Worlds of Persons:
James Bay Cree Hunting and Ways of Engaging Governments and Developers

By Harvey A. Feit, McMaster University
feit@mcmaster.ca

For the workshop on the "Pluriverse and the Social Sciences," Memorial University, St. John's, Nfld., Sept. 30 - Oct. 2, 2010.

Introduction

Many ethnographies of people living in amodern ontological worlds, where Nature - Culture are not radically divided, describe worlds in which other than human persons have a very wide presence. I will call them worlds of persons. More recently a number of ethnographers have also explored how people living in such worlds engage in confrontations, negotiations, collaborations, and struggles with states and markets. In this paper I consider three sets of questions arising from my collaborations in one such setting. Can living in a world of persons have effects on the ways that responsibility and agency are understood and enacted? Can living in a world of persons be connected to specific ways that power is understood and performed? What visions and aspirations for world-becoming are facilitated or made difficult in a world of persons? In this initial exploration of these questions I offer brief and fragmentary stories, examples and commentaries.

I was introduced to living in worlds of persons in the context of an Indigenous people's relations with their lands and the animals they hunted, where the complex but grounded relations and processes quickly became understandable. People invited ethnographers to share their lives and they offered varied analyses to complement the experiences of hunting and living on the land that were their main means of teaching and transmitting their ways of living and knowing.

But I found it has been more difficult to understand their actions, knowledge and ontologies in the contexts of their relations with modern states and markets. Part of the challenge is that I am trying to understand events that occur in part within worlds of people, and in part on the terrains of states and markets. And I am already engaged in analysing the latter, and responding to it from within a broad context of academic and activist theorizing that does not generally have worlds of persons within its horizons. At different times in these collaborations I found myself amused or angered at misunderstandings and experienced incommensurabilities, embarrassed at apparent naivety, awed at unanticipated clarity of thought and action, and appreciative of subtle communications and enduring engagements. I am still trying to put order in these experiences, emergent understandings, and relationships. I am also trying to find a way to write about the stories, histories, questions, and the challenges they pose.

Earlier ethnographies and my experiences show how worlds where persons are predominant sources of events can make personalized explanation a satisfying form of analysis

(see below). Such explanations are commonplace in many places and in many people's lives, but they are much less common in academia. I ask whether there are political effects of such explanatory logics in the lives of people who live in worlds of persons? Especially with respect to the effects in such contexts of the translations from modern ontological worlds whose constitutive powers are often associated with the naturalization and depersonalization of agency, causes and accountability? Does this have effects on the relationships that emerge and endure between people living in worlds of persons and states, and markets?

Are there somewhat distinctive ways that people living in worlds of persons understand and perform power? Do these have implications for the strategies and longer-term engagements that develop with states and markets? Do they have implications for how translations can develop?

What kinds of life projects, aspirations and visions "fit" with living in worlds of persons? Are there social visions and aspirations that are not effective in worlds of persons, for example, democracy? Are there social visions that meet different "challenges" here than elsewhere - for example, social justice, or equality? And, what other visions may occur?

Lastly, although I will not refer to these questions again here, I would ask what might be the implications of the co-existence of modern with amodern ontologies? That such ontological pluralities appear to be capable of enduring in people' lives leads me to ask - what role ontologies of worlds of persons play in the lives of "ordinary" people living in places and relations that are considered modern, national, urban and developed? Casual experiences suggest that they live only partly in modern ontological worlds, but in what ways? Can translations between and among people who live in modern worlds and in worlds of persons develop in ways than are unimagined when the pre-modern - modern divide is the focus of the story?

My intention in this paper is to foreground and comment on texts and ethnographic stories that emerged during collaborations with James Bay Crees in northern Quebec. The James Bay Cree people I quote are mostly elders, as well as Ndoho Auchimaauch and their partners. Elders are informally recognized by members of Cree communities as leaders with special responsibilities for communities and lands. Ndoho Auchimaauch are responsible for the use and care of the hunting territory lands that are a home to their extended families, kin and friends. Elders may or may not be Ndoho Auchimaauch or their spouses, but I will use the term elders as a general reference. The people I quote are from several generations and communities.

Elders are one of several kinds of contemporary Cree leaders. Philip Awashish, a Cree author and elder has distinguished three forms of contemporary Cree governance and leadership. In addition to elders and Ndoho Auchimaauch who are foci of "traditional governance," he cites local governance and Cree Nation governance. Local governance emerged from Cree band societies and later fur trade relations. It was used and altered by federal governments in order to have a local administration for government programs. It has developed more recently through Cree initiatives and negotiations into Cree community governance and administrations. Cree Nation Governance arose from a decision in 1971 of Cree elders and local government leaders "to unite as one voice," a decision taken as they decided to oppose the first hydro-electric project being built on their homelands (Awashish, 2009a). Its present expression is partly focussed on the Cree national political and regional administrative organizations. The stories of the Cree struggles and negotiations over hydro-electric and other developments have been widely told, and I will not recount them here in any detail.

Explanation, Responsibility and Agency in Cree Personalized Worlds

The anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell's account of the ontology and epistemology of a 1930s Ojibwa[1] community, an Algonquian speaking people,[2] linked the ontology of a world of persons to the processes of explaining events and attributing causality and responsibility. Starting from the classificatory differences with Euro-American ontologies and stressing the very broad animate domains of Ojibwa, and the importance of "other-than-human-persons," Hallowell went on to say that without a concept of the natural world there cannot be a theory of impersonal causes, or of natural law (Hallowell, 1992 : 71). As he put it, "All the effective agents of events throughout the entire behavioral environment of the Ojibwa are selves -- my own self or other selves. *Impersonal* forces are never the causes of events. *Somebody* is always responsible" (Hallowell, 1955: 181, italics in original).

Later, he wrote, "'Persons,' in fact, are so inextricably associated with notions of causality that, in order to understand their [Ojibwa] appraisal of events and the kind of behaviour demanded in situations as they define them, we are confronted over and over again with the roles of 'persons' as *loci* of causality in the dynamics of their universe. For the Ojibwa make no cardinal use of any concept of impersonal forces as major determinants of events" (Hallowell, 1976 [1960]: 381-2).

I find his account of the connections of ontology to explanations and to the forms of attribution of responsibility matches many of the experiences I had with James Bay Crees, another Algonguian speaking people, and I want to ask if it has political effects in relations with states and markets.

Talking to Anthropologists, 1970

Conversations in the 1960s and 1970s with James Bay Cree people showed how hunters' relations with animals were personalized in processes that involved a plurality of persons, emerging relationships, and specific but plural responsibilities for agency.

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

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

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

[JO:]   No.

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

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

[HF:]   Why does this work?

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

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

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

J.O. indicates that he responds to the beaver's initial reluctance to be caught by stopping his hunt, and he takes up the hunt again after the animal appears again and signals another encounter. Responsibly breaking off the initial hunt acknowledges the agency and will of the

animal, and is respectful of the animal. However, the animal may itself misjudge the breaking off of the hunt as a sign of the limited capacity of the hunter to catch it. The hunt may then be resumed at the will of both the animal and the hunter, who may still surprise the animal and kill it. But there is nothing certain in this, times change and are different, relationships of hunters and animals are not standardized but personal and emerging, and there are many different types of game. JO's discomfort with the way I phrased my last question is due in part to the assumption which underlies "outsmarting an animal," namely that it is the hunter who is the active agent who controls the outcome of the hunt.

J.O.'s explanations of the hunt are about the agency of human and animal persons, and about the shifting initiatives and responsibilities of each as the hunt proceeds. He indicates how the hunt comes into being through the mutual creation of personal relationships between hunters and individual animals, and that the emergent outcome may, or may not be fully agreed upon: "at times . . . animals have a feeling that death is coming on" but sometimes J.O. "surprises him." Relationships and events continue develop with or without common understandings, and with misunderstandings - animals may misjudge hunters and be surprised, or they may "feel it." Nothing is sure as the hunt unfolds among wilful persons, although there are likelihoods in how persons may respond to events, as J.O implies.

Talking to Government and Developers, 1972

Many Cree elders who lived within a world of persons responded to the commencement of the James Bay Hydro-electric Project on their lands in the early 1970s, following a major public media event and announcement by then Premier of Québec Robert Bourassa. Elders responded to the complexity and uncertainties of the ever changing development plans with calls for more information, involvement, and explanation. They frequently expressed their difficulties understanding the project plans and the ongoing work which was on a scale they had never seen. But they also responded with decisive clarity about many issues that they saw as central to any response to the project work and to their relations with the developers.

In the summer of 1972 Job and Mary Bearskin of Fort George (now relocated to Chisasibi) took journalist and filmmaker Boyce Richardson to their hunting territory along the main river that would be dammed. Job and Mary spoke to Boyce, and through him to governments and developers, as well as to a generalized audience that included other Crees, especially youth. Having heard that the hydro-electric and development corporations claimed that the animals would not be much affected by the project Job told Boyce: "'I know, I'm the one who's telling the truth' he said. 'I'm over fifty years old and I've been hunting over this territory since I was a young boy.' He spoke of the relatives buried on some of the most beautiful spots along the river. 'The person who gave the word to go ahead with this project,' said Job, 'the Indians think he has no consideration for all the graves of our ancestors. I have to say this about him: he has no consideration for the Indian at all. I would tell him exactly this if he were sitting right in front of me.'"

"'*Gee-wa*,' said Mary, '*gee-wa*' -- right, right.". . .

"Now Job said that he heard that the man who launched this project believed this was just a wasteland, that there was nothing here. How could he believe such a thing when so many people are surviving here? That man should come north and see for himself. 'He is made the same way we are,' said Job. 'He would still survive if he lived with Indians. He has the same soul we have. Everybody was given the same. But he is not using his soul properly, he's using it

only for his own gain. He is trying to destroy lots of men. The Creator did not intend that this land should be destroyed'" (Richardson, 1991 [1973]: 146-7, italics in original).

Here a dialog rooted in an ontology of persons is a vital aspect of Job's response to the ignorance, untruthfulness, destructiveness, and self-interest of the "man who launched this project." An ontology of persons structures the purpose and kind of discourse that occurs, and it serves as an explicit foundation for Job's determination and confidence in this purpose, in part by offering no grounds for any difference of being and sacred worthiness between Crees and developers. He also makes clear that what he knows is true because he has lived there since his youth. He claims authority in his statements based on experience and his relations to places. A world of persons is central to Job's agency. It is also central to the translations of his statements for hearers and readers elsewhere, through Boyce's skilful translation of a personalized struggle.

Talking to Developers, 1999

In the following decades the Crees fought a court case against the hydro-electric project, at which Job testified, and they won a partial victory that led to a negotiated treaty in 1975. Starting in 1989 they undertook a transnational campaign against a new phase of hydroelectric development, which contributed to the shelving of the Great Whale River project in 1984. All the while they have suffered expanding forestry and resource development and other occupations of their lands. Their national leaders have sought a stronger voice over developments and also participation in potential benefits, through new agreements. Crees have become much more diverse during these years of complex confrontations, negotiations, agreements and confrontations.

Throughout, Cree elders who now have decades of experiences of large scale developments have continued to enter dialogues with personalized developers and governments. A number of elders made legal affidavits for a court case against forestry companies and the government in 1999.

In an affidavit Allan Saganash, Sr, talked about the effects of forestry and his experiences with governments and corporations:

"As I said our land is uncut now but I know Donahue [a forestry company] plans to build a road into it. . . .

"I am opposed to this road. . . .

"I am afraid once the road comes there will be many mines opened. All of this development will hurt us. We will lose everything we have forever.

"I want all of this considered in a full environmental assessment but they won't do it. I know the government well. I have seen how they work throughout my life. They refuse to consider all the development together. I have no chance to get all of these issues looked at. I worry all the time about what will happen when the road comes. The road is not to come to the heart of my land. I don't want it. The government is not trustworthy. Why do they keep all these issues apart? . . .

"Others support me in this . . . .

"The companies and the government don't listen to us. They take what is ours and push us aside. This must stop" (Allan Saganash, Sr. Affidavit in Quebec Superior Court, for Mario Lord et al. vs. The Attorney General of Québec et al. S.C.M. 500-05-043203-981, July 22, 1999, brackets mine).

Alan Saganash, Sr. has experienced how government negotiations and reviews divide up issues, knowledge, responsibilities and responses and are used to ignore the Crees while excessively developing the land. He emphasizes that he is determined that this not continue.

Another elder, François Mianscum who had testified in the 1972-73 court case, described the existing impacts of forestry on his land and his experiences with corporations:

"I understand the forestry workers need their work and that it is possible to share the land. However, they must understand that we Crees also need our land to survive. I have been on my *Ndoho Istchee* [hunting territory] since I was 15 years old. I believe I am now 68 years. I have seen what they have [done] to the land. This is not proper sharing ...

"This summer, the forestry company wants to continue to cut ... The foresters told me this. They flew in by helicopter ... I told the gentlemen that I knew that this paper would be thrown away and that my desires would not be respected ....

"What I see happening is the fact that their so-called consultations result in no respect for their own words. I do not want the situation to get worse with the younger generation. There are more and more conflicts on the land between the Crees and the loggers.

"I think the foresters should stop logging until they respect the Cree use of the land. The loggers should do what we ask them to do" (François Mianscum, Affidavit in Quebec Superior Court, for Mario Lord et al. vs. The Attorney General of Québec et al. S.C.M. 500-05-043203-981, July 22, 1999, brackets mine).

Françoise Mianscum eloquently acknowledges the needs of non-Cree people, and he indicates that there are effective ways to share the land. But he makes clear that this sharing is not occurring and that his needs are not being taken into account. He has experiences of forestry companies in personal encounters over the years, and he addresses forestry companies as forestry workers, loggers, and as foresters who are company representatives.

The similarities and differences among the statements about Cree - corporate - government relationships in 1972 and 1999 invite some reflection on the possible enduring effects of a world of persons that changes. Recognizing how government and corporate developers ontologically separate peoples and worlds, and the effects of such separations, as well as the self interest, lies and destructiveness of developers is well expressed from within an ontology of persons. In these statements there is an absence of objectification of the land, of naturalization of economic enterprises and governments, and of reifications of money, documents, bureaucratic processes, law, governance authority, development, and self-interests.

Alan Saganash, Sr. and Françoise Mianscum, like Job Bearskin 25 years earlier, act not as victims, or as powerless, but as persons and agents with a continuing capacity, ability and will to take what actions they can, whatever those actions are.

Intriguingly, this emerges alongside recognitions of the needs of non-Crees, and the responsibility of respect for an ultimate or ontological value of all persons. These elders speak clearly of the abuses and responsibilities of developers, at the same time that their dialogues and oppositions acknowledge the respect that is due those others, as persons, including those whose actions they condemn and oppose.

In a more speculative mode, I ask, can the Cree elders continuities of vision and of a determination to full active engagement, respect, and challenge, be related to living in a world of persons, where the most compelling explanations are personal, and where accountability, responsibility and agency are fore-grounded? And do such ways of knowing, feeling and acting have some significant capacity of endurance in the face of modern forms of ontology that are enabling of forms of potential control founded in naturalization and depersonalization of agency,

expertise and responsibility? These are questions that probably cannot be answered in this form, but I hope to seek ways to explore their implications further. That leads me to ask further, could ontological worlds of persons have a role in academic activists' practices and analyses, and what would that look like?

<div style="text-align:center">Power in Relationships</div>

<div style="text-align:center">Power-in-the-world, Personally</div>

Worlds of human and other persons, where relations are foundational to being and individuation, and where agency is distributed amongst pluralities of persons, have diverse implications for understandings of world processes, histories, stories, and power. That hunter and hunted come together and one serves to feed and nurture the other, is at once a mystery (see Tanner, 1979), and an experience of transformations, of matter and of spirit, and it is a context of power.

William Saganash, a Cree elder with a reputation as a bear hunter, a reputation that exemplified one of his powers, told me a story about that relationship, one where the experiential transitions between dream states and fully awake encounters are a continuous world:

"He was hunting [by] himself alone. He was paddling himself alone in the evening. He had a small little camp, didn't have no sleeping bag. . . . He couldn't sleep at night it was too cold. He saw someone coming in, a man and a woman. He [a visitor] brought a rabbit skin, like a sleeping bag, and he covered William up.[3] They [the visitors] slept in the place he was sleeping and he woke up and he was warm. They got up and left, and he [William] got up right after. The wind was cold, and he was waiting for the wind to settle down. And the wind went down . . . . He [started] walking around, [and] he heard a noise like somebody yelling out. He knew where it was, and he went and looked where it was. He found the noise and he looked around and he saw bear picking berries, and he saw that noise was a bear – a bear was yelling for him. He's walking around, just himself, but he hear like people around laughing at him, but he is not [human] people but bear. . . . He lived with his [wife] already when this story that he is [telling happened]" [ie. he was not a youth but probably a young adult when this happened] (Field notes, William Saganash, 8/17/70, brackets mine).

The story implicitly explains his success hunting bears as part of his relationships to them, but not by highlighting how much he knew about bears or how skilful a hunter he was, but rather how close bears and he were with each other, and the intimacy of his relationships and experiences with bears. Crees would say that one of William's "powers" came from bears, from his relationships with bears.

More generally, some elders describe "power" as the connections between what is thought, how one acts, and what is experienced to happen in the world. Some explained power as most directly manifest in the ability to "know the future." A Cree term for this anticipatory knowledge, nikanchischeitam, means literally "future knowledge." Humans often get future knowledge from other than human beings through dreams, daytime experiences, thoughts, and in ceremonies. Thoughts often are "given," in the sense that they are often not experienced as the products of human will. As humans mature, they learn how to cultivate and interpret such communications, and to have such kinds of knowledge is to have "powers" or to be "powerful."

The implication is that knowledge of the future is not simply an expectation or speculation, it can be knowledge with substantial, if varying and unknown, degrees of certainty

for the knower. Future knowledge is not passive. It was explained by one Cree as "looking to find what one knows," just as hunting is conceived of as looking to fetch the game (Tanner 1979). Future knowledge helps to actualize what will come to be. Joe Ottereyes, Jr., another elder explained through a translator:

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

This asking is not a passive reflection but a going out and working to find signs of an animal gift on the land, it usually requires hard work, persistence, and responsiveness to relationships. It is a participation in the actualization of the world. And as Joe's explanation suggests, there is a confidence of success and survival in the midst of a deep awareness of the fundamental uncertainties of the world of persons. Humans are powerful insofar as their thought and action are linked to the multi-faceted courses and causes of events in the world. The hunt proceeds with gifts of ideas, signs, mutual recognitions by the animal and the hunter, and the "giving" of the animal. That so many gifts flow out of emerging relationships, gifts that are not the result only of human will, sustains confidence in self and world.

Human beings have power when they integrate their thought and actions with those of other beings with whom they co-habit the world, and in this way they participate in the power of world-becoming. This concept of power approximates in some ways a notion of truth as process, the coming to be of a configuration in the world is anticipated in thought, thought that is not solely one's own, a process that one participates in through action. But unlike truth, this is not knowledge/action from outside but as part of the becoming of the world. The world is already present in the narrator's awareness and in their thoughts, which themselves may participate in the becoming of the world.

Power in a World of Persons with Whitemen, Conserving Beaver and Co-governing[4]

Cree hunters' stories of relationships with representatives of governments are equally complex and ambiguous, but also embedded in relationships and mutual recognitions. The first on-the-ground intervention of governments in the James Bay region occurred when beaver reserves were established by Québec in the early 1930s with the initial goal of restoring beaver populations depleted in the post-World War I boom years. They also aimed at limiting Crees need for welfare. The reserves excluded non-local trappers who had been the main impetus for the depletion, as well as limiting Cree harvests until beaver populations recovered (Morantz 2002; Feit, 2005). These initiatives had multiple origins having been suggested in one form or another by fur traders, missionaries, anthropologists, and Cree hunters who influenced the others.

When it came time to actually harvest beaver in the 1940s, the government claimed that its employees were exercising governance authority over the beaver and the Crees. But the employees were confronted by their lack of knowledge of beaver dynamics and the distributions of beaver in the region. This made setting the quotas they envisioned difficult, as well as making decisions on how to allocate beaver harvest quotas among Crees. To solve these problems government agents adopted and copied the Cree customary tenure system, and recognized and

worked with hunting territory leaders. Based on Cree reports of beaver lodges, the government then set the harvest quota for a territory in consultation with hunting territory leaders. The leaders usuaklly then allocated beaver to be taken on their territory to hunters whom they allowed to use their land. One government official described what was happening thus:

"[The RCM Police Officer] rightly stresses the importance of trapping ground rights and the following explanation of our tallyman system will show that we also not only recognize these rights but have put them to practical use in our administration of Fur Preserves. . . .

"When it is borne in mind that a Tallyman is the head of a family; that a district is a family trapping ground; that a section is the area trapped over by a whole tribe or band and that all boundaries are laid out by the Indians themselves, it is apparent that we have not only adhered strictly to Indian custom but have actually improved on it . . . . (brackets mine).[5]

The beaver reserve system not only recognized and depended on the Cree hunting territory leaders and on Cree rights, it left the Crees in control of where and how they hunted and what they thought necessary on the land. The government beaver-preserve agents were more systematically dependent on the Crees than the reverse, although they claimed credit for the success of the scheme. Both government officials and Cree hunters benefited from the plurality of practices and from the numerous ways they were interlinked. The Crees had exclusive use of their lands again as a result of the government closing beaver reserves to other trappers.

The government presented itself publicly as having taken control of the governance of the lands, wildlife resources and Crees, a claim that followed both from the exercise of legislative authority and the establishment of a new bureaucracy. But the recognitions of Cree hunting territory leaders by government officials, both in government practices and with the distribution of regalia recognizing their status, was taken by Crees as an acknowledgement by the government of the hunting tenure leaders, and of Cree tenure and governance of the land. This was recognized, both directly and in unintended ways by government actions, as in the text above, and Cree stories told today reaffirm these understandings (see Feit, 2005).

Despite these different understandings, under the beaver reserve system, which lasted from the 1930s to the 1970s, the Crees shared decisions about the use of the land for the first time with governments, but on terms that were distinctly advantageous to themselves both in terms of decision-making and on the ground control.

Here a very personal set of relationships between Cree hunting territory leaders and government officials, involving annual meetings, at which the distributions of beaver lodges and of hunting families over the land would be discussed, led to a overall sense of the emergence of enduring relationships and coordinated practices that created mutually desired developments. There were conflicts, and numerous abuses by governments, but many Crees speak of the beaver reserves as an experience of the emergence of shared and often respectful sharing of power.

Abusing Power-in-the-world

But the power of mutual actions by persons can also be abusive. Stories of fights and duels among Crees with special powers are well known, as are contemporary conflicts. And abuse by non-Crees predominates contemporary concerns. Job Bearskin, standing at a construction site on his hunting territory said to the film crew:

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

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

"It looks like people have been fighting, everything is shattered. I have seen it before in the mating season for the bear: they fight, and when they do that, they usually tear up a lot of land. They [the developers] are killing the roots, and in my opinion nothing will grow here again. This is the way it's going to be. The white man is only thinking of himself. Many people are saying that. The white men are not even thinking about the land they are destroying, they are thinking only of money." (Richardson, 1991 [1973]: 163-4).

Job's references to the shattering of trees and to destructive fights between male bears during the mating season offer, for the Euro-Canadian audience a metaphor for destructiveness. But his reference also alludes to Atuush, the cannibal monsters that inhabit the forest and that may stalk humans.

Colin Scott indicates that Atuush is a being that denies sociality and reciprocity, an isolated solitary creature with a heart of ice. Atuush prey on people - treating those they capture only as food or labour, by enslaving them (Scott, 1989). Atuush thus use power for extreme self-aggrandizement, for control of others, for domination and violence. Crees and non-Crees alike can be or becom Atuush, asocial beings. Cree stories are often about people who try to avert the development of an Atuush by encouraging relationships and links to human societies.

Denials of relations among persons, and abuses of power often shape the situated dialogues and politics of Cree and non-Cree relations. Senior representatives and negotiators for the Province of Québec and its development corporation came to the village on the main river to be developed by the initial hydro-electric project for their first public meeting in 1974, in order to discuss the project with the community and to gauge for themselves the extent of Crees opposition. The chief Québec negotiator John Ciaccia spoke from an assumed superiority of knowledge and power, as the project was being built and land was being destroyed and prepared for flooding, a process Job had responded to two years earlier. The provincial representatives said that they could not stop the project, and they were prepared to discuss other means of helping the Cree to continue their hunting culture and economy.

Ciaccia's opening remarks set out his role, saying in part: "I hope to listen to some of your problems and to give my views on these issues. My role is not negotiation in the usual sense of the word, the James Bay Project has brought many problems to this area. Perhaps Natives and the provincial government have not communicated together. I believe many problems caused by the James Bay project can be solved. However, for us to begin to solve them we must be able to communicate on these problems with Native people" (Fieldnotes, 04/09/1974). His comments were translated into Cree.

The first Cree speaker, an elder said: "God created earth for men - Indian and White. The earth was not created for someone to destroy. God controls all of life - no one has the right to destroy things that are necessary for life. Here no one has a right to deprive us from essentials to sustain life. This river - drinking water – everything [is] created for men - Indian, White - all the water is for everyone to drink. No one should be deprived of drinking water. I hope this will not happen" (Fieldnotes, 04/09/1974, from a running translation by Philip Awashish).[6]

He thus began by asserting that the land is to be shared by Crees and Whites, and not by asserting that this is only Cree land, although some later Cree speakers did imply that. He stressed that the relationships between Crees and non-Crees flow from the creation of earth and the presence of Crees and others on the land. Given this co-existence he asserts a fundamental principle, that no one has a right to deny any others the necessities of life. For the speaker, negotiations begin from recognition of co-existence and respect for access to the necessities of

life, for Crees, non-Crees and all life. This is a vision of relationships between Crees and governments.

When Ciaccia spoke again he responded by saying he had respect for Crees and he asked: "You speak of certain effects - [as on] drinking water - are you sure this will happen?" At least one audience member interjected, "Yes." Ciaccia said, "Someone said God is the creator and only God can destroy and not Whitemen. We all destroy, for example when hunting . . . . Look around here - there were changes long before the James Bay project was announced - without the James Bay project there were other kinds of changes. The basis of the proposal made [by Québec] is preservation of your way of life" (Fieldnotes, 04/09/1974).

The next Cree speaker said, "We want our land not to be destroyed. We want our demands met. Why does he say an Indian destroys while hunting?" Ciaccia responded that the "point of my statement is - there are changes and there will be changes" (Fieldnotes, 04/09/1974, translation by Philip Awashish)

In response to the question about why he claimed Crees destroy the land, Ciaccia emphasized what he thought was universally recognized and undeniable, everyone degrades the land by living on it. His response denied developers' responsibility for the destruction of the land and for irremediable effects on the Crees. His response also denied Cree caring for the land, and the recognitions of the necessity of sharing that the first Cree speaker had made.

One Cree audience member replied, "that's all I have to say - he doesn't listen anyways." After a few exchanges on project impacts, which Ciaccia denied or minimized, a series of Cree criticisms ensued. A young man said:"You are a 'yes' man from Indian Affairs. Who are you fooling? Whose side are you on?" An old man said: "I testified in court. I remembered our people, and the children. Those who threaten our way of life - [are] devil[s]." A woman said: "The government has never listened to the Indians."Another woman said: "You are a wolf in sheep's clothing." An older man said there was: "no need for him [Ciaccia] to answer as I have spoken the truth and the truth cannot be distorted. We want to preserve the land and our way of life." A middle aged man said: "We know you have no love for our people - that is the way the Whiteman is - he does not love his neighbours. Indians have a lot of love for people - we are concerned for children" (Fieldnotes, 04/09/1974, translation by Philip Awashish). The use of "devil" here referred both to the Christian Devil, and to Atuush. Ciaccia then started to move towards closing the meeting, claiming a need to return south.

But closure of the meeting was delayed as Cree elders insisted that the dialogue be continued, despite the widespread sense of a lack of dialogue, of common understandings, of ongoing destruction, and of grave danger and threats. Only after Ciaccia set a date for his return did the meeting end.

This insistence on continuing dialogue reflected, I think, the ontological connectedness of a world of persons, and the indissoluble relationships of Crees, developers, lands and animals. Even in the midst of destruction, lies and abuse, the alternatives to acknowledging that relationships exist would facilitate, enhance and expand the denial of relationships at the roots of the destruction and exploitation. To respond to denials of relationships and the ignoring of relationships by seeking to break them further is to enhance the conditions of abuse.

No vision of whether or how relationships might change was expressed, there was no clear plan of what to do, only a sense that relationships, effects and needs still bound Crees and governments, and the relationships should not be denied when confronting developers. The meeting and the dialogue were not a means to an end, but a necessary participation in a process

that itself expressed what was needed and envisioned. When a hunter doesn't get what s/he wants and needs they do not stop hunting. Survival, if it is possible, depends on it.

Visions for Living in a World of Persons

In worlds of persons what can be the grounded visions by which relationships should be shaped and developed? What more than survival, and not denying others the necessities of life?

Some of the answers provided from within the modern constitution seem out of place in worlds of persons. It is difficult to imagine a representative democracy that would include land, some rocks, wind persons, beaver, moose, bear and the diversity of humans - even if limited to a closely demarcated place - although there are some attempts to re-conceive democracy along such lines. It seems to also be challenging to imagine social justice for such a collectivity of persons, at least more so than in settings with narrower horizons of caring. Even the pervasive quest for equality would need rethinking in a world of persons, although the potential connections to relational respect might be helpful.

Cree elders have recently begun to look to new ways to record and transmit histories and stories about visions of relationships and responsibilities to youth. These dialogues on visions have developed in numerous contexts, and have involved Crees and non-Crees.

In one of his introductions to Cree governance Philip Awashish writes: "Eenou [Crees] see all creation as interconnected and we are part of the circle of life in this earth. . . . In fact, Eenou view of wellness and wellbeing are considered in the same manner and described as Miyupimaatisiiwin" (Awashish, 2009b). Wellbeing here is very inclusive and grounded, including but not being limited to bodily wellness. it encompasses relations to lands and animals, as well as Cree culture and governance. "Eeyou Istchee is the land that Eeyouch have used and occupied for millennia. Therefore, Eeyou Istchee is essential and central for the "*meeyou pimaat-tahseewin*" or well-being of Eeyouch. The centrality of Eeyou Istchee forms the foundation of Eeyou governance, Eeyou culture, identity, history, spirituality and the traditional way of life" (Awashish, 2006: 18, italics in original). Thus "Eeyouch describe Eeyou culture as '*Eeyou pimaat-seewun*.' (Eenou way of life)" (Awashish, 2006: 19, italics in original).

Naomi Adelson, an anthropologist researching Cree understandings of health, was asked a research-shaping question by Joseph Masty Sr.: "If the land is not healthy then how can we be?" (Adelson, 2000: 3, 113). She found no Cree term that translated as health, but found the most apt phrase was miyupimaatisiiun, which she translated as 'being alive well' (Adelson, 2000: 14). Her work showed how, specifically with reference to health practices, understandings and relationships, miyupimaatisiiun was linked to well-being on the land, but how it also, "as part of the realm of 'being Cree' is linked to a strategy of cultural assertion and resistance in a dynamic . . . of power between the State" and the Crees (Adelson, 2000: 9).

The anthropologist Colin Scott reflecting on the relationships of epistemology and ontology embedded in such terms noted that: "the term *pimaatisiiwin* (life) was translated by one Cree man as 'continuous birth.' Consciousness (*umituunaaichikanich*, glossed by the same man as 'mind and heart, thought and feeling') is at the threshold of unfolding events, of continuous birth. One consequence of this construction of the world is that an attitude of dogmatic certainty about what one knows is not only untruthful but disrespectful. . . . interpretation cannot be certain or absolute. To expect a definite future outcome on the basis of signs in the past or present, for example, may presume too much about the cooperation of other persons. Someone

(human, animal or spirit) could even retaliate by frustrating hunters' intentions" (Scott, 1996: 73, italics in original).

These broad visions of seeking to be alive well by engaging a world of persons with respect seems to be what some elders point to as a goal and vision for living and action. It is closely tied to what they readily call love, albeit love that extends widely. While this vision and goal of living in a world of persons is not universalized, it affords possibilities for dialogues as a means to seeking to explain to Crees and non-Crees what is valued, powerful, exploitative or destructive.

The interrelated processes of actively birthing ontologies, explanations, responsibilities, commitments to engagement, challenges to abuse, and visions of values have endured through long struggles, and repeated collaborations and abuses, and they still afford Crees continually emerging means of action.

Understanding these and many other peoples' ways of living and of engaging states and markets are, I suggest, inherently part of projects for developing political ontologies.

REFERENCES

Adelson, Naomi
2000. *'Being Alive Well', Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being.*Toronto: Univesity of Toronto Press.
Awashish, Philip
2006. "Eeyou law and Eeyou Governance." In *Report of the Cree –Naskapi Commission.* Ottawa: Cree-Naskapi Commission. Pp. 14-21.
2009a." Iiyiyiu (Cree) Governance." Paper presented at the 69thAnnual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Santa Fe, NM, March 19, 2009
2009b. [Notes for] "A Talk on Eenou Governance (presentation to the SfAA, 2009)."
Feit, Harvey A.
2004. "James Bay Crees' Life Projects and Politics: Histories of Place, Animal Partners and Enduring Relationships." In *In the Way of Development.* Mario Blaser, Harvey A. Feit and Glenn McRae, eds. London: Zed Books and the Canadian International Development Research Centre. Pp. 92-110. (Also on the web at: http://www.idrc.ca/ev_en.php?ID=64526_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC).
2005. "Re-Cognizing Co-Management as Co-Governance: Histories and Visions of Conservation at James Bay." *Anthropologica.* 47 (2): 267-288.
Hallowell, A. Irving
1955. *Culture and Experience.* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
1976 [1960]. "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and world View." *Contributions to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hallowell.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
1992. *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba.* Ed. by Jennifer S.H. Brown. Forth Worth, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
Morantz, Toby
2002. *the White Man' Gonna Getcha. The Colonial Challenge to the Crees in Quebec.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press

Richardson, Boyce

1991 [1976]. *Strangers Devour the Land.* Toronto, Douglas & McIntyre.

Scott, Colin H.

1989. "Knowledge Construction Among Cree Hunters: Metaphors and Literal Understanding," *Journal de la Société des américanistes*, no. 75, pp. 193-208.

1996. "Science for the West, Myth for the Rest? The Case of James Bay Cree Knowledge Construction," in Nader, L. [ed.], *Naked Science.* New York, Routledge, pp. 69-86.

ENDNOTES

[1] The peoples Hallowell called "Ojibwa" now more commonly use the self-identification "Anishinabe nations."

[2] Based on field research in the 1930s, Hallowell published on psychology and worldview, and was by the 1960s writing about "Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour and World view." His posthumously published ethnography of the Ojibwa of Berens River (written in the mid-1960s but published in 1992) was a synthesis of his analyses collected earlier in two edited volumes (1955, 1976).

[3] Cree make very warm blankets woven of strips of fur from hare skins.

[4] This section is revised from Feit, 2004. The term "whiteman" or is a common expression in Cree English referring broadly to non-Indigenous peoples or people who do not live the Cree way of life, depending on the context.

[5] PAC, RG10, Vol. 6750, File 420-10-5, reel C8106, Deputy Minister to The Commissioner, R. C. M. P. 10 December, 1942.

[6] Unfortunately, I did not know the names of the Crees who spoke.

September 14, 2010