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## Gifts of the Land: Hunting Territories, Guaranteed Incomes and the Construction of Social Relations in James Bay Cree Society

メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2009-04-28 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Feit, Harvey A. メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.15021/00003140">https://doi.org/10.15021/00003140</a>

## **Gifts of the Land: Hunting Territories, Guaranteed Incomes and the Construction of Social Relations in James Bay Cree Society**

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The most widely cited example of the impact on a hunting and gathering people of involvement with the world capitalist economy has probably been the claim that the family hunting territories of the Algonquian people of eastern Canada and the United States developed as a form of private property in response to the conditions of the four-century long fur trade with Europeans [LEACOCK 1954; MURPHY and STEWARD 1956]. Eleanor Leacock's influential monograph developing the evidence in support of this proposition was a ground-breaking study, and in important respects it foreshadowed by over two decades the widespread recognition that the non-capitalist societies which anthropologists typically studied were not isolated from the world economy, and that their present forms could not be understood without reference to the consequences of those linkages.

Within Algonquianist research however, the model proposed by Leacock has recently been subjected to several critical evaluations and to either extensive revision or rejection (for recent reviews see Bishop and Morantz [1986], Peterson and Anfinson [1984] and Feit [n.d.]). What these studies have not done however is to offer a detailed alternative interpretation of Algonquian territoriality and its contemporary socio-economic significance.

In a review of processes of commoditisation and their impacts in New Guinea societies, Chris Gregory [1982] argues that the persistence of indigenous forms of clan-based land ownership are necessary for and dependent on gift exchange practices, and that these linked processes are essential to limiting the impacts of commodity production on land tenure and society. Indian societies of the eastern sub-arctic are in fundamentally different circumstances from New Guinea societies, being hunters, not having clan organisation, having been involved in exchanges with world markets over several centuries, and being more dependent on transfer payment from a welfare state than on commodity production. Nevertheless, the connections between land tenure, social relations, market commodity exchanges, and gifts, which are the focus of Gregory's analysis, need to be considered in this context. And this largely internal dynamic needs to be linked to examination of the changing circumstances of access to cash and commodities.

So long as Algonquian hunting territories were considered as not developing in

relation to the reproduction of Cree cultural and social structures, but mainly in response to the European fur trade as forms of transition to privatised rights to land, they did not constitute an appropriate topic for the analysis of the place of land tenure and land utilisation in a hunting social formation, but only for the analysis of presumed social disintegration of those social relations.

It will be my contention that contrary to this view, contemporary Algonquian hunting territories have been and continue to be a critical means of reconstituting the wide social relations and the basic symbolic meanings of Cree hunters in northern Quebec. This involves both reproducing and transforming land tenure in a distinctly non-market form. I will show that the hunting territory system is a major means of locally shaping the changes caused by increasing linkages to both nation states and markets. Thus, I suggest that hunting territories are more accurately viewed as means of social reproduction, and of resistance, rather than of assimilation.

### ISSUES IN THE DEBATES

The detailed model of the development of the family hunting territory system proposed by Eleanor Leacock emphasised the linkages between Algonquian social and territorial organisation and the fur trading forms of market enterprise.

My hypothesis is, first, that such private ownership of specific resources as exists has developed in response to the introduction of sale and exchange into Indian economy which accompanied the fur trade and, second, that it was these private rights—specifically to fur-bearing animals—which laid the basis for individually inherited rights to land [LEACOCK 1954: 2].

The actual transformation occurred through several inter-linked processes, which Leacock introduces as being elaborated in Herskovits' assertion that production for use rather than for exchange in primitive economies "focuses the attention on the products of the land rather than on land itself" [1954: 7]. She focuses her analysis on the social consequences for rights to land of three linked processes: a) the introduction of food as a commodity supplied through the world trading link; b) the change from production for use to intensive production for exchange which the introduction of externally produced food commodities makes possible; and, what follows from that, c) the change from limited material objectives to limitless commodity consumerism.

Thus, she wrote that formerly, "owing to the uncertainty of the hunt, several families were necessarily dependent upon each other," providing a subsistence security greater than individual families could attain [1954: 7]. Production for trade transferred the individual's most important economic ties from within the band to outside traders, and this changed the objective relation between band members from cooperative to competitive. Families became self-sufficient through increased dependence on storable, transportable and individually acquired

purchased food supplies [1954: 7]. In contrast to the aboriginal situation, material needs became theoretically limitless, and larger living groups were "not only superfluous in the struggle for existence but a positive hindrance to the personal acquisition of furs" [1954: 7].

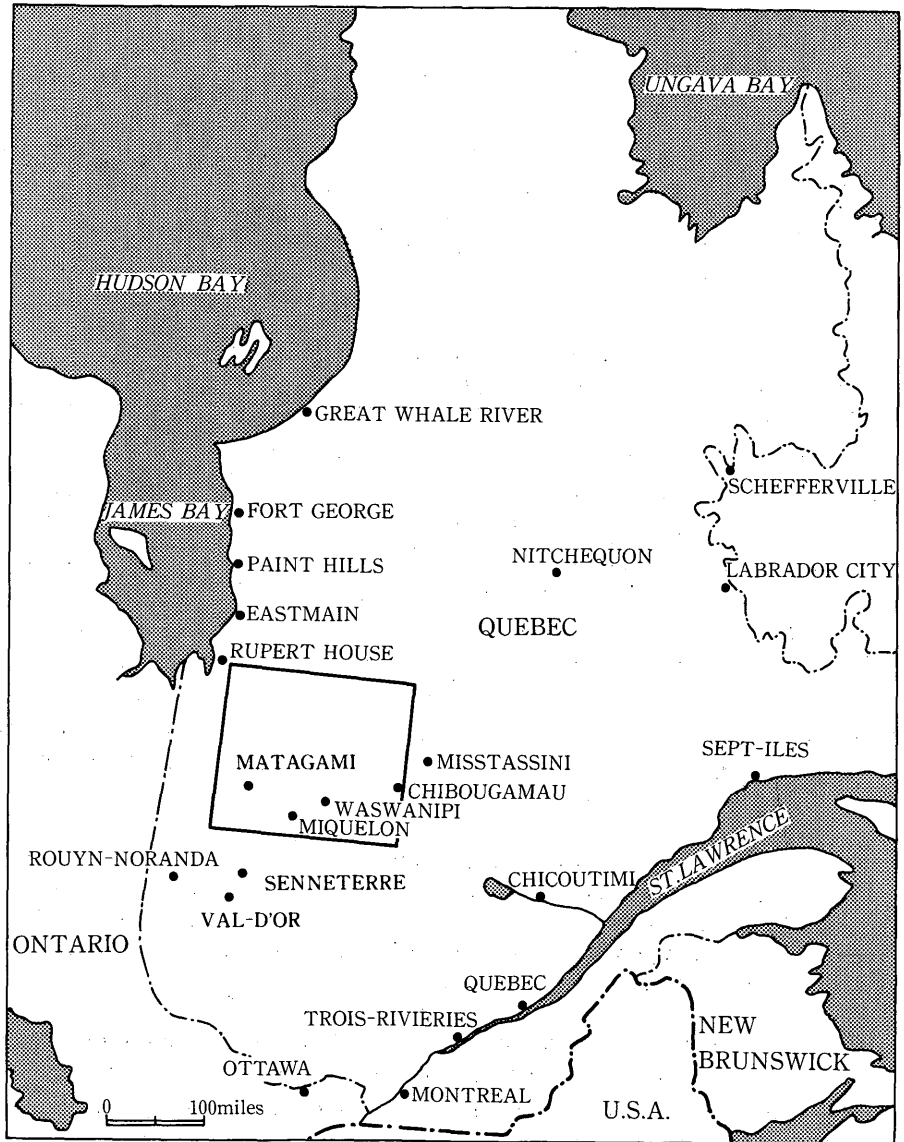
The consequences of these processes for the relationship between trappers and land are that:

The family group begins to resent intrusions that threaten to limit its take of furs and develops a sense of proprietorship over a certain area, to which it returns year after year for the sake of greater efficiency [LEACOCK 1954: 7].

Leacock claimed these developments have considerable historical depth and the process had begun by the beginning of the eighteenth century when clear evidence appears of individual family hunting and trapping arrangements [1954: 15]. This is followed by an annual system of seasonal allotments, which was increasingly stabilised [1954: 16] and transformed into the family hunting territory system. The process, which proceeded through three stages, was essentially complete by 1950 at Seven Islands (Sept-Iles on Figure 1) on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River [1954: 24] and in western Quebec-Labrador at Mistassini [1954: 36]; whereas among other groups east of Seven Islands the process was not yet completed [1954: 24, 29]. (Mistassini is adjacent to the community of Waswanipi where much of the data cited in this paper was gathered). Leacock claimed these developments were not smooth or easy, they met considerable resistance from the Indians who were reluctant to give up communal patterns [1954: 9], but these she treated as passing anomalies. At the final stage of development, the Indian trappers:

differ from white trappers only in the carry-over of some material traits, including at times a slightly, but hardly significant, greater dependence on natural products and, more markedly, in the retention of attitudes and personal relationships more closely correlated with their past than their present way of life [LEACOCK 1954: 24].

Murphy and Steward, building on both Leacock's analysis, and on Murphy's of the Mundurucú of Brazil, generalised the process of transformation of aboriginal economy and society. Schematically, and with some modifications to Leacock, they argued that, in the initial stage of contact, production for exchange is secondary to subsistence production and basic social patterns exist. In a transitional phase, increased production of commodities for exchange interferes with subsistence production, individual trade conflicts with group solidarity, and the displacement of native crafts with manufactured commodities results in increased dependence on the trader. In the final stage, production for exchange predominates, provisions are purchased, family or individual hunting predominates, and hunting territories are exploited only by the owner's family. Summarising their argument, they claim that:



**Figure 1.** The location of the Waswanipi region.

When the people of an unstratified native society barter wild products found in extensive distribution and obtained through individual effort, the structure of the native culture will be destroyed, and the final culmination will be a culture type characterized by individual families having delimited rights to marketable resources and linked to the larger nation through trading centers [MURPHY and STEWARD 1956: 353 original in italics].

Different conclusions are reached by a series of more recent studies of the

modes of production and the cultural structures of eastern sub-arctic hunting societies [TANNER 1979; SCOTT 1979; FEIT 1978, 1982; BRELSFORD 1983].

In an earlier paper I noted that the data available on James Bay Cree society do not support the development of the features which Murphy and Steward cite as diagnostics of the final phase of the processes of assimilation [MURPHY and STEWARD 1956: 350; FEIT 1982: 378-389]. But it might be argued that such data do not preclude the outcome predicted by Murphy and Steward, because the processes of transformation are ongoing and the final stages have not yet been reached [FEIT 1982: 388]. Thus, while the contemporary indicators are not as predicted, the lack of processual analysis of the historical changes in tenure systems, and in local economic production and exchange, make conclusions difficult.

Some evidence that the likely outcomes may not conform to the predictions is given by critics of Murphy and Steward including Scott, Tanner, and Brelsford, who have noted: 1) that the forms of territorial systems found among the James Bay Cree today are not forms of privatised property rights; 2) that hunting territories are both systems of practice and culture, intertwined and closely linked to distinctive social forms and relations; 3) that the replication of distinctive ideologies of land and social relations has been central to the ability of Algonquian peoples to maintain distinctive systems of land rights; 4) that the transformation of Cree society cannot be analysed in isolation from consideration of the impact of the nation state, over and above the impacts of world markets; and, 5) that the very distinctiveness of Cree ideologies and practices implies some degree of historical continuity of practices and of cultural knowledge and values, which has been reproduced through the extended changes or transformations that have clearly occurred. With respect to the long historical changes, however, the ethnohistorical data have not, as yet, been adequate to document the processes of historical change in the tenure system of the James Bay Cree.

This paper seeks to extend the earlier analyses by linking contemporary practices and structures to the processes underlying their ongoing reconstruction, and by looking at the processual responses of James Bay Cree society to a number of important changes in social and economic conditions. This requires looking in greater detail at the contemporary relationships between land tenure, production, exchange, and social forms as a basis for analysing the processes by which social relations are reconstructed, and potential impacts of cash and commoditisation are shaped. In particular, the analytical tasks it addresses are threefold:

to examine land not only as a force of production but also as both a meaningful symbol and as a social means, central to processes of production of Waswanipi social formations; and,

to reconsider the relationship between the expansion of the role of cash and wage labour in Cree economy and society and the continuation of both the hunting territory system and the practice of gift exchange, by comparing data from before and after the implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement;

and,

to consider some of the changes which have recently occurred in land use and hunting from the perspective of questions of reproduction and resistance.

These analyses will first require briefly reexamining the literature on the functioning and significance of Algonquian hunting territory systems.

## WASWANIPi CREE CUSTOM AND LAND TENURE

Cree hunters do not generally consider land and wildlife to be owned by humans in any market sense of ownership, because, as the Cree say, people are born and die while the land continues. The land is passed on from previous generations, and will be transmitted to future generations, and no one can create it, dispose of it or control it in any absolute sense.

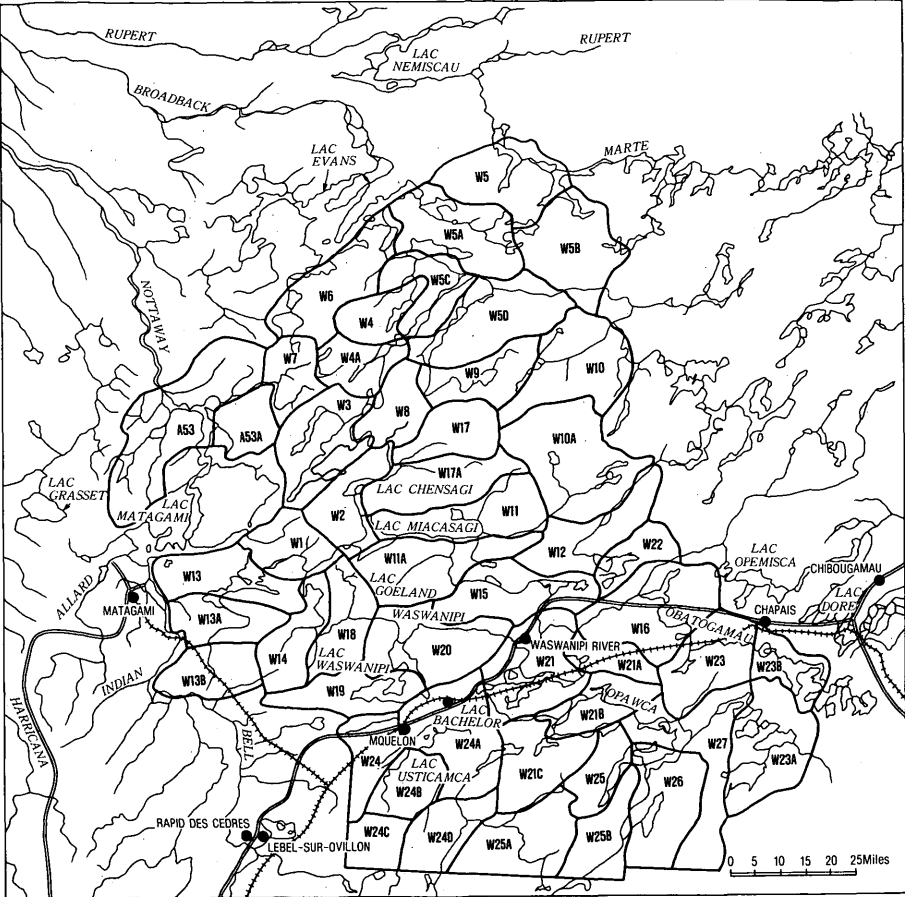
All people have a right of access to land and resources to sustain themselves<sup>1)</sup>. This right extends to all Cree, and to other humans as well, but along with the rights go responsibilities to respect the land and animals. Thus when Cree criticise Euro-Canadians for what they are doing on the land, it is traditionally not directed at the fact that they are using the land *per se*, all humans have a right to do this, but because they do so irresponsibly. The Cree focus is in the failure of Euro-Canadians to use the land and animals in ways that responsibly respect their continued value and productivity, and that respect those people who already have rights to, and are using the land.

All the land on which the Cree hunt is divided into territories. The approximately three hundred territories in the James Bay region vary in size from about three hundred to several thousand square kilometres, each supervised by a hunter. The territories are part of continuous blocks, each associated with a particular Cree community, which exercises collective rights over the community territory. The 300 hunting territories are thus part of 8 community hunting zones. At Waswanipi there were some 49 territories in 1977 (Figure 2). The boundaries of the territories are often imprecise, they frequently overlap, and they vary somewhat over time.

While rights to land and resources are distributed to the community as a whole, as a continuing society extending over generations, specific people exercise authority over the hunting territories in the name of the community and the common interest.

Each hunting territory is said to be "owned" by an individual "boss" or "leader," whom I shall call a "steward." Although the Cree use the English term "ownership" for the relationship of stewards to their hunting territories, the relationship is not one of ownership by market standards. The steward appoints

1) This section of the paper draws on material previously reported [FEIT 1982]. It is included here so that the present paper can be self-contained, and so that readers will not have to turn to other sources to follow the issues discussed below.



**Figure 2.** Hunting territories Waswanipi, 1977, based on consultations among “Owners.”  
Source: La Grande Complex Remedial Works Corporation (SOTRAC)

his successor, but he cannot dispose of the land by sale or transfer. The steward is therefore the temporary custodian of a portion of the community and kin-group patrimony. He is under obligation to see that the land is used in ways that sustain and protect it for posterity.

The steward exercises a broad mandate and considerable authority vis-à-vis his contemporaries. He has the right to decide whether the hunting territory is to be used for an extended period of time, that is, whether it can be harvested intensively; and he has considerable authority over who uses it. He can decide which of the big game species can be hunted, as well as where, when and how many can be taken. Social and spiritual sanctions support his authority, and although animal spirits communicate with all hunters, the steward is said to have the closest ties to the spirits of the land he owns.

In practice, a steward will exercise much less day-to-day direction than this formal account may imply. Allowing a hunter to use a hunting territory will often



carry an implicit or explicit agreement on the overall size of the harvest and the area to be harvested, and no more direction than that may be required. Often direction takes the form of an impersonal commentary on a situation or a suggestion, in accordance with the value of egalitarianism.

An individual typically occupies the role of steward for several decades, between about the ages of 40 to 60. This leadership authority is thus exercised by a relatively stable and limited number of individuals. At Waswanipi there are 49 stewards among a population of nearly 1,000 and a resident active adult male population of about 200.

In addition to the rights of a steward, other hunters acquire a long-term right of access to one or more hunting territories in which they have grown up or hunted over an extended period of time. If a steward decides a certain hunting territory will be used, then those people with a long-term right of access to it may use it without having to be invited to join the steward's hunting group. Their use of it, however, is still subject to the steward's supervision.

In addition, a hunter who does not have a right may be granted a privilege of using a hunting territory for a specified period of time—several months or a year. I will return to this practice below. The steward's authority is, in principle, sanctioned spiritually, thus making it powerful but also obligating him to protect the land, and to share the resources with the community. Stewards are generally expected to accommodate hunters without land, and in practice it would be rare for a man who wanted to hunt not to find a place.

The key elements of the hunting territory system then are: a communal and inalienable interest in the use and protection of all land resources; the existence of a limited and relatively stable set of stewards, whose detailed knowledge of, and spiritual ties to, tracts of land are the basis of their authority over all intensive use of those lands and resources by community members; community expectation, sanction and encouragement of leaders to exercise authority with a view to protect communal and family needs, inter-generational continuity, and the needs of all for access to land.

My first task then is to develop an understanding of how this hunting territory system is processually related to the reproduction of Waswanipi Cree social relations.

## **HUNTING TERRITORIALITY IN SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **Commensal Groups**

Waswanipi live year round in enduring and generally slow changing commensal or domestic units, but they generally conduct intensive hunting activities in larger hunting groups.

The commensal unit is the social unit with the greatest economic cooperation and with the greatest social solidarity. Within the commensal unit the sexual division of labour is central. Women are generally responsible for camp

maintenance, domestic activities and primary care of children. Most hunting activities are performed mainly by men<sup>2)</sup>. The commensal or domestic unit is therefore an interdependent unit, and individuals without consort usually attached themselves to a commensal unit. Units with single adult members are rare in the village and do not occur in the bush<sup>3)</sup>. There are no smaller enduring units. Temporary work groups are established for short tasks, or several days, and the same work groups may gather regularly, but they are usually based on men or women co-resident in commensal or hunting groups. The commensal unit on the other hand exists all year round, and tends to endure over many years, as the relationship between the couple at its core continues. Change does occur as children may leave to go to school, or as visitors are accommodated for varying periods, as well as through birth, adoption, fostering, marriage, and death.

The majority of commensal groups in 1968-1970 were nuclear families, a couple and their children or step-children, 79 per cent in 1968-69 and 73 per cent in 1969-70. All but four of the remaining commensal groups were nuclear families that were "extended" by the addition of other relatives. In the four cases, approximately five per cent, a person not related by bilateral kinship ties was a member of a commensal group<sup>4)</sup>.

Given that commensal groups are the most enduring social units, and that a majority are nuclear families, the most distinguishing social relationships in

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2) Women's work includes: preparation of food and meals in the household; looking after the dwelling, including provisioning of firewood and water; butchering of most animals, the main exception being bear; preparation of fur pelts for both sale and domestic use; manufacture of moccasins, mitts and snowshoe lacings, and some other clothing; cleaning and repair of clothing; gathering of boughs for camp flooring, and moss for use as diapers and caulking, when these are used in a household; checking fish nets, often in conjunction with men; most snaring of hares and grouse; and most of the herbal and healing knowledge and preparation and most healing treatment. Some women do hunt and trap for other species, especially for beaver, and many women work with husbands and/or sons. Men, in addition to hunting, fishing and trapping, also give secondary care to children; erect camps and bush dwellings; do most of the hauling of equipment and camps; do gross butchering of big game before it is returned to camp; help with the preparation of large hides; set fish nets, especially when they are set under the ice; produce various tools and equipment including snowshoe frames, some toboggans, snow shovels, skin stretchers, crooked knives, and occasionally beds, stoves, and tables; and generally keep equipment in repair. Men will check fish nets, and snare hare and grouse as will women, and men will often provision firewood.

3) In the years for which I have complete detailed data on Waswanipi social groupings, 1968-69, 1969-70 and 1981-82, nearly all commensal groups which went to the bush were built around a conjugal pair, a hunter and his consort. In the first two years covered there were only two commensal groups which did not conform. In 1981-82 the first of these groups continued, and two new non-conjugal groups formed. In the first case, an older bachelor formed a commensal group with his unwed sister and their mother. In the other cases a widow or widower formed commensal groups with teen-age unmarried offspring. There were no commensal units in which two married couples occurred.

Waswanipi society occur at a supra-commensal unit level.

### Hunting Groups and Hunting Territories

The people who go to hunting camps generally form larger social units, which I will call hunting groups, although the terms "hunting band," "micro band," and sometimes "band" itself have been used for this group. The term "hunting group" avoids confusion with the term "band" which is often used with reference to a government recognised administrative unit such as a reservation community like Waswanipi. The hunting groups are co-residential groups usually comprised of two or more commensal groups that live together at the same camp site, and that generally hunt on the same hunting territory or section thereof.

At the camp the entire hunting group may live in a single dwelling, or in several dwellings: usually adjacent tents over wooden frames or log and plywood lodges. However, each commensal group will have its own stove, larder and sleeping area, even if they share a dwelling. Sharing is extensive among the commensal groups within a hunting group, but each commensal group keeps and maintains its own possessions. Daily interactions among commensal groups in the hunting camp are intensive and extend over the course of many months. Men and women often work in sexually divided work groups which draw membership from different commensal groups. Men typically do not go hunting or trapping as individuals but as working teams of two or three individuals, which travel together each day, each hunter setting one or more traps at locations along the way. Where there is only one hunter in a commensal group, he will form a team with men from another commensal group. However, each member of the team of hunters sets his own traps, and each catches his own animals. The kill is owned by an individual hunter, or more properly, by the commensal group, as he delivers the animals to his consort for butchering, preparation and processing. Similarly, women from different commensal groups often work together gathering firewood and boughs, and in other tasks.

The hunting groups are thus units of important daily and extended social and economic cooperation. Most Waswanipi consider it preferable to live in hunting camps inhabited by groups composed of more than a single commensal unit.

But hunting groups do not usually stay together when people return to the

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- 4) In the winter hunting seasons of 1968-69 and 1969-70, the average size of the commensal groups was 4.5 and 4.6 members, respectively, not including individuals who were present less than two months, who are considered visitors. The number of children that were not in the commensal groups in winter, but were in school, was 1.7 to 1.4 per group. During the winter most of the children in commensal groups that go in the bush are below school age. Not all school age children go to school each year however. Parents often try to keep a teen-age son and a teen-age daughter out of school to help with the work in the bush. Among the commensal groups that went in the bush, there were 8 children in 1968-69 and 10 in 1969-70 between the ages of 7 and 15 inclusive, and most of these were between 13 and 15 years of age.

settlement at various seasons of the year. Nor do they typically stay together from year to year. They are therefore considerably more fluid than are the component commensal groups. The 42 and 41 commensal groups that went to bush camps during 1968-69 and 1969-70 were organised into 18 and 19 mid-winter hunting groups respectively. On average there were 9 to 10 people per hunting group, and the hunting groups were comprised of 2.3 and 1.9 commensal groups each in the two years covered by the data.

The formation of hunting groups is dependent on the system of land tenure and hunting territories, because hunting groups form by and around the stewards, or on some occasions, around the head of a commensal group who has been given permission by a steward to lead a hunting group on a given hunting territory. The steward invites other heads of commensal groups who do not have primary rights of access to that hunting territory to join the hunting group. Sometimes, single hunters may be asked to join, but in these cases it appears that they are effectively invited to join the commensal group of the hunting group leader. There was only one case like this in 1968-1970.

Hunting groups are thus formed both by activating long-term rights of access, and through "invitation," and this is reflected in the way Waswanipi hunters speak about their use of hunting territories. When asked why they used a hunting territory hunters typically say "I always hunt with X" or "I always hunt on X's land," or alternatively they may say "X invited me" or "X asked me to go," where X is a hunting territory steward. The former answers imply a long-term right of use. The latter answers imply the processes of offering invitations to hunters to use a hunting territory and join a hunting group. Such temporary privileges to use a hunting territory may be given to owners of other hunting territories, to hunters with long-term rights of access to other hunting territories, or to the limited number of hunters who have no continuing rights to hunting territories within a community. Hunters who receive invitations will typically be accompanied by adult sons who are hunters and others who regularly hunt as members of their commensal groups. While the process is often discussed as involving invitations among men, few groups form without decisive inputs being made by the adult women who will share the camp site.

While formally the process is said to involve invitations from the owners, those seeking invitations make their needs known during the period immediately preceding hunting group formation. Access would not normally be arranged by asking for permission. Rather the potential recipient of an invitation often takes the initiative by discussing his needs in the community "news" network, and especially with those who may be close to a steward. Through specific portrayals of circumstances, demands can be placed on specific stewards to offer privileges, but without thereby creating the possibility of specific refusals<sup>5</sup>.

The process of offering invitations is discussed indirectly by stewards and hunters, and the reasons given for invitations or the lack thereof are often cast as mundane practicalities. A steward might say that they wanted someone to hunt

with them because he was a friend, or that the invitee's family needed to be near town because his wife was pregnant or his mother was sick<sup>6</sup>). The logic of such explanations appears to lie in precisely what they do not say. That is, they place the decisions about invitations to hunting territories into an explanatory frame which withholds from view the role played in the decisions by personal opinions about, or reputations of, those who are offered and denied privileges; as well as omitting any personal interests of the stewards in the decisions they make. Just as the hierarchical structure of owners versus non-owners is de-emphasised by talking of the dependence of some men on the privileges granted by other men in terms of invitations; so the personal judgments involving who receives privileges are explained in terms of mundane practicalities of different locations, thus providing non-evaluative or non-judgmental explanations of why privileges were or were not given to one hunter, as opposed to another.

Thus the hunting territory system is at the root of the social processes of hunting group formation: both in terms of providing the mechanism of rights and privileges of access to territories and their wildlife resources, in terms of which hunting groups are formed; and in terms of the public images of the process, which emphasise locational aspects of the social obligation and practical concern of stewards for the needs of other hunters.

### **Reproduction and Transformation of Social Relations**

The social relationships which are expressed, reproduced and transformed through the daily face to face interactions, and through sharing work and goods among co-residents in hunting groups, are an important component of the social

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- 5) During my first field trip to Waswanipi, I tried to interview people about their plans for the coming fall and winter. I found that it was easy to gather definite information about who was seeking a place to hunt, and whom they might be hunting with, and many informants seemed well able to state where they thought most of the hunters in the community would be going for the hunting season. But as the season progressed, I found that the actual hunting territories the hunters went to, and the composition of the hunting groups, had not always been predicted in advance by informants. The process of seeking and offering invitations seemed in some cases to be very dynamic, invitations and realignments sometimes going on up to the day of departure from the settlements for the hunting territories. Nevertheless, effectively all of the hunters received invitations as the season progressed. During the late summer and early fall, as the time of departure for the hunting territories grew near, and as some hunting groups departed, the pressure built on stewards remaining to offer invitations to those few hunters who had made their needs known but who had not as yet received invitations.
  - 6) Similarly, one might hear that a man should hunt elsewhere so his ill child could be nearer to town. One steward explained to me that he made an invitation to a man to hunt on his not too distant hunting territory for a whole winter because in the spring the invitee, who did not have a canoe of his own, could bring back to the settlement, and to its owner, the canoe of a third man which had been left on that hunting territory the previous year.

fabric of Waswanipi society. And because the hunting group creates and expresses what are viewed as important relations of both co-residency and working partnerships, these intensive, extended, but annually changing relationships have considerable significance for the enduring bonds which are perceived to develop and continue among Waswanipi as a wider society.

Turner and Wertman emphasise the importance of co-production in the formation of bonds among Shamattawa Cree [1977], and similar processes occur among the Waswanipi. The links between the heads of the commensal groups that comprise a hunting group do not conform to any single kinship rule. In a substantial number of cases the commensal groups in a hunting group do not have primary kinship linkages, or any traceable kinship linkages. Furthermore, hunters have said on occasion that they were living together because they were "friends," as opposed to kinsmen, although they could sometimes trace a more or less distant kin link. In total, nineteen per cent of linkages between heads of commensal units comprising a hunting group were through primary consanguineal bonds, thirty-one per cent were through primary affinal bonds, twenty-two per cent were linked by non-primary kin bonds, and twenty-eight per cent were not clearly related by kinship according to their own reports. The hunting groups therefore express and activate social relationships beyond those normally found in the commensal groupings, and beyond those identified as kinship bonds. In addition, during 1968-69 and 1969-70, only 22 per cent of the hunting groups which occurred in either year were comprised solely of hunters with long-term rights of access. Invitations were therefore of considerable importance in the formation of hunting groups. In hunting groups comprised of two or more commensal units, 74 per cent of the heads of commensal groups joined the hunting groups through invitations, and just over one quarter participated through long-term rights of access.

Furthermore, the social relationships activated by the hunting groups change over time, so that the range of extended relationships of individuals tend to expand as they participate in changing hunting groups. Although invitations to hunters to use a hunting territory are often renewed repeatedly over the course of a lifetime, they also change from year to year in a significant number of cases<sup>7)</sup>. In 1968-69 and 1969-70 only three hunting groups were comprised of the same hunters in both years, about 19 per cent of the cases.

The system of land tenure which defines the procedures for granting privileges of access is thus a major means of expressing and creating social linkages between commensal groups within Waswanipi society.

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7) On the transformation of work-mate relationships into metaphorical kinship relationships in a Cree community to the west of James Bay (see Turner and Wertman [1977]).

## HUNTING AND LAND AS SYMBOLS OF SOCIAL RECIPROCITY

The system of gaining access to hunting territories also builds social bonds which link to the wider cosmos, in the view of Cree hunters. Waswanipi hunters conceptualise the natural world through the metaphor of society. Animals, spirits, and natural objects are spoken of as "persons," or as being "like persons." Not just living beings, but many phenomena such as winds, water and land are conceptualised as being like persons. These are said to be like persons because they are active in the world, they are useful, and because humans have reciprocal responsibilities towards them. The world of the Cree is not therefore divided into a material or natural domain and a human or social domain. All parts participate in a single personalised social universe.

Humans participate in a hierarchy of power leading from God to his wind helpers, to masters of the animals, to various spirit beings, to humans, and to various animals which themselves are hierarchically ranked. Land is represented as created by God and stewarded by his helpers, especially the four winds.

This social universe in which humans live is linked to animals and spirits by the image of social exchange. People say that the animals they hunt are 'being given to us,' and the term that is used is a cognate of the term for gift exchange between humans. The animals people kill are explicitly said to be gifts, from God, from the winds and from the animals themselves. The receipt of animal gifts is conceived of as part of a complex chain of actions. Hunting itself is conceived of as a going to fetch animal gifts, and if the hunter is successful, as a 'bringing back' the animal: a concept expressed by Adrian Tanner [1979] in the title of his monograph on the neighbouring Mistassini people, *Bringing Home Animals*.

Those who bring back meat they have received as a gift are expected to continue the chain of gifts. Those who give meat to other people are said to find more animal food, to replace what they give others. That is, they assure the continuity of the gifts they receive by the gifts they give. As one hunter explained, "When we have food, and we are living with others, we give them half our food, and it seems we find more to replace it." A series of proverbs elaborate this model and injunction, as do a series of daily ritualised practices<sup>8)</sup>.

The receipt of animal gifts from spirits and from the animals who themselves

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8) For example, a small portion of the meat of the animals is often put in the fire each morning, or before each meal at which meat from the animal is consumed. The meat in the fire is burned and the smoke goes up the chimney to the winds. This gift is not only interpreted as an offering of thanks for the animals received, but a request for future gift animals. The piece given to the winds is offered "so we can get more in the future." Oft quoted proverbs state that a hunter cannot have luck all the time, he cannot always get what he wants and needs, and that this is how God wants it so people can depend on others. Another proverb emphasises the opposite point, the danger to life of excess and of not having to share; it states that a man who has good luck all the time will have a short life.

die, albeit to be reborn again, cannot be directly and equally reciprocated. To the animal which has given its life that humans may live, the hunter can only offer respect for its soul, proper use of its body, and sharing the gift of food with others. This incommensurability creates enduring obligation, which is expressed by participation in the wider network of gift giving, which eventually leads back to rebirth of animals and renewed receipts of animal gifts: renewals which people say they experience in the continuing harvests of wildlife, but which they do not fully understand. Human labour is required to harvest animals, but it is not sufficient. And as a consequence, "bush food" is "owned," but not without placing the owners under significant, generalised and enduring obligation.

These processes of social exchange are the core not only of exchanges of food, but of the use and exchange of privileges to hunting territories. The granting of privileges to hunting territories is coordinate with the giving of food, and indeed access to land is the basis of the latter. By inviting a hunter to use a hunting territory, the gift of use is also a gift of the harvest of animals. And the harvesting of the animals provides the material basis and the moral obligation to give away a portion of those animals to others.

So too the granting of privileges of access to hunting territories is not directly and equally reciprocated. In practice, most Waswanipi, who are not stewards, simply cannot offer access to hunting territories to those from whom they receive invitations. It is possible for extended kin groups to exchange access to territories. Yet, even at the level of exchanges between extended family groups, with primary access rights to different hunting territories, exchanges of privileges often cannot and do not balance each other out<sup>9</sup>. Direct reciprocating by those who receive to those who give is not central to the Waswanipi model, for gifts are received as part of an extended chain of hierarchical and changing relationships. The Waswanipi emphasise that stewards do not create land or fully control animals, these are the powers of God and Jesus. And stewards inherit land from previous generations, and must pass it on to the next. Stewards too, in the Waswanipi view, are thus under enduring obligations arising from the resources over which they exercise substantial control in the present. Thus, access to land involves extended linkages and enduring responsibilities rather than direct compensation. Nevertheless, it is clear that stewards have considerable control over access to valued resources, they have real power, and they are often men who expect respect, and are respected.

In summary, the rights and privileges pertaining to hunting territories are embedded in a cultural definition of land which locates stewards as intermediaries in a complex chain of unequal social reciprocities. Symbolically and morally, the

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9) The invitations cannot balance each other out because more people who have long-term rights of access to the northern and more isolated, and therefore more expensive territories to reach, seek and receive privileges to hunt more easily accessible hunting territories, than the other way. This is visually clear on Diagrams 1 and 2.



hunting stewardship system expresses and reaffirms the social responsibilities of people to each other, and especially the obligation, value and logic of giving. In social terms, the system of access to hunting territories provides the basis for a widespread system of social gifts of privileges. And in material terms, the access to land provides access to the wildlife resources which are the means of subsistence, and the medium of day-to-day food exchanges within the community.

This is not to say that hunting territories are not also expressions and sources of fundamental inequalities, differing interests and conflicts. But, I would argue that acknowledging this, under the circumstances of contemporary Cree society documented in this paper, emphasises an aspect of the process and a source of change in the pattern, and does not undermine the fundamental role of Algonquian hunting territoriality in the ongoing constitution of fundamental social relationships<sup>10</sup>.

Thus the claims by Leacock and by Murphy and Steward that contemporary hunting territories processually contribute to or express the fundamental undermining of mutual dependency and social exchange in Algonquian society are wrong. The practices at the core of Algonquian hunting territoriality provide the basis for the expression of the most important symbols of social exchange, for the inter-commensal group linkages which are central to the daily recreation of the wider society, and for the material exchanges which sustain networks of people and express their relationships.

## **SOCIAL RELATIONS AND CASH INCOMES**

These practices are not automatically self reproducing, however, and have been subjected to stresses and alterations by at least two changes of critical importance in recent decades. First, the increased interaction of the Cree with the Canadian state and the augmentation of cash transfer payments from governments, and second the development and growth of a sector of the Cree population which live in the settlements all year and who are employees and not primarily hunters. Each change has potentially profound implications for the development of Cree society and the organisation of land tenure and social exchanges. Yet the systems of land tenure, hunting group organisation and gift exchange have been reproduced through change, and have effectively shaped the social impacts to date. I will examine each in turn.

Two general potential problems have been emphasised concerning the impacts of the growth of government transfer payments to the indigenous populations of the Canadian north. It has been argued that transfer payments, because they are paid to individuals or heads of nuclear households, tend to emphasise the distinctiveness of the commensal groups, and correspondingly to de-emphasise

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10) This conclusion does not, however, minimise the fact that some hunters have trouble finding places to hunt, and are more dependent than others on reciprocity.

wider social ties and obligations. One effect is to undermine the responsibility for reciprocity and mutual aid.

It is also claimed that where access to land becomes a condition of access to cash earnings or transfer payments, rights to land become more highly valued, and they become a more important economic and political source of inequality between those controlling such rights and those without rights, with the result that access becomes more restrictive, or greater social differentiation develops.

The Waswanipi Cree have been receiving government assistance on an occasional basis since about the beginning of this century, and on a systematic basis since the early 1940s. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficiently detailed records of Waswanipi social life at that time to fully analyse the impacts of the introduction of the system<sup>11</sup>).

It is therefore instructive to examine the impacts which occurred as a result of the changes in the form and size of transfer payments with the introduction of a Cree Hunters and Trappers Income Security Programme (ISP) in 1976 as one of the provisions of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. The structure of this Programme, its process of implementation, and its economic effects have been reported elsewhere [LARUSIC 1979; SCOTT 1979; FEIT 1983, 1988, 1989; FEIT and SCOTT 1991]. I will focus here on the relationship of these changes to access to lands and to social exchange.

Briefly stated, the Income Security Programme was established for James Bay Cree whose primary productive activity was hunting, fishing and trapping. For those Cree individuals and heads of nuclear families who met a number of eligibility



**Photo. 1.** Commercial fishing in summer was a source of income for hunters before Income Security Programme payments were available. Although organised by the government, families tended to do commercial fishing on their own hunting territories. This is Abel Otter on Olga Lake (Waswanipi), in 1969.

criteria, most importantly those who spent more time hunting than working, the government provided a payment for every day the head and his/her consort spent outside the settlements conducting harvesting or related activities. In addition a minimum income guarantee was provided based on family size, and on other sources of income<sup>12)</sup>.

There are no precise figures comparing family incomes before and after the introduction of the Income Security Programme, so we do not know exactly how much additional money the programme gave to people when it was introduced in 1976. At Waswanipi, total welfare expenditures during 1975-76 were \$C132,531 [LARUSIC 1979: 32]. We also know that the case load on welfare dropped by 56 per cent between 1975-76 and 1977-78<sup>13)</sup>. The 1976-77 income security payments to Waswanipi hunters and their families were \$C536,561, which represents a several-fold increase over welfare receipts<sup>14)</sup>.

The first and most immediate effect of paying incomes for time spent in the bush in harvesting related activities, was to increase the number of people making hunting their primary productive activity, and the time they spent in the bush. In Waswanipi, the number of beneficiary units for whom hunting had been their primary productive activity during 1975-76 was increased by almost fifty per cent when Programme registration was opened in 1976-77 (Table 1)<sup>15)</sup>. The Programme also led to an increase by 15 to 22 per cent in the amount of time people spent in

11) Waswanipi people note that the small commensal groups described above did not exist earlier in this century, when larger households were common. But in discussing this change they note several factors, including the changes following from the spread of moose and moose hunting throughout their lands, and the administrative pressures arising from the formal government recognition of the hunting territories during the 1930s and 1940s. And they tend to emphasise the modest impacts of the changes. This is consistent with the findings reported above. Despite the smaller commensal groupings, sharing and relatively egalitarian relationships were still highly valued and actively maintained.

12) In 1982-83, the per diem payment for the beneficiary unit (roughly equivalent to a commensal group, with the important difference that all eligible single adults would receive their own income security payment, so some commensal groups would have two such incomes) was \$C23.64 each to the head or the consort for every day spent outside the settlements in hunting and related activities. And, the average total payment per beneficiary unit was \$C9,519 in Waswanipi in 1982-83. The 1987-88 figures, the most recent available, were \$C30.69 per diem, and \$C11,028 average annual payment per beneficiary unit.

13) We cannot say that only 56% of the welfare payments went to people who transferred to the Income Security Programme, because of several interpretive problems. For example, the full-time hunters had large families and were receiving larger payments than the single individuals and single parent families which made up a larger proportion of those who stayed on welfare. It is also the case that a modest number of those who receive income security through Waswanipi were not receiving welfare through an office in the region and so their receipts were not included in the welfare totals [LARUSIC 1979: 30-31].

**Table 1.** Waswanipi participation in the Cree Income Security Programme.

Year	Intensive hunters or beneficiary units <sup>1</sup>	Man-days in bush camps per head or adult <sup>1</sup>
1974-75	49	172-176
1975-76	69 <sup>2</sup>	(137) <sup>3</sup>
1976-77	102	203 (167) <sup>3</sup>
1977-78	92	189
1978-79	95	204
1979-80	105	198
1980-81	116	197
1981-82	119	222
1982-83	139	223
1983-84	144	
1984-85	144	
1985-86	145	
1986-87	140	

<sup>1</sup> The figures for 1974-75 are based on estimated eligibility of intensive hunters for benefits, made by Waswanipi community leaders. But, the structure of the programme was not yet finalised when these estimates were made. The 1975-76 figures are based on the number of beneficiary units which qualified for retro-active payments for that year, and are from Cree Income Security Board data. The figures from 1976-77 on are drawn from the Annual Reports of the Board. The man-days figures were calculated by LaRusic [1984].

<sup>2</sup> This figure has been proportionally adjusted for people transferring community of residence.

<sup>3</sup> The figures in brackets are for the eight-month period from November 11 to June 30.

hunting camps<sup>16)</sup>.

The result of this increase in the number of people hunting for longer periods has been to intensify the use of hunting territories. This is both a result of the number of people seeking to live in hunting camps, and of the structure of the income programme, which requires each beneficiary unit head to specify the

- 14) It should be noted that the difference between the income security payments and the total welfare to which the Cree were potentially legally entitled, would have been much smaller than the figures show here. Because welfare was paid out monthly, and many Waswanipi Cree lived in bush camps and typically visited settlement every three months or so from September to May, they could only receive welfare occasionally. Whether they were entitled to receive payments for the other months, varied with the system they received from, the federal or provincial social aid programmes, and could at different times depend on legal interpretations concerning issues such as what was their legal residence, and were people available for work while at a bush camp.
- 15) This increase was comprised primarily of those who wished to return to intensive hunting, although some who joined wanted to try it for the first time. In 1976-77, 102 beneficiary units registered at Waswanipi, but this dropped by 10 per cent the following year. Since then, numbers have risen to 116 beneficiary units in 1980-81, and to 139 in 1982-83, after which the participation has remained quite stable.



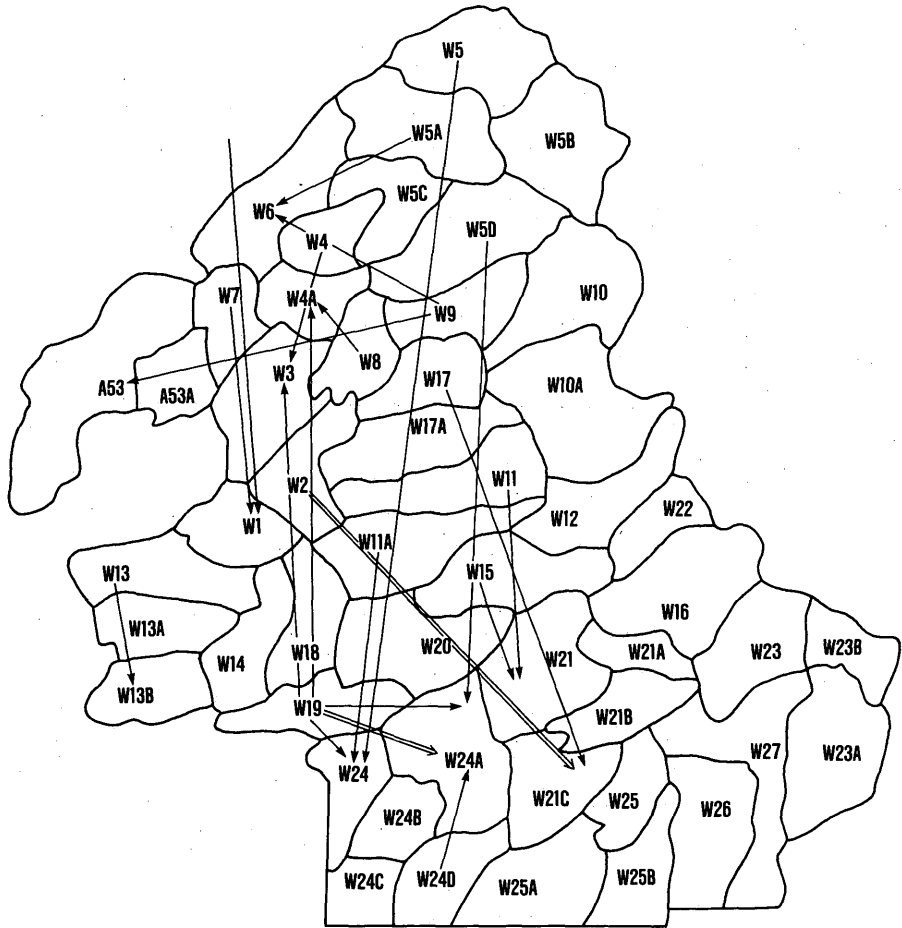
**Photo. 2.** An early winter camp, with a storage porch in front, and one room behind (approx. 3 metres by 6 metres) for the use of two families, Waswanipi, 1978. Winter camps vary in construction from wood frames with canvas or tar paper roofs (as here), to 'traditional' pole and canvas tepee-shaped lodges, to log cabins or one-room plywood dwellings. Excellent insulation is provided in mid-winter by banking snow up against the outside of the walls. The hoops on the right are to stretch and dry beaver skins.

hunting territory on which he or she will be residing during the coming year.

This increase in the demand for access to land, along with the payment of benefits to individuals or nuclear families, replicates the conditions in which it has been thought likely that reductions in social reciprocity and mutual aid, and increases in inequalities and exploitation, would occur. I will therefore examine these processes. In particular I will consider five questions: whether access to hunting territories became more restricted, formalised, or more monetised following the introduction of the Programme; whether social groups were altered in their composition; whether conservation of wildlife resources was compromised; whether exchanges of food were reduced; whether inequalities among hunters increased.

- 16) Estimates of the number of days spent in hunting camps during 1974-75 by full-time hunters at Waswanipi ranged from 172 days to 176 days. In 1976-77 the heads of the beneficiary units on the programme reported that they and their spouses spent an average of 203 days in the bush, an increase of 15 to 18 per cent. When data available for the time the heads of units spent in the bush during eight months of 1975-76 and of 1976-77 are compared, the increase is 22 per cent. In short a substantial increase in time spent in the bush occurred. Between 1976-77 and 1982-83, the average time in the bush per year by the adult members of the beneficiary units have varied from 189 to 223 days [LARUSIC 1984].





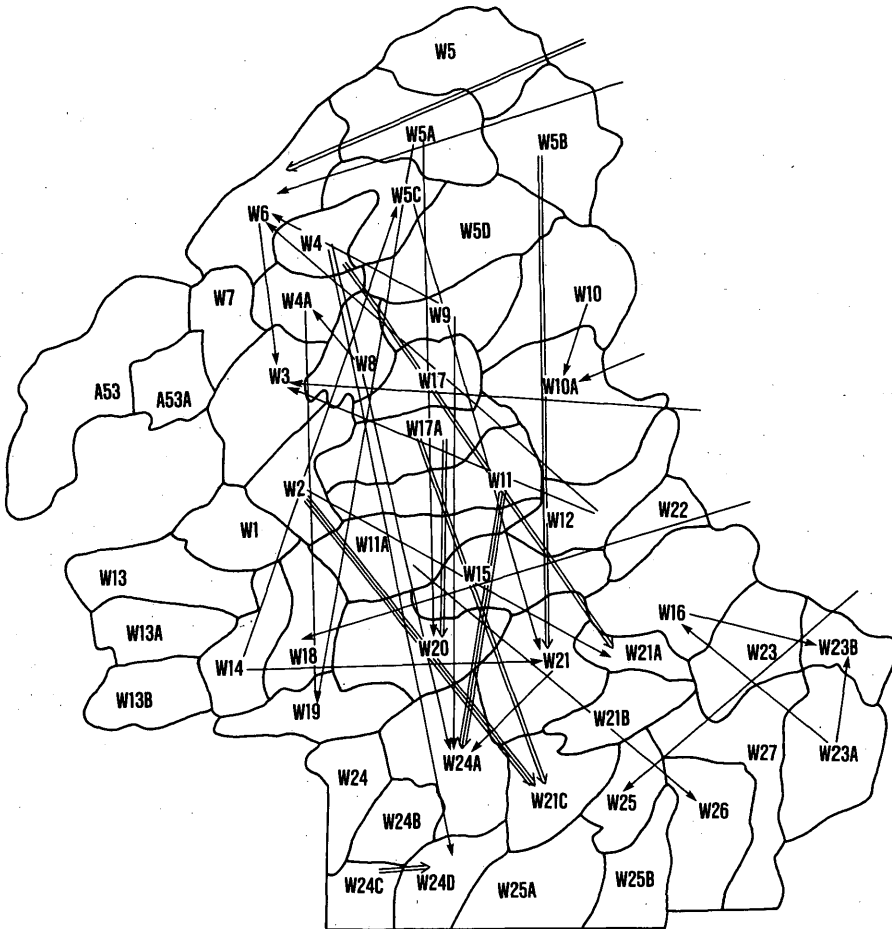
**Diagram 2.** Invitations to heads of commensal groups to use hunting territories, 1969-70.

in 1981-82 as was used in 1968-70, there has been no change, as invitations continue to account for 74 per cent of all linkages between commensal group heads and stewards.

The seeking of invitations has become more formalised, as prospective participation in hunting groups must be reported early in the summer period. But more formalised arrangements between stewards and other members of hunting groups with respect to the conditions under which they may hunt have not become

17) These are territories W10, 10A, 12, 22, 16, 23, 23A, 23B, 27, 26, 25A, and 25B.

18) Furthermore, the pattern continues to be one in which the invitees move more frequently to, rather than from, the more southerly, and now westwardly territories, those which are more easily and cheaply accessible by road. So the pattern of invitations appears to continue to be one which is not being systematically reciprocated with an equal number of exchange invitations in the opposite direction.



**Diagram 3.** Invitations to heads of commensal groups to use hunting territories, 1981-82.

normative. One dimension on which we have systematic data is whether invitations were accompanied by explicit instructions on harvest limits. Of a sample of 64 hunters who were not stewards, interviewed in 1983, only 12, or 19 per cent, indicated that they were told how many beaver they could catch when they were invited to use a hunting territory. Thus the frequency of formal hunting quotas is not high. Unfortunately, there are no comparable statistics for the pre-ISP period. It is possible that such formalisation has increased, but only marginally.

With respect to monetisation of the exchanges, only very limited and case specific data are available. Requests from stewards that an invitee give him a number of beaver pelts, or a percentage of the fur pelts caught, for permission to use a hunting territory, have been an infrequent but recurring pattern for at least several decades. The number of pelts involved has been modest, usually up to 5, while average annual beaver harvests are 25 to 35. There are no statistical data on



whether such monetisation is increasing. But occasional stories of stewards asking a particular potential invitee for more than half of the harvested pelts have occurred in recent years. These caused considerable and widespread disapproval in the community. The cases of such requests I am aware of are all instances of men who inherited a hunting territory, but who ceased to hunt intensively themselves. It is highly significant that, by their own accounts, these same stewards have had considerable difficulty controlling access to their hunting territories.

This is consistent with a common pattern of opposition to improper stewardship. Initial responses to an errant steward involve public criticism of a steward's management. If this fails to bring accommodation, people may simply start to use a territory either by traversing it intermittently, or from camps on adjacent lands, or by establishing uninvited camps on unoccupied hunting territories. Stewards who do not use their lands find it hard to identify the intruders and publicly chastise them. If the steward's disapproved behaviour continues, he may either be ignored and lose his reputation, or other hunters may assert parallel claims to ownership of all or part of the territory. And, if accommodations are not reached by a steward these claims and the uninvited users may gain broad public sanction, undermining the errant steward's control. Thus there are potentially effective means of resistance to the occasional efforts of a small number of stewards to enhance the monetisation of invitations to use hunting territories<sup>19</sup>). And, increased compensation has not become a common or accepted pattern of action, although it does occur, and it may be more frequent than in the past.

Thus, while the increased number of people hunting puts pressure for more intensive use on accessible hunting territories, invitations continue to constitute a high percentage of all access, and increases in formalisation are limited, while some increases in the monetisation of access occur and are resisted. Customary stewardship of land therefore continues to provide a basis for expressing and establishing social exchange and mutual aid.

The data on the impacts of the intensification of hunting, on the size and composition of hunting groups indicate no clear trends in the number of commensal groups per hunting group, nor in the average number of adult men or adult women per hunting group (Table 2)<sup>20</sup>).

Overall, the increased number of people in bush camps appears to have been accommodated almost entirely by increasing the number of hunting groups/camps rather than by any demographic change in their composition. In this sense, it would appear that the demographic pressures caused by income security have been

19) The more serious challengers of a steward's authority are therefore his close kinsmen and "friends" who have primary rights of access to his territory. When stewardship breaks down, they do not simply cut ties. Rather they are likely to engage in public challenges to the steward's management, for it is easier for those who depend on invitations to a particular territory to cut ties, but not for those with long term rights of use to that territory.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Waswanipi hunting groups, 1968–70 with 1981–82.

Year	Number of hunting groups	Commensal groups per hunting group	Adult <sup>1</sup> men per hunting group	Adult <sup>1</sup> women per hunting group	Children per hunting group
1968–69	18	2.3	3.8	3.1	3.5
1969–70	21	1.9	3.2	2.6	3.1
1981–82	34	2.3	3.6	2.6	2.7

<sup>1</sup> Adult is defined as 17 years of age or older for this tabulation.

responded to by a replicating of hunting groups, while the demographic structure of the groups themselves has been substantially reproduced without significant transformation<sup>21</sup>).

**Wildlife Harvests, Food Production and Social Reciprocity**

The increased number of people on the hunting territories, the additional time spent there, and the increased use of mechanised equipment financed by the higher levels of cash available, all raise questions about the levels of wildlife harvesting following the introduction of the Income Security Programme.

Waswanipi depend heavily on moose and beaver, as well as on a variety of fishes, as sources of food they produce and consume. During 1974–75 to 1978–79, moose accounted for over 50 per cent of harvested food, beaver for 18 per cent, and various species of fish for 15 per cent (Table 3)<sup>22</sup>. Despite the intensification of bush life following the introduction of income security, and despite the significant reduction in fish harvests due to contamination, there was only one species for which there was a statistically significant increase in harvests between 1974–75 and 1978–79, the moose which increased by 24 per cent (Tables 4 and 5)<sup>23</sup>.

From a conservation point of view, it could be asked whether the already intensively used moose populations could sustain the additional harvest. The point is however moot, because in succeeding years the Waswanipi became concerned

20) Whether the lower average number of children in the hunting groups (see Table 2), 2.7 in 1981–82 versus 3.1 to 3.5 in 1968–70 is a significant change is not clear without data on school participation rates, because there is a higher proportion of commensal groups now made up of elderly and of young people, which might account for the change in the average.

21) One new form of hunting camp was established, road or “corridor” camps. The roadside camps were developed in response to the introduction of the Income Security Programme. They are permanent camps built along the roads with easy access to a town or a Cree settlement. Because they are outside the settlements, the residents are eligible for income security, but because they are along the roads they have access only to heavily hunted lands. About one-quarter of the hunting groups lived in these camps in 1981–82, supplementing bush food with increased purchased commercial foods.

**Table 3.** Percentage of total harvested food available to Waswanipi from each species or species group.

Species and species groups	Percentage of harvested food	
	1974-75 to 1978-79 <sup>1</sup>	1974-75 <sup>2</sup>
Moose	54	33
Big game sub-total	(56)	(36)
Beaver	18	18
Fur-bearer sub-total	(20)	(19)
Whitefish	4	11
Pike	3	6
Dore (Pickerel)	3	7
Sucker	4	11
Fish sub-total	(15)	(40)
Ducks	3	2
Waterfowl sub-total	(4)	(3)
Hare	3	2
Small game	(6)	(2)
Others <sup>3</sup>	9	10
Total	100	100

<sup>1</sup> Source: JBNQNHRC [1982: 230-1].

<sup>2</sup> Source: JBNQNHRC [1976: 363-4]. For discussion see footnote 22 in text.

<sup>3</sup> Other species and species groups providing less than 3 percent of harvested food each are: caribou, black bear, canada goose, snow geese, brant, loons, lynx, otter, muskrat, speckled trout, lake trout, sturgeon, burbot, porcupine, ptarmigan, and grouses.

about harvest levels, and reduced their annual harvests back down to levels closer to the 1972-1976 levels. In 1985-86 it is estimated that the moose harvest was 203 animals (unpublished Cree Trappers Association Survey).

- 22) However, the levels of fish harvests were drastically reduced in 1975-76, after higher than acceptable levels of methylmercury were found in Cree hunters. Prior to this, fish played a more important role, which can be seen if the harvests for 1974-75 are considered separately. Under the earlier conditions fish provided 40 per cent of the food harvested, moose 33 per cent and beaver 18 per cent (Table 3). The effects of the reduction by over 80 per cent in fish harvests in 1975-76, and the introduction of the Income Security Programme in 1976-77, overlap and interact.
- 23) For all other species, statistical tests for differences in the mean harvest levels (T-tests) showed no significant changes comparing the before and after income security periods (Table 4 presents harvest data, Table 5 statistical results). Tests for differences in the variance of annual harvests (F-tests) showed significantly different variance between the two periods for fish, due to the factors discussed above, and for hare, which is related to the rise in the cyclical abundance of this species during the period covered. Interestingly, tests on the marten were also not significant. Marten is a species not generally consumed for food, but it is second only to beaver as a source of cash income from the sale of its fur pelts.

**Table 4.** Waswanipi harvests before and after the Income Security Programme was introduced.<sup>1</sup>

Year	Moose	Beaver	Marten	Whitefish	Dore (Pickerel)	Ducks	Hare
1972-73	198	3,451	700	— <sup>2</sup>	—	—	—
1973-74	186	2,242	806	—	—	—	—
1974-75	198	2,681	896	22,964	17,096	3,248	2,132
1975-76	183	2,481	494	1,439	1,157	4,096	2,188
1976-77	230	2,472	740	993	668	2,728	1,951
1977-78	234	2,066	734	2,629	1,081	3,070	4,482
1978-79	248	1,858	907	2,119	1,390	2,350	5,694
Average	211	2,464	754	6,029	4,278	3,098	3,289
Std. Dev.	26	516	140	9,488	7,170	655	1,699

<sup>1</sup> Source: JBNQNHRC [1982].<sup>2</sup> Dash indicates no data collected.

The hunting territory system seems therefore to have continued to be an effective means of managing wildlife harvests despite the intensification of bush camp life. ISP was designed to pay for time in all bush camp activities, and not to pay solely for hunting effort, or for harvests, in order to prevent direct encouragement of unsustainable harvests. Furthermore, it is illegal in Quebec to sell wild game, for personal or commercial consumption, so there is no established market for the bush foods. Nevertheless, the increased transportation facilities, and possibly the increased incomes, have lead to some expansion of sale of specific bush foods within the Cree settlements and between some Cree settlements. These sales are in general either of game that are only available in specific localities, or they are aimed at meeting the needs of those who cannot hunt because of age or

**Table 5.** Statistical test results comparing Waswanipi harvests before and after the Income Security Programme was introduced.<sup>1</sup>

Species and species groups	Average annual harvest		T-test	Significance	F-test	Significance
	Pre-ISP <sup>2</sup> (pre 1976-77)	Post-ISP (post 1975-76)				
Moose	191 (4) <sup>3</sup>	237 (3)	-7.06	.05	1.44	not
Beaver	2,714 (4)	2,132 (3)	1.69	not	2.81	not
Marten	724 (4)	794 (3)	-0.62	not	3.10	not
Whitefish	12,202 (2)	1,914 (3)	1.28	not	330.59	.01
Dore (Pickerel)	9,127 (2)	1,046 (3)	1.36	not	968.02	.01
Ducks	3,672 (2)	2,716 (3)	2.31	not	2.77	not
Hare	2,160 (2)	4,042 (3)	-1.32	not	2,326.21	.05

<sup>1</sup> Source: Table 4.<sup>2</sup> ISP: Income Security Programme for Cree Hunters, Trappers and Fishermen.<sup>3</sup> Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of years of data included.

employment. These practices are limited in scale, and are consistent with the legally recognised exchange rights of the Cree under the JBNQA. Several factors therefore contribute to the continued conservation of wildlife resources, and to the limited commoditisation of those resources.

The contrary question must also be examined. Given that the new ISP incomes are paid to beneficiary units<sup>24)</sup> and thereby significantly increase the security of income and subsistence at the commensal group level, do hunters limit hunting effort in order to produce only levels of food needed for the commensal group, and reduce the effort needed to produce bush foods for social exchanges?

While moose meat is one of the most valued and prestigious gifts to exchange, and the increase in moose harvests might suggest augmented exchanges, the increased consumption demand arising from more people spending more time in the hunting groups, as well as the decline in the fish harvests, create a more complicated situation. In order to examine the question of whether exchanges of harvested foods are continuing at similar rates, it is necessary to look at more detailed data available for 1968-69 and 1981-82.

For an adventitious sample of five hunting groups in 1968-69, it was possible to determine a nearly complete record of food harvests and purchases, and to calculate both the food energy available from these sources and the approximate food energy requirements of the groups<sup>25)</sup>. On average, 49 per cent of the food harvested was required by the members of these groups and their dogs, 14 per cent was put into storage for future use in the summer back in the settlement, and 37 per cent was assumed as the residual net transfer through reciprocal exchanges. Actual exchanges probably involved one-half or more of the food being given away, but groups also received food back through exchanges, so the 37 per cent is an estimate of the resulting net flows<sup>26)</sup>.

Some 85 per cent of the hunting groups harvested more food than they could immediately use themselves. They were clearly working to harvest a surplus over subsistence needs, and to produce a net exchangeable harvest [FEIT 1978]. About

24) Beneficiary units, as noted above, are defined so as to recognise single adults over 18 years of age, and single parent families, as separate units with separate payments. In bush camps these people are typically part of larger commensal groups.

25) It should be noted that a detailed examination of other nutrients and requirements indicated that, in this almost entirely fresh meat diet, calories were the most scarce of the nutrients which were examined [FEIT 1978]. On this basis the analysis here concentrates on energy to the exclusion of other nutrients, although it seeks to avoid "caloric determinism."

26) When all groups in the community are compared on the basis of harvests of moose and beaver, and on the basis of the intensity of their subsistence needs, it was found that all hunting groups met their immediate needs, exceeding 1,300 Calories per adult consumption unit per day (An adult consumption unit included children's needs as a proportion of adult caloric requirements, based on nutritional standards, adapted to Cree lifestyles). These calculations assume a standard purchased food ration was taken to the bush, as well as a common level of use of small game and fish (see Feit [1978]).

15 per cent of all hunting groups harvested sufficient moose and beaver that they could have used most of what they harvested for their own needs. However, if they choose to supplement their diet with extra purchased foods or extra fish and small game, as was common, they would have had a modest surplus over their own needs.

Of the 20 bush camps in 1981-82 on which I have extensive data, all had harvests which provided bush foods sufficient to meet their own needs (ie. more than 1,300 Calories per adult consumption unit per day). But, the increased time spent in the bush, as well as reductions in some harvests, meant that fewer produced the substantial surplus food which was common in 1968-69. In 1981-82, 55 per cent of bush camp hunting groups harvested more than 2,500 Calories per adult consumption unit per day, as compared with 85 per cent in 1968-69 (see Table 6).

Thus over half of the groups still clearly produced more than they could have immediately used themselves. This represents a continuing widespread commitment to hunting intensively enough to produce food for social exchange, within the limits of concepts of conservation and of the social value of work and time. Most of the other hunting groups harvested sufficient moose and beaver to make a net gift of some bush food, if they used additional foods from other less valued animal harvests or purchased additional foods.

The partial exception to this conclusion are the groups living in roadside camps, where harvests were significantly lower than in more isolated bush camps (Table 6). By deriving cash incomes from ISP some hunters have been able to live all year round at roadside camps, where wildlife harvests are lower. The larger camp population, and the competition from settlement based native and non-native hunters leads to substantially reduced harvests in the adjacent lands. The emergence of such camps may partly reflect the difficulty of supporting the full contemporary hunting population on the landbase. But more isolated hunting

**Table 6.** Comparison of bush food harvests in Waswanipi hunting groups.

	1968-69	1981-82
No. of Hunting groups	18	34
No. in Roadside camps	—	9
Average calories from moose and beaver Harvests per adult-day subsistence Demand <sup>1</sup> in:		
-Roadside camps	—	1,008
-Bush camps	4,351	3,040
Percentage of bush camps harvesting more than		
-1,300 calories per adult-day	100	100
-2,500 calories per adult-day	83	55

<sup>1</sup> An adult-day subsistence demand is calculated on the basis of including children 0 to 6 years of age as counting one-third of a daily adult caloric requirement, and children 7 to 17 and elders over 65 as counting two-thirds of a daily adult caloric requirement.

territories are used less frequently than those which are more easily accessible, suggesting more intensive use of some lands would be possible.

In the view of many Cree hunters, these roadside camps also involve some Cree who have decided not to work intensively at hunting, but to use ISP benefits as a generous form of social aid. By living outside the settlements, such hunters meet eligibility requirements, but they purchase most of their foods, and work little. In a society where both social exchanges and productive labour are highly valued, these people lose respect within the community. The number of such individuals appears to be quite limited in my experience.

Nevertheless it is significant that their practices are not adopted nor tolerated by the hunters at large. From the beginning of ISP there have been pressures from within the community to deny access to Programme benefits to beneficiaries known not to be actively hunting. This widespread demand was not easily solved within the initial form of the ISP programme, but in recent years community members have proposed changes to effectively make it significantly more difficult to "free ride" on ISP. They have proposed that a new condition for eligibility for ISP be recognition as an active hunter by a widely-based committee of hunters in each Cree community. Because such a provision will meet several programme needs, this alteration has been accepted by Cree regional authorities and the governments, and it is now being implemented. There has thus been considerable resistance to the one group of hunters who have used the opportunities provided by increased income to significantly reduce hunting effort; and community values of hunting labour, and of social responsibility, have been effectively re-asserted.

There is therefore no evidence that the potential for commensal group autonomy has limited invitations and access to territories in new ways, or that it has led to any general abandonment of harvesting effort, or to reduced commitments to producing food for exchange. Significantly, the case of the inactive roadside hunters shows that an option to reduce effort is objectively possible, but also that it contravenes widely held community values. It also shows the determination of community members to put those values into practical action so as to deny this option of support from the ISP programme. This is a clear instance of community rejection of a specific local impact of increased access to cash, albeit in a generally beneficial programme, and of local insistence on effective response.

On the other hand, it should be noted that, unlike what has been reported in some horticultural societies, the increased cash incomes, the improved productive technologies, the demographic growth, and the generally more intensive living in hunting camps, have not led to any widespread and enduring intensification of harvests. While moose and fish harvests are restricted by productivity and contamination respectively, other small game and fur mammals could sustain increased harvests, although they are very labour intensive activities. This has not generally occurred. In this sense under-production and limiting demand, as well as producing for a socially appropriate level of exchange, within the limits of conservation of the resources, continue to be active organising principles.

### **Inequalities and the Question of Hegemony**

Despite the emphasis in Cree ideology and practice on social reciprocity, mutual obligation, and a generalised egalitarianism, there is no doubt that the hunting territory system creates important inequalities between hunters in everyday life. A limited number of men have significant control over intensive and extended access to wildlife resources. This inequality is not simply based on the differences in the personal skills and energy of individuals, but in the real differences in their control over the use of material resources.

Inequalities and potential conflicts are deemphasised in everyday interpersonal relationships, which are conducted in a style emphasising both individual autonomy and cooperation rather than dependent aspects of relationships. But, it is important to emphasise that these cultural values do not obscure or mystify in any simple way peoples' fundamental awareness of the everyday presence of inequalities and of the potential for conflicts and exploitation. The naive anthropologist asking a non-leader about tomorrow's hunting plans can bring a curt reply that, "I am not the boss here," or, "Ask him." And personal accounts of hunting experiences often include in minute detail the behavioural patterns that establish the hierarchy of leadership among the hunters engaged in the events being described.

Furthermore, the issues of hierarchy are not simply noted in discussions by Cree hunters, they are explicitly analysed and debated by Cree. The real inequalities which exist are interpreted and discussed both as mundane everyday realities, and through reference to the symbolic structuring of the Cree world described in a previous section of this paper. In particular, interpretive allusions and explicit references are made in discussions of authority to the ultimate hierarchy of leadership, stretching from God to animals, thereby both affirming and reestablishing that inequalities are part of the structure of the world. But if inequality is made part of the world, and thereby legitimated in at least its generalised form, so too is a fundamental equality legitimated. For all living beings are closely related, especially by continuing relations of cooperative reciprocal respect. The Cree symbol of power, as I indicated above, emphasises the need of those who would participate in power to create cooperation as opposed to conflict, and this interpretation informs evaluations of legitimate and condemnable uses of authority. Indeed it is precisely these symbolic structures which emerge as central focuses in arguments over countervailing claims to appropriate stewardship when direct and public conflict does occur. And critical comments on the activities of stewards form a regular part of everyday conversation during summer aggregations at the larger settlements.

The discussions and arguments are not however limited solely to evaluative symbols and assertions, what might be called ideology in some usages. The evaluative dimension is also profoundly linked to perceptions of mundane action and the practical outcomes of action. The issues of inequality and exploitation are thereby linked to the practice and outcomes of hunting. In discussions, stewards



say that they provide the means to continued access to animal gifts. And they say that they share their knowledge and information, as well as their ties to animals, with younger hunters and with those without hunting territories.

That the responsibility of stewards toward the wider community is a serious factor in stewards' perceptions was emphasised in the stewards' responses to one of the changes in the system of land rights resulting from the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. As a result of the classification of tracts of land into different categories governed by different legal provisions, some hunting territories or parts of hunting territories were to be exclusively for Waswanipi use; and on these areas there was to be no non-Native hunting without the community's permission. The initial response of some observers to the creation of these exclusive hunting areas was that the stewards of hunting territories in these areas would have their lands better protected by not having non-Natives on them; and they would thereby derive a benefit from these arrangements. However, in discussions of the land arrangements stewards tended to see the issue differently. In their view the benefits were not at all clear. They felt that stewards with territories in protected areas would have to respond to requests from a much larger number of hunters if the other hunting territories in the non-exclusive areas were depleted by non-Natives. And they wondered if this would be possible given the limited size of the protected areas. They thus emphasised the broad social, and environmental, responsibilities felt to be part of the ownership of a hunting territory.

Hunters without hunting territories also tend to confirm the views of the stewards, that they receive animals and the knowledge needed to hunt from the hunting group leaders. Statements of younger hunters sometimes emphasise not only the value of short-term reciprocities but also the long-term benefit they derive from having access to elders who can help their education as hunters. Young men without the opportunity to hunt intensively with stewards often indicate how difficult it is to learn the more subtle hunting skills and knowledge. Hunters without hunting territories also tend to state that they actually have better and more productive hunts when hunting with stewards or in the camps of stewards, than they do when hunting with other men who either have less hunting experience or who have less experience hunting the particular territory. Thus, both stewards and non-stewards agree on the benefits and the generally non-exploitative nature of the stewardship system.

Whether this agreement among stewards and invitees is itself a form of hegemony cannot be fully analysed here. But I would argue that both the explicit public debates about stewards' power, and the fact that people decide on their responses to that power partly on the basis of experience, not solely authority, given the systematic means by which errant stewards' authority can be undermined and their lands surreptitiously used, indicate that such agreement is not hegemonic<sup>27</sup>.

The immediate question here is whether inequalities have increased, or exploitation has been established, by the changes in the availability of ISP payments. I think the general accounts of the practice of hunting territory use



**Photo. 3.** Community-wide feasts are held often to celebrate various events, or to honour a deceased relative, as in this case. Bush foods are the focus of the feast—especially, beaver, moose, and geese, with bear if it is available—and these are supplemented by turkey, potatoes, homemade breads and donuts, and more recently with salads. Food is supplied by many households, it is prepared and served abundantly, and part is taken home for each family in the community to consume over a day or two. It may take several sittings to serve the whole community. This was a feast organised by the Gull family at Waswanipi, Quebec, in the mid-1980s.

under the ISP programme, outlined above, indicate that access to land based resources, material equality, generalised social reciprocity, and stewards' responsibilities to the collectivity (backed by public morality and public sanction) have generally been maintained. Differentiation and inequality remain amidst reciprocity and responsibility, while exploitation is actively resisted.

In practice, no payment is usually made for the use of hunting territories, and each hunter has the right to dispose of his own catch, so the privilege of using a territory effectively provides a hunter with access to both the meat and the commercial pelts and by-products of the animals he harvests. The territory system leads, therefore, to community-wide access to production of wildlife products, to control of the products by each producer (although under a wider network of social obligations), and to a general material equality through an extensive and generalised sharing of products.

27) It should also be noted that the threat of physical coercion is not normally available to stewards, and that potential invitees normally have several stewards from whom they may seek invitations.

## RELATIONS BETWEEN WORKERS AND HUNTERS

So far I have concentrated on the Waswanipi population who hunt intensively enough to participate in the Income Security Programme. But this comprises only a part of the community population, and only a portion of the economic activity of the community. In 1981-82, there was an adult population of 333 resident at Waswanipi, of which 184 or 55 per cent participated in the income security programme.

The activities of those Waswanipi who do not hunt intensively have changed significantly during the last two decades. Whereas less than 10 per cent of Waswanipi men were not hunters at the end of the 1950s, by 1969, 38 per cent were spending most of their time working for wages, or living off welfare payments and taking occasional jobs (Table 7). By 1982, women were much more actively taking jobs, and it was still about 38 per cent of the active adult population which was employed or seeking employment. However the percentage of those employed who worked full-time had risen from 22 per cent to 54 per cent. And in 1982, a significant number of Waswanipi were now employed in administrative positions, mostly within the new Cree organisations expanded or established during the implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

In terms of community sources of income, in cash and kind, the changes are dramatic. Benefits from the Income Security Programme have replaced employment as the main source of cash incomes, providing nearly half of the cash income available to the community in 1982 (Table 8)<sup>28</sup>. Thus, in what must be acknowledged as probably a rather unusual situation compared to most other

**Table 7.** Occupations of Waswanipi adults, 1969 and 1982.

Occupation	1969 <sup>1</sup>	Year 1982 <sup>2</sup>
Administrators		37
Employees and skilled workers	9	18
Independent workers		2
Occasional, seasonal and unskilled workers	31	49
	40	106
Hunters, crafts people, housewives	66 <sup>3</sup>	169 <sup>4</sup>
Unemployed/welfare		6
Unknown	1	
	107	281

<sup>1</sup> Includes only adult males, and includes some older than 65 years old, but still active.

<sup>2</sup> Includes active population of both sexes, 15 to 64 years of age.  
Source: SSDCC [1982: 149].

<sup>3</sup> Includes unemployed, as most hunted part-time in 1969, but does not include housewives.

<sup>4</sup> Of this total, 119 were heads of beneficiary units on the Income Security Programme.

**Table 8.** Income in cash and kind for Waswanipi, 1968–70 and 1982.

Income source	1968–70		1982 <sup>1</sup>	
	Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage
Employment	\$C168,963	60	\$C612,000	33
Sales-tourism, fur, handicrafts	\$C31,867 <sup>2</sup>	11	\$C116,000	6
Transfer payments	\$C82,352	29	\$C286,600	15
Traditional activities (Income Security Programme)	0	0	\$C915,851	47
	\$C283,182	100	\$C1,930,451	101
Food <sup>3</sup>	\$C177,798	(63)	568,667	(29.5)
	\$C460,980		\$C2,499,118	

<sup>1</sup> Source: SSDCC [1982: 168].

<sup>2</sup> Includes only fur income.

<sup>3</sup> No calculation is made in these figures for other products produced in bush camps and not entering the cash markets, including bush housing, fuel, clothing, hunting and camp equipment, medications, and vegetal food products.

hunting societies in developed nations, hunting activities are no longer solely producing an important income in kind, they are at present providing a larger portion of the growing cash incomes of community members than do wages. Indeed they are probably producing a larger proportion of incomes than has been the case since the early 1950s when declining fur prices and the introduction of government social assistance marked a significant shift in the extent of Cree dependence.

However, despite the renewed importance of incomes derived from hunting, the development of a group of people who hold or seek employment on a continuing basis raises questions about the social and economic relations between workers and hunters<sup>29</sup>. Several kinds of exchanges mediate these relationships. First, many of the part-time workers are also part-time hunters, and many full-time workers or full-time hunters do move back and forth between one activity and the other over the course of their active careers. There are not, therefore, two wholly separate categories of people, workers and hunters. In addition, most extended family networks have people engaging in both working and hunting at any given

28) In addition, servicing the hunters was providing several of the administrative jobs in the community. The value of the food produced by hunting has declined as a percentage of cash income largely because this value is calculated as a replacement cost, and the increasing accessibility of the region has meant that the cost of purchased foods has not risen as quickly as the cost of living. In terms of Waswanipi evaluations of harvested foods, there is little doubt that the perceived value of bush foods over purchased foods has remained very high. Indeed the threats to Cree culture which have become an active focus of Cree attention during the last two decades may have enhanced this value to the whole population. Increases in the population mean that there is less bush food per capita, but this may also have enhanced the perceived value of bush foods, within the range of change occurring to date.

time.

Furthermore, most of the net surplus food harvests produced by bush commensal groups make their way to relatives and friends who are full time residents in the community. These sources of fresh meat are highly valued, and a whole Cree lore exists about the superior nutritional, medicinal and culinary qualities of bush foods<sup>30</sup>. These exchanges are often reciprocated in a general way with purchased goods and money which flow from settlement families with sufficient cash to the families who are hunting. This takes a variety of forms. One is for a kinsman or friend to contribute to the cost of travelling to the bush which the hunters incur, and to receive food gifts on the hunters return. The use of airplanes and trucks to travel to and from the bush, as well as an increased frequency of travel, facilitates taking extra supplies to bush camps and bringing additional foods back to the settlement. Sometimes, giving or extended loans of traps or guns to a hunter is associated with the hunter giving the harvests taken with them to the owner of the tools, although this is not a regular pattern.

Another major flow of resources from those in the settlements to those in bush camps occurs through the sale of used but still serviceable equipment. Those with sufficiently high incomes from wages often buy and replace snowmobiles or all-terrain vehicles, or boats, canoes and outboard motors, frequently enough that the sale of used equipment is a cheap source of productive technologies for the intensive hunters.

Exchanges between families based in the settlement and those who live primarily in bush camps also involve rights and privileges to use land. Again, the categories of people classified as workers and hunters are not exclusive. While hunters often take summer employment, and in some years other seasonal employment, the majority of Waswanipi who work also regularly engage in hunting activities. This can involve some very casual forms that are rarely reported in surveys and interviews, such as fishing adjacent to the reserve on evenings or weekends. It also involves snare lines set on trails leading from the stretches of roads which are within close enough walking or driving distance of the reserve that they can be checked every few days by the head of a household or an unemployed spouse or by children. Similarly, weekends are often spent on day trips along the roads looking for small game, or waterfowl to hunt, depending on the season<sup>31</sup>.

In addition to these short day trips, families based in the settlement for most of the year often engage in more intensive hunting trips, on which occasions they

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29) This is important as well because it is clear that the population of workers will grow steadily as the very numerous population of young Waswanipi reaches adulthood.

30) People still consider the costs of purchasing foods for a large family in the settlement to be excessive, partly because prices on and near the settlement are known to be substantially higher than in regional urban centres. So both the quantities of bush foods and their evaluation remain high relative to the alternatives. In recognition of this, during the last decade, most households have found it worthwhile to purchase freezers, mainly to store bush foods.

typically visit the bush camps of kin or friends. These trips may involve repeated weekend stays of two or three days each, up to a total of 45 or 60 days in a year. Or they may involve visiting during the fall school break for moose hunting, or the spring school break for duck hunting, or a job vacation, or between periods of employment. There may be several such trips a year, and the stays may last from a few days to a couple of months between jobs.

These stays involve having access to a hunting territory, either by a long-term right of access, or by being invited to exercise a privilege<sup>32</sup>). Stewards encourage the visitors to hunt under their supervision. While this facilitates stewards' control and management of wildlife, it shares the resources of the territory more widely, and reproduces exchange and generosity with those who are employed. From the visitors point of view, there are advantages to joining a group. First, the residents in the bush camp will have considerable knowledge of current hunting conditions and the present distribution of some animals, and can help providing information which makes for a more efficient and successful short hunt. Further, a system of trails through the snow in winter is established and can be used. And, because the camp site itself is already in use, water and wood supplies often do not need to be prepared from scratch.

While the amount of harvesting that can be done on these occasions will vary considerably, the amounts can be important to a household. From 1976-77 to 1978-79, non-income security hunters harvested an average of 264 pounds of edible meat per year of the main food species listed on Table 4 (data from JBNQNHRC [1982]). This is about 20 per cent of the harvest of an intensive ISP hunter of 1,322 pounds of edible meat, but it is a significant amount for a settlement household. In 1981-82, among men who were not income security beneficiaries, approximately two-thirds reported having made such visits to bush camps.

In these ways, the system of hunting territory rights and privileges not only

31) In recognition of these activities, much of the lands around the settlement and along the roads within an hour or so drive of the settlement are effectively treated as lands open to all to use without permission. Since most of the use is short-term and each foray is not individually intensive this conforms to customary practices. But the stewards of the areas adjacent to these lands also generally treat these areas as if they were not part of their hunting territories, and do not try to hunt or use them themselves. As might be expected these areas are usually depleted of species less able to withstand a cumulative harvest which can be intensive.

32) There have been problems with men going out for extended hunts without invitations or permission, and these are discussed critically by stewards and older hunters. Most, but not all of these cases involve young men or groups of young men, and hunters actively encourage them to join established hunting groups. This may well have become an established tension in the community. These hunts are usually not particularly successful, so the tension does not arise from the size of the harvests, but from the inexperience and the disruption caused to wildlife. One reason why these situations are not so numerous is that there are significant advantages to joining a camp on these short visits.

articulates social relations between those who live for extended periods in hunting groups, but it has also been extended in recent years to include a large number of those who live in the settlement and who have regular or occasional employment<sup>33</sup>).

## CONCLUSIONS

Let us return to the impacts of the processes of monetisation, commoditisation and the creation of wage labour on the socioeconomic organisation of Waswanipi Cree, and examine the material in the light of the analyses proposed by Leacock and by Murphy and Steward. In both analyses, the dynamic for change is rooted in the external agents with whom hunters and gatherers enter into trade, and the indigenous society is portrayed as essentially reactive. "Thus Murphy and Steward predict the course of local-level change entirely from an account of macro-level interventions and local patterns of material production given the currently existing environment and technology" [FEIT 1982: 403]. I have argued previously that indigenous hunting societies in Canada had actively sought to set and meet their own objectives in their political and economic strategies for responding to recent outside interventions [1982].

In this paper I have sought to delineate some of the internal dynamics and processes of reproduction and transformation of Cree society, which in some significant sense shape the outcomes of relations with external economy and society. These processes are intimately linked to macro-level processes, but they are also, significantly directed by the meanings and practices of everyday relationships within Cree society. I have examined these processes with particular reference to the impacts of changes in the access to cash and commodities. And, I have shown that these impacts were profoundly shaped by daily community practice and social values at the micro-level in the processes of: distribution and consumption, production, social group formation, and access to lands.

The introduction of food commodities produced in an industrial society into Cree households has become essential to support the rapidly growing Cree population. Nevertheless, complete dependence on purchased foods, and self-sufficiency in food procurement at the expense of food exchanges with other commensal groups have not developed. These outcomes have been prevented by both long-standing practices in Waswanipi Cree society, as well as by more recently developed practices.

All sectors of Cree society maintain a high value and a strong preference for

33) Even at a community level, the desire to develop land resources for purposes of job creation is generally undertaken in a cooperative frame rather than a competitive one. This is partly because everyone is engaged in and highly values hunting. Partly because jobs in industry that come at the cost of jobs in hunting are generally not politically acceptable, and partly because the importance of income security in the cash incomes of the community means that reductions in hunting diminish current and future potentialities for economic development and jobs related to servicing the hunters.

locally produced bush foods. The value of bush foods reflects, in part, the practices of the people in bush oriented households. Those bush households which have sufficient bush foods for their own needs, continue to undertake additional work to produce a net quantity of bush foods to give away. On occasions when their supplies of bush foods do not significantly exceed their own needs, they will typically use additional purchased foods, or less valued small game bush foods to supplement their diet, and thereby produce a modest surplus of valued bush foods for exchange. In a society in which animals are sacred, and labour is highly valued and a source of respect, the bush food exchanges are highly valued. The gifting of bush foods is both a sign of the value of those foods, and of the value of the social bonds which motivate the distribution. The fact that such exchange is less of a material necessity today highlights its social dimensions.

Among settlement based commensal units which have sufficient incomes to purchase all their foods, exchanges with bush groups are actively sought, for similar reasons. These exchanges also involve translating commodities, including purchased foods and various cash and equipment contributed to help to meet hunters' costs, into bush foods. However, especially for these households, the value of bush foods may also reflect the fact that bush food production has become a symbol for distinctive Indian identities, Indian skills and knowledge, and Indian rights, in the midst of increasing contacts with local and national Euro-Canadian society.

Gift exchange in foods thus flourishes, and reproduces the predominant value of bush over purchased foods, an evaluation which cannot be explained simply by reference to biological need or by individual consumer preference. Rather food exchanges continue to express the primary commitment to sociality, and to recreating an active practice of mutual aid and responsibility in daily lives in which generosity is expected.

When we turn from distribution processes to the processes of production, we find that there has been no systematic change from production for use to production for exchange. The archaeological literature shows that extensive trading networks existed in pre-contact times. The ethnohistorical literature suggests that predominance of production for exchange has generally not occurred throughout the fur trade era in the James Bay area, where the under-production of furs has a long history (e.g. Salisbury [1976]). Thus fundamental conflicts between production for use and for exchange, in so far as they have occurred, have generally been resolved in favour of subsistence and of bush foods harvested for use.

However under present circumstances any radical distinction between production for use and for exchange in hunting would be difficult to establish. As Appadurai [1986] and others have noted, commodities can be exchanged in gift or market exchanges at different times in their "lives," and it may not be possible to distinguish the products destined for different exchanges at the time of their production. Thus, among the Waswanipi, used equipment may become part of the gift exchange process. And hunters may be unable to tell whether certain harvests



will be consumed or gifted. For example, approximately half of any large game animal is gifted, and other food is received to replace part of that gift. And many fur-bearing animals produce food which is exchanged while the pelts are sold. Furthermore, when some of the food commodities which are purchased are in effect used to supplement the diet and to leave additional bush animal foods for gift exchanges, people are effecting a translation of market commodities into gifts. These ambiguities are highlighted in the case of the James Bay Cree, where the state prevents the creation of a market for wildlife and bush food. Nevertheless, integration rather than differentiation between production for use and for exchange has tended to occur over a long period of time.

With respect to the intensity of production, it has been shown that hunting effort continues at levels necessary to produce substantial food for social exchange, despite the potential for commensal group autonomy in food production, and for reductions in hunting effort and bush food production. And such initiatives as have occurred in the direction of reductions have been resisted by community consensus and practices.

It has also been shown that access to the most important productive means, land and wildlife, is provided through the processes of gift exchange, and not through market exchanges or individualised ownership. Thus, social exchange continues to provide access to the most critical means of production, land, even where important elements of technology and important services, such as airplane transportation to bush sites, are acquired through market exchanges. And the production process continues to be embedded in social and spiritual meanings, values and organisation. Rather than productive processes being dominated by commodity market conditions, and leading to the attenuation of social relations, hunting production continues to depend on social relations, and to be dominated by values of reciprocity. Production is a complex arena involving a diversified set of productive practices in which local meanings and practices are central to the outcomes. The continuing reciprocities prevent market definitions of relationships from becoming predominant, and are a key element in maintaining local autonomy.

With respect to the social concomitants of the changes in production and distribution, these processes are not associated with reduced dependencies of families on each other in daily life, or a shift from general cooperation to general competition. Within hunting groups, and in the processes of their formation, cooperation is still materially and symbolically recreated. Hunting territories are key here because in giving access to lands and resources they create the social linkages and dependencies between community members, although not in a fully egalitarian form. Indeed, while it may be objectively possible now for households to be autonomous with respect to cash, it is with respect to access to lands and resources that each is not autonomous, depending on links to stewards. The continuing access of workers to hunting lands and to bush food gifts recreates similar linkages of dependency and cooperation and not of general competition.

While autonomous use and control of hunting territories by individual families

is materially possible in present circumstances, the Cree continue to reproduce and transform communal forms of hunting territoriality in the face of that choice. The option is expressed by the Cree who note that they do not hunt or trap the way whitemen do. They emphasise that: the Cree do not just pursue furs, they harvest animals most of which are fully used for food, pelts and in the production of domestic tools and crafts; the Cree do not hunt alone nor have individual rights to areas; and, the Cree do not live in social isolation but in extended families and communities.

The analyses previously proposed placed too much emphasis on the nature of the commodities, and on connections to the market, and too little on the way in which local social relations and symbolic meanings are reproduced in the context of the changing constraints and resources created by external institutions. The inadequacy of the earlier formulations is especially clear in the analysis of land tenure. This study has reached the opposite conclusions from those forecast by Murphy and Steward: land rights and land access in the hunting territory system are a source and means of community rather than a cause or indicator of social atomisation and dependency.

Indeed, the impacts of significant increases in cash and commoditisation have been part of the reproduction and transformation of Waswanipi social forms which remain distinctly non-capitalist<sup>34</sup>). In the Cree case not only have the impacts of the market been so directed, but also those of the increasing penetration of the state system and of transfer payments. Commoditisation is a complex process, with many phases and facets, a process whose impacts vary from one context and from one structure to another. To revise Murphy and Steward, I would suggest as a hypothesis for further testing that: only in the context of an already established market domination, created by other means, does commoditisation create social atomisation and privatisation.

Murphy and Steward argue that external trade in local products which are found in extensive distribution and produced through individual effort, is sufficient to transform the structure of native cultures, and create delimited rights to marketable resources, and cultural dependency [1956: 350, 353]. The likelihood of such transformations in the absence of physical coercion, dispossession of land and natural resources, pauperisation, forced control of the education of youth, or intensive programmes of cultural change, seems to me exaggerated. There is no doubt of the widespread and deplorable domination of indigenous peoples by these means, and I do not in any way seek to minimise those impacts. But Murphy and Steward hold out the likelihood of social disintegration in the absence of such

34) It should be noted that at present James Bay Cree reproduce their communities in the context of relatively exceptional buffering from market conditions for those people whose main productive activity is hunting. The Cree have, however, had decisive impacts on commoditisation through several centuries. Current practices suggest some of the processes by which the impacts of external trade and commoditisation were locally shaped and limited throughout the period.

domination, through the initial desire and then need to engage in commodity trade. While this process has occurred, it is my view that our assessment of its likelihood will be distorted if we do not analyse commoditisation in the context of the reproduction of indigenous meaning systems and social practices of tenure, production and exchange. Where dominance has not been established, we should expect local level processes to decisively shape the impacts of increased access to cash and commodities.

In conclusion, I would note that indigenous peoples across the north of Canada have asserted that they must protect their lands, and their rights, because to destroy the land is to destroy them as a distinct people. This paper gives voice to many of these same issues. The paper elaborates the critical link between land and society. In the case of the Waswanipi an analysis of tenure, land, production, symbols and social relations shows their fundamentally communal character. And, it provides a key to unlocking part of the critical processes by which the Waswanipi continue recreate themselves as a people, and to actively shape the impacts which the introduction and expansion of market commodities and state transfers have had on their lives.

**Acknowledgments** This paper expresses ideas developed over long conversations and cooperative research and advising with Colin Scott, the late Richard Salisbury and Ignatius LaRusic, and I wish to thank each of them for contributing to my own understandings of the issues. However, they do not necessarily agree with my conclusions, and they bear no responsibilities for the limitations of this analysis. The paper draws on research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Grants 410-81-0241, 410-84-0547, 410-87-0715, and 410-88-0535), by the Quebec, Ministère des Affaires Sociales, Comité de la Recherche Socio-économique, and by McMaster University, Arts Research Board. I wish to thank each agency.

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