EARP AND THE ABORIGINAL WOMEN OF JAMES BAY: A STRUCTURAL BIAS?

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EIA: Environmental impact assessment

EIS: environmental impact statement

FEARP: Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (also "EARP")

FEARO: Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Office

JBNQA: James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

Note that the terms Poste-de-la-Baleine, Great Whale, Kuujjuarapik and Whapmagoostui refer to the same location. For the sake of simplicity, the term “Great Whale” is generally referred to in this paper.

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the relationship between First Nations and the environmental and social impact assessment of large resource development projects in the North. Specifically, I explore the notion that there may be an inherent gender bias in the scoping provisions of the federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process, or EARP. In order to address this issue, phases I and II of the James Bay hydroelectric project in northern Quebec are examined. Based on interviews conducted in the Cree village of Chisasibi, the community most directly affected by the first stage of the project, a number of direct and indirect social effects were identified. I find that the extent to which women and men experienced different impacts, or to which they experienced the same impacts differently, is not entirely clear. It is possible that women bear the brunt of some effects, such as increased rates of spousal assault and psychological stress. However, there is a danger that such interpretations are reductionist and ethnocentric; in traditional Cree culture, men and women play distinct, yet highly interrelated roles within their families and society as a whole. Cree men and women see their roles as different, but equal. I conclude that the question itself needs to be reframed. Rather than focus the extent to which the EARP may be biased against aboriginal women, I ask whether EARP is adequate to address the range of indirect social impacts which accrue to many social sectors, including youths, elders, men, and women. I conclude that it is not. I follow this with a number of recommendations which may help to facilitate cross-cultural social impact assessment.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette etude ce concerne avec les relations entre les autochtones, et les evaluations des impacts sociaux et environmentaux des grands projects de developpement dans le nord. Spécifiquement, j'examine l'idée qu'il y a un biais de genre inherent dans les provisions du Processus d'évaluation et d'examen en matière d'environnement (PEEE). Pour s'adresser à cette idée, les deux phases du projet hydroelectric Baie James au nord du Quebec sont examinées. Selon les interviews menées au village Cri de Chisasibi, la communauté la plus affectée par la premiere phase du projet, plusieurs effets sociaux on été identifies. Je trouve le degré auquel les femmes et les hommes eprouvent des impacts differents, ou le degré auquel ils eprouvent les mêmes impacts différentment, n'est pas complètement evident. C'est possible que les femmes endure la plupart des effets certains, comme la violence contre les épouses et la stress psychologique. Mais il y a une problème avec les interpretations étroit et ethnocentrique; dans la culture Cri, les hommes et les femmes jouent des roles distinctees mais integrées. Ils s'aperçoivent les hommes et femmes Cri comme differents mais égales. Je termine avec la proposition que la question même se doit être reformée. Au lieu de s'addresser à la relation entre PÉEE et les femmes autochtones, peut être PÉEE n'est pas adquat pour addresser les impacts sociaux dans plusieurs secteurs sociaux, notamment les jeunes, ls personnes âgées, les hommes et les femmes. Puis, j'offre des recommendations qui pouvont aider à regler l'évaluation des impacts sociaux entre des cultures differentes.

THE GREEN EARTH

Some say
this modern century
is the best.
Some have doubts.

One day
my mother told me a story.
Clearly interested
I listened.

She spoke of another time
So out of date.
Impressed
I sat in silence.

A nameless joy stirred.
She talked of my inheritance;
the woods, the wilderness,
the future of my children.

Suddenly uncomfortable
I felt fear
my inheritance threatened,
my children cheated.

by Margaret Sam-Cromarty, Chisasibi (1991)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this study, I have attempted to explore two distinct but related themes. The first theme deals with women and development. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the fact that women often bear the brunt of rapid resource development projects (eg.Rodda 1991; Moen *et al.* 1981). The second theme is concerned with the environmental impact assessment of resource development projects in the Canadian North, particularly as such projects relate to aboriginal peoples. The massive James Bay hydroelectric development project, in northern Quebec, serves as a useful case study for exploring the juxtaposition of these two themes..It also serves to highlight the complexity and difficulty of discussing gender relations in a cross-cultural context, particularly when one culture is undergoing a period of rapid, and in many ways traumatic, social change.

Although the definition of "environment" is frequently conceived of as including social, as well as biophysical elements, the term "social impact assessment" is occasionally used here for the purposes of discussion. Social impact assessment, or SIA, has been defined by Geisler (1982:1) as "the thorough and methodical study of human trauma associated with the rapid exploration of natural resources" Geisler continues by describing the importance of social impact assessment to aboriginal North Americans:

> SIA has immediate relevance to Indian people. Among humankind, Indians live in greatest overall proximity to the earth, at both a personal and a cultural level, and conceive of themselves as the earthly custodians of the bounty therein.

Certainly, Geisler's statements are true for the Cree and Inuit of northern Quebec. Yet, the homeland of the Cree and Inuit has undergone dramatic biophysical alteration over the past twenty years, on a scale which is virtually unprecedented anywhere in the world. If the second phase of the James Bay hydroelectric project proceeds in Great Whale, more change is on the way. Altogether, an area the size of France may be flooded in the north of the province, in order to develop the hydroelectric potential of the region. Before this occurs, however, the Great Whale project will be subject to a comprehensive environmental impact assessment, including the federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process.

The Problem

In this study, I have sought to determine whether the federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP) results in a bias against aboriginal women. Although the EARP allows consideration of socioeconomic impacts, it considers only those which are a direct result of changes to the biophysical environment ***(EARP Guidelines Order*, *s.2). Thus,*** it appears direct social impacts are valued as being less significant than biophysical effects, and that indirect social impacts are valued even less. In the case of northern native peoples such as the Inuit and Cree, direct social impacts clearly include impacts to hunters, the majority of whom are male. It is possible that women, on the other hand, are more concerned about, and subject to, indirect social impacts resulting from rapid resource development. If such indirect impacts are neglected, then it is possible to conclude that the EARP is inherently biased against aboriginal women.

This study uses the Cree village of Fort George, now relocated to Chisasibi, as the backdrop against which to test these questions. Fort George was dramatically affected by the hydro project. It is situated at the mouth of La Grande Riviere, on which the first phase of the James Bay project took place almost twenty years ago. Although a comprehensive environmental review was never conducted at that time (CARC et al. 1991:7), the community was directly affected. The spectrum of biophysical and social impacts which resulted from the project provides a good idea of what impacts are likely to occur in Great Whale. I am assuming that the impacts will be similar in Great Whale. Given that assumption, I am asking the following questions:

1. Using Fort George/Chisasibi as a case study: what kinds of social impacts ***did*** accrue from James Bay I?

2. Which impacts, if any, were particular to women?

3. Is there detectable gender bias within Cree society itself which may itself have led to women experiencing different effects, or the same effects differently? A related question is: does the structure of Cree society limit the extent to which women participate in public consultation efforts which may identify potential impacts--despite the best intentions of EARP?

4. In light of the previous questions, can I conclude that there is a bias in the EARP against women?

Methods and Limitations

To a certain extent, this project builds on an earlier study conducted in 1990, entitled ***Unheard Voices: James Bay II and the Women of Kuujjuarapik*** (Hawkes 1991). That paper, which I submitted to Pauktuutit (the Inuit Women's Association of Canada), was aimed at documenting the concerns voiced by Inuit women over the possible Great Whale Project in their community. With the present study, I hoped to discover the extent to which the women's concerns in Kuujjuarapik might have been born out by the actual experiences of Cree women in Chisasibi, twenty years earlier. As I discovered, many of the impacts from the first project are still unfolding.

There were two major components to the methodology followed in this study. First, I conducted a broad, but by no means exhaustive, literature review on a number of topics related to the project. These included discussions of the biophysical and social effects of James Bay; the effects of women and development generally; the topic of feminist anthropology and sociology; descriptions of traditional Cree lifestyles and histories; and documents related to the current assessment of the Great Whale EIA.

The second and most critical component of the study involved conducting two weeks of field work in Chisasibi, accompanied by several specific interviews conducted in Montreal. I attempted to use a feminist approach to conducting the interviews, as outlined by Reinharz (1992: 18-45). Despite the short period of time spent in Chisasibi and on Fort George Island (where a community gathering was taking place on the Island for much of my stay), I attempted to immerse myself in the rhythms and activities of the extended family with which I stayed, and to develop rapport and trust with the men and women I met. This appeared to be facilitated by the fact that I was a woman, and possibly also because I was an outsider--and thus thought to be less likely to be judgmental when others shared often deeply personal issues with me. At least, that was the conclusion of my host, translator and consultant, Lily Napash. I also attempted to really "open my ears", as one woman put it (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.). That is, I tried to set aside a tendency to judge or interpret many of the things I heard and saw in the community from the perspective of my own cultural and feminist biases. This was difficult, and I cannot say that I was wholly successful.

Altogether, I conducted 11 interviews, six with Cree women and five with Cree men. Their ages ranged from the mid-thirties to the late seventies; thus, all the participants have lived through and witnessed the changes resulting from James Bay I. I tape-recorded the interviews only with the permission of the participants, and otherwise took detailed notes; I later transcribed the tapes. The interviews themselves ranged in duration from 30 minutes to, in one case, nearly three hours. They took place in a variety of locations: in teepees, tents, and houses, on the grass near the river's edge, and in the offices of the Chisasibi Band Council. They were largely unstructured, although I would occasionally ask questions pertaining to certain themes of the study, such as the role of women in modem and traditional Cree society, or the social impacts of the hydro project and of the community's relocation.

Although this is clearly not a fully participatory study in terms of the approach outlined by Maguire (1987), I use the term "participants", rather than "subjects" or "informants" throughout the paper. I did attempt to encourage a feeling of empowerment among those who participated in the study, by disclosing my own perceptions and biases when it seemed appropriate, by framing the interviews as open-ended discussions rather than by following a strictly delineated format, and

by allowing participants to choose the duration and locations of our meetings. As well, participants were asked to choose their own pseudonyms for the purpose of the paper, unless they preferred me to use their real names. Finally, I attempted to "display the interviews" (Reinharz 1992:39-41) by using the words of participants extensively, particularly in Chapters Three and Four. By using people's own words, the possibility of that I might have inaccurately interpreted or paraphrased their ideas was somewhat reduced.

There are a number of limitations to this study, the most obvious being the brief period of time spent in the field, and the small number of interviews I was therefore able to obtain. I addition, there were communication barriers stemming from cross-cultural and linguistic differences between myself and the Cree participants. It was often difficult to know exactly how my questions or comments were being translated into Cree, or whether they were always understood clearly by those who maintained they spoke good English. Because of these factors, there are possible limits to the accuracy and validity of the specific findings and qualitative analysis in this study. For example, given the small number of interviews and the fact that open-ended interviews were conducted, I cannot assume that the impacts and concerns which were more or less randomly identified by the participants in this study would be applicable to the population of Chisasibi as a whole. The use of a questionnaire would have been more systematic; however, I was reluctant to develop such a survey instrument, given my unfamiliarity with the culture and the issues. Moreover, had I done so, I certainly would not have identified many of the more culturally-specific impacts identified by participants in this study.

This report by no means serves as an exhaustive survey and analysis of the social impacts on the Cree in Chisasibi, nor of the impacts likely to occur in Great Whale. Each impact identified in Chapter Three could easily warrant an additional, full-scale study of its own. Rather, this report represents a beginning, an initial exploration. Hopefully, too, the report will serve as a call to action: clearly, a tremendous amount of work remains to be done in terms of fully auditing the vast array of social impacts which resulted, directly and indirectly, from James Bay I. Only when the social effects have been thoroughly and wholistically identified from a multi-cultural and egalitarian perspective, can a realistic and truly accurate assessment of future hydroelectric development in Northern Quebec be conducted.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

James Bay I and the JBNQA

The plan to harness the hydroelectric potential of northern Quebec was first unveiled by Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa in 1971; he called it "the project of the century" (Jenish 1990:50). It was to be the largest hydroelectric complex in the world' an awesome testimony to the technological might of contemporary western civilization. Moreover, the extensive development was to serve as Quebec's engine of economic growth for decades to come. The James Bay Project' in its entirety, was to be comprised of three separate hydroelectric complexes: one on La Grande Riviere; on in the region of the Nottaway, Broadback and Rupert Rivers; and one on the Great Whale River on the Hudson Bay coast (Bourassa 1986). There was no consultation with the Inuit, Cree, or Naskapi residents of the area, no comprehensive environmental review, and no public hearing process. Nonetheless, construction at La Grande began one year later (Feit 1982; O'Reilly 1985).

The aboriginal peoples of northern Quebec were forced to quickly organize. In 1972, the Crees of Quebec and the Northern Quebec Inuit Association together successfully sought an interlocutory injunction to halt the project. Although the injunction was later overturned, the court action gave rise to serious questions concerning the legitimate title of the region's aboriginal peoples. As a result, the provincial government and Hydro Quebec began negotiating with the Cree and Inuit (O'Reilly 1985).

In 1975, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) was signed by the Cree, Inuit, and representatives from the federal and Quebec governments. It was the first comprehensive land claim settlement in Canada' and, as Feit (1982:293) notes, "the first such settlement to explicitly specify a set of aboriginal rights, including the means thought necessary to maintain the indigenous hunters' way of life."

The JBNQA required the aboriginal peoples to extinguish their land title, and to allow Phase I of the hydroelectric complex, which involved the damming of the La Grande Riviere, to proceed. In turn, the Cree and lnuit received financial compensation, ownership over specific categories of land, the creation of local and regional municipal governments, and the establishment of social and environmental protection and impact assessment measures for the region, among other things.

Environmental Assessment Under the JBNQA

Several distinct EIA bodies were established under the Agreement. Section 23 of the JBNQA provides the Kativik Environmental Quality Commission, a provincial review body, and the Federal Review Committee North of the **55th** Parallel. Both bodies have Inuit representation, and both review development projects north of the 55th parallel, an area primarily inhabited by the Inuit, Section 22 establishes processes for reviewing projects north of the 55th parallel, which is predominantly inhabited by the Cree. The two bodies established under that section, both of which include Cree representatives, are the Provincial Evaluating Committee, and the Federal Review Committee South of the 55th Parallel. In addition, Section 22 provides for an Evaluating Committee, comprised of two Cree, federal, and provincial representatives. The Evaluating Committee is aimed at drafting guidelines for the preparation of an environmental impact study, or EIS. Finally, the Chair of the Federal Assessment Review Office serves as the federal administrator of the JBNQA, while Quebec's Environment minister serves as the provincial administrator of the Agreement (Evaluating Committee *et al* 1992:3-4. See Couch 1989, for a more thorough description of the regional EIA regime).

It is important to note that the JBNQA includes a provision which states that any future hydroelectric projects in the region shall be "subject to the environmental regime only in respect to ecological impacts and that ***sociological factors or impacts shall not be grounds for the Crees and/or Inuit to oppose or prevent the said developments"*** (JBNQA, s.8.1.3; emphasis added).

Some Direct Impacts from James Bay I

The Cree community of Fort George was directly affected by this first project. The island

of Fort George is located at the mouth of Chisasibi, the "Big River" (known as La Grande Riviere in French), along the Hudson's Bay coast. The island was used for centuries by the Cree for summer gatherings. In 1903, the Hudson Bay Company established a trading post on the island. An Anglican mission was established on Fort George in 1852, followed years later by a school and Catholic mission (Chisasibi Band Council, no date). Gradually, many families in the area came to settle semi-permanently in Fort George, although the majority of families maintained traplines and seasonal hunting camps.

With the construction of dams along La Grande Riviere, the river's flow regimes were dramatically altered. Due to concern over the possible erosion of Fort George island, the Cree residents were therefore relocated to the mainland, to the present site of Chisasibi. The relocation caused bitter divisions within the community; many people had no desire to leave the home they had known for generations. However, concern over land erosion, as well as the lure of electricity, telephones and running water, convinced many Cree residents to agree to the move. Others followed in order for their children to attend the school, which was also relocated to Chisasibi ("S. Atkinson", pers. corn.; G. Snowboy, pers. corn.).

A number of biophysical impacts directly resulted from the construction of the La Grande complex. The geography of the region was dramatically altered through river diversions, the creation of water reservoirs, and the establishment of worker camps, access roads, transmissions lines, airports, and other facilities. The impacts to the region were clearly substantial, and have not yet been fully documented. One profound effect' of course, is the fact that approximately 13,300 square kilometres of land were simply submerged, in order to create the reservoirs of the La Grande complex. Thus, large areas of wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat, and the nesting grounds of migratory waterfowl, as well as traditional hunting and trapping grounds used by generations of Cree families, have been destroyed. For instance, an estimated 7,000 to 9,000 breeding pairs of migratory waterfowl were displaced (Rougerie 199057). Such dramatic physical disruption creates a host of repercussions for people and wildlife throughout the region, as well.

One significant and largely unforeseen impact from flooding such vast tracts of forested lands was the development of methylmercury contamination (Makivik 1987). Because methylmercury becomes concentrated as it moved up along the food chain, the amount of fish humans can consume in contaminated areas becomes significantly reduced (Hecky 1987:8). In 1984, two thirds of the population of Chisasibi were found to have unacceptably high levels of mercury in their bodies; some elders had twenty times the acceptable levels (CARC *et al.* 1991:7). Fish has long been a staple of the traditional diet in the Chisasibi area (Diamond 1990). Significant direct and indirect social impacts also resulted from phase I of the James Bay Project; these are discussed further below, in Section Five.

Assessing James Bay II: the Great Whale Project

The Great Whale Complex is to be the second major phase of the James Bay Project; it is sometimes referred to as James Bay II. The complex is to consist of three generating stations, GB1, GB2 and GB3, each with a corresponding reservoir. An additional regulatory reservoir is to be constructed at Lake Bienville, and the Little Whale River is to be diverted into the GB1 reservoir (Hydro-Québec 1991:2). Altogether, the project will involve the flooding of lands and the altering of flow regimes in the Great Whale River Basin, the Nastapoca River Basin, the Coates River Basin, the Boutin River Basin and the Little Whale River basin (Diamond 1990). In addition, the installation of extensive transportation infrastructures, accommodation facilities for up to 5,000 workers, support facilities and transmission lines, are also planned (Hydro-Québec 1991).

The closest Cree and Inuit villages-Whapmagoostui and Kuujjuarapilc, respectively-- would be directly affected by both the development complex itself, and the various installations and infrastructures required to support it. In an earlier study, Inuit women in Kuujjuarapik expressed deep concerns about the potential effects of the Great Whale project on their environment and their way of life. They were worried about the effects of mercury contamination, global air and water pollution, and the continuity and health of such "country food" as fish, marine mammals and game. Women also anticipated indirect social effects, such as increased alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, single motherhood, and lowered self esteem. Many of these impacts were

expected to result, both directly and indirectly, from the large influx of non-aboriginal Hydro-Quebec workers into the area (Hawkes 1991).

The Great Whale Project was officially announced by Hydro Quebec in March, 1989 Construction was originally to begin in 1991, with power production scheduled to commence by 1998. However, the project has been met with substantial regional, national and international opposition. The environmental and social impact assessment of the Great Whale project has also been steeped in controversy, at the heart of which lie two issues. First, Hydra-Quebec initially sought to divide the review into two phases, where the transportation infrastructure for the project (such as roads, airports, and transmission lines), and the actual hydroelectric complex, would be reviewed separately. This reductionist approach was strongly contested by the Cree, Inuit, environmental interest groups, and other stakeholders. The second issue involved jurisdictional disputes. The Quebec government argued that the project was a solely provincial matter, while Ottawa claimed that such areas of federal responsibility as migratory birds could be potentially affected (*Northern Perspectives* 1992:8).

After substantial public pressure, coupled with a 1991 federal court decision which legally bound the Government of Canada to conduct EIA hearings under the terms of the JBNQA, the federal government announced in July 1991 that it would undertake a full environmental review of the entire Great Whale complex (Picard and York 1991:A5). On August 15, the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Panel of the Great Whale Project commission was established by the federal Minister of Environment (Great Whale Public Review Support Office 1992:5). However, Hydro-Quebec maintained that it would boycott any federal review of the project (Picard 1991:A1).

Meanwhile, major energy utilities in the eastern United States were under increasing public pressure to cancel their contracts with Hydro Quebec. These contracts were based largely on projected electricity supplies from the Great Whale complex. That same month, Premier Bourassa announced that, due to reduced electricity demand, the project would be delayed for one year (*Northern Perspectives* 1992:8). At present, Hydro-Quebec has adopted an even later schedule, whereby the initial stage of the complex, GB 1, is not to be commissioned until *2000* (Evaluating Committee *et al.* 1992:3).

In October 1991, the Quebec government agreed to undertake a joint federal-provincial environmental review of the Great Whale complex, in its entirety (Séguin and Picard 1991: Al). In order to further reduce duplication of environmental review efforts, Cree and Inuit authorities also agreed to coordinate their reviews of the Great Whale complex, which would straddle both sides of the 55th parallel, and thus be subject to provisions under both Sections 22 and 23 of the JBNQA. In January 1992, the Governments of Canada and Quebec, the Cree Regional Authority and the Grand Council of the Crees, and Makivik Corporation and the Kativik Regional Government, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate and harmonize the various environmental assessment and review processes applicable to the Project (Evaluating Committee *et al.* 1992, Appendix 1).

The Great Whale EIS Guidelines

Throughout February and March 1992, the four relevant EIA bodies--the Federal Review Committee North of the 55th Parallel, the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Panel, the Evaluating Committee, and the Kativik Environmental Quality Commission--held public scoping hearings for the Great Whale EIA. The committees visited the Cree communities of Chisasibi and Whapmagoostui, the Inuit communities of Kuujjuarapik and Sanikiluaq (on the NWT's Belcher Islands), and the cities of Val D'Or and Montreal. Both oral testimony and written submissions were received and used to develop Guidelines for Hydro-Quebec's EIS. Based on the hearings, Draft Guidelines were circulated for public input on April 30, 1992. After considering and incorporating much of this input, the final Guidelines were issued on September 10, 1992 (Great Whale Public Review Support Office 1992:5-6).

The Guidelines contain several innovative elements. To a large extent, they are shaped by precepts of sustainable development. They adopt a multicultural approach to defining the notion of "environment", as well as to identifying anticipated impacts. The proponent will be required "to

characterize Native knowledge with respect to the biophysical and social environment," systematically focusing on ecosystem components valued by the Inuit and Cree. The Guidelines also stipulate that Hydro-Quebec must adopt an integrated approach in its EIA, considering not only the potential and long-term impacts of the project, but how those impacts may interact with each other. Cumulative impacts on certain ecosystem elements must be identified and studied, as well. Specific issues must be addressed in the EIS, such as the health of human and animal communities, human and animal access to the territory, the availability of resources, "the maintenance of social cohesion at the local, regional and national level", and respect for such values as ecosystem preservation, cultural diversity and quality of life (Great Whale Public Review Support Office 1992:2-3). These sorts of innovative provisions have led some observers to characterize the Great Whale EIS Guidelines as possibly the most progressive guidelines ever issued for a major development project in Canada (R. Keith, 1993 pers. corn.; P. Mulvahill, 1993, pers. corn.).

CHAPTER 3: THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF JAMES BAY I

The **purpose** of this section is to answer the first question outlined in the Problem Statement of **Chapter One:** Using Fort George/Chisasibi as a case study, what kinds of social impacts accrued from James Bay I? Participants in this study identified a number of impacts which occurred as a result of James Bay I. I have discussed these below, beginning with those impacts which may be defined as being relatively direct, and followed gradually by those which are relatively indirect. However, these distinctions quickly become arbitrary and wholly artificial, due to the highly integrated nature of the impacts, and the interrelatedness of Cree society with the surrounding landscape. Because of the small number of interviews, I was generally unable to discern any consistent pattern whereby one gender focused on particular areas more than the other. For example, both men and women expressed concern over the future of Chisasibi's youth. Therefore, I have simply listed the concerns raised by various participants.

Mercury Contamination

Several participants mentioned concern over mercury contamination. The effects of mercury contamination are not just physical. They are also psychological, social, and economic, and may result in native peoples losing confidence in their traditions (Makivik News 1991:7). For example, Wheatley and Wheatley (1981:33) describes some of the these impacts on members of a coastal Inuit in Quebec:

> The psychological effect of the apparently sudden presence of an invisible danger in the traditional food supply, coupled with rumors of crippling deformities and death due to to Minamata disease, caused great concern for individuals who had high blood mercury levels, and for community leaders who did not know which information to believe. Whole lifestyles were altered over a period of a few months as expensive, less nutritious store food was substituted for country food [ie. traditional fish and game]. In an isolated community where the opportunity for employment is limited, economic hardship was encountered as a result of expenditure on store food. The few hunters who continued to harvest and eat country food no longer shared with other family members--whether for fear of contagion or in order to help the sufferer, is not clear.

In Chisasibi, one elder admitted that, despite his knowledge of the health risks of mercury contamination, he continued to regularly consume fish; it was too important of a dietary staple. As George Snowboy explained "I'll say I eat less, because I know [we're supposed to do] less fishing than before. But I can't go without fish!"

Polluted Drinking Water and Food

A number of participants are extremely concerned over the fact that the tap water in Chisasibi is often dirty and contaminated. Violet Snowboy, an elder, explains, "Sometimes, when I turn on the tap water, I see the water, and it's so muddy. I see a lot of this. And we still drink that' even though I see that it's not clean." John Weesapa* notes, "before the dam, people used to get drinking water from the river, but now they can't do that anymore. They [Hydro-Québec] ruined the water." Many families keep a bucket of clean drinking water in their kitchens from an uncontaminated supply.

At least two elders commented on the fact that the taste of traditional food has generally deteriorated since the hydro project. As George Snowboy describes it, "it's even changing the taste of the foods we used to eat. Seal doesn't taste like a seal anymore. Pretty soon, those ducks are going to taste like a chicken! Or a turkey!" Another elder, John Snowboy, views this as representative of the cumulative effects of the project:

> Everything is affected. Everything that runs on the ground: the caribou, the beaver-- because they're flooding their food. I used to taste the moose in the old days, and this one time when I tasted moose, it was almost like I couldn't eat it. I guess it's because of the dam. It doesn't do any good. We can't eat the fish here anymore. We used to have good fish here; now they

have mercury.

Hunting and Trapping Grounds

James Bay I dramatically altered the regional landscape, and this affected the distribution of game and migratory fowl. Participants observed that there were fewer geese in the area; the birds are believed to now fly along more inland routes. Small game has long served as a steady and reliable supplement throughout the year; traditionally, "whitebird", or ptarmigan, as well as rabbits and other small mammals, were snared or shot by Cree women near their camps. Today, these animals are apparently extremely scarce in the vicinity (V. Snowboy, pers. corn.; Sandy 1991).

The project also resulted in the flooding of the traditional hunting and trapping territories of several local Cree families. This resulted in a reduced land base for hunting in the region generally, and created additional stress on the hunting community. As Sam Sandy (1993, pers. comm.) explained, the Cree have always shared resources. However, "the reorganization of hunting and trapping territories brought stress to tallymen, who had to share their traplines with trappers less skilled than themselves, not knowing if these people held the same respect for the land as they did (Sandy 1991).

Health Issues

Deteriorating physical health was also cited by several participants. For one, they noted that increased interaction between the Cree and non-native workers has resulted in the spread of infectious diseases. In addition, for a variety of reasons, including diminished land base, smaller numbers of game, contamination of fish, and the recent shift towards a wage economy, families hunt less often than they did in the past, and rely more heavily on store-bought foods. Store-bought food is generally believed to be of poorer nutritional quality than traditional foods. Elders, in particular, feel ill if they do not consume regular meals of traditional food (V. Snowboy, pers. corn.). As Selley* explains,

> Most people don't understand that we have to get that traditional food, in order for us to survive. If I don't eat fish for a long time, I get sick! If I don't eat goose for a long time, I get sick. I can't eat pork chops or hamburgers. I was not brought up to eat that kind of stuff. My mother and father were not *farmers*; they were hunters and trappers.

As well, the Cree have become much more sedentary over the past twenty years. Part of this is because the need for vigorous physical activities, such as walking and doing laundry by hand, has been largely eliminated with the advent of access roads--and therefore, motor vehicles--and with automated washing machines. The elder women I spoke with all noted how "easy" women's work is today, compared with that of the past. As Selley* noted,

> We were never told that we'd get the White Man's diseases so rapidly; we're coming down with heart disease, diabetes, sugar in your blood, oil in your blood--all those things. We never had those things, before. We moved a lot, before. We exercised; we were always on the go. We didn't sit in front of our television sets!

Economic Issues

Some participants noted that the relatively sudden creation of a formal wage economy has contributed to the disruption of the culture. It is cited as one reason many people spend less time in the bush. The development of the wage economy has primarily occurred over the two decades. Chief Violet Pachanos (1993, pers. comm.) attributes much of this to the road access created through James Bay I. With road access came the need for motor vehicles, which are expensive both to purchase and to maintain--thus necessitating greater participation in the formal wage economy. At the same time, relatively few job benefits are felt to have come from the hydro project itself. Some Cree assert that most employment benefits remained with non-native Québecois (V. Snowboy, pers. comm.; Sandy 1991).

The River

Many participants indicated their sense of pride over La Grande Riviere, before it was altered by James Bay I. As one elder said,

> . ..this river here was the best river, they said. [former] Chief Joseph Napash talked about this. He said the people used to talk about it, that it was the greatest river. It was the most, best talked-about river" (V. Snowboy, pers. comm.).

Apparently, the river was a fixed yet dynamic feature on both the physical and cultural landscape of the region for countless generations. This almost spiritual conception of a geographic feature is foreign to many people of the industrialized South, and may be difficult to comprehend.

The changes to La Grande Riviere since the project were mentioned several times. Traditionally, the river served as the major transportation conduit for the Cree, who travelled along its length by canoe in the summer, and by sled or foot during the winter months. Now, as was noted above, the waters of La Grande are no longer as clean. Another major effect of the project is the fact that such access has been severely limited, because the river is now unpredictable. Altered flow regimes have resulted in ice forming late on the water's surface, and breaking up earlier in the season. Once a safe and predictable source of transportation, crossing the river can now be extremely hazardous. One elder explained:

> Well, you can't trust it any more, because you have to test it all the time; test the ice all the time. And they don't let us go anywhere. Before, they used to let us go anywhere--across the river, anywhere! Now, we cannot do that any more. Sometimes it's not all frozen now--it's just snow sitting on the water. You go through there with a skiddoo, and it just sinks right through! It's dangerous. Sometimes you think you're standing on the ice, but you're just standing on snow (G. Snowboy, pers.comm.)

Another participant also saw this issue as being highly significant:

> . ..in the winter time, people can't travel on the river. There's a *line* there you can't cross. And to me, that in itself is very significant, for a culture that travels, who knew the seasons, who knew what times were safe. The thing about this culture...is that we are super careful. We don't take chances. Because when you take chances out there, it could be your life... We're a very careful people, especially where it comes to travel. And to have something like that, where you can't cross the river because it's not safe--there's ice on the surface, but there's no ice underneath-it's something that I know has hit us--people where I come from, who go north of the river. For people who go south of the river it doesn't matter. People who go inland, go inland. But people who go north: you feel like you've lost a limb. You've lost something that's very significant (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.).

Uncertainty

In addition to concerns about the river's unpredictability, several people expressed fears about other aspects of the physical environment. Concern was expressed about the possibility of there being an accidental flood from the hydro project, which could directly affect the community. There appeared to be a high level of mistrust where Hydro-Quebec was concerned, in terms of whether the community has been accurately informed about such risks, whether contingency plans are accurate, and whether such plans exist at all. As well, several people mentioned that the full extent of the project's environmental effects are not well understood, and are still being discovered.

The Rate of Change

The rapid rate of social and environmental change over the past twenty years was a recurring theme in discussions; it appeared to be emphasized particularly by women. As Selley* observed,

> It changed too fast and too much. Too fast for us. It's mostly where the heartache all comes from: things happened so fast. If it had happened much more slower, we might have been able to take it. And then we were starting to forget...we were just starting to accept the changes. And then the Great Whale Project came around! Then that opened up all the hurt; all of it came back again.

Another woman noted,

> It's been such a fast change over the past twenty years, compared to the kind of life I was used to. It was a slow and simple life, the way my parents brought me up. And now it's a modem way of living altogether. There's alcohol, drugs, TV, radio--you know, all this new life... I think the lifestyle we're exposed to, we have to adjust...We're strong people. I think we're always a strong culture, because we were faced with so many things in our lives--like starvation, and lack of food for many months. I think this is what made us so strong. You guys never faced those kinds of changes; it's a slow process for you people. But us--for us, it was a very fast change! I think that's why we're still adjusting to it.

The Relocation

The emotional impacts of the relocation from Fort George to Chisasibi were profound and far-reaching, according to at least five of the participants. For a culture where people are deeply imbued with a sense of place, the sudden upheaval proved to be traumatic. Many people now regret the move, and say they never would have agreed to it, had they known how difficult it would be for the well-being of the community. As Selley* noted,

> We were trusting. We had to accept that kind of life, living in a community like Chisasibi; having running water like you people do, and electricity. At first they told us, "it's going to be a good life, if you move to a new village". But... we didn't know we were getting into real problems. What little problems we had here, we thought, "ah! If only we could have running water, if only we could have electricity, it would make things easier for us!" But we didn't know we were better off without those things. We were better off living our own "primitive" lives, the way it used to be.

Chief Violet Pachanos concurs:

> I guess with the relocation, that was a big upheaval; we were uprooted, and changed to new houses... I think a lot of it has to do with [the fact that] it was more or less done for them. And people in the community, or the majority of them, decided to relocate for various reasons, one of them being better housing, the promise of electricity, easier lifestyles. But with that, the changes were--not realizing how it was going to change your traditional ways. So I guess people did not look at the emotional side of the relocation. I guess they just looked at it like it was going to be a nice place to be, and people should be happy, but not the social aspects of it,

Currently, there are approximately ten families which have moved back, permanently or semi-permanently, to the island, despite the fact that there are no telephones, electricity or running water. Apparently, the island is not eroding in the manner and at the rate that was originally predicted (G. Snowboy, pers. corn.) Many other families with whom I met plan to move back in the future, when they have retired, or when their children have finished school. Meanwhile, for the past five summers, virtually all of Chisasibi's residents gather on the island for the "Mamoweedow", a week-long community gathering marked by dancing, live music, games, and feasting.

Losing Traditions

Like other First Nations across Canada, the Cree of Chisasibi are deeply concerned about the potential loss of their traditions, particularly among the young people. This cross-cutting theme

was threaded throughout virtually all of my interviews and discussions with people in the community. One elder, Charlotte Rupert, explains,

> People are changing; they're living the White Man's way of life. In the old days, people used to be so happy, even though they didn't have many material things to live off. They were still happy, even though they only lived off the things from the earth. Now, today, we lost many of our traditions. Even I see a lot of differences between my life and my parents'. Since the Hydro [project] came here, it changed a lot. We're missing a lot of the old traditional ways.

The loss of tradition, of the Cree's cultural fabric, appears to be caused by the cumulative, synergistic effects of a host of other changes. Television, which carries images of non-native, Southern culture into virtually every household, is often cited as one major cause of cultural deterioration (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.). The shift to a wage economy; a damaged and altered biophysical environment; the relocation to Chisasibi; the widening generation gap between youth and elders; alcoholism; and increased exposure to non-natives, are also cited as potential factors. Yet, due to the population "boom" in the region, combined with limited economic opportunities, the importance of maintaining an informal economy remains central. As John* observed

> Even if my kids are all grown up, I don't think they're all going to have jobs. That's the reason I want to teach them to learn the traditional way. What the White Man brought into the village has a stronger impact on the kids. They're more for the White Man's world than the traditional ways. It's hard for the Indian kids to learn the white man's way in school. It's the same for kids today, who want to [learn] the old ways. It's hard for people now to learn all the traditional ways of life. It's hard.

Alcohol

Officially, Chisasibi is a "dry" community. Nonetheless, alcohol abuse was identified as being a critical issue by most participants. Several participants maintain that' prior to the hydro project, alcoholism was scarcely used, and was certainly not a serious problem. However, the installation of roads and airports for James Bay I greatly increased access to non-native communities, and therefore, to alcohol. As well, the cumulative effect of many of the changes noted earlier in this section, have contributed to uncertainty, loss of self esteem, and loss of identity. In turn, participants linked alcohol abuse to a host of other problems, including spousal assault, marital breakup, violence, theft, and vandalism. At least one participant is of the opinion that men tend to abuse alcohol to a greater degree than women. This is at least partially confirmed by a recent health survey of James Bay Cree, including Chisasibi (Santé Québec 1992:22-25).

S pousal Assault

The issue of family violence, including spousal assault, is not discussed easily or openly in Chisasibi (S. Hilton 1993, pers. comm.) Nonetheless, it was cited as an area of concern by several participants. Again, it is a phenomenon which is inherently linked to a number of other factors, including the loss of traditions, self-esteem, cultural identity, and substance abuse. Several participants maintain that family violence seldom occurred in the past. This was partly because of the Cree ethic of mutual respect' and partly due to the fact that Cree families and individuals frequently lived in very close quarters. As Helen Atkinson (pers. comm.) explains,

> . ..in those days, nobody talked about those things. These things may have occurred, but people didn't judge them... I think also, in those days, we were very close together. We started off in the communities, and also in the bush--you knew people. [So] a lot of times you didn't hear about it because it didn't exist! Because a lot of it had to do [with] respect. In our grandparent's days, it was mostly arranged marriages. And the only thing you could do was accept the decision, accept your husband or your wife, whoever they are. And respect them...

Elder Violet Snowboy also insists that spousal assault was virtually unheard of in the past:

> . ..they never used to do that. And today, I see couples physically fighting a lot, and it really hurts me. Married couples] always used to work together. They got along so well; they never had any problems.

H. Atkinson believes that the loss of traditional skills and cultural identity is one of the root causes of spousal assault today:

> But now there's a lot more spousal abuse, because the younger people aren't ready for marriage; they're not ready for children. I think because when we started going to school, our parents stopped [teaching] the traditional ways--because they knew that it was out of sync with what we were learning in school, the *way* we were learning, and what we were learning. . . . And now, I see a lot of the young adults here, they don't know the first thing about taking care of themselves. I notice there's a lot of pressure on the mother. And I think it has to do [with the fact that] when people don't know what they're supposed to do, and they become insecure, and they want somebody else to be a mother to them. So I think a lot of spousal abuse comes from that--not being in control, not knowing where you're going; a lot of uncertainty. And of course, there's alcohol.

Elders

The rapid changes of the past two decades have profound emotional, psychological and physical effects on Cree elders. Traditionally, elders played a significant role within Cree society, serving as vast stores of knowledge and wisdom. Today, with the loss of traditions, the place of elders in society may seem less clear. Also, as the elders observe the relatively sudden appearance of serious social and environmental problems, they understandably suffer from anxiety, grief and distress. For instance, as Violet Snowboy notes, while talking about family violence, "...what we see today really affects us. It's like somebody is hitting us; this is how it affects us." John Snowboy, a male elder, adds:

> Since we moved, there was a lot of alcohol. That's why the elders worry a lot, because they worry too much about their families. People today separate; in the old days, people never separated. I know that the white couples separate. And now, it's started. Its probably because of the drinking. This is why the elders worry a lot. The elders are not like the young people. They worry a lot. It's like they're always sick [the elders]. It's like the people of the younger generation are killing their parents, because they always worry about them. This is what is affecting us, affecting the people here.

In fact' some participants believe that the elders are dying off, and experiencing much shorter life spans than before. According to elder Charlotte Rupert, her father long ago predicted many of the dramatic social changes that lay ahead for her people and their elders:

> [He predicted] that the White Man is going to bring a lot of changes to our life, and we're going to lose our traditional way of life. And this is what is happening. We can see what's happened, that the old people are dying off. This is what the old people used to say, and it's happening. We don't see many old people around now. It's true--this is what I'm seeing today.

Family and Community Relationships

Another cross-cutting theme in the interviews related to the breakdown of relationships between generations, between family members, and among members of the community. Some participants felt that the relocation of the community to Chisasibi had much to do with these effects. Others talked about the effects of television on Chisasibi's youths, and other forms of increased access and exposure to Southern culture. Loss of cultural traditions and personal identity, combined with alcoholism, unemployment, and rising crime rates--all of which interact on one another--also has strained the relationships between elders and Cree youths (see Sandy 1991). Some elders also noted that, in their view, parents are less able to adequately discipline their

children, and children have become more difficult to control. Again, the possible deterioration of parenting skills may stem from a variety of other social problems and issues.

A number of participants observed that both within families and between members of the community, there is less social interaction, less support, and more competitiveness. One interesting explanation, which arose on several occasions, was that the distribution and layouts of the new houses in Chisasibi encouraged competition, insularity, and individualism. On Fort George Island, most families lived in single-room cabins, and when families were in the bush, they would often share teepees or tents. In the more private, multi-room dwellings of Chisasibi, some social checks and balances, such as the constant presence of watchful elders, are no longer always present.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender-specific Social Impacts

This final chapter is aimed at answering the remaining questions outlined in the Problem Statement of Chapter One. First, based on the previous chapter, I have attempted to determine whether any of the impacts identified accrued primarily to women, or were experience differently by them. Again, because of the high degree of interrelatedness between most, if not all, of the impacts discussed above, separating specific effects is difficult.

The only effect which appears to be clearly gender-specific is spousal assault. This is an enormous topic of discussion, which I will only address briefly here. Spousal assault and other forms of family violence are most often perpetrated by men against women. This is generally true for both native and non-native communities, where women and children often bear the brunt of much crime and violence (Chaumel1992; Mesténapéo 1992).

Frequently, alcohol abuse is involved in incidents of family violence. As noted in the previous chapter, there are preliminary indications that the men of Chisasibi may abuse alcohol to a greater degree than women. Moreover, a recent health survey of James Bay Cree indicates that only "17% of men and 7% of women stated having been injured or having injured another while fighting after drinking" (Santé Quebec 1992:24).

Another, perhaps more elusive effect which may tend to accrue somewhat more to women --although it is clearly experienced by both genders--is that of psychological stress, caused by the need to balancing new and old roles in society and in the family. According to some of the women I met and interviewed, women bear unique positions of responsibility in Cree society, as they are the "bearers of life" (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.; Selley*, pers. comm.). Indeed, this seems to be the case with women in a number of cultures. It is possible, then, that women suffer additional emotional or psychological stress from the pressure of feeling particularly responsible for passing Cree traditions and culture on to the next generation. They may also feel particularly acute pressure concerning the environmental legacy they leave to their children. For example, Selley* noted:

> Women should be heard more. Because it affects women a lot. If the children ask them "why didn't you stop the Great Whale project, why didn't you stop Hydro Quebec from destroying the world?", what are we going to tell them? Because of them, we have to try and stop this.

Gender Relations in Cree Culture

A third question in this paper focuses on whether there is a detectable gender bias within Cree society, which may have led to women experiencing different effects, or the same effects differently. Related to this was the question of whether the structure of Cree society limits the extent to which women participate in the kinds of public consultation efforts which may identify potential impacts. This is a difficult and sensitive issue, as it centers on one culture interpreting and assessing the relative gender "equality" of another culture. It is also necessary to acknowledge that Cree culture is rapidly evolving; the state of gender relations twenty years ago may be quite different from what it is today.

Traditionally, women played very specific labour roles in Cree society. Women's work consisted of a wide variety of activities, most of which were centered around the home. These included child care, gathering wood and water, preparing food, fishing, hunting and trapping for small game, and collecting spruce boughs for floor coverings. Men often travelled far from their homes for days or weeks at a time, in search of large game, while women ran the camp (Selley*, pers. comm.; McMillan 1988:101-104). The men and women I spoke with asserted that though these roles were different, they were highly interrelated, and equally important. Moreover, if necessity dictated, several participants pointed out that such gender roles were somewhat interchangeable. As Selley* noted,

> The woman, too, was also a hunter and a trapper. Because I heard a story: the man went to get the supplies. He was walking, and he never returned, because he died of starvation

> along the way. And the woman took over. She knew what to do... And I supposed the man could do the same. But it would be much harder, without a woman, whereas a woman could adapt.

Apparently, this is still true today. As another woman (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.) observed,

> I say, if somebody can do the job, it doesn't matter who they are, man or women. That's the way I feel, and that's the way we were raised. A lot of men would do the so-called women's traditional things, and they felt comfortable with that. My father was like that. He didn't think, "oh, that's women's work, I won't do it!" If it needed to be done, if there was nobody who could do it, he'd do it. It was the same thing for my mother, especially when my father was out for a long time, and there was no man around; she had to do the more "masculine" role. That was just part of the reality.

Still, there appeared to be spheres of influence which were dominated more by one gender than the other. Decisions regarding the "private" domain, for example, were often made by women. This appears to have been true for many native peoples, as LaFromboise *et al.* (1990461) point out: "Realizing the importance of private power is critical to understanding Indian cultural systems because--in general--Indian women exercised almost complete control over the home, the children, and belongings inside the home."

On the other hand, the "public" domain appears to have been dominated more by men. This continues to be the case. Women today and in the recent past are poorly represented in the Cree political arena' at both local and regional levels. Of course, this is generally true for not just the Cree, but all of Canada! As a result' women's voices tend to be heard less, and their concerns given less weight' than those of men. The Chief of Chisasibi is a woman, but this is extremely rare. Generally, most political leaders are men--and many men, apparently, are uncomfortable with the idea of a female Chief (Pachanos 1993, pers. comm.; Marish* 1993, pers. comm.; Selley* 1993, pers. comm.).

It is important to point out, however, that the very concept of a political, "public" domain is relatively new to Cree society. As one woman pointed out, "Chiefs are an "Indian Affairs concept" (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.). Like many hunting and gathering cultures in the North, traditional Cree society was socially flexible, and relatively non-hierarchical, with no permanent leaders (McMillan 1988). To the extent that men did provide community leadership roles, there are indications that they did so only in consultation with women (V. Pachanos, pers.com.). This contention is supported by LaFromboise *et al. (1990:* 461), who point out:

> Although males might have monopolized public roles and positions of authority, important family and tribal decisions were also determined in the private sphere; therefore, the reality of power was often very different from its public manifestation.

Thus, some of the emphasis on male political control may represent a new phenomenon in Cree society, and perhaps a breakdown in the delicate balance of power held between men and women in the past, On the other hand, it is difficult to say whether women's apparently low profile in the political realm, or the highly-differentiated labour roles they fulfill, can be equated with secondary social status. This is an old argument in anthropological circles. It is well-summari zed by Moore (1988:2), who notes:

> . ..when researchers perceive the asymmetrical relations between women and men in other cultures, they assume such asymmetries to be analogous to their own cultural experience of the unequal and hierarchical nature of gender relations in Western society. A number of feminist anthropologists have now made the point that, even where more egalitarian relations between women and men exist, researchers are very often unable to understand this potential equality because they insist on interpreting difference and asymmetry as inequality and hierarchy.

Nonetheless, Cree society, like most northern aboriginal societies, is in a state of rapid transition. Social roles are becoming blurred, as women increasingly become the "bread-winners" of their families. Tension between women and men, marked perhaps by rising rates of spousal assault' may be growing. One Montagnais writer (Mesténapéo 1992:4-5) asserts that everywhere, relations between aboriginal men and women are deteriorating, as native men adapt the more patriarchal mores and behaviours of men to the South:

> Previously, the men were the captains and governed the camp or village, but always in consultation with the women who accompanied them. Times change. In spite of themselves, men have adopted the ways of white civil servants. Today, we've moved backwards, and the main issues are handled almost exclusively by men. Like all western women, the women of our nations must fight to have their rights recognized. Even worse, there is confrontation within women's groups in the communities. We no longer always agree on the values to emphasize.

Perhaps the most important measure of gender relations in Cree society is the perception held by men and women themselves hold about the issue. Approached from this angle, the answer I received was clear. All of the participants who were asked about or volunteered information about this issue said that they saw men and women as being equal, and highly interdependent. As Atkinson (pers. comm.) explained,

> I think men and women have ***always*** been equal. I think it's just a matter of perception: Where do you look the situation from? How do you see it? Because for me, having been educated in the White system, I had those White views. Then when I looked at our society, I thought that was the way it was; like, that women were low, and men were higher. But then when I learned more about the Cree traditions, I found that it wasn't true. **But** it ***looks*** like that. Like, the men, the wise people that I've talked to, the males--the ones that really understand, know that women had their fair share of work. And that the women's work was much more difficult than the men's work. It's a very complicated thing. The way it was explained to me, is that in the traditional Cree culture, everybody had a role. And you needed that structure; it's a question of responsibilities.

When talking about modern native societies, she added:

> When I lived in Alberta--I can talk about that, because I actually lived in other native communities--I always found that the women were the leaders. They were the ones that were concerned about what was happening in the schools, what was happening with their children, and what was happening in their community. And it's the same here. It's always been like that. In a lot of families, you'll find here, the women ***are the*** leaders; they're the head of the household. They're the ones who make the major decisions. But the balance comes in the women saying, well, the men also have equal responsibility. So a lot of it is just verbal. You know, the women have a lot of power, but then they balance it. It's always a matter of balance, also. It's not always equal across the board, all the time, in a static state.

This last point should not be underestimated. I spoke with two professional women, for example, both with with high-status positions in their communities, and both of whom worked in a male-dominated environment. Arguably, these women would be the first to detect anti-female bias in the professional and political domain; yet both maintained that women and men were equal, but different' and highly interdependent. As far as I could gather, there was no perceived social barrier to women entering the professional or political domains, although three people mentioned that some men in the community may have objections to having a woman Chief. When asked about how women's lives have changed over the past twenty years, Selley* observed:

> It's the same now. Women are just as--a woman can take care of her children. A woman

can easily find a job--much faster than a man. Nowadays both men and women have to work, because it's more expensive now. It's much easier for women to find jobs than men.

In terms of women finding expression in public meetings, I again encountered a perception that women's voices were clearly heard. As **Marish*** emphasized, "I think women are more--very outspoken. The women I know are very outspoken! [laughs]". And **Selley*** noted, "Women are not shy. In fact, women can be great speakers. When women speak out, they really speak out!"

Finally, there is the final, essential question: In light of the previous discussions, can I conclude that there is a bias in the **EARP** against women? The simple answer is: yes, of course. Although the EIS Guidelines for the Great Whale project are unusually broad and wholistic, they represent a synthesis of processes, of which the EARP is only one part The Guidelines Order which gives EARP the force of law does specify that the scope of effects to be considered arc only those social impacts which directly result from biophysical changes from the projects being considered. The EIS Guidelines, although commendable, represent a unique situation in terms of social scoping. Moreover, given the fact that the Guidelines do represent a synthesis of processes, the assessment itself may remain constrained by the stipulation in the James Bay Agreement that projects cannot be opposed on the grounds of social impacts to the Cree and Inuit (see Chapter Two). The real effect of the progressive, socially-encompassing definition of "environment" which was adopted by the Guidelines remains to be seen. Therefore, the fact remains that the scoping parameters set out in the EARP are limited to direct social impacts.

As the preceding discussions have shown, however, women in Chisasibi experienced a vast array of social effects from James Bay I, most of which could not be thought of as having been directly caused by biophysical changes. It is likely that women in Great Whale will experience similar impacts. The key issue, of course, is that men ***also*** experienced indirect social impacts, as did the youth and elders of Cree society. ***All*** segments of Cree society have suffered from profound and rapid changes, as traditions have been lost, the surrounding environment has been altered and damaged, and traditional balances of power, purpose and respect, have been eroded. In evaluating the power relations between Cree men and women, and the different ways in which they may be affected by major resource developments, there exists a very real danger of being ethnocentric and reductionist to the point of inaccuracy.

In fact, I have come to the conclusion that the original question simply needs to be expanded. The real question must be: Is the scoping provision of EARP adequate to address the full range of social impacts experienced by women, men, elders, youths--in short, by all sectors of the society in question? It seems evident, from the preceding discussions, that it is not.

The upshot is that analyzing social effects from a cross-cultural basis is a tricky business, one that must be handled both **wholistically** and with tremendous delicacy. It should be emphasized that I discarded my original question only with the greatest reluctance, and only after extensive discussions with Cree women in Chisasibi. It is likely that many readers will disagree with my conclusions; certainly, the issue of gender bias is, and has always been, extremely sensitive and contentious.

Recommendations

This study indicates that an enormous amount of work remains to be done in the field of social impact assessment of northern aboriginal peoples, particularly when assessments are conducted cross-culturally. The following recommendations merely touch on the kinds of initiatives which could facilitate a greater understanding in this area.

1. Explicit Inclusion of Indirect Social Impacts

Any environmental assessment policy, procedure or legislation should ***explicitly*** *allow* for the inclusion of indirect social impacts; they should be excluded only on a case-by-case basis, and only where there may be compelling reasons for doing so. As noted above, although the EIA of the Great Project is likely to consider indirect social impacts from an unusually wholistic

perspective, such is not normally the case. The extent to which the new Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (which has not yet been proclaimed into force) may deal with this issue, is unclear.

2. **Cumulative Social Impacts**

There has been growing acceptance in recent years of the need to consider the ***cumulative*** biophysical impacts of resource development. Ecosystems are complex and synergistic; separating specific effects and examining them in isolation is reductionist and ultimately may lead to irrational, poorly informed development choices. I suggest that there is a pressing need for a similar approach to the concept of cumulative ***social*** effects. In the case of Chisasibi, it is difficult to separate the effects of social change generally in the North, to the specific effects of the James Bay I. The reality is, however, that both sources of change play upon Cree culture and society. In the case of a hunting and gathering culture, any realistic assessment of a major resource development should be include a full recognition of the many other external and internal forces which may be at play in that culture. This is particularly true if human cultures are considered in light of their "assimilative capacities;" for adapting to particular kinds and rates of social and environmental change.

3. Cultural Liaisons

The field component of this study highlighted the fact that northern Cree and people from the South demonstrate vastly different communication styles, and different ways of knowing. One way of contending with these differences in the context of EIA would be for EIA researchers and panels to work with "cultural liaisons." Such "culture brokers" are needed not only to translate the language, but also to interpret the culture, the deeply-rooted meanings and world views that may accompany the spoken word of interveners, participants and informers. These cultural liaisons would need to be experienced and "fluent" in both cultures.

4. Flexible Communication Modes

In terms of cross-cultural public consultation, it is critical that processes are sensitive to potentially different cultural modes of communication. There are indications that, at least with the Cree of Chisasibi, this has not always been the case. In particular, public meetings on the Constitution and on the Great Whale EIS Scoping hearings, were inflexible in their time frames (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.). In scoping hearings for the Great Whale EIS Guidelines, for example, interveners were given 20 minutes to speak. For elders, who often speak slowly, using such speaking tools as allegory and frequent repetition of key concepts, 20 minutes may be wholly inadequate. In addition, large public meetings of any kind may not be the best means of informing and receiving input from native people. Cree people, in particular, were traditionally taught to avoid the public expression of their opinions (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.). Smaller, informal meetings, perhaps including several households at one time, may be the most appropriate means of obtaining cross-cultural public feedback. This is another field of inquiry which begs further study.

5. Comprehensive Audit of James Bay I, and Baseline Data for James Bay II

In the event that the Great Whale project is approved, a solid, comprehensive base of both qualitative and quantitative social data should be gathered on both the Cree and Inuit villages (Whapmagoostui and Kuujjuarapik, respectively), before construction begins. A long-term, systematic comparison of indicator changes before and after project development would be invaluable in more accurately and wholistically assessing long-range effects of large-scale environmental alteration on aboriginal peoples in the North. Such data does not exists for Chisasibi; to this date, very few studies--if any--have been conducted on the social impacts experienced by Chisasibi following James Bay I (H. Atkinson, pers. comm.).

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