Cree Agency and Environment: Rethinking Human Development in the Cree
Nation of Wemindji

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Abstract

As indigenous peoples strive to navigate development in a way that enhances their agency, advocates of human development and the capabilities approach have increasingly sought to support this objective. To this end, the work of Amartya Sen, a chief advocate of human development, has been influential. While Sen's contribution to development economics through the capabilities approach cannot be underestimated, his understandings of agency in development have been criticized as too limited, failing to significantly integrate group agency and the environment. This thesis examines understandings of agency in the East James Bay Cree community of Wemindji, and compares and contrasts these with that of Amarta Sen, in seeking to reveal where these two perspectives both align and fail to align. Wemindji Cree approaches to development generally, and a prospective gold mine in particular, reveals a perception of agency that challenges the aforementioned limitations of Sen's work. These challenges demonstrate a need to reconsider and expand considerations of agency in human development approaches if these are to help understand and realize Wemindji Cree agency.

Résumé

Alors même que les populations autochtones aspirent à une forme de développement qui puisse favoriser leur capacité à agir et à décider de manière autonome, les tenants de l'approche de la capabilité et du développement humain cherchent aussi à favoriser cet objectif. L'œuvre d'Amartya Sen, un important partisan du développement humain, fut très influente à cet égard. Bien que la contribution de Sen à l'économie du développement par le biais de l'approche de la capabilité soit substantielle, sa compréhension de l'agir humain dans le contexte du développement est critiquée comme étant trop limitée, en ce quelle néglige d'intégrer de manière importante l'apport de l'environnement et de l'agir collectif. La présente thèse évalue différentes conceptions de l'agir humain dans le contexte de la communauté crie de Wemindji, sur la rive est de la baie James, et les met en relief avec celle articulée par Amartya Sen. L'objectif est de déterminer les points de contact et de divergence entre ces deux approches. L'approche des Cris de Wemindji à l'égard du développement en général, et d'une éventuelle mine d'or en particulier, révèle une conception de l'agir humain qui met en question les limites dont nous avons déjà fait état dans l'œuvre de Sen. Ces défis

soulignent la nécessité de reconsidérer et de décloisonner nos conceptualisations de l'agir dans le contexte d'un développement humain, un effort qui ne saurait être évité si nous aspirons véritablement à comprendre et actualiser l'autonomie des Cris de Wemindji.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Indigenous experiences of development are as textured and varied as the definitions of development itself. However, a common thread in these experiences has been resistance to a process perceived as embodying extraneous objectives, unable to address the values and promote the agency of indigenous communities (Esteva, 1994; Blaser, 2004; Gow, 2008). From its inception, the development agenda has been dominated by liberal models (Keynesianism and neoliberalism) that emphasize growth and accumulation as objectives of development (Simon, 1997; Andreasson, 2005). This agenda historically tended to submerge indigenous knowledges and goals under narrowly defined objectives related to industrialization, urbanization, material production, and the adoption of modern education and cultural values (Esteva, 1992; Escobar, 1995). Both indigenous and non-indigenous critics have observed that instead of facilitating the achievement of their life projects, these liberal development models jeopardized them while undermining the autonomy and integrity of indigenous communities and ways of life (Esteva, 1992; Shrestha 1997; Coon Come 2004; Dahl and Megerssa, 2006; Gow, 2008).

Recent work on development theory and practice, particularly in human development, has responded to these critiques by seeking to make development more responsive to and supportive of indigenous objectives (Kanstrup-Jensen, 2003; Human Development and Capabilities Association 2009). Most notably Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, a human development approach, has emerged as a viable alternative framework for development with broad applicability across issues and cultural contexts. Based on the

idea that development "should be defined in relation to what human beings can and should be and do" (Crocker, 1992: 586), the capabilities approach conceptualizes development as the expansion of human freedom through the realization of human capabilities (Sen, 1999). Lauded as an improvement on its mainstream predecessor and its means of *measuring* development (Sanchez, 2000; Sen, 2000), the capabilities approach as Sen describes it is critiqued as having a limited conception of agency (Gasper, 2002), one that is insufficiently attentive to the environments and relationships that shape agency and by extension impact capabilities. As a result, the capabilities approach is considered by some as not giving enough consideration to relational or collective aspects of agency and capabilities. These critiques are particularly relevant in the context of indigenous peoples as they dovetail with common indigenous concerns regarding the maintenance of traditional values in development, values that are based on community health and cohesion where community often includes both human and other-than-human beings.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

This aim of this thesis is *to examine how Wemindji Cree[1] approaches to development dialogue with the capabilities approach, with particular attention to the concept of agency, and what this dialogue reveals regarding the application of this approach in a Cree context.* The realization of this dialogue will elaborate on Cree perspectives on development and agency in Cree society, and in turn leads to constructive reflection regarding the potential for the capabilities approach, and Sen's version in particular, to

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[1] Hereafter all references to Cree refer to Wemindji Cree unless specified otherwise

describe and enable Cree approaches to development. I focus on one particular project, a proposed gold mine, and study the various perspectives and approaches that the people of Wemindji have with regard to this project in order to build my argument.

The aim of this research divides into two objectives, which in turn divide into several research questions. The first objective is *to examine how Cree perceive development in Eeyou Istchee and how this perception translates into Cree approaches to development*. This objective breaks down into three research questions:

> 1) How do Cree define and/or reflect upon the term development?
> 2) How do Cree describe their objectives and agency with regard to development?
> 3) How are Cree approaches to development expressed in relation to the proposed gold mine project?

The second research objective strives *to compare and contrast Cree understandings of agency as evidenced through Cree approaches to development with those of the capabilities approach, with particular reference to the relational aspects of agency embedded in structures of living together*. Thus the second objective engages the results of the first objective in a constructive dialogue with the capabilities approach and reflects on the results. This objective breaks down into two research questions:

> 1) How well can the capabilities approach encompass Cree agency and structures of living together, with particular attention to environmental and collective components of Cree society?
> 2) How do Cree approaches to development anchored in structures of living together dialogue with the agency concept at the heart of the capabilities approach to development?

In sum, this thesis explores Wemindji Cree approaches to development through an account of the Cree agency and structures of living together that undergird those approaches. I discuss the historical and cultural roots of Cree objectives in relation to

development, with attention to the degree to which these objectives include relation and collective elements, and involve other-than-human beings. I briefly explore how these objectives manifest themselves in relation to a potential gold mining project being considered by the community. Cree approaches to development rely on understandings of agency and community that are not fully addressed by the capabilities approach. Learning from Cree agency and structures of living together, and how these compare with popular approaches such as the capabilities approach, helps to clarify whether, how and to what extent Cree objectives in development benefit from the interpretation of popular development approaches..

This research expands the literature on capabilities and agency in human development while integrating aspects of indigenous approaches to development. The results of this research suggest that encompassing Aboriginal agency and the related objectives with regard to development could require adjustment and expansion of the capabilities approach if it is to apply in Cree contexts – indeed, some of these findings may be more broadly relevant to other indigenous communities and other development approaches. In addition, discussing Cree agency with regard to development invites deeper reflection on how best to promote indigenous agency through, or in relation to, development processes.

1.2 Key Terms and Concepts

Before going further, it is useful to define and discuss key terms that are at the centre of this research. In this section I explain the uses of development, agency and capabilities, and structures of living together in this research.

Development is a term that has become increasingly vague and difficult to define even within the West, due in part to the range of schools of development: " 'economic development', 'modernization', 'distribution with growth', 'dependent development', 'interdependent development' ", etc. (Simon, 1997: 184). When these difficulties are compounded by the variety of cultures and languages in which a term like development must be translated, defining the term becomes a futile exercise. As Dahl and Megerssa (2006) point out, it is unclear what changes and processes qualify as development, so rather than attempt to define what does and does not qualify, I concern myself with how the term development is discussed in different communities. Similar to Nadasdy's (2002) exploration of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal meanings of property, I am less interested in defining development than I am in examining how the term development is used and understood differently in various contexts, and reflecting on the significance of these differences.

This thesis revolves around the understandings of agency and structures of living together in Cree perspectives on development, and comparing these understandings with the capabilities approach. In this latter approach, capabilities can be understood as potential 'achievements' and 'outcomes' which a person has reason to value and freedom to attain (Biggeri et. Al., 2006: 63). Capabilities are rooted in agency, with agency being defined as "the capability, or power to be the originator of acts" (Cleaver, 2007: 226). Agency is "commonly conceptualized as relational; it does not exist in a vacuum but is exercised in a social world in which structure shapes the opportunities and resources available to individuals, in which appropriate ways of being and behaving are not simply a matter of

individual choice" (Cleaver, 2007: 226). The full implications of the relational nature of agency for capabilities have yet to be acknowledged and integrated, as a move from a focus on individual capabilities to also considering group and environmental capabilities is underway. The decades of ethnological writings on Eastern James Cree, and the development approaches that the Cree use, provides a context in which the implications of interrelated agency for capabilities and development might be further studied and understood.

Structures of living together are "structures which belong to a particular historical community, which provide the conditions for individual lives to flourish, and which are irreducible to interpersonal relations and yet bound up with these" (Deneulin, 2008: 111 – citing Ricoeur, 1992). Ricoeur describes these structures as comprising institutions, characterized by "the bond of common mores and not that of constraining rules" (Ricoeur, 1992?). In Wemindji, the Cree cultural ecology and knowledge that inform both hunting practices and decision-making with regard to development involves traditional structures of living together[2]. These structures emerge from the Cree emphasis on community autonomy and integrity, on maintaining traditional values while embracing change, can be understood as efforts to bolster structures of living together which enable individual and collective objectives. Structures such as the traditional institutions which advocate respectful and reciprocal relationships are significant beyond the lives of

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[2] I understand tradition as referring to "cultural continuity transmitted in the form of social attitudes, beliefs, principles and conventions of behaviour and practice derived from historical experience. It is cumulative and open to change" (Berkes, 1999: 5)

individuals. This is because the existence of these institutions helps define a community which seeks to enable individual and collective agency and achievement.

Cree structures of living together are relevant to understandings of agency in a Cree context, which in turn invites deeper reflection on the appropriateness of capabilities and impacts of development in this context. The next section gives a brief description of the research context in the Eastern James Bay Cree community of Wemindji.

1.3 Field Site: Eastern James Bay Cree community of Wemindji

The James Bay territory, known to the Cree as Iyiyuuschii, or Cree land, is located in the northern part of the province of Quebec, Canada, between the 48th and 55th parallels, and 70° and 79° west. The entire territory is approximately 215 000 square miles in size (Niezen, 1998: 71. Citing Development Act) and has a subarctic climate characterized by long harsh winters and short summers (Niezen, 1998). The boreal forest of mainly black spruce, jack pine and tamarack is interspersed with marshes, lakes, streams and rivers, several of which are large and powerful enough to support major hydroelectric projects. Home to large populations of birds, fish and mammals (Whiteman and Cooper, 2002), this landscape characterized by extreme seasons has been the setting of Cree life for more than five thousand years (Morantz, 2002). There are nine Cree communities in the territory, four are inland and five – including Wemindji – are on the James Bay coast.

In the past 40 years, the Eastern James Bay Cree have frequently found themselves in the public eye, as their story is tied to issues of energy generation and indigenous rights as

well as cross-border environmental concerns. Traditionally a hunter-gatherer people with nomadic lifestyles, as much as 90% of the Cree population still spent a majority of their time on the land as of the 1940's (LaRusic et. Al. 1979: 130). However, the decline of the fur trade, government intervention, and since the 1970's the construction of hydroelectric complexes on Cree land have led to a climate of rapid social, cultural, political, economical and also ecological change (Niezen, 1993; Diamond, 2002; Coon Come, 2004) . In the 1970's, less than 50% of Cree spent more than 3 months a year in the bush (LaRusic et. Al., 1979: 130). At the same time, large scale hydroelectric development projects initiated by Hydro-Quebec in the 1970's and afterwards drastically affected the hydrology of the region through the diversion of rivers and the creation of large reservoirs. Protracted struggles with Southern proponents of development projects, particularly Hydro-Quebec, have earned the Cree a reputation for being shrewd politicians as well as vocal defenders of their rights to land. These struggles led to agreements with federal and provincial governments that involve significant constraints and compromises, though also accord to the Cree a substantial degree of autonomy (Scott, 2001).

In the context of this autonomy, and its limitations, the Cree face the ongoing challenge of defining their objectives for their communities and region. In retaining strong ties to the land while navigating rapid social and ecological change, the Cree face the inevitable task of defining, using, and referring to the term development in a way that is loyal to their values and beliefs (Scott, 2001). With this, they face the associated challenge of describing their own perspectives and objectives for their land in a "universe of meaning

based on fundamentally different assumptions" (Nadasdy, 2002: 254), a universe inhabited by Southern governments, firms, academics and public who mainly generate the development discourse. The ways in which the Eastern James Bay Cree respond to these challenges is informative in understanding Cree approaches to development.

The Cree associated with the Old Factory Hudson Bay Trading Post established the community of Wemindji in 1959, halfway up the Eastern James Bay Coast and slightly inland along the Maquatua river, and roughly 65 kilometers away from the Old Factory site. The community is located approximately 1200 kilometers north west of Montreal, and is accessible via permanent road since 1995, as well as via air travel. Wemindji's population is just under 1300 hundred people of which a quarter "still live year-round in the bush, while others go to their families' traplines on weekends or when they have free time" (Cree Nation of Wemindji a, 2009).

Traditional activities still remain very much a part of life in Wemindji through goose hunts, walking out ceremonies, canoe expeditions and respect for elders whose knowledge of the land and the stories attached to it are an important element of Cree culture, and who are considered to be the foundation of Cree society (Cree Nation of Wemindji a, 2009). Wemindji's Mission and Vision statement describes the members of the community as "children of the Creator, and we respect this relationship, and the duties it places upon us to maintain harmonious, happy and healthy relations among ourselves, with other people, and with all living things" (Cree Nation of Wemindji b, 2009).

Wemindji's economic development is largely driven by the Tawich Development Corporation, an umbrella organization aiming to increase self-sufficiency and quality of life within the community. To this end, Tawich is linked to local businesses, ground transportation companies (KEPA transport), aerial travel companies (Air Wemindji and Whapchiwem Helicopters), and a wholesale petroleum company (Bessum), and seeks to provide local entrepreneurs with the opportunity to realize their objectives (Cree Nation of Wemindji b, 2009). The major initiatives in regard to long term economic development include mainly tourism and ecotourism, and mining. Wemindji has been in negotiations with Goldcorp Inc. regarding the extraction of a substantial quantity of gold on the Éleanore claim, near the easternmost tip of Wemindji's territory. In addition, a recent find of rare and sought-after purple diamonds on Wemindji's territory by Metalex Ventures Ld. (in conjuction with Dianor Resources and – significantly – Wemindji Explorations Inc.) suggests that mining exploration pressure on the territory will likely increase in the future.

Wemindji has also partnered with a multidisciplinary team of Southern academics to create the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau Protected Area Project. The project seeks to establish a protected area in the Old Factory watershed, a relatively pristine watershed in a region which, due to hydroelectric projects, has seen several hunting territories affected and damaged, if not simply flooded, due to hydroelectric projects. The Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau project seeks to "develop a regime of protection that builds on existing Cree institutions for environmental stewardship, and on Cree practices of

indigenous ecological knowledge" (Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau – About Us, 2009). With the protected area, as with economic development projects, the emphasis remains on how to further community values in balancing its varied objectives (Cree Nation of Wemindji c, 2009).

1.4 Thesis Outline

Chapter two provides an in depth discussion of the conceptual framework of this research and how elements of that framework relate to the Eastern James Bay Cree context. Chapter three describes research methodology and the data gathering process. Chapter four presents the results of my fieldwork in Wemindji, detailing Cree descriptions and definitions of development as well as some of their cultural and historical roots of these perceptions. Chapter four also discusses diverse Cree perspectives regarding a potential mining project currently being considered on Wemindji territory, and from these perspectives I describe certain Cree objectives in and approaches to development and agency. In chapter five I compare and contrast Sen's capabilities approach description of agency with accounts of agency derived from Cree cultural ecology and knowledge and approaches to development, arguing that the former is not fully appropriate to Wemindji's situation. Chapter five also elaborates on structures of living together and their role in Cree agency and approaches to development, and describe the limitations of Sen's conception of agency in grasping these structures. The sixth chapter offers some concluding remarks on agency and structures of living together in the Wemindji Cree context, and reiterates why this research give reason to question the extent to which the capabilities approach conception of agency may apply to the Wemindji Cree context and

– to the degree that Cree are representative of indigenous peoples – in indigenous contexts more broadly as well.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Frameworks

This research project falls at the intersection of human ecology and the anthropology of development. Human ecology is an inherently interdisciplinary domain of study, drawing on both geography and anthropology in seeking to understand the interrelationships between people and their environments (Butzer, 1989). Central to this field is the notion of change and the processes linking cultures to their environments (Heider, 1972), thus enabling this field to cope with the dynamic dimensions of interrelationship and adaptation. The anthropology of development draws attention to dimensions of the development process that are not addressed by other disciplines, seeking to incorporate local and indigenous perspectives and focus on mechanisms of empowerment (Grillo, 1997). This task requires combinations and integration of different domains such as culture, economy, power, discourse, institutions and history (Edelman and Haugerud, 2005), truly hybrid approaches that can integrate and synthesize the multiple dimensions of development. In the overlap between these two fields, this study seeks to compare and contrast Cree perceptions of agency and development with the capabilities approach. This comparison will serve to highlight those differences most relevant to the applicability of the capabilities approach to Cree contexts, and the ability of the capabilities approach to express Cree concerns with regard to development.

The conceptual framework for this research draws from development studies, the capabilities approach, indigenous knowledge, and cultural ecology. A brief description of the development project and its impacts on indigenous communities highlights some of the main challenges that indigenous peoples have faced, and critiques they have made, in

negotiating a development that maintains the integrity of their communities and lifestyles. Human development and the capabilities approach represent one attempt to address these and other critiques of development by shifting the focus from economic achievement to what people can be and do, but one that may remain limited with regard to its ability to address indigenous critiques and objectives. A discussion of agency, structure and cultural ecology, particularly with respect to their relationships to the development process, helps understand the basis for Wemindji Cree agency. It also help outline the multiple positions and strategies of Wemindji Cree in seeking agency and empowerment through development, agency that will facilitate the continuity of the traditional teachings in which much of community life is grounded (Cree Nation of Wemindji c, 2009). Gaining a solid knowledge of Cree concerns and objectives with regard to development through indigenous knowledge and cultural ecology helps assess the extent to which the capabilities approach can describe the Cree perspective. Thus this conceptual framework links a series of bodies of knowledge that together help describe indigenous experiences of and objectives in development, and how approaches such as the capabilities approach can encompass these experiences and objectives.

2.1 Development and Human Development

In 1949, President Truman gave the inaugural address that many believe founded the international development project. The international development project has been defined as "a multidimensional undertaking to achieve a higher quality of life for all people" (United Nations, 1997: 1), the realization of which has often yielded controversial results.Truman's address, given in the wake of two world wars and in the shadow of a communist bloc gaining ground and momentum, was, perhaps above all else,

an argument against communism and an appeal to the world community to join Americans in opposing the Soviet regime (Sachs, 1992). To this end, Truman stated the following:

> "The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques…I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life" (Truman, 2009).

The aim of the development effort that Truman's words gave rise to is probably most commonly understood as an effort to reproduce in all regions of the world those features that characterized 'developed' nations: "high levels of industrialization and urbanization, technicalization of agriculture, rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values" (Escobar, 1995: 4). From its earliest stages, the development project assumed these objectives were universally applicable and appropriate, synonymous with the preferred futures of poor, indigenous and other underprivileged peoples (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson 1999). These objectives, and the practice of development that attempted to realize them, concerned itself with primarily with utility, of which real income and GNP were the most accessible – if incomplete and inaccurate – measures (Haq, 1995; Sen, 2000). This obsession with economic indicators also fed a set of suppositions regarding the superiority of post-industrial nations and cultures (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1999). These suppositions too often influenced development theory and practice (Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995), resulting in a development process that was inappropriate to the point of often being damaging where it took place (Esteva, 1992; Shrestha, 1997). This controversial and long dominant brand of development that arose over the second half of the twentieth century has been

called 'mainstream' development (Pieterse, 1998), in contrast with the alternatives that have arose particularly over the past two decades.

The first three decades of development, however, eroded the assumption that mainstream development objectives corresponded with those of the 'poor' and inhabitants of non-industrialized regions, including indigenous peoples. This erosion took the form of numerous criticisms of mainstream development and particularly the structural adjustment policies of the 1980's (McNeill, 2007). A number of critics and critiques of development emerged from the situation of Aboriginal peoples. For many indigenous communities, the development project has yielded ecological and social burdens disproportionate to the benefits (Blaser, Feit and McCrae, 2004), even and perhaps especially in 'developed' countries which is where the focus of this research lies. Barsh (1994) notes that while Canada as a whole consistently achieves a high ranking in the United Nations' Human Development Index, Canada's Aboriginal population rank only in the medium range alongside nations such as Paraguay and Cuba (Barsh, 1994; citing UNDP 1993). Aboriginal peoples in Canada suffer from lower life expectancy, higher rates of illness, an unemployment rate which is three times the national average, their average income is half that of non-Aboriginal Canadians (Smith, 2000: 80-81), and they "remain at the top of the scale on all indexes of social distress in Canada" (Coon Come, 2004). Croal and Darou (2002) refer to Canadian First Nations as developing nations, in contrast with Canada as a whole. This situation has its parallels in other developed 'settler' nations such as the United States, Australia and also New Zealand, where Gibbs (2005) states that "indigenous peoples, particularly in developed countries...suffer current

disadvantage and unequal access to the benefits of development as a legacy of colonization" (Gibbs, 2005: 1365). For these and other indigenous peoples, the development process has in several respects failed to provide empowerment, promote agency, and enable the attainment of their objectives.

As the development project wore on, it became evident that "a high income, by itself, was no defence against human deprivation" (Haq, 1995: 25), and that indicators like GNP are woefully inadequate measures of development; as Robert Kennedy noted, GNP "measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile" (cited in Sanchez, 2000). In the late 1980's, critics argued for the relevance to development of basic needs, the rights of children, economic equity, social justice, the relief of hunger, and a slew of other causes that at the time lay outside the narrow focus of mainstream development (Sen, 2000), highlighting the narrowness of mainstream approaches and the need for alternatives that were more responsive to the complexity of the realities in which development occurred, and the varied needs arising from that complexity.

These varied concerns and causes together crystallized in the human development framework, a framework holding that development should be concerned about the realization of human freedom, rather than the attainment of economic objectives (Crocker, 2008). From the time of the UNDP's publication of the first Human Development Report (HDR) in 1990, the human development framework has seen

astounding success, so much so that by the end of November 2005, a Google search found over two million web pages referencing at least one HDR (Murphy, 206:cited in McNeill, 2007). Its architects, chief among them Mahbub ul Haq, created a broad and inclusive framework that succeeded in "coordinating discontent and in weaving them together into a rival and flexible format" (Sen, 2000: 21). This format is anchored in the premise that development should be about expanding the range of human choices (Gasper, 2002), and it maintains an openness to new perspectives that enhance the measurement or attainment of that end (Sen, 2000). Human development "is now seen as a more appropriate goal and measure of development" than its mainstream counterpart (Pieterse, 1998: 344). It has effectively challenged the dominance of mainstream neoliberal approaches to development and the corresponding narrow focus on economic indicators by operating with the assumption human beings are the ends, not the means of development (Sen, 1999; Sanchez, 2000), and thus shifting the focus to human capabilities.

2.2 Capabilities Approach

Amartya Sen has been a central figure in this shift towards human development and capabilities, and the human development framework has increasingly been associated with his work (McNeill, 2007). Sen has gone on to create the capabilities approach, which focuses on enhancing human functionings and capabilities. The capabilities approach has been describes as "a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society" (Robeyns, 2005:94).This approach, which Sen explains in depth in *Development as Freedom* (1999), has become a popular means of

conceptualizing and operationalizing human development that strives for broad applicability across contexts and issues.

Functionings and capabilities are two tools that Sen uses to assess quality of life and so attain his objective of enhancing human freedom. Sen describes the concept of functionings as representing " part of the state of a person – in particular the various things that he or she manages to do or be in leading a life" (Sen, 1993: 31), ranging from the elementary functionings of, for instance, being well-nourished, to the more complex functionings or states such as having self-respect (Sen, 1999). A person's capability is described as reflecting " the alternate combinations of functionings a person can achieve, and from which he or she can chose one collection" (Sen, 1993: 31), meaning that a person's capability refers to their ability both to attain and to forego valuable functionings (Olsaretti, 2005). Robeyns states that "the difference between a functioning and a capability is similar to the difference between an achievement and the freedom to achieve something, or between an outcome and an opportunity" (Biggeri et. Al., 2006: 63 - citing Robeyns 2003). In essence, capability reflects the freedom to do and be the things a person chooses to do and be, a freedom that Sen regards as an appropriate end to development (Sen, 1999).

Sen has deliberately left the capabilities approach broad and incomplete, open to a wide array of applications both theoretical and empirical, qualitative and quantitative, in fields ranging from development philosophy to gender issues to the study of famine to the conceptualization of poverty and of inequality (Bagolin and Comim, 2006: 4-5). He

emphasizes that "it is important that people evaluate explicitly and critically what they want, and engage in arguing for — or against — any set of proposed weights" (Sen, 2000: 21). Sen's approach is also meant to be applicable in different regions and contexts, holding that "a list of capabilities must be context dependent, where the context is both the geographical area to which it applies, as well as the sort of evaluation that is done" (Robeyns, 2005: 197).

The malleability of the capabilities approach to different contexts and purposes, along with its broader focus, makes it more appropriate than its mainstream counterpart in Aboriginal contexts, as it shows more sensitivity to peoples who struggle to integrate and balance traditional lifestyles and values with contemporary opportunities and economic needs. Indeed, practitioners of human development and the capabilities approach show a significant interest in accommodating and addressing indigenous perspectives. Among its thematic groups, the Human Development and Capabilities Association (HDCA), which seeks to expand and improve the applicability of the capabilities approach, focuses on indigenous peoples in seeking to discover how the capabilities approach can "further indigenous holistic concept of development in the design, implementation and evaluation of development policies" (HDCA, 2009). This demonstrating a concern with indigenous perspectives on development that is less apparent in the mainstream approach, and that hints at human development's greater interest in including and encompassing a range of perspectives, and receptivity to means of doing so.

According to Gigler (2005), the adaptability of the capabilities approach should allow indigenous peoples to set their own agenda with regard to development, thus addressing critiques that development agendas are set predominantly in the West. In addition, the breadth of concerns addressed through the capabilities approach – including not only economic and social but also cultural and spiritual dimensions of development – and its integrative nature is compatible with more holistic indigenous understandings of development. Third, human development and capabilities approach are more concerned with measuring quality of life than material forms of deprivation, allowing non-tangible elements like cultural identity and traditional knowledge to be factored in. Finally, the capabilities approach acknowledges the role of development as the process of expanding freedoms and attainment of capabilities, with the focus being on the process less than the actual outcome, a perspective which Gigler argues is compatible with that of indigenous peoples (Gigler, 2005: 5-6). Perceiving development as an ongoing process – which Sen does (Sen, 2000: 23) – is indeed more compatible with indigenous perspectives than the perception of development as a linear path leading to a pre-determined state often associated with earlier development strategies.

While being acknowledged as an improvement on its mainstream predecessor, the capabilities approach to development has also been subject to criticism. A good deal of this criticism surrounds Sen's understanding of agency and how this corresponds with the way agents perceive and address their own agency, with all the resulting implications for development. To begin this discussion, we will clarify how Sen understands agency and its role in his approach.

The capabilities approach is a broad framework for evaluating development policies, proposals and action, one which emphasizes "that individuals are to be considered as the very subjects of development, both as ends and means of development" (Deneulin, 2008: 107). Sen's approach consists of enhancing human freedom, a goal he seeks to attain through enhancing human agency and also well-being. Sen describes agency as the realization of those goals and values that a person pursues, irrespective of whether those goals and values relate to that person's well-being. Well-being for Sen describes a person's "wellness" or "personal welfare" (Crocker, 2008: 151). Agency objectives and well-being objectives overlap, but for Sen they are "significantly non-identical: one wants some things other than one's own pleasure and comfort, and does not want all the things that would bring them" (Gasper, 2002: 451). Well-being freedom and achievement, along with agency freedom and achievement, together describe quality of life. As described earlier, functionings and capabilities are the tools used to measure quality of life – mainly through assessing well-being. But agency is also a critical component to this assessment, as for Sen it comprises all those objectives a person has that bear no impact on their own personal well-being.

Sen's understanding of well-being has already been critiqued elsewhere, as some argue it is not sufficiently removed from its utilitarian counterpart (Gasper, 2002: 450; Giri, 2000 1005). While Sen is critical of the notion that self-interest is the only driver of human behavior and acknowledges that a person may have many goals and objectives other than her own well-being, he still believes these goals and objectives to be external to her well-

being. In contrast, Giri argues that "other-regarding pursuits are...an *integral* and *central* part of the quest for well being...in order to be a source of well being even pursuit of self-interest often requires an integral attention to the other" (Giri, 2000: 1005). Giri goes on to state that "other-regarding activity is not solely self-sacrificial, it is also self-nurturing" (Giri, 2000: 1006); this argument can be extended to address not only the human but also the ecological 'other' (Brown, 2001; Leopold, 2001). She further argues that for this reason, Sen's separation of well-being and agency is misleading.

Accordingly, a similar critique has been mounted with regard to Sen's conception of agency as exists with regard to well-being, but has not before now been directly or thoroughly linked to the issues of indigenous peoples. Critics argue that the concept of agency with which the capabilities approach operates is too thin, too incomplete and too focused on the individual (Gasper, 2002; Stewart and Deneulin, 2002; Zimmermann, 2006; Deneulin, 2008). As an approach that developed mainly as a dialogue between economic and philosophy, Sen's approach has yet to fully flesh out concepts like agency through exposure to the social sciences (Gasper, 2002). This is significant in that agency freedom is crucial to development, and therefore so is a good understanding of what agency is and implies. An incomplete understanding could stunt and mislead development efforts and outcomes to the detriment of indigenous people and communities.

Theorists and practitioners of the capabilities approach are striving to make the capabilities approach more appropriate for indigenous peoples (HDCA, 2009). Exploring

perspectives on agency in development in the capabilities approach and amongst the indigenous peoples is one means of achieving this objective. In order to shed more light on indigenous perspectives on agency and development, I now turn to a more thorough treatment of the topic of agency.

2.3 Agency

Before proceeding further, the concept of agency which is so central to this discussion bears further clarification and discussion beyond how it relates to Sen's work. Agency which describes the "actor's capacity to act upon situation" (Sibeon, 1999: 139), and the 'structures' of social organization, are two related concepts integral to social change that have long been at the heart of debates in philosophy and the social sciences (Gregory, 1981; Pile, 1993; Chouinard, 1997). Chouinard (1997) refers to the concepts of structure and agency as referring, respectively, to "the basic organizational features of particular societies and peoples' capacities to act within this social context" (Chouinard, 1997: 364). An understanding of this dialectic between structure and agency is critical to geography, particularly human geography, and researchers have been seeking and redefining this understanding since the discipline was founded (Chouinard, 1997). Particularly since the late 1970's, when human geography began in earnest its dialogue with critical theory, this dialectic has come to the forefront (Chouinard, 1997). Since that time, Western Marxist, humanist, feminist and postmodern critiques, amongst other influences, have all contributed to the refinement of understandings of agency and structure, integrating analysis of how not only class but also race, gender, age and ability enter into this dialectic (Chouinard, 1997). At the same time, insights emerging from

cultural and political ecology have improved our comprehension of how structure and agency interact in human-environment relations (Chowdhury and Turner II, 2006).

The idea of agency is intertwined with that of social structure, and both require clarification for the purposes of this research. Social structure has been a longstanding preoccupation for social scientists, dating back to Marx. While debates regarding the nature of structure have a long and rich history, both classical and contemporary descriptions of social structure can be described as sharing the following characteristics: persistence over time, bearing fundamental (rather than superficial) characteristics, existing as a social whole made up of interdependent parts, and being considered more than the sum of these parts (Baber, 1991: 225; following Homans, 1975: 53-65). While elements of structure are enduring, they are not immutable (Sideon, 1999: 142). In Giddens' elaboration of structuration theory, he describes "the structural properties of social systems" as "both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize...Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling" (Giddens, 1984: 25). So for instance, agency is influenced by the political economic, cultural and historical structures in which it exists, but an agent also "interprets and reshapes its circumstances" (Chowdhury and Turner II, 2006: 303) mediating and negotiating those structures in making choices.

Agency, as expressed above, describes the ability of agents to act upon situations (Sibeon, 1999:140), where one can describe action as "the realization of a purpose or goal, assisted by empirical knowledge about the world" (Fuchs, 2001: 26), as well as the

capacity for reflexivity (Cleaver, 2007) with regard to those actions. But what are agents? Sibeon (1999: 140) describes agents as "an entity that, in principle, has the means of formulating and acting upon decisions". This is a property not only of individuals, but also of social actors including organizations, households, committees, private firms, and some other groups (Sibeon, 1999: 140). Indeed, understanding the agency of social (as opposed to individual) actors can be essential in studying human-environment relations, including in indigenous settings. Furthermore, while some theorists describe agency as primarily, perhaps exclusively, a property of human beings (Fuchs, 2001), for the Cree and other Aboriginal groups agency is attributed not only to other-than-human animals but also to natural forces such as wind (Ingold, 2000: 48; Schlosberg and Carruthers, forthcoming). This difference is relevant when considering the sources of Cree agency and action.

While Amartya Sen's definition of agency is limited in many respects to consideration of (human) agency at the level of the individual, and limited in its consideration of relational dimensions of agency, Deneulin and Stewart (2002) argue that "both the extent of agency and the objectives that people value depend in part on the environment in which the individual lives" (Deneulin and Stewart 2002: 67). A full account of agency requires attention to that environment. Similarly, Zimmermann (2006) calls for a "a proper understanding of the agency-structure relation...that grasps action as being situated and in process" (Zimmermann, 2006: 477), an understanding that acknowledges the dynamic relationships between individuals that cause agency to be relational, "a product of certain structures of living together" (Deneulin, 2008: 120). These structures of living together in

turn are embedded in and reliant upon community life (Deneulin 2008) which is important to indigenous cultural continuity, where the definition of community includes people but also extends to other-than-human beings on the land (Schlosberg and Carruthers, forthcoming). These critiques point to social, interactive aspects of agency that an individualistic approach would have a difficult time encompassing, aspects which will be examined more closely in chapter five. This examination will demonstrate that including this relational aspect of agency is crucial to understanding and enabling Aboriginal Cree objectives with regard to development.

2.4 Cultural ecology

Cultural ecology concerns itself with the interface of society and environment, and more specifically with the role of culture in interaction with and adaption to environment (Sutton and Anderson, 2004). It is a major subdivision of human ecology, along with human biological ecology focusing more narrowly on the biological aspects of human-environment interaction. It is also cognate with political ecology, which emerged from cultural ecology, and interacts and overlaps with a series of other human-environment approaches (Zimmerer, 2004). Cultural ecology seeks to understand the dynamic juncture of cultural belief, practice and institutions with environment, and this across societies and scales. As this juncture is complex and multifaceted, cultural ecology is of necessity broad in scope, exchanging and overlapping with a host of other human-environment approaches including political ecology, ecological anthropology and cultural geography (Zimmerer, 2004).

Cultural ecology emerged as a distinct facet of human ecology in the 1950's, partially in reaction to a growing trend in anthropology to believe that, as Harris critiqued, culture begot culture autonomously from environment and material conditions (Braun, 2004). Julian Steward's work in his *Theory of Cultural Change* in which he elaborated on the basis of cultural ecology is one of the first important texts in this discipline. For Steward, the principal unit of analysis is the culture itself, with the analysis being that of the "creative processes involved in the adaptation of culture to its environment" (Steward, 1955: 30). Steward sought to avoid deterministic explanations which made culture simply a product of environmental conditions; rather, Steward believed that human interaction with the environment through subsistence and work determined the nature and extent of the influence of environmental conditions on culture (Robbins, 2004: 30); that is, it is a limiting factor rather than a determining factor (Sutton and Anderson, 2004). However, the Stewardian approach was criticized as relying too heavily on too narrow a range of factors, as Steward's focus on a 'cultural core' of practices seen as of primary importance to the nature-culture relationship ignored many significant ecological and cultural factors in societal traits and behaviours (Ellen, 1982).

While Steward focused on cultures as the units of analysis, others such as Roy Rappaport in *Pigs for the Ancestors* (1968) saw populations as the unit of analysis that better enabled integration of a range of ecological factors. Rappaport sought to explain the behaviours of populations in the context of and resulting from elements and changes in the ecosystems they belonged to (Biersack, 1999). For Rappaport (1968), cultural traits developed to maintain ecosystemic balances (Robbins, 2004), where ecosystems

regulated themselves in a cybernetic manner much like thermostats (Biersack, 1999). This ecosystemic approach was seen by some as a return to environmental determinism, but Rappaport argued that if "human life is poised amid multiple, irreducible orders of determination, natural and cultural, *there can be no environmental determinism*" (Biersack, 1999: 7).

Cultural ecology's denial of both environmental determinism and of cultures evolving autonomously from their environments (Braun, 2004), and the refusal of Rappaport and others to be constrained by the idealism vs. realism debate helped generate a number of new debates, disciplines and 'new ecologies' (Biersack, 1999), with the gaps and overlaps between these yielding further fertile ground for research (Zimmerer, 2004). These and other debates helped feed and generate research on, amongst other things, political ecology, indigenous knowledges, and social-ecological systems. Political ecology is defined by Paul Robbins as "empirical, research-based explorations to explain linkages in the condition and change of social/environmental systems, with explicit consideration of relations of power" (Robbins, 2004: 12). It emerged as a result of critiques of cultural ecology as being insufficiently political and critical, and as a result providing inadequate tools for assessing the realities of societies being studied. Wilk (2006) in his research of the Kekchi people of Belize found that cultural ecology's focus on subsistence systems at the expense of sufficient acknowledgement of consumption and the cash economy made it inadequate in describing "the dynamic mix of subsistence and commercial production" (Wilk, 2006: 156). Only a blend of cultural ecology and political economy allowed for an accurate description of the changing lives of the Kekchi. For

political ecologists, environmental and cultural change had to be understood "through 'chains of explanation' which linked local decisions with wider social, economic and political structures" (Braun, 2004: 160-161). The insight and critiques derived from political ecology can help focus and guide a cultural ecology approach to understanding how development and development projects can affect Aboriginal perspectives with regard to community objectives and relationships to land.

Cultural ecology's interaction with research on indigenous knowledges has also helped further discussion on the nature/culture duality which has dominated much of Western thought but is absent from a number of indigenous cosmologies, including that of the Cree (Ingold, 2000). This duality has been the topic of research and debate in anthropology and cultural ecology for decades (Descola and Palsson, 1999), and has recently been challenged by indigenous perspectives, though also by the West (Braun, 2004). While cultural ecology seeks to "develop a *unified theory* of culture and nature, one which would dissolve the culture-nature dualism and replace it with a single totality" (Braun, 2004: 153), still "human behaviour, social institutions and specific cultural features were seen as adaptive responses to, or mere expressions of, basic environmental or genetic constraints" (Descola and Palsson, 1999:2), rather than in the terms of the unified cosmologies of indigenous peoples (ibid, 1999). More recent research in cultural ecology (Berkes, 1999, Salmon 2000; Parlee et. Al. 2005; Scott 2006; Peloquin 2007) has begun to thoroughly integrate indigenous knowledges and cultural ecologies in order to describe nature and culture as melded rather than contrasting or even intersecting. Cree

perceptions of their environment lend themselves further to this latter description of the nature/culture relationship.

2.5 Conclusion

While much research has been completed with regard to the applicability of the capabilities approach even in indigenous contexts, much ground still hasn't been covered. For one, the integration of social science perspectives on this applicability is still incomplete, and this integration is vital for understanding the potential impacts of the capabilities approach in indigenous contexts. A fuller account of the impacts of human development approaches in indigenous communities will require a more thorough grounding in development anthropology, cultural and political ecology and indigenous knowledge. Enabling indigenous approaches to development is aided by a fuller understanding of their grounding in both traditional knowledges and contemporary challenges. Continuing down this line of thought, indigenous relationships with the environment – still mostly absent from debates with regard to human development – are frequently an important consideration in Aboriginal approaches to development (Scholsberg and Carruthers, forthcoming). Understanding the basis of these relationships and how they are integrated into decisions with regard to development seems necessary if Aboriginal objectives with regard to development are to be realized.

To this end, this conceptual framework has sought to address and blend several bodies of knowledge at the nexus of development anthropology and human ecology in order to assess Aboriginal approaches to development and compare and contrast these with the

capabilities approach. Development studies reveals the origins of the development project and the problems that arose as it progressed, setting up the inception of human development as a means of addressing those problems. The capabilities approach is a means of applying the principles of human development, but one that has a limited geneology drawing principally from economics and philosophy (Gasper, 2002). Critiques of the capabilities approach have revolved around this deficiency, which in some ways limits a fuller understanding of the applicability of this approach in indigenous contexts. Research in indigenous knowledges gives some grounding in Aboriginal perspectives that inform objectives with regard to development. These knowledges are often embedded in traditional practices and in the social fabric of communities, and come to the fore in contemporary responses to social, cultural and ecological challenges. The literature on indigenous knowledges overlaps with the cultural ecology literature in describing Aboriginal structures of living together, particularly with regard to perspectives on and relationships to the environment which is the focus of cultural ecology. Together, these disciplines create a conceptual framework in which the comparing and contrasting of the capabilities and Cree approaches to development can occur.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Research Context

Wemindji has partnered with a multidisciplinary team of Southern academics primarily based at McGill University to create the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau Protected Area Project. The project seeks to establish a protected area in the Old Factory watershed, one of the last remaining watersheds undamaged by development, particularly hydroelectricity projects. It is spread over at least eight coastal and inland traplines, which are the hunting territories of Wemindji's tallymen or hunting bosses, and straddles the James Bay highway. Its objective is to "balance development, cultural autonomy and continuity, and environmental protection" (Peloquin, 2007: 18). The Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau project seeks to "develop a regime of protection that builds on existing Cree institutions for environmental stewardship, and on Cree practices of indigenous ecological knowledge" (Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau – About Us, 2009). The proposed protected area aims to safeguard traditional tenure regimes and land uses within the Old Factory watershed, responding to the Wemindji Cree effort to sustain important elements of their culture.

As a whole, the Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji project may be considered participatory; as Kesby et. Al state, participatory approaches "are about working *with* rather than *on* people; about generating data and working in ways that increase participants' ability to bring about positive change in their own lives" (Kesby et. Al., 2005: 144). However, the nature of my own project prevents it from being considered truly participatory.

Fig 1 – The East James Bay region within Canada (Source: Wemindji Community Museum, 2010)

Fig 2 – The proposed Paakumshumwaau protected area (Source: Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji Protected Area Project b, 2009)

Nonetheless, this project does seek to respond to those objectives collaboratively set at the inception of the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau project by exploring Cree perceptions of development.

3.2 Qualitative Research

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this project because, as Zimmermann (2006) states, qualitative research is necessary in order to grasp the different dimensions of what people value. Qualitative research in geography developed as a reaction to the perceived narrow focus and scope of quantitative research; it "sought to portray human experience and expression. It recognized that there was a social construction to place, space and landscape which transcended spatial patterns and structures" (Robinson, 1998). Qualitative research concerns itself primarily with two related issues: the societal, cultural, environmental, political or economic structures of the case study community, and individual experiences of places and events. These two issues are interrelated, as both personal characteristics and social positioning can impact the behaviour and experiences of individuals, so that qualitative research requires a balancing of the two perspectives (Wincester, 2004). Such an approach applied to the understanding of perspectives on and approaches to development in a community like Wemindji can reveal the richness and especially the variety of individual experiences of development while accounting for the social structures that construct, carry out and resist it.

A qualitative approach seeks to gather "data that reveal the 'qualities' of certain phenomena, events and aspects of the world under study, chiefly through the medium of verbal descriptions which try to convey in words what are the characteristics of those

data" (Cloke et. Al., 2004: 17). Wincester (2005) describes three types of qualitative research: the oral or verbal which is collected chiefly through interviews, the observational and the textual analysis of creative, documentary and landscape sources. The research methods employed for this project include the first two, focusing mainly on oral data but also including some observational material. Later sections describe these qualitative methods used; for now, we turn to the role of ethnographic approaches in this research project.

3.3 Ethnographic Approach

An ethnographic approach is one that attempts to "understand the world-views and ways of life of actual people from the 'inside', in the context of their everyday, lived experiences" (Cook, 2005: 167). Ethnography is generally associated with the anthropological tradition where it originated. It has its roots in European imperialism and has been associated with its consequences; however subsequent transformations, alterations and critiques of ethnographic research have rendered it more reflexive and useful as a research tool (Cloke et. Al., 2004). Today's ethnographic research emphasizes the positionality and bias of the researcher (Robinson, 1998), acknowledging that the researcher herself comes with a pre-given set of perspectives that influences her work; as Wincester argues, the researcher's choice of topic and methodology reflect her own values and beliefs (Wincester, 2005). For this reason, perceptions of ethnographies have changed such that 'ethnographic findings are not...'realities extracted from the field' but are 'intersubjective truths' negotiated out of the warmth and friction of an unfolding, iterative process" (Cloke et. Al., 2004 – citing Parr, 2001; Hoggart et Al., 2002).

Ethnographic research generally involves extensive amounts of time spent in the research context, participating in the lives of the individuals and community of which one wishes to learn; it is 'immersive' and inductive so that the realities, perspectives and ways of life of the people with whom the research is conducted can become apparent (Cloke et. Al., 2004). Participant observation is thus a research method frequently associated with ethnographic approaches (Robinson, 1998; Cook, 2005), and one that is employed in this research project. Employing ethnographic approaches and participant observations requires of the novice that she "recognize, develop, complement and sometimes unlearn existing attitudes, habits, sentiments, emotions, senses, skills and preferences" (Cloke et. Al., 2004), and this in order to access, understand and communicate as accurately as possible the lived realities of the individuals and communities in which she works.

3.4 Research Ethics and Protocol

The Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau project has drafted a memorandum of understanding which describes its guiding principles, enumerates its main undertakings or objectives, and supplies guidelines for the conduct of research that are to be followed by all project researchers working in Wemindji. These principles, undertakings and guidelines reflect the purpose of the project, which is to seek to balance environmental protection, cultural integrity, and Wemindji's objectives in regard to territorial development (Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji Protected Area Project, 2009). Such a memorandum is crucial to a decolonising approach that respects and does justice to cultural differences rather than exploit them (Howitt and Stevens, 2003), and has shaped the formulation of this project's methodology and research. These guiding principles shaped research ethics

and approaches and provided a set of guiding principles for research activities in the community.

With community consent to the research already given and guiding principles supplied to guide the research, attention must be given to issues of confidentiality since some of the opinions given could be sensitive in a community context, particularly when the issues discussed involve certain development projects or events over which the community is divided. In order to ensure that participants in the interviews I conducted for my own research comfortable with the degree of confidentiality they are attributed in the project, they were asked whether they would like to be identified or remain anonymous in the research. This process was integrated into the ethics consent form which participants signed acquiescing to participation in the project. As a precautionary measure, those participants whose position regarding identity disclosure couldn't be ascertained remained anonymous in the text, being identified with a set of initials (not their own) which I assigned to them. In addition, where translators were required because a participant was monolingual Cree or uncomfortable expressing themselves in English, they were required to sign a consent form attesting that they respect the complete confidentiality of the interview. For the land use mapping interviews, there were no consent forms for participants or translators as permission for that project was obtained under a different ethics approval application; however, participants in those interviews were informed of the research objectives and their oral consent was obtained.

My objective in recruiting participants for my research is twofold: firstly, to meet and interview a number of community leaders entrusted with the enactment of Wemindji's vision for the future, and secondly, to meet and interview people from different walks of life. My strategy for seeking out participants was loosely based on snowballing. Snowballing describes the process of using one contact to make another, and continuing this process until it 'snowballs' and creates an extensive social network (Valentine, 2005). As a student in the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau project and as an employee at the Youth Centre, I had already made initial contacts with community leaders and a respectable number of community members which I could use to employ the snowballing strategy. Also, graduate students in the protected area project who have more extensive research in the community have introduced me to those community members with whom they have become acquainted. Therefore, I already have 'multiple initial contact points' (Valentine, 2005), which will facilitate my access to several segments of the population and thus ensure that I am not simply drawing from a small pool of like-minded people.

As the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau team consists of students and academics from several disciplines all working in Wemindji, non-sensitive data, findings and perspectives were shared with other members of the team, with the permission of primary investigator professor Colin Scott. Additionally, certain interviews were carried out with other members of this team, with the consent of the participants so as to avoid redundancy in the interviews.

3.5 Research Methods

This research occurred mainly during two trips to Wemindji from mid-June to mid-August of 2007, and from mid-June to the end of August of 2008. Additionally, data verification was carried out from mid-June to early August 2009. In total over six months were spent in Wemindji at the conclusion of this research over three consecutive summers. Over this time, sixteen formal interviews were carried out with twenty interviewees, some of which were interviewed on more than one occasion. In addition to this, numerous informal discussions of research-related subject matter occurred in during community events and during my participation on field trips (notably the Gathering, the community's yearly celebration of its founding on an island in James Bay). The following section describes the three main field research methods that I employed in Wemindji, these three being participant observation, land use mapping interviews as well as semi-structured interviews.

3.5.1 Participant Observation

Among the research methods I adopted in Wemindji is participant observation. Participant observation can be broadly understood as a three part process involving first to obtain access to a community, second to live and/or work in said community so as to take on their worldviews, and third to travel back to the university to write up an account of the community's culture and ways of life (Cook, 2005). Participant observation acknowledges our location in the social context we are researching, and the reasons why we are conducting our research (Kearns, 2005), meaning that unlike scientific research, participant observation implies a certain degree of subjectivity (Tierney, 2007). This subjectivity, and the relationships that form between researchers and community

members, mean that care must be taken to protect the integrity of the participants in the research (Tierney, 2007). This protection implies an awareness, which I endeavoured to have, of how the participants in my research and their views are represented, and with what effects for those individuals and Wemindji more generally (Cook, 2005).

Since the people of Wemindji are partners in the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau protected area project, they have helped to determine the objectives of our academic research, broadly speaking, have evidently accepted my project as an attempt to reach one of those objectives, thus giving me access to the community. I also took on other roles besides researcher which helped fill out my perspectives on and observations of the community. I was employed in Wemindji for a period of twenty eight weeks over three consecutive summers in coordinating and animating Wemindji's Summer Arts and Science Day Camp. This position placed me near the front lines of many of the community's contemporary challenges, including the difficulties of providing and balancing both traditional and formal educations to Cree children, and the numerous problems and opportunities that come with the rapid social change that the Cree have undergone. It supplied with a number of different perspectives on the community, helped me meet many people I would not otherwise have met, and additionally my commitment to the camp program earned me a degree of respect and appreciation in the community that I believe I would not have gotten otherwise.

In addition to my employment in the community, I participated in a number of community meetings on a variety of topics including mining, protected areas,

hydroelectricity and the new agreement that the Cree signed with the Federal government in 2007. Again, while not all topics were directly related to my research, most were, and all were helpful in improving my understanding of the perspectives of the community and the dynamics of community life.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

During my research, I relied on semi-structured interviews as a means of gathering data. A semi-structured interview is one that uses open-ended questions, thus allowing the participant the opportunity to formulate their own responses, or even to guide the direction of the interview (Fife, 2005). The aim of interviews is not to be representative, but to understand how meanings differ among people (Valentine, 2005; Dunn, 2003). Thus, as Dunn (2003) warns, geographers using interviews as a research strategy should resist the temptation that they have discovered or distilled the 'truth' of a population with this evidence. Semi-structured interviews acknowledge respondents as active subjects; as Cloke et. Al. state, "the interview has a script, at least in outline...However, it has a plot which develops rather than being static...There is plenty of room for improvisation, both by the interviewer and by the subject; each is complicit in the production of a narrative" (Cloke et. Al., 2004: 150). Thus, semi-structured interviews provide a loose script, while inviting interviewees to participate and even lead in the unfolding of the plot.

My interviews were based on a series of questions addressing broad themes of interest in the community: perspectives on development generally, on certain projects specifically (namely protected areas and mines), social change in the community, life on the land, and preferred futures. I kept the focus broad, addressing relationships between development,

community and land in an effort to encourage participants to guide the interview 'plot' towards those relevant topics of most interest to them and their own experiences. This proved useful as some of the most interesting and substance-filled reflections on development lay in the accounts of events and experiences in the participant's lives, which may have been less accessible through a more formal or narrower line of questioning.

3.5.3 Land use mapping interviews

The Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau project, being in the process of establishing a protected area covering some of the coastal hunting territories, is carrying out ongoing research exploring the question of establishing protected areas in the inland portion of Wemindji's territory. To this end, the project sought to interview the tallymen and other users of inland hunting territories in order to collect data regarding what areas are suitable for protection, and what are biological, cultural and heritage features of the landscape that are of interest. I participated in the majority of these interviews, which were carried out by another graduate student Wren Nasr and myself under the guidance of one of the principal investigators of the project, Professor Colin Scott. In keeping with the philosophy of the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau project's participatory research approach, diagramming techniques aims were used to achieve at least two goals: to obtain a thorough account of the subject under investigation, and to facilitate the learning and self-reflection of the participants (Kesby et. Al., 2005). To this end, preliminary land use maps were created through small semi-formal group interviews with tallymen, hunters and other users of the territory. Participants were invited to indicate and outline certain features of their hunting territories on transparencies superimposed on 1:5000 maps of

their hunting territories (features include sites of biological significance such as moose yards and spawning habitat, desired protected areas, camps, possible archaeological sites, sites of cultural significance or with heritage value, potential and actual development projects, etc - see Appendix 5). With the permission of the principal investigators and the interviewees, I used these interviews to address my own research questions regarding Cree understandings of development, agency and life objectives.

3.6 Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is an inductive, open-ended process (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; citing Lofland and Lofland, 1995), without standardized procedures to serve as guidance. Nonetheless, the analysis of the research data produced by this project followed certain prescriptions supplied in the literature.

The analysis proceeded with a deductive approach, in that the data is acquired in order to understand Wemindji Cree objectives and agency in development, and the compatibility of this agency with that of the CA. Analysis entailed three stages, based on Kitchin and Tate's (2000) prescriptions regarding the analysis of qualitative materials. The first of these stages is description, that is, the phase in which field notes and interviews are transcribed and annotated, encouraging a 're-familiarization' with the research materials (Crang, 2005). The second stage involves a coding process in which the data is categorized according to the main themes and topics that present themselves. The categories for this stage present themselves through earlier annotations and are frequently altered until they most insightfully describe the material – Kitchen and Tate (2000) refer to this stage as 'splitting and splicing' the data by refining the categories and

interweaving them. Cloke et. Al.'s (2004) recommend movement between 'etic' and 'emic' codes during this process so as to most faithfully draw out the insights in the research material. The third stage is linking and connecting the categories in order to build arguments and conclusions, a process that must be undertaken with care. Jackson (2001) to be rigorous in cross-checking categories and interpretations of analysis, and to state clearly how the data was interpreted and the arguments formulated so as to ensure thorough, accurate and ethical findings. He also emphasizes the need to avoid "cherry picking" quotes; interview data is rarely represented in its entirety, and when this is not possible, care must be taken in selecting interview material that is truly representative of what is expressed in interviews (Dunn, 2003).

In exploring how elements of the development and capabilities approach discourses applied in the Wemindji context, I was reminded repeatedly that terms such as agency, capabilities and structures of living together emerge from non-Cree understandings of development issues. Some of these understandings might intersect or overlap with elements of development discourse, but this does not necessarily imply equivalence between the discourse and Cree worldview. As an outsider to Cree culture, I tried to remain sensitive to this distinction in attempting to understand parallels, intersections and overlaps between Cree understandings and agency as it is discussed in the development literature, in order to draw the most truthful conclusion possible regarding Cree agency. I discussed overlap between elements of development discourse and Cree views where I saw it, but resisted the assumption that this implied compatibility between these two perspectives, and sought to point out and learn from both similarities and differences. I

also strove to remain mindful that the Cree understand and describe themselves through their own terms which differ from those used in the academic context from which I am borrowing.

Finally, in my research and writing about Cree approaches to development, I continually sought to emphasize that there is no one Cree approach but rather a multiplicity of voices and perspectives which are sometimes in harmony and sometimes not. To this end, in keeping with Dunn's (2003) recommendation to bring out diverse opinions, I sought out participants of varying ages and sources of employment, men and women with different and sometimes conflicting convictions regarding some of the important development projects and social changes that Wemindji now faces. I repeatedly tried to emphasize this diversity of voices in order to give the fullest, most realistic picture of Wemindji perspectives on development as I could within the limitations of this research. This is why Cree approaches, perspectives and objectives are always referred to in the plural form throughout this research.

Chapter 4: Wemindji Cree Approaches to Development

In this chapter I describe Wemindji Cree cosmology and cultural ecology, as well as certain experiences of development in the Eastern James Bay region, and examine how these impact Cree perceptions of and approaches to development. In Wemindji Cree cultural ecology, socio-ecological systems are understood as unitary rather than integrated, "as a complex and dynamic web of interactions" (Peloquin and Berkes, 2009: 543). This understanding shapes Wemindji approaches to development that strive to remain mindful of the interrelatedness of Cree with each other and with other-than-human beings without sacrificing autonomy and agency (Coon Come, 2004; Feit, 2004). These approaches shift over time and also vary between people, as changing relationships with actors from the South and with other-than-human beings on the land require new strategies for achieving certain Cree objectives. I explore these approaches, building on previous work by Feit (1995, 2004), Niezen (1993, 1998) and Scott (2001, 2004), discussing how the people of Wemindji understand and refer to development with reference to Cree cultural ecology and socio-historical experiences of development, and how these understandings play out in a proposed gold mine project which the community has considered. Through this discussion, I draw attention to a set of shared Cree concerns and objectives underlying decidedly different approaches to development, concerns and objectives that will later help illustrate Cree understandings of agency.

4.1 Cree Cultural Ecology

Wemindji Cree approaches to development, along with the culture in which they are grounded, emerge from five thousand years of inhabiting the Eastern James Bay region and are entwined with the traditional Cree hunting territories from which they emerge. Despite the drastic pace of change in the Wemindji in the past half century, life in the bush continues to be "the cornerstone of Cree society" (Niezen, 1993: 525), and to inform decisions with regard to development – not just directly in the sense of protecting hunting, trapping and fishing as well as the resources these requires, but also indirectly through the influence of knowledges, beliefs and practices embedded in Cree cultural ecology on contemporary decision-making (Niezen 1993, 1998; Feit 1988, 1995, 2004). This section explores basic tenets of Cree cultural ecology as these are revealed both through the work of generations of anthropologists in the Eastern James Bay region, as well as through experiences and anecdotes in the field, in order to later illustrate its relationship to and influence in decision-making regarding development projects.

As with other hunter gatherer societies, amongst the Cree "perceptions of cause and effect often draw on cosmological theories in which no basic distinction is made between 'environmental', 'natural' and 'social'" (Casimir, 2008: 8). The connectivity of social and ecological systems is reflected in Cree belief systems in which the land is conceptualized as a living organism. Cree see themselves as inhabiting a landscape occupied by other-than-human beings that are also sentient, including animal species, natural forces such as the north wind, and other beings that would be considered supernatural in the Western worldview (Berkes, 1999: 80). This perception is along the lines of what Salmon

describes as 'kincentric ecology', or the awareness common to several indigenous peoples of their surroundings as kin, with whom they have interactions that are vital to their survival (Salmon, 2000: 1327). Wemindji Chief Rodney Mark describes Cree the language as reflecting the reality and importance of these relationships: "when you listen to the Cree language, how the land is described, everything is a living thing...the land, the trees, it's part of our lives" (Rodney Mark, July 26 2007). This lack of a duality between the natural and the social generates perspectives of and relationships with other than human beings on the land that are central to Cree approaches to development.

Cree hunters emphasizes the power of the other-than-human beings on which they rely for success on the land (Tanner, 1979). For this reason, in working in another Cree community in the south of the James Bay territory, Tanner finds that "the relationships which the Mistassini hunters establish and maintain with games and spiritual entities are similar to human relationships" (Tanner, 1987: 67). Cree believe that in the past, all living things talked and even intermarried with people (Tanner, 1987; Berkes, 1999), and Cree stories describe this belief, with characters that simultaneously navigate the social and cultural worlds of both Cree and other-than-human beings (Tanner, 1979). In the present, communication with animals is still very real. Hunters in Wemindji sometimes refer to the ways in which they communicate with animals. One hunter explained to me that there are stories inside the bodies of animals, gifts for the hunter. Some of these gifts are signs telling her or him what to kill next. This hunter went on to explain that he killed a beaver that had a lump in its face. The lump was understood as a sign and burned, and the scent emanating from the burning lump resembled that of bear, and the next animal

this hunter killed was indeed a bear. The bones of other animals such as whiskeyjack and pike also hold symbols guiding the hunter, and a straight porcupine nail is thought to point to a bear den (IP, August 19 2007).

In the case of hunting, then, animal species then are not simply human prey to be harvested, but members of the land community who are related to Cree through sharing the same Creator (Berkes, 1999). Game animals are watchful and aware of the hunter's actions and words (Tanner, 1987: 67), and capable of reciprocity (Tanner, 1979; Scott, 2006). The animals reward good hunting practices with the success which ensures the survival of a Cree family on the land. Punishment for disrespecting an animal, either verbally or by being careless in making or utilising a kill, can have dire consequences. These consequences can involve not only the failure of a hunt but also death; Scott (2006) describes health ailments and accidents that claimed Cree lives, and that are explained by Cree as related to disrespectful or improper behaviours in hunting bears.

One story told to me in Wemindji serves to illustrate how hunting practices are received and reacted to by these spiritual beings. A trip was organized in which a group of elders from Wemindji was to visit Eastmain. Just outside of Eastmain, a number of fowl birds appeared, which were perceived as giving themselves to the groups of elders and those who accompanied them. Despite the best efforts of the Cree on the trip, the birds were not shot. At this, the elders became wary, and warned the driver to be especially careful on the drive back. In spite of the warning, on the highway back to Wemindji the group hit a bear, which is considered to be especially unlucky as the bear is among the most revered

animals in Cree culture. The person who told me this story explained how it was the failure to shoot the birds that resulted in the unlucky accident, one that the elders had anticipated (EP, July 26, 2009).

Since animals are endowed with powers to observe and reward Cree behaviours, the Cree understand that they are the ones who control the outcome of hunting or trapping activities (Feit, 1995; Berkes, 1999). Animals that are watchful of Cree hunters will 'give themselves' to hunters who have exhibited appropriate behaviours. Feit (1995) elaborates on the link between these behaviours, animals and success in the hunt, describing success as a combination or coincidence of the intent of the animal and that of the hunter. The hunt therefore involves a reciprocal relationship in which animals are offered to hunters in return for the hunter incurring and fulfilling obligations to those animals (Feit, 1995: 3-4).

The obligations that a Cree hunter or trapper incur in their activities involve maintaining humility in the hunt, showing respect in the killing of the animal, making the appropriate offerings and observing certain rules in butchering, consuming, and disposing of the animal (Berkes, 1999). Humility implies showing restraint in hunting and trapping; for example, certain hunters who explained their land use to me discussed how they refrained from overtrapping by limiting their catch at each beaver colony, or alternately using and resting different parts of their traplines. Others explained how moose kills are to be shared when they are scarce, that is, "with everyone, first immediate family, then extended family, then community" (Sammy Blackned, August 15 2008). Conversely,

inappropriate behaviours include killing more than one needs. One hunter spoke about Cree youth who are not from Wemindji showing such irresponsibility by killing 13 caribou on his trapline in one day: the hunter told the youth that "you know you shouldn't do that, it's too many in one day. You're with us, I said, that's our trapline and we don't need them, only when we need that's when we kill them" (LI, August 21 2008). The same concern about irresponsibility is shown about the hunting practices of non-Cree on the land. Maintaining respectful, reciprocal relationships with other-than-human, then, is the means by which Cree assure the success of the hunt – not that this itself *ensures* success, as other-than-human beings remain in control of whether the hunt is productive or not, but it increases the likelihood of an animal offering itself to the hunter.

Adrian Tanner has described hunting as a religious occupation amongst Cree, so it is that the elements Cree cultural ecology remains deeply rooted in this occupation. Cree society in turn draws from these elements, from the beliefs and values associated with hunting to cope with change. This connection remains significant despite, or perhaps because of, the rapid pace of change. The lyrics from the Cree hip hop group CerAmony captures the ongoing significance of this connection to all Cree and perhaps especially youth:

> "Grandfather I want to walk where you have walked
> Grandfather I want to see where you have hunted
> Grandmother I want to see where you set up your camp
> Grandmother I want to know how to live like you"
> (Iserhoff and Mukash, 2009)

These lyrics describe youth aspiration to spend time in the bush pursuing the skills and lifestyles of their ancestors. Participating in life in the bush, and practicing traditional skills more generally is a "process that connects" indigenous peoples like Cree "to their

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mental, emotional, spiritual and physical selves, to each other and to the land" (Parlee et. Al., 2005: 132). It is a way to be connected with their ancestors and to traditional and indigenous knowledges that can sustain them and guide them in approaching development and the future.

4.2 Experiences of Development

Respectful relationships with other community members and other-than-human beings are central to Cree objectives, but maintaining these relationships has been challenging over the past 50 years, as Southern affairs have increasingly impacted the Eastern James Bay region and the North more generally (Niezen, 1998; Morantz 2002). Coping with Southern influence, governments and business has required that educated and experienced Cree remain in the community in order to promote Cree objectives with regard to development. According to some in Wemindji, this is a need that elders predicted. One Cree person described to me how elders knew at the time of the signing of the JBNQA that the land couldn't support the growing Cree population in subsistence living, and changes were inevitable: "I think the elders foresaw that back in the 1960's, that it was going to get to a point where people were going to have very specific duties for the benefit of the community, of the culture, they didn't expect everybody to move back into the traplines, they expected half of them to stay here to keep the community going and some of them to practice the culture here in the community, and then the other live on the land" (AE, August 3 2007). This shift was possibly also associated with a population that was already becoming increasingly sedentary even before Quebec launched its hydroelectric projects (La Rusic et. Al., 1979). As a result, in the second half

of the twentieth century Wemindji Cree objectives with regard to development continued to be enmeshed in relationships on the land, but also increasingly enmeshed in relationships with the South.

Even as recent history has significantly altered life in Wemindji, many Wemindji Cree still seek to participate in life in the bush, directly or indirectly. This helps ensure cultural continuity and reinforces community integrity, in which is included other-than-human beings. These elements have been tried by the flood of water and of change stemming from hydroelectric and other forms of development in the region, which has in turn affected social development, but their renewal remains an important goal among Wemindji Cree:

> "Let's say in 1970, like, especially talking about social skills, you really developed your social skills at home, because more, you were out on the land most of the time, and you learned usually from your parents, and let's say, I don't know what year that changed dramatically, it changed a lot, I can say not everybody, but there's a lot – or you could say some – youth and children out around town that development their skills from their peers"
> "That's why we have Gatherings the canoe program, the activities around the community, that's where we're bringing people together" (HR, August 19 2008)

Time spent in the bush helps alleviate negative impacts of adjusting to rapid change (Roué, 2006), and supports the renewal of traditional knowledges and values which are evidently important in Wemindji's description of its own vision and objectives (Cree Nation of Wemindji c, 2009). When asked what is the most important opportunity or capability a young person could have, one Cree woman responds that "I guess it's better if the youth go follow their traditional skills, their traditional life, so they can learn how to survive, like, how to hunt. Even if a person is without a job, he or she can still survive

without money, just hunting, learning traditional skills" (IE, August 19 2008). Another responded that youth "have to know how to survive in the wilderness, it's very important" (AP, August 21 2008). Many of the youth I encountered through my work in Wemindji reiterated this emphasis on land-based skills through their art work and its preoccupation with tipis, geese, bears, fish and other elements of life on the land, the frequent practicing of the goose calls used in the hunt, and the trading of stories regarding their own successes on the land. In reflecting on the Expedition, an annual trip made by a number of Cree youth, elders and community members, one person explains the effects that time on the land has on youth: "they begin to realize that they have to take care of things, not take care of themselves, because they're out there and that's what they learn. It's all about teamwork and helping each other out too, and they develop, and they understand that going somewhere they have to help one another you know, especially out on the land" (HR, August 19 2008). Participating in land-based activities, directly or indirectly, is thus a central preoccupation for Cree, and possibly the most pervasive goal – likely the least disputed – in discussions of development.

With the pace of development and change in the region, however, the realization of many Wemindji Cree objectives, land-based and not, has become more contingent upon economic and institutional forces from the South. These forces, explains Scott (2001), are "commonly portrayed by narrow measures of economic or political power and interest" (Scott, 2001: 3) which excludes or obfuscates much of the breadth, subtlety and complexity of Cree goals in development.

Much of Cree success in negotiating these forces to arrive at their objectives has been reliant on education and experience in Southern contexts, in addition to education and experience in Eeyou Istchee. In the Cree communities "there is an ever growing awareness that formal education has distinct advantages, producing a new form of leadership that is more effective than the community of elders in managing local agencies, dealing with governments, and challenging industries that threaten Cree resources" (Niezen, 1998: 106). Formal education then is seen not as divergent from traditional and cultural knowledge but as a necessary complement in sustaining Cree autonomy: "education is most important opportunity a young person can have, because it's a tool they could use in the future. Even if you're in a Cree community it's not entirely governed by Cree, there are laws that the government developed that we have to follow. Cree need to educate themselves in order to help their people. Education goes with keeping culture alive" (AU, August 25 2008).

However, the process of acclimatizing to Southern impacts, including education and also employment, requires sedentarization that changes access to the bush, and the ways in which people may renew relationships on the land. Some people note that "there's less people using the land now, some people only go out at goose break in spring" (AU, August 25 2008). One hunter states that "you don't have that nowadays, people getting together, hardly now. Like the families, relatives and that getting together, some of them don't even want to go into the bush" (LI, August 21 2008). Along with this changes access to the bush comes a shift in practicing traditional activities, as a number of people noted that "some people don't bother doing...traditional things" (IE, August 19 2008). At

the same time, every flock of geese that flies over the community draws out crowds of children practicing their goose calls and excitedly discussing the number and direction of the geese. Many of these youth do show an interest in being in the bush: "I know a lot of kids they ask me to go to the camp goose hunting, but you can't take them all" (LI, August 21 2008). Niezen (1993) argues, along with Cree leaders, that "the two styles of life – of the bush camps and the communities - should be brought closer together" (Niezen, 1993: 525). This is certainly vital to realizing Cree objectives in development, and explains why documents such as Wemindji's Mission and Vision Statement is so explicit about maintaining these lifestyles and values in negotiating with the South to the greatest degree possible[3] (Cree Nation of Wemindji c, 2009). The next sections describe certain perspectives on development, and how these are integrated into Cree approaches to development in negotiating a mining project on Wemindji's territory.

4.3 Perceptions of Development

The Cree of Eastern James Bay have been among the most visible and vocal First Nations in Canada in terms of disputing and defining visions of development. As an Aboriginal community retaining strong ties to the land and experiencing rapid socio-economic changes (Niezen, 1993, Diamond 2002), the task of defining and approaching development in a way that is loyal to Cree values and beliefs is not an easy one to undertake (Desbiens, 2004). However, the construction of large scale hydroelectric

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[3] The Mission and Vision Statement was elaborated from a series of consultations held in Wemindji by community leaders in 2001 and 2002, where these leaders questioned Wemindji Cree about what makes good government, and what the community should look like in 25 years. These resulted in, among other things, the Mission and Vision Statement, a Principles of Good Government Statement, and Roles and Responsibilities Statement.

facilities and the greater government involvement on the James Bay territory that ensued has required that Cree be able to describe and promote their own objectives with regard to development. Thus through both negotiation and resistance the Cree have manifested their own approaches to development (Scott, 2001; Feit, 2004) which are complex, dynamic and intertwined with the territory which the Cree view as an integral part of their traditions, community and future.

> "This time, however, they chose development. In doing so, they questioned the stereotypes that they have seen in themselves and that others see in them. They have also tried to step across the boundary between standing in the way of development and gaining the means needed to initiate some developments that they can control, not just oppose, stop or suffer." (Craik, 2004: ?)

Discussing and defining development in Wemindji results in multiple visions composed of, and affected by, both endogenously- and exogenously- driven change. To address the objectives of the former, I asked that informants provide a Cree definition or term describing development. Several people responded with definitions referring to physical development "something new" (IE, August 19 2008), or "to build" (LI, August 21 2008), while other definitions addressed themes of community and relationship, including but not limited to Cree:

> "development as growing ourselves, allowing ourselves to grow...in terms of growth, the ability to be a self-contributing members of the community, growth within your own family, being empowered, the ability to contribute...to add value" (OR, August 6 2008)

> "(helping contribute in a youth's life, in their growth, like you're contributing in a way to helping them" (HR, August 19 2008)

> "to develop maybe non-natives and natives, develop relationships" (IP, August 20 2008)

These themes, and the strength of their emphasis on relationships in the community, are apparent in the Wemindji Mission and Vision Statement which states that "whenever we think of developing our Territory, we must also respect our duty to keep the environment – our Land, the waters, and the air – clean and healthy, and to repair any damages we may cause" (Cree Nation of Wemindji c, 2009). Thus social development, as in renewing community bonds with each other and with the land, is important: "the social part...it's there at times, but it's us, us the people that work, that need to work on the social development part as well. That's why we have Gatherings, the canoe program, the activities around the community, that's why we bring people together for social development" (HR, August 19 2008). The Gatherings, program and activities referred to here are community expeditions and celebrations on the territory which play an important role in the continuity and renewal of a Cree society and culture.

Cree strive for their own development objectives in a context that involves relationships with Southern governments and businesses. These governments and businesses have their own objectives with regard to the Eastern James Bay territory, and under the JBNQA they are allotted rights to achieve their objectives through projects – some that require consultation with Cree communities and leadership, and some that do not (see Section 22 of the JBNQA on the environmental and social protection regime). Thus Cree have real, but restricted, influence on the realization of projects originating outside of the Cree communities. This section describes how Cree perceive this influence and its restrictions, which then shapes Cree approaches to development.

Early in my time in Wemindji, one hunter explained to me that "you can't stop development, that's the dynamics" (DI, August 14 2007). This can be interpreted in many ways. After discussing this statement with several people, it was understood as meaning that while some projects can be stopped, particularly those that are most costly and onerous to the Cree, *all* projects can't be stopped. The Cree could not stop the La Grande hydroelectric project despite prolonged efforts (Penn, 1995; Rynard, 2001), thought they are well known for having stood 'in the way of development' (Blaser, Feit and McCrae, 2004) by blocking Hydro-Québec's Great Whale hydroelectric project in the 1990's (Niezen, 1998; Craik, 2004). However, one community member noted that when Hydro-Quebec failed to dam the Great Whale, they turned to the Eastmain and then the Rupert. The impression is that "one part you're winning, you say 'no it's not going to happen', and another part you've lost. When you have the world calling for resources, where are they going to go for those resources? To places that haven't been touched" (Sammy Blackned, August 15 2008).

It is also important to add that Cree do not strive to stop all projects either. Part of living on the land implies sharing with other actors, including Southerners (Feit, 2004). As Wemindji Chief Rodney Mark states, community development involves "accepting certain projects that do take place" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). The goal is not to stand in the way of all development, but to limit impacts, "controlling our own destiny, trying to stave off development in order to have some control" (Sammy Blackned, August 15 2008). For this reason, the process of negotiating and accommodating projects on the territory continues. Brian Craik, Director of Federal Relations for the Grand

Council of the Crees, asks "Is development imposed? For the Crees, they can say that they have had the ability to stop development that they do not want, and they have already done it. They may not always succeed, but their skills and resources are such that their capacity to stop some developments cannot again be ignored by developers." (Craik, 2004: 184²). Craik's statement accurately represents Cree sentiment with regard to external development influences, that is, that "there's not no control, but limited control" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). Another community member states that "I can't really say you can't stop development, it has been stopped before...sometimes you can and sometimes you can't" (HR, August 19 2008). Cree recognize that they do possess a certain influence over the realization of projects in their territory, and seek to use this influence judiciously and with maximum effect. In this way, Cree approaches to development projects involve adopting that best balance the need to protect Wemindji's autonomy in its relations with the South with the need to protect the integrity of the land and the community. The next section examines more closely these diverse Cree approaches to development.

4.4 Towards A "Balanced Approach"

Wemindji Cree approaches to development are centered on community integrity, including the land economy. As Feit states, Cree hunters are "connected far and they have often been connected for long" (Feit, 2004: 95), and take long term approaches to development. Cree realize that proponents of development projects and the projects themselves are far more transient on the land than Cree history on the Eastern James Bay territory: Chief Mark states that "they're going to be here, why not get involved because after they're gone we'll still be here" (Rodney Mark, July 26 2007). Thus they plan on

the long term to protect the community, the land and the traditional knowledge rooted therein, and the objectives that rely on these.

Evidently, maintaining the health of the land is at the heart of Cree approaches to development. As is the case with many indigenous peoples, the Cree concern for the integrity of their traditional territory is "more than a matter of survival: the health of the land and the health of the community are one and the same" (Parlee and Berkes, 2005: 127). One hunter asserts that "there are certain areas we want to be respected" (DI, August 14 2007), a sentiment echoed widely in the community. At the same time, it is clear in the community that protecting all areas is not possible: "if we wanted to protect the whole James Bay area, for sure the government of Canada, the government of Quebec would say no" (HR, August 19 2008). Thus there are limits to the Cree ability to shield the land from use; one participant notes that "if we took the position of being environmentalists period, what would we do as a community?" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). Rather than simply opposing development projects, then, they engage with them without relinquishing an insistence that their land and autonomy be respected.

With this in mind, Cree stress acknowledgement and input in their approaches to development, to negotiating with project proponents. One man notes that "people are not opposed, as long as there is incentive, involvement from an environmental standpoint"; that is, they "don't take a stand against projects, they wait to see if it'll benefit the community. People want to see if there's going to be a collective benefit to the community, not to the individual and not in money (Rodney Mark, July 26 2007). In

discussing various projects and aspects of development with Wemindji Cree, community interests continually surfaced as a foremost concern. The objective is a balanced approach, one that protects relationships on the land as much as possible through building relationships with project proponents. Chief Mark explains that "either we fight this stuff or we say, this is how we're going to maximize the benefits" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008), so they "take all the good parts of what's accommodating us, what will add value...either way, we're going to have a place to live and build something" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). This is indicative of a Cree approach that seeks to step "across the boundary between standing in the way of development and gaining the means needed to initiate some developments that they can control, not just oppose, stop or suffer." (Craik, 2004: 184).

The balanced approach that many Wemindji Cree adopt can seem counterintuitive to some, as it defies simplistic assumptions of Cree motives as being driven by either profit or environmentalism. Feit aptly demonstrates this in describing Cree encounters with the Massachusetts Legislature, whose support the Cree sought in countering a Hydro-Quebec project. The members of the Legislature are unable to comprehend why the Cree would accept some of Hydro-Quebecs projects – and compensation for those projects – but not others including the Great Whale dam (Feit, 2004). According to Feit, this is because Cree decisions are made in function of their impact on longstanding relationships that Cree hunters and community members have, on the land and with the South; it is "an ongoing pursuit essential to maintaining the everyday lives and life projects of the Cree" (Feit, 2004: 107). Feit, however, focused at Cree reactions to and opposition to

development projects, specifically hydroelectricity and forestry. This research focuses on how Wemindji Cree seek to realize their objectives with regard to development through their engagement with the possibility of gold mining.

To add some context to Wemindji's prospective gold mining activities, at the time of my fieldwork, Wemindji was in the process of examining and negotiating the possible establishment of a gold mine on their traditional territory. Simultaneously, Wemindji was in the process of creating the Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji protected area with a team of university researchers. This effort was undertaken in response to long-standing community concerns regarding the integrity of life in the bush, and how activities occurring outside of Cree influence might be affecting that integrity. Both found proponents and opponents in the community, and both came up in discussions of either the potential protected area or the potential mine. It is beyond the scope of this research to compare the level of support that each project enjoyed, and indeed as a student associated with the Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji project I would have been ill-placed to assess such support. Nonetheless, my attendance and experiences at meetings concerning both projects, as well as numerous discussions I had with people around Wemindji regarding these issues, confirmed to me that within the community there existed arguments for and against each project. What's more, several participants in my research very deliberately pointed out to me that similar concerns were expressed with regard to both projects, concerns about Wemindji autonomy, community integrity, and the health of the land – concerns that at least partially synonymous to the (substantial) extent that they overlap. In discussions with me and with other researchers and visitors in the community, these

participants in particular and others strove to ward off essentialist and simplistic assumptions regarding Wemindji Cree approaches to development, assumptions that they are very aware of. They stressed that Wemindji Cree were neither strict environmentalists in the Western sense (see Nadasdy, 2005) nor were they blindly pro-development. Instead they sought to chart a course that would best address the above-stated and interrelated objectives of autonomy, integrity, and ecological soundness, a course that – according to at least some members of the community – could and still may include both conservation objectives and mineral extraction projects.

Members of the Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji Project research team have looked extensively into Cree motivations for and reactions to creating a protected area (Benessaiah et. Al. 2003; Berryman et. Al. 2004; Chu et. Al. 2005; Bussières 2005). In the following section, I describe the mining project and discuss Cree reactions to it and motivations for supporting it, paying attention to the similarities, parallels and overlaps in those reactions that describe Cree approaches and agency.

4.5 The Proposed Goldcorp Mine

Many Cree objectives with regard to development can be explained with reference to maintaining the integrity of land and the cohesiveness and autonomy of the community. The achievement of Cree objectives go hand in hand with both the continuity and integrity of traditional skills and knowledge on the land, and the formal education that allows Cree leaders to negotiate successfully with the South for the autonomy of the community. This is taken into consideration when considering approaches to development projects.

Mining is not a new concept to Cree. Historically, the Cree have extracted and traded for mining materials needed for tools that facilitated hunting and traditional livelihood activities (Paberzyte, 2009). According to several participants in this research, since at least the 1940's, some tallymen have done prospecting on their hunting territories, because they knew there weren't enough resources in the land living as hunters to sustain everyone, and that there were other resources in the land to benefit from (Sammy Blackned, August 15 2008). However, the community has no direct experience with actual mineral extraction in its territory. There are presently no mines on Wemindji's territory, though there are a number of mines in the Eastern James Bay region and on the territories of other Cree communities. The next section examines a potential mining project currently being considered in the community and reveals how Cree describe their objectives in relation to these projects. These descriptions allow a better understanding of these Cree agency and objectives, how they are conceptualized, and what are the challenges in attaining them.

4.5.1 Background

In recent years there has been a veritable 'gold rush' in the Eastern James Bay region, with mining claims skyrocketing and exploration activities intensifying (Banyandera and Houle, 2007). Recent rises in the value of minerals, in addition to increased accessibility of the region as a result of an expansion of the road network, has allowed for an intensification of mining activities all over the territory. The region is rich in mineral resources and the Cree are aware of this, leaders and tallymen alike, though opinions differ on how best to deal with these resources. Wemindji is active in mineral exploration

in the region, and has its own mineral exploration company which has recently helped uncover rare and sought-after purple diamonds on Wemindji's territory by Metalex Ventures Ltd. (Metalex Ventures Ltd., 2008). Wemindji has yet to become involved with a working mine, however.

In 2002, mining exploration activities were underway in VC 29, the easternmost hunting territory attributed to Wemindji. The exploration company had the approval of the tallyman, and exploration activities revealed a substantial quantity of gold. This discovery prompted the community to begin considering the possibility of partnering with the mining company involved, which happens to be a subdivision of Goldcorp. At the present time, Wemindji and Goldcorp are in negotiations, mining activities are still in the exploration stage and no partnership agreements have been signed. However, the interest of a significant proportion of Wemindji's population in the partnership and the prospect of a mine on Wemindji's territory is evident, and has caused some concern both inside and outside of the community. Many people remain divided on how Wemindji should proceed with mining activities, or whether Wemindji should proceed at all, and whether the mine responds sufficiently to Cree objectives to warrant the environmental cost that even the most environmentally-friendly mine can incur.

4.5.2 Mining and Cree Objectives: "what about the environment?" (AU, August 25 2008)

In Cree approaches to development, there are different definitions of balance and what it consists of. Some people are willing to incur a short term cost to the land and traditional livelihoods for the potential of long term enhancement of Cree autonomy which can in turn be converted to resources promoting greater community integrity and environmental

protection, but only as long as the short term cost is small and Cree are involved in managing it. Others regard this cost to be too high to justify potential long term benefits, regardless of the level of Cree involvement. This section looks at the opinions of the latter group, while the next section considers the perspectives of the former group.

One reason to question the value of the potential mine for the community is the level of control that people may have over the question of whether a mine should be constructed. There is no consensus on this. One hunter explained resignedly that "there's nothing we can do about it now" (IS, August 11 2007). Another person considered that the Cree were in some respects overruled: "They didn't really accept the hydro development 30 years ago but it was going to happen. I guess in the JBNQA category 3 has been signed. What can I do on the mines? It's the idea in the JBNQA that the government...is allowed to fund programs like that for exploration" (HR, August 19 2008). However, others feel that the Wemindji Cree could move to stop projects, and express that "if people wanted to stop the mine they could do it" (AU, August 25 2008), implying that people choose not to. It is possible, and indeed likely, that there are different understandings of the degree of control that Cree have over mining exploration and exploitation activities that occur on their territory which helps create this diversity of perspectives.

Another important reason to question the value of the potential mine is the extent of benefits that people will draw from the mine once it's constructed. Some Cree feel that their share in the project needs to be considered thoroughly before decisions are taken: "we don't get anything out of it...we want a piece of the pie. Our people have been

exploited, we don't get anything in return" (DI, August 14 2007). There is concern that people in Wemindji may only receive a pittance, that "the best you can hope for is the people of Wemindji to get some sort of a job out of it, maybe the traplines too they can get a little share, maybe a cabin or two" (IS, August 11 2007). Others feel that the nature of the compensation will not make up for what is lost in terms of the health of the land, that "people are for the mine because of the money, why else would they want to destroy the land? (AU, August 25 2008). This again reflects the Cree concern with maintaining the integrity of the land and Cree culture and tradition rooted therein, and a certain discomfort with compromising that environment regardless of long term benefits.

With the issue of possible collaboration with Goldcorp, environmental health still remains an important consideration for many Cree. Chief Mark mentions that the biggest concern in negotiations was always the environment (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). This concern is the main grounds of objection for those opposing the project. For these people, the benefits of the mine don't outweigh the costs to the land: "I'm not really for mining, it could help people but how long is it going to last, what's going to happen when the mine closes, what about the environment?" (AU, August 25 2008). People don't want the mine because of concern for "the water, the land, the animals" (AP, August 21 2008); as one woman noted, "well, some people don't like mining because of the land, and maybe some toxic will affect the plants and stuff, if the animals eat the plants I'm sure they're going to have problems, and the fish too" (IE, August 19 2008). The health of the land is significant because it assures the continuity of traditional ways of life: "you probably lost something in the mine, you won't be able to hunt in that area" (HR, August

19 2008). The environmental burden of the mine is seen as restricting the land economy, a cost that some find difficult to bear; some choose simply to turn away from it: "when I go to the bush I never think about that mine, I'm just thinking of what I'm going to do" (AP, August 21 2008).

For others, this burden can be counterbalanced through vigilance and care, both by the mining companies and by Cree. Some consider the mining company to be very thorough and cautious when it comes to environment: "they're very careful, they're professionals working there...that's why I like to see you know people from the community go there, especially the elders, go there and see what's going on over there, they'll believe it when they see it with their own eyes, the fairness" (IP, August 20 2008). Also, collaborating with the mining companies gives Cree leverage in that they can't be portrayed as uncooperative. According to Chief Mark, Goldcorp "can't argue that we're anti-mining or anti-development" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008), and this cooperativeness represents negotiating room at the table for Cree. Cree want "reassurance that we want to protect our territory" and "make sure that he community benefits out of this" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008)

4.5.3 Mining and Cree Objectives: "it's a good thing that people can work" (IE, August 19 2008)

Cree judge projects in terms of benefits for the wider community, including other-than-human beings on the land, and the potential mine is no different. As many people in Wemindji understand it, the mine offers a number of potential benefits that can be perceived as helpful to the community in the long term, not just in terms of financial benefits but also in terms of the education and autonomy. This education and autonomy,

in addition to widening horizons for Cree youth, could also eventually support and strengthen the Cree case for protecting the land. This section examines the reasons that people have for supporting the mine, and how these are reconciled with the possible loss, at least temporary and partial loss, of certain land-based abilities.

As mentioned earlier, Cree recognize that taking part in life on the land requires sharing, with other-than-human beings on the land, and also with non-Cree. Some feel that if Cree could, and were in fact required to share the waters and land for hydroelectric development, then they should also have the right to choose whether and how to share the land for mining (Sammy Blackned, August 15 2008). To be made to share one resource and forbidden to share another seems like another affront on Cree autonomy – for Cree, the decision must be theirs. If the decision to participate in mining is made, however, some informants pointed out that this could be empowering for the community in several respects, and that could be a springboard to launch the community into other forms of development that it chooses (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). While community income from federal and provincial governments is prescribed and restricted, the income from the mine can be invested into projects of the community's choosing. For instance, there are plans to invest a substantial proportion of the income into education programs for Cree youth to provide new sets of skills and broaden the range of possible employment for them (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008; Beverly Mayappo, August 21 2008; IE, August 19 2008). This is seen as adding significantly to Cree aptitudes, and compensating in some measure for the environmental costs of the mine.

Employment is an important consideration in weighing the costs and benefits of the potential mine. The mine proposes to employ a substantial proportion of Wemindji's population, and with that employment comes income, training and skills. Chief sees employment as an important aspect of participation in community life, "the opportunity to be with people, to interact, to make friends, to add value but also to be a major contributor to the community" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). A number of people in Wemindji, even those who are at best ambivalent about the mine, recognize the value of employment, that "it's a good thing that people can work" (IE, August 19 2008). One hunter notes that "sometimes I hear people encouraging their children to go out there and work instead of hanging around here and everything" (IP, August 20 2008). Since employment is seen as empowering, so – to some extent – is the mine.

Finally, some people support the mine because it is seen as an alternative use for resources on the land where traditional activities are no longer possible or prevalent. One Cree hunter also interested in mining activities justified his stance by saying that for graduates from formal schooling, life on the land is difficult, and mining is the way of the future (IP, August 19 2007). He goes on to state that "we didn't want to stop this because you know, the mine there, we knew we were going to have benefits from that, that's why we didn't want to fight it" (IP, August 20 2008). Others have expressed interest in mining activities, on the grounds that the project offers employment and other potential benefits for the community, which in turn would help enhance Wemindji's autonomy.

Ultimately, all Cree informants for this research seem to assess the mine in its ability to enhance Cree capacity to attain objectives, with special concern for land-based skills, education and employment. The assessments that people make are varied and this is somewhat problematic, as any decision taken will impact the community as a whole. Endorsing the mine will significantly restrict some land-based activities. Opposing the mine could mean passing up opportunities to enhance employment and education in the community, themselves also important aptitudes. Chief Mark describes the community's stance as "we're not pro-mining but there's mining taking place...let's use this for where we want to go 20 or 30 years from now" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008). The approach of the community aims to reveal "how we can benefit or participate in this process of development...this could really add to the community as a whole" (Rodney Mark, August 6 2008).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the roots of Cree objectives in and approaches to development in Cree knowledge and cultural ecology, as well as in the rate of social, economic, political, ecological and cultural change in Wemindji. Throughout this change, many of the values associated with traditional Cree life have been sustained and manifest themselves in Cree approaches to development projects such as the proposed gold mine. While there exist a range of opinions regarding whether and to what degree a potential gold mine could be advantageous for the community, many of these opinions are rooted in a fundamental concern for the integrity of the community including other-than-human beings on the land, integrity which is central to Cree agency. Refusing a mine is seen as advantageous by some as it assures that the land remains healthy, thus enabling the continuity of the

hunting way of life. This continuity is a pillar of Cree life that strengthens community traditions and knowledges with which Cree confront change and affirm their identity and autonomy, among the central objectives cited by informants. Others see a potential mine as a benefit for the community as the employment and financial gains to be made from the mine would empower Cree, particularly in areas such as training and education which might, according to some, strengthen them in their interactions with the South. This in turn facilitates the achievement of a wider range of Cree objectives – chief Mark referred to the mine as a possible springboard from which Wemindji could propel itself into a better, more autonomous future, autonomy which could help sustain Cree social structures related to the hunting way of life. At the root of both positions is a concern for these Cree social structures and their continuity, which Cree approaches to development strive to assure. The next chapter explores how these Cree approaches to development and concern for social structures compares to capabilities approach perceptions of agency in development.

Chapter Five: Agency and Structures of Living Together in Cree Approaches to Development and Sen's Capabilities Approach

In human development circles, it is widely accepted that the success of development is closely related to its ability to enhance well-being and agency. However, this objective, while hard to dispute, is more difficult to define than it would seem at first and the definition is relevant to how we assess the impacts of development. What is the agency that is referred to? What is the scope at which it should be considered, at the level of the individual, or the community, or both? Whose agency must be enhanced, and why? Far from abstractions, these questions have real implications in the ways we define and describe capabilities, and the ways we approach and evaluate development in a given context, in this case the Wemindji Cree context.

This chapter looks at the Wemindji Cree approaches to development described in chapter four in seeking to understand how they describe and understand agency and development in their community, and promotes an interchange between these understandings and those of Amartya Sen's capabilities approach. Wemindji Cree cultural ecology and their related approaches to development reveal an understanding of agency as strongly interrelated through tradition, custom, and values that emphasize the agency of and kinship with other than human beings. This understanding undergirds approaches to development that demonstrate a concern for interrelated agency and abilities, where by 'interrelated' are included other-than-human beings on the land. The approaches may seem diverse, but

what connects them is this underlying awareness of interrelated agency. In contrast, while Sen acknowledges that agency is embedded in social environments and economic contexts (Zimmermann, 2006), he does not acknowledge that agency is interrelated. By interrelated is meant mutually constituted through interaction, through the "process of reciprocal constitution and transformation of environment and agency in the course of action" (Zimmermann, 2006: 475). Moreover, Sen's concept of agents is limited to human beings, with other-than-human beings having only an instrumental role in the realization of human agency. In the Wemindji Cree context, where other-than-human beings also have agency, the definition of agent needs to be redefined with implications for the realization of Cree agency. The discussion and debate surrounding the potential goldmine, which highlights the Wemindji Cree concern for the agency of other-than-human beings and for Cree structures of living together, illustrates why the limitations of Sen's concept of agency are so relevant to the description and realization of Cree capabilities. These contrasts and contradictions require attention if Sen's approach is to be applicable in the Wemindji context.

In this chapter I will begin by summarizing Cree understandings of agency based primarily on the previous chapter. I will then examine how Sen describes agency in the capabilities approach, and move on to examine the limitations of Sen's description in terms of acknowledging the interrelatedness of agency, and the role of other-than-human beings as agents. I will then turn to the concept of structures of living together as a means of more accurately describing agency and its context in Wemindji, and as a concept that could usefully dialogue with Sen's capabilities approach in order to help it address

Wemindji Cree agency and resulting approaches to development. Finally I will reflect on the implications of these findings for the application of the capabilities approach in Cree and other indigenous contexts.

5.1 Cree Concept of Agency

In the first sections of the previous chapter, I described how from the Cree perspective, the people of Wemindji share their traditional lands with other-than-human beings who are sentient and aware of the words and actions of Cree. Animals were once able to communicate with people, and they know of the hunters' activities (Berkes, 1999), as do the spiritual beings that inhabit the land. To the Cree, these other-than-human beings are persons with whom relationships of respect and reciprocity must be maintained. Failure to maintain such relationships could result in the animals making themselves less available to the hunter, a critical and negative development in a hunting society – the disappearance of caribou from Cree lands for several generations was blamed on such a failure (Berkes, 1999). The agency of the hunters, therefore, is enmeshed in this web of relationships which much be continuously renewed if the hunt is to be successful. A hunter's agency freedom in the hunt is, according to Cree, in large part dictated by the extent he engages in practices and behaviours that are conducive to good relationships with animals. From the Cree perspective, this agency could not be isolated from its context (Tanner, 1979).

Similarly, respectful and reciprocal relationships are valued among human members of the community. Historically, relationships within and between small hunting groups were a safety net for when a particular group of hunters came across hard times (Morantz,

1986; Preston, 2002). Today the same preoccupation for collective wellness and agency endures, as is evident in the community's Mission and Vision Statement (2009). The renewal of traditional knowledges and values plays an important role in sustaining community agency. As Otto and Pederson state, "not only do traditions allow social actors to define norms and articulate claims to land and other resources, but, conversely, they also function to define or articulate social agency...traditions are thus used to define a group identity and to invoke a sense of agency" (Otto and Pederson, 2005: 34-5). One's agency freedom to absorb and participate in Cree culture and tradition is reliant upon the relationships that generate and reproduce it. When speaking of agency in the hunt and relationships with other-than-human beings on the land, as when speaking of the agency of and amongst Cree themselves, " freedom often depends on first satisfying one's own personal obligations towards others...In other words, a person's capability to impute to himself/herself the responsibility of fulfilling obligations is a precondition for real freedom" (Ballet, Dubois and Mahieu, 2007: 187).

Cree see their agency in development also in the context of the relationships they have with Southern governments, agencies and businesses that are active on the Eastern James Bay territory (Feit, 2004). Through the JBNQA primarily but also through continued interaction in the hydroelectric, mining and forestry industries and elsewhere, these relationships have helped form the institutions, agreements and conditions within which Cree agency in development is exercised (Niezen, 1998; Scott; 2001; Feit, 2004). The choices Cree make and why they make them cannot be disentangled from the specific institutional conditions in which they find themselves. In Cree interactions with

government and developers, as shown through the Cree experience with the JBNQA, there are relationships that have involved imbalances of power that have shaped Cree agency, and perceptions of agency. An understanding of Cree choices and approaches to development cannot be considered outside of this socio-historical context that shaped them.

The discussion in Wemindji surrounding the potential mining project brings these different aspects of Cree agency to the fore. Both proponents and opponents expressed concerns regarding the continuation of hunting traditions in the area surrounding the mine. Cree land management strategies feature relationships of reciprocity with agents rather than ownership of things (Scott 1986; Brown et. al., in press), with those relationships involving animals and elements as well as other human beings. Serious damage to this social fabric through mining would be damaging to the landscape and traditions rooted therein, and by extension to Cree agency which encompasses other-than-human beings. Additionally, however, both opponents and proponents of the project also expressed concerns with regard to education and employment in the community. These are seen as important tools strengthening the ability of Cree to negotiate successfully with the South in order to increase Cree autonomy and agency, which in turn could be put at the service of efforts to protect Wemindji's land from the more onerous impacts of development. The question for some is whether the trade-off of choosing to mine would ultimately increase or decrease Cree agency on Wemindji's land. My purpose in the previous section was not to help answer this question, a task only the community can

accomplish, but rather to examine how its facets reveal different aspects of Cree agency that play into Wemindji's approaches to development.

The agency that Cree have in development is profoundly related to the environment it occurs in – social, institutional, ecological, political or otherwise. The Cree perspective on agency and freedom seems to parallel that of Georg Simmel when he states that freedom is not a condition of the subject but "a relation considered from the standpoint of the subject" (Zimmermann, 2006: 477; citing Simmel, 1992). The relationships that are the environment for Cree agency are fluid and changing, with real impacts for agency, whether those relationships be on the land, in the community or with developers. As Feit notes, with reference to the Cree community of Waswanipi, Cree continually strive to renew and improve these relationships in their approaches to development because:

> ...it (is) necessary to continue to seek relationships, even when they are not working, because only with such relationships can the animals and the land be effectively cared for and respected. To cut off relationships on an enduring basis in frustration would affect not only what can be in the future; it would affect the expression of relationships now. Cutting off communication denies the relationships one already has, and expresses a thoughtlessness and disrespect" (Feit, 2004: ?)

Cree recognize their agency as being not only located in, but also as at least partially constituted of, this web of relationships, and many of their objectives in development address the need to maintain those relationships to strengthen Cree agency.

5.2 Sen's Concept of Agency

In the conceptual framework, I briefly described Sen's capabilities approach as a human development approach intent on broadening the scope of development beyond narrow economic indicators related to utility, this in order to include other considerations such as

freedom, agency and well-being. Here I will elaborate more on the role of agency in capability formulation and achievement and thus in development according to Sen, relying mainly on his *Development as Freedom* (Sen, 1999). *Development as Freedom* is one of Sen's most in-depth descriptions of the capabilities approach, and Stewart and Deneulin (2002) describe as coming close to describing Sen's contribution to development thinking.

As the title of *Development as Freedom* suggests, Sen perceives development as the expansion of freedoms that people have. In this light, "the success of a society is to be evaluated...primarily by the substantive freedoms that the members of that society enjoy" (Sen, 1999: 18). Freedom is seen as linked to agency achievement, which is a crucial component of development as it "enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world" (ibid, 18). Sen describes agency achievement as "the pursuit of all the objectives that one has reason to promote" (Sen, 1993: 37), and as a major factor in improving people's lives: "understanding the agency role is...central to recognizing people as responsible persons: not only are we well or ill, but we also act or refuse to act, and can choose to act one way rather than another" (Sen, 1999: 191). In discussing women and social change Sen draws attention to the extent that women's agency, as expressed through factors such as literacy, education, ownership rights and ability to work and earn an income outside the home, affect and improve women's well-being (Sen, 1999: 191). Agency freedom, therefore, is a necessary to women's fullest participation in development, as is the case with all social groups. Emphasizing the role of agency in development also draws attention to the dynamic nature of participants in

development, clarifying that the subjects of development are actors rather than patients. Recognizing this dynamic nature can affect how one formulates, targets, and assesses both development efforts and achievements (ibid, 137).

Sen's concern with agency is intertwined with his concern for well-being, since these are two cornerstones of the quality of life that development is seeking to enhance (Gasper, 2002). For Sen's capabilities approach, well-being and agency are interrelated in that "a person's agency is usually geared partly to promoting their own well-being, and failure to achieve agency goals can promote frustration and thus reduce well-being. Indeed this interdependency is central to the logic of the capability approach" (Gore, 1997: 240). For Sen, a person's well-being achievement can be described as "an evaluation of the 'wellness' of the person's state of being" (Sen, 1993: 36). Well-being consists and is limited to those factors that benefit the agent. Other-regarding activity is admitted as being significant for the agent, but here Sen distinguishes between activity that benefits the agent and activity that doesn't. Sen labels the former sympathy, and integrates it into assessments of well-being. Other-regarding activity that doesn't benefit the agent is labelled commitment, and is not integrated into well-being assessment but is integrated into agency assessment (Sen, 1993; Robeyns, 2003). Therefore, well-being and agency are considered by Sen to be overlapping, and mutually influential, but not identical sets (Gasper, 2002).

Sen's focus on the agency of individuals as contributing members of the public in social, economic and political spheres (Sen, 1999: 19) draws attention to the active nature of

participants in development, and how this can affect the achievements versus the attempts at development (ibid, 137). Individual agency is deeply affected by surrounding social, political, economic, cultural and environmental conditions and Sen acknowledges this: "there is a deep complementarity between individual agency and social arrangements. It is important to give simultaneous recognition to the centrality of individual freedom *and* to the force of social influences on the extent and reach of individual freedom" (Sen, 1999: xii). Sen notes, however, that while sources of an inability to be happy can arise from within one's own life or from outside of it, he makes the case for including only those factors within one's own life in assessments of living standards (Sen, 1993: 38). That is, while well-being and agency are understood in their contexts, in Sen's capabilities approach they are evaluated on a case by case, individual by individual basis. Martha Nussbaum, another strong advocate of the capabilities approach, supports this stance:

> The account we strive for [i.e. the capability approach] should preserve liberties and opportunities for each and every person, taken one by one, respecting each of them as an end, rather than simply as the agent or supporter of the ends of others. … We need only notice that there is a type of focus on the individual person as such that requires no particular metaphysical position, and no bias against love or care. It arises naturally from the recognition that each person has just one life to live, not more than one (Nussbaum, 2000: 55-56)

While the influence and limitations that social structures represent for individual agency is acknowledged, still Sen's work seems to shy from acknowledging the possibility of social or community capability or interrelated agency. So the focus on individual agency remains in Sen's work.

Another aspect of Sen's take on agency that relates to this last point with regard to focusing on agency at the level of the individual, is to specify that Sen's focus is on *human* agency. Alkire describes Sen's take on agency as "'human agency' represents people's ability to act on behalf of goals that matter to them" (Alkire, 2005: 218). Other-than-human agency has not yet entered the equation. While some theorists of the capabilities approach, most notably Martha Nussbaum, have begun examining the possibility of considering the need to integrate other-than-human beings into the capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2007), Sen still has not moved to consider this, or to consider other-than-human agency in capabilities assessments. He does acknowledge the necessity of a certain degree of environmental integrity in order for development to be successful:

> Seeing development as enhancement of human freedom involves diverse concerns, but incorporating expansion of social opportunities and the quality of life, which are integrally dependent on ecology and environmental preservation, must be among the central concerns in development thinking. (Sen, 2006)

For Sen, environmental integrity seems to have an instrumental value in realizing human agency, freedoms and development, but seems to have no other role in relating to, influencing or contributing to human agency (Sen, 2004; Sen, 2006).

Sen's contribution to development thinking, and the nature and role of agency in development, can hardly be underestimated. The capabilities approach has contributed significantly to improvements in development through shifting the focus away from utility-based measures such as GNP and towards objectives that are more inclusive of the multiple dimensions of people's lives, and thus better able to address and improve them.

One of the great strengths of Sen's work is his openness to new measures, means and other ways of assessing and improving development. In his appraisal of the successes of the first decade of human development, Sen acknowledges that "unfreedoms in the world come in many different forms...the world itself is changing even as we look at it and report on it. It is this diverse and dynamic reality on which the enterprise of human development has to concentrate. It is a stream, not a stagnant pool" (Sen, 2000: 23). The deliberate vagueness and openness of the capabilities approach is a nod to this dynamic reality and an attempt to adjust to it while remaining open to critiques and to change. In that spirit, several critics have stepped forward with ideas on how the capabilities approach may be used or improved, sometimes drawing on indigenous communities for inspiration (Kanstrup-Jensen, 2003; Schlosberg and Carruthers, forthcoming). The nature and role of agency in the capabilities approach is no exception (Stewart and Deneulin, 2002; Gasper, 2002; Zimmermann, 2006; Deneulin, 2008). The following sections explore two of these critiques in order to contextualize the comparison of capabilities approach and Cree conceptions of agency and development.

5.3 Agency and Interrelatedness

Sen's concept of agency, described above, has contributed significantly to the capabilities approach and its role in refocusing development on human freedoms. However, several critics argue that this conception remains limited, and limiting in terms of its ability to contribute to a fuller understanding of development. The critique of the capabilities approach as being too individualistic has been a recurrent one, with agency playing a significant role in the discussion (see Gore, 1997; Gasper, 2002; Stewart and Deneulin, 2002; De Herdt and Deneulin, 2007). Here I explore the reasons for adopting a concept of

agency based on that explained by Zimmermann (2006), that is, less as a property of an individual positioned in an environment with pre-determined features she has little control over, and more as an interactive and dynamic process through which agency and environment are mutually transformed (Zimmermann, 2006: 475).

In Sen's work, capabilities are rooted in agency freedom and achievement, with a focus on individual agency. As Deneulin (2008) explains, "by situating the evaluative space of quality of life in the capability space, Sen's capability approach implies that individuals are to be considered as the very subjects of development" (Deneulin, 2008: 107). However, individual agency does not exist in a vacuum but is situated in a context which is formative to it, namely, the community. As Deneulin states, "community is pre-existent to individuals. It is what gives meaning to the life of its members and gives them identity, in the sense that it is only from their attachment to communities that human beings draw their moral development, their identity, and the meaning of their life" (Deneulin, 2008: 120). Sen acknowledges the importance of this social world to the extent that he underlines the importance of institutions and social arrangements to the individual's agency. Still for Sen, the social world seems to be significant only insofar as it affects individuals and is not in itself significant (Deneulin, 2008: 108). This creates a dualism between this social world and the individual that is not tenable in practice.

Instead, as Cleaver argues, agency is best "conceptualized as relational; it does not exist in a vacuum but is exercised in a social world in which structure shapes the opportunities and resources available to individuals, in which appropriate ways of being and behaving

are not simply a matter of individual choice" (Cleaver, 2007: 226). This is relevant to understanding indigenous contexts, where agency "often depends on first satisfying one's own personal obligations towards others. It is this capability of first fulfilling one's obligations that subsequently generates the capability of choosing what one wants rather than vice versa" (Ballet, Dubois and Mahieu, 2007: 187). In other words, one participates and fulfills one's obligations in the social world because much of one's capabilities are inextricably bound to this world. Drawing from the work of Dewey and Simmel, Zimmermann (2006) argues that agency is not static but instead represents an interactive relationship with one's environment, including community. This implies that the realization of agency is a process carried out in relation to one's environment. As Zimmermann points out, an understanding of freedom that "engages agency and environment in a dynamic and interactive way" (Zimmermann, 2006: 478) also raises the question of the extent to which environment contributes to the formulation of capabilities and agency goals (see also Stewart and Deneulin, 2002).

The previous chapter's examination of Wemindji Cree approaches to development supports a concept of agency that is constituted of fluid and changing relationships within the social environment. Wemindji's Mission and Vision Statement describes Wemindji Eeyouch as being "the children of the Creator, and we respect this relationship, and the duties it places upon us to maintain harmonious, happy and healthy relations among ourselves, with other people, and with all living things" (Cree Nation of Wemindji c, 2009). Among Wemindji Cree, agency is located in the realization of these duties. To give an example, traditionally leadership amongst Wemindji Cree was earned through

maintaining respectful relationships with other Cree and other-than-human beings which ensured that the hunt yielded sustenance for the people, and those that failed in these relationships lost their positions of leadership (Berkes, 1986). Today, while the system for electing leaders may have changed, the criteria for selecting them remain similarly focused on promoting respectful relationships that promote autonomy and realize agency in Wemindji. Thus, the agency of the individual can hardly be considered outside of the relationships in, the social fabric of the community.

The issue of how best to approach a potential mine also highlights the need for a broader concept of agency in order to fully situate and grasp the impacts of this particular development project. The previous chapter discusses two possible categories of impacts the potential mine could have, one environmental, the other economic. Certainly, each individual Cree would be affected by changes to the environment at or surrounding this site[4], as they would be affected by changes to the employment situation in the community brought about by mining. These would impact individual Cree agency. But the impacts would also transcend the individual and affect the social, political and cultural fabric in which that agency is located, what Deneulin calls "structures of living together" (Deneulin, 2008). A definition of agency that cannot take this fabric into account cannot fully encompass Wemindji Cree agency and approaches to development.

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[4] Despite that the site on which the mine may be built is on one of the most distant hunting territories from the community, many Wemindji Cree have ties to this site and the hunting territory through family and history.

5.4 Agents, Agency and Other-than-Human Beings

The previous section details the work of certain critics of the capabilities approach that explore the concept of agency and argue for the need to broaden it to include the social world. By social world, what is most often implied by these critics are political institutions, social environments, economic conditions, cultural traditions, and so forth. The other-than-human environment remains unseen at the outskirts of this discussion of agency, although elsewhere attempts are being made to begin to integrate it into the capabilities approach (see Nussbaum, 2007; Holland, 2008 for examples). Nonetheless, evidence for the lives of many indigenous communities including Wemindji indicates that there is a need to further explore the role of the other-than-human environment in agency, and by extension in development. Here I argue that amongst certain indigenous peoples, including Wemindji Cree, the social world in which agency exists includes other-than-human beings which are intrinsically important to human agency.

The environment has not been a chief focus of Sen's work, but nor has it completely escaped his attention. In a valedictory address delivered in Bangalore, India, Sen emphasizes that efforts directed at conservation of the environment on the one hand, and development to reduce poverty on the other, are not opposing but rather two elements of a necessary movement towards the realization of human freedoms and capabilities (Sen, 2006). Sen states that "environmental issues are inescapable parts of the battle against poverty... there are good reasons to see development and ecology as mutually dependent ideas" (Sen, 2006: 3). Elsewhere, Sen has elaborated on the role of citizenship in environmental conservation, not merely to ensure human standards of living but also for

less tangible but not less significant reasons such as values, and a willingness to ensure that future generations also have the opportunity to breathe clean air (Sen, 2004). However, Sen attributes a primarily, sometimes exclusively, instrumental role to the environment as a means of assuring the achievement of human freedom (Sen, 2006). While emphasizing that many fundamental and essential human capabilities are reliant upon the integrity of environmental systems, still according to Sen other-than-human beings have no agency and Sen makes no mention of them having intrinsic value, nor is an explicit connection made between the agency of human beings and other-than-human beings. He seems to praise the willingness to preserve species for their own sake, but provides few arguments for doing so beyond their role in attaining human freedoms and capabilities.

Writing about the links between environmental justice, indigenous peoples and interrelated, Schlosberg and Carruthers (forthcoming) give good reason to expand the consideration of people's agency to include ecological communities, and this in more than an instrumental role as Holland (2008) argues for. They also argue for consideration of community integrity and capabilities in the capabilities approach as well as that of the individual, stating that communities as well as individuals are victims of environmental injustice: "in order to tighten the fit between the capabilities approach and environmental justice, particularly for indigenous cases, we must expand the frame to address the capabilities and functioning not just of individuals, but of communities as well" (Schlosberg and Carruthers, forthcoming). This is particularly true, they argue, in the case of indigenous communities, where community life is such a focal point and a key to the

reproduction of indigenous culture and traditions. For the Navajo, Hopi, Hualapai people that Schlosberg and Carruthers (forthcoming) discuss, environmental health and other-than-human beings play an integral role in their communities. Like the Cree, the Navajo, Hopi and Hualapai peoples of Northern Arizona believe themselves to be bound to the San Francisco Peaks they hold to be sacred, and to the spirits that inhabit those mountains, spirits with their own agency that can interact with people and impact their lives. When a ski resort located on the Peaks proposed to make snow from reclaimed sewage water, these Navajo, Hopi and Hualapai peoples protested on the grounds that the environmental impacts on the sacred mountains would be too great, and would jeopardize cultural practices and traditions at the heart of their peoples. Navajo President Joe Shirley expressed the reasons for protest:

> "The San Francisco Peaks is the essence of who we are. It is a Holy place of worship that was placed in the West for our sacred prayers and worship. It is … the Holy house of our sacred deities whom we pray to and give our offerings…. It is also a place where we gather and collect our sacred herbs for healing and our way of life ceremonies yearlong… The United States of America will commit genocide by allowing the desecration of the essence of our way of life." (Schlosberg and Carruthers, forthcoming; citing Shirley, 2004)

These comments, and the resistance mounted by these and other Aboriginal peoples in response to threats to their traditional lands, indicate an understanding of community that extends beyond human beings, and an understanding of their own agency as bound to that community and its integrity. They give reason to consider, in indigenous contexts and beyond as well, the extent to which the communities in which agency are rooted are bound to and inclusive of the ecological communities and to other-than-human beings that comprise it.

The previous discussion of Wemindji Cree demonstrates that similar to the Aboriginal peoples that Schlosberg and Carruthers (forthcoming) describe, the Cree acknowledge the agency of animals, and traditional skills such as hunting and trapping demand respect for animal agency. This acknowledgement poses challenging questions to the understanding and assessment of agency in the Cree context, and elsewhere as well. For Cree, ecological communities are not just the context enabling their own agency, but composed of actors with their own agendas which are responsive to the words and actions of people. In Wemindji, the agency of these other-than-human actors is crucially important, and strongly related to that of the Cree themselves. If the ecological communities are part of the social world in which Cree agency is situated, and these communities are composed of members with their own agency linked to that of Cree, then assessing agency in this context requires attention to ecological communities and other-than-human beings as intrinsically significant.

5.5 Structures of Living Together

In the above section, I have established that the agency of Cree is interrelated and can best be understood and evaluated in the context of these relationships. Part of maintaining these relationships of living together, involves the formation of social structures that mediate between individuals, what Charles Taylor calls irreducibly social goods. Irreducibly social good emerge from and are part of social life, in examples such as institutions, traditions of language; they are also described as "objects of value that cannot be decomposed into individual occurrences...(that) exist beyond individuals but are endorsed by them" (Deneulin, 2006: 55-56). In the literature on the capabilities approach, Severine Deneulin has employed Ricoeur's expression of 'structures of living

together' to describe the ways in which individual lives relate to and create irreducibly social goods, and are therefore "integral components of the substantive freedoms of individuals" (Deneulin, 2006: 55). I explore this concept of structures of living together and its usefulness in understanding Cree concepts of agency and approaches to development in the next section.

The development of the concept of structures of living together is derived from the importance of institutional or social arrangements for improving freedom and agency, but also from Sen's reluctance to integrate these arrangements, to look at development with a supra-individual subject (Deneulin, 2008). Yet as Gore (1997) and also Stewart and Deneulin (2002) argue, the ability to understand and enable the development of individuals hinges on those institutional or social arrangements through which individuals come to formulate values and decisions. These arrangements can take the form of irreducibly social goods. Irreducibly social goods emerge from social life but exist independently of individuals; to give examples, "a social norm would not exist if individuals had not endorsed that norm in regulating their actions, a particular form of ethnicity would not exist if individuals had not born the characteristic feature of that ethnicity" (Deneulin, 2006: 56). The term 'structures of living together' describes these irreducibly social goods and their relationships to individuals in a society. Structures of living together are:

> ...Those structures which belong to a particular historical community, which are the very conditions for individual lives to flourish, and which are irreducible to interpersonal relations yet are bound up with these. Those structures of living together have an autonomy existence and cannot be

reduced to the features of the individuals living in those structures (Stewart and Deneulin, 2002: 7)

Structures of living together call attention to the fact that irreducibly social goods emerge from the reality of people living together. They are not inherently good, and Deneulin notes that some such structures represent oppression and inequality in the societies in which they exist (Deneulin, 2008). However, she argues, whether good or bad, development cannot be fully assessed or enabled without attention to such structures.

In order to illustrate the significance of structures of living together for agency and development, Deneulin (2008) uses the example of the development successes of Costa Rica. Deneulin argues that Costa Rica's successes are built on a variety of structures of living together that were formed over the years throughout the nation's history and that underlie some of its main institutions. She cites, for instance, the imposition of universal primary education for boys and girls in urban and rural areas, and the development of a social security system are structures rooted in Costa Rica's social democratic identity (Deneulin, 2008: 114). These acts contributed to "the strong collective capability that belongs to Costa Rican society as a whole beyond individual reach and control, and explains the high levels of human well-being that Costa Ricans enjoy" (Deneulin, 2008: 114). Deneulin goes on to point out that the development and significance of such structures cannot be properly appreciated through a focus on individual impacts: "assessing development on the basis of individual capabilities, or irreducibly social goods that are of intrinsic value to individual lives such as the capability to maintain one's language and culture...would miss an important component of the development process

itself" (Deneulin, 2008: 114). I now turn to the example of development approaches in Wemindji to illustrate this point.

Making sense of diverse Wemindji Cree approaches to development, that reach for both conservation and mineral extraction can be challenging. It was certainly challenging for members of the Massachusetts legislature, who questioned the motives of a Cree leadership fighting to halt one Hydro-Québec project when they had accepted compensation for another project (Feit, 2004). Trying to articulate diverse approaches to and perspective on development often simultaneously is no easy task. However, people community are quick to emphasize the parallels in these articulations. With the mine as with other projects, Cree were most interested in which activities would support or constrict agency, and the social structures that interact with and support that agency. Opponents to and proponents of the mine often asked the same questions: would Cree hunting, trapping and fishing still be permitted? What impacts would the mine have on the land, animals and waterways? Could other industries such as outfitting still be pursued around the mine? How does the mine benefit Cree and/or non-Aboriginal people? What kind of employment would the mine offer the community? How might the project contribute to the advancement of the objectives of the community? These questions paraphrase concerns expressed by Cree regarding the mine, and demonstrate important parallels in Cree approaches to projects.

I argue that these parallels are derived from Cree awareness of interrelated agency and structures of living together, and objectives with regard to development that seek to

sustain these. Development requires that Cree negotiate between the duty and advantages in maintaining respectful, reciprocal relationships with developers and take advantage of beneficial projects so as to maximize their agency in this arena, while also seeking to maintain ecological and social integrity and the agency embedded therein. The Cree leadership strive to mediate between these two concerns so as to maximize positive outcomes for Cree (Scott, 2001; Coon Come, 2004; Craik, 2004). The decisions made in this mediation strive to support Cree agency and structures of living together, which themselves emerge from a community that is ever changing in its relationships with development. A fuller understanding of Cree approaches to development therefore requires attention not only to individual agency, but to the communities and structures of living together through which agency is formed and mediated. Agency is relational, and as Deneulin states, "community is pre-existent to individuals. It is what gives meaning to the life of its members and gives them identity, in the sense that it is only from their attachment to communities that human beings draw their moral development, their identity, and the meaning of their life" (Deneulin, 2008: 120).

5.6 Revising Agency in Sen's Capabilities Approach

How well can the conceptions of agency in the capabilities approach describe the Cree situation? As Deneulin describes, Sen believes that "the freedom of individuals are the ultimate purpose of development, and individual agency – the ability of individuals to act and shape their own destiny – is the ultimate means to address and overcome human deprivation" (Deneulin, 2006: 54). Sen's conception of agency freedom is as a value, something that can be measured at the level of the individual. Social arrangements and

institutions are linked to individual agency, but in an instrumental rather than intrinsic sense. Gore states that in Sen's perspective, social context can affect in what circumstances a person is able to appear in public without shame, to use a favourite example of Sen's, but what matters to Sen is the ability and not the context (Gore, 1997: 245). Critics of Sen, including Gore, have argued that the two, the ability and the context, are inseparable (Gore, 1997; Zimmermann, 2006; Deneulin, 2008). Drawing from Herbert Blumer's work, Zimmermann states that "the rejection of positivist epistemology goes hand in hand with a proper understanding of the agency–structure relation and with a qualitative and ethnographic approach that grasps action as being situated and in process" (Zimmermann, 2006: 477). Put otherwise, in the case of the Cree of Wemindji, agency is located in – and in some respects through – networks of relationships with other Cree, non-Cree governments, developers and agencies, and other-than-human beings on the land. The agency freedom that Cree have is embedded in those relationships.

Cree discussions of development and its impacts on Wemindji describes such embedded agency. In Wemindji, one participates and fulfills one's obligations in the social world because much of one's freedom and objectives, both formulation and achievement, are inextricably bound to this world. In the previous chapter, I described how Cree speak of the land and its community of living things as an integral part of their lives, and indispensable in the continuity of Cree traditions and culture. When I asked one respondent why it is important to her continue these traditions and ensure transmission of the skills involved in living on the land, and the renewal of all the relationships that this entails, she answered simply "because we are Crees" (IE, August 19 2008). For this

woman and for others in Wemindji, being Cree – the agency freedom to be Cree – is virtually indistinguishable from the ability to participate in such activities, engaging in such relationships. This demonstrates the validity of those critiques of Sen's concept of agency who argue that the freedom he is seeking to deliver through agency cannot be disengaged from the context in which it occurs, at least not in Wemindji. In the Cree context, and possibly in other indigenous communities, agency and freedom can only be understood and assessed in its context.

The implications of these conclusions for Sen's assessments of agency, and also of development, give some cause for consideration. Sen's human development and capabilities approach is certainly closer to being able to articulate and enable Wemindji Cree objectives in development than many earlier theories might have been. However, the Wemindji Cree understandings of development discussed here, and their context in a worldview that places great emphasis on structures of living together that include other-than-human beings, suggest that Sen's account of agency might need to adjust and expand in order to accommodate the Cree perspective. To deny the relational nature of – and the role of other-than-human beings to – Cree agency would be to deny vital aspects of that agency. Such potential misrepresentation does not lend itself to the support of Cree objectives in development that Sen, and other practitioners of human development, obviously care deeply about. However, an expanded account of agency that takes the findings of this research into consideration would facilitate the understanding, articulation and realization of Cree objectives with regard to development.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Compatibility between development theory and approaches on the one hand, and indigenous goals and values on the other hand, has been a growing concern within the field of development studies but also more narrowly among theorists and practitioners of the capabilities approach (Human Development and Capabilities Association, 2009). Acknowledging indigenous perspectives and enabling indigenous objectives in development requires that development theorists and practitioners examine and re-examine their approaches in order to suitably address and help bring about the preferred futures of indigenous communities. This thesis set out to examine how Cree understandings of agency and approaches to development dialogue with Amartya Sen's concept of agency and capabilities approach to development. My findings indicate that practitioners of human development and the capabilities approach would be more effective in Cree and, to the degree that Cree are representative, in other indigenous contexts as well by taking into consideration the agency of other-than-human beings, and the role of structures of living together in development.

The first objective of my thesis sought to examine and reveal Cree perspectives on, approaches to, and agency in development. Cree cultural ecology and my fieldwork in Wemindji indicate that the Cree see themselves as woven into a web of reciprocal relationships not only with each other, but also with other-than-human beings on the land and with various agents from the South. They recognize that other-than-human beings, including animals, have agency which is interrelated with their own. Cree approaches to

development are diverse, and shaped by Cree culture on the one hand, and socio-historical experiences of development on the other hand. A potential gold mine project proposed to the community offers an opportunity to explore both the diversity and parallels in these approaches. While there exists a range of concerns and opinions regarding the potential mine in the community and its potential impacts and benefits, what connects these diverse perspectives is an underlying awareness of agency that is interrelated, linking not only Cree but also other-than-human beings on the land. Thus, varied Cree approaches to development seek to maximize agency which is perceived as constituted of relationships on the land, in the community and with the South. The Wemindji Cree perspective defies a more limited conception of agency, particularly one that doesn't significantly take other-than-human beings and structures of living together into consideration, providing grounds to rethink and re-imagine the role and form of development, particularly human development, in Wemindji.

My second thesis objective sought to engage Cree concepts of agency and approaches to development in dialogue with Sen's capabilities approach and work on agency. In my research I touched on critiques of Sen's capabilities approach as operating with an insufficient concept of agency, one that didn't sufficiently acknowledge other-than-human beings and the extent to which agency is interrelated, or constituted through relationships. I argue that one way of describing this interrelatedness is in structures of living together which emerge from community life. There are different opinions in the Wemindji regarding how best to sustain these, particularly with regard to the potential mining project, but these varied opinions are still rooted in a fundamental concern for

these structures of living together which include not only Cree but also the other-than-human beings with whom they share the landscape and its history. An acknowledgment of this concern is vital to addressing Cree approaches to development, and this acknowledgment requires a redefinition of agency as a property not limited to, or fully assessed at, the level of the individual. Defining agency as interrelated through structures of living together allows for a description of development that transcends the limitations of Sen's focus on individual agency, to more fully address and articulate the range of concerns that Cree face with regard to development.

This dialogue on agency between the capabilities approach and Cree perspectives has aimed to clarify how the former might better address the latter. On the one hand, this study contributes to the literature on the CA regarding indigenous peoples. Few studies in the CA literature begin from the ground up to examine whether the capabilities approach framework harmonizes with the realities of the settings and peoples they are studying (Zimmermann, 2006; Lloyd-Sherlock, 2002), and few or none do so using qualitative data in an Aboriginal context. Providing a basis for questioning, negotiating and improving this harmonization should help inform the use of human development approaches in Cree contexts and, to the degree that Cree are representative, in other indigenous contexts as well. With regard to the literature on development in Wemindji, this research advances the concept of structures of living together as a description of Cree agency that finds common ground in the diverse perspectives on and approaches to development. Sustaining structures of living together is advanced as a main Cree

objective in development, and motivation for both supporting and objecting to a potential gold mining project.

The policy implications of this research for human development are several. First, practitioners of Sen's human development approach could consider re-defining key concepts in their framework, such as agency, to accommodate the realities and objectives of those communities in which they work. The Cree case study demonstrates that the limitations of these concepts could seriously impact the effectiveness of a human development approach in the Wemindji context. A key aspect of this re-definition should involve broadening the consideration of agency to include all those actors implicated in the social fabric or structures of living together at work in Wemindji, and perhaps in other indigenous communities as well. A particular emphasis should be placed on other-than-human beings, which to date have played mainly an instrumental role in Sen's consideration of agency. The Cree case study clearly demonstrates the intrinsic importance of these beings to Cree agency, and further research will likely only reiterate this importance in other communities, both indigenous and non-indigenous. This underscores a need for practitioners of human development to reconsider the vital role of the environment as not only an instrument in, but also a constitutive part of, the realization of human agency.

Finally, these policy recommendations lead to several possible avenues for future research that might lead to more appropriate understandings of Cree and other indigenous development approaches. First, how can structures of living together be integrated into

the capabilities approach so as to better encompass Cree (and perhaps other indigenous) approaches to development? Deneulin (Deneulin and Stewart 2002; De Herdt and Deneulin 2007; Deneulin 2008) has made important strides in promoting the concept of structures of living together within human development and capabilities circles; however, more ethnographic and qualitative studies of indigenous approaches to development should help prove the utility of this concept in describing indigenous development objectives. Second, and perhaps most troublesome, what are the implications for human development approaches such as the capabilities approach of considering other-than-human beings as agents? Schlosberg and Carruthers (forthcoming) take an interesting step in that direction by asserting the importance of environmental justice for capabilities in indigenous communities. This theme needs to be more broadly explored in order to examine the possibility of structures of living together that integrate not only people but also other-than-human beings. Sen's insistence of the instrumental value of the environment for human capabilities only begins to reveal the extent to which human agency is interrelated with an environment which can also be considered to have agency, and what this interrelatedness implies for development. Third, what are the implications for the human development approach of considering agency as not only interrelated but as collectively held, that is, of considering group agency and capabilities? This is a possibility Sen has not yet addressed, yet again Schlosberg and Carruthers (forthcoming) suggest that an accurate portrayal of indigenous objectives requires attention to group capabilities that integrate other-than-human actors.

Further exploration of these directions for future research may lead to reconsideration of the foundations of human development and the capabilities approach. Sen's approach in particular has focused primarily on individual agency and capabilities, and has cast other-than-human beings and the environment in only an instrumental role in realizing individual capabilities. Considering other-than-human beings and environment as intrinsically important in human development, together with consideration of interrelated and even collective agency and capabilities, both seem significant if human development and capabilities approaches are to accommodate indigenous perspectives. However, this will also require questioning some of the most fundamental assumptions of human development and the capabilities approach, questioning that can only continue to improve development approaches in Cree and indigenous communities.

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8.0 Appendices

Appendix 8.1: Semi-structured interview questions

1) What is your name?

2) Do you hunt or trap? If so, where? How much time do you spend on the land?

3) What does life on the land mean to you?

4) Do you feel that life on the land has changed in the past 30 years? If so, how? Where? Why?

5) What Cree term do you use to define and describe development? Why did you choose this answer?

6) What changes has development brought to Wemindji? What role have these changes played in your life?

7) What do you know about the Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji protected area project? How do you feel about it?

8) How might the Paakumshumwaau-Wemindji protected area affect your life? Why? What kinds of impacts and opportunities do you expect from this project?

9) What do you know about the Goldcorp mining project? How do you feel about it?

10) How might the Goldcorp mining project affect your life? Why? What kinds of impacts and opportunities do you expect from this project?

11) Do you feel that you can stop these projects? Development projects more broadly? Why or why not?

12) What are the most important opportunities that a Cree person should have during his or her life? In relation to development? In relation to land? Why?

Appendix 8.2: Letter of Introduction

McGill

RESEARCH - Iiyiyuu ideas about what development opportunities are important in *Iyiyuuschii.*
_____

Waachiayaa!

My name is Jessica Labrecque, and I am a Master's student in the Department of Geography at McGill University.

My research is part of the Paakumshumwaau-Maatuskaau protected area project, a partnership between the Cree Nation of Wemindji and a team of researchers led by Dr. Colin H. Scott. My supervisor is Dr. Peter Brown at McGill University.

This research seeks to understand how Cree people understand development and its relationship with their traditional lands. I want to compare these understandings to a popular model of development called the capabilities approach, so as to help us build better models and plans for development, both in *Iyiyuuschii* and elsewhere.

You are free to choose the level of confidentiality of this interview. You may remain anonymous if you so choose. Alternatively, you can opt to have your name used in quoting if that suits you. You can choose to stop the interview whenever you'd like.

If you have any questions, concerns or requests regarding this interview, this research or the larger protected area project, please contact me at the addresses below.

Chiniskumitin!

Jessica Labrecque

Investigator:
Jessica Labrecque   Tel. in Montreal (as of September 2007): (514) 999-3678
Department of Geography   Tel. In Wemindji (before September 2007): (xxx) xxx-xxxx
McGill University   Email: jessica.labrecque@mail.mcgill.ca
805 Sherbrooke St. West
Montreal, QUE, H3A 2K6

Supervisor:
Dr. Peter Brown
Tel: (514) 398-8967
Email: peter.g.brown@mail.mcgill.ca

This research project is taking place in the context of the Wemindji-Paakumshumwaau protected area project with Dr. Colin Scott, at McGill University, and it has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at McGill University. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding this project you may contact Jessica Labrecque or Dr. Peter Brown at the addresses above, phone the Research Ethics Officer at (514) 398-6831 or email lynda.mcneil@mcgill.

Appendix 8.3: Consent form for interviewees

Name:

Explanation of the study: My work explores Cree understandings of development, how Cree people perceive the goals of development for themselves and the community, as well as on the land in *Iyiyuuschii*. I am interested in how these Cree understandings compare with a popular model of development called the capabilities approach, and how they help us understand development in *Iyiyuuschii.* This interview will help me achieve this goal. Topics will include the development goals and opportunities that you think are important for yourself, your community and the land. I hope that this study will contribute to the development of a protected area in the territory of Wemindji.

Confidentiality: I am aware that the information you provide could be of a personal nature and will ensure it is handled confidentially. Research data will be securely archived, tapes and transcripts of interviews will be coded, and computer files containing data will be locked. All interview information will be anonymous, unless you wish to be identified.

Remuneration: You will be paid $20/hour for the duration of the interview.

Consent: I have read or have been orally informed of the above information in full, and my questions about this research project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research. I understand I may stop the interview at any time and that any information that I have given can be withdrawn from the study. I may refuse to answer any question.

     I consent to participate in the study.

     I can be audio taped: Yes_____   No_____.
     I wish to be identified in the report: Yes_____ No_____.

_____
 Participant's Signature or Mark   Date

_____
 Researcher's Signature   Date

About the Researcher: My name is Jessica Labrecque, I am a Master's student at McGill University working with Dr. Peter Brown. You can reach me at:

Department of Geography	Telephone in Montreal (after September 2007): (514) 999-3678
McGill University	Telephone in Wemindji (until September 2007): (xxx) xxx-xxxx
805 Sherbrooke St. W.	Email: jessica.labrecque@mail.mcgill.ca
Montreal, QUE, H3A 2K6	

Dr. Peter Brown, my supervisor, may be reached at:

Department of Geography	Telephone in Montreal: (514) 398-8967
McGill University	Email: peter.g.brown@mcgill.ca

Other Information: Data from this project will form an important part of the researcher's Master's thesis. Copies of the report will be made available (in English), upon request, to any member of the community. The results of this study may be presented at academic conferences or may appear in publications.

Appendix 8.4: Consent form for translators

Name:

Explanation of the study: My work explores Cree understandings of development, how Cree people perceive the goals of development for themselves and the community, as well as on the land in *Iyiyuuschii*. I am interested in how these Cree understandings compare with a popular model of development called the capabilities approach, and how they help us understand development in *Iyiyuuschii*. This interview will help me achieve this goal. Topics will include the development goals and opportunities that participants think are important for themselves, the community and the land. I hope that this study will contribute to the development of a protected area in the territory of Wemindji.

Confidentiality: I am aware that the information provided by the participant(s) in this interview could be sensitive in nature and will handle it confidentially. *By consenting to translate this information, you are also consenting to maintaining this confidentiality*. You are agreeing that you will not make available to anyone any information from the interview once the interview is over. Research data will be securely archived, tapes and transcripts of the interviews will be coded and computer filed containing data will be locked.

Remuneration: You will be paid $20/hour for the duration of the interview.

Consent: I have read or have been orally informed of the above information in full, and my questions about this research project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research. I understand I may stop participating in the interview at any time, but that this does not alter my obligation to maintain the confidentiality of other participant(s) in this interview.

I consent to participate in the study.

I can be audio taped: Yes____   No____.
I wish to be identified in the report: Yes____   No____.

_____
 Participant's Signature or Mark   Date

_____
 Researcher's Signature   Date

About the Researcher: My name is Jessica Labrecque, I am a Master's student at McGill University working with Dr. Peter Brown. You can reach me at:

Department of Geography	Telephone in Montreal (after September 2007): (514) 999-3678
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Montreal, QUE, H3A 2K6	

Dr. Peter Brown, my supervisor, may be reached at:

Department of Geography	Telephone in Montreal: (514) 398-8967
McGill University	Email: peter.g.brown@mcgill.ca

Other Information: Data from this project will form an important part of the researcher's Master's thesis. Copies of the report will be made available (in English), upon request, to any member of the community. The results of this study may be presented at academic conferences or may appear in publications.

Appendix 8.5: Themes for Land Use Mapping Interviews

Land Use Mapping Project Interview Themes
Summer 2007
Wren Nasr and Jessica Labrecque

Questions – Guide
Identify all/ some high priority areas.
Identify productive areas/ small watersheds
Identify rich lakes
Identify areas representative of local (possibly endemic) forms of life.

Fauna
Identify valued animal habitat (highly productive habitat)
Provide a qualitative sense of distribution of species
Identify moose yards
Identify fish spawning areas
Identify medicinal plants
Identify useful flora (i.e. berry picking etc.)
Identify sites of special value for the building of toboggans or snowshoe frames

Culture and Society
Identify culturally significant sites
Identify burial sites
Identify locations associated with stories
Identify camps – old, present, future
List the individuals who have used the camp over the past three winters
Areas they want to guard against future outfitting