which many people still prefer. There is also a desire to maintain the cultural and nutritional importance of traditional foods. Hunting continues to tell the narrative of life on the land and ensures that there is local stewardship of natural resources, by those it matters most to. Wendell Berry's perspective on the garden clarifies the value of the interconnectedness of body and land that is strongly felt in James Bay:

> One of the most important local resources that a garden makes available for use is the gardener's own body. At a time when the national economy is largely based on buying and selling substitutes for common bodily energies and functions, a garden restores the body to its usefulness - a victory for our species.[75]

While the bush itself has been framed in this thesis as the garden in James Bay, there do exist more Western understandings and practices of gardening in the North. A number of homes in Fort Albany have set up their own vegetable gardens, mostly in raised beds. There have been many successes with these for individual families. Parents enjoy seeing their children excited to go out and water or watch the seedlings emerge from the soil. There is an appreciation for the effort it takes to grow food and a pride in the harvest.[76] Small greenhouses have also been constructed in the community, with one


74 Sustain Ontario, "Fort Albany Farmers' Market" (accessed Aug. 15, 2013)
75 Berry, *The Gift of Good Land*, 168
76 Vandenberg, "Improving Access to Fresh Vegetables," 2014

[1.25]
An extended family meets up along the riverbank en route to their traplines.

at the school and one at a home. Both of these methods have a lot of promise and local interest.

However, there remain some reservations about conventional gardening in this landscape.[77] For one, the original Catholic Mission had agricultural fields for the school during its operation. The land was cleared and tilled at great effort, largely by native labour. It was then planted and tended by the residential school children as part of their daily tasks. It has been recorded that often this took most of the day, and there was no time left for learning.[78]Although so much time was spent in the fields, community members recall having little knowledge of what it was they were doing out there: they just did as they were told. Understandably, with this history in mind, there are some lingering feelings of discomfort in the community with growing food in this way and continuing to cultivate "White man's food" rather than focusing on traditional foods.[79]

For those who are interested in personal gardens, there also remains a gap in knowledge of how to grow vegetables. In conversation with various community members, some people said they weren't sure what was a weed and so they just left everything. Others were unsure of the processes for planting and cultivating.[80] Another concern was with dogs getting into the gardens, and vandalism. Fences around the gardens are almost necessary to preserve the harvest. It is important to reflect on how this separation might affect relationship with food from the bush, if ever-increasing containment of even a local food supply becomes the norm.

Considering the boundaries that these sorts of home gardening creates, a number of questions come to mind: How might community gardens assist in completing the enclosure of the reserve by containing sustenance within it? Or, might they just serve to reduce food expenses on produce that people would buy anyways? Would gardens at all reduce the incentive to hunt? Or, is there a possibility that an increased interest in traditional foods might arise, as people become more aware of their cultivating capacities? Could the evolution of these gardens lead back to the land, and help to break down some of the boundaries that the current food system has created?

Certainly there are many potentials with private and community gardens. It will

77 Vandenberg, "Improving Access to Fresh Vegetables," 2014
78 Metatawabin, *Hanaway*
79 From conversations
80 Vandenberg, "Improving Access to Fresh Vegetables," 2014

[1.26]
The greenhouse at the school in Fort Albany.
[1.27]
The bi monthly farmer's market. A day of preparation, and a half hour of frenzied activity as people shopped for fresh produce.

remain of importance to consider their role and impact in light of present and possible boundaries of the reserve. How might vegetable gardening reinforce or redefine current boundaries? Could these gardens assist in strengthening a Cree sense of the moral bounds of the bush as garden? How might gardens be designed and defined in Cree communities to integrate with the bush? These questions of appropriateness begin to address what might be considered spatial aspects of food security.

> The abuse of wildlife disgusts and alarms the Indians. It represents a dangerous failure to respect the animals and the land, a respect that is essential for the Indians' own continued supply of food; essential, that is, for their security.[81]

81 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, 233

With the influx of European traders, settlers and missionaries to the James Bay region, it became evident that there were great cultural differences from the native inhabitants in their beliefs and practices regarding land use. This was revealed through the boundaries that each culture observed. Native peoples saw themselves as sovereign caretakers of the land as they lived within moral boundaries based on intangible measures, which created narratives on the land. The whole bush is a garden which the Cree tend with respect and reciprocity. In contrast, Europeans brought ideas of private land ownership and physical boundaries as they asserted control on the land. Their garden was surrounded by lot lines and fences which gave a familiar sense of security. They saw the unfamiliar bush as a barrier and something to be tamed, rather than embraced. This ownership through exclusion resulted in Native exile from lands they had occupied for centuries. The Cree relationship with the land was not understood or respected by the newcomers. This misunderstanding was also represented in the Federal Government's implementation of the traplines, treaties, and reserve system, which removed the authority over the land from native control and into the hands of the newcomers. Many present concerns have arisen from the application of these controls, such as changing lifestyle patterns and activities towards increased dependency on external provision. This has an especially significant impact on food security in the remote communities of the James Bay Lowlands. Broadening our concepts of the bush to include the intangible boundaries of the Cree, we may begin to see that any action in this cultural landscape requires constant negotiation with the people and the land. In the bush garden, cultivation must also engage human character as these moral bounds are traversed.

# IN THE BUSH

*I spent an afternoon with a member of the Band Office talking about housing and infrastructure. I had noted in conversations with other community members that there was a great interest in the new houses built "in the bush." I wanted to know more about this. She explained that it costs $10,000 more per lot to keep the trees on the new lots. Due to the demand for them, however, it has now been made a requirement in the housing policy that all new houses retain as many trees as possible. It makes people feel good to have the bush around them, she said. I also wondered about the siting of these houses, along the channel. She said, "the river is a part of our lives all the time." Both of these observations indicate an attitude toward the reserve that would seem to look beyond its invisible boundary for what is desired in life. Even though she is often limited to work within its political confines, there is a tendency to negotiate with this line.*

*There are many concerns with the infrastructure on the reserve. The limitations imposed by the political framework have a direct impact on quality of life. The water treatment plant's limited capacity cannot accommodate the creation of many more lots, despite a need for more houses.*

*She spoke about how the natural ecosystem takes care of many functions at once. It cleans the water in the muskeg by filtering out impurities, acting like a sponge or liver. It is an extremely resilient and effective system that we could learn from. Does concentrating waste into one area that is vulnerable to overflowing into the river make sense here?*

*I found it interesting how she tended to integrate the bush into her work in these ways. As this was in my mind, I looked up behind her desk to find a map of the community. I was struck by how little it told of the place: simple uniform black lines indicating lots, houses and water lines on a white sheet. What a discrepancy between what I saw there and what I experienced from being in the community! I wondered if a better map could be made. One that gave more nuance and context, delineating the cultural boundaries of the community. Could this artifact assist in re-conceptualizing the place in future decisions?*

[ v ]
New houses 'in the bush'.

# GIGNAC

*I stayed with a woman on her small homestead in Southern France for five weeks, helping with daily tasks. During one of our evening conversations, we had a map open. I noticed then how near I was to the town of Gignac. I wondered about my origins. An aunt had traced our name back to some of the earliest settlers of Canada. Could they have come from here? Near the end of my stay, we returned to this map and my host drew my attention to the national network of footpaths (or* Sentiers de grande randonnée*) detailed on it. Following these trails, I could reach Gignac in about seven days.*

*My host dropped me off at the nearest access point to the "voie vert" – an old rail trail that is integrated into the* chemins de petit randonnée*. Her gifts for my journey: a large marble and a sachet of lavender.*

*My pilgrimage took me past horse paddocks, farm fields, vineyards and orchards; through towns and villages; up and over mountains and along rivers. It consisted of an interconnected network of anything from dedicated nature trails, to roadways, to farmers' tracks, marked with painted blazes on natural or man-made monuments. The persistence of the ancient paths, affirmed and trodden over countless years, assured me that this way could be trusted. It also defined my purpose, and legitimized my presence. I was a traveller, and here was my route, well-known and well-defined. I was continually reassured along the way with the simple coloured lines. The markers are maps in real-time. In this way, the path itself is an enclosure.*

*As many sections of the paths go through farms, it is often necessary for them to be fenced in, requiring a gate for hikers to use. I was surprised the first time I saw this. I had climbed to a mountain ridge to find grazing sheep scattered on the hilltop. They were fenced in with an electric fence, and the path went right through their pasture. A sign was posted on a tree beside the gate, instructing walkers to please replace the gate as we pass through. What daring trust of complete strangers! If someone failed at their duty, it was the farmer who was left with the mess of finding his lost sheep. I saw in this moment that when there is the least physical enclosure, there is the greatest moral responsibility.*

*At the end of my journey, upon reaching Gignac, exhausted and with no place to stay, I had collapsed in surrender when I discovered that there was no where I could stay in town. Giving up all my effort, the idea miraculously came to me that I could take a bus to Montpellier where there would surely be a hostel! It was perfect and would satisfy my conditions of time and cost. So, when I waited at the station for a bus that never came, a new level of despair crept in. How could this plan also fail?*

*However, in the midst of my inability to make anything work for myself, I was offered a gift*

*I could not have imagined to ask for. A couple was sitting beside me, also waiting for the bus to Montpellier. As we slowly realized that because of the holiday no buses would be running, I'm sure an expression of utter weakness came over my face. It made little difference to the couple, but for me, this was my last resort. Suddenly, without explanation or hesitation, I was being ushered to their car, to stay at their home for the night until I could get the bus the following day.*

*Nanou set me up on their terrace with some pastries and orange juice, and a foot bath of epsom salts. Patrice then proceeded to entertain me by recounting stories of his own travels across France and around the world, showing me his maps and photographs. This was far better than any accommodation I could have secured myself. More than the utility of place, what I needed to complete my journey was relationship through people to this place. Here, I had come home.*

*At my departure the following morning, Patrice offered me a gift: one of his trekking poles.*

[ vii ]
A trail blaze painted on a monument.

To make a landscape sacred is to sacrifice something to it rather than sacrificing it to some other perceived need. It means giving as much as you receive from the land in order to create a community with it. It also means placing words on the land, naming it, and telling stories about it ... and this is what makes a garden in its fullest sense. It is a process that requires dealing with change while also maintaining a larger continuity.

Hans M. Carlson
*Home Is the Hunter*

# AND THAT WAS ITS NAME

## Marking and Naming

[2.1]
Trees are "planted" along the ice roads as edge markers; in sudden white outs across the river these are essential so drivers don't get stuck in the snow.

The human reverence and action of returning something to the land completes the formation of the garden. Naming and marking are processes that begin the symbolic transformation of a space into a place; that is, a location within a history. In this way, marks and names on the land are the means of enclosure.

In the shifting landscape of the James Bay Lowlands, it is significant when marks persist for a long time. The resilience of a mark is not simply due to the intent of one who made it, but rather because the mark holds meaning for a broader community who sustain it.

In the Cree context, naming does not take the form of self-aggrandizement, but rather provides cues to the histories embedded in words. Place names are memories remembered through practice. They are a means of claiming a way of life and marking territory. They do not serve a static purpose, nor are they expected to remain as constants; they are living memories. In the James Bay Lowlands, change is not surprising or unnerving: it is a certainty. The land cleanses itself annually. It is all water; shifting, flowing somewhere else, to return altered. It is filtered through all of the interventions of man and collects their effects. The place names on the land embody this flexibility as they speak of a specific locality and its history, simultaneously human and natural. Water erases memories and then re-writes them.

Naming initiates the creation of myths about a location, connecting a place to a broader cultural context, becoming part of a larger time scale and continuity of life. Names must also respond to change in order to be integrated into this continuum, since they take on different meanings over time as practices and patterns change. Interpretations alter with each group or individual that encounters the place. Stories are told and retold with each listener hearing them differently. This is fitting. Just like the land they signify, place names are forever perceived in new ways.

Some questions arise: How do we mark the land? What are the fences that are put up? What is the form of the enclosure? It may be monuments or landmarks at critical points of a territory. It may be a literal barrier to include, exclude or demarcate. Thresholds define the passage from one territory into another, while pathways provide a continuum

[2.2]
A cross stands on the North riverbank where a rail bridge crosses over the Moose River.

of occupation between exclusive spaces. It may also be a moral enclosure, found in stories that inform practices on the land, or in place names that reveal history and memory of particular places.

These markings define a relationship to the land. They firstly state that there is a relationship: man and land are interacting in a particular place. The form of marking upon the land outlines what is intended for one's relationship to it. In the James Bay Lowlands, marks reveal a posture towards a land that is frequently and inevitably changing.

# BOUNDS

The following sections illustrate examples of 'bounds' as anchor points in measuring the Cree narrative of life on the land.

## LANDMARKS

Landmarks or monuments (whether modest or grand) placed on the land serve as tangible reminders and advisors of a way of life. Their presence, function and meaning aid in navigating the Cree cultural landscape.

In the past, caches served as waymarkers and provision on the land. Their contents measured how frequented the places were. Caches moderated the extents of immediate provision to be found on the land. This intervention and provision on the land solidified the reality of human activity. People were not merely subject to the changeability of the landscape, but could mediate their existence within it both provisionally and orientationally with such landmarks. Sites were chosen along hunting or travelling routes to store food, such as dried meat, for times of need along a journey.[82] These were often located on mounds of earth in the muskeg where trees would grow, sometimes even using a hollow tree to serve as the storage place. Other types of caches included cairns which

82 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, 187


[2.3]
A cache box at one family's camp.

covered a hole in the ground and protected the stores from animals. If no game was found en route, the cache would be a point of hope and assurance.[83] This corresponds with the general nonchalance of the Cree people in difficult situations, in which hope is maintained in the land:

> Most traditional hunters see the creation of a large store of food not only as a physical burden but also as a potential burden on their relationship with the animals from which it is taken. Too large a store implies a loss of hope for the future of the human/other-than-human relationship, thereby jeopardizing the hunter's luck.[84]

At hunt camps, there would be a storage place for both food and supplies to ease the burden of travelling. Traps, fuel and camp equipment might be stored year-round, while food was cached for the stay at the camp. Wooden racks or platforms were built to keep the game meat elevated and safely out of reach, as well as for respectful disposal of certain bones. Remains were never simply thrown away.[85]

While food is not as often cached today due to changes in lifestyle and food sourcing, other necessities for journeys are. Between January and March of most years, the James Bay Winter Road is constructed with funding from the mining corporation located at its northern end, as well as the federal government and coastal First Nation bands.[86] This is a surprisingly little-known annual feat of human and machine labour. The road made of ice and snow traverses the usually swampy ground of the Lowlands as winter offers unmatched mobility in this typically impassable region. Crossing over three major rivers in a 312-kilometre stretch, it connects Moosonee to Attawapiskat, with Kashechewan and Fort Albany along the route.

Gasoline is significantly cheaper at the south end of the road, where a train frequently brings in supplies from Cochrane. Many people travelling on the road calculate carefully how far their vehicle will take them before it needs refuelling, and will time a trip south according to this. For others, they know their car won't make it the whole way on one tank. Strategically placed markers (anything from toy dolls nailed to trees, to red tape

83 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*
84 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 45
85 Ibid., 45
86 Ginter, "Ice Roads on the James Bay Coast," (accessed May 2, 2014)

[2.4]
[2.5]
[2.6]
The James Bay Winter Road is constructed each year to cross the rivers and muskeg, mostly with funds from the DeBeers Diamond Mine located just beyond Attawapiskat. This opens up the region to transportation that is impossible at any other time of year.

on branches, to oil cans hung upside down on tree stumps) identify to the shrewd observer a gas cache - a jerry can stashed beneath the snow.

Along the road, whiteouts can blow through without warning, particularly on open stretches across muskeg or rivers, where the wind blows un-restrained, obscuring an already indistinguishable white landscape. Over these precarious stretches, small trees are cut and 'planted' in the snowbanks at the roadsides to keep drivers on track. Their dark silhouettes visible in the snow aid in the negotiation between vehicle travel and the unrelenting landscape, marking the extents of safety. An excerpt from Margaret Atwood's poem *Paths and Thingscape* (1970) speaks about such subtle signs:

> Those who went ahead
> of us in the forest
> bent the early trees
> so that they grew to signals
>
> the trail was not
> among the trees but
> the trees[87]

Objects are also left to mark along trails where entry points to trapping areas are located[88]. Empty pop cans on sticks or the ubiquitous sign of black oil containers on tree stumps give new purpose to travel waste. They indicate that an area is in use so that other trappers know to go elsewhere.

Other marks on the land include the well-known inuksuks, typically stone human-like figures or cairns. These are often used to mark the extents of a band territory or, as explained to me by one elder, signify the beginning of Inuit land. In the winter, an inuksuk of snow along the ice road marked the divide in territory (and subsequently responsibility for road maintenance) between the Moose Cree First Nation and Fort Albany First Nation.

Grave sites used to be located throughout the land at meaningful locations. This

87 Atwood, "Paths and Thingscape", 1970
88 Boyden, "Trapping to save a culture," Mar. 7, 2014

[2.7]
A trail in the bush is marked at a fork with an oil can indicating one direction and a Pepsi can for the other.

meant that the area surrounding the grave had to be left fallow for a time out of respect for the dead. However, to facilitate increased hunting and trapping demands, these began to be consolidated so that the land could be used continually.[89] At one historical site, Ghost River Island, grave markers indicate a meaningful history of place. There is currently a plan to clean up the site (Nameo Sipi Cleanup Project) and make it more hospitable for travellers.

Along the river near Fort Albany rests the locally well-known Mamatowassini – a large green stone of metamorphic rock, created by lava that comes to the surface of an ocean bed. Since this phenomena does not occur in the James Bay Lowlands, it is reasoned that the rock was broken off by glaciers and deposited there. Other explanations reside in the spirit world, and in cases like this may seem more believable.[90] It remains a significant marker along the river, connecting travellers to the particular place and across time. Oddities like this are significant for local people and visitors alike, and are held in the memory for a long time.

We leave marks like these as reference points, both in space and history. They signify the place that has been created by human action, while transforming that place to become more suited to our occupations. They are accommodations on the land that reveal relationship through an undeniable and ongoing presence. These marks are made in every garden. The following thoughts were penned by a friend as she tended my community garden plot while I was away. She draws out these characteristics with surprising clarity:

> After, I sit in the wood pavilion again to eat my breakfast. The weeds are growing up between the slats. It makes me wonder about the meaning of 'landmark.' As it is normally understood, a landmark is something vertical that differentiates itself from its surroundings. Looking out over the field and the opposite bank of the river, that's what comes to mind: an undifferentiated field of green punctuated by human constructions. Even within the garden - there are the plants and then there are the stakes, the rain catchers, the picnic benches, the constructed stuff. We're not always so comfortable with ambiguity - we like putting things into categories, this or that. But what happens when we embrace the both/

89 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 146

90 Henderson, *Every Trail Has a Story*, 8-9

[2.8]
Camp areas set up just off the road make the transition into the bush simple for a weekend or afternooon.

> and? Like the native trio of the Three Sisters - is the corn the stake for the beans or the harvest? It's both. How can we make our buildings part of the ecosystem? Is this even desirable? Marking the land is such a fundamental human act - an inukshuk, a cairn, a furrow. We want to show that we've been here, that some intent, some rational intent, has guided the development. Because there's always the danger that trying to do both means you do neither well. Who knows, though. I met a structural engineer who was slowly weaving live willows into bridges on his property. That's the other thing - the different timescales and lifespans of constructed vs. natural things. Those bridges will survive hundreds of years, but they might take decades to build.[91]

## BARRIERS

While landmarks can serve as "fences" in that they create an understanding of enclosure, a continuous constructed barrier tends to be even more exclusive and assertive. Its intention is usually to either keep something in or out. Its form is determined by its criteria for enclosure. These may be actively protected to maintain their integrity and certainty, or they may be ephemeral and subject to any number of altering factors. Sometimes barriers are not even recognizable as distinguishers of space to the unaware observer.

How barriers are rendered indicates a posture toward site, time, and degree of exclusivity. Choices are made according to how much maintenance particular materials will require for the integrity of the barrier over a desired time period. Consideration is also given to the sourcing of materials, whether they are local or imported, natural or man-made. Permeability indicates either loose guidelines for the boundary, or complete exclusion.

Intangible barriers also have a great impact on accessibility to a region. In the remote communities on Western James Bay, the difficulty of travel is often an impediment for many people. For nine or ten months of the year, communities are only accessible by airplane. Particularly for the many low-income families in this region, it is difficult to afford a trip even to the next community to visit relatives. Most gatherings are organized

91 Oswald, Notes from Danielle's Garden, Saturday


[2.9]
The new Northern store, with gas pump out front inside the barbed wire fence.

for the couple of months when the James Bay Winter Road is constructed, connecting all coastal communities to the South.

Presently, there are not many fences on the Fort Albany reserve, compared to southern towns. They were used around the gas pumps, where one always needs an attendant to come out and unlock the enclosure around the pumps. There is also a fence surrounding the dump and airstrip. A few lots have wooden fences, but many of the posts are heaved out of place by the deep frost over the years.

Out in the bush, few barriers are to be found directly on the land. The ones that are constructed, however, have far-reaching effects. Dams built on the broad rivers feeding into James Bay are regional in their assertions, flooding large areas of land with their reservoirs. They displace local communities and impede migration routes, both human and non-human, in favour of powering distant populations.

## THRESHOLDS

An important component of a barrier is the point at which it breaks: the threshold that connects one enclosed space to another. Thresholds can be subtle or abrupt; physical or intangible. These can often be mystical, representing a portal into another world, whether earthly or spiritual.

Natural features such as rivers and streams are often used as geographic dividing lines, but they also serve as gateways: routes that lead into a territory. These were the initial inroads for European explorers and traders, allowing access far inland without having to navigate the difficult terrain of the bush.

Cultural thresholds are meeting places, where two worldviews engage. These are places where gifts are offered and negotiations are carried out; where relationships are established. There is usually a spatial location for these that is considered common ground, such as a trading post or courtroom.

While these breaks can be abrupt, such as a gate or national borderline, thresholds on the land or in the bush may be more transitional and subtle: the threshold is the overlap

[2.10]
A snowmobile trail beside a drainage ditch tracies the reserve boundary.

or common ground. One community member explained that the edge of Swampy Cree territory was where the spruce trees ended and the pine trees began. This is not a clear divide, but a liminal zone that mediated between two cultures occupying the land. Further north, where there are no trees, inuksuks were used by the Inuit to indicate entrance into their land.

Political thresholds are usually abrupt and clearly defined. They are easily represented on visual maps. However, they may not be so obvious in the experience within the context that they apply: without any geographical indications, you are suddenly on the reserve, seemingly arbitrarily cut into the bush.

At a personal level, within homes, there is often an entry vestibule that moderates the cold wind, preventing it from directly entering the house. These spaces also tend to gather items like boots and coats, mediating between life lived indoors and out. It is a meeting place for visitors.

## PATHWAYS

Movement through the land traces paths that define occupation on the land in time and space. As in a garden, the pathways are facilitators of movement and action, even as they define sections, dividing the space to include human occupation and mediation. Traversing the land is one narrative *mete* of 'metes and bounds', which measures the Cree way of life. Paths through time and space can be retraced by connecting landmarks through movement on the land.

Paths reveal a presence on the land that is both intimately physical and spiritual:

> The Cree word for the hunt, reported by anthropologist Frank Speck as *Nemeckenu*, translates as "my path" or "my road." Hunting was thus conceived as a journey across a personal landscape as understood by each hunter and this was a conceptual as well as a physical path.[92]

Movement on the land is a way of knowing: physically tracing the land is a means of

92 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 48

[2.11]
Riding out to collect firewood; following rabbit tracks. Many animals, as well as people tend to follow paths that are cleared and easier to traverse.

gaining knowledge, of both the self and the other. This movement and measuring is a form of knowing as it connects points in time and space.

Movement over the land traces geography and history, and therefore is an act of place-making. The action of traversing creates stories, as it provides opportunities with every step for new encounters. In particular, the hunter's movement over the land marked the ability to engage different areas over a season or from year to year through the journey in the quest for food. Movement through possible food sources was part of the hunter's path.

This activity on the land sometimes leaves tangible traces. Other times, the traces reside in personal or collective memory translated through stories. It is common for the Cree to refer to a desire to follow in the 'footsteps' of the ancestors.

The traditional territory of the Cree continues to be traversed today. In the winter of 2014[93], the "Omushkegowuk Walkers" travelled 1700 kilometres, from Attawapiskat to Ottawa. Their journey is steeped in rich cultural metaphor: it is a movement both physically and politically aiming to "reclaim our steps past, present, and future"[94] in seeking to pursue the honouring of the treaties. To traverse the land is to claim each step that is taken as well as the place that it is taken in. Walking is occupation. The imprints left on the land, however briefly, are a record. In the changeable landscape of the Swampy Cree territory, traversing the land engages the walker in a continued dialogue of people and place, through time. The land is regarded as sacred. This journey across it is an offering of oneself back to the land that provides. As a pilgrimage, walking the land is a search to know both the ancestors and the self through the process, often leading to healing either physically, spiritually, or emotionally. For many, it is a path of reconciliation. Many walkers reported that their homelands provide strength and empowerment for the journey, as if the ground beneath them was a support for the spirit as well as the body. Weakness and strength are found on the same road.

Paths in the bush take many forms today. On the frozen river in winter, snowmobiles carve their way over the terrain of massive ice shards and snow drifts. Because of the challenge of path-making out there, and the long distances the river is

93 4 January to 25 February, 2014

94 "Omushkegowuk Walkers' Historic Journey Calls for New Arrangements," http://cpcml.ca/Tmld2014/D44022.htm (accessed June 23, 2014)

[2.12]
Areas in the bush are scouted out for good stands of dead trees to cut for firewood. These can be selected by looking at the tops of trees to see if the needles are dry, as well as looking at the bark for dryness. Then, check for wetness of the wood by cutting a notch into the south side, where the water would concentrate most.

used for, these trails become well-worn from concentrated use. This creates the "highway" that the Cree refer to when talking of the rivers. Going out to get firewood, one would sometimes scout out a good dry stand of trees first by snowshoe. This is a much more quiet and agile method to navigate the bush. Once that is found, one would return with snowmobile and sled along a more direct or frequented route that would accommodate the machine. The snowmobile greatly limits your access. It can get stuck in heavy snow, has a limited turning radius (especially with the sled on the back), and requires a pathway cleared of trees and stumps. It is much more suited for the clearing of the reserve than the thick bush. The space of the bush is diminished for those people who only enter it by machine.

However, there are other pathways that leave their marks on the landscape, which speak of a non-indigenous relationship to land: one of dominance and intrusion. These include transportation corridors constructed for development and mining of natural resources. Roads and railways open up the bush with little regard for patterns of life on the land. They facilitate the influx of outsiders into territory, making the area accessible to non-indigenous hunters who strain the balance Cree hunters have maintained with their environment. These inroads also bring more pollution into the region, whether through emissions or disposable goods.

Transmission corridors similarly scar the land as they bring into the region the amenities of modern life. They have to be continually cleared of trees to avoid damage to the power lines and towers, with bare cross-sections of approximately 50 metres. These clear-cut areas disrupt both small and large game movement that relies upon continual tree cover for safety and sustenance. The following poem by Margaret Cromarty, of Chisasibi on Eastern James Bay, captures the emotional conflict of these developments:

**Steel Towers**

One cold day
I stood on the shores of James Bay.
The sun shone bright, the sky blue.
I wanted to find a clue.

[2.13]
Transmission lines cut through the landscape, with large swaths of bush cleared to prevent interaction and damage. This leads to disrupted animal movements in many areas where they rely on the bush for cover, but serves as travel routes for people on snowmobiles where it is much easier to travel.

Why, among the spruce and pine
rows of steel towers stood in line.
They were out of place, as I near
an Indian camp I shed a tear.

Looking for white birds-
instead as I turn my back
tracks of bulldozers
meet my sight.

Against the sky and beyond
stood stark steel towers.
In this harsh land of ice and snow
these steel towers are colder than forty below.

We Cree live in harmony
with nature.
In this land where no man had trod
in the fresh white snow I read
signs of upheaval of black earth,
bulldozers making roads
and steel towers standing tall.

## INFORMATION

Somewhere between physical indications and intangible meaning found in words, marking is also information: we can read marks in the landscape like a book, to learn history and gain knowledge. As a hunter, this is a necessary ability for tracking animals. Reading the landscape is also valuable for ensuring balanced use of the land for all. At beaver lakes, a trapper would notch a tree to indicate to others that it was already being trapped.[95] Marking has become important for reading details of incursions into the bush by outsiders. Native peoples can decipher the actions, and often the intentions, of these intruders without even having to come in contact with them. This allows a quiet distance for decision-making on what to do. Sometimes this leads to confrontation. This is often not aggressive or demanding, but rather inquisitive and observant, adding a strong

95 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*

statement of position rather than a lengthy explanation:

> One of them at this point asked Joseph if he knew whose trapline the cabin was on. When Joseph gave no answer, the older of the two white men said he had heard it belonged to a Mr. Patsah. Then Joseph did react. He was Mr. Patsah! For a moment he ceased his relentless pacing and searching. He opened his arms wide in the clearest of gestures, and said, "This land, all round here, is mine. My land."[96]

Other times, this distancing leads to Native retreat further into their territory to try to maintain their space and absorb the shock of the advancing White frontier.

I learned an element of how to read the bush in selecting dead trees for firewood. Peeling bark can be an indication, but a more definitive sign is when the tops of the trees are dry. Cutting a notch into the south side of the bark where any remaining water would accumulate allows one to test and see if the tree is still wet or how deep the wetness goes. As we were stopped to cut the "snags," my friend pointed out rabbit tracks near an area he had previously cut where branches were lying on the snow. "When you see tracks, leave food for the animals and they will later leave food for you." He snapped off some spruce branches and laid them on the ground near the tracks for the rabbits to eat. They like the spruce tips, but obviously cannot climb into the trees to get them. Simple gestures like these are part of the daily movement through the land, strengthening non-human relationships with each step.

One can also read the general health of animals and their sources of sustenance by observing their behaviour. For example, if the jaybirds start to eat human food, one knows their own is scarce. Typically the birds don't like to come near humans. In this way one can interpret what is happening out in the bush, beyond the human space. The animals tell it through their actions.

Bounds are the more tangible or physically present elements that describe the limitation of a territory. That they exist as references in situ prevents them from becoming abstract

96 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, 225

conceptions. Accuracy is negotiable. In situations where a boundary marker may have been moved or altered (i.e. a tree dies or is confused with another over time), the original intent of the boundary is what matters. This requires a discourse across time. The ancient English custom of "beating the bounds" involves walking around the boundary of a parish property to hand down the knowledge of the limits of the land. The action of beating the boundary markers with green boughs would help participants remember their location. The ritual was also useful for checking the boundaries for encroachment and alteration of boundary markers. Similarly, as Cree moved over the land for the harvesting of food, knowledge of their land was reinforced and their repetitive presence at the boundaries ensured the active negotiation of the bounds both socially and physically. To traverse the land is to know it.

## METES

The following sections describe the connections between bounds as forms of measurement which orient one in relation to the boundaries.

### STORIES

Language in cultural landscapes draws out character in the land that cannot be simply observed, but must be articulated to be understood. We know the land in a collective way through language, as stories create cultural meaning. Words bring the land into being in our perceptions, as we mete out the extents of our comprehension. Naming is equivalent to boundary-making in that it delineates a cultural understanding:

> The abundance of life in the High Arctic is the region's deepest surprise of all. To be able to speak of it, even a little, in Inuktitut gave me in some essential way both the glory and the detail of the land.[97]

Words create and reveal boundaries. As one traverses a landscape, stories link

97 Brody, *The Other Side of Eden*, 37

[2.14]
The Albany River in winter.

these words: "Wherever he goes he wants to leave behind not a chaotic wake, not an empty space, but the comforting marker-buoys and trail-signs of stories."[98] In an oral culture, as Cree was historically, stories must be repeated for their existence to continue. Their presence and meaning reside within people's memories and are a part of measuring their journey of life on the land. To think about language spatially as it relates to human action emphasizes that the meaning of words supports our use of particular places, and grounds us in "the fact that use is the foundation of meaning."[99] Adaptations allow these stories to maintain relevance.

Introduced in Norway House, Manitoba in 1840 by Methodist minister James Evans, syllabics spread rapidly amongst the Cree, of their own accord.[100] It proved to be an extremely effective communication system for Cree peoples, as well as a means of negotiating languages between English and Cree.

Stories continue to be related orally. However, the decline of the Cree language and the loss of elders who know the stories has led to an increase in recordings of the tales.[101] There are concerns that the Cree language is being lost among the younger generations who have little exposure to it, either in school or in the home. There is not always a Cree teacher at the school, and not many children have an interest in learning it. Audio recordings have been an invaluable tool to document both the content and the character of the stories and storytellers. Syllabics have made it possible to record in the Cree language, which is of primary importance in retaining the cultural meanings of their content. Stories transcend generations, allowing people across ages to tread a common ground:

> These stories, and parts of these stories, emerged when I sat with my capan [grandmother]. She asked me to record the words. I sat in her kitchen. The kitchen floor had worn patches scattered throughout it. Paths lay where she had walked. I thought of those paths as being metaphors of her journey through life. The paths in her kitchen were like her stories. The paths on the floor were like the pathways of memory, they were maps of where she had been, which also represented the

98 Swift, *Waterland*
99 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 15
100 Olson, *Literacy and Orality*, 92
101 Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, 33


[2.15]
A reference sheet for Cree syllabics.

> ways in which she had traveled, and the connection with the land for Nehiyawak. The mapmaking of culture is also represented in political struggles.[102]

The markings on the floor are an active, lived-out representation of history. The stories that produced them draw the lines of the cultural map or boundary in the intimate setting of one's daily movements. As an oral map, important information about the land was also passed between people through the telling of stories. Experiences on the land during one hunter's day were described for the benefit of others who may pass that way later on.

## PLACE NAMES

Names hold memory. Place names for specific locations on the land serve as mnemonics for histories.[103] These identifiers enable us to relate through time to a place that persists from generation to generation. We leave names and take stories. Place names find their meaning in action, and that meaning is enriched through the association between the rich cultural information encoded in the names and the location.[104] Cree place names are precisely descriptive, with the Native terminology reflecting the "shape, location, and/or conditions of the land and the animals and creatures that were... found there."[105] They also preserve "information about a landscape that is changing geologically in response to ongoing glacial rebound... place names record the older geological formations."[106] Through their delineation of a landscape, they provide a means of claiming a way of life and marking territory that sustains the people. The land can thus be read like poetry.

European naming of Rupert's Land, the area of the Hudson Bay drainage basin, in the 1670s and 1680s provided in abstract terms a form of claiming the territory which had no boundary markers on the land itself. The ambiguous edges of this land caused issues of definition for European settlers. Their naming of the lands attempted to articulate claims through words that were largely disjointed from Cree values and understandings of land. Cree place names are descriptive and inclusive, while Europeans tended to invoke a sense

102 *Oral History Forum*, 51
103 Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, 167
104 Ibid., 167

[2.16]
A typical street in Fort Albany.

of exclusive possession by using names of significant individuals. Rupert's Land, Charles Town or Hudson's Bay illustrate this. In contrast, in the early contact with newcomers, the Cree used words like *waskahiganish*, which means "little house" or "means of enclosing a small space with walls," to describe their understanding of European occupation of the land.[107]

Names remain powerful representations of the Cree's cultural occupation of this region, while little physical evidence remains. There seems to be a particular legitimacy to Cree place names in their grounding in the history of a particular place. Naming after prominent figures requires a historical knowledge for the name to have meaning to individuals. In contrast, Indigenous place names are accessible to all who can come into that territory, or even to those who can imagine it through the stories evoked by them.

In many places, English names are being replaced once again by the old Cree names. The Albany River is re-named as *Kistachowan* (or *Kashechewan*) *Sipi*, meaning "fast, strong" and "water moving."[108] There is a local memory embedded in the Cree names which defines and demonstrates their knowledge of the land:

> ... Cree place names can begin to outline a symbolic Cree interpretation of James Bay not as a peripheral part of Canada or Quebec but rather as something Cree-centred. 'Our land is our memory, that is why it is so important to us,' former grand chief Matthew Coon Come tells us: 'almost every tree out there has a name, almost every rock. Something happened here, something happened there, somebody killed his first moose at that mountain. We know where the bear dens are, the moose yards, the beaver, the otter, the mink. Everything has a story and these are the stories that sustain us.' Seasonal hunting camps may have quickly receded back into the forests from which they were made, but what remains are the names that the Cree gave to their land and that represent the anchor points for that spider's web of meaning that is spun of narratives and relationships to that land.[109]

Anthropologist Keith Basso explains that "Wisdom sits in places. It's like water that never dries up. You need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well, you also

105 Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, 26
106 Ibid., 167
107 Binnema, Neyland, *New Histories for Old*
108 Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, 28
109 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 30

[2.17]
[2.18]
Removing the hair from the moose hide. is the first step in the tanning process. The hide is soaked in a bucket of water to make this easier. Then, the membrane is scraped from the skin to enable it to be supple.

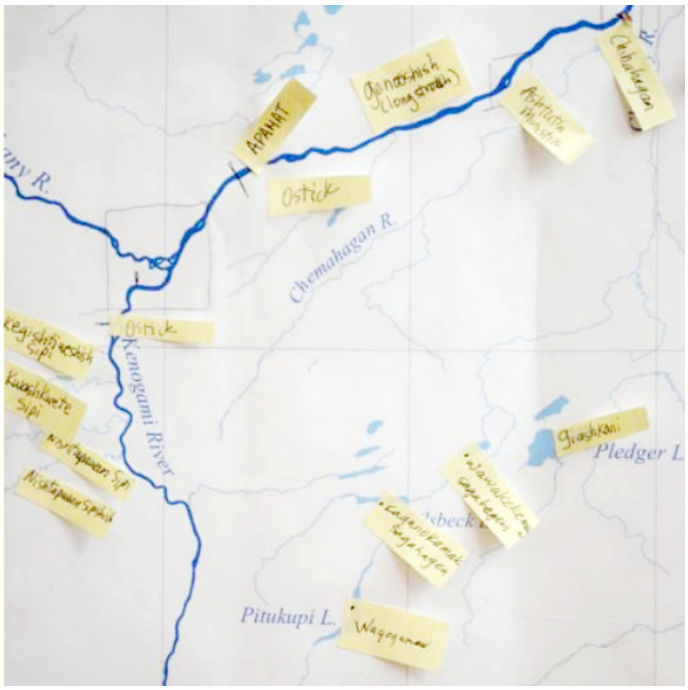
need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must learn their names."[110] This continually practiced memory of places, facilitated by mnemonic place names, smoothes the mind and draws one into closer relationship with the place. This increases understanding and enables one to "see danger before it happens."[111] This is wisdom. To learn the names of places is to also remember what happened there. As mnemonics, they help us to keep revisiting the place in our minds when we are not there in our bodies. They can also encourage presence. Sometimes in Fort Albany one hears a child ask, "Why is it called Ghost River?", inquiring as to when they can go visit it themselves, to 'drink' from it directly.

110 Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 127
111 Ibid.,127

The narrative description of metes and bounds, expressed through naming and marking the land, measure the cultural landscape of the James Bay Lowlands. The land is filled with these sketches of life, mapped out in the minds of local inhabitants over generations, and temporarily indicated by artifacts of active engagement. Placed on the land, names and marks describe the boundaries that are observed, both tangible and intangible. They connect people to place by initiating and embodying memory. This is critical for a culture which traditionally does not create permanent edifices or artifacts to exhibit collective memory. Instead, the Cree negotiate their presence through stories and activity marked on the land. These elusive indications embed meaning within a place and facilitate cultural continuity. Place names are increasingly effective as proof of knowledge of the land, and validate Cree claims to continue their traditional use of all the lands within their territories. While these can be drawn from memory and recorded on maps, there also remain records on the land itself: flexible and temporary marks indicate the light impact that the Omushkego Cree have in their tending of the bush through the harvest of food throughout the year. These tangible indications serve functionally as wayfinding devices in situ, and announce occupation of a territory, forming evidence of the cultural values and relationships which form the boundaries that define the garden of the Omushkego Cree.

[ viii ]
Place name map of the
Albany River watershed.

# PAQUATASKAMIK



*I spent an afternoon with another member of the band office discussing the Albany River, and specifically the significant sites with place names along its length. Over the past few years, a local initiative called the Paquataskamik Project has taken elders and youth on a ten-day raft trip along the river. This was in part to locate the specific places that are named, to tell their stories, and make markings on the sites. When they are told by the government to "prove" their claims to the land, these sorts of reminders may prove to be vital.*

*I wonder about this perplexing clash of worldviews. The governments ask for evidence of land use, while not taking peoples' words or stories as valid. They want physical proof of occupation. But don't they know? In the James Bay Lowlands, everything is water. The land is flowing constantly; it is cleansed seasonally. Physical memory is erased, ready to be re-laid or re-told. The Cree's intent is not to "leave no trace," but rather to leave it so that the land could find itself again, in its own time. This, in part, must facilitate relationships: memory is held in stories that must be told for the culture's continuation.*

*The 'evidence' for land use was in the stories, and these were largely interrupted or destroyed by both the cultural suppression in residential schools, and the concentration and containment of reserves. A rift was created between young and old by removing children from the home environment, as well as drawing people off of the land. In effect, the government asks for evidence that they themselves have had a hand in destroying. It baffles the mind.*

*This process of the elders and youth clarifying these areas together, as they engage on the land, is a start to reclaiming the territory. Through maps and place markers, information is provided in a form that outsiders can grasp. The project may serve as a critical link between past and future.*

[ ix ]
Writing names on grave markers


RUTA MelatoWabin

[x]
Sketches of the farmhands.

# LES CLOUTETS

*It was an ancient road, laid down by the Romans.*

*That's the story the "old boy" next door told Andy and Jessie about the path that passes through their farm. Part of the* chemins de Petit Randonée, *the route here is a public right-of-way, frequented by trekkers.*

*As we walk along it to check on the sheep in the pasture, Andy carries a well-shaped and strong stick that he's chosen from his collection leaning in the corner of the porch. We come to a slight rise in the road, with the South side opening onto a hayfield. Andy pauses, and starts scratching a line into this ancient path with his stick. Perceiving my curiosity, he explained: even such a simple gesture can redirect rainwater onto the field, rather than letting it wash down the path fruitlessly. Over time, if he keeps making these marks, it will make a big difference to the field's natural irrigation.*

*During the hay harvest, the farmhands followed the tractor back and forth raking the fields, piling the hay into rows to be picked up by the baler. Every square inch was touched and traversed by us; every blade of grass observed. We knew each wet spot and shady corner, chased out snakes and rodents from the haystacks, and collected large stones to save the machinery from damage. I found myself with an innate desire to glean the fields after the baler, tracing once again the contours of the land with my rake, collecting the stray bits of hay for the mangers.*

*Each of these intimate etchings on the land gives us greater knowledge of the place. We press into a dialogue with history, geography, ecology, and learn the real boundaries of a place, both tangible and intangible. We must act, while humbly considering the implications of our actions.*

*One Sunday Jessie had taken a group of us to the market. We had moved slower than planned and didn't get started in the fields until after noon. While the morning was fair, the afternoon had other intentions. The hay had just finished drying after a few days of less-than-ideal weather and lots of manual turning of the stacks. We needed to get it baled. We were making good progress until, over the valley, we could see the mountains to the South overshadowed by thick black clouds. We didn't have much time. Frantic, we ran the baler as fast as possible through the fields, leaving behind anything it didn't pick up. At a certain point, Andy yelled to us from the tractor to look at the sky. He counted with his hands: 'Fifteen minutes!', 'Ten minutes!', 'Five minutes!' And then we were done. Soaked, Andy climbed down from the tractor and violently cursed the rain in frustration. Jessie went to meet him as the rest of us stood under shelter. She looked up at him with*

*deep compassion, and he, defeated, placed his arm around her. They stood there in the pouring rain looking out over the unfinished field and valley below, washed by the humbling force of nature and remembering their place in the world once again. We are stewards, not masters.*

[xi]
The Roman Road with hoofprints in the mud. Electric fencing runs on either side where there are hayfields.

‘One may speak of ownership in the sense that particular families enjoy the right to exploit (but not to alienate) the resources of such land.’ What is implied, then, is exclusive use rights but not rights of disposal.

Bryan D. Cummins
*Only God Can Own the Land*

# WHERE ARE YOU?
## Relationship and Ownership

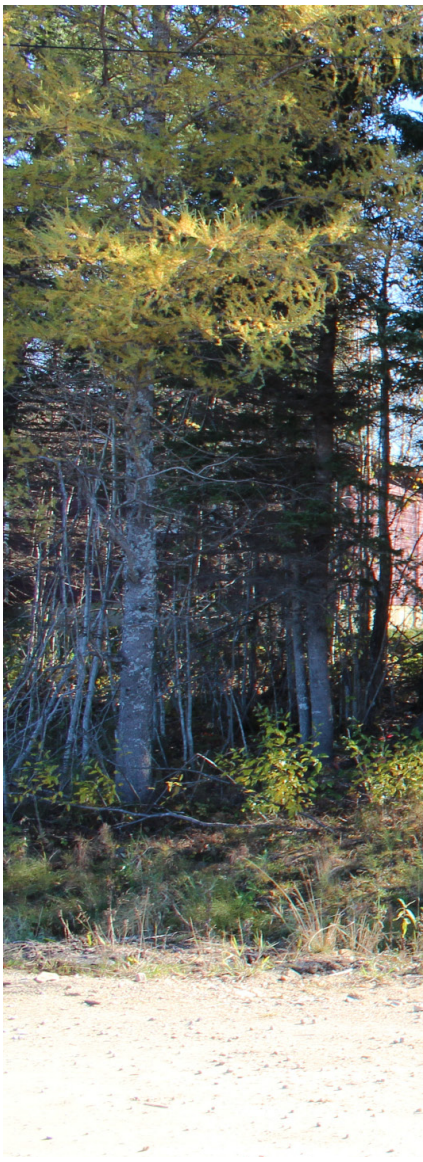
[3.1]
The process of tanning moose hide involves scraping off the membrane that clings to the inner side of the skin. A bone scraper is used for this: it is hard enough to do the job, and sharp but worn in such a way that it does not cut the skin. It's almost as if the skin is used to its presence and gives in to its pressure.

A garden is essentially relational.

We see this again in the familiar Judeo-Christian tradition of the Genesis account. It is written that God completes His acts of creation with man and woman. He places them in the Garden, where they are to live in relation to the earth, in relation to one another, and in relation to Himself. Genesis describes that man was created in the image of God, who, as a Triune Being, is intrinsically relational. Mankind was created from the dust of the earth and the breath of God. In Hebrew, the word for man, *adam*, may be related to the Hebrew word for ground, *adamah*. Man is derived from the earth. After the Fall, he was condemned to "work the ground" and so his relationship with the earth becomes necessarily reciprocal: his life comes from it and is exhausted on it.

From this creation story, we may infer that isolation was never intended. God is not finished His work when he creates man. He says "It is not good for the man to be alone."[112] He crowns creation not merely with woman, but with relationship. He creates marriage so that people can participate in a binding and intimate relationship. This allows them to more fully reflect the relational image of God. They can negotiate their distinctness as man and woman freely within the context of commitment. However, when we think first of the self, we hinder relationship. Reciprocity begins with a gift. If it does not continue to be received and returned, it results in broken relationships. We see in Genesis again that broken relationships between persons lead to broken relationships with place. The Fall of Man was not primarily caused by the taking of the forbidden fruit; it was the relational issue of disobedience which led to this action and the resulting expulsion from the Garden.

Similarly, the Cree account of mankind first encountering the earth also involved a 'fall.' Seeking to be 'by themselves' the man and woman ask for a place. E-hep (depicted as a giant spider) weaves a basket with his webbing to lower them down to the earth. He gave one condition: they were not to look down, or else they will have to suffer in order to live on the land. They disobeyed this command and fell from the sky into a high tree where they, helpless, had to be rescued by the animals.[113]



112 Genesis 2:18, New International Version
113 Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, 81-86

[3.2]
New house built with trees kept around it, now a policy in the community for all new houses. There has been a demand for the "houses in the bush" which reveals a deeper longing for some of the intangible qualities as well as the physical aspects.

## SOIL

As man and earth have been related through the Hebrew language, there is also an interesting etymological connection specifically between the Omushkego Cree and their land. Again, the particular identifier of this division of Cree as 'Swampy' or 'Omushkegowuk' refers to the muskeg of the James Bay Lowlands, as the 'people of the muskeg'.[114] The people self-identify with the soil.

> Land makes people into who they are. Of that I'm sure. If they lose it, they forfeit their solvency and a little bit of their souls, which they will spend the rest of their lives trying to regain. From the landless of Central America, to the Palestinians, the Kurds, or the First Nations, there is a predictable outcome to their dispossession. The resultant uprisings are the inevitable outcome when one's identity is threatened or lost - an identity which is in the land itself.[115]

The James Bay Lowlands are part of the largest wetland in North America,[116] made up largely of the organic matter of *humus*. Following its Latin origin, this term refers to ground, earth and soil, as does *homo* (man). Humus is the rich earth comprised of decayed organic material in an extremely stable state. It is the soil layer that provides structure, and can hold 80 to 90 per cent of its weight in moisture. It also holds organic carbon and environmental toxins, as they bind to its molecules.[117] It acts like a liver to cleanse the ecosystem as it filters the runoff of the Hudson Bay watershed before returning to the Bay. It takes centuries to build humus in a subarctic climate, and it is also extremely fragile if damaged.

*Humility* is similarly derived from this Latin root referring to the ground, earth and soil. Like its physical counterpart, humility accepts what comes to it. It submits the self with a clear position: we were formed from the dust and will return to it. It is identifying with the lowliness of the earth in submitting to something higher. A trait often attributed to the Cree, this reveals a consistency of character between the land

114 "Who Are The Anishinaabe and Mushkegowuk Peoples?" http://www.pathoftheelders.com/history/chapter1 (accessed July 13, 2013)
115 Towell, *The World From My Front Porch*, 145
116 Fraser and Keddy, *The World's Largest Wetlands*, 118 148
117 "Humus: What It Is," http://organicsoiltechnology.com/humus what it is.html (accessed June 12, 2014)

[3.3]
A wigwam frame

and its people - one that centres around the substance and processes of humus. Both are essentially interdependent and negotiable, taking in what is given and filtering what is useful:

> [The gardener] recognizes that he is dependent for his health and survival on many other forms of life, so he is careful to take their interests into account in whatever he does... It is when he respects and nurtures the wilderness of his soil and his plants that his garden seems to flourish the most.[118]

This humble approach towards the land (*humus* and *homo*) is intensely relational. Rather than an attitude of dominance or assertiveness, humility acknowledges others and considers them before the self. Give and take proportionately. Stability is the outcome.

As mentioned previously, central to the Cree system of thought is the perspective of hope. This informs all relationships on the land and is expressed humbly as, "My idea is to see what'll happen to me."[119]

> But hope is a vehicle by which the hunter impresses his will and ability upon a contingent world of individual relationships, and his luck is a representation of the effectiveness of his hope... a very active hope in the land expressed as self-control in the face of adversity.[120]

This hope is what has enabled the Cree way of life to persist. Even when difficulty comes, the Cree response is to absorb the challenge with self-controlled humility, trusting in the land's ability to provide under circumstances of right relationship. This does not lead to being overcome; rather, there is a strength and resilience in this form of hope.

As expressed throughout this thesis, the Cree paradigm of the land is essentially one of the garden. This is manifested through active engagement in a continued reciprocal relationship. It acknowledges that the resources of the land are gifts. Appreciation is shown by sharing and returning something to the land:

118 Pollan, *Second Nature*, 228
119 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 54
120 Ibid., 55

[3.4]
A hunter inspects an area of the bush for his traps.

> It is really beautiful what he has been saying. He said this whole place is like a garden, because many things grow here, and the Indians are one of the things that grow here. He says that animals were given to the Indians so they could feed their children and old people, and everyone has always shared the food from this garden. He says everyone here will always share. It's always been like that.[121]

The 'people and the land' share the common characteristic of humility, which "consider[s] others better than [the self]."[122] Arising from a common place of the ground, this expression of reciprocity informs the Cree approach to relationship and how to live in the garden with others, both human and non-human.

## ECONOMY

When First Nations speak of 'ownership' of the land, it is clear that this is a very different understanding than a Western approach. A better word would be 'relationship'. When Job Bearskin says, "This is our land; we own the land," he is using Western terms so that he might be better understood by outsiders. What he's really saying is, "we appropriate the land," utilizing it, though it remains able to be used by others, provided they follow similar principles of appropriate use.

The socioeconomic frameworks applied to land use have a large part in determining whether the boundaries laid out by a society are based upon ownership or relationship. They influence perceptions, principles and practices of how to relate to the garden: Do these 'lines' integrate or exclude? Relationship deals with connection and integration: identifying common needs and provisions for one another. Ownership deals with separation and isolation: delineating what is mine from what is yours.

The Omushkego Cree share with many indigenous societies what is known as a 'traditional economy'. This approach involves community-based subsistence and the practice of reciprocity. Interdependency affects all aspects of life. A multi-generational approach to livelihood necessitates long-term visioning:

121 Job's Garden, 1973 (Job Bearskin speaking)
122 Philippians 2:3, New International Version



[3.5]
The Northern, once owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, today supplies the remote communities with food and other goods.
[3.6]
Air delivered supplies wait to be picked up.

> Is it any wonder that our belief... in all things we do, is for those that are not yet born? We will not use up everything, we will not overkill, we will not destroy because as the guardians for those yet to come, we are here to look after this garden.[123]

Reciprocity creates an intentional levelling of ego and lifestyle. It also introduces acceptable, though flexible, extents of morality. They are flexible because, though people remain equals, in order to maintain overall well-being the entire society may have to shift the boundaries of specific positive and negative actions in response to environmental changes in a particular place. It takes into account the resources available locally and determines their appropriate management.

This traditional economy stands in disconnect with the 'market capitalism' that was introduced with the arrival of Europeans on the continent. This market system is based upon consumption of commodities and ideas of limitless growth. It isolates individuals as the basic unit of society, valuing personal gain above the well-being of others. Discrepancies in quality of life within a society are a natural outcome, as personal property is valued above relationships. Short-term goals are pursued at any cost. Adam Smith, the "father of economics," argued that pursuing self-interest in a free market would lead to societal well-being.

What began in the fourteenth century and continued into eighteenth century England[124] was a process of common land enclosures that moved peasants from the countryside to the cities. Most commonly discussed is the merchant acquisition of the land for wool production in the sixteenth century. Forced off the land, peasants had nowhere to go but to the towns and cities.[125] Over the next two centuries, private ownership of the land continued to remove subsistence potential for the poor, forcing them to enter the wage economy and provide fuel for the rising industrial era. Understandings of the space of land began changing with this new private interest. Previously employing a metes-and-bounds delineation of lands, official measured surveys began to provide a quantifiable and objective measuring of property, re-shaping the landscape of Britain as well as the

123 Metatawabin, *Hanaway*, 166
124 Scrutton, *Commons and Common Fields*
125 Handy and Fehr, "Drawing Forth the Force that Slumbered in Peasants' Arms", 46

socio-economic mindset of the English, and later influencing other European nations and colonies.

The Indigenous peoples of the 'New World' also held a narrative description of land extents prior to, and during, the time of European contact. As described previously, it was based upon movement through the land, with significant places marking off the bounds of both collective territory and memory. With neither the feudal system of discontent, nor an industrial insatiability requiring people to work for someone else, First Nations continued their traditional life on the land, even while settlers became established.[126]

Over time, however, the mentality of enclosure was translated to the 'New World'. It would seem that the early Europeans came not in search of a *new world* and a new way of life, but in search of something new with which to feed their old selves. Here was a vast and 'uncharted' territory to explore and extract from. Bringing it under the system of landed property would ensure that economic benefits were reaped for the newcomers.

In 1670, a British Royal Charter granted the ownership and governance of the lands of the Hudson Bay watershed to The Hudson's Bay Company. The Company functioned as the government in Rupert's Land and at the time was the largest landowner in the world. The HBC controlled the fur trade from its headquarters in York Factory on Hudson Bay for several centuries. In 1870, the Hudson Bay Company signed the Deed of Surrender, which yielded sovereignty over its territories to the newly created Dominion of Canada.[127] Further, sovereignty and proprietorship were "partitioned between federal and provincial governments through a succession of constitutional and legislative processes." This did not immediately have a direct impact on the Cree hunters, as they continued to manage hunting, fishing and trapping activities.[128]

Ownership was predicated upon 'improvement' of the land. The Enlightenment thinker John Locke propelled a philosophical model where the means of legitimizing one's claim to land was through cultivation, meaning ploughing or otherwise harnessing it. Therefore, land that was perceived to be unimproved was considered unclaimed and empty; not legitimately owned. Subsequently, 'empty' land was thus available for claiming

126 Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England 1450 1850*, 2
127 HBC Heritage. "Our History." Accessed August 19, 2014. http://www.hbcheritage.ca/hbcheritage/history/overview
128 Niezen, *Defending the Land*, 15
129 Coleman, *Property, Territory, Globalization*, 63 64

and exploitation.[129] Since newcomers to the Cree landscape considered agriculture as the primary means of improving land, in their view hunter-gatherer cultures did not exercise 'ownership' over their territory. A capitalist worldview prevented Europeans from seeing active improvement of the land in Cree terms, which were often marked with intangible signs over an imperceptible time frame.

One example of Cree 'improvement' of the land is found in the hunt. This activity required an intimate knowledge of the economy of the land, perceiving the subtleties of beneficial relationships and tuning them for greatest abundance of resources for all.

Hunters were the first to engage with the market economy, succeeding for a time in keeping it in balance with the traders' dependence on them for survival through food exchange.[130] As newcomers became more settled and brought their own means of survival with them, they were able to live at a distance from Cree subsistence and could apply interpretations of the region independent of Cree context. As previously explained, this self-sufficiency was significantly due to gardens planted at the trading posts, which altered the trade relationship between hunters and traders.[131] As traders had success with growing crops at the posts, their reliance on agriculture grew while their relationships with hunters diminished. Hunters attempted to include the gardens within the conceptual world of the hunt, but the success of gardening worked against that inclusion.[132] It changed the environmental relationships as the seasonal rhythm of life altered around the posts to fit the growing cycle, and was the "foundation for some of the cultural differences that mark them as places apart."[133] Gardening, combined with the ability to store up large quantities of imported goods like sugar, tea, and flour, meant that settlements could remain permanent places even in times of scarcity on the land. Without an economic need for reciprocity, traders held power to make demands without negotiation, maintaining an "unwillingness to listen or be moved."[134] Rather than continuing to engage with particular hunters, traders could go elsewhere to obtain furs on their own terms. Hunters resisted this change, but over time their influence waned as the hunt became less vital to traders.

As the differences in lifestyle grew, the traditional gift economy of the Cree was supplanted by the market system of the Europeans. This quietly facilitated the degradation

130 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 82
131 Ibid., 89
132 Ibid., 90
133 Ibid., 90
134 Ibid., 90

[3.7]
A family smokes moose meat on an afternoon spent along the channel upriver. The scent gave away their presence before sighting them. One of the boys showed us a homemade moose call with a jug and rope.

of the environment as extraction of animal resources increased. The fur trade continued to exhaust the beaver populations, while also exhausting the hunters. It took away from the hunters the time they needed to hunt for their own food resources, especially in times of scarcity when it was necessary to hunt farther from the posts. This in turn led to increasing sickness among those Natives who kept closer to the posts for reliable sources of food, where diseases were also introduced. This "threaten[ed] the Cree's ability to interpret their own material and symbolic surroundings, and they became increasingly dependent on government aid, outside food, and a cash-driven market economy."[135] Rather than adapting to the place-based system of reciprocity with both people and land, the enacting of a consumer culture enabled settlers to bring their old world to the new one:

> ... during the Revillon Frères/HBC period it is clear that Cree culture began to lose control of the land in the face of the free-market economy. This powerful new idea of people's relationship to the land was reshaping the territory and leaving many people hungry.[136]

It is important to consider how the land specifically informs the economy of the Cree. The land was seen as the bank for Native peoples: the inheritance for future generations.[137] The reliability of the land to provide for the peoples' needs rested on their investment in beneficial relationship with it. Today, the discourse continues in much the same way, testifying to the resilience of First Nation relationship to the land, within a framework of social and cultural continuity. Concerned to enhance the economic viability of their communities,

> They [Omushkego Cree] do not consider integration with the economy of the South, and the replacement of the traditional sector by the wage economy, as foreseen in the conventional view of development, to be feasible or desirable. Among the Cree, a common theme is to try to reduce external economic dependence and to base growth on local markets and the use of local resources, preferably in ways that increase the complementarity between wage-income generation and traditional activities.[138]

135 Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 134
136 Ibid., 149
137 Niezen, *Defending the Land*, 70
138 Berkes et al. "Wildlife Harvesting and Sustainable Regional Native Economy in the Hudson and James Bay Lowland, Ontario," 359


[3.8]
Making preserves...
Interest from a number of women in the community to learn how to preserve foods.

## NEGOTIATION

One of the key elements of relationship is continual negotiation. Particularly for the Cree of the James Bay Lowlands, this must occur on, as well as with, the land, as "environment becomes a personal geography of individual and reciprocal events and relationships, and a process of negotiation becomes the hunter's main activity in the act of living on the land."[139] This dialogue comes alongside reciprocity in making way for the other: considering factors which will affect those involved. It aims for mutual benefit through co-operation, rather than competition[140]; a meeting in the middle, rather than a gaining of advantage.

There are often complaints today that negotiations take too long. Perhaps such a mindset misses the point. The objective of negotiating may not be to reach a particular goal as fast as possible, or try to gain the most ground in a tug-of-war. Instead, maybe it is to build a relationship in balanced tension through mutual give and take; neither to stay at an impasse, nor to overcome, but to walk together to better understand one another. When this activity becomes about the journey - about the process of drawing closer to an agreement - time has little relevance. It is about the development and valuing of a meaningful and lasting relationship. Each party must have the patience to continue returning to the discussion to build understanding. There must be a care for one another, and a humility to set aside one's own desires for the sake of the relationship. The garden teaches us this:

> This old idea [divine nature: romantic and preservationist] may have taught us how to worship nature, but it didn't tell us how to live with her. It told us more than we needed to know about virginity and rape, and almost nothing about marriage. The metaphor of divine nature can admit only two roles for man: as worshipper... or temple destroyer... And now that [nature - apart from man and messy history - is dead], perhaps we can begin to write some new parts for ourselves... not from some imagined state of innocence, and let us get down to the work

139 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 53.
140 Metatawabin, *Hanaway*, 166

[3.9]
Albany River near the former barge landing.

> at hand... For the garden is a place with long experience of questions having to do with man in nature.[141]

One such question may be related to what man does with the products of nature. Does he hoard or share? The leaders of a society often have a large role in determining such behaviours through example or policy. In Cree society, sharing was considered the better action. If nature provided gifts abundantly, it would follow that people would do the same for one another and also back to nature. There is always more to give. Therefore, the exercise of power in this form builds relationship by placing more and more in common. A leader who gives is interested in negotiation and arriving at common understanding. He finds out what of himself he will need to put into the relationship until it is mutually beneficial, rather than what he can get out of the other party:

> "...*uuchimaau* - the idea that giving is integral to leadership. The Cree word *uuchimaau*, which is usually translated as boss or chief, derives from the verb 'to give away,' and ethnologist Colin Scott argues that, historically, this reciprocal kind of relationship was the basis for all social and political relations among the Cree. This reciprocity was naturally transferred to traders when they arrived, and the trading posts created new arenas for this power relationship within Cree culture."[142]

As discussed previously, there is a long history of continued negotiations between First Nations and newcomers in Canada, since the first traders and settlers arrived. As a trading company, the Hudson's Bay Company was founded upon negotiation with Indigenous peoples, both for their business and for survival. Both parties found benefit from the reciprocal relationship, with traders receiving furs and Native peoples receiving food, tools and guns.

However, as newcomers were more able to provide for their own sustenance, negotiations became unbalanced. Traders demanded more and gave less. Residential schools forced enrolment and facilitated the cutting off of a connection with the culture

141 Pollan, *Second Nature*, 189-190
142 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 68

[3.10]
An empty lot on reserve.

and land for students. Without both parties bringing equal offerings to the relationship, dominance and dependency became the social model for interactions. The meaning of their relationship changed.

There exists a disconnect between notions of the north being a 'resource landscape' or a 'cultural landscape'. How nature will be defined, interpreted, commodified and packaged in this region will be the result of the struggle between ideologies.[143] While resource development negotiations often offer some sort of provision to protect or enhance the rights of nearby First Nation communities, these are usually short-sighted and have no impact on the actions of the developers. Further, the long-term responsibility and accountability for development are too often abandoned before closure or remediation work begins. Companies run out of capital if it is not clearly laid out in their economic plan. Government does little to enforce the agreements made for stewardship. There are at least 10,000 "toxic orphans" (abandoned mines) in Canada.[144] When these projects proceed without serious negotiation, rather than mere compensation, the ability of First Nations people to define life on the land in their own terms is drastically reduced, if not eliminated. Too often the development decisions happen far off in the South, and leave those who are most impacted off the guest list.[145] No one in the communities is informed about the massive developments happening on their traditional territories until, when they do, it has progressed so far that they feel helpless and a sense of inevitability. A wedge is further driven into Canadian society.

Western James Bay communities are greatly interested in having active involvement in southern plans for their lands. They have repeatedly said that they are not opposed to resource development, but that it must be responsible and consented to by those who occupy the land. There exists a "duty to consult" in these matters as outlined by the Canadian courts, but there remains no concrete definition of consultation. One thing it does mean is that agreement is not required, but that they must deal with one another in good faith to balance interests. In the often-cited court case of *Platinex vs. KI*[146], it is noted that

143 Bertloas, "Cross Cultural Environmental Perception of Wilderness"
144 Mining Watch Canada, "Mining's Toxic Orphans"
145 Boyden, *Prophecies and Power*
146 Cf. Platinex

[3.11]
Setting traps.

> The purpose of consultation is to promote reconciliation. As Lamer 1. stated in Delgamuukw,
> "ultimately, it is through negotiated settlements, with good faith and give on all sides, reinforced by the judgment of this Court, that we will achieve ...the basic purpose of s. 35(1) - the reconciliation of the pre-existence of Aboriginal societies with the sovereignty of the Crown."[147]

While these legal forms do not necessarily lead to actual negotiation, they do provide an opportunity for it and value attaining good relationships between parties when possible. When Platinex attempted to sue Kitchenuhmaybosib Inninuwug First Nation for an injunction when the band re-secured its territory, the legal system provided a balanced case for negotiation. Both parties possessed valid legal rights that had to be weighed in the context and as the case would inform future decisions of land development.

The special relationship that First Nations have with their traditional land was given as valid reason why the mining would cause irreparable harm, which no award of damages could compensate for. A strong attempt was made to understand the relationship with the land from an aboriginal perspective, addressing the unity between it and First Nations people. This was held not merely as a value statement, but a valid argument against detrimental activity on the land.

Current sights are set on the area of chromite deposits dubbed the "Ring of Fire", which resides about 200 kilometres inland from James Bay, spanning between numerous watersheds, including the Attawapiskat River. There are countless known issues with open-pit mines, as this is planned to be. Particularly in its location in the largest wetland in North America, leakage of chemicals into this vast network of waterways can have far-reaching effects for both environment and inhabitants who rely on the quality of the water. The current largest chromite mine in the world is in South Africa. Countless documented cases of severe health defects have resulted from the presence of this mine in proximity to populations residing nearby. Human well-being on the land must be seriously considered and accounted for. The main stakeholders in this development are some 30 exploration

147 Cf. Platinex .

companies, many of which are foreign, holding a total of over 31,000 claims.[148] As they reside far from the reality of the situation, both physically and conceptually, there is little confidence in their concern for the effects of the mine on its context. With little support from an economy-driven federal government, the slowing down of this development in order to allow proper negotiations to occur also seems unlikely. When relationship is sacrificed to greed, we see the story of the Windigo returning. A re-orientation in value and observance of the moral boundaries of this landscape are necessary in order for resource development and Native land use to have anything meaningful to say to one another.

Negotiation requires continual practice, coming to the table over and over as "... the aboriginal cultural landscape is not revealed through observation but through experience, and it must be continually practised into existence to be sustained."[149] Of great importance here is to keep in mind that the practice of negotiation is essential to Cree culture and relationship to the land. There is no desire for romantic visions of conservation, but rather an understanding that change is inevitable and will carry with it something good if negotiated well.

## PROPERTY

An ownership approach to land values the acquisition of land as property, over which the owners exercise exclusive rights. However, "In the Eastern Cree context, in which land was constituted by social relations, the Western concept of property would have quite inappropriately involved claiming other persons as possessions."[150]

The creation of a contract or title to the property provides protection for the continued possession of property once acquired. It outlines clearly the terms and limits of ownership, which usually constitute unconditional discretion. Property regimes, solidified by such contracts, serve as a mediating relationship between the owner, the possession and the enforcement of protection over the property. The creation of the Dominion of Canada

148 McLaren, "Frozen Out of the Ring of Fire," http://www.thesudburystar.com/2013/02/16/frozen out of the ring of fire

149 Smith, *Understanding Heritage*, 50

150 Coleman, *Property, Territory, Globalization*, 64

as property of the Crown occurred in courts and on paper. The possession of title to land removes the necessity of presence and action on the land. As a result, for a time Native life continued without noticing the effects of their land being claimed by others.[151]

There also remains the much discussed issue of the oral contract differing from the written one. In Treaty No. 9, the Cree assert that their lands were never ceded, and Commissioner journals from the time back this up with accounts of pacification in order to acquire signatures.[152] No opportunity was provided for negotiation. At Fort Albany, one day's notice was given that the Commissioners were arriving with the treaty to be signed. For a culture that continually negotiates its use of the land, what is the value of a signature or a static agreement? Where property rights set unconditional use of land that is owned, it is incongruent with the conditional nature of the bush. The indigenous relationship between man and the land has no contract, per se. The constant tension this produces seems to create greater resiliency than hard-lined legal settlements, while strengthening relationships of interdependency. Similarly, the land seems to lack lasting definition when it is based on fickle measures of quantity of space, physical context or capital.[153]

One Métis woman distinguishes property conceptions in a discussion on James Bay Lowland reserves in this way:

> Aboriginal peoples don't have European property regimes, so it's correct to say none of us had European notions of land ownership. It isn't correct to claim this means none of us had or have any sense of land ownership at all. It's a completely different approach based on reciprocity, not a 'free for all this land is everyone's and no-one's land'. "Ownership" is not a good term for it, no…but "no ownership" suggests something to those familiar with common-law and civil-law property regimes which is not accurate either.[154]

The Reserve system set up through the Indian Act brought a confusing concept of land use to the table. The land set aside was to be for use by registered Bands, but it was to be 'owned' by the Crown. This was essentially an 'absentee landlord' situation.

151 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*
152 Long, *Treaty No. 9*
153 Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention*, 31
154 Apihtawikosisan, http://apihtawikosisan.com/2011/11/dealing with comments about attawapiskat/

The Crown set strict controls over the land, and the First Nations were left to inhabit it without possessing any decision-making power. In questioning why people don't seem to maintain or care for their lots on reserve, the reply was, "People are not settled". This is a profound statement. The reserve land has been 'settled' into, but the people of the land are not settled there. We must not be mistaken in thinking that a mobile culture is not a settled culture. There can be a comfort and establishment of a people in a continually changing landscape if it serves as a secure environment. Many things are shifting, but we return to the concept of hope in the land, trusting that it will provide. On a reserve, the concentration of people and commodities increases the volatility of the landscape and reduces its capacity to absorb negative impacts. The quietness and calmness that the bush induces settles people.

Because of distant ownership, the immediate relationship between land and inhabitants is hindered. The arbitrary lines of the reserve boundaries cut off the essential understanding of the fluid nature of the land in James Bay. Fish or moose don't see those lines; their boundaries are the limits of sustenance. This paper ownership of the land stifles the most necessary relationships of the Cree.

> Civil death is manifested when the 'Reserve' member discovers that he cannot borrow money from banks because he has no collateral to back him up. He does not own the land upon which he resides because 'the legal title is vested in her majesty...' (Indian Act, page 2). That house he occupies cannot be used either, because the Indian Act states that, no item can be claimed, by an outsider, once it has been brought in, otherwise he would be guilty of 'trespassing.'
>
> So a separate physical setting and a separate government body, to deal with these people, combine to place them apart from and to receive 'categorical treatment' (Kramer, J., 1970:5) from the social, political, judicial and economic field.
>
> Upon receiving 'categorical treatment' they have isolated themselves and provided an enclosure where outside influences are brought to a minimum and the people draw their attention to the immediate surroundings.[155]

155 Metatawabin, *Hanaway*, 230

How do we interpret the apparent disregard for the land within reserves today? Perhaps the issue of carelessness has more to do with relationship than societal convictions about tidiness or ownership of resources. Care originates from relationship rather than ownership (though these are certainly not exclusive of one another).

> Many northern reserves appear to be grim and even hateful little places, clusters of houses crowded together by planners in order to achieve economies of administration and service. The Reserve where Joseph Patsah lives is no exception although his house is one of five that stand on their own, out of sight and well located. The other fifteen homes crowd up to one another, clustered to ease the supply of municipal services; yet none has running water, drains, or electricity. There is no garbage collection nor are there any other amenities or services on the Reserve. Such compression of a people distinctive for their free roamings through unbounded forest is bizarre and painful. They pay the price for modernity, yet receive few of its benefits.[156]

During my stay in Fort Albany, I spent much of my time at one family's house. They built off-reserve at a point of the island where the flood channel meets one of the main diversions of the Albany River, with water surrounding half of their land. They explained to me that the only way to build one's own home near the community is to build beyond the reserve boundary, on Crown land. The man recalled the conversation with Indian Affairs regarding the location. They had asked him, "Isn't that Crown land that you want to build on? You gave up your rights to it in Treaty No. 9." His response was a confident, "No, I didn't. And it's my grandfather's land." No one has bothered him about it.

What is most striking about his land is how separate it feels from the rest of the community. I walk down the long road along the water at twilight. It terminates in a steep footpath down to the river. Just before this drop, looking to the east is a long dirt driveway surrounded by spruce and tamarack trees, with Christmas lights strung along the drive to

156 Brody, *Maps and Dreams*, 73

[3.12]
A view from the dyke across Kashechewan.

show the way. There are no street lights this far down the road. Infrastructure off-reserve is not typically covered by the Band budget. After 20 years, a water line was extended the 300 feet to provide indoor plumbing to their house. About 50 feet in, an octagonal log cabin sits comfortably, with smoke rising out of the central stovepipe and a warm glow of light emanating from the windows.

The caring and attentive manner in which the family relates to their land seems to have an effect on others who enter it. Their boundaries and belonging are respected, unlike on the lots in town. The combination of keeping their land clean and a sense of security provided by the bush may contribute to a perception of 'property' that doesn't require a legal framework.

Without a deed of ownership, the land could potentially be re-appropriated by the Crown. However, there is an undeniable relationship to this particular site that has developed and altered the people and the place throughout its duration. This family has cared for the land. The rich blackness of the soil that I found there is a testament to a well-tended garden. The trees are kept trimmed above head height, rather than cleared out of the way. They can still provide shelter and food for the animals, while easing movement and maintenance for the people living there. The site is remarkably calm even when the wind is blowing strongly because of the natural windbreak of the trees. There is a clear consideration of relating to the surrounding bush and a reciprocal understanding of its needs.

As measures of ownership are what legitimize a claim to property, it is crucial to consider that these may vary across cultures. As described previously, moral boundaries defined life on the land for the Cree and served to establish relationship with it. Western conceptions of quantifiable and abstract surveying to determine extents of occupation were a hindrance to relating well in the bush:

> Other older hunters, those without this specific education, found these [quantitative] questions inappropriate. They understood the questions,

[3.13]
Event site for youth camps and retreats

> but they did not understand the reasons why someone would ask them in the first place. Canadians put value on information that the Cree had never thought to collect. This was partly because they did not need it and partly because to collect this kind of data showed a kind of disrespect that jeopardized their relationship with the land.[157]

The result of today's political structure, in which land uses are determined or mediated by a distant authority, is that those who are most affected by development are the most powerless to protect the environment they live in. Relationship with the land is mediated by policy. Yet at the level of individual agency, good stewardship remains the norm. Cree hunters are mindful to keep the land clean, recognizing that it continues to provide food and water:

> Hunting relied on the hunter moving within a cultural network, with the result that family, hunting partners, and more distant friends expanded hunting geography in social directions as well. Finally, there are the animals on the land, which can render the hunter's landscape vast and multifaceted all of a sudden - anything but matter of fact. He is intimately connected with the hunted animals - beings of great power and also material manifestations whose flesh becomes food - and this landscape of relationships is the most important terrain that the hunter's path crosses.[158]

When you're in the bush, you can see that all the land is supporting you: the plants and water are the food and drink for the animals, which in turn become food for you. So you don't want to pollute the land or the water. The concentrated and cluttered space of the reserve, however, is not a source of sustenance. Many people won't eat the berries that grow on the sides of roads out of concern that the roaming dogs and vehicle emissions have made them unclean. There is greater restriction and isolation in this space than in the bush. A contained space enables a sense of dominance over it, but this form of ownership is not the Cree paradigm. The bush, on the other hand, presents a vastness

157 Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 212
158 Ibid., 48

[3.14]
Setting a trap.

that requires humility, which validates and enables the Cree worldview. Unmediated by permanent human constructions, we again identify with the soil.

Many communities are now seeking to address issues of health and land use by building on traditional knowledge to know the land more intimately, and to related better to it for the well-being of everyone. Elders have expressed their hope in the land by stating with peaceful confidence that 'we will return to the bush when we need to.' It will be the answer as it always has been. The *Paquataskamik Project* is one example of the resurgence in traditional ways of knowing:

> In the summer of 2009, 3 elders, 6 youth and 5 adults embarked upon a raft trip down the Kabinakagami, Kenogami and Kistachowan Rivers from Constance Lake First Nation to Fort Albany First Nation. Participants in the river excursion interviewed elders and one another about the sites and stories of the river. Along the way, participants re-introduced Cree names onto a map and erected signs marking important sites along the Kistachowan (Albany) River - making it known to all who travel there that the region is of great significance to the original peoples of the area.[159]

159 http://paquataskamik.weebly.com

[3.15]
2009 Albany River excursion,
with raft and freighter canoes

For the Omushkego Cree, the land and its people are one: people, plants and animals all grow together in this garden. What affects the people affects the land. The contrasting viewpoints of ownership of, versus relationship with, the land are reflected in the way that land on and around communities is respected and used. Confinement has increased dependency and diminished respect for cultural beliefs that connect the land and nature to the people. Replacement of the traditional local economy with dependence on a distant market economy has conflicted with the cultural paradigm of the Cree. Western forms of ownership have tended to diminish the relationships of people and place which rely upon reciprocity for their strength. Negotiation remains an essential means of mediating these worldviews in order to dwell together, in good relationship.

I was comforted one evening in Fort Albany with the caring and perceptive words of a friend who is himself dealing with negotiating different worldviews in his work in the community. He said that it is good to go through difficulty, because you always end up with something better as you struggle to deal with it. You come to a point where something has to change, and that is good: "Life is made up of negotiations: with yourself, with others, and with God."


[3.16]

[xii] Cranberry preserves

# COLLECTING

*I have collected or produced the following items. They are mementoes of Fort Albany for me.*

*While they do represent a moment in time, they are not static artifacts to store in a database of past memories. Their nature requires use and transformation. They are meant to be propagated or put into use.*

*These items illustrate an approach to relationship that speaks of abundance. Seeds are planted to bring forth new life. The process of making crafts and being taught deepens working friendships. Gifts are offered, which continue the relationships beyond the immediate encounter and encourage further gifting.*

*My friend took me on a bike ride one warm autumn afternoon in search of cranberries; 'moosomin' in Cree. We came to a place along the river where the path seemed to disappear. Leaving our bikes against an old log, we stepped into the bush, leaves crunching underfoot and the comforting scent of decaying leaves surrounding us. Most of the trees were bare by now, so the berries were easier to spot: bright red at hand-height, ready for picking. With the advice to not pick all of them in one area, I was left on my own to fill my bag. I thought about how the birds must also be eager to get them this time of year.*

*When I began to look for myself, I suddenly saw berries everywhere! Stepping gingerly through the bush, I gathered in moderation. All the while, I made a point to keep my orientation back to the trail. It would have been too easy to wander away following the ripe berries.*

[xiii] Highbush cranberries
[xiv] Cranberry seeds

*Rosehips are one of the most common wild fruits in and around the community. I frequently passed them on the roads, sometimes stepping into the bush a bit to pick some. The taste was much milder than the cultivated 'wild roses' that we have down south – more pasty – but still a nice treat while walking. A common name for them is "itchy bum", since they contain tiny hairs that cause a reaction in the body.*

[xv] Wild rosehips
[xvi] Rosehip seeds

*A small greenhouse was constructed at the school a few years ago. It is used for education as well as the food program. With the students, it is a way of familiarizing them with different types of vegetables and fruits, engaging their interest in healthy food as they help the plants grow.*

*I found these dried beans in their pods on some of the plants left from the summer. The cycling of saving seeds for planting the following year allows for a closed-loop gardening system. This is especially important in the North where resources like seeds are rare and must be brought into the community when someone takes a trip south.*

[xvii] Bush beans
[xviii] Dried bush beans

*The Farmer's Market runs bi-monthly, and ships in fresh produce from the south by chartered plane. The morning the produce arrives is a flurry of activity unloading from the plane into pick-up trucks and then unloading at the school to sort for the market.*

*Foods like these red sheppard peppers provide an abundance of Vitamin C. Much of the store-bought food typically consumed in the north is of much lower nutrition than simple fruits and vegetables. Changing eating patterns to focus on quality of food for the body is a vital step to becoming healthier people.*

[xix] Produce being unloaded
[xx] Red sheppard pepper seeds

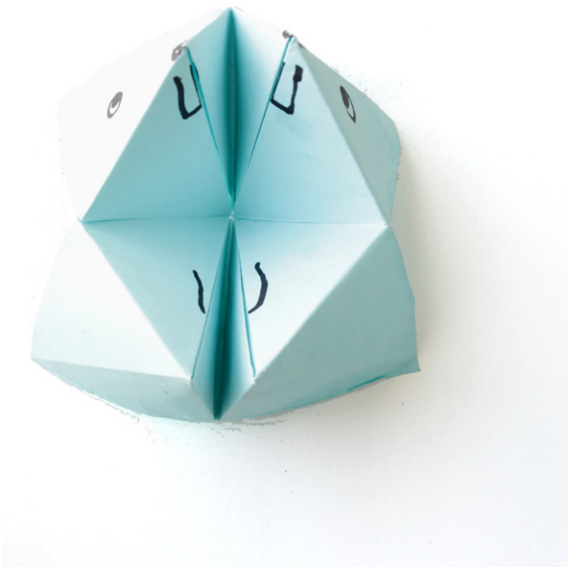
*There are many styles of moccasins. This one is typical to the Western James Bay region, and is made of two pieces of leather.*

*A friend graciously spent several hours teaching me how to make these moccasins during my stay. She laid out a pattern for me based on my foot size. The beading was adapted from an artwork that she liked and is a pattern I made myself. The beadwork took about ten hours in total. The vamp (beaded piece on the top) is moose hide. It's stiffer than the sole, which is made of deer hide. Beaver fur is used for the cuff. I had no idea it was so soft! The lining is felted sheep wool. Everything is stitched by hand with a sharp needle and sinew.*
*The experience of this craftwork is as much a part of the moccasins as the end product is. I would sit in my friend's living room with a cup of tea, sewing as we talked or she cooked.*
*Her first comment when I finished was, "I'm going to have to lock you up in a room like Rumplestiltsken and have you make more of those for me!"*

[xxi] Scrap of beaver fur
[xxii] Moccasins

*I made this paper game with friend's daughter one evening as I was entertaining her before dinner. She made a couple with words in them, but I wanted to have a puppet to play with, so I drew a rabbit face on it. She liked it, but let me take it home.*

[xxiii] Paper hand game



*After my first trip to James Bay, I wanted to send notes to friends back in the community. I created a block print inspired by the snowshoe and ended up wtih about forty prints.*

[xxiv] Block printed Christmas cards

[xxv] Pumpkins arriving for children to carve at school.

# THANKSGIVING

*As a visitor to Fort Albany First Nation, I was invited to spend Thanksgiving with a Cree family and their grandmother. The night wore on, the children were put to bed, and candles were lit. The atmosphere intensified to something almost mythical, as our conversation led into storytelling. The grandmother wanted to know about me: How long would I be here? What am I doing? She spoke little English, so her bilingual son translated our conversation. He had never done this before for an outsider. She then related a story to me.*

*A priest was travelling upriver one winter to visit some communities. On his way back, wearied from the journey, he stopped at a camp for some water and rest. The people there welcomed him to join them around the campfire, offering him some water heated on it. It was too hot, however, so one man put some snow in the cup to cool it. As he did that, he put his finger into the water to push it down. By this act, he was testing the priest: was he being truthful about his journey, that he was thirsty enough to drink the water the man had touched? The man was also showing trustworthiness by touching the water: it was not dangerous. He simultaneously affirmed the traveller, and tested him.*

*I was drawn into her words, both beautiful and foreign. I longed to understand. Her eyes, glistening in the candlelight, warm yet strong, fixed on a vision in her past.*

*The grandmother went on to describe the bush camps that she grew up in. She emphasized that they were always hygienic. When the camp started to become unclean, it was time to move on. This place, built out of bush materials, would return to the bush. They had a light load to carry when they were 'nomadic.' As they moved, this walking was knowing the land, and participating in it.*

*She looked directly at me, as I tried to comprehend her words; as I searched myself for understanding and for an explanation to her question of, "What do you think now?" or "Why are you here?"*

*I also wanted to hug her. Somehow I loved this woman – for her past, for who she is, her wisdom and her trust of me. My eyes welled up with tears as I searched her deep brown eyes. Was I like the priest, journeying and thirsty? And she offering me refreshment with trust? Was she testing the authenticity of my intentions? Did I drink deeply enough to prove trustworthy?*

*It was getting late, so her son walked her home. When he returned, his words to me left an*

*indelible impression: "Well, whatever it is you're doing, it must be good. My mother gave me a kiss tonight before I left her. She hasn't done that in thirty years. You know, we were at a loss for understanding each other for a while, and haven't had that human closeness. So, you're doing something."*

*Did his translating help to break down barriers of understanding? Did the Cree language in those moments unite them as nothing else could? Was his mother encouraged to hear him continue their language, seeing then more commonalities than differences between them? Or, what effect can a caring, receptive and listening ear have on relationships?*

*As I stepped into the frosty air to leave, the Northern Lights came out to dance.*

[xxvi]
Boiling moose bones over a fire for broth and bone marrow.

[xxvii]

# GIFTS

*The other day I met the man who has been taking our tomatoes.*

*He  leaned his bicycle up against the skid of bricks at the edge of the garden and made his way over to the picnic table as I was digging up potatoes. With an air of authority, he pulled the weeds from under the table to make it easier to sit at. I said "Hi", and he pointed to the tomatoes and made a comment about how tasty they were. I was a bit surprised, especially since I had been frustrated lately that they kept disappearing just as they were getting ripe. Unsure of how to respond, I made a point about the work it's been to keep it watered this summer. Again, to my surprise, he agreed, telling of how he had once or twice taken a bucket down to the river to get water for "our" strawberries.*

*With this simple word indicating a sense of collective belonging with this stranger, my mind began to open up in a perplexing sort of way. I suppose my heart responded as well.*

*Yes, I guess if he had put in some effort, then maybe it was "ours", beyond the limited ownership of the school gardeners. I mean, we don't even own the land ourselves; it's just through agreement with the City that we use it. Do we have any more right to it if this man occupies the space as often? Do we have any claim to the produce just because we bought the seeds and planted them and watered them? It struck me as extremely interesting and put me in a position of deeply questioning ownership in the garden.*

*This man also explained that he had left his shopping cart full of weeds next to the partially-built greenhouse because he thought it was going to be an incinerator. (I mentioned that I hoped it wouldn't get that hot in there.) He had been cleaning up the riverbank and wanted somewhere to put them. Seeing his care, I began to feel a legitimacy for him being in this space. We could negotiate [our presences] here, especially if both of us were willing to accept the other's sense of occupation.*

*As I went to walk away, something didn't feel right. I had spoken with him, but had I reached out in any way, to establish a relationship, or had I just stayed in my corner, still at odds with his presence in our space? Only one response seemed appropriate. I turned back as he lit a cigarette: "By the way, would you like some potatoes?"*

[xxviii]
School greenhouse building in progress.

# CONCLUSION

Confronted with the dilemma of property in the school community garden, I recognized a Lockean sense rising up in me in protest against the theft of 'our' produce. Had our work not set apart this piece of land as ours and earned us exclusive rights to obtain the fruits of it? Did we need to put up a fence to assert our claim and clarify that outsiders were not welcome to take from the garden? Catching myself, I was poignantly reminded that I continue to struggle with boundaries and land ownership. What I have learned from the Omushkego Cree, however, provides a counter-argument to Locke's property theory. This broadened outlook allowed me in that moment to overcome my sense of exclusive ownership.

Through this thesis I have sought to better understand the Cree paradigm of seeing the land as a garden. If it is a garden, it requires some sort of enclosure. This attribute may be more acutely and profoundly understood by the Cree than one might realize at first glance. Without apparent material bounds on their land, I sought to know what else could serve to form a boundary.

I began my investigation in James Bay with a "factual" and physical approach to land: what are its limitations and opportunities in seeking how to live well there. I tried to engage with maps of the region and statistics. This left me dissatisfied, certain that the knowledge on the land possessed infinitely greater depth. In visiting Fort Albany, I found through the relationships that I developed in the community that the boundaries they perceive are much more flexible and intangible, based on cultural values and reciprocity, expressed through action on the land. In context, these boundaries became much more clear to me. At the same time, I also began to see their complexity in "dealing with virtually unaccountable values... biological forces and processes not always measurable, with spiritual and community values not quantifiable; at certain points... dealing with mysteries."[160]

In comparing Locke's theory of property with Omushkego Cree reciprocity, both systems of land use begin with the perception of the land as a gift from the Creator. However,

160 Berry, "Seven Amish Farms", 258

what they do with that gift differs greatly. This is determined by whether value is placed on relationship or ownership.

The socio-economic system of reciprocity involves giving, receiving and returning. The result of this gift cycle is the establishment of relationships, as the system is inclusive and integrative. The land remains under a sort of tenancy. It is not to be exclusively owned, but may be shared for the benefit of all. Industrialized cultures, on the other hand, practice capitalism, which seeks private ownership and personal profit. The gift in this context is given and received, but not returned. Relationship is not established without a return of some sort. This pursuit of ownership and accumulation of wealth, then, leads to isolation and exclusion.

In particular for the Cree, food from the land is a gift, and it cannot be monopolized. The boundaries of the Omushkegowuk that define their land as a garden are revealed through relationships and interdependencies established on and with the land through the gift exchange of food. To form and maintain these relationships, there must be a continual process of reciprocity: food is given, received and another gift is returned.

Extending from these understandings, in this thesis I have questioned a material approach to the definition of boundaries in the James Bay Lowlands, and have aimed to look at the architect's role through the practice of reciprocity with the goal of relating well. Three comments by one community member, and friend, have remained with me. I have sought to address them through this thesis as my role permits.

One. **"What is the 'glue' that makes any initiative for change 'stick'?"**
This reciprocity, I suggest, is the social "glue" needed to make change "stick".

Two. **"We Cree are creative people. We need tools, not solutions."**
For architecture to have a role in the communities of Western James Bay, in particular, it must see its work as providing tools, rather than solutions. "The ultimate task of architecture is to act in favour of the human environment by mediating the reciprocity

of people and the landscape that is their natural home." (Berleant, 28) This can be done through direct community involvement in design and construction. An architect may always be an outsider when he acts beyond the bounds of his own cultural landscape. As such, the work must be based upon reciprocal relationships to negotiate the boundaries on the land. The architect holds the position of consultant, offering the gift of mediating reciprocity of people and land through building. This requires humility.

Three. **"The canoe is designed to go *up*river."**
The canoe is a master of negotiation: it opens the water before it, and closes the water behind, gaining ground as it does so. It is a craft that faces problems head-on: the water is flowing down, but the canoeists want to move up – inland. Negotiation refuses compromise, but clings to relationship. The goal is to get up river: simple, clear, determined. The canoe skilfully comes alongside opposing forces in such a way that both purposes are fulfilled in harmony. I feel quite sure that for the Cree, the metaphor here is inseparable from the practical reality.

**I have sought to internalize the principle of *kwachi*: "my future depends on the well-being of my neighbour." I now look to my neighbours, the Cree of Fort Albany, and seek to understand what it is they need; what gift I can offer in return.**
I was able to see that perhaps it is not for ourselves directly that we work. Perhaps our use of the land can be firstly for the benefit of others; to give the first-fruits in return for receiving the gift of this good land. From the long-term relationship and interdependence established through such actions, we can ensure the future well-being of ourselves through attention to the well-being of others.

It is with gratitude for the Cree's stewardship of the land over their entire history that I seek to respect their occupation of the land and to help strengthen the relationships between land and people through what tools I can provide.

I see that it is critical to understand that any time we intervene in this landscape, we are dealing with sustenance: food from the land. We cannot touch the land without

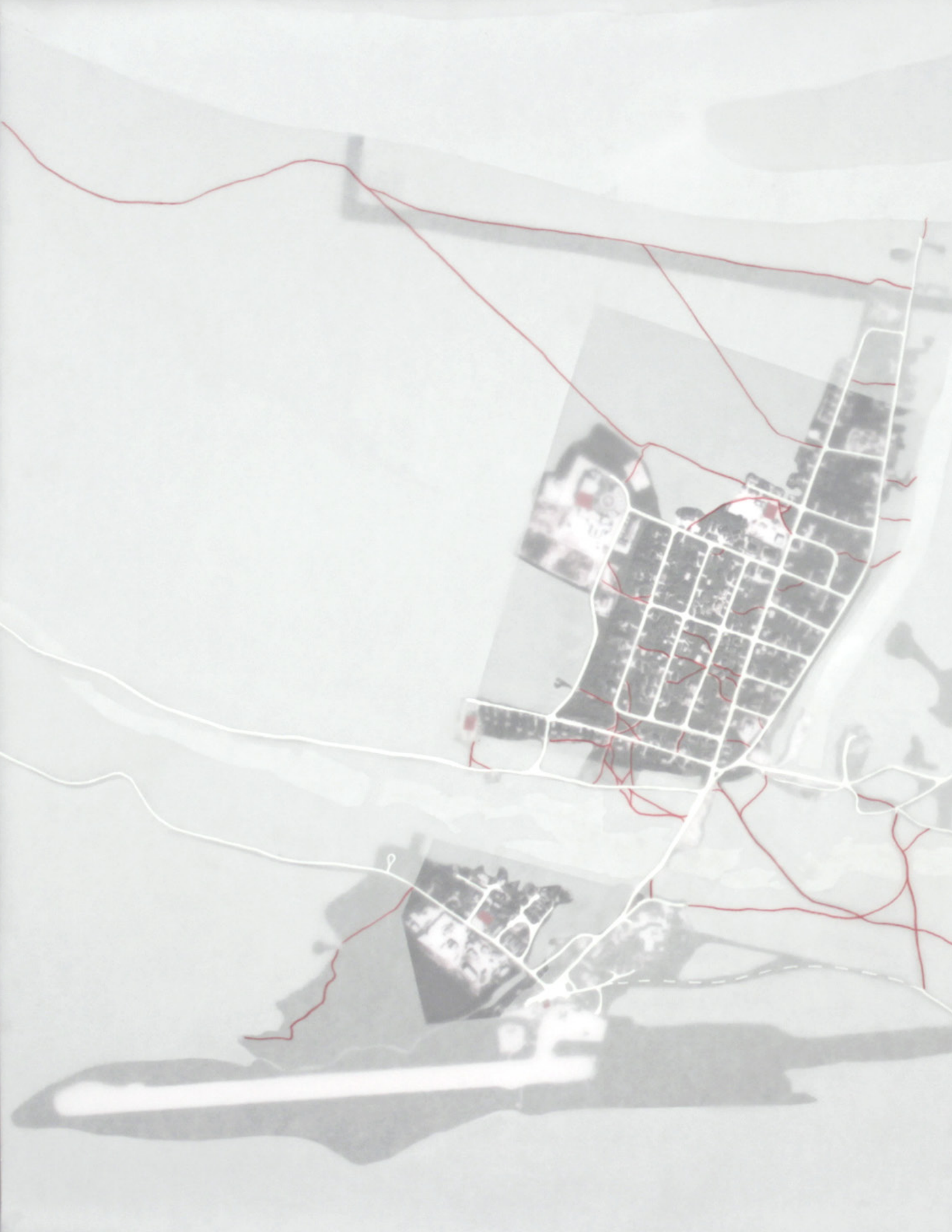
addressing the hunter. Animals give their lives so that people may live. Since the land directly sustains these other beings, our actions on the land must acknowledge, respect and honour the animals.

How we build reveals our understanding of the boundaries we work within, and betrays our posture toward relationship. If we look at architecture through the lens of reciprocity, how do we build differently in this landscape? I take a great lesson from the observation that the houses "in the bush" are a desired approach on the reserve, and are more consistent with a Cree paradigm.

An architect working here, then, must look to the more complex, yet more complete, solutions. How does what we build contribute to or shape the cultural narratives that describe life on the land? How does it speak of the boundaries on the land? We must re-conceptualize what is 'permanent' in the James Bay Lowlands and how our buildings address that sense of permanence. Southern 'solutions' must be tempered with deep understanding of the negotiable landscape of the North. Here, it is the intangible things that last. Specifically, we must consider the land in its role in supporting thriving communities. As food is a gift from the land, what we build on the land should enable the continuation of the food exchange and return something back to it.

I observed that, for the housing coordinator, another sort of map might prove useful. It would be one that would acknowledge some of the intangible boundaries on the land. Perhaps this could be a tool for the community and my gift. It could be used to help mediate the spatial relationships of the reserve to the surrounding bush with cultural narratives of food from the land. (At this stage it will be incomplete, requiring further consultation. This is a first step, in good faith and humility.) However, it is crucial to remember that what we bring into the region is just as transformative as what we take out. How we choose to represent the place impacts its reality. The principles of reciprocity place responsibility on the architect to act with care: to acknowledge the land as a garden and to tend it well.

[xxix]
Children tobogganing. In this flat landscape, it was interesting to note that children tend to play in ditches and on hills.
[xxx]
Overleaf: Fort Albany First Nation boundaries map.



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