

Animals as Hunting Partners:

Reciprocity in the World of the James Bay Cree

By Harvey A. Feit¹

Published in French as: “Les animaux comme partenaires de chasse: Réciprocité chez les Cris de la baie James,” in *Les animaux pensent-ils?* Terrain (Paris) 34, mars 2000, pp. 123-142.

“I understand animals, but I do not know what they think,”
Matthew Ottereyes, Waswanipi Cree hunter, 1999

Abstract

For James Bay Cree hunters of northern Quebec animals and thought are intertwined in changing circumstances and everyday practices ranging from hunting, to social reproduction, to political struggles. Like Ojibwa described by A.I. Hallowell, Cree do not radically separate society and nature, or human and animal, but live in a world animated by persons. In the view of the Cree hunters, animals think, but hunters’ access to that thought is indirect and always incomplete. Hunting creates experiences with the world beyond humans who respond intimately to Cree practices, and thereby affirm the reality of this world. The key ruptures in this social cosmos are those asocial acts that exploit both animals and humans, whether by “bush cannibals,” Cree or non-Cree. In the midst of industrial degradation of lands, animals are both ideal and bodily exemplars of an ongoing reciprocity that assures Cree of their own continuance.

Introduction

A key focus of the research and debate on relationships of the thought of humans and of animals examines the ways in which thinking about animals is related to thinking about humans. A large part of this paper is in that tradition, because the social reciprocity which the James Bay Cree extend to animals and to other phenomena in their world reflects their society, in which a social fabric of kinship relations are reproduced through norms of widespread sharing and personal communications.

James Bay Cree hunters think that animals do think, as the quote above implies, but they do not readily claim that they know what an animal is thinking. Animate beings can reveal their thoughts through their actions, so one can develop understandings of what others, including animals, may be thinking. But, the relationship between action or speech and thought is complex and it always leaves ambiguity and uncertainty about what the other really thinks. As I will show throughout this paper, as James Bay Cree hunters try to understand the animals and people they interact with, they are constantly forming and evaluating ideas of what the others may be thinking. However, when describing actions and motives they are cautious to describe what they have seen or heard rather than to make definitive assertions about what the other thinks.

In sometimes meditative discussions with some James Bay Cree about knowledge and metaphors, they too would say that their social communications are key to their understandings and their relationships to animals.

In everyday contexts Cree (I will use Cree as a shorthand term for James Bay Cree) talk about human – animal relationships often turns from thinking about thought to thinking about hunting practices. It also turns to Euro-Canadians who think and act very differently in relation to the same animals. Cree interact with this encapsulating society through media, schools and the

¹ Department of Anthropology, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4L9. [feit@mcmaster.ca]

innumerable linkages of daily life that connect them to neighboring towns, to capital cities and to world markets. Thus they also think about themselves and animals in terms of how the Cree are different from Euro-Canadians. These differences are not just about ideas, but about different practices, and about the power of practices to transform both relationships to animals and relationships between peoples.

Here the notion of animal thinking becomes more complicated, and the very relation of social ideas and practices to ideas about animals must be seen as an area of contest, of questioning, and of uncertainty as much as of order.

Because Cree hunters think about animals as if they are social beings, but not the same as humans, see below, and how they think about animal thought is not a simple mirroring of thought about humans, but a rich and complex arena for reflexive thinking, for negation of relationships, and for new interpretations. I will show how such rich cultural interpretation of animals as thinking and social beings, when it has continued to develop over the course of several generations, encompasses diverse understandings and knowledge. Specifically, I will consider for the Cree: a) how a metaphysics can incorporate personal relationships extending beyond humans to animals; b) how inter-species interactions can be communicative processes; c) how communicative processes can be embodied, and how they can implicate subsistence, social relations, and a moral order; d) how epistemology can be grounded in complex relationships between thoughts, practices and interpretive processes in a world that is influenced, but not brought into being, by each; e) how thinking about the negation of sociality can locate humans and animals together in opposition to those who would endanger the conditions for both to flourish; and, f) how relations with animals are embedded in contemporary politics and in struggles of domination and resistance.

Ethnographic approaches to questions of human – animal relations afford the possibility of complementing findings from other types of research with insights drawn from the locations of everyday lives, where both humans and animals are simultaneously involved in provisioning, socializing, and politics. This paper on James Bay Cree and animals examines everyday relations ranging from hunting strategies, to intimate reciprocity, to negotiating with and resisting the state. I begin by summarizing a seminal account of the world view of a related Algonquian people of eastern Canada and the United States by A. Irving Hallowell.

Beginnings: Human Evolution in a Meaningful Cosmos

Hallowell conducted field research among the Ojibwa² of northern Manitoba in the 1930s, and his posthumously published ethnography of the Ojibwa of Berens River (written in the mid-1960s but published in 1992) was a synthesis of his path-breaking ethnographic analyses (1955, 1976). In that book his concluding analytical statement addressed the connections that challenge too simple a synthesis of evolutionary scale and local meanings:

Adaptation to “reality” in human evolution can never be understood as adaptation to a “reality” abstracted and projected from the physical and biological sciences as we now know them. Human survival has never been dependent upon the prior discovery of absolute truth or a comprehensive objective understanding of all aspects of the world in which man found himself. The realities of human adaptation have always involved adaptation to the actualities of the world as meaningfully conceived, interpreted, and socially transmitted in cultural terms. Thus ecological relations, historical processes, and the psychodynamics of individual adjustment must be considered with reference to cultural variables (1992 : 98).

Ojibwa “cognitive orientation” (1992 : 60) was a demonstration of the world as meaningfully conceived. He noted, for example, that their classificatory system distinguished

² The peoples Hallowell called “Ojibwa” now more commonly use the self-identification “Anishinabe nations.”

between animate and inanimate phenomena in a way fundamentally different from that in Euro-American cultures:

Most startling is the fact that the sun and the winds also belong in this [animate] category, rather than the class of natural inanimate objects to which we assign them. . . . It is also significant that more than formal classification of substantives is involved; there are correlative differences in attitudes and behavior based on traditional concepts. . . .

What motivated such conduct was the belief that if proper treatment was not accorded to a member of an animal species used in any way by human beings, the “owner” [or leader of each kind of animal] would retaliate by making it impossible for the hunter to catch animals of the species in the future. . . . Consequently there was always an implicit social relationship between the hunter and the “owners” of animal species. . . .

. . . . To the Ojibwa hunter, his knowledge of the habits of animals and of the best way to hunt and trap them, and his relations with their “owners” form an integral pattern that functions as an essential part of his cognitive orientation to the world in which he has to act. His beliefs and personal experiences are not compartmentalized. His behavior as a hunter is a function of reliable knowledge, beliefs, values, and experience (1992 : 62-3; brackets by H. Feit).

Hallowell went on to consider some of the consequences for thinking about the Ojibwa view of the world:

The culturally patterned, structured, and unified aspects of the Ojibwa world view take on psychological reality that has meaning for them and motivates much of their behavior. In this perspective, we too can better understand that reality (1992 : 63).

. . . . Consequently, any attempt to order Ojibwa data in a conceptual scheme familiar to us distorts their world view and makes it impossible to understand their actual behavioral environment. . . . For the Ojibwa a natural world of objects, sharply opposed to a world of spiritual, divine, or supernatural beings is absent. Their metaphysics of being has a different ground (1992 : 63).

A Metaphysics of Persons

Hallowell stressed the importance of the class of beings that are “persons” in Algonquian ontology. Persons include both “human beings” and what he called “other than human” persons. All “beings of the person category” have attributes of thought, intelligence, will, metamorphosis, and capacity for speech, and therefore humans can communicate with other than human persons. These attributes vary in degree and features, but not in kind (1992 : 64).

Hallowell noted however that in Ojibwa world view, many animals do not have a capacity for speech, only a few do, so most do not have the essential characteristics of persons, although they are animate beings (1992 : 64). But since persons are also generically capable of metamorphosis of their bodily form for Ojibwa, and powerful humans or “other than human” persons can appear as animals, “no hard and fast line can be drawn between an animal form and a human form” (1992 : 67).

However Hallowell also noted that there was “a modern scepticism about the traditional belief in actual metamorphosis” among Ojibwa in the 1930s (1992 : 67).

He noted that, as a consequence of the wide extension given to both the person and animate categories by Ojibwa, their implicit theory of causation is personalistic. Without a concept of the natural world, Hallowell notes, there cannot be a theory of impersonal causes, or of natural law (1992 : 71). This does not mean that events are unstructured or unpredictable, but that cosmic regularities take the form of habits and traditions characteristic of personal behaviour and social action. In a world in which most of the active agents in the cosmos are persons, satisfying explanations are founded by reference to the personal actions of various beings, such as persons who send the winds, animal owners, and humans (1992 : 71).

Hallowell often emphasized how such systems were sustained through time:

From early childhood, the experience of Ojibwa individuals is channeled both directly and indirectly towards a knowledge of and, under special circumstances, interaction with other than human persons. These entities assume the reality of persons in their lives not only through conceptualization, but through dramatization in myths [which are true stories for Ojibwa, albeit often about the distant past], through perceptions of their voices heard in [ceremonies where they are heard but not seen] , and visually, in the more intimate, vivid imagery of dreams [which are considered different but direct apprehensions of reality, continuous in time and space with those of waking life] (1992 : 65, brackets by H. Feit based on pages 65-71,85).

Hallowell himself worked with a keen awareness that these patterns of understanding and practice were themselves changing. During his 1930s fieldwork he worked in a research tradition that sought to reconstruct “older” cultural patterns, based on available evidence, before they “disappeared.” He therefore did not focus initially on observing a full ongoing set of daily practices and how they were linked to culture and environment, although his analyses showed that they must be linked. In his later work he systematically addressed change. His discursive but systematic setting out of Ojibwa culture was therefore an even more impressive milestone of analysis, and it has remained a rich resource for later ethnographers researching contemporary practices and cultures among the Ojibwa (for example, Black: 1967, 1977; Désveaux: 1987; and Brightman: 1993) and other Algonquian-speaking groups.

Hallowell’s pioneering formulations have been a starting point for contemporary researchers of the James Bay Cree, another Algonquian group, living hundreds of miles away, to the east and south of James Bay in northern Quebec. At Rupert’s House (now Waskaganish) in the 1960s Richard Preston explored the personal meanings of narratives in a highly interpretive analytical style, and found the themes and meanings emergent in Cree myths, ceremonies, songs, and personal stories corresponded closely with the frameworks Hallowell synthesized. Other than human persons were central actors in the Cree cosmos, relations in the Cree world were highly personalized and governed by principles of reciprocity and respect between humans, animals and other persons, and diverse forms of human experience were treated as continuous and valued. Preston’s work also confirmed Hallowell’s anticipation that with this integration of experiential modes Cree could function effectively in complex and often challenging circumstances (Preston 1975 : 257-8). Preston did not however find the levels of anxiety which Hallowell reported among Ojibwa (1975 : 239), but instead showed that Cree themselves highlighted the importance of the idea of competence, and they placed a high value on its continuing achievement in Cree society (1975 : 171-197).

Exploring Everyday Life

Adrian Tanner, working in the early 1970s at the adjacent community of Mistassini provided the first comprehensive ethnography of daily life in the hunting camps (Tanner 1979). This made clear how hunters’ religion, as Tanner called it, was embedded in a multitude of everyday practices and attitudes, around which life was patterned, from the spatial structure of a camp, to the way hunting trips were conceptualized as “Bringing Home Animals” (1979). The ways animals were approached, killed, carried back to camp, admired, processed, shared, consumed, disposed of, thought about, and dreamed, were all connected to the notions of personal relations and means of expressing respect and responsibility to animals as persons. These systematic findings not only built on Hallowell’s Ojibwa work, they showed continuity with the important, but more fragmentary research by earlier ethnographers, and also with the much earlier reports of European missionaries and explorers. Frank G. Speck, the dean of Algonquian ethnography and Hallowell’s teacher and colleague, who had worked with James Bay Cree since about 1912 wrote, in 1935:

The animals (*awa’cōts*) pursue an existence corresponding to that of man as regards emotions and purpose in life. The difference between man and animals, they believe, lies

chiefly in outward form. In the beginning of the world, before humans were formed, all animals existed grouped under "tribes" of their kinds who could talk like men

There has been no change in these native doctrines since they were first recorded in the seventeenth century in the words of the French priests. 'They believe that many kinds of animals have reasonable souls. . . . They pretend that the souls of these animals come to see how the bodies are treated . . . , so that if ill treated the beasts of the same kind will no longer allow themselves to be taken in this world or the next' (Speck 1935 : 72; Speck was quoting from Chrestien LeClerq, 1691).

Speck's assertion that there was little or no historical change is not supported by more recent ethnohistorical research or social analysis (Leacock 1954; Feit 1991, 1994). Nevertheless, elements of these cultural patterns have been continually reproduced and transformed in new contexts.

My own work in the 1960s and 1970s at another James Bay Cree community, Waswanipi, showed how such a system functioned in the choices Waswanipi Cree hunters made when deciding how many animals to harvest. Under many conditions Waswanipi hunters were able to conserve key game populations, such as those of moose and beaver (Feit 1973). Research by other ethnographers and some biologists revealed similar sets of strategies, knowledge and practices for limiting harvests, and sometimes for conserving waterfowl and fish stocks (Scott 1989b, 1996; Berkes 1977).

The emphasis on everyday hunting practices by ethnologists led to an emerging understanding of Waswanipi Cree relations to animals, and their interrelations in thought, practice and bodies.

This revealed in turn how these relationships are socially and politically embedded. In the rest of this paper I survey what I have learned about Waswanipi hunters' knowledge and practices, starting in the late 1960s.

The James Bay Cree Indians are sub-arctic hunters living in northern Quebec in nine communities with a total population of 12,000 people. Waswanipi is the most southern of these communities. The Cree have been involved in the European fur trade since the mid-17th century. They have been actively missionized, by Anglicans since the end of the last century, and they are now also served by Pentecostal missionaries. Some Cree today follow solely Cree religious practices, most follow one of the Christian denominations, but in a uniquely Cree way they also incorporate a world of dreams and other than human beings. Thus both Christians and non-Christians share much of the same world view. Since the 1970s Cree have modern housing and live in villages with state schools and health services. The James Bay Hydro-electric Project has been built on the northern Cree lands, and commercial forestry clear-cutting is extensive on southern Cree lands. The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement of 1975, which resulted from opposition to the first hydro-electric project, recognized Cree rights to land, to hunt and to self-governance, and provided financial benefits to Cree communities. The Agreement also recognized the right of the government to use the natural resources of most of the lands the Cree claim. As a result, the Cree control over \$200 million of investments, and manage more than \$50 million per year of government funds for schools, health, social benefits, community administration, and various community programs. In the late 1990s about one-third of the adults hunt full-time, spending up to seven months of the year in small camps of one to five families, located at sites in the forest, "bush." They travel from settlements by chartered small airplanes, by car or truck, and by canoe with outboard motor, or snow machine. About one-third of the population have steady jobs, mostly in the Cree institutions that service the communities, but they also hunt on average the equivalent of two months a year.

Hunting is participated in on a part-time basis by most workers and unemployed, and is a key to Cree ethnic identities. Hunting also provides a significant input to family and community diets, and health and well-being. The James Bay Cree have thus gone through many changes and transformations, but they remain a distinct hunting people.

Enticing Animal Gifts

Waswanipi Cree world view emerges in everyday conversation most readily when talk turns to everyday hunting. Animals are killed in the Waswanipi Cree hunters' view partly because humans have more knowledge, but the hunting techniques which that knowledge can provide are not so effective that an animal cannot avoid them. Knowledge also provides the skill to entice the animal psychologically.

For example, doing what the beaver wants pleases it, and lowers its reluctance to give itself to help a hunter in need. Hunters have to be responsive to the beaver, and not too quick or insistent.

[HF:] Is it the animals themselves that decide if a man can catch them?

[JO:] [Yes.] At times, he can swear, that animals have a feeling that death is coming on, they feel it.

[HF:] Does an animal [just] give itself to the hunter?

[JO:] No.

[HF:] When he can't kill what he wants does he just try another way?

[JO:] If he doesn't kill it the first time, leave it alone. If he sees it again, try it another way.

[HF:] Why does this work?

[JO:] Leave it alone a while, he [the animal] thinks he put up a good fight and he [JO] couldn't kill it. But while he [the animal] is thinking this he [JO] surprises him.

[HF:] To be a good hunter you have to outsmart the animal?

[JO:] He wouldn't say that. The animals and the hunters change, he wouldn't say this would make a good hunter. Maybe this time it would, another time it wouldn't. . . . Makes changes with different game, depending on the size of the animal, how fast it thinks (Fieldnotes, 9/25/70).

JO's discomfort with the way I phrased my last question is due in part to the assumption which underlies "outsmarting an animal," namely that it is the hunter who controls the outcome of the hunt. By not seeking to control the animal, but to entice it, the hunter demonstrates the worthiness of the hunter to receive a "gift."

The statements by Cree that the animals are gifts may appear to non-Cree to be purely self-serving, but they cannot be dismissed as simply moral evasions. The communications from animals during the hunt place hunters under obligations to limit their hunts to levels that do not create indications that hunters are depleting game. The modalities of these choices and the hunters' strategies, and independent evidence that the strategies work, have been described elsewhere for moose and beaver hunting (Feit 1973), fishing (Berkes 1977), and goose hunting (Scott 1989 b). Thus, hunters do not just speak of animal gifts to justify their hunting, they limit their harvests of animals in ways that protect animal populations and that also help the health of the surviving animals. So treating the hunt as a gift can place the hunter under obligation to decide whether or not to hunt an animal, and these decisions can contribute to conserving the animals. That this works is evidence to Cree that speaking and thinking of animals as gifts makes good sense, and that it is more than rhetoric.

The Intimate Side of Hunting

Thinking of the hunt as a communicative process as well as a harvest, and as a series of encounters with game animals rather than a single event, helps to understand some Cree hunters' statements that they are not just hunting generic animals, a moose or a bear, they hunt individual animals. Hunters often get to know the specific habits and idiosyncrasies of the animal whose signs they see during the course of the hunt, they may get to know an animals' feeding preferences, learn how many young it has had, discover its patterns of rest, how it relieves itself, how it walks, what terrain it chooses to travel, what times of day and weather it prefers, how consistent its habits are. Cree say they start to come to know the animals they hunt individually.

The reverse is true as well, animals come to know the hunters. Many hunters say they want their clothing to be attractive, and to keep their equipment in good repair and often well decorated, with the implication that this pleases the animals who know and see them. Colin Scott has pointed out that Cree draw analogies between hunting and courtship, and that a variety of Cree terms carry meanings in both domains, “mitwaaschaau” can refer to both “he shoots” and “he ejaculates,” “paaschikan” can refer to both shotgun and penis, and “spichinaakin” to both gun case and condom (Scott 1996 : 75). The animal gift is not anonymous, it is an expression of a personal, even intimate, relationship.

Whether animals can talk is a point of disagreement among Cree hunters I met. The most common view was that the larger animals, roughly from beaver and up, can understand what is said to them by Cree, but that animals cannot talk among themselves. The black bear, however, is widely said to understand human speech, and one recurrent experience is often cited as an example. In winter when hunters find bears in dens under the snow, they may smoke tobacco or show other signs of respect to the bear, and then call upon it to wake up and come out of its den, while prodding it with poles. The fact that so powerful and potentially dangerous an animal emerges and is relatively calm is a sign of its awareness of the hunters’ respectful request, as well as an indication of the bear’s decision to give itself in response.

These and other personal stories stress the close and even intimate relationships which individual hunters can have with animals. Stories sometimes mix together experiences drawn from implied dream states and fully awake encounters. William Saganash who was in his sixties, and who had a reputation as a good bear hunter, told this story about when he was younger:

He was hunting himself alone. He was paddling himself alone in the evening. He had a small little camp, didn’t have no sleeping bag. . . . He couldn’t sleep at night it was too cold. He saw someone coming in, a man and a woman. He [a visitor] brought a rabbit [translation correct?] skin, like a sleeping bag, and he covered William up. They [the visitors] slept in the place he was sleeping and he woke up and he was warm. They got up and left, and he [William] got up right after. The wind was cold, and he was waiting for the wind to settle down. And the wind went down . . . He [started] walking around, [and] he heard a noise like somebody yelling out. He knew where it was, and he went and looked where it was. He found the noise and he looked around and he saw bear picking berries, and he saw that noise was a bear – a bear was yelling for him. He’s walking around, just himself, but he hear like people around laughing at him, but he is not [human] people but bear. . . . He lived with his [wife] already when this story that he is [telling happened] [ie. he was not a youth but probably a young adult when this happened] (Fieldnotes, 8/17/70; brackets by H. Feit).

The story implicitly explains his success hunting bears and his relationships to them, but not by highlighting how good a hunter he was, but rather how close bears and he felt to each other. This story goes beyond the relationship of the hunter and the animals, it also makes clear that the wind had a role in creating the conditions for this encounter.

“Other Than Human” Persons

There are four key wind personages, each associated with one of the cardinal directions. The North Wind is said to be the “most powerful,” the “oldest,” the “leader,” and all four are said to be God and/or Jesus’ helpers. In William Saganash’s story, it is implied that the North Wind brought the extreme cold which created the context of these experiences, and it was he who also moderated the cold enough for William to walk around on the following day and find the bears.

These other than human persons are described in diverse but consistent ways. In a series of interviews conducted about wind personages over a few-day period Chuetenshu, the North wind personage, was described by five different hunters:

- a) tells him the most about people and hunting; . . . others [winds] are all his friends; . . . the person who brings us the snow;

- b) North Wind same as West Wind; . . . good wind for man, he brings a lot of snow; . . . dangerous sometimes when it is real cold; . . . most powerful wind;
- c) he was here first; . . . he gives him the animals he catches; . . . dangerous sometimes when it is really cold . . . [if it is] very cold [it is] hard to get animals; . . . he protects animals, he also helps men;
- d) he is the boss of the winds; . . . it is Chuetenshu who tells him what he will catch, he gives animals; best time to hunt when wind comes from the north, rabbit run around [are] not scared, fish eat [and we can] catch [them] on a hook; south wind blows then turns to north, [have a] snowstorm but then it clears up [and is a] nice day; . . . puts a piece of meat in the fire . . . before he eats . . . for Chuetenshu;
- e) we think of Chuetenshu as a person, like our own grandfather telling us what to do; that is why we put food in the fire, so we hope we can get more in the future; in summer do not dream, or talk of Chuetenshu (Fieldnotes 10/14-18/1969).

The characters of the other winds were similarly described. The East Wind personage, Oabenshu, is the “stingiest,” “worst wind, you can’t kill anything when it is blowing,” and “all game are scared of the East Wind,” and “bad weather. . . never see a nice day with the East Wind” (Fieldnotes 10/14-18/1969).

Souenshu, the South Wind personage, was described “in winter, when there is a big south wind, the animals are all afraid, they just hide . . . sometimes it gets mild and starts to rain . . . it is like a person who is stingy, who does not want to give anything.”

But at other times Souenshu is “good . . . shows all the animals, like in springtime,” “best in summer . . . nice day too sometimes,” “sometimes Souenshu is talking to him when summer is drawing near, seems that he tells him that now it is his [Souenshu's] time to be here, we are going to see all animals alive again, all plants and leaves” (Fieldnotes 10/14-18/1969).

These character sketches of wind personages combine experiences of weather patterns, seasons, animal behaviours, hunting conditions, communications with humans, and psychological characteristics, which are all associated with the wind personages’ relationships to humans. Cree hunters have considerable experience and knowledge about the relationship of animal behaviour in relation to different weather conditions. Winter moose hunting may suffice as an example.

As cold northern arctic weather systems become dominant in fall and early winter the snow accumulation on the ground rises and eventually exceeds a meter in height, the level at which adult moose bellies drag through the upper layers of snow. This makes movement harder for moose, who progressively move to the areas with lower snow accumulation, such as the hilltops where snow is partly blown away by the winds. In these areas the moose create “yards” with networks of packed trails. Cree hunters actively look to be given moose at this mid-winter period as they know where to look for moose, they know moose will be reluctant to leave the network of packed trails, and they know that if the moose do run they will become quickly exhausted in unbroken snow when pursued by a hunter on snowshoes. During this period of the year, hunters do not hunt on any day, but on those days when the weather conditions make the chances of receiving a moose best. If they have seen signs they may be given a moose, they get up in the morning to see if Chuetenshu has brought a “moose day.” With a light snowfall, the age of tracks can be judged, and with a light wind, the moose will not hear the approach of the hunter until he is close. Hunters wait for “moose days” because under these conditions a hunter can best meet his obligations to kill the moose without undo suffering.

The right moment to shoot a moose is when hunter and animal are face to face. Moose tend to “bed down” facing into the wind, so the cold does not get under their hair, and they normally do not take flight after hearing a noise but only when they see or scent the source of the disturbance. When a moose hears a hunter approaching from down wind, it slowly rises up and turns around towards the hunter to try to get a scent or a sighting, and it is at this moment of exchanged looks that the moose gives itself.

The Power of Thought

Cree hunting indicates how ideas and world view are deeply embedded with everyday hunting practices and experience. We might say their ideas and understandings make sense of daily experiences. We might also say their practices are informed by their ideas and experiences. But we should also note that hunting practices recreate the conditions for experiences, ideas and understandings, and in doing so they locate experience as part of a "real" world. Here conceptual order not only contributes to behavioural competence, but practices create experiences-in-the-world that mirror back to the hunters other than human affirmations of Cree conceptual orders. That they hunt this way orders their world, it affects the distribution, abundance and behavior of animals, and thereby influences their world so it is more like their ideas of how it should be. This dialectical relationship of thought and action in the world is addressed by Cree hunters themselves in their discussions of why God and/or Jesus are part of the giving process, and why the process does not just involve hunters, animals and wind persons.

In the view of Cree hunters, God has ultimate responsibility for what is, but the world is populated by living beings and persons with intelligence, intentions, wills, morality, and personal idiosyncrasies. Wind personages, animals, and human beings each act out of their own intentionality. Further, there is a hierarchy of beings in the Cree world, God is the "boss" of all things, and other living beings are called his "helpers," his "pets," or his "children." Innuat, human beings or Indians, have a somewhat ambiguous place in the hierarchy. Generally they are more powerful than animals, but less powerful than other than human persons, although they are not incommensurably different from either. Human beings vary among themselves and are ranked, a young married man is said to be just "starting to think" whereas a chenu, 'old man,' "knows a lot" or "understands" things.

These differences are spoken of by the Waswanipi in English as degrees of "power." When Cree hunters are asked to explain the power of God, they explain the relationship between his thought and his action, what God thinks or knows happens. When people want to explain the power of a human person they say that what he or she thinks sometimes comes to happen.

Waswanipi describe "power" as the link between what is thought, how one acts, and what is actually experienced to happen in the world. Power is explained as most directly manifest in the ability to "know the future." The Waswanipi term for this anticipatory knowledge, *nikanchisheitam*, means literally "future knowledge." Humans get future knowledge from other than human beings through dreams, daytime experiences, thoughts, and in ceremonies. Thoughts often are "given," in the sense that they are often not experienced as the products of human will. As humans mature, they learn how to cultivate and interpret such communications, and to have such kinds of knowledge is to be "powerful," or to have "powers." The implication is that knowledge of the future is not simply an expectation or speculation, it can be knowledge with substantial, if varying, degrees of certainty for the knower. This is partly because this knowledge comes from other than human beings who can "know for sure" what is going to happen. Future knowledge is not passive, but active. It was explained by one Cree as "looking to find what one knows," just as hunting is conceived of as looking to fetch the game (Tanner 1979). Future knowledge helps to actualize what will come to be.

When he wants to get a moose, he thinks about it, and then it's as if somebody is telling him about it, where to go and what to do. And then he is sure to get it. . . . Sometimes he dreams about it, but sometimes he hears it, as if somebody is talking to him, telling him where to go. . . . When he asks Chitche Manitu [God] for what he wants, Chitche Manitu gives it. . . . When somebody doesn't have luck, he asks Chitche Manitu for what he wants even though he thinks Chitche Manitu says no. He keeps asking for what he needs and finally he gets what he wants (Joe Ottereyes, Jr., 12/29/69).

This asking is not a passive reflectiveness but a going out and working to find signs of a gift on the land. Humans are powerful insofar as their thought and action are linked to the multi-faceted courses and causes of events in the world. Here human beings have power when they

integrate their thought and actions with those of other beings, and in this way they participate in the "power" of making the world. This concept of power approximates in some ways a notion of truth as process, the coming to be of a configuration in the world is anticipated in thought and participated in through action.

Abuses of Power – Asocial “Others”

In a world animated by persons with power, a main concern is the abuse of power in its many forms. These concerns inevitably engage Cree in thinking not only about their own society but their relationships to other peoples and animals. Cree representations of abuses of power involve a category of being that is part human and part negation of sociality. However, in the process of applying this metaphor to Cree relations to Euro-Canadian developers, animals and humans get differentiated in new ways. Colin Scott has shown that when Cree elders at Wemindji were asked to discuss relations to Wemistigoushu, “Whitemen” in Cree English usage, they told a series of stories about reciprocity and rupture (Scott 1989a).

In these stories Cree draw on the contrasting metaphors of kinship and of cannibals to think about “others” (Scott 1989a). My own personal experience, which I only understood after reading Scott, may help to clarify how Cree use these ideas not only in stories but in daily practices.

Within hours of arriving in a Cree village in 1968, I was "adopted" by a family, giving me a place in a society based on social ties and kinship, but also placing me under new responsibilities I was sometimes slow to recognize and to take up. Throughout my stays I was encouraged by example, and pressured by advice and complaints to be more aware of social reciprocities than I was accustomed to be.

The status of my kinship was thus constantly asserted, frequently called on, and sometimes in question.

On the first day of my stay in the village, after I was invited into the home and life of the family that "adopted" me, my status was immediately ambiguous. The youngest child of the house, 2 or 3 years old, who was observing me from a distance, was pushed unwillingly towards me, while I was pointed to and called "Atuush! Atuush!" The child cried and lay flat on the floor to better resist being pushed any closer to me. I learned later that Atuush is the cannibal monster, more widely known in the literature as "Windigo," which lives in the deep woods, and which captures humans. As Scott shows, the metaphor of Atuush is in fundamental opposition to that of kinsmen, it is a being that denies reciprocity and sociality, an isolated solitary creature with a heart of ice. In narratives of various kinds Atuush prey on people treating those they capture only as food or labour, by killing and eating them or by enslaving them. Atuush is thus a metaphor of the use of power for extreme self-aggrandizement, for total control of other people, and for the domination and exploitation that follow.

Atuush is not like the cannibal in European stories - a half human and half animal being. In a world where animals and humans are expected to be social beings, Atuush is more an asocial other than simply a cannibal. Atuush is an asocial being neither fully human nor fully animal. Atuush emphasizes both the negative valuation the Cree have of such uses of power, and it acknowledges the existence of such events in Cree society and beyond. The metaphor of Atuush attests to the inherent ambiguity, uncertainty, and danger inherent in social relationships. It is a symbol of the possibilities for negating relations between people, whether animal or human.

Most Waswanipi Cree stories of personal encounters with Atuush in the past refer to the terrifying approach and passage of a whirlwind-like event, that knocks down trees and levels patches of land. In the past powerful Cree elders would try to protect people in these terrifying circumstances by going outside of the abode so that their other than human helpers could do battle with the Atuush. Many Waswanipi Cree say that Atuush are not common in the Cree world anymore, that they were more common at the beginning of the 20th century - at a time in which people say there was greater conflict within Cree society, and when people sometimes starved in the bush. But some note that Atuush may be returning in the contemporary world.

Dialogues on Abuses of Power - Asocial Development

The James Bay hydro-electric projects, started by the Government of Quebec in 1972, was the first region-wide transformation of land and wildlife initiated by outsiders. These projects were initiated without consultation with the Cree, and in order to respond effectively the Cree developed a new regional government. The hydro-electric project on Cree lands was discussed and understood by Cree hunters through images of selfishness and the misuse of power.

On the site of a construction camp, where he could see bulldozed swaths of land being prepared for construction near Fort George, the Cree community most extensively affected by dam construction and now relocated to Chisasibi, Job Bearskin used images which for the Cree allude to the Atuush. Standing at this site in 1972 he said to journalist and film maker Boyce Richardson:

Okay, I will tell you how I feel about it. . . . It was never like this before they came. It was a beautiful earth. The people really liked to look at this beautiful earth, but now it has been destroyed....

When we flew over here I saw how many trees are being destroyed. And it is all white man's destruction. . . .

It's just like ripping something apart, it doesn't look good.

It looks like people have been fighting, everything is shattered. . . . They [the developers] are killing the roots, and in my opinion nothing will grow here again. This is the way it's going to be. The white man is only thinking of himself. Many people are saying that. The white men are not even thinking about the land they are destroying, they are thinking only of money (Richardson 1991 : 163-4).

Here the metaphor of asocial Atuush is used by a Cree hunter to facilitate his, and other Cree,' understanding as they experienced a new kind and scale of transformation of their land, and a destruction of the animals they hunt. Describing what the government called "development" with the images of Atuush labelled it for Cree as destruction, and located its causes as asocial practices. Hydro-electric development is here placed outside the moral and social universe that encompasses humans, animals and other than human beings.

Nevertheless, the situation also involved considerable ambiguity and uncertainty. It was not yet clear to Cree hunters how big the project would be, or whether so massive an undertaking could continue, and if it did, what its exact effects would be for animals and humans. Diverse responses were therefore sought by Cree.

In Cree stories about the past, Atuush are often humans gone astray, who at least in the early stages of their metamorphosis, may still be "cured." Thus understanding developers as asocial beings did not preclude a desire to build social linkages to those building the hydro-electric project. Indeed the Cree entered into negotiations with them, in the hope of convincing the developers of the legitimacy and truthfulness of Cree concerns, and of changing the developers in the process (see, Feit in press).

This willingness to dialogue, but not to be ignored and disempowered, was clear in 1974 when the senior negotiators for Quebec came to Fort George to discuss the hydro-electric project. The developers came to hear at first hand the complaints of people, and to judge the resolve of the Cree opposition. But they also sought to convince the Cree that accepting the hydro-electric project and seeking compensation were the only choices the Cree had, and that Cree resistance could not be too determined. They spoke from an assumed superiority of knowledge and power, continuing construction of the dams as they met with Cree. The provincial representatives said frankly, early in the meeting, that they could not stop the project or change it significantly, but they were prepared to discuss other means of helping the Cree. Community members replied that they were not interested in money, but in means of assuring the protection of the land and of reducing impacts on animals and themselves, impacts that the government denied were serious.

Here I understood that the Cree hunters were reciprocating the generosity of the animals that give themselves to the hunters by seeking to protect both land and animals from the certain

and irreversible destruction the hydro-electric project would cause. They did this not just for the benefit of their own hunting but also for animals as persons in themselves. As they insisted on a voice in what would be done, they set an example of reciprocity. A community member said that the Cree did not claim sole ownership of the land, and that Cree and Whitemen could share the land, but he implied this required mutual respect. He went on to say the "earth [was] not created for someone to destroy. . . . no one has the right to destroy things that are necessary for life" (Fieldnotes 4/9/1974).

Government negotiators replied that all men destroy the land even when hunting, and that changes have been going on long before the hydro-electric project was announced. A Cree man said in response that "our people have lived from the river like a garden. [We don't] want our land destroyed, [we] want our demands met. Why does [how can?] he say Indian destroys while hunting?" (Fieldnotes 4/9/1974).

The government denial of Cree practical caring for the land and animals, and the implicit denial of Cree honesty and moral concern, were for the Cree participants the point where perceptions of the government negotiators and expectations of the possible outcomes of the meeting changed.

A Cree speaker said, "He does not listen [to us] anyway." An elder Cree hunter responded in Cree that there was "no need for him [the government representative] to answer as I have spoken the truth which cannot be distorted. We want to preserve the land and our way of life." Another middle-aged Cree man said, "We know you have no love for our people. That is the way the Whiteman is - he does not love his neighbours. . . ." (Fieldnotes 04/09/1974).

These were all unusually strong and direct statements in Cree discursive practice, and the Cree were stating that they were no longer dealing with socially responsible or feeling people, they were dealing with an asocial other. But they also spoke from the conviction of people who perceive their experience and knowledge to be confirmed by the everyday practices of hunting and sharing the land. Here relationships shift, sometimes quickly, between the realities and possibilities of more widely encompassing partnership and reciprocity and those of more domination and refusal of relationships, and both are in constant but situational dialogue.

Uncertainty, Destruction and Survival

Here both the experiences and knowledge of reciprocity among humans and animals, and the experience and knowledge of asocial destruction, are applied in new contexts where the power and veracity of each are confirmed anew, even as contradictions and uncertainty are highlighted. Over the next twenty years Cree struggles continued, along with new developments and ongoing destruction of lands and animals. The ability of the Cree to pursue a dual course of both resistance and dialogue was increasingly uncertain. This was especially the case where dialogue became a means to avoid change rather than a means to responsibility and reciprocity.

In the 1990s, the Cree were facing a crisis caused by forestry clear-cutting on the lands where they have Indigenous and hunting rights. Logging operations are rapidly expanding, and already over 80 percent of the forests on land that some families hunted has been cut. Cree hunters are convinced that if the cuts were distributed differently forestry would have dramatically less impact on animals and Cree, and moose and other animal populations would recover more quickly as vegetation slowly re-established itself. Implementing such a plan would require effective Cree participation. Forestry companies, to date, have consulted with Cree as the law requires them to do, but they have not significantly changed their practices. Moose populations in the region have seriously declined, which Cree say is a response of the moose to destructive forestry cutting. Cree expect moose to recover slowly as new vegetation is established, but the extent of recovery and the timing remain uncertain.

In the summer of 1998 when Waswanipi hunters met to discuss possible responses, they heard from Cree negotiators about how modest the changes were which the forestry companies and the Government of Quebec were proposing as their solutions. It was a meeting fraught with a

sense of anxiety and frustration, although periodically relieved by humour. A middle-aged hunter said to Cree negotiators:

. . . go to the government and tell them about forestry. This is what is pushing wildlife out. . . . How can we participate if they're not willing to participate with us? . . . [logging companies] they're just going crazy and taking all the wood out and they're destroying the moose yards which are used in the winter time. They're destroying the mating grounds and they're destroying the playgrounds [of moose] (Transcript, Waswanipi Cree Trappers Association Meeting, 8/26/98).

In support, an elder hunter said that what was said was true, but he went on shortly after to say:

The animals of this world love us, they can't leave us. I was told by my grandfather . . . if someone else kills your moose, it can happen that there will be more than what was killed. You showed love when you didn't say anything to the person who hunted on your territory, and that's how much love will be returned to you (Transcript, Waswanipi Cree Trappers Association Meeting, 8/26/98).

Here the strategies of dialogue are questioned by the first speaker, expressing his frustration with both the developers, and more implicitly with the ineffectiveness of Cree efforts at dialogue in which he has been involved. At the same time he refers to the suffering of the moose, both their lower reproductive success but also their more general well-being.

The second speaker picks up on the latter statements, and insists that Cree strategies have brought benefits in the past and will continue to do so. But he does not only locate the power of this strategy in the past, but in the example of the animals who continue their relationships to hunters despite the destruction they suffer. Here animals stand in opposition to developers, they are uncompromisingly generous in contrast to the denials of reciprocity by developers and governments. It is ordinary humans who stand ambiguously in between, and who must find strategies for living, such as the one offered by the animals and taken up by the grandfather in the last comment.

Cree ability to continue to receive animal gifts in the midst of extensive destruction is undeniable, and it grounds and affirms Cree hunters' experience of the power of reciprocity in a world beyond simple human making.

Here the animals represent and have become ideal as well as social, but very embodied, beings. Animal thoughts and gifts have become models that profoundly affect Cree hunters, while the flesh of their bodies provides food that helps Cree to survive in health. Here animals are not just intimate partners, they are untarnished ideals of reciprocity and models of how to survive, even under abuse. The continuing generosity of animals reassures Cree hunters of their own future in the midst of great destruction and uncertainty. The experiential reality of animal reciprocity empowers a politics of both resistance and reconciliation.

Drawing Conclusions

Both destructive domination and animal reciprocity are experiences of power for the Cree. Cree hunters' strategies label and firmly identify domination as it occurs, and they vividly articulate the exploitation, destruction and suffering it causes. This is therefore a way of thinking and acting that facilitates resistance to hegemonic claims of truth and of power. Yet, as Cree hunters seek to resist domination, they also seek not to cut themselves off so completely from the social potential of the other that they fail to remain open to future opportunities for dialogue and respectful relationships. This repeatedly recreates efforts to initiate change by recognizing the other as potential partner.

As a result, Cree hunters tend to think that in some respects they are more powerful than destructive outsiders, for they continue to live with assurance as Cree, sharing the land with animals in continuity, although enduring increasing and unnecessary suffering. They are also profoundly aware that in many respects and places the land is being transformed and destroyed,

and that it will never be the same again, and this creates an extraordinary sadness, resolve and incomprehension.

Cree hunters' thoughts and relations with animals permeate diverse arenas of everyday life in powerful but changing and complex ways. Through centuries of fur trading and missionization, and decades of schooling, generations of Cree hunters have not taken up alternative understandings and practices that would draw more radical separations between humans and animals. These Euro-American teachings would involve de-socializing experiences with animals, distancing the communicative intimacy and responsiveness of their practices, and, in the view of Cree hunters they would risk making their relationships with animals exploitative. They have seen such relationships, and suffer their consequences. Cree hunters' also imply that their own prospects would be diminished by taking up such alternatives. Cree reflections on relations to animals affirm Cree society, reject these non-Cree ideas that are ever present, and envisage a future they are trying to create in the context of both Whitemen and animals.

Hunters may not know what animals think, but their daily communications with them make it possible to understand animals. Most Cree hunters profess to find the long-term logic of developers and governments more incomprehensible than that of animals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wants to acknowledge the support for this research given by the people and the Council of the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi, and by the Cree Regional Authority. The research was funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (410-99-1208, 410-96-0946), and from the McMaster University Arts Research Board.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berkes, F. 1977. "Fishery resource use in a subarctic Indian community," *Human Ecology* vol. 5, pp. 289-307.
- Black, M. B. 1967. *An Ethnoscience Investigation of Ojibwa Ontology and World View*. Ph.D. Thesis. Stanford University. Ann Arbor, University Microfilms.
- _____. 1977. "Ojibwa Power Belief System," in Fogelson, R.D. and R.N. Adams [ed.], *The Anthropology of Power*. New York, Academic Press, pp. 141-51.
- Brightman, R. 1993. *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Désveaux, E. 1987. "La métamorphose comme limite de l'animalité symbolique," *Cahiers de littérature orale*, no. 22, pp. 57-69.
- _____. 1988. *Sous le signe de l'ours. Mythes et temporalité chez les Ojibwa septentrionaux*. Paris, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Feit, Harvey A. 1973. "The Ethno-Ecology of the Waswanipi Cree: Or How Hunters Can Manage Their Resources," in Cox, B. [ed.], *Cultural Ecology*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart Limited, pp. 115-125.
- _____. 1991. "The Construction of Algonquian Hunting Territories: Private Property as Moral Lesson, Policy Advocacy and Ethnographic Error," in Stocking, G. W. [ed.], *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press (History of Anthropology, Volume 7), pp. 109-134.
- _____. 1994. "The Enduring Pursuit: Land, Time, and Social Relationships in Anthropological Models of Hunter-Gatherers and in Hunters' Images," in Burch, E. S., Jr. And L. J. Ellanna [ed.], *Key Issues in Hunter-Gatherer Research*. Oxford, Berg Publishers, pp. 421-439.

- _____. In Press. "Hunting, Nature and Metaphor: Political and Discursive Strategies in James Bay Cree Resistance and Autonomy," in Grim, J. A. [ed.], *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 61 pp.
- Hallowell, A. Irving. 1955. *Culture and Experience*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- _____. 1976. *Contributions to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hallowell*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 1992. *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba*. Ed. by Jennifer S.H. Brown. Fort Worth, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Leacock, E.B. 1954. *The Montagnais Hunting Territory and the Fur Trade*. Washington, D.C., American Anthropological Association, Memoir 78.
- Preston, R. 1975. *Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meaning of Events*. Ottawa, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 30.
- Richardson, B. 1991 [1976]. *Strangers Devour the Land*. Toronto, Douglas & McIntyre.
- Speck, F. 1977 [1935]. *Naskapi*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.
- Scott, Colin H. 1989a. "Ideology of Reciprocity Between the James Bay Cree and Whiteman State," in Peter Skalnik [ed.], *Outwitting the State*. New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Publishers, pp. 81-108.
- _____. 1989b. "Knowledge Construction Among Cree Hunters: Metaphors and Literal Understanding," *Journal de la Société des américanistes*, no. 75, pp. 193-208.
- _____. 1996. "Science for the West, Myth for the Rest? The Case of James Bay Cree Knowledge Construction," in Nader, L. [ed.], *Naked Science*. New York, Routledge, pp. 69-86.
- Speck, F. 1977 (1935). *Naskapi*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.
- Tanner, A. 1979. *Bringing Home Animals*. London, Hurst.