

A “New Relationship” Between Anthropologists and the Crees of Québec

Part One: The Challenge

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Abstract:

While the historical relationship between anthropologists and indigenous peoples is complex and contentious, there are many examples of the former supporting the latter as they seek self-governance and autonomy within their respective nation-states. In northern Québec, the Cree (Eeyou) Nation has spent much of the last 30 years in conflict over development of their lands and resources, with anthropologists involved in nearly all levels of this debate. Recently, Cree leaders signed a “New Agreement” with the Province of Québec which promises increased cooperation in the sustainable development of the region’s resources and reflects the fact that local employment, economic development, and community services have now become the main concern of Cree leaders. In response to such trends, anthropologists need to revise our research questions, methods, and perhaps even theories to address the issues now facing indigenous communities in the north and elsewhere. In this article, the first of two parts, I identify the challenges we face and explain the historical patterns that led to where we are. In Part Two I will offer suggestions for responding to these challenges both as individual researchers and for the field as a whole.

Introduction

The purpose of applied anthropology, in simplest terms, is to use anthropological methods and theories to solve real-world problems, generally at the behest of a community, organization, or government agency. Yet questions arise: How do we know when one or more of the tools we use, from our theoretical perspectives to our research methods or communication products, is no longer adequate for the task? What obligation do we have to the communities or agencies we serve to respond to their changing needs and priorities? I ask these questions as a practicing anthropologist engaged in a process of developing new skills and mastering new tools, from GIS and remote sensing to digital media and community training, as a response to a rapidly evolving context for research with Indian communities in the U.S. and Canada. My work is primarily in the area of environmental, land-use, and cultural heritage issues affecting the Cree (or Eeyou) communities of northern Québec, and that is the basis for the arguments I make in this article. (I use the terms “Eeyou” and “Cree” interchangeably in this article. Although the former, along with the inland-dialect “Eenou,” are now the official appellation, the latter is commonly used by residents when speaking English.) I know from other accounts, however, that the evolution in research methods and tools is generalizable to other places and communities and to other research topics (Schensul and LeCompte 1999; Harrison 2001). Therefore, I assume that the situations I describe in this article, and the suggestions I offer in part two, will contain insights that might be useful for others.

In the situation I describe here, recent developments stemming from a new political agreement between the Eeyou Nation and the Province of Québec have highlighted the major changes that have occurred in this region for the last 30 years. These include regional environmental disturbances related to the James Bay Hydroelectric Project and other development (McCutcheon 1991; Penn 2002), as well as rapid social and economic changes affecting the 9 Eeyou communities (Hornig 1999). My work as a consultant to the Eeyou has involved documenting such changes, helping to protect their rights to land and resources, and documenting cultural heritage. Among other projects, I have collected local testimony on the environmental and social impacts of hydroelectric development (Scott and Ettenger 1994); evaluated community fishing programs established under the Mercury Agreement (Ettenger 1996); documented community history about a traditional wildlife preserve (Ettenger 2002); conducted land-use and occupancy research for an offshore claim (Ettenger 2003); and, most recently, worked with local Eeyou researchers to preserve the cultural heritage of a future reservoir site (Denton, Ettenger, and Moses 2003).

These projects have influenced my opinions about what the Crees find relevant about anthropological research and what they do not. I have also spoken with Eeyou leaders at the local and regional levels, with community residents, and with non-Cree researchers, advisors, and administrators working within or on behalf of Cree organizations. These conversations have helped me to understand why much of our research and writing goes unnoticed by the Cree communities and

what we could do to improve this situation, especially in light of the new course for development being charted by Cree leaders. I should add that I present these views as an individual, not as a representative for the Crees or a particular community or organization.

Environment and Development in Eeyou Istchee

The Cree or Eeyou (“the people”) Indians of northern Québec inhabit a vast subarctic territory of muskeg and boreal forests called Eeyou Istchee, or “The People’s Land” (Figure 1). Physically this region is bound on the west by James and Hudson Bays, on the north roughly by the treeline, and on the east and south by the height of land dividing the Hudson Bay drainage basin from the rivers flowing into Ungava Bay, the Labrador Sea, and the St. Lawrence River. The region is more than 127,000 square miles (330,000 sq. km.) in size, or larger than New York, New Jersey and the New England states combined, yet the total Cree population is less

than 14,000 (Gagnon and Rocher 2002). Another 20,000 or so non-Indians live in the region, mostly in southern mining and logging towns, and in the northern town of Radisson, created by Hydro-Québec to service the La Grande hydroelectric complex. The Cree population is divided among 9 villages ranging in size from roughly 500 to more than 3,000 individuals. Each community has a small area of municipal land (dubbed “Category 1” under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, or JBNQA), surrounded by larger buffer zones (Category 2 lands) on which they maintain exclusive wildlife harvesting rights. The rest of the territory, constituting about 3/4 of the land base, is Category 3 lands on which the Crees have exclusive trapping rights while non-Indians can hunt and fish. As well as these imposed categories, the land is also divided into some 320 Cree hunting territories (*ndoho istchee*), commonly called traplines, which form the basis for traditional Cree wildlife harvesting and management.

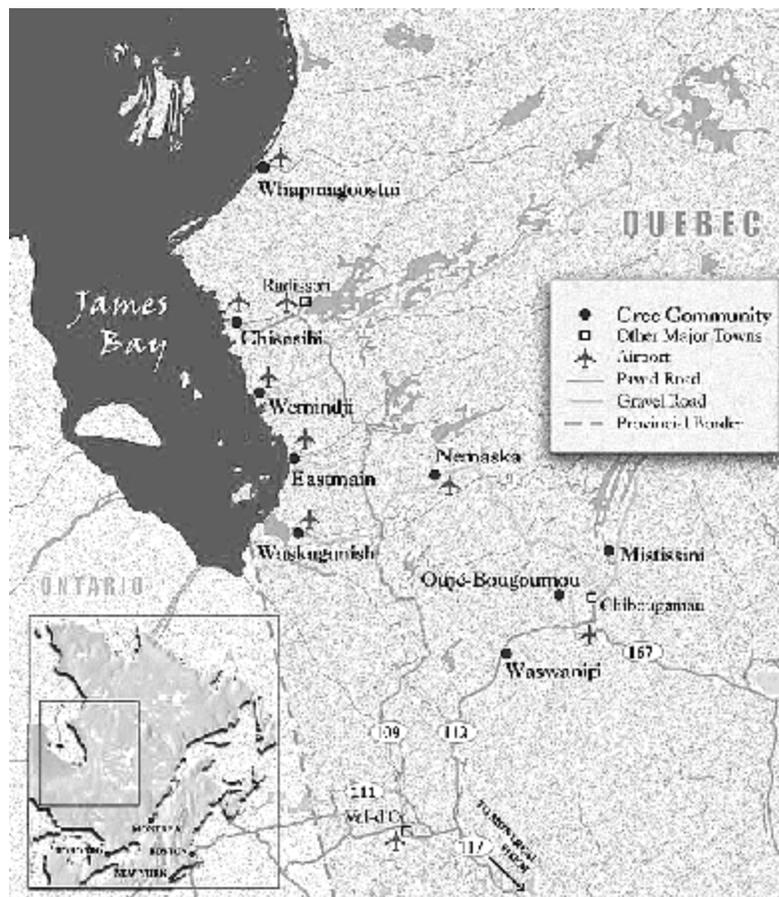


Figure 1. Map of the Eeyou Istchee (approximate boundary) in Québec, Canada, showing the 9 Eeyou communities, major rivers, and existing hydroelectric stations. Map courtesy of the Cree Outfitters and Tourism Association. Adapted by author.

For most of their history, the Eeyou have lived off what the land provides, both as subsistence hunters, fishers, and gatherers, and as trappers in the fur trade (Tanner 1979; Francis and Morantz 1983). From 1670 on, when the first Hudson's Bay Company post was established in the region, until the early 1970s their existence was one of gradual accommodation to global and state economic, political, and social institutions while maintaining a fundamentally "traditional" way of life (Morantz 2002). This changed in the early 1970s when the Premier of Québec, Robert Bourassa, announced that the province would proceed with plans to develop the region's major rivers to create one of the world's largest hydroelectric complexes (Bourassa 1985). Following this sudden revelation was a period of Indian resistance and negotiation which led eventually to the signing of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, considered the "first modern land claim agreement" (Richardson 1991; Gagnon and Rocher 2002).

This major compact, signed in 1975 by the Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi communities of Québec along with the province and the federal government, essentially gave to the province the right to develop the territory in return for financial compensation, the protection of aboriginal harvesting rights, and a number of measures designed to protect the environment, foster the development of Indian communities, and give Indian governments in the region the tools to administer their own affairs from health and education to housing and community economic development. While the James Bay Agreement was considered groundbreaking in scope and respectful of Indian rights and culture, in the years to follow it proved to be flawed on several levels, from environmental protection to economic benefits. "At the outset," says Alan Penn, an environmental advisor to the Cree Regional Authority, "the Cree found themselves confronted with a complex government structure which seemed to be designed to exclude them from the development of the region" (Penn 2002:123). The Cree were in a situation of continuous conflict over implementation of the agreement, and constantly had to resort to the courts (provincial, federal, and international) to uphold their rights to land and resources (Moses 2002). The most visible of these battles was over the proposed Great Whale Project, a hydroelectric complex planned for the Great Whale and neighboring rivers in the northern part of Eeyou Istchee, but conflicts over forestry, mining, sport hunting, and other issues were also intense. It was the continual problem of implementation of the JBNQA that eventually led the Eeyou leaders to engage in the process leading to the 2002 agreement with Québec.

Environmental, Economic, and Social Change in James Bay

Three decades of intense natural resource development centered around the construction of the James Bay Project have had enormous impacts on life in the Cree communities, some of which are still poorly understood. First are major environmental changes associated with the building of dams, roads, transmission lines, power plants, and other features that large-scale hydroelectric development entails (McCutcheon 1991; Coppinger and Ryan 1999). Huge new reservoirs were created, flooding entire Cree traplines and parts of many more. Rivers were diverted from their natural courses to feed the power plants of the La Grande Complex; those like the Eastmain are now all but dry while the La Grande carries most of the runoff from central Québec (Figure 2). Other water-related changes include mercury contamination of local fish stocks due to reservoir flooding, interruptions of spawning runs, and new travel hazards associated with floating debris and dangerous ice conditions on rivers and reservoirs. Roads and transmission lines have further impacted the regional landscape, wildlife habitat and movements, forest cover, and access by outsiders to Cree hunting and fishing areas. Extensive logging in the southern part of the region has led to clearcuts, logging roads, damage to water quality, and other impacts. Increases in forest fires in the region, some devastating in size, may be associated with roads and use of the territory by sport hunters, fishers, and other recreationists.

While such changes have clearly had an impact on the way Indian hunters use the land, other changes at the community level have also had profound effects on the Eeyou and their way of life. The development of community infrastructure (roads, houses, schools, recreation centers, shopping centers, and so on) and growth in the wage economy both fueled by payments made as a result of the JBNQA and subsequent agreements, are most obvious. Many residents are now employed by local administrative offices, schools, health clinics, and other service and administration entities. Such jobs form the backbone of the Cree economy, providing support for other local businesses from grocery stores, restaurants, and gas stations to cottage industries like crafts and bush food production. The private sector, which remains limited in the communities, would be almost nonexistent without the influx of capital from the external support of local government and human services. Cree leaders are well aware of this fact, which is part of the reason that community and economic development are the main issues dealt with in the New Agreement.



Figure 2. Part of the complex of dams and dikes that make up the La Grande Complex, the series of reservoirs and power-generating stations on the La Grande River in Eeyou Itchee.

In material terms, there is little doubt the Eeyou communities are better off than before the coming of the hydro projects and the signing of the JBNQA. In the 1960s, when Norman Chance (1968a) and others were studying the effects of development (mining and forestry) on the Cree in the southern part of the region, living conditions were compared to those of developing nations. Housing was inadequate, heating and plumbing systems were primitive (that is to say, wood stoves and buckets), and transportation was largely limited to motorized canoes, bush planes, and snowshoes (the skidoo entered the scene in the early 1970s). Many Cree men were beginning to work in the resource sector simply to earn a better living than they could off the land, even if it meant spending a good part of the year in work camps or non-Indian communities like Matagami and Dore Lake (Tanner 1968). However, as Tanner showed, more than half of all Cree families from the southern communities still spent their winters hunting and trapping in the bush, showing that the traditional subsistence economy remained strong well into the 1960s.

Today the Cree villages consist of modern houses neatly set along sandy, gravel, or (in a few cases) asphalt roads in communities designed by architects and land-use planners (Figure 3). They are heated by furnaces and connected to municipal water and sewage systems and local or regional electric grids. Spacious local government offices, sports complexes, and commercial centers with small shops and restaurants are the norm (Figure 4). Near-daily air flights provide rapid transportation of people and goods, and all but one community is connected via roads to the south. Entertainment and recreation opportunities, while not diverse, are ample; many larger communities would love to have the sports facilities, for example, of Eastmain (pop. 550) with its indoor hockey arena and recreation complex. In short, the Cree communities have made a great leap forward in terms of material infrastructure, in large part due to the economic benefits of regional development and the ability of Cree leaders to use their political skills to gain services for residents.



Figure 3. Clusters of modern houses in Chisasibi, a new Eeyou community created when the former village of Fort George was moved from an island in the La Grande River. With a little more than 3,000 residents, Chisasibi is the largest Eeyou community and home to the Cree Board of Health and Social Services and the region's only hospital.



Figure 4. An example of the impressive architecture in Oujé-Bougoumou, the newest Eeyou community in Eeyou Istchee. The community's residents had long been displaced by forestry and other development and were living in scattered towns and villages throughout the region. Today Oujé-Bougoumou is a model of sustainable community design and is the future site of the new Cree Cultural Institute, Aanischaaukamikw.

On the negative side are an array of social, physical, and emotional problems related to rapid changes in lifestyle and other factors, some of which were identified nearly 40 years ago by the anthropologists studying the effects of development on the Cree (Chance 1968b; Sindell 1968; Wintrob 1968) and others that emerged in the context of newfound affluence

(Warner 1999). Most Cree adults now stay in their communities to work and send their children to school; less than 1/4 of all heads of households now work as "trappers" supported by the Cree Income Security Program (which provides subsidies to occupational subsistence harvesters). Children spend their evenings watching satellite broadcasts on TV and grow up expecting a high degree of material possessions. Many

youth are torn between wanting to be like their grandparents, experiencing the freedom of being their own bosses out on the land, and wanting to be like their parents, with the freedom of being able to hop in their truck and drive 100 miles to Radisson for pizza and beer on a Friday night. This tension and other social pressures can lead to self-destructive behaviors ranging from substance abuse to suicide. Health challenges are also many. We are only now beginning to see the long-term effects of dietary and lifestyle changes on the Cree (diabetes is rising rapidly, as are heart disease and other “Whiteman diseases”).

The “New Relationship Agreement”

Applied anthropologists who work with indigenous communities often find themselves engaged, either directly or indirectly, in conflicts over land, resources, and sovereignty. Certainly this has been the case for many anthropologists who have worked in the James Bay region of Québec in the past 30 to 40 years. During this time the Eeyou (formerly Cree) Nation has been embroiled in a constant battle to protect their lands, culture, and political autonomy in the face of considerable resource development pressure and encroachment from various state-level institutions. Anthropologists working in this region have played supporting roles as researchers for the Cree government and for local and regional Cree agencies and have testified on behalf of the Cree in court cases and hearings, including those that led to the landmark 1975 James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, the initial land claim settlement that paved the way for Cree self-government (Richardson 1991). With such help Cree political leaders have negotiated a series of agreements which, in addition to protecting rights to land and resources, have provided them with many of the tools needed to develop their communities and participate to a desired degree in the global economy.

The latest of these agreements changes the landscape for anthropological research in Eeyou Istchee (the Cree homeland) by setting new priorities for economic development and establishing a joint approach to resource management in the region. This agreement, a draft version of which was signed in October 2001 and a final version in February 2002, was negotiated by Cree and Québec officials to resolve outstanding conflicts over hydroelectric development, forestry, and mining in James Bay, and to provide additional financial and legal tools for the Eeyou to foster economic development and self-government. *The Agreement Concerning a New Relationship Between le Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec*,² as it is officially called in English (now

referred to as the “New Relationship Agreement” in Cree documents), is described in its Preamble as “a nation-to-nation Agreement which strengthens the political, economic and social relations between Québec and the Cree, and which is characterized by cooperation, partnership and mutual respect.” In practical terms, the New Agreement allows the province to pursue additional hydro projects in the region, including the diversion of the Rupert River, resolves a number of court claims filed by the Cree on forestry and other issues, and gives the Cree annual payments on the order of \$100 million for the next 50 years.

The Agreement Concerning a New Relationship is clearly founded on a belief that the main needs of the Cree are related to jobs, income, housing, health, and other aspects of community development. The funding to address these needs will come from continued – albeit better managed and controlled – development of the natural resources of their territory. Under the agreement, hydroelectric development, forestry, mining, and other forms of resource extraction are not only permitted but are encouraged, with the Cree engaging in all of these activities to some degree. Rather than continuing to pour their resources into fighting individual projects that impinge upon their lands and resources, or trying to receive compensation for damage already done, the Cree accept that a certain level of development will take place. However, they will not only receive due benefits from such development, they will actually take part in the process in meaningful ways.

Among the agreement’s provisions are ones that give the Cree stronger control over the development and monitoring of hydro projects. This process has already been used to modify the design of the “Rupert Diversion,” the plan to divert a portion of the water from the Rupert River north into the existing La Grande complex (earlier designs called for more flooding and greater diversion of flow from the river). There are also revenue sharing provisions in the agreement which basically make the Cree partners in future hydro projects and give them a portion of the income generated. Similarly, the Cree were able to negotiate better management of logging operations, such as the integration of traditional Cree traplines into cutting plans. This means that individual trappers will be able to restrict, to some degree, the amount of logging that takes place on their family hunting territories. Of course, it does not mean that the Cree will gain full control over this activity, which affects a large part of the inland communities’ land areas, but it does allow them to have a stronger voice in management

decisions. There are also provisions regarding the number of Crees that various resource industries will hire in coming years, something that the communities and leaders have been fighting for since the 1970s (and which the JBNQA was supposed to address).

The New Agreement provides the Cree with something on the order of four to five billion dollars (Cdn) from Québec over the next 50 years to fund local development, housing, job training, and a host of other needs. With a young (more than half under 21 years of age) and rapidly growing population, limited regional economic development outside of resource extraction industries, few local employment opportunities outside of band administration and other government entities, and desperate needs for housing and other infrastructure, the choice was clear, according to Grand Chief Moses. Cree leaders signed the New Agreement because it provides them with the impetus for community development that previous agreements lacked. They know that the land is at its limits, at least for some resources, and that the majority of today's Cree are not going to follow a subsistence-based way

of life, although those that wish to still can. It is not just progressive, formally educated leaders who feel this way. Many of the elders I have spoken with over the last 10 years say the same thing.

Not all Crees agree with this path or the way it was taken, however. Most controversial was the decision to allow the diversion of the Rupert River to provide more water for the La Grande Complex, a huge series of dams, dikes, reservoirs, and power-generating stations clustered in the La Grande River basin (Figure 5). This reflects a fundamental shift in the course of development of the James Bay territory, with Cree leaders now charting a course in tandem with their former rivals, Hydro-Québec. Meanwhile, the agreement is perceived by many younger Crees as undermining their political, cultural, and territorial sovereignty, which they see as more important than the economic objectives of the agreement. From their perspective it may be difficult to accept the claims of Cree leaders that the New Agreement actually improves their ability to control development or to build stronger mechanisms to support hunting as a way of life.



Figure 5. Dead Man's Bones Falls, part of the Eastmain River that will be flooded by the EM-1 hydroelectric project, which was included under the New Relationship Agreement. Currently researchers are working to document the cultural heritage of the site using elders as teachers and training local residents in ethnography, archaeology, and digital media.

For anthropologists working with the Cree, or those whose research and writings have helped inform the debate over Cree rights, the New Agreement has important implications. On one hand it offers the Eeyou communities what many anthropologists have argued for: greater control over their own affairs, more funds to pursue their goals, and a higher level of involvement in regional resource development. On the other hand it reframes the debate over land, resources, and culture in such a way as to require significant revision of our own approaches, methods, and research questions. How relevant is our discussion of concepts like resistance and autonomy in an era of increased cooperation with the state and its agencies? How do we address the needs of Cree communities in light of their leaders' new emphasis on jobs and training as opposed to protection of traditional activities? What are the major issues to be dealt with at the local level as communities gain more control over health, social services and economic development? How do we ensure that our work builds local capacity rather than maintaining communities' reliance on our own knowledge and expertise for future research? These are some of the many questions anthropologists need to address as Indian rights are entrenched and we enter a new era characterized by self-government and community development in indigenous territories. I propose that as applied anthropologists we need to forge our own "new relationship" with the communities we support as they expand their own capacity and resources for self-government, whether through major "nation-to-nation" contracts like the New Agreement or through other means.

Anthropologists and Development in Eeyou Istchee

Early anthropological writing about the Cree and their neighbors focused on their adaptation to the harsh subarctic environment, the way they organized themselves on the land, and their indigenous system of religion. Ethnographer Frank Speck (1923) set this trend, and it was followed for the next 50 years by people like John Cooper (1939), Eleanor Leacock (1954), and Edward S. Rogers (1967), among others. Beside theorizing about indigenous or introduced systems of land tenure, many of these individuals also worked to protect Cree rights to the land, often using their theoretical perspective to validate their practical or political interests (Tanner 1983). This concern over the condition of the Cree people continued in the 1960s, although the theoretical focus turned to development and its impacts on local populations. It was in this vein that Norman Chance (1968) and colleagues from the Cree Developmental Change Project at McGill and Laval Universities worked among the Cree villages in

the 1960s, seeking to understand and respond to some of the impacts of encroaching development in the region. The reigning theoretical perspective at that time, which was applied in the Cree context, was a "gradual assimilationist" model that saw Indian communities becoming increasingly Westernized through their economic and social interactions with government institutions and the resource sector (Warner 1999).

After the James Bay Project was announced in 1972, a new generation of scholars responded by defending the Crees' right to maintain their traditional culture and rights to the land, while at the same time challenging development theory's apparent acceptance of an inevitable march toward "progress" along a path dictated by outside forces. The newfound political, legal, and economic clout held by the Cree after they signed the James Bay Agreement meant that they were now able to respond to some of the negative impacts of development while dictating the terms of the debate over their own identity and sovereignty. Those who have worked closely with Cree communities in the development era include such noted Canadian anthropologists as Norman Chance (1968a), Richard Salisbury (1972, 1986), Harvey Feit (1982a, 1982b, 1986), Colin Scott (1988, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2001), Fikret Berkes (1977, 1982), and Adrian Tanner (1979, 1983, 1999, 2001). The work of these authors forms the basis for much of our understanding of modern Cree politics and identity. For more than three decades, they have helped frame the debate over development and indigenous rights in northern Québec, often adding their scholarly weight to the positions taken by Cree leaders as they engage with the state. Prominent in much of this work has been a focus on how the Cree have managed to preserve critical aspects of their traditional social and cultural patterns while adapting to modern economic and political realities.

The information collected and ideas put forth by these authors have contributed markedly to theoretical discourse on northern development and aboriginal rights during the last three decades. Their work has also been extremely useful to the Cree in their struggles over land, resources, and identity in the face of large-scale development and increased intervention by the state. From testifying about Cree culture during court hearings and negotiations leading to the JBNQA (Richardson 1991) to conducting research on wildlife harvesting (Weinstein 1976; Berkes 1977, 1982; Feit 1987; Salisbury et al. 1972; Scott 1986), hunting practices (Scott 1982; Tanner 1979; Scott and Feit 1992) and the impacts of hydroelectric development (Scott and Ettenger 1994; Nakashima and Roué 1994),

anthropologists have played key roles in defining the debate over Cree rights and governance and helping the Cree defend their territory and way of life. Ethnographic depictions of Cree life, both past and present, have been used by Cree leaders and legal advisors when making the case to outsiders that Cree culture still exists as a functioning system of land and resource management (Richardson 1991). In the Grand Council's 1994 submission to the Massachusetts Legislature, for example, they cite books and articles by Feit, Tanner, Berkes, and Rogers, among others, which "establish that the Crees have consciously and conscientiously safeguarded and conserved the resource base and environment of which they are part, since time immemorial." (Grand Council of the Crees [of Québec] 1994: 3).

Development and "Cree Hunting Society"

The scholars who actively support Cree claims to territory, resources, and identity have tended to focus on the continued use of the land for subsistence activities and the role that hunting still plays in both everyday life and in framing relations with outsiders. The context is the conflict over development and autonomy (Scott 2001), and the primary argument is that Cree cultural survival depends in large part on their continued ability to use the land in both traditional and new ways. On a policy level such thinking has led to the development of support systems like the Income Security Program for Cree Hunters and Trappers, which assists full-time trappers through financial subsidies (Scott and Feit 1992). Also created were environmental mechanisms like those in the James Bay Agreement, designed to help protect the natural environment and, where it has been damaged by development, help restore it (Penn 2002). These elements have, no doubt, helped maintain and encourage resource harvesting activities by residents of the Cree communities and protect the land base upon which these activities depend. Even the recent agreement with Québec reflects anthropological conclusions about land tenure, with strong provisions for protecting individual traplines (the "family hunting territories" of ethnographic accounts) as part of the new requirements for forestry management.

It is not hard to understand why anthropologists concerned with the rights and status of the Crees within Canada and Québec would reject the assimilationist models of their predecessors in favor of a less deterministic model of development wherein new and original social and economic forms would emerge out of the ongoing relations between the Crees and the state. According to Stanley Warner (1999: 97), Feit,

Scott, and Tanner wanted to show, each in his own way, that "Cree society has evolved in transformational stages that have incorporated new sources of income and livelihood while preserving a matrix of cultural values and practices from earlier times." This has led to extensive discussions of how Cree hunting values form the basis for both internal and external social and economic relations (Scott 1982, 1989), how Crees use hunting concepts and metaphors in their discourse with the state (Feit 1979, 1982b, 1986, 2001), and how the Crees respond to development (Tanner 1999). As Colin Scott has framed the issue:

The view that aboriginal cultures have surrendered their integrity and authenticity in adapting to modern circumstances, and that territorial, political, and other rights are thereby diminished, is a persistent manifestation of assimilationist double standards. Contemporary anthropology has largely abandoned the evolutionary and romantic premises that underwrote these assimilationist expectations. We recognize that indigenous cultures are neither static nor bound to assimilate to the dominant cultures of encapsulating states (1993: 328).

The focus on hunting as the basis for Cree social and political relations, however, is problematic on a number of levels, including the fact that fewer than 1/4 of all Crees now make their living mainly off the land. As Warner (1999: 103) asks, "How much farther can the number of full-time hunting families fall before this kind of [social] glue (and transformational model) gives way to a different construct?" I believe that the Crees themselves have answered this question with the New Agreement; it is now up to anthropologists to understand this shift of thinking. Meanwhile, many popular accounts of Cree culture tend to ignore the obvious changes that have occurred as a result of development, representing the Crees as "a timeless people unable to cope with the forces of modernity," and staging "an oppositional relationship between an original balanced-with-nature culture and the bulldozer forces of an intruding western culture" (Warner 1999: 97-98). It is not just the popular media that convey such images; Cree leaders, environmental groups, and even anthropologists, including myself, have helped to maintain this dualistic portrayal of traditional Cree life versus modern society. It is a powerful dyad, and one that has helped the Crees win the support of various audiences over the years. However, it fails to recognize the complexity of modern Cree society and the fact that, without the development that has occurred in the region in the past 30 years, both traditional and modern ways of life would be more difficult to maintain.

The New Agreement seems to reflect this understanding, and an acceptance on the part of Cree leaders that most young Eeyou are not going to pursue hunting and trapping as a way of life. It will remain an important aspect of their society, no doubt, and many steps have been taken to encourage the pursuit of traditional activities. However, the time may have come for anthropologists to turn their attention elsewhere. It makes little sense to continue to argue for the reproduction of hunting culture, or to suggest that it forms the basis for nearly all aspects of modern Cree identity, in an era when most Crees spend limited time in the bush and when their identity is formed at least as much by their other activities: work, family, sports, travel, politics, and so on. Even from the perspective of cultural survival, the most urgent threats to the Cree today may have more to do with physical and mental health than with hunting *per se* (although these are all related subjects, as Adelson [2000] and others have pointed out). If the Crees themselves can balance hunting with other needs, whether in their day-to-day lives or at the negotiating table, then surely anthropologists can do the same.

Anthropology and Public Policy in Eeyou Istchee: Recent Developments

Unlike some First Nations in Canada, the Eeyou do not have an in-house social research institute or department to direct, carry out, or oversee cultural or social research. Aanischaaukamikw, the newly designed Cree Cultural Institute being created in Oujé-Bougoumou, may eventually serve this function, although cultural heritage preservation and promotion seem to be its major focus (actual exhibits and programs have not yet been designed). The Cree Regional Authority (CRA) has an environmental staff in the Department of Traditional Pursuits based in Montreal, but no anthropologist, sociologist, or other social science staff. They do have several key employees with social science backgrounds (Master's degrees and unfinished Ph.D.s) serving in roles from cultural program directors to policy advisors. Most of these individuals have been working in Eeyou Istchee for two to three decades, having been pulled into their jobs during the early period of Cree administrative capacity-building following the James Bay Agreement. (There are, to my knowledge, no Eeyou with advanced degrees in the social sciences working in the region.)

With no dedicated social science researcher on staff, the CRA and other entities generally turn to outside consultants for their research needs. This includes both independent (self-employed) contractors as well as those with academic appointments. The

selection of consultant(s) for a particular task depends, of course, on their professional qualifications, but also on the nature of the work, time and budget constraints, and professional and personal connections. Some researchers have long-standing working relationships with particular communities or regional organizations that they maintain through applied as well as theoretical research. One community even has its own "official anthropologist," although such designations are probably more fluid than they sound; I have worked in this community myself with no question about my legitimacy or right to work there. One might consider such affiliations as the research equivalent of the Cree trapline system: one person may be the recognized authority, but others can use the territory as long as they follow the rules.

The lack of a Cree social science staff person or department has meant that social considerations are sometimes an afterthought in project planning, rather than a directing factor. This is somewhat ironic given the emphasis that Cree leaders have tended to place on such issues as cultural identity and the social impacts of development. Yet there are major obstacles to implementing a social research program comparable to the environmental program, ranging from limitations of the James Bay Agreement (which specifically states that social impacts of future development projects cannot be considered) to an implicit assumption that anthropologists have little to tell Crees about being Eeyou. The New Relationship Agreement was drafted with little or no input from anthropologists, including those who have worked on the Crees' behalf for the past 30 years. The Cree team consisted of the Grand Chief, three other high-level Cree officials, and their primary attorney. On the Québec side were several senior provincial ministers reporting directly to then-Premier Bernard Landry. While some ideas no doubt came from internal advisors on each side, the speed and secrecy of the negotiations would have made it nearly impossible to seek the guidance of any outside experts, including knowledgeable anthropologists.

On the other hand, some of the topics that anthropologists have studied and written about over the years did find a place in the New Agreement, suggesting an institutionalization of certain social ideas in emerging development structures. For example, the agreement's section on forestry includes strong provisions for respecting the knowledge and land-use practices of local tallymen, the Cree hunters charged with managing individual family traplines. The agreement also called for an improved "level of harmonization between forest management activities and traditional activities including hunting, fishing and

trapping” (p. 11). Similarly, tallymen whose traplines will be affected by new hydro projects on the Eastmain and Rupert Rivers were extensively consulted during planning, with their concerns duly recorded by contract anthropologists working on behalf of Hydro-Québec. They were even taken on aerial surveys of their lands, something that would hardly have been considered 20 or 30 years ago. Hydro-Québec has clearly learned from its past mistakes and from the work of anthropologists; now they employ their own social scientists and take great pains to respect, at least in theory, Cree systems of land tenure and traditional ecological knowledge. When traditional detractors of Indian rights and culture begin to use the tools and theories of anthropologists, where does that leave us?

A “New Relationship” Between the Crees and Anthropologists

For an applied anthropologist, the key question is how to make our work relevant to the needs of the people we work with, and how to deliver our services in a way that respects and furthers community goals, values, and priorities. While anthropology has been a key player in the past in Eeyou Istchee, our lack of input into the New Agreement and absence from many of the issues now facing the Cree suggests that we have lost influence in critical areas of policy, planning, and administration. The positive aspect to this change is that it represents a shift of decision-making power to Indian leaders and a decline in our traditional role as cultural brokers. However, the many challenges laid out in the New Agreement and other recent funding agreements, including needs for increased economic development, employment, health programs, and social services, suggest a host of new ways in which anthropologists can apply their skills and knowledge in the region. If we wish to seriously contribute, it will be necessary to move away from our traditional roles as experts and interpreters of Cree culture and accommodate the emerging needs and priorities of those we seek to support.

In the case of the Eeyou of Eeyou Istchee, a clear shift toward pro-development strategies on the part of their elected leadership means that the research questions anthropologists developed within a setting of conflict with the state may be outmoded today (unless we wish to study conflict and tensions within Eeyou society itself). While there is still a need to understand how communities interact with regional, national, and global forces, the issues that now dominate the agendas of local band (tribal) councils and regional entities are practical ones: providing services to local residents, preparing them for new

economic opportunities, and protecting their health and safety – in other words, the problems that governments everywhere deal with as part of their administrative mandate. Such issues may not be glamorous, but they are the areas in which we as anthropologists may be asked to contribute as Indian peoples achieve true self-government. This is at the heart of the “new relationship” proposed between anthropologists and the Eeyou: working collaboratively to find solutions to the many serious challenges now facing the Cree communities, from health care to jobs to housing, using the techniques that build capacity through training, employment, and knowledge transfer.

In the late 1960s the anthropological focus in Eeyou Istchee was on how Crees were becoming acculturated to Western economy and society. Yet Tanner (1968) and others showed that, rather than being duly assimilated, the Eeyou of James Bay were incorporating the new elements into traditional patterns of existence. They had already adjusted to new sources of income from mining and forestry, using cash from jobs to subsidize their hunting activities. Within anthropology a similar adaptation was needed in order to fully understand what such adaptations meant for Cree identity and autonomy. Tanner, Scott, Feit, and other anthropologists such as Hugh Brody, Peter Usher, Tim Ingold, Anne Fienup-Riordan, Richard Nelson, and Robin Ridington, to name a few, have helped illuminate how northern hunting societies have adapted to, and in some cases resisted or remodulated, the forces they have faced in the last few decades. As a result we can now better appreciate the diverse and ingenious ways in which local communities can maintain critical aspects of their culture and society while incorporating new technologies, information and economic revenue into their lifeways.

Some 30 years after the signing of the James Bay Agreement, however, it may be time for another adjustment in our thinking in response to the profound changes that have taken place in the last three decades. The establishment of the wage economy as the primary source of income, along with modern housing, rapid transportation, and other changes, have altered not only how most Crees make their living but how those who do continue to hunt full-time use and perceive the land. Most Crees, even those on the Income Security Program, would barely recognize themselves in portrayals of the iconic hunter and trapper who continues to linger in the anthropological imagination, or whose knowledge and memories form the basis for Eeyou collective consciousness and cultural identity. The question for most Crees is not how to be more like this image, but how to preserve

and cultivate the sense of connection to their land and heritage even if their experience in the bush is limited to a few days or weeks each year. This is not an idle question, or one of interest only for theoretical reasons. The rapid changes that have come to Eeyou Istchee in the wake of development have left many Crees with a profound sense of dislocation, to borrow from Basso (1996), from their own culture and history.

The majority of Crees are moving toward a way of life wherein hunting and other resource-harvesting activities are just one component, and not necessarily the central one, that defines their existence. This shift has not been an easy one for the Cree communities, and it will not be easy for those of us who work with them. Even Eeyou leaders may not fully appreciate the implications of this shift, although they are certainly aware of the economic and social needs of their communities. Yet I believe that if we are to remain useful to those whom we seek to assist and understand, we must make the transition from studying and writing about the maintenance of Cree hunting practices to helping solve issues of local development.

Conclusion

What I propose is simply a continuation of a process of anthropological adaptation and advocacy that has been taking place for the last century. Ethnographers like Speck and Cooper made arguments on behalf of an indigenous Cree system of land tenure in part to support the rights of Indian trappers against outside encroachment. In the 1960s Chance and others studied the effects of economic change on the Cree, working from a development theory perspective to address emerging social problems. In the recent era of regional development conflict and the implementation of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, Feit, Scott, Tanner, and others have helped fight for Cree rights to land, resources, and autonomy, the critical issues of the day. In each case the social scientists involved adapted their research questions, approaches, and methods to help meet the needs of the Cree communities and their leadership, while maintaining solid ties to their theoretical groundings and professional linkages.

Anthropologists have clearly played a role in helping to establish recognition and respect for Cree systems of land-use and resource management and in entrenching some elements of these local systems into current policy. Now that the New Agreement is in place, however, what are the new horizons for anthropologists interested in working with and supporting the Eeyou of Eeyou Istchee, or other Indian

governments in similar situations? What steps can we take to ensure that our research is meaningful and relevant to the needs of Indian leaders and communities as they achieve greater levels of self-government and move *en masse* from defending their rights to land and culture to regional and local planning and administration? The second part of this article, to be published in the next issue of the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist*, addresses these questions by offering some concrete suggestions for expanding the scope of anthropological research in Eeyou Istchee. I hope that others can add to this discussion and look forward to hearing about similar or contrasting experiences in other settings.

Notes

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2. The text of the agreement can be downloaded as pdf file from the Grand Council of the Cree's website (<http://gcc.ca>). All page numbers refer to this version.

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