

**“Experimenting with what will become our traditions”:  
Adaptive co-management as a bridge to an Atikamekw  
Nehirowisiw post-treaty world in Nitaskinan, Canada**

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October 2011

A thesis submitted to McGill University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines whether transitioning from current co-management approaches to an *adaptive* co-management approach would resolve some of the problems experienced in current treaty negotiations contexts between Canadian First Nations and the state government. It first identifies how adaptive co-management would be an improvement on existing treaty processes. Secondly, it examines how the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change can be addressed in an adaptive co-management process. Finally, the thesis identifies the preconditions needed in order to build organisations for adaptive treaties. The case of the Atikamekw First Nation (central Quebec, Canada) treaty negotiations serves as a case study to meet these research objectives.

Research results identify adaptive co-management as a suitable approach for creating treaties that are closer to First Nations' needs by focusing on learning and the on-going renewal of a people-to-people relationship. This approach departs from current static and bureaucratic models of treaty making, which concentrate on structural aspects of co-management and the extinguishment of Aboriginal rights. The research identifies adaptive co-management as a potential catalyst for the revitalization of Aboriginal cultures by reporting on the current transformation of the Atikamekw First Nation traditional institutions of governance in order to increase their participation in natural resource management decision-making processes. It also conveys that the Atikamekw aim towards having a decision-making system rooted in the past, with the territorial chief at its core, but yet future-oriented, not fixed in time, and departing from its original form, therefore highlighting the need for flexible and adaptive organisations for the co-management of the land.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse détermine si une approche de cogestion *adaptive* peut ou non résoudre quelques uns des problèmes actuellement rencontrés lors de négociations de traités entre premières nations du Canada et l'état. La thèse identifie dans un premier lieu la façon dont la cogestion adaptative présenterait une amélioration par rapport aux traités actuels. Deuxièmement, elle examine la façon dont la coexistence de différents systèmes de savoir et le changement culturel peuvent être pris en compte dans un processus de cogestion adaptative. Finalement, la thèse identifie les préconditions requises pour la mise sur pied d'organisations de cogestion dans un contexte de traité adaptatif. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, c'est le cas de la négociation territoriale de la nation atikamekw (Quebec, Canada) qui est étudié.

Les résultats de recherche indiquent que la cogestion adaptative est une approche appropriée afin d'en arriver à des traités qui sont plus près des besoins des premières nations en valorisant l'apprentissage en continu et le renouvellement continu d'une relation de peuple-à-peuple. Cette approche se distingue des modèles actuels de traités, qui tendent à être statiques et bureaucratiques, se concentrant sur les aspects structuraux de la cogestion et l'extinction des droits ancestraux. La recherche souligne qu'une approche adaptative de la cogestion a un potentiel de catalyseur pour la revitalisation des cultures autochtones. Ceci est illustré par le processus de transformation des institutions de gouvernance territoriale ayant présentement cours chez les Atikamekw. La thèse démontre que les Atikamekw désirent construire un système décisionnel ancré dans le passé, centré sur le chef de territoire et la famille, mais tourné vers l'avenir, évolutif et différent de sa forme originale.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this thesis is the latest chapter of an exciting journey that began almost ten years ago when I first started working for the Atikamekw Nation Council. I owe to my colleagues and to numerous members of the Atikamekw nation my discovery of the world of treaty negotiations, of which, I realized quickly, I knew so little. I also owe them my interest in the questions I explore in this thesis. I especially acknowledge the help and guidance of Thérèse Niquay, Jean-Paul Néashish, and Micheline Petiquay. I also thank Grand Chief Eva Ottawa for her support throughout. I am grateful for the contribution of Gérald Ottawa, with whom I directed interviews and workshops. The hours, days, and nights spent traveling on *Nitaskinan* with him allowed me not only to become more acquainted with the Atikamekw ancestral land, but also to develop a deeper understanding of the Atikamekw world through his insightful explanations and our rich conversations.

I am particularly grateful for the strong and constant support, counsel, challenging questioning, and encouragement Richard Boivin has provided me with over the years. This thesis would not have been possible without him.

I thank my academic committee, Garry Peterson, Sarah Turner, and George Wenzel, who were invaluable guides and councillors throughout the PhD process. I thank them for the insight and support they provided as I ventured into the unknown. They made me a better researcher and a better scholar.

Funding for the research was provided by a FQRSC doctoral fellowship, by McGill-based research funds, and by the Atikamekw Nation Council. I also acknowledge the contributions of Samuel Castonguay and of Salomé Awashish-Soucy for helping me put together the digital version of figures and maps presented in this thesis. I thank Sylvie Létourneau for guiding me through the

archives of the Nation Council, and Rachel Melzer for her editorial skills. I thank all those who took some time to discuss with me, during workshops, formal interviews, or in other moments, matters that were important to them. I hope their concerns are well presented here.

Finally, the doctoral journey would not have been possible without the continuous inspiration and support friends and family have provided me with. I think about Louis-Philippe, Nicole, Richard. I thank my parents, Lucie and Denis, and my sisters Marianne and Catherine, who have never failed to encourage and support me and never stopped believing in what I was doing. I thank my children, Zachary and Gabrielle, who may have slowed down the PhD process somewhat, but who have filled me with so much love and inspiration ever since they entered my life.

Above all, I owe so much to Rowena, who has had to put up with so much and yet has continued to support this endeavour. I thank her for being my best reader and my best editor, but also for being my best confidant and supporter. It would never have been possible to finish up this thesis without her love and encouragement. Thank you ever so much.

## REMERCIEMENTS

L'écriture de cette thèse a représenté le dernier chapitre d'une excitante aventure qui a débuté il y a maintenant presque dix ans, lorsque j'ai commencé à travailler pour le Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw. Je dois à mes collègues du CNA et à de nombreux membres de la nation atikamekw ma découverte du monde de la négociation territoriale, duquel, je me rendis rapidement compte, je connaissais si peu. Je dois aussi à ces personnes les questions que j'explore dans cette thèse. Je remercie spécialement Thérèse Niquay, Jean-Paul Néashish et Micheline Petiquay, qui ont été pour moi et depuis le début de patients guides. Je remercie également Grand Chef Eva Ottawa pour son soutien. Je suis reconnaissant de la contribution de Gérald Ottawa, avec qui j'ai dirigé entrevues et ateliers. Les heures, les jours et les soirées passés avec lui à voyager sur *Nitaskinan* m'ont permis non seulement de devenir plus familier avec le territoire ancestral atikamekw, mais également de développer une connaissance plus approfondie du monde des Atikamekw, à travers ses généreuses explications et par nos riches conversations.

Je remercie particulièrement Richard Boivin, mon éternel mentor, pour son soutien continu, ses conseils, ses remises en question et les encouragements qu'il m'a offerts au fil des ans. Cette thèse n'aurait jamais existé sans son soutien.

Je remercie les membres de mon comité académique, Garry Peterson, Sarah Turner et George Wenzel, qui ont été d'excellents guides et conseillers tout au long du processus doctoral. Je les remercie du support qu'ils m'ont offert alors que je m'aventurais dans l'inconnu. Ils ont fait de moi un meilleur chercheur et un meilleur universitaire.

Le financement de cette recherche a été rendu possible grâce à une bourse d'étude doctorale du FQRSC, des fonds de recherche de l'université McGill, ainsi que par

l'importante contribution du Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw. Je remercie également Samuel Castonguay et Salomé Awashish-Soucy pour m'avoir aidé à réaliser la version électronique de figures et des cartes présentées dans cette thèse. Je remercie Sylvie Létourneau, pour m'avoir guidé à travers les archives du CNA, et Rachel Melzer, pour ses talents de correctrice. Je remercie tous ceux qui ont pris un peu de temps pour discuter avec moi, en entrevues, en ateliers ou à d'autres moments, de choses qui leurs étaient importantes. J'espère que leurs contributions sont bien rapportées dans cette thèse.

Finalement, le parcours doctoral n'aurait pas été possible sans le continuel soutien et l'inspiration que les amis et la famille m'ont apportés ces dernières années. Je pense entre autres à Louis-Philippe, à Nicole, à Richard. Je remercie en particulier mes parents, Lucie et Denis, ainsi que mes sœurs, Catherine et Marianne, qui n'ont jamais manqué de m'encourager et d'avoir confiance en moi et en ce que je faisais. Je remercie mes enfants, Zachary et Gabrielle, qui auront peut-être ralenti un peu le processus, mais qui auront compensé largement par tout l'amour et l'inspiration dont ils m'ont rempli depuis qu'ils sont entrés dans ma vie.

Surtout, je dois énormément à Rowena, qui a eu à en endurer tellement et qui malgré tout a continué à soutenir ce projet. Je la remercie d'être ma meilleure lectrice et ma meilleure correctrice, mais aussi d'être ma meilleure confidente. Il n'aurait jamais été possible de finir ma thèse sans son amour et ses encouragements. Merci.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AAC:	Allowable Annual Cut
ACM:	Adaptive Co-Management
AFNQL:	Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador
AMAA:	<i>Association Mamo Atoskewin Atikamekw</i> A now-defunct Atikamekw trappers association
CAM:	<i>Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais</i> Attikamek-Montagnais Council, a tribal council that represented the Atikamekw and the Innus of Quebec in treaty negotiations from 1979 to 1992
CNA:	<i>Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw</i> Atikamekw Nation Council, a tribal council currently representing the Atikamekw in treaty negotiations with the state government. Also called <i>Atikamekw Sipi</i>
JBNQA:	James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement
SAT:	<i>Secrétariat au territoire</i> (Land Secretariat) A branch of <i>Atikamekw Sipi</i> concerned with land-related issues. Its aim is to produce, analyse and synthesise land-related information that could be important for the Nation and for the land claim process
TEK:	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TSFMA:	Timber Supply and Forest Management Agreement
ZEC:	<i>Zone d'exploitation contrôlée</i> : Controlled harvest zone

## GLOSSARY

Atikamekw Sipi:	Atikamekw Nation Council ( <i>Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw</i> )
Nehirowisiw:	Autonomous person, able to provide for his/her own needs and well-being, who has found his/her equilibrium
Nitaskinan:	Atikamekw ancestral land
Notcimik:	The forest. Can also mean “the place I am from”
Okimaw:	Chief of territory, person responsible for a family territory



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

My first trip to the community of Manawan (Quebec, Canada), a few months after I had started working for the Atikamekw Nation Council as a policy advisor in 2001, was for no particular tangible reason. My Atikamekw Nehirowisiw supervisor, with whom I was travelling, had told me I was “in training”. I had to go into the community to “have a sense of what it is like to be on a reservation”, to meet with people, and to listen to what they had to say. This kind of experience would happen several times in the months to follow. I would regularly travel hundreds of kilometers to hear stories people had to share.

These experiences made me increasingly upset. As I was navigating from public consultations to reservations, from clear-cut areas to Aboriginal hunting/fishing camps, I could not believe that even today, in a supposedly open and democratic society, many citizens could be marginalised in such a way. As a Masters student, I had used a pluralist, or multi-stakeholder, theoretical framework to make sense of environmental policy decisions. This approach views policy-making as balancing interests of different actors of the civil society, with the government acting as the umpire implementing policies reached through equilibrium (Houde 2001). After a few months with the Nation Council, I realised that this framework was completely inadequate to meet the needs of a marginalised Aboriginal society. I began to see that with the way laws, the policy-making processes, and the economic system are structured it is impossible for Atikamekw Nehirowisiw voices to be heard.

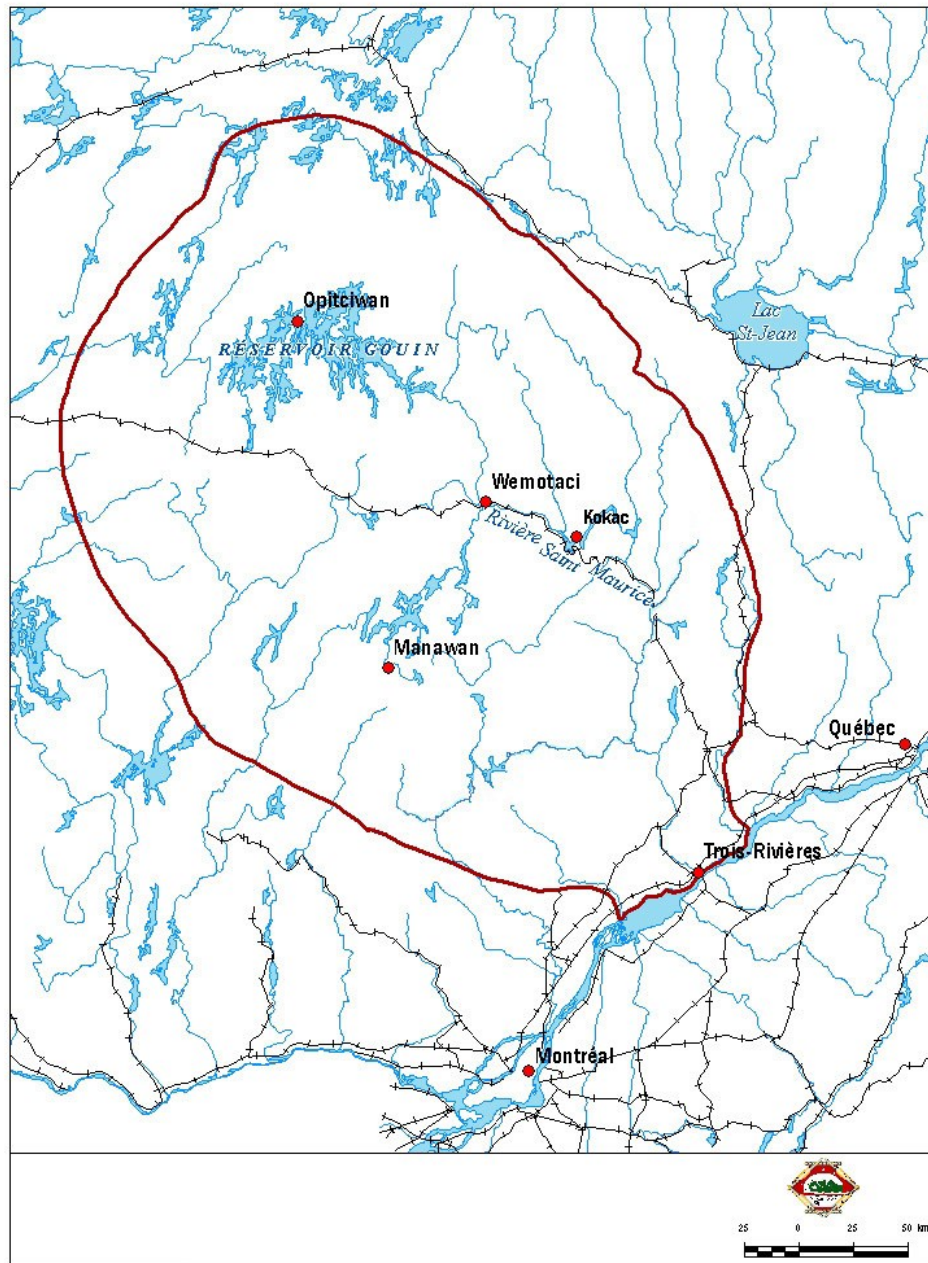
Since September 2001 I have been involved with the Atikamekw nation as a freelance consultant, working with their negotiation team in designing a co-

management arrangement regarding natural resources, mainly forestry products. It was an extraordinary learning experience that allowed me to discover a world I previously only had remote knowledge of. After a few years of experiencing the difficulties of treaty negotiations first-hand, I wanted to take a step back and reflect upon possible solutions that would make the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw negotiations move forward at a quicker pace. I therefore started the PhD research presented in this thesis with the hope of increasing effective Atikamekw Nehirowisiw participation in ecological management processes, and identifying means for improving environmental management as a whole for *Nitaskinan*, the ancestral land of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).



**Figure 1.1.** Eastern Canada and *Nitaskinan*

(Map data: CNA and Government of Canada)



**Figure 1.2.** *Nitaskinan* and the three Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities  
(Map data: CNA and Government of Canada)

## 1.2. ABORIGINAL CLAIMS AND CO-MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Years of colonisation policies have placed Canadian Aboriginals<sup>1</sup> at the margins of society, creating conditions through which they have lost access to the lands and been forced onto tiny reserves (see Chapter 2). Their ways of learning and thinking about the environment and natural resources have been marginalised, with the result that state governments have for years had monopoly on how things work with regards to resource management on their ancestral lands, working in the best interests of the majority non-Aboriginal populations and to the detriment of local Aboriginal populations, those most directly affected by resource policy and management decisions (see Chapter 2).

For more than 30 years now, the Atikamekw First Nation (central Quebec, Canada) has been actively involved in the negotiation, with federal Canadian and provincial Quebec governments, of a treaty that aims to change this situation and settle pending land claims. One goal of this negotiation, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw point of view, is to design co-management arrangements over natural resources that would allow the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to have greater control over the decisions taken concerning their ancestral land, *Nitaskinan*. Their objectives are that these co-management arrangements allow them to regain greater access to the land, and to gain fuller participation in resource management. They hope that this participation will happen in a way that accounts for their traditions and addresses the questions they want to address, and that it is a participation that is supported by their traditional ecological knowledge of the land.

This land claim process takes place against the backdrop of increased cultural identities and rights affirmation by Canadian First Nations in general (Charest 1992; Wyatt 2004). Gaining strength in the 1960s as a reaction to increased colonisation and economic activity taking place in northern Aboriginal homelands

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.8. for an explanation on the terminology being used throughout the thesis.

but regulated by non-Aboriginal outside forces, First Nations' political and legal activism sought to have Aboriginal land rights recognised (Cassidy 1992; Dupuis 2001; Rodon 2003). Ensuing court decisions meant that the existence of Aboriginal titles and rights were increasingly recognised across the country. Since then, court decisions have transformed and continue to transform the way in which resource management is undertaken in various Canadian provinces (Coates 1992). They have reshaped the relationship between the state and Aboriginals with regards to the sharing of land access, resource wealth, and policy and management decisions, as state governments (federal and provincial) have tried to make more room for Aboriginal participation in the decision-making processes concerning the land in recent years (Rodon 2003). However, current approaches to participation are still insufficient from the perspective of Aboriginal peoples (e.g. CNA 2004).

### **1.3. APPROACHES TO CO-MANAGEMENT**

A review of the last two decades of co-management research and practice worldwide reveals that centralized, bureaucratic resource management systems have been criticized for leading to ecological collapses and for failing to improve people's lives (Agrawal 1995, 2003, Holling and Meffe 1996, Scott 1998, Schelhas et al. 2001). Consequently, attention has started to focus on collaborative processes, which are viewed by many as able: to enhance the robustness of ecological management decisions by gaining access to systems of knowledge and management practices that are better attuned to local specifics (Berkes 1998; Pálsson 1998); to increase the efficiency of decision implementation by involving people that are directly affected by the decisions in activities such as monitoring (Kearney 1989; Pinkerton 1989; Hanna 1998; Sheppard and Meitner 2005); and to increase equity in the decision-making process by moving away from management models that are controlled by a central state that is remote from the needs of local people and from regional and cultural specificities (McCay 1996; Persoon and van Est 2003; Pagdee et al. 2006).

These collaborative processes have turned into co-management arrangements. These “broadly refer to the sharing of power and responsibility between government and local resource users, [this being achieved through] various levels of integration of local and state level management systems” (Notzke 1995a:187). Through such rearrangement of decision-making processes, Canadian First Nations not only seek greater control over land and resources, but aim for processes that will lead to management decisions that are closer to their values and worldviews, reflecting a wider extent the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that they possess of the land.

A review of co-management research and practice allows for the characterisation of co-management models according to three broad approaches. Firstly, there exists a community-based approach, or one of local development, that finds its origin in the field of common-pool resources management, particularly fisheries management (Pinkerton 1989; Agrawal 2003). Co-management, through the involvement of fishers in the allocation of quotas or monitoring activities, is seen as a way to achieve a better management of fish stocks, compared to relying solely on science-based quantitative models. The goal is for a wider participation of local populations in the management of their immediate surroundings, as well as insights from different angles for modelling and quota-setting purposes. However, in this approach, the central government often remains the central and leading player (Pagdee et al. 2006).

The second approach is the pluralist, or multi-stakeholder, approach. It aims at considering the multiplicity of viewpoints on issues at stake by seeking to involve various actors of civil society. Within this approach, central governments responsible for natural resource management create room for discussion with interest groups, in order that different points of view about management objectives and procedures can be expressed. In a pluralist framework, a government listens to the different interest groups’ arguments, but retains the final decision concerning the way in which resources are managed. From this

perspective, the government (the ultimate decision-maker and enforcer) is not an active entity so much as a sort of arena where competing groups meet and bargain (Howlett and Ramesh 1995). To advocate for such an approach is to work towards the creation of forums where every interest group can benefit from a safe space for discussion, or at least a place where opinions may be expressed. This is often done through public consultations. In Quebec, the province in which the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw land is located, it is this approach that tends to be used in forestry (the main industry that takes place on the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ancestral land) through the many public consultation processes.

The pluralist framework brings about three fundamental problems for First Nations. Firstly, the structure itself of processes such as multi-stakeholder roundtable discussions limits the opportunity for participants to discuss issues that are not part of what the government wants to discuss. Often, issues discussed are framed as technical questions and participants feel that political or strategic questions, which could be critical for them, are left out (CAM 1979; Braun 2002; Dionne 2005). Discussions are pre-formatted in such a way that it is impossible to discuss items not put on the agenda by government bureaucrats. Forums are therefore often perceived as simply rubber-stamping already-made decisions. Peterson (2000:334) has argued that this approach is a way for the state to maintain control over important strategic issues by nurturing “the ability of the institutions of a society to restrict the set of issues about which people think they can make decisions”. This is particularly true for Aboriginals wanting, for instance, to discuss property rights or the transformation of their way of life through increased human intervention on the land.

Secondly, most of the time the language authorised in these forums is the language of science, making it difficult for people to use alternative knowledge systems to put their points across (e.g. Braun 2002; Nadasdy 2003a). Finally, the context of pluralist policy-making is problematic for frustrated First Nation organisations having not only to comply with the authorised language and format

of the debate, but also having to share the stage with ‘interest groups’ (Peters 1992, 1999; NAFA 1995; Cruikshank 1998; Nadasdy 2003a; CNA 2004).

To Aboriginals, it is disrespectful of their ancestral rights, and disrespectful of the political institutions that have the mandate to represent them, to include First Nations organisations in the same set as interest groups such as forest companies or environmental coalitions. As Aboriginal organisations (e.g. CNA 2004) often consider natural resources management decisions as political decisions, not technical ones, they want to be involved at a higher level in the decision-making process, where they would not be considered “just another stakeholder” (NAFA 1995:1), along with environmental activists, outfitters, or forest companies. It is therefore to make up for the weaknesses (from the First Nations’ point of view) of the pluralist approach that a third approach is being proposed: a ‘government-to-government’ approach in which an Aboriginal government representing its population is fully involved in a decision-making process with a non-Aboriginal government. This approach necessitates that the two governments agree, as equal partners, on the way that each of the parties will be implicated in decision-making processes concerning the land.

So far, the now-30 years old Atikamekw Nehirowisiw-government negotiation process, seeking, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw point-of-view, a government-to-government approach, has resulted in a deadlock. As shall be discussed in this thesis, current treaty or ‘government-to-government’ models of co-management have their problems. Bureaucracies emerging from treaty processes cannot always accommodate traditional decision-making systems, and traditional knowledge and co-management arrangements may still be perceived as the “white man’s institutions ran by white man’s rule” (Berkes 1989:195). Some authors have pointed to problems of implementation (e.g. Peters 1992; Miller 2009). Once the treaty is signed, it is argued that central governments generally consider negotiations with First Nations to be over, ancestral rights having been addressed. As a result, state governments eschew involvement in the implementation of



agreements or in updating their content when limitations are discovered. First Nations have pointed out that the state views a treaty as the end of the land-claim process, under-investing in making the arrangement work in the long run.

These situations limit the ability of emerging co-management organisations to respond to changing social and environmental conditions, “an anachronism in a world increasingly characterized by rapid transformations” (Armitage et al. 2007:1). It also limits the ability of participants to reconcile world views and increase trust.

#### **1.4. A NOVEL APPROACH: ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT**

Recent research in ecology and environmental management points towards a new approach to environmental management that would address problems associated with top-down, command-and-control approaches and approaches characterized by cumbersome and static bureaucratic processes, as tends to be the case with several current treaties in Canada. This new approach is that of adaptive co-management. Adaptive co-management is a flexible management process allowing participating partners to test, revise, and enhance their knowledge about the environment and about each other through practice. Dynamic learning and active experimentation are at the core of the process, and allow for on-going testing and revision of institutional arrangements, environmental management methods, and environmental policies. Within this approach, co-management is therefore an experiment and innovation (Olsson et al. 2004; Berkes 2007).

#### **1.5. AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw negotiations have to date been slow to progress due to different reasons I will explore in this thesis. The aim of the research presented here is to take a fresher look at the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty process in order to see how some of the deadlocks that have thus far slowed down the process can be broken in order to achieve a satisfactory treaty for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. More specifically, I examine if transitioning from current co-

management approaches to an *adaptive co-management* approach would resolve some of the problems experienced in current treaty negotiations contexts. The case of the Atikamekw First Nation treaty negotiations will serve to achieve this goal.

## **1.6. THESIS OBJECTIVES**

The thesis fulfills three objectives. It aims:

- 1) To identify how adaptive co-management (ACM) is an improvement (or not) on existing treaties between Canadian First Nations and the state government.

In order to meet the first objective, three questions will be answered:

- a) How can an adaptive approach to co-management and treaty-making break deadlocks in negotiations on land resources between Aboriginal and state governments?
  - b) How is success defined by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok?
  - c) In what ways is ACM different to other environmental co-management approaches?
- 2) To examine how the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change can be addressed in an adaptive co-management process between First Nations and the state.
  - 3) To identify what preconditions would need to be met in order to build organisations for adaptive treaties in Canada.

## **1.7. ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS**

In Chapter 2, I introduce the processes that have led Aboriginals to be excluded from decision-making processes regarding the environment in Canada, and also introduce the context in which current claims, treaties, and co-management arrangements are being negotiated. The chapter also highlights limits to the current Canadian treaty system, and identifies and introduces adaptive co-management as a possible, and more flexible, model of co-management arrangement between Canadian First Nations and the Canadian government.

Chapter 3 provides a definition of the adaptive co-management (ACM) approach and identifies the three adaptive components of ACM currently reported in the literature. It is adaptive co-management as defined in this chapter that serves as the theoretical framework for my thesis.

Through the negotiation of co-management arrangements, First Nations not only seek greater control over land and resources, but aim for processes that will lead to management decisions that are closer to their values and worldviews, reflecting to a wider extent the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that they possess of the land. In Chapter 4, I therefore provide a theoretical definition of what TEK is. It is the framework outlined in Chapter 4 that will help make sense of what roles the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok see for their traditional knowledge of the land and their traditional decision-making institutions.

Chapter 5 presents a detailed account of the methods used in the study of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw case, whereas the goal of Chapter 6 is to assess what aspirations today's Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have for the land. It identifies the results the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people want to reach concerning the land in terms of activities on the land and landscape features they want to keep or change. Chapter 6 will partly address my thesis objective #1 by identifying how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define success in terms of goals achieved in land-related issues.

Chapter 7 also partly addresses thesis objective #1 by identifying how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define success in terms of institution-building. It also partly addresses thesis objective #2 by examining how the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change can be addressed in an adaptive co-management process, in the particular context of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty negotiations. Finally, this chapter makes connections with the adaptive co-management approach to better understand how this framework could help in resolving deadlocks and build Atikamekw Nehirowisiw institutions of governance.

In Chapter 8, I examine the overlap that exists between the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs and what ACM has to offer. I provide a framework outlining the preconditions that would have to be met for adaptive co-management to be used in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context (thesis objective #3). I finally reflect back on the criticisms of the adaptive co-management approach identified in Chapter 3, and at the gaps in ACM theory that could be identified through my research, and point to improvements that could benefit the general ACM approach.

Finally, Chapter 9 provides a synthesis of the thesis by recapitulating the questions that have been answered by my work.

## **1.8. NOTE ON LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY**

This thesis was written in English, but as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok speak among themselves in their own language and relate to outsiders in French, most of the archive material used in the research was in French and all of the interviews and workshops were conducted either in French or Atikamekw. Consequently, I often translate quotes into English. All quote translations are my own, and I bear the sole responsibility for any inaccuracies or mistakes in the translated text.

I often use French or Atikamekw terms in the text, for example when I refer to names of organisations. In such cases, italics are used. Atikamekw words referring to the land, traditional practices, or the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture are often left in their original form, as they could be difficult to translate into either French or English.

The ethnonym ‘Atikamekw’, meaning ‘whitefish’ (*Coregonus clupeaformis*), has been commonly used since the 1970s (McNulty and Gilbert 1981). Before the 1970s, the Atikamekw were better known to non-Aboriginals as the ‘Têtes de Boules’ (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; Gélinas 1996, 2002). The Aboriginals occupying the Upper Saint-Maurice River region were referred to as the ‘Attikamègues’ in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Wyatt 2004). The ethnonym *Nehirowisiw* (plural: *Nehirowisiwok*) has been claimed by the Atikamekw since “time immemorial” and in 2006, the Atikamekw Nation Council (*Atikamekw Sipi*) officially adopted the term *Atikamekw Nehirowisiw* through a resolution in order to designate themselves (Jérôme 2008:52). However, the term *Atikamekw Nehirowisiw* is unevenly used by the Atikamekw people and in Atikamekw publications. Throughout this thesis, I will use the term ‘Atikamekw Nehirowisiw’.

In the Atikamekw language, the word ‘Atikamekw’ can be used as both adjective and noun and the plural form does not take an ‘s’ (Wyatt 2004). In French, the spelling suggested by the *Office québécois de la langue française* is ‘Attikamek’ and an ‘s’ is added for the plural form (OQLF 2004). In this thesis, I will use the Atikamekw spelling for all Atikamekw words. Also, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw interview participants usually employ the word ‘*Québécois*’ to refer to non-Aboriginal persons from Quebec. I will thus use the word ‘*Québécois*’ to designate the inhabitants of the province of Quebec.

In this thesis, I use the terms ‘First Nation(s)’, ‘Aboriginal(s)’, or ‘Indigenous’ to refer to the descendents of people who already populated North America when the

Europeans started colonizing the continent. Some other terms, such as ‘Native’ or ‘Indian’ may be used at times in quotes. I will expand more on the definitions and use of these terms, none of which I use pejoratively, in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ABORIGINAL CLAIMS AND CO-MANAGEMENT IN CANADA**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

There are currently more than 600 specific and comprehensive Aboriginal claims being negotiated in Canada (INAC 2010b). These claims, along with past settlements (e.g. James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement) and other bilateral co-management agreements between First Nations and the Canadian state government, have transformed and continue to transform the way in which environmental policy and management is conducted throughout Canada.

The overall aim of this chapter is to introduce the processes that have led to these claims negotiations, and to introduce the context in which current claims and co-management arrangements are being negotiated. This chapter will first explore the processes that have led Aboriginals to be excluded from decision-making processes regarding the environment. Secondly, it will introduce the means and strategies by which Aboriginals are able to reclaim a lost geography and regain a meaningful role in decisions that are made about their homelands. The final section of the chapter highlights limits to the current treaty system, and identifies and introduces adaptive co-management as a possible, and more flexible, model of co-management arrangement between Canadian First Nations and the Canadian government.

#### **2.2. WHO ARE THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES?**

Throughout the thesis, I use the term ‘Aboriginal’ to designate the “existing descendants of those who are commonly thought to be the original inhabitants of a territory” (Fleras and Elliott 1992:1). The United Nations has not adopted an official definition of Aboriginals or Indigenous peoples, leaving it to Aboriginal

groups themselves to define what and who is Aboriginal (United Nations Development Group 2008). However, the work leading up to the adoption of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was guided largely by the work of José Martínez Cobo, the special rapporteur to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights who in the 1980s penned a report on the problems of discrimination against Indigenous populations worldwide. The report suggested that:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sections of the societies now prevailing in these territories (Martínez Cobo 1983:50)

From that perspective, then, ‘Indigenous’ is not only a biological concept, but a sociological concept as well. Aboriginals are the descendants of the original inhabitants of a place, and they also “occupy an encapsulated status as subordinate members of a larger society (and) continue to identify with a cultural lifestyle at odds with that of the dominant sector” (Fleras and Elliott 1992:1). Therefore, on an individual basis, an Aboriginal or Indigenous person is one who identifies as belonging to an Aboriginal group and who is accepted by the group. Contemporary Aboriginal sense of belonging, and identity, can be linked in part to discriminatory policies, histories of state-sponsored genocide, or forced settlement. The 2006 Canadian census recorded more than one million people who self-identify as ‘Aboriginal’ (INAC 2010a).

For the Canadian state, however, self-identification is not enough to be legally considered ‘Aboriginal’ and culture is not part of the equation. Historically, the state has created categories in order to relate with the descendants of those who were already in North America when the Europeans arrived. Indeed, the 1982 *Constitution Act* refers to three categories of Aboriginals: ‘Indians’ ‘Inuit’, and ‘Métis’ (Dupuis 1985).



Only people recorded on the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs registry as ‘Indians’, also known as ‘status Indians’ – or as Métis or Inuit – are clearly recognized by the federal government. According to the *Indian Act*, ‘Indian’ means a person who “pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian”. This status does not therefore cover everyone who self-identifies as Aboriginal or who has Aboriginal ancestry. The recording of ‘Indians’ by the government started in the 1850s although the registry itself was created in 1951 (INAC 2003). Today, the individuals who find themselves on the list are the descendants of the Aboriginals who were part of the original list. As of 2010, there are 763, 555 ‘Status Indians’, around half of whom live in cities (INAC 2010a).

The term ‘Non Status Indians’ came to identify those Aboriginals, or their descendants, who were ‘forgotten’ during the making of the original register, those who lost their right to be registered under the *Indian Act* by being ‘emancipated’ voluntarily or forcibly (Boldt et al. 1985), as well as women who, until 1985, had married ‘non-Indian’ men and had lost their status by doing so (INAC 2003). Since 1985, following a major overhaul of the registration system, women who have married out and descendants of individuals who had been left off of the original registry can have their names returned or added to the list, after proving Aboriginal ancestry. ‘Non Status Indians’ may also belong to groups that were never recognised by the government as Aboriginals.

Although this Indian registration process creates rigid categories and can be remote from a self-identification process that would be much more fluid in deciding who is Aboriginal and who is not, Aboriginal communities themselves can embrace essentialised identities for strategic purposes (Gehl 2003). To be registered as ‘Indian’ thus gives a person special status and allows for a special relationship with the government. As it has become clearer throughout the years that Aboriginals have rights to participate in resource management decisions in ways that are different to the general public, it has become critical for the

Aboriginals concerned to be clearly recognised as ‘Indians’. It is when a group is recognised as ‘Indians’ that it can intervene in a different way in resource management and can eventually embark in land claims negotiations with the government. In Canada, ‘Indians’ are considered the legitimate Aboriginal partners in resource management, a status protected by the Constitution since 1982.

Apart from defining who is Aboriginal and who is not, the Canadian policy towards Aboriginals also transformed Aboriginal governance, starting in 1869 with the *Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians*, which authorised the government “to decree that the chiefs of any tribe, band or body of Aboriginals would be elected by the male members of the community under the supervision of federal authorities” (Otis 2006:219). This law and the following updated versions of the *Indian Act* imposed a transition on Aboriginal communities from traditional systems of governance to an elective system that resembles that of the Canadian state, mimicking its political apparatus and its administration (Poirier 2010).

Elected chiefs and band councils became synonymous with local government, the government of the reserve. The system was modeled “on the Westminster one-round, first-past-the-post system, and was a key feature of the strategy to assimilate Aboriginals to the majority culture” (Otis 2006:219). The imposition of the band government was done gradually, as Aboriginals became ‘sophisticated’ enough to adopt the electoral system. The overall objective of this policy was to prepare Aboriginals for being Canadian citizens, enfranchised from their Indian status and fully integrated into the mainstream society.

Today there are 615 band governments, providing services to the population in the way that municipalities would (police, road work, economic development), plus having jurisdiction over files such as education or social services. Most of the band council budget is provided by the federal government and the band government is often – as is the case for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok – the main

employer on reserves (Morissette 2007). Band councils' decision-making powers are confined to the limits of the reserve, so they are often cut off from the benefits of resource exploitation happening around the reserves, a situation that has restricted First Nations' economic independence. Band councils do, however, often invest in joint ventures in the area of natural resource extraction.

Band councils were originally modeled after non-Aboriginal institutions, but today, Aboriginals have the option of re-integrating some elements of tradition into bands' electoral codes, as is the case in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw community of Manawan (Morissette 2007). Throughout Canada in 1971, over seventy per cent of bands elected their council in compliance with the methods suggested in the *Indian Act*, whereas in 2006, only fifty per cent of the communities did so, while others instead integrated some element of tradition (Otis 2006).

Since the band government is the body of local government recognised and sanctioned by the state government, it acts as the official link between resource extraction companies or regional bureaucrats and the Aboriginal population during consultations concerning natural resource management. Formerly, of course, the scope of decision-making powers of Aboriginal governments (pre-band system) extended beyond the confines of today's reserves, and into the expanse of the ancestral land. There is a large disparity between the size of reserves and the size of claimed ancestral lands (see Figure 2.1). It is an increased influence upon these ancestral lands, beyond the reserve, that several Aboriginal bands today seek to obtain through co-management arrangements.



**Figure 2.1.** An example of the discrepancy in area size between a reserve and an ancestral land (Aseniwuche Winewak Nation 2010)

In section 2.7, I will identify the options available to today's Aboriginals in order to increase their influence on ancestral lands beyond reserves. Firstly, however, I will turn in the next section to a review of the processes that led Aboriginals to be confined to reserves in the first place.

### **2.3. ALLIANCES, DISPOSSESSION, AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS**

In order to understand the evolution of the relationship between the Aboriginals and the Canadian state, it is useful to divide Canadian history into three broad periods. The period spanning from first contact between Aboriginals and European newcomers up until 1815 was a period of alliances between peoples. The end of the War of 1812 brought about the end of this period of alliances and marked the start of a period during which the Canadian state adopted different strategies to marginalise and assimilate Aboriginals into the increasing non-

Aboriginal population. This historical stage involved displacement and assimilation (Brant Castellano 1999). This period lasted until 1969, the year when the Canadian government presented a *White paper* aimed at completely assimilating Aboriginals into mainstream society. Finally, since 1969, we find ourselves in a period of renewed Aboriginal political activism where new partnerships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals are needed and sought for.

### 2.3.1. *Alliances*

When the French and the British first settled in North America, they needed to create economic alliances with those who could be guides to the land, allow them to use existing trade networks, and provide labour. Europeans found pre-existing trade networks into which they fit themselves (Miller 2009). Consequently, numerous commercial agreements emerged in the early days of the French and the British colonisation (Miller 2009).

Also, since the Europeans were overwhelmingly outnumbered at first by Aboriginals, it was difficult to effectively exercise control over the land and people. To survive, “imperial powers were (...) obliged to maintain extensive sets of diplomatic relations with native American peoples, to enter alliances, sign treaties, and exchange gifts” (Slattery 1985:115). Aboriginals thus became economic and military allies to the French or the British. From contact until 1763, the French and the British were involved in a few wars that took place in part in North America. These wars were followed by the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 between Great Britain and the United States (1812-1815). Throughout all of these wars, parties involved needed Aboriginal allies (Rodon 2003).

During these years, as Aboriginals were ‘allies’ of the King and not mere ‘subjects’ (Miller 2009), they paid no taxes to the Crown nor were they subject to European laws. The *Act for the Capitulation of Montreal* (1760) and the subsequent *Royal Proclamation* (1763) that would re-organise North America

following the end of the Seven Years' War made sure that the Aboriginals would continue to enjoy the freedom they had before. Aboriginals were not militarily conquered; the French were. Consequently, the *Proclamation* framed the British Crown as the protector of its 'allies'. The British still needed, at that time, military allies.

The *Royal Proclamation* came to be the "single most important document in the long history of Canadian treaty making" between the Crown and the Aboriginals (Miller 2004:117). The first reason for this was because it framed Aboriginals as allies, not subjects. It also became important because it declared that all lands not included within the limits of existing British colonies, such as the Province of Quebec created by the *Proclamation* (see Figure 2.2), would be reserved "under Our Sovereignty, Protection and Dominion, for the use of the said Indians" (quoted in Rodon 2003:57). The consequence of this statement was that those territories, falling outside existing colonies, could thus only be colonised after having been purchased by the British Crown, who was the only authorised entity to conduct such transactions. The still favourable balance of power held in those days by Aboriginals resulted in Britain not being able to assert outright power over North America, and having to portray Aboriginals as allies in the *Proclamation*.

This exclusivity of negotiation held by the British Crown came from an agreement between European powers – not necessarily recognised by local populations. 'Discovering' new lands gave the discovering European power sovereignty on 'discovered' lands and exclusive rights to negotiate land titles with the 'discovered' Aboriginal populations (Slattery 1985; Dupuis 2001). Therefore, the British Crown and its successors in North America, Canada and the United States, "asserted exclusive rights to maintain relations with the Aboriginal peoples (...) to conclude treaties, to secure suzerainty over them and obtain cessions of their lands" (Slattery 2000:13). This right of exclusive negotiation was transferred from France to Britain in 1763. This is why today the federal government has fiduciary

obligations towards Aboriginals (an obligation to protect Aboriginals), as well as constitutionally approved jurisdiction over ‘Indian affairs’ and reserved land (Dupuis 1985).



**Figure 2.2.** Eastern North America following the *Royal Proclamation* of 1763  
(Canadiana.org n.d.)

The existence of a land reserved “for the use of the said Indians” was thus recognition of an existing title that had to be cleared before pursuing colonial settlement in new areas. “In brief, the *Proclamation* recognised that lands possessed by Indians throughout British territories in America were reserved for their exclusive use unless previously ceded to the Crown” (Slattery 1985:122).

Following the *Proclamation*, the Crown entered into treaty making to make room for new colonials. As British immigration picked up after the British conquest of North America, new land was needed for newcomers and Aboriginal titles to the land were to be extinguished through treaties in order to make room for these newcomers.

A land cession made through treaty had to be a public process supervised by the Crown. It also had to be done with Aboriginal consent (Slattery 1985). This public and consensual process was set up in order to fight what has been labelled as the “deed game” through which private frontier entrepreneurs could dispossess Aboriginal groups by fraudulently obtaining a deed of sale from an individual or an unrepresentative group of Aboriginals, often through bribes and without the explicit consent of the Crown (Miller 2004:119). From then onwards, only the Crown could legally purchase land from Aboriginals, thereby extinguishing their title. Consequently, reserved land (not surrendered) is therefore inalienable. It cannot be sold, subdivided, or given to anyone else but the Crown. This status persists today, with modern-day reserves being inalienable.

With the *Royal Proclamation* creating the Province of Quebec (see Figure 2.2), it was presumed for a long time that Aboriginal title within Quebec had been extinguished (Slattery 1985). That is why the Quebec government did not pursue the process of signing treaties for so long. This attitude was reversed by the courts in the early 1970s through the *Calder* case and the Malouf decision (see section 2.3.6).

The end of the 1812-1815 war changed things for Aboriginals. As stability and durable peace was coming to North America, the United States and the British Empire no longer had need for military allies. As alliances were based on necessity, not on recognition of Aboriginal nations by the Europeans, alliances ceded way to a relationship of domination (Rodon 2003).



### 2.3.2. *Dispossession and assimilation*

The focus thus shifted from building alliances to settling and developing the territory within a European framework. Starting after the War of 1812, there was a bump in immigration and more space was needed for newcomers, especially in Ontario. The project of colonisation required, as mentioned before, that First Nations living in areas targeted for settlement be dispossessed of their land titles.

Dispossession was legitimised by the assumption that First Nation cultures were inferior to European laws and cultures (Goulet 2010; Harris 2008). Europeans were civilised, and the Aboriginals were savages. For Europeans, Aboriginal use of the land was not productive enough. The European norm of reference was denser settlement and more intensive farming. Consequently, replacing savagery with civilisation and European methods and usage of the land was a normal process and was even a moral imperative (Harris 2008). Europeans thus positioned themselves as judges, assigning the relative hierarchy of stages of human development. This was a taken-for-granted position throughout the dispossession/assimilation period, the main instrument for dispossession being treaties, and the main instrument of assimilation being the *Indian Act*. The logical process, from that perspective, was first to isolate culturally inferior Aboriginals through the creation of reserves, where they would be disconnected from the bad influences of the outside world. Secondly, once isolated, they could be better prepared for assimilation into the larger, more ‘advanced’, Canadian society (Rodon 2003; Boldt et al. 1985). This was done by providing Aboriginals with local governments and administrations along the lines of the colonial ones and by schooling them through a network of residential schools. “It was assumed that the social and economic advancement of Indians, a necessary requisite for assimilation, could be best achieved in an insulated environment under the tutelage of the federal government” (Boldt et al. 1985:5). From the “Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under our Protection” (*Royal Proclamation* (1763) quoted in Maton 1996), Aboriginals in the post-1815 period became instead pupils of the state.

Starting in 1876, the *Indian Act* gave the federal agents near-absolute power in all aspects of Aboriginal life. Federal agents could forcibly enfranchise ‘Indians’, thereby ripping from them their Aboriginal identity. They could approve or disapprove of band elections, disallow any by-law passed by the council, demote a chief, require Aboriginals to ask for permission to leave the reserve, and so on.

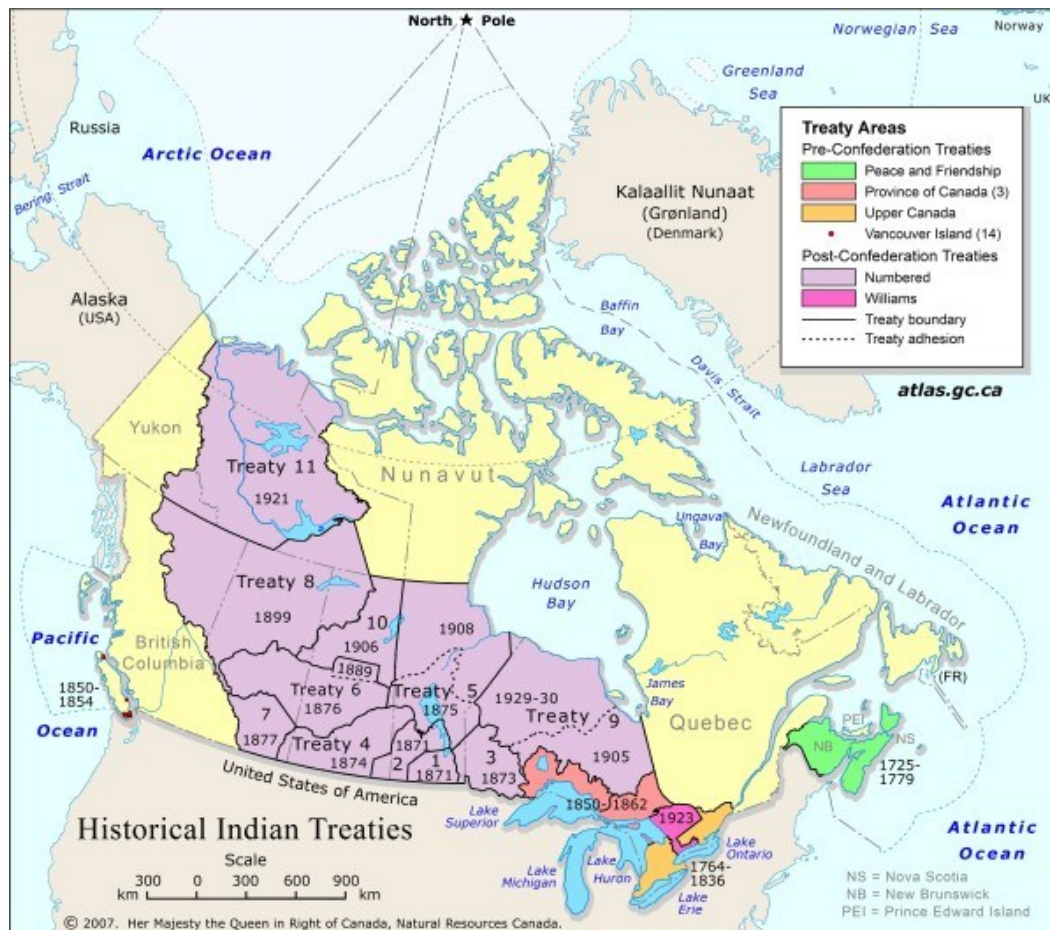
With the creation of reserves also came the concepts of wilderness, empty spaces, and public land, free for resource ‘development’. Following the creation of reserves, the remainder of the land became both on maps and in people’s minds an empty territory, underused, ready for a government to take charge of, and to develop according to the now-dominating norms (Blunt and Rose 1994; Brealey 1995; Braun 1997, 2000, 2002; Harris 2002; Baldwin 2004; Desbiens 2004a). These lands became ‘Crown land’, or ‘public land’, and the state, representing the public interest, then became the owner and manager of its resources. Vested with the role of representing the public’s interest in public land, the state could now impose a standard way of discussing land issues, including forestry issues. Even now, it is often the state that determines which forestry questions it is possible to discuss during consultations on forest policy (Braun 2002). This is why Aboriginals today struggle to discuss questions that are not identified as relevant in the first place by the government. This control by the state often makes it impossible to seriously discuss some of the concerns Aboriginals have regarding the land. The result is that today, local Aboriginal governments have a hard time meaningfully intervening outside reserves, even if the population they represent have been granted land-related rights outside the reserve through historical treaties (see section 2.3.3) or if their title has in fact not been extinguished outside reserves (see section 2.3.6).

### *2.3.3. Historical treaties*

As mentioned earlier, starting in 1763, treaties had to be negotiated in order to release land from any Aboriginal title and allow for its colonisation and resource

development. Room was needed to accommodate increasingly numerous British immigrants and Loyalists who fought in the American War of Independence and moved to Canada in its aftermath (Fortin and Frenette 1989). Today, the treaties signed between 1764 and 1921 are called ‘historical treaties’. They demanded that Aboriginal peoples concerned “cede, release, and surrender” their lands, and this action, from the Crown’s point of view, extinguished Aboriginal title to large areas of land and legally secured Canadian sovereignty (Blackburn 2007). As the colonisation frontier was moving westward, treaties were signed with the inhabitants of the desired land. The strategy of treaty making for land cession continued unabated following the *British North America Act* that created the Canadian confederation in 1867. Historical treaties that were negotiated between 1763 and 1921 cover most of the country, with the exception of what are now Nunavut, Labrador, Quebec, and the majority of British Columbia and the Yukon (see Figure 2.3).

While it varies from case to case, land cession was generally obtained in exchange for small reserves, rights to hunt and fish, medical and financial assistance, and education. The sums of money given in compensation were usually relative to the size of the Aboriginal population of the concerned area (Miller 2009) and reserved land was established through a per capita system based on what European settlers would need to sustain a family farm. Reserves were often established around trading posts or old missions, as is the case with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw reserves (Gélinas 2002).



**Figure 2.3.** Historical treaties (NRC 2007)

For the Crown, treaties were mostly a document used to extinguish Aboriginal land titles, while whereas First Nations may have had a different perception of what the treaties were. This discrepancy became evident during the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in the early 1990s. For First Nations, embedded in historical treaties is the idea of reciprocity in treaties (Brant Castellano 1999). Treaties are not contracts about land transactions, but covenants that need to be continuously renewed and reaffirmed. “Aboriginal peoples did not think that they were ceding their title, but rather entered into treaties as sacred instruments to protect their rights and establish a nation-to-nation relationship with Canada” (Blackburn 2007:623). Aboriginals generally refer to ‘the intent and

spirit' of the treaties when they affirm, like the Alberta chiefs did in *Citizens Plus* in 1970, that treaties are evolving instruments built on a long-term relationship of reciprocity, and that it is this intent and this spirit that should guide a treaty relationship, not its letter:

The intent and spirit of the treaties must be our guide, not the precise letter of a foreign language. Treaties that run forever must have room for the changes in the condition of life (Indian Association of Alberta c.1970)

Over the years there has been a lot of disappointment on the part of the Aboriginals as a result of differing perceptions.

#### 2.3.4. 1921-1969

From 1921 to 1970, the federal government refused to negotiate any new treaty (Alcantara 2007a, 2007b). "The reason for cessation of treaty making was simple: the federal government was uninterested in First Nations' lands unless and until non-Natives showed an interest in them" (Miller 2004:146). Due to the fact that after 1921 there was no immediate need for more resources or new land for settlement, treaty making stopped. Also, the assumption at that time was that Aboriginals as a cultural group were simply going to die out (Miller 2004) and assimilate in the more 'advanced' society. It was therefore not economically justifiable to enter costly treaty negotiations with people who were likely to disappear.

The focus therefore shifted towards definitively assimilating Aboriginals into the mainstream of Canadian society (Alcantara 2007b). Different assimilation strategies were pursued. Residential schools, reserves, and emancipation clauses of the *Indian Act* all contributed to 'raising' Aboriginals from their status as pupils of the state into educated citizens. Emancipation clauses were introduced in 1927 in the *Indian Act* "to permit the government to use involuntary enfranchisement to strip *status Indians* of their distinctive standing as 'Indians' in the Canadian law" (Miller 2004:149). When status Indians were 'emancipated', they were given their per capita 'share' of the reserve, little by little diminishing the size of the reserve

until everyone was emancipated and the reserves, as well as Indians, would disappear (Miller 2009).

Another strategy used by the government to accelerate assimilation was to make it impossible for First Nations to raise funds for court challenges or land claims. That effectively forbade the creation of Aboriginal organisations and the possibility for them to seek professional counsel. This prohibition on fundraising lasted from 1927 to 1951 (Dupuis 2001).

This assimilation approach culminated in 1969 with the liberal government of Canada penning its *White paper*. The policy proposal aimed to eliminate Aboriginal peoples as identifiable nations, make them “citizens like any other” (Brant Castellano 1999:95). It proposed an abrogation of the *Indian Act*. The reaction was strong. The Indian Association of Alberta presented, in 1970, a response to the total assimilation approach as proposed by the *White paper*. In the *Citizens Plus* policy paper, dubbed the *Red paper*, the Association underscored the importance of recognizing Indian status and setting Aboriginals apart from other Canadian citizens as they argued the recognition of a special status was the only way Aboriginals could preserve their distinct cultures. *Citizens Plus* also advocated for a re-interpretation of historical treaties, for “the written treaties are not the full record of the promises given by the Queen’s Commissioners (who negotiated the treaties)” to the signatories (Indian Association of Alberta c.1970:35). The document also demanded the creation of a claims commission for the negotiation of new treaties and the modernisation of the old ones.

#### 2.3.5. *Activism and new partnerships*

“Many consider the 1969 *White Paper* to be the single most important catalyst in raising the political consciousness of (Aboriginals)” (Boldt et al. 1985:7). However, it is not the only factor to have channelled the militant energy of Canadian Aboriginals. World War II was a watershed moment for Aboriginal rights. Aboriginals who fought in the war and became accustomed in the army to

being treated more or less on the same footing as non-Aboriginals went back home only to face discrimination once again. Having laid down their lives for the country, they felt they were owed more. In addition, 1948 brought the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and the dismantling of European colonies in the 1950s raised awareness about political hegemony and cultural suppression that had seemed a natural part of the ‘civilizing’ process in earlier generations (Miller 2009). Preoccupation with human rights after the war thus “created a new political atmosphere, one sensitive to the rights of identifiable groups and more respectful of different cultures, values, and traditions” (Coates 2004:237).

The response at home came from both the government and the Aboriginals. Assimilation strategies were becoming more and more difficult to justify for the Canadian government. The state adjusted to the new context by revamping the *Indian Act* in 1951. This overhaul ended the prohibition on fundraising for Aboriginals. It was also the end of discriminatory laws about Aboriginal languages. The late 1940s saw the advent of the North American Indian Brotherhood, a militant organization composed of Aboriginal chiefs. This organization became the National Indian Council in 1961, then the National Indian Brotherhood in 1969 and finally the Assembly of First Nations in 1982. In fact, several Aboriginal organisations were created in the 1960s and 1970s and this newly organised movement started using different strategies, from negotiation to litigation to international media campaigns “as both government and aboriginal peoples sought to alter their relationship with each other” (Boldt et al. 1985:4). This new political militancy, which effectively resisted the *White paper*, is considered by many to be the Canadian equivalent to the *Red Power* movement that was taking shape in North America in general (Charest 1992).

Another factor that pushed Aboriginals and the Canadian state to rethink their relationship is a renewed interest in Canadian northern resources in a postwar world of economic growth. The North was the next frontier to be opened up to the industrial extraction of natural resources (Doubleday 1989; Rodon 2003). These

regions of the hinterland were still occupied in the majority by Aboriginals and title issues had not yet been addressed.

In sum, the growing pressure on the hinterland combined with a rise in First Nations' militancy and organization, and a favourable international context pressuring Canada to address human rights issues at home, led to a reconsideration of ways of doing concerning the management of the land (Coates 1992; Miller 2009). There was a need for a renewed relationship. If a final push towards a reconsideration of the approach to Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations was needed, it came from Northern British Columbia and Northern Quebec.

#### *2.3.6. The Calder case and the James Bay project*

The Nisga'a people have always maintained that they never surrendered the title to their homeland, the Nass River valley of Northern British Columbia. The province of British Columbia, however, worked under the assumption that Aboriginal titles did not exist in a modern world. In 1969, as "logging, mining, and other economic pursuits (were changing) the face of these lands, perhaps forever" (Cassidy 1992:15), Aboriginal peoples of British Columbia were still not recognised as such on their own territories.

Irritated by the growing pressure on their land coming from increased colonisation and economic activity regulated by outside forces, the Nisga'a took the provincial government to court in 1969. Their aim was to force the state to recognise once and for all that an Aboriginal title for the land existed in places where treaties had never been signed and to force the government to enter treaty negotiations before furthering development in the Nass valley. In the *Calder v. R.* decision rendered in 1973, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Aboriginal title indeed existed in British Columbia if no treaty had been signed. It sent the signal that Aboriginal peoples who had not signed treaties could still claim title to their ancestral land (in other words, to petition for a land claim).



Meanwhile in Quebec, a court decision forced the provincial government, eager to develop hydroelectricity in the James Bay watershed, to negotiate a settlement with the Crees living in the area. Since the Crees of Quebec had never signed treaties with the Crown before, Quebec Superior Court judge Justice Malouf issued an injunction in December of 1972 to stop the construction work related to the development of the James Bay hydro project. Although the injunction was reversed soon after, it gave the signal that the Crees still held title to the land in the James Bay area, and pushed the Canadian and the provincial governments to enter into negotiations with the Crees. The Cree legal action led to an out-of-court settlement that developed into the first modern treaty, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (Dupuis 2001).

In the aftermath of these two events, the government of Canada adopted a ministerial policy for the resolution of land claims and established the Office of Native Claims to negotiate settlements in areas where titles had never been extinguished, including British Columbia and Quebec (MAINC 1981; Dupuis 1985; Cassidy 1992; Charest 1992; Saint-Hilaire 2003). Further land development by non-Aboriginals was therefore illegal in these areas if no agreement was struck, and negotiations between parties had to take place before development could occur. The favourite route to address grievances of First Nations who had never signed treaties, such as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, was to settle 'comprehensive claims' through a modern treaty. The Inuvialuit agreement, signed in 1984, was the first modern treaty to be negotiated following the 1973 Canadian comprehensive claims negotiation guidelines (Notzke 1995a). The Nisga'a, following their legal action that ended with the *Calder* decision, entered into a comprehensive claims negotiations process that lasted until 1998, when the parties involved finally reached an agreement.

Modern treaties are much more comprehensive than historical treaties. Comprehensive claims agreements, or treaties, are founded on ancestral rights (the topic of the next section) and include a variety of topics such as the protection of

the hunt, fisheries, and trapping activities, as well as land titles (MAINC 1981). These claims “are not simply about grievance resolution or money. They are also about securing a voice in resource development” (Slowey 2008:12).

In the 1970s, comprehensive claims were the only way for First Nations to settle their claims in a lasting way and gain a voice in resource management. It was the “only game in town” (Alcantara 2007b:355). Things have changed somewhat over the years. As case law on Aboriginal rights expanded over the years, treaties became one of several ways to address First Nations’ grievances concerning natural resource management. Bilateral agreements, devolution, and self-government are options that are increasingly possible today. I will return to these new options in section 2.7.

#### **2.4. ANCESTRAL RIGHTS, TREATY RIGHTS**

Before the 1970s, Canadian courts had always been quite restrictive in interpreting what Aboriginal rights were. Aboriginals were considered to have the rights that were explicitly recognised in documents such as the *Royal Proclamation* and nothing more (Dupuis 2001).

However, events from the 1970s changed things somewhat. Two different types of rights were now identified. First, it became known that general ‘Aboriginal rights’, along with Aboriginal titles, existed in areas and for peoples who had never been part of a historical treaty framework. Secondly, there were ‘treaty rights’ specifically defined by existing treaties. Through *Calder*, the Supreme Court has recognised the existence of a title because Aboriginals lived in organised societies at the moment of contact with the Europeans, regardless of whether the ruling regimes following contact recognised that title or not (Dupuis 2001; Woolford 2005). At first, the meaning of the possession of an Aboriginal title was left somewhat undefined. The *Delgamuuk* Supreme Court decision of 1997 helped clarify what Aboriginal title meant. This decision made clear that it was inalienable, that it could not be sold to a private party, but only transferred to

the Crown. It is a true collective property right that arises from prior occupation. Consequently, “an aboriginal group has the inherent right to make communal decisions about how its lands are to be used and by whom” (Slattery 2000:16). A title confers rights to exclusive use and occupation for a broad range of purposes, and is not limited to the practices at the time of contact. With title, Aboriginals do not have to demonstrate that specific rights (like hunting) have been recognised to them. They only have to prove their affiliation with the group that was occupying the land they now claim at the moment of contact (Dupuis 2001).

#### *2.4.1. Ancestral rights*

Aboriginal title, or land rights (Woolford 2005), is only one of many types of Aboriginal rights (or ‘ancestral rights’). Other rights exist, such as rights to fish or hunt. To hold such Aboriginal rights, a proof of prior occupation of the land is not necessary. Being registered ‘Indian’ is sufficient proof of Aboriginal ancestry and having Aboriginal rights. That is why specific ‘Aboriginal rights’ can be set apart from the all-encompassing Aboriginal title.

Aboriginal rights started to be recognised as existing outside the *Royal Proclamation* or treaties in the 1970s. Aboriginal organisations pressured the government to include full recognition and protection of ancestral rights in the Canadian Constitution when it was repatriated in the early 1980s. They got their wish, as the *Constitution Act* of 1982 states that “the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed”.

At first, even in 1982, what Aboriginal rights were was not very clear, although they were known to exist. “(In Canada) ancestral rights have been recognized in principle (in 1982) but must still be given a modern form to carry them into the future” (Blackburn 2007:630). For the government, rights had to do mainly with usage rights, hunting, fishing, and ritual performance. However, for the Aboriginals, they also have to do with self-determination, self-government, and sovereignty. This perspective is highlighted by Bernard Cleary, former Innu

negotiator involved in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw and Innu land claims in the 1980s:

Nos droits ancestraux (...) sont équivalents à des droits de souveraineté. Il est évident que nous n'accepterons jamais que ces droits soient limités à la notion étroite de droits résiduels de chasse, de pêche et de piégeage que veut nous appliquer sournoisement le gouvernement du Québec (Cleary 1993:52)

Since resuming treaty making in the mid-1970s, the government strategy to cope with this uncertainty over Aboriginal rights has been to write specific rights into a treaty and extinguish all residual rights unaddressed by the treaty. “The main thrust of (Canada’s 1974 policy statement regarding comprehensive claims) is ‘to exchange undefined aboriginal land rights for concrete rights and benefits’” (Notzke 1995a:191), including rights regarding natural resources (Mulrennan and Scott 2001; Alcantara 2007a).

#### *2.4.2. Comprehensive claims and treaty rights*

From the government perspective, the extinguishment of residual rights and the clarification of vague rights into treaty rights served the purpose both of creating a certainty for the future, and of allowing for the accommodation of societal changes that had happened in mainstream Canadian society since time of contact. There were concerns, from the government point of view, about applying ancestral rights at the expense of third parties and the larger society as numerous changes took place in society:

The scope and practical effects of dispossession were so significant that as time passed it became increasingly difficult to reverse the situation through the application of Aboriginal rights without severely affecting the interests of third parties and the public at large. In the end, the remedy originally envisaged — the expulsion of individuals who occupied unceded Indigenous lands — was no longer practicable on a large scale (Slattery 2006:261)

The idea of treaties is therefore to bring parties together into negotiations aimed at defining the modern scope of Aboriginal title and Aboriginal rights. The result is that a modern treaty may recognize and guarantee certain Aboriginal rights, may alter them, and does not automatically convert Aboriginal rights into treaty rights.

In short, treaty making is “cutting a deal that makes sense now” (Blackburn 2007:629). The other goal of the Canadian government is to make sure that no future claims can be pursued by the signatory nation. Canada wanted treaties to be final agreements that would not be reopened in the future, in order to be protected from future litigation concerning rights that were forgotten or not addressed in a treaty. This is the Canadian approach to certainty; an approach which seeks finality rather than promoting an ongoing and flexible relationship (Woolford 2005).

For Woolford (2005), however, this is not what certainty is for Aboriginals. For Aboriginals, certainty is found in the renewal of the relationship. The ‘finality’ sought by the Canadian government means greater uncertainty for First Nations because they are “asked to gamble the rights of future generations on treaty rights that are untested” (Woolford 2005:13).

Not all First Nations, even the ones who never signed treaties, are involved in treaty negotiations. In order to avoid their Aboriginal rights being extinguished for good, they take the litigation route, seeking to have their rights clearly defined outside a treaty framework. Over the years, Aboriginal rights have been defined with increasing clarity by the courts. The nature and extent of Aboriginal rights and title mainly find their source in the judiciary (Thom 2001). Over the years, “the Supreme Court expanded Aboriginal rights to include the modern means of exercising such rights. Aboriginal rights cannot remain static in their implementation and, therefore, modern means of fishing and hunting, for example, can be considered within the ambit of exercising ‘existing aboriginal rights’” (Isaac 1993:202).

In the absence of treaties, then, Aboriginal groups can use the increasingly-defined body of recognised Aboriginal rights to increase their participation in natural resource management.

## 2.5. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE ABSENCE OF TREATIES?

This section reviews some of the major court decisions that directly concern land use and resource management. The nature of Aboriginal rights (what they are specifically) has been clarified bit by bit since the early 1990s. Different court decisions helped to define what Aboriginals could do in resource management.

*Calder* in 1973, as mentioned earlier, started the process of rights definition by confirming the existence of such rights. Then *Sparrow* in 1990, *Delgamuukw* in 1997, and two decisions dating from 2004 (*Haida Nation* and *Taku River First Nation*) are major decisions that influenced the way Aboriginals who do not have signed treaties (like the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok) now participate in land-related decision-making processes.

### 2.5.1. *Sparrow*, and *Delgamuukw*

*R. v. Sparrow* was the first attempt by the Supreme Court at defining precisely what Aboriginal rights are (Isaac 1993). The 1990 decision also defines the extent to which Aboriginal rights referred to in section 35 of the Constitution are protected and the degree to which they may be enjoyed (Isaac, 1993). This case concerned a member of the Musqueam nation of British Columbia, Ronald Sparrow, who was charged in 1984 under BC's *Fisheries Act* for fishing with a drift-net that was longer than permitted (Isaac 1993:201). Sparrow contended that the net length restriction was invalid in that it was inconsistent with section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act* of 1982 (the Canadian Constitution). He won his point as the court concluded that Aboriginals have an inextinguishable right to fish for food and that Aboriginal fisheries should be given priority over other users' rights.

In 1997, "basic attributes" of Aboriginal title were identified in *Delgamuuk v. British Columbia* (Slattery 2000:13). Following this decision, it was said that Aboriginal title is inalienable as it cannot be sold to a private party, but only transferred to the Crown. It is a collective property right that arises from prior

occupation. Consequently, “an aboriginal group has the inherent right to make communal decisions about how its lands are to be used and by whom” (Slattery 2000:16). Title confers rights to exclusive use and occupation for a broad range of purposes not limited to the practices at time of contact, thus not limited to narrowly-defined traditional activities such as fishing or hunting. However, these practices must be coherent with the nature of the group’s attachment to the land (Slattery 2000; Dupuis 2001). Consequently, the nature and content of the Aboriginal title differs from group to group. In other words, this decision signalled the beginning of the end for one-size-fits-all state policies. First Nations can now customize their involvement in resource management. This is important, because from now on, what holds true in Aboriginal participation in resource management in one part of the country for one people does not necessarily hold true elsewhere.

#### *2.5.2. Haida and Taku River*

For more than a hundred years, the Haida people have claimed title to all the lands of Haida Gwaii, known to non-Aboriginals as the Queen Charlotte Islands (S.C.C. 2004a). In 1961, the province of British Columbia issued a tree farm licence to a large forestry firm, permitting it to harvest trees in an area of Haida Gwaii. In 1999, the province approved the transfer of the licence from one company to another. Following this decision, the Haida people launched a lawsuit in January of 2000, objecting to the transfer of the licence. The Haida argued that they should have been consulted prior to the decision.

This case is interesting because it does not concern a decision that has direct ecological impacts on forests or wildlife, and was not likely to infringe on the Haida’s capacity to sustain similar levels of hunting, fishing, or other uses. The same volumes of wood were to be cut, following the same regulations. The only difference was that the logging was to be done by a different company. The Haida’s argument for contesting the transfer was that they wanted to get involved

in all decisions concerning their land, even decisions taken at the level of strategic planning, not only operational decisions.

Meanwhile, in the mid-1990s, it was proposed that a mining company build a road cutting through a portion of Taku River First Nation's traditional land. At first, the community participated in the planning process and expressed their concerns, which crystallized around the potential effects of the road on wildlife and traditional land use. The community was also concerned that the road could act as a magnet for future traffic and development. Mitigation plans were brought forward to limit the impacts of the road, but not to the community's satisfaction. Dissatisfied, they launched a lawsuit in 1998, arguing that the process was not sufficiently addressing their concerns. The lower court judge "concluded that the decision makers had not been sufficiently careful during the final months of the assessment process to ensure that they had effectively addressed the substance of the (community's) concerns" (S.C.C. 2004b). The Supreme Court indicated that First Nations have the right to be consulted in a way that is meaningful for them, which may be different from the model proposed by the government, or different from processes existing in other Aboriginal contexts. However, Taku River First Nation lost its case because they had remained full participants in the assessment process for a long time without voicing a disagreement with the process.

The conclusion of these two decisions is that accommodation is needed during both the consultation process and as the results emerge from the process. "The commitment (of the Crown) is to a meaningful process of consultation in good faith. The content of the duty varies with the circumstances and each case must be approached individually and flexibly" (S.C.C. 2004b). Furthermore, it is the government's duty to set up regulatory schemes to address the procedural requirements appropriate to different problems. It was also concluded that since decisions made during the strategic planning stage may have potentially serious impacts on Aboriginal rights and titles, Aboriginals have to be meaningfully consulted at that early stage of the planning process.



### *2.5.3. Consequences*

The problem arising for the federal government was that now potentially hundreds of different arrangements needed to be negotiated and specificities to be accommodated. The related problem was that current environmental management processes are mostly centralized, are not diverse, and have goals sometimes far removed from local specificities, needs, and expectations.

These decisions pushed towards a co-management approach that was to be tailored to local specificities. It also meant that treaties were not the only way forward anymore.

## **2.6. PROBLEMS WITH TREATIES**

From the perspective of First Nations, two types of problem can be identified with regards to treaties. Firstly, there are the problems in reaching a treaty agreement, and secondly, there are the problems with implementing the treaty and making it work.

### *2.6.1. Problems with achieving a treaty*

One of the main problems for First Nations involved in comprehensive claims is the requirement by Canada to extinguish residual ancestral rights, those not specified clearly in the text of the treaty. Canada wants to buy peace once and for all and never reopen a file (Dupuis 2001). Certitude is thus created by spelling out all the rights in writing. Everything is in the treaty; there are no surprises. First Nations often do not like that approach, because it removes the possibility of adapting the legal framework to a changing social context. It removes the possibility for future generations to use the treaty as an instrument to implement their own vision of the land, which can depart from the vision the original signatories of the treaty had. It creates a situation where in order to evolve and change, Aboriginals have to fit into the (evolving) model of the mainstream

society, and leave behind their traditions inscribed in the treaty without the option of implementing new traditions that would best fit their own culture in the future.

Consequently, a treaty process can be extremely long because the First Nation concerned does not wish to leave anything out of the treaty, for fear of not being able to put it back in later. Current generations of Aboriginal leaders hesitate to write into stone what future generations will have to live with. The process is also slow because for the governments there is the fear of setting legal precedents by conceding too much. This fear of setting precedents that could be used elsewhere by other nations limits the creativity of parties when it comes time to design a co-management framework.

The slow pace creates frustrations. It takes time, it's costly, and the outcome is uncertain. These reasons pushed the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council of British Columbia to put an end to their comprehensive claims negotiation process in 2007 (CSTC 2007b). The Council argued that "negotiations are a waste of money and cost members a chance to secure their fair share of revenue from natural resources" (Brethour 2007:A2). They thought that recent legal decisions (e.g. *Haida* and *Taku River* in 2004) have bolstered Aboriginal rights enough to allow them to design bilateral agreements with the province or private companies that would not extinguish their rights (leaving the litigation door open), while meeting several of their immediate land-related goals:

There is no doubt among First Nations in B.C. that significant obstacles stand in the way of achieving a just resolution of agreements on lands, resources, and governance. Levels of frustration run high in our communities, and as leaders we have exhausted justification to our membership as to why we continue to borrow funds to participate in a process that leads to a dead-end (CSTC 2007a:1)

Another deadlock in treaty negotiation is the need to make treaty rights compatible with existing Canadian institutions. This limits what First Nations can come up with in terms of institutions of governance. "This requirement that the rights of the Nisga'a be acknowledged in forms and to an extent that can work

within present-day Canada leaves the cultural specificity of Canadian institutions unchallenged” (Blackburn 2007:630).

The approach of making Aboriginal rights compatible with Canadian cultural standards, updating Aboriginal rights to today’s Canadian society’s needs and reframing them in treaty rights in order to ‘cut a deal’, was decried by the *Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais* (CAM) in 1979 when representing the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in their land claim:

Nous (...) acceptons encore une fois de jouer le jeu de la société dominante et de ses agents décisionnels en vous présentant aujourd’hui (...) nos revendications territoriales (...) suite à l’incurie séculaire (du) gouvernement du Canada envers la défense de nos droits face à des gouvernements provinciaux accapareurs de nos territoires et de leurs ressources au profit des entreprises privées. (...) nous n’avons plus le choix; il nous faut agir maintenant ou accepter de dépérir au sein de la société dominante (CAM 1979:171)

This approach gets in the way of Aboriginal claims to self-determination in the area of economic development. Aboriginals find it difficult to progress on issues that are not considered to be in the domain of the ‘traditional’, such as the economy, although Aboriginals have stated several times that Aboriginal rights are, from their perspective, rights to self-determination:

Nos droits ancestraux (...) sont équivalents à des droits de souveraineté. Il est évident que nous n’accepterons jamais que ces droits soient limités à la notion étroite de droits résiduels de chasse, de pêche et de piégeage que veut nous appliquer sournoisement le gouvernement du Québec (Cleary 1993:52)

Currently, Quebec Aboriginals thus criticise the provincial government for ignoring economic development questions when trying to implement court decisions concerning article 35 of the Constitution of 1982, which is the article that specifically mentions the recognition and the protection of Aboriginal rights, and when designing a new policy on Aboriginal consultation (Dionne 2005; Quebec 2008). Strides were made in the early 1990s concerning rights to self-determination. The 1992 Charlottetown accord for a new constitution provided an explicit constitutional entrenchment of the inherent right to self-government and

the recognition of a third order of government (Isaac 1993). But the Charlottetown accord did not survive a referendum and was never implemented.

### *2.6.2. Problems of implementation*

Work does not stop once an agreement is reached. Parties have to make the agreement work. To the concerned nation's dismay, the government is often reported to be uncooperative in making the deal work after signature. For the government, the file is closed. For example:

It was not long after the (JBNQA) was concluded that Cree and Inuit leaders began to complain that the two levels of senior government that had been signatories to it were not fulfilling its terms. Billy Diamond (a Cree leader) observed that "implementation was one fight after the other", and the Grand Council of the Cree noted in 1986, "What the Crees and Inuit have learned over the last 11 years is that negotiation of a claim settlement is only half the battle and implementation is the other half" (Miller 2009:281)

Consequently, the James Bay Convention is at the root of several court actions initiated by the Crees, who are irritated by delays in its implementation (Dupuis 2001).

Writing in 2004 to Canada's then Prime Minister Paul Martin, northern Aboriginal leaders expressed their frustration at the lack of federal commitment to the implementation of northern modern treaties:

There is growing frustration with the Federal government's approach to implementation, and unmistakable signs that the original good will and hope generated with the signing of these agreements is being undermined. (...) Federal agencies, particularly Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, take the view that agreements are successfully implemented if federal contractual commitments have been discharged in a way that withstands legal challenge. This is a minimalist view that prevents agreements from delivering to us the full range of rights and benefits we negotiated. Federal agencies have lost sight of the objectives of these agreements (Land Claim Agreement Coalition, 2004, quoted in Penikett 2006:183)

Another problem related to treaties is the lack of flexibility, making them hard to change through means other than litigation. As already mentioned, it may be difficult for treaties to meet the needs of future generations due to the fact that they are static. Chapter 3 will expand more on why the lack of flexibility is also a

problem from an ecological point of view, making treaties instruments ill-suited to a world “increasingly characterized by rapid transformations” (Armitage et al. 2007:1).

Other critiques of treaties and treaty-like arrangements point to the difficulty of integrating Indigenous knowledge and science-based knowledge into a single epistemological framework. This makes it difficult to design common methodological frameworks for action (Berkes 1989; McGregor 2000; Rodon 2003). These scholars also argue that the heaviness of bureaucracies typically emerging from treaties and other co-management arrangements, and the language – technical and scientific – used in co-management processes, limits the full participation of First Nations’ members and constrains the possible involvement of traditional decision-making systems (Cruikshank 1998; Nadasdy 2003a). Finally, it has been suggested that decision-making processes allowing for an increased participation of marginalized groups do not necessarily lead to sound ecological management decisions. In other words, to involve more people does not always lead to better decisions (Côté and Bouthillier 2002; Pagdee et al. 2006).

#### *2.6.3. To sum up: the problems with treaties*

To sum up, here are the problems associated with the current process and format of treaty resolutions:

- Extinguishment of residual rights left outside of the written treaty
- It takes time, it’s costly, and the outcome is uncertain
- Cultural specificity of Canadian institutions goes unchallenged
- Ignores the need for endogenous economic development that departs from the mainstream paradigm
- Does not address right of self-government beyond the reserve
- Implementation is often lacking
- Bureaucratic nature of resultant governance structures

- Language - technical and scientific
- Participation of marginalized groups does not necessarily lead to sound ecological management decisions

## **2.7. POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS**

The existence of alternative options created by court decisions such as *Delgamuuk*, *Haida*, and *Taku River First Nation* has led some First Nations to question a treaty process fraught with problems. These court decisions brought Aboriginal participation in environmental management into a world of pluralities as they made one-size-fits-all approaches irrelevant. These decisions also mean that the extinguishment of rights through treaties is not a necessary road anymore. Treaty-making is no longer the only game in town.

For instance, the Haida Nation, following the 2004 conclusion of their legal action, sat down with the provincial government of British Columbia in order to agree on a 'Reconciliation Protocol' concerning natural resource management (Haida Nation and British Columbia 2009). The Haida also have a co-management agreement with the government of Canada concerning the Gwaii Haanas National Park that occupies the southern part of the Haida Gwaii archipelago (Archipelago Management Board c.1995). With co-management in the national park and active participation with the provincial government in the rest of the archipelago, the Haida are now involved in natural resource management for the whole of their traditional land, to a degree they had not achieved in the past. All this was made possible without a treaty. It was asserted in recent years that the Haida still held Aboriginal title to Haida Gwaii, and as a consequence, it was possible to design innovative arrangements of co-management outside the treaty framework.

The case of the Haida opens possibilities for other treaty-less First Nations throughout the country, including the Atikamekw Nation of Quebec. In this province, consultations so far have been modeled on a pluralist framework,

involving different spheres of the civil and private society. This approach is rooted in what Woolford (2005) calls “cross-cultural equality”. However, this approach has proven not to be sufficient for Aboriginals who consider themselves as being more than “just another stakeholder” (NAFA 1995:1). The Courts, through *Haida* and *Taku River*, concurred.

Consequently, following these two decisions, Quebec grabbed the bull by the horns and proposed a consultation policy outlining general principles to be followed in consultations processes (Quebec 2008). The policy opens the door to customized approaches of consultation, but has been decried by Quebec Aboriginal leaders for not going far enough. However, no substantial alternative has thus far been proposed, including for the case of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Work thus remains to be done by Quebec First Nations to come up with viable solutions with regards to their participation in natural resources decision-making processes. The litigation route can be followed to further define rights, but at the end of the day, parties (the government and First Nations) have to negotiate an agreement anyway.

Self-government agreements negotiated between the federal government and a band can be appealing to some (Alcantara 2007b). They do not need to involve the province and they are a means for communities to build a governance system that is in their own image. The new self-run government can pass laws affecting education, language, police, adoption, health care, and so on. This approach allows a community to get to govern itself more quickly than through a treaty negotiation. However, its influence cannot reach much outside the limits of the reserves. For that, they would still need to negotiate an arrangement with the province to become involved in governance across the full extent of the ancestral land.

Bilateral, limited-in-scope arrangements are another option outside a treaty framework. This is, for example, what the Haida and the province of British

Columbia agreed upon. A co-management arrangement can be designed to address a particular resource management problem, such as the management of a particular species. These arrangements are limited in the aspects of environmental management they deal with, or have limited timeframes. The 'Beverly-Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board' (Kendrick 2003), in central Canada, or the forestry agreement presently being negotiated in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw community of Manawan, are examples of agreements with limited reach that do not commit parties permanently (Quebec and Manawan 2003). Such a strategy can be adopted if the concerned First Nation has already signed a treaty in the past in which ecological management responsibilities were not allocated in such a way as to clearly protect Aboriginal rights. It is also a strategy that could be adopted if a treaty negotiation is in progress, but not yet completed, while a pressing ecological management issue needs to be addressed (as suggested by Feit 1988). Bilateral agreements provide for Aboriginal input into the way their land is managed, and since they are limited in time and scope and do not impact on potential comprehensive claims, "governments have shown more flexibility to what they are willing to agree" (Alcantara 2007b:360). These types of agreements can also serve as a test of the final treaty and can serve as interim measures.

## **2.8. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT?**

This chapter has shown that while Canadian First Nations were dispossessed through different mechanisms, they still possess rights that today have significant influence on environmental policy making and management. Ancestral rights defined with increasing precision by the courts challenge the state governments to design novel resource management arrangements in order to accommodate First Nations. From the 1970s up until 2004, the promising solution for Aboriginals to have their rights recognised in practice was to negotiate a treaty to settle their comprehensive claims.

This approach is fraught with problems, and in order to meet First Nations needs, novel solutions, moving away from the old modern treaties approach, are needed



to arrive at satisfactory agreements for all parties. What is needed is an approach that recognises clarity as a renewed bond and rights to self-determination promoting an ongoing and flexible relationship, since treaties are seen, from the Aboriginal perspective, “as sacred instruments to protect their rights and establish a nation-to-nation relationship with Canada” (Blackburn 2007:623). This means that we need to move towards frameworks that allow for processes to change according to changing needs. This also means focusing on goals to be achieved instead of focusing on structures. This leads to a flexible understanding of structures and processes. There is a need for greater flexibility because today’s leaders are hesitant to subscribe to an agreement that will be difficult to reopen as the needs of future generations evolve. As the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, mentioned earlier, points out, treaty-making has become a costly and static process that yields little results. The time is ripe for a novel approach that provides results now for First Nations.

In order to work, a treaty, or any other form of arrangement, would have to address the problems identified in section 2.6. A solution to these problems may be found in an adaptive co-management approach. In this thesis, I explore how ‘adaptive co-management’ could address the issues raised above. In Chapter 3, I will define what adaptive co-management is, contrasting this approach with current definitions of co-management. Chapters 6 to 8 will explain how the adaptive co-management approach could help in the context of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw nation’s comprehensive claims negotiations.

## CHAPTER 3

### ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT

The fundamental objective of the modern law of aboriginal and treaty rights is the reconciliation of aboriginal peoples and non-aboriginal peoples and their respective claims, interests and ambitions. The management of these relationships takes place in the shadow of a long history of grievances and misunderstanding. The multitude of smaller grievances created by the indifference of some government officials to aboriginal people's concerns, and the lack of respect inherent in that indifference has been as destructive of the process of reconciliation as some of the larger and more explosive controversies. And so it is in this case (S.C.C. 2005)

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

By affirming that Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relationships should be based on the reconciliation of their respective claims, interests and ambitions, in the quote above Chief Justice Binnie departs from the widespread view of Aboriginal participation in environmental policy and management, usually considered solely as an accommodation of Aboriginal ancestral or treaty rights (see Chapter 2 for a discussion on treaties and Aboriginal rights). Chief Justice Binnie's opening statement from the written report of the unanimous decision by the Supreme Court in the *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada* case (2005) challenges Canadian federal and provincial governments to abandon an approach that had so far aimed at conforming Aboriginals to state practices as much as possible, while mitigating the impact of these practices on a spectrum of recognised rights. What the *Mikisew* decision suggests is that current approaches to deal with Aboriginal participation do not go far enough and are not true to the spirit of treaties so far concluded between Canadian First Nations and the state government.

Aboriginals have rights, but as pointed out in Chief Justice's opening statement, they also have interests and ambitions. Some of these ambitions are to preserve a cultural identity bound to the land and to involve traditional ecological knowledges in the environmental decision-making process (see Chapter 4). Therefore, Aboriginal participation in environmental management should not be

seen as a question of more or less, as is often the case at the moment, but as a question of doing things differently, imagining new frameworks and new ways of doing. Treaty making and co-management of natural resources is hence not a question of incremental amelioration, but sometimes of complete transformation to something new, unknown, even filled with uncertainties, yet worth embracing. Arrangements and treaties that formalise Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relationships need thus to be dynamic and flexible to give partners the time to become accustomed to each other and to understand each others' ambitions and worldviews.

This thesis examines the potential for adaptive co-management frameworks to formalise this relationship in a more comprehensive way than current co-management approaches allow for, in order to reconcile not only rights (such as resource usage rights), but also interests, ambitions, and worldviews in environmental management. This chapter thus defines adaptive co-management (ACM) and identifies the three adaptive components of ACM currently reported in the literature. It is adaptive co-management as defined in this chapter that serves as the theoretical framework for my thesis. Chapter 8 will later examine whether the ACM framework presented here could be refined, in light of the study of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw comprehensive claims negotiation process.

### **3.2. CO-MANAGEMENT**

Before moving to specifically define the concept of *adaptive* co-management, I highlight in this section some elements of the general co-management approach.

A way to formalise Aboriginal participation in environmental management is through the negotiation of co-management arrangements. In Canada, such co-management arrangements could be reached either through a treaty resolving comprehensive Aboriginal land claims, or through bilateral agreements – more limited in scope and less binding in terms of commitment – between an Aboriginal community and state government (for more details on comprehensive

claims and treaties, see Chapter 2). As Notzke (1995b:36) points out, the “co-management of natural resources refers to the sharing of power and responsibility between government and local users, and to various levels of integration of local and state level management systems”. It thus “encompasses a variety of organisational arrangements, functions, and levels of power-sharing” (Peters 2003a:669).

Co-management arrangements are reached with First Nations in order to address questions of ancestral rights, but also because centralized, bureaucratic, resource management systems have been criticized for leading to ecological collapses and for failing to improve people’s lives (Agrawal 1995; Holling and Meffe 1996; Scott 1998; Schelhas et al. 2001; Braun 2002; Agrawal 2003; Armitage et al. 2009). Therefore, it is argued that arrangements should be designed to:

(1) enhance the robustness of ecological management decisions by gaining access to local or traditional knowledges attuned to local specificities (Berkes 1998; Pálsson 1998);

(2) increase the efficiency of decision implementation by involving people directly affected by these decisions through activities such as monitoring (Kearney 1989; Pinkerton 1989; Baland and Platteau 1996; Hanna 1998; Sheppard and Meitner 2005); and, if we are to follow Chief Justice Binnie’s thinking,

(3) increase equity in the decision-making process by moving away from management models controlled by a central state remote from the needs of local people, and remote from regional and cultural specificities (Baland and Platteau 1996; McCay 1996; Persoon and van Est 2003; Pagdee et al. 2006).

Currently in treaty negotiations, there is a focus on power sharing, but little on how to make worldviews work together, on how to make different ontological and

epistemological frameworks work together, leading to a lack of integration of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and science and of traditional Aboriginal institutions and state bureaucracies.

### *3.2.1. Limits to current co-management arrangements*

When assessing existing co-management arrangements, scholars and practitioners point to the difficulty of truly involving different cultures and therefore integrating traditional ecological knowledge and science-based knowledge (used by the state government to partly support resource management decisions) into a single epistemological framework. In turn, this makes it difficult to design common methodological frameworks for action (Berkes 1989; McGregor 2000; Rodon 2003). Also, traditional, local institutions and government bureaucracies are difficult to make work together in a single framework. Furthermore, many argue that the cumbersomeness of the bureaucracies that typically emerge from co-management arrangements and the language – technical and scientific – used in co-management processes limit the full participation of First Nations' members and constrain, if not exclude, the possible involvement of traditional decision-making systems (Cruikshank 1998; Peters 1992, 1999; Nadasdy 2003a; White 2006).

Finally, in the case of treaties, once an agreement is reached, central governments generally consider negotiations with First Nations to be concluded, ancestral rights having been addressed. As a result, state governments eschew involvement in the implementation of agreements or in updating their content when limitations are discovered. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the James Bay Cree had to resort to litigation in the late 1990s to bring about updates to their then 25-year-old treaty (the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement). Indeed, as early as the 1970s and 1980s, Cree and Inuit who had taken part in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement had voiced these concerns, complaining that both the federal and the provincial (Quebec) governments, who had signed the treaty, were not fulfilling their terms (Peters 1992; Miller 2009). More recently, the Nisga'a

Nation, speaking from the experience of a ten-year-old treaty, testify that the hard work starts on day one of treaty implementation (Houde personal notes 2009). Today the Nisga'a complain that the state views a treaty as the end of the land-claim process, under-investing in making the arrangement work in the long run.

This situation, including both the cumbersome bureaucracy and lack of post-treaty involvement, limits the ability of emerging co-management organisations to respond to changing social and environmental conditions, “an anachronism in a world increasingly characterized by rapid transformations” (Armitage et al. 2007:1). It also limits the ability of participants to reconcile worldviews and increase trust.

### *3.2.2. A new approach to co-management*

To address the above mentioned limits, and to engage in a process of reconciliation as suggested by Justice Binnie, co-management has to be seen not as an end, but as a beginning. Co-management has to be seen as an institution-building, knowledge-building and trust-building exercise and a process of knowing each other if we are to be successful in reconciling worldviews.

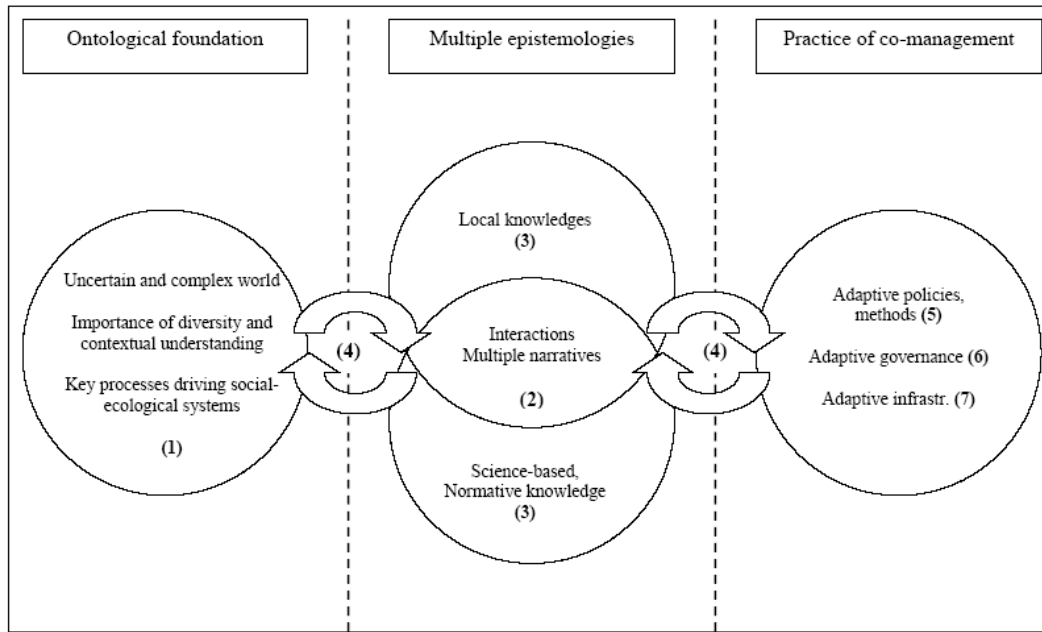
In a treaty context, co-management is an inter-cultural process. Not only must different rights, interests and ambitions be reconciled, but individuals and groups with different understandings of the world held by different cultures need to work together. Because First Nations have been marginalised for so long, it will take some time to re-establish trust between partners and “end those unproductive situations where they are pitted against one another as antagonistic actors in the process of resource regulations” (Baland and Platteau 1996:347). There is a mistrust of TEK and Aboriginal ways, and that, too, takes time to work through. Therefore, it is almost impossible to get to a perfect co-management arrangement at the first attempt.

There is, then, a need for environmental management that is collaborative and flexible. Practitioners and scholars working in the area of co-management have started to look into this matter, and a new approach to co-management is emerging: adaptive co-management. This emerging approach offers some potential in addressing the above-mentioned limits to current arrangements. As noted in Chapter 1, it is the aim of this thesis to examine the potential for transitioning from a co-management approach to an adaptive co-management approach. The following section thus outlines and critiques the definition of adaptive co-management I will be using for the purpose of this study.

### **3.3. GENERAL DEFINITION OF ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT**

Adaptive co-management is a flexible management process allowing participating partners to test, revise, and enhance their knowledge about the environment and about each other through practice. Dynamic learning is characteristic of adaptive management (Olsson et al. 2004). A focus on active experimentation is at the core of the process and allows for on-going testing and revision of institutional arrangements, environmental management methods, and environmental policies. Within this approach, co-management is therefore an experiment and innovation (Berkes 2007). Adaptive co-management is an approach that explicitly values context specificity, the existence of alternative narratives about the environment, and collaboration across geographical scales of multiple institutions and people. An adaptive co-management process allows itself to change quickly with changing conditions. It is built with the acknowledgement that the context can change rapidly, and sometimes in surprising ways. It is therefore not only reactive to change, but proactive in both creating positive change and preparing and adapting to surprises. An adaptive co-management arrangement institutionalizes a learning process, and not – as is often the case with current treaties – structures.

Figure 3.1 shows how adaptive co-management could work in a cross-cultural context. Each component of the figure is explained in the following sections:



**Figure 3.1.** Framework for understanding adaptive co-management  
(source: author)

### 3.4. ADAPTATION TO WHAT: ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The first rectangle in Figure 3.1 illustrates the ontological foundation of adaptive co-management. Adaptive co-management finds parts of its roots in the *adaptive environmental management* approach. Adaptive environmental management<sup>2</sup> emerged as an approach in the 1970s and the 1980s through the work of scholars concerned with the limitations of the reductionist approach to ecology and management practices that had characterised much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Holling 1973, 1978; Walters and Hilborn 1978; Clark and Munn 1986; Walters 1986). Adaptive management refers to a multidisciplinary process for continually improving management policies and practices, by learning from their outcomes. Specifically, it regards policies as alternative hypotheses and management actions as experiments (Holling 1978; Walters 1986; Lee 1993; Gunderson 1999). Hypotheses will then evolve as these experiments bring results. In other words, it is through the interaction with the environment that management methods will change. Success is dependent on analysing each interaction, learning from it and

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter referred to as “adaptive management”



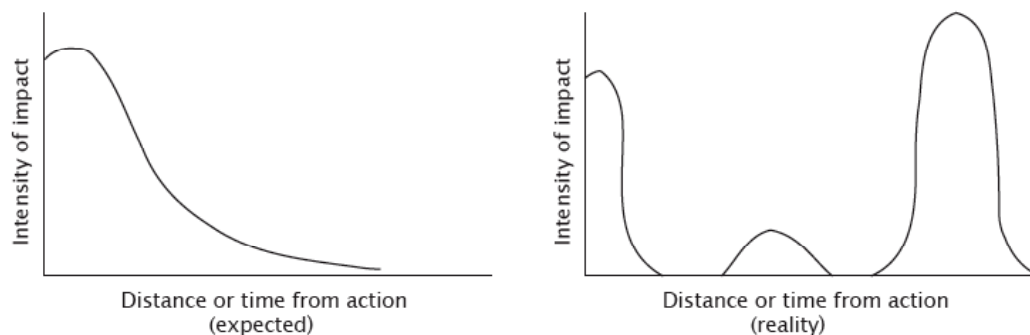
applying that learning to the next action. The worldview expressed in the management approach, the way of understanding the world, will evolve according to the environment's reactions to human actions, and this evolution will bring about adjustments in management practices.

Why is this experimentation and evolution built into adaptive environmental management processes? Because at the foundation of this approach – and at the foundation of adaptive co-management – is the belief that the world, and therefore the social-ecological systems to be managed, is complex and uncertain (see #1 in Figure 3.1), behaving in ways that could be surprising. It is a never-fixed world, thus a world in which structures are always being challenged. Unpredictable, perhaps rapid changes can happen, provoked by controllable or uncontrollable factors. Adaptive management, then, “deals with the unpredictable interactions between people and ecosystems as they evolve together” (Berkes and Folke 1998:10) where “the notion of adaptation implies capacity to respond to change and even transform social-ecological systems into improved states” (Folke et al. 2005:463).

Traditional top-down bureaucratic environmental management approaches focus on controlling or predicting natural processes. Experience has however shown that simplifications of systems in order to assert greater control and predictability (such as plantation forestry) have lead to an increased vulnerability of these systems in the face of unpredicted disturbances (e.g. Gunderson et al. 1995). The ‘problem’ for resource managers with this approach is that most natural systems do not work in a simple linear fashion (Costanza et al. 1993; Byrne 1998):

Increasing evidence suggests that ecosystems often do not respond to gradual change in a smooth way. Threshold effects with regime shifts from one basin of attraction to another have been documented for a range of ecosystems. Passing a threshold marks a sudden change in feedbacks in the ecosystem, such that the trajectory of the system changes direction (Folke et al. 2004:559)

The consequences of resource management actions taken today may be unknown for years, if not for decades. One therefore cannot control systems and their behaviour. Control can work well within closed systems, but not in complex, open systems like the social-ecological systems of the type encountered in resource management. The number of important variables that are at play in environmental systems can cause variations or disturbances that can easily generate unpredictable outcomes. For instance, disturbances affecting a system do not necessarily distribute smoothly over space or time (see Figure 3.2). Not only can slight changes in one variable of the system (e.g. concentration of methylmercury in water) have unexpected impacts on variables in the same place, but these can be felt several connections away (e.g. poisoning of humans at the top of the food chain) (Holling 1978).



**Figure 3.2.** The distribution of ecological effects due to human disturbance  
(adapted from Peterson 2005:376)

This complex web of interconnected elements means that the combined effects of disturbances or variations do not necessarily equate to the sum of separate effects. The resulting effect may be greater or less, “because factors can reinforce or cancel out each other in non-linear ways” (Byrne 1998:20).

In this complex world, dynamics such as forest succession turn out to be non-linear processes (Holling 1986; Müller 1997; Gunderson and Holling 2001; Holling 2001).

A consequence of this complexity is that while no-one can ever fully understand the world as it is now, neither can we know what the world will be made of in the future, as there is such a high level of complexity that cause-effect relationships are neither predictable nor even identifiable. It is therefore not possible to produce a total, comprehensive description of ecosystems (Odum 1982; Jørgensen et al. 1992), because elements are too numerous and interact in a non-linear way, but also because systems change constantly as a result of human intervention (Gunderson 1999).

As practitioners and theorists of environmental management came to the realisation that ecosystems are complex, impossible to completely understand and control, partly because “management changes the systems being managed” in the first place (Holling 1998), the focus necessarily switched from a control of ecological processes to a process of learning through action. Complexity, and the conscious introduction of the human being in systems, meant that “the separation of thinking and doing (was) abolished” (Schwaninger 2004:519).

Although in dynamic and open systems it is not possible to predict the future with certainty, a question worth asking is whether it is possible to at least identify domains of possibilities. Some things happen and others do not; there is only a range of possible system states and futures. Everything is *not* intimately connected to everything else, and “the complexity of living systems of people and nature emerges not from a random association of a large number of interacting factors rather from a smaller number of controlling (...) critical processes” (Holling 2001:391).

In this context, the job of people involved in an adaptive management process is to build knowledge about key processes (key drivers) within social-ecological systems, which maintain the system's identity (Ash et al. 2008). Anderies and colleagues (2004) refer to "key interactions" between agents within social-ecological systems, including human agents. Decision makers can influence these drivers to either maintain the system in the desired state or provoke change to a more desirable state. "Evaluation efforts (in ACM) should seek to identify and attend to the slow variables operating at small spatial and temporal scales that overwhelm slower variables and lead potentially to alternative system states" (Plummer and Armitage 2007:67). These key interactions and drivers can serve to identify leverage points on which to focus in order to promote change in the system. Key uncertainties and external drivers must also be identified (Hahn et al. 2006; Taylor et al. 1997).

In a co-management situation, it would also be important to identify the system's attributes that are culturally significant and linked with tradition. Adaptation in adaptive management and co-management means adaptation not only to environmental conditions and responses to management decisions, but also adaptation (of structure, management actions, etc.) to evolving motivations, traditions and cultures.

#### *3.4.1. Resilience as an objective*

It is understood, then, that management actions change the system to be managed. However, the objective of ACM is to make sure, if a certain system configuration is desirable, that it does not 'flip' into some other, undesirable configuration. This ability to absorb shocks, changes and disturbance and still maintain the same general configuration is called 'resilience' (Holling 1973). "Resilience determines the persistence of relationships within a system and is a measure of the ability of these systems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables, and parameters, and still persist" (Holling 1973:17).

Adaptive co-management can also serve to build resilience in social-ecological systems that otherwise would not be resilient (Olsson et al. 2004). Furthermore, the objective of ACM may also be to transform an existing system into a new, alternate, state and make it resilient within its new configuration. This is the case for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in certain ways, since they want to move away from a situation in which they are marginalised towards a situation where their participation in resource management is much more central. This would bring about institutional transformations, but also transformations in the natural systems, since the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs in terms of resource use and conservation are different from – and incompatible with, to a certain extent – those of the forest industry currently operating on their ancestral land. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would like to transform the current situation to a situation that better allows them to pursue a livelihood close to their traditions.

An objective pursued by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in treaty negotiations is therefore to transform the current system into a configuration of processes and structures that would allow them to re-establish the possibility of pursuing a culturally coherent livelihood despite massive changes in the environment. Their other objective would then be to build resilience into the newly designed system, to ensure that these livelihoods and their cultural aspirations are possible in the way the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok indeed want. Overall, the aim is to build a resilient livelihood that “can cope with and (is) able to recover from shocks and stresses, maintains or enhances existing capabilities and assets despite uncertainty (and) ensures the provision of sustainable livelihood opportunities for future generations” (Plummer and Armitage 2007:68).

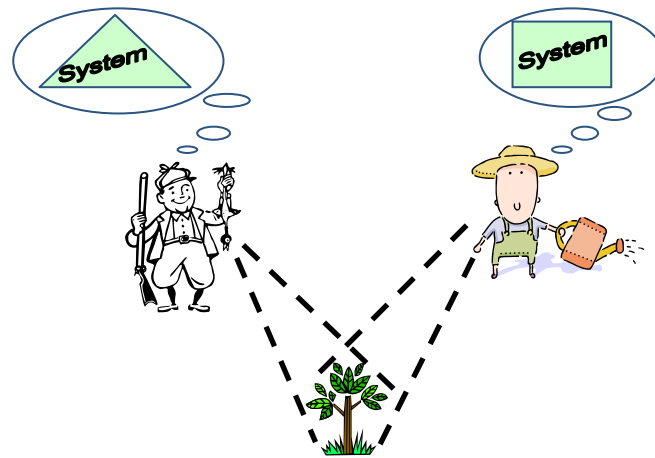
### **3.5. MULTIPLE EPISTEMOLOGIES, ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES**

The middle rectangle in Figure 3.1 illustrates how knowledge is being built in an adaptive co-management process. It shows that multiple sources of knowledge are used to both make sense of what is happening in the social-ecological system (first rectangle in Figure 3.1) and design environmental management policies and methods, institutions of governance, and infrastructure (third rectangle in Figure 3.1). It is the interaction (see #2 in Figure 3.1) of different knowledge systems (#3 in Figure 3.1) that is at the core of the decision-making process in ACM.

There are several reasons to involve multiple groups of people and multiple narratives in environmental decision-making. One of these reasons specifically relates to uncertainty and complexity of social-ecological systems. Because of complexity and uncertainty, one is never sure of fully understanding systems. Systems are situations as perceived by people, based on an incomplete knowledge at a particular point in time (see Figure 3.3). Since different people have access to different sets of information, and often different understandings of the world, “most concrete situations may be seen from a variety of perspectives” (Flood and Carson 1988:20), and there sometimes may be no basis for giving greater credence to one understanding of the world over another (Carpenter 2002). Reality itself therefore becomes very unstable and fluid. In this context, ‘problems’ are often not well bounded or defined, and are always in renegotiation amongst those involved in the management task, not least because the very definition of a problem itself is an adaptive process.

The aim of nurturing multiple narratives in ACM is not to build one common worldview, but rather to allow these narratives to continuously inform each other. This diversity is needed not only because people have the right to think differently, but because it is required to build resilience into the system and thus avoid path-dependency. If a surprising change happens in the environment, some management methods may be more appropriate for the new context, so it is important not to suppress any, in case one option ends up being more useful than

another. Also, a ‘surprise’, or the ‘unexpected’ – common in a complex theoretical framework – may not necessarily be surprising for everyone, but only for the holders of the belief it contradicts (Thompson 1986). Such surprises can offer “all sorts of conflicting signals that are open to every interpretation from imminent disaster to grand opportunity” (Walters 1986:32). Therefore, alternative bodies of knowledge may be useful when the unexpected happens. Nurturing diversity is a way to ensure greater options for the reorganization of systems (Doubleday 2007).



**Figure 3.3.** Perception of systems (adapted from Flood and Carson 1988:20)

### *3.5.1. Context specificity*

Local people are well placed to know about environmental management methods that work effectively in a specific geographical, social, and cultural context. Over time, they have developed a knowledge system about the place that is suited to a particular context (see #3 in Figure 3.1). This is why “the best approach to comprehensive knowledge is through a variety of holistic views” (Jørgensen et al. 1992:10) or alternative narratives (see #2 in Figure 3.1). In the case of Canadian modern treaties (e.g. Canada 2005), parties try to involve both the science-based, normative knowledge used by the state and the traditional knowledge of local

people. The involvement of 'local' people in management processes is increasingly seen by managers empowered to govern decisions as a way to access greater insights from local/Indigenous/traditional knowledges regarding local ecosystems and greater understanding of management practices adapted to particular contexts. This, in turn, enhances management practices (Berkes 1998; Pálsson 1998; MEAB 2005). Chapter 4 provides the detailed definition of traditional knowledge I use in this thesis.

Adaptive co-management is thus about combining information and knowledge, but also about nurturing epistemological diversity. Traditional ecological knowledge, or local knowledge, may use its own epistemological approach and that has to remain if one wants alternative narratives about the environment to be as cohesive as possible. In this context, science-based knowledge and local knowledge will influence each other (see #2 in Figure 3.1). However, they will both be allowed to remain within their own epistemology and methodologies.

It is, however, important to stress that local knowledges are not everything. An adaptive co-management system is connected to local knowledges, but is also connected to other forms of knowledge that can work better at other-than-local scales. No one can do everything single-handedly (Dowsley 2007), and some types of environmental decisions require working at different scales. Therefore, science and other expert knowledges have a place, depending on the context (see #3 in Figure 3.1). Combining sources of knowledge is desirable because it increases the range of information available and because different knowledges have different relative strengths (Berkes and Berkes 2009).

This context-specific approach valuing local knowledges and institutions goes against what the Quebec government, for instance, has so far used for the consultation of Aboriginal peoples. Instead, the province has sought a one-size-fits-all consultation framework. In contrast, to operate within an ACM framework means that each Aboriginal nation should have its own participation framework



attuned to its own ways of doing, a right confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada through the *Taku River FN* decision in 2004, as explained in Chapter 2.

### 3.5.2. Learning

In ACM, learning happens through the interaction of people and narratives (see #2 in Figure 3.1). Knowledge is also improved and changed through feedbacks within the social-ecological system (see #4 in Figure 3.1) responding to management actions or environmental policies. This approach is particularly important in a co-management context involving First Nations because of the uncertainty surrounding the choice of socially acceptable methods and institutions that will work.

In ACM, learning “not only corrects errors in current routines and practices but questions the routines themselves, and the conceptions and worldviews shaping those routines” (Schultz 2009:20). Learning is done through careful monitoring of actions, careful documentation of outcomes, and responses to “critical questions posed by both supporters and opponents” (Plummer and Armitage 2007:63). In ACM learning is also done through purposive experimentation (on methods, policies, and institutions), sometimes by allowing experiments to fail. This experimentation is identified as being important because communities trapped in poverty are often trapped because they tend to focus on one option only (Westley et al. 2007).

From this perspective, managers build understanding through the interaction of multiple models, or points of view of reality, in order to gain a richer and more complete picture. This means having a robust environmental management framework allowing for a solid navigation through complexity with the input of various stakeholders, instead of simply the scientists or ‘experts’ engaging in the process. This is how adaptive environmental management has become adaptive co-management, a flexible management process, enabling participating partners to enhance their knowledge about the environment through practice.

### **3.6. WHAT IS ADAPTIVE IN ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT:**

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN A COMPLEX WORLD**

In adaptive co-management, both ecological and social uncertainties are “acknowledged as inherent to governance, and is best addressed with collaborative processes and recognition that multiple sources and types of knowledge are relevant to problem solving” (Armitage et al. 2009:96). This acknowledgement means that the management system needs the capacity to adapt. But what exactly adapts in ACM? This section, illustrated by the third rectangle in Figure 3.1, identifies the three adaptive components of adaptive co-management: (1) adaptive policies and methods, (2) adaptive governance, and (3) adaptive infrastructure.

##### *3.6.1. Management policies and practices*

In an ACM context, management is experimental. By experimenting with different management policies and methods (see #5 in Figure 3.1), resource managers increase the capacity for learning. Experimenting can either be passive or active. In passive adaptive management, historical data and memory are used to develop a single working policy and/or management hypothesis and to implement one preferred course of action (Taylor et al. 1997; Gregory et al. 2006). The course of action is then corrected according to the kind of feedback obtained. This is how most environmental management to date works.

Active adaptive management, on the other hand, seeks to define *competing* hypotheses about the impact of management activities (Taylor et al. 1997; Gregory et al. 2006). “Policies become hypotheses and management actions become experiments to test those hypotheses” (Folke et al. 2005:447). Several types of management activities can take place at the same time with the aim of comparing results. Not only are management objectives and policies adjusted in response to new information (as in passive adaptive management), but management policies are deliberately designed to enhance the *rate* of

improvement. “Given the complexity of the process of designing rules to regulate the use of (...) resources, (...) all public policies should be considered as experiments” (Ostrom 2007:33).

In both active and passive adaptive management, “crisis, perceived or real, seems to trigger learning and knowledge generation” (Folke et al. 2005:446). A challenge is therefore to promote knowledge generation and think about alternatives when things are working well. One way to do that is to allow certain experiments to fail, in order to gain a better understanding of the impact of different options. However, if the system is not resilient, failure of experiments is not an option and active adaptive management does not work well if institutional constraints are strong. What usually takes place is a mix of both active and passive adaptive management (Taylor et al. 1997). It is rare that in any given situation, active management is possible for all types of actions or decisions to be taken.

To better formulate testable hypotheses and experiment, knowledge systems (the ones used by the local population and the one used by the state) need to connect (see #2 in Figure 3.1), and monitoring activities need to be performed by both co-management partners. This process can involve building networks towards external people or organisations (such as independent scientists, governments, other Aboriginal organisations, etc.).

### *3.6.2. Institutions of governance*

The need for flexible institutions and governance (see #6 in Figure 3.1) has been identified more recently, as “adaptive co-management extends adaptive management into the social domain” (Folke et al. 2005:448). To enhance the capacity of social-ecological systems to cope with change and adapt, it is desirable to design institutions of governance that are not persistent in time, but change as the social and ecological context change (Anderies et al. 2004). This

can be done by nurturing innovation within the institutions (Westley et al. 2007; Biggs et al. 2010).

Governance – the structures and processes by which societies share power and shape individual and collective actions (Young 2008) – provides the vision and direction operationalized by management activities (Boyle et al. 2001, cited in Folke et al. 2005). We have been used to rely on government to take care of governance (Delmas and Young 2009), but within a complexity/uncertainty paradigm, “governance is not the sole purview of the state through government, but rather emerges from the interactions of many actors, including the private sector and not-for-profit organizations” (Lebel et al. 2006). ACM literature therefore frames structure or institution building as a self-organizing process for problem solving (e.g. Berkes 2009), including the relevant people for a specific management problem in a specific context. In these self-organizing “adhocracies” (Hahn et al. 2006:586), individual leaders are found to play an important role in making things happen (Olsson et al. 2004; Hahn et al. 2006).

As environmental ACM is driven by the ultimate goal of resolving environmental management problems, “there is a new appreciation of loosely structured governance entities that spontaneously emerge or self-organise, often in response to rigid governmental structures” (Folke et al. 2005: 449). In the particular context of treaties, or other co-management arrangements with First Nations, this self-organizing process cannot be let completely loose, for it is usually an obligation to have members of the concerned First Nation to participate at particular stages of the process.

Since ecological processes happen on different scales, ecological knowledge has to be built at different levels to match these processes. From a learning and an institutional point of view, there is a need for various organizations to work at different scales as well (Wilson et al. 1994; Anderies et al. 2004; Olsson et al. 2004; Armitage et al. 2009). This is because the local level does not have the

capacity to do everything by itself (Dowsley 2007) and because there is a need for institutions to work at different scales in order to match the dynamics of biophysical systems (Galaz et al. 2008). Linkages therefore have to be built across levels and organisations, networks have to be created with others. Adaptive governance therefore connects individuals, organizations, agencies, and institutions at multiple scales (Folke et al. 2005). They include redundant and layered institutions, a mix of institutional types (Armitage et al. 2009:96), and bridging organisations. Finally, ACM systems nurture sources of resilience for renewal and reorganization (Folke et al. 2005) and therefore may build on already existing institutional arrangements (Olsson et al. 2004).

As with policies and methods, it is also ideal to experiment with institutions. It may be more complicated to have concurrent experiments happening, but it is possible. In the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw case, three organisations – one for each community – are responsible for bridging the gap between Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families and the forest industry (and government bureaucrats) to mitigate the effects of logging operations on family trapping lots and hunting territories. Each of these organisations has its own set of procedures, which is revised periodically, in part through a sharing of experiences with the other two organisations.

### *3.6.3. Physical infrastructure*

The third adaptive component concerns physical infrastructure (see #7 in Figure 3.1). Recent research (e.g. Sengupta et al. 2001) shows how building rigid, costly physical infrastructure can commit a community or society to certain development paths:

Investments once made cannot be easily dismantled. Even though considerable care is taken when planning for the construction of new infrastructure facilities, the operation of actual irrigation systems frequently differs substantially from initial plans (Sengupta et al. 2001:79)

Reality (...) is never so fixed. Whether or not the farmers actually build a particular irrigation system or not, they are frequently left with the problem of how to operate and maintain it over many years. In doing so, they are faced with a wide diversity of uncertain events including variations in water supply, in factors affecting the deterioration of the system [such as severe storms], in the amount of land irrigated, in the level of free riding, and in the amount of water taken by farmers located advantageously (Sengupta et al. 2001:108)

The challenge is therefore to develop flexible infrastructures, which can be removed, transformed or used for purposes other than originally intended, once projects are decommissioned. This component of adaptive co-management is not being addressed in this research. I rather focus on the first two components.

### **3.7. PRECONDITIONS FOR ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT**

So far, in this chapter I have identified the characteristics of an adaptive co-management process. In this next section, I identify preconditions that co-management partners need to be willing to put in place in order to achieve an ACM framework.

When reviewing the literature on ACM, it is possible to identify six preconditions that should be met before people start to do adaptive co-management. ACM has to be seen as a deliberate process among all stakeholders (Armitage et al. 2009); that is, people need to willingly engage in an adaptive process. A co-management arrangement can be imposed on one or more parties, but the adaptive dimension cannot be built if partners do not agree to the undertaking. The six preconditions identified below are needed if ACM is to be possible in a certain context. They are the ones I will be focusing on in the thesis.

1. Foster a learning environment:
  - Organizations need to promote learning
  - Learning from experience, learning to learn
  - Learning to live with change and uncertainty
  - Ongoing transparent and documented assessment of actions and decisions
2. Consider multiple worldviews and epistemologies:
  - Accommodate diverse views and achieving multiple results
  - Shared learning by bridging knowledge systems
  - Group decision making that accommodates diverse views
3. Experiment:
  - Active and passive experimentation
  - Build resilience to experiment
4. Build trust:
  - Trust between managing partners
  - Trust in other sources of knowledge
5. Live with and accept change and uncertainty
6. Clarify and accept access and property rights.

### **3.8. CRITIQUES OF ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT**

Adaptive co-management as an approach is still in its infancy, and as Plummer and Armitage note, ACM has so far more than often taken the shape of an “idealised narrative (supported by) relatively little empirical evidence and even less evaluative experience” (Plummer and Armitage 2007:71). In much of the literature about ACM, success seems to be dependent on the participant’s goodwill. Potential problems are often left out of the discussion on ACM.

There are, however, several critiques and cautions that could be directed towards the approach. While co-management is about resolving decision-making power imbalances between a local community and the central government, it does not resolve all imbalances. More input from local communities in decision-making does not resolve all power imbalances. Power is not only defined by the number of votes a group gets on a co-management board. Power is also related to learning (who defines what type of learning to use), to the choice of indicators for measuring outcomes of the co-management process, or to the sharing of political, ecological, and livelihood risks when change occurs (Armitage et al. 2008, 2009).

Earlier in this chapter I noted that resilience is often an objective in an adaptive co-management situation. The goal of ACM is to maintain a certain configuration of a social-ecological system, or to change a system and develop a new configuration. This action of deciding which configuration is best is not a neutral exercise. Although ACM aims to involve marginal voices, power differentials may still be present. Who decides what the desired characteristics of the system are? Who decides to 'adapt' and favour one type of institution over the other? These are fundamentally political questions (Nadasdy 2007). Such questions have not been entirely answered by co-management approaches that have been used so far and are not completely answered by the younger ACM framework either.

In trying to answer the questions above about what system configuration is best, the implicit assumption often made is that scientific knowledge is the most convincing source of knowledge, no matter how many alternative narratives are spelled out. Thus, "research has yet to show under what conditions and at what cultural consequence indigenous representatives are able to express themselves. Nor has it been shown how cultural biases, including perceptions of the 'other', influence group behavior" (Natcher et al. 2005:240).



Consequently, failure to recognize cultural dimensions of learning, and the cultural origins of worldviews and environmental ethics results in “superficial policy measures that fail to address the deeper underlying (structural) differences between resource users” (Adams et al. 2003:1916):

The origins of conflict go beyond material incompatibilities. They arise at a deeper cognitive level. In our view, stakeholders draw on their current knowledge and understanding to cognitively frame a specific common pool resource management problem. Thus, differences in knowledge, understanding, preconceptions, and priorities are often obscured in conventional policy dialogue and may provide a deeper explanation of conflict. It is precisely when different stakeholders (of different sizes and operating at different levels) reveal different interpretations of key issues that the policy debate can be most productive (Adams et al. 2003:1916)

Failure to attend to these dimensions influencing co-management practices can even reinforce existing inequities (Nadasdy 2003a).

Finally, other critiques remind us that the transfer of powers from central governments towards the local can re-enforce local elites and increase injustices (Berkes 2009). Indeed, this latter point is a concern voiced by some respondents I talked to for this thesis research. There is therefore a need to attend to the “dynamics of power inherent in novel institutional arrangements” (Armitage et al. 2009:98).

One way to do so is to foster learning that accounts for the social context (e.g. power imbalances) and make the co-management system as flexible as possible, so that structures of inequalities can be reviewed and changed. As such, in the next section I outline how I plan to move forward with utilising ACM in this thesis.

### **3.9. CONCLUSION: ACM AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE THESIS**

In this chapter I have developed the theoretical framework that I use through the rest of this thesis. The next chapter develops in further detail a particular element to be included in adaptive co-management: traditional knowledge (which refers to #3 on Figure 3.1). The two chapters together provide a lens that will allow me to explain how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok intend to bring forward their rights, interests, ambitions, and worldviews in a novel environmental management system currently being negotiated with the state government.

To arrive at the adaptive co-management approach that I will be utilising in the thesis, I first reviewed the reasons supporting the adoption of an adaptive approach to co-management in a treaty context by shedding light on an ontological foundation rooted in the idea that social-ecological systems to be managed are complex systems, which often behave unpredictably. Then, in section 3.5, I highlighted the importance, given this complexity and unpredictability, of including multiple understandings of the world. Multiple knowledge systems may well be useful when the unexpected happens. Nurturing diversity is a way to ensure greater options for the reorganization of systems. Finally, I moved on to investigate the adaptive components of adaptive management. This brought to light three components that have to be made adaptive in a co-management arrangement for a complex world: policies and methods, governance, infrastructure.

In sum, what I have developed here is a framework that will allow me to assess how ACM could unfold in a treaty context (I focus on the specific context of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok) and if this approach would be an improvement over the current treaty-making approach used by governments and First Nations. It will also allow for an assessment of how the six preconditions identified in section 3.7 – needed to build organisations for adaptive treaties – can unfold in the Atikamekw treaty-making context.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE SIX FACES OF TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADIAN CO-MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS<sup>3</sup>**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

Centralized, bureaucratic resource management systems have been criticized for leading to ecological collapses and for failing to improve people's lives (Agrawal 1995, 2003; Holling and Meffe 1996; Scott 1998; Schelhas et al. 2001). Consequently, attention has started to focus on collaborative processes, which are viewed by many as able: to enhance the robustness of ecological management decisions by gaining access to systems of knowledge and management practices that are better attuned to local specifics (Berkes 1998; Pálsson 1998); to increase the efficiency of decision implementation by involving people that are directly affected by the decisions in activities such as monitoring (Kearney 1989; Pinkerton 1989; Hanna 1998; Sheppard and Meitner 2005); and to increase equity in the decision-making process by moving away from management models that are controlled by a central state that is remote from the needs of local people and from regional and cultural specificities (McCay 1996; Persoon and van Est 2003; Pagdee et al. 2006).

To meet similar goals, Canadian First Nations have been active since the 1970s in negotiating with the Canadian state government co-management arrangements that would increase their participation in decisions concerning the land and natural resources. These negotiations, the fruit of years of Aboriginal political activism and successive court decisions made in First Nations' favor, have transformed and continue to transform the way in which resource management is undertaken in

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<sup>3</sup> This chapter was published as a paper in 2007: Houde, N. (2007). The six faces of traditional ecological knowledge: challenges and opportunities for Canadian co-management arrangements. *Ecology and Society* 12(2): 34. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol12/iss2/art34/>

various Canadian provinces (Coates 1992). Through the 1973 *Calder* decision, involving the Nisga'a nation of British Columbia, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the existence of an Aboriginal title to the land (Dupuis 2001), thereby pushing the Canadian government to establish the Office of Native Claims to negotiate land claims settlements with several First Nations (Cassidy 1992). A court action launched in the early 1970s by the Cree Nation of Quebec led to the conclusion of the first Canadian modern treaty, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, which led to the emergence of co-management boards. The 1990 *Sparrow* decision acknowledged the ancestral right of Aboriginals to subsistence fishing, and the 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision gave more authority to oral traditions and narratives in decision-making processes. More recently, other decisions such as *Haida vs. BC* and *Taku River First Nation vs. B.C.*, both reached in 2004, gave more leverage to the First Nations' case with regard to increasing their role in strategic planning and natural resources policy making.

From treaties to more informal arrangements, co-management “broadly refers to the sharing of power and responsibility between government and local resource users, [this being achieved through] various levels of integration of local and state level management systems” (Notzke 1995a:187). Through such rearrangement of decision-making processes, First Nations not only seek greater control over land and resources, but aim for processes that will lead to management decisions that are closer to their values and worldviews, reflecting to a wider extent the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that they possess about the land. Recent treaties (e.g. Canada 2002, 2005) or bilateral agreements (e.g. Quebec and Crees of Quebec 2002) therefore often include mechanisms to involve TEK.

However, this task of involving TEK in decision-making processes meets with challenges that have much to do with the way that this knowledge is understood. Often, schemes to involve First Nations in decision-making processes have been criticized for equating TEK to a collection of data about the environment that could complement and be integrated within the existing data sets used by state

management systems and for failing to acknowledge the value system and cosmological context within which this traditional knowledge was generated and makes sense (e.g. McGregor 1999, 2000; Simpson 2001; Gallagher 2003). Starting with the premise that TEK is more than a mere collection of data about the environment, I review the different faces that have been given to TEK in the literature. I also identify the challenges and opportunities that each one of these faces poses for the design of co-management arrangements, citing examples from various existing arrangements. The literature on TEK is very broad, and I do not intend to undertake a complete review of the field, if such an endeavour were indeed possible. Rather, for the purposes of this discourse, I focus on how ideas about TEK emerged in the Canadian context of co-management.

#### **4.2. WHAT IS TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE?**

I first encountered traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in the format of a database. I had recently been hired as a policy advisor by a First Nation tribal council in the province of Quebec, Canada, and my first task was to create an inventory of geographic information that the council possessed in various forms. Through this work, I discovered a set of ArcView *shapefiles* bearing the prefix TEK. Not knowing the meaning of these three letters, I asked my colleagues for a meaning and discovered that TEK stood for traditional ecological knowledge. I thought it was curious that an English acronym would be used to name the files, considering that hardly any of my colleagues were proficient in the English language. Even stranger was the juxtaposition of TEK with French abbreviations, creating file names such as *tekcas* (for *castor*: the beaver) or *tekfbro* (for *frayère à brochet*: pike spawning bed). As I eventually realized, ‘*les TEKs*’ (the TEKs), sometimes called ‘*les milieux de vie*’ (habitats) in French, stood for discrete entities, i.e., polygons identifiable on maps, as sites of significance to be protected from logging operations. For me, the thought that a *milieu de vie* could be reduced to a digitized polygon and swapped between the tribal council and forest companies or among forest companies was very strange. Nevertheless, it seemed

that in the region in which I worked and in much of the literature with which I was becoming familiar, TEK was largely understood as a collection of polygons.

This understanding of TEK makes it a bargaining chip that can be used in negotiations with the state government or private companies. For example, under the 2002 agreement on forestry between the James Bay Cree and the government of Quebec, Cree hunters are allowed to identify up to 1 per cent of the land for protection on cultural grounds (Quebec and Crees of Quebec 2002). Any type of protection that would threaten the forest companies' capacity to produce wood would force the government to compensate these companies for lost volumes of timber. It could therefore be argued that a monetary value was attributed to the areas to be protected, at least indirectly.

For many scholars, to associate TEK with discrete entities to be protected or traded such as in the case reported above is problematic (e.g. Rundstrom 1995; McGregor 1999; Stevenson 1999; Simpson 2001) because providing information about wildlife habitats or the location of sites of human occupation such as temporary hunting camps or portage trails fails to guide management practices in a direction that is truly compatible with Aboriginal values and is not representative of the depth of the knowledge that First Nations possess about the land. Furthermore, this type of data acquisition has been considered problematic because the same scholars believe that TEK cannot be extracted from its holder and from the context in which it was created without losing part of its meaning (e.g. McGregor 1999, 2000; Simpson 2001; Gallagher 2003), especially if First Nations do not have control over how this knowledge is to be projected in reports, scholarly journals, or maps (Johnson 1992b; Kuhn and Duerden 1996; Stevenson 1996; Nadasdy 1999).

To address these concerns, a definition of TEK that accounts for more than the discrete, localized, and localizable data about the environment of which it is partly composed must be provided. Therefore, I use Usher's (2000:185) definition of

TEK, which states that “TEK refers specifically to *all types* of knowledge about the environment derived from experience and traditions of a particular group of people” (my emphasis). What these types of knowledge are exactly is what I will identify in the next section, after a brief overview of the nomenclature attributed to what I refer to as TEK.

#### *4.2.1. The nomenclature of traditional ecological knowledge*

It is perhaps because TEK connects such varied dimensions as the type of knowledge, the identity of knowledge holders, and the process of knowledge acquisition that there exists a great variety of definitions and an extensive nomenclature for TEK. For some, this intimate knowledge can be labelled as ‘local’ or ‘Indigenous knowledge’ to emphasize its very localness (e.g. Warren and Rajasekaran 1995; Antweiler 2004) because it is “embedded in its particular community, it is contextually bound, (...) and it requires a commitment to the local context” (Banuri and Apffel-Marglin 1993, as quoted in Agrawal 1995:418). The word Indigenous is used by some specifically to point out that it refers to knowledge systems “unique to a particular community or ethnic group” (Warren and Pinkston 1998:158).

For others, the expression ‘traditional knowledge’ is deemed more appropriate because it shows the ancient roots of “much of this knowledge” (Nickels 1999:8) and the idea that it is knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to the next (Hobson 1992; Brant Castellano 2000). However, this use of the word traditional is viewed by some (e.g. Stevenson 1996, 1999) as not empowering to people because it may be perceived as referring to a distant past, without illustrating the dynamical aspect of that knowledge and its current relevance. Aboriginals sometimes feel that “the term ‘traditional’ imposes a way of life on them that is shackled to the past and does not allow them to change” (Gombay 1995, as quoted in Stevenson 1996:280).

Conversely, First Nations themselves are sometimes tempted to use the word traditional, especially in the context of the negotiation of co-management arrangements, specifically to root their knowledge in the past and give it the authority of difference in the face of state resource management, which claims to be supported by science. In the public eye, First Nations' legitimacy in negotiating for the co-management of the land partly lies in the existence of located ancestral traditions reproduced over time immemorial. If identities and cultures are in constant transformation and never fixed within time or space, this begs the question of how one is to approach negotiations when bearing in mind that the hegemonic social group involved in the negotiation process wishes to convey the message that if culture does transform over time or moves through space, it is no longer traditional and is therefore an invalid partner in the negotiation. This questioning refers to what Rose (1993) labelled as a paradoxical space situated both at the center and at the margins of power. As hooks (1991, as quoted in Valentine 2001:149) states, "(Marginality is) a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist". Different cultural traditions, from which emerged, for instance, particular land stewardship systems, have placed Canadian First Nations at the margins of Canadian society both economically and socially, whereas the recognition of that difference by both the First Nations and non-Natives authorizes the First Nations to negotiate co-management arrangements.

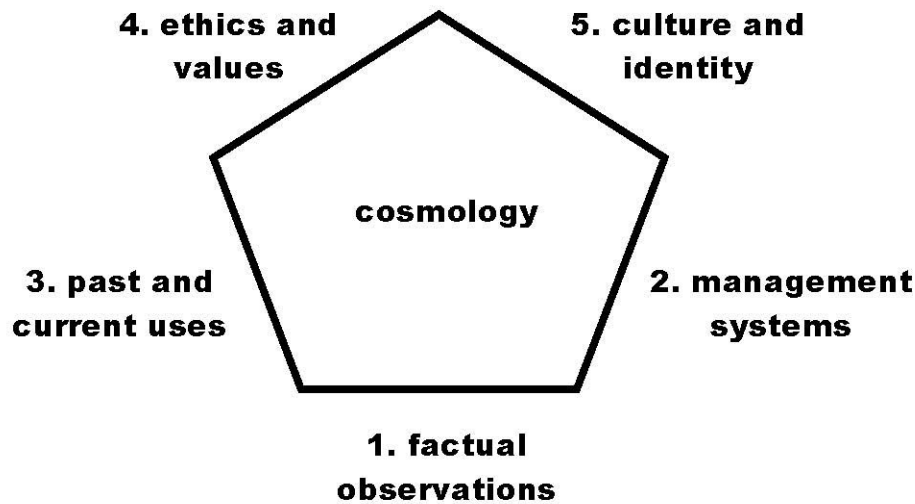
This discussion has implications for my analysis because it shows that if the three goals stated in the introduction, i.e., increased equity, increased efficiency of management decisions, and increased robustness of ecological management decisions, are to be reached, it becomes necessary to give more authority to traditional knowledge and involve it as complementary to scientific knowledge development. For the purposes of my analysis, I use the expression 'traditional ecological knowledge' to emphasize the connection of traditional knowledge to ecological processes, as well as to emphasize its importance in the context of environmental co-management.



#### **4.3. THE FACES OF TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Several authors have attempted to contrast the knowledge of the environment possessed by local Aboriginal groups with the knowledge system used by the colonizer. Some (e.g. Cruikshank 1981; Stevenson 1996; Usher 2000) have broken down the types of knowledge elements into categories that, taken together, form the traditional ecological knowledge of a group. This is an attempt to understand how traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) could be an informative complement to science or how it could be involved in environmental management. Other authors have also identified categories of TEK, although in a less comprehensive or explicit manner.

In the following section, I present a synthesis of these typologies that are provided in the literature to identify as precisely as possible the ways in which TEK is understood. This synthesis was done with the goal of using TEK in co-management arrangements in a manner that comprehensively satisfies First Nations. It identifies six interconnected and mutually informing faces (see Figure 4.1) of TEK that are to be considered by partners in co-management to better identify areas of difference and convergence when attempting to bring two ways of thinking and knowing together. TEK forms a pentagon held together by the cosmological underpinning that gives meaning to the knowledge system. The three faces at the bottom are those that non-Natives would tend to understand to a greater extent. To have a complete picture of a TEK system, however, the pentagon needs to be rotated. Furthermore, the nature of what holds the pentagon together must be acknowledged. The framework that I present differs from those that have already been offered in the literature in that it acknowledges more clearly the upper faces of the pentagon (faces four, five, and six) and specifically identifies TEK as a vector for cultural identity. By being more detailed about the characterization of the upper three faces, the framework allows for better reflection on the most challenging aspects of TEK involvement in co-management arrangements.



**Figure 4.1.** The six faces of traditional ecological knowledge  
(source: author)

#### *4.3.1. First face: factual observations, classifications, and system dynamics*

The most understood aspect of TEK is the body of factual, specific observations that TEK holders are capable of generating. It is also the body of knowledge that was first explored by nonaboriginal researchers through folk taxonomy studies. This face of TEK therefore consists of the recognition, naming, and classification of discrete components of the environment (Johnson 1992b; Mailhot 1993; Kuhn and Duerden 1996; Neis et al. 1999; Nickels 1999; Antweiler 2004). It is a set of both separate empirical observations and information, i.e., synthesized data (Wenzel 1999), such as facts about animals and their behavior and habitat, the anatomy of species, and animal abundance (Nakashima 1990; Freeman 1992; Mailhot 1993; Kuhn and Duerden 1996; Neis et al. 1999; Brant Castellano 2000; Huntington 2000; Turner et al. 2000; Simpson 2001; Nadasdy 2003b; Peters 2003b; Wenzel 2004). This type of knowledge is also about understanding the interrelationships that occur among species, the connections within the

biophysical environment, and the spatial distributions and historical trends of spatial and population patterns, allowing for the monitoring of ecosystem health indicators and the measurement of ecological changes, including climate (Freeman 1992; Johnson 1992a, 1992b; Mailhot 1993; Ferguson and Messier 1997; Duerden and Kuhn 1998; Neis et al. 1999; Nickels 1999; Wenzel 1999). Thus, it is as much about understanding the dynamics of ecosystems as about the description of their components.

This type of empirical knowledge consists of a set of generalized observations conducted over a long period of time and reinforced by accounts of other TEK holders (Usher 2000). It is therefore personal knowledge, but it is enriched and validated through social life. It has been pointed out that it is linked to survival, i.e., it is an 'appropriate' ecological knowledge (Berkes 1988), but that it can also emerge out of sheer curiosity (Johnson 1992b).

This is the face that is most compatible with the knowledge used by resource management bureaucrats (Berkes 1999; Nadasdy 2003a, 2003b). It is a type of knowledge that is attractive to many because it may enhance scientific knowledge about the environment, but also provides additional information to databases while monitoring for environmental changes. This is seen as most useful in the context of environmental impact assessments (Stevenson 1996; Usher 2000), risk assessments (e.g. Nakashima 1990), and the management of species at risk (e.g. Kendrick 2003). It is therefore able to somewhat increase the participation of First Nations in decision-making processes by helping to identify, for instance, unforeseen and undesirable consequences of development projects. It provides First Nations with the opportunity to influence the direction of resource management actions.

However, as long as First Nations do not have more control over the final decisions being made in resource management and as long as they do not participate more in the managing of that information, factual TEK is open to being

misinterpreted or discarded when it does not serve the particular interests of the state or private interests represented by the state. This lack of control over TEK and its interpretation has been pointed out by many Aboriginals as a source of great concern (e.g. McGregor 1999). The *les TEKs* or *les milieux de vies* to which I referred earlier exemplify problems that arise from a lack of information control by First Nations. When a forest company consults a hunting family regarding the land, it catalogs sites to be protected. However, once these data are integrated into the company's databases to generate logging models, the family loses control of the way in which the logging will actually be done, which may be very far removed from what the family had imagined. In Quebec, for instance, whereas consultations with a generic *Autochtones* (Indigenous) category of actors are mandatory for forest planners, consensus on logging plans is by no means required (Quebec 2006). The next time the company has to plan, it may not even consider it useful to return to consult with the family because it already has its 'TEK' in storage. These concerns about losing control of the interpretation of data are not helped by TEK research titles such as "Capturing Traditional Environmental Knowledge" (Johnson 1992b), "Taking Advantage of Indigenous Knowledge" (Veitayaki 2002), or "One Last Chance: Tapping Indigenous Knowledge (...)" (Thomas 2003). This focus on the utility and economic value of TEK has led Indigenous peoples worldwide to construct arguments toward the recognition of fundamental rights to TEK, including a share of the monetary benefits obtained from the use of this knowledge (Mauro and Hardison 2000).

#### *4.3.2. Second face: management systems*

As mentioned earlier and discussed extensively in the literature, TEK largely serves the purpose of subsistence. Therefore, a major theme of research on TEK is that of resource management systems and how they are adapted to local environments. Thus, the second face of TEK refers to the strategies for ensuring the sustainable use of local natural resources such as pest management, resource conservation, multiple cropping patterns, and methods for estimating the state of resources (Berkes 1988; Gunn et al. 1988; Johnson 1992a, 1992b; Gadgil et al.

1993; Mailhot 1993; Agrawal 1995; Kuhn and Duerden 1996; Ferguson and Messier 1997; Duerden and Kuhn 1998; Nadasdy 1999; Neis et al. 1999; Nickels 1999; Turner et al. 2000; Simpson 2001; Peters 2003b; Antweiler 2004; Lewis and Sheppard 2005). This face acknowledges that TEK is a “complex web of practices” related to the knowledge of animals and their interrelationships (Nadasdy 1999:6) that adapts to change by developing appropriate and effective technologies (Johnson 1992b; Warren and Rajasekaran 1995; Wenzel 2004).

This face of TEK has been investigated in the North American context by academics through studies of management systems such as harvesting rotations in beaver trap-line systems (Feit 1978; Berkes 1998), controlled fires in the Yukon (Lewis 1989), and patterns of wild egg collection (Hunn et al. 2003). These studies have aimed at finding novel ways of managing the environment in a sustainable manner. This line of work is undertaken in the context of an increased realization that ecosystems are complex, that one-size-fits-all management policies are ill adapted to consider local specificities, and that adaptive processes are needed to cope with change (Holling and Meffe 1996; Gunderson 1999).

Some promising attempts have been made to implement flexible, locally based management systems, for instance, the implementation of model forests throughout Canada in which local Aboriginal communities may be able to gain greater control of information management, forest practices, and the outcomes of management activities. An example of a model forest managed under Aboriginal responsibility is that of Waswanipi on Quebec Cree land (Waswanipi Cree Model Forest 2008). Further advances have been made recently in the updated Quebec *Forest Act*, introduced in 2001, which has permitted the adaptation of forest management regulations to local needs, including those of First Nations, as long as these adaptations comply with provincial baseline standards (Quebec 2006).

#### 4.3.3. *Third face: Past and current uses of the environment*

This third face of TEK highlights the time dimension of traditional knowledge while locating it precisely in space. It is knowledge of the past and current uses of the environment that is transmitted through oral history (Neis et al. 1999; Usher 2000; Peters 2003b). It refers to the knowledge of historical patterns of land use and settlement, occupancy, and harvest levels (Duerden and Kuhn 1998; Wenzel 1999; Usher 2000). It also concerns the location of medicinal plants and cultural and historical sites (Mailhot 1993; Lewis and Sheppard 2005). Part of this dimension of TEK is life stories that are transmitted over generations through narratives that give a sense of family and community (Johnson 1992b; Cruikshank 1998; Callaway 2004).

This face of TEK is often revealed by Canadian First Nations in the context of land claims negotiations. The 1997 Supreme Court of Canada landmark decision in *Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia* gave wider authority to oral history (Joffe 2000). It is therefore now commonplace for First Nations to put historical sites such as burial places and occupancy patterns (e.g. Horvath et al. 2002), in addition to toponyms in local languages (Desbiens 2004b; Charland 2005), on maps to reclaim lost geography and assert a historical Aboriginal connection to the land. Although imperfect in its depiction of the depth of this connection, the exposure of this face of TEK is a compromise that First Nations make because it allows them to gain wider credibility within the western scientific paradigm while awaiting greater recognition of the authoritative value of their own knowledge systems.

Current land use is sometimes incorporated in land-use plans and is increasingly incorporated as multiple-use frameworks are proposed in different jurisdictions and as Aboriginal rights over the use of natural resources are being awarded by court systems. However, First Nations are quite careful with the exposure of this type of knowledge because the lack of control over information can lead to

misinterpretation and because benefits, for instance, from the sharing of medicinal plant locations, are not always distributed equitably.

The three faces that I have presented thus far are largely those with which non-Natives are most familiar. They are also those that are less problematic to consider in state resource management or co-management processes. The faces that I present next are much more abstract for non-Natives and potentially bear fundamental differences from the mainstream values that are encoded in Canadian institutions. They are therefore much more complex to involve fully in state resource management.

#### *4.3.4. Fourth face: ethics and values*

The fourth face of TEK relates to “value statements about how things should be” (Usher 2000:186). For Wenzel (2004), this face of TEK is the connection between the belief system (the fifth face) and the organization of facts and actions. Berkes (1988, 1999), in a more pragmatic approach, refers to an environmental ethics that keeps exploitive abilities in check. This face is the expression of values concerning correct attitudes, often identified as values of respect, to adopt toward nonhuman animals, the environment in general, and between humans (Johnson 1992b; Kuhn and Duerden 1996; Stevenson 1996; McGregor 1999; Nadasdy 1999; Simpson 2001; Callaway 2004; Wenzel 2004; Lewis and Sheppard 2005).

This face of TEK is not currently well translated in state resource management. Policy documents often refer to the cultural rights of First Nations or rights to protect sacred spaces for the purpose of rituals, but these provisions do not allow for the full accommodation of alternative land ethics. First Nations have been increasingly vocal about their values in position papers and public meetings, but with very limited results. Catch-and-release fishing or trophy hunting are examples of incompatibility between state and Aboriginal ethics that are not being addressed seriously. For instance, the Haida people of British Columbia have long opposed recreational bear hunting, which is considered disrespectful toward the

animal (CHN 2004). Since 1995, when the Council of the Haida Nation issued a formal request to ban recreational bear hunting on Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands), the Haida have tried to encourage local outfitters to stop offering hunting opportunities to tourists and to provide bear-watching opportunities as an alternative. This initiative has had limited effect because bear hunting still continues on Haida Gwaii, with the exception of Gwaii Haanas, which is a National Park located in the southern part of the archipelago (Burles et al. 2004; Process Management Team 2006).

#### *4.3.5. Fifth face: traditional ecological knowledge as a vector for cultural identity*

This face emphasizes the role of language and images of the past in giving life to culture. It has been argued that the land is at the heart of Aboriginal cultures (IDDPNQL 2004) and that if the land ‘disappears’, or transforms too much, cultures and peoples also disappear (CNA 2004). “Landscapes ‘house’ (...) stories, and the protection of these places is key to their long-term survival in Aboriginal culture” (Buggey 2004:17). This face of TEK understands the stories, values, and social relations that reside in places as contributing to the survival, reproduction, and evolution of Aboriginal cultures and identities. It stresses the restorative benefits of cultural landscapes as places for spiritual renewal (Lewis and Sheppard 2005).

Although European settlers first perceived North America as largely empty space, it was nevertheless full of meaning for First Nations. These meanings, spiritual or other, developed historically and are at the basis of what many have pointed to as being an Aboriginal sense of place or feeling of home and of identity (Kuhn and Duerden 1996; Buggey 2004; Callaway 2004). It has been stated by many First Nations scholars and organizations (e.g. CNA 2004; IDDPNQL 2004) that there exist very strong connections among language and the use of meaningful toponyms, the consumption of country food, life on the land, identity, and cultural survival (e.g. Duerden and Kuhn 1998; Kulchyski 1998; Callaway 2004; Myers et al. 2005). Landscape features can act as points of reference for communicating



tacit knowledge (Cruikshank 2005). It has further been noted that rapid transformation of the land can break historical connections with the past, thus changing its meaning for current generations. This has in turn eroded the sense of place, which is a central feature of Aboriginal identities. Hydroelectric dams constitute an example of change that has a negative effect on Aboriginal societies by flooding or draining places that are invested in meaning or by changing patterns in food consumption because of increases in methylmercury in fish (Dumont et al. 1998; Myers et al. 2005). Recently, attention has been directed toward the way that climate change or the presence of persistent pollutants in the Canadian Arctic is transforming the landscape from a place able to sustain the local communities socially and nutritionally to a place in which people now lack confidence in its ability to provide healthy sustenance (Berkes et al. 2005).

The need for meaningful landscapes pushes First Nations to express these connections among the state of the environment, language, the consumption of country food, life on the land, identity, and cultural survival while negotiating treaties or other co-management arrangements. By expressing this face, each First Nation affirms its identity as a coherent cultural whole located within the land for which it claims responsibility. The expression of this face strengthens First Nations' authority to negotiate co-management arrangements. Aboriginals refer to these connections when trying to force major shifts in environmental policy. In 2005, for instance, representatives of the Inuit people filed a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, asserting that the United States, in refusing to sign international treaties to cut its greenhouse gas emissions, threatened Inuit rights to pursue their traditional lifestyles because these emissions change the climate and their living environment in the Arctic (Gertz 2005). In February 2007, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights agreed to hold a hearing on the matter (Earthjustice 2007). Similarly, the Cree Nation of James Bay alleged in the late 1990s that the government of Quebec was not being respectful of their treaty rights according to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement to pursue a way of life based in part on beaver trapping because the

government was allowing too much logging to take place on Cree ancestral land (Grand Council of the Crees 1998). The landscape was changing too rapidly for the Cree to be able to sustain their culture. Through a court procedure and negotiation, the Cree and the government of Quebec settled the matter through a new agreement, the *Peace of the Braves* (Quebec and Crees of Quebec 2002).

#### *4.3.6. Sixth face: cosmology*

The last identifiable face of TEK is a culturally based cosmology that is the foundation of the other faces and inseparable from them (Kuhn and Duerden 1996; Usher 2000). This face relates to the assumptions and beliefs about how things work (Neis et al. 1999; Nickels 1999). This is the worldview (Mailhot 1993; Duerden and Kuhn 1998; Turner et al. 2000; Antweiler 2004) that explains the way in which things are connected (Pierotti and Wildcat 2000) and gives the principles that regulate human–animal relations and the role of humans in the world (Berkes 1988; Mailhot 1993; Peters 2003b). This dimension of TEK has been explored by many anthropologists and cultural ecologists in attempts to understand, for instance, how Cree (Berkes 1988) or Inuit (Wenzel 2004) peoples understand human–nonhuman animal relationships and how these directly influence social relationships, obligations toward other community members, and management practices (Feit 1988; Johnson 1992b).

This dimension has been said to be akin to religion (e.g. Howard and Widdowson 1996, 1997). Others (e.g. Berkes and Henley 1997; Stevenson 1997) have counter argued that TEK is more of a philosophy than an ideology and that state resource management was, in any case, also founded on a certain philosophy that has been deeply influenced by a Christian values system. It has been argued (e.g. White 2006) that by separating the human being from the object being studied and by reducing the natural world to a collection of commodities traded through hunting or logging licences or land titles, bureaucrats have been working under the assumption that living beings are not equal, that humankind is a separate kingdom, and that nature is at the disposal of humans to be used as is deemed fit.

The appropriateness of opposing TEK and science as separate and different knowledge systems has therefore been under much criticism (Agrawal 1995). It has been argued that the way in which scientific narrative has been built is not so different from that of TEK. Furthermore, Watson-Verran and Turnbull (1995:116) argue that the “great divide in knowledge systems coincided with the great divide between societies that are powerful and those that are not” and that the difference between science and other knowledge systems has more to do with the power to impose a narrative as the truth through devices such as maps and books than with the processes of knowledge building. Consequently, Nadasdy (1999) proposes that research should focus on the power relations that have lead to the creation and imposition of knowledge systems. However, for the purposes of co-management, it is important to contrast alternative worldviews, difficult as it may be to accommodate fundamental and deeply rooted assumptions under a single management regime. However, emphasizing that worldviews are always shifting and in constant flux (Hubbard et al. 2002) suggests the potential for a more optimistic point of view, leading to the possibility of co-constructing new models of the world that would satisfy both parties.

The concept of the cultural landscape is by no means new (Johnson 2000); however, the concept has never been fully integrated into the practice of resource management in Canada. Some attempts have been made, in Quebec for instance, to develop the concept of *forêt habitée* (inhabited forest) and apply it to land-use planning (Bouthillier and Dionne 1995). This reflection, however, has never materialized in a major shift in forest management. I argue that it nevertheless deserves close attention, especially in the context of co-management. “To understand the northern landscape requires an understanding of the related cosmologies” (Buggey 2004:19). These are places that embody traditional narratives and spiritual meaning, as well as economic use (Buggey 2004). They are providers of both physical and spiritual reference and sustenance, as Lewis and Sheppard (2005) have noted. Consequently, propositions have been made

(e.g. Karjala and Dewhurst 2003; Lewis and Sheppard 2005) to integrate Aboriginal concerns at an earlier stage in land-use planning by projecting into the future what the land would look like under different management scenarios and by attempting to find scenarios that would match to a greater extent the idea of what the landscape should look like according to those who live there. Synchronizing logging planning and activities with beaver harvesting patterns or rotating protected areas to ensure that resources such as mature tree stands for bark collecting are always available are thought of as potential avenues for exploration.

#### **4.4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Each of the six faces presents a number of challenges for the co-management of natural resources. I summarize these challenges, along with the key components of each of the faces in Table 4.1. The challenges of the first three faces have to do with the control over the data generated by traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) holders and the lack of confidence that non-Native people have in this data. Lack of trust among people is an obstacle to co-management (Olsson et al. 2004). It may well be somewhat challenging for bureaucrats, who are used to particular ways of producing and monitoring information, to accept information generated within a largely different knowledge system. Also, it may be challenging for central administrations to trust local organizations in developing new context-specific management models.

The next three faces are even more complex to tackle in co-management arrangements because incompatible sets of values can be difficult to accommodate within a single management framework. Competing values in the general public are currently often addressed within liberal, multistakeholder policy-making processes in which the government attempts to strike a balance among competing values and interests. However, this type of framework is not a solution because First Nations organizations do not want to be considered as just another stakeholder (NAFA 1995).

Face	Key Components	Challenges	Opportunities
Factual observations	Empirical observations Classifications Naming of places Descriptions of ecosystem components Understanding of interconnections Spatial patterns Ecosystems dynamics	Aboriginal control over TEK Misinterpretation in various media Sharing of TEK monetary benefits Difficult for central administrations to trust locally produced knowledge	Enhancement of scientific knowledge Monitoring of environmental changes Environmental Impact Assessment Management of species at risk Preparedness to social or ecological surprises
Management systems	Practices adapted to context Methods for conservation Methods for sustainable resource use Methods for adapting to change Appropriate and effective technologies	Delegation of responsibilities by central administrations in order to develop context-specific management models	Decentralized, appropriate management regimes Novel, sustainable approaches Diversification of management regimes
Past and current uses	Historical land-use patterns Historical occupancy Historical harvest levels History of the cultural group	Misinterpretation of oral history Aboriginal control over TEK once revealed Sharing of TEK monetary benefits	Re-appropriation of aboriginal geographies Increased aboriginal negotiation power Identification of medicinal plants
Ethics and values	Correct attitudes to adopt	Values often incompatible with dominant discourse Aboriginals "not just another stakeholder"	Inspiration for new environmental ethics
Vector for cultural survival	Links life on the land, language, identity, and cultural survival	Acceptance of the existence of aboriginal societies as vibrant and multifaceted Liberal policy-making could weaken First Nations' status	Rich cultural diversity
Cosmology	Assumptions about how things work Beliefs Spiritual relationship to the environment	Mistrust of alternative narratives Structural and methodological problems for TEK holders in working with government bureaucrats	Re-evaluation of long-lasting assumptions Preparedness to social and ecological surprises

**Table 4.1.** Summary of the six faces of TEK

Dissimilar worldviews can also be very difficult to accommodate. Partners in the co-management process may mistrust alternative models of how things work. However, if partners put aside the initial assumptions that they have about how the world works to co-construct new models, as suggested by Bohm (1996), this could place Aboriginals at risk to lose what sets them apart and gives them authority in participation in co-management processes, i.e., their specific worldview and set of values.

As mentioned earlier, TEK requires a commitment to the local context. To keep TEK alive means spending a lot of time on the land. Therefore, a challenge that TEK poses to co-management is related to the logistical difficulty of reconciling the time that someone spends on the land with the time-consuming commitment to interact with the co-management board and to keep in touch with government bureaucrats and other stakeholders. This problem is not only a problem of time management, but a problem of the compatibility of methods of information acquisition, processing, and representation required by different knowledge systems.

Although these challenges are very real, the acknowledgment of the many faces of TEK also creates opportunities to enhance the co-management of natural resources (see Table 4.1). Collaborative processes are viewed as having the potential to enhance the robustness of ecological management decisions. Because knowledge about the complexity of ecosystems is incomplete within state bureaucracies and elsewhere, by involving TEK as a complete knowledge system with corresponding management systems that are coherent with local ecological and social contexts, it may be possible to be better prepared for unforeseen consequences of policy and management decisions made by outside bureaucrats. Also, local residents can provide early warning of environmental change (Olsson et al. 2004). Finally, TEK as a knowledge system allows for different perspectives when making sense of environmental complexity, as well as for novel ideas to cope with environmental change. To have available a multiplicity of varied locally

based management systems and institutions could result in a wider set of experiences that could potentially be useful in coping with uncertainty and surprise.

In light of what has been argued regarding the cosmology of TEK, one main challenge for co-management arrangements is to acknowledge that the knowledge systems of both local people and state bureaucrats are based on particular sets of values. From this perspective, the six faces framework could be applied to both of the knowledge systems interacting within the co-management process to explicitly acknowledge the various points of view and find commonalities when co-constructing possible futures. This would also bring a richer cultural diversity to the discussion and possibly inspire new philosophies regarding the environment.

#### **4.5. CONCLUSION**

I reviewed the ways in which different observers of the Canadian resource management scene have conceptualized traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). This review has allowed for the identification of six faces of TEK, each of which is an important dimension to consider in the negotiation and design of co-management arrangements. I identified some of the attempts that have been made to consider each of these faces in current resource management regimes, as well as suggestions that have been made to involve First Nations more extensively in decision-making processes. I also pointed out some of the challenges posed by each face of TEK in the implementation of co-management arrangements. Different environmental ethics, values, and worldviews may be difficult to accommodate on the same land and within the same management system.

However, it is possible to envisage some long-term solutions toward the resolution of Aboriginal claims. Co-management arrangements will have to be designed in such a way that First Nations communities can be involved from the initial stages of decision-making processes. This participation should not be limited to impact assessments for projects, but should also take place in the

strategic planning phase when multiple futures are still possible. Involvement at a strategic level would allow for increased Aboriginal control of TEK and a greater sense of Aboriginal empowerment with regard to the events taking place on their own land while envisioning futures that are more attuned to their perception of how the land should be.

To achieve this, flexible legal frameworks need to be put in place to allow for co-management arrangements to change and adapt over time as trust builds between partners. These arrangements could find inspiration in adaptive environmental management methodologies and by focusing on learning about the systems being managed and about each of the partners' needs and values. Only with patience and flexibility will TEK find its rightful place and role in the cohabitation of the land.



## CHAPTER 5

### CASE STUDY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, I identified that the aim of the research presented in this thesis is to examine the potential for transitioning from current co-management approaches to an *adaptive co-management* (ACM) approach in resolving some of the problems experienced in current treaty negotiations contexts. In Chapter 1, I also identified the three specific objectives of my research, namely (1) to identify how adaptive co-management is an improvement (or not) on existing treaties between Canadian First Nations and the state government, (2) to examine how the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change can be addressed in an adaptive co-management process, and (3) to identify what preconditions need to be met in order to build organisations for adaptive treaties. I also stated that the case of the Atikamekw First Nation treaty negotiations will be used in order to achieve this goal.

This chapter details the inquiry approach and the research methods that were used to fulfill my objectives. The next section explains the general inquiry approach and introduces the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw case study. Section 5.3 further details the approach I used by showing how this research was framed and conducted as a collaborative effort. Finally, section 5.4 details the specific methods that were used to gather and analyse the data needed for the research.

#### 5.2. INQUIRY APPROACH: CASE STUDY

The case study presented in this thesis is an ‘instrumental’ case study. It is a “particular case (...) examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory. The case (...) facilitates our understanding of something else (Stake 1994:237). This is not to say that the context is not important, but I believe there

are enough similarities between the case of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and other contexts for the results to be transferable. The conclusions of the case study could be used in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context, in other Canadian treaty negotiation contexts, and in other contexts where a local or Aboriginal population aims to redefine its relationship with a central government.

I selected the Atikamekw nation as a case study of the negotiation of co-management arrangements between the state and First Nations because the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw-government negotiation is happening now, so there is the potential for a direct social contribution for the thesis. Indeed, some of its elements are already introduced in negotiations documents as a result of my work. Another reason is that I am familiar with the context, as I was involved with the *Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw* (CNA) as a consultant for some years previous to my PhD work. Furthermore, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw leaders know me. It was therefore easier to connect and develop a research project that would be collaborative, an approach valued by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw leadership. Since the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have never signed a treaty, the field is wide open to propose creative solutions. There are several unresolved Aboriginal claims in Canada that could be partly addressed by what is exposed in this thesis. Finally, as I began my research, there seemed to be an overlap between the needs adaptive co-management (an approach I was keen to explore) aims to fulfill and the negotiations needs of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok.

#### *5.2.1. The Atikamekw nation*

The Atikamekw nation encompasses about 6300 people (Quebec 2009), mainly divided into the three communities of Manawan, Opitciwan, and Wemotaci, in central Quebec, Canada (see Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2). *Nitaskinan*, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ancestral land, covers the entirety of the Saint-Maurice River (*Tapiskwan Sipi*) watershed, and overlaps the watersheds of the *Lièvre* River (*Wapoc Sipi*), and of the James Bay. The area shown on Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 is *Nitaskinan* as currently depicted in treaty negotiations documents,

the area currently the object comprehensive claims negotiations. Part of the Algonquian language family (Poirier 2001), traditionally a semi-nomadic people, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have slowly been dispossessed of their land and their way of life by European colonisation and the industrialisation of forestry.

Today, despite all the changes that have affected them, they have retained large aspects of their culture, including their language. In 2006, the language most often spoken at home was the Atikamekw language for 88 per cent of the people of Wemotaci, for 92 per cent in Opitciwan, and for 96 per cent in Manawan (Statistique Canada 2007a, 2007b, 2007c).

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw population is extremely young and growing rapidly. In 2006, the median age of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw population varied between 18 and 22 years old, depending on the communities, whereas the median age of the overall Quebec population was of 41 years old (Statistique Canada 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Unemployment is high, and those who work mostly do so for the local government, the band council. As is the case in several Canadian First Nation communities (see Chapter 2), Atikamekw Nehirowisiw band councils and communities are dependent on federal money, and not much wealth generated by local natural resources actually goes back into the community. The main employers, apart from the band governments, are the forestry sector, the tourism industry, construction, trapping, arts and handicrafts (INAC c.2009). Employment can be provided through short-term projects, such as recently with Hydro Quebec employing members of Wemotaci for the construction of two hydro dams on the Saint-Maurice River. In Opitciwan, the band council is part owner of the sawmill located in the community, which provides work for some of its population.

Each of the communities is located on an 'Indian reserve' and is governed by a band council of elected community members that provides services to the population, takes decisions concerning the life of the community, but has limited influence outside the reserve. Each community elects a chief, and the Atikamekw

nation as a whole elects a Grand Chief by universal suffrage, who has a role of political representation with other governments, nationally and internationally.

In 1975, the three Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities, along with eight Innu communities, created a ‘tribal council’, the CAM, in order to centrally provide a certain number of services (Charest 1992; Dupuis 1993). This umbrella organisation came to represent the eleven communities in political meetings with the federal and provincial governments, and it is the CAM that eventually represented the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and the Innus in the comprehensive claims negotiation process initiated in 1979 (Dupuis 1985). At that time, the CAM represented about one third of the ‘registered Indian’ population of Quebec (CAM 1979). The CAM was dissolved in the early 1990s, and the *Atikamekw Sipi* Tribal Council, or *Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw* (CNA, or Atikamekw Nation Council, or *Atikamekw Sipi*), took charge of the negotiations on the part of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Today, the Grand Chief is also the president of the *Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw*, and as such can take the lead in building nation-wide consensus around land-related questions, including land claims negotiations.

### 5.2.2. Historical background

Archeological evidence documents human presence in *Nitaskinan* as far back as 4000 years ago (Gélinas 2000). Written European records of Aboriginals living in the Upper Saint-Maurice River watershed start in the first half of the XVIIth century. Following early explorations, fur traders settled in the region, followed by missionaries and the first regular missions in 1837. From very early on, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok were involved in the fur trade with Euro-Canadians: “During the entire period of documented history, and no doubt earlier, the (Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok) have occupied a country rich in beavers, which provided a primary resource both for use and for trade” (McNulty and Gilbert 1981:208).

Prior the 1950s, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok used to be autonomous semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers, which meant that each extended family relied on a family territory for subsistence. Affiliation of families to particular areas – family territories – could remain consistent over time, but there were many exchanges between families, allowing them to use each other's territories if food was not equally and sufficiently available. Today, “every parcel of (*Nitaskinan*) continues to be identified with a family group and is governed by a transfer process in accordance with Atikamekw customary law” (Poirier 2001:107). The concept of family territories will be expanded upon in Chapter 7.

Trading posts first appeared in the Upper Saint-Maurice region in the eighteenth century, with the first post being built in Kikendatch (today flooded by the Gouin reservoir) as early as 1775 (Gélinas 2000)<sup>4</sup>. Independent traders, followed by the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, soon established themselves throughout the region, and with the intensification of the fur trade, the Euro-Canadian presence in *Nitaskinan* expanded steadily from then on (Wyatt 2004).

The development of the upper reaches of the Saint-Maurice River intensified following the creation of the Canadian Confederation in 1867. Dams were built, flooding Atikamekw Nehirowisiw hunting grounds. Private hunting and fishing clubs were created, thereby barring access to several wildlife-rich sectors to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Logging also intensified. A population of forest workers, dam builders, and hunting and fishing club members therefore threatened the Atikamekw de facto autonomy on *Nitaskinan* (Gélinas 2002). Through this period of industrial development, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok quickly became the minority population (Gélinas 2002).

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<sup>4</sup> This first post was built by independent traders (Gélinas 2000). The Hudson's Bay Company later built a post on this location in the 1840s (Leney 1996).

The completion of the Transcontinental Railway in 1910, linking La Tuque and Abitibi and splitting *Nitaskinan* in half, accelerated the development of the forests in the area (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; G  linas 2002). Furthermore, dams flooded three Atikamekw villages, Kikendach, the first village of Opitciwan, and Kokokac<sup>5</sup>, and at least one cemetery, in Kokokac, was flooded (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; Clermont 1982; Leney 1996).

Consequently, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok started to be concerned about their economy and about access to land and resources. In parallel to the creation of forestry concessions and the intensification of logging operations in *Nitaskinan* starting in the mid-1850s (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; Lavoie 1999), the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok began to ask the federal government for the creation of land reserves in order to protect themselves against the impacts of economic development (G  linas 2002). Eventually, the reserves of Wemotaci and Kokokac (which is now with no permanent population and is almost completely flooded) were created in 1895 and the reserve of Manawan in 1906 (G  linas 2002, 2003). In Opitciwan, the federal government surveyed a tract of land that was to be established as a reserve in 1914, but the flooding of the area due to the construction of the La Loutre dam forced the relocation of the village and postponed the creation of the reserve until 1950 (G  linas 2002; Leney 1996).

Exclusive control of large tracks of land exercised by forest companies and private sports (hunting and fishing) clubs, dams, an increase in forest workers, forestry itself, and activities led by white trappers<sup>6</sup> all limited Atikamekw Nehirowisiw access to large portions of their traditional territories, which all contributed to bringing about an increased scarcity of fur-bearing animals and imperilled the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw mixed-economy of fur-trading and subsistence (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; G  linas 2002). This led to the creation by

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<sup>5</sup> Also written Kokac, Coucoucache, or Coocococash

<sup>6</sup> During the 1930s in the Upper Saint-Maurice, the Hudson's Bay Company bought more pelts from white trappers than from Aborigines (Guinard 1945, in McNulty and Gilbert 1981).

the provincial government of a Beaver Reserve in 1951 upon which to this day the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have exclusive trapping rights.

Other factors contributed to accelerating the change of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw life-style from semi-nomadic to sedentary, such as the establishment of summer schools in present-day reserves (from June to September) starting in the mid-1920s for Opitciwan and Wemotaci. This, in addition to the necessity for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw trappers to do commerce in May and September with the Hudson's Bay counters established in these locations, and the presence of Catholic missions in June brought an increase in houses being built (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; Clermont 1982). People started to stay for increasingly longer periods of time on the reserve, and less on their hunting grounds.

After the Second World War, the trend towards a sedentary life became irreversible (McNulty and Gilbert 1981). The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok became increasingly involved in forestry as wage earning labourers. More houses were built on the three reserves. During the early 1940s, they began to be employed in the forestry industry as they worked principally as loggers, a seasonal occupation which enabled them to nevertheless continue to hunt and trap and to occupy their territories for parts of the year (Wyatt 2004).

The 1950s saw the end of the on-reserve summer school as children started to be sent to boarding schools for nine months of the year in Amos, La Tuque or Pointe-Bleue<sup>7</sup> (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; Lavoie 1999). This contributed directly to a stoppage in the full-time life on the land and of the transmission of land-related skills and knowledge. On-reserve schools were opened in the 1970s. Since the 1980s, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have had more control over school curriculum. For instance, in 1989 and 1990, Opitciwan and Manawan took charge of school administration and education curriculum development (Charest 1992).

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<sup>7</sup> Present-day Mashteuiatsh

Over the years, with an increased sedentary life on the reserves, the occupation of the traditional territories outside the reserves decreased. The influence of families and their traditional chiefs of territories accordingly diminished. As the years have past and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have retreated away from an ancestral land increasingly developed and controlled by outsiders, Quebec people and the Quebec provincial government – which according to the Canadian constitution has jurisdiction over natural resources – became used to taking decisions based on their own interests and values, based on their own knowledge system. They came to ignore that there existed an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of knowing and living on the land. There was little room for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to make their voices heard, and to have decisions made that would be more compatible with their own objectives, interests and way of life. Consequently, since the 1970s, in a context of increased cultural, identity, and rights affirmation by the Atikamekw Nation, they have sought to reverse this trend of non-involvement in environmental policy and management decisions, and one of the strategies for doing so is the land claims negotiating process. It is a voice in this domain that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok seek.

### **5.3. *NISAWITATAN KITASKINO*: A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH**

It has been suggested that for a long time, research has not directly served the interests of Aboriginal peoples (e.g. Gibbs 2001; Kenny 2004; McKennitt and Fletcher 2007; Castleden et al. 2008), and has even worked at times as “an instrument of oppression, imperialism and colonialism” (Durst 2004:2). Tuhiwai Smith (1999:1) suggests that the word “research” might be one of the “dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary”, for until recently Aboriginals have rarely had control of the formulation of research objectives and on the choice of such matters as data-gathering methods and the dissemination of results. “Indigenous peoples have tended to be passive subjects, and even the objects of conventional forms of social research, much of it undertaken by nonindigenous academics” (Gibbs 2001:674). These negative experiences have led First Nations



to be distrustful and reluctant to participate in research (NAHO 2007; Castleden et al. 2008).

Consequently, an increasing number of Canadian and international scholars are calling for research that addresses Aboriginal concerns, follows their priorities, and falls more within their control (e.g. Ross 1990; Crush 1994; McGregor 2000; Gibbs 2001; Karjala and Dewhurst 2003; Kenny 2004; McKennitt and Fletcher 2007; Castleden et al. 2008). They hope for types of research that follow culturally appropriate methods and time frames.

In Canada, the release of the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in the mid-1990s pushed both Aboriginal organisations and university-based researchers to think about better ways to undertake research involving Aboriginals. In 1998, three major Canadian research-funding agencies released the “Tri-council policy statement on the ethical conduct for research involving humans”, with section six specifically concerning research involving Aboriginal peoples (Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics 2005). Since then, in consultation with First Nations, the Tri-council has worked to ameliorate section six. The release of this report channelled important efforts to improve the relationship between academic researchers and First Nation participants. At the same time, Aboriginal peoples and communities have begun to assert a more active role in research affecting them (PRE-TACAR 2008), as some have developed their own research protocols that must be followed by researchers wishing to work in an aboriginal context (e.g. NAFA and FSC Canada 2000; Nishnawbe Aski Nation c.2001; AFNQL 2005; KSDPP 2007).

The approach now generally promoted is one of collaborative research. The research presented in this thesis used a collaborative approach and therefore this section identifies the criteria that I used to build a collaborative research framework with *Atikamekw Sipi*. The criteria selection flows from a literature

review that includes scholarly resources and Aboriginal sources, including position papers and research protocols developed by First Nations.

#### *5.3.1. Definition*

As defined by Piquemal (2003:206), collaborative research is an “on-going process in which researchers and participants accept going through a common learning experience in order to build an ethical relationship, a research situation in which each party's motivations are honoured”. Through this process, all parties should benefit from the research (Gibbs 2001; AFNQL 2005) by developing meaningful partnerships and reciprocal relationships. It is a type of engaged research aimed at changing things immediately, because, as Crush (1994) suggests, the imperative is to end people's sufferings, not only document it. Researchers, in this context, write “*for* rather than *about*” (Crush 1994:345). Research has more of a political agenda aimed at asking meaningful questions and providing meaningful answers for people who are the most affected by the research goals. It is a way to design an appropriate process – tailored to the milieu – in order to achieve good results.

Collaborative research is done through engaging in a dialogue at every step of the research, from the formulation of research questions through to the dissemination of results (Pain 2004). In this context, the potential benefits for each party should be made clear from the beginning. This open dialogue is a way to choose a methodology congruent with the worldview of research participants, allowing for questions that are meaningful and informative from the perspective of the research participant, and to design research respectful of the social and cultural institutions of the research participants, as suggested by Gibbs (2001) and the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL 2005).

#### *5.3.2. Practical reasons for doing collaborative research*

There are a host of practical reasons pointing to the necessity of doing collaborative research. From an academic perspective, notably in the field of

Ecology and Environmental Policy and Management, the value of outlining multiple narratives about the environment, or involving multiple sources of knowledge, has been widely argued (see Chapter 3). It makes sense to work with local communities while doing research in order to enhance the robustness of ecological management decisions by gaining access to systems of knowledge and management practices that are better attuned to local specificities (Berkes 1998; Pálsson 1998). Also, appropriate methods give better results. Asking meaningful questions results in more meaningful answers, and members of host organizations are well placed to understand what research design approaches, methods, or strategies for research results dissemination are appropriate and useful.

From the perspective of First Nations, there is a need to retain a certain control of the research being done, and especially on the dissemination of results, because results of research can undermine the efforts of a vulnerable group to extract itself from the society's margins. Furthermore, as is the case with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, some First Nations have been quite solicited in recent years. Therefore, there may exist a certain research fatigue (Castleden et al. 2008; Jérôme 2009) and reluctance to participate even more. Having a deep participation of the host community at the level of problem definition may help to overcome that fatigue ensuing from First Nations always being asked about something they may consider pointless or inappropriate. Therefore, research questions should be focussed on First Nations' needs. The challenge is to undertake research in such a way that does not impede self-criticism, self-reflection, and the exposure of negative information.

Another advantage, from an Aboriginal perspective, is that by doing collaborative research, First Nations can gain access to financial resources and expertise that would otherwise be out of reach. This applies to academics as well. It gives them access to monies that would potentially be spent otherwise, such as on consulting. It is also cheaper for First Nations to deal with university students and professionals, the trade-off being the need to publish results.

In sum, for the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL 2005), Aboriginal organisations interested in participating in research should:

- Initiate research partnerships
- Define their own interests and research needs
- Actively participate in developing goals and research objectives, co-develop (with the researchers) a methodology
- Self-identify as the main beneficiary of the research
- Be the first users of the research results
- Fund research
- Grant research licences
- Co-realise and co-administer research projects on their land

#### *5.3.3. Nisawitatan Kitaskino*

*Nisawitatan Kitaskino* is an ongoing project initiated in 2007 by the Atikamekw Nation with the aim of resolving some pending issues regarding their territorial claims, and to build a consensus around questions such as what to do with the land, and how to structure decision-making processes in order to take better decisions concerning that land. The expression ‘*Nisawitatan Kitaskino*’ conveys the idea of strategic land-use planning. The project aims at reinforcing and developing the capacity of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw institutions to take part in land-use planning and to ameliorate natural resource management, notably the forest. Its goals are congruent with negotiation needs, and the project was designed so that the results could be used immediately in the negotiation process. As mentioned in Chapter 2, two decisions rendered in 2004 by the Supreme Court of Canada stated that First Nations have the right to design consultation frameworks to be used when the government has the obligation to consult them about land-related questions affecting their ancestral rights (Dionne 2005; Brethour 2007). This is what *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* is about: designing a consultation process that can be put into immediate effect at the end of the project.

The expected results are plausible models of natural resource co-management structures, including a greater involvement of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw population and traditional institutions.

I had been involved with the Atikamekw Nation since 2001 as a freelance consultant, when in 2004 I became interested in pursuing a PhD research in the field of co-management. I approached *Atikamekw Sipi* to inform them of my intention in pursuing a doctoral degree, and I asked the leadership of the Nation if they thought it was possible to work out a collaborative framework so that I could answer my research questions while also answering questions that interested and supported them. I thought that there would be a good overlap between our interests, but a lot of points had to be worked out before I could set out in the field.

In order to design a collaborative research process, my colleagues from *Atikamekw Sipi* and I engaged in an extensive dialogue to ensure both our objectives were met. We wanted to write research questions together and collaborate closely when deciding upon which research methods to be used.

This does not mean that by doing *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* together, the CNA and I shared the same objectives. There was not a complete overlap of both our research questions, but the aim was to develop a project that could both accommodate their needs for immediate answers about what community members wanted for a decision-making process and vision for the land, and my academic needs of developing ‘new’ research and obtaining a degree (while also helping them, of course!). The project itself ended up being larger than my doctoral research, as my doctoral research is not completely included in *Nisawitatan Kitaskino*.

#### 5.3.4. *Criteria for collaborative research*

Given that my research partner, *Atikamekw Sipi*, and I were aware that university research would not necessarily be well accepted by community members, we needed a strategy to be developed in such a way as to satisfy most people and answer mutual questions.

In 2007, no specific Atikamekw Nehirowisiw policy or protocol concerning research work with outsiders existed to guide us in framing *Nisawitatan Kitaskino*, but since *Atikamekw Sipi* officially supports the protocol developed by the AFNQL (2005), this is where we started. This document is loosely based on a template developed in 1999 by the Canadian Assembly of First Nations, and is meant to help First Nations to take greater control of the research agendas concerning them. However, this document offers only general guidelines and principles, and is not a step-by-step manual. Therefore, in order to clarify the process and to gain insight into how people have dealt with collaborative research elsewhere, I reviewed the literature, including existing research protocols developed by other First Nations organisations (NAFA and FSC Canada 2000; Nishnabe Aski Nation c.2001; NAHO 2007), the McGill ethics process (McGill University 2008), and the Tri-Council policy statement (Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics 2005).

The review of these documents revealed fifteen broad themes or criteria. Collaborative research:

1. Is an open dialogue
2. Has a non-hierarchical approach
3. Responds to real needs and local priorities
4. Uses culturally-appropriate methods and temporal rhythm
5. Respects and involves social, cultural, and political institutions of the hosts
6. Values Aboriginal knowledges

7. Makes room for, and presents, results in the local language
8. Involves an educational/capacity building dimension
9. Provides work to people from the community
10. Is granted ethical approval from all partners before research begins, by appropriate bodies
11. Is a continuous consultation and collaboration
12. Clarifies the potential benefits for all parties
13. Provides results that are shared by all parties involved
14. Produces data that are subsequently owned by local institutions or communities
15. Disseminates results appropriately

These criteria were used to design the methods used in this project and are explained in section 5.4.

#### *5.3.5. Ethics of collaborative research in an Aboriginal context*

The practice of collaborative research raises challenges for the outside researcher that touch the realm of politics and within-community power dynamics. In the context of my research, these challenges were connected to the publication of sensitive information, to having to navigate through within-communities and inter-community political rivalries, and to having to account for biases in results that can come from doing collaborative research.

Working as a researcher with and for a vulnerable group negotiating to enhance its status vis-à-vis the mainstream society, I was aware that some information that I might potentially reveal through publications could in fact weaken the bargaining power of the group I worked with. Therefore, iterative mechanisms to review findings were needed for information to be published, in order to retain information only directly relevant to my research questions.

Even when individual consent was given by interview participants to reveal the information they provided me with, I understood I could not necessarily talk about what the participant was revealing to me during interviews. Having worked with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok for a number of years, I knew that other community members would not be pleased if specific information came out, in writing or otherwise, especially if it touched upon the particularities of certain cultural practices or oral histories. It was evident to me that some information belonging to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok was well known throughout the population and could be revealed to outsiders, but that other information really belonged to the private domain, and the transmission of this knowledge was limited, even among Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. For instance, it was reported to me during the course of the research that some information considered by elders as being sensitive is transmitted to younger Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok only after a long process through which the youngster has to prove his or her trustworthiness, and his or her ability to keep this knowledge private and to use it parsimoniously:

(Un aîné), il faut que tu gagnes sa confiance, avant (de recevoir des connaissances). Aujourd'hui, ils sont très réticents (à transmettre certaines connaissances) parce qu'ils savent qu'on écrit et ils nous disent tout le temps « écris pas, écris pas... » (W-W02)<sup>8</sup>

Quand je demande de l'information concernant les plantes médicinales, ce n'est pas tout le monde qui est au courant. (...) On m'a déjà expliqué un peu pourquoi, mais quand je demande, (on me dit que) cette information-là ne peut pas se transmettre à n'importe qui. Ça, je le comprends. Mais, il faut quand même le transmettre aux générations qui s'en viennent, parce que sinon ça va se perdre (W-M15)

People may become alienated from the community by revealing information that should not be made widely available, such as in the case of knowledge about medicinal plants, as reported in the quote above. So, in order to account for the need for privacy, I was forced to use a dose of self-censorship by not revealing sensitive information (mostly connected to traditional knowledge) that would not directly answer my research questions, even if the said information was

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<sup>8</sup> Codes are explained in section 5.4.9.



interesting from an outsider's perspective, as I was often sure it would be. It may make for a blander narrative in this thesis, but sensitive information was kept in check. I therefore did not try to expand the scope of my research as new and interesting, but somewhat unrelated material, was divulged during the course of my fieldwork. Jérôme (2009), reflecting on his own fieldwork experience in the community of Wemotaci, warns researchers about the challenges of staying within boundaries agreed-upon in the initial research, as he reports having received some criticism from community members for not strictly adhering to the initial agreed-upon research protocol.

If the information generated through interviews concerned my research questions directly, and if I was not completely certain of the potential negative effect on the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, I would seek counsel with my research partner, the CNA. The result was a multi-level informed consent procedure, in which individual consent was given, some level of self-censorship applied (when I know that it could be contentious to reveal information even to other Atikamekw members), and then a third level of discussion and approval was sought with CNA staff members to ensure collected information would not imperil the organisation's collective bargaining power if published. The acceptability of the risks involved was thus assessed by myself, participants themselves, and CNA staff members. I intended to be as transparent as possible about the risks involved, and I exposed to the best of my knowledge the risks I perceived to exist, even if the participants would not themselves acknowledge them upfront.

The downside of this approach is the resulting tendency to brush under the carpet some of the political tensions that exist within the Atikamekw people. The Atikamekw nation is composed of three different communities located geographically far from each other. They each have their own specific internal politics, and land-claims and resource management objectives constantly have to be negotiated between communities in order to present a united front in the hope of increasing their bargaining power vis-à-vis the state government. In a

collaborative research context in which I aimed to improve the situation for the Atikamekw nation, political tensions between different subgroups (Band councils versus Nation Council; Band councils versus traditional councils, etc.) could not be revealed in great detail. There was a strong consensus among Atikamekw Nehirowisiw leaders (both in the communities and at the CNA) that doing otherwise had the potential to weaken the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw position in public and negotiation forums.

The result of this approach was to portray the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok as a somewhat more homogeneous as a group than they are in reality. Heavy criticism has been directed towards generalised representations of communities that ignore “critical interests and processes within communities” (Agrawal and Gibson 1999:633). It is even often necessary to understand internal political tensions or questions related to internal community leadership in order to understand the outcome of (or the lack of) treaty negotiation processes (Alcantara 2007a).

How is it possible to get results that are both useful and defensible in the academia? Throughout this thesis, I therefore allude to differences in perspectives between various Atikamekw Nehirowisiw subgroups, without getting into the specifics if not entirely needed for the sake of answering my research questions. This was a necessary trade-off that somewhat circumscribed the analysis of the results and the conclusions. Over time and through my ongoing partnership (which continues to this date, beyond my doctoral work) with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, by building consensus with the various Atikamekw Nehirowisiw actors about the pertinence of the work we were doing, political opponents could see that it is interesting to produce research results that show different perspectives, if it is for the greater good of the nation. The building of a relationship of trust between myself and the various actors helped, but trust-building is an ongoing process, and only in time might I be able to improve even more work relationship and methods in a politicised environment.

#### *5.3.6. A non-Aboriginal student in Nitaskinan*

Although I had already been a consultant with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok for five years prior to starting fieldwork, I was largely unknown to people from the three communities. The CNA office, where I mostly worked, is located in the town of La Tuque, more than a hundred kilometres away from the closest Atikamekw Nehirowisiw village, Wemotaci (see Figure 1.2). Also, people who knew me did so for my role of working with the central council office, not for my work as a PhD student. Even though I spent a lot of time talking to people in order to reframe myself as a student, I was, along with my field assistant, still largely perceived throughout the research as a representative of the Nation Council. For that reason, it became clear that interview participants would often emphasize tensions between local communities and the central office, as they would use us to get messages across to the nation's leadership.

As a result, there was at times pressure from the CNA to tone down some criticism voiced by local community members, as there is a gap between the needs and the wants of the political elite and those of "ordinary" people (Jérôme 2009:480). A challenge of a collaborative research such as the one I report on here is that "unless a definite political commitment to working with the powerless is part of the process, those who are relatively inaccessible, unorganized and fragmented can easily be left out" (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995:1673).

These efforts to reach out for some of these subgroups were achieved, but with limited success. I often felt that because people saw in me a non-Aboriginal university student, they would automatically assume I was interested solely in past traditions and histories, usual themes explored by researchers who had worked before me with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. The same people were surprised when I would ask land-related questions that were future oriented. Some workshop participants commented that it was probably the first time they had been asked what kinds of activity (even those not usually labeled as 'traditional') they would, in the future, ideally like to do on their family territory.

Because of the assumption that I was solely interested by the past, and because I was interested in land-related matters, when approaching people for interviews I would often be directed towards the traditional chiefs of territories, the *okimaws*. Although working with an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw field assistant, a man in his late forties, helped me in gaining access to potential interview and workshop participants, some subgroups of the population were still hard to connect with, namely the youth and women, since he was more at ease approaching people of his own demographics. Also, younger potential participants were sceptical of the value of their own contribution, given the assumption I was interested in history or past traditions. In such cases, I would be directed to older members of the family or be given vague answers.

As explained below in section 5.4.9.1, the propensity of women and younger men to refer us to the *okimaw* or male leaders of the family for land-related questions constrained us to using a snowball sampling method over choosing other methods. We would first talk to *okimaws* from different families, and subsequently reach out to other people. The consequence was an under-representation of the youth and women.

I was aware of these limitations, but:

On the one hand, working through local power structures invites manipulation of the research according to the agendas of the powerful. On the other, working outside (and, inevitably, potentially against) these structures can weaken both the potential impact of the project at a wider level, as well as invite continued marginalization (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995:1673)

In order to mitigate constraints, I performed some “purposeful sampling”, in order to reach out to younger participants and women and increase the variation in my sample (Seidman 1991:45).

Consequently, voices of *okimaws* are heard more strongly throughout this thesis. Although I try to attend to this bias by presenting counter points of view periodically throughout the thesis, the results of this research may overemphasise the centrality of the *okimaw*'s role in land-related decisions and downplay somewhat the role of other family members in producing relevant knowledge about family territories, land occupation patterns, or decisions about the future of the land. As will be reported in Chapter 7, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to give a large role to the *okimaw* in the governance of the land. This idea makes consensus, however, if more women and younger people had participated in the research, the need for checks-and balance and the need for participation by other-than-*okimaws* members of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw civil society in the decision-making process may have been verbalised more strongly than it was.

#### *5.3.7. Regarding collaboration, reconciliation, and treaties*

As a non-Aboriginal Québécois, I have been brought to postulate that collaboration, reconciliation and treaties would lead to an ideal betterment of Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations in Canada. This bias was exacerbated by a long-time working relationship with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty negotiators, who have made a name for themselves through the negotiations and therefore have a vested interest in having the process succeed.

This bias made me frame, at the onset of my PhD program, treaties and collaborative arrangements as a solution to First Nations' challenges. I began with the idea of improving treaties, without considering that other-than-treaty alternatives may exist. Through my fieldwork, my conversations with Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok who are sceptical of the treaty process, my literature review, as well as through my increased understanding of recent decisions by various Canadian courts, I have come to a much more nuanced understanding of possible solutions for Indigenous populations wishing to take greater control of their cultural, social, and economic futures. It is my hope that these nuances are well portrayed in this thesis, for example in Chapter 2.

## 5.4. METHODS

Four mutually validating and reinforcing methods were used to gather the data presented and analysed in this thesis. Data were gathered and analysed through qualitative methods. In order to assess today's Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok aspirations for the land, I conducted sixty semi-structured individual interviews and three workshops – one in each of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities. In order to reinforce and clarify the findings generated through these two methods, conversational follow-up discussions took place, in addition to participant observation via my involvement in different meetings at the Atikamekw Nation Council. Finally, archive research gave depth to the patterns identified through the other methods, and helped me to re-enforce my interpretations. Using a “variety of techniques to collect complementary information” is a “crucial means of validation in qualitative research” in order to develop a greater confidence in the results (Wyatt 2004:79).

As mentioned in the previous section, *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* is a project larger than that of my thesis. Consequently, I was involved directly or indirectly in other activities, such as the creation of an electronic atlas for the use of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families, that do not relate to my PhD research. The methods used to complete these activities are not reported here.

Throughout section 5.4, I will indicate how each criterion identified in section 5.3 was addressed in the research design.

### *5.4.1. Setting objectives and research questions*

The first step was to set the objectives to be fulfilled by *Nisawitatan Kitaskino*. It was also to clarify my working relationship with the Atikamekw Nation Council.

My work as a PhD student collaborating with the CNA started when I first made an oral presentation to its leaders (the Grand Chief, the treaty negotiators, and the

staff involved in land-related work). I wanted from the beginning to have an open dialogue (collaborative research criterion #1) by explaining the nature of a PhD, why I wanted to do a PhD, and why my career objectives were changing somewhat, as I was moving from being solely a consultant to being a graduate student attached to a university. I outlined my preliminary questions and what I thought could be commonalities between my studies and the Council's work (collaborative research criteria #2, #3, #12, and #13). After hearing their suggestions and completing the requirements of the comprehensive examination and research proposal defense, I started the real work of determining a general approach for our collaboration. We were very open about each other's needs, and I was clear that one of my goals was to obtain a degree from this work.

To ensure that the project focused on local priorities, the first phases of the project were very fluid. The project's specific objectives kept changing. They were discussed with a small circle of people from the CNA, mainly negotiators and staff members from the *Secrétariat au territoire* (SAT)<sup>9</sup>. It was a process of co-construction of the field, co-construction of the fieldwork and co-construction of concepts, as we defined together the limits of the field (*Nitaskinan*), who to include (only status Indians), and so on. Because the project and the research protocol were changing rapidly, ethics applications to McGill had to be at first vague, and then changed several times.

By the end, the objectives of the *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* project read as follows (my translation):

- Resolve issues pertaining to the comprehensive claims negotiations through a participatory approach that will produce information critical to land-related decisions

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<sup>9</sup> The *Secrétariat au territoire* (Land Secretariat) is a branch of *Atikamekw Sipi* concerned with land-related issues. Its aim is to produce, analyse and synthesise land-related information that could be important for the Nation and for the land claims process.

- Build consensus around the strategic objectives of a new land vision and policy
- Develop and reinforce the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw institutional capacity to manage land and resources
- Offer the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people solid land-related information for helping with their planning for the economic development of their family territories within an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw vision
- Enhance resource management practices, including forest management

My own research objectives (see Chapter 1) could now fit easily within the work to do in order to fulfill the objectives of *Nisawitatan Kitaskino*.

#### 5.4.2. *Financing*

As mentioned earlier, the AFNQL suggests that in order to promote research that is respectful of Aboriginals, Indigenous organisations should not hesitate to fund research (AFNQL 2005). Accordingly, the CNA was interested in funding part of the research I report here so that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok could benefit immediately from some of the results produced.

I was already being funded through a research fellowship, but further funding was jointly sought (and eventually obtained) in order to cover field expenses, the salary for a field assistant/translator (collaborative research criterion #9), and money for aspects of *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* that laid outside the scope of my PhD. Furthermore, participants in individual interviews were not financially compensated for their participation. However, people from the communities participating in workshops did get a *per diem*, in compliance with the CNA's internal policies.



#### *5.4.3. Research protocol*

The next step in the process of setting up a collaborative research framework was to develop a clear research protocol spelling out my duties towards the Council and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people, the research methods to be employed and the consent forms to be used, and how the results would be shared and disseminated. Once this was done, the protocol was submitted to the Office of the Grand Chief, for official approval (see Annex 1 and 2).

The research protocol was developed, as mentioned earlier, with the help of existing protocols used by First Nation organizations, and in conjunction with staff members from the SAT, negotiators, and the Grand Chief. The Grand Chief approved the protocol, and the sections of the protocol directly relating to my PhD research were used to obtain my research certificate from McGill University's Research Ethics Board Office (collaborative research criterion #10) (see Annex 3).

#### *5.4.4. Archive research*

The first step in collecting data was to research the CNA's archives in order to shed light on the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ideas pertaining to land and resource management over the past thirty years. This first step of examining the archives was to gain historical depth and gather information, but also to alleviate potential criticism that could arise in the following steps of the research. It was to be done before going to meet people in the communities (leaders and potential interviewees) in order to be able to say to people we were to meet in interviews that, yes, we (my field assistant and I) had done the work of reviewing everything that had been done in the past, that our work was not a repeat, and that we had new questions to be answered, in order to push further ahead what had been started by others. This strategy aimed at combating research fatigue.

Questions guiding the archive research were discussed with CNA staff members so that it could cover both their own concerns and help to answer some of my

research objectives (see Chapter 1 for research objectives). The questions guiding the selection of documents to analyze read as follows:

- How do the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to involve their traditional ecological knowledge of the land (TEK) in resource management? How have they tried, over the past thirty years, to change decision-making processes in order to increase the role of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge? (Research objectives 1 and 2)
- What is the role of the *okimaws*<sup>10</sup>, and what should their role be in the future? (Research objectives 1 and 3)
- What does ‘co-management’ mean for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok? (Research objective 1)
- Why is it important for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to participate more into decision-making processes concerning *Nitaskinan*? (Research objective 1)
- What should the future of the social and economic development of *Nitaskinan* look like? (Research objective 1)
- How should the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people participate in the management and development of their family territories? (Research objectives 2 and 3)
- In a co-management situation, what should the role of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw institutions such as the *okimaws*, the band council, the Grand

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<sup>10</sup> *Okimaws*, or chiefs of family territory, are traditional leaders. Atikamekw families are associated with a particular territory, and the *okimaw* acts as the guardian of that territory, overseeing, among other things, the use of its resources the members of its family. Chapters 6 and 7 will explain in more details the role of *okimaws*.

Chief, the territorial council be? How do the people see the role of elders, women and the youth in a co-management process? Should new institutions be created? (Research objectives 1 and 3)

The review of the archives included documents produced since 1978, the year the comprehensive claims negotiations started. The review included documents produced by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw and accessible through the Nation Council's archives office and the *Secrétariat au territoire*. The following documents were included in the review:

- Reports of two major conferences concerning land-related issues organised by the CNA (in 2003 and 2004)
- Position papers submitted during public consultations by state governments
- Documents published by the *Association Mamo Atoskewin Atikamekw*<sup>11</sup>
- Research reports sponsored by the CNA
- Minutes from meetings on land-related issues

The content analysis of the documents was inspired by the coding method proposed by Charmaz (1998). A first reading allowed for the identification of general themes that were discussed in the documents. The identified themes were then regrouped in categories based on their similarities. This method of analysis allowed me to pay particular attention to emerging themes of territoriality that I had not identified prior to the archival research. This approach also allowed me to highlight similarities and differences in ideas through time and to identify which ideas related to resource management have gathered Atikamekw Nehirowisiw consensus. It also allowed for the gathering of specific points of information that would enrich my understanding of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw case study.

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<sup>11</sup> *Association Mamo Atoskewin Atikamekw* was a now-defunct trappers association whose mandate was to revitalize trapping and hunting amongst the Atikamekw people. In the 1980s and the 1990s, they sponsored several studies on traditional ecological knowledge, on the harmonization of industrial forestry and trapping/hunting activities, and on resource management in general.

The synthesis of the archives is reported in a document that was submitted to the Atikamekw Nation Council (Houde 2008). In this thesis, I only use archival data to support and enrich the data gathered through the interviews. The synthesis is not reproduced in full here.

#### *5.4.7. Hiring a field assistant and connecting with local leadership*

Once equipped with a deeper knowledge of the negotiation process and a historical perspective of the land-related ideas defended by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok since 1978, we (staff of the SAT and myself) presented *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* and the research protocol to the elected councils in the three Atikamekw Nehirowisiw local communities, to groups of *okimaws*, and to women groups. This was done through group meetings, but we also presented the project to and gathered feedback from individuals who could not make it to the meetings or were more apt to voice comments privately. This took place from August 2008 to January 2009.

This process of meeting people was done to respect local customs and the local political systems (collaborative research criteria #5 and #11). It was also a way to build consensus. In this phase of the work, we met the three band councils once, separately. We met with a group of women in Wemotaci, as well as with the ‘Regional Association of Atikamekw Women’<sup>12</sup> in La Tuque. Finally, we had group discussions with several *okimaws* in the three communities (collaborative research criteria #5 and #11).

Meeting with local leadership was one of two components of a ‘preliminary fieldwork’ period. Preliminary fieldwork refers to “formative early stages of research in the field that allow for exploration, reflexivity, creativity, mutual exchange and interaction through the establishment of research relationships with local people often prior to the development of research protocols and ethics

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<sup>12</sup> Association régionale des femmes Atikamekw

applications” (Caine et al. 2009:491). Meeting the local leadership allowed us to refine the research protocol (collaborative research criteria #1 and #11). For instance, the necessity (from the communities’ point of view) of meeting with traditional territorial chiefs (*okimaws*) before starting the interviews and the workshops escaped our team at first. It was only when we met with the band councils that we were told it would be more appropriate to talk to the traditional chiefs (often elders) first. They are, as for instance Cresswell (1998:60) has put it, “gatekeepers” whom we needed to meet with first for they are the guardians of the tradition and of the land. They therefore need to be aware of research projects that concern the land or the tradition and several research participants would later confirm to us that they preferred me and my field assistant to speak to their *okimaw* first. Therefore, we had to change the protocol we had first established in order to present the project to groups of *okimaws* (collaborative research criteria #5 and #6).

For that phase of building support and gathering feedback, I was aided by a field assistant/co-researcher, Gérald Ottawa, who had just been hired by the CNA to work on the *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* project. He acted, throughout this phase of the project and in subsequent interviews and workshops, as a translator. His role was also to build people’s confidence in the project. Gérald and I were working for the CNA, which is a central organisation somewhat contested and criticised in the communities. My field assistant was someone who gathers enormous respect from the communities because of past services, but also because he is seen as a traditionalist, removed from politics and the Council’s bureaucracy. He and I acted as a buffer between the Council and people. Therefore, people felt more comfortable to contribute to the project (anonymously) and to criticise the Council, while the Council could have access to that critique that would otherwise be silenced in public meetings. We wanted to make sure that multiple voices were heard.

#### 5.4.8. *Camp visits*

After having met the local leadership, my field assistant and I undertook a second phase of preliminary fieldwork. During this important phase – which lasted a few weeks in the fall of 2008 – we travelled to several family camps around *Nitaskinan* in order to discuss the project with people. It was done with no tape-recorders, just to meet people individually, in their element, to take the time to share a bit of their life, and explain our intentions. Visits at the camps during the fall hunting season were important. It showed respect for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw calendar (during the October ‘Cultural Week’, several people leave villages to go on their family territories in the bush). As a man from Wemotaci would later point out during an interview, it is important to visit people at their camp since people generally feel more comfortable in the bush, and are therefore more likely to have open discussions (collaborative research criterion #4):

(Avant,) ils faisaient beaucoup les rencontres dans le territoire. Les gens avaient des tentes pis...on voyait que c'est pas la même chose quand tu fais des rencontres dans les communautés. Ce n'est pas la même (chose)...On dirait qu'on est plus nous-même quand on est dans le territoire. On est plus humains (...). Chaleureux, pis très fraternels, aussi. (W-M10)

This phase was made mostly of unstructured conversations that would start once tea was served. This phase of the work allowed us to build support for the project, gather suggestions, and find participants for the interviews and the workshops.

#### 5.4.9. *Individual interviews*

In 2008 and 2009, I conducted semi-structured interviews (Fontana and Frey 1994; Dunn 2000), interviewing a total of sixty people (twenty per community) from Manawan, Opitciwan, and Wemotaci. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has some degree of predetermined order in the questioning, but “still ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant” (Dunn 2000:52). Consequently, I used an “interview guide” (Dunn 2000:61) that identified the questions to be addressed, and the order that they were preferably to be addressed, but I allowed for flexible conversations. As interviews evolved,

some subquestions may have been formulated, or the interview guide would be left aside altogether and a more conversational mode was adopted, if this was more appropriate and comfortable for the participants. Also, as I was perceived not only as a university researcher, but also as a member, along with my field assistant, of the CNA close to the negotiation team, it was expected that interviewees would also query us on land-related questions and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw politics. This open approach is supported by academic literature on qualitative research as “finding out about people through interviewing is best (...) when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship” (Oakley 1981:41). As we wanted the whole *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* project to be a two-way street where researchers could also provide research participants with feedback on their questions, we welcomed the opportunity to let that happen.

The guide (see Annex 4) nevertheless included fully and carefully worded questions because the questions had to be translated from French to Atikamekw, and also because my field assistant felt more comfortable in leading an interview in Atikamekw if he knew the translation directly reflected the topic I wanted to address in the interviews. As the fieldwork progressed and the field assistant became more comfortable with the whole process, the interviews became flexible conversations in Atikamekw as well.

I developed the interview guide in collaboration with staff members of the SAT and of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw negotiation team. The guide aimed at identifying how success in co-management would be defined by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw (partially meeting research objective #1), how traditional ecological knowledge could be involved in a co-management process (partially addressing research objective #2), and what type of organisations would be needed to build a successful co-management arrangement (partially answering research objective #3). A test of the questionnaire was initially performed on CNA staff members.

#### 5.4.9.1. Sampling

A “snowball” sampling method (Del Balso and Lewis 2001:89) was used to select interview participants. A first set of potential participants were identified by myself and my field assistant and included people interested in land-related questions, and those coming from different sub-groups of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw population. Representatives from all of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw extended families (each family is responsible for a family territory) were selected for interviews. When we first presented *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* in the communities, we approached those who became the first interview participants. These first participants then identified other potential participants, who would subsequently be interviewed, and so on and so forth. The sample then grew just like a snowball rolling down a snowy hill. The process continued until new participants repeated or confirmed the information given by previous participants, rather than generating new information. When this point of saturation is reached, there is no need for more interviews (Seidman 1991; Creswell 1998).

Table 5.1 breaks down the number of participants by sub-categories. A limitation of our sample is the under-representation of the youth (less than 35 years old) and women. As *okimaws*, the first people we needed to talk to, are mostly middle-aged and elderly men, I had made particular efforts to reach out to the two other groups. I therefore had to perform some “purposeful sampling”, in order to increase the variation in my sample (Seidman 1991:45). Often women and younger men were uncomfortable answering questions that regarded the land and would refer us to the *okimaw* or male leaders of the family, those who would be more on the land and who would practice traditional activities. This necessity to talk first to the *okimaw* constrained us to using the snowball sampling method over other methods.



<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Sex</b>
M-M01 <sup>13</sup>	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M02	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M03	Manawan	36-54	M
M-W01	Manawan	36-54	W
M-W02	Manawan	36-54	W
M-M05	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M06	Manawan	-36	M
M-W03	Manawan	36-54	W
M-M07	Manawan	-36	M
M-M08	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M09	Manawan	55+	M
M-M10	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M11	Manawan	55+	M
M-M12	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M13	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M14	Manawan	36-54	M
M-M15	Manawan	-36	M
M-M16	Manawan	-36	M
M-W04	Manawan	36-54	W
M-M17	Manawan	36-54	M
O-M01	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M02	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M03	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M04	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-W01	Opitciwan	36-54	W
O-M05	Opitciwan	55+	M
O-W02	Opitciwan	36-54	W
O-W03	Opitciwan	55+	W
O-M06	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M07	Opitciwan	55+	M
O-M08	Opitciwan	-36	M

**Table 5.1.** Characteristics of the sample

<sup>13</sup> The first letter of the interviewee identification code identifies the community of residence (M = Manawan, O = Opitciwan, W = Wemotaci). The second letter indicates the gender of the respondent.

O-M09	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M10	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M14	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M13	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-W04	Opitciwan	36-54	W
O-W05	Opitciwan	36-54	W
O-M11	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M12	Opitciwan	36-54	M
O-M15	Opitciwan	36-54	M
W-M01	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M02	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-W01	Wemotaci	55+	W
W-M03	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M04	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M05	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M06	Wemotaci	-36	M
W-M07	Wemotaci	55+	M
W-W02	Wemotaci	-36	W
W-W03	Wemotaci	55+	W
W-M08	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M09	Wemotaci	-36	M
W-M10	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M11	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M12	Wemotaci	-36	M
W-W04	Wemotaci	36-54	W
W-M13	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-M14	Wemotaci	55+	M
W-M15	Wemotaci	36-54	M
W-W05	Wemotaci	55+	W

**Table 5.1.** continued

Age group	N	%
-36	9	15,0
36-54	41	68,3
55+	10	16,7
Total	60	100

Sex	N	%
F	14	23,3
M	46	76,7
	60	100

**Table 5.2.** Distribution of the sample by age and sex

The interviews took place in the communities (Manawan, Opitciwan, and Wemotaci) or in *Nitaskinan*, in places identified by the participants (home, workplace, hunting camp, etc.). Almost all interviews were tape-recorded. The recordings averaged 50 minutes in length, but the whole of the interview process, with the preamble necessary to explain the project and start the conversation, would often last longer. Sometimes, discussions following the part of the conversation that was tape-recorded (and therefore felt more official) would last as long as the interview itself and would yield as much valuable information as the recording. In such instances, I made sure that it was clear which information I could use in the research and which information had to remain off the record. The consent form used for the interviews is reproduced in Annex 5.

I myself conducted the interviews, but as previously said, a field assistant/co-researcher was involved in the process, as many of these interviews took place in the Atikamekw language (collaborative research criterion #7).

The interviews were transcribed either by Gérald or myself. Those conducted in Atikamekw would be translated and then written into French by Gérald. Confidentiality was kept for all participants. Lastly, the transcriptions were validated by the interview participants.

#### 5.4.9.2. Coding

The content analysis of the interviews was inspired by coding methods proposed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) and Charmaz (1998). Therefore, I first selected the text from the interview transcriptions that was relevant to my research objectives. Then, I recorded repeating ideas and grouped them together. This phase is called “initial coding” (Charmaz 1998:113). For this phase, I started with the first interview transcript. I pulled apart the ideas that were expressed in this interview and labelled the ideas with an initial code (*in vivo*, if possible). For each labelled idea, I reviewed the other transcripts in search for repetition. The end result was that repeating ideas from all interviews were grouped together. “Repeating ideas” are groups of similar words used by different research participants to express the same idea (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003:37). Following this phase of initial coding, I grouped similar repeating ideas into broader themes. Finally, I organized the themes into larger, more abstract categories. The coding process allowed for the identification of six emerging abstract categories under the broad topic of territoriality that appeared significant for the research. These categories are:

- Daily experiences of dispossession
- Uncertainty and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw adaptation to change
- Active occupation of the land
- Economic development
- Atikamekw Nehirowisiw values in land-use planning
- Organisation of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw institutions for autonomy on the land

The first four themes – which refer to the results the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people want to reach concerning the land in terms of activities to do on the land and landscape features they wish to keep or change – are addressed in turn in Chapter 6. The two remaining themes – themes of governance – are addressed in Chapter 7.

#### *5.4.10. Workshops*

Another component of my empirical data gathering consisted of three workshops. In 2009, a total of about fifty people, most of whom were chiefs of territory, or *okimaws*, participated in the workshops, which took place in the three communities. The workshops lasted two days each. Participants discussed how they saw the future of their family territories, and reflected on possible solutions to the problems they face with the land. Themes discussed at the workshops were:

- What vision of the future do people hold for the future of their land? (Research objective #1)
- What problems do people currently experience while on their family territory? (Research objective #1)
- What solutions (policies, institution-building, technology, knowledge-building) can be proposed to resolve these problems and put in place a better future? (Research objectives #1, 2, and 3)

The advertisement and recruitment for these workshops was done through word of mouth, in collaboration with the band councils. They involved any community members who shared interests in the negotiation process and in resource management. At the beginning of the workshop, participants were informed that the activity was part of a research process. These discussions were moderated by myself and the field assistant, and took place both in French and the Atikamekw language. I therefore acted as an observer participant (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994; Creswell 1998). Notes were taken by my field assistant and myself, but the workshops were not tape-recorded. I re-wrote the notes in the form of memos. Memos are “written elaborations of ideas about the data and the coded categories (in process of being created)” (Charmaz 1998:120). Data gathered through that process came in support of interview data.

Culturally, the meeting, or the workshop, is very important, as oral debate and personal interactions are central to Aboriginal cultures (Kenny 2004). It was therefore very important to have these kinds of activities taking place in the course of *Nisawitatan Kitaskino* (collaborative research criteria #4, and #7). This type of activity is also important to generate novel ideas that would not arise otherwise. These workshops allowed participants to exchange points of view, and from this exchange emerged ideas that were not brought up in individual interviews. Also, for the workshops, we did not want the information to flow in one direction only. We wanted the workshops to be a conversation. We called the workshops ‘*ateliers de formation*’<sup>14</sup> because there had to be an educational dimension for the participants (collaborative research criteria #3 and #8). It was decided that we would not go into the field only to get data, but also to help people understand things they wanted to know and that we could explain, or that they could explain among themselves, explanations emerging in conversations. A participant in the workshops labelled the exercise as being one of “popular education”.

The workshops were designed to produce scenarios of what the future of *Nitaskinan* could be, and future scenarios for potential institutions and organisations for the co-management of resources on *Nitaskinan*. Scenarios are narratives that link historical and present events with hypothetical future events (Peterson et al. 2003). They are used to cope with uncertainty by identifying sets of possible futures and sets of desired futures a community of people can aim for. The former can allow for informed reaction to a wide range of possible developments (Bunn and Salo 1993) to improve the capacity to adapt to an uncertain future (Wollenberg et al. 2000), and the latter can be used as possible target futures, places where people want to go, in order to design current policies and to take the decisions necessary to get there accordingly.

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<sup>14</sup> Training workshop, or training session.

However, the workshops, although very productive in terms of process and results, did not produce scenarios. Participants discussed the themes I had brought forward, but the discussions did not lead to complete and structured scenarios. It allowed, forced (to a certain extent) people to open up about questions they would very rarely discuss amongst themselves, because land-related questions touch the heart of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity and can bring back painful memories of marginalisation. It was very emotional, especially in Wemotaci, where I was told that this type of discussion, involving so many *okimaws* had not happened in several years. The workshops unfolded in three stages. At first participants would blame non-Aboriginals for problems they experience in their lives. When led to discuss further, participants tended then to blame people from inside the community for these problems. In a final stage, solutions started emerging. The workshops ended up being a vital step in the process of furthering Atikamekw Nehirowisiw work on the creation of a territorial council. It also led participants to re-question traditions and start a process of updating some of them, such as the *okimaw* institution.

#### *5.4.11. Participant observation*

Over the past ten years, I have been involved with the Atikamekw Nation Council as a natural resources policy advisor. This involvement began before I became a PhD student, in 2004. While carrying out my doctoral research, I continued to be involved as an advisor, and in that capacity, I became an observer participant. The “observation carried out when (...) playing an established participant role in the scene studied” (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994:248) allowed me to gain richer insight into my research topic. Observing, listening, and making interventions during meetings and during informal conversations happening around structured events, allowed me to deepen my understanding of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw case. My observations were recorded in the form of memos (Charmaz 1998) and came in support of the coding process explained in section 4.4.9. Observations were recorded on separate sheets of paper and preliminary codes were attributed to each memo, to be later integrated into the interview data coding process. My

colleagues (especially the field assistant who worked with me to complete the interviews and carry out the workshops) also assisted me in interpreting and validating my observations.

#### *5.4.13. Reporting*

One important aspect of collaborative research is to report on the project to local partners, participants, and other community members often and through different types of interactions (Wolfe et al. 2007).

Written material was distributed to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw population throughout the research process, but everything had to be presented and debated orally, the way to do it in a culture that is still largely oral-based (collaborative research criteria #4, #7, #8, #11, and #15). Most written documents were translated into the Atikamekw language. Debates in workshops were almost all in Atikamekw, and interviews were done in both languages, depending on the level of comfort of interview participants. Reporting was done in both languages, usually in Atikamekw and French orally, in French for written documents, and in both languages for synthesising posters.

We repeated the presentation of the work several times. In the post-fieldwork period, I had to go back several times into the communities, not only to present the results, but to maintain relationships with the people, just to be there, to show that we were not there only to pick data.

As mentioned before, collaborative research ought to provide results that are shared by all parties involved and produce data that are subsequently owned by local institutions or communities (collaborative research criteria #13 and 14). I wrote three reports to the Nation Council containing data analysis (Houde 2008, 2010; SAT 2009) and also reported to the communities. The synthesis of the ideas expressed during the interviews has been reproduced in a document that will be made available to *Atikamekw Sipi*. As for the interpretation of results, the CNA is



not concerned about my doctorate, although everything is discussed before publication to make sure exposure of results could not potentially imperil the negotiation process. Beyond that, my doctorate is seen as a bonus. The focus really is on the results usable by the Atikamekw nation.

Before submitting any paper, or making any presentation in public conferences, the material to be presented throughout the collaborative research process was revised with *Atikamekw Sipi* staff members, who would sometimes consult with community members to clarify some points. Approval was sought at the office of the Grand Chief, to make sure that no information that could collectively harm the Nation would go into the public arena.

## CHAPTER 6

### CLAIMING BACK THE LAND: SKETCH OF A FUTURE FOR *NITASKINAN*

On est en plein la bonne génération pour retourner sur le territoire parce que les gens sont instruits et affirmatifs de leurs droits, il reste encore des gens qui peuvent transmettre le savoir traditionnel et il reste encore de la forêt. Si les Atikamekw attendent une autre génération, il sera peut-être vraiment trop tard pour prendre en main le développement du territoire et de la Nation. (...) On est chanceux, on a encore de la forêt. On vit en forêt (M-W02)

#### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

More than thirty years ago, the Atikamekw nation started on the long road of comprehensive land claims. It was in the spring of 1978 that the *Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais* (CAM) adopted a resolution encouraging the twelve communities represented by the *Conseil* to define objectives and orientations to follow for the land claims about to be made. A year later, in the spring of 1979, the CAM presented the Canadian government with eleven ‘principles’ constituting the bedrock of the negotiation process (CAM 1979; Dupuis 1985).

It has been an eventful time for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in the years following the initiation of this claim. From 1975 to 1992, the CAM represented both the Innus of Quebec and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok with their claim negotiations. In 1992, the two nations parted ways and now it is *Atikamekw Sipi*, or the *Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw* (CNA), who represents the Atikamekw nation’s interests in talks with state governments (provincial and federal). After having changed their negotiators a few times and after several proposals and counter-proposals, negotiations on the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw comprehensive claims are still active.

Reflecting back on the eleven 1979 principles, reading through over thirty years of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw archives related to the land claim, and talking to people today, one cannot miss that the major questions brought forward in 1979 remain largely unresolved today. However, some ideas dating back from early land-claim discussions have evolved or disappeared since, while others have emerged. A new generation of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, born after the beginning of the claim negotiations and whose ideas on environmental management are not well documented in writing, seems to be pushing the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw leaders into adopting firmer positions on protecting *Nitaskinan*, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ancestral land, and to question the claims process. Indeed, as one CNA staff member exclaimed: “the youth, sometimes, they want to protect everything<sup>15</sup>” (personal communication).

#### *6.1.1. Goal of chapter*

My goal in Chapter 6 is to assess what aspirations today’s Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have for the land. This chapter will identify the results the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people want to reach concerning the land in terms of activities to do on the land and landscape features they want to keep or change. This chapter will partly address my thesis objective #1 by identifying how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define success in terms of goals achieved in land-related issues.

This chapter highlights some of the problems and deadlocks to be broken in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw pursuit of re-arranging the way things are done on the land. Chapter 2 highlighted some reasons why a treaty process can get stuck in a deadlock, while this chapter makes connections with the adaptive co-management (ACM) approach to see how such an approach could help to resolve some of those deadlocks.

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<sup>15</sup> « l’idée (des jeunes), des fois, c’est de tout protéger. » The translation of quotations is my own.

While this chapter explores the results the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok aim to achieve, Chapter 7 will go on to explore how it is possible to get to these desired results and what governance systems are needed.

In section 6.2 I analyse how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw experience their marginalisation on the land and I identify two sensitive areas or major ‘bones of contention’: tourism and industrial forestry. In sections 6.3 and 6.4 I depict how participants see the future of the land, while in section 6.5 I identify the kinds of activities and development they wish to see happening on the land and offer some solutions as to how to overcome problems lived on the land. Finally, section 6.6 goes further towards identifying solutions by making the bridge with Chapter 3 in order to see if ACM can offer some help within the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context.

A detailed account the methods that were used to gather the data presented and analysed in this chapter can be found in Chapter 5.

## **6.2. PROBLEMS TO OVERCOME: THE DAILY EXPERIENCE OF DISPOSSESSION**

Until the 1950s, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok lived in relative autonomy on the land (Wyatt 2004), which meant that each extended family relied on a family territory for subsistence. Since then, with increasing settlement on reserves, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have been progressively marginalized as competition for natural resources increased, and as the federal government actively pursued its assimilation policies (see Chapter 2). Free access to the land and its resources has become increasingly difficult for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok as a result of different pieces of government legislation and economic development that has been controlled by interests outside of the Atikamekw Nation. As more and more people have settled on *Nitaskinan*, as more and more tourists have visited the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ancestral land each summer, and as the forest industry has progressively taken its toll, it has become increasingly difficult for the

Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to claim both a space for themselves and a satisfactory role in decision-making processes concerning the land and its resources. Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families, going less and less on the land, have become less involved in its management.

However, since the 1970s, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have been active in claiming back a role in decision-making and a space on *Nitaskinan* in order to return to and live once again off their traditional family territories. Today, though, they are still struggling to have a satisfactory role in natural resource management and continue to feel marginalised by the Quebec mainstream society regarding the occupation of the land and the use of its resources.

#### *6.2.1. Tourists, bush camps, and land occupation*

The vast majority of *Nitaskinan* is public land and its jurisdiction falls into the hands of the provincial government. Its resources are sought after by the forest industry and also by tourists for hunting and fishing purposes. Other tourism sectors, such as ecotourism, are not yet well developed in the area, although there may be some potential there.

Until the 1970s, private sports clubs used to own exclusive rights to game and fish (but not the land) in several areas of Quebec. The access to these areas was restricted to club members. Non-members from the general public, as well as Aboriginals, were thus barred from access to several wildlife-rich sectors of the forest. This situation prevailed until the *Parti Québécois* government pushed a process of *déclubage*, thereby opening access to these areas to members of the general public willing to pay a fee for vacationing for small periods of time (Houde and Sandberg 2003). Areas formerly occupied by clubs are now used by a larger population of hunters and fishers, not just a few club members.

Fishing, hunting, snowmobiling and other types of outdoors activities are today supported on *Nitaskinan* by two major types of structures: outfitting operations;

and the ZEC (*'Zones d'exploitation contrôlée'* or controlled harvest zones). Outfitting operations are businesses that offer housing and logistical services to people wishing to practice outdoor activities. Many of these operations own exclusive fishing, hunting, and trapping rights granted by the government of Quebec (FPQ 2000). They own exclusive rights for specific areas, making the area under the control of an outfitting operation out of reach for hunters or fishers who are not clients of these businesses. These rights are then transferred to vacationers for the time of their stay. The ZEC are not-for-profit organizations that provide similar services. The idea of the ZEC is to provide affordable access to wildlife resources to the general public. Almost all of ZEC and outfitting operations are owned by non-Aboriginal individuals, with a few outfitters owned by Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people with the support of band councils.

Outside of the areas controlled by the ZEC or the outfitters, individuals can rent from the government a small lot of land for vacation purposes. Through this type of rental, with leases that commonly last several years, lease owners are granted the right to a small lot, on which they can build a camp. Several of these lease holders then buy fishing and/or hunting permits and use their camp as a base for their activities. Most camps (or cottages) are not used year-round, but only during the fishing and the hunting seasons.

Since non-Aboriginal vacationers present on *Nitaskinan* do pay permits to the provincial government in order to build their hunting/fishing camp, they feel at home and are therefore irritated when they realize that other people – the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw – periodically occupy the same piece of land and use its resources. This realization usually comes after the vacationers have settled on their newly leased lot. In the mind of a few vacationers or outfitters, to buy a permit is to buy exclusivity to land access and resource use. “It is funny, but it is to the point now that they think of themselves as owners of the land<sup>16</sup>” (M-M17). Since these tourists are not necessarily aware of Aboriginal rights to resource use,

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<sup>16</sup> « Ça fait drôle, mais même eux autres, c'est rendu qu'ils se croient propriétaires du territoire »

they sometimes bar access to some areas of the land by blocking roads or putting up ‘private property’ signs, and tensions can mount, as a trapper from Wemotaci can testify:

Des fois, je veux aller à une place (...) et je vois une pancarte (sur laquelle) c’est marqué terrain privé. J’y vais pareil. (...) Le gouvernement dit (que les détenteurs de baux de villégiature) n’ont pas le droit de mettre de pancartes ni de barrières, mais (ils) en mettent pareil. Des fois, il y a des gens qui font des menaces. (...) Il y a un Blanc qui ne veut même pas qu’on aille dans son coin (W-M02)

Increases in the number of leases have brought about an increased competition for resources. In some areas of *Nitaskinan*, this competition seems to translate into a decrease in the number of hunting and fishing catches for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, while in some other areas, no notable changes are observed, “other than ceding the place for a time to other users<sup>17</sup>” (W-M05) during the Québécois moose hunting season in October. This period of the year is a time when tensions can especially mount, and some Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok prefer to avoid being in the forest during a few weeks in October. A hunter from Wemotaci reports that sport hunters coming in the forest during the Québécois hunting season can become tense and irritated by the presence of others (including Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok hunters), as they are anxious to catch a moose during the very short period of time that is allocated to them:

Une fois, j’étais allé chasser dans le temps de la chasse (des non-autochtones). C’était en même temps que la semaine culturelle, au début octobre. On était dans notre territoire, et il y avait du *monde* [accent mis sur *monde*, il y avait beaucoup de monde]. Il y avait plein de rubans, (ce qui faisait) que c’était des routes où tu ne pouvais pas entrer, c’était tout bloqué (et il y avait des affiches) « chasseurs à l’affût ». C’était vraiment le temps de la chasse. Même qu’il y avait un gars qui s’est arrêté face à face avec moi. Il trouvait que je roulais trop sur son bord et il a commencé à me crier après (...). Mon frère était à côté de moi et on a montré la carabine...C’était quasiment... Pourtant dans la forêt, c’est supposé être bien, pas de chiâlage. Ce n’est pas à Montréal! (W-M04)

The main concern for Atikamekw Nehirowisiw interview participants does not seem to be the availability of wildlife and fish resources, but free access, circulation, and occupation of the land. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok until recently did not necessarily leave permanent traces of their occupation and as

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<sup>17</sup> « sinon de céder (la place) un temps pour d’autres utilisateurs »

such, some bush camp sites do not have permanent structures. Indeed, their use of the word ‘occupation’ does not refer to a continuous settlement of the land in a single place, but rather to the periodic use of different places as camp sites or for harvesting, visited at intervals. Non-Aboriginal patterns of occupation, on the other hand, are characterised by the building of a permanent structure, or camp, on a small private-like lot. Since the number of rented lots has increased over the years on *Nitaskinan*, and since Québécois sometimes behave as if their lot was private property, an increased presence by the Québécois, “forbids us (the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok) to go places (...), it forbids us to be on the land<sup>18</sup>” (M-M17).

Historically, the issuing of leases for vacationing purposes did not take into account that sites empty of permanent structures could nevertheless be occupied periodically by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. In certain cases, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families withdrew from the land for factors that were not related to tourism, although tourism now bars them from going back. As an interviewed man from Wemotaci explained, “in my family, we almost abandoned the camp at the time when lots of logging was done<sup>19</sup>” (W-M04). Later, as trees grow and the forest again allows for hunting and other activities to take place, the return to the land may be complicated if leases for vacation purposes have been issued in the meantime. For the holders of these leases – who often have built cottages – it may be difficult to accept the return of families who were not on the land at the time the lease was granted.

Today, consultations between the provincial government and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities take place when new leases are to be granted to non-Aboriginal cottagers (Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families do not need a permit to build a camp). However, although Atikamekw Nehirowisiw family members whose family territory is to be affected can recommend places for new leases,

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<sup>18</sup> « ça nous empêche d’aller à des places (...), ça nous empêche d’être sur le territoire »

<sup>19</sup> « dans ma famille, on a quasiment abandonné le camp quand il y a eu beaucoup de coupe »



they cannot discuss the number of leases to be issued. Also, some Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, usually older people, shy away from some areas of the land that were in the past actively put out of reach from Aboriginals. Until the 1970s, private sports club owners completely forbade the access to all non-club members, including the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Court decisions (e.g. S.C.C. 1996) have confirmed the rights of Aboriginals to use areas that are under lease and to use areas controlled by outfitters or by the ZEC. However, due to harassment from outfitting operators who inevitably want to keep the place empty for their own clients, due to old prohibitions that are still in the minds of some, and because Aboriginal rights are not well known by everyone, some areas of the land are today still under-used by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok.

Harassment discourages many from being on the land, and some Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok acutely feel the injustices of this encroachment on traditional lands by vacationers. This man from Opitciwan expresses the frustration he feels when he sees the luxurious cottages – almost as big as houses – that are built on his family territory, with, he contends, wealth generated by the resources of *Nitaskinan*:

Quand tu vas dans un territoire puis que tu vois un *hostie* de gros chalet, quasiment comme une maison - ce n'est même plus un chalet – t'aimerais ça, toi aussi, te payer une affaire de même, dans ton territoire. Ce chalet là, (c'est) construit avec les redevances du territoire qui sont payées. T'as beau (vouloir) te partir quelque chose dans ton territoire, tu sais qu'il y a déjà (des gens) qui sont établis autour et tu sais qu'ils vont t'écraser dans pas longtemps. Ça fait qu'en tout cas (ça amène) beaucoup de frustrations (O-M10)

Frustration is also brought about by the imposition of provincial regulations (for instance against the night hunt) and permits (such as for firearms possession) on the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. This imposition is perceived by many as harassment: “We still do not have it, peace, because there is too much surveillance on the land when we occupy it<sup>20</sup>” (O-M06). The action of “those we do not like,

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<sup>20</sup> « Nous ne l'avons pas encore la paix parce qu'on nous surveille trop en territoire quand nous l'occupons »

the wildlife officers<sup>21</sup>” (M-W03), is considered harassment that could potentially lead to a decline in traditional activities and subsistence. Interviewed people from Manawan report on pressure that is put on them by wildlife officers. Indeed, some time before our visit in the community, wildlife officers had issued several tickets to some Manawan hunters for illegal hunting practices. With no money to contest in courts a contested hunting practice (the night hunt), or to keep paying tickets, the two community members interviewed here feel that hunting may decline if the trend (ticketing) continues:

(Quelqu’un) était à la chasse à l’orignal et les gardes chasse sont arrivés. Ils l’ont arrêté, puis aujourd’hui, je pense qu’il a eu une amende de 5 000,00\$ De la façon qu’on nous traite, je vois le désert dans mon territoire familial, je ne vois que des Blancs (M-M10)

Aujourd’hui, c’est de plus en plus difficile d’aller chasser. Les gardes-chasse viennent nous emmerder pas mal plus souvent. C’est rendu qu’ils nous donnent des gros *tickets*. Il y a beaucoup de gens qui ont comme un peu modéré leur chasse. Je m’attends à ce qu’il y ait une escalade dans cette situation, parce que de plus en plus, il y a des gens qui commencent à en avoir ras-le-bol des interventions qu’il y a (M-M06)

Several of these “tickets”, or fines, have been issued to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok because they were hunting by night. Night hunting is, as a general rule, forbidden in Quebec. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok argue that night hunting was practiced traditionally, so they feel they behave within the limits of their own, ancestral, rights. However activities like the night hunt are not clearly defined as an ancestral right by the courts or in a special agreement such as those referred to in Chapter 2, so government agents fine Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok caught hunting at night. There are indications that this ‘harassment’ sometimes actually works, as many Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, preferring to avoid confrontation and paying fines they could not contest successfully in courts, therefore go on the land less often.

A consistent preoccupation regarding provincial regulations and increased non-Aboriginal occupation of the land is visible in the interviews, as well as in the

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<sup>21</sup> « ceux qu’on n’aime pas, les gardes-chasses »

archives of the CNA. The words ‘control’ and ‘autonomy’ turn up again and again in documents since 1978. The word ‘control’, while not always well defined, seems to refer to a desire for free access to the land and to greater access to natural resources (CAM 1983, 1991, 1993b; Brassard 1986). It also refers to the will to regain autonomy to take decisions about the use of resources the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok judge appropriate and in conformity with their traditional codes of practice. It is certainly clear that ‘control’ implicitly refers to marginalization processes that have resulted in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok losing the control they previously had over their own actions and free-will regarding the land. Similar comments were made in different position papers, such as the one penned by the Opitciwan Band Council for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples (Conseil de bande d'Opitciwan 1992). It is now part of that autonomy, control over their own lives, and the ability to move freely with ‘peace of mind’, that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to regain through the treaty-negotiation process. As a man from Manawan succinctly puts it:

Ce qui permettrait d’avoir un aboutissement (aux négociations), ce serait d’avoir l’esprit tranquille quand tu rentres dans le territoire (M-M13)

Atikamekw Nehirowisiw interviewees and participants were clear in interviews and workshops that they want to move away from having rules imposed that do not make sense for them, from having to enter into confrontations on the land due to overlapping land use with vacationers, and from feeling powerless regarding decisions that are taken about their ancestral lands.

#### *6.2.2. Forestry*

Tourism, hunting and fishing, and the associated lease system is one of two major factors limiting access to and use of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional territory for Atikamekw Nehirowisiw individuals and households. The other limiting activity is industrial forestry.

The vast majority of the land under discussion in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw land-claim is public land. Therefore, forest companies operating on *Nitaskinan* are

not, for the most part, owners of the land they log on. However, forest companies own supply guarantees provided by the provincial government. Through Timber Supply and Forest Management Agreements (TSFMAs), forest companies are guaranteed stable supply over time with the understanding that agreement holders manage the forest “in such a way as to preserve its full timber, leisure, landscape and other potential in the long term” (MRNF 2010). It is through the calculation of the Allowable Annual Cut (AAC), that it is possible to know how much wood could be harvested yearly without compromising future supply. This Allowable Annual Cut is the “maximum volume of timber that can be harvested annually in a given forest management unit without diminishing the unit’s production capacity. It is used to establish the volumes of timber that can be allocated to agreement holders” (MRNF 2010). The AAC is also used to set annual yields that holders *must* achieve if allocations are to be maintained. The AAC sets maximum volumes possible to log from an area and the annual yield is the minimum a company *needs* to log in that same area. If a company does not meet the required minimum, the government can transfer the TSFMA to another, better performing, company.

By law, agreement holders must prepare forest management plans that respect provincial government regulations and take into account the concerns of other forest users, including Aboriginals. A general forest management plan details a five-year management program to be implemented for a given forest management unit. A more detailed annual plan is also submitted to the Quebec Department of Natural Resources and reports on harvesting methods to be used, tree stands to be logged, and strategies to protect rivers, fragile ecosystems or animal species.

By law, Aboriginals have to be consulted before these logging plans are to be approved by the provincial government (Quebec 2006). Each of the three Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities has an office employing a forest engineer and a few other staff members whose job is to liaise between Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families and forest companies. Consultations take place with each

family whose land is to be affected by logging. Families are consulted for both types of plan, and they can be consulted by several companies, since their family territory can overlap different forest management units.

Typically, forest companies come to the consultations with drafts of their plans indicating what logging they intend to do for a given forest management unit. The plans show roads to be built and tree stands to be logged. The family then reacts to the proposed plan by indicating sensitive areas they would rather protect (moose yards, immediate surroundings of bush camps, or places of cultural significance). Plans can subsequently be modified to accommodate the consulted families. From the point of view of the forest companies, consultations are a means of obtaining information to facilitate forest management decisions and to avoid conflict (Wyatt 2004). For the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, these consultations can be means used to protect their occupation of the land. The mitigation measures adopted as a result of the consultations are called ‘harmonisation measures’ (see Wyatt 2004 for a detailed account of how these consultations work for Wemotaci).

Several participants pointed out the limitations of this process in interviews. Since the annual yields that a TSFMA holder must achieve have already been preapproved for the management unit at the time of the consultation with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, there is little room left to subtract timber volumes from what is proposed to the families. Consequently, many of those participating in these consultations argue that the only input they can have is on protecting some particular sites. As an *okimaw* from Opitciwan, an active hunter and band council employee who participates regularly to the consultations concerning his family territory, explained to me in details, if quotas (annual yields) are already decided, “even if we want only 50 per cent to be logged in a particular area, and if they already decided 80 per cent, they will take 80 per cent”:

Quand ils disent à telle date je vais venir, ils sont présents (les représentants de compagnies forestières). Ce qui est plus avantageux, c’est de négocier les coupes, parce que nous autres le plus qu’on voudrait, c’est que ça soit le moins coupé

possible, mais eux autres, il faut qu'il en ramasse. Ils ont des quotas à respecter, puis souvent, ces quotas sont déjà établis sur le territoire. (...) Tout ce qu'ils font, c'est de jouer là-dedans. On coupe pas à telle place, on ne coupe pas à telle place, mais il faut qu'ils coupent à des places. (...) Ils n'ont pas le choix de couper (...). On n'a pas vraiment le pouvoir, on se fait imposer les quotas, tout ce qu'on peut dire, c'est coupe-ci, coupe-là, coupe-ci, fais pas un chemin par là, mais (...) quand c'est leurs quotas, ils les ramassent. Ils disent qu'il ne faut pas qu'il y ait de diminution, mais si nous autres, une partie du territoire on veut que ça soit 50% (coupé et qu'eux) autres, ils ont prévu 80%, ils vont prendre le 80% pareil. Ça fait que dans le fond, ça ne donne pas grand-chose. Tout ce que ça donne, ce sont des types de coupes qui permettent la régénérescence du bois, c'est juste des arbres, c'est juste ça. Eux autres, quand ils arrivent (et que) le quota est établi dans une partie d'un territoire à 70%, ils vont les ramasser les 70%, même si nous autres on demande que 50% ne soient pas coupé. Ils vont ramasser le 20% quand même. C'est là que c'est difficile. Même si on négocie, tout ce qu'on négocie de temps en temps, c'est une petite partie (de territoire) où on campe (pour) que ça ne soit pas coupé (O-M14)

Many Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok therefore feel that the planning process is simply too advanced when they are shown the maps of future logging operations. Nothing can be significantly changed by the time families are shown the maps:

Demain, je vais avoir une rencontre (avec une compagnie forestière). (...) Elles ont déjà préparé la planification. Donc, moi je n'appelle pas ça une consultation. C'est plus (qu'elles) viennent nous présenter leurs travaux, puis nous autres, on peut rien faire avec ça vu que ça été déjà planifié. Nous, on aurait aimé qu'ils viennent avant qu'ils fassent leur planification. Si on indique des endroits qu'on pourrait garder, elles ne (les gardent) pas pareil. Par exemple pour nous, il y a 2, 3 places qu'on voulait garder (...) Non, je ne sais pas, mais pour moi je n'aime pas qu'on vienne me présenter une carte (montrant) la planification qui a déjà été toute faite. Moi, je n'aime pas ça voir ça, ce n'est pas pour moi (O-M09)

Consequently, as another *okimaw* from Opitciwan highlights above, people tend to lose interest in the planning process. For him, it should not be called a consultation, because so little can be altered by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw participants.

If no common ground between the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw family occupying the land and the company is found, the company may offer financial compensations for proceeding with the planned logging operations. Financial compensation is usually not a goal pursued by families, but rather a choice of last resort if no other agreement can be reached, as the above-quoted *okimaw* also reports:

(Pour) la rencontre (d'harmonisation) de demain, c'est sûr que la planification a été déjà faite parce que (les représentants de la compagnie forestière) m'ont donné une carte hier. On voit déjà des chemins, où vont passer le chemin puis la coupe. Donc, tous ce que je vais demander, ça va être une compensation (financière), j'imagine, soit avoir accès aux chemins ou bien quelques choses que je puisse utiliser dans nos territoires. À part ça, le reste, ça va être eux autres qui vont (décider) (O-M09)

For local people such as the above-quoted participants, frustrations with a process in which they feel powerless lead them to accept cash payments. This compensation system is not part of the official process, but is not forbidden by law either.

Some research participants see positive factors in the current system. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok who are satisfied with the current system seem to be those who manage to preserve parcels of land that are important for them. The consultations are a forum where people can at least make their demands heard: “with the harmonization table, we can now say things<sup>22</sup>” (W-M10). This satisfaction is probably not proof that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are successful in greatly influencing the planning process, but rather that those demands met with success do not interfere seriously with the goals of the forest companies.

From what research participants express, perceptions of forestry have improved somewhat since the gradual implementation of consultation and harmonisation measures in the three communities. If the families are still not called upon to participate in the early stages of forestry planning (before the calculation of the AAC or the determination of annual yield), a minority of the interviewees acknowledges that certain efforts are made by companies and the government to ameliorate the situation, as reported by this middle-aged man, quite active and present on his family territory:

Je dirais qu'il y a eu un virage, ou bien c'est en train de virer, mais la *curve* est longue. Mais moi, je dis que ça s'en va dans la bonne direction, oui (la gestion des ressources). Quand tu vois les affaires qui se passent aujourd'hui, il faut tout

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<sup>22</sup> « avec l'harmonisation, la table, on peut maintenant dire les choses... »

le temps que tu regardes ce qui s'est passé en arrière pour essayer de te donner une image pour dire si ça c'était de même dans le temps, aujourd'hui, c'est moins pire. Tu te dis, « ben peut être que dans 20 ans, ça va peut-être être encore bien moins pire (W-M08)

The majority of people I interviewed or who spoke at workshops feel that their current participation does not have a major impact on forest planning, but on the other hand they do not necessarily seem to be willing to invest time and energy themselves into the planning process. What is most important for research participants is to maintain land healthy enough to allow for their activities to continue, and eventually to allow them to live off the land by developing small-scale businesses. In other words, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people do not necessarily want to participate in large-scale forestry, but are not opposed to it, as long as it does not interfere with their capacity to undertake their own activities, which requires a certain level of environmental health.

### *6.2.3. Conclusion*

To sum up, there is a feeling of powerlessness regarding decisions taken concerning land-use planning, and especially forestry planning, that brings the discomfort of uncertainty about the future of the land. From an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw point of view, the limited results yielded by consultations regarding the issuing of vacationing leases brings discouragement:

Il y avait des places où on avait fait un petit sentier puis un site de campement. Pas longtemps après, c'est le ministère qui a (loué) le terrain, puis il y a eu une construction, là. On a fait un autre (site de campement), puis ça été la même chose. Puis là, ce lac-là est entouré de chalets puis on ne peut plus y aller (M-M10)

There is the feeling that the future of the land is in the hands of the forest companies. "There are lots of companies approaching us in order to clear cut the land, so because of the logging, the future of the territory is quite a bit threatened<sup>23</sup>" (O-M10). This young woman from Wemotaci feels that she has to record *now* images of her family territory, since the forest is now mature and may disappear soon through logging:

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<sup>23</sup> « Il y a beaucoup de compagnies qui nous approchent pour raser (le territoire), donc (à cause des) coupes forestière, l'avenir du territoire est pas mal menacé, mettons »



Aujourd'hui, quand je m'en vais me promener dans le bois, (...) je me dis « c'est tellement beau, on va en profiter avant que les compagnies (ne) viennent tout raser ça! » C'est ça que je me dis, quand je suis toute seule dans le bois. Autant me faire de belles images avant que ce soit tout coupé. C'est ça que je me dis...J'ai tout le temps deux perceptions d'avenir et des coupes de la forêt...Je me demande quand est-ce qu'ils vont venir couper là...Pourtant, la forêt est assez mature...Je ne sais pas s'ils vont venir *checker* ça (W-W02)

Even the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok employed by the communities to facilitate the discussions between the families and the forest companies have the impression that forest companies do as they wish, unhampered:

Disons que la compagnie forestière nous achale. Je dirais que l'avenir va avoir l'industrie forestière qui va couper tout. (...) L'industrie forestière va ramasser beaucoup de bois (M-M03)

S'il y a une chose que je ne comprends pas, (c'est) qu'ils viennent couper du bois et qu'ils disent « partageons nos ressources. » Il n'y a pas de partage là-dedans. C'est eux autres qui gardent le pognon et nous autres, on n'a rien (W-M02)

Tourism and forestry bring powerlessness and leave the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok uncertain about what the future may bring to them. This uncertainty about the future of the land and the future of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw society are the topic I turn to in the next section.

### 6.3. CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY

(L'avenir est) incertain. Je ne sais pas trop comment ça va aller, parce qu'on est vraiment maintenus dans l'ignorance des négociations. Est-ce qu'on va être capable de pratiquer encore comment ce qu'on faisait avant? (M-M06)

Nearly all research participants see the future of the land as uncertain. It is uncertain because people do not have a grip on the land-claim negotiations and its eventual outcomes. The future is also uncertain because people feel impotent regarding the development of guidelines for the land, and because they feel that all decisions are controlled by the government and the companies, while the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok stay marginalized. Finally, the future seems uncertain and vague because it is difficult to identify what could be the consequences of observed land changes – whether these changes are the consequence of industrial forestry or more global processes like climate change.

A great concern associated with uncertainty about the future of the land is connected to its capacity to support traditional activities, its capacity to provide an earning to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw, and its capacity to offer the chance to perpetuate the transmission of traditions, given the strong link the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identify between culture, identity, and the land. If the territory disappears, there is the distinct understanding that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity is in danger of vanishing.

### 6.3.1. *Changes on the land*

Reported environmental changes are explained by participants as being caused by the increase in numbers of Québécois going on the land, by forestry operations, and, by climate change and pollution. Pollution and climate change are blamed for changes that are reported in the behaviour of animals and in the taste of the meat, which is “not the same anymore<sup>24</sup>” (O-M02). Climate change is also blamed for increased sightings of new species, such as the turkey vultures (*cathartes aura*), in *Nitaskinan*. However, it is not clear for people if changes are the results of global processes linked to climate change and pollution or if they are the results of direct human actions (e.g. fish stocking of certain lakes to increase the availability of desired species for sport fishing).

Forest operations are blamed for most of the changes occurring in *Nitaskinan*. Animals are not as healthy as before as a result of forest operations, as this school teacher and hunter reports:

Il y a des animaux (qui changent), comme les orignaux...Moi, ce que j'ai entendu dire, (c'est que) de plus en plus, la fourrure n'est pas belle parce qu'ils ne sont plus capable de se gratter, à cause des petits arbres...Des choses comme ça. Les animaux, aussi, écopent, par rapport à l'exploitation forestière (M-M06)

Generally, people see that the land can eventually return to good health after logging. People can even take advantage, to a certain extent, of the different stages of forest regeneration. Blueberries, traditional food *par excellence*, grow

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<sup>24</sup> « plus le même »

extremely well after an area has been logged. Small game returns quickly as well, leaving some hope for future generations to this father from Opitciwan and this young woman from Wemotaci, who both remember the early stages of forest regrowth after logging and can compare it to today's state of the forest:

Je sais que ça a été bûché en partie (mon territoire). Ils vont bûcher, mais c'est sûr qu'il va y avoir des jeunes pousses quand même. Mon jeune (garçon) est encore jeune, (donc) lui, il va avoir l'occasion de le voir plus tard, d'ici dans une quinzaine d'années, pousser. Il va être tout..., ça va être merveilleux, si je peux dire (O-M11)

Je ne suis pas contre les coupes parce que ça fait à peu près 4 ans que je voyage en territoire (et je constate que) quand il y a eu les coupes, au bout de 10 ans, ça a repoussé. Quand j'étais jeune, mon père m'avait montré une montagne où ça avait été rasé. Au début, je pleurais à cause que tout était coupé, mais aujourd'hui, ça va faire 20 ans cette année, les animaux (...) reviennent (W-W02)

What concerns Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people most is the intensity of the logging. Many have the impression that there is simply too much logging, and that the land threatens to change towards something that is completely different from what they are used to:

(Pour que ça aille mieux, il faudrait dire) « Fini les coupes! » (rires) Je ne sais pas comment je peux faire revenir l'humidité (en territoire – le territoire est plus sec qu'avant)...Personne, je pense, ne va être capable de faire revenir l'humidité... (W-W02)

Quand on parle de l'état (du territoire), j'ai peur que ce soit trop tard, aujourd'hui. (...) Quand on parle environnement, l'environnement se détériore beaucoup (M-M01)

Je crois qu'on va le perdre (le territoire) parce qu'il y a trop de coupes. C'est rare que tu vas trouver de quoi chasser, il n'y a plus d'arbres. La dernière fois qu'on l'a pris en photo, ça fait cinq ans de ça (...), notre territoire familial et quand on regarde ça aujourd'hui, c'est de la coupe abusive (W-W04)

Several people mentioned a decline in the availability of certain species, suggesting that the forest does not regenerate enough to allow for the full return of certain animal populations, notably the beaver, as reported by this respected *okimaw* from Wemotaci who spend a significant amount of time on the land:

C'est de plus en plus rare, le castor. Peut-être dû, je ne le sais pas, à l'ancienne coupe qu'il y a déjà eu, vu que ça ne pousse pas autant, les plantes pour (nourrir) le castor (W-M07)

This decline is also mentioned for wildlife in general, including the moose, the hare, or the walleye. These people from Opitciwan are concerned that the decline in forest resources will bring hardship to the community's sawmill (where a number of community members work) and bring a decline of traditional food:

Il y a le moulin à Opitciwan. (Le moulin) ne vivra pas un autre vingt-cinq ans certain (...). On manque de bois et la forêt verte (mature), c'est rare en ce temps-ci. Ils vont attaquer toutes les petites îles (du réservoir Gouin), maintenant. (Sur) notre île, ils ont coupé toute (une) section. C'est tout rasé, mon homme. Il y avait de l'original, là. Maintenant, on ne voit plus de traces. C'est rare, c'est rare (O-M04)

C'est ça qui va arriver, si ça continue de même. Un moment donné, (il n'y) aura plus de gibier, plus d'original. Le doré va disparaître de plus en plus. Il n'y a rien que les lièvres qui vont être là. Le gibier et l'original, ça va tout le temps être diminué. Comme dans mon territoire, j'en vois moins souvent. Quand j'y vais, les traces, l'été, il n'y en a pas beaucoup, alors qu'avant que ce soit bûché, je parlais d'ici et je ramenaïs mon original. Ce qui fait qu'il y a un abus. Depuis que ça a été bûché, c'est moins sûr (que je vais ramener mon original). Je passe au moins deux trois voyages pour en voir un et souvent je n'en ai pas. Il y a en moins (O-M14)

As a young man from Manawan who had just been named *okimaw* puts it, changes are in some cases so important that we do not "smell" the forest anymore:

L'autre jour, je me suis dit : « je vais aller faire un tour par là. » Juste le fait d'aller sentir dans mon territoire...C'est rendu qu'on ne sent (odeur) même plus! (rires) (M-M08)

Like many others from his community, this hunter from Opitciwan fears that changes on his territory due to forestry are irreversible, and that Atikamekw Nehirowisiw adaptation to changes has become harder:

C'est sûr qu'il faut s'adapter, mais *câline*, on n'est plus dans le bois vraiment, là. Il faut attendre au moins 20-25-30 ans avant que les arbres poussent, avant que ça ne redevienne comme avant. C'est sûr que ça ne redeviendra plus jamais comme avant, ça c'est sûr (O-M13)

What concerns people is that a radical change in *Nitaskinan's* forest ecosystems would bring about a potential loss of cultural references and a loss of traditional foods and traditional activities like trapping:

Si je peux dire une chose, c'est que ça va être pas mal bûché (rires). Comme c'est là, je ne pourrai pas beaucoup aller trapper... Comme où est mon cousin, en arrière

d'où ce qu'on est, c'est pas mal bûché. Il ne reste rien que quatre ou cinq fouets. Tu peux aller trapper encore, mais d'ici 2-3 ans, il ne pourra plus (W-M02)

Je pense que ça va être rare, d'en trouver des activités traditionnelles d'ici dix ans. La seule chose (qui va rester), c'est d'aller juste s'installer, prendre des vacances de repos. Je ne vois pas d'autres activités qui pourrais être pratiquées, mettons dans dix ans. Je ne sais pas comment les territoires vont être dans dix ans (O-M09)

When the land is threatened by cuts, it is suggested that it is the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw memory that is threatened. A man from Opitciwan, employed at the local school and deeply interested in traditional spirituality, explains that while on the land, he “walks” with his ancestors, and that this connection the ancestors and history brings him comfort and strength. However, this spiritual connection with the past, with history is threatened by logging operations:

Quand je m'en vais (dans mon territoire), (mes ancêtres) sont dans mes pensées. Ça me donne des forces, le courage, des fois, quand je pense à eux autres. Des fois je me dis que quand je marche dans le bois l'hiver, surtout l'hiver en raquette, peut-être que mon oncle où un de mes grand-père a déjà marché ici, (...) (mais) quand même il y a eu une différence avec la coupe de bois qu'il y a eu (O-M01)

A woman from Wemotaci reports on the existing link between the health of the forest and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditions:

Ma grand-mère et mon grand-père, ils en parlaient souvent: «un jour ça va être comme ça, il n'y aura plus de forêt dans de milieu de vie (de l'Atikamekw), il n'y aura plus d'activités» (W-W04)

To protect culture and memory, it is therefore necessary to protect the land, in order that it does not change too much and too rapidly.

### *6.3.2. Defending the land, defending the culture*

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok feel that it is their responsibility to defend the land, since the defence of their identity is inherently linked to the defence of *Nitaskinan*. Since almost all areas of *Nitaskinan* have experienced at least one episode of logging in the past, and since the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw territory has experienced several changes even before current generations were born, I asked research participants *which Nitaskinan* it was important to protect. Should the

state of reference required to sustain Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture be the forest as it is today, or should we try to go back to the forest that existed a few decades ago? Could the forest sustain more changes without threatening the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity?

When asked what they would like *Nitaskinan* to look like, those who have known the land since before the widespread logging operations would like the land to go back to the state it was in before the beginning of these cuts (pre 1970s). Those who have recently experienced cuts on their family territory would like to see the land transformed back to how it was prior to logging. This band councillor, also an *okimaw*, opines that the land would never go back to the state it was when his grand-parents were on the land, but that the way he knew it as a kid would be acceptable:

L'état dans lequel il était quand mes grands-parents ont vécu, ça je pense qu'on ne verra plus jamais ça. Quand je campé la première fois sur ce territoire-là, il était moins pire (que maintenant) ...C'est de là que je partirais, moi. La manière qu'il était, l'état du territoire, quand j'ai commencé à le fréquenter. Pas trop défriché. Des fois, je leurs parle de ça, à mes neveux. Ils disent que c'est beau...C'est vrai qu'il est beau, mais il a déjà été plus beau, quand il n'était pas défriché (M-M14)

These two people, an *okimaw* from Wemotaci and a school teacher and hunter from Manawan both stress the importance of keeping intact some portions of territory, to show the future generations what a real forest is. They also both stress that the regrown forest, even mature, is not the same as the forest it once was:

(J'aimerais que le territoire reste) dans l'état où il est maintenant, du moins ce qui en reste. C'est sûr qu'on aimerait avoir encore les forêts avec des grands arbres...Quand j'étais jeune, là, je rentrais dans le bois comme quand tu rentrais dans des halls d'entrée...C'était des grands arbres...Tu parlais là-dedans, il y avait de l'écho. C'était quelque chose. Encore aujourd'hui, il y en a encore, du bois comme ça (...) Des grands arbres...tu rentres là-dedans, c'est un autre univers, c'est un autre monde. Ce n'est plus comme aujourd'hui (où) tu rentres dans le bois et qu'il y a des branches partout dans le visage. Tu passes là-dedans, c'est tous des petits arbres...Ce n'est plus pareil. Le bois...c'est...ça a changé (M-M06)

J'aimerais ça, pour mes enfants, mes descendants aussi, qu'ils voient la forêt vierge, disons, pas avoir été coupée...Après, c'est de nouvelles pousses qui vont être là. Comme en ce moment, on essaie de garder l'aire protégée, parce que c'est une forêt

vierge encore (et) on veut la garder. Pis quand on rentre à l'intérieur, c'est vraiment beau! Il n'y a pas (eu) de coupes. Tout vit. Je dirais que tout vit et prend vie, aussi. C'est impressionnant. (...) Et dire que mes ancêtres ont passés ici (W-M07)

On the other hand, most respondents said they would like a land for their children or grand-children that is the equivalent of what it is today, suggesting that for most people, the current state of the land is acceptable and does largely allow for the practice of desired activities: "My dream, I would say, would be to see no change, that it stays like it is today<sup>25</sup>" (O-M14). Many participants use the word 'intact' to describe the state in which they would like the land to be for future generations. The word 'intact' in 'intact land' often refers to the current state of things; not worse, or more degraded than it is today. Given that the majority of people have experienced at least one episode of logging on their family territory, it is interesting to note that the state of the land, once regenerated after being cut, is perceived as being satisfactory. It is, however, highlighted that it should not be degraded more:

(Je veux que le territoire soit) dans l'état qu'il est aujourd'hui, qu'il soit comme il est aujourd'hui. C'est une forêt que j'ai, une montagne que j'ai (et) je voudrais qu'il soit comme ça encore (quand mes enfants) vont y aller. (Il n'y a pas eu beaucoup de changements sur mon territoire au cours des dernières années) (O-W03)

Some people talked about "integrity of the land":

(Pour l'avenir, je veux que le territoire soit) dans l'état qui l'est actuellement : pas beaucoup de coupe, pas trop ravagé. Mes enfants, ils nous en parlent déjà et ils commencent à s'opposer aux coupes forestières eux autres aussi. Je pense qu'ils ont acquis une certaine conscience de comment garder l'intégrité du territoire, donc ils sont un peu contre les coupes forestière eux autres aussi (O-M10)

This integrity is difficult to define, but it seems to be related to the capacity of the forest to maintain its main characteristics and to provide the possibility to pursue traditional activities defining the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity, maintaining the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture and the preservation of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw memory.

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<sup>25</sup> « Mon rêve, je pourrais dire, c'est qu'il n'y ait pas de changement (et que ça reste) comme c'est là »

The concept of ‘territorial integrity’ has surfaced periodically in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw archives since the start of the 1990s. Integrity refers as much to ecological integrity as to social integrity. From the archive research, it is possible to say that integrity, as defined through the years by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, means the capacity of the land to renew itself and to maintain biological diversity and diversity of natural resources and to respect the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw right to maintain the family territory system, and by extension the capacity of the families to practice traditional activities (of subsistence and others) on the land (e.g. CAM 1993a; ENA 1994). The result of the negotiations should therefore be “to respect the integrity of the ancestral territory<sup>26</sup>” (CNA c.1993). I will come back later in this chapter to this concept of integrity and link it to the concept of resilience that is used in the adaptive co-management literature. By linking the two concepts, it is possible to identify ways in which an adaptive co-management arrangement could help the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to deal with the situation as presently lived on *Nitaskinan*.

### 6.3.3. *Changes in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw society*

The last section showed that *Nitaskinan* is changing and that changes may, according to research participants, impact upon the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture. Rapid transformation of the land threatens social integrity as defined by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok (capacity to maintain the family territory system and the capacity of families to continue practicing traditional activities on the land). However, regardless of what may happen in the future with the land, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok witness today that their society and their culture are transforming. Changes already happened and are still happening. The culture is not the same as it was, research participants suggest, because the connection with the land is being lost, and the connection is being lost because of the factors mentioned in section 6.3, including industrial forestry, and regulations that

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<sup>26</sup> « respecter l’intégrité du territoire ancestral »



complicate land occupation, and also because of a rupture between generations that is blamed on residential schools.

This section looks into how research participants see these cultural transformations. Many witness social and cultural change with some apprehension about the future for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok as a distinct society, and most see that these transformations have to be accounted for when reflecting about the future they want to build for themselves.

#### *6.3.3.1. Generational gap*

Many interviewees and workshop participants alluded to a ‘loss’ of culture in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw society. “Certainly, this (traditional Atikamekw) knowledge diminishes. We lose the youth. There is a lack of transmission<sup>27</sup>” (M-M17). The older generations see that younger Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok go on the land less, and therefore know it less, and lose the cultural connection with the land. As a consequence, this loss of culture brings about behaviours that are reprehensible in the eyes of older people, such as wastage of game meat and hides, or improper beaver hunting methods, as do indicate these two middle-aged hunters:

Aujourd’hui, je vais (...) au dépotoir et (j’y trouve) des peaux d’orignal qui se font jeter parce qu’il y a tellement de jeunes qui en tuent et ils ne savent pas (quoi) faire de ça. Pis ça, je ne veux pas que mes enfants le fassent (M-M13)

Il y a une diminution. Les gens (de) la nouvelle génération ont moins de respect pour la faune. Pourquoi qu’on faisait ça, ça a disparu, parce qu’ils n’ont pas appris aux jeunes, puis aujourd’hui, quand ils vont dans le bois, ils vont tirer un castor avec un coup de .12 (O-M14)

If the younger generations respect the animals and the environment less, as the interviewees quoted above suggest, it is because the younger generations do not go out on the land as much and tend to stay in the village. Most of those who participated in interviews mentioned a decline in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw

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<sup>27</sup> « C’est sûr que ces connaissances-là diminuent. On perd nos jeunes. Il y a un manque de transmission »

occupation of the land and for the older *okimaws*, such as the one quoted here, the changing of the guard in land occupation seems uncertain:

C'est ça que je me demande bien souvent, quand je regarde le territoire: Est-ce que mes jeunes, ou les jeunes de mes frères, vont venir à notre rescousse, disons, vu que nous (les plus vieux), on n'est plus là? (W-M07)

Participants explain this difference at the cultural level between the generations by the existence of a 'residential schools generation' for whom ties with the land and the language were severed, and the existence of a 'post-residential generation' that has been less in touch with the land than previous generations.

Younger participants, however, refer to a revival of interest in the territory, and land-related activities, such as expressed by this teacher from Wemotaci who goes frequently on the land:

Je vois (l'avenir) très bien à partir du moment où il y a quelqu'un qui va prendre en charge (le territoire). Si le chef de famille, le chef de clan, le chef du territoire prend vraiment ça en charge (...) Je vois également les jeunes comme moi, et les plus jeunes encore, qui retrouvons le goût, qui retrouvons un intérêt pour ça (aller en territoire). Fait que je suis positif (W-M15)

Given the small number (9) of 'young' interviewees, it is difficult to assess with clarity the extent of that revival, but signs such as an increase in Atikamekw Nehirowisiw cottages or permanent camps being built, an increase in hunting, and a youth that is politically militant and vocal (and more aware of Aboriginal rights than their elders) point towards an increased interest in land-related activities. It seems that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok were until recently at a low point regarding the occupation of the land, but that now, activities increase on the land as younger generations see an economic and cultural future that is beyond the villages and outside of the reserves.

#### *6.3.3.2. Village – territory dichotomy*

Differences between generations are perceptible in language. A diminution in land occupation, and therefore in the practice of traditional activities on the land, has created a rift that is perceptible even in the language and the words used by the

different generations. Generations at times have difficulties communicating with each other, because of the different – Atikamekw – words they are using. This young woman from Wemotaci tells that she can understand both the younger and older people, but that younger people often have difficulties to understand elders:

(La langue) commence à se détériorer chez les jeunes. Ils mélangent souvent. Moi aussi, j'ai tendance à le faire, parce que je me tiens tout le temps avec les jeunes. Je comprends la vieille langue des aînés, mais les jeunes ne la comprennent pas. Ils disent tout le temps « qu'est-ce qu'il dit? » (W-W02)

This 39 years-old *okimaw* and father also reports differences in language, and worries about them, between the children he takes care of and his parents:

On garde deux enfants, ici, nous autres, et j'ai toujours vu une différence (entre) leur langage et mon langage à moi. (Avec) ces enfants-là, on ne se comprend pas... Pourtant, c'est des Atikamekw... Quand on veut maintenir, garder notre langue, quand même, ça fait partie de la vie, ça, garder notre langue pour qu'on puisse conserver notre territoire (M-M08)

To characterise this language difference, some people interviewed refer to a “village language” and a “bush language”. “We speak (increasingly) the village language, but we lose the bush language<sup>28</sup>” (W-W03). If there is a “village language” and a “bush language”, it is because many consider that culture is to be found in the forest, the place of production and reproduction of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity:

Mon identité est dans la forêt. Ce n'est pas entre quatre murs. Même que quand je travaille entre quatre murs, je me sens étouffer. J'ai besoin d'espace (...). (C'est pour ça que) l'avenir, c'est plutôt d'investir sur le territoire, que je vois (W-W02)

Tsé, souvent on est au village, bon, il y a toute la modernité, mais d'un autre côté, il n'y a pas la culture, en quelque part dans ça il y a un oubli (W-M05)

For many, the problems now experienced in the communities, including high suicide rates and addictions, derive from a loss of culture and spirituality. “We should go back to our spirituality, to gather back our strengths<sup>29</sup>” (O-M13). Since spirituality and culture are associated with life in the bush (*nocimik*), participants generally felt that in order to revitalise culture, they need to encourage the youth to spend more time on the land. This artist and hunter from Opitciwan explains

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<sup>28</sup> « On parle la langue de village, mais on perd la langue de bois »

<sup>29</sup> « Il faudrait retourner à notre spiritualité, pour retrouver nos forces »

that parents who do not bring their children in the forest tend to have discipline problems with them:

Il y a de moins en moins des jeunes qui vont dans le bois. C'est ça le problème, (...) je sais qu'il y a des jeunes d'ici qui traînent et qui ne font rien. Ils ne vont pas dans le bois et les deux parents ont de la misère avec eux (O-M11)

This band council and mother from Opitciwan opines that not enough opportunities are provided for working people to go on the land, even though it would be important for families to occupy the land:

(Les familles) doivent occuper le territoire. Moi, je dirai que j'y vais au moins trois fois par années pour leur montrer la vie en territoire, c'est ça que je veux absolument montrer à mes petits-enfants, ce qu'ils devront faire les familles parce qu'il y a des familles qui ne font pas. (Trois-quatre fois, ce n'est pas assez. Il faudrait) qu'on donne plus de temps, comme la semaine culturelle, il y a juste une ou 2 semaines (et ce n'est pas assez) (O-W01)

What this research suggests is that in order to decrease social problems in the communities, in order to rebuild the connections between the generations, and in order to strengthen the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity and culture, people need to be on the land more. They need, according to the above-quoted research participants, to work towards having a continuous occupation of *notcimik* (the forest).

#### 6.3.3.3. *Work-tradition dichotomy*

Continuous occupation of the land is, however, not easy to achieve, given the modern structure of wage-labour and the school calendar. People see work as an activity that both enables and impedes the practice of traditional activities. It is an obstacle because the 9-to-5 schedule does not easily permit spending time on the land in order to pursue activities such as trapping, which require frequent visits to the lines. 'Cultural weeks'<sup>30</sup> are a successful improvement, but insufficient for many to allow for the transmission of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture to

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<sup>30</sup> Each spring and each fall, band governments and schools close down for a week to allow people to go spend some time in the forest.

children in a satisfactory manner. “There is not enough teaching for the youth<sup>31</sup>” (O-M11). It is difficult to reconcile work and life in the bush or school and life in *nocimik*. “Vacations are not enough to show what you want to your children<sup>32</sup>” (O-M10).

On the other hand, work brings revenue that can pay for the travel required to go from the community to the family territory and back. Ironically, it seems that those who have less revenue, and thus who have more time and would benefit the most from gathering food on the land, are also the ones who spend less time in *nocimik*. This man from Manawan explains that when he worked, he had a pick-up truck, which allowed him to go hunting. When hunting, he would bring someone with no revenue or means of transportation along. This person could otherwise not go:

C’est ceux qui travaillent, ceux qui ont un revenu, c’est eux qui ont un pick-up. Eux autres ont accès au territoire. (...) Moi, j’ai enseigné pendant 5 ans (et) j’avais un pick-up (...) et c’était tellement facile la fin de semaine, comme le vendredi ou le samedi matin : je partais tout le temps, à chaque fin de semaine. J’emmenais quelqu’un (avec moi). Un Atikamekw, c’est rare qu’il chasse tout seul. C’est tout le temps à deux. Souvent, c’était que la personne (que j’embarquais) n’avait pas de revenu (...). Plusieurs fois, il me disait: « Faut que j’amène de quoi aujourd’hui, je n’ai rien (à manger) chez nous ». Plusieurs fois, ça. Et quand moi je n’allais pas, lui n’y allait pas, dans le bois. Il ne pouvait pas y aller, à moins (de prendre) le canot, à moins que quelqu’un d’autre le ramasse. C’est ça, le problème (M-M08)

To reconcile formal schooling and the transmission of traditional knowledge is also a tall order, but everyone seems to agree that the Atikamekw nation needs to push its youth more into formal school-based education. Some suggested in interviews that the ones with less scholarly aptitudes should be taught more nature survival skills or hunting and fishing techniques:

Les jeunes, il faut les impliquer (les inciter) à persévérer dans leurs études, à finir. Puis ceux qui ne veulent pas y aller à l’école, c’est de prendre les connaissances du territoire, de pratiquer la chasse, de pratiquer le piégeage, de pratiquer la pêche, cueillette, comment ramasser le sirop d’érable, le sucre d’érable (M-M01)

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<sup>31</sup> « Il n’y a pas assez d’enseignement pour les jeunes »

<sup>32</sup> « Les vacances, ce n’est pas suffisant pour montrer ce que tu veux montrer à tes enfants »

Les jeunes qui font le décrochage, (il faudrait) les amener dans le bois et leur montrer la chasse. Moi, j'ai décroché à l'âge de douze ans, puis j'ai suivi mon père à la chasse (et c'est) comme ça que j'ai appris la chasse (O-M01)

To achieve the school-bush conciliation is not simple, but some initiatives are showing some promise. In particular, *Kice Amisk* is a camp that allows students of Wemotaci to spend some time each year in the forest and learn basic survival skills from elders or experienced hunters and trappers.

To sum up, transformations in land, transformations in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw society, and transformation of work patterns bring about some uncertainty with regard with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture and way of life. However, as next section shows, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok also embrace change and believe in their capacity to adapt to it.

#### **6.4. PAST AND FUTURE ADAPTATION**

Despite a future that is uncertain both culturally and environmentally, and a feeling of powerlessness referred to in section 6.2, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are not necessarily pessimistic, tells this man of Wemotaci, who has spent much of his youth on the land:

Ah! Ben je vois (l'avenir du territoire), j pense avec espoir. La coupe est passée. Ça fait peut-être une quinzaine d'années. Là, les arbres deviennent un petit peu matures. Ça va devenir une belle forêt, bientôt. Ça va redevenir comme elle était, je pense, un petit peu... (W-M10)

Participants believe in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw capacity to adapt to change. In fact, they see this capacity to adapt as a feature of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity. Because of their nomadic 'nature' that in the past required that they adapt to all sorts of situations and environmental fluctuations, and because of the experience of oppression over the last decades, participants believe that if the future brings about its many changes, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok will be able to adapt once again. Proof of that, they feel, is that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok still exist today, despite all the changes and pressures experienced in the past, as

explained in this details by this woman from Wemotaci, wife of an *okimaw*, who spends much time on the land:

C'est sûr qu'avec la condition des forêts d'aujourd'hui, il faut s'adapter. Il faut s'adapter à ce qui en reste, du territoire (...). Je pense qu'on va quand même s'adapter, puis qu'on va continuer à vivre selon ce qui va...il y a toujours les bleuets, il y a toujours les plantes médicinales, il y a toujours les activités comme la pêche que tu peux pratiquer. Ce sont des choses qui ne peuvent pas disparaître, même si les arbres ne sont plus là. Donc l'avenir, pour moi, il y en a tant et aussi longtemps que tu continues à vivre, à te ressourcer sur le territoire. On (les Atikamekw) est capable de s'adapter à toutes sortes de situations. Nos parents ont subsisté aussi quand ils ont contribué, quand ils ont coupé, ils ont dravé. À cette époque-là, eux aussi ont survécu...quand ils coupaient pour des compagnies. L'avenir, oui, il y en a toujours. À chaque jour il y a de l'avenir. Je pense que les activités, ça va toujours continuer selon ce qu'il y a sur le territoire (W-W01)

There also exists an internal will to change, change that will be brought about by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok themselves, in order to develop a new economy, new traditions, new knowledge – to be different. A woman from Manawan, involved in the business community sees that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok should not only stick to what the ancestors were doing, but should look forward for new opportunities, and let the society evolve and by part of the global world:

De toute façon, essayer de savoir « ah! Mais avant, les ancêtres, ils ont fait ci... ». On ne peut plus rien faire, là. Présentement, on est aujourd'hui, puis on peut faire quelque chose avec ce qui est là. C'est gros en maudit, là (M-W02)

Tranquillement, aussi, (il faut) inclure l'évolution, parce qu'il faut aller comme le reste de la société à travers le monde...Il faut qu'on grandisse, nous autre avec (M-W02)

These men, from Manawan and Wemotaci also emphasize the need to look forward and to change traditions such as the institution of the family territory and the *okimaw* in order to fulfill today's needs:

Les gens s'imaginent encore dans les années 1950-1960. Ça n'aide pas (...). Il faut vivre en 2009, il faut arrêter de vivre dans le passé! (M-M11)

On est intervenu étant donné que traditionnellement c'était des aînés qui étaient chefs de famille, qui remplaçaient le rôle du chef de territoire. On a conservé ça, mais on a divisé ça autrement concernant le territoire. Autrement dit, au lieu de n'en avoir rien qu'un (territoire familial), on a divisé ça en trois. Tu vois, il n'y a rien de coulé dans le ciment. (...) Moi, je n'ai pas à décider pour l'avenir de mes jeunes...Je ne veux pas hypothéquer leur avenir. C'est à eux autres à aller avec le temps du moment. Ils vont s'adapter, comme nous on a fait...Moi, je trouve ça

correct que ça soit comme ça que ça se passe, que ça soit malléable. C'est toujours consensuel, ce n'est pas dictatorial, c'est vraiment décidé avec la famille. Ce qu'on a fait, ça a été...avec la famille, et non décidé unilatéralement (W-M05)

Today people want to stay attached to the past, while developing new institutions, something specific to them and that is not necessarily a copy of a crystallised past. While interviewed *okimaws* tended to focus on the necessity of preserving and reinforcing the traditional activities, younger participants tended to emphasise the need to transition towards an economy that would allow job creation in the community and on the territory outside the limits of the reservation. For example, this young man from Wemotaci explains that wage earning jobs in the land, not only traditional activities, would be ideal for people of his generation:

J'aimerais ça que du point de vue du travail, qu'il y ait du travail qui se passe dans nos territoires. Débroussaillage...Ça serait le fun qu'ils nous en parlent et qu'ils prennent du monde qui serait qualifié pour faire ces jobs-là. Il y en a beaucoup qui sont capables d'aller dans le bois, comme dans le débroussaillage, planter...C'est ça qui serait le fun (W-M09)

He adds that being on the land, and therefore having work that allows for spending time on the land, is important for the well-being of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok:

Dans le fond, on aime ça, aller passer du temps dans le bois, pas tout le temps rester dans la communauté. C'est comme du ressourcement, aller dans le bois (W-M09)

Women and younger participants would generally emphasize the need to reform some traditions more, in particular the role of the *okimaw*. Chapter 7 will develop the role of the *okimaw* more extensively. For now, suffice to say that while male *okimaw* participants tended to want to adapt the *okimaw* role to today's reality by emphasizing the need for *okimaws* to have a wider decision-making role, women and younger interviews highlighted the need to strengthen consensus-building capacities within and between families, so that decisions are not only made by the *okimaw* (usually a man) but rather emerge from a consensus. This young woman from Manawan clearly expresses this perspective:



(Un chef de territoire) doit consulter les membres de la famille. On doit surveiller ensemble le territoire, il ne doit être pas le seul à être le responsable. (...) Si on rencontre un problème sur le territoire, c'est lui qui doit parler, mais pas seulement avec sa façon de penser. Il doit consulter ses frères et sœurs, ses neveux, sa mère. Il doit demander leur avis (à propos de) qu'ils vont faire s'il y a un développement pour le territoire, des négociations territoriale ou bien des coupes forestières (...) (M-W03)

From this perspective, the *okimaw* is perceived as a representative of the family who do not take decisions without consulting.

In sum, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok see the future with some apprehension. This apprehension stems mainly from a sense of powerlessness over decision-making concerning their land. They are conscious of the difficulty in reconciling what has been traditionally considered Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of life with a certain need to change these ways of doing (including a certain bureaucratization, as evident in their concern with permits) in order to invest energy in shaping the future of their land. For this, in the end, is what they want: to own the tools to shape their own future. This can go through the re-thinking of the link between the school and the bush by promoting initiatives such as *Kice Amisk*, and updating certain traditional institutions and take them out of a crystallised past.

## **6.5. ACTIVE OCCUPATION OF THE LAND FOR A BETTER FUTURE**

So far in this chapter, I have noted that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have felt marginalised on their ancestral land. The past sports-club system and the current land-rental system supported by the government have contributed to an increase in the non-Aboriginal use of space and game resources important to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture, to the point where members of the Atikamekw nation avoid using certain areas they felt safe using in the past and avoid going on the land at certain times of the year. I have also analysed how the industrial forestry contributes to a sense of insecurity with regards to the continuity of an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of life threatened by potential environmental

degradation. These two factors, together with other factors such as residential schools and the still-limited participation in decision-making processes concerning environmental decisions, have led to a decrease in Atikamekw Nehirowisiw land occupation and some loss (as described by most research participants) of cultural transmission through the generations.

In the previous section, I alluded to the fact that for several participants, the increased disconnection to the land has led to increased social problems in the communities (villages), and to an erosion of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity. Consequently, for these participants, the only viable future of the Atikamekw nation as a distinct society and culture is on the land. This section (section 6.5) thus focuses on what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok see as the main solution to their problems: an active and sustained occupation of the land.

Almost all interviewees mentioned the importance for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok of occupying the land. Four reasons were identified as important for doing so: To (1) be seen, so that the Québécois know that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok still exist and still use the land, (2) maintain the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture, since, as mentioned earlier, land and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture are closely linked, (3) know the land in order to better cope with changes and be able to monitor what is happening, and to (4) develop an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw economy. These four rationales for land occupation are addressed in turn in the following sub-sections.

#### *6.5.1. Maintain an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture and identity*

Both the archives and the interviews show that the question of land occupation is at the forefront of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw concerns since 1978. This importance finds its sources in the fact that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok identify the land as being at the centre, the heart of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity. For them, being autonomous on the land, living off the land, is a question of identity. The term *Nehirowisiw*, often even used by the Atikamekw to name themselves, means

autonomous person, able to provide for his/her own needs and well-being (CNA 2002; Poirier 2010), who has found his/her equilibrium (Poirier and Niquay 1999). An Atikamekw, then – or a *Nehirowisiw* – is autonomous on the land and the autonomy of development and management, of being able to live off the land, becomes a question of identity which connects to pride in being autonomous and in being Atikamekw. A teacher from Wemotaci explains that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw has a role of manager on the land, and that this role has to be taken back, along with a commitment with the land, which defines the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity:

Un Atikamekw, ça a un rôle de gestion. Et il faut se réapproprier cette responsabilité là. Il faut se réapproprier la gestion de notre territoire. Il faut se réapproprier l'engagement qu'on a toujours eu vis-à-vis le territoire (W-M15)

Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok today wish, therefore, to strengthen this bond with the land that has been strained in the past decades. Therefore the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok perceive their economic, social, and cultural future as a recuperation of the ability to live on the land, and to know the land. “The territory remains the fundamental reference around which everything is built and gains cohesion<sup>33</sup>” (CAM, 1993b:4).

#### 6.5.2. *Be seen*

Interviewees agreed that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok must be on the land and actively occupy it if they want to send the signal that *Nitaskinan* is still Atikamekw Nehirowisiw land. If Atikamekw Nehirowisiw land occupation is not made obvious, they run the risk of seeing their land being settled by non-Aboriginals, because those people think it is empty. As a consequence of the land not being occupied by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, as this Opitciwan council employee reports, non-Aboriginals build cottages:

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<sup>33</sup> « Le territoire demeure la référence fondamentale, celle à partir de laquelle tout s'ordonne et se construit »

(Les Blancs) ont construit plein de chalets dans (dans notre territoire), à cause qu'il n'a pas été occupé, c'est ce que ma sœur disait. Il n'a pas été occupé et (maintenant), tout est occupé en chalets (O-W01)

A teacher and hunter from Manawan highlighted that it was especially important for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to be on the land during the Québécois hunting season (in October), the moment of the year when the most people are in the forest:

(Dans le) temps de la chasse, il y a beaucoup d'allochtones qui sont en forêt et s'ils voient des Indiens, (ils se disent) « Ah! Regarde, on sait qu'ils sont là. » Plus on va se montrer, plus on peut avoir une incidence sur des choix qui vont se faire plus tard. Si on n'y va pas... (M-M17)

This emphasis on being on the land during the Québécois hunting season contrasts with what most participants think, however. Because tensions with non-Aboriginal people mount during the hunting season, and because the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok can hunt year-round, many of the latter prefer to avoid conflict – and the associated risk of accidents – and leave the land free for the two weeks of the year the Québécois are allowed to hunt. It has been reported by several Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok that past conflicts with non-Aboriginal hunters and wildlife officers have left scars on certain people, some of whom have been driven to depression after having experienced events that limited their access to their ancestral land.

Because Aboriginal ancestral rights are not being necessarily well defined (for instance in the case of the night hunt, as discussed earlier) and since they are certainly not well understood by Québécois, there is a difficulty for Québécois to accept this difference (in occupation, activities, needs, or ways of doing), which brings about tensions between land users.

However, in several cases interviewees indicate harmonious cohabitation. This cohabitation seems to be an attempt at non-interference in the affairs of the other. As one participant stated, “(the presence of non-Aboriginals on the land) does not

bother me. I do what I have to do and this is it<sup>34</sup>” (M-M05). It is the wish to mind their own business and let others be. As this teacher from Wemotaci explains, he is aware of his different rights, but tries not to make this difference too obvious when he is fishing or hunting on his family territory, in an attempt to maintain serene relations with local outfitters and tourists. He thus builds a schedule with cohabitation in mind:

(La présence allochtone nous embêtait) peut-être par le passé un peu. Pis nécessairement encore aujourd’hui, c’est sûr. Mais je te dirais que ce n’est pas nécessairement embêtant. (...) Ça change une petite affaire. (...) Si lui (l’Autochtone) peut, par exemple, chasser à l’année longue, pis que l’autre ne peut pas, ben, ce sont des choses que tu ne dis pas. Tu fais attention. Le filet, par exemple, tu ne veux pas laisser ton filet là...il n’est pas fait pour être tout le temps là. Je veux dire, tu vas le ramasser de bonne heure le matin, pour pas qu’un bateau passe dedans. Des choses comme ça (W-M15)

Several participants indicated that sharing is a value characterising the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people. This propensity to share resources and territory, in addition to the idea that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok cannot own the land - since they are the guardians of the land, not the owners - leads to the *a priori* belief that everyone, including Québécois, has a right to be on the land to enjoy its richness. This open attitude is what certain participants believe to have contributed to Québécois appropriating the land, as expressed by a Manawan teacher and hunter. He thinks that because the past generations of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok used to say that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok “belonged to the land”, and not the other way around, the Québécois were able to take possession of the land more easily:

« Le territoire, ça nous appartient pas, on appartient à la Terre. » Ça, ça a été toujours le discours de nos aînés et de nos grands-pères. C’est aussi un discours qui ne nous a pas aidé, parce que dans un sens...c’était comme un couteau à deux tranchants (...). Tu es de passage ici, donc le territoire n’appartient pas à une personne, mais on appartient à la Terre. Comme je te dis, ce discours-là ne nous a pas aidé parce qu’il y a des gens qui sont allés mettre des titres de propriété sur le territoire (M-M06)

As a consequence, younger generations of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok seem to increasingly integrate words like ‘property’ into their vocabulary, in order to stake a stronger claim to land access, in a language that can be understood by *Québécois*.

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<sup>34</sup> « (La présence des non-autochtones) ne me dérange pas. Je fais ce que j’ai à faire et c’est tout »

Most interviewees agreed that the future of the land lies in the sharing of the wealth. “There are useless fights. We should better share the territory<sup>35</sup>” (M-M15). The solution seems to be in a cohabitation of non-interference. Many mentioned that a restructuring of the hunting calendar would help to create a good social climate on the land:

Si je prends l’activité de la chasse à l’original, il y a une période où eux sont peut-être deux semaines ici, trois semaines. On leur laisse la place. On n’ira pas se mettre entre l’original et le chasseur. C’est du co-voisinage (...). À telle période on vous laisse tranquille. Là, on y va à d’autres périodes de l’année. » Il n’y a pas vraiment de problème de ce côté-là. Ça ne change pas ma façon de faire, sinon de céder un temps pour d’autres utilisateurs (W-M05)

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are ready to leave the land for certain periods of the year, as long as it is understood that for the rest of the time, they can access it without being harassed, as this employee from the Manawan council, who for his work relates with several elders, says:

J’aimerais mieux qu’on cohabite sur le territoire de chasse avec les Blancs, mais ils ne devraient pas être là tout le temps pendant que nous, nous chassons. (Il faudrait) leur dire que c’est à notre tour de chasser et faire une rotation de l’utilisation du territoire, pour bien s’entendre. Des aînés disent qu’ils aimeraient cohabiter, mais (aimeraient aussi) qu’ils ne nous dérangent pas pendant qu’on est en territoire (M-M03)

To clarify the calendar and access would go a long way towards diminishing tensions between users:

(Un aboutissement positif des négociations territoriales,) ça serait de pouvoir faire de notre territoire comme on a eu la liberté de l’occuper, parce que souvent, on s’en va, même au niveau du travail, quand on passe sur le territoire, on est interpellés par des gens qui nous disent « qu’est ce que (vous faites) dans ce coin ci? Vous n’avez pas d’affaire ici. » Ça, c’est ce qui nous dérange. Ce qui permettrait d’avoir un aboutissement, ce serait d’avoir l’esprit tranquille quand tu rentres dans le territoire (M-M13)

Therefore, what some Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok propose is the idea of two resource management systems working in parallel. On the other hand, some, as this Opitciwan council employee, also say that work is needed to harmonize

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<sup>35</sup> « Il y a des chicanes pour rien. On devrait mieux partager le territoire »

regulations so that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok can still live according to their own precepts, because, essentially, the traditional system cannot work within the current Québécois legal framework:

Pour le partage des ressources, je n'ai vraiment rien contre ça. Mettons que si un Blanc cohabite avec moi, il va falloir qu'il suive les (mêmes) règles que moi, si on veut partager les ressources (et) cogérer les ressources. Je n'ai rien contre ça (...) Je n'ai rien contre la cohabitation, la cogestion, mais il va la falloir de la cohérence pour appliquer ces règles là (O-M02)

Referring to the idea of the systems working in parallel so that “both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures continue to flourish side by side in a mutually supportive but nonintegrated environment” (McGregor 2011:307), a young band councillor from Wemotaci indicated that the solution would be to have a treaty in line with what old *wampums* were: “I would like to have a real treaty between Nations like in the old days, the days of the *wampums*. These were *real* treaties<sup>36</sup>” (W-M06). *Wampums* are considered to be adaptive, evolutive, and open, allowing two societies to live beside each other in respect, according to their respective laws.

### 6.5.3. Knowledge of the land

To have free access to the land, to move freely on one's family territory is very important for nurturing that connection with the land I referred to in the last sections. It is only by going on the land frequently that Nehirowisiw can engage in their own surveillance in order to know if key features of ecosystems are being maintained, if forest companies are respecting what was agreed upon in consultations, or to observe patterns of environmental changes. Several interviewees referred to this action of surveillance as an important potential role to be played by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. It is only through that active knowledge development and monitoring *in situ* that an individual can be enabled to take decisions about their territory. I will develop this topic further in Chapter 7.

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<sup>36</sup> « J'aimerais mieux avoir un traité entre de vrais Nations comme à l'époque, comme à l'époque des wampum, ça c'est un vrai traité »

Knowledge about the land and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw history and culture is maintained, according to several informants, through the knowledge of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw toponyms. The way the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have named the land tells the story of the land. It is for this reason that the Nation Council is currently actively reviving this toponymy and is placing Atikamekw Nehirowisiw names on maps. It is important for many to show *Nitaskinan*'s Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity by writing down toponyms filled with historical and cultural meanings. These Atikamekw Nehirowisiw toponyms were largely removed or transformed by Euro-Canadians, but the Atikamekw nation is now claiming this older toponymy to both show Québécois the land's identity and to educate its own people about their history.

#### *6.5.4. Develop an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw economy*

The fourth reason identified by research participants as being important for increasing the active Atikamekw Nehirowisiw occupation of the land is economic development, because as said before, it is widely believed that the economic future of the nation is on the land. If the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok see in tourism and forestry two major threats to their occupation of the land and to their way of life, interestingly it is also through these two activities that they see an economic future for the land and the nation.

Two main elements come out of the interviews concerning the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw vision for economic development. Firstly, most favour economic development that is based on the land resources, but that is more limited than the industrial development currently happening on *Nitaskinan*. Secondly, people are not interested in receiving cash transfers on royalties. Not only do people favour a certain development "not in any manner and not with anyone"<sup>37</sup> (W-M06), but they wish to be actively involved in this development, such as forestry:

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<sup>37</sup> « pas n'importe comment puis pas avec n'importe qui »



Nous, ce qu'on envisageait, ce qu'on a discuté, c'est que les familles prennent part aux activités forestières, mais à leur rythme, non pas comme les industrielles (W-M05)

The problem is not with development *per se*. The main problem with the current situation is that people feel powerless in the face of what is happening with their ancestral land and feel injustice because they do not benefit from the result of that development. It is clear that people feel the land is developed outside of their control and that this development relationship is considered to be abusive. These men from Opitciwan and Manawan point out that revenues generated by the forest industry on their land do not go to the communities:

Ca fait longtemps qu'il y a des ressources qui sont prélevées dans notre territoire, mais on n'en bénéficie jamais (...). On aimerait ça, en bénéficier aussi. Je trouve qu'on a été pas mal exploité dans le temps (O-M10)

On parlait des coupes de bois, tantôt – il faut qu'il y en ait, ça c'est sûr. Mais quand il n'y a aucun revenu palpable qui revient à la réserve, je trouve ça déplorable. Il n'y a rien... (M-M17)

Frustrations exist as a result of a feeling of injustice in the face of economic development that is unbridled and controlled from the outside. People do not reject development; they just want to have better control and be able to limit it. This *okimaw* in his forties, from Opitciwan, suggests that his community build itself cottages on *Nitaskinan*, and then rent them to tourists, in order to replace the current provincial lease system on which they have little control and from which they do not get revenues:

Le gouvernement, ça fait longtemps qu'il fait de l'argent sur nos territoires, pourquoi que nous on ne ferait pas aussi un peu d'argent dans nos territoire? Moi, je dirais que ce serait le mieux. Puis quand viennent les touristes, au lieu de se faire un chalet (on pourrait dire) "on a des chalets, ici. Nous on va louer ces chalets là" (O-M13)

To describe the situation the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok find themselves in, it is often opined that there is a double impoverishment caused by a government that "pockets the revenues (generated) by the selling of permits"<sup>38</sup> (W-W01) for hunting, fishing, or cottage building while this money does not go to the

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<sup>38</sup> « empoche les recettes (venant de) la vente de permis »

Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and, on top of that, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok get poorer in terms of resource access and availability: “There are less fish in rivers<sup>39</sup>” (W-W01). So “not only does the other government get richer (...), automatically, it impoverishes (the Atikamekw) financially and at the level of resource availability and at the level of its traditional way of life<sup>40</sup>” (W-W01).

Waste of resources by outsiders was identified by a problem by research participants, while this wastage was also perceived as an economic opportunity. Examples of resource waste include forest companies allowing trees that have been cut but cannot be sold to rot alongside roads, or waste by ‘sports’ hunters who bring back only moose trophies, leaving behind much of the meat. This adds to the frustration linked to industrial development controlled by outsiders. As a solution to this wasteful behaviour, it is proposed by many that the unsold wood be put at the disposal of the people from the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities to be used as construction material or fuel for heating homes. Animal parts that are not used by successful sports hunters could be salvaged, as suggested by this *okimaw* from Manawan:

À l’automne, on (pourrait) récupérer les peaux (des) chasseurs. Ça pourrait être facile, ça, de récupérer les peaux, au lieu de les jeter à la *dompe*. (...). Juste en l’essayant une fois, je me suis ramassé avec 80 peaux d’originaux. Je pensais que j’allais être capable de revenir avec, mais c’est pesant, ça, 80. Au lieu de les jeter, faudrait les récupérer pour faire de l’argent avec ça (M-M09)

The second main element to come out of the interviews, regarding economic development, is that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are not in favour of a system that compensates with cash transfers families that are affected by logging operations (as explained in section 6.3.4). Neither are they in favour of transfer payments on royalties to the communities, without providing a clear opportunity to influence forestry decisions. The transfer of logging rights and land rentals is a last resort solution. People want to work for their money, as this man from

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<sup>39</sup> « Il y a beaucoup moins de poisson dans ses rivières »

<sup>40</sup> « non seulement l’autre gouvernement s’enrichit (...), automatiquement ça appauvrit (l’Atikamekw) – financièrement oui – mais (...) aussi au niveau des ressources qui existent (...) (et de) son mode de vie traditionnel »

Opitciwan, where a sawmill providing work to community members is located, says:

Mes deux garçons travaillent au moulin, ça leur fait un emploi. Ça c'est équitable: tout le monde a accès (à) une partie des revenus de la forêt qui arrivent par chez-nous (O-M14)

This *okimaw* from Opitciwan opines that the forestry-related benefits going back to the community are not enough, despite the presence of the sawmill:

Nous n'en bénéficions pas (de la coupe de bois). Ils amènent tout. (...) Il faudrait être égal-égal (avec) le gouvernement et nous même, qu'il (se) fasse un partage. Ça fait longtemps qu'ils bûchent dans ce coin là. Dans le temps de CIP, ils ont beaucoup amené, et ce qui se passe ici pour nous, c'est qu'il y a un manque important de maisons (donc on devrait se faire donner du bois pour en construire). Même avec l'existence de la scierie, les emplois sont minimes. Il n'y a pas beaucoup (de monde), seulement environ une cinquantaine ou une soixantaine d'Atikamekw qui travaille (O-M06)

People do not want to 'sell the land'. Revenue sharing is not excluded, but only if the land is not sold and if the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have an influence on the decisions being made. They are especially against seeing the revenues generated by land resources leaving *Nitaskinan*, without them being able to have any influence on how decisions are made.

For some, compensation for the use of natural resources does not necessarily have to come under the guise of tax transfers, but can take the shape of direct material compensation that would allow the families to access and occupy the land more easily and, "to build bridges to access the territory"<sup>41</sup> (W-M13). Others have suggested that the companies should leave "something in return, like gasoline to go hunting"<sup>42</sup> (O-W05).

In sum they want to develop an economy that is in line with their values and in which they actively participate, as this hunter from Opitciwan reports:

(Il faudrait) juste être rentable au niveau économique, (...) ne pas juste attendre que le gouvernement pose de l'argent sur la table, (mais) essayer de trouver et de

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<sup>41</sup> « pour faire des ponceaux pour l'accès au territoire »

<sup>42</sup> « quelques choses en échange, (comme) du gaz pour aller à la chasse »

développer nos valeurs, pour montrer qu'un autre être humain peut vivre de différente manière (O-M03)

The next section outlines what an ideal Atikamekw Nehirowisiw economy would look like.

#### *6.5.5. A mixed economy?*

Traditionally, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok had a subsistence economy based on hunting, fishing and gathering (McNulty and Gilbert 1981; Poirier 2001). With the introduction of commercial trapping for fur, this economy transformed into a mixed economy (Gélinas 2003). A mixed economy refers to a system in which wage labour or the selling of wildlife by-products has come to support subsistence hunting and fishing, allowing for the purchase of fuel and higher-performance hunting and fishing gear (Dowsley 2007). After 1940, and up until the 1970s, the quasi-disappearance of commercial trapping brought the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok into the world of wage labour, as they started to be more involved with logging for forest companies. The mechanisation of the forest industry in the 1970s initiated a decline in the numbers of forestry workers and brought about an increase level of specialisation of the workforce (Mercure 1996). This, as indicated by an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw informant, signalled a decline of wage labour for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Today, unemployment rates are high in the communities and those who work are mainly employed by band governments (see Chapter 5).

Nowadays, the going price of pelts (beaver, lynx, marten, etc.) does not cover the costs of trapping (fuel, gears, etc.), and for those who work, wage-labour is somewhat difficult to integrate with the practice of traditional activities, as reported in section 6.3.3.3. As a result, some interviewees talked with nostalgia of the era of the mixed economy, considered a good period for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, when people lived well.

If a mixed economy does not seem to sustain itself in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context, archival research showed that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have been thinking for a long time about the viability of an income security program to encourage trappers to be on the land. In its report to the CAM penned in 1987, La Rusic highlights that for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, it is important to support hunting and trapping in order to maintain access to a source of healthy food, because these activities are connected to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity and would play a decisive role for the future of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, and because skills developed through these activities could serve in other economic sectors, such as tourism:

Une économie axée sur la chasse nous semble importante pour au moins trois raisons: (1) elle est une source appréciable de nourriture de très bonne qualité; (2) elle est très étroitement liée aux racines culturelles de la nation et donc pourra jouer un rôle déterminant pour son avenir culturel; (3) elle a servi à l'apprentissage des connaissances qui sont en demande dans d'autres secteurs, tel le tourisme et l'exploitation forestière (LaRusic 1987:2)

The consumption of bush meat or wild fish is an important factor in the economy of isolated communities (Myers et al. 2005). What is not spent at the supermarket can be utilised elsewhere. This is why a financial support program for hunters makes sense, even from a strictly economical point of view.

Several interviewees suggested that subsidises to encourage people to be on the land could be drawn from revenues gained through the sharing of royalties on forestry or vacationing leases, instead of giving cash directly to families:

Je pense que ce n'est pas vraiment une bonne solution, de donner de l'argent (directement aux familles en compensation des coupes forestières). À la place de donner l'argent, on devrait mettre plus sur le conseil de trappe, ramasser l'argent puis voir un peu qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire dans leur coin, dans leur territoire, si on peut construire des chalets pour eux autres, pour améliorer leur vie dans leur territoire, peut-être trouver d'autres choses, des projets. C'est ça que je vois. Il ne faut pas donner de l'argent à ceux qui ont des coupes de bois dans leur territoire (O-W05)

This Wemotaci council employee suggests that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok look into the Cree system (Colette 2010) for inspiration and put up financial support programs for trappers and hunters:

Donc, ces gens-là (qui veulent vivre sur le territoire), ils ont besoin de ressources (...), il faut aider ces gens-là. Il faut trouver une façon pour pouvoir les aider...Eux autres (les Cris) ont de l'argent, ils savent comment...Nous autres, on n'a pas d'argent, mais il faut trouver des façons d'essayer de vivre la même chose qu'eux autres avec le peu de moyens qu'on a, pour pouvoir utiliser notre territoire (W-M14)

This man from Opitciwan reminds us that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, through the land claims negotiations, should not 'give away' the land and develop only non land-related economic activities (such as casinos). For him, claims negotiations are not only a question of money, but a question of protecting a way of life and the land that comes with it:

J'ai déjà entendu un négociateur en chef dire; «on va laisser cette partie du territoire, de toute façon on peut faire de l'argent avec d'autres choses ». Ce n'est pas juste une question d'argent là-dedans hein (les négociations territoriales), mais c'est beaucoup de protéger notre mode de vie, puis quand tu veux protéger ton mode de vie, ça prend un territoire qui vient avec. Si tu n'as plus de territoire le lendemain, qu'est-ce que tu fais? (O-M10)

People state a preference here for centralised transfer instead of cash payments to individual families, as is sometimes the case currently within the forestry consultation system.

Colette (2010), who studied the question of the income security program that has existed amongst the James Bay Cree since the 1970s, warns that there is a disparity between *ideal possibility* (that is the legal right for any Cree to pursue a harvesting life-style), and *actual feasibility* (which is determined by parameters such as land access, equipment purchasing, sincerity of commitment, or individual competence). This disparity has also been signalled during the interviews by elders, such as the one quoted below, who are concerned about the real commitment of the youth to practice traditional activities that require hard work in the way they themselves did:

J'aimerais développer les connaissances que j'ai, comme le trappage, la chasse, tout ça. Il y aurait d'autres gens qui pourraient faire ça, aussi, enseigner aux jeunes comment trapper. J'ai déjà essayé, dans les années 1980 (...). J'avais un jeune homme avec moi et je commençais à lui montrer la chasse à l'orignal. Il est venu seulement une journée et il disait que c'était trop fatiguant, qu'on avait trop de misère à marcher, que c'était dur à aller dans le bois et vivre dans le bois. Il n'est jamais venu, par après. Il n'y a pas assez de volonté pour aller dans le bois, pour continuer. (Les jeunes) se découragent trop vite. C'est comme ça que je verrais, pour au moins essayer de sauver les connaissances de ça, la vie du bois, et le trappage. Parce que les jeunes ne savent pas trapper, de nos jours. (...). Faudrait peut-être les montrer...Les intéresser à (se faire) montrer, ceux qui sont intéressés (W-M07)

The ideal for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would be to be fully active in the economic future of *Nitaskinan*, to live off the land, “to set up businesses with which we could benefit from the land<sup>43</sup>” (M-M17). Many note that the development must be compatible with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw vision. An equitable resource management system “is to participate to the economic development, in the decisions regarding the protection, to protect one’s family territory<sup>44</sup>” (M-M10). People prefer economic activities that have certain similarities with traditional activities such as trapping, activities allowing for the active occupation of the land, and activities which financially support the ultimate goal: to be on the land and maintain traditions and identity. This alternative is therefore economic development at a smaller scale, partly controlled by families, as suggested by this young woman from Wemotaci who spends extensive periods of time on her family territory:

À chaque fois que je vais dans le bois et que je suis toute seule, je me dis tout le temps (que) j'aimerais ça que toutes les familles se réunissent et qu'on fasse de quoi avec leur territoire, qu'on fasse de l'argent (W-W02)

Some participants went further by making connections between being *Nehirowisiw* and having a role in developing the land: “It is our job, Aboriginals,

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<sup>43</sup> « se lancer dans des entreprises où on pourrait, à partir du territoire, profiter (du développement) »

<sup>44</sup> « c'est de participer au développement, aux décisions pour la protection, pour protéger son territoire familial (...) »

to develop and exploit (the land)<sup>45</sup> (W-M11). This development should be family-based, diversified, and land-related, as suggested by this man from Wemotaci, quite involved in the promotion in his community of the life on the land:

J'ai bon espoir que les négociations réussissent et puis qu'on puisse, avec la famille, s'installer sur le territoire, tirer des revenus, qu'on puisse vivre du territoire. C'est ça qui est mon espoir (...). (Développer) plusieurs activités d'ordre économique. Il (y aurait) de l'exploitation forestière, l'exploitation des bleuets ou d'autres fruits sauvages. L'exploitation forestière, ce n'est pas uniquement du feuillus, du résineux mais y va avoir du feuillus aussi pour différents types de matériaux dépendant quel sorte de client qu'on pourrait avoir. (...) La trappe, beaucoup de trappe, et le côté récréo-touristiques (W-M11)

The economic system that is proposed by many participants is not far removed from the idea of subsistence, without 'abuse' (monetary profit is perceived as abusive), and closer to the value of sharing (there is enough for everyone) referred to earlier.

Tourism, in this context, gets the attention of interviewees. This type of economic activity does not transform the land as much as forestry, and not in an irreversible manner, and allows for continuity in terms of the appearance of *Nitaskinan*. Also, a commerce built around Atikamekw Nehirowisiw cultural expression is seen by some as a viable alternative, while others, more traditionalists, would see the return of a mixed economy positively, where the selling of hunting, trapping and fishing by-products would finance the equipment necessary for the occupation of the land.

The objective is to live off the land, "a kind of subsistence"<sup>46</sup> (M-W03), not to generate profits. To have an outfitting operation, for instance, could generate a minimum of revenue, but would mainly allow one to "occupy the territory all the time"<sup>47</sup> (W-M13). People seem largely satisfied to generate just enough profit to

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<sup>45</sup> « C'est à nous, les Autochtones, à développer, à faire du développement (et) à se développer pour qu'on puisse exploiter »

<sup>46</sup> « une sorte de subsistance »

<sup>47</sup> « occuper tout le temps le territoire »



live well on the land and to secure the continuity of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture by way of practice of traditional activities. Due to the fact that not many people from younger generations participated in the interviews and in the workshop, it is not clear if this pattern holds across generations, but it certainly does among today's leaders. As mentioned earlier, there was a stronger emphasis among the young interview participants, on the need to develop an economy rather than on the need to protect traditional activities, but there was still the willingness among them to develop economic activities on the land in order that Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok can ground themselves within their own culture (*se ressourcer*).

In sum, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok aim minimally to receive compensation for the exploitation of the land's resources, through employment, tax and royalties transfers, or through direct material compensation (heating wood, construction material, unused meat, temporary infrastructure left behind, etc.). However, they would ideally like to participate in an economy that is smaller scale, diversified, and made of activities (such as tourism) allowing for a greater nurturing of the practice of traditional activities and active occupation of the land.

## **6.6. DISCUSSION: AUTONOMY AND INTEGRITY**

The quote opening this Chapter 6 sums up what several Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would like for the future:

On est en plein la bonne génération pour retourner sur le territoire parce que les gens sont instruits et affirmatifs de leurs droits, il reste encore des gens qui peuvent transmettre le savoir traditionnel et il reste encore de la forêt. Si les Atikamekw attendent une autre génération, il sera peut-être vraiment trop tard pour prendre en main le développement du territoire et de la Nation. (...) On est chanceux, on a encore de la forêt. On vit en forêt (M-W02)

In this quote, this Manawan woman, involved in the business community, identifies key points to consider in a successful co-management arrangement. The goal for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok is to go back on the land (outside the reserve) in order take the development of the territory and the nation in their own hands. The key existing features to build upon are, according to her, first, an up-

and-coming educated generation that is aware of Aboriginal rights, second, an older generation still alive who possess a traditional knowledge that could be instrumental into revitalising the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity, and sense of pride, and give a direction to land development, and third, the presence of a forest that despite all the changes that have already occurred, continues to exist.

What comes from this analysis then, is that for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to be autonomous on their ancestral land is vital. The main objectives of the land-claims negotiations, for the people, is first to build and maintain the capacity of *Nitaskinan* to support the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of life. Secondly, it is to build an economic future on the land, for themselves and controlled by themselves. This means that the land should provide the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok with the possibility to regain their *Nehirowisiw* status.

To be *Nehirowisiw*, an autonomous being, today is to make a living off the traditional family territory. It is to be able to know the land by having access to it, monitoring environmental processes currently happening, and freely moving around “with peace of mind”, without fear of being intercepted by wildlife agents or non-Aboriginal hunters. Finally, to be *Nehirowisiw* today is being able to develop economic activities that require one to know the land and to be active year-round on the family territory. By regaining their *Nehirowisiw* status, therefore, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would attain their double objective of family-based economic development and of cultural transmission of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw values.

How could this double objective be attained in today’s context of industrial forestry and large-scale sports hunting/fishing? The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok express the capacity of the land to sustain their way of life with the word ‘integrity’. The presence of this concept of integrity in the debate signals that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are ready to allow some changes to happen on the land, and a certain level of industrial intervention, as long as these actions do not

threaten the capacity of the *Nitaskinan* social-ecological system to maintain its main characteristics and therefore its capacity to support and allow for the development of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditions and culture.

#### *6.6.1. Does integrity equal resilience?*

Are there similarities between what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok identify as ‘integrity’ and what ACM scholars refer to as ‘resilience’? As noted in Chapter 3, resilience is the ability of systems (in this case *Nitaskinan*) to absorb shocks, changes and disturbance and still maintain the same general configuration (Holling 1973). Implicit in that definition of resilience is the notion of change and the idea that a system can integrate a certain level of change while remaining the same system. In this case, one could say that a resilient *Nitaskinan* has the ability to absorb shocks from economic development and other changes, while maintaining its identity as *Nitaskinan*, which for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would mean a capacity to maintain an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of life based on the family territory, and a capacity for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to produce and reproduce a culture they understand as intimately linked to a healthy land.

This, resilience, is close to what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok express when they say that the result of the negotiations should be “to respect the integrity of the ancestral territory<sup>48</sup>” (CNA c.1993). This statement may at first sight convey a more static understanding of how the land should be, but as the results of the interviews presented in this chapter illustrate, integrity, for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, is shown to include a certain level of change, both ecological and social (as discussed in sections 6.4, 6.5.4, and 6.5.5). Livelihoods can change somewhat, the environment can change, as long as these are in line with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture. The system is thus not static but changes over time, and people can change with it.

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<sup>48</sup> « respecter l’intégrité du territoire ancestral »

The concept of resilience can be used to identify the level of change that a social-ecological system or a territory can tolerate without flipping into an entirely different state, unrecognizable to its occupants (Berkes and Fast 2005). For the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, the resilience of *Nitaskinan* relates to the capacity of the land to absorb the cumulative environmental and human changes while keeping its identity as *Nitaskinan*, a land that can provide an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw lifestyle similar to that of today and desired by most of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw population, and a land that is a keeper of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw memory.

I would argue, then, that these Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ideas about integrity resonate with the concept of *resilience* developed over the past few years in the academic literature.

Consequently, in the context of the treaty negotiations, co-management should work towards building resilience to maintain ecosystem features that allow them to maintain the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of life. To move towards a successful arrangement, from the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw perspective, then, is to design policies to “enhance the system’s ability to reorganize and move within some configuration of acceptable states, without knowing or caring which particular path the system might follow” (Walker et al. 2002). “Without knowing or caring” reflects to a certain extent what some Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok think. There could be industrial forestry on *Nitaskinan*, as long as traditional way-of-life is possible (the acceptable state).

In order to move towards a management framework that focuses on resilience, one needs to know what important features in the social-ecological system need to be monitored and to identify critical thresholds not to cross in order to stay within the boundaries of the desired system and not flip towards something that is completely and irreversibly different. Thresholds are defined as boundaries in time and space that separate alternative system regimes (Briske et al. 2010).

Beyond certain natural resource exploitation thresholds, development thresholds, or pollution thresholds, this capacity to remain *Nitaskinan* disappears, changes are irreversible, and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture, dependent on the land, is potentially threatened.

If we talk in Aboriginal rights language, rights become thresholds not to cross. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have ancestral rights (as explained in Chapter 2) to use resources and the land in certain ways, and these ancestral rights are, in this context, the important features to keep track of. If a critical threshold concerning these ancestral rights is crossed, making the system transform into something that cannot maintain the important feature, we are in breach of ancestral rights. The goal is to move away from any regime shifts that produce a system that can no longer sustain ancestral rights – rights to a desirable *Nitaskinan* that can provide Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok with economic autonomy and a culturally meaningful place. Consequently, there is a need to identify thresholds that matter culturally. For example, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw landscapes may require higher presence of certain types of medicinal plants than what would be required by Québécois.

In order to get this situation, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok need to identify: the acceptable states, the critical (ecological and social) processes that support an acceptable state, and the culturally relevant ecological thresholds that cannot be crossed without causing undesirable changes.

#### *6.6.2. Main features that should be maintained, protected*

What the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to keep in its current state is the land's capacity to sustain traditional activities, the capacity to build an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw economy based on forest resources (with some logging) and tourism (ethno-tourism, ecotourism). For *Nitaskinan* to maintain its identity as *Nitaskinan*, it has to maintain a certain level of ecosystem biological diversity. If sufficient biodiversity is lost, if a threshold is crossed and the land becomes too different

from what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are used to, this transformation would bring a loss of cultural references and a loss of traditional foods.

This capacity to be *Nehirowisiw*, autonomous on the land, is something very important for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, and it is in part through the land claim process that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok try to re-establish this capacity. This capacity includes the capacity to hunt by day or night, and year-round, according to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw code of practice, the capacity to build camps on family territory, the capacity to have peace of mind when going on the land and not be interfered with, the capacity to reconnect to one's roots and one's strength through the land, as well as the capacity of those with less income to go on the land. It is this capacity to be able to be *Nehirowisiw* that the Atikamekw want to retain.

Almost everyone spoken to identified the maintenance of language and toponyms as significant. They even went as far to say that if there is no land, there is no language. Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are not alone among Canadian First Nations to fight for the survival of their language. In order to keep the language and the connection to the land alive, Aboriginals have claimed back their space by putting in evidence old toponymies and by following processes that have enabled them to become officially accepted by state governments, as in the case of the Inuit of Canada (Collignon 2004). The most recent case in Canada of such a process involves the Haida nation of British Columbia, who has managed to change the official name of their homeland from *Queen Charlotte Islands* to *Haida Gwaii* (Haida Nation and British Columbia 2009).

#### *6.6.3. Main features to be changed - What are the deadlocks to be broken?*

The obstacles barring the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok from putting in place what they would like for the land and for themselves are numerous. Several deadlocks must be broken, through the establishment of co-management arrangements or otherwise.

The greatest irritant for the research participants are the restrictions imposed on Atikamekw Nehirowisiw movement and occupation of the land. Access rights are not clear for everyone, and outfitters and government agents (wildlife agents) often take advantage of these grey areas to keep the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw off wildlife-rich areas of the land. Activities such as the night hunt have not been clearly identified as an ancestral right for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw, and therefore, those who practice it regularly get fined for doing so. This leads to a decrease in hunting on the part of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw, and therefore discourages them from taking part in a traditional activity.

The current system in which most in the communities who have work are employed by the band council (and therefore depend on cash transfers from other governments) has been identified as a serious obstacle to the flourishing of a bright Atikamekw Nehirowisiw future for two reasons. Firstly, the structure of wage labour (9-to-5 in the community) bars workers from spending a significant amount of time on the land, therefore disconnecting people from their cultural roots. It was pointed out during the interviews that economically less well-off people, who have the most time available to spend on the land for long periods of time paradoxically tend to spend less time than those who work because they do not own the motorized vehicle or cannot afford the gas to get on their family territory. This is one of the reasons why respondents clearly saw the need to earn money while being on the land. Secondly, the problem of the school calendar has also been identified. This disconnects people from their cultural roots. A different learning cycle could potentially be implemented, where students would spend more time in the bush, in places such as the *Kice Amisk* camp mentioned earlier.

A solution to both these problems could be to focus on professional occupations that bring people to their family territories, setting up small-scale businesses, performing activities that are close to traditional activities. That would strengthen

the connection with the land, develop a new generation of chiefs of territories (*okimaws*), and push the youth to go on the land.

#### *6.6.4. Trade-offs the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are willing to make*

Several of the participants identified ‘sharing’ as a value at the core of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok therefore are in favour of sharing the wealth of the land. Participant comments indicate that an accommodation can be reached in terms of the calendar of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw activities and non-Aboriginal activities on the land.

Logging is acceptable for a vast majority of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, as long as the capacity of the land to sustain traditional activities is preserved, and as long as the development of an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw family-based economy is possible. The other precondition for accepting logging operations in *Nitaskinan* is the possibility of participating in early stages of forestry planning.

Land rentals for the purpose of building cottages in *Nitaskinan* is acceptable, but it would be ideal if cottagers paid occupation licenses to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw government and if the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok participated in planning the issuing of these leases. Also, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are willing to pay taxes and permits, but want these to stay within the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw community.

The challenge is to reconcile two systems that want to work in parallel, in non-interference, within a legal system protecting the rights and ambitions of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, guaranteeing certainty and security regarding land title, but bringing about the flexibility required so that the ambitions of each party can be reconciled without stepping on each other’s feet.



#### 6.6.5. How can ACM help (or not)?

To break the several deadlocks the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are facing, forestry would have to switch focus from the maximum sustained yield converted into AAC to resilience management of the *Nitaskinan* social-ecological system (considering both ecological features and social components such as the family territory system). This focus on resilience is appropriate because the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are willing to accept some change and to try things that are different from what they have been doing in the past, as long as *Nitaskinan* maintains the core features that define it as *Nitaskinan* and allow for the practice of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional activities that define their way of life. It would mean making ‘resilience’ the heart of a co-management arrangement, the bench-mark for evaluating the success of the arrangement.

Chapter 3 showed that a resilience framework and an adaptive approach are needed to deal with the complexity of natural systems. Here, I argue that a resilience framework and an adaptive approach are also needed in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context because the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people want to do more on the land, want to be more involved in their economic development while maintaining the main cultural features of their society, but they do not exactly know how to do that. In other words, they need to try new things to see if they could be acceptable ecologically, socially and culturally. As one workshop participant phrased it, they “need to experiment with what will become (their) traditions”. They want to revitalise their traditions into something new, to develop a new, family-based economy, and at the same time to remain Atikamekw Nehirowisiw.

There is a need to build an economy that is based on the family unit, and on the family territory. Chapter 7 will show in further detail that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok wish to build a decision-making system concerning environmental management around the family unit and around the chief of territory, the *okimaw*. Family and *okimaws* are therefore considered central to the economic future of

*Nitaskinan*. There are 60 family territories in *Nitaskinan*, so there is room for experimentation. Each of these families wants to be autonomous and to do their own thing, so a decision-making system can work differently in each territory.

Experimentation is an important part of ACM. Trying different things in the form of pilot projects on different family territories would respond to the needs expressed by research participants. This would also engage more people in different experiments (methods experiments) to reduce conflict and build trust between government bureaucrats who are sceptical of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw capacity to participate in decision-making, forest companies, and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families. Since there are several family territories, some pilot projects could be set up in a few of these in order to test new logging methods that would be more attuned to the families' needs. To give some leeway to families in order to test new methods of logging would reduce conflict in the short term, and would empower *okimaws* to participate in the decisions concerning their territory. In the long run, it could build trust between parties as they assessed the results of different experiments happening at the scale of family territories.

Some potential for experimentation already exists, as three communities have three different liaison offices with three different ways of doing consultations. It would be a good idea to build on these existing organisations.

The resilience framework was built to deal with ecological uncertainties, with ecology in mind. What I advocate here is for the identification of ecological thresholds that have cultural importance. Building resilience is essential for cultural reasons.

## 6.7. CONCLUSION

The quote opening this chapter sums up the optimism of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok about a window of opportunity that currently exists. The land is still able to provide economically and culturally, and while the youngest generations have been less exposed than previous generations to life on the land, there are still enough elders to nurture a relationship with *nocimik* that has been strained over the past decades. Also, recent court decisions and the fact that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok did not yet sign a treaty leaves plenty of room to manoeuvre for a creative arrangement that would allow them to put in place experiments that could become tomorrow's traditions.

In this Chapter I first identified two sensitive areas or major 'bones of contention' that work both as a threat to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture and way of life, and as an opportunity for a better future: tourism and the associated competition for game meat; and industrial forestry.

I then illustrated from interviews, workshops and archival analyses that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to diversify their economy to make it less dependent on government income reconnecting people to their cultural roots, the land. As such, I argued that there is a need for a resilience framework to sit at the heart of a co-management arrangement. Finally, I identified the need for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to work on the identification of acceptable social-ecological system states and culturally-relevant thresholds. In sum, in this chapter I examined what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would like to do with the land and on the land. In the next Chapter I examine how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok could get to a co-management arrangement that considers these elements by exploring what kind of governance there exists today and what kind of governance they are setting up for tomorrow.

## CHAPTER 7

### UPDATING TRADITIONS: GOVERNANCE IN *NITASKINAN*

Ce n'est pas de dire « c'est mon territoire, c'est le mien! » Juste dire comme ça...le gars qui dit ça, « c'est mon territoire, » il ne sait pas gérer son territoire (W-M07)

#### 7.1. INTRODUCTION

For the informant quoted above land and resource management is more than claiming property rights to a piece of land. For him, to manage a family territory, one needs to know the land and one needs to develop the proper institutions, or, in other words, the “sets of rules, decision-making procedures, and programmatic activities that serve (...) to guide the interactions of those participating in these practices” (Young 1997:4). For this informant, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have a lot of work to do before taking matters into their own hands regarding resource management, or before reaching a co-management arrangement. They need to reflect on what kind of institutions they want to set in place to allow discussion between land users to happen. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok also need to know more about the land for, as stated in the previous chapter and elsewhere (Poirier 2001, 2010; Morissette 2007), the knowledge of the land by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people and the connection with it has been strained in the past decades due to industrial resource development, residential schools, colonial policies and a lack of recognition of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw rights.

Co-management has to be seen as a knowledge-building and institution-building exercise. For years, the Atikamekw First Nation has been calling for traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw knowledge of the land and for their traditional institutions to be taken into consideration while building new knowledge and new institutions for a co-management arrangement concerning their ancestral land, *Nitaskinan* (e.g. CNA 2004, 2006). While a co-management arrangement can in itself be seen as an opportunity to build new knowledge and institutions (Berkes 2007), some of that work is an inward-looking and reflective process, and has to

be done before reaching an agreement. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the inward-looking work the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to do with regards to (re)building their institutions for the governance of their ancestral land.

#### *7.1.1. Goal of the chapter*

While Chapter 6 explored the results the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok aim to achieve concerning the land in terms of activities to undertake on the land and in terms of landscape features they want to keep or change, Chapter 7 explores how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok intend to get to these results – what governance system is needed. The goal is to show how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define traditional knowledge and how they see a place for it in today's land and resource management. The goal is also to report on how the Atikamekw nation intends to rebuild their traditional decision-making institutions in order to revitalise the central role and the knowledge of the *okimaw* in order to reframe these in today's context.

Chapter 7 partly addresses thesis objective #1 by identifying how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define success in terms of institution-building. It also partly addresses thesis objective #2 by examining how the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change can be addressed in an adaptive co-management process, in the particular context of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty negotiations. Finally, this chapter makes connections with the adaptive co-management (ACM) approach to understand how this framework can help in resolving some deadlocks and build Atikamekw Nehirowisiw institutions of governance.

After this examination of the inward-looking reflective work the Atikamekw nation is doing in building their institutions, Chapter 8 will go on to examine the outward-looking work necessary in order to bridge Atikamekw Nehirowisiw aspirations, knowledge and institutions with state bureaucracies and build institutions of co-management for *Nitaskinan*.

### *7.1.2. Structure of the chapter*

The first part of this chapter explores how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). The second part of the chapter focuses on the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional institutions of governance, mainly the *okimaw* and family territories, and on the way the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok intend to rehabilitate these traditional institutions to make them work today. The discussion section focuses on connections that could be drawn between a fluid conception of traditions, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw revival project, and adaptive co-management (ACM), in order to see how ACM is pertinent to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw project of cultural revival, institution-building and political autonomy.

The methods that were used to gather the data presented and analysed in this chapter are the same as Chapter 6. A detailed account of my methodology is presented in Chapter 5.

## **7.2. ATIKAMEKW NEHIROWISIW TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have stated that one of their interests in the land claim is to develop a new environmental management process that would allow for management decisions to be compatible with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw worldviews (*sensu* Elshof 2001) and values, and informed in part by their traditional knowledge of the land.

Interviews performed during this research aimed to understand how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and how it is possible to use it in resource management. This section thus reports on that topic using the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 4. Consequently, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw definition of TEK will be categorized according to the six faces of traditional knowledge illustrated in Figure 4.1. The six faces are: factual observations, management systems, past and present usages of the land,

ethics and values, culture and identity, and cosmology. Later sections of the chapter focus on a particular component of that tradition – institutions of decision-making – and on how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would like to use these traditional institutions in today's environmental management.

### *7.2.1. Factual observations*

For the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, traditional knowledge is to know their territory, “the forest, and the plants. It is quite a knowledge<sup>49</sup>” (W-M10).

This face of TEK is the body of factual, specific observations TEK holders are capable of generating. It consists of the recognition, the naming, and the classification of discrete components of the environment. It is a set of both separate empirical observations and information such as facts about animals, their behavior and their habitat, the anatomy of species, or animal abundance:

Le savoir traditionnel atikamekw, je pense que c'est la connaissance du territoire, la connaissance des matières premières, de tout ce qui existe sur le territoire. (C'est) la connaissance de la faune, (de la localisation des) animaux, de leurs habitats. C'est vraiment la connaissance du territoire (M-W04)

This type of knowledge is also about understanding the inter-relationships between species, an understanding of the connections within the biophysical environment, spatial distributions and historical trends of spatial and population patterns. This allows for the monitoring of ecosystem health indicators and the measuring of ecological changes, in order to know how much it is possible to harvest for consumption, as reported a teacher and hunter from Manawan:

(Le savoir traditionnel), c'est connaître son territoire, connaître ce qu'il y a à l'intérieur...Les animaux, les arbres, ce qu'il y a dessus. Savoir où on peut aller faire de la chasse, savoir combien on peut en prélever, savoir qu'est-ce qu'il y a dans cette forêt-là comme essences, les arbres et tout ça. (...) les lacs, ce qui doit être protégé, quel genre de poisson il y a dans ce lac-là. (C'est savoir) ce qui (est nécessaire) à ce lac-là pour (maintenir) une qualité (M-M06)

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<sup>49</sup> « la forêt et les plantes. C'est tout un savoir. » All translations are my own.

It is also the knowledge of traditional medicine, medicinal plants and their properties.

Several respondents referred to traditional knowledge (or Atikamekw knowledge) as the useful knowledge of “everything we need to know to live, or survive<sup>50</sup>” (M-M13). As pointed out in chapter 4 and discussed extensively in the literature, TEK therefore largely serves the purpose of subsistence.

### 7.2.2. *Management systems*

A major theme of the research on TEK is that of resource management systems, and how they are adapted to local environments. The second face of TEK, then, refers to strategies for ensuring the sustainable use of local natural resources and the methods of estimating the state of the resources. This face acknowledges that TEK is a “complex web of practices” (Nadasdy 1999:6) that adapts to change by developing appropriate and effective technologies.

Accordingly, for the Atikamekw, traditional knowledge is know-how. It is hunting methods, trapping and fishing methods. “It is to know how to set snares<sup>51</sup>” (M-W03). It is also to know how to prepare, cook and preserve game food.

It is therefore the specific methods, but more globally, it is a knowledge of resource management systems adapted to the particular environment in which management takes place. A respected *okimaw* from Wemotaci, who spends extensive periods of time of the land, sums up what good Atikamekw Nehirowisiw resource management by reporting what his own father taught him:

Mon père disait que tout le territoire qu’il avait, il en faisait le tour (...), soit à toutes les années, ou à tous les deux ans. Quand il quittait le territoire qu’il venait d’occuper, (c’était pour qu’il y ait) une régénération d’animaux. C’est pour ça qu’il faisait le tour du territoire. Tous les membres du territoire, c’est ça qu’ils faisaient. Ils le gardaient assez gros, là, pour qu’ils puissent survivre en une année avec les

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<sup>50</sup> « toutes les choses qu’on avait de besoin pour vivre, survivre »

<sup>51</sup> « C’est de savoir où mettre le piège »



membres du territoire. L'année suivante, ils déplacent leurs (activités). C'est pour ça qu'il y avait beaucoup de gibier. Même les poissons, avant que les Québécois arrivent. Quand ils en avaient de besoin, ils n'en prenaient pas une vingtaine ou une trentaine, là. *Celui qui dirigeait* disait « prenez du poisson...prenez au moins 2-3 chaque pour que vous puissiez manger un repas, pis l'autre repas...ne gaspillez rien. » (W-M07, my emphasis)

This quote refers to a harvesting rotation pattern conducted in order not to overuse certain areas thereby killing all the game. The hunters of a family would from year to year move around their territory, using different parts of the territory, depending on fluctuations in resources availability. The monitoring of these fluctuations would allow the *okimaw* – “the one who was leading (*celui qui dirigeait*)” – to dictate to other family members which parts of the family territory to use for which resource, and how much of the resource to use. This system thereby ensures that all family members have enough, as long as an ethic of respect of the game that strongly discourages waste is enforced.

This quote speaks in the past tense, revealing that the interviewee believes that resource management does not work quite like that anymore. The systems work very well in a subsistence economy where few outsiders interfere with resource use and with the possibility of conducting resource inventories. Today, very few respondents consider it possible to return to the system described above in its pure form. Rotations are difficult to implement if the overall control of the catches – by Atikamekw Nehirowisiw and non-Atikamekw alike – are not monitored. However, section 7.5 will report that today the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are trying to re-establish the central role of the *okimaw* in an updated system of resource management where co-operation with outsiders is considered.

### 7.2.3. Past and present usages

This third face of TEK refers to the knowledge of the past and current uses of the land that is transmitted through oral history. It refers to the knowledge of historical patterns of land use and settlement, occupancy, harvest levels, kinships and family ties. It also concerns the location of cultural and historical sites.

Several participants in the interviews highlighted the importance of knowing the history of the land in order to better understand the bonds uniting the different families, so that the family territory system can continue to work well. Unfortunately, what comes out of the interviews is that while people want to continue to use the family territories system in resource management, the knowledge of the delimitation of the different territories, as well as the family affiliations with respect to the territories, are not widespread, especially among the youngest generations (W-W03). The revival of that oral history related to families and family territories is part of the project of building a new ‘territorial council’, involving the *okimaws* of the different families and contributing to refocusing resource management on familial autonomy. I will return to this later in the chapter.

For many years now, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have been working to locate cultural and historical sites that were previously known only through oral history and to map this information. This is being done both to revitalize the knowledge of these places within the nation for a younger generation who was removed from oral transmission of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw history over the past years, and also to show forest companies and governments that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have a historical connection with *Nitaskinan*.

#### *7.2.4. Ethics and values*

This fourth face of TEK relates to “value statements about how things should be” (Usher 2000:186). For Wenzel (2004), this face of TEK is the connection between the belief system and the organisation of facts and actions. Berkes (1988, 1999), more pragmatically, refers to an environmental ethics that keeps exploitive abilities in check. This face is the expression of values concerning correct attitudes to adopt towards non-human animals, towards the environment in general, and between humans.

For the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, the traditional system works if it takes place in a context of the non-abuse of resources. ‘Respect’ for the land, and the fight not to ‘abuse’ animals and the land, is the core of this system. The traditional code of practices instructs the individual to “preserve the land, not to abuse resources<sup>52</sup>” (O-M10). “It (is) first and foremost the respect for the environment and the animals<sup>53</sup>” (W-M02). The value system is also to “take when it is time and be careful<sup>54</sup>” (W-M10).

In the past, when the means to preserve meat were not what they are today, an ethic of sharing would be applied constantly. Today, although sharing of the meat is made less critical because it can be preserved for longer periods of time, many research participants refer to the values of sharing and mutual support as still defining values of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity. An informant from Opitciwan explains that sharing and mutual support was, in the past, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw equivalent of the income tax:

On a vécu durant dix-mille ans sans impôt, sauf que le partage et l’entraide, c’était ça nos impôts (O-M02)

Others stress clearly that an Aboriginal philosophy focusses on sharing:

On peut aller dans leur coin et une autre année, on peut aller dans un autre coin. C’est comme ça. Et toujours en laisser (pour que) la vie continue. Il faut en laisser pour les autres personnes (M-M09)

La philosophie autochtone (...) dit « on partage, on est un peuple de partage » (M-M17)

Today sharing is still an important part of the practice of subsistence in order to allow those who cannot hunt (such as elders) to have access to traditional foods, as reported by this woman from Wemotaci, who has spent a significant amount of time on the land throughout her life:

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<sup>52</sup> « préserver le territoire, de ne pas abuser des ressources »

<sup>53</sup> « C’était surtout le respect pour l’environnement, mais aussi pour les animaux »

<sup>54</sup> « de prendre quand c’est le temps et aussi de faire attention »

Aussi, dans toutes ces activités là, c'est le partage. (À) la maison des aînés, il y a des aînés qui ne pratiquent plus la chasse, la trappe. Ce qui fait qu'on donne, on partage le gibier qu'on attrape (W-W01)

The value of sharing is perceived by many as being threatened with today's options for selling game meat on the black market<sup>55</sup>.

#### *7.2.5. Culture and identity*

For many participants, traditional knowledge is not only the knowledge of historical or empirical facts. It is a way of life and a culture. "It is your way of life. It is as simple as that"<sup>56</sup> (W-W01).

Le savoir traditionnel...c'est tout ce qui est en relation avec la culture. Tout ce qui est relation avec la culture, mais la culture qui est active. C'est-à-dire toute celle qui est en lien avec la forêt, les activités comme telles, avec la médecine (W-M15)

This "active culture", as stated above by a Wemotaci teacher, "linked with the forest", is the basis of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity, as also mentioned by another teacher, in Manawan:

C'est des savoirs qu'on a à l'intérieur. Ça, c'est une force. Pourquoi les savoirs, tu me disais tout à l'heure? Qu'est-ce qu'on peut aller chercher avec les savoirs ancestraux, traditionnels, ces affaires-là? Ben...si on perd ça, on n'est plus rien. On n'a plus d'identité (M-M17)

This face of TEK therefore understands the stories, the values, and the social relations that reside in places as contributing to the survival, the reproduction and the evolution of Aboriginal cultures and identities. It has been argued that the land is at the heart of Aboriginal cultures (IDDPNQL 2004), and that if the land 'disappears', or transforms too much, cultures and peoples also disappear (CNA 2004). "Landscapes 'house' (...) stories, and the protection of these places is key to their long-term survival in Aboriginal culture" (Buggey 2004:17). It has been stated by many First Nations scholars and organisations (e.g. CNA 2004; IDDPNQL 2004) that very strong connections exist between language (and the

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<sup>55</sup> The commercial transaction of wild meat is completely forbidden in Quebec.

<sup>56</sup> « C'est ton mode de vie, c'est aussi simple que ça »

use of meaningful toponyms), the consumption of country food, the life on the land, and identity and cultural survival (e.g. Duerden and Kuhn 1998; Kulchyski 1998; Callaway 2004; Myers et al. 2005). These connections were discussed at length for the case of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in Chapter 6.

#### *7.2.6. Cosmology (worldview)*

The last dimension is more difficult to grasp. It is the most abstract, and also the most difficult to discuss in resource co-management situations, for it refers to firmly-held beliefs, sometimes implicit, about how things work in the natural world. The worldview the most fundamental of the way things are (Elshof 2001), “a set of conceptual structures, of implicit assumptions or presuppositions about the nature of reality” (Tarnas 1996, cited in Elshof 2001:11).

It is also the dimension that was the least talked about by research participants. One interview participant mentioned that an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw “philosophy” exists, at the basis of a “code of ethics<sup>57</sup>” that organizes and gives meaning to Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional activities. The same participant opined that this philosophy should be the foundation of today’s resource management process. ‘Everything’ flows from a spiritual grounding: identity or resolution of social problems experienced by Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities:

Tout le côté spirituel, c’est parce que c’est abstrait (que) le monde ne veut pas en parler, mais en quelque part, tout découle de là. (...) C’est pour ça qu’il y a des problèmes dans les communautés, parce qu’on a oublié le rêve, le spirituel (W-M05)

As this participant says, people are less comfortable talking in the abstract, although he believes that for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok it would be very important to open up about spirituality, the belief system that gives meaning to everything else. He argues that social problems in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities derive from a lack of reflection on this dimension.

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<sup>57</sup> Code d’éthique

### 7.2.7. Code of ethics

For a long time, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have organised management methods, practices and know-how into this code of ethics (also called a ‘code of practices’<sup>58</sup>). It is a set of guidelines laying out how people must behave in the forest. It connects all the different faces of their TEK. The (oral) transmission and the knowledge of that code – the responsibility of the *okimaws* – is what ensures perennial use of natural resources. To achieve this goal of continuity, and the goal of sustenance for the family, each family structures its activities around this code of ethics.

The code of practices is updated through time. It finds its roots in the past and in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw cosmology, but for many interviewees, it is also something that evolves and needs to be ameliorated and adapted:

Le savoir traditionnel. C’est de le maintenir et de l’améliorer. Quitte aussi à l’adapter à aujourd’hui (W-M04)

Il faut regarder ce qu’on faisait comme pratiques avant et regarder comment on pourrait améliorer ça aujourd’hui (mettre à jour le code de pratiques) (M-M15)

This need for evolution holds for management methods, but also for traditional political institutions that existed in the past and that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok today want to re-invigorate. This man from Wemotaci, active on his family territory, explains that the role of the *okimaw* should be based on what had currency in the past, but that the role should be expanded in order to face today’s needs. He also thinks that a territorial council should be created and replace the band council in some areas:

(Il) faut aller chercher la manière que la nation a fonctionnait à l’époque. (...) Aujourd’hui avec les événements externes qui nous arrivent, son rôle (au chef de territoire) devrait s’agrandir. Il faut que ce soit une institution pour qu’il puisse bien mener son rôle. Le conseil de bande pourrait se former comme un conseil de bande mais son rôle serait différent, complètement différent d’aujourd’hui (W-M11)

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<sup>58</sup> Code de pratiques

In order to infuse more Atikamekw Nehirowisiw values into forest management, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have attempted over the years to modify provincial land policies and forestry methods to bring them closer to their code of practices by suggesting, for instance, forest management methods aimed at harmonizing the practices of the two worlds (e.g. AMAA 1992, 1994; Anonymous 1993, 1995). However, in attempting to apply a traditional code of practices to provincial resource management, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok face two problems. Firstly, they need to write down the code to some extent in order to transform it into regulations that could be followed by the government, the forest companies and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Secondly, the principles or the rationale underlying traditional practices or management methods to be transformed into regulations may not be taken seriously by the non-Atikamekw parties. For many, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge is not sufficiently documented – not credible enough. The next two sections develop these challenges faced by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in treaty-making in general.

#### *7.2.8. Orality and writing*

Traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw knowledge is transmitted through practice and orally. It is not usually transmitted in writing. However, part of the people believes that some of the tradition should be written down, and this is for two reasons. First, as the older generation – the last to have been brought up on the land – is leaving, and as younger generations did not have the opportunity to learn from the elders, there is a sense of urgency regarding keeping traditions alive, and keeping them in writing is better than nothing. Secondly, part of the population believe that if the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to have their values considered in forest management by others, some of their knowledge has to be written down in order to harmonize forest practices.

This is a contentious issue. It seems that the question of whether or not the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw knowledge should be written does not have consensus

within the nation. Elders seem to be especially sceptical about writing down traditions. In the interviews, some mentioned that one needs to merit the trust of an elder in order to start an apprenticeship. If traditional knowledge is written down, then untrustworthy people can access it. Some feel that so much in the past has been robbed from the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and that so much of their knowledge has been ridiculed that today they need to hold on to what remains unknown to outsiders, and agree to share orally only to some trusted younger individuals in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw language, as reported by this young woman from Wemotaci, who is working towards enhancing her land-related knowledge:

Un aîné, il faut que tu gagnes sa confiance, avant (de pouvoir apprendre). Aujourd'hui, (les aînés) sont très réticents, parce que ils savent qu'on écrit et ils nous disent tout le temps « écris pas, écris pas! » (W-W02)

A man in his thirties from Wemotaci talks of the difficulties he experiences while trying to have access through elders to knowledge related to medicinal plants, even if he is a keen learner. He understands the elders' concerns, who do not want to transmit information to whomever, but worries that not enough young Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people get exposed to that knowledge:

Moi, ce que je regrette beaucoup, c'est de ne pas (connaître plus la médecine traditionnelle). À gauche et à droite, tranquillement pas vite, il y a des informations qui rentrent, mais j'aimerais ça...je trouve que ce n'est pas assez intensif, à mon goût à moi, concernant (l'apprentissage de) la médecine comme telle. Ça fait partie du savoir traditionnel et ça devrait être pris en compte dans la gestion et l'utilisation du territoire par le chef de famille. Ça c'est clair. Mais ça se fait également via des camps-nature. Quand je demande de l'information concernant les plantes médicinales, ce n'est pas tout le monde qui est au courant. On m'a déjà expliqué un peu pourquoi, quand je demande. Cette information-là ne peut pas se transmettre...elle ne peut pas être transmise à n'importe qui. Ça, je le comprends. Mais, il faut quand même le transmettre aux générations qui s'en viennent, sinon ça va se perdre (W-M15)

However, others believe that traditional knowledge, in order to be kept alive in a context where kids go to school in the village, should be transmitted in writing and taught in schools. Places like the *Kice Amisk* camp, to which I referred in Chapter 6, can serve the purpose in teaching some forest-related knowledge.



### 7.2.9. 'Validation' of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge

Forest companies' representatives and government bureaucrats often contest the validity of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge. This is sometimes apparent in forestry-related consultations, when a family seeks to protect, for instance, a sacred site:

(Il y a) des sites sacrés que je veux protéger. J'ai toujours défendu ça parce que ce quelque chose-là, je l'ai vu, mais je n'ose pas le dire, parce que je sais que tout le monde va me dire que je suis une malade mentale. (...) (Aux ingénieurs forestiers), j'en avais pas parlé (de ce qui rend cet endroit spécial) et j'en avais parlé (que je voulais protéger cet endroit). (Les ingénieurs) ont dit que ce n'était pas un argument assez fort, que je n'avais pas un bon argument pour (les empêcher d'aller) couper là...C'était ça...Mais aujourd'hui, je suis déçue (W-W02)

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok sometimes succeed in building a convincing argument to include some TEK in planning, but overall, skepticism remains, making it difficult for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to implement a set of alternative forestry regulations.

In reaction to this situation, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw efforts have been dedicated to 'validating' TEK through scientific methods. The *Association Mamo Atoskewin Atikamekw* (AMAA), among others, has been active in trying to demonstrate that Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge is a valid source of information to include in the environmental management decision-making process. The goal of their *Aski Nipi* project was to "test Atikamekw trappers and hunters' ancestral knowledge of the land in an environmental study to demonstrate without any doubt the veracity of their knowledge"<sup>59</sup> (AMAA 1992:3).

The result of this work was convincing in some areas, but the recommendations of the report (a normative forest regime adapted to Atikamekw Nehirowisiw knowledge and values) were never implemented. The adapted norms (Biofaune 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1992d, 1992e) were proposed to forest companies operating on *Nitaskinan*, but without success.

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<sup>59</sup> « Soumettre la connaissance ancestrale du territoire des trappeurs et chasseurs Atikamekw à une étude environnementale afin de démontrer hors de tout doute la véracité de leurs connaissances. »

In sum, the code of ethics tries to bring Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge together into a coherent whole that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would like to use in environmental management. So far, they have tried to influence the results of environmental management by appending this code of practices onto existing practices of government and forest companies, without necessarily challenging the decision-making process and institutions.

However, what my research shows is that people are now ready to challenge this process by involving the *okimaws* to a greater extent. The next section turns, therefore, to an aspect of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditions that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people are now interested in (re)developing: family territories and the *okimaw*.

### **7.3. ATIKAMEKW NEHIROWISIW TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

Before the arrival of European settlers in *Nitaskinan*, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok used to be autonomous semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers (Poirier 2001; Wyatt 2004). This traditional life-style – which persisted up until the 1950s, after the collapse of the fur trade, when the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok began to work for forest companies (Poirier 2001; Gélinas 2003; Morissette 2007) – meant that each extended family relied on a family territory for subsistence. The families would regroup at summer gathering points for celebrations and discussions about resource use, then retreat to their family territories in the winter to trap and hunt. Affiliation of families to particular areas – family territories – could remain consistent over time, but there were many exchanges between families, allowing them to use each other's territories if food was not equally and sufficiently available. “Accordingly, the (family territories) should probably be regarded as flexible subdivisions of *Nitaskinan* that were modified to reflect the needs of the society, rather than as strict lines delimiting the property of a particular family” (Wyatt 2004:91). The first to map out these family territories was D.S. Davidson in 1928 (see Figure 7.1).



At the centre of this system was an accomplished hunter, the *okimaw*. Each extended family had an *okimaw*, whose responsibility was, among other things, to negotiate land and resource use within the family and between families. He was the one who had influence in decision-making, with regard to hunting territories and distribution of resources within family, as explained by an *okimaw* from Opitciwan:

Il gère la fréquentation, il gère la cueillette du gibier. Si à une place (il y a) du lièvre, on va aller dans ce coin-là, mais s'il voit que c'est en diminution, il va choisir (de) laisser reposer ce territoire là pendant un an ou deux, le temps que ça revienne. On va (alors) camper à une autre place (O-M14)

The *okimaws* still exist today and family members still use their family's territory for hunting and the practice of other traditional activities. In theory, as pointed by a young hunter from Manawan, people are supposed to talk to the local *okimaw* before going hunting in the particular area under his/her responsibility:

Quand tu veux aller à la chasse dans un territoire Flamand, par exemple, il faut que tu ailles voir le chef de ce territoire-là. Tu lui demandes la permission pour aller là-bas. C'est ça, un chef de territoire. C'est lui qui refuse ou qui approuve tout ce qui se passe, là, sur son territoire (M-M15)

This leadership responsibility is usually handed down from father to son (Poirier 2001), although women have occupied this position at different points in time. An *okimaw* is picked not only through heredity, but also for his/her leadership qualities and knowledge of the land. S/he is "someone who is capable of managing his/her land"<sup>60</sup> (O-M13). The *okimaw* is knowledgeable of the land because s/he "is often there"<sup>61</sup> (W-M04). S/he therefore has to "keep watch (with the family) over the land"<sup>62</sup> (M-W03). S/he is a leader and a spokesperson for the family. An *okimaw* is also a mediator when there is a misunderstanding between families or within a family:

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<sup>60</sup> « quelqu'un qui est capable de gérer son territoire »

<sup>61</sup> « est souvent là »

<sup>62</sup> « surveiller, (avec la famille), le territoire »

En tant leader sur le terrain, c'est toi (le chef de territoire) qui doit gérer un peu les pour et contres, les chicanes parce qu'il y a des chicanes (dans les familles), veut, veut pas (O-M02)

Now in his thirties, an employee of Manawan's health center who often goes fishing on his family territory recalls the days when, as a younger man, he would not always respect family territories' limits, which led the *okimaws* of other families to have the father (himself an *okimaw*) of the young rule-breaker to step in:

On ne va jamais dans le territoire d'un autre. Si tu y vas, comme moi, c'est arrivé 2-3 fois (et) mon père (un aîné) me l'a dit : « Il ne faut pas aller par là-bas, ce n'est pas notre territoire. » Parce que l'autre aîné est allé dire à mon père « J'ai vu ton fils là-bas...c'est notre territoire, ça. » Ce qui fait que, ça a marché comme ça (M-M05)

Up until the imposition of the band council structure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these traditional 'chiefs' played a role in relations and negotiations with newcomers. When the band council elective system was introduced, the role of the *okimaw* diminished considerably. Today, family members consult the *okimaw* concerning hunting and fishing. The *okimaw* nowadays are also consulted, through a band-appointed liaison office, on forestry planning and cottage licensing, as explained in Chapter 6. And more importantly, the *okimaws* are guardians of the tradition and of the family territories and they are responsible for the transmission of knowledge of the land to the younger generations and for the enforcement of the code of practices. It is therefore the *okimaw*'s role to "ensure the survival of the culture"<sup>63</sup> (W-M05).

The next section shows that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to expand the role of the *okimaw* and the family, from being consulted on land projects controlled by others, to being a force in the development of a vision to be implemented through the code of practices.

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<sup>63</sup> « d'assurer la survie de la culture, quelque part »

#### 7.4. TOMORROW: AUTONOMY CENTRED ON UPDATED INSTITUTIONS

Over the past decades, traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw institutions have been challenged by obstacles to land access (see Chapter 6), by interruptions in the oral transmission of traditions (due to a large extent to the residential school period), and by the industrial exploitation of forest resources. For the past two decades, band councils have slowly established themselves as an interlocutor to government bureaucrats and forest companies through, among other things, the establishment of liaison offices referred to in Chapter 6. The system currently in place has its limitations, as shown in Chapter 6. Consequently, one thing that comes out of my research is that interview and workshop participants want to keep and reinvigorate the traditional institutions that existed and were functional before the advent of the reserves and the band councils. They want a system that is closer to their culture and traditions, although they see these institutions as being in need of updating, in order to function in today's reality. The *okimaw* and the family are at the centre of a traditional decision-making system and it seems that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok of today want to rebuild their autonomy around this ancient nucleus. "If this (the institution of the *okimaw*) is broken, a revolution will happen<sup>64</sup>" (W-M14).

As explained in Chapter 6, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok seek autonomy on their land in order to develop the family territories by themselves with their own vision and according to their own needs. "It is our job, Aboriginals, to develop and exploit (the land)<sup>65</sup>" (W-M11). In the case of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, autonomy goes beyond the political and the economic aspects. For them, autonomy is also a question of identity. The term *Nehirowisiw*, often used by the Atikamekw to name themselves, means autonomous person, able to provide for his/her own needs and well-being (CNA 2002; Poirier 2010), who has found his/her equilibrium (Poirier and Niquay 1999). An Atikamekw, then – or a

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<sup>64</sup> « Si ça c'est brisé (l'institution des chefs de territoire), c'est une révolution qui va arriver »

<sup>65</sup> « C'est à nous, les Autochtones, à développer, à faire du développement (et) à se développer pour qu'on puisse exploiter »

*Nehirowisiw* – is autonomous on the land and the autonomy of development and management, of being able to live off the land, becomes a question of identity, connected to pride in being autonomous and Atikamekw:

Un Atikamekw, ça a un rôle de gestion. Et il faut se réapproprier cette responsabilité là. Il faut se réapproprier la gestion de notre territoire. Il faut se réapproprier l'engagement qu'on a toujours eu vis-à-vis le territoire (W-M15)

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok pride themselves on being autonomous individuals living off the land; they pride themselves on being able to provide for their families through the bounty of their family territories. If autonomy and subsistence are understood today as including new economic pursuits (see Chapter 6), it is nevertheless on this cultural feature that they want to rebuild their traditions and envisage a future. It is this individual and familial autonomy that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to rebuild.

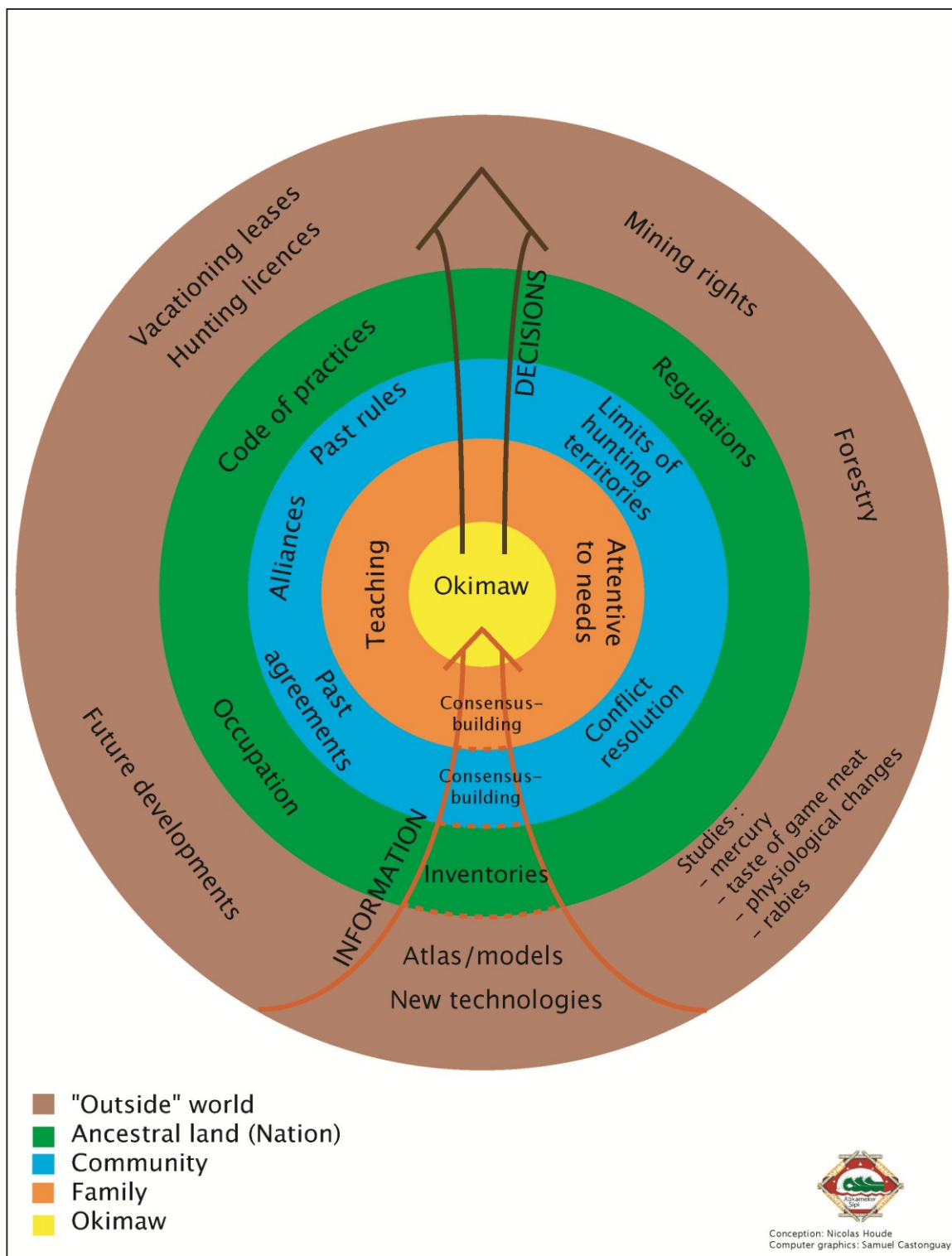
This autonomy will have to be rebuilt by providing the *okimaw* and the family with new roles, in line with today's resource management challenges: a "renewed traditional resource management"<sup>66</sup> system (CNA c.1996:36).

#### 7.4.1. *The okimaw of tomorrow*

Figure 7.2 represents the research participants' vision concerning the role of the *okimaw* in today's world. It is not how things necessarily work today, but how they *should* work in order to have an acceptable decision-making process for *Nitaskinan*. In this figure, the chief of territory is positioned as a catalyst through whom information concerning the land flows. This information would be organized, and decisions would be produced and implemented, to have an impact at different scales.

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<sup>66</sup> "Gestion traditionnelle renouvelée"



**Figure 7.2.** The role of the *okimaw*



The first responsibility of the *okimaw* is to be informed about what is happening on the land. “A chief of territory, he knows his land<sup>67</sup>” (M-M10). S/he needs to share this information with the rest of the family: “(to be chief of territory) is to be able to give (...) the right information to the rest of the clan<sup>68</sup>” (M-M06). The information used by the *okimaw* to make decision about resource use comes, according to Figure 7.2, from external sources such as studies conducted by forest companies, government or research institutes regarding the land. The information can also originate from inventories done by the *okimaw*’s family members, rendered possible by active occupation of the land. This information, once collected, is organized in order to facilitate consensus-building within family members and with neighboring families. Once the information has been assembled and the opinions of various family members heard, the *okimaw* makes the decision on which action to pursue. This decision (upper part of the graph) will have an impact on the overall functioning of the family territory, on the code of practices, on the regulations to propose for the land, and ultimately on the land development.

The focal point of the system is therefore the *okimaw* and the family. The *okimaw* teaches and is attentive to the family members’ needs, as this hunter from Wemotaci, son of an *okimaw*, reports:

Le chef de territoire, c’est mon père. La première chose que je vois, c’est mon père en premier. Mon père, (...) il nous a transmit bien des affaires, des connaissances à lui. Moi, je pense que c’est son rôle de communiquer son expérience de vie, tout ce qu’il a appris, tout ce qu’il a connu, tant au point de vue personnel qu’au point de vue environnement, les changements qu’il y a eu, tout ça...Moi, je pense que c’est son rôle à lui de transmettre à d’autres (W-M08)

The *okimaw* builds consensus within the family, based on available information and people’s points of view:

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<sup>67</sup> un chef de territoire, il connaît son territoire

<sup>68</sup> ( Etre chef de territoire,) c’est d’être capable de donner (...) les bonnes informations au reste de son clan.

(Le chef de territoire) consulte les autres membres de la famille puis il fait ses déductions puis il s'en va avec ça. La plupart du temps, il suit nos recommandations (des autres membres de la famille) (O-M10)

Because of his or her position as a consensus-builder, the *okimaw* can act as a representative of the family when dealing with other actors:

(Un chef de territoire), c'est une personne qui peut faire toutes les relations avec les membres de la famille, que ce soit au niveau social ou au niveau politique ou même économique. Il faut que cette personne là puisse être le porte-parole du groupe. (Les décisions) vont être (prises) par consensus, mais ça va être plus un porte-parole (W-M11)

Consequently, as this woman from Manawan explains, an *okimaw* is the sole responsible authority with regards to the family territory. S/he is not a land owner, and decisions must be based on consensus:

Il ne doit être pas le seul à être le responsable, il ne doit pas être propriétaire du territoire. Nous sommes là pour surveiller le territoire et si on rencontre un problème sur le territoire, c'est lui qui doit parler, mais pas seulement avec sa façon de penser. Il doit consulter ses frères et sœurs, ses neveux, sa mère... Il doit demander leur avis (concernant ce) qu'ils devraient faire s'il y a du développement en territoire, des négociations territoriale où bien des coupes forestières (M-W03)

At the scale of the family, the result of decisions taken by the *okimaw* impacts on the level of knowledge within the family and ultimately on the maintenance of the culture within his/her clan (see Figure 7.2).

At the scale of the community (see third concentric circle in Figure 7.2), the *okimaw* is a consensus-builder who brings families together to discuss land-related decisions that could impact more than the local family. By doing so, and in planning for activities to pursue, s/he makes sure alliances and past agreements between families are respected<sup>69</sup>. The *okimaw* is also there to resolve conflicts and find new solutions to problems.

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<sup>69</sup> Family territories' surfaces usually overlap, so discussions are always needed between neighbors in order to agree on who is using the overlap. Agreements are sometimes struck so that a son-in-law, a cousin, or a friend could use the one particular area for a certain period of time (such agreement could last for years). Also, the responsibility of a track of land can be transferred for instance to a son-in-law, especially if the *okimaw* does not have an obvious male heir. The land

At the scale of the community, the result of decisions made by the *okimaw* impacts on the maintenance of the oral tradition, especially with regards to the family territory system. At that scale, the *okimaws* are brought together to discuss land-related issues that concern the whole of the community and give a general direction to the vision of land development. Almost all research participants indicated that an organization that would bring together the *okimaws* was needed, in order to be able to discuss land-use planning and resource use at the scale of the community, and to develop a common vision for the communities.

An *okimaw* does not act alone. Decisions that are implemented on the family territory are generally the fruit of within-family consensus and of inter-family discussions. Consequently, there is a strong desire within the Atikamekw nation to revitalize their own political structures that, in the past, allowed for collaboration between families:

On devrait les embarquer (les chefs de territoire) dans le Conseil de territoire pour que tous les chefs de territoire siègent. (On devrait aussi) peut-être mettre en place un comité de travail (et) celui-ci devrait écouter ce que veulent les chefs de territoire. (...) Pour le conseil de territoire (ça prendrait) un représentant dans chaque territoire familial, parce que c'est à eux ça (la responsabilité du territoire) (O-W05)

This is why the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are currently working towards the creation of a territorial council involving all of the *okimaws*. If it was to be used in a potential co-management arrangement, reinventing such a council could be seen as a way to increase the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw influence outside the reserve over the expanse of the ancestral land, and in such a way that would be closer to their culture by using a traditional council instead of the *Indian Act*-imposed band council.

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can go back into the fold of the woman's family after one or two generations. These agreements are verbal and need to be retold regularly to be kept alive and avoid unnecessary conflicts.

At the scale of the ancestral land (see fourth concentric circle in Figure 7.2), the *okimaw* is responsible for contributing to the monitoring of environmental processes and the creation of inventories. This could first be done by encouraging his/her family to actively occupy the land (more on this in Chapter 6).

At the scale of *Nitaskinan*, the impact of the *okimaw*'s actions can be felt by the implementation of a code of practices. The code is updated through careful monitoring of environmental processes. This monitoring, and feedback into the code of practice, will ultimately contribute to the definition of forestry and land-use regulation. A bridge is therefore built with the 'outside world', the biggest circle in Figure 7.2.

This outermost circle shows that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are ready to use and accept new technologies, studies of the land done by other actors, and other sources of information in order to complement their traditional ecological knowledge gained through active occupation of the land. They are also ready to take on the challenge of building a knowledge, articulated by the *okimaw*, that would have an impact on how licensing is done, how forestry regulations are shaped, and on what direction to give to further land-use development. Knowledge built by the *okimaw* would also take into consideration the result of consensus-building efforts with family members and with other families that is part of the *okimaw*'s responsibility. The result of that consensus and knowledge building effort shapes the position s/he goes on to defend at the negotiation table with forest companies and the governments:

Le (...) chef de territoire, (serait) un de nos représentants. Un chef de territoire est là pour (être) un porte-parole, il est là pour amener au devant des choses qu'on envisage de faire. (Il serait représentant auprès) du gouvernement autochtone (...), si jamais ça existe, un gouvernement autochtone (et) qu'il soit représentatif de sur les deux côtés, auprès des non autochtones et des autochtones (M-M01)

(Le chef de territoire est) un rassembleur, il donne des informations, il va négocier en notre nom. C'est un leader, qui va être un porte-parole qui va défendre notre idée, (pour indiquer par exemple) une place (qu') on veut que ça soit respecté ; telle place, tel endroit (O-W03)

From what people stated in the above quotes, it can be concluded that the *okimaw* is now not only a knowledge-holder, a teacher and a family mediator, but also a negotiator who intervenes in discussions with governments – both post-treaty Atikamekw Nehirowisiw central government, and provincial governments. The way the role of the *okimaw* could be bridged with the one of government's bureaucrats will be addressed in Chapter 8.

#### 7.4.2. *Tradition and contemporaneity*

It is interesting to note that the topics identified as being part of the *okimaw*'s responsibility are not limited to what are usually identified as 'traditional activities'. Indeed, research participants alluded to the necessity for the *okimaw* to become involved in questions of economic development or in new technologies that could help with the inventory of land resources. This points towards a will to 'update' traditions:

(II) faut aller chercher la manière que la nation a fonctionnait à l'époque. C'est ce rôle là qu'il faut aller chercher. Je dirais (que ça prend) un conseil de territoire. C'est sûr qu'à l'époque, il n'y avait pas réellement de conseil de territoire, mais y avait des chefs de famille qui se réunissaient et en se réunissant, ça devient social. Ça veut dire qu'ils avaient des relations qui se faisaient entre les familles (W-M11)

This updating of traditions is necessary if the *okimaws* are to discuss economic development:

Au niveau du développement économique territorial, on devrait voir ensemble comment on pourrait faire, on parle de chef de territoire autochtones, pour voir dans quelle mesure (on pourrait) aller chercher le développement économique (O-M03)

This Wemotaci council employee stresses that the *okimaw* should be proactive in land-use planning:

ce serait le rôle à lui de les avertir et de trouver aussi qu'est-ce qui serait bon à faire dans les territoires, qu'est-ce qui serait...Comment qu'on pourrait l'occuper. Ça serait à lui, de travailler avec le papier pis de vraiment mettre quelque chose sur pied. Ce serait vraiment lui qui, avec nous autres, pis avec tout les jeunes qui veulent donner...Tu demandes à un jeune « c'est quoi, que t'aimerais faire, dans le

territoire? » Il va te dire une idée que peut-être ça coûtera pas trop cher pis ça va se faire. Ce serait ça, le rôle du chef de territoire (W-M09)

Chapter 8 discusses in more detail how updated knowledge-sharing could happen in an adaptive co-management context, using Figure 3.1.

#### *7.4.3. Territorial council and band council*

Obviously, to reflect on the renewal of a traditional political institution is to challenge the existence of the current institution that has outsiders' political recognition: the band council. The two entities – the territorial council and the band council – are therefore confronting each other:

C'est là qu'est la confusion, ce que je vois comme confusion. Il y a deux entités (...) et c'est ce qui se confronte en ce moment. Il y a toute la facette culturelle, traditionnelle, qui est (celle des) chefs territoriaux, de territoire, les chefs de territoire familial versus les membres élus du Conseil de bande. Cette question-là, pour moi représente tout le côté fédéral/provincial/gouvernement. Et c'est ce qui se confronte. Je dis souvent qu'une personne pourrait suffire au travail d'administration du Conseil de Bande. C'est vraiment administratif, là. Ce qu'ils ont comme budget, ça n'a aucun rapport avec le territoire. C'est là que ça devient conflictuel, en ne venant pas reconnaître (le système) traditionnel (W-M05)

The individual quoted above expresses what many envisage for the future, namely that the role of the band council should be confined to administration, inside the reserve, in support of the families and their *okimaws*, who would be the true decision-makers for the family territories, outside reserves. This desire to change the balance of power (between the two councils) stems from a desire to revive Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditions, but also in part from the widespread perception that elected members of the band council can not presently work fully in the interests of the people of the community, due to the fact that the band council is a creation of the Canadian government, receives most of its funding from the Canadian government, and is accountable to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

People are therefore considering a change in the balance of power between the two councils, as well as a re-invention of the overall political apparatus. Already

in 1989, conscious that “the powers recuperated through the (land claim) negotiation will be without common measure with the ones currently held by the band councils<sup>70</sup>”, participants in the *États généraux du territoire* were invited to reflect on what a completely different political structure (to the band council) could look like in a post-treaty world. The idea of a territorial council was already being bounced around back then.

However, although the idea of a territorial council seems to be fairly popular, there does not appear to be consensus:

On veut conserver la tradition. Pour nous, ça a une valeur pour nous. C’est la tradition, on ne peut pas en inventer d’autre. (...) On dit des choses, mais quelque part plus loin, on atténue, ou en tout cas, on camoufle (le fait que les gens veuillent mettre sur pied un Conseil de territoire). Il y a comme pas de suite, il n’y a rien qui aboutit (W-M05)

During my research, some people expressed fears concerning a transfer of powers towards a traditional council and *okimaws*. They fear that these newly-created authorities would not be accountable enough to the overall population, as these men, none of them *okimaws* but all of them using the land, explain:

Je sais qu’on a des chefs de territoire qui sont appelés des fois à se réunir pour parler de différents sujets, mais je pense que ce n’est pas tout le monde qui est consulté. Donc, on n’amène pas les gens à s’impliquer (M-M17)

Je pense qu’il faut que la table d’harmonisation fasse son possible pour rejoindre les personnes. Des fois, ils vont les inviter (les gens) à aller dans les réunions au bureau. Moi, je pense qu’il faut aller vers les gens, à leur maison, dans leur territoire. Aller voir les gens des fois qui ne sont pas intéressés, mais qui devraient (l’être) (W-M10)

(Il faut) s’impliquer. Je sais qu’il y a beaucoup de consultations avec les industriels forestiers, mais je vois qu’il n’y a pas beaucoup de gens qui assistent à ces rencontres-là. Je pense (qu’il faut) donner un support aux chefs de territoire...Que ce ne soit pas juste le chef de territoire qui décide, mais que (ce soit) l’ensemble des familles qui soient dans le territoire (M-M13)

Morissette (2007) states that in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw world there are two political spaces at the local level: a formal one that was imposed upon the

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<sup>70</sup> « Les pouvoirs récupérés par la négociation seront sans commune mesure avec ceux détenus actuellement par les Conseils de bande. »

Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok (the band council) and a traditional one – composed of *okimaws* and elders – that still exists in the background, and is called upon from time to time to be consulted about decisions. What is happening today is an attempt on the part of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to reconcile both in order to gain power against other governments, while remaining within the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok cultural domain.

Views on the sharing of powers between a traditional council and a band council, and between the local level of a community and the central tribal council (the CNA) led by the Grand Chief differ across the population. People in power in band councils tend to favour more land-related decision-making powers being delegated to the local authorities of the band council, and see that institution in only small need of reformation. On the other hand, people who are not part of the local political class tend to emphasize the need for the Grand Chief (and therefore the CNA) to step in and protect and support the workings of the *okimaws* and a potential traditional council that would exercise some authority beyond the confines of the reservation and on *Nitaskinan*.

Older generations of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok who were in charge when the CNA was created in the 1970s – when the land claim process was initiated – tend to remember and emphasize the purpose of having a tribal council and a Grand Chief: building a sense of national solidarity.

## **7.5. DISCUSSION**

### *7.5.1. Discussion: Atikamekw Nehirowisiw priorities*

Chapters 6 and 7 show that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, when reflecting about what could be improved in resource management, identify three priorities. The first priority, as mentioned in Chapter 6, is to reinforce the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional culture, way-of-life and identity by strengthening the link between the land and people. In order to fulfill this first priority, people envision building an economy that requires people to spend more active time on the land



than they do today. Spending more time on the land would allow for land-related teachings to be reinforced, thereby improving the standing of traditional institutions (such as the *okimaw* and the family). To be active on the land is also seen by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok as a way to regain their individual and familial autonomy, a strong component of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity. The shift from a village life largely dependent on cash transfers to a life that includes more time on the land would bring them closer to an envisioned future that includes elements of a traditional way of subsistence relying on the bounty of the land. It would also include economic development based on tourism, and natural resource exploitation at a scale that would not threaten traditional activities located at the core of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity, such as hunting, fishing, and plant-based medicine.

The second priority is to build land-related knowledge that would both reconnect the younger generations with the traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw land-based identity and allow for developing the envisioned land-based economy. Chapter 7 shows that vital to knowledge-building as envisioned by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok is a revitalisation of the *okimaw*'s central role (see Figure 7.2). To know the land better (through active occupation and monitoring, through engaging with other actors of the land) would work both to build a sustainable way of life independent from cash transfers, and also to rebuild Atikamekw Nehirowisiw society on their own cultural foundations.

Traditional institutions of knowledge-building and decision-making – the family and the *okimaw* – find themselves at the centre of a project to infuse resource management with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw values, something that has been lacking throughout decades of industrial exploitation of resources. This would work through the implementation – and updating – of an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw code of practices. The third priority is, then, for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to use their code of practices to safeguard the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity while developing and implementing a vision of land development. Safeguarding

means developing resource management policies and methods that would allow for the maintenance of what several research participants referred to as ‘integrity of the land’, as discussed in Chapter 6. The code of practices would be a guide to how to develop the land in a way that is compatible with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw values and aspirations, and it would be the operationalization of the knowledge developed both by the *okimaw* and by external sources of knowledge (see Figure 7.2).

However, this would need to be updated in order to work in a changing world. It would need to be made flexible so that new knowledge and practices could be integrated over time. This updating process, led by the *okimaw* – the keeper of the tradition – sanctions what can and cannot be part of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw cultural domain, because the code of practices is grounded in Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture. The ability to achieve desired ecological and social results would be a deciding factor in determining which management practices to include or exclude from the code. Compatibility with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw values would also come into play. If the frames of reference change (ecology, society, values), the codes will have to be changed as well.

The code of practices, which encodes traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw knowledge, therefore clearly has to change over time to keep up with changing social goals, ecological responses, and cultural needs. This perception of how a code of practices functions confirms that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw perceive traditions – embodied by the code of practices – as being flexible and changing over time. This departs from an understanding often voiced by non-Aboriginals which perceive traditional knowledge as crystallized in the past, unchanging.

In this context, a successful co-management arrangement therefore has to be flexible enough to include this notion of changing traditions and fluid institutions espoused by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. This can only be done if co-

management is seen as an institution-building and knowledge-building exercise that challenges the boundaries of knowledge systems.

#### *7.5.2. Discussion: Tradition and knowledge-building*

There are four key problems related to the goal of using Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge and traditional institutions in a natural resources co-management arrangement. First, the fluidity the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok see in TEK, the idea that traditions can be updated and evolve as society evolves, is often not well understood by non-Aboriginals who perceive traditions as being located in a fossilized past, making it hard to implement new traditions. Secondly, there is the problem of deficient transmission of that traditional knowledge through the generations, due in large part to the residential school period. Transmission has also been hampered by the decreased occupation of the land outside reserves, due to a lack of recognition of ancestral rights. Thirdly, there is the aforementioned internal debate about the writing down of formerly oral traditions. Lastly, government bureaucrats and the non-Aboriginal population lack trust in Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional knowledge.

##### *7.5.2.1. Tradition and comprehensive claims negotiations*

A fluid vision of TEK and traditional institutions departs from what is usually understood as ‘traditional’. There is, for the general public, a “tendency to reify Indigenous peoples and their knowledge as traditional, timeless and unchanging” (Nuttall 1998:155). For the public, tradition, marginality, and historical continuity are what give a voice to the Atikamekw Nation in the negotiation process. The battle for public opinion sometimes requires Aboriginals to shed light on their ‘different’ ways-of-knowing or culture – often described as environmentalist cultures – and it is this difference that often gives them authority and leverage in negotiations with the dominant state and ideology. If they were the same as the Québécois, why then would they need to negotiate a special arrangement?

Currently, the central government's definition of what is traditional, and therefore valid, is fixed in time and generally located in the past. Certainly this is the case in land claims, where the claimant can lay claim to a land only if the same people have lived in the same place since contact. This attitude tends to ignore past (and current) migrations, *métissages* between cultures, or social changes:

Les premières nations actuellement engagées dans des processus de revendication face aux États qui les englobent doivent amener la preuve que ce qui définit l'essence de 'l'être autochtone' est fidèle à un passé ancestral pour que soit simplement reconnu le droit d'entamer des négociations à propos de leurs spécificités culturelle, identitaire et territoriale. Cette essence de 'l'être autochtone' n'est pas perçue à travers ce que les autochtones sont aujourd'hui mais en regard de ce qu'ils font avec ce qu'ils sont. Par exemple, les 'activités traditionnelles' sont réduites par le système juridique et politique, canadiens notamment, à un sens strict et minimum 'd'activités de subsistance' (Jérôme 2005:21)

To gain authority in the negotiation process and to conform to the government's definition of what is traditional, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok tend to hold a discourse fitting the government's expectations, therefore limiting the creativity of the negotiation process and the possibility of a system that is flexible and evolving in a more appropriate way for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Whatever departs from what is 'native', or anything considered 'un-native' can make public support falter. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are then left in a dichotomous position, either to choose a timeless tradition or integrate and participate in 'modern' mainstream structures. The example of 'harmonization measures' given in Chapter 6 illustrates this matter, where families are able to use their TEK in consultations as long as it does not interfere with the dominant discourse of industrial forestry. When relating her experience about protecting a sacred site, the young woman from Wemotaci (W-W02) quoted in section 7.3.9 tells us about the difficulties of making changes to forest planning when it does not fit the foresters' frames of reference.

#### *7.5.2.2. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw meaning of tradition*

The *okimaw* used to be the 'general manager' on the land, as one interviewee puts it, overseeing almost everything that was happening in the family territory. Through different mechanisms, this role has been marginalized over the years.

Today, the interest in a revival of that role aims at a fuller participation that would extend beyond the oversight of ‘traditional activities’ defined narrowly as hunting, fishing or ritualistic activities, in order to participate in more comprehensive land planning.

In order to do that, the *okimaw* has to be open to other sources of knowledge. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw see his/her role not only as a giver of information to decision-makers, but also as a receiver and processor of information in order to be a decision-maker. This is what Figure 7.2 illustrates. Knowledge-building in this system, with this new understanding of the role of the *okimaw*, becomes the fruit of the interaction with other sources of knowledge. In this way, TEK evolves and does not stay static and archaic. In this approach, to empower the *okimaw* in taking decisions would be a way to remain in control of how TEK is projected, and protect that knowledge from unwanted uses.

The way to implement their multifaceted TEK in land planning would be through a code of practices kept up-to-date by the *okimaws* on the basis of knowledge generated through active occupation of the land and knowledge-sharing with others. Therefore, there is a need for (1) understanding the code of practices (and therefore TEK) as something that evolves, (2) allowing freedom of movement and building capacity to be on the land and to monitor and build knowledge that feeds into the code of practices, (3) bridging traditional knowledge with other sources of knowledge that can nourish the code of practices, (4) empowering the *okimaw* to bridge the gap between generations and complement the code. Chapter 8 will look into how this could be done in a co-management context.

The fact that there has been discontinuity over time in the *okimaw*/family territory system should not imply that it is not valid today. Atikamekw Nehirowisiw social organization has always been characterized by fluidity (Wyatt 2004; Morissette 2007) and the need to embrace this fluidity remains today, as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok attempt to reinvigorate their institutions. Fluidity, in the context of

the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, is actually continuity. In order for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to find elements that could be integrated into their traditions in a co-management context, they will need room to experiment with what will become traditions. This can only be done through self-determination, autonomy, and flexible co-management arrangements that will allow this flexibility over time that has characterized the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw political world.

#### *7.5.2.3. Generational gap and the writing of traditions*

The research participants have identified the problem of a deficient transmission of oral traditions through the generations. The existence of a rupture caused largely by the residential school period has been identified elsewhere (e.g. Lavoie 1999; Poirier 2010). Consequently, to increase the involvement of the *okimaw* – many of whom are elders – in resource management is not only a way to enhance the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw status in decision-making or to work for the betterment of resource management, but it is also a way to bridge the knowledge gap between generations. This would add value within the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw society to the knowledge that is sometimes kept secret by the older generations. It takes time to revive an institution that has been more or less dormant for a certain period of time. Participants at the Wemotaci workshop (almost all *okimaws* of that community) reported that indeed it had been several years since the community's *okimaws* had met this way to discuss several land-related matters at such a level of depth.

In a co-management situation, patience would also be required from other actors, for institutions and traditional knowledge could not be mobilized overnight. It would be done gradually, with the understanding that things can change over time, as new knowledge is acquired. TEK is not to be selectively dissected or added to by resource managers. It is to be built upon. Gaps in traditional knowledge between generations exist, and the project of giving more authority to the *okimaw* is not only to obtain direct results in resource management, but is also to rebuild the knowledge capital in the younger generations by giving back to the *okimaw*

the chance to again become a respected authority within the nation. It is as much to build knowledge for the purpose of environmental management as it is for the purpose of rebuilding an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity.

### *7.5.3. Discussion: Tradition and institution-building*

During the interviews, participants spoke at length about the role of the *okimaw*, the family, and the territorial council of *okimaws*. Several people pointed out that this traditional structure should make decisions in the future, and that it is these decisions that should be implemented in *Nitaskinan*, the traditional domain of the *okimaws*, thereby confining the decision capacity of the band council mainly to the reserve. They see the ideal decision-making system as a bottom-up system where families tell the council what they want to do with their land, thereby confirming the autonomy of the families.

The band council would therefore be there to back up the territorial council, and use the political leverage they currently have with governments to make the territorial council's recommendations a reality. It therefore means that even if they are usually critical of the way band councils conduct business today, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok still see a role for that institution. Although the band council is perceived as a remnant of Canadian colonialism, most research participants proposed to use this tool as a bridge with non-Atikamekw organisations. It would also serve, in this context, as a bridge between the governmental bureaucratic environment and the non-bureaucratic sphere of the territorial council. A band council, or a designated organisation created by the band council, is needed so the *okimaws* can focus on being on the land, and not focus on being bureaucrats.

What is needed then, and what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are currently trying to build are horizontal and vertical linkages between different institutions that are both traditional and not-so-traditional in order to work and connect at different scales.

There is a realization that an *okimaw* cannot work in isolation, both to build knowledge and to have leverage on decisions that concern processes happening at scales that are more global than the family territories. There is a need to build horizontal linkages with other families. This already happens through *ad hoc* meetings organized by the community in which elders participate to discuss land-related matters, but the research participants, as reported in section 7.5.1, wish to create a more permanent forum in which the *okimaws* could discuss and build consensus within the nation. This would be the territorial council.

By creating a territorial council, *okimaws* “jump scales” (Smith 1993, quoted in Valentine 2001:9) and make themselves able to intervene in regional debates and to access relevant knowledge which may be difficult to build at the local scale. By doing so, they match levels of authority with those of the state government structure. They also match the scale of institution with the scale of economic and biophysical processes, a need that is also identified by several current scholars of environmental management (e.g. Dowsley 2007).

There is still a debate in the broader Atikamekw nation as to whether or not the institution of the territorial council would be the best link with government representatives to discuss and decide on regional environmental issues. But for the research participants interviewed, it seems that this would be the appropriate scale to bridge with government bureaucrats. People usually felt that families should not be left alone when dealing with forest companies or the provincial government.

Also, a regional institution would need to either include members of civil society other than the *okimaws*, or elected members, in order to strengthen its accountability and credibility, both within the nation and when dealing with outsiders. This is why some participants still see a role for the band council in defending the position elaborated by the families and the *okimaws*, but also in



making sure that no one is left out of the process and that this system does not become a dictatorship of the traditional council.

#### *7.5.3.1. Flexibility and fluidity*

The institution-building process the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are currently going through is both a way to affirm their identity and a way to reconnect and re-educate generations. They would like to use a system that existed in the past – to reconnect them with their own identity – but a system that is nevertheless updated.

It takes time to rebuild traditions and to heal from the residential school experience. Traditions are not fixed and readily available at the moment to be included in a process, but they are in (re)definition, in flux. Therefore, a co-management process, in order to work, would have to take into consideration this building process. Flexibility needs then to be embedded in order for the project of social re-construction to be a success. This should not prove overly difficult for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, since the institutions were flexible in the past (Wyatt 2004), and can be made flexible today as well.

### **7.6. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has explained that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are working towards involving the six faces of their traditional knowledge through the implementation of a code of practices under the guidance of the *okimaw*. Traditional knowledge is usually generated through practice and the active occupation of the land by the *okimaw* and other family members. However, since the occupation of the land has become more difficult over the past decades due to state policies and direct harassment, and since the transmission of culture and traditions has been challenged by the rupture caused by the residential schools, the corpus of traditional knowledge has been somewhat eroded. Therefore, in order to revitalize traditional knowledge, what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want today is more freedom of movement and greater opportunities to be on the land in order to monitor the land and rebuild the traditional intimate relationship they have with

their family territory. They also want to build bridges with other sources of knowledge in order to better understand processes that happen at scales larger than those of the family territory or *Nitaskinan*, and to enrich their traditional knowledge and keep it up-to-date and relevant.

Key to the knowledge (re)building project of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok is the existence of a code of practices, or code of ethics. This code provides instructions on what activities are permissible or not to do on the land, and on how to perform land-related activities consistent with the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ethic of the land. It is this code which, for instance, instructs on what is wasteful behavior or disrespectful to the land. This code evolves over time as new information can modify practices, but it seems that the code also acts as a filter to decide which new information fits with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ethical behavior and can therefore be integrated into new practices. It follows that this code that could therefore eventually decide what is acceptable (or not) to do on the land in a co-management situation. I will elaborate more on this in Chapter 8.

The code is the key to the inclusion of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw TEK in co-management, and the keeper of the code and of the tradition is the *okimaw*. Therefore, the *okimaw* acquires a central role in a renewed decision-making process. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok now aim to place the family and the *okimaw* at the focal point of the decision-making processes, for traditionally families had more autonomy in deciding what to do on their territory.

While the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want and need to build bridges to improve knowledge of the land, they need to build bridges between different institutions operating at different scales. For the system that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are proposing to work, the institutions need to be developed at different scales. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to be autonomous on their family territories, but the families need to get together within a wider council when processes confront them at a scale that affects more than one territory. Also, the institutions

that work at a higher-level scale have to match the provincial government institutions. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok do not feel comfortable with introducing bureaucracy at the family level, so they feel they need a bureaucracy (band council) to take care of business and implement or lobby for what the families want at a local level. The band council would act as a bridge organization between a low-bureaucracy territorial council and bureaucratic procedures needed when dealing with the province.

For the system proposed by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to work, it is necessary to see traditional knowledge as something not crystallized in the past, but that could evolve with input from different sources of knowledge. A fluid conception of the *okimaw*/family territory institution and territorial council is also needed, for these do not exist today in a definite form and shape since the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are in a process of re-building their society and traditions as a consequence of ruptures in the passing of traditions between generations. It takes time to rebuild traditions and to heal from the residential school experience. Traditions to be included in the co-management process are in the process of definition, in flux. Therefore, for that system to work, there is a need to focus on Aboriginal rights to autonomy, and self-definition of governance structures, and not on mere rights to fish or hunt.

## CHAPTER 8

### POTENTIAL ORGANIZATION FOR AN ADAPTIVE TREATY

#### 8.1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis has identified in Chapter 2 limits to existing treaties between Canadian First Nations and the state government. Chapter 3 provided a definition of environmental adaptive co-management (ACM) and framed it as an approach better capable of addressing questions of complexity and environmental change than mainstream (command-and-control) environmental management approaches. In Chapter 6, I identified the needs the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to fulfill through the negotiation of co-management arrangements with regards to the activities and the type of resource development they want to see happen on *Nitaskinan*. Finally, in Chapter 7, I identified the *okimaw* and the family as being the center of a renewed system of governance for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, and the motor of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw cultural revitalization and an essential tool to reclaim a status of *Nehirowisiw* on *Nitaskinan*. Whereas Chapters 6 and 7 took an inward-looking gaze at what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to do from within, Chapter 8 seeks to identify the work that needs to be done to get to institutions of co-management, therefore taking stocks the outward looking work to do in order to achieve a satisfactory end to the claims process.

In this chapter, I therefore look into how these Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs can be projected at the level of co-management. In this chapter, I finally intend to answer the question: Would an adaptive co-management approach be a useful one to adopt in the context of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty negotiation? To answer the question, I examine the overlap that exists between the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs and what ACM has to offer. In the second part of the chapter, I provide a framework outlining the preconditions that have to be met for adaptive co-management to be used in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context. In the final

part, I reflect back on the criticisms mentioned in Chapter 3, and the gaps in ACM theory that could be identified through my research and point at ameliorations that could benefit the general ACM approach.

## **8.2. CAN ACM BREAK TREATY DEADLOCKS AND MEET ATIKAMEKW NEHIROWISIW CRITERIA OF SUCCESSFUL TREATY?**

In this section, I take one by one the treaty deadlocks that were identified in Chapter 2 and explain for each one of them how adaptive co-management can help in breaking them. These deadlocks overlap problems experienced by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. I therefore use the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context, and highlight their criteria for a successful treaty identified in Chapters 6 and 7, to ground the answer as to whether ACM is useful or not.

Here are the problems (from the perspective of First Nations) leading to deadlocks in treaty making. They were identified in Chapter 2:

- Extinguishment of residual rights left outside of the written treaty, finality, and lack of implementation
- Uncertain outcomes of a time-consuming and costly process
- Necessity to create institutions that are compatible to Canadian institutions
- Difficulty to allow for self-determination in the area of economic development
- Heaviness of bureaucracies and language used (technical and scientific)

Here are the elements that would contribute, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw perspective, to build a successful treaty:

- A treaty must be a nation-to-nation renewable commitment
- It must offer the possibility to build an autonomy centred on the *okimaw* and the family
- It must provide for the possibility to update in time and implement an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw code of practices, and to (re)build knowledge about the land, eroded by a strained connection with the land
- It must ‘protect the integrity’ of *Nitaskinan*
- It must offer the possibility to (re)build institutions of governance

In the following subsections, I will now turn to each of these elements one by one in order to answer the question: Can ACM break treaty deadlocks and meet Atikamekw Nehirowisiw criteria for successful treaty?

#### *8.2.1. Finality and extinguishment vs nation-to-nation renewable commitment*

The extinguishment of residual rights required by the state government as a condition for negotiating a treaty is a problem for First Nations. It is a problem because it means that it is very difficult to devise and include new traditions into the treaty, once the document is signed, to make it suitable for the changing needs of future generations. The only way to evolve and change in a treaty context is for Aboriginals to fit into the (evolving) model of the mainstream society, and leave behind their traditions inscribed in the treaty without the possibility to implement new traditions that would fit best their own culture. This is consistent with the state’s view, which sees treaties as a final deal, not to be changed in the future. If change happens, it has to steer in the direction of the mainstream society.

What most First Nations involved in treaty-making, and it is the case for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, is rather not to have to extinguish their rights, in order to preserve the capacity into the future to determine what is best for them in

terms of land development and conservation. As said in Chapter 2 and 6, First Nations, including the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, would prefer treaties to be seen “as sacred instruments to protect their rights and establish a nation-to-nation relationship with Canada” (Blackburn 2007:623), or as a young band councillor from Wemotaci quoted in Chapter 6 puts it: “I would like to have a real treaty between Nations like in the old days, the days of the *wampums*. These were *real* treaties<sup>71</sup>” (W-M06). “The two-row wampum (or ‘treaty belt’) of the Haudenosaunee, displaying two rows of different coloured beads running side by side and separated by a third colour” is a representation of the idea of co-existence between two people, in order that “both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures continue to flourish side by side in a mutually supportive but nonintegrated environment” (McGregor 2011:307). This image is still used today, for instance in the RCAP report, or by the band councillor quoted above, to promote the idea of two societies living beside each other in respect, according to their respective laws, the idea of a nation-to-nation relationship to be renewed and reaffirmed over time.

Two equal peoples living and evolving side by side, not interfering with the other disrespectfully, means that frameworks of environmental management processes are allowed to change according to changing needs. Treaties from this perspective are evolving instruments built on a long-term relationship of reciprocity, and it is this intent and this spirit that should guide a treaty relationship, moving therefore beyond a document that extinguishes rights to evolve.

The current approach favoured by the state is one that does not allow for much flexibility, possibilities for trial-and-error, and transformation over time. It makes the environmental co-management arrangement aspects of the treaty very difficult to change according to changing needs, may these needs be social or ecological. The state approach is advocated for the sake of clarity and certainty. However,

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<sup>71</sup> « J’aimerais mieux avoir un traité entre de vrais Nations comme à l’époque, comme à l’époque des Wampums, ça c’est un vrai traité »

what the adaptive co-management approach teaches us is that the future is not certain and straightforward.

The adaptive co-management approach critiques non-flexible and static approaches to environmental management. ACM focuses on flexibility because environmental problems need constant revision, monitoring, re-definition, re-assessment of ways-of-doing. It is wrong to assume that participants will get things right at first attempt, that decisions taken today will have the expected outcomes in the future. As indicated in Chapter 3, the consequences of resource management actions taken today may be unknown for years, if not decades. It is a never-fixed world, but a world for which structures are always being challenged. Unpredictable, perhaps rapid changes can happen, provoked by controllable or uncontrollable factors. A consequence of this complexity is that while no-one can ever fully understand the world as it is now, neither can we know what the world will be made of in the future, as there is such a high level of complexity that cause-effect relationships are neither predictable nor even identifiable. It is therefore not possible to produce a total, comprehensive description of ecosystems (Odum 1982; Jørgensen et al. 1992), because elements are too numerous and interact in a non-linear way, but also because systems change constantly as a result of human intervention (Gunderson 1999).

Constant effort in thinking and re-thinking procedures, ways of doing and institutions is needed. Adaptive co-management, then, “deals with the unpredictable interactions between people and ecosystems as they evolve together” (Berkes and Folke 1998:10). As practitioners and theorists of environmental management came to the realisation that ecosystems are complex, impossible to completely understand and control it is necessary to switch the focus from a control of ecological processes to a process of learning through action.



Because the future is unknown and unpredictable, there is a need for learning in action in order to improve environmental management procedures. In order to deal with complex environmental problems and uncertain management results, there is a need for flexible, adaptive methods and institutions of governance, a need to focus on goals to be achieved instead of focusing on structures. This leads to a flexible understanding of structures and processes. There is therefore a parallel to draw here between the need for flexibility for environmental management reasons, and a need for flexibility, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok point of view, for (1) allowing new structures or methods to be implemented in the future, as new generations of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok set new social goals, for, (2) as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok maintain they have rights to determine for themselves what decision making structures they want to set up and want that right to be carried forward to future generations, and for (3) allowing the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to rebuild their traditional institutions little by little.

To have a flexible and adaptive co-management arrangement makes sense from the point of view of the Aboriginals who want self-determination. It also makes sense from an environmental management point of view that seeks to deal with complex systems. There is therefore a parallel to be drawn between the flexible approach advocated by ACM and the evolving relationship wanted by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok.

#### *8.2.2. Uncertain outcomes of a time-consuming and costly process*

Treaty negotiation processes can be long because of the extinguishment problem. First Nations concerned do not wish to leave anything out of the treaty, by fear of not being able to do it later in time. It is also time-consuming because for the governments, there is the fear of setting legal precedents by conceding too much. This fear of setting precedents that could be used elsewhere by other nations limits the creativity of parties when comes the time to design a co-management framework.

Negotiations that drag on are costly, as negotiating nations have to borrow the money to keep the negotiation running. It also forbids First Nations to get today monetary benefits, their share of resource development. Consequently, people in Aboriginal communities get frustrated because it takes time, and also because they do not know what kind of rights they will get, and they do not know if they will be able to practice their traditional activities in the post-treaty future, as indicated in Chapter 6.

This wait-and-see approach has a parallel in environmental management. A lot of people would like to take action only when complete knowledge about the environment is attained, in order to limit the risks of making a bad decision. However, as argued in Chapter 3, in environmental management, it is often impossible to take decisions with complete knowledge of a situation. The world is too complex and one can never have a complete picture of a system. There is a need to do things right away, with incomplete knowledge. As developing a complete knowledge is not possible, there is nevertheless a need to take action. It is impossible to completely understand and control, partly because “management changes the systems being managed” in the first place (Holling 1998); the focus necessarily has to switch from a control of ecological processes to a process of learning through action.

When dealing with complex problems in adaptive co-management, and because there is a need for action, flexibility and learning are keys to success. In order to navigate through complexity and uncertainty, and as highlighted in Chapter 3, different narratives and local knowledge are called upon in order to make sense from different points of view. What is important are not the structures of decision-making, but to identify problems to deal with, and identify different solutions that could be put forward to deal with the problem through experimentation and carefully monitoring.

There is a parallel that can be identified here between the treaty situation and the complex system management situation. Do not wait to have all the necessary information in order to act. It will be costly, from a FN perspective, since each day that passes without a treaty is one more day without sharing the benefits of resource exploitation and one more day of resource management done outside what is wished by FN, Act now, with interim measures, that will be possible to change and adapt in the future, if they are not well suited.

Instead of conducting complete analysis of the system *Nitaskinan*, it would be more appropriate to use co-management partners' intuitive understanding of the resources at stake and of each other's norms and preferences to experiment with different rule changes until they find a solution that seems to work in their context (Ostrom 2007).

Entrench in the treaty the necessity for both parties to talk to each other, and move on from there. Do not focus on procedures, but rather on the fact that there exists a necessity to get together and talk and resolve problems. In a treaty context, this materialises into interim measures that can serve as non-binding experiments, in order to get things going, both for the sake of families' economic well-being, cultural revival, and ecological management and knowledge building.

#### *8.2.3. Institutional (re)building and compatibility with state institutions*

State governments put pressure on Aboriginals to have treaties that are compatible with state institutions. The state wants to disturb as little as possible its own institutions. Quebec is trying, for example through its policy on Aboriginal consultations, to maintain its pluralist approach to public consultations in resource policy and management (Dionne 2005; Quebec 2008), to accommodate recent court decisions while changing its practices as little as possible, to keep them in line with what is perceived as being the majority point of view in the Québécois society. Furthermore, the federal government requires to enter into treaty negotiations that First Nations involved comply with the *Canadian Charter of*

*Rights and Freedoms* when designing new institutions of governance. Since the state has a tendency to perceive good institutions of governance as something that resemble existing Canadian institutions (Otis 2006), it is very difficult for Aboriginal organisations to suggest models that do not include an electoral process:

In treaty and self-government negotiations, (Aboriginals) will (...) have to deal with the federal government's 'democratic requirement' aimed at promoting 'good governance' values and principles that are supposed to be the inalienable heritage of all Canadians. (...) It may lead to confrontation between certain traditional practices (such as selecting leaders exclusively on hereditary grounds) and (*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*) rights. The application of the *Charter* will affect the search for alternatives to electoral democracy, but it will not be an obstacle to innovative adaptations of the electoral system. (...) Elections are not (...) a *Charter* right that proscribes consensual practices inspired by custom (Otis 2006:229)

As seen in Chapter 7, for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, to have a successful outcome of the negotiations, they would move away from top-down approaches by putting the *okimaw* and the family at the centre of the decision-making process concerning the land. Many participants see the *okimaw*, a position passed down through hereditary rights, having executive powers in authorizing activities for its family territory. This approach may enter into conflict with the government's approach, which would probably prefer to see the *okimaw* and the territorial council having a consultative role to an elected Atikamekw Nehirowisiw government.

As underscored by several research participants in Chapter 7, if a territorial council composed of *okimaws* is put in place for the future of resource co-management in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context, members of civil society should also be consulted, or represented in the council. This is part of the challenge identified by Otis (2006) for Aboriginals to achieve democracy without elections but also without denying fundamental individual rights.

The institutions the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to put in place are not only different to Canadian institutions; they are also in rebuilding mode. The

Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok still need to reflect on what kind of institutions they want to set in place to allow discussion between land users to happen. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok also need to know more about the land for, as stated in the previous chapter and elsewhere (Poirier 2001, 2010; Morissette 2007), the knowledge of the land by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people and the connection with it has been strained in the past decades.

The requirement to perceive elections as being the key to conform to the *Charter*, combined with the attitude of wanting finality and the static perception of traditions (see Chapter 4) make it difficult for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to be in re-building mode. Under current requirements, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would need to spell out in the treaty what traditional institution they would like to use, without possibility of modifying it if it turns out in the future that it does not quite work for future generations. To change the structure, they would have to move closer to mainstream institutions, without the possibility to update and transform their own traditions. Consequently, rebuilding, and therefore flexibility, and the possibility to introduce change when the institution is tested through time is what is needed.

Adaptive co-management literature criticizes command-and-control, one-size-fits-all approaches in ecological management. It critiques the over-reliance on state bureaucrats and advocates for more responsibilities be given to people directly affected by environmental management decisions. As mentioned in Chapter 4, there are three reasons to move away from command-and-control and one-size-fits-all approaches: (1) to enhance the robustness of ecological management decisions by gaining access to systems of knowledge and management practices that are better attuned to local specifics (Berkes 1998, Pálsson 1998); (2) to increase the efficiency of decision implementation by involving people that are directly affected by the decisions in activities such as monitoring (Kearney 1989, Pinkerton 1989, Hanna 1998, Sheppard and Meitner 2005); and (3) to increase equity in the decision-making process by moving away from management models

that are controlled by a central state that is remote from the needs of local people and from regional and cultural specificities (McCay 1996, Persoon and van Est 2003, Pagdee et al. 2006). An important body of policy research concludes that government agencies “have been notably unsuccessful in their efforts to design effective and uniform sets of rules to regulate important common-pool resources” (Ostrom 2007:32).

The idea is however not to completely decentralize, towards a full bottom-up approach (Dowsley 2007; Schultz 2009). There has to be an institutional mix. Adaptive co-management should be performed by a diverse network of actors to enable a balance between the coordination capacity of centralized structures and the learning capacity of decentralized structures (Schultz 2009). Local structures know better about local issues, better apt to learn about local environments, and take decisions that are suitable for local groups. This is why an *okimaw* system would be interesting. There is also a need for institutional diversity, a diversity of learning approaches, to keep options open (Doubleday 2007).

As said in Chapter 3, we have been used to rely on government to take care of governance (Delmas and Young 2009), but within a complexity/uncertainty paradigm, “governance is not the sole purview of the state through government, but rather emerges from the interactions of many actors, including the private sector and not-for-profit organizations” (Lebel et al. 2006). ACM literature therefore frames structure/institution building as a self-organizing process for problem solving (e.g. Berkes 2009), including the relevant people for a specific management problem in a specific context. Therefore, for ACM scholars and practitioners, governments and bureaucracies should not be the only actors involved. As ACM is driven by the ultimate goal of resolving environmental management problems, “there is a new appreciation of loosely structured governance entities that spontaneously emerge or self-organise, often in response to rigid governmental structures” (Folke et al. 2005:449). The sharing of management responsibilities “may involve multiple, polycentric, cross-level

institutional and organizational linkages among user groups or communities, governmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations. It is neither centralisation nor decentralisation” (Hahn et al. 2009:121). In sum, it only makes sense to have a variety of institutions, including the institutions that make most sense for the ones the most affected by environmental management decisions, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok.

This acceptance of fluid, flexible, traditional institutions is important in a nation-to-nation relationship, in order to build trust between parties, local ways-of-doing, to which, in this case the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok would adhere, should be granted legitimacy in the process. Those who know a lot about social dynamics are obviously community members.

The *Haida* and *Taku River* decisions confirmed the need for co-management arrangements that are tailored to local the social and cultural context. This is the end of the on-size-fits-all approach, which is also advocated, for ecological reasons, by ACM theorists and practitioners. In this thesis, I therefore suggest that the approach that was developed for ecological reasons can also be used for social and cultural reasons, to be more attuned to an evolving social and cultural context. These court decisions brought Aboriginal participation to environmental management into a world of pluralities as they made one-size-fits-all approaches irrelevant. There is a parallel to make with ACM framework and complexity theory.

Therefore, Aboriginal participation in environmental management should not be seen as a question of more or less, as is often the case at the moment, but as a question of doing things differently, imagining new frameworks and new ways of doing. This view is compatible with the ACM approach.

Atikamekw Nehirowisiw social organization has always been characterized by fluidity (Wyatt 2004; Morissette 2007) and the need to embrace this fluidity

remains today as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok attempt to reinvigorate their institutions.

#### *8.2.4. Heaviness of bureaucracies, technical and scientific language*

*Okimaws* and other Atikamekw Nehirowisiw users of the land spoken to have no interest in becoming full time bureaucrats, going from consultation to consultation. There is a certain consultation fatigue because Aboriginal organizations are small and it is often the same people who are involved all the time in all consultations (Robinson and Ross 1999; Fast et al. 2005). As mentioned earlier, generating and updating traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) requires a commitment to be on the land, to spend a lot of time on the land. Therefore, a challenge that TEK poses to co-management is related to the logistical difficulty of reconciling the time that someone spends on the land with the time-consuming commitment to interact on co-management boards with state government bureaucrats and other stakeholders.

A further problem of current consultation processes is that the *okimaws* can at times have difficulty to follow when conversations between forest engineers happen, as they may not understand language used. The language of authority is science. There is a frustration in having to adopt a scientific and technical language in order to advance its arguments, as mentioned in Chapter 7. If it is not scientifically proven, it is hard to make it a valid argument in the negotiation of a particular environmental problem. As said in Chapter 7, Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are sometimes reluctant to tell forest companies why they want to protect a particular area of the forest, for fear of being ridiculed. Interview participants would not want to reproduce this current situation into a future arrangement. They would like the *okimaws* to spend as much time as possible on the land, and as less time as possible trying to explain in a foreign language their issues from consultation forum to consultation forum.



As said in Chapter 4, dissimilar worldviews and working approaches can also be very difficult to accommodate in a co-management arrangement. Partners in the co-management process may mistrust alternative models of how things work. Static institutions reluctant to listen people expressing themselves in their own words are unlikely to lead to trust, mutual respect that were the true spirit of treaties.

In the adaptive co-management approach, it is understood that it is important to nurture diversity, not entrap ways-of-doings and governance in a single paradigm, because, as explained before, command-and-control approaches are ill-suited to deal with ecological problems because as said before, one can never fully understand the world fully, nor the future. There is a need, then, to involve multiple narratives, and since the methods to generate traditional ecological knowledge does not accommodate well with bureaucratic institutions, it needs not to be bureaucratized.

As argued in Chapter 3, this diversity of understanding is needed not only because people have the right to think differently, but because it is required to build resilience into the system and thus avoid path-dependency. If a surprising change happens in the environment, some management methods may be more appropriate for the new context, so it is important not to suppress any, in case one option ends up being more useful than another. As said in Chapter 4, the acknowledgment of the many faces of TEK also creates opportunities to enhance the co-management of natural resources (see Table 4.1). Because knowledge about the complexity of ecosystems is incomplete within state bureaucracies and elsewhere, by involving TEK as a complete knowledge system with corresponding management systems that are coherent with local ecological and social contexts, it may be possible to be better prepared for unforeseen consequences of policy and management decisions made by outside bureaucrats. Also, local residents can provide early warning of environmental change (Olsson et al. 2004). Finally, TEK as a knowledge system allows for different perspectives when making sense of

environmental complexity, as well as for novel ideas to cope with environmental change. To have available a multiplicity of varied locally based management systems and institutions could result in a wider set of experiences that could potentially be useful in coping with uncertainty and surprise. It is also a way for First Nations to identify with the knowledge produced. It can also be used to convey this nation-to-nation approach of co-existence “founded on the belief that having separate worldviews need not be undesirable, and developing a framework which would respect different worldviews would be a positive approach to take” (McGregor 2010:308).

It only makes sense, then, from an adaptive co-management perspective, to maintain a non-bureaucratic sphere, to allow the *okimaws* to do their work and nurture different ways-of-knowing. A solution that could be envisaged for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context is the creation of bridge organizations working as a buffer between non-bureaucratic sphere of the *okimaw* and bureaucratic sphere of the state government. This research has shown that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to use their traditional *okimaw* system, but at the same time, they do not want the *okimaws* to become full-time bureaucrats. Several participants identified the band council as being that relevant organisation. It could therefore be the band council or an organisation mandated by the band council to help out.

#### *8.2.5. The desire to be Nehirowisiw: Self-reliance and self-determination on*

##### *Nitaskinan*

To be successful, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw point of view, a treaty must allow for them to regain their status as *nehirowisiw*. To be *nehirowisiw* would require the Atikamekw to be involved in all aspects of land development, management, and conservation. This includes being involved in strategic discussions about economic development. However, as said in Chapter 2, it is currently difficult for Aboriginals to attain self-determination in the area of economic development. Aboriginals find it difficult to progress on issues that are

not considered as being in the domain of the ‘traditional’, such as the economy. Quebec Aboriginals thus criticise the provincial government for ignoring economic development questions when trying to implement the recognition and the protection of Aboriginal rights, and when designing the new policy on Aboriginal consultation (Dionne 2005; Quebec 2008). It is therefore difficult for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to build economic development strategies that depart from the mainstream paradigm or depart from a perception of static traditions.

This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families, as mentioned in Chapter 6, want to be autonomous from other families. Families want to do their own things, their own way, on their own territory. It could be difficult within current treaty formats to accommodate for different families wanting to do different things in different ways.

What matters in ACM is the goal. Not the way to get at it, not the methods used. What matters is to identify a domain of possibilities within which people are comfortable and aim towards that target. To adopt the same attitude in the case of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, it would mean that it does not matter if methods employed to reach management goals are not perceived as being strictly traditional.

The goal, through treaty making, for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok is to protect the ‘integrity’ of *Nitaskinan* in order to be able to maintain the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way-of-life and culture. Consequently, in the context of the treaty negotiations, co-management should work towards, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw perspective, into building resilience to maintain ecosystem features that allow them to maintain their way-of-life.

Since each family want to be able to implement different activities on their own family territory while maintaining the integrity of the land and the general features

of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of life, an ACM approach would consider each family territory as an opportunity for experimenting with different methods. Diversity is key. It does not have to be the same things that are done across the land. This would lead Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok collectively to decide which global target is most appropriate for the future of the nation, while allowing families to decide of the trajectory to use to “enhance the system’s ability to reorganize and move within some configuration of acceptable states, without knowing or caring which particular path the system might follow” (Walker et al., 2002). “Without knowing or caring” reflects to a certain extent what some people think. There could be industrial forestry on *Nitaskinan*, as long as traditional way-of-life is possible (the acceptable state). It is a goal-oriented management (resolve problems in a way that work for everyone).

To get there, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok need to identify what are their goals. These goals will serve into determining how to maintain the integrity of *Nitaskinan*.

#### *8.2.6. Protecting and maintaining the integrity of Nitaskinan*

I argued in Chapter 6 that a successful outcome of the treaty process would be to have a co-management arrangement that would allow “to respect the integrity of the ancestral territory” (CNA c.1993). Results of the interviews presented illustrate that integrity, for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, includes a certain level of change, both ecological and social. Livelihood can change somewhat as the environment can change, and a certain level of environmental change is possible, as long as it allow for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture to continue to blossom. The system is thus not static but changes over time, and people can change with it.

In Chapter 6, I already established that what Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok refer to as being ‘integrity’ is what ACM theory defines as being ‘resilience’. The concept of resilience can be used to identify the level of change that a social-ecological system or a territory can tolerate without it flipping into an entirely different state,

unrecognizable to its occupants (Berkes and Fast 2005). For the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, the resilience of *Nitaskinan* would be the capacity of the land to absorb the cumulative environmental and human changes while keeping its identity as *Nitaskinan*, a land that can provide an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw lifestyle similar to that of today and desired by most of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw population, and a land that is a keeper of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw memory.

The goal of a co-management arrangement, as said in the previous section, would be to build and maintain the capacity of *Nitaskinan* to support the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way-of-life. The solution is there to adopt a problem-solving approach as advocated by the ACM approach, to focus on results achieved (ecological and social results).

#### *8.2.7. (Re)build knowledge about the land through a code of practices*

Another goal sought after by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in negotiating a treaty is to use their traditional knowledge to inform decisions that are made about their ancestral land. This, as demonstrated in Chapter 7, can be achieved through the use of an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw code of practices in environmental management. The code of practices encodes traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw knowledge and has to change over time to keep up with changing social goals, ecological responses, and cultural needs. This perception of how a code of practices functions confirms that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok perceive traditions – embodied by the code of practices – as being flexible and changing over time. This departs from an understanding often voiced by non-Aboriginals who perceive traditional knowledge as crystallized in the past, unchanging.

In this context, a successful co-management arrangement therefore has to be flexible enough to include this notion of changing traditions and fluid institutions espoused by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. This can only be done if co-management is seen as an institution-building and knowledge-building exercise

that challenges the boundaries of knowledge systems. This again, goes against the Canadian state approach to treaty, which seeks finality.

As highlighted before, because the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw connection with the land has been strained over the past years of residential schools and marginalization on the land, a priority for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok is to build land-related knowledge that would both reconnect the younger generations with the traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw land-based identity and allow for developing the envisioned land-based economy. TEK is not out there to be integrated. It needs to be built.

We do need, then, to understand Atikamekw Nehirowisiw participation to environmental management as an exercise of knowledge building, which is a thought compatible with an adaptive approach to co-management, which seeks first to identify problems and workable solutions, and then build knowledge from different sources needed. Adaptive co-management is knowledge building. It is focused on learning, from different perspectives. As said in Chapter 7, in a co-management situation, patience would be required from actors on the land, for institutions and traditional knowledge could not be mobilized overnight. It would be done gradually, with the understanding that things can change over time, as new knowledge is acquired. TEK is not out there to be picked and added to by resource managers. It is to be built upon. Gaps in traditional knowledge between generations exist, and the project of giving more authority to the *okimaw* is not only to obtain direct results in resource management, but is also to rebuild the knowledge capital in the younger generations by giving back to the *okimaw* the chance to again become a respected authority within the nation. It is as much to build knowledge for the purpose of environmental management as it is for the purpose of rebuilding an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity.

### **8.3. DO ATIKAMEKW NEHIROWISIWOK NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ACM OVERLAP?**

I would argue that they do. In the light of what has been exposed in the previous section, I conclude that an adaptive co-management approach would help in resolving some of the deadlocks experienced by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, and First Nations in general, in their quest for novel arrangements regarding the management of natural resources.

The ‘wampum approach’ of a constantly revisited treaty and the need to allow future generations to negotiate the implementation of their own vision of the land matches the ACM dimensions of flexibility and evolution. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs for institution-building, knowledge-building and trust-building match the objectives of the ACM approach. The desire to ‘protect the integrity’ of *Nitaskinan* overlaps the resilience approach used in ACM. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw objective to involve traditional knowledge and institutions (territorial council and *okimaws*) in decision-making matches the ACM approach, which supports the involvement of non-state actors and other-than-scientific narratives in the governance of natural resources. Finally, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw need for family-based autonomy matches the ACM approach of experimentation.

### **8.4. PRECONDITIONS TO BE MET TO REACH AN ADAPTIVE TREATY**

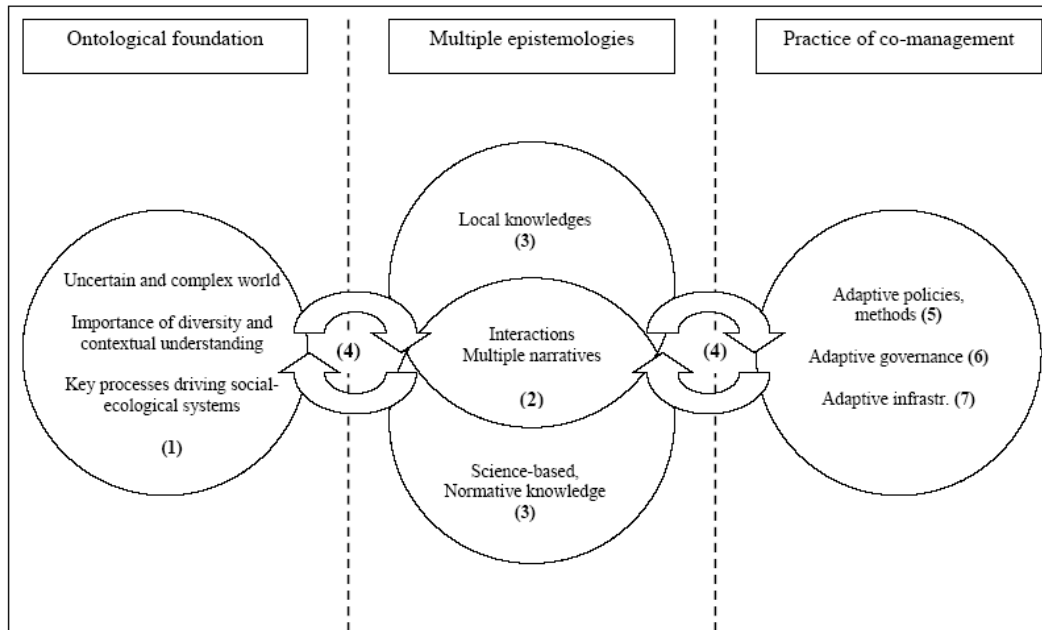
Now that it has been established that an adaptive approach could help in a treaty context, I now turn to the specific Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context to see how it might unfold in this particular context. This section thus answers thesis objective number 3, which is to identify what preconditions need to be met in order to build organisations for adaptive treaties.

In Chapter 3, I identified the following six conditions that would enable an adaptive co-management approach:

- Clarify and accept access and property rights
- Consider multiple worldviews and epistemologies
- Live with and accept change and uncertainty
- Foster a learning environment
- Experiment
- Build trust

I will now revisit these enabling conditions in order to consider how they could be fostered within the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context. Below, I reproduce the figure that was first shown in Chapter 3 in order to assist my reflections. Section 8.4.1 explains what vision first needs to be put into place in order to create a functioning adaptive treaty (left rectangle). Section 8.4.2 then focuses on how learning can be conducted in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty-context (middle rectangle). Finally, section 8.4.3 focuses on the adaptive components of ACM (right rectangle). The adaptive infrastructures component has been left out of the analysis, since the research did not focus on this particular aspect of adaptive co-management.





#### 8.4.1. Left rectangle: Defining a vision

Resource management is guided by a vision of how the land and its resources should be used and developed and for the benefits of whom. This vision is two-fold. Management is guided both by an understanding of how things *should* work and an understanding of how things *actually* work.

Currently, as evidenced in Chapter 6 and elsewhere (e.g. Wyatt 2004), the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok do not associate with the management vision within which Quebec forests have been developed. The first step, in developing a successful co-management arrangement from the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw point of view, is therefore to legitimize Atikamekw Nehirowisiw participation to the definition of a land-use vision that would be used in the future to their satisfaction.

The first enabling condition for a successful co-management arrangement is thus to clarify access and property rights for everyone so that the participation of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in decision-making in environmental management is not disputed. As mentioned earlier, title is what gives the Haida of British

Columbia leverage in their negotiations and allows them to have innovative co-management arrangements even outside a treaty framework. Clear title is currently lacking in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context. Clarification of title rights and ancestral rights on *Nitaskinan* should then be a priority for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. Clarified and widely known rights, including to outfitters and cottagers using *Nitaskinan*, would provide a general framework for the co-management arrangement, and it would enable Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people to move around their traditional territory with peace of mind. These rights, as mentioned before, should be seen, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw perspective, as rights to self-determination, which would include rights to define their own institutions of governance, involving the *okimaw*, and provide the opportunity for families to live autonomously on their land. Rights to self-determination would also include the right to redefine their own traditions, and those of future generations to define their own.

#### *8.4.1.2. Defining the vision of an ideal Nitaskinan: Resilience of what?*

After having clarified rights, the second step in creating a co-management arrangement would be to define the vision that will guide the process. It has been established that ACM's objective is to maintain a system's resilience (see Chapter 3). In the case of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, it would mean working towards the resilience of a culturally significant system, *Nitaskinan*. In this instance, the co-management arrangement work towards making *Nitaskinan* able to keep its culturally significant features through ecological or social change, make it able to "cope with and able to recover from shocks and stresses, maintains or enhances existing capabilities and assets despite uncertainty (and) ensures the provision of sustainable livelihood opportunities for future generations" (Plummer and Armitage 2007:68). It is to make *Nitaskinan* resilient to changes so that it continues through time to provide for the maintenance of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw livelihood, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture, and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way-of-life.

To keep *Nitaskinan* as a territory that is identifiable as *Nitaskinan* for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, allowing them to keep their ability to be *nehirowisiw*, would not necessarily forbid Québécois to set up their own vision, as long as it does not interfere with that of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. As noted in section 8.2.1, McGregor (2011:307) points out that First Nations are supportive of the idea of having co-existing, “mutually supportive but nonintegrated” visions. This was demonstrated in Chapter 6, where it was mentioned that several of the participants identified ‘sharing’ as a value at the core of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw identity. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, therefore, are in favour of sharing the wealth of the land in a way that would allow them to maintain their own activities. As stated in Chapter 2, this support for co-existence was also revealed in the early 1970s’ *Citizens Plus*, when the Alberta chiefs argued that special status, by setting First Nations apart was needed to nurture First Nations identity (Indian Association of Alberta c.1970). There is thus a need, for identity purposes, to nurture separate visions that can co-exist.

In order to define visions of how things *should* work, both the state government and the Atikamekw nation have work to do. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok need to define what are the key components that makes *Nitaskinan* be *Nitaskinan* and need to indicate what sort of thresholds, in terms of environmental features, need not to be crossed, in order to keep *Nitaskinan* in a desirable state. This will allow for the identification of features in the social-ecological system that are important to be monitored. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok need to identify what ideally *Nitaskinan* would look like and indicate the level of environmental change for their way of life to be maintained. The desired state would be the target to aim for in the management of activities on *Nitaskinan*. Following the identification of the targets to aim for, the following steps in the co-management process would be about trying to reach this target while maintaining *Nitaskinan* in an acceptable state. In other words, the following steps will be about designing policies and implementing methods that will strengthen *Nitaskinan*’s resilience, or its ability to

stay within the state that would also allow for Atikamekw Nehirowisiw cultural continuity and economic self-reliance.

If we use the language of Aboriginal rights, these rights become thresholds not to cross. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have ancestral rights to use resources and the land in certain ways, and these ancestral rights are, in this context, the important features to keep track of. If a critical threshold concerning these ancestral rights is crossed, making the system transform into something that cannot maintain the important feature, there is a breach of ancestral rights. The goal is to move away from regime shifts towards a system that cannot sustain ancestral rights anymore (i.e. a desirable *Nitaskinan* that can provide Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok with economic autonomy and a culturally meaningful place). Consequently, there is a need to identify thresholds that matter culturally. If management methods or land development emerging from the interaction of state and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw actors are in conflict with cultural thresholds, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok should have the ability to say no. These thresholds thus become Aboriginal rights not to cross. This is the way in which visions are kept alive in parallel, as suggested by *Citizens Plus* and the wampum approach referred to earlier. The state can implement certain activities, as long as it does not cross certain culturally important thresholds.

For example, moose is an important animal for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. It is important for food, but also from an identity point of view. Moose hunting is an important from a cultural point of view (Roussy 1998; Wyatt 2004). Moose is for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok what Garibaldi and Turner (2004) call a cultural keystone species. Therefore, any land development would need to ensure a certain level of moose population is maintained, so that families have access to a large enough number of moose. The need for moose is the indicator. What makes the moose population fluctuate are the drivers, and the point not to cross for each driver that would make the moose population crash are the thresholds not to cross.

#### *8.4.1.3. Making sense of the world: Resilience to what?*

Defining a vision is not only to say how things should work, but it is to develop an understanding of how things *actually* work. The third step of the co-management process is therefore to make sense of the world. In ACM, the world is a complex place, and as argued in this chapter, a complexity approach is appropriate for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context, because there is no certainty regarding the kind of impact management decisions will have on the physical environment, and therefore on its ability to continuously through time support Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture and way of life. The second enabling condition for a co-management arrangement in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context is thus to live with and accept change and uncertainty, to embrace complexity and change for both ecological and social reasons.

#### *8.4.2. Middle rectangle: Fostering a learning environment*

How is developing an understanding of how things actually work done?

One of the main characteristics of ACM is to be focused on learning. Within the ACM approach, co-management is an experiment and innovation (Berkes 2007). As argued in Chapter 3, an adaptive co-management arrangement institutionalizes a learning process, and not – as is often the case with current treaties – structures. One enabling condition permitting ACM is therefore to foster a learning environment. Once a clear vision of what managing partners want is established (section 8.4.1), the third step is to develop an understanding of the system (*Nitaskinan*) with the goal of protecting *Nitaskinan*'s integrity, or in other words, work to maintain the resilience of *Nitaskinan*. This step of the co-management process is about examining the disturbances and actions to which the desirable configurations are expected to be resilient (Walker et al. 2002). This step involves identifying critical processes that impact most profoundly the features that really matter for Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture. It is to identify what key processes (key drivers) are important culturally. This step is about building knowledge about these key processes, which maintain the system's identity (the processes allowing

for *Nitaskinan* to remain *Nitaskinan*, or having the potential to make *Nitaskinan* flip towards an undesirable state).

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok put the *okimaw* at the centre of the information generation process, as explained in Chapter 7 and illustrated in Figure 7.2. The *okimaw* is also the one who is supposed to make sure everyone in the family has sufficient game and other resources. Therefore, the *okimaw* has to be heavily involved in developing an understanding of how things work for the co-management arrangement to be successful from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok point of view. The *okimaw* would need to be involved in identifying thresholds not to cross, and in the identification of possible drivers of change in the environment. Access to information technology, to other scales of knowledge (as illustrated by Figure 7.2), the possibilities for training the youth, and possibilities for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to be involved in monitoring activities, should all be part of a co-management process. This is part of a bridging exercise that would connect local knowledges to other forms of knowledge that can work better at other-than-local scales, as no one can do everything single-handedly (Dowsley 2007), and some types of environmental decisions require working at different scales. Therefore, science and other expert knowledge have a place, depending on the environmental problem being dealt with.

As stated before, the *okimaw* and Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in general have a certain knowledge of the environment, of environmental processes, and possibly of threshold effects to be taken into consideration in environmental management. However, this knowledge is incomplete and in need of constant renewal and updating. So for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to be truly involving in the knowledge-building process, TEK has to be seen as something fluid and changing. Due to the fact that there is a general mistrust of TEK by non-Aboriginal co-management partners, experiments could be used to build trust.

The aim of nurturing multiple narratives in ACM is not to build one common worldview, but rather that they continuously inform each other. Nurturing diversity is a way to ensure greater options for the reorganization of systems (Doubleday 2007). Since culturally relevant thresholds matter in a co-management arrangement involving the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, it is important to consider multiple worldviews and epistemologies, for example the one on the *okimaw*. In a co-management situation, resilience management (building the resilience of the system) tries to accommodate diverse views and achieve multiple results by identifying multiple thresholds. This is why “the best approach to comprehensive knowledge is through a variety of holistic views” (Jørgensen et al. 1992:10) or alternative narratives. The ultimate goal of ACM is to resolve environmental problems and use all types of knowledge available to do so. ‘Problems’ in this context mean everything that threatens to bring the system out of its identifiable boundaries that define it as *Nitaskinan*.

So far, I have explained that participants to the co-management process should have generated two types of information. First, the vision of what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and the state government want to have on the land, detailed with regard to features of the system (*Nitaskinan*) people want to keep or change. Also, people should have identified major uncertainties that may affect these features, influence them, and about how the system may respond to change. The next step is to try to figure out the interaction of these two types of information to test the resilience of the desired system.

#### *8.4.2.1. Scenarios*

How can we build narratives of the way things work and how can we make visions “mutually supportive” and not antagonistic? A method to do this is through scenarios (Walker et al. 2002; Peterson et al. 2003) that try to make the visions of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and the Québécois work together to achieve multiple goals with management actions.

It could be said that scenario planning has two main uses. It can first be used to imagine possible ‘target’ futures, places where people want to go, in order to design today’s policies and take decisions accordingly, to get there. The other way scenarios may be used is by allowing for informed reaction to a wide range of possible developments (Bunn and Salo 1993). In this instance, the intent of scenarios is not to predict the future, but rather to improve abilities to adapt to it (Wollenberg et al. 2000). Therefore the question that decision-makers are asking is not what will happen, but what could we do if it did happen (Rotmans et al. 2000)? It provides a framework for finding robust decisions “that have acceptable consequences no matter how events turn out” (Carpenter 2002:2080).

Scenarios thus set out possible trajectories, and experimentation test strategies to stay on course for desired trajectories and targets. Scenarios can help set up general guidelines, and experimentation can test the cultural and ecological acceptability for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok of procedure, methods, and policies. In this context, “given the complexity of the process of designing rules to regulate the use of (...) resources, (...) all public policies should be considered as experiments” (Ostrom 2007:33).

#### *8.4.3. Right rectangle: Governance*

The result of the ACM process as explained so far is an emerging understanding of social-ecological systems that both affect, and have been affected, by policy and management actions. Because it is an emerging understanding, the governance of such system also has to adapt to the changing context. Therefore, adaptive governance is what frames and enables adaptive management (Schultz 2009). To enhance the capacity of social-ecological systems to cope with change and to adapt to it, it is desirable to design institutions of governance that are not persistent in time, but change as the social and ecological context changes. This involves connecting individuals, organizations, agencies, and institutions relevant to the environmental problems at hand. They include redundant and layered institutions, a mix of institutional types working at multiple scales (Folke et al.



2005; Armitage et al. 2009), and bridging organisations. Finally, ACM systems nurture sources of resilience for renewal and reorganization (Folke et al. 2005) and therefore may build on already existing institutional arrangements (Olsson et al. 2004), in order to identify sources of transformative capacity. It is thus about involving the relevant people at the right moment, and re-organizing the learning and decision-making process to fit new circumstances. “An automatic process to solve (natural resources) problems is also not appropriate assumption” (Ostrom 2007:32). This means it may be necessary to move away from structures when they are no longer productive in reaching good results.

It has become clear through this research that answers to Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty negotiation woes have to come from outside conventional political structures. Conventional bureaucracies, reproduced in treaty co-management organisations, do not seem to be appropriate structures to involve the participation of the non-bureaucratic sphere of the decision-making organisation wished by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, the territorial council formed of the various *okimaws*. Therefore, the ACM approach shows promise in its willingness to embrace post-structuralist ideas of self-organizing governance systems (or “self-organizing adhocracies”, as worded by Hahn et al. 2006) to match post-normal understandings of a (complex) ecological world.

These ideas, grounded in the complexity theory underlying the ACM approach, reinforce the need to frame Atikamekw Nehirowisiw rights as rights to self-determination. There is a need to move beyond existing structures and to re-organize according to evolving ecological, but also social and cultural parameters. The results of the ACM process in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context would be assessed according to the ability to achieve ecological, but also social and cultural results. Not everything, in terms of management methods, policies, or institutions is culturally acceptable for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. This means two things. First, as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are already in a re-building process mode regarding their institutions, we are presently unsure as to what will

work or not. There is thus a need for room to change and experiment. Secondly, it means that the *okimaw* needs to be empowered in deciding what is good for the nation and what is compatible with Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture, since he or she is the guardian of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw tradition. Methods, policies and institutions to test and use would be chosen for their likelihood to work with ecological, social, and cultural environments. If the frames of reference change (ecology, society, values), governance, management methods and policies have to be changed as well. Interventions or actions would be chosen for their likelihood to make people move towards desired ecological, social, and cultural goals and on their ability to make the system stay on a trajectory towards these goals, and to make the system less vulnerable to shocks and events that would throw the trajectory off target.

#### *8.4.3.1. Bridges*

To move away from conventional structures requires, in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context, to build bridges between the non-bureaucratic sphere of the *okimaw* and the bureaucratic domain of the state. Band councils, even if they are often criticized for their way of doing business and for being remnants of Canadian colonialism, have been identified as a needed instrument to be used to bring the two sides together more effectively, and to implement what Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families want to do with the land. A band council, or a designated organisation created by the band council, is needed so the *okimaws* can focus on being on the land, and not solely on being bureaucrats.

There is furthermore a need to make co-management institutions flexible because the territorial council, or any organisation regrouping the *okimaws*, needs to evolve in accordance with a changing context, to include new families, and new members of the civil society, as needed by the issues being dealt with. This territorial council would be a permanent forum in which the *okimaws* could discuss and build consensus within the nation and it would allow the *okimaws* to

jump scales and have more influence on issues that take place at other-than-local scales, but that are still affecting them.

The down side of self-organisation as advocated by ACM theorists is the fact that it remains mute on power relations that make people decide what is part of a self-organizing adhocracy and what is not. What's less good, then, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw point of view, is this idea of *complete* self-reorganization. Re-organisation to fit environmental problems dealt with would have to be mitigated by the legal requirement of having Atikamekw Nehirowisiw participation, no matter what. Structures should therefore only be created to protect the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw ancestral rights to participate in land-use management.

#### *8.4.3.2. Experiments*

As explained earlier, experimentation with methods and policies is at the heart of the adaptive co-management process. As said in the previous section, management interventions, actions, and policies would be chosen for their likelihood to make the system stay on a trajectory towards the multiple goals set by the co-management partners, and to make the system less vulnerable to shocks and events that would throw the trajectory off target.

As there are sixty Atikamekw Nehirowisiw family territories in *Nitaskinan*, there is room for experimentation with management actions. Since families want to be autonomous and do their own things, management of these territories could be thought of as experiments to compare with what is happening on another family territory. Self-management of family territories could therefore be seen as pilot projects that would feed into the knowledge-development process located at the heart of the co-management process. To engage more people in different experiments would likely build trust between government bureaucrats who are sceptical of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw capacity to participate in decision-making, forest companies, and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families.

Furthermore, as with policies and methods, it is also ideal to experiment with institutions. It may be more complicated to have concurrent experiments happening, but it is possible. In the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw case, three organisations – one for each community – are responsible for bridging the gap between Atikamekw Nehirowisiw families and the forest industry (and government bureaucrats) to mitigate the effects of logging operations on family trapping lots and hunting territories. Each of these organisations has its own set of procedures, which is revised periodically, in part through a sharing of experiences with the other two organisations. These existing organisations can be thought of as sources of transformative capacity, for the experience they have already gathered through trial-and-error over the years as in-betweeners for designing harmonisation measures that attempt to suit both families and forest companies.

## **8.5. LESSONS TO IMPROVE THE ACM FRAMEWORK**

I have argued in this chapter that adaptive co-management is an approach that could be used in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context and in other treaty or co-management negotiation contexts to upgrade the approaches currently used. By doing so, I am aware that I have still not answered the critiques of the ACM approach I first identified in Chapter 3. This section thus reflects on these critiques.

### *8.5.1. Goodwill*

ACM, still in its infancy as a theoretical approach, can be described as an “idealized narrative” (Plummer and Armitage 2007:1) for which its implementation is largely dependent on participants’ goodwill. This begs the question: What happens if people are not willing to co-operate? An answer to that question can be found in flexibility and experimentation. To try different things to gain insight into what works or not, and to think of decisions as experiments, may build trust over time. What the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok really need, however, are some safeguards. ACM promotes the idea of self-organizing adhocracies,

adapting and re-organizing according to the situation or the environmental problem being dealt with. However, this approach may leave the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok out of the loop if some safeguards are not included in the process. Co-management structures need to be flexible enough to adapt, but rigid enough to ensure a certain level of participation by the less empowered group; an insurance to participate in the process no matter what. Ultimately, it means that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok need not only be a participant in the process, but a decision-maker. Then, over time of a forced co-habitation of state and Atikamekw Nehirowisiw decision-makers, the hope and intention is that some goodwill will develop.

#### *8.5.2. Power*

Does ACM empower more than classical treaties? I mentioned throughout the thesis that some mistrust of TEK exists on the behalf of non-Aboriginals relating to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. I therefore suggest that mistrust of other ways of knowing can potentially be defused through experimentation. Is it possible to address concerns with the authority of language, for example, by having a double set of cultural thresholds not to cross (Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culturally-important thresholds), as explained in this chapter. These thresholds thus become Aboriginal rights not to cross. This is how you can keep visions alive and parallel. The state can implement certain activities, as long as it does not cross certain culturally important thresholds. Questions around the identity of landscapes and sense of place are not well framed in ACM and resilience theory, but I suggest that considering culturally-relevant thresholds may improve the ACM framework. It would be a way to make things evolve while remaining true to core Atikamekw Nehirowisiw values.

Some have pointed that co-management can lead to the re-enforcement of local inequalities and local elites. By implicating the civil society in the Atikamekw Territorial Council being created, as well as using culturally-relevant networks to build support for the co-management arrangement, this could be overcome.

Atikamekw Nehirowisiw communities are heterogeneous. This means there is a need to build support in different parts of society for the arrangement to work.

#### *8.5.3. Ways of learning*

The failure to address cultural differences in learning could be resolved by the threshold system and by empowering the *okimaw* to decide what these thresholds are and in monitor their own family territories. There is a need, however, for *okimaws* to develop horizontal connections (through a territorial council where *okimaws* get together to discuss land-related issues) as well as vertical connections in order to access knowledge about processes affecting their family territories.

The problem of writing down traditions and a code of practice presents another challenge that could be tackled or diminished not by giving away all culturally-sensitive information, but rather empowering knowledge holders, the *okimaws*, and the institutions generating and preserving the knowledge and the family territory system to participate in environmental decision-making. If these revitalized institutions are more empowered to participate in environmental decision-making, maybe the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok do not need to write down so much of their traditional knowledge for the outside world, which would probably be considered as more acceptable within the nation.

### **8.6. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have explained how the adaptive co-management approach could be useful in the context of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty negotiations in resolving some of the deadlocks experienced in their quest for novel arrangements regarding the management of natural resources. To do so, I first examined the overlap that exists between the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs and what ACM has to offer. It was concluded that the nation-to-nation approach of co-existence embodied in a constantly revisited treaty advocated by First Nations, as well as the need to allow for future generations to negotiate the implementation of their

own vision of the land matches the ACM flexibility and evolutive dimensions well. It was also argued that the desire to ‘protect the integrity’ of *Nitaskinan* overlaps the resilience approach used in ACM. Finally, it was demonstrated that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw objective of involving traditional knowledge and institutions (territorial council and *okimaws*) in decision-making matches an ACM approach that supports the involvement of non-state actors and other-than-scientific narratives in the governance of natural resources.

In this chapter, I have also provided a framework outlining an adaptive co-management process that could be used in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context. Reflecting back on criticism directed at the ACM approach, it was argued that using the different Atikamekw Nehirowisiw family territories as a base for experimentation and comparisons could potentially help to build trust towards different ways-of-knowing and trust between co-management partners. It was further argued that ACM arguments for self-organizing adhocracies involving different types of institutions strengthen the case for a participation of Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional institutions, such as the Territorial Council and the *okimaw*. However, it was argued that for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok not to be left out of potential institution self-reorganizations, legal safeguards are needed to ensure that Atikamekw Nehirowisiw participation and rights are insured in the future.

What this chapter has demonstrated is that answers for treaties have to come from outside conventional political structures. There has to be political will to think outside the box. It does sometimes happen, for example when the perceived imperative of building the James Bay led to very swift claims negotiation. For the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, tired of old structures and processes, now is the time for another major push and reconsiderations of way of doings, in order to have true nation-to-nation relationships unfolding in the long future.

## CHAPTER 9

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the potential for transitioning from current co-management approaches to an *adaptive* co-management approach in resolving some of the problems experienced in current treaty negotiations contexts. The case of the Atikamekw First Nation treaty negotiations has served to achieve this goal.

Chapter 2 introduced the factors that have led Canadian Aboriginals to be excluded from decision-making processes regarding the environment, and also identified problems associated with the current process and format of treaty resolutions in the Canadian context. These problems relate to the extinguishment of residual ancestral rights and the associated problem of rigidity of treaties that allows for changes (institutional changes, or changes in resource management practices) only with difficulty, the length and cost of treaty negotiations, the difficulty of accommodating certain types of traditional institutions, the difficulty of making room for endogenous economic development that departs from the mainstream paradigm of economic development, the implementation and updating of agreements, the bureaucratic and inflexible nature of resultant governance structures, and to the possibility that participation of marginalized groups does not necessarily lead to sound ecological management decisions.

Following the identification of problems related to treaty negotiations, I framed adaptive co-management (ACM) as a possible approach to resolving some of these problems. Consequently, Chapter 3 provided a definition of ACM that served as the theoretical framework for my thesis. It brought to light three components that have to be made adaptive in a co-management arrangement for a complex world: policies and methods, governance, and infrastructure. Chapter 3 further identified six preconditions that have to be met in order to have an adaptive co-management arrangement. These preconditions are: (1) to foster a



learning environment, (2) consider multiple worldviews and epistemologies, (3) experiment, (4) build trust, (5) live with and accept change and uncertainty, and (6) clarify and accept access and property rights over land and resources.

The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw people, as well as several other First Nations, want their traditional ecological knowledge of the land (TEK) to be involved in co-management arrangements being designed with the state. It was therefore important that I included this aspect (TEK) in my research. Consequently, Chapter 4 provided a theoretical definition of TEK that was used to make sense of the roles the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok see for their traditional knowledge of the land and their traditional decision-making institutions in future co-management arrangements. It identified six interconnected and mutually informing faces of TEK that have to be considered concurrently in co-management arrangements. These faces are (1) factual observations about the environment, (2) management systems, (3) factual knowledge regarding past and present usages of the land, (4) ethics and values, (5) cultural identity, and (6) cosmology. Chapter 4 concluded that each of these faces presented challenges, but also opportunities for the co-management of natural resources. It also concluded that for TEK to truly be part of co-management, First Nations communities would have to be involved from the initial stages of decision-making processes, hereby increasing Aboriginal control over the use of TEK and a greater sense of empowerment with regards to the events taking place on their own land. Chapter 4 finally concluded that since non-Aboriginal partners can at first be sceptical of TEK, only with patience and flexibility (of people and process) will TEK find its rightful place and role in the cohabitation of the land.

Chapter 5 presented a detailed account of the way in which a collaborative research framework was built in order to build knowledge for both the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok and myself. It also presented the methods used in the study of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw case, whereas the goal of Chapter 6 was to assess what aspirations today's Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok have for the land. It identified two

sensitive areas or major ‘bones of contention’ that work both as a threat to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture and way of life, and as an opportunity for a better future: tourism and the associated competition for game meat; and industrial forestry. It also indicated that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to diversify their economy to make it less dependent on government income, and reconnect people to their cultural roots, the land. I argued in Chapter 6 that a resilience framework could sit at the heart of a co-management arrangement in order to address the need for economic development, the need for change, or updating, of some traditions while making sure that *Nitaskinan* continues to fulfill Atikamekw Nehirowisiw cultural needs. With this regard, I identified the need for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to work on the identification of acceptable social-ecological system states and culturally relevant ecological thresholds not to be crossed while planning for the social, biophysical, and cultural future of *Nitaskinan*.

Chapter 7 identified how the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok define successful participation to land-related decisions in terms of institution building. It also examined how the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change can be addressed in an adaptive co-management process, in the particular context of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw treaty negotiations. It showed that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want and need to build bridges between different institutions operating at different scales. Also, as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok do not feel comfortable with introducing bureaucracy at the family level, they need a bureaucracy (band council) to take care of business and implement or lobby for what the families want at a local level. The band council would act as a bridge organization between a low-bureaucracy territorial council and bureaucratic procedures needed when dealing with the province.

Chapter 7 further showed that for the approach proposed by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok in the negotiation process to work, it is necessary to see traditional knowledge as something not crystallized in the past, but that could evolve with

input from different sources of knowledge. A fluid conception of the *okimaw*/family territory institution and territorial council is also needed, for these do not exist today in a definite form and shape since the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are in a process of re-building their society and traditions as a consequence of ruptures in the passing of traditions between generations. Traditions to be included in the co-management process are in the process of definition, in flux. Therefore, for that system to work there is a need to focus on Aboriginal rights to autonomy, and self-definition of governance structures, and not on mere rights to fish or hunt.

Finally, Chapter 8 identified an overlap that exists between the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs and what ACM has to offer. It was concluded that the nation-to-nation approach of co-existence embodied in a constantly revisited treaty advocated by First Nations, as well as the need to allow for future generations to negotiate the implementation of their own vision of the land, matches the ACM flexibility and evolutive dimensions well. It was also argued that the desire to ‘protect the integrity’ of *Nitaskinan* overlaps the resilience approach used in ACM.

## **9.1. THESIS OBJECTIVES**

The thesis aimed to fulfill three objectives.

### *9.1.1. First thesis objective*

The thesis was first concerned with identifying how adaptive co-management is an improvement (or not) on existing treaties between Canadian First Nations and the state government. In order to meet that objective, problems with treaties were identified in Chapter 2. A review of the literature on Canadian treaty making revealed these problems for First Nations:

- Extinguishment of residual rights left outside of the written treaty
- It takes time, it is costly, and the outcome is uncertain

- Cultural specificity of Canadian institutions goes unchallenged
- Ignores the need for endogenous economic development that departs from the mainstream paradigm
- Does not address right of self-government beyond the reserve
- Implementation is often lacking
- Bureaucratic nature of resultant governance structures
- Language – overly technical and scientific
- Participation of marginalized groups does not necessarily lead to sound ecological management decisions

Chapter 2 further stated that for treaty-making to be more successful, there is a need to move towards frameworks that allow for processes to change according to changing needs, and that it is necessary to focus on goals to be achieved instead of focusing on structures. The chapter also argued that there is a need for greater flexibility in treaties because today's leaders are hesitant to subscribe to an agreement that will be difficult to reopen as the needs of future generations evolve.

Chapters 6 and 7 identified what, from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw perspective, would especially contribute to building a successful treaty:

- A treaty must be a nation-to-nation renewable commitment
- It must offer the possibility of building an autonomy centred around the *okimaw* and the family
- It must give a central decision-making role to the *okimaw* and the family
- It must provide for the possibility to implement and update over time an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw code of practices
- It must further provide for the possibility of (re)building knowledge about the land, which has been eroded by a strained connection with the land
- It must 'protect the integrity' of *Nitaskinan*
- It must offer the possibility of (re)building institutions of governance

Lastly, Chapter 8 met the first research objective by identifying overlaps between current problems with treaties, Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs, and what ACM can theoretically contribute. I concluded in Chapter 8 that an adaptive co-management approach could help in resolving some of the deadlocks experienced by First Nations in their quest for novel arrangements regarding the management of natural resources. The ‘wampum approach’ of a constantly revisited treaty and the need for allowing future generations to negotiate the implementation of their own vision of the land matches the ACM dimensions of flexibility and evolution. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs for institution-building, knowledge-building and trust-building match the objectives of the ACM approach. The desire to ‘protect the integrity’ of *Nitaskinan* overlaps the resilience approach used in ACM. The Atikamekw Nehirowisiw objective of involving traditional knowledge and institutions in decision-making matches the ACM approach, which supports the involvement of non-state actors and other-than-scientific narratives in the governance of natural resources. Finally, the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw need for family-based autonomy matches the ACM approach of experimentation.

#### *9.1.2. Second thesis objective*

The second objective of the thesis was to examine in what ways the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change can be addressed in an adaptive co-management process. This objective was answered first by reviewing the literature on TEK and proposing a new definition that integrate six interconnected and mutually informing faces of traditional ecological knowledge. This theoretical framework was used to understand what components of their TEK the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok wanted to see involved in future co-management arrangements. Chapter 7 confirmed the validity of the TEK framework I proposed in Chapter 4, and concluded that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok are working towards involving the six faces of their traditional knowledge through the implementation of a code of practices under the guidance of the *okimaw*. Traditional knowledge is usually generated through practice and

the active occupation of the land by the *okimaw* and other family members, and therefore, in order to revitalize traditional knowledge, what the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok need today is more freedom of movement and greater opportunities to be on the land in order to better monitor the land and rebuild the traditional intimate relationship they have with their family territories. They also need to build bridges with other sources of knowledge in order to better understand processes that happen at scales larger than those of the family territory or *Nitaskinan*, and to enrich, keep up-to-date, and keep relevant their traditional knowledge.

The code of practices encodes traditional Atikamekw Nehirowisiw knowledge and has to change over time to keep up with changing social goals, ecological responses, and cultural needs. This perception of how a code of practices functions confirms that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok perceive traditions – embodied by the code of practices – as being flexible and changing over time. This departs from an understanding often voiced by non-Aboriginals who perceive traditional knowledge as crystallized in the past, and unchanging.

In this context, a successful co-management arrangement therefore has to be flexible enough to include this notion of changing traditions and fluid institutions espoused by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok. This can only be done if co-management is seen as an institution-building and knowledge-building exercise that challenges the boundaries of knowledge systems, as is the case with ACM.

For the co-existence of different knowledge systems and cultural change to be addressed in an ACM process, there is a need to (1) understand the code of practices (and therefore TEK) as something that evolves, (2) allow freedom of movement and build capacity to be on the land, and to monitor and build knowledge that feeds into the code of practices, (3) bridge traditional knowledge with other sources of knowledge that can nourish the code of practices, (4)

empower the *okimaw* to bridge the gap between generations and complement the code.

### *9.1.3. Third thesis objective*

Finally, the thesis aimed at identifying the preconditions needed in order to build organisations for adaptive treaties. This was addressed through Chapters 2, 7 and 8. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature pertaining to Canadian treaty making and showed that the necessity for First Nations to comply with the Canadian model of democracy is a roadblock for achieving resolution. It also showed that the lack of flexibility of current treaties impedes the capacity of co-management organisations to adapt to changing environmental and social contexts. It was finally mentioned that the bureaucratic nature of organisations emerging from a treaty process was incompatible with the needs and demands of Aboriginals.

Chapter 7 and 8 showed that for the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok to have a successful outcome in the negotiations, they would move away from top-down approaches by putting the *okimaw* and the family at the centre of the decision-making process concerning the land. These chapters also pointed out that institutional flexibility is needed in order to re-build and re-invent Atikamekw Nehirowisiw traditional institutions, such as the Territorial Council, which they want to involve in a future co-management arrangement. These chapters showed that Atikamekw Nehirowisiw needs for institutional flexibility and difference from Canadian institutions overlaps with the goals of ACM. They also draw similarities between Atikamekw Nehirowisiw attempts at transforming the band council institution as a buffer organisation between the bureaucratic sphere of the state government and the non-bureaucratic sphere of the family and the *okimaw*. This type of buffer organisation would be needed in the context of an adaptive treaty.

Chapters 7 and 8 showed that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw social organization has always been characterized by fluidity, and the need to embrace this fluidity

remains today as the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok attempt to reinvigorate their institutions. This acceptance of fluid, flexible, traditional institutions is important in a nation-to-nation relationship, in order to build trust between parties.

In the ACM literature, institutional flexibility is often embraced as there is “a new appreciation of loosely structured governance entities that spontaneously emerge or self-organise, often in response to rigid governmental structures” (Folke et al. 2005:449). However, what Chapters 7 and 8 show is that in the particular context of treaties, or other co-management arrangements with First Nations, this self-organizing process cannot be left completely loose, for certain actors have to be present at different stages of the process. ACM promotes the idea of self-organizing adhocracies, adapting and re-organizing according to the situation or the environmental problem being dealt with. However, this approach may leave the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok out of the loop if some safeguards are not included in the process. Co-management structures need to be flexible enough to adapt, but rigid enough to ensure a certain level of participation by the less empowered group.

## **9.2. ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

The examination in Chapter 8 of the overlap between problems pertaining specifically to Canadian treaties and what ACM can achieve had not previously been addressed in the academic literature. Furthermore, while some authors have reviewed treaty problems in the Canadian context (e.g. Alcantara 2007a, 2007b), a comprehensive synthesis of these problems, such as the one provided in section 2.6.3, is rarely found in the literature. Future research may explore more deeply the overlap between other-than-treaty options (identified in section 2.7), current treaty problems and the ACM approach.

Without being a completely new contribution, Chapter 3 nevertheless provides an interesting review of ACM literature that clearly spells out three adaptive components and six enabling conditions. A framework that is precise,



comprehensive, and clear is not common. Future research may explore the ‘adaptive infrastructures’ component of ACM further, in order to better understand why adaptive infrastructures may contribute to better adaptive co-management processes.

Chapter 4 (published in the journal *Ecology and Society* in 2007) brought clarity to a concept, TEK, that has often been only partially defined in the literature. It proposes a comprehensive approach to TEK that includes facets that are not often made explicit. Furthermore, it proposes some solutions regarding how to acknowledge the different faces of TEK in resource management. Future research may entail the use of this framework to study the involvement of local and traditional knowledges in different co-management contexts. Also, the understanding of ‘updating’ mechanisms of codes of environmental practices within the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context merits further attention, as it is key in understanding how worldviews (and associated environmental practices) evolve and how different worldviews can cohabit within a co-management arrangement.

The research that led to this thesis was a collaborative project. Although several scholars have been calling for collaborative research to happen between Aboriginals and university scholars, academic contributions reporting on how collaborative research can concretely be undertaken are still rare. Consequently, the list of criteria I provide in section 5.3.4, emerging from a review of Aboriginal and scholarly publications, in addition to my explanation of how the collaborative project I was involved in was developed from these criteria, is a contribution that will help, I hope, future collaborative research to take place. Future work will identify the shortcomings of the collaborative approach I used for this research and will identify how these shortcomings can help to enhance research protocols developed by First Nation organizations, to better graduate student research design, and improve university ethics approval processes.

In this thesis, I argue that an ACM approach, with resilience management at its core, can be used not only to adhere to ecological results, but also to help marginalized communities to reinvigorate their culture, and rebuild their traditions. As identities, cultures, and associated management practices are in redefinition, marginalized Aboriginal populations do not necessarily know now what works ecologically, socially, and culturally. Consequently, they need to try new things to see if they could be acceptable ecologically, socially and culturally. As one workshop participant phrased it, they “need to experiment with what will become (their) traditions”. These types of links between ACM, culture, and marginalization are rather sketchy, if existent, in current ACM literature. I argue that flexibility is needed to allow First Nations to rebuild and redefine their traditional institutions for the purposes of environmental management. Future research may explore the role of traditional guardians of the tradition (such as the *okimaws*) in shaping institutions that are mindful of, and attuned, to local social and cultural characteristics.

It is argued in this thesis that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok should work towards building resilience to maintain ecosystem features that allow them to sustain the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw way of life. To move towards a successful arrangement, from the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw perspective, then, would be to design policies to “enhance the system’s ability to reorganize and move within some configuration of acceptable states” (Walker et al. 2002). What I argue is that those states should be acceptable, not only from an ecological point of view, but also from a social and cultural point of view. The resilience framework was built to deal with ecological uncertainties, with ecology in mind. What I point to here is a need for the identification of ecological thresholds that have cultural importance. Building resilience is essential for cultural reasons. Beyond certain natural resource exploitation thresholds, development thresholds, or pollution thresholds, this capacity to remain *Nitaskinan* disappears, changes are irreversible, and the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw culture, dependent on the land, is potentially threatened. The need for culturally-relevant thresholds has so far not been clearly identified in

ACM literature. Future research will involve developing methods to identify, qualify, and quantify these culturally-relevant thresholds.

My thesis identifies that for a co-management arrangement to be successful from an Atikamekw Nehirowisiw point of view, it is necessary to see traditional knowledge and institutions as something not crystallized in the past, but that could evolve with input from different sources of knowledge. This need for fluidity puts knowledge-building and institution-building at the heart of what is needed for successful co-management arrangements between First Nations and the state. This need is identified in the ACM literature, but an endogenous process of redefinition of traditions has rarely been documented. Furthermore, ACM has not so far been identified as a potential catalyst for the revitalization of Aboriginal cultures. More work, however, would need to be done to identify exactly how this process of tradition rebuilding is happening in the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw context and elsewhere.

This research has shown that the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok want to use their traditional *okimaw* system in a co-management arrangement, but that at the same time, they do not want the *okimaws* to become full-time bureaucrats. This thesis identified the band council as being a relevant organisation to act as a buffer between the non-bureaucratic sphere of the *okimaw* and the bureaucratic sphere of the state government. The need for bridge or buffer organizations have already been identified in ACM literature, but the need for a buffer organization to bridge not only local and other-than-local organizations, but also knowledge-systems and cultures, has not been widely documented before. This proposes a solution to the hunters-and-bureaucrats problem identified, for example, by Nadasdy (2003a). Future research may explore the decision-making link between the non-bureaucratic sphere and buffer organizations.

Finally, my research has documented non-Aboriginal mistrust of TEK and of non-state-like institutions. This points towards a mismatch between what the ACM

literature proposes, which is self-organizing adhocracies, and the reality that traditional institutions and TEK may not be considered as effective and valid as state-like organizations and science by the majority of co-management partners. ACM promotes the idea of self-organizing adhocracies, adapting and re-organizing according to the situation or the environmental problem being dealt with. However, this approach may leave First Nations out of the loop if some safeguards are not included in the process. Co-management structures need to be flexible enough to adapt, but rigid enough to ensure a certain level of participation by the less empowered group; an insurance to participate in the process no matter what. These arguments are not made clear in current ACM literature. What I assert is that over time, with a forced co-habitation of state and Aboriginal decision-makers, the hope and intention is that some goodwill will develop.

### **9.3. CONCLUSION**

Conclusions of my thesis are relevant to other Canadian and international contexts. In this section, I outline how the approach to adaptive co-management as presented in my thesis can connect to the needs for adaptation and experimentation with management approaches, decision-making processes, and institutions beyond *Nitaskinan*.

It is argued in this thesis that a resilience approach can be used to estimate the capacity of ancestral lands to support and absorb certain levels of economic development and other changes, while maintaining ecosystem features that sustain Indigenous ways of life. From this perspective, there is therefore a need to find ways for outsiders wanting to access resources to know more about the local social and cultural contexts in order to allow for the different communities to flourish side-by-side. This need resonates with a growing body of research which argues “that resource management policy must fit social, as well as ecological, circumstances in order to be successful” (Meek et al. 2011:468). In Indigenous contexts, this would include to fitting into “cultural norms, local framings of legitimacy, and contemporary social patterns” (Meek et al. 2011:468).

In Canadian treaty contexts, some attempts are being made at improving the fit between policy frameworks and ecological and local social systems. Such is the case with the *Paix des Braves* framework that was negotiated between the government of Quebec and the Crees of Quebec living in the area affected by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA). The *Paix des Braves*, enacted in 2002, includes provisions to facilitate the development of coherence between the Cree way of life and logging taking place on their ancestral land. This arrangement stems from demands made by the Crees to make the forest regime more accommodating to the local system of family territories (somewhat similar to the one used by the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok) by using traplines as the spatial unit of reference for calculations of harvest volumes in forestry. This system makes it simpler to predict the impact of logging on Cree trappers' activities.

However, it is a system that is somewhat static, as the arrangement stipulates that a fixed maximum of 25 per cent of traplines are to be identified for protection from logging and labelled as "sites of wildlife interests" (Quebec and Crees of Quebec 2002:11). Within this framework, it becomes difficult for Cree people, as for the other actors, to adjust practices to evolving environmental and social conditions. By fixing a maximum in percentage of land to set aside, this approach is meant to protect stable forestry revenues, but leaves little room to maneuver to adapt to the different needs of various family territories, and the changing environmental conditions of space and time.

In that kind of situation, the next step may be to account for the possibility that percentages written into stone may not be suitable for a changing environment. Therefore, an approach closer to that I have exposed in this thesis, with the concept of resilience at its core, could help by working towards the balancing of broader goals of maintaining an evolving traditional way-of-life in an evolving physical environment by letting local community members and government

agents design specific adaptive management techniques (such as the identification of culturally-relevant ecological thresholds) that work locally to fit the broader goal of maintaining a way-of-life while developing a local economy.

More flexible than the Cree example of the *Paix de Braves* is the newly minted Protocol of Reconciliation that is currently being implemented in Haida Gwaii (Haida Nation and British Columbia 2009). This agreement is comprehensive, while not being a treaty. It aims to allow the Haida people to intervene not only at the operational stage of forestry decisions, but also at the level of strategic policy-making. Instead of focusing on percentages, this agreement has focused on consensus building and shared decision-making. It also values ongoing reform of the decision-making process. Indeed, the Protocol states that the “parties will be responsible for the development, implementation, and on-going review of the decision-making framework, and may agree to make changes from time to time” (Haida Nation and British Columbia 2009:12). It further states that the “parties commit to further refine and develop the processes for operational level decision-making on Haida Gwaii”, this being done through the setting up of “Solutions Tables” (Haida and British Columbia 2009:12).

This approach is much closer to what ACM advocates for, while unfolding in a non-treaty context. It would therefore be interesting, for the future of Aboriginal/state relations in Canada to assess how non-treaty collaborative processes are easier to render flexible and how these can alter treaty-making in other contexts in a positive way. By obtaining more flexibility in agreements in the way I have proposed and in the way the Haida are currently doing, it may decrease the chances of Indigenous communities having to resort to litigation in order to adapt a process that does not adequately fit the social context, the way the Crees of Quebec were forced to do in order to modify their treaty (the JBNQA) and to reach the *Paix des Braves*.

The *Haida* Supreme Court decision of 2004, which prompted parties to negotiate the above mentioned Reconciliation Protocol, marked the start of a new way to envisage not yet recognised ancestral rights that are under negotiation in order to become treaty rights (see Chapter 2 on how ancestral rights are transformed into treaty rights). Even though the Haida people did not have treaty rights – for they never signed a treaty with the Crown – it was argued by the Court that the government had an obligation to involve the Haida, as they could lay solid claims concerning Haida Gwaii and its resources. In other words, if the Haida had had to prove that they held rights on Haida Gwaii, they probably would have succeeded.

From this situation stems two needs that now have to be addressed when negotiating collaborative arrangements with Canadian First Nations. First, there is a need to protect rights that are still undefined from environmental management decisions that may have unforeseen consequences on the said undefined rights. Secondly, as the current legal framework push governments to consult with First Nations regarding natural resources projects, there is now a constant pressure put on First Nations to participate in several consultation processes. Therefore, there exists a need, from the point of view of Aboriginal organisations, to build consensus *now*, even if the institutions of governance they would like to see set in place are not well defined yet. This is a tall order if there is locally no previous experience of participation for the types of decisions they are now asked to be involved with.

An ACM approach, as presented in this thesis, can bring about the possibility for Aboriginal groups to adapt their institutions while at the same time participating in current decision-making processes and keeping a door open for further changes in the longer treaty negotiation horizon. An ACM approach could help to frame this transition period of participation before the treaty is fully negotiated and is an ideal period for experimenting with what will become traditions and good practices. This would also serve to build confidence towards a flexible, adaptive

approach that could develop into a permanent approach focussed on learning for best practices, and serve to build trust between partners.

The focus of my thesis was embedded in the Canadian legal context of Aboriginal/state relations, but the concerns about how to improve relations – as well as environmental management – in Canada take place against the backdrop of an international debate on how to both enhance environmental management and human well-being for less wealthy, often Indigenous, communities (e.g. MEA 2005). The principle of involving local populations, those often most impacted by decisions on resource policies and management “is increasingly recognized in some of the most comprehensive efforts (such as the Millennium Ecosystem assessment) to manage integrated social-ecological systems” (Berkes et al. 2007:310).

What my thesis adds to the current academic reflection is that while there is a need to facilitate the reliance on local knowledge, existing social networks, capacity to self-organise, and contextualised management approaches, there is also a need for protecting participation. In the case of Canadian First Nations, this protection of participation is achieved through a treaty or the recognition of existing (or potentially existing in the case of the Haida) Aboriginal rights. However, this possibility of participating should not be protected at the expense of a capacity for learning and adaptation decision-making processes should be invested with. The need for both the protection of the participation of vulnerable communities in shaping their own future, and the protection of a learning and adaptive capacity highlighted in this thesis, is relevant in many contexts where Indigenous groups are pushing to redefine their relation with central states, and are eager to adapt their traditions to rapidly changing social and environmental conditions.

Current adaptive co-management frameworks surely do not represent a panacea to all Indigenous/state negotiations contexts challenges, but what this research has



aimed to show, is that new, more fluid frameworks are needed to meet Indigenous aspirations and to enter into respectful relationships allowing for current and future generations to tackle their own needs and challenges. It is my hope that this research will contribute to making such negotiations processes of mutual understanding and mutual respect.

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## ANNEX 1

### RESEARCH PROTOCOL

#### Nisahitatan kitaskino

### Protocole de recherche (entrevues individuelles)

#### Introduction

Ce protocole de recherche s'applique aux points 6.2 et 6.3 du projet *Nisahitatan kitaskino*, dont il est question à l'annexe 1 du présent document. **Ce protocole dicte la ligne de conduite à adopter par Nicolas Houde dans le cadre de la recherche doctorale qu'il poursuit tout en menant à bien les travaux prévus aux points 6.2 et 6.3 de l'annexe 1.** Nicolas Houde est un étudiant de doctorat à l'Université McGill étudiant les questions de cogestion territoriale.

#### Participation à l'élaboration de la démarche de recherche

Le projet *Nisahitatan kitaskino* est une recherche de type collaboratif pour lequel les questions de recherche ainsi que les méthodes employées pour amasser et analyser les données sont établies conjointement par le CNA et Nicolas Houde. Le CNA et Nicolas Houde s'entendent sur les mandats à donner à celui-ci.

Le projet répondra donc aux questions qui sont cruciales pour le CNA, dans le cadre des négociations territoriales mais répondra également à certaines questions que Nicolas Houde se pose dans le contexte de son doctorat. Il est donc souhaitable que ce projet soit perçu comme un processus d'apprentissage conjoint à l'intérieur duquel les objectifs des parties respectives sont respectés et ce dans le cadre d'une relation éthique d'engagement mutuel. Pour cette raison, Nicolas Houde et le Secrétariat au territoire du CNA collaborent depuis un certain temps au développement de la démarche de recherche du projet *Nisahitatan kitaskino*.

Le fait que ce processus soit collaboratif permettra entre autres de tenir compte dans la recherche actuelle des résultats produits antérieurement par la nation (projet de synthèse documentaire en cours) et ailleurs dans le domaine de l'aménagement du territoire.



### **Modalités relatives à la collecte des données;**

Avant de débiter les entrevues individuelles, le projet sera présenté dans les communautés (aux Conseils de bande et auprès des gardiens de territoire). Une vingtaine d'adultes par communautés, provenant de différentes familles seront approchés pour participer sur une base volontaire au projet. Deux ou trois membres par famille seront sélectionnés au hasard pour participer.

Pour les ateliers de groupe, des représentants d'une dizaine de familles par communauté seront approchés.

### **Engagement et formation de co-chercheurs**

Un(e) interprète sera engagé(e) pour assister dans le déroulement des entrevues, dans la traduction et dans leur transcription.

### **Mécanismes d'information et de suivi durant le déroulement de la recherche**

Nicolas Houde rencontrera de façon périodique l'équipe de négociation Atikamekw ainsi que le Secrétariat au territoire afin de faire état de l'avancement des travaux, pour améliorer la démarche de recherche et pour s'assurer du bon déroulement des activités dans les communautés.

De plus, les membres du Secrétariat au territoire rencontreront périodiquement les Conseils de bande et le Grand Chef pour faire état de l'avancement des travaux. Une stratégie de communication sera élaborée conjointement pour s'assurer que la population soit bien informée des activités.

### **Propriété des résultats**

L'information territoriale spécifique, issue du savoir traditionnel ou généré par des méthodes scientifiques demeurera l'entière propriété de la Nation.

Le rapport final des entrevues, respectant les mécanismes de confidentialité expliqués ci-dessous, deviendra la propriété du CNA.

Les enregistrements et les transcriptions seront gardés par Nicolas Houde, à moins que les participants concernés tiennent spécifiquement à ce que le ruban soit conservé au centre de documentation du CNA.

### **Confidentialité**

Le nom des participants aux entrevues individuelles ne seront jamais divulgués, à moins qu'ils (ou elles) n'en expriment la volonté clairement (voir formulaire en annexe 4). Le CNA n'aura pas accès aux noms. Cependant, les participants qui le

souhaitent pourront faire don de l'enregistrement de l'entrevue au centre de documentation. La transcription des entrevues ne seront accessibles qu'à Nicolas Houde et ne seront jamais rendues publiques dans leur intégralité. Un système de codage sera utilisé pour assurer la confidentialité de l'information découlant des entrevues.

Les participants pourront retirer leur accord de participer à tout moment

Les entrevues seront enregistrées sur ruban audio et transcrites par Nicolas Houde. Les enregistrements seront détruits une fois la transcription terminée, à moins que les participants concernés n'en aient décidé autrement. Les transcriptions seront validées par les participants concernés et seront gardés sous clé par Nicolas Houde. Elles ne seront jamais utilisées par d'autres parties.

### **Consentement**

Le formulaire de consentement à utiliser pour les entrevues individuelles est inclus à l'annexe 4. Il sera rédigé dans un style compréhensible, simple, direct, en français. Si le participant le désire, le formulaire pourra être expliqué et/ou traduit en Atikamekw.

En préparation de chaque entrevue, il sera expliqué aux participant(e)s les tenants et les aboutissants du projet. Il sera également mentionné où trouver une copie imprimée du projet et les coordonnées de personnes-ressources à contacter en cas de plainte quant au déroulement de la recherche.

Il sera clairement expliqué qu'il est possible de retirer son accord à tout moment, d'exiger que le nom apparaisse en référence ou sur une liste d'informateurs et d'exiger que le ruban audio soit mis à la disposition de tout le monde via le centre de documentation du CNA.

### **Validation des données**

Une fois la transcription de l'entrevue terminée, le participant(e) pourra la valider. Des précisions quant au contenu de l'entrevue pourront également être apportées à ce moment-là.

### **Accès aux produits de la recherche**

Les rapports et les résultats de la recherche, leurs résumés, leurs synthèses et les articles potentiels seront mis à l'entière disposition du CNA dans la langue de son choix.

## **Responsables de la recherche**

Le Secrétariat au territoire fera le suivi du projet.

Nicolas Houde est responsable du bon déroulement des entrevues, du maintien de la confidentialité et de la juste représentation des résultats.

## **Publication des résultats**

Étant soucieux de la confidentialité de la stratégie de négociation du CNA, aucun élément de type stratégique ne pourra être utilisé dans d'autres publications que le rapport-synthèse des entrevues remis au CNA. Le rapport-synthèse demeurera la propriété complète du CNA.

L'information de nature non-stratégique (historique, technique, méthodologique) et l'analyse découlant des entrevues pourront être utilisées par Nicolas Houde dans le cadre de sa recherche doctorale, en autant que cette utilisation se fasse sans préjudice au processus de négociation en cours. L'étendue de ce qui est préjudiciable sera discutée avec les membres du CNA.

Les résultats de recherche seront présentés aux Atikamekw en premier. Les Atikamekw pourront assister dans l'interprétation de ces résultats.

De plus, le CNA disposera d'un délai raisonnable pour répondre, ajouter, ou montrer un point de vue divergeant quant au matériel destiné à être publié. Tout(e) participant(e), ou le CNA peut se dissocier de l'interprétation des données et des résultats d'une recherche l'impliquant. Si aucun point de vue commun ne peut être atteint, le CNA ou les participants aux entrevues pourraient souhaiter que dans le rapport même, les divergences de points de vue soient rapportées.

Les Atikamekw seront tenus au courant et invités à participer à des présentations en lien avec le projet. Les Atikamekw pourront également – de leur propre initiative – présenter les résultats du projet.

## **Compensations**

Les participants aux entrevues individuelles ne recevront pas de compensation. Par contre, les participants aux ateliers (étapes suivant les entrevues individuelles) seront rémunérés selon la politique interne du CNA.

## **Accès aux documents de recherche**

Les participants seront informés que des copies de la démarche du projet *Nisahitatan kitaskino* seront disponibles sur demande et également pour consultation au Secrétariat au territoire, au centre de documentation du CNA et aux locaux des Conseils de bande.

Aux mêmes endroits, les gens auront accès à la politique d'éthique de l'université McGill, qui encadre le travail académique de Nicolas Houde, ainsi que les coordonnées des personnes à joindre au CNA et de Lynda McNeil (directrice du bureau d'éthique de McGill) pour rapporter des plaintes au niveau du déroulement de la recherche.

# **Nisahitatan kitaskino**

## **« Participation aux décisions »**

### **1. Buts du projet**

- Renforcer et développer la capacité des institutions atikamekw à gérer le territoire
- Offrir à Atikamekw nehirowisiwok une information solide afin d'assurer son épanouissement à travers le développement de son otaski, sans changer l'essence de ses valeurs et de son identité
- Améliorer la gestion des ressources, notamment de la forêt

### **2. Objet**

Résoudre les enjeux territoriaux de la négociation sur les revendications globales par une démarche participative qui produira une information primordiale à l'aide d'outils appropriés et par l'établissement d'un consensus sur les objectifs stratégiques nécessaires à la réforme de la politique territoriale.

### **3. Contexte**

Ce projet s'inscrit dans la vision d'avenir de la Nation, soit d'assurer une protection du territoire selon nos valeurs et selon l'enseignement de nos aînés de façon à préserver le territoire, la culture et la langue Atikamekw. Il demeure dans la ligne définie à l'amorce des négociations territoriales, soit d'assumer pleinement notre autonomie sur notre territoire ancestral, Nitaskinan.

À l'heure où le gouvernement québécois est engagé dans de grands projets qui risquent de changer profondément le territoire ancestral Atikamekw – nous n'avons qu'à penser à la révision du plan d'affectation des terres publiques et à la mise en place d'un réseau d'aires protégées – notre Nation peine à suivre le rythme des multiples consultations publiques où sa voix demeure marginalisée dans le concert des groupes d'intérêt partisans. À l'heure actuelle, les Atikamekw ne sont appelés à participer à la prise de décision relative au territoire que par le biais de consultations publiques. Or, un des objectifs Atikamekw de la négociation sur les revendications globales étant une participation active à la prise de décision de l'étape de la planification stratégique à l'étape de la mise en œuvre de projets, de nouveaux cadres de planification doivent être élaborés. C'est donc dans cette perspective de développer un cadre de planification territoriale permettant à la Nation de réellement aménager et développer le territoire selon notre vision propre et en respect de nos droits ancestraux que la négociation sur les revendications globales suit toujours son cours.

## **4. Problématique**

Les processus de consultation existant pour la planification et l'aménagement du territoire ne sont pas satisfaisant pour la Nation Atikamekw. Ils ne permettent pas de rendre justice à la vision, aux valeurs et aux besoins des Atikamekw. Le défi est donc pour nous de construire un consensus de planification territoriale nous permettant de nous épanouir culturellement, socialement, économiquement et dans un environnement en santé. Ce consensus de planification territoriale doit se créer à travers la population Atikamekw mais également à l'intérieur d'un processus conjoint Atikamekw-Québec-Canada de participation réelle à la planification stratégique du territoire et à sa gestion.

L'IPN 2008-09 donnera à la Nation Atikamekw les moyens pour consolider la vision Atikamekw de la protection et du développement du territoire, les moyens pour consolider ses institutions et les moyens pour affirmer sa vision du territoire dans un processus de planification et de prise de décisions protégé par traité.

## **5. Solutions**

Le projet ici présenté comblera certaines lacunes actuelles de planification territoriale et de participation active aux décisions en développant un plan stratégique du Nitaskinan qui articulera la vision atikamekw du développement du Nitaskinan, qui orientera ce développement et qui donnera les lignes directrices des chapitres de négociation territoriale reliés à la planification territoriale et à la protection de l'environnement.

L'approche globale de travail favorise la participation active et la consultation constante des membres des communautés. De ce fait, le travail s'effectue par le dialogue et l'échange entre les membres du Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw (incluant les négociateurs), les leaders des communautés, la population Atikamekw et les professionnels-experts consultés au besoin.

### *Données*

La collecte d'information se fera par le biais d'entrevues individuelles et d'ateliers de travail auprès des membres des communautés et de collecte d'information numérique à référence spatiale (cartes, images satellite, etc.). Les entrevues individuelles et les ateliers de travail serviront à définir les paramètres du bilan de santé territorial et le contenu de l'atlas territorial. Ce portrait du territoire s'effectuera donc en tenant en compte autant du savoir traditionnel des Atikamekw que du savoir et des outils (e.g. cartes) scientifiques. Les entrevues et les ateliers serviront également à définir comment les gens entrevoient l'avenir pour le territoire. Cette vision d'avenir est essentielle à la réalisation d'un plan stratégique. Cela permettra d'établir le type de gestion territoriale appropriée et

d'identifier les priorités en aménagement territorial et en protection de l'environnement.

### *Analyse*

L'analyse de l'information ainsi recueillie donnera un portrait de la santé Nitaskinan, un atlas des Nitaski et des modèles plausibles de participation aux décisions. Cette analyse débouchera vers l'énoncé de la vision d'avenir que les Atikamekw entretiennent.

### *Synthèse*

La synthèse de l'analyse de ces données prendra la forme d'un plan d'affectation du Nitaskinan, d'un atlas du développement territorial à l'échelle des Nitaski, d'un plan stratégique du Nitaskinan et de la solidification du cadre de participation Atikamekw aux décisions négocié à la table centrale de négociation (chapitres « Participation aux décisions », « Évaluation environnementale », « Foresterie », « Activités traditionnelles », etc.).

Afin de faciliter la communication et la compréhension commune des objectifs du projet, des réunions de suivi périodique seront organisées avec leaders des communautés. De plus, il y aura des rencontres d'information dans les communautés et une partie significative du travail se fera en comité.

## **6. Démarche du projet**

### ***6.1. Adhésion au projet «Participation aux décisions »***

But : S'assurer du soutien et de la compréhension de la population des communautés

Activités :

- 6.2a Présentation au C.A. du CNA  
- Requête d'appui du C.A.
- 6.2b Identification et définition des mandats à accorder; identification et embauche du personnel travaillant spécifiquement pour le projet
- 6.2c Présenter le projet aux Conseils de bande
- 6.2d Présenter le projet d'entrevues et d'atlas aux gardiens de territoire
  - Préparer les ateliers
  - Rencontrer les représentants de 10 familles par communautés (3X 10 familles = 3 réunions)

### **6.3. Entrevues individuelles**

But : Identifier ce que veut dire cogestion pour les Atikamekw et savoir comment les Atikamekw

voient le développement de leurs territoires familiaux

Activités :

- 6.3a Planification des entrevues et du questionnaire
  - Établir des objectifs à atteindre par les entrevues
  - Réviser le questionnaire et le formulaire de consentement (annexes 3 et 4)
  - Test du questionnaire (annexe 3)
  - Échantillonnage
- 6.3b Entrevues individuelles (rencontrer les familles une par une)
  - Utiliser le questionnaire et le formulaire de consentement (annexes 3 et 4)
  - Demander ce que les gens veulent comme atlas territorial et comment rendre l’atlas utile dans une perspective de prendre en charge la planification du développement des territoires familiaux
  - Identifier les critères Atikamekw de succès en cogestion
  - Identifier la manière dont les Atikamekw voient leur vision du monde et le savoir Atikamekw faire partie de la cogestion
  - Identifier les obstacles et les solutions dans l’élaboration d’une entente de cogestion, tels que perçus par les Atikamekw
  - Aller à Opitciwan (3 semaines)
  - Aller à Wemotaci (3 semaines)
  - Aller à Manawan (3 semaines)
  - Aller ailleurs?
- 6.3c Transcription des entrevues
  - Transcription manuscrites
  - Traduction/validation linguistique
  - Validation avec participants aux entrevues
- 6.3d Rapport des entrevues
  - Analyse de contenu des entrevues
  - Liste des éléments requis pour l’atlas des nitaski
  - Ébauche de portrait territorial de référence



## **7. Résultats**

Le projet permettra ultimement de mettre en place des « mesures immédiates de co-planification territoriale », une stratégie des aires protégées adaptée à la réalité Atikamekw et la protection des sites patrimoniaux.

## ANNEX 2

### APPROVAL BY ATIKAMEKW NATION COUNCIL



#### CONSEIL DE LA NATION ATIKAMEKW

##### BUREAU DU GRAND-CHEF

290, rue St-Joseph, C.P. 848

La Tuque (Québec) G9X 3P6

La Tuque, le 26 juin 2008

M. Nicolas Houde,  
3581 boul. Gouin Est #1411  
Montréal, Québec  
H1H 0A1

#### Objet : Projet de recherche « Participation aux décisions »

Monsieur,

La présente est pour vous faire part du soutien du Grand-Chef de la Nation Atikamekw au projet de recherche intitulé « *Participation aux décisions* » selon les modalités établies par le document intitulé *Nisahisatan kitaskino : Participation aux décisions* (voir pièce jointe 1).

Les entrevues individuelles seront dirigées par Nicolas Houde et un(e) co-chercheur(e) à identifier par le CNA. Ces entrevues se dérouleront selon le protocole de recherche établi en collaboration par le CNA et M. Houde (voir pièce jointe 2). Le questionnaire et le formulaire de consentement à utiliser sont joints à cette lettre et pourront faire l'objet de révisions par le Secrétariat au territoire.

La propriété des données et des résultats est établie par le protocole de recherche

Tel qu'indiqué dans le protocole de recherche et dans le formulaire de consentement, les participants à la recherche pourront contacter le Secrétariat au territoire ou le bureau du Grand-Chef concernant toute question concernant la recherche ou pour soulever une plainte quant à son déroulement.

En espérant le tout conforme, je vous prie d'accepter l'expression de mes meilleurs sentiments.

Grand Chef / Présidente

Eva Ottawa

p.j. (1)

Siège social

Wemotaci (Québec) G0X 3R0

Tél.: (819) 523-6153 — Téléc.: (819) 676-3293

## ANNEX 3

### RESEARCH CERTIFICATE (McGILL)



**Research Ethics Board Office**  
McGill University  
845 Sherbrooke Street West  
James Administration Bldg., rm 429  
Montreal, QC H3A 2T5

Tel: (514) 398-6831  
Fax: (514) 398-4853  
Ethics website: [www.mcgill.ca/rgo/ethics/human](http://www.mcgill.ca/rgo/ethics/human)

#### Research Ethics Board I Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 11-0605

**Project Title:** Vers la congestion du territoire: concilier les méthodologies de la gestion adaptative et les savoirs autochtones

**Applicant's Name:** Nicolas Houde **Department:** Geography

**Status:** Ph.D. student **Supervisor:** Prof. G. Peterson

**Granting Agency and Title (if applicable):** FQRSC doctoral award

This project was reviewed on June 17, 2005 by

Expedited Review ☒  
Full Review ☐

John Galaty, Ph.D.  
Chair, REB I

**Approval Period:** Aug 1, 2005 to July 31, 2006

This project was reviewed and approved in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects and with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects

\*All research involving human subjects requires review on an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted at least one month before the above expiry date.

\*If a project has been completed or terminated and ethics approval is no longer required, a Final Report form must be submitted.

\*Should any modification or other unanticipated development occur before the next required review, the REB must be informed and any modification can't be initiated until approval is received.

cc: Prof. G. Peterson

## **ANNEX 4**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- 1- Quel genre d'activité pratiquez-vous en territoire? À quel(s) moment(s) de l'année allez-vous sur votre territoire familial? Allez-vous seulement sur votre territoire familial ou fréquentez-vous d'autres endroits?
- 2- Comment voyez-vous l'avenir de votre territoire familial? Quel genre d'activités voudriez-vous que vos petits-enfants soient en mesure de pratiquer quand ils seront en âge de prendre la responsabilité du territoire?
- 3- Dans quel état aimeriez-vous que votre territoire soit quand vos petit-enfants ils seront en âge de prendre la responsabilité du territoire? Dans quel état craignez-vous qu'il soit quand vos petite-enfants seront en âge de prendre la responsabilité du territoire?
- 4- Croyez-vous que l'utilisation des ressources s'en va aujourd'hui dans la bonne direction? C'est quoi, la bonne direction? Quels seraient les moyens à prendre pour aller dans cette direction?
- 5- Qui d'autre utilise votre territoire? Est-ce que cette utilisation change la façon dont vous pratiquez vos propres activités?
- 6- Est-ce que vous avez votre mot à dire dans la façon dont sont prises les décisions concernant l'utilisation (par les utilisateurs autre que vous) de votre territoire? Si oui, comment cela se passe-t-il?
- 7- Est-ce que cette façon de faire (de prendre les décisions) pourrait et devrait être différente? Comment?
- 8- On entend souvent dire que les Atikamekw ont une responsabilité envers le territoire. Comment décririez-vous le rôle Atikamekw de responsabilité envers le territoire? Comment voyez-vous ce rôle évoluer dans l'avenir? Comment décririez-vous le rôle des gardiens de territoire?
- 9- Quel rôle êtes-vous prêt à jouer pour l'avenir du territoire?
- 10- Quel rôle voyez-vous pour les familles? Pour la communauté? Pour la Nation?
- 11- On entend souvent dire que le savoir traditionnel Atikamekw devrait être pris en compte dans la gestion et l'utilisation du territoire. Comment est-ce que ça pourrait être fait?
- 12- Quelles sont les forces de la Nation pouvant être mobilisées pour mettre en place un meilleur avenir pour le territoire? Quelles habiletés ou connaissances pourraient être développées au sein de la Nation?

## ANNEX 5

### WRITTEN CONSENT

#### Formulaire de consentement

**Titre du projet de recherche (sujet à changement):**

"Vers la cogestion du territoire: concilier les méthodologies de la gestion adaptative et les savoirs autochtones"

**Chercheur:** Nicolas Houde, candidat au doctorat en géographie (613) 767-2964

**Directeur:** Garry Peterson, département de géographie, U. McGill (514) 398-6072

**Date :** \_\_\_\_\_

Afin de compléter l'information nécessaire à la réalisation de ma recherche doctorale, j'aimerais pouvoir utiliser certains des renseignements que vous pourriez me fournir au cours de l'entrevue. Toutefois, dans la mesure où mes publications pourraient refléter votre contribution en exposant certaines de vos idées ou en relatant certaines de vos expériences, votre consentement écrit est nécessaire. Ma recherche, faite en collaboration avec le Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw, porte sur les approches de cogestion territoriale qu'il serait possible de développer dans le cadre du traité actuellement négocié. Un entretien avec vous me permettrait de faire un portrait plus riche de la situation en rapport avec la situation Atikamekw actuelle en territoire et sur le futur que la Nation entrevoit. Une description plus exhaustive de mon projet de recherche est disponible sur demande et auprès du Secrétariat au territoire du CNA.

Si vous désirez participer à l'entrevue, il est nécessaire que vous me précisiez si vous voulez être cité ou si vous désirez garder l'anonymat. Soyez assuré que je respecterai votre choix sans aucune condition. Vous avez à tout moment le droit de mettre fin à l'entrevue, de retirer votre consentement ou de demander à ce que toute référence à votre participation soit retirée de tout document écrit que je rédigerai dans le cadre de cette recherche.

L'entrevue sera enregistrée sur ruban audio. Le ruban et la transcription sur papier seront conservés dans un classeur verrouillé en tout temps. Seul le chercheur (Nicolas Houde) aura accès à la liste de nom des participants, aux rubans, ainsi qu'aux transcriptions des entrevues. Un système de codage sera utilisé afin que l'anonymat soit conservé dans les documents publiés et qui utiliseront l'information de cette entrevue.

Je vous remercie de votre collaboration ainsi que de tout commentaire, idée ou critique que vous pourriez apporter au sujet de mon travail. Je vous invite à communiquer avec moi à tout moment pour discuter du projet de recherche. Vous pouvez également communiquer avec le CNA, au (819) 523-6153, ou au comité d'éthique de l'université McGill, au (514) 398-6831, pour toute plainte concernant le déroulement de la recherche.

Nicolas Houde

S.V.P. cochez l'une des options suivantes :

☐ Référence complète : J'autorise Nicolas Houde à utiliser, dans le cadre de sa recherche de doctorat, toute information, idée ou critique que je formulerai au cours de l'entrevue à condition que mon nom soit mentionné dans les publications.

☐ Anonymat : J'autorise Nicolas Houde à utiliser, dans le cadre de sa recherche de doctorat, toute information, idée ou critique que je formulerai au cours de l'entrevue à condition l'anonymat soit conservé dans les publications.

Nom : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_