RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND SYMBOLS OF PRESENCE

AMONGST THE PEOPLE OF EASTERN JAMES BAY

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Abstract

This study enquires into the relationship between cultural symbolism and religious behaviour in the development of a hunting and gathering society, the Cree of Eastern James Bay. Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self* (1989) suggests that an individual's cultural framework is apt to inform the perception of an alternate paradigm. He argues that in order to evaluate adequately such an alternate paradigm the framework from which judgements are made needs to be identified and understood. This study offers a review of Taylor's ideas associated with identity. At the beginning of each chapter the pertinent areas of Taylor's discussion are put forward as a context for research.

From the geographical, topographical and linguistic data an analysis of how the environment is perceived by the people themselves is provided. The symbols used arise from the interaction between the people and the environment and call for a detailed analysis of the relationship between the activity of hunting and the celebration of that activity in the community ceremony known as Walking-Out (W*iiwiitahaausuunaanuu*). The ceremony is aimed at initiating the young and at developing character. In the interrelationship between all aspects of the environment, individual and communal character is developed in conjunction with a rich spiritual symbolism which forms the basis of religious expression in every dimension of Eastern Cree life.

The intention is to show how the beliefs and practices of the people of Eastern James Bay have been and are being maintained, developed and transmitted. The embodiment of behavioural patterns leads to the development of a character best equipped to engage in the cultural heritage based on a hunting/gathering lifestyle. A community that bases its subsistence on the parameters of a natural environment such as that identified in the first chapter and experienced by the Eastern Cree has and will continue to develop a meaningful contextual framework or narrative capable of bringing order as well as retaining sufficient fluidity to cope with the changing needs of the community.

Résumé

Cette étude analyse le rapport entre le symbolisme culturel et le comportement religieux dans le développement d'une société de chasseurs-cueilleurs, les Cris de la rive est de la Baie James. Dans *Sources of the Self* (1989), Charles Taylor suggère que le cadre culturel est susceptible d'informer la perception d'un paradigme alternatif. Pour ce faire, le cadre à partir duquel les jugements sont produits doit être identifié et compris. Cette étude comporte un examen critique des idées de Taylor concernant la question de l'identité. Au début de chaque chapitre, les thèmes abordés sont résumés et offrent ainsi un contexte pour la recherche.

L'analyse de la façon dont l'environnement est perçu par les Cris eux-mêmes fait appel à des données géographiques, topographiques et linguistiques. Les symboles reliés à l'interaction entre le peuple et son environnement appellent une analyse plus détaillée de la relation entre les activités de la chasse et la célébration de cette dernière dans la cérémonie *Wiiwiitahaausuunaanuu* visant l'initiation des jeunes et le développement du caractère. La relation étroite entre tous les aspects spirituels de l'environnement favorise le développement du caractère autant individuel que communautaire, et donne lieu en même temps à un riche symbolisme à la base de l'expression religieuse des Cris de l'Est de la Baie James.

L'intention est de montrer comment la croyance et les pratiques des Cris de l'Est de la Baie James se sont maintenues, développées et transmises. Une attention spéciale est apportée au processus d'incorporation des modèles comportementaux concernant un développement du caractère conduisant à s'engager activement dans un style de vie fondé sur les activités de chasse et de cueillette, dans le respect de l'environnement et de l'héritage religieux présent dans leur culture. Le défi à relever consiste pour les Cris dans le développement d'un cadre de vie qui puisse contribuer à la fois au maintien du style de vie et à une fluidité suffisante pour faire face aux besoins changeants.

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Others have supported my research, offered insights and facilitated enquiry: Laird Christie from Wilfrid Laurier University, Gerbern Oegema, Patricia Kirkpatrick, Ellen Aitken, and Torrance Kirby from the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill. Added to these are Toby Morantz and Colin Scott from the Department of Anthropology at McGill. Their thoughtfulness and constructive provocation has encouraged me to focus this research.

I would be remiss if I did not thank certain individuals whose lives have intersected with my own and who shared their knowledge and encouragement. Theresa Dolinsek who welcomed me 'home' after a difficult surgical procedure not long after I came to live in Canada. She left with me the intense feeling of 'belonging.' Along the journey of discovery there are people I have come to know and respect such as Margaret Cheezo, Community Education Administrator who has aided me in Cree language, Dorothy Gilpin, Principal of the Wabannutao Eeyuu school, Sharon Moses Gilpin, Documentation Technician, and my e-mail correspondent Richard Preston whose long association with another Eastern Cree community has been invaluable to my research. People like Jacob and Ann Sealhunter of Chisasibi, Annie Tomatuk, Daniel Moses, and Chris Merriman of Eastmain, have all willingly contributed to my research. To Ruffin Isaya and Ethel Blais, former teachers in Eastmain now living in Montreal, I give my thanks for sharing their Montreal home with me as I travelled to and fro to continue my research.

Added to these are my family, my daughters, Corinne and Melanie, and their partners, whose lives have become enriched through the experiences of northern Canada. By maintaining the concept of home, and consistency in relationship even though separated by thousands of kilometres, their continued support for my work instilled a deep reciprocal respect for our respective endeavours. I hope their children, James, Cameron, Quinn, and Connor, and baby, as their lives unfold, will find this study thought provoking and stimulating.

Despite the many difficulties associated with being separated by distance and for many months at a time, both in Eastern James Bay and Montreal, my husband, Karljürgen, has remained my primary focus. To him I dedicate this work.

Contents

Illustrations[*]

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[*] Photographs by Author.

Abbreviations[*]

The specifications with reference to this study are the following:

CeTA   Cree Trappers Association.

ChEC   Chisasibi Eeyou Caravan.

HNAI   Handbook of American Indians.

JAI   The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

JRAD   The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 1610-1791. Ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Cleveland, OH, vol. 1 to 74, 1896- 1967.

SUNY Press State University of New York Press.

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[*] See also bibliography. - Other abbreviations are indicated in Siegfried M. Schwertner, *International Glossary of Abbreviations for Theology and Related Subjects.* Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992, xli + 488 p.

Glossary

Aboriginal   Early Canadian, a descendant of any of the indigenous peoples who inhabited Canada before the arrival of European settlers.

Indigenous   "Indigenous Populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than the institutions of the country of which they now form a part, under a state structure that incorporates mainly the national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population that are predominant." (U.N., UNESCO, ref: E/Cn.4./Sub.2/L.566, 1982)

Native   Born or originating somewhere.

Introduction

After living in Canada for seven years I became aware of an increasing dis-ease, in part created by my own sense of dissatisfaction with the lack of enquiry into, and respect paid to the richness of indigenous traditions within my native country of Great Britain, and in part due to the realization that I now live in a country which – though I may claim citizenship – can never be the country of my birth. As I have attempted to learn how it is that the diversity of peoples in Canada subsist I have become aware of the misconceptions about the religious dimension of indigenous life. These misconceptions, articulated by missionaries, explorers, and early settlers formed the base of knowledge which future settlers used to educate themselves and formulate decisions.

In the last thirty years the aboriginal peoples situated all over Canada increasingly have made claim to land and heritage. This study explores this heritage with the intent of identifying the cultural symbolism in a particular indigenous community - namely, the people of Eastern James Bay united in a shared heritage. I will use these data in conjunction with contemporary research and practice to discover the cultural symbolism which emanates from the spiritual dimension of Eastern Cree life and forms the basis of religious activity.

From the time of first contact with the indigenous peoples of North America traders, missionaries and explorers used their own heritage as the yardstick by which they measured and assessed all they encountered.   I am aware that the symbols of my own tradition will bias my own theoretical discussion despite my attempts to research this topic from an objective point of view. Philosopher Charles Taylor proposes that effective research takes

into account the personal framework of the researcher, that an understanding of how personal identity is developed in community will serve to temper the reflections and interpretations of distinct cultures. His work moderates my research while at the same time offering insights into the characters of previous historical researchers as they interpreted their findings. I will use his teachings where necessary to illustrate the discussion and illuminate possible discrepancies in interpretation.

The idea that there is a universal principle, power, or supreme being manifest in all aspects of existence prevails in the hunter-gatherer society and is evidenced in the interactions between people and their environment. The community ceremony known by the people of Eastern James Bay as *Walking-Out (Wiiwiitahaausuunaanuu)* emanates from a complex system of coherent affirmations of the continuing relationship between the land and what the people consider to be a universal principle or power. Past and present activities within nature are legitimated by continuing participation in an environment which is considered to have a spiritual foundation; meaning is conferred and re-enacted in the behaviour patterns associated with the recognition of the fundamental relevance of existence. To say it another way, in the acknowledgement and re-enactment of what are perceived as the spiritual elements of life reality is experienced as present.

Social scientists, philosophers and scholars of religion and theology have discussed how character is formed within community as well as how value systems are appropriated by individuals within a given community. As one of these scholars, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) has suggested, ideas about space, character, relationship and origin are categories

which often eventuate in some form of retro justification to a principle of first things – in the case of the Eastern Cree: a universal principle. The organization of hypotheses concerning these ideas are assembled into a framework which Durkheim identifies as religion. This religion is the premise on which all judgements are made and through which they are interpreted. As such, religion is social (Durkheim 1915: 21f, 38f). My research to date has looked at socialization within the Judaic/Christian tradition of my own heritage and I have noted the occurrence of disparities when differing value systems coincide and when the relevance of a system itself is in question. Issues surrounding the impact of socialization on those cultures with an ethical heritage differing from those founded on a Judaic/Christian ethical system have become issues of identity.

Character formation takes place in a variety of contexts and much has been written on this subject by students of diverse religious philosophies, behavioural scientists, ethicists, urban and regional planners, psychologists and others engaged in ethnographic study. In particular, interesting points made by Stanley Hauerwas on the development of character in community will be referred to in chapter five on cultural transmission through the use of symbols in hunting and the community ceremony. In reviewing Hauerwas' ideas, and some of the other research, I wish to look at the symbols which bring cohesion to, and are used to develop character in a particular community – one in which symbolic code represents the corporate perception of the spiritual and religious dimensions of nature and is perpetuated in living, interpreting, reflecting and incorporating experiences of existence. For the people of Eastern James Bay, the close connection between hunting and the community ceremony is the best exemplification of the spiritual nature of existence. Such a connection brings

about symbols of distinction and continuity that are responsible for the harmonious rhythm of community being and activity.

The people chosen as a focus group are spread over a large tract of land in Northern Quebec. Even so, the transmission of meaningful symbolic representation of the religious dimension of existence within the community identifies its members with each other, with a superior being – whether universal principle or power – and with nature. The subject community is a hunter-gatherer society that over time has separated into distinct bands, each congregating in social housing developments whilst retaining links with traditional hunting grounds and bush camps.

In order to determine the relation between nature and the indigenous hunter/gatherer culture of Eastern James Bay, I will look at symbols which promote individual and communal identity. In doing this, it will be apparent that this identity carries with it the notion of a symbolic language that promotes cohesiveness within the group or community by connecting immanent reality with what is considered as transcendent. The idea that a superior being, universal principle or overarching power is manifest in all aspects of existence prevails and is evidenced in the interactions between people and their environment.

Chapter one (*The People: Some Contextual Considerations*) sets the parameters for study. Using Charles Taylor's notes on the use of language in culture, it identifies the people, their environment and social relations, and begins to examine ways of assuring cohesiveness within the group. This first chapter refers to historical, religious and

anthropological sources to give background information used to illustrate the study. This information makes clear that environmental considerations are integral to the formation of character in this milieu. Wherever possible, observations from the indigenous people themselves as well as current research and the perceptions of non-indigenous voices are included. The contextual framework identified in chapter one forms the parameter for the study and is the basis on which all further theories in this research are presented.

The idea of *space and place in the human and religious experience* is discussed in chapter two. To the people of Eastern James Bay, the identified environment is considered to be known space as opposed to unknown space. Known space suggests the possibility of belonging; in that sense of belonging connecting points between the transcendent and the immanent reality are discernible. These connecting points offer the opportunity for dialogue. All known space is considered as spiritually significant by these people known as the Eastern Cree; all aspects so considered are interrelated. In acknowledging the importance of known space to the Eastern Cree this chapter also explores the concept of space from a philosophical perspective. Edward Casey helps to uncover the historical discourse regarding location - a discussion which contrasts with, and in some ways complements, the Eastern Cree understanding of the land they refer to as home. This understanding includes religious experience and spiritual encounter.

Symbols related to the dichotomy between known and unknown space as experienced by the people of Eastern James Bay are discussed in chapter three (*The Possibility of Life Associated with the idea of Space and Place*). The relationship between the known and the

unknown has created much misunderstanding between cultures. This chapter uncovers some of the underlying conceptions endowed with spiritual symbolism by the Eastern Cree to give coherent meaning to ongoing life amongst the people. The argument introduced in this chapter is dependent on a hypothetical conceptual framework which uses a being or body identified as 'I'. As the body 'I' engages in known space the view of the spiritual connection between all aspects of the environment is upheld. Communication between these aspects provides a complex interaction leading to the perpetuation and development of an ideological framework which supports life within the identified environment. Again, using the insights of Charles Taylor as well as those of Barbara Sproul and Maurice Merleau-Ponty amongst others an interpretation of tradition from the non-indigenous perspective issues in a reflection on questions related to myth and meaningful life amongst indigenous people.

Presence and power within nature is the issue of chapter four. Traditional hunting provides subsistence as well as cohesion to the Eastern Cree whose lives are built around the interrelationship between what they considered as the spiritual aspects of the environment. The belief in the fundamental sacrality of the environment brings about a lifestyle in which a complexity of meaningful symbols act together to promote harmony. The interaction between symbols of power and symbols of presence offers opportunities for dialogue. By participating in this dialogue a human person engages in a sacramental union and appropriates the manifestation of power offered by the others. Using the discussion around the three aspects developed by Charles Taylor – i.e. ordinary life, respect, and the avoidance of suffering – an alternate paradigm such as that of the people of Eastern James Bay offers a contrast to Taylor's non-indigenous perspective. Appropriation of power becomes an

exchange of power between the environmental spiritual aspects which suggests mutuality and recognition leading to respect and the avoidance of suffering. The kind of organization this indigenous culture has revolves around the closely interrelated notions of power and presence as a vivid expression of the intertwining of the spiritual and natural phenomena as experienced in everyday life.

Space and the possibility of life are woven together and are legitimated through continual re-enactment of the parameters pertaining to a hunting lifestyle. The symbols of power and presence associated with this heritage lead directly to the dramatization of its microcosm in the community ceremony known as Walking-Out.   In chapter five (*Development of Character*) this ceremony will be explicated to show how a dramatic narrative affirms social memory and shapes the identity so as to promote meaningful existence amongst the Eastern Cree. The symbols associated with this meaningful existence act together in the development of individual character.   Everyday life and religion within the narrative history of the people of Eastern James Bay are intrinsically bound to the other. Religious teaching is where character formation takes place; it is exclusively oral and does not include the kind of systematization other cultures have developed. A comprehensive collection of beliefs pertaining to the ordering of the community and its place in a geographic, economic, and social reality provides a dynamic interplay with religion as a collection of structured beliefs and practices. The community ceremony instructs and perpetuates the practical skills and knowledge pertaining to the traditional lifestyle of the Eastern Cree. In exploring the parameters of the community ceremony itself, I will draw on the hypothetical example of the physical/sensing body identified as *'I'* introduced in chapter

three. Using this paradigm I will search five categories – namely: recognition of the fragility of life, celebration of life, transition, education and communion, before going on to discuss the development of a character which will best sustain and inform the actions and reactions of individuals within the traditional conceptual framework. I argue that a community which bases its subsistence on the parameters of a natural environment heretofore discussed is capable of bringing order as well as retaining sufficient fluidity to cope with the changing needs of the community while still maintaining a meaningful ideological framework.

The conclusion acknowledges that religious symbolism amongst the Eastern Cree of Eastern James Bay is a rich spiritual heritage. Religious symbols and their place in the social cohesion of hunter-gatherer society serve to legitimate and bring cohesion to the life and culture of the people inhabiting the region. These religious and spiritual symbols promote the formation of character, and the re-enactment of rituals confirm the cultural heritage as perceived by the Eastern Cree.

Chapter 1

The People : Contextual Considerations

This first chapter sets the parameters for study and uses the ideas put forward by Charles Taylor on symbolic language and its transmission to preserve a cultural heritage (Taylor, 1989). The chapter also explores who the people of this study are and where they are situated. I have become increasingly involved in the life experiences of first nations people and have listened to many of the arguments used to negate first contact and subsequent experiences from both indigenous and non-indigenous points of view. Despite many attempts to document the effects of initial and ongoing contact between the indigenous and non-indigenous people of Canada there is still much conflict and misunderstanding. Taylor's notes on the use of language in culture help provide a better understanding of the European framework, and situate the approach of a particular group of indigenous people, their method of subsistence, and the ceremonies which serve to assure cohesiveness within the group.

I had been in Canada for seven years when I entered a Christian seminary and began to study the history of New France and the effect the presence of the representatives of Christian organizations (hereafter referred to as missionaries) and traders were having on indigenous life. At the conclusion of this initial study of New France I asked myself whether the indigenous peoples of Canada would have enabled my immigration and subsequent settlement in Canada, and I decided to explore the heritage of the people indigenous to the country of which I had chosen to become a part. As I attempted to learn how the diversity

of people in Canada subsists I became aware of how the concept of space is uniquely tied to the understanding of the spiritual dimension of indigenous life.

1.1 Location of Indigenous Peoples

In the last twenty years the indigenous peoples situated all over Canada increasingly have made claim to land and heritage, and they have complained about hardship and unwarranted assimilation perpetrated by non-indigenous explorers, settlers, traders and missionaries ever since their first encounters with peoples from outside North America. The following attempts to locate an indigenous community and identify those aspects of their culture which are dependant on a particular location.

1.1.1 Cartographic Evidence

According to Larry Zimmerman and Brian Leigh Molyneaux,[1] settlement of North America occurred in three distinct phases: initially by boat, followed by migration across what has become known as the Bering Strait land bridge,[2] and subsequent migrations by boat across the Bering Strait after the flooding of the land bridge, as well as from south and central America. They are not alone in this theory. James Adovasio, founder and director of Mercyhurst Archæological Institute in Erie, Pennsylvania, recounts the archæological

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[1] 1996: 147; also Jean Malaurie 1999; Jerry Gill 2002: 25-30.

[2] "The land bridge known as Beringia would not resemble a bridge or a narrow course between two land masses" (Adovasio 2002: 46). – Adovasio suggests that this bridge would have been at least "1000 miles across from north to south.... relatively barren tundra and steppelike ... crossed by occasional rivers..." He comments that "people followed the game in the direction of the morning sun". See also Snow 1996: 125-99 and Bryan 1986: 45-72 on archeological evidence for migration patterns.

evidence for global migrations offering data which support periodic mobility of animals, birds, plants and human beings across continental borders (2002). For example he cites the archæological site in Monte Verde where carbon dating led Thomas Dillehay to suggest that there is evidence of human habitation in the Americas as early as 12500 years ago (2002: 207-09). Though the actual dates for the migrations to North America are still the subject of much discussion carbon-dating has confirmed that they took place at least 10000 years ago - and preliminary evidence points to the possibility of human activity before this date.[3] Suffice it to say that when the first european explorers travelled to North America the land was already populated. Records of the mid 1600's document the presence of aboriginal people in the area known to european explorers, missionaries and traders. The following two maps indicate Algonquian speaking peoples in their approximate summer locations in c.1630 (fig. 1) and after one hundred years of trading, i.e. c.1740 (fig. 2). The establishment of permanent trading posts increased trade and opportunities for exploration and missionary activity. The location of known groups of people in the mid eighteenth century at the height of French trading is represented in fig. 2 and more accurately estimates the number of aboriginal people in each location.

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[3] Adovasio 2002: 272ff. – Linguist Morris Swadesh (1909-1967) argued that an earlier date such as at least 15,000 years ago may be inferred from the study of linguistic patterns: (Swadesh 1960: 896-97). However, at the time, this was too complex to verify with any certainty.

Population circa 1630

Algonquian ● Iroquoian

° Less than 100

° 100 – 199

○ 200 – 499

○ 500 – 999

○ 1 000 - 1 999

○ 2 000 - 3 999

○ 4 000 - 7 999

▲ Late Prehistoric Athapaskan Archæological Complexes
Extent of Areas Known to Europeans circa 1630

Extent of Areas Known to Europeans
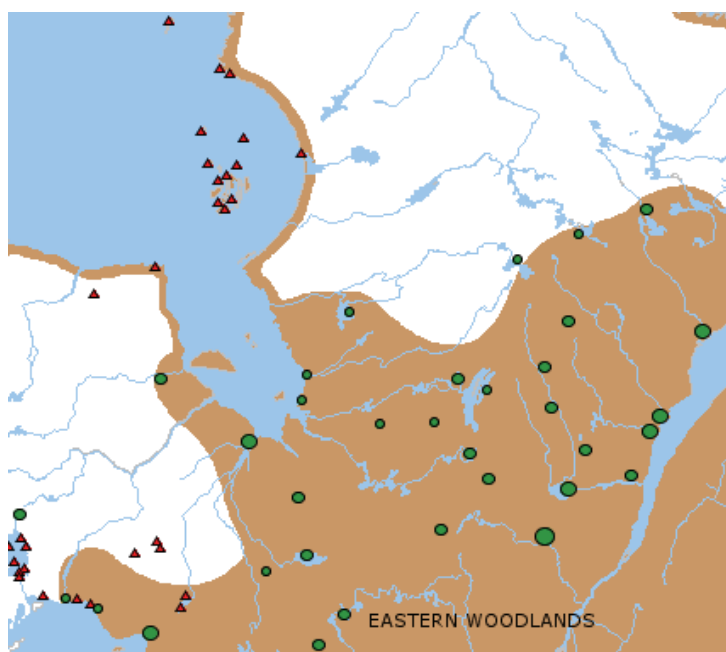
Fig. 1. Map detailing the distribution of Aboriginal peoples (circa 1630) .
Original map data provided by The Atlas of Canada http://atlas.gc.ca/

Fig. 2. Map detailing the distribution of peoples and the landscape (circa 1740).
Original map data provided by The Atlas of Canada http://atlas.gc.ca/

Since the eighteenth century much geographical data have been collected and disseminated as a result of an increased awareness of the cultural and ecological landscape of Canada.[4] Distinct zones across areas have been identified with groups of people who share cultural similarities.   These zones identified as Arctic, Subarctic, Great Plains, Northwest, Plateau and Northeast are home to the various indigenous peoples who have learnt to subsist within the particular conditions of their respective environments.

Fig. 3. Guide to location of the distinct groups of indigenous peoples situated across Canada.
Copyright: Smithsonian Institution and included in *The Handbook of North American Indians* (1981).

The Cree are purported to be Canada's largest Indigenous group with over 200,000 registered members with as many as 100,000 métis, situated across Canada from Northwestern Alberta to the Atlantic ocean (www.native-languages.org/cree.htm: 2005).

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[4] www.geogratis.cgdi.gc.ca; Helm 1981; Malaurie 1999.

The community identified as the subject of this study, the East Cree, are situated in the James Bay region of northern Quebec in the northeastern Hudson Bay Lowland area of the subarctic cultural zone.
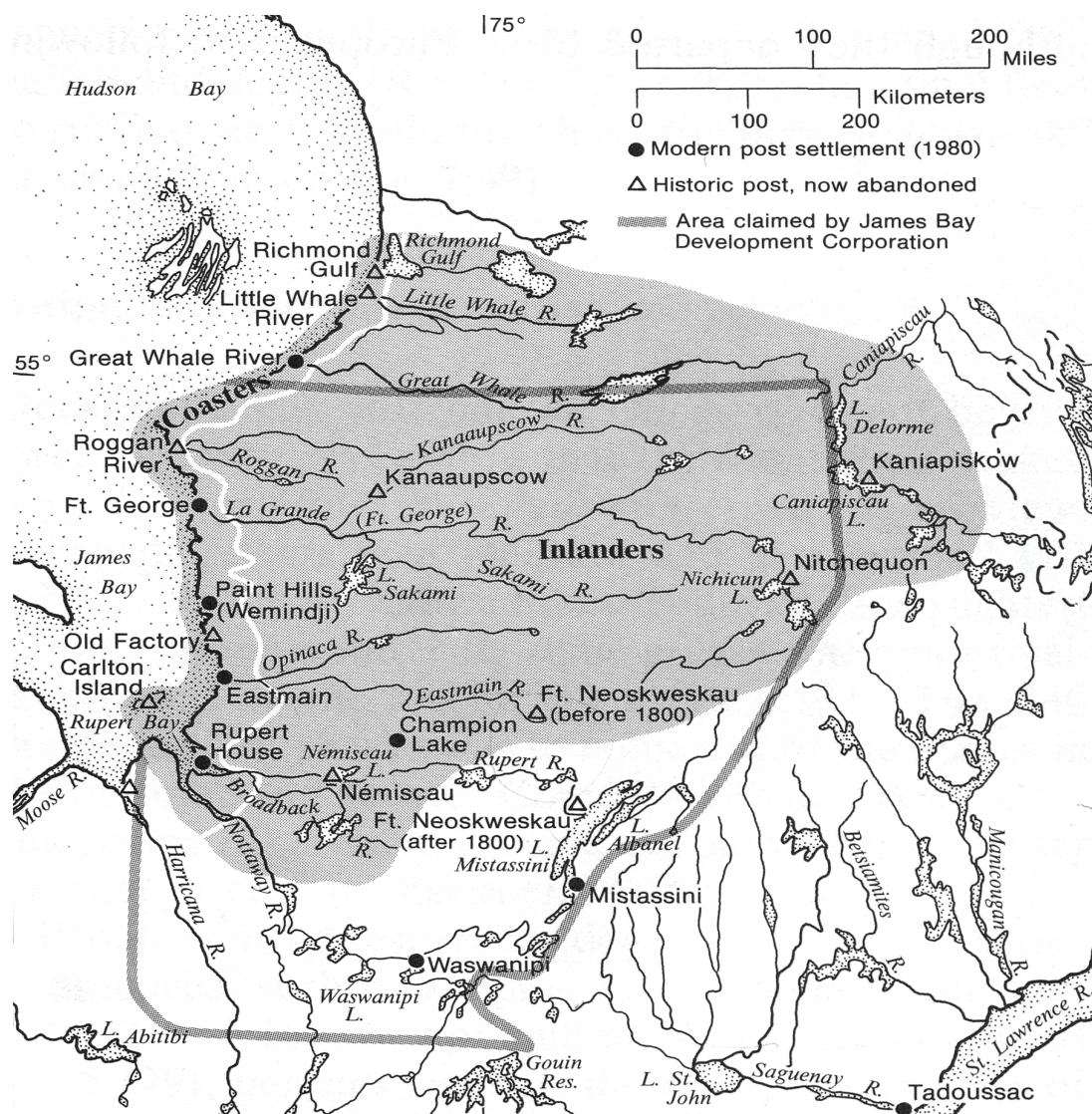
Fig. 4. Map identifying the area of land, extending from the south at the Nottaway River to Richmond Gulf in the north, inhabited in 1981 by the Eastern Cree. (Preston 1986:196)

1.1.2 <u>The People of Eastern James Bay</u>

The Jesuit Relations of 1659-60 records that nine distinct Killistinon groups – a European name for Cree – were known to live in the aforementioned territory, and that one of these groups, the Pitchibourenik, inhabited the area around the Eastmain (Slude) and Rupert Rivers.[5] Today, these people are known collectively as the Eastern Cree, yet even in the twentieth century a variety of names have been used to describe these people and their various habitats.[6] To avoid confusion I use the terms *Eastern Cree* synonymously with *people* and *Eastern James Bay* as the regional locator, except where the concepts forwarded by the people themselves are referenced.

The identification to be used is that provided by the people themselves: in this region they identify themselves as ᐃᔨᔫ *Iiyiyuu (people)* in the northern dialect, and ᐃᓅ *Iinuu (people)* in the southern dialect. Further distinctions refer to community – for example, Waskaganish-wiiyiyuu, and to family groups according to their ancestral hunting location, i.e. inland or coastal people. (Atkinson 1990: 14; see also note 5)

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[5] Figure 4. The indigenous traveller "noticed especially the Kilistinons, who are divided among nine different residences, some of a thousand, others of fifteen hundred men; they are settled in large villages.... After visiting these tribes, our man betook himself to the Pitchibourenik, a people dwelling at the entrance to the Bay" (JRAD 45: 229). For an extensive chronological study see Toby Morantz, Dan Francis, Carol Sheedy and Claire-Andrée Tremblay (1976) pertaining to first contact, trading, and missionary endeavours between 1610 and 1870.

[6] East Cree (Rogers/Leacock 1981: 169; Preston 1981), Inlanders, Coasters, Coastal Cree, Eastern Cree (Rogers/Leacock 1981:169; Skinner 1912; Preston 2002), and the Montagnais/Naskapi which included the East Cree (Speck 1926: 275 & 1931; Rogers/Leacock 1871: 169). East Main Cree (Preston 1981) describes a fur-trading district of the Hudson's Bay Company (see also Oldmixon 1708).

The land, approximately 400,000^2 kms,[7] inhabited by the Iiyiyuu/Iinuu for c. 5000 years (Atkinson 1990: 14) is known as ᐄᔨᔪᐊᔅᒌ *Iiyiyuuschii* (fig. 5), or Iiyiyuu Istchee, Astchee or Estchee - translated as the *land of the Iiyiyuu* (more on this in chapter 2). The following map identifies the land as the space where the people of Eastern James Bay make their home and their living. Each of the nine settlements are represented in both syllabics and roman orthography.
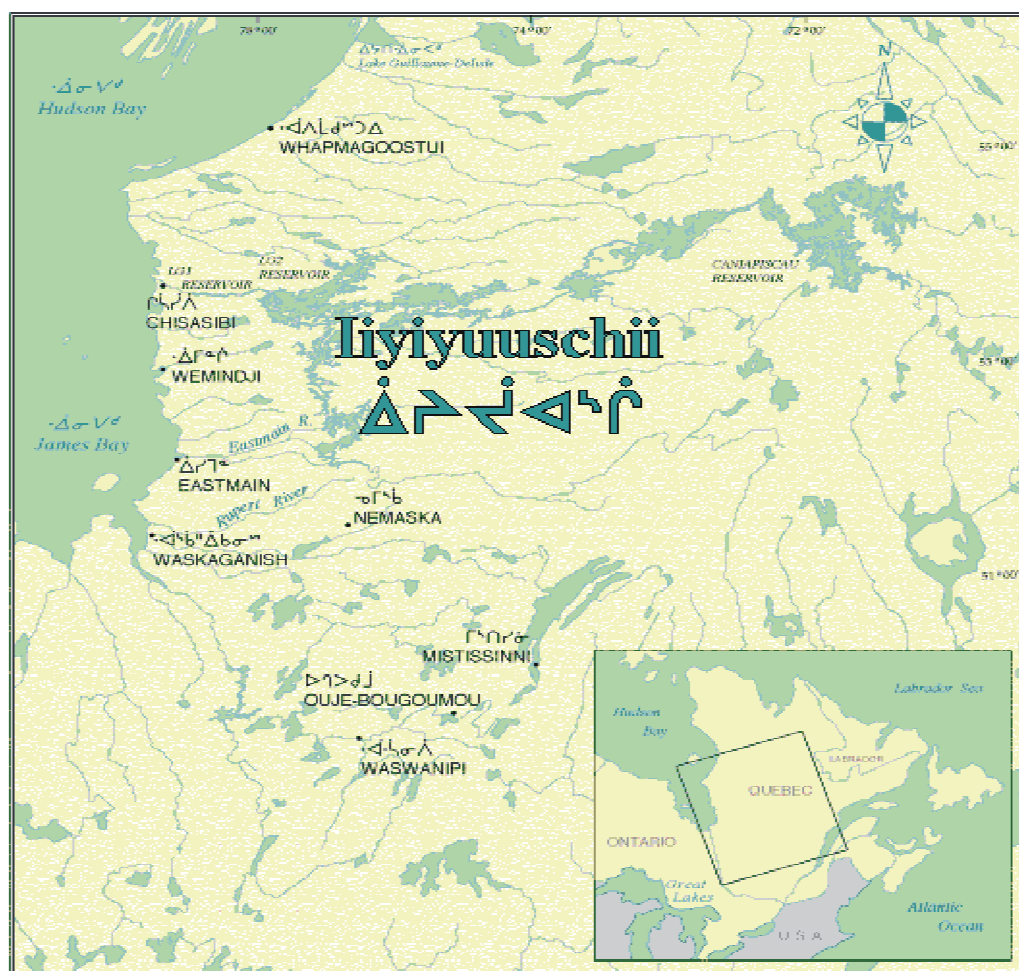
Fig. 5. Map showing Iiyiyuuschii.
(http://www.creeculture.ca/e/land_people/map.htm)

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[7] Grand Council of the Cree. Cree Regional Authority, 2000.
http://www.gcc.ca/pdf/ENV000000001.pdf

1.2 <u>The Terrain</u>

The terrain and the demands it makes on the lives of its inhabitants is the focus of this study. Let us begin by recording the geographical and environmental perceptions found in the writings of the early traders, missionaries and explorers, and then go on to look at the view of the Hudson Bay lowlands terrain by the people who live on it. Current geographical and geological evidence will be used to elucidate the opinions of the early travellers to James Bay.

1.2.1 <u>A first Perception</u>

In 1610 Marc Lescarbot, a lawyer, wrote of the deplorable and wretched living conditions of a people living beyond the great river, the Saint Lawrence,[8] who live in a country so large that the world bears no comparison with it.[9] Even though there is no evidence to suggest that Lescarbot travelled sufficiently northward to have visited Eastern James Bay in 1610 it is known that trading had been established at Tadoussac attracting commercial transactions from James Bay with the Montagnais acting as intermediaries.[10] At least by the 1650's trading occurred between the more northerly groups and other aboriginal groups who regularly frequented the Tadoussac post resulting in an exchange of both material and spiritual resources. (JRAD 45 [1659-1660]: 229)

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[8] JRAD 1 (1610-13): 59 n.6. – The St. Lawrence, so named by Cartier (1535), is frequently called "The Great River" or "The River of the Great Bay".

[9] M. Lescarbot (1610: 13). – See JRAD 1 (1610-13): 59.

[10] Gagné 1994: 35; Morantz, Sheedy & Tremblay 1963: 2.

1.2.2 <u>A Systematic Approach</u>

     Twentieth-century researchers have taken a systematic approach to identify the living conditions of the people living beyond Tadoussac. Surveys of the earth show that there are distinct geological formations around the world. As the following two maps show, the boreal forest exists as a nearly continuous belt across North America and Eurasia.

Fig. 6. Boreal Forest around the globe.
Original map data provided by The Atlas of Canada http://atlas.gc.ca/
© 2006. Produced under licence from Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada,
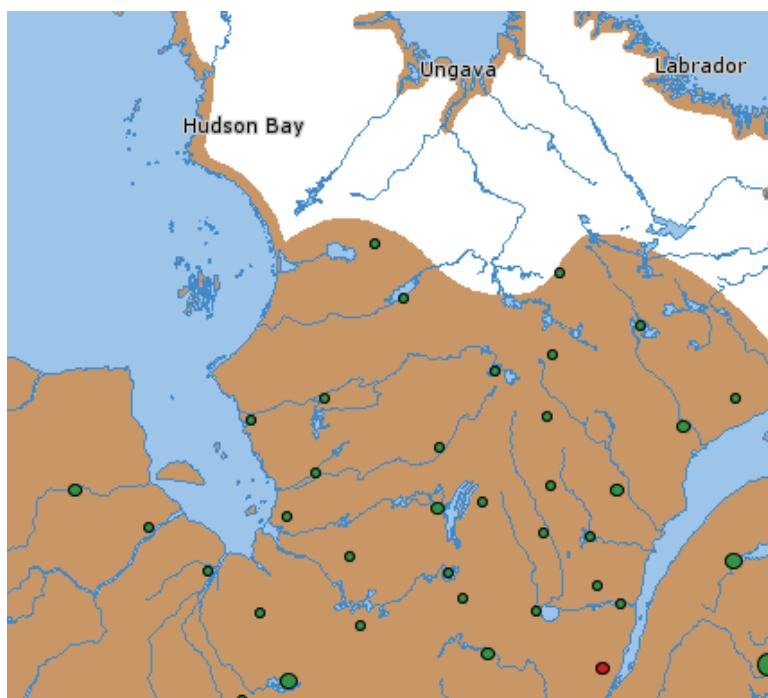with permission of Natural Resources Canada.

Across Canada the boreal forest area stretches from the Yukon to Labrador and covers

approximately 1.3 million square kilometers or one third of the Canadian land mass. The

eastern subarctic region (see chapter 1.1) is part of this shield.

Fig. 7. Map showing the extent of the Boreal Shield in Canada.
Original map data provided by The Atlas of Canada http://atlas.gc.ca/
2006. Produced under licence from Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada,
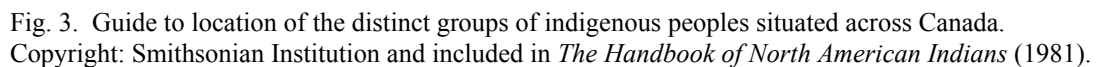with permission of Natural Resources Canada.

1.2.3 Environmental Conditions

In his research of Subarctic environmental conditions James Gardner argues that the

terrain of the Hudson Bay Lowlands is harsh and rigorous. As Francis and Morantz

comment, this area has been stripped of its soil cover by massive glaciers resulting in much

of the available open land being covered by bog and rock (Francis & Morantz 1983: xi). Yet

Gardner concludes that the climate, soil character, water courses, flora, fauna, and geography

offer the opportunity for human interaction (1981: 14). The people I have identified as the

Eastern Cree inhabit this environment where formerly glaciated areas have given way to

muskeg and various stages of flora and fauna. (Zimmerman 1996: 14)
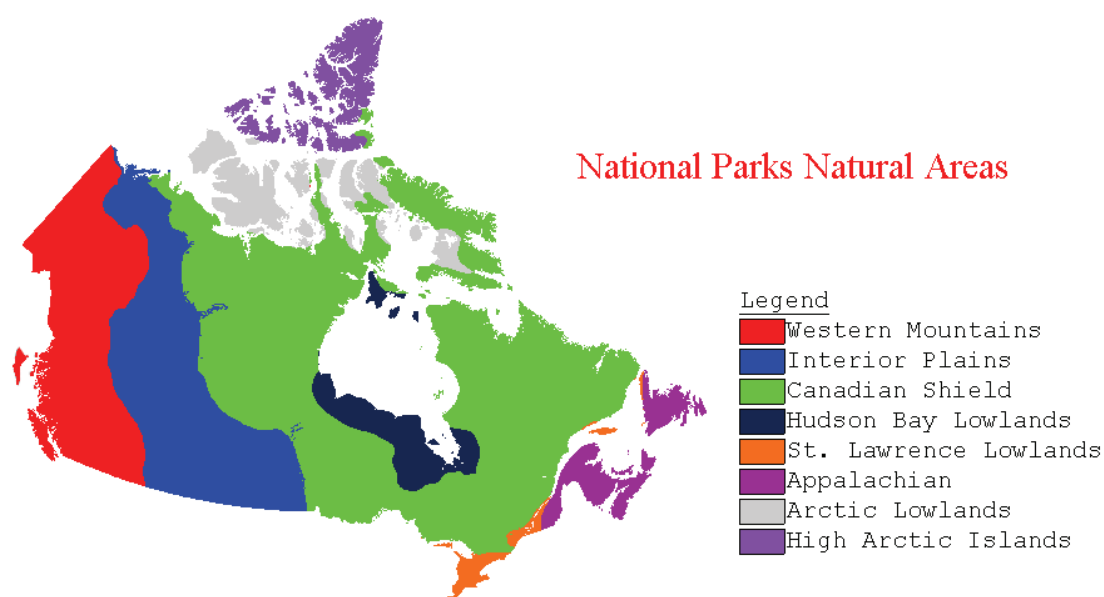
Fig. 8. Map indicating the extent of the Shield. Original data provided by Parks Canada, 1996.
http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/ic/can_digital_collections/parks_atlas/maps/index.html
Produced under licence from Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada,
with permission of Natural Resources Canada.

What has been noted by the explorers and missionaries as a harsh uninviting terrain

is seen quite differently by the Eastern Cree: today, they speak of their traditional homeland

as the place where they have lived for thousands of years. The people identify their land

Iiyiyuuschii as embracing a wide range of environments, from the salt marshes and islands

of the coastal zone to the upland areas far inland, from the dense coniferous forests in the

southern areas to the sparsely treed forest-tundra in the north. Precipitation and sunlight, range of temperature, widespread forest fires, length of days and seasons limit the number and variety of plants, and these in turn limit the animals foraging. (Francis & Morantz 1983: 5; Rogers & Smith 1981: 130f; Wright 1981: 86; see also Brown & Wilson 1986: 134-39)

1.2.4 <u>Subsistence within the Environment</u>

In *Prehistory of the Canadian Shield* James V. Wright discusses the conditions which the generations of people dwelling across the Canadian Shield may have experienced. He suggests that spatial cultural continuity is the result of long term adaptation and concludes that the people living in the region are descendants from earlier generations of people who migrated progressively northward penetrating formerly glaciated areas to pursue a livelihood from hunting and trapping the animals as they also migrated in search of sustenance. Further, Wright argues that conditions in the region suggest that "the available evidence strongly suggests that the northern Algonquians at the time of initial contact with Europeans followed a way of life that had not changed significantly for more than 7,000 years." (1981: 86f.)

The establishment of trading posts along the coast line of James Bay might have encouraged increased mobility between the forest and the coast line. There is no evidence of permanent settlements in the Hudson Bay lowland area prior to the arrival of the posts,

the first of which was established in 1670 by The Hudson's Bay Company at Rupert House.[11]

As the map of c. 1630 shows (fig.1) it is reasonable to argue that the seasonal pattern of people gathering in particular places along the coast line during the summer for trading, community activities and ceremonies continued to embrace the increased trading opportunities offered by permanent trading posts. Writing in 1708, the author of the *History of Hudson's Bay*, John Oldmixon (1673-1742), referred to such a pattern when he commented that in springtime hunters around James Bay travel to the post to trade.[12] Such practice appeared relatively common at least until the early 20th century when Alanson Skinner commented that "the Cree meet at the Posts [...] bringing in the winter's hunt of furs to trade for the necessities of the following season". (1911: 57)

The people living in this eastern subarctic boreal forest have learnt to co-exist with the flora and fauna available to them, adapting hunting and gathering techniques to enable a subsistence; they became dependant on the vegetation and animals of the area to feed,

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[11] Oldmixon 1708: 549; Voorhis 1930; Leacock 1974: 12; Wright 1981: 87; Gagné 1994: 35. – The Hudson Bay Company received its charter in 1668 and the first post opened at what became known as Rupert House (now known as Waskaganish). See also Hodgins & Cannon, eds. 1995: 93-103 and Preston 1990: 315-18.

[12] See Tyrrell 1931: 386). – More on this in S. Preston 1999: 45-51 and Leacock 1974: 16. Leacock includes two maps, the first showing the position of the trading posts before 1700 as well as the approximate limits of the hunting territory of the Montagnais-Naskapi. The second shows the bands of the Eastern Cree.

clothe, and sustain life.[13] For example, the flesh of an animal satisfied hunger, skin became

clothing, sinew and bones became tools, and medicine was gleaned from animal hooves.[14]

Jerry Gill (2002: 139) comments that "native peoples have generally exercised great

thoroughness and inventiveness in the use they have made of meat, hides and bones, while

at the same time paying homage to the animals they have killed, through prayers and rituals

of thanksgiving" (more on this in chapter 4.3.2). Social or subsistence activities depended

on the availability of animals, which in turn depended on the environmental conditions

prevalent at any given time. The seasonal pursuit of fur, fish and game became the

framework of culture and life; all other activities, whether spiritual or social, revolved

around and intertwined with the natural resources available at the different times of the year.

(Chance 1968: 19)

1.3 Communication

The unpredictable rhythm of nature in the area heretofore identified as the location

of the Eastern Cree necessitated adaptation to ecological conditions to ensure survival.[15]

Being situated, being a body, means to have the ability to communicate, and to communicate

is to have a language (Ong 1982: 7; more on this in chapter 3.3). Amongst the Eastern Cree

the notion of communication is tied intimately to perceptions of the spatial and temporal

environmental rhythms and is experienced in the interactions between a human being and

his or her environment. From these perceptions and interactions language develops within

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[13] Rogers & Smith 1981: 131; Atkinson & Magonet 1990: 16.

[14] JRAD 1 (1610-13): 247; Rogers & Smith 1981: 131.

[15] Wright 1981; Darnell 1986: 28; Chance 1968: 20.

various means of communicating, i.e. of sending and receiving information not necessarily tied to words. Three aspects immediately become apparent when considering how language skills develop and are put to use: the spoken word, contextualized communication, and communication as signal. These aspects will be explored only in so far as they aid to locate the Eastern Cree as they seek to relate to their particular environment. For the purpose of this enquiry the medium in which language develops and the concepts are used is to be emphasized rather than the spoken word or a specific dialect.

1.3.1 The Spoken Word

Consideration of the spoken language is only a means to introduce a topic much broader than that which is manifested in words. The following map (fig. 9) shows the Eastern Cree located in relationship with other indigenous people across North America. Cree is part of the linguistic family identified as Algic which extends across much of Canada and into the southern part of the United States.

Legend:

- Eskimo–Aleut
- Na–Dene
- Algic
- Tsimshianic
- Wakashan
- Salishan
- Chimakuan
- Chinookan
- Plateau Penutian
- Kalapuyan
- Alsean
- Coosan
- Shastan
- Palaihnihan
- Wintuan
- Yuki–Wappo
- Pomoan
- Maiduan
- Utian
- Chumashan
- Uto–Aztecan
- Yokutsan
- Yuman–Cochimi
- Keresan
- Kiowa–Tanoan
- Caddoan
- Siouan–Catawban
- Comecrudan
- Muskogean
- Iroquoian
- isolates
- unclassified
- uninhabited, unknown, out of area

Map labels: Algic, Eastern Cree

1 Beothuk
2 Yuchi
3 Timucua
4 Calusa
5 Tunica
6 Natchez
7 Chitimacha
8 Adai
9 Atakapa
10 Karankawa
11 Tonkawa
12 Aranama
13 Cotoname
14 Coahuilteco
15 Solano
16 Zuni
17 Seri
18 Salinan
19 Esselen
20 Washo
21 Yana
22 Chimariko
23 Karuk
24 Takelma
25 Siuslaw
26 Cayuse
27 Kutenai
28 Haida

Fig. 9. Map showing spatial continuity of the Algic language family.[16]
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Langs_N.Amer.png (modified)

The following table breaks down further the Algic linguistic family of forty distinct languages to show Cree as a Central Algonquin language spoken in a variety of dialects each developing contextually to meet the needs of groups of people in each of their particular

[16] The Wikipedia map is based on two maps by cartographer Roberta Bloom appearing in Mithun (1999: xviii-xxi). The other main source used is the map found in Goddard (1996, revised in 1999). Additional references include Sturtevant HNAI, Mithun (1999: 606-616), and Campbell (1997: 353-376). Fig. 9 is the result of further modifications.

environments. The language of the Eastern Cree is listed as one of twenty-three closely

related Central Algonquian languages.

Family: Algic[17]

Central Algonquian	Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi (9)	Atikamekw, Plains Cree, East Cree Southern, Moose, Swampy, Woods, Naskapi, East Cree Northern (Canada), Montagnais
	Menominee (US)	
	Kickapoo (US)	
	Miami (US)	
	Ojibwe (8)	Chippewa (US), Algonquin (CA), Northwestern, Western, Severn, Central, Ottawa, Eastern
	Potawatomi (US)	
	Masquakie (US)	
	Shawnee (US)	

Source: Raymond G. Gordon Jr. (ed.). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2005 (15th ed). – Online version: **http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=91079**.

Mary R. Haas, linguist (1910-1996), has suggested that "the geographical spread of the

Algonkian languages is greater than the spread of any other linguistic family of North

America" (Haas 1960: 977). As fig. 9 shows the Algic language family is evident in the

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[17] Goddard, 1996: 4. – For a complete list of the Indigenous languages of North America see HNAI and also Jerry Gill 2002: 43; Margaret Fisher 1946: 226; Regna Darnell on linguistic classification 1986: 22-32; and Snow 1996: 125-99 for an interesting hypothesis on the number of languages spoken. From archæological and historical linguistic evidence Snow postulates (p. 128) that "there were at least 375 separate languages spoken in North America in 1492 [and] that there would have been at least 75 separate languages in 2000BC", some of which "became the founding languages of the families" shown in fig. 9.

north, central, north eastern, and south of Canada as well as in the United States at least as far as North Carolina. Included in the Algic family are ten Eastern, four Plains, and one unclassified apart from those Algonkian languages listed in the above table. (Haas 1960: 977)

Fig. 10 identifies the Cree language across the Algonquian language region within Canada and highlights the classification into major dialects: Woodlands, Swampy, Plains, Moose, Naskapi, Montagnais, Innu, Atikamekw and Eastern Cree.[18] Though there are some dialectical differences even within regions, significant similarities enable mutual understanding across the diverse population. The most divergent is Eastern Cree, itself comprising distinct community dialects, each of which is more or less intelligible to the other. For the most part, distinction is made (see the preceding table) between the northern dialect spoken in the coastal communities of Eastern James Bay, and the southern dialect spoken in the inland communities of the region.

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[18] Ray (1996: 262) suggests that Eastern Cree is one of three eastern dialects of Cree, Montagnais and Naskapi being the other two. Each of these dialects are associated with regional groups on the eastern side of James Bay across Quebec and Labrador.
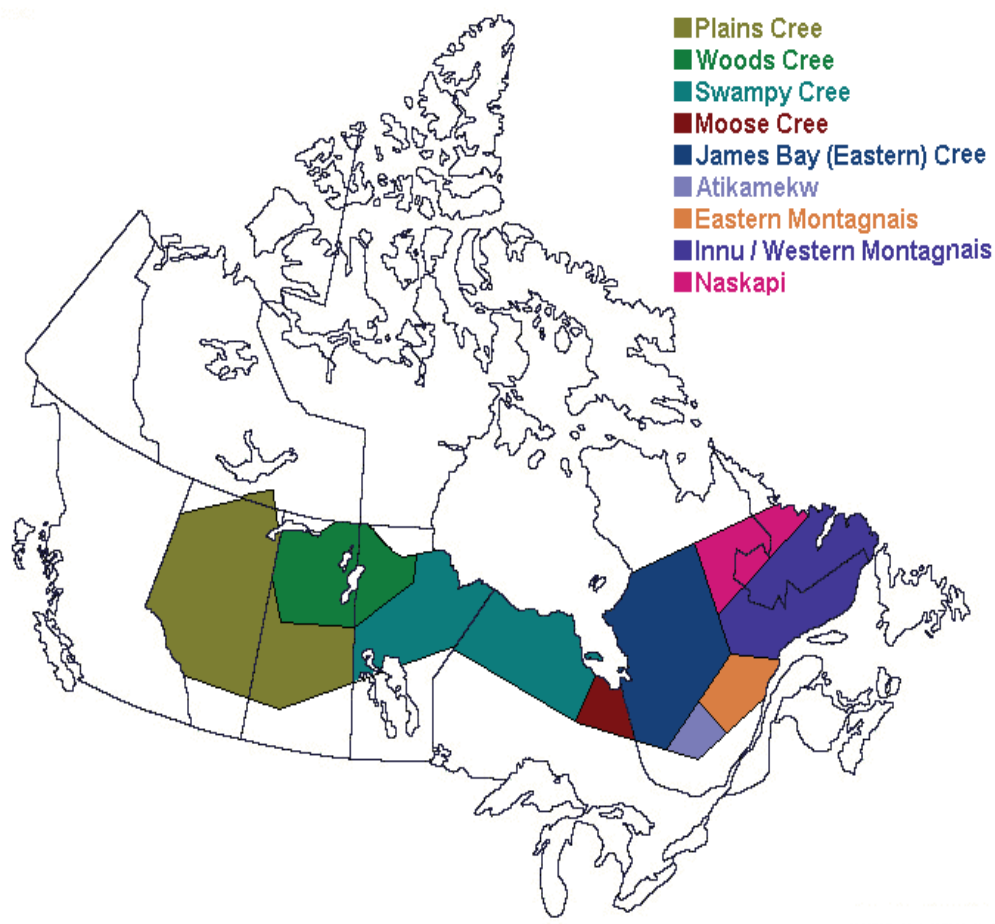
Fig. 10. Map showing the spatial extent of the use of the Cree language. ─ Modified from: Brock University Map Library. *Canada (no names)*. [PDF]. Software Edition. St. Catharines, ON: Brock University Map Library. 2004. http://www.brocku.ca/maplibrary/images/canadaNONAMES.pdf

1.3.2 Contextualizing Communication

Despite the evidence linking associated languages together as one family, much is to be said about contextual specificity. According to the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) language develops through experiencing phenomena in a particular place to describe its particularity . *It is local - a "craft of place"* (1983: 167). Language ─ i.e. words and sounds ─ has been invented to describe particular objects and feelings thereby

ascribing relevance to particular conceptual contexts within space. Taylor agrees that to describe reality and identify oneself within that reality one turns to the mediums available to communicate and re-present one's realm of existence using a language developed within and from that same experience. Language is about meaning, argues Taylor. Language articulates the conception of identity. Without it, the essence of what it means to be human is in question. "We are not asking about meaning in the sense that we ask about the meaning of life... or the sense of being meaningful... here we are talking about the significance things have for us in virtue of our goals, aspirations, purposes" (Taylor 1985: 216-18). After all, as Taylor says, "A language only exists and is maintained within a language community". (1989: 35)

Sam Gill, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado, recalls that language is more than description; it is the mediation of ideas and possibilities, and it makes interaction plausible within the world (1983: 48; also Taylor 1985: 234). Human beings "exploit the conditions of the world and the capacities of [...] human bodies," asserts Ruth Finnegan, developing resources "to aid in [...] active interconnection" (2002: 4). She addresses many of the influential approaches to a discussion on communication, or modes of expression, and suggests that the diverse array of non-verbal processes are of great importance to understanding the role of language in developing community (2002: 9ff. & 36-39). For her, non-verbal communication is a creative human process by which experiential information is transmitted between members of a community (2002: 5; also Ong 1982: 6). Non-verbal modes of expression include the five basic senses, i.e. sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste, as well as their spatial and temporal aspects. This suggests that

"human bodies have a localized presence and their interactions take place in space".
(Finnegan 2002: 104)

Communication in space may include the ability to vision, create, depict either in reality or representation, speak, write, analyze, reflect and calculate. "Humans are dependent on webs of interconnectedness for their basic modes of growth and livelihood," both individually and collectively (Finnegan 2002: 5f). The interconnectedness of the human body and the perceptions of the spatial/temporal aspects of the environment conspire together to give expression to a variety of physical and spiritual phenomena. It is within space and in time that the very actions of interconnectedness take place - in other words, as Taylor emphasizes, the development of life itself is dependent on a particular framework. For the Eastern Cree this particular framework is their familiar environment.

Taylor stresses the importance of continuity between the early formative community and the later development of an independent life stance, and he suggests that it is from within the framework of a defining community that an individual can transcend the givens of a particular language (more on this in chapter 4.1) and relate to the language of others (1989: 37f). The complexity of the language of communication emanates from the inherited contextual framework of existence: "Each young person may take up a stance which is authentically his or her own; but the very possibility of this is enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a tradition." (Taylor 1989: 39)

1.3.3 <u>Communication as Signal</u>

The impulse to communicate in some form is influenced by a need to interact with the known environment. It has everything to do with "symbols and meaning" (Honigmann 1981: 718). Linguist Eric Lenneberg (1921-1975) suggests that symbolic communication is fundamental to existence as a body, "that all human beings are endowed with an innate propensity for a type of behaviour which can be shaped into language" (1960: 883f). In fact, Walter Ong (1912-2003) argues, "wherever human beings exist they *have* a language"(1982: 7).   An important question to ask at this point is whether this innate propensity might also inhere in *non-human* beings as well.

Ruth Finnegan argues affirmatively: both animals and human beings manipulate the environment to engage in communicative activity (Finnegan 2002: 45). She suggests that animals draw on a multiplicity of communicative forms to express themselves in, and appropriate the resources of, their own familiar environments. The repertoire includes "movements, colours, squeaks, taps, whistles, calls, smells, strokes, pushes, body positioning, plumage, echo-sounding, scratch marks, vibrations, odour deposits - to name but a few" (Finnegan 2002: 26). Interspecies communication then might consist of learning to interpret and use those signals. Since language as a web of communicative signals forms part of a "purposive, organized, and mutually recognizable process in which individuals actively interconnect with each other" *(*Finnegan 2002: 47), this might well be true of communication between animals and humans. As a point of fact, communication amongst the Eastern Cree includes non-human species. For them, communication with animals is a prerequisite for successful subsistence. Moreover, the language of communication, whether

verbal or non-verbal, offers an intelligible mediation between the components of what the Eastern Cree describe as the spiritual dimensions of life. (more on this in chapter 4.1.4)

1.4 <u>Language and Lifestyle</u>

In literate cultures, written records facilitate the historical remembering of the foundation of societies. This background is not so easily attainable, or at least justifiable, in oral cultures. As anthropologist Jan Vansina suggests, "Oral traditions make an appearance only when they are told."[19] For Sam Gill, "oral traditions are performed and gain their life and vitality, indeed their meaning, from the response they make to specific cultural situations" (1982: 61). Vansina suggests that these traditions are "documents of the present because they are told in the present" (1985: xii). The customs of generations beyond the present, from before current memory, have been articulated as truth - tried, tested, proven, altered to fit a changing environment, and handed on; as such they are profound expressions of experience. Amongst the Eastern Cree these experiences or truths have been reduced to a kernel, and surrounding layers of socialization cemented with the notion of respect for particular customs added to aid cultural transmission in the effort to render their understanding of an ongoing relationship possible between human beings and their environment.

Differentiating between *custom* and *tradition* Eric Hobsbawm comments that the former refers to the flexible practices associated with an unchanging traditional belief. For him, customs associated with social cohesion may initiate other customs to legitimize

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[19] Vansina 1985: xi. – See also Morantz, 1984: 172f.

relationships, and to promote the transmission of beliefs held about a particular tradition. He argues that fluidity is a necessary component of a custom in order that a community might address the changing circumstances of their environment (Hobsbawm 1983: 2ff). As the people of Eastern James Bay communicated and perpetuated their knowledge of the physical and social world around them, the customs associated with their traditional way of life developed to ensure subsistence and strengthen group identity. Anthropologist Norman Chance considers that the stresses associated with the harshness of the environment required "reciprocal social relations between the hunting group members" (1968: 20f). The active language of tradition for these people is based on a model considered as a primordial foundation, which defines and legitimates the present (more on this in chapter 3.2). Beliefs concerning this primordiality are evident in the customs developed to perpetuate and transmit this knowledge. For example, for these people, fundamental to the idea of existence is the consideration that some form of presence, beyond that which is immediately evident, forms the basis of a cultural framework. This framework validates the traditional beliefs, ideas and feelings emanating from the conditions of subsistence, and it becomes the paradigm through which cultural cohesion is being perpetuated. The paradigm includes the attribution of spiritual identity to all aspects of existence, thereby creating symbols of worth and motivation which in turn help to develop strong solidarity within the group.

Åke Hultkrantz, professor emeritus of Comparative Religion in Stockholm, suggests that hunter-gatherer peoples are less likely to clearly delineate through ritual or ceremony the mythology associated with the concept of a superior being (1967: 27; more on this in chapter 4) that forms an essential component of the relationship between the environment and its inhabitants. Such a component is active in the subsistence practices relevant to a

hunter-gatherer society in a particular space and pertains also to the act of hunting itself. (Hultkrantz 1981: 135-39)

Amongst the Eastern Cree spiritual power and presence are most evident in the practice of hunting. As Chance stipulates, "what we would call the Cree supernatural belief system saw [hu]man [beings] as dependent on the power of an unseen force [...] contained in all living things including stones, animals, [hu]man and spirits" (1968: 21). Thus, all aspects of the created order, whether land, people, animal or plant, are interconnected with a superior being, or universal principle as the binding force.[20] Practices which recognize and celebrate this interconnection, such as renewal and thanksgiving ceremonies, developed over time, enhance the opportunities to dialogue with the environment and promote cohesion within the hunting group. (LaDuke, 2005: 12ff)

Successful hunting is directly related to the respect paid to the particular aspect of the spirit associated with the desired prey. An animal guardian or owner,[21] defined by Hultkrantz as "a supernatural ruler whose function is to exercise stewardship over the wild animals" (1981: 136), is believed to have the power to control the food supply in accordance with the appropriate deference given by the hunter. For example, the hunter speaks to the

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[20] Quoting Alice Fletcher's statement (JAI [1898]: 437) "In the idea of the continuity of life, a relation was maintained between the seen and the unseen, the dead and the living, and also between the fragment of anything and its entirety", Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1966: 27) writes: "[...] regard all animate and inanimate forms, all phenomena as pervaded by a common life, which was continuous and similar to the will power they were conscious of in themselves [...] through it all things were related".

[21] It is beyond the scope of this study to recount the copious discussion regarding the concept of owner or guardian. For references see bibliography to Speck, Hultkrantz, Preston, Long/Preston/Oberholtzer, Feit, Kock, Cooper, Fisher, Martin, and Paulson.

animal guardian or owner of the need to provide food for the hunting party and apologizes for having to resort to killing. Recognition is given to the prey for offering its life to assuage the hunger of the hunting group, and a plea is made that its species continue to populate the hunting area so that a harmonious relationship between the species may be continued. At this point it is presumed that the guardian or owner spirit of the particular species being addressed has heard the hunter's plea and is prepared to give one of its kind as a gift of sustenance to the hunter.[22] The hunter thanks the prey for offering itself and then takes its life. The animal is butchered and its parts distributed. (more on this in chapter 4)

Hunting is a complex series of ritual activities which pay homage to the traditions of the past and perpetuate the communication of a myth as it is acted out in the present (more on this chapter 4). The activity of hunting (chapter 4.1) and the associated ceremony (chapter 4.2) contain within them mnemonic devices which transmit the connection between symbolic presence within nature and human existence within what the Eastern Cree consider to be both a physical and spiritual reality.

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[22] Hultkrantz 1981: 136 & 1961: 53ff; also Swan 1995: 37.

Chapter 2

Space and Place in the Human and Religious Experience

Spiritual and economic globalization presents a challenge to every individual who seeks to comprehend his or her place in the socioeconomic and philosophical realm of life. No less so than in the indigenous communities around the world whose task is to define their own cultural heritage, advocating the preservation of what they consider to be spaces which offer spiritual fulfilment (Carmichael & others) 1994: 1-5) alongside economic development. (Helm & Leacock 1971: 359; Ray 1996: 259; Feit 1986, 1995, 2001; Richardson 1976; Scott 1996; Chance 1968; Penn 1995; Niezen 1998, 2000)

Since the time of first contact in the seventeenth century a variety of researchers - anthropologists, economists, geographers, missionaries, and geologists to name a few - have captured data in an attempt to delineate the habitat and lifestyle of the indigenous peoples they have encountered. Though dialogue between these professionals has not always been positive, the research has illuminated significant areas of development, knowledge and understanding[1].

As in chapter 1, let us first outline briefly Taylor's comments on contextual frameworks, and then proceed to explore how space is experienced by the people of Eastern

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[1] Bonsen, Marks & Miedema introduce and edit an extensive study of the relationship between anthropologists and missionaries in *The Ambiguity of Rapprochement* (1990). See also *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places,* edited by Carmichael& others, concerning the differing perceptions between archæologists and indigenous peoples and the need to develop a collegial dialogue.

James Bay as well as the general parameters of that which is spiritually significant in their lives. The historical evidence offered by a variety of researchers and the philosophical material offered by such authors as Merleau-Ponty, Sheldrake, Inge, Eliade, Tuan and Casey do include contributions to the discussion on the significance of space by the people of Eastern James Bay themselves.

The idea of space carries with it the connotation of belonging, i.e. the co-ordination and co-option of observed and sensed data by which an individual or community claims identity. In the notion of belonging space acquires the attributes which the people of Eastern James Bay experience as spiritual. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests, space is the setting in which other things are possible (in Smith 1962: 243). If this were not so there would be no connecting points between the environment and its component parts. Space is, in this sense, power – a universal power enabling things to be connected (Smith 1962: 243) and in place. These connecting points are the subject of this chapter.

2.l Taylor's Individual Frameworks of Reference

According to Taylor (1989: 26) identity is formed out of that which provides the background, explicit and implicit, for intuitions, reactions and moral judgements. Even though most people do not explore their own underlying historical frameworks, actions are taken and judgements are formed under the influence of the implicit understanding of a particular framework prevalent at any specific historical time (Taylor 1989: 3). Thus, dialogue becomes meaningful only after attempts to bring out the underlying language which informs the current assumptions on which moral choices as well as future cultural

projections are articulated.[2] Respect for life and basic integrity emanate from the cultural

definition of what it is to be human in a given context. The most important criteria for

meaningful existence are the avoidance of suffering (Taylor 1989: 12f), the affirmation of

ordinary life (Taylor 1989: 13), and respect for others (Taylor 1989: 14) – all of which will

be examined in chapter 4.

As Taylor points out, the frameworks from which perceptions and judgements are

made are apt to colour the perceptions and judgements about a particular reality. For him,

individual agency emanates from a known cultural, linguistic and spiritual framework. A

given space endowed with meaning by one group will be described differently by another.[3]

For example, for a group of people living in coastal areas the experience of space might be

different from that of people living inland, even within people of the same basic ethnic

experience such as the people of Eastern James Bay.

This chapter explores the contextual framework of reference associated with the

culture of the people living in Eastern James Bay. As noted in chapter 1.1, the people

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[2] Taylor, 1989: 5. – Taylor uses the terms 'language' and 'the articulation of such' to
include non-linguistic expression.

[3] Taylor, 1989: 5. – See also Casey 1996: 31. Casey argues that regional identity derives
from the diversity of differing place-related experiences (1993: 304). This proposition
will be taken up in the following pages.

identify themselves as Δᑉᐧ *iiyiyuu* (people[4]) in the northern dialect, and as Δᓈ *iinuu*

(people) in the southern dialect. Iiyiyuu/Iinuu has a compound meaning given by the people

themselves: iiyiyuu or iinuu suggests 'human' as different from other forms of life, Cree as

distinct from other indigenous nations, 'indigenous' as opposed to 'non-indigenous' and

having the quality of life (Atkinson 1990: 14; Adelson 2000: 120). For these people this

environment, Iiyiyuuschii, has the quality of being primary, and as such it forms the basis

for enquiry, subsistence and religious experience. Three aspects in particular do relate to the

human and religious experience of the people of Eastern James Bay and suggest the need for

further clarification: environment as primary, the connection between the component parts

of the forms of life, and religious experience.

2.2 <u>Environment as Primary</u>

Human beings and human activity depend on an integrated system of agency within

the known space – a space considered to be fundamental to all existence.[5] This space has

the quality of being primary: it is the starting point of experience - continually offering itself

to be known - forming and being formed (Casey 1996: 26f). To exist at all is to be

considered as a body, and to be considered as a body requires that the body be in place in

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[4] Feit (1995: 97) uses the word 'Innu' as people.

[5] Casey 1996: 14f. & 1997. See also Benson 2001: 10. – In Casey 1993 space is that
which is claimed as personal from a realm of possibilities: 'being in place' suggests the
possibility of movement between places which are fixed in space (22-39), and objects
(bodies) are those which reside in the imminent presence of space, that is 'implaced' (47-
54). To exist is to be in place (13), and space itself can only be conceived of as in place
(16). In Casey 1997 space is part of an all encompassing place which in turn limits the
particular and is boundless in and of itself (1997: 335). Whereas *space* is considered as
'placial' in the first book, in his later book Casey attempts to resurrect *place* as both
particular and universal - places *within* place.

space - "emplaced" in "space"[6] - which *is in itself,* suggests Merleau-Ponty. *Its definition is to be in itself.* "Space remains absolutely in itself - everywhere equal to itself, homogenous; its dimensions [...] interchangeable" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 173). The body as space exists in space and is completed by space; as Casey suggests, "they interanimate each other" (1996: 14): "Just as there is no place without body there is no body without place"(Casey 1993: 104). The body becomes that which sense data experience in association with space as one spatial body amongst other spatial bodies each with its own distinct experience of space.[7]

2.2.1 Place within Space

... or space within place, this is the question! Or might it be place within place? When discussing an environment one has to acknowledge that particular people live in a particular space which is different from the space of another group of people (see chapter 2.1). Since each particular space will be described differently, what is worthy of investigation is that which makes one space qualitatively different from another. These qualitatively different spaces might be considered as limited or unlimited, intimate or exterior (Bachelard 1964: 201), here or there, near or far (Casey 1997: 225; 1993: 50), familiar or unfamiliar, known or unknown, otherness or elsewhere (Caviola 1991: 6f, 23), though as has been shown (chapter 2.2), even these designations of space do not reveal the

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[6] See Casey 1993: xv, 313; 1996: 14; 1997: 34 & 102.

[7] See Merleau-Ponty 1962: 99-100: more on this chapter 5. – In *Metaphysics* Aristotle says: "To be material is a primary way of being" (i.1042.34); "To be a body is to be in place" (xi.1067a7), and "to be in place is to be somewhere" (xi.1067a32). As Rabil (1967: 33) states, "Perceived space is existential space." "Space is thus orientated in relation to the body subject who perceives."

depth of the historical argument revolving around the distinction between space and place.

Plato considered that space pre-existed defined places, whereas Aristotle argued that place

is the starting point of experience (Inge 2003: 4f). Edward Casey pursues this argument,

positing "that it is from the specifics of space that place is hypothesized" (1996: 21) – that

in fact, it is from place that the specifics of space become defined even though space is

beyond that which is known (1997: 23). Here Casey agrees with Caviola's hypothesis

concerning the distinction between elsewhere as "the sphere of otherness" and space that is

"habitual and known". It is a matter of perception, and perception is primary. Place is

experienced by being in place;[8] it is, Geertz would say, local knowledge (see chapter 1.3.2),

which is itself the perception of embodiment in a particular place. Place is perceived in the

experience - at least the part of place which has the potential of becoming familiar and

known. As Casey suggests, human beings are "never not emplaced" (1996: 17f), never not

"in place" (1997: ix), never not "implaced" (1993: 21 & 46; 1997: 56). However, despite

his suggestion that human beings "are never without perception" and consequently "are

never without emplaced experiences" (1996:19), more than ever human beings live now in

an era in which the issue of place is one of crisis. Philip Sheldrake recalls that people are

faced with increased mobility, less dependence on particular locations, less reliance on

family structure and cohesiveness, which results in "a sense of rootlessness, dislocation or

displacement" (2001: 2); people become "out of place" (2001: 2-9). But since, as Casey

suggests, "place has the power to make things be somewhere" (1997: 71), so that "there is

no space without body" (Philoponus cited in Casey 1997: 198) and space as power informs

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[8] See Casey 1993: 46 note 16, and 331: "We can say by extension that all our experience
starts with being-in-place, even though it does not follow that all experience derives from
place".

perception, then, the body is never without place (more on this in chapter 2.2), and becoming "out of place"is indeed a matter of being **lost in place**!

This raises the question as to how place moulds perception as human beings seek to interact with a changing environment. Sheldrake offers a reflection on the significance of place in the current discourse of social sciences, literature and philosophy, suggesting that symbols associated with place are in decline in western societies. He argues that such a decline leads to a disharmony amongst people resulting in an increase in social pathologies and individuation (Sheldrake 2001: 2). John Inge shares Sheldrake's concerns regarding the impact of technology and globalization on social constructions of localized space. (Inge 2003: 12-17)

Much of Sheldrake's argument can be used to identify the framework from which many current North-American thinkers address their enquiries concerning the changing perspectives on the perception, use and availability of space in a variety of topics from industry, education, and landscape to recreation. Even modern theologians such as Inge suggest that the notion of space can only be understood by looking at historical concepts. This historical discourse represents the framework of the non-indigenous voice, whereas the framework of indigenous people like those of Eastern James Bay does not include such a historical perspective. The concepts associated with describing a particular space are culturally specific constructs and as such local knowledge; they do not necessarily transfer across cultures.

To distinguish place from space is to be equated with the distinction between, for example, near and far; it is a subjective reflection dependent upon who is being asked. "Places feel different", espoused James Swan in 1969 as the University of Michigan searched for a definition for *environmental education* (1990: 19). Locations acquire symbolic or tangible signification as a place of import through meaningful experience (Swan 1990: 35, 70f, 130-4, 181). The occupants of a space both derive meaning from that space and confer meaning on individual places within that space (Casey 1996: 27). Meanings associated with specific places are told in narrative – stories and dramatic representations – which has the potential to express traditional beliefs about space (Sheldrake 2001: 6). Such beliefs offer the opportunity to localize particular places within space. For example, Mircea Eliade speaks of a qualitative difference in the perception of a particular space and the subsequent orientation to life as it unfolds within that space (Eliade 1959: 22). Space, in these views, suggests a tract of land as a subset of place. Place as a concept becomes primal in that it gives forth of itself to individual spaces within which human beings interact; specific places become identified within specific spaces. To say it another way, the concept of place promotes the recognition of aspects of itself in particular places within the boundaries of identifiable spaces in which life takes form (Casey 1993:chapter 3; Tuan 1977: 159). Following this line of enquiry, the environment known as Iiyiyuuschii (chapter 1.1.2), the familiar, known space inhabited by the Eastern Cree, **is** a manifestation of place as a particular place within spatial parameters in which all elements of life interconnect.

2.2.2 <u>Home as Space</u>

Although the words 'space' and 'place' both describe components of an experienced world and therefore are often used interchangeably (Inge 2003: 1), discourse over the last forty years suggests that consideration be given to the primacy of place over space. Space is described as "pure dimensionality void of all corporeality" (Philoponus in Jammer 1970: 56), although it does, in fact, have a dimensional quality (Casey 1997: 139f) and "is never without body" (Casey 1997: 198). We are aware of space because we as bodies exist. As Merleau-Ponty says, *"far from my body's being for me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space at all for me if I had no body"* (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 102). For Casey, we are now witnessing *"The Reappearance of Place"* (Casey 1997: 197-342); that is, we are recognizing the particularity of place-related phenomena which attract our senses and identify a particular location as a place of import.

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that the word 'place' connotes a specific area of space that has a determinate feature, with a boundary from which one launches into the open and experiences possible threat from the indeterminate space (1977: 6). Prior to this, Mircea Eliade espoused that this latter space is the formless expanse which surrounds the space considered as familiar or as having meaning conferred upon it (1959: 20). Such familiar or potentially meaningful space is significant to its residents, leading to the identification of a home space. The idea of home as space infers that which is, or has the potential to become familiar, that which Gaston Bachelard refers to in the opening words of *La poétique de l'espace* (1958) as both an intimate and complex unity, having within it the potential to evoke something fundamental.

According to the people of Eastern James Bay, there is no space which does not make an impact. Space is tangible. One feels a location within space either negatively or positively. One exercises caution or boldness depending on the terrain. One is at home or is on alien soil, depending on the degree of familiarity. A distinction, if made at all by these people, is between space endowed with meaning and recognized as familiar, and space beyond the parameters of meaningful identification.[9] The land identified as Iiyiyuuschii (chapter 1.1.2) is considered as known space inhabited by the inland as well as the coastal people of Eastern James Bay: it **is** the place of familiarity – home.

2.2.3 Home and the Sense of Belonging

The typical view of home is a place where one seeks refuge; a space where one seeks security and respite; a dwelling place wherein one lives with one's family and shares affections, extending hospitality and launching forth to perform a variety of projects. Bachelard likens the image of home to a 'cradle', the first world of experience (1964: 7). It is the womb of creation (more on this in chapter 5.3) evoking a love of place, i.e. topophilia (1964: 14). Home may include one's native or adopted land as the place where one spends one's life, reaping resources, developing and establishing ethical parameters (Tuan 1974: 100ff.) or, Casey suggests, as "being somewhere in particular" (1993: 121). The body *is* fully engaged in the dynamics associated with the proximity of place. Home becomes that which **is** felt, it is – as Swan suggests – a place which feels different (see chapter 2.2.1), it is a *"situation for living"* (Casey 1993: 300). As such, home then is

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[9] 'Alien soil' and 'space beyond that which is meaningful' refer to that which is outside the purview of the Eastern Cree. Increased mobility and global communication enhance knowledge of the surrounding environment.

located - "located in space but, as Mary Douglas suggests, it is not necessarily a fixed space". (1991: 289)

Fig. 11. Fort George Island 1994.[10]

For the people of Eastern James Bay home is a tangible place they have feelings for - a place with which they feel intimately connected; it is, as Bachelard said, "la topographie

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[10] Dwellings attributed to the Eastern Cree. The suggestion that there might be an Ojibwe influence in the style of dome lodge has not been affirmed in personal conversations with the Cree people of Chisasibi and Eastmain. See also Alanson Skinner (1911) who comments that the traditional home of the Eastern Cree is either the conical tepee, the rounded (domed) top lodge, or the elongated two-fire tepee (12) - all of which were to be found at Fort George in 1994.

de notre être intime" – "the topography of our own inner self".[11] Yet the traditional home

for these people is not a static dwelling place *on* the landscape (fig. 13); it *is* the landscape.

"All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (Bachelard 1964: 5).

This is so for the Eastern Cree. Prior to the establishment of permanent villages, dwelling

places were erected for a short time in a particular place in the bush while hunters sought

sustenance from the surrounding land.[12] To avoid depletion of available food resources

frequent relocation occurred. Temporary dwelling places were considered as an integral

part of the living environment with which the hunting group participated in a subsistence

economy.   The particularity of place in this context becomes a multiplicity of

interconnecting places or events within the known environment which act together to engage

its component parts. It carries with it the connotation of familiarity – a sense of belonging

without which there would be no connecting points between the component parts of life.

Fig. 12. Traditional Tepee frame alongside modern dwellings, Eastmain 1997.

These socially constructed connecting points are integral to the sense of belonging, giving

shape to identity and providing the basis of what life is all about. The people of Eastern

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[11] Quoted in Casey 1997: 288f; see also Inge 2003: 17. – More on this in chapter 3.

[12]"Settlement comprises any place occupied by one or more individuals for one or more nights, for any purpose that falls within the ordinary, expected and predictable round of activities for the society in question" (Campbell, 1968 in Helm & Leacock 1971:361).

James Bay consider themselves as an integral part of what they consider to be *their* space; they *feel* they belong with the area of land they call home, they *feel* a part of the inherent seasonal rhythms associated with that space. This is why they describe themselves as people of the land (see chapter 1.1.2). What is at issue here is the space endowed with meaning by the indigenous people of Eastern James Bay – a meaning also developed and perpetuated in the development of both community and character. (more on this in chapter 5)

Human perception of an environment is the factor which affects the evaluation of a particular space and the places within that space. Simple observation may indicate qualitative differences between one space and another. Some might call this 'ambiance', that is, feelings evoked by a memory associated with a particular space, or even a space influencing the lifestyle or mood of a particular people. Whatever these definitive aspects are, they are the qualities which enable familiarity and set one particular space, and the places within it, apart from another.

Such a perception leads to questions of **ownership** versus **stewardship** with regard to the consequences of non-indigenous political ventures such as logging and hydroelectric power, education and social programmes. These issues do impinge on the relationships the Eastern Cree maintain with the land they consider as home. These programmes do have a tangible and substantial impact on the Eastern Cree; yet they are of interest here only in so far as Eastern Cree perceptions of their land remain despite the external demands made on it. This study cannot include a discussion on the political ventures between the people of James Bay and the Province of Quebec; significant research on these matters has been

carried out by people such as anthropologists Richard Preston, Harvey Feit, Colin Scott, and

Adrian Tanner.

2.2.4 Home as Garden

Home suggests a dwelling place surrounded by a small tract of land (see chapter

2.2.3) . Such land may well be defined as a garden – that space set aside for leisure activities

and/or the cultivation of food products - a specific space set apart within a larger space.

Usually gardens are considered to comprise mostly natural elements of what can still be

thought of as essentially domestic. As Tuan suggests, "gardens mirror certain cosmic values

and environmental attitudes" (1974: 138), they are landscaped venues for human activities

(1974: 141), rich in symbols (more on this in chapter 3), and often potential repositories of

and for meaningful experience[13]. Gardens are for Tuan "redeemed from the wilderness, a

particular spot where primeval nature has been reshaped to accommodate human needs"

(1971: 24). According to Casey, gardens represent some place in between the dwelling

considered as home and the space beyond, some sort of respite between that which can be

considered as cultivated, known and familiar, and that, such as a wilderness, which is not.

(Casey 1993: 154f)

This is not the view of the Eastern Cree. What Casey refers to as wilderness (1993:

188f) is the environment people of Eastern James Bay consider as home. Casey recalls that

wilderness is considered since the middle ages as the domain of wanderers whose lifestyle

differs from that of a people given to an agrarian way of life (1993: 188). The Eastern Cree

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[13] Tuan 1974: 145. – More on this in chapter 5.

consider it as Ȧᕆᐸᐁᐟᠻᐧ Iiyiyuuschi – that which is familiar and known. This familiar and known environment identified by the Eastern Cree as home is also referred to as garden – ᓂᐦᐸᐅᠻᐦᠻᐸᐞ *nihtaauchihchigen*.[14] Garden represents their culture and the resources of this space, their livelihood. "Hunting is like gardening and their hunting lands are like a garden [...] life is sustained from the garden" (Feit 2001: 424f).   In this garden they cultivate reciprocal relationships between the diverse components of the environment.[15] For these people *garden* becomes a compound meta-symbol capable of mediating information about its many components, offering opportunities for the conference of spiritual significance. Home as garden is the basic expression of what can be viewed as Eastern Cree 'culture' referred to by the Middle English word as <u>place tilled</u> and stemming from the latin <u>colere</u> meaning to care for, till, worship – Ȧᕆᐦᐠᐧ·ᐁᐞ <u>*iiyihtuuwin*</u>, i.e. it is in such contextualized behavioural patterns of "social action that cultural forms find articulation". (Geertz 1973: 17)

2.3 <u>The Component Parts of the Forms of Life</u>

According to the people of Eastern James Bay, to have life as a human is to be situated (see chapter 1.4.2), and to be situated is to have some sort of reciprocal presence in

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[14]Personal communication from Margaret Cheezo and other Eastmain community members in 2006. See Richardson's discussion with Job Bearskin in Chisasibi on the comparison between the traditional hunting land of the Cree and the small cultivated garden of the European (Richardson 1976: 118-97), and also Feit's discussion on the use of garden as metaphor (2001: 432- 445).

[15] Tanner (quoted in Richardson 1976: 235) suggests that in order to understand hunting as a way of life, and acquiring the skills associated with this activity as education, wilderness and the life it supports needs to be understood and affirmed. Using biblical images Tuan reminds us that wilderness has a dual function as a place of confrontation and as a place of refuge (1974: 110).

space amongst other situated entities. For them also, "There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it" (Casey 1996:18). The relevance of space emanates from a perception of belonging; in that belonging, an understanding of the interrelationship between the different aspects associated with environment is formed. For these people nothing exists in isolation (Brown 1976: 32). Every thing in space and the places associated with space are essential parts of human experience and as such impact every level of human activity (Tuan 1977: 3; Inge 2003: 1-3). How individuals or collectives of human beings perceive this activity depends on the particularity of the space occupied. For example, topographical, climactic and hydrological properties, such as salt marshes, fires, water courses, muskeg, lakes, dense coniferous forests, open land, and sparsely treed northern tundra offer the opportunity for a wide range of subsistence activities in the subarctic region of Eastern James Bay.[16] The people inhabiting this region consider this environment as the starting point of experience, itself provoking or prompting a response. For these people, identification with the environment is both **provocative** and **evocative**, both **informative** and **formative**.

For the indigenous person of Eastern James Bay, subsistence from the environment requires knowledge of the spatial parameters pertaining to the sustenance of the hunting or fishing group. A feeling for the particular places within the environment is developed over time – a feeling that can be disclosed, interpreted, and understood. Within the familiar space of Iiyiyuuschii settlements arise, animals are hunted, children are born, and people die. All these are moments in time giving rise to profound experience of particular places. These

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[16] Atkinson 1990: 10, 16; Rogers & Smith 1981: 130f; Wright 1981: 86.

significant places emanate from a profound association with the land and its resources: animals, plants and waters used in healing, relaxation, meditation and spiritual renewal are mapped in memory and form part of the local history of the people.[17] This history represents the accumulated knowledge of generations of people inhabiting the area. Tuan calls this "intimate knowledge",[18] perpetuated amongst the Eastern Cree through storytelling (chapter 5.2.2) and dramatic representations (chapter 5.2.3). Experiencing place leads to intimacy with place, which in turn leads to place **as** experience. Defined by observable parameters, place at once defines and influences its inhabitants (Casey 1996: 31); it both **informs** and **forms**. The inhabitants of a place confer meaning on a place, and this meaning then gives rise to attributes associated with the place (Casey 1996: 27), which in turn inform future inhabitants (more on this in chapter 5). For the indigenous people of Eastern James Bay, such meaning and such attributes are derived from direct experience of the environment itself; in the co-ordination and co-option of observed and sensed data knowledge is gained and put to use. The environment is considered to be the initiator of experience, evoking or drawing out from its perceivers the possibility of exchange. In this exchange, the recognition of space as familiar and known or as potentially utopic, is made clear, no matter how harsh and intimidating it may seem to those standing in other known spaces.

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[17] Beck & Walters l977: 73; Niezen 1998: 31- 36; Martin 1980: 43f: "Wild game flesh is loaded with symbolic significance: it is a palpable sign of animal friendship; it represents physical nourishment; and it is medicine (prophylactic), since animal flesh is but an altered form of plant forage and 'the vegetable kingdom ... [is] the original source of medicine agency." Speck (1977: 78f) records that the Montagnais-Naskapi are 'taking medicine' as they eat the diet of game animals and argues that the acts associated with 'taking medicine' are significant (more on this in chapter 5). See also Kavasch & others 1999, Decora in LaDuke 2005: 191-210, and Niezen 1998: 31.

[18] Tuan 1977: 147; also Posey 2001: 4.

The people of Eastern James Bay depend on an integrated system of agency within the familiar known space. They consider themselves as an integral part of this space and of the seasonal rhythms associated with it (chapter 2.2.3). There is no action or reference which is not bound to the cycle of regeneration. The evolution of known space-related events and activities is perpetuated through acknowledgement and the repeated reverence paid to the connections between the component parts of the known space. The same consideration is given to all forms of life within the known space (LaDuke 2005: 12), and place becomes the space where interaction between species exists. This interaction occurs in particular places within space, thereby rendering the possibility of identifying the significance of such places.

In identifying themselves as Iiyiyuu/Iinuu, the people of Eastern James Bay acknowledge that they are one particular aspect within the complexity of life, and that all aspects of life – whether land, human, animal or plant – are interrelated and infused with 'spirit'.[19] For them, living, breathing, temporal existence in conjunction with corporeal, spatial existence take place in the natural order and are subject to the inherent rhythms therein; it is significant as such and has to be considered as spiritual. Joseph Epes Brown comments that "every form of the land is experienced as the locus of qualitatively differentiated spirit-beings, whose individual and collective presence sanctifies and gives

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[19] CeTA 1984, 11; Hultkrantz 1981: 120, 136; Long/Preston/Oberholtzer 2006; J. Gill 2002: 177; Brown 1976: 32; LaDuke 2005: 12. – In a discussion of the belief in the mystic properties of everything which exists Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939) suggests that "indigenous cultures around the world considered that these properties were inherent and beyond the reach of their immediate senses." He suggests that "these properties, by their very nature, are much more important than the attributes of which our senses inform us" (1966: 27).

meaning to the land in all its details and contours" (1976: 30). To say a place, thing, or

person has spiritual significance suggests that there is a boundary or border between 'self'

and what is considered as 'other', and that the connection between the two can be expressed

(Sheldrake 2001: 3). Such spiritual significance emanates from the inter-relationship

between the land and the living organisms associated with the land, of which human beings

are just one.[20]

2.4 Religious Experience

In order to understand the interaction between the various aspects of life in which

sense data in the first place – not the spoken/written word – are adequate, one must enter the

space in between the differences of the indigenous Eastern James Bay people and the non-

indigenous perspective. There is no easy way to do this, for to apprehend another space one

needs to first comprehend one's own and – Durkheim suggests – to free the mind of

preconception (1915: 38). Taylor argues that to make conclusions about another frame of

reference without first attempting to discern from which perspective one is drawing those

conclusions is to demote one's own heritage and to deny oneself the opportunity of

embracing the new found in the other. Victor Turner suggests that "if our basic model of

society is that of a structure of positions we must regard the period of margin or liminality

as an interstructural situation" (1967: 93). He follows folklorist Arnold Van Gennep (1873-

1957) who addresses the passage of an individual from one stage to another, or the change

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[20] The process of differentiation might be extended to 'other persons' outside of the
known area of space: especially relevant to this discussion are the comments made by
Ronald Niezen on the effects of "exploration, development and settlement" (1998: 1).

an individual makes when confronted with a new idea or a new option (more on this in chapter 5.3.3). This pertains also to the space in which two distinct species or cultures meet.

The interstructural situation where such a meeting takes place is considered as the space of differences (Van Gennep 1960: 18). This space might be the political trading arena, or in ecclesial matters, ecumenical or interfaith dialogue. In Eastern James Bay this dialogue is between spirit-filled aspects of known space. Here, space is not identical with physical space, known or unknown, but is an in-between area, both spatial and temporal, where experiences meet and are confronted, where opportunities and exchanges are made possible, or when a people or nation is deciding whether to move from one political stance to another.

Such interstructural situation is constantly given in the daily life of the people of Eastern James Bay. The dwelling places erected for a short time in the bush while the men hunt are cleared of all but the tree trunks used to frame the tepee. The materials used to cover the frame are carried to the next site to re-establish a new dwelling. Getting ready to move camp, preparing for the hunt, or getting ready to embark on a journey – these real events in space and time are all *transitional* phases (Van Gennep 1960: 2f; 15) equated with perceived boundaries between the known familiar space and the unknown and unfamiliar space. (Leach 1976: 33f: – More on this in chapter 5.3.3)

For the people of Eastern James Bay, these transitional phases are significant in that they involve all the relational spatial elements of the traditional way of life as a hunting/fishing and gathering community for whom all aspects of life are interconnected and

manifest the presence of a superior being or power.[21] Generations of people attest to an
unwavering adherence to the acknowledgement that this superior being or power has been,
is presently, and will always be[22] in the encounter taking place either in the physical known
or unknown space, or in the transition between the two. Such encounter is revealed *with*
space and *in* space. The boundaries are fluid and harmonize with all aspects of life and of
the environment.

Known space offers to the Eastern Cree the continual return to what they consider
as the historical view of the traditional past and with it, the possibility of a meaningful
spiritual encounter in the spatial component of the present (Inge 2003: 124). Such encounter
enables religious experience and offers the passage into the re-creation of the future.
Religious expression witnesses the continuing presence of spirit-filled aspects of life and the
particularity of significant places associated with the spiritual manifestation between aspects
of space.

2.5 Sacred/Spiritual Encounter

Even though the traditional view of the Eastern Cree is that the environment
emanates from the spiritual realm, that the component parts of the environment are
interrelated and that each component part is imbued with spirit (see chapter 2.3), a difficulty
arises in determining what can be considered as sacred.   The word itself conjures a

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[21] Already referred to above in chapter 2.3, footnote 12.

[22] S. Preston 1999, 25. – "According to Cree legend, the landscape and all the animal
and spirit-persons in it existed before humans arrived; human culture was added to the
landscape matrix."

definition that   designates reverential meaning to some thing, place, or person, and distinguishes that so designated apart from anything else. The same is true when some thing, place, or person is deemed spiritually significant. The words 'sacred' and 'spiritual' are usually used together and interchangeably, and many indigenous peoples use the word 'sacred' to describe both the **known** space and the particularly **significant** place.

The connections made between particular places in known space and the component parts of the environment have a symbolic foundation. This symbolic foundation emanates from the inter-relationship between the land and the living organisms associated with the land, of which human beings are considered one amongst others (LaDuke 2005: 12; more on this in chapter 3.3). This symbolic foundation is developed and perpetuated in community. (more on this chapters 4 & 5)

Chapter 3

The Possibility of Life associated with the Idea of Space and Place

Differing perceptions formed by historically and contextually developed personal frameworks gave rise to cultural misunderstandings in the encounter between indigenous and non-indigenous people. For example, the idea that a seventeenth-century culture was able to exist without knowledge of Christ gave birth to the onslaught of missionary zeal, or the idea that fur had commercial value gave birth to a system of trade and barter for goods and services between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Rather than go on to record how it is that the spread of the Christian gospel and the exchange of goods challenged both indigenous and non-indigenous perceptions, this chapter attempts to describe how environment and symbolic language come together to represent a spiritual reality that governs the possibility of life.

Subsistence activities and linguistic development are contextually specific (see chapter 1.3.2) – in other words: environment determines whether industry, agriculture or hunting is sustainable; within that context practices and language develop to support the mode of subsistence. Further verbal and non-verbal language describing both the environment and activities within the environment offer opportunities to interpret and communicate experiences of the environment. Space and place highlights an intimate relationship between the people and their environment (see chapter 2). The idea of belonging indicates the development of familiarity between all aspects of a known space. The Eastern Cree consider that all aspects of life form extensions of a superior being or

power and are interrelated. Linguistic interaction between these aspects is based on the perception that each contains within itself a spiritual element; communication occurs as each aspect, human, land, flora, or fauna, engages in a dialogue with another spirit-filled aspect. Interaction between the components of the environment are most evident in the use of symbols which describe the possibility of life amongst the people of Eastern James Bay.

This chapter refers to the development of symbolic language associated with the interpretation of space. How space is perceived to offer subsistence will be discussed in chapter 4, and chapter 5 shows how it is that the symbols associated with space aid in character formation that occurs amongst the Eastern Cree within an understanding of the relationship between all aspects of the environment and the place of nature in the spiritual realm. Such understanding encourages an intelligible articulation of the possibilities of life.

Clarification and working definitions of terms such as myth and symbol will be given in the following sections as well as a reflection on how these ideas are used to order known and familiar space. The place of myth as a foundation for a system of belief will be introduced in this chapter in so far as it establishes the parameters for the discussion in chapter five on character development. Since the concept of myth is multidimensional any conclusions drawn will be dependent upon the specific data available. To this end a hypothetical framework using the body 'I' as a referent is used and engages many of the working parameters involved in the creation and maintenance of symbolic reference to perpetuate a social order. Theorists such as Louis Dupré, Mircea Eliade, James Swan and Barbara C. Sproul offer a variety of alternate ideas when looking at the relationship between

people and their environment and some are included in the discussion. On the other hand, while Kevin Doran looks at the historical definition of personhood from a philosophical, medical and theological perspective he concentrates on what this has to do with ethical behaviour. Some of his comments concerning the relationship between the physical and sensing functions of a body are incorporated. (see chapter 3.4.3)

3.1 <u>Tradition</u>

For Taylor, to describe reality one turns to the mediums available to communicate and re-present one's realm of existence. Human beings use a variety of symbols to articulate a perception of their reality, whether physical or imagined. Cross-cultural contact continues to evoke dialogue and adaptation; especially since the 1800's human beings have become increasingly adapted to expanding global conditions, which includes awareness of the symbols of life within other cultures and the experiences associated with differing perspectives (Taylor 1989: 394). All people – indigenous and non-indigenous – strive to locate themselves in a symbolic framework which preserves at least some of the familiar parameters and thus encourages a meaningful existence. Some, like the Eastern Cree, try to keep in focus their traditional heritage whilst incorporating technological and economic advancements. (more on this in chapters 4 & 5)

Tradition is built on a complex perception that entails symbolical representation of reality through the medium of myth. In discussing creation myths Barbara Sproul argues that the past, present and future have significance when arranged around a central truth interpreted through myth. "The fundamental structures of understanding that myths provide,

even though in part dictated by matter and instinct, [...] describe not just the 'real' world of 'fact' but our perceptions and experience of that world" (Sproul 1979: 2). Attitudes towards reality find their definition in the mythical interpretation associated with longevity (Sproul 1979: 1f). Symbols emanate from, and refer back to this longevity and are defined by a present cultural conditioning. Environmental symbols, such as those associated with topography and hydrology, together with seasonal symbols, become the framework within which all other forms of life acquire symbolic meaning (S. Preston 1999: 29). The symbols themselves **formulate** the myth, and the myth **articulates** the symbols. (Dupré 2000: 93)

3.2 <u>Myth as Foundational Paradigm</u>

Myth arises from particular needs of a community. Jan Vansina argues that myths are developed to perpetuate and explain the majority assumptions of the internal workings of a culture (1985: 23, 85). Developed in this way, myth legitimates life and gives meaning to its structure (Eliade 1963: 2) by reinforcing behaviour patterns within the context of traditional knowledge of an environment.[1] Primary myth relates the essential account of a particular heritage (Doty 1986: 25) and is a statement of the human condition; "it offers ways of ordering experience" (Barbour 1974: 20). It is a narrative with temporal import –

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[1] Doty 1986: 35; also Turner 1967. – This is attested by Bronislaw Malinowski who writes that myth "is a vital ingredient of human behaviour " 1954: 101), which "deeply [...] enters into human pursuits, and [...] strongly controls their moral and social behaviour" (1984: 195).

past, present, future[2] – representing the social and religious structure of a community (Eliade 1976: 22). The connection between structure and actions within the structure are closely linked, even though most actions are unconscious and form part of a communal adherence (Vansina 1985: 96). As Bruce Lincoln states, "Myth is not just a coding device in which important information is conveyed, on the basis of which actors *can then* construct society. It is also a discursive act through which actors evoke the sentiments out of which society is actively constructed" (1989: 25). As Malinowski intimates, myth "is not symbolic but a direct expression of its subject matter; it is not an explanation [...] it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief: it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for guidance" (1984: 199). Myth evolves within a framework created by those who believe and gives significance to life in a particular environment; as such it is based on a perception of reality generally accepted and considered as believable (Ogden 1966: 105). As the environment changes, so the framework or structure of a myth evolves to accommodate the changing need. The essential core of living truth remains intact and is perpetuated by evolving symbolic expression. Myths are dramas: they attempt to reveal hidden meanings in reality. Sproul argues that human beings in understanding the paradigmatic myth are led to connect with, and be part of, the nature of the environment (1979: 14). For Lincoln, a paradigmatic myth is one endowed with sufficient authority, claiming an ætiological truth which evokes a response by those who believe in its structure. (1989: 24)

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[2] Bascom 1994: 9; Ricœur 1974: 28; Sproul 1979: 1; Ogden 1966: 104.

For the people of Eastern James Bay myth is based on some experiential phenomenon emanating from the known environment and transmitted orally for generations. Oral transmission is the connection between the emergence of the myth and the current reality. Space is experienced, and in the experiencing of space ideas are formulated regarding particular spaces existing in the space. These ideas become the lens through which the spatial (environmental) reality is perceived and experienced, and give rise to that which may be viewed as mythical knowledge. For the Eastern Cree, all the elements of life – the land, fauna, flora, and humans – are connected in some form of spirit or power.

Myth, then, portrays a structure based on that which is perceived to represent an expression of life within the spatial parameters of their environment. As Louis Dupré notes, "myth justifies the transition from contingent everydayness to ideal necessity" (1994: 15). For Rudolf Bultmann human beings create a paradigm that makes sense of their relationship with the spatial parameters of the environment within which they find themselves. A myth has to be understood as existential in that the power attributed by human beings to their sense experience of the environment bespeaks that which may not immediately be known (Bultmann 1964: 10). Kevin Schilbrack suggests that a myth does not necessarily refer to some thing beyond that which may readily be inferred from experience; and yet myth encompasses a contextual framework within which existence takes shape and is shaped (Schilbrack, 2002: 88), and may allow a living body to reach beyond itself. (Mallin, 1979: 59)

Fundamental myths refer back to a time long forgotten in current memory. For Sproul, myths speak backwards about that which cannot be known and transplants into the known reality as imminent presence (1979: 14). The following description of myth given by theologian Schubert Ogden provides succinct points to be considered as we look further into the experience of the people of Eastern James Bay:

> Myth refers to a certain language [...] which [...] functions to represent (to *re-present*, to present *again*) some field of human experience in a particular way. The field of experience [...] is our original internal awareness of our selves and the world as included in the circumambient reality within which all things come to be, are what they are, and pass away. The particular way in which the language of myth represents this awareness is in terms and categories based in our derived external perceptions of reality as the object of our ordinary sense. (Ogden 1966: 104)

Rather than consider the foundational paradigm of the Eastern Cree as that which is transcendent in itself, it might be preferable to think of it as myth based on an historical past reality. As such it would stem from a time beyond human recollection but with lasting significance; it might offer a view of life which supports both spatial and temporal continuity, and encourages respect for a livelihood which must have been most difficult. Certainly, contradictory evidence suggests a confusion between a superior being, universal principle or power who was not considered to be supreme, awe-inspiring or the creator of human/animal persons, and a being considered as the caretaker and owner/guardian/keeper

of all, the one who gives breath and offers food. (Cooper 1934; Hultkrantz 1960: 54ff; 1961: 54; 1982: 167; Long/Preston/Oberholtzer 2006; see also end of chapter 4.1.3)

Myth as essential paradigm offers the inhabitants of a particular space a framework in which to co-exist with other bodies. The life patterns incorporated within the myth offer an individual body the opportunity to perceive and dedicate symbolic meanings which in turn perpetuate and develop the myth thereby increasing the myth's longevity (Doty, 1986: 31). The question to consider here is whether the symbols contained within the Eastern Cree framework correspond to that which can be traced back to a moment in reality, or whether they can be brought forth into existent reality in a spiritual encounter. It is plausible to suggest that the answer may not be either/or, but both. The people now living in Eastern James Bay are descendants of others who, somewhere in the distant past, ordered their existence with regard to **reference point** from which all species were granted existence. By harmonizing existence in this way future generations lived and modified symbols associated with the mythological foundation to accommodate to a changing environment.

3.3 Life as Symbol

Alfred North Whitehead (1958: 9, 86) argues that personal experience is a compound and cyclical unity of sense data received and reflected upon by a developing body. Absorption of these data promotes a coherent reference point from which to interact and form relationships within an environment, thereby gaining further experience. In this view experience is spiral: experience begets experience *ad infinitum*. Contextual frameworks provide the starting points from which meaning is discerned. A foundational myth, itself arising from experience, is incorporated into the body through the medium of signals.

Mnemonic devices evolving from the experience of sense data aid in the effective

incorporation into experience; assimilation of new data occurs when a body is able to

attribute symbolic meaning to what is perceived. This is evident especially in an oral culture

(Ong 1982: 34) such as that of the Eastern Cree.

Amongst these people significance is attributed through interaction between the

elements within space. Symbols arise from this interaction and are interpreted as vehicles

through which communication is achieved and coherence given to a complex historical

reality. The effective symbol conjures an immediate sense response, evokes communal and

traditional memories, and directs towards action (Sperber 1974: 23; Langer 1976:21).

Symbols have life: as evoking and evoked by the myth they are both temporal and spatial,

they have a history, they are part of the myth and yet separate from the myth, they evolve

in context imitating the myth and yet they form and perpetuate the myth itself justified as

foundational (Dupré 2000: 100), thus legitimating the constructs shaping social behaviour

patterns within an environment.

The word 'symbol' is currently understood as a visible sign or representation

suggesting an idea or quality, or another thing as by resemblance or by convention. Whereas

a sign may direct towards that which is being signified, a symbol may actually represent it;

symbols embody and articulate meaning revealing a reality grounded in the past, focused in

the present, and able to direct one towards the future. Though "born out of an initial,

profound reflection upon the world-experience," they "never simply refer to a pre-existing

reality: [they] open up a new one" (Dupré 2000: 2 & 7). Susanne Langer refers to a symbol

as that which allows the articulation of "the signified, rather than merely announcing it" (in

Dupré 2000: 1). Symbols evoke the unconscious directing towards action. However, Whitehead cautions that direct knowledge has the advantage of being provable: "direct experience is infallible." Symbols on the other hand, which articulate a meaning beyond themselves may well lead to erroneous interpretation and presupposition. For him "symbolism is an essential factor in the way we function as the result of our direct knowledge"(Whitehead 1958: 6). Keeping this in mind, symbols, then, are such that to be effective they should be capable of mediation, thereby offering the opportunity for comprehension in what would otherwise be a chaotic unfamiliar environment (Geertz 1969: 653). "Symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos - the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood [...]." (Geertz 1968: 641; 1973: 89)

More basic than that! Symbol – from the Greek 'συμ - sum / συν - sun' ('with, together') and 'ballein' ('to throw') – means to 'throw together' again broken parts of – for instance – a bone as reminder of a past agreement between two parties whose implementation is now being acknowledged precisely through this act of 'throwing together'. Amongst the Eastern Cree symbols 'throw together' aspects of the environment. They are made out of connecting points between realities and refer back to these connecting points by 're-enacting' them. As such they contain identifiers which are either direct representations or associated ideas. They act as signifiers of a relationship. On the surface, it may appear that symbols are tangible or concrete representations of a specific reality termed – as Whitehead suggests – direct recognition. And yet, symbols may represent a complex cultural history and be used to mediate, and thereby perpetuate, the preservation of a particular heritage. Such use of symbols is termed by Whitehead as *symbolic reference* (Whitehead 1958: 7). In this view, symbols are a series of related culturally-specific

signifiers intended to lead the perceiver towards a truth contained within reality (Eliade 1952: 12; Geertz 1983: 34, 21-23). Thinking through the relationship of symbol to ritual amongst the Ndembu Victor Turner concludes that "symbols of ritual [... are] bins or storage units into which is packed the maximum amount of information. Symbols, in this regard, may also be viewed as multifaceted mnemonics, each facet corresponding to a specific cluster of values, norms, beliefs, sentiments, social roles, activities, and relationships within the total cultural system of the community performing the ritual" (1975: 58f). Nevertheless, perception of a truth contained within a symbol is not always immediately obvious to a casual *observer*. Whitehead suggests that the effective symbol elicits sense experiences which lead to, and from, perceptions of both immediate and causal existence in reality (Whitehead 1958: 8 & 18). For the *participant* symbol as 'throwing together' offers the opportunity to apprehend the breadth and depth of understanding associated with the possibility of life such as that developed by the Eastern Cree.

Amongst the Eastern Cree life itself is seen as a significant compound symbol becoming the focal point of both temporal and spatial existence. By recognizing life as the centre point (Eliade 1952: 39-41, 51 & 55) communication occurs on a multi-level dimension between land, animals, plants, and humans, as well as between their aspects, including all spirit-persons, seasonal regeneration and the possibility of environmental change. Personal experience together with the benefit of generations of knowledge lead the people of Eastern James Bay to identify symbolically with their environment. To them this familiar environment is known space endowed with symbols referring to the spiritual aspects of existence. Their reaction to this environment is both instinctive and formative. The interrelationship between the spiritual aspects of the environment suggest the possibility of

conversation. For the Eastern Cree this conversation has the potential to reveal the manifestation of a superior being or power, and therein lies the potential for meaningful existence.

3.4 Meaningful Existence: A Hypothetical Myth

Symbolic perception of meaningful existence forms the basis of Eastern Cree life. In identifying the three criteria for meaningful existence – the significance of ordinary life, the propensity to be respectful of others, and the ability to avoid suffering, (more on this chapter 4.1, chapter 4.2, chapter 4.3), Taylor suggests that each culture strives to establish a lifestyle that accommodates these criteria; in so doing, the means of such accommodation and the outcome will be culturally specific (1989: 12-15). The people of Eastern James Bay make use of a variety of artistic mediums to establish, make known, and perpetuate a heritage based on these three parameters, and thus enhance their sense of community and build integrity and cohesiveness within that community.

There is no historical evidence for a myth of creation which would legitimate the Eastern Cree's presence as a community in their particular environment. Yet it is within the parameters of this study to enquire into the symbols associated with the possibility of life as developed and perpetuated to bring cohesion to the Eastern Cree community. Pertinent to this idea is the question of how people see *themselves* in relation to the environment in which they find themselves. For Ciarán Benson, "Centredness, agency and autobiographical narrative as aspects of self find their meaning in worlds that are not initially of the self's making" (2001: 60). Further he adds that "Being and becoming follow from beliefs" (2001:73). Alexandra Howson argues that being and becoming, the sense of an individual

as a person has to do with how the body is perceived: "The body is lived, influenced by social patterns and shaped by social contexts."(2004: 12)

In this and subsequent chapters it will become clear that, as Benson and Howson suggest, contextual beliefs and behaviour patterns have a direct impact on the shaping of identity and the development of character. This is best illustrated using a framework for the body that I name 'I'.

'I' is, 'I' exists, 'I' is the known space standing in an unknown environment which has the potential to become integrated and ordered as known space. In order to make sense of this as yet unknown space, that area is identified either as 'chaotic' (Eliade 1959: 29), 'elsewhere' (Caviola 1991: 6f & 24), or 'wild' (Casey 1993: 188); it needs to become familiar. A foundational myth as a referent engages 'I' in the attitudes and meaning attributed in any given culture. The Eastern Cree are no exception. The myth is perpetuated in order to disseminate cultural meaning, promote the ethical attitudes best suited to maintain social cohesion, and develop character. In so doing the myth is continually reshaped to adapt to the changing needs of the culture; yet it does not lose its foundational character (Sproul 1979: 2f), which offers opportunities for further revelation and subsequent enculturation.

In so far as the body exists it becomes the meeting point for a multiplicity of actions (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 83), will engage in relationship, learn about space, collect information, evaluate its potential, establish links and connecting points it may then order and claim as significant (Eliade 1975: 9). As a conveyor of meaning, the myth engages

human consciousness encouraging the identification of symbols which illustrate the definitions attributed to the myth, thereby fulfilling the intent of the myth itself. Symbols are identified within every aspect of the known space acknowledging the significance of ordinary life; through them a history is retold. Communication becomes a complex interaction between the symbols which systematize life within the known familiar space, thus creating order out of that which would otherwise be a chaotic arrangement of disassociated forms in an unfamiliar or unknown space.

The connection between the body and all the other spirit-filled aspects of life involved in what is considered as known space requires either a complex physical systematic paradigm or an overarching paradigm in which such a connection exists and flourishes. While the complex physical paradigm can be engineered to fit cultural conditions, the overarching paradigm exists in the perpetuation of that which might be considered as a foundational myth. The latter might be based on the former, and the evidence of a successful physical paradigm is found in the perpetuation of that paradigm, which thus becomes myth. Rites develop to celebrate that which is considered to be the overarching order. In this view, the latter cannot exist without the former.

In Eastern Cree culture the myth is based on the interconnection of the land, the people, the fauna and the foliage. Tanner suggests that hunting as a means of subsistence birthed the evolution of a myth which would substantiate such a livelihood (Tanner 1979: 12). Natural environmental phenomena encourage a spiritual response (Swan 1999: 17), and symbolic descriptions of these significant spiritual aspects of the environment are

perpetuated through drama, art and storytelling, which in turn legitimate the social, spiritual and moral order as evidenced in the myth itself. (Eliade 1963: 11f)

3.4.1 The Body in Space

A body is situated and actualized amidst other situated bodies. To exist, to be in place, presupposes that 'I' is emplaced bodily – or to put it another way – the body named 'I' is situated in space. In this context the referent 'I' becomes that which is space, acts within space and is acted upon through the experience of space. 'I' is shaped by participation within an environmental frame of reference: it is the embodiment of, and participation in, that by which a community governs itself. In responding to external stimuli the situated body continually recreates itself as it incorporates and accredits meaning to the perceived reality in which it is situated. (Mallin 1979: 10f)

3.4.2 Body as Embodied Spirit

The body as a symbol of life has existence in space through the interrelation between the symbols attributed to all elements of existence. A physical entity, the body provides a boundary separating the known inner space from the space beyond the body. In the process of communication the physical body acts in sensing data and mediates them to other bodies. The sensing body exists in and through the physical body, it is dependent upon the physical body to express the experience of phenomena (Doran 1989: 63-5). The physical and sensing body acts overtly within nature, each in relationship with the other.

Amongst the Eastern Cree it is commonly held that physical/sensing bodies incorporate elements of the spiritual in that each living body is a manifestation of a superior

being or power.[3] Spiritual powers, posits theologian David Granfield, enhance the physical body's ability to communicate (1991: 15-7). For the people of Eastern James Bay, communication between spiritual bodies takes place through the medium of embodied spirit; the body, physical, sensing and spirit-filled, finds completion in communion with other physical, sensing, spirit-filled bodies. Each of these physical, sensing, spirit-filled bodies is identified as 'person'.[4] Each person exists for another in reciprocal relationship.

3.4.5 Body in Myth-making

The body as space is directly involved in the process of myth-making, it participates and develops the myth that legitimates ongoing life patterns in the situated body's environment. A mythical framework for the body can be found in many traditions in some form or other, and it might have the following structure:

– *In the beginning 'I' immanent did not know I transcendent; and yet, the body 'I' was and is I.*

– *The environment of the unfamiliar, un-experienced space was calling the transcendent I to become, so that immanent 'I' could be acquainted with the transcendent I that the immanent 'I' is.*

– *The immanent 'I' as part of the earth, of the heart, of the womb, of the dust, of all that is unknown was soon to become part of the heart, of the womb, of the dust, of all that which is known.*

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[3] Long/Preston/Oberholtzer, 2006. – According to Lévy-Bruhl (1966: 64), the claim that each is made in the image of the superior being or power leads to the belief that the connection between the original and its manifestations can be realized in dialogue. Hultkrantz (1953: 342) talks about "a particular potency which is believed to be inherent in or possessed by spirit-beings, living persons (human beings, animals etc.) or objects, and which through the nature of its effect is considered to reveal a supernatural quality".

[4] Scott 1996: 39. – and also personal communication in Chisasibi and Eastmain between 1994 and 1998.

Somewhere beyond temporal conception the birth occurred from which followed all other acts. (Vansina 1985: 21 - 24)

In a discussion of social systems Mary Douglas argues that the human body as a composite symbol elucidates phenomena pertaining to the spatial and temporal particularities of a culture: the symbolic meanings associated with the social body and the physical body work together to reinforce each other (1970: xiii & 65). In this view the human body becomes one unified body amongst other unified bodies, it interacts and is interacted upon. The body is in fact a complexity of symbols interacting together to form a unified presence in the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962; see chapter 3.4.3), a fully integrated mode of existence. This is especially evident amongst a people, such as the Eastern Cree, who consider themselves to be symbolic of the life the symbol itself represents (Tuan 1974: 27, 30, 99f). Not only is the symbol representative of life, but life is understood to be symbolically the centre around which all living things evolve. The body then becomes the focal point for the conversation between past, present and future, and for the mutual relationship between life and spirit-filled persons at the basis of Eastern Cree culture.

Chapter 4

Power and Presence within Nature

One of the challenges arising from encountering an alternate paradigm is a resistance to shift from what is familiar to the unknown (Eliade 1959). Human beings, as Taylor points out, are shaped contextually: they wear the mask of the culture from which they inhere. The researcher is charged with the task to understand another culture from that particular culture's perspective. Even though the early missionaries engaged in a form of ethnographic research and their detailed records have been recognized as invaluable to later research (Bonsen/Marks/Miedema 1990), these same records include opinions biased by their own cultural paradigm. The challenge is to identify that which forms the researcher's own experiential framework and then discover the symbols and metaphors preserved and perpetuated in another's cultural milieu.

The first chapter briefly explained the activity of hunting as a mode of subsistence enabling the people to continue to live and thrive within the subarctic region of Canada on the Eastern side of James Bay, and chapter two entailed a discussion on known space and the symbols associated with familiar space. The symbols associated with the rhythmic cyclical nature of all aspects of life as it pertains to the people of Eastern James Bay are the subject of this chapter. The discussion on symbols of power and presence will be set within Taylor's threefold dimension of meaningful existence: affirmation of ordinary life, respect for others, and avoidance of suffering. Although Taylor does not have anything specific to

say with regard to subsistence hunting he does offer insights that might be relevant in a discussion on the idea of an ordinary life shaping and shaped by culture.

The parameters of meaningful existence (chapter 3.4) as the affirmation of ordinary life, avoidance of suffering and respect for others fall within the scope of a discussion on autonomy according to Taylor. Human beings author and contribute to their own sense of respect through the acknowledgement of individual differences; respect for life and basic integrity emanate from what it is to be human in a given context (Taylor 1989: 12ff). Being human is described as life encompassing production and reproduction: the infrastructure of existence.

4.1 Ordinary Life

In *Sources of the Self* Taylor introduces a discussion concerning the components of modern identity. He suggests ordinary life might be considered as that which serves to placate the human appetite (production and family life) and as such is distinguishable from a higher quality of life associated with the search for, or at least an aspiration towards, the contemplative, the moral, and the common good. Ordinary life in this sense implies that which is necessary only in that it provides the means to pursue a greater quality of life (Taylor 1989: 211). Progressively since the eighteenth century, moral obligation, contemplation and the pursuit of the common good have become integrated as components of ordinary life. The legitimization of the moral life by upholding the idea of ordinary life, respect and the avoidance of suffering lead to that which Taylor deems a life of dignity and fulness.

In Western civilization modern human beings' quest for autonomy emanates from the pursuit of respect and avoidance of suffering; self respect and respect for others play an important role in affirming ordinary life (Taylor 1989: 12f) and form the basis of the modern western moral code. Art represents both a portrait of a present reality and the visionary avenue to change, and thus illustrates the development of moral behaviour. The seventeenth-century traders, missionaries and explorers were themselves products of social policies and a philosophical ideology which in turn shaped their perceptions of the unfamiliar cultures they encountered. (Taylor 1989)

It is beyond the scope of this research to determine how much the Eastern Cree have been influenced since the time of first contact with Westerners. Yet, for the Eastern Cree also, the notions of respect and the avoidance of suffering are central to the affirmation of ordinary life. Each of these topics will be discussed in connection with the activity of hunting which has historically formed the basis of their subsistence economy. Hunting is the reality of existence for the people of Eastern James Bay and as such is developed as an art form, which parallels Taylor's use of art as a definitive statement of culture. What follows identifies Taylor's view of ordinary life, respect and the avoidance of suffering where applicable. While he traces how the perception of ordinary life has been influenced by philosophers and religious movements particularly in the Western hemisphere (Taylor 1989: 211ff), I look at ordinary life as it pertains to the Eastern Cree in a context where traditions stem from pre-Christian contact and have been developed and perpetuated to form and legitimate a subsistence economy. It would be erroneous to state categorically that influences on the perception and transmission of the ideas associated with ordinary life were

not part of the development of a tradition prior to migration into the subarctic region of Canada. These traditions continued to develop as habitual conditions changed and successive migrations contributed to ideas concerning ordinary life. Although post-Christian contact has influenced the conception of ordinary life, or at least the ritualistic practices of the Eastern Cree, what follows shows that the power and presence apparent in the relationship between the Eastern Cree and their environment continues to offer the people of Eastern James Bay the best opportunity for a meaningful existence.

Successful ordinary life amongst the Eastern Cree stems from and builds upon a fully integrated system of social behaviours and skills. The contemplative, the moral and the common good are intricately connected. In order to achieve subsistence the spiritual qualities associated with the power and presence of the environment in which the people live provide an harmonious balance between all aspects of nature. The person "who earns his [her] subsistence from hunting, who survives [...] from the land depends on knowing where [s/] he must stand in the strangely efficient and mysterious balance that is arranged for the propagation of all life. [...] The Cree hunters have followed a spiritual system designed to maintain that balance." (Richardson 1976: 7)

4.1.1 Affirming Life

Affirmation of life offers the opportunity to experience the *exchange* between the symbols of *power and presence*. A component of *meaningful* life concerns respect as it pertains to both *life* and *death*, which raises questions as to the nature of life. Is it *sacrifice* or *sacrament*? Is it both? Might the idea of the gift of life be considered as *stewardship*?

As the idea of ordinary life unfolds each of these topics italicized will be explored in greater depth.

Affirming life suggests the will to live well and acknowledge similar relevance to all other living entities. As Albert Schweitzer contends, "I am life that wills to live in the midst of life that wills to live"(1933: 186f). For him, "the affirmation of life is the spiritual act by which man ceases to live thoughtlessly and begins to devote himself to his life with reverence. To affirm life is to deepen, to make more inward, and to exalt the will to live" (1933:187). While Schweitzer emphasizes striving to attain the ethical life by focusing on the existential, the Eastern Cree attend to the natural environment replete with spirituality. While Schweitzer considers nature as unfeeling and horrible (1969:120), the Eastern Cree consider that the ecological conditions of the environment are the beginning and the culmination of experience – a framework for ordinary life which includes a universal power or spirit presence. As Robert Bettinger states (1991:5), in ecological development theory "subsistence and economy are no longer set apart from, or in opposition to, the more esoteric parts of culture – religion in particular. [...] subsistence and religion are likely to be related in fundamental ways". "Often people living such a life are an advantaged and in their own way, sophisticated folk." "The cultural system is regarded as being in equilibrium, each part regulating and being regulated by others."

The goal of a human life is to have one's efforts rewarded and find in that reward satisfaction and contentment. A successful human life finds this in the activities associated with maintaining the ordinary and transcending the platitudes associated with it (Taylor 1989: 44ff.). Increasing globalization not only challenges the perception of culturally bound

ordinary life; it also has the potential to encourage getting beyond that same culturally bound ordinary life. The loss or sublimation of that which Taylor describes as an ineradicable human drive to move beyond that which can readily be known in order to further one's life circumstances (1989: 44) and articulate self-identity may be experienced – Nadia Ferrara (2004: 36-37) suggests – as reduced self-esteem, loss of identity and an inability to live well; or it may result in the continued search for new horizons offering opportunities in order to enhance the quality of life.

For the Eastern Cree, living well and an integral self-identity involve a personal commitment to the corporate social ethic and a willingness to engage in a way of life in which both the functional and the spiritual are intimately combined and in balance (see Ferrara 2004: 17; Scott 1996: 72f). The perpetuation of traditions in this context guarantees both well-being and the ability to engage in activities which further the development of social structure and the common good in an evolving spiral leading from the past into the present and promising development into the future.

4.1.2 Meaningful Life

Living well in ordinary life suggests that a referential point exists from which to appreciate the quality of life. An actual or perceived loss of significant opportunities to experience meaningful life has the potential to result in either reduced or enhanced coping abilities (chapter 4.1.1). For Taylor, the idea of the good may be thought of as a culturally specific expression either in the spoken/written word or in action (1989: 91). That which constitutes superior life or living well amongst the people of Eastern James Bay is best

articulated in the practice and skills associated with subsistence[1] – in other words: the superior life depends on the articulation of life within the particularities of a lifestyle, which in turn legitimate the practices and skills. Subsistence practices are two-way, each legitimated by and legitimating the other. Amongst the Eastern Cree motivation and action find their fulfilment in that which is perceived to be an ordered structure of known spatial and temporal reality.

At least amongst the Eastern Cree, the notion of well-being is based on an overarching principle which evokes a personal and communal reflective response to questions of ethical behaviour and the common good. Taylor names it *moral sources* (1989: 310) as he discusses the progressive changes in the way people articulate belief (or non-belief) in God as a principle. The people of Eastern James Bay draw on their past traditions in order to give expression to what they consider to be a superior being or power. They make sense of their lives through the narratives transmitted generationally to uphold a conception of ordinary life which has evolved and given meaning to a livelihood in which each member is responsible for ensuring ethical behaviour and the common good of the group.

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[1] *Pi'maatisiiwin –* ˆ‒∩�˙·∆ᵃ is a Cree word meaning 's/he is living'. It is well documented as an approach to health encompassing all the elements of the environment by Scott 1996: 72f; Niezen 1998: 31; Adelson 2000. Annie Tomatuk answered the question: "Chakwan pi'maatisiu?" – "What does pi'maatisiu mean?" with the response: "Miyo maatisiu. It is life! S/he/It is well, usually referring to people but said also of environment components. It is a condition of life. It is rhythmic balance. It is effective stewardship" (personal communication with Annie Tomatuk, Eastmain, June 2006 and October 2007).

According to Clifford Geertz, human beings function more effectively when the power of symbolism acts within life (1973: 46). The power of all meaningful communication is evident in the interplay between the symbols identified to express the revelatory experiences: without such symbols life experience is meaningless (Dupré 2000: 6; Geertz 1973: 49)). Human beings live in the interplay provided by the symbols identified as pertinent to a given culture (Geertz 1973: 50). For example, at a time when traditional nomadic bush-life becomes secondary to sedentary community, life therapists such as Ferrara (2004) aid their clients to reconnect with the symbols which have depth and meaning, thereby enabling them to reclaim their heritage and affirm their dignity. For the people of Eastern James Bay, this dignity is found in the apprehension of symbolic forms within the environment with which they interact. The acknowledgement of symbolic representation makes possible entry into the power or energy presented by that symbol and in this way becomes part of a rhythmic dialogue between the distinct aspects of the environment.

Revelatory experiences illuminate the intrinsic information present in the interaction between symbols, thereby enabling the environmental components to deal mutually effectively with one another. Only through the recognition and response to this interaction between symbols of power and presence do activities within nature become cohesive (Geertz 1973: 46ff). "By submitting [...] to governance by symbolically mediated programs for producing artifacts, organizing social life, or expressing emotions, [human beings] determined, if unwittingly, the culminating stages of [their] own [...] destiny. Quite literally, [... they] created themselves and are in the process of 'completing or finishing' themselves in and through the symbolic function of culture" (Geertz 1973: 48). Following this line of

thought it may be said that the Eastern Cree designed and are in the process of designing for themselves a harmonized understanding of the diverse elements of the power manifest within their environment, which in the twenty-first century includes economic and technological advancements.

Meaning derived from contextual participation forms the greater part of the symbolic nature attributed to the acquisition of power. The environment described in the first chapter suggests that a keen awareness of both the potential and the hazards associated with the subarctic land and its climate provides maximum efficiency of the resources available within the known space. The hunter, in this sense, is both the diviner and the recipient: s/he divines from nature itself those aspects which become spiritual experiences within his/her ordinary life. This shifts the locus of power from the environment to the recipient: by appropriating the manifestation of power evident within the environment the recipient engages in that which might be considered as a communion with nature, which offers empowerment for future action within the environment. This does not mean that the hunter, in appropriating this manifested power, gains the power to control nature "as a neutral domain, which we have to understand in order to master it, and whose causal relations we have to make use of in order to produce the greatest amount of happiness" (Taylor 1989: 321). It does mean that the appropriator of power has the ability to enter into dialogue between the two present aspects of reality, thereby engaging in and affirming meaningful life. As David Granfield suggests, "Spiritual powers enable [human beings as embodied spirits] to use the body and the senses as a means of understanding, loving and communicating". (1991: 15ff)

4.1.3 <u>Power and Presence</u>

Identification with the land by the Eastern Cree becomes paramount to successful subsistence. In experiencing the environment, its particular topography, hydrology and seasonal weather fluctuations, the people of Eastern James Bay learn to identify the patterns of behaviour regarding the distinct aspects of the land. Much emphasis is placed on becoming familiar with the power of nature and the ability to recognize the signals offered by the environment to alert the hunter to its positive and negative qualities. To surmount the dangers of the environment, the people of Eastern James Bay seek the symbols of power which point to those of presence in the environment; conversely, those aspects of presence offer the potential for the acquisition of symbolic power. For example, "it is the perception of the Eastern Cree that each living aspect of the land has a unique functional role.[2] ˆᒪᐣᕈᐤ pimaatisiiu, meaning 'alive', refers not only to humans but also to some rocks, animals, plants, water, etc., all of which form part of a reciprocal relationship in fulfilling the subsistence economy" (CeTA 1989; Berkes 1999: 2). These living aspects are considered to offer unique opportunities to witness revelatory experiences as communication occurs between species.[3] Communication between these diverse organic forms of life might be seen as a transference of power, since each form participates in the maintenance of a subsistence pattern of life. As John Honigmann suggests, "many things a [hu]man successfully accomplished revealed that he held power granted by non-human helpers who attended him". (1981: 718)

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[2] See Ferrara 2004: 27, and also Swan 1990: 70.

[3] Eliade (1959: 12) suggests that a stone or a tree might reveal a glimpse of something other than that of a stone or a tree: "the cosmos, in its entirety can become a hierophany". – Rudolf Otto (1923) describes such "revelation" as a sense of the numinous.

Taylor traces the development of the idea of meaningful life from the fact that power resides within the self instead of being an external source of revelation; each individual is a presence endowed with power within an integrated network of components (Taylor 1989: 321). Citing Augustine he says that "the principal route to God is not through the object domain but within each human being. This is because God is not just the transcendent object or just the principle of order of the nearer objects, which we strain to see. God is also [...] primarily the basic support and underlying principle of [...] knowing activity. God is not just what [human beings] long to see, but what powers the eye which sees. So the light of God is not just out there, illuminating the order of being, [...] it is also an inner light."[4] The idea of power within the self is in accordance with Casey who suggests that to be, to exist, is to be in place or situated in space as space. Might it not be considered that this "inner light" is place as an element of space (Casey 1993: 16ff.) **as well as** space itself? In this sense, might it not be considered as *infinite* space becoming actualized or situated in – not just limited by – *finite* place? The "inner light" or the universal power in the traditional vocabulary of the Eastern Cree, is that which offers itself for revelation through the interaction between the component parts of spatial and temporal reality. Might it not also be considered that the presence of such a universal power symbolized by unity is the life giving energy in all living beings? (Friesen 2000: 100)

Amongst early to mid twentieth-century researchers there is a consensus that the assumption of a common animal/human heritage was prevalent amongst indigenous peoples. In a paper for the American Museum of Natural History Alanson Skinner describes the

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[4] Taylor 1989: 129. – See also The Bible, Gospel of John 1: 9.

Eastern Cree experience of existence as including the idea that animals and humans are considered to be intelligent and communicating in a common tongue (Skinner 1911: 73,76), and that the dynamic interchange is maintained by an effective mutual obligation of reciprocity. In this view successful subsistence occurs once successful communication occurs. Human spirit-persons integrate themselves into the animal spirit environment by learning how to co-exist and subsist thanks to a symbolic dialogue with the component parts of the environment.

Effective subsistence depends on an intimate knowledge of symbols in their mediating activity (see chapter 3.3). Drawn from that which is considered fundamental in known space, symbols of power and presence are a complex compendium of interconnected signifiers drawn from life experience, often contrasting dualities such as "spiritual/physical, male/female, outside/inside", here/there, and sometimes containing the possibility of negative and positive polarities as in "clean/soiled, health/illness, luck-success-confidence/failure-bad luck-anxiety, power/powerlessness, feast-satiety-abundance/ starvation-scarcity" (Martin 1980: 40). In each case the symbol is able to evoke a response which may be either beneficial or detrimental. For example, "water both gives life and takes life; fire destroys life and encourages life. A symbol associated with a powerful animal such as the bear reminds the hunter that the animal is capable of both destruction and offering itself as sustenance to another spirit-person." (Swan 1990:20; also Otto, 1958: 5ff.)

An interesting example of power and presence is offered in *Defending the Land* by Ronald Niezen (1998: 18f.):

Before the construction of roads and dams, rivers were principal travel routes, usable only between the spring thaw and fall 'freeze-up'. During summer, away from the principal waterways, the traveller often faces impenetrable bogs. With the changing of seasons, travel patterns are reversed. In fall and spring, in the times of freeze-up and break-up, the many bodies of water themselves act as an impediment to movement because the weak ice obstructs canoe travel but cannot support much weight. Moving unimpeded across the land is possible only when the lakes, marshes, and bogs are frozen. In winter conditions the land opens up and, equipped with a good pair of snowshoes, a dog sled, or a snowmobile, a person who knows the land can go almost anywhere.

For the Eastern Cree, "human activity revolves around these dramatically contrasting seasons" (Niezen 1998: 19; also S. Preston 1990: 45). For example, snow is a symbol of power pointing to the opportunity for revelatory experience of the possibility of the life it represents in the period known as that of frozen lakes and rivers. Snow is so important that summer (ᓂᐱᐣ *niipin)* is referred to as the period without snow or the period of open water (S. Preston 1999: 45; Tanner 1979: 28f). More clearly, the Eastern Cree describe summer as ᓂᐱᓂᔅᑲᒥᑲᐤ *niipiniskamikaau,* it is summer ground, i.e. bare of snow. Snow is endowed with person-hood and is respected for the opportunities it affords in easing land travel for other spirit-persons. Tracks are especially visible in the snow and may be considered as symbols which display the interaction of spirit-species within the environment and offer the presence of power (S. Preston 1999: 70). As symbols of power, they contain within them the promise of sustenance (Feit 1986: 173). The knowledgeable hunter in recognizing them is alerted to both possibility and danger. The opportunity to dialogue is immediate: it is

initiated by the animal spirit-persons themselves leaving tracks for the hunter to interpret. The hunter chooses whether to enter into the dialogue and interprets the tracks accordingly.

4.1.4 Spiritual Exchange

"The earliest human art and ritual celebrate the epiphanies of hunting great game animals. They tell of the quest that grew up around the killing of animals - a kind of double seeking, both physical and spiritual [...]" (Shepard 1991: 86). The spiritual aspects of existence are integral to meaningful life amongst the people of Eastern James Bay because the components of ordinary life point to a relationship between the symbols of power and presence. Both the hunter and the hunted enter into an ambivalent space and engage in dialogue. In such a space the hunter encounters the physical manifestation of the spirit-form of the animal gifted for subsistence. According to Martin, "the chief distinction between the two beings, animal and human, is that they live in different dimensions. The world of the animals is the spirit world [...] with the understanding that animals exist primarily as spirits who don fleshy robes from time to time for human benefit" (1980: 40). One of these benefits is the transfer of power or energy from the slain animal to the hunter, which is understood as an outpouring of spiritual resources, a gift to the physical or tangible existence of the human being. "Where traditional hunters see the consumption of animals as participation in the transfer of energy they also see it as the movement of an endless spiritual flow." (Shepard 1991: 86)

There has been much research into the possibility of interspecies communication and attestations to forms of non-verbal communication.[5] For psychologist James A. Swan this type of communication is "an expression of merger with a higher force or purpose" (1995: 34f); the conditions within nature are such that a hunter is at once endowed with a clear perception and the potential to experience the power in nature, an experience that floods the consciousness with illumination, awareness, revelation, unity, and oftentimes, ecstasy, which is called "peak experience" by Abraham A. Maslow (1964: 19). Distinguishing between hunting for subsistence, sport and pleasure Erich Fromm, a behavioural scientist, argues that sport hunting "seems to have more to do with satisfying a wish for power and control", and that the pleasure hunter finds enjoyment in the development and use of the skills, whereas the subsistence hunter "in the act of hunting [...] becomes, however briefly, part of nature again. He returns to the natural state, becomes one with the animal, and is freed of the existential split: to be part of nature and to transcend it by virtue of his consciousness. In stalking the animal he and the animal become equals" (1973: 132). Thus, a subsistence hunter not only gains power from the transfer of energy but also is enabled to participate in the meaning of life revealed to him (Shepard 1991: 86). As Fromm suggests, subsistence hunting lies not in sport or pleasure but in the accumulation and use of the knowledge required to secure a satisfactory and meaningful life. He goes on to posit that social skills such as sharing and co-operation emanate from such knowledge of hunting (133-5). The experience becomes that which offers the opportunity for hunting success.

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[5] See Swan 1995: 3f; Gill 1982: 43. – Sam Gill comments that a Naskapi primal tradition includes a reference to kinship between animal and human, "similar social structure [...] and the power of human speech. Once the primal era came to close, the animal peoples lost their human appearances but retained, especially in their inner life forms, their personhood" (1982: 45).

Is such success also pleasure? Quoting William James (1958: 306) Swan talks about a feeling of ineffable joy at the moment of high exhilaration (Swan 1995: 33). Yet the question remains as to whether the people of Eastern James Bay in their subsistence hunting practices do feel a sense of ineffable joy at the time of killing, or rather – as Preston suggests – do have feelings of remorse and thankfulness with regard to such indeed regrettable facts of subsistence.[6] Perhaps Swan is describing not the moment of the kill, but the moment when the hunter and the hunted enter into the dialogical space where communion between species takes place (Swan 1995: 33). James is himself quoting psychiatrist R. M. Bucke who speaks of such an elevation in the level of consciousness that a person experiences "the purifying, strengthening and exalting effect of divine illumination" (Bucke 1901: 2; in James 1902: 306).   The ineffability of which Swan speaks pertains to the fundamental and pervasive existence of the reality from which emanates power through which communication is possible.   An underlying premise maintained by the Eastern Cree is that such communication, though affirmed as offering significant power, is to be approached in humility and accepted respectfully as a gift (CeTA 1989: 27). In that, there **is** pleasure for these people or, at the very least, satisfaction and security in the knowledge of being able to 'live well'.

4.2 Respect

Symbols of power and presence directly refer to the conditions which best support the development and maintenance of meaningful life in a composite of ecological and topographical conditions. Taylor suggests that the principle of respect is an attitude or

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[6] Preston, personal communication, September 2006.

behavioural stance human beings develop and adopt towards each other. The specifics of the idea of respect most likely have initiated with culturally bound perceptions: integrity, autonomy, and expressive freedom undergird the obligations arising from the development and maintenance of desired behaviours, which substantiate the drive to meaningful life and well-being (Taylor 1989: 14 & 25). As formerly insular communities have been increasingly exposed to globalization these perceptions have developed and expanded to include all human life (Taylor 1989: 5ff). In adhering to the principle of self-defining cultural frameworks Taylor emphasizes human place in society, although he does acknowledge that respect for the fundamental integrity of human life suggests that such human life is that which is itself worthy of respect, a matter of specific achievements, attainments, and fundamental integrity. (Taylor 1989: 25)

Ideas concerning the relevance of human life are pertinent to the understanding of subsistence hunting amongst the Eastern Cree. Meaningful life amongst these people hinges on respect for all life. The traditional lifestyle seeks to affirm worth in all forms of existence in such a way as to influence and develop life. Worldliness and spirituality interrelate to offer the inhabitants the opportunities to experience life to its best. A cultural framework has been traditionally developed in which respectful behaviour patterns are promoted as a communal model. This model encompasses all the components associated with the normal life cycle. The referent 'I' (see chapter 3.4.5) becomes that which is both respected and respecting, engaged and engaging in the communal understanding of meaningful life.

4.2.1 <u>Respecting Life</u>

Central to the traditional Eastern Cree hunting lifestyle is respect for all forms of life, human and non-human spirit-persons. The interconnectedness between living entities implies a mutual participation in the ongoing subsistence pattern of life and a responsibility lived out in the respect accorded to all spirit-persons. (Zimmerman/Molyneaux 1996: 74)

A community comprises many of the referents as embodied in places in space. Each is a centre. The Eastern Cree extend this centre to other interrelated spirit-persons. Such an attribution has more to do with what each spirit-person is than with some attribute – for instance physical nourishment – considered worthy by another. What each spirit-person is in turn extends outwardly to make use of other entities. In the case of hunting, an animal spirit-person may be considered in itself and at the same time be described as instrumental in that it both seeks out sustenance for itself and provides sustenance for other spirit-persons. "The aspiration of indigenous people throughout the world has been to achieve a congruent relationship with the land, to fit well in it. To achieve occasionally a state of high harmony or reverberation. To dream of this transcendent congruency included the evolution of a hunting and gathering relationship with the earth, in which a mutual regard was understood to prevail [...]" (Lopez 1987: 297). Amongst the people of Eastern James Bay each aspect issues from one overall power. The interrelationship between various aspects corresponds to a deference with regard to dialogue within the environment. By acknowledging each related environmental aspect, respect affirms the interdependence between all the living entities which form part of a meaningful existence and thus becomes an appropriate mode of action.

4.2.2 <u>Respect in Death</u>

Death is revered as associated with the gift of life in a subsistence economy, where each spirit-filled aspect of life is considered in itself and as instrumental to another. In a subsistence economy survival amongst all spirit-persons becomes primary; as such, life may quite easily be construed by the uninitiated only as a commodity. Amongst the Eastern Cree this would be a denial of respect for life. Spirit-persons are considered to be willing participants in survival, and when an offering of life occurs strict observance of the rules of respect are followed (Feit 1986: 174). The hunter is obligated to fulfil the responsibilities learnt through traditional teaching which ensure the continuation of life. Successful subsistence and meaningful life amongst the Eastern Cree involves participation in the ongoing relation between the existential reality of life and death as a way of being present in the world evidenced in acknowledging the necessity of appropriating nourishment from other interrelated and interdependent forms of life. In order to promote life, life is given.

The Eastern Cree consider that success in hunting is directly related to the gift of power made by a non-human person and is a melding of the non-human and human personal powers (Preston 1975: 118). This suggests that in order to be successful there is an obligation on the part of the human person to acquire the knowledge needed to participate in the hunt and understand the prey well enough to offer the appropriate respectful response in exchange for the gift of power.

Implicit to the activity of hunting is the understanding that animals control the hunt and that success depends entirely on the willingness of an animal to present itself (CeTA 1989: 21). Before even venturing into the bush a hunter has learned and also integrated into

his/her psyche the skills necessary to locate an animal's habitat as well as the ability to comprehend the communication techniques used by individual animal species (more on this in chapter 5.3.4). Once the hunter is in the bush s/he has already ascertained the likelihood of an animal offering itself as nourishment (CeTA 1989: 22). When the animal decides to make him/herself available to a hunter, it is in response to the appropriate respect paid to the particular animal species. As Niezen emphasizes, "Success in the forest economy depends entirely on a hunter's consistency in establishing mutual respect with the game he is pursuing".[7] Such respectful response is apparent in the act of killing, preparation, and distribution of meat and extends to the responsible and respectful disposal of the bones and skull. (Speck 1977: 79; Cooper 1934: 17-20, 35; Leacock 1986: 157; Niezen 1998: 27f; Hultkrantz 1982: 167, 173; Paulson 1959: 182ff; Tanner 1979: 170ff)

Fig. 13. Cleaned bones and skulls of animals attached to a tree, Eastmain 1996.[8]

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[7] Niezen 1998: 27. – See also Skinner 1911: 68 and Preston 1990: 315.

[8] The bones are wrapped in a plastic shopping bag on a tree stripped free of branches. – See also Adrian Tanner (1979: 171f.) who suggests that these bones often face the rising sun, are wrapped in birch bark or cloth and placed on a decorated tree stripped of its branches and out of the reach of dogs.

Respectful response is apparent also in the offering of a portion of the meat (Feit 1986: 179) and prayers to the superior guardian spirit of the animal.[9] Such homage is an acknowledgement that the opportunity to perpetuate life has been presented by the gift of a life resulting in a death.

The power associated with the animal is gained after the appropriate respectful response is made.[10] Respectful disposition of the carcass is a prerequisite to the ongoing source of food and power. As Shepard makes clear, "the killing and eating of animals by hunting-gathering people is not seen as victory over a reluctant nature, [but as] part of the larger gift of life, a receiving from the hand of a conscious power according to the state of grace of the recipients" (Shepard 1991: 86f). Death, though seemingly final, is considered to be part of the ongoing cycle of life in an appropriate relationship between all the aspects of the environment. "So long as humans take what is offered to them in an ethically right fashion, the numbers of animals will somehow be renewed and they will continue to make themselves available to hunters" (Preston 1990: 315). In accepting the gift of life as an integral part of the cycle of life and death, an appreciation for the interdependence of all spirit-persons is upheld.

This interdependence is made apparent by the use of tangible representations of the gift of power received by the hunter through visionary or revelatory experience or through

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[9] Hultkrantz 1981: 136f, 141; Speck 1977: 79; Tanner 1979: 160

[10] Skinner 1911: 68; Scott 1996: 82; Honigmann 1981: 718-20; Tanner 1979: 130; Beck & Walters 1977: 23; Hultkrantz 1982: 167.

the consumption of an animal spirit-person. Symbolic power is often portrayed in the form of a token, a likeness or part of a particular spirit-person who has identified him/herself to the hunter. Such a token is a talisman, a sign of respect for, and affirmation of the gift of the life of a hunted animal. Tokens taken from the animal are used in deference to the particular spirit associated with the animal and may be a bone, a hair tuft, or a tool such as a ᐅᐦᐱᒑ *niimaapaan (*carrying strap) made from animal skin and used to bring home animals (Hultkrantz 1982: 167; Speck & Heye 1921: 1-19, Tanner 1979: 142, 145; Witthoft 1967: 22f).

Fig. 14. Traditional Carrying Strap, Snowshow ceremony, Eastmain 1998.

It may be also an important ceremonial symbol such as an herb or tobacco to be used during or at the end of a hunt. It may be worn, sacrificed, used, or carried in a pouch by the hunter and is chosen for its efficacy: in this case the desired outcome is successful hunting (Speck 1921; CeTA 25; Tanner 141). Such tokens represent a spiritual connection between the animal and the wearer.

An animal is treated with the same dignity as the hunter; appropriate equipment and methods are used in the killing, butchering and distributing of animal flesh (CeTA 1989: 31),

thereby affirming the worth of the hunted and alleviating the suffering from hunger of the hunting group.   Rather than be viewed as an act which inflicts suffering, death is seen as a creative act that gives life to the hunter. The possibility of meaningful life is initiated through death itself. The preservation and affirmation of life becomes that which by necessity involves the taking of life whilst promoting the least amount of suffering on the part of both the hunted and the hunter.

4.3 Avoidance of Suffering

Whereas dignity is the sense of self-affirmation and commands respect for oneself and other human beings, much of what Taylor has to say with regard to the avoidance of suffering is built around the issues of autonomy. Autonomy, integrity, and freedom are components foundational to the relationship between human beings (Taylor 1989: 12ff). This relationship extends, in the view of the Eastern Cree, to non-human spirit-persons. A respectful relationship includes behaviour that minimizes the amount of suffering and eases the survival of all spirit-species. As Schweitzer comments, "the ethic of *Relevance for Life* [...] comprehends within itself everything that can be described as love, devotion and sympathy whether in suffering, joy or effort."(1933: 88)

4.3.1 Sacrifice?

According to Swan, the parties to a hunt engage in a conversation that extends to the fulfilment of life relationship in which the confines of tangible reality might be overcome as each party enters into that which might be considered as a transcendent conversation. For him "Power is a personal empowerment arising from a surrendering of personal ego

consciousness to become aligned with a spiritual world beyond this one" (Swan 1990: 70, 102). Yet, with reference to the Eastern Cree such definition of power should rather have as a goal to become aligned with the spiritual **in** the world. The hunter identifies in a relationship with the hunted in so far as the hunted, as a spirit-filled entity in the world, is considered in a similar way as the hunter is him or herself a spirit-filled entity in the world.

These entities, though differentiated by species, are considered capable of communication. Swan suggests that a hunter extends the feeling of self with the intention of developing a sympathetic bond with the hunted – a relationship based on "respect, awe, humility, and even love".[11] Preston also describes this sympathetic bond between the hunter and the hunted as a "reciprocal attitude of love". For him, love is an important and natural bond developed between the hunter and animal persons, "a mix of predatory and grateful assertion of controlling and taking the prey – at once a necessary and moral possession of the other – the love of the prey is a mix of wary stratagems of escape and probable failure that results in sacrifice"; in this love relationship a successful hunt is made possible,[12] and each party is affirmed.

If, as Swan and Preston think, the gift of life is a gift of love, then perhaps this love might be considered as the kind of love which looks beyond itself to the fulfilment of another. This raises the question of sacrifice. Might it be considered a willingness to suffer for another's sake? Affirmation of life becomes, then, willingness not to suffer death, but

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[11] Swan 1995: 33; 1999: 26; Feit 2001: 421f; Scott 1996: 75; Honigmann 1981: 724.

[12] Preston, 2002: 199f. – Also personal communication, September 2006.

to offer a gift through which death becomes life. "When asking why an animal went in a trap, or allowed itself to be caught, the Cree answer with similar kinds of reasons to those they would offer for why a human gives food away to another person. That is, because it appreciates the need of the other. The implication is that consent is given – it is a responsible thing to do as a moral social being" (Feit 2001: 421; see also Sharp 1988: 186). By participating in life the hunted and the hunter affirm equally the creative act in death and contribute to the avoidance of suffering.

Rather than consider the idea of sacrifice in the context of one spirit-person suffering *at the expense* of another, it is more appropriate to consider the question in relation to an encounter wherein the spirit-persons are affirmed in their connection to a universal or guardian spirit and that despite the giving of one physical body to sustain another physical body, the universal power of which these physical bodies are manifestations lives on.

This hypothesis would fit well with the idea that all physical spirit-persons are interrelated, interdependent, and are representative of a non-corporeal universal principle. Martin suggests that "the relationship [between spirit-persons] is a "social one", a "fundamental equation or sympathy between human persons and animal persons - a sympathy that pervades not just the hunt itself, but all of life's experiences" (1980: 39; also Preston 1990: 315). Such an idea includes the possibility that it might be the human spirit-person who offers the gift of life. This, too, fits well with the perception that in turn all is regenerated through the earth. For example, Karen Warren in discussing ecofeminism argues that care, love, and reciprocity frame a definition of being human: "Relationships of

humans to the nonhuman environment are, in part, constitutive of what it is to be human".
She suggests that amongst the indigenous groups of people she has encountered it has been
considered an appropriate tradition for a hunter to promise an animal offering its life that the
hunter will return his body to nourish the earth at the time of his/her own death which in turn
will nourish future foragers (Warren 1990: 143ff.). Jean Malaurie recalls that amongst the
people of Greenland, "the animals let themselves be killed so that they could visit their
human [relations] and help them". (1982: 218; also Shepard 1991: 86f)

4.3.2 <u>Sacrament?</u>

An appropriate response to the giving of life is one of respect. This respect might
best be described as an acknowledgement of being able to participate in the process of life.
In offering life, life is given. To honour this act a piece of the meat of the gifted animal is
put in the fire and offered in thankfulness for life as a token of reciprocity. The owner of the
animals or animal guardian (see chapter 4.2.2) is thanked for the gift of life, and a supplication is made for future successful hunting.

Fig. 15. Goose over the Fire, Eastmain 1997.

What is at issue here is whether the animal in its entirety as a gift or the offering of a piece of the meat might be considered a sacrament. Amongst the people of Eastern James Bay the answer to this is not either or, but both. The gift of life is considered a gift which nourishes both the body and the spirit. The animal becomes that which is offered to celebrate life, and it is received as a token of the promise of a bountiful earth through the recognition of an overarching provider. In receiving such a gift the offering of a portion is made in respect to both the animal spirit guardian, or owner, and the ancestors of all those human and non-human persons, thereby affirming the interdependence of all the aspects of the environment. The flames and smoke rising from the fire towards the roof at the centre of the tepee represent the interrelatedness of all forms of life and the dialogue between the universal spirit and other forms of life. The feast which follows a ceremony such as Walking-out is a further acknowledgement of this basic understanding: it has the power to conjure memories of hunger, acquisition of food, homecoming, life and death. Yet it is also an affirmation and celebration of the power identified in the inter-relationship between spirit-persons dramatized in the symbolic present.[13] Each element of the feast, the gifted animal spirit-person, human spirit-persons, and other environmental spirit-filled aspects converge to uphold the cultural understanding of the spiritual tradition. The feast becomes the punctuation marking a progression from one aspect of life to another and is especially significant in that it incorporates traditional community teachings about sharing, respect, the nature of all environmental aspects, and the qualities associated with meaningful life.

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[13] For Malinowski, "since food is the [...] token of the beneficence of the world, [...] by sharing in food sacrificially with the spirits or divinities [the human being] shares with them in the beneficial powers [...] – the roots of sacrificial offerings are to be found in the psychology of gift, which is to the communion in beneficent abundance" (1954: 43).

One further notion needs mention: namely, Bachelard's home related image "housework" (1964: 67). In understanding their home as garden (chapter 2.2.4) the Eastern Cree acknowledge their responsibility for all the resources within their purview. Continued existence in this environment includes stewardship as a way of *being in the world*. As Lévy-Bruhl discusses in *How Natives Think,* mystical properties inhere in everything: flora, fauna, land, water, humans as well as space "assume a sacred character by virtue of their [...] mystic power" (1966: 27 & 77). The information mediated between these components leads the Eastern Cree to attend to the well-being of the environment. Successful hunting becomes that which is the result of the "mutual efforts of the hunter and the environment" (Feit 1986:174). The avoidance of suffering, and respect in this context include stratified hunting techniques: land clearing, safety and resource management in order to maximize the forage activities of the animals themselves, which in turn aids the subsistence of the Eastern James Bay hunting groups. "Indigenous and traditional peoples frequently view themselves as guardians and stewards of nature. Harmony and equilibrium among components [...] are central concepts", says Darrell Addison Posey (2001: 4). How the principles of stewardship pertain to hunting technique amongst the Eastern Cree are well documented by Adrian Tanner: his detailed study of trapping, camp site location, and subsistence patterns identify clearly the care taken to preserve the natural habitat to avoid undue suffering by any of the spiritual aspects of the environment (1979). His comments are echoed by Shepard Krech as he comments on the efforts made by Matthew Coon-Come to preserve hunting traditions amidst what he perceives to be widespread waste associated with industrialization and consumerism (Krech 1999: 199). This resonates in the upsurge of dialogues between indigenous local knowledge experts and other non-indigenous researchers. (Scott 1996: 71)

Fig. 16. A melding of traditional and modern symbols of culture, Eastmain 2006.

Chapter 5

Development of Character

The foregoing chapters identify the Eastern Cree perception of their environment, albeit from a frame of reference informed by my own cultural experience. The people of Eastern James Bay consider that the land, the people, the fauna and the foliage are interconnected and acting in reciprocal practical engagement, and each of them is considered to be infused with spirit. Some of the existential and phenomenological aspects associated with the hunting milieu of the Eastern James Bay have been explored with reference to

Charles Taylor's insights. The activities associated with hunting offer the requisites necessary for an integrated and meaningful life.

Much of the tradition of the Eastern Cree is transmitted through drama, art and storytelling, which in turn serve to legitimate the social and spiritual order. Retold with added perceptions over time, this heritage plays a significant role in defining the parameters of individual spiritual existence and in developing characters which will fulfil the expectations of the hunting group. It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss the development of character amongst the multiple options available to an individual through electronic communication or conflicting religious teaching arising out of increasing globalization. Emphasis is put in this chapter on the specific correlation between the activity of hunting and the associated community ceremony as they pertain to character development amongst the people of Eastern James Bay. However, Christian and secular teaching and their attendant expectations, as well as increasing globalization and technological advancements, make an impact on the self-determination of character beyond that of childhood. Even so, the cultural framework of the Eastern Cree is a melding of inherited subsistence patterns based on environmental conditions and the changing needs of the community.

After a brief overview of Charles Taylor's ideas on the use of the artistic medium a brief outline of the framework that has informed the perceptions of the people of Eastern James Bay and the visitors to the region will follow. The methods of transmitting information include narration, drama and artwork; each of these are reviewed before

discussing character development. The Walking-out ceremony is a recognition and a celebration of life; it is also an instructive tool for engaging each member of a community. The mythical referent 'I' (chapter 3.4.1) forms part of the argument. The last section of this chapter discusses the development of character and – using the insights of a Christian theologian, Stanley Hauerwas, as well as Taylor – shows that the specificity of the ceremony serves to inform a character best suited to the community framework of the Eastern Cree.

5.1 Taylor and the Cultural Framework

For Taylor, a work of art might be viewed "as the locus of a manifestation, which brings us into the presence of something which is otherwise inaccessible, and is of the highest moral or spiritual significance; a manifestation, moreover, which also defines and completes something, even as it reveals" (1989: 419f). As such, a work of art may never be fully described; it is always in the process of becoming, of revealing an intimate truth to the perceiver. Art often expresses a sense of the nostalgic, or a vision of the ideal future. (Taylor 1989: 419-425)

Lived experience becomes that which is at once realized in an increasingly mechanized environment while the sense of the nostalgic or the ideal future becomes increasingly interiorized. In the twentieth century the reclamation of these interiorized experiences associated with creative activity has become the focus of on-going discussion and artistic representation which have offered meaningful opportunities for human engagement (Taylor 1989: 460). This re-engagement has the potential to lead to increased self-definition and self-realization. (Taylor 1989: 476)

While Taylor's arguments do not directly refer to the people of Eastern James Bay, they do contribute to understanding the cultural framework of those non-indigenous people living and working in the area. It is entirely plausible that the non-indigenous cultural framework has impacted and influenced indigenous perceptions since the time of contact and that the medium of art – because of its propensity to represent and/or challenge the perceptions of a culture – might be applied to a culture which has developed outside the western philosophical and spiritual paradigm. The following discussion is presented with the intention of showing how it is that the beliefs and practices of the people of Eastern James Bay have been and are being maintained, developed and transmitted using the medium of art to represent their cultural ideals.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century traders, missionaries and explorers developed their perceptions of indigenous peoples from a framework primarily relating to experiences within the realm of Christian governance. These same traders, missionaries, and explorers brought with them an idealized frame of reference based on Christian religious teachings which were themselves in the slow process of being complemented by contemplation of the spiritual in European society (Taylor 1989: 461ff) even though an acceptable ethical code based on the teachings of a juridical Judaic/Christian tradition continued to be the recognized form of governance. Such an internalized system of governance was used by non-indigenous people to identify and critique an indigenous people whose belief, symbols and ritual practices emanated from an integrated spirituality revolving around the environmental conditions. Researchers such as Åke Hultkrantz (1976), and Roland Bonsen, Hans Marks and Jelle Miedema (1990) acknowledge that anthropologists have contributed a great deal

to the study of religion amongst indigenous people and that students of religious experience might be encouraged to offer deeper insights. Hultkrantz, in particular, cites research carried out on the subject by historians of religion and anthropologists who have been adjunct to the main focus of their research. He comments that a phenomenological approach will help to clarify and broaden the study of religion research (1976: 88f; also Crossley 2004: 31) noting that in part this is beginning to be achieved by the expansion of religious studies to include Native American Spirituality (1990: 168). However, philosophical interest in the rites and ceremonies associated with religious beliefs has been limited, according to Kevin Schilbrack (2004: 1 & 25). He argues that a connection between body and thought might be analyzed from a philosophical perspective (2004: 1) – an issue pursued in this study.

Basic attitudes to religion and the associated rituals and ceremonies depend on how individuals perceive their relationship to a culture-based, socially accepted religious tradition. The dedication an individual feels for a particular religious perspective might be based on routine and the mechanical acceptance of a set of beliefs that underlie behaviour patterns. Thus, conditioning becomes the pathway to the development of a framework containing a set of structures or codes which encourage an individual to *imitate* rather than *experience* religious ideals (Clark 1958). Such a framework would be built on the theory of moral obligation on the part of each individual to comply with social regulations rather than lead towards an internalized idea of the common good.

A framework developed on socially regulated moral obligation suggests, as Robert N. Bellah does, that the notion of religion from a monotheistic stance has come to signify

a structured system of beliefs and practices such as Christianity. Critiquing the United States in the twentieth century Bellah explains that religion so described has become separated from popular secular existence: for example, beliefs, symbols and rituals once identified with Christianity have become socially acceptable codes of conduct without being attached to a personal profession of faith in Judaic/Christian principles (Bellah 1969: 331, 341). Such description of social or corporate religion contrasts individual religious experience, and compliance with the socially integrated code of conduct might lead to imitation and leave the quest for spiritual fulfilment to the individual option.

The cultural framework of the Eastern Cree is a melding of the spiritual nature of the environment and the evolving social reality in which they find themselves. Although far too general for a real anthropological understanding, the expression 'religious ideology' might be appropriate - according to Adrian Tanner (1979: 206f) – when used with reference to those actions which may have a spiritual interpretation while at the same time upholding a distinctive social ordering. This would then meet the sociologist Émile Durkheim's understanding of religion as that which enables human beings to transcend reality in order to affirm an accepted social code.[1]

5.2 Creative Expression

An integral system of beliefs is expressed by the Eastern Cree by using visual and verbal mediums. The symbols used reinforce the community ideal of meaningful life and

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[1] Religion for Durkheim is "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things [...] beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church" (1915: 62).

are introduced very early in a child's life. Hunting methods, animal habits, care of the land, omens, methods of prediction, natural medicinal practices, social relationship skills[2] are transmitted through mnemonic devices, artistic representation, storytelling and dramatization (Beck & Walters 1977: 37; Atkinson 1990: 22). Transmission uses devices intended to teach, develop and perpetuate the cultural framework. Referred to as symbols (chapter 3.3) these devices are representations of an environment able to communicate that which would otherwise be incomprehensible. They create a composite picture that diffuses meanings corporately as well as through each of the interrelated symbols. (Geertz 1975: 129; Turner 1975: 59; Hultkrantz 1980: 394)

To represent a perceived meaning in a tangible medium implies that the essence of the perceived meaning be brought forward to a physical object. Artists seek to express this perceived meaning or *bring it to birth* in such a way as to transmit the dialogue between perception and what is perceived. Art becomes the point of contact in the in-between space; it offers the perceiver an opportunity to overcome the limitations of the tangible real space in which the physical body finds itself, and enables sense experience to illuminate that which may not readily be evident (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 52). The body *'I'*, at once emergent with the environment, is that which perceives elements of the environment and mediates between the physical body I and the physical environment in which the body *'I'* finds itself to express

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2 Social relationship skills "strong traditional values"which "include honesty, sharing, respect for others, respect for nature, preservation of family and kinship ties, the collective welfare as opposed to individual gain, strong separation of male and female roles, and acting in a responsible way" (Atkinson 1990: 22).

in artistic form that which it perceives as a body among other bodies.[3] As such the body is an active component in the process of creating and recreating itself.

The expressed reality remains that which pertains to the physical body I while at the same time revealing a sensed body *'I'* experience. Contact with the environment becomes that which the sensing body experiences through the physical body which transcends itself in interpreting the sense experiences offered by the environment. The unity of the I/ *'I'* body enables artistic expression which becomes the birthing point from which dialogue occurs (Rabil 1967: 13). In a very real sense artistic expression might well be referred to as a representation of the birth from which all other acts follow: a transcendence which births into immanent reality through a perception of an intangible, yet increasingly comprehensible power already present within the environment[4] suggests that just as the physical body I and the sensing body *'I'* act in unity, so may the immanent and the transcendent belong to the same unity. "There is a paradox of immanence and transcendence in perception. Immanence, because the perceived object cannot be foreign to the perceiver; transcendence, because it always contains something more than what is actually given." (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 16)

Narrative, storytelling, drama and ceremony exemplify a continual series of opportunities enabling artistic expression representative of lifestyle and culture (Merleau-

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[3] Merleau-Ponty in Rabil 1967: 34; Merleau-Ponty 1964: 127.

[4] Merleau-Ponty makes similar comments as he discusses the relationship between artist and subject matter in *Eye and Mind* 1964: 167f. – See also Forest Williams 1993: 173, and Madison 1981:100, n. 28.

Ponty 1964: 168; 1993: 141). With regard to the people of Eastern James Bay, creative

vision, coupled with artistic expression, offers a perceiver the opportunity to enter into the

dialogue between the environment and all its aspects. Perception "summons [...] to the tasks

of knowledge and action [...] assisting at the birth of this knowledge [...]". (Merleau-Ponty

1964: 25)

5.2.1 <u>Narrative</u>

"Narrative is everywhere a major genre of verbal art [...] underlying so many other

art forms. [...] Knowledge and discourse come out of human experience and [...] the way to

process human experience is to give an account of it more or less as it really comes into

being and exists" (Ong 1982: 139f). The oral tradition of the Eastern Cree is such a

narrative. It is the process of relating and transmitting the ideals of the past into the present

and the future. Symbols associated with these ideals become part of the oral tradition;

though fluid, they have the propensity of preserving heritage and culture. The fluidity of

these symbols creates the perception of boundaries (Leach 1976: 33) and enables the mores

which shape and develop social behaviour for the benefit of survival and community; they

are continually reformulated as the environment changes. Narration of historical meanings

associated with the symbols chosen to represent the environment aid in the development of

character while still maintaining a meaningful framework bearing within itself the power to

transmit knowledge achieved through the interaction of the transcendent and the immanent

aspects of the environment (Geertz 1973: 126f). Spiritual power lived out in symbolic form

legitimates a traditional narrative, communicates events within the narrative, and offers

possibilities for future interaction within the narrative. (Geertz 1969: 641; 1973: 90)

Oral transmission through narrative is communication through memory over time to perpetuate a parameter which governs current and future actions within a community. In discussing oral tradition, Jan Vansina suggests that narrative transmission should be regarded as a series of oral historical documents subject to distortion over time. Such distortion includes subtle changes in order to maintain continuing relevance (1965: 21; 1985: 21). Oral documents are the historical remembering of the heritage of generations past, and continuing narration brings this heritage into the present in such a way that it offers continuity and relevance. (Vansina 1985: 31f.)

As Paul Connerton suggests, it is in the remembering of the past that the social customs of the present find their legitimation (1989: 3). From this remembering current perceptions are built and images visualized as the narrative unfolds, thus giving the participant the opportunity to formulate an understanding of the information being passed on. Narration in this way also enables the teller or relator to maintain specificity in his or her own memory; individual people remember different aspects of the narrative and thus factually relate the content of the narrative to their own particular perceptual knowledge (Preston 2002: 69f.). Narratives expressing a social memory encourage both group and individual identity within the world of the Eastern Cree people. Within this world meaning and interpretation take shape and form the basis of all decision-making. Narration is used as a means to educate the young in the traditional skills of their ancestors, thereby enabling them to develop and mature into useful and competent members of the group. (Atkinson 1990: 8)

5.2.2 <u>Storytelling</u>

Communication between a human body and the environment is often represented in artistic form such as storytelling, narrative, and drama to depict and transmit a cultural heritage (Gill 1983: 48). Communicating a story suggests the expression of tradition which serves to support culture. The location and content are important factors in a periodic re-presentation of data intended to represent and perpetuate a common heritage (Vansina 1985: 39ff.). In recreating an idealized representation of the parameters of known and familiar space and acknowledging the interaction of all the component parts within that space the centrality of the space in the lives of its inhabitants is upheld as worthy. The stories associated with a tradition become the replication and enaction through which initiation of the young and assimilation into the heritage of a culture occurs. From such sharing, the very young are taught how to listen and how to retell each story as it is enacted in ceremony. Harold Rosen explains that knowledge "is a superstructure erected on and motivated by meanings which had their beginnings and verifications in a past rich with encounters" (1998: 71). A concrete example is the ceremony known as *Walking-out* (*Wiiwiitahaausuunaanuu* - 5.3). Not only is it a story: it is also a drama, a powerful representation of the meaning of life amongst the Eastern Cree. Participation in, and observation of, this ceremony encourages the creative interpretive process which both reinforces and develops the traditional lifestyle of the community. Since the community at large is invited to participate in some way in the ceremony, each occurrence reinforces the teaching mediated by the symbolic dramatization of the underlying foundational paradigm.

5.2.3 <u>Drama</u>

For Geertz, the perceptions people have of themselves and their environment arise out of experience and give rise to attitudes about culture and the possibility of enactment of those attitudes within culture (Geertz 1973).   These attitudes are enacted amongst the Eastern Cree through the development of specific practices which reflect the transcendent and immanent reality of the environmental and social conditions in which they live.   In this context an interconnecting spiral of experience and celebration takes place: experience develops celebration, which enables an absorption of environmental developments and behavioural patterns, and also a continual regeneration and development of character. Such a system is a paradigm for – and of – that which is considered real and culturally relevant (Geertz 1969: 642; 1973: 92-93). Myths as dramas may lead to enactment in a form of ritual (Doty 1986: 35f). Such is the case in Eastern James Bay where the myth has become symbolized in the ritual/ceremonial practice of 'Walking-Out'.

5.3 *Wiiwiitahaausuunaanuu* - Walking-Out Ceremony

Being situated, being a body, means to have the ability to communicate, and to communicate is to have and use a language (Ong 1982: 7). The Eastern Cree are no exception: they use symbolic language to maintain their subsistence activity and develop rituals and ceremonies which legitimate and perpetuate the knowledge of their environment and the relational orders they experience within that environment. Amongst these people, the expression of this language is primarily visualization in space of symbols (see chapter 3.3) representing the environment surrounding a body. How a body impacts the environment and vice-versa manifests in a symbolic form which in turn is transmitted through the

language of art. Such language provides the shaping of a character which will enable a physical and sensing body to engage in a lifestyle promoting the well-being of a subsistence economy within a particular environmental space. The continued re-enactment of the practices associated with hunting through ceremonial dramatization assure the ongoing transmission of the skills developed to maintain subsistence and a harmonious balance within the environment.

Growing out of and complementing the activity of hunting the community ceremony celebrates the continuing beneficence of the superior being or spiritual power and the role each spirit-filled body plays in the evolution of life in the environment. One of the ceremonies that represent community celebrations is known as Walking-out or *Wiiwiitahaausuunaanuu* – ·Δ·Δ"C"◁▷ᐱᓄ – literally 'a going-out ceremony'. Participation in this dramatization reinforces the structure of an integrated system of belief intended to maintain spiritual cohesiveness within the community and between the community and the environment.

This ceremony takes place in the settlement, usually in the spring after the goose hunt, and involves a young child and his or her family. Signalling the transition from the first year of life and babyhood to that of a recognized place within the group the ceremony marks a major experience in the life of both the child and the community and encourages identification of both the child with the larger community and the larger community with the child. When a child is able to walk on his or her own, i.e. between the first and second year

of age as well as at the stage of life when infants become able to distinguish between elements of the environment and their own bodies

The ceremony begins at sunrise; by following the course of the sun from its rising to its setting the power associated with the rhythm of life is acknowledged as significant in every aspect of the environment. The ceremony signals a major experience in the life of both the child and the community and encourages the identification of both the child with the larger community group and the larger community group with the child. A ceremonial tepee is constructed, the wood pile is stocked, and a feast prepared. The community gathers to witness the first steps of the child over the threshold, around the circumference of the tepee and wood pile to a small tree which represents the external as yet unfamiliar environment. Around her neck in a decorated bag, a girl carries the tools she will need as an adult to prepare the food and make the fire. She uses her toy hatchet to break off a twig which she then carries back into the tepee. This twig along with a small piece of meat from her bag is offered to a female elder as the child re-enters the tepee.

Deanna Snowboy, Fort George 1994
Fig. 11. A girl in traditional ceremonial dress at the Walking-out ceremony.

A boy uses his toy rifle to shoot a goose which is also brought back into the tepee and offered to a male elder. (Tanner 1979: 91-3; Preston 2002 :33-36)

Fig. 12. Boy at the Walking-out ceremony, Eastmain, 1995 (used with permission)

A child, by participating in the drama even at such a young age, begins to assimilate the data associated with each symbol as he or she becomes engaged. The gathered community witnesses these first steps and applauds the young child as a good hunter or woman. The child is recognized as a member of the community (Ferrara 2004: 26; able to take part in the cyclical reality of regeneration in the death and life of the hunting group (see chapter 4.2.2). The celebration concludes with an elder who puts the offerings of meat and wood into the fire and thanks the animal guardian spirit for the gift of the animal. The elder then invites the community to partake in the celebratory feast. (Malinowski 1954: 42f; Langer 1976:181; Waugh 1996:163; see also chapter 4.3.2)

As a model for communication, the opportunity to engage in dramatic representation in the Walking-out ceremony offers a nonverbal explanation of each participant's role in the development of character (Finnegan 2002; Tambiah 1981: 119 &124). Such communication is a complex circular motion: the ceremony intended to aid in the development of character

is itself developed in the communicative interaction between each of the spatial components. Amongst the Eastern Cree the ceremony itself becomes the medium through which the beliefs about the social order of the community are communicated. In other words, the fundamental significance of the composite whole gives rise to the ceremony, and participants in the ceremony enact the structures verifiable through tradition and experience, and at the same time contribute to the development of the tradition.

Rather than understand the ceremony as a representation of a static tradition (Moore & Myerhoff 1977: 8), the developing character is a composite part of the ritual which gives the impression of ongoing fluidity. Though the ceremony is occurring at a specific moment in time, it is taking place in an environment which initiates the potential for dialogue in the first place and yet is itself in the process of evolution (Bell 1992: 124); this suggests that the characters or spirit-persons associated with the ceremony are variables and not static (Goody 1977: 34; Moore & Myerhoff 1977: 3). The spiral of experience becomes a complexity of spirals as the symbol associated with the developing character intertwines with the symbols associated with the ceremony itself in ongoing movement. Ceremony becomes in this context a 'throwing together' of the meaningful symbols (chapter 3.3) associated with the sacred environment in such a way that the underlying primordial paradigm is affirmed while at the same time the symbols associated with the paradigm evolve. In other words, the ceremony as a ritualistic practice contains within it the potential for both confirmation and transformation.

Beginning in the nineteenth century theories were being developed and used to analyze the efficacy of ritual practice (Bell 1992: 14). In the early twentieth century, Durkheim argued that the spiritually significant is manifested in beliefs of which rites are the practical representation (1915: 36f). Similarly, Gluckman expressed the idea that a continuum exists in the representation of both a religious and a social ordering of that which a community perceives to be literally apparent in the environment (1962: 42; 1977: 230). Thus, ritual practice does have, as Bellah suggested (chapter 5.1.1), the propensity to become ritualistic or habituated, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the spiritual truth contained within the symbolic language giving rise to the ceremony in the first place. (Merton 1968)

While acknowledging that "ritual is a stereotyped concentrated expression of beliefs and sentiments regarding ultimate things [bringing to mind] through symbolic performances certain centrally important processes and norms", Edward Shils nevertheless suggests that contextual beliefs could exist without being evidenced in ritual action (1969: 736). Merton proposes the following definition of ritual which does pertain to the Eastern Cree: "Phenomenologically considered, rituals may be defined as culturally transmitted symbolic codes which are stylized, regularly repeated, dramatically structured, authoritatively designated, and intrinsically valued" (Merton 1968: 388; also Vansina 1985: 39f). Wiiwiitahaausuunaanuu ·ᐃ·ᐊᑕᕁᐊᐅᐝᐅ·ᓂ *Walking-out ceremony* is the enactment of the comprehensive belief system held and enacted by the people of Eastern James Bay. Although belief in some thing may exist without ritual affirmation, for the Eastern Cree the ceremony itself is part of the process of developing the perceptions and actions of

individuals, thereby perpetuating the accepted social categories. (Moore & Myerhoff 1977: 17)

The effective rite, Roger Caillois suggests, contains within it the ability to articulate the conversation between the spiritual aspects of existence (Caillois 1950: 23f). Amongst the Eastern Cree the Walking-out ceremony is significant for a number of practical and/or spiritual reasons: recognition of the fragility of life (chapter 5.3.1), celebration of life (chapter 5.3.2), transition (chapter 5.3.3), education (chapter 5.3.4), life as sacrament (chapter 5.3.5), and development of character (chapter 5.3.6)

In the first five categories symbols of presence and power (chapter 4.2.3) are incorporated into the Walking-out ceremony and aid in the development of character (chapter 5.3.6). The use of familiar and unfamiliar space and the hypothetical mythical body known as 'I' (chapter 3.4.3) illustrate how knowledge of the ordering of life is transmitted amongst the Eastern Cree. Several elements of the ceremony are representative of each of the Eastern Cree communities, although with minor variants such as the use of a small tree and the choice of the animal as a hunting symbol. Much of the following discussion may be taken to be common practice. (CeTA 1989: 76; Tanner 1979: 90ff; Preston 2002: 33ff)

Fig. 19. Traditional Home with woodpile and decorated threshold, Eastmain 1997.

The concept of **home** in relation to familiar and known space is not limited to the confines of a family dwelling (chapter 2.2.3); the distinction between known and unknown space extends to the traditional family dwelling for a hunting group which is movable within the known space. In *Bringing Home Animals* Adrian Tanner introduces an additional distinction appropriate to the concept of home: that between inside (Λ̇"Ϲϧ¨"Ⴑ *piihtakamihch)* and outside (·Δ̇·Δ̇∩¨"Ⴑ wiiwiitimihch) – (see also chapter 4.1.3). Meaningful life consists of establishing a satisfactory dialogue between these polarities (Tanner 1970: 90). Amongst the Eastern Cree the situated body finds its relevance in the tension between polarities – for example, the space *between* in and out, summer and winter, known and unknown, giving and taking life, sustenance and starvation, camp and bush. These polarities will be discussed within each of the aforementioned categories.

5.3.1 <u>Fragility of Life</u>

Several theories have been proposed to account for the establishment and the continuation of the Walking-out ceremony. It has been argued that the shifting migration patterns of subsistence animals caused a reduction in the number of animal spirit-persons available as potential food, which in turn caused death by starvation in human adults and children (Tanner 1979; Preston 1981; 2002). A lifestyle based on subsistence depends on the availability of animal persons and often necessitates frequent relocation of the campsite.

Moving from one site to another is made especially difficult with an infant. An infant would be tightly wrapped in a waaspisuyaan[5] ·ᐧᐁᑉᐱᔪᔮᐣ and then strapped to a mother's back, thereby keeping the child warm and allowing the woman to accomplish her chores around the campsite and assist in relocation when necessary.

Fig. 20. Baby Gilpin Wrapped for Transport, Eastmain 1997.

The development stage of an infant from birth to early infancy is marked by dependency on others for mobility and sustenance. An infant is unaware of his or her place as a physical body in the order of life. In the beginning the body 'I' does not know I; and

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[5] Personal communications 1995-98. – Originally a bag made of moss. See also Adelson 2000: 87.

yet, the body 'I' is I (chapter 3.4.3). The body 'I' has life, but the space the I inhabits is as yet unfamiliar.   The I exists in the beginning in spiritual time, yet the space which the I inhabits is as yet unknown, and the boundaries associated with the body in space are wrapped up within the body as space itself – akin to the wrapping of the infant itself in the *waaspisuyaan*. The physical body of an infant exists apart from awareness of itself; and yet it exists as a sensing body (Stern 1985: 6), it is itself the centre (chapter 3.4.1). At the same time, from the moment of birth, the sensing body seeks sensory stimulation and transmits information necessary to the survival of the physical body. (Stern 1985: 41-3)

5.3.2 Celebration of Life

Though a very young infant usually stays within the confines of the dwelling place his or her life is recognized as being in spirit-filled relationship with others. In this way a developing infant is enabled to experience increasing awareness of, and curiosity in, the relationships between the individual component parts of familiar space.   The body is experienced in communication with other bodies. (Merleau-Ponty in Rabil 1967: 36)

During the first year an infant develops an awareness of the physical body and begins to make connections between physical and sensing experiences (Stern 1985: 10). Within the safety of the camp an infant is encouraged to develop these experiences and engages in the space in between the sensing and physical body as s/he begins the preliminary dialogue between the two. The ability to integrate the new data perceived in the relationships between the physical and the sensing aspects of the body amongst other bodies motivates an infant to expand the boundaries of his or her known and familiar environment. Primary external

stimuli encourage subjective reflection which aid in the integration of acceptable social behaviour patterns. The regular routines associated with the campsite encourage an infant to become increasingly familiarized with the environment and practices associated with the traditional lifestyle. The subjective experience of routine offers opportunities for the infant to organize his or her personal space and begin to comprehend the relationship between perceived and inferred reality. External and internal sensory data become the building blocks on which the social skills necessary for traditional communal life are developed and maintained. An infant engages in that space in between, and continual reinforcement of the relationship between actual and inferred reality encourages imitative behaviour aimed at the integration of socially accepted behaviour patterns.

As social cohesion and functioning become integrated into a cognitive perception of existence the affective transmission of information increases the social abilities of the infant which in turn enable the infant's participation in dialogue. The increasing experience of the interrelationship between physical and sensing bodies instil the enquiry into the space beyond that which is familiar.

5.3.3 Transition

In the traditional lifestyle of the Eastern Cree many groups stay in their own camps located on extended family trap lines during the winter months, with the result that babies born during this time are unknown beyond their own hunting group. Once break-up comes each hunting family returns to the summer settlement where people from other groups congregate and become re-acquainted (Preston 2002; Tanner 1979). The summer camp

becomes a place of trading and sharing, arranging and celebrating marriages, and welcoming new infants and toddlers into the community (Skinner 1911: 57; Helm & Leacock 1971: 362)

Today, even though hunting groups or families live in established communities, the practices associated with life-cycle transitions continue in a form which reinforces the importance of a tradition based on a hunting culture. Amongst the people of Eastern James Bay the transition from infant to young child is a significant stage in the life cycle of the hunting party; as such it is celebrated in a way akin to an initiation rite intended to reinforce the traditional roles of each person within the community (CeTA 1989: 76). Once a child can walk beyond the confines of the dwelling s/he is recognized as a spirit- person in the community with self-determination and future productive potential. Young children between the ages of twelve to eighteen months become increasingly intuitively creative. Development takes place through a series of transitional situations. Children experience sensing phenomena and translate them into meaningful criteria. Creative play often marks the eagerness to explore an environment beyond the known and familiar safe places which have heretofore been the boundary of their experience. The environment of the unfamiliar, un-experienced space invites the I to explore its meanings (chapter 3.4.4). As a child crosses the threshold s/he moves into a space which has yet to become known.

Transitions are not simply linear; they are temporal as well, i.e. passages from one status to another. They contain within them the potential to lead to what Taylor identifies as an *epiphany*. They involve a period of detachment followed by a subsequent re-attachment, yet it is not just a matter of traversing boundaries. Each transition, though it may appear as

a single movement from one state to another, evidences in a reality which is a spiral (see

chapter 3.3) with birth as its beginning followed by a process of continual deaths and rebirths

the more increasing knowledge and experience influence existence (Eliade 1958). As such,

reality is in a constant state of redefinition; it is a complexity of continual transitions with

the promise of multiple epiphanies contained within them.[6]

Inside versus outside, known space versus unknown space (Eliade 1959), not walking

versus walking (Preston 2002: 33ff), the ambiguous zone between familiar and unfamiliar

space (Van Gennep 1960), snow versus no snow (chapter 4.1.3) are distinctions made by

the people of Eastern James Bay to mark at once changes in the environment and the ability

to interact with it. They are separated by a state which Van Gennep calls *liminality* (1960:

21) – that is, periods of transition between a former and a future stage. Transitions may

include crawling (i.e. the period between not walking and walking), the arrival of the spring

or fall goose (itself a complex symbol indicating seasonal change and the difference between

life and death), crossing the threshold from one terrain to another as in passing through a

doorway or crossing a border or boundary, and in the case of an infant the incorporation of

the cognitive skills necessary to move from one stage to another.

5.3.4 Education

As Colin Scott demonstrates, knowledge of the cultural paradigm may best be

understood as the meanings attributed to the symbols associated with ritual or ceremonial

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[6] Taylor 1989: 419. – "The epiphany is our achieving contact with something, where this
contact either fosters and/or itself constitutes a spiritually significant fulfilment or
wholeness" (see Taylor 1989: 425, also 465f).

practice unfold. He rightly suggests that there is a disparity in the basic assumptions applied to the acquisition of knowledge. The Eastern Cree do believe that their traditional life as hunting group unfolds in a multi-dimensional spirit-led environment. This understanding is the beginning of their enquiry into environmental relationships. On this foundation the Eastern Cree hunter builds further knowledge as s/he learns to differentiate between human and non-human spirit-persons. On the other hand the non-Cree observer seeks to understand from an entirely different foundational perspective: that of tangible physical reality, which then might lead to knowledge of the multi-dimensional spirit-led environment (Scott 1996: 72). The Walking-out ceremony, itself a dramatic encapsulation of the spirit-filled environment, is a case in point. As Doran explains, "All of reality is either known or waiting to be known" (1989: 79). The ceremony offers initiation into this life. The symbols representing the traditional heritage are chosen with reference to their efficacy as instruments of thought and regulators of experience. The Walking-out ceremony exposes a young child to the dialogue within an integrated multi-group environment. The transition from the life heretofore experienced in the enclosed winter camp to that of the open summer community life is one step in the process of learning how each spiritual aspect of the environment is interrelated. Once a young child is deemed ready to participate in the dialogue s/he is taught by the parties to the dialogue, members of the community gathering to participate in the ceremony engage in the reinforcement of the beliefs associated with the symbolic heritage. The expectation is that a young child will begin to embody the traditions as s/he continues to participate in the ceremony repeated also for other young children, thereby initiating the propensity for reflexive action in association with the perception of the symbolic patterns within the life of the environment.

Each act associated with the Walking-out ceremony is designed to encourage a child to perceive that which is waiting to be perceived (chapter 1.4.2). The placing of the tepee with its doorway facing the rising sun, the decorated threshold cover, the tree symbolizing the forest, the animal chosen to represent the food offering, as well as the seating arrangement of the elders within the tepee, are considered together as representative of the macrocosm within which the life of all the components of the environment unfolds.

5.3.5 Life as Sacrament

For theologian Leonardo Boff sacraments emanate from direct experience of an environment and offer opportunities for further experience. The symbols associated with the environment form the syllables of an alphabet inherent in the aspects human beings intend to describe (Boff 1987:1, 4). This alphabet, for Susanne Langer, is a "subjective record of sense experience" offering the opportunity to recall to memory a story which legitimates future action.[7] "The symbols that embody basic ideas of life and death" (Langer 1976: 151) are opportunities for revelation. There is both a human immanence and a human reaching towards that which is offering itself to be known. The body I/'I' transcends itself to perceive a spiritual truth, and the moment of acquisition or realization of that truth is acknowledged and celebrated as sacrament. For the Eastern Cree life itself is sacrament, and the symbols associated with all aspects of life mediate meaningful dialogue between the components of life. The experience of sacrament becomes an invitation to participate in a communion between the spiritual aspects of the environment. Participation in the communion includes the transmission of the understanding of the relationship between these components of life.

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[7]Langer 1976: 144-70: "Life Symbols: The Roots of Sacrament."

A good example of this transmission is evidenced in the Walking-out ceremony. As a form of social communication it represents the interplay between the universal spirit and space. In its entirety it is a symbolic expression of the associated beliefs about the ultimacy of a spiritual existence as the foundational paradigm from which the immanent aspects of reality emanates (Shils 1969: 735; Tambiah 1981: 132f). Each of the symbols associated with the ceremony becomes a narrative aimed at dialogue and the celebration of life.

As the young physical I and sensing *'I'* body steps across the threshold of the familiar dwelling into the unknown space outside the tepee s/he has the opportunity to experience the realm of the universal principle, power or supreme being. The physical/sensing body is invited to transcend the present reality and evolve to a space in which the transcendent and the immanent merge to redefine the physical and sensing body's frame of reference with regard to the environment. I, as part of the earth, part of the heart, part of the womb, of the dust of all that is unknown is soon to become part of the heart, part of the womb, of the dust of all that which is known. The ceremonial cake (fig. 21) illustrates how the symbols associated with the environment converse. The known space of the tepee expands to include the space around the outside of the tepee. The fire in the centre of the tepee is contained within a stone circle on the ground its heat rising through the opening at the apex of the tepee. Into this fire offerings of meat are made to the animal spirit power, while supplications are made to the universal spirit and thanks are given for the gift of life of all related beings.

Fig. 21. Microcosm, Fort George 1994.
The cake of recognition decorated with the symbols associated with Walking-out:
the goose, water, forest, tepee with east facing threshold cover, and the woodpile, tracks and snow.

5.3.6 Character Development

The most complex aspect of the ceremony is its place in the development of character. Such development stems from a systematic dissemination of information mediated through the symbols of power associated with the environment. In order to develop a character which will best sustain and inform the actions and reactions of individual human spirit-persons, initiation within the traditional conceptual framework of the individual needs to take place. Individuals, thus initiated, develop a character which best informs the choices to be made along with the attempts to maintain the cultural traditions in an increasingly globalized society. (Davis 1993)

An aid to the theory of character development may be found in the writings of Stanley Hauerwas, a Christian theologian who has written extensively on the place of narrative in the formation of character. He argues that the specificity of a narrative aims to shape the development of character in such a way that the choices made by an individual will be those which identify with and perpetuate the narrative (Hauerwas 1975: 2). In the case of the people of Eastern James Bay this narrative emanates from their interaction as a component part within the environment as discussed in the previous chapters.

Arguing from the Christian perspective, Hauerwas notes that globalization and increased pluralism threaten to undermine traditional character development based on a Christian heritage (1981b: 48). Similarly, this threat of globalization and increased pluralism contributes to the ambiguity of traditional character development amongst the Eastern Cree, which in turn leads to social dysfunction and insecurity (chapter 4.1.1).

According to Hauerwas, discussions about character are related significantly to the idea of self-determination and ethical behaviour (1975: 8, 11) and the very notion of 'having character' denotes "a more basic moral determination of the self" (1975: 16) best understood as a personal narrative set within a community narrative providing the skills necessary to promote a successful existence (1981b: 144). On this point Hauerwas reiterates Taylor's ideas concerning conceptual frameworks which serve to inform judgements and decisions (Taylor 1979), and he suggests that habitual consistency developed over time guides an individual as s/he interacts with the environment (Hauerwas 1981b). "Character in its particular manifestation cannot be a static possession. Since it is born in intentional

behaviour it exists [...] as a qualification of that continuing behaviour" (Hauerwas 1975: 68, 115 & 121). For the Eastern Cree such habitual consistency begins as a small child. The development of intentional behaviour is reinforced in the Walking-out ceremony – a complex symbolic reproduction of what is considered to be a meaningful life modelled on the traditional teachings which inform the common history of culture. In Walking-out a child is subjected to a separation from that which is known and familiar and projected into the space in between where the potential for dialogue exists. By virtue of age and the ability to walk the child undergoes a transformation from the social status of infant to that of personhood, and by introduction to the rest of the gathering community the child is prepared to take his or her place in the spiritual realm within the environment. As such, the process of developing character through intentional behaviour patterns is "both public and private" (Hauerwas 1975: 115). Such a process is considered as equivalent to a change in existential status (Eliade 1958: x), even though it is through passive compliance and response to events beyond individual control. Even this unwitting response, Hauerwas suggests, contributes to the formation of character. (1975: 18f)

Fig   .

22. Transition - Ceremonial Threshold.

Conclusion

The most personal formative development has been the experience of working,

eating, and being incorporated into the home of the people I had been called to live amongst.

Plunged into what seemed to be an overwhelmingly confusing mix of what I will call

'otherness' I brought my own ideas formed over the years through my life experiences. Subconsciously at first, Taylor's work impacted my sense of responsibility for who I am; and that knowledge began to surface as I encountered a people whose indigenous spiritual flavouring had become intertwined with that of Christian ideals.

The material contained in chapters 4 and 5 is an attempt to understand from a theoretical point of view the patterns of life I had been privileged to be incorporated into. From the very first day of my entry into a community I was considered as family. I learned that there were others, considered as strangers, who researched, taught, treated, fixed, and existed on the periphery of the community. In retrospect, indeed, I was privileged, honoured and humbled. I have attempted to honour my hosts whilst describing my perceptions on space and symbolism, understanding that my own framework of experience has entered into the interpretations. The application of the earlier material concerning the environmental and spiritual landscape illuminates how existence is perceived to encourage and substantiate successful subsistence.

I began chapter 4 by acknowledging that my apprehension of the culture I had become a part of was radically different from my spiritual and physical life thus far. I became aware that taking at face value many of the significant studies made by early researchers failed to prepare me for the integration into the spiritual milieu I was led to experience. This does not mean that the earlier research was flawed. This research, and that carried out by later researchers such as Tanner, Feit, Preston, Berkes, Morantz and Niezen, has contributed immensely to the acknowledgement and understanding of traditional

subsistence patterns. However, the most influential of all in my formation are the people I lived amongst. The brief review of the philosophical discourse on *place* and *space* (chapter 2) and *myth* and *symbols* (chapter 3) reveals the historical base of questions related to existence. As Bonsen/Marks/Miedema observed historical cultural frameworks underpin the data gathered and interpreted by the early explorers, traders and missionaries. Keeping this in mind the insights put forward by Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self* have challenged me to look beyond my own framework in my encounters with the people of Eastern James Bay.

Though my role in Eastern James Bay was not as a hunter I learned from the people that the hunting activity is a complex pattern of guidelines and behaviour which work together to ensure the continued rhythmic harmony within the environment even in a time of change precipitated by technological and economic development. By acknowledging Taylor's direct influence on my thought process I found that hunting as a mode of subsistence represents the reality of existence for the people of Eastern James Bay, and is also developed as an art form which parallels Taylor's use of art as a definitive statement of culture. (chapter 5)

In chapter four the recognition of the spiritual exchange between spirit-filled persons and their interdependence is most illuminating. Cohesion within the culture is most effective when symbolic interaction governs all aspects of life. Overall comprehension of this is perpetuated in the activity of hunting. The photographs included in chapters 4 and 5 show symbols which illustrate the potential for conversation between the spirit-beings associated

with the environment. For example, the clothing made from animal skins and fur, the goose and the tree under which it is propped, wood, rifle, carrying strap, scarf, decorated bag for carrying tools, as well as the fire and the threshold contain within them the potential for discovery. Even as this conclusion is being written it becomes clear that the chosen symbols not only point to the skills necessary for life on the land; they also incorporate many of the cultural adaptations these people have made during the last four centuries. The importance of the power contained within these symbols cannot be over-stressed – they underpin Eastern Cree culture.

Spiritual symbols and their place in the social cohesion of the community promote the formation of character and legitimate behaviour patterns which, in turn, confirm the cultural heritage of the Eastern Cree. The idea that there is a universal power or supreme being manifest in all aspects of existence is prevalent and is evidenced in the interactions between people and their environment. It has been most difficult to step aside from my Christian teaching and use words like sacrifice and sacrament without considering my heritage (chapters 4.3.1 & 4.3.2). However, in so doing I experience the practices associated with the giving of life and the offering of a portion of the meat akin to spiritual communion. This communion is intimate: the pervasiveness of the universal principle/supreme being or power becomes known in the immanent presence of what may only be described as sacramental.

The belief in the fundamental sacrality of the environment identified in chapter one brings about a lifestyle in which a complexity of meaningful symbols (chapter 3) act together

to promote harmony and the sense of belonging. Symbolic code represents the corporate perception of the spiritual and religious dimension of known space and is perpetuated in living, interpreting, reflecting and incorporating experiences of dialogue between the environmental components. By participating in this dialogue the Eastern Cree engage with what they perceive as a manifestation of power. Communication between these environmental components is a complex interaction leading to the perpetuation and development of a framework which supports life within the identified environment. Symbolic representation emanating from and with the environment has a spiritual significance played out in and through relationship. In its traditional form, the dialogue between the symbols of power and presence (chapter 4) within the environment is an act of spiritual exchange through which successful subsistence is achieved, and there is no place for a distinction between the sacramental and the secular aspects of life.

Distinction between species is considered to be on the spirit-person level; and spirit can be defined as that which emanates from a spirit source from which all spirits of the same class manifest. As human spirit-persons, the Eastern Cree interact with other spirit-persons in what is perceived as a spiritually-based environment. An element of success in the activity of hunting is achieved by invoking the spirit-source of the desired animal spirit-person: a belief which forms the fundamental basis of meaning attributed to all aspects of the environment. A code of conduct amongst the Eastern Cree in which respect is paramount enables the creative act in death of another spirit-person. Such a death affirms life as meaningful for both the hunted and the hunter.

These people affirm that the framework narrating their traditions is both formative and practical. Embodying the spiritual aspects of the narrative and developing the knowledge of hunting skills provides that successful and meaningful life in the subarctic environment will be preserved. The systematic artistic portrayal of the inter-relationship between spirit-persons within the environment develops and perpetuates the beliefs of a culture and encourages community members, young and old alike, to participate in their traditional religious heritage. Amongst the Eastern Cree, religious teaching revolves around the closely interrelated notions of power and presence, this time as a vivid expression of the intertwining of the spiritual within the natural environment as experienced in everyday life. Religious teaching is the milieu in which character formation takes place. The example of the hypothetical body identified as I/*'I'* in chapter three shows that as the body 'I' engages in the life cycle, incorporation of the prevalent understandings of a particular heritage become integrated into the framework of the body, thereby acknowledging the physical and sensing body's place in the environment. Amongst the Eastern Cree this integration is upheld as an incorporation into a communal heritage which acknowledges the interrelationship between all aspects of the familiar environment.

Chapter five illustrates the unity of the physical and sensing body (I/'I') as perceived in the Walking-out ceremony, which points beyond what is immediately known. The embodiment of behavioural patterns leads to the development of a character best equipped to engage in the cultural heritage based on a hunting/gathering lifestyle as well as keeps abreast of technological and economical advancement. Artistic representation in this context aids in the development of such a character. By presenting a young child with the

opportunity to engage in the actions associated with hunting the artistic form in which it is expressed gives birth to the expansion of enquiry and perception.

The Walking-out ceremony dramatizes the traditional perception of the environment and the rhythmic and cyclical lifestyle of the people of Eastern James Bay. The use of symbols serves to reinforce the belief in the meanings associated with and mediated by the symbols themselves. The outcome of the ceremony is the recognition of the associations within the environment and the adoption of behaviours intended to maintain and perpetuate that association. By affirming the ordinary life of the hunter within the environment represented in the microcosm of the Walking-out ceremony, by showing respect for the traditional heritage of the community, and by participating in the inter-relationship between the aspects of the environment an infant will grow to maturity strengthened in the union between him or herself and all other aspects of the environment.

A community that bases its subsistence on the parameters of a natural environment such as that experienced by the Eastern Cree has and will continue to develop a meaningful contextual framework or narrative capable of bringing order as well as retaining sufficient fluidity to cope with the changing needs of the community.

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