

IT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING:
AN ETHNOHISTORY OF
MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY LAND TENURE
IN FORT SEVERN, ONTARIO

David Michael Finch



Native people watching arrival of floatplane at Fort Severn, 1950.
John Macfie fonds, C 330-8-0-0-1, Archives of Ontario.

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CENTURY LAND TENURE IN FORT SEVERN, ONTARIO

by

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ABSTRACT

This research presents the results of sixteen interviews with Mushkego (Swampy Cree) elders from the community of Fort Severn, Ontario. The interviews focused on commercial and subsistence trapping conducted in the mid-20th century, specifically the period around the imposition of a foreign land tenure system by provincial authorities. A variety of themes were identified in the interviews related to traditional knowledge, animal-human relationships, access to mechanisms of controlling land use, and relationships within and without the community. Special focus was paid to the history of relations between the community and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and its predecessors. The interviews were compared to historical developments in the fur trade and wildlife conservation. The analysis concludes that the community experienced repeated reductions in social-ecological resilience during the 19th and 20th centuries, due to increasing social and economic marginalization coupled with the reduction of access to their land and resources. A widespread outbreak of infectious disease among beaver populations contributed to reasons for abandoning the imposed land tenure system. After the 1950s, the trapline boundaries defined by the province were largely retained in name only. In the 1990s they were co-opted in a co-management process, and elders noted that continued use of the land (including the traplines) is a tool in maintaining their rights to the land.

DEDICATION

To my father, Jack Finch,
whom I miss reminding me that all truths don't come from books.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been finished without a lot of people who either lent their hands to the tiller or were gracious enough to take a chance on me when even I might not have done so. These acknowledgements are in no real order except for marking an imperfect chronology of how I got to this moment. To all of you, please accept my heartfelt thanks. I sincerely apologize if I have forgotten to thank anyone.

Right off the top I would like to thank my thesis supervisors, Dr. Scott Hamilton and Dr. Martha Dowsley. They are the godparents of this thing, and they cleaned up my mess in a very short time to make it happen. Scott in particular takes the blame for my returning to school in the first place. To both I extend my gratitude as well as apologies for my organizational skills.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The history of Canada is a patchwork of regional stories and local perspectives that risk being ignored in a wider national narrative. By virtue of its cultural geography, the dominant voice of modern Canada is overwhelmingly a southern and urban one. Decisions affecting rural and remote regions, including those that affect Canada's Aboriginal peoples, are made by a distant majority. It was not always so. The far north of Ontario was once an important arena for cross-cultural economic interaction, but after the fur trade declined it became a relatively marginal hinterland. Its Aboriginal residents did not disappear but their access to economic and policy mechanisms became relatively less. An example of this marginalization was the imposition of southern land tenure systems upon northern communities, specifically the creation of registered trapline territories in the mid-20th century. This followed decades of increased wildlife conservation practices, also imposed by southern agencies, and changing economic conditions that promoted a wage economy at the expense of a traditional one. The cumulative effect of these forces was the disenfranchisement of northern Ontario's subsistence and commercial trappers. The history of this change is relatively well documented from a Euro-Canadian point of view; that is, through written records (or syntheses thereof) made by outsiders. The other part of this

history is relatively less well represented owing to the limited voice of a population that was small, remote, and economically and socially marginal.

The purpose of this research is to present the oral history of the elders of Fort Severn, Ontario, and to provide an analytical understanding of change. At question is whether the local social-economic system (SES) adapted to new circumstances and political paradigms, or if there was instead a transformation of the land tenure system. It will be shown that, while wildlife harvesting has been remarkably persistent throughout time, the economic and social focus of those activities has been reduced, and the role of the traplines has changed greatly. By the end of the 1960s, trapping intensity had greatly diminished; in the early twenty-first century, it has not disappeared though it has become economically marginal compared to previous centuries. Furbearer harvests have persisted, in part for cultural reasons, and in recent decades control over the traplines has reverted back to the community. As noted in the interviews on which this research is based, the trapline areas themselves have value as a means of marking Cree ties to the land. In the case of furbearer trapping, its persistence is less about subsistence and more of controlling harvesting rights and ensuring access to the land. The trapline area, once imposed from without, has now become a tool in Fort Severn's political toolkit to ensure Aboriginal and treaty rights to the land. This function is likely to change again in the not-too-distant future. This work will show that there has been a transformation of the human component of the local SES as a historically significant mode of harvesting was eroded and subsequently modified.

In the centuries after contact with Europeans, a major arena for cross-cultural interaction was the continental fur trade conducted from posts in the Hudson Bay watershed. Aboriginal peoples interacted with these posts on economic and social bases, and many First Nations settlements in Ontario are situated on or near historic trading posts. As discussed by historian Arthur J. Ray (1998), the fur trade was a dynamic industry in which Aboriginal communities sometimes wielded considerable power. For most of the 17th through 19th centuries, the locus of control remained in the Aboriginal community; precisely, it continued to be mediated via a locally-situated field of interaction with European and Canadian actors. Over time, and for various reasons, the dynamics of this field shifted south in favour of national and provincial authorities. This shift had palpable effects on the ability of indigenous communities to regulate their economic and environmental activity.

The broad strokes of these events have been well documented by Ray (1990, 1998), Victor Lytwyn (2002), and others. The nuances of this story are the subject of the research that is now before the reader, which focuses upon one of the pieces in the aforementioned historical patchwork. During the winter of 2011, the author interviewed seventeen residents of the Wasaho First Nation at Fort Severn, Ontario, a reserve on Hudson Bay and home to about five hundred members of the Swampy Cree (or Mushkegowuk). The intent of the research was to record the memories and opinions of residents regarding a narrow historical window – the two decades following the implementation of the Ontario Registered Trapline System in 1946.

This research explores historic dynamics of change and response to trapline regulation in a northern Canadian community. It records living memory through interviews with residents of Fort Severn, Ontario, and analyzes their statements thematically using open coding. The interviews are compared to and contrasted with the written historical record, including primary and secondary sources. Following the imposition of a foreign land tenure system, the people of Fort Severn suffered a loss of resilience in the late 1940s. While adaptation occurred, the cumulative effects of this and other regulatory changes left the community vulnerable to variable conditions in the social-ecological system. By the 1960s the tenure system had been abandoned in all but name, though it was more recently repurposed in a co-management exercise. This work also documents examples of resistance and links the transformation of the tenure system to an assertion of aboriginal title.

1.1 Background

The focus of this research is on Fort Severn, Ontario, a Swampy Cree reserve on Hudson Bay in northern Ontario. The period in question is the mid- to late 20th century. For convenience, this was framed as beginning in 1946 with the introduction of the trapline system to Ontario's Far North as well as the extension of the welfare system to First Nations peoples. Likewise, it was initially thought that the period of study would end in 1966. This end date was partly arbitrary, representing two decades or a full generation of adaptation to the earlier changes.

It also coincided with one of the few surveys of trapping activity conducted in the region, namely the examination of fur returns conducted by Edward S. Rogers (1966). In reality, the forces that shaped Fort Severn's trapline history extend this interval at least a generation before and after this period, from becoming subject to wildlife laws in the 1930s, to the decline and re-purposing of the traplines in the 1990s.

This work is an ethnohistory that documents changes in Fort Severn's land use practices and tenure system. It combines an ethnography of furbearer trapping with historical information that provide a context for interpretation. History and anthropology are both narrative disciplines that engage in the act of framing events contextually. This is a regular part of qualitative research, which serves to increase the validity and reliability of observations (Gray 2009: 515-517) as well as providing a richness of description (e.g. Geertz 1973). The mixed parentage of ethnohistory ideally benefits from this interdisciplinary union. The role of the ethnohistorian is to identify crosswalks between voices, in effect using the tools of ethnography to shape the matter of history.

Traplines are areas of land management on which harvesters have the right to harvest furbearing mammals including beaver, marten, and others. They are held in usufruct because the land on which traplines are situated is traditionally common property, and was either unregulated (before Treaty) or on Crown land (today). Modern trapline holders possess the right to harvest a narrow range of resources for commercial use, which in the case of Aboriginal harvesters is complementary to subsistence harvesting on their treaty lands.

Traplines in northern Ontario were assigned to heads of extended families and passed on to their descendants. As a result, trappers tend to work the same traplines as their relatives, though intermarriage and trapping partnerships offered some flexibility in trapline membership.

Though trapping is today considered a traditional activity, there has been some debate over the nature and intensity of furbearer harvesting. The anthropological literature of the 1930s through 1960s contains a debate on the aboriginality of Algonkian hunting territories. The central question was whether Aboriginal fur trade participants followed a Pre-Contact system of familial or individual ownership of bounded hunting areas, or if their territories developed as a response to the fur trade itself. The former opinion was championed by Speck (1915) and Speck and Easley (1939), who suggested that trapping territories were the norm in Pre-Contact times. In this model, territories were held more or less individually and passed down via paternal or bilateral inheritance. Included within the system were prohibitions against trespass. Barnouw (1950) also upheld this model, seeing little or no cooperation outside of the immediate family unit.

A contrasting position, held by Jenness (1935) and Steward (1955), suggested that the family tenure system arose in historic times in response to increased demand. They suggested that the ancestral form of land tenure was communal with few fixed rules of access. Leacock (1954) saw this pressure to adopt private ownership as coming from within the bands, as opposed to being imposed from without. Hickerson (1967) provides an excellent overview of this debate. In subsequent decades, the mainstream anthropological community

came to accept the notion of private land tenure as an adaptation to the fur trade. This discussion will be expanded in Chapters 3 and 4.

In the context of this research, the debate over origins is in every sense academic. By the mid-20th century, the commercial fur trade had been active in northern Ontario for four hundred years and family traplines had long since become the norm. Regardless of their aboriginality, the traplines were part of the daily interaction of humans and the land in the Hudson Bay Lowlands. This routine was altered in the mid-1940s as transportation opened up the north and southern authority put its mark on all aspects of land use.

This research treats the regulation of traplines by the Province of Ontario in 1947-48 as a directed change in the management of land and natural resources. *Directed change* is a form of imposed change, a “cultural process in which internal or external agents make more or less intentional, coordinated, and sustained modifications or reforms to a society and culture” (Eller 2009: 396). Specifically, Ontario’s assertion of control over its northern land base was an attempt at development, a form of directed change in which a state tries to change its economy and society (or that of another) in order to promote net benefits in economy, industry, and urbanization (Eller 2009: 395). That which Ontario probably considered as entirely internal and beneficial change was viewed by affected Aboriginal residents as something else entirely. In the middle of the 20th century there were two societies at play, one northern and Aboriginal, the other southern and Euro-Canadian. This was as it had been for several

centuries prior, but this period witnessed the most drastic directed changes since the relationship began.

Conversely, wholly internal modification made at the discretion of a society or culture is *non-directed change*. The responses of a group to external forces are often combinations of directed and non-directed change, and are shaped by differences in access and resilience. This research explores historic dynamics of change and response to trapline regulation in a northern Canadian community.

1.2 Structure of this Document

The following is an outline of the content of this document. Supplemental materials are included in Appendix 1.

Chapter 2 situates the geographical context of the study area, describing the physical characters of Fort Severn and its environs that make it unique. It also introduces place names and vocabulary that are relevant to understanding later chapters.

Chapter 3 performs a similar context-building role with an historical overview of the community and region. It covers the period from contact with Europeans in the 17th century to the modern day. It also provides demographic information for the period of interest and for the current day.

Chapter 4 provides a resume of the registered trapline system as it applied to northern Ontario, framed by a discussion of trends in provincial and national conservation laws.

Chapter 5 contains the methodology for this research. It outlines the general approach, methods used, and an assessment of limitations. The data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews that proceeded from a list of pre-made questions, but the conversations were encouraged to assume whatever form was required. A brief discussion is included on the means to assess validity and precision.

Chapter 6 presents the results. The participants are introduced in this section and a précis made of each interview. This summary includes a list of themes observed in the interviews and examples of support for each theme. A list of themes relating to the registered trapline system has been drawn from the interviews as well as highlights from a sub-set of those themes.

Chapter 7 is the discussion of results, relating participants' statements to the contextual information from government documents, historical syntheses, and other archival sources. A particular focus will be the effects of historic government policy on community resilience.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion, in which the fruits of this research are discussed and avenues for further research are identified.

A record of the interviews is reproduced in Appendix 1. The transcripts were reviewed by the participants, who graciously agreed to include their personal information and images to put faces to their words.

CHAPTER 2

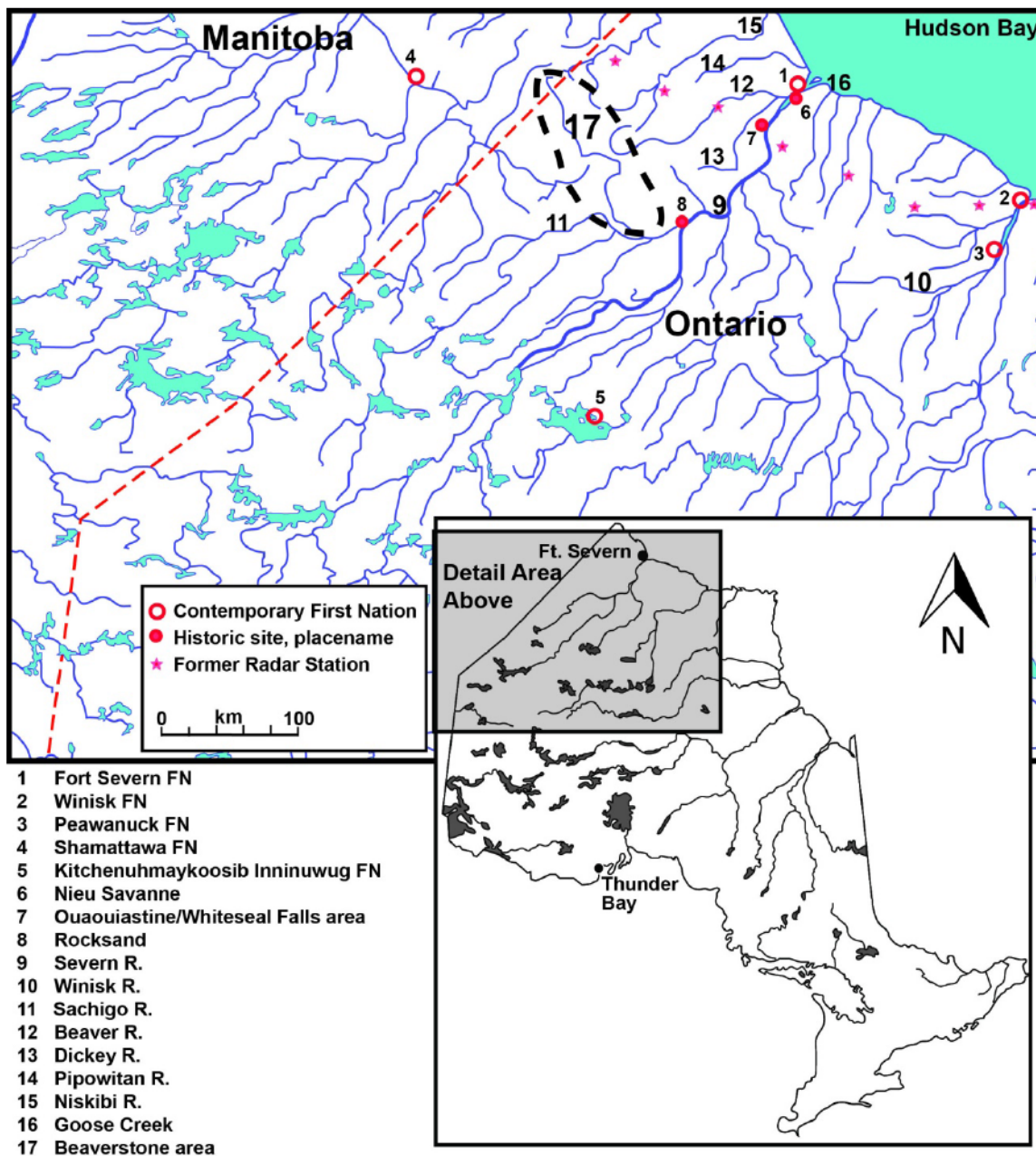
STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces the physical and cultural geography of the research study area. Presented are profiles of the community during the mid-20th century and at time of research. The intent is to provide the spatial and temporal context for subsequent chapters.

2.1 Description of Study Area

Fort Severn (also called Severn House, Wasaho or Wasaho Sipi) is an Aboriginal community located near Hudson Bay in northern Ontario (see Figure 2.1). Situated approximately 830 km north of Thunder Bay, it is the northernmost community in Ontario. Though frequently noted as being on Hudson Bay, the primary community site is located approximately 15 km upriver near the location of one of the historic Hudson's Bay Company posts. The community has two loci: one established in 1929-30 by the creation of Indian Reserve (I.R.) Fort Severn 89; and the other officially registered in 1973 but of historical origin. The latter community locus is situated near the historic European fur trade occupations and features the band office, school, airstrip, and other permanent community places.

Figure 2.1
Regional Map (Including locations referenced in text)



The more southerly secondary community site is located further inland in the Rocksand locality at the confluence of the Severn and Sachigo Rivers. This settlement area was well established from the 1930's to 1950s, but today is only intermittently occupied. The southern community is located near current firewood gathering places and the site of a former commercial sawmill. It is still visited by local hunters and trappers, but its position places it within an area of overlap between the traditional territories of Fort Severn and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Beaulieu and Finch 2011; Kayahna Tribal Area Council 1985; Matthews 2007; Morris 2009). For most purposes the term 'Fort Severn' applies to the near-coastal northern community, though in this work the term may be extended to all the members of the Fort Severn band and their traditional territory, depending on the context.

In addition to the two community loci discussed above, numerous associated community gathering places exist in Fort Severn's traditional territory. These include the traplines and associated cabins belonging to Fort Severn residents which range up to 100 km removed from the townsite, as well as self-identified family gathering places such as the Beaverstone locality near the junction of the Sachigo and Beaverstone (Weeshinago) rivers (see Figure 2.1: 11, and Appendix 1: George Thomas). The Keewaytinook Okimakanak Research Institute (KORI) is engaged in an ongoing project in which Fort Severn's place names are integrated with maps and associated traditional knowledge.

2.1.1 *Physical Geography*

Fort Severn is situated in the Hudson Bay Lowlands, a region of coastal tundra grading into upland muskeg and spruce-lichen forest or taiga (Abraham and McKinnon 2011: 203). It is part of Ontario's Far North region, and owing to its northerly location (55° 59' N, 87° 38' W) it is in the continuous permafrost zone with subsurface ice present year-round. Its maritime boreal climate results in cold winters and short summers, both heavily influenced by the Arctic conditions of Hudson Bay. Temperatures at the height of summer can range above 20° C and at the depth of winter below -40° C.

The Hudson Bay Lowlands are the northernmost ecological zone in Ontario, previously considered to have been largely uninhabited prior to the Contact-Traditional period, but now known to have been occupied by Aboriginal peoples for at least several thousand years (Pilon 1987; Lytwyn 2002: 27-39). Long-range travel was traditionally a feature of the winter season during which the frozen muskeg did not impede travel on foot or by dog team (see Figure 2.2). Starting in the 1960's snow machines came to replace dog teams, and more recently provincially-funded winter roads have connected Fort Severn to other communities. A 750 km long ice road called the Wapusk Trail is constructed each year between Gillam, Manitoba and Peawanuck (Winisk), Ontario. Fort Severn is an isolated community, its nearest neighbour being Winisk (182 km by air). Its nearest major service centres are Sioux Lookout (714 km away) and Thunder Bay (830 km) (AANDC 2012).

Figure 2.2

A Cree Indian and dog sled team on the Severn River, with the Fort Severn Hudson's Bay Company post in the distance. Circa 1953. John Macfie fonds, Archives of Ontario, C 330-14-0-0-145.



The region has thick marine and glacial deposits atop limestone and dolomite bedrock, and presents very little surface relief. Soils tend to be sandy and rich in peat and other organics, being classified as regosols along a coastal strip leading west to the Manitoba border or fibrisols in much of the remaining area (Canadian Forest Service 2013). The area is dominated by broad plains with poor drainage, extensive wetlands and numerous small lakes. Linear features are occasionally present including relict beaches and cheniers that run parallel to the Hudson Bay coast, as well as eskers deposited during the last glacial period. These geomorphic features sustain discrete microenvironments and also facilitate summer travel by dint of their elevation from the muskeg.

Fort Severn itself is near the mouth of a tidal estuary, at the end of a drainage system whose origin is deep in the Canadian Shield and the boreal forest (see Figure 2.3). The community is situated near the boundary of several ecological zones and affords a variety of terrestrial and marine resources. For example, seal and polar bear were occasionally eaten but oral history describes them as being used to feed dogs (see Figure 2.4).

The Severn River and its tributaries provide aquatic food resources such as fish, plus terrestrial resources including firewood and timber. Similarly, the trapline areas are defined by watersheds. Given the historical trends towards increased sedentarism and relatively decreased trapping intensity (see section 2.2.4 below), the river is principally used today as a travel corridor. The main community is located on the west bank of the river just south of Partridge Island, and from above the low-lying muskeg of the Hudson Bay Lowlands can be seen stretching to the horizon. A fairly flat and featureless landscape is punctuated by peaty marshes and knolls separated by stands of black spruce and tamarack, and the entire area features numerous streams, ponds, and lakes. A flight into the community quickly impresses upon the viewer exactly how much water is present in the landscape, and the challenges that it would have presented to overland transportation.

Figure 2.3
Map of Major Watersheds in Northern Ontario

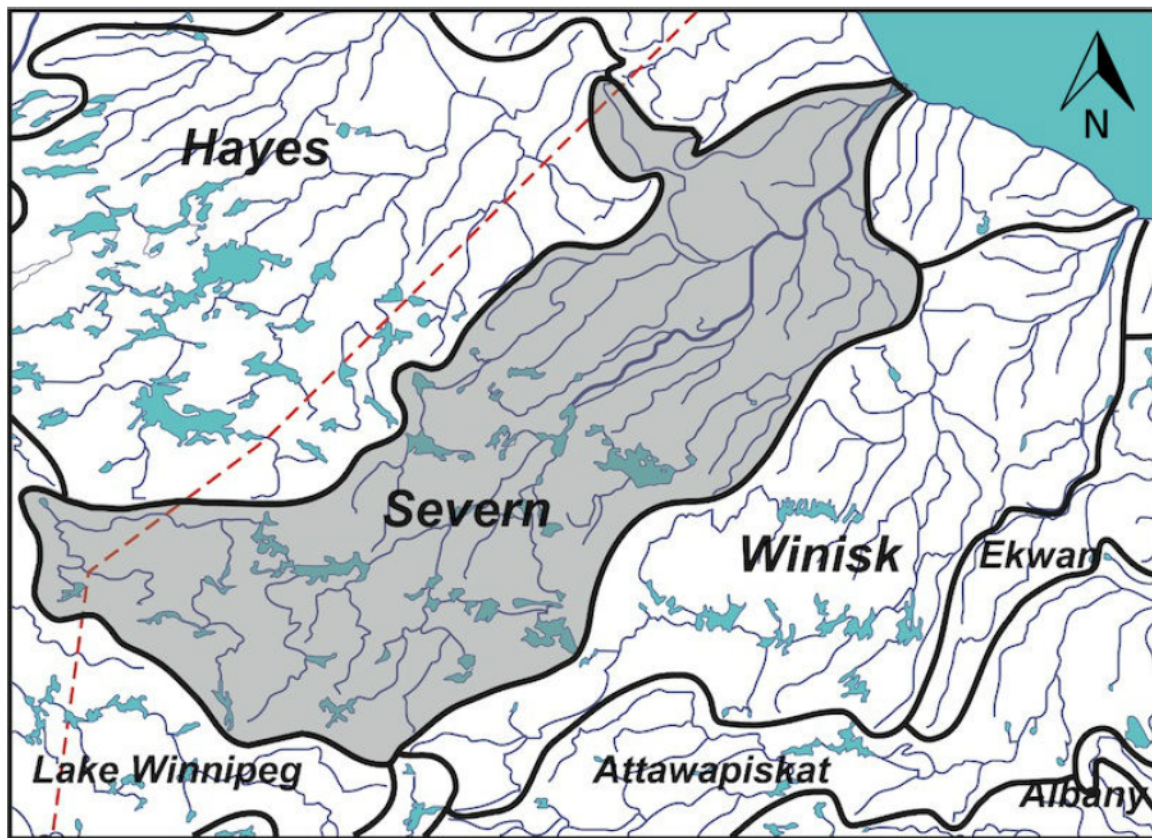


Image © Scott Hamilton, 2013.

Common terrestrial mammal species in the area include woodland caribou (*atik*; *L. Rangifer tarandus*), moose (*môs*; *L. Alces alces*), black bear (*muskwa*; *L. Ursus americanus*), polar bear (*wabusk* or *wâpask*; *L. Ursus arctos*), Arctic fox (*wâpahkeshiw*; *L. Vulpes lagopus*), and American marten (*wâpistân*; *L. Martes americana*). Most of these are resident year-round except caribou, whose annual migration brings them close to the community during the winter months. A number of aquatic and marine species are important for subsistence and commercial use including beaver (*amisk*; *L. Castor canadensis*), muskrat

(*wacashk*; L. *Ondatra zibethicus*), otter (*nikik*; L. *Lontra canadensis*), and various fish species (*kinosew*; e.g. northern pike (*Esox lucius*), pickerel (*Sander vitreus*), brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), and others). Of lesser importance are marine mammals like ringed seal (*âhkik*; L. *Pusa hispida*) and beluga whale (*wâpamek*; L. *Delphinapterus leucas*). Also present in the area are a variety of migratory and resident bird species including Canada geese (*niska*; L. *Branta canadensis*), blue and snow geese (*waywew*; L. *Chen caerulescens*), and willow ptarmigan (*pinew*; L. *Lagopus lagopus*). Geese in particular are the focus of spring harvests, with hunters congregating on the marine coast to intercept their annual migration and to fill their freezers for the rest of the year.

Populations of some species of commercial and subsistence importance fluctuated considerably during the 20th century. While present in the archaeological record, moose were absent from the area for some time prior to 1900. By 1950 they had again reached the Hudson Bay Lowlands (Peterson 1957: 46-47). Some interview participants in this research suggested that marten were also late arrivals to the region (see Appendix 1: Moses Kakekaspan; Ezra Kakekaspan; Isaac Matthews). Beaver populations were seriously depleted in the early 19th century, rebounded by the early 20th century, and were again decimated by a tularemia outbreak in 1948-51 that also affected humans (Labzoffsky and Sprent, 1952; Millar 1953). Its population has since rebounded.

Woodland caribou numbers increased in the middle decades of the 20th century (Peterson 1957: 54) before declining across the north (Ontario Woodland

Figure 2.4

Eseas Thomas of Fort Severn with a bearded seal, at the mouth of the Severn River. 1955. John Macfie fonds, Archives of Ontario, C 330-13-0-0-202



Caribou Recovery Team 2008: vi). The boreal population is now designated as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and listed as a Schedule 1 species under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (Callaghan et al. 2011: 1). Polar bears have also been listed as Threatened under the Ontario *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources 2011) and as a species of concern by COSEWIC. Their management is a topic of ongoing international discussion. The listing of caribou and polar bears limits Aboriginal harvesting, the degree of which is still being determined. It is known that both caribou and polar bear were harvested regularly throughout historic times (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5

A female polar bear about to be butchered in the village of Fort Severn.
August, 1953. John Macfie fonds, Archives of Ontario, C 330-14-0-0-172



2.1.1 Cultural Geography

The people of Fort Severn self-identify as Mushkegowuk (sing. Mushkego) or more colloquially as Cree. The earlier ethnonym means swamp or muskeg, and is sometimes rendered 'Omushkego' especially in older sources. The Mushkegowuk are a Cree sub-group variously identified in the historical literature as Swampy Cree, Lowland Cree, and Home-Guard Cree, and occasionally conflated with the West Main Cree when in fact that term refers to the Moose Cree situated around James Bay (Lytwyn 2002: xi; 3-4). Speakers of Mushkego are distributed across north-central Manitoba and as far east as James Bay,

though principally along the Ontario coast of Hudson Bay (see Figure 2.6). They are historically associated with the Hudson's Bay Company by dint of their physical proximity to the bayside fur trade posts (hence the European term for this group: 'home-guard', being the Cree dwelling closest to the posts and thus close to 'home'). Their complex relationship to and conflation with the Northern Ojibwa is discussed in Lytwyn (2002), but the people of Fort Severn today identify themselves as Cree. The term 'Cree' itself may have emerged during the fur trade as a misleadingly inclusive label, and Pilon (1988) observed that the identification of the Severn River Lowland people as 'Cree' does not reflect the distinct difference between upland and lowland Cree peoples.

The local people speak the Fort Severn or Wasaho variant of the Mushkego (Swampy Cree) dialect of Cree. Regionally, Mushkego is distinct from Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) and Anishiniimowin (Oji-Cree) although the different languages overlap considerably (Mackenzie 2005). Its vocabulary exhibits a high degree of variation and redundancy that may reflect dynamic social contact and a history of long-distance travel, as people can employ synonyms that originate in Severn Cree, Ojibwe, and Oji-Cree. Elders may also use different words than young people, their vocabulary shifted in favour of describing life on the land with relatively fewer terms relating to more recent cultural and technological practices (Mackenzie 2005: ix). The younger generation is largely fluent in English. Elders vary widely in their own proficiency with English, many appearing to have a good understanding of it although they prefer to speak in their own language. During the interviews conducted for this

Figure 2.6
Languages of Ontario



Red line indicates approximate boundary of Cree language area. Light red shading indicates extent of Washaho (West Swampy Cree) dialect. Modified from *Languages of Ontario* map © Christopher Harvey 2011.

research, it was not uncommon for elders to slip into English in order to describe some concepts either because the terms were lacking in their native tongue, or because they had to communicate across a dialectal distance with a younger generation.

Fort Severn is governed by a chief and band council, consisting of a chief, deputy chief, and three councillors, and using a custom electoral system.

Officials are elected to two-year terms. In 1992 the reserve was a founding member of the Keewaytinook Okimakanak / Northern Chiefs tribal council, a non-political body that advises and assists its member First Nations (Keewaytinook Okimakanak 2010, 2012). It is the sole Cree member of this group of six northern Ontario Aboriginal communities. Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO) in turn is a member of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN), a political territorial organization that represents Treaty No. 9 communities, advocating on their behalf with provincial and federal entities (see Figure 2.7).

The community is fully modern in most aspects though there are chronic issues of limited supply and repair. The community is not connected to the provincial power grid and electricity is provided by diesel generators. It is connected to the provincial telephone system, though cellular phone connections are limited or impossible at the current time. Broadband Internet is available, but computer ownership is limited by community members' individual financial means. The local grocery is fairly well stocked, though food prices are high due to transportation costs.

Statistical Profile (1946-1966)

Fort Severn remained for decades a small, isolated community on the Hudson Bay coast (see Figure 2.8). Statistics are incomplete for the middle decades of the 20th century. However some information is available for the period immediately prior to the study period and at its end. In 1941, Jack Grew of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests (the predecessor of MNR) wrote to D.J. Allan, Superintendent of Reserves and Trusts, Department of Mines and Resources, on the results of Treaty visits to Aboriginal communities across

Figure 2.7
Treaty Areas of Ontario

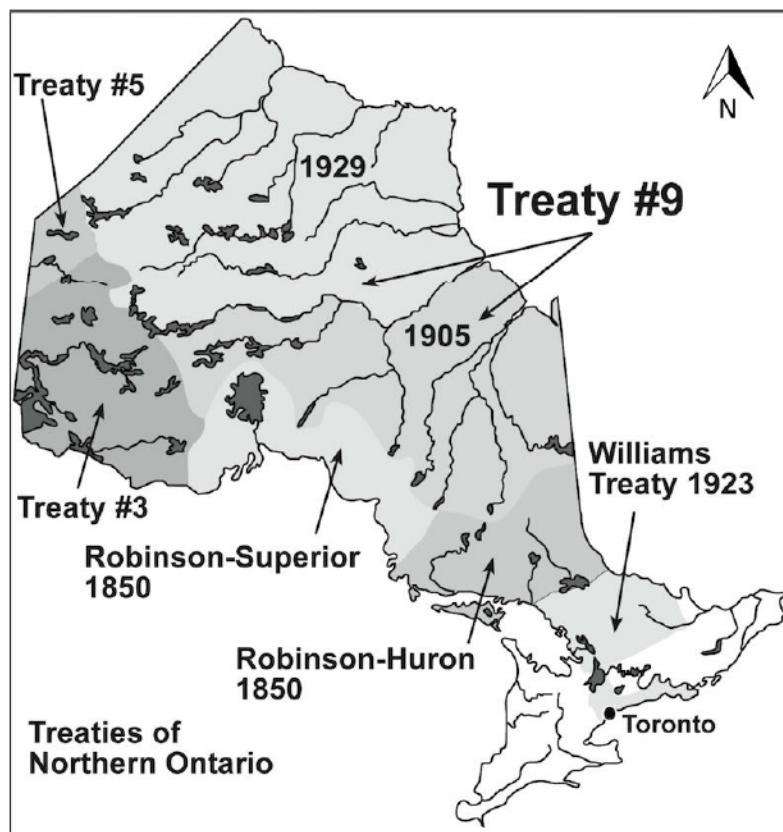


Image © Scott Hamilton, 2013

northern Ontario (Grew 1941). Grew reported that Fort Severn had a population of 105 persons of whom 25 were trappers. Grew commented that the Fort Severn band, along with those living at Weenusk, “appear to be the most progressive and materially better off than any of the Bands visited”. The community was said to be neat and well-maintained and that trapline revenues were robust.

Figure 2.8

Settlement at Fort Severn. Circa 1955. John Macfie fonds. Archives of Ontario. C 330-14-0-0-13



By 1966 the population of Fort Severn had only risen to 115 with some scattered families at Rocksand (Schnupp et al. 1967: 74-75). For the year 1963 Rogers (1966: 56) shows the trappers in the community to number 41. Over a period from 1950 to 1963, Rogers noted that the number of trappers had

fluctuated from 32 in 1950 to a low of 15 in 1956 before quickly rebounding to the higher number seen in 1963. He attributed the decline in trapping seen in the late 1950s to the fact that many men moved to Weenusk to pursue wage labour during the construction of Mid-Canada Line Base 500 (Rogers 1966: 28). The average number of trappers per line ranged from 3.9 in the forested inland areas to 5.5 for those on the coast (Rogers 1966: 30). The size of the trapping group had decreased in previous years, which Rogers attributed to increased sedentarism and out-migration. However Rogers thought that Fort Severn had been affected less than other bands by virtue of its isolation from acculturative processes and that its trapping groups most closely resembled those of the Early Contact Traditional period (Rogers 1966: 30; 36-37). Overall he observed a trend of reduction in the number of trappers taking fur in the total area, even factoring in actual and predicted population increases (Rogers 1966: 27).

Data on language and religious affiliation are unavailable, though a picture of the latter could possibly be constructed from Anglican and Catholic parish records. The dominant local language is presumed to be Mushkego, supported by the fact that most elders who participated in this research were more comfortable speaking in Mushkego than in English. In his correspondence, Grew (1941: 14) noted that interpreters were required at each stop on his trip, including Fort Severn.

Statistical Profile (Modern)

In 2012, Fort Severn reserve had a registered population of 644 of which 510 were resident on the reserve (AANDC 2012). On-reserve males numbered 246, and females 251; off-reserve males numbered 63, females 71.

Detailed census data were unavailable for the community at the time of study, the only data available being from the 2001 national census (Statistics Canada 2002). In 2001, the resident population of Fort Severn was 400, which was divided equally between men and women. The population change recorded from 1996 was +10.8%, well above the Ontario population growth rate of +6.1%. The increase in recorded population from 2001 to 2012 is consistent with this rate of growth. In terms of residency and mobility, 71.25% of the residents had lived at the same residence five years previously, well higher than the provincial rate of 53.18%, and only 2.5% of the population had lived in another province or territory five years prior. Given the low mobility numbers and the low rate of immigration into Fort Severn these numbers are evidence for a high local birthrate.

In 2001, the median age in Fort Severn was 21.1 and over half of the community (53.75%) was under the age of 24. The community consisted of 90 family households distributed over an area of 44 square kilometres, none of which were privately owned and nearly three quarters of which were built before 1991. Owing to the nature of reserves, land tenure is communal in the sense that

land rights are held by the Crown and administered by AANDC on behalf of the reserve. Individual home ownership is not possible under this model.

As noted previously, an overwhelming majority of residents (93.75%) did not speak English or French as their first language. The language most often used in the workplace was English (50%), followed by 34.4% who reported using English and a non-official language (i.e., Mushkego) and 15.6% using only a non-official language.

The census also indicated that the community is largely Christian, reflecting four centuries of fairly regular contact with European traders and missionaries. The outward face of the community is Christian, though some traditional beliefs persist (see Chapter 6). Most people (61.25%) identified as Protestant (probably Anglican and Presbyterian), with smaller numbers reporting Catholic (8.75%), Christian not otherwise stated (16.25%), or no religion (15.00%).

No major resource extraction or heavy industry is present in the area so the majority of local jobs are trades or service-related, often funded by the band or by government agencies. In 2001, the median family income was \$36,992, significantly below the provincial average of \$61,024. Most adult men (67.50%) were employed whereas only about a third of women (32.50%) held employment. Data from 2000 indicated that employment earnings made up 78% of the average income, government transfers 20.8%, and other income about 1.0%. Employment was nearly evenly distributed between management (14.81%), business, finance and administration (18.51%), social science, education,

government service and religion (11.11%), sales and service (25.93%), and trades and transport (22.22%). Women dominated the business, finance and administration sector (having all 25 positions) and sales and service (having 20 of 30 positions) and were less represented in trades (having 10 of 30 positions). No persons were noted as being employed in the sector of arts, culture, recreation and sport, though in 2011 the author was aware of some persons that worked as guides and had done so for many years.

The community is characterized by having a low level of formal schooling. 55.6% of the population between ages 20 and 34 had less than high school equivalency, as did 50% of those between 35 and 44. High school graduates made up 16.7% and 25.0% of the respective cohorts; similar numbers held trade certificates though these were exclusively men. At the time of the 2001 census no one in the community was reported as having a university degree. The situation in 2011-2012 is unknown due to limited census data; to the author these numbers looked similar to the current situation in the community.

In 2012, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources reported that 38 Fort Severn community members were registered on ten (10) traplines, of which roughly half were located on the coast and half inland. The average number of trappers per line was 3.6 (Beaudin pers. comm. 2012). These values should be taken with the caveat that MNR had no data on personal trapping, only on commercial use.

Recall here the earlier observation by Rogers that the absolute number of trappers working the traplines was remaining constant even as the total

community population was increasing. His calculated averages in 1963 of total number of trappers (N=41) and the mean numbers of trappers per trapline (3.9 inland, 5.5 on the coast) are not dramatically different from modern numbers (N=38, mean 3.6 per trapline). This is despite the total population increasing by over five times between 1966 and 2001. The suggestion is that absolute trapping activity has not diminished, but it is less significant as a relative part of the total economy.

The portrait of modern Fort Severn painted by these numbers is that of a geographically isolated Aboriginal community that is relatively poor and partly dependent on transfer payments. The statistical profile agrees with the general trends listed by Southcott (2006) for northern Ontario's Aboriginal communities. He noted that the population in these communities tends to be growing and is younger than the norms for the region. Their youth were also not leaving in as great numbers as in non-Aboriginal communities (Southcott 2006: 224). The community's land base is largely controlled by the federal government, though trapline areas are subject to a measure of local control. The community is growing and is characterized by low mobility and limited formal education. Traditional activities appear to make up a relatively small portion of the local economy, possibly due to their underreporting in the census or being monetarily invisible owing to barter and other arrangements. During fieldwork, the author did not observe any marked deviation from this description of the economy.

CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL CULTURE HISTORY

This chapter provides an overview of the history of Fort Severn after cultural contact between the Mushkegowuk and Europeans. The intent is to provide the spatial and temporal context for subsequent chapters. It concludes with a discussion of previous research in the area that is relevant to understanding the issues of local history and furbearer management.

It should be noted here that this chapter outlines history almost entirely from a Euro-Canadian point of view. Written indigenous views of Contact are few and personal, though elements of the Post-Contact dynamic relationship are contained in the interviews (see Chapter 6 and Appendix 1). The linear cause-and-effect format of standard historical discourse presented here is useful as an introductory framework though limited by the lack of indigenous context.

3.1 Culture History

The chronological framework used in this research follows the model devised by June Helm and Edward S. Rogers who applied it to the North American Subarctic region (Helm et al. 1981: 146). The discussion attributes a qualitative difference between what are sometimes called the Pre-Contact and

Post-Contact periods, constructing the process of cultural contact between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples as being a critical historical event. The latter period is further reduced into three sub-periods (eras) that reflect the tenor of contact between Aboriginal and European/Euro-Canadian culture groups. The framework is an idealized one and the dates assigned to each period can be considered arbitrary, with local processes modifying the range of periods. The chronological framework used in this research is outlined below.

I. General Periods of North American Culture History

- Pre-Contact – The time before European arrival in the New World.
- Protocontact – A variable time before direct European contact but when the effects of more distant contact can be perceived ahead of their arrival, e.g. trade goods, information, introduced disease.
- Post-Contact – The time after European arrival in the New World.

In order to reflect the changing territories of European powers, historians and archaeologists often divide the Post-Contact (or Historic) period in Canada into three periods. These are: 1) the French Period, which begins with Cartier's arrival in 1534 and ends in 1763 with the cession of French claims in the Treaty of Paris; 2) the British Period, beginning in 1763 until Confederation in 1867; and 3) the Canadian Period, which covers 1867 to the present day. In the case of Fort Severn, it alternated being under French and British control during the 17th

and 18th centuries, but for better part of its history the region was interacting predominantly with traders other than the French.

In this circumstance, it is still more useful to use the chronology of Helm et al. (1981), which reflects Aboriginal ethnohistoric dynamics rather than simply referencing which European dynasty was in charge. Helm et al. also characterize the Post-Contact Period as having three subdivisions, but these reflect the type of cross-cultural interaction. Their divisions are as follows:

II. Post-Contact Phases of Engagement (modified from Helm et al. 1981):

- Early Contact Era (1689-1821)
- Contact-Traditional Era (1821-1945)
- Modern Era (1946-present)

The dates for the Post-Contact Phases reflect modifications by the author of the chronology of Helm et al., taking into account the earliest recorded date of contact between Europeans and local Aboriginal populations. It could be argued that a chronological division could be made in 1930 with Fort Severn's signing of Treaty No. 9. The Treaty was (and is) significant to people in the region as it brought the community into formal relations with the Crown, providing greater resources at the cost of autonomy over traditional lands. However Fort Severn was remote and its traditional territory remained largely undeveloped. Major changes from the treaties were not realized until after the period of this research, during which time court cases like *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997) and *R.*

v. Sparrow (1990) clarified and in some cases expanded Aboriginal land rights. Between 1930 and the 1970s, the community experienced several incremental changes concerning land and resources, none of which altered existing dynamics overnight. These included the introduction of conservation measures, the establishment of the registered traplines, and the provision by various levels of government of social services and assistance. These shifts in government policy and services all reinforced a growing tendency towards sedentarism, though the community's isolation appears to have slowed the process of acculturation. One early significant effect was the extension of provincial wildlife laws to the region, the reaction to which are mentioned in the interviews in Chapter 6. In short, the signing of Treaty No. 9 was the beginning of a process that did not reach fruition for another twenty years, and numerous other forces shaped the outcome.

The reader should note that any discussion of chronology is somewhat arbitrary and imposed from without, without regard to the views of the participants. As with any historical sequence, the one being used has its intrinsic assumptions and biases. By focusing on names, events, and dates, there is a risk of neglecting discussion of cultural and historical processes as well as stories running counter to the dominant narrative. However chronology is the common reference point for the disciplines of anthropology and history. The question is how to define what is historical.

On this point, Silliman (2005) points out that inter-cultural contact is not an event but a process, meaning that its distillation to pivot points (Pre-Contact versus Post-Contact) divorces history from meaning. Furthermore, as a concept

contact includes directionality in culture change, the term's use tending to obscure or justify what he considers an underlying colonialist process. In applying this nomenclature one accepts and emphasizes an outside point of view, be it that of the colonizer, the historian, or both. In spite of its limitations, the researcher is compelled to use the extant terminology of Helm et al. (1981) due to its ubiquity in comparative literature, leaving discussion of directed change to subsequent chapters. The framework introduced above attributes importance to three events: (1) Contact (starting in earnest with the establishment of Fort Severn by the British in 1689); (2) the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC) in 1821; and (3) the end of World War II in 1945 and the emergence of modern governmental models of social governance and resource management. These are not arbitrary constructs. As will be demonstrated in the later discussion of results, each of these events did coincide with subsequent changes in local subsistence and economy. This is not to say that the Mushkegowuk were passive receivers of imposed changes, but rather that periods of changing direction and nature of cultural contact mark the temporal parameters of the discussion.

As will be shown in the subsequent discussion of the history of furbearer management (Chapter 4), certain changes occurred at or around each of these three critical events that fundamentally altered the relationship between Aboriginal trappers and their Euro-Canadian partners. In general, the contact between Europeans and Aboriginal peoples was a significant event that brought changes to demography and material culture. It was also the foundation for the

fur trade and its 400 years of economic activity. The amalgamation of the HBC and NWC was locally significant because the end of major competition in the fur trade meant the creation of an HBC trading monopoly, and the corporate model shifted from a competitive basis to one of profit maintenance. It also meant the elimination of the privileged middleman role formerly played by Aboriginal partners in the Fur Trade, and the institution of conservation measures by the HBC in order to shift the Fur Trade to long-term profitability. Lastly, the end of World War II was locally significant, albeit more indirectly than the previous two factors. Provincially imposed conservation changes that had been underway during the decades prior to the war had stalled during the war only to start anew upon the end of overseas hostilities. The return of soldiers to the labour force and the reorientation of the domestic economy from a wartime to a peacetime footing meant changes in economic development. Large-scale projects were instituted in the North including the Mid-Canada Line of radar installations (see Figure 2.1), and post-war increases in the availability of aircraft and pilots exposed the North to greater degrees of cultural contact. A tendency towards increased centralization and bureaucratization culminated in the extension of southern services to Aboriginal Canadians (e.g. welfare transfer payments, residential schools, missions, nursing stations, etc.) and an increased regulation of their daily lives. The end of World War II did not change things overnight but marked the beginning of Fort Severn's transition to the modern day.

3.2.1 Pre-Contact Period

The lower Severn River area has been occupied by Aboriginal peoples for thousands of years prior to contact with Europeans. Lytwyn (2002: 27-38) provides an overview of the history of Pre-Contact archaeology in the lower Severn system, noting that prior to the 1970s the whole of the Hudson Bay Lowlands were considered a sort of *terra nullius*. Archaeologists and historians characterized the human occupation of the region as being sparse, intensified only as a result of the historic fur trade. A series of discoveries in the 1970s and 1980s strongly suggested otherwise and lent credence to the notion of long-term human occupation of the region. Pilon (1990) suggested that humans have been resident in the area of Fort Severn for at least 2000 years and observed great continuity in the local archaeological record. He noted that “[c]hanges in material remains, as well as in the faunal assemblages suggest that major elements of the traditional lifestyle persisted well beyond the initial contact period” (Pilon 1990: 141). Caribou dominated the faunal assemblages on the lower Severn River, declining only in the 19th Century (which coincides with the historic records of declining caribou population numbers).

Work in the early 1980s demonstrated year-round occupation was not only possible in the Hudson Bay Lowlands but that Aboriginal peoples had been present for at least 1500 years. For example, Pilon’s interpretation of faunal remains at the Ouabouche Site (GkJa-3) near Whiteseal Falls (see Figure 2.1: 7) suggested a year-round occupation marked by a diversified subsistence regime

with seasonal peaks in furbearer harvest. This occupation persisted from Pre-Contact times into the early Fur Trade era (Pilon 1987). Kenneth Lister's work at Shamattawa Rapids near Weenusk described fish weirs dating to 3920 ± 180 years BP (Lister 1988; Beta 11642). Experience with historic Aboriginal subsistence suggests that fish weirs tend to be re-used for generations, just as with portages and other land-water interfaces. The presence of weirs and fish remains in Pre-Contact sites support the continuity of an ancient generalized seasonal round in which Aboriginal peoples aggregated during the summer to exploit fishing places before dispersing in winter to family-based hunting and trapping camps (Rogers and Smith 1981: 130-137). Mobility would have been greatest during the winter months when firm footing facilitated overland travel, though extensive social and trade networks were still possible through summer canoe traffic.

The construction and maintenance of large fish weirs suggests that summer gatherings involved a substantial degree of social organization, perhaps acting as a venue for social contact, marriage, ritual, and exchange. All of these would contribute to the social reproduction of widely dispersed family-based bands and to inter-band cohesion. Group sizes may not have been large, and Lytwyn (2002: 24) estimated that around the time of Contact the population of the entire Hudson Bay Lowlands likely did not exceed 2000. Winter populations tended to be organized around the immediate or extended family, whereas summer aggregations were groups related through shared history and intermarriage. Their dispersal during the winter would serve to limit risk by

spreading out the group's footprint on the land while maximizing individual opportunities to intercept game. Aggregation in the summer increased social contact between family units allowing for the sharing of information and resources, facilitating ritual activity and social phenomena such as marriage (Rogers and Smith 1981: 135, 137; 143-144). Lytwyn (2002: 7) noted that group identity would be maintained through marriage connections, ceremonies, and feasts, activities that necessitate social aggregation.

The mainstays of Aboriginal subsistence were fish in summer and big game such as moose and caribou during fall and winter, with furbearing mammals making up a smaller percentage (Rogers and Smith 1981: 134-137). Furbearing mammals, such as beaver, otter, and fox, varied in their significance to local diet and were trapped primarily for their pelts, either for domestic use (e.g. clothing) or commercial sale. They were also occasionally eaten, at least in historic times (e.g., see Appendix 1: Delia Stoney). Occasional downturns in resource abundance could be offset through a generalized and opportunistic subsistence pattern characterized by seasonal mobility. This pattern is not grossly dissimilar to the historic Muskego round, though obviously lacking the intensive economic focus of the fur trade and without the centralizing presence of a community centre.

3.2.2 *Early Contact Era*

During the seventeenth century sporadic contacts occurred between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans along the Hudson Bay coast. Contact with Europeans in the Hudson Bay and James Bay regions first occurred in 1668 with the arrival of an expedition led by Médard Chouart des Groseilliers on the ship *Nonsuch*, captained by Zachariah Gillam (Moriarty 1979). This expedition led to the formation of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, triggering its long history of economic activity throughout much of northern Canada. It also intensified territorial rivalry between the French and English, resulting in the establishment of numerous bayside fortified posts. For the locations of some of the posts and place names relevant to this discussion, refer to Figure 2.1 in the previous chapter.

As noted by Ray (1998: 126-132), for Aboriginal people, these locations served as a market for goods (furs and provisions) and as a venue for exchanging labour and local knowledge for non-local material culture. They were also symbols of European presence, as much to other Europeans as to anyone else. The social aspect of this relationship cannot be overestimated, culminating as it did in shared destinies and mingled bloodlines. The primary function of the fur trade was economic but trade occurred "within a framework of delicate political alliances in which ceremonies, feasts, and gift-giving continued to be important" (Lytwyn 2002: 133). The foundations laid down in the 17th century helped to shape modern Fort Severn.

Fur trading with Europeans and Euro-Canadians has occurred in and around the current location of Fort Severn since 1685 (Archives of Manitoba 2012). In that year the HBC established a post at the mouth of the Severn River identified both as New Severn and Churchill Fort. It was primarily intended to provide an extra level of security against the French for HBC activities in James and Hudson Bays. It was the first of several fur trade posts located near modern Fort Severn, being constructed of "logs with 4 bastions" (Voorhis 1930:162, in Christianson 1980). The people living in the region traded until 1690 when the HBC burned their post at Severn on orders by Governor Thomas Walsh to prevent its capture by French forces led by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville (Crouse 1954: 65, in Christianson 1980; Pothier 1969). D'Iberville was an extremely effective opponent of British plans in and around Hudson Bay, both through his military campaigns and by soliciting support from the Crown for a French corporate presence rivaling the HBC. Largely due to his actions, at the beginning of the 18th century the bottom of Hudson Bay was in French hands.

Between c.1700 and 1704, the French briefly maintained a fort called Nieu Savane upstream of the English post, on the south bank about five kilometers south of modern Fort Severn. Apparently only a summer trading post, the French abandoned the location due to its inability to turn a profit (Christianson 1980: 24). By 1713, the political situation had reversed and the bayside posts returned to British control following the Treaty of Utrecht. For the next 50 years, the people living near and trading with Fort Severn fell within a middle ground between the HBC posts at York Factory and Fort Albany. Those living closer to Hudson Bay

tended to trade with York Factory or middlemen from that post, while those living inland traded with Fort Albany (Ray and Freeman 1978: 40-41, 43-52).

In 1759, the British constructed James Fort three miles (five kilometres) south of their former post, located on the north bank of the Severn River near the modern town site (Christianson 1980: 29, 32, 36; HBCA 2012). The post was a key transport post as it was situated between York Factory and Fort Albany. At this time, the York Factory district administered Severn. Furs brought by various Aboriginal peoples for trade at Fort Severn were transported by boat to York Factory and then sent to Europe. A review of the Severn account books (1759-1899) suggests that many of the residents around Fort Severn also undertook various duties around the post, including hauling trading goods and furs along the coast to and from York Fort.

By the 1780s, Fort Severn's economic success began to wane due to competition upriver from Canadian traders including the Northwest Company (NWC) from Montreal. During this period, many inland Aboriginal groups chose to not trade exclusively with the HBC, putting pressure on its profits across the continent. As well, in 1782 the French attacked Severn Post while they were allied with the Thirteen Colonies during the American Revolutionary War, but the fort remained in English hands through the rest of the Early Contact period. In the wake of such pressures, the HBC reorganized its continental operations. The Fort Severn District of the HBC was established in 1814 with Severn as its headquarters. Smaller inland posts were also established during this period and

many groups traded with local posts, which then sent furs to Severn. In turn, these were sent to York Factory and then overseas.

Following initial Contact, there appears to have been a continuation of traditional subsistence practices, at least along the lower 40 kilometres of the Severn River and in the Beaverstone locality. An examination of several Historic sites in the Lower Severn system suggests that European trade goods did not necessarily replace old technologies but were incorporated into existing Mushkego material culture. The generalized seasonal round previously described was modified to include visits to the bayside trading posts (and later upland subsidiaries) which constituted new resource patches in the environment (Pilon 1990: 136). The Mushkegowuk living near Fort Severn were effectively situated near a stable year-round resource patch, its utility possibly promoting decreased ranges for families living close to the post. Bishop (1994: 286) noted that the groups attached to the coastal HBC posts devoted more time to trapping than did the more southerly Anishinaabek (Ojibwe), with commensurate increases in European and Canadian goods reflected in their material culture. This pattern was also visible in Pilon's (1990) analysis of Historic Aboriginal sites in the Severn River basin, in which European goods were more common in coastal sites (though this may be a function of proximity rather than a strict separation between coastal and inland populations).

During this period numerous outbreaks of epidemic disease affected the residents of the Hudson Bay Lowlands. The smallpox epidemic of 1782-83 essentially halved the population, which rebounded by 1820 (Lytwyn 2002: 24).

During this time, the population in the vicinity of Fort Severn was probably around 75 to 100 people. The coastal population came to interact with the Post more frequently and acted as 'middlemen' for trade to their relatives inland and those living upland including the Anishinaabe (Ray 1998: 61-70). Existing social ties between coastal and inland groups facilitated and maintained the fur trade network, the middlemen profiting materially and socially by dint of their privileged position. This process of habituation could be regarded as a form of social and economic specialization. Hickerson (1973) argued that Aboriginal groups that linked their economies to the fur trade lost control of the means of production and therefore became dependent upon their colonizers. More recent work has taken the tack that Aboriginal adaptations to the fur trade were a more nuanced synthesis of old and new. An argument could be made that it was a pattern of mutual dependency, and it is clear that different Aboriginal groups chose to engage with Europeans in different ways and degrees (Francis and Morantz 1983; Ray 1998).

Certain aspects of the Mushkego seasonal round, furbearer harvesting, were intensified for the benefit of the fur trade relationship. Pilon (1990: 127) observed that in some Severn River archaeological sites, furbearing mammals were relatively more common in deposits dating to the Post-Contact era compared to Pre-Contact ones. The exploitation of migrating animals occurred during the Pre-Contact era but according to both archaeological and historical sources these activities expanded significantly to aid in provisioning the fur trade

posts during the Early Contact period (Lytwyn 2002: 146-147; Ray 1998: 132-134).

This was an intensification of a pre-existing pattern rather than the adoption of an entirely new one for the benefit of Europeans. At early Historic domestic camps during this period, caribou continued to dominate faunal assemblages (Pilon 1990). While caribou harvesting was not unique to the Early Contact era, it was intensified as part of the fur trade provisioning system. Graham (1969) described how Fort Severn hunters supplied York Factory and Churchill with venison during the mid-18th century when caribou were present in high numbers. The spring goose hunt was also historically important for HBC provisioning at the bottom of Hudson Bay. Pilon (1990) pointed out that Cree provisioning facilitated the existence of the posts rather than the other way around, and questions the validity of the Home-Guard concept. To him, perceptible changes in faunal procurement patterns are not visible until the late 19th century. Prior to that the Mushkegowuk presumably followed a lifestyle otherwise basically unchanged from their ancestors (Pilon 1990: 130). Admittedly, zooarchaeology is an imperfect tool and Pilon's site sampling was limited, but the observations made are in line with the aforementioned general trends and regional trends.

In summary, the Early Contact Era was a period of limited but increasing external influence on Mushkegowuk activities. The changes included the introduction of Euro-Canadian goods and the incorporation of Fort Severn's people into a commercial economy. Subsistence-level activity appears to have

continued without serious interruption but aspects of the traditional economy may have been intensified to support the trading relationship.

3.2.3 *Contact-Traditional Era*

In 1821, the HBC and NWC amalgamated following a period of intense competition. As with many corporate acquisitions, the period following was one of consolidation, downsizing and closures. Following the end of competition with inland posts, York Factory (to the west of Fort Severn) grew significantly in size and importance, drawing larger numbers of “Home Guard Cree” from across the lowlands (Payne 2002: 57). In 1827, the HBC abandoned Severn and other smaller posts in an attempt to sway people within the region to trade directly with York Factory. The idea was that once trade had shifted, Severn would be re-established. However, before the plan could be put into place, the inactive post was destroyed by fire in 1828. Rebuilt in 1831, Severn’s operations fell under the control of York Factory. By this time a large part of trading at the HBC post became geese for post provisioning, in addition to fur destined for continental and overseas markets.

The 1821 merger had administrative effects that sound familiar in recessionary times. In the absence of the competition that made them necessary, the HBC closed superfluous posts and laid off unneeded personnel. It also became a *de facto* monopoly, meaning that its Aboriginal clientele had few to no

options regarding trade. With the development of the HBC inland transportation network, even their middleman status was threatened.

Fort Severn's trade declined in the latter half of the 19th century. Between 1860 and 1930, York Factory (and thus Severn) increasingly served only the population in the region and those of the smaller posts. Around 1885, the HBC supply network shifted from river transport on a north-south axis to railways that ran east-west (Ray 1990: 78). This coincided with a shift away from trade in furs to retail and real estate. The northern posts were slowly relegated to backwaters, and the post at Fort Severn lost its autonomy. From 1901 to about 1933, Severn's administration was shifted to the Keewatin District, and from 1933 to 1959 to the Nelson River District, continuing a century-long trend of increasingly remote management.

Fort Severn operated continuously as a fur trade post throughout this period. Between 1880 and 1892, Severn returned only \$6,561 in fur returns, the smallest post reporting in the Northern Department during that period (Ray 1990: 72). York Factory was not much more productive, having a return of \$7,909, but had almost twenty times as much capital on-hand as Severn. The highest fur returns were inland, for which York Factory was the principal transportation point to market. Severn was not only producing less profit but control over its finances had been removed. Muskrat came to dominate trade due to demand, and while beaver remained a high-value fur during this period, it declined in importance. This was reflected in the amount traded at its posts across the Hudson Bay Lowlands (Ray 1990: 56).

Human populations remained stable and relatively small during this period. In 1926, the HBC and the Reveillon Frères trading company conducted censuses of Ontario fur trade post communities to assist with the adhesions to Treaty 9. Fort Severn was noted as having a total population of 81, of which 13 were receiving Treaty payments from York Factory (Snow 1926). The population listed is hardly different from Lytwyn's estimate for the Early Contact era, or the 115 reported in 1941 (Grew 1941).

As for animal populations, it is known that beaver greatly diminished across northern Ontario at the end of the Early Contact period, and caribou herds thinned across the Subarctic by the end of the 19th century (Ray 1998: 117-125). The ancient generalized mode of subsistence would convey the Mushkegowuk a measure of resilience to buffer the impacts of such downturns. However, by the end of the 19th century their habits had changed, having engaged in a combined commercial/subsistence economy for over two hundred years. It is unclear if the people of Fort Severn experienced a local equivalent of the Fish and Hare period, a pattern of adaptation observed in the Anishinaabek between 1880 and 1920 (Rogers and Black 1976). During this period a relative scarcity of beaver coincided with low numbers of ungulates such as moose and caribou, resulting in an intensified exploitation of fish and non-preferred furbearers such as rabbit. It would be interesting to determine if an equivalent pattern of adaptation occurred on the lower Severn River, but documentary evidence is lacking at this time.

During the Contact-Traditional Era there were many changes visible in the Mushkego hunting and trapping lifestyle as they adjusted their traditional routines

to take advantage of and accommodate the fur trade. Some of these were directed changes, such as early missionary activity and engagement in international trade. Some were internal adaptations to new circumstances. Bishop (1994: 304) stated that despite the challenges of the fur trade and some changes in social and economic organization, northern Algonkian groups retained much of their old culture and belief systems. They did so through an array of adaptive strategies that maximized returns and limited effort and risk. The Mushkegowuk adapted through four centuries of cultural contact including the creation of new economic realities, the introductions of European technology, or periodic depletions of wild game.

While undocumented in the lower Severn River basin, people from other areas in the Hudson Bay lowlands have described periods of scarcity during these decades. In the first volume of *But Life Is Changing* (Weesk and Hollander 1999: 31-32), the elder Agnes Nakogee of Attawapiskat related her experiences as a child during the early 1900s. In her account, she mentioned the people's reliance on fisheries and the creation of rabbit skin blankets, both hallmarks of the period, and even described how a starving family ate their leather goods. Given a widespread crash in beaver and caribou populations and the absence of moose in the region prior to the 1930s, it is possible that a similar pattern of deprivation and decreased resilience occurred in the Severn River basin during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Exploring this issue further would be useful in describing the subsistence patterns of this period.

Cultural change was reciprocal, with European technology continuing to be added to the Mushkego toolkit and vice-versa. By the early 20th century muzzleloaders were entirely replaced by breech-loading shotguns and rifles, sales of Euro-Canadian style clothing were commonplace, and southern amenities gradually entered the Mushkego mainstream. For their part the Euro-Canadian partners in the fur trade received a number of subsistence-related technological innovations (e.g. snowshoes, toboggans, canoes,), a number of words and concepts of Aboriginal origin, and of course no small amount of fur.

Fort Severn underwent a number of significant political changes during the first three decades of the 20th century. In 1870, the HBC transferred most of its land base to the Government of Canada. Fort Severn remained a part of the Keewatin District of the Northwest Territories until 1912. At that time the district was transferred to the Province of Ontario. In 1927, the region north of the Albany River (originally called the Patricia Portion) became part of the Kenora District. Provincial authority over natural resources would have applied to Crown lands in this area upon annexation but much of the area had not been formally surrendered to the Crown.

Earlier, in 1905-06, the federal government negotiated Treaty No. 9 with many of the Aboriginal bands in northern Ontario. The Fort Severn Mushkegowuk held onto their independence for two decades longer, though they requested to enter Treaty in 1915 (Stoney 1915) and 1925 (Stangroom 1925). They signed the adhesion to *Treaty No.9* on 25 July 1930, the second last Nation after Weenusk to do so (Long 2010: 89-91; Morrison 1986: 48). While a good

deal of debate exists over what was actually promised during the treaty-making, it was generally understood by Aboriginal signatories that their ancient hunting and fishing rights would not be taken from them. The federal government set aside land for a native reserve in the Rocksands locality near the confluence of the Severn and Sachigo Rivers, within the bounds of its traditional territory described in the 1929-30 Adhesion to the James Bay Treaty of 1905 (Treaty No. 9). This is the second community locus referred to in Chapter 2.

The decision to sign the adhesion to Treaty No. 9 was undoubtedly a complex one, accented in part by events including a scarcity of furs, unusually warm weather, and a sickness that swept through the community affecting both the young and the old (Beaulieu and Finch 2011). This was compounded by a general decline in the price of furs. Beaver populations appear to have been generally healthy during this time but had entered a local downturn around 1929-31. For example, what furs were traded between February and March 1930 largely came from around Weenusk. Post Journals for 1931 also reveal that during the late summer and fall many from Weenusk journeyed to Severn to stay and trap (HBCA B.198/a/129). The Post Journals also speak of increasing debt in this period. The community was also hit hard by the accidental shooting of one of its “best hunters,” Sam Matthews in 1931. How the accident occurred is not mentioned, but he suffered a severe gunshot wound to his hand and arm. People within the community (including the post factor) assisted in paying off some of his debt, demonstrating the degree of connection between the HBC personnel and their neighbours (HBCA B.198/a/130, 3, 5-11).

This last comment demonstrates the curious role of the HBC in the daily life of the Swampy Cree. Lytwyn (2002) and Ray (1990) comment extensively on the paternalist aspect of the company, which dealt with Aboriginal peoples simultaneously as clients, patrons, suppliers, workers, wards, and (in many cases) as kin. As the HBC underwent substantial restructuring after the 1870s, the company shifted its role in community development and welfare to the government of Canada and the provinces. Initially charged with fulfilling supply contracts and distributing treaty money in addition to its mercantile duties, the company eventually turned its focus into retail trade. By 1945 it had become less of a social force in northern communities. More information on the evolution of the HBC after 1821 can be found in Arthur J. Ray's *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (1990).

In summation, Fort Severn was gradually incorporated into the administrative fabric of Ontario and Canada throughout the 20th century. As noted earlier, Fort Severn signed Treaty No. 9 as part of the 1929-1930 adhesions (the original 1905-1906 treaty area being further south and east). In so doing, it was brought into the Canadian fold. The activity of southern religious and governmental institutions increased, though the largest changes were yet to occur. As World War II came to an end, Fort Severn was poised to enter a new period of engagement with outsiders.

3.2.4 *Modern Era*

The written history of Fort Severn is perversely copious during the Fur Trade era compared to the post-war years. This is largely thanks to the existence of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) and long-term scholarly interest in the Canadian fur trade. Recent local history owes more to personal recollection than documentary sources (hence the interviews in Chapter 5). However, a broad overview can be made, and fortunately without stepping too deeply into statistics.

Several events occurred in the years after 1945 that helped to create the community that one sees today. These include: (1) demographic changes; (2) technological change; (3) the expansion of transfer payments and the governmental social welfare system; (4) changes in wage employment opportunities; and (5) the regulation of natural resources and traditional lifestyles. Many of these trends have their origins in the years before 1945 but their cumulative impact was probably not significant until that time.

The major change in local demography derives from the increase in population size. As stated earlier, the population of Fort Severn is currently just over 500, an increase of nearly 400% from the mid-1960s. Possible reasons for this include the introduction of community-based health care and increased food security related to the regular nature of social assistance. At the same time as the population was growing, a number of technological changes became commonplace in the region. Overland travel was extended by the development of

snow machines in the 1930s and their widespread adoption by northern communities in the 1970s. Regular winter road service was introduced in the 1980s, allowing long-range contact and transport between northern communities. Lastly, the introduction of air transportation fundamentally altered the nature of freighting and passenger traffic, reducing reliance on waterways and increasing mobility. This also can potentially affect health by allowing for medical evacuation flights and neonatal care in southern Canadian centres.

In 1955, the Department of National Defense began construction of the Mid-Canada Line of radar bases, including the sector control station Site 500 near Weenusk. Between 1955 and 1959, this contributed to the wage economy as men from Fort Severn routinely obtained employment in Weenusk. This harkened back to the fur trade in which Aboriginal labour was the backbone of northern development. Unfortunately, the project was short-lived and men returned to Fort Severn in 1959. Four years of wage labour may have had effects on the local economy and personal expectations, and Rogers (1966: 36) noted a decline in trapping among adult males who were otherwise engaged in Weenusk. Rogers also noted low trapping yields and a developing disinterest for trapping among teenaged and young adult males, who may have seen trapping as excessively difficult or of low yield compared to wage labour. Rogers speculated that the cause was an inadequate opportunity to learn trapline skills. Youth were increasingly enrolled in schools, and their fathers were often employed in Weenusk. A new wage-based economy was available to them, but industrial

Figure 3.2
Fox trap, near Fort Severn. 1955. John Macfie fonds, Archives of Ontario, C 330-13-0-0-173.



Figure 3.3
Trapping gear cached at mouth of Niskibi River near Fort Severn. 1955. John Macfie fonds, Archives of Ontario, C 330-13-0-0-18.



options had again declined. Trapping continued in the community but had become an occupation for older men (Rogers 1966).

Several participants in this research discussed work on the radar sites and their ongoing impact on the landscape (see Appendix 1: Theresa Kakekaspan; George Thomas; Ernest Thomas). The now-decommissioned bases are currently the focus of remediation efforts and some community members have linked them to negative environmental effects. These include pollution and disrupting animal migrations, both of which were seen by two participants as impacting activity on their traditional lands. For more on this topic, refer to the interview results in Chapter 6 and their discussion in Chapter 7.

At the same time as the traditional way of life was changing, there were effects from southern initiatives. These included the expansion of the social welfare system to Aboriginal people in 1946, the mandatory education of children including the residential school system (which further reduced children's time on the land), and the construction of a nursing station. The last factor is the introduction of wildlife management measures by the Ontario government. Chief among these is the Registered Trapline System, which was introduced in 1946 and extended to Fort Severn in 1948. The origins of trapline management in Ontario will be discussed in Chapter 4, and the community's memories of its effects in Chapter 6.

Many of the events in the Modern Era were directed changes, externally imposed or dictated by political or economic factors. This contrasts sharply with the Early Contact and Contact-Traditional eras that were characterized by a two-

way agency on a more even footing. The federal Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) in conjunction with other federal and provincial agencies largely oversaw these changes that affected northern Ontario. In this way, government assumed the paternalistic role formerly played by the HBC.

The HBC was quickly reduced to a retail operation, its aforementioned paternal role in land administration and social policy replaced by government agencies in the 1930s and 1940s (Ray 1990). In 1959, the Fort Severn trading post became a Northern Store that was in operation until 1987 when the stores were sold to the Hudson's Bay Northern Stores, later called the North West Company. That store location is currently used as a warehouse, the retail operations having moved to a new building sometime during the 1980s or 1990s. By this time, HBC operations may have shifted to the south bank, nearer to the community. In 1973, the reserve was relocated to the mouth of the Severn River on Hudson Bay, presumably for more direct access to shipping. The reserve achieved full status on January 11, 1980 (Keewaytinook Okimakanak 2010).

In 1973, the Cree and Anishinaabek signatories of Treaty No. 9 organized themselves politically into Grand Council Treaty No. 9, now called the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) (Lovisek 1999). One of three political territorial organizations in the province, it represents 49 First Nations in the treaty area. It maintains a variety of community and economic programs including medical services, policing, and treaty rights and land claims research. In the 1990s, it assumed some responsibilities for wildlife management.

Despite the many changes in economic and political organization, the Mushkego of Fort Severn showed remarkable resilience and held onto many traditional ways of life. An analysis by Berkes et al. (1995) suggested the persistence of geographically extensive land use for hunting and fishing in Mushkego territory, even as trapping and hunting ranges declined in neighbouring areas. Rogers (1966: 35-36) observed these patterns developing during the mid-1960s and also commented that the Fort Severn population seemed to retain more extensive traplines and larger trapping groups, perhaps by dint of their greater relative isolation as compared to their relations in Attawapiskat. The patterns of land utilization (e.g. hunting, trapping, fishing) described by Rogers in the 1960s are similar to those of the Kayahna Tribal Council in the early 1980s, particularly in the general extent of harvest areas (Kayahna Tribal Area Council 1985). Clearly, even as the details of land use and access were changing for the Mushkegowuk, they were remaining fundamentally similar to previous practice.

3.3 Summary

The Fort Severn region underwent tremendous cultural change in the three centuries since first contact between Mushkegowuk and Europeans. The Early Contact and Early Contact Traditional Eras witnessed a dynamic interaction of Euro-Canadian fur traders with Mushkego trappers, hunters, and middlemen. The traditional way of life was largely retained though trapping was intensified to

fulfill trading demands. The trading post expanded resources available to the community and its employees incorporated into the social landscape. The people of Fort Severn retained a considerable degree of autonomy until after 1821, at which time reorganization of the HBC eroded their economic position and reduced the post's economic stature. Fort Severn became economically marginal in the late 19th and early 20th century, after which it joined Treaty No. 9 and was absorbed into the political fabric of Ontario. It was increasingly affected by external factors after this point, including the introduction of government services and assistance. Nonetheless, Fort Severn remained socially and physically remote from southern Ontario, which, as the next chapter illustrates, was set to change the control of its lands and natural resources.

CHAPTER 4

THE HISTORY OF THE REGISTERED TRAPLINE SYSTEM IN ONTARIO

This chapter provides the contextual frame for government decisions and community adaptation in the late 1940s that is the subject of the interviews presented in Chapter 6. Describing the evolution of land and wildlife management in Ontario establishes the rationale behind then-new laws and regulations. It begins with a discussion of land tenure systems prior to and after Contact between the Mushkegowuk and Europeans; then, it characterizes the bureaucratization of trapline management that began in the late 1940s before abruptly changing in the 1990s following an agreement between the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and the Province of Ontario.

The principal sources for this chapter are V. Crichton's *Registered Traplines* (1948) and Lise Hansen's *Indian Trapping Territories and the Development of the Registered Trapline System in Ontario* (1989). No other summaries of Ontario's registered trapline system provide adequate detail on the reasons for its inception. No intervening sources were found that reviewed the system's long-term implementation and ultimate modification. This chapter frames the abovementioned works within the broader thematic history of wildlife management in Canada.

4.1 Land Tenure and Wildlife Management

Land tenure is the “way land is held or owned by individuals and groups, or the set of relationships legally or customarily defined among people with respect to land” (Mitchell 2011: vii). Land here includes the natural resources included on or within the landscape. This use of the term *land* is narrow in that it does not include spiritual or cultural aspects of the landscape. These do form part of the relationship via custom. The extent of traditional ecological knowledge, which is often inaccessible to Western understanding, frequently deals with the operation of the social-ecological system (SES), its culturally embedded use and interpretation, and the means of transmitting knowledge between users (Usher 2000; Davidson-Hunt and Berkes 2003).

In other words, tenure reflects relationships between people and land, and also between individuals and groups in their dealings in land. Land tenure systems are the “sets of formal or informal rules and institutions which determine access to and control over land and natural resources” (Mitchell 2011: vii). Political and social dynamics will alter access (*sensu* Ribot and Peluso 2003) by varying the operation of the legal and extra-legal instruments that constitute it.

Access, as a bundle of powers that allows an individual or community to benefit from something, is considered key to the development and maintenance of social resilience (Langridge et al. 2006; Ribot and Peluso 2003). It is a measure of collective agency, the capacity of actors in a social-ecological system to make autonomous choices regarding their interaction with the ecosystem.

Factors that constrain the influence of some users on resource management decision-making can conserve limited resources, but can also restrict or diminish resilience. Greater access on the part of a local community potentially affords a greater range of governance options. Conversely, limited flexibility means greater potential risk to resource users.

In reference to the above, resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbances while maintaining its basic structure and function (Gunderson and Holling 2002). Social features that promote and maintain resilience include multi-level governance that is adaptive and accountable with strong horizontal links between institutions (Lebel et al. 2006). Traditional knowledge, in terms of local expertise regarding both ecosystem interactions and adaptive management, has also proven valuable to maintaining desirable system states by maintaining indigenous knowledge systems (Folke 2004).

As discussed previously, traplines are one aspect of land tenure. They are currently defined by watersheds and generally assigned on a family basis, with a harvester assigned only to a single trapline. It was not always thus, and the history of the traplines reflects changes in the degree of control by local people. Langridge et al. (2006) stress the importance of understanding the history and mechanisms by which local institutions develop governance structures and access resources. The next sections describe historical events that modified community access and resilience, ones that will be referenced in later chapters.

4.2 Humans, Animals, and the Land in the Pre-Contact Era

The existence of indigenous conservation practices in the eastern subarctic is unclear. Their existence is suggested by shared practices among Algonkian groups that govern proper relations with animals and the land. However, these interactions were probably not intensively managed. Among the Rock Cree, the western neighbours of the Mushkegowuk, Brightman (1993) observed a complex and personal relationship between hunters and prey. The proper maintenance of this relationship, mediated through *pawākan* (spiritual facilitators) and by respect shown to the animals themselves, influenced the success of hunting and trapping. Examples of respectful practice included: invocation through song; making quick kills; not wasting meat; correct disposal; avoiding offense (*pāstāhōwin*); and maintaining physical and spiritual cleanliness (*pīkisitōwin*) (Brightman 1993: 103-135). In short, hunters would give animals the same respect that they would expect themselves. Similar attitudes of respect to animals were recorded more recently among the Eastmain Cree (Preston 2002), including at Waswanipi (Feit 1973), Mistassini (Tanner 1979), and Chisasibi (Berkes 1998, 1999). Speck (1977:74) stated that displays of respect to animals among the Montagnais-Naskapi were essentially unchanged since the 17th century.

The ethnographic literature clearly shows that in the eastern subarctic respect for animals was widespread, at least in recent times. Historically it may have been a different situation. Brightman (1993) argued that the conservation

ethic was a Post-Contact response to the demands of the fur trade, probably learned from European traders. Brightman's work with the Rock Cree in northern Manitoba suggested that game depletions in the Early Contact and Contact Traditional periods were due in part to a belief that animal populations were "infinitely renewable" (1993: 288). If game presented itself, it must be taken. Indiscriminate hunting "discharges the obligation to receive" (Brightman 1993: 290). Dudgeon (2006) was critical of Brightman's model and argued that Pre-Contact harvesting was not so indiscriminate, and that the conservation ethic was intermittently applied depending on circumstance (Dudgeon 2006: 119). However, by the 20th century, conservation practices were certainly not unknown to people across the subarctic who had already survived several periods of wildlife depletion.

It stands to reason that large-scale landscape and wildlife management was limited in a widely dispersed population with no central governance. Instead, personal relationships between hunter and prey probably defined human-animal relations, though the ideal was probably modified by necessity (Berkes 1999: 95). Aspects of this relationship can be seen in the interviews with Fort Severn elders conducted for this research. Some participants discussed practices for respecting animals, including limits on harvesting and disposal. To violate these norms would risk driving the animals away. For more on this refer to Chapter 6, sections 6.2.1f and 6.2.1j.

4.2.1 *Land Tenure Systems Prior to and Following Contact*

For much of the 20th century, the origin of Aboriginal trapping territories in the eastern subarctic was the subject of anthropological debate. At issue was whether or not historic land tenure systems were present before the arrival of Europeans, or if they were products of interactions in the fur trade. Research in this area included ethnographic, historical, and archaeological approaches spanning the area from Ontario to Labrador.

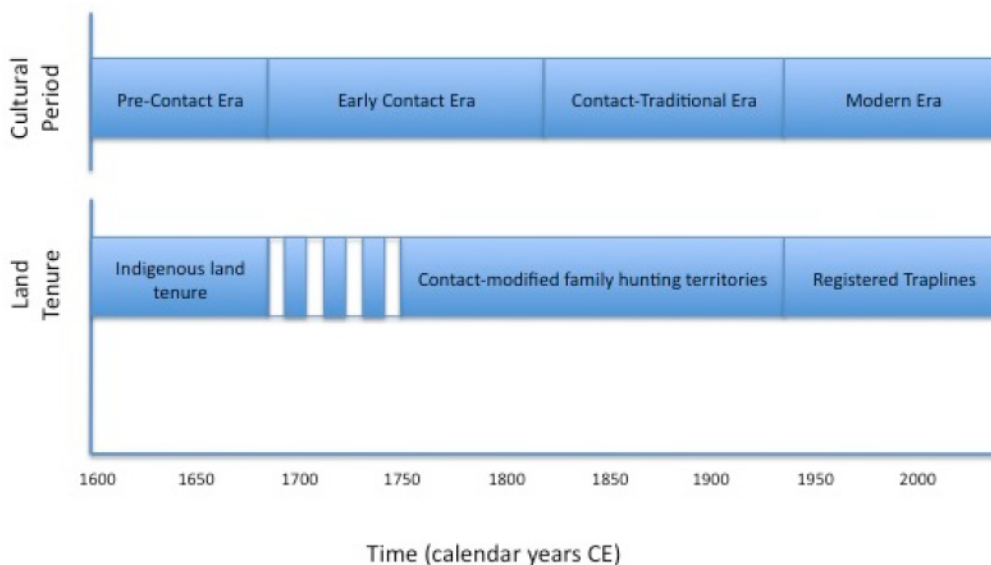
One of the first scholars to examine the aboriginality of these systems was Frank Speck (1915) who concluded that trapline areas among Algonkian groups were Pre-Contact in origin. Cooper (1939) and Hallowell (1949) concur with this position. Furthermore, Cooper explicitly linked tenure to modern notions of ownership and European-style property rights, which constituted part of a wider dialogue on whether early Algonkian societies were more atomist or collectivist in their activity. A contrary position developed after World War II espoused by Leacock (1954), Hickerson (1962; 1967), Rogers (1963), Bishop (1970; 1974), and Rogers and Black (1976), argued trapping territories were a form of individual ownership that was a Post-Contact adaptive response to fur trade economics. These latter approaches differed from those of their earlier colleagues by dint of utilizing broader ranges of information, incorporating archeology and historical data and accounts rather than simply ethnographic information and ethnological interpretation.

Some differences in approach were present even among these writers. Leacock (1954: 1-2) did not characterize traplines as particularly individualistic and thought them subordinate to band interest, characterizing their operation as usufructory. Rogers argued that historical traplines were a form of private property that developed from prior 'hunting areas' or 'hunting ranges'. In his construction, hunting groups "return[ed] to the same general area each year but possess[ed] no exclusive rights to the resources. The area [had] no sharply demarcated boundaries" (Rogers 1963: 82). By emphasizing a core or habitual zone of land use, Rogers' construction is more in keeping with the concept of traditional occupancy (Tobias 2000:3).

This research generally accepts the position that the traplines are a modification of previous hunting territories as a result of Contact-related processes. This view is recapitulated in the culture history presented in Chapter 1, and a timeline of the changes discussed in this chapter presented in Figure 4.1. Prior to this change, Aboriginal hunters in northern Ontario would have occupied a 'hunting range' or 'hunting territory' with more flexible boundaries than historical traplines. Pre-Contact groups would demonstrate greater mobility than present-day users of the land. According to this model, Pre-Contact Algonkian groups including the ancestors of the modern Mushkegowuk were generalized hunter-gatherers with relatively high mobility. Their hunting ranges would have been decentralized and largely unmanaged, with trapping conducted largely for subsistence purposes though some inter-band trade in goods was probable. Seasonal or local fluctuations in wildlife resources could be managed by moving

to areas peripheral to the core that had more or different resources. A generalized hunter-gatherer round would limit the risk of resource depletion by virtue of mobility and therefore increase the group's resilience.

Figure 4.1
Timeline of Land Tenure Changes in Fort Severn by Cultural Period



4.3 Post-Contact Trends in Canadian Wildlife Management

In her book *States of Nature*, Tina Loo made four arguments regarding the evolution of wildlife management in Canada. First, during the 20th century, wildlife management underwent a significant change in form; whereas, in the 19th century it had been “a highly localized, fragmented, and loose set of customary, informal, and private practices,” it became increasingly centralized and

manifested “a more coordinated, encompassing, systematic, and ultimately more scientific approach” (Loo 2006: 6). Statutory instruments gradually became secondary to scientific management. Loo observed a marginalization of customary use of wildlife in what she constructed as a “colonization of rural Canada” (2006: 6). She documented that during the 1930s to 1950s, private individuals and organizations spearheaded numerous conservation efforts, though there was a parallel increase in state involvement in a command-and-control approach to wildlife management. Prior to World War II, for example, the HBC was involved in establishing beaver preserves in Quebec and Ontario, applying scientific principles to wildlife management in order to effect sustainable harvests. The program was successful, in part because of its emphasis on decentralized control and the incorporation of local (Cree) knowledge (Loo 2006: 94).

Second, Loo posited that in Canada the authority vested in the provinces over their natural resources resulted in a “several centralized commons controlled by the provinces” (2006: 36) rather than a national commons. Third, she noted that for the first half of the 20th century progressivist and antimodernist ideals heavily influenced the use of these commons. Wildlife and wild spaces existed as “objects for over-worked men” that were used to treat their nervous exhaustion and make them fit for the workplace (Loo 2006: 34-45). This focus fueled the tourism industry, the value of which to Ontario was expressed quite clearly by D.J. Taylor in his quote in section 3.1.3 above.

Loo's fourth point was her observation of a recent shift in conservation priority towards the creation of protected areas including parks, preserves, and sanctuaries, characterized as shifting "from saving wildlife to preserving wild places" (Loo 2006: 181). While this promotes holistic approaches to ecosystems and better addresses wildlife issues embedded in a complex system, it risks alienating human users from traditional and customary uses of the land. In short, broad prescriptive limitations on land use can also limit the access of northern communities and in some cases may reduce resilience.

Loo noted that over the course of the 20th century, Canadian wildlife law increasingly marginalized the subsistence use of animals. At the same time, consumptive use by recreational hunters and fishers was encouraged. On this matter, Loo (2000: 26) wrote:

The operative idea behind these restrictions seemed to be that Canada had reached a state where it was no longer necessary to consume wild meat; to do so signaled one's primitiveness and geographic and social marginality. In this respect, it is significant that the only people exempted from Canada's game laws were those living in remote districts or who were Aboriginal, and the only exception to the general trend of restricting market hunting and the sale of game meat was the Yukon. Taken together, these strictures pushed subsistence and commercial hunters to the moral margins.

John Donihee provided another view of the evolution of regulation in Canada in *The Evolution of Wildlife Law in Canada* (2000). Wildlife law in Canada was initially focused on animals of commercial import, or on ones that affected commercial sectors, e.g. enacting bounties to counter the perceived effect of wolves on agriculture and husbandry. Donihee surveyed Canadian statutes and documented that many began with broad acts that focused on the hunting of

game, but then moved towards an increasing number of controls on human activity.

Donihee outlined three stages in the evolution of Canadian wildlife law, drawn in part from Leopold's *Game Management* (1933) (Donihee 2000: 12-17). The first stage was the Game Management Era, derived from English common law and statutory framework. In Ontario this period ranged from 1877 to 1960. Legislation from this period focused on: game animals or predator control with little concern for species of no commercial import; development of hunting controls including seasons, quotas, and limits; instituting restrictions on harvest-related equipment; the creation of controls on market hunting; and, some limited preservation of game lands in the form of refuges and sanctuaries. The majority of the study period for this research falls in this first era. Note the emphasis on animals as 'game', i.e. intended for human consumption.

The second stage was the Wildlife Management Era (1960-1980), a transitional period in which the statutory focus expanded from game to wildlife. This period was in response to greater demand for habitat management and protection measures, along with provisions for stocking or re-introduction of species. The period brought greater reliance on regulations in order to meet management objectives. Note the shift in emphasis from game to wildlife, which recalls Loo's comments on the marginalization of subsistence hunting during the mid-20th century.

The Sustainable Wildlife Management Era was the third stage, with legislation of its type beginning in 1980. Significant changes occurred in wildlife-related

values (and are still occurring) marked by: the continued expansion of the concept of wildlife away from utilitarian aspects; a stronger ecological or environmental legislative focus; specific protections for endangered species and biodiversity; strengthened controls on domestic and transboundary wildlife trade; and, the tendency to incorporate Aboriginal rights and entitlements in wildlife law.

During the mid-20th century, Ontario's wildlife management system was undergoing its own transitions. Presumably the provincial focus would not go undetected either by affected Aboriginal trappers or by outside observers. An example of this is preserved in research conducted at the time. Rogers (1966: 2) noted that prior to 1947 provincial game wardens incurred a great deal of distrust from Aboriginal peoples in northern Ontario. He attributed this to its earlier policy of enforcement of "game law" as opposed to newer notions of wildlife management. More on the relationship between Fort Severn's trappers and provincial authorities is presented in Chapter 6.

As observed by both Loo (2006) and Donihee (2000), Canadian wildlife law gradually shifted its focus away from subsistence and commercial harvesting towards non-consumptive uses of the environment and, later, towards the protection of entire ecosystems. Consumptive uses of wildlife, both subsistence and commercial, became increasingly regulated. Coupled with prohibitions on land-based activity in protected areas, the Aboriginal peoples of northern Ontario experienced a reduced range of land use options. This has been offset in recent years by legal decisions that have helped define Aboriginal and treaty rights (e.g. *Calder v. British Columbia* 1973, *R. v. Cheechoo* 1981; *R. v. Sparrow* 1990;

Delgamuukw v. British Columbia 1997; *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada* 2005); however, these cases post-date the study period of this research. During the late 1940s through 1960s, the people of Fort Severn were embedded in a complex, prescriptive statutory environment that threatened to limit their options based on an unclear legal definition of their rights on their traditional lands.

4.3.1 *Post-Contact Changes to Land Tenure*

As shown in the previous chapter, the period between the late 17th and mid-20th centuries in Fort Severn was characterized by increasing cross-cultural contact and acculturation. Governance changed from local to remote, following the community's entry into Treaty No. 9 and integration into various provincial and national networks. During the 20th century, human-animal interactions moved towards numbers-driven 'scientific management' with less input from traditional ecological knowledge (see section 3.2 below). Throughout this period, Ontario tended to expand its provincial authority over natural resource harvesting.

As noted in Chapter 2, the HBC attempted to promote the conservation of fur-bearing animals following its amalgamation with its chief rival, the Northwest Company. This followed a period of intense competition in which furbearer populations were sharply reduced across the Canadian Subarctic. In 1824, a series of reforms were instituted by Governor George Simpson including an instruction to company traders not to accept furs obtained during the summer months. Aboriginal trappers were encouraged not to hunt adult beaver during summer and to refrain from taking young beaver during the winter. Steel traps

were discontinued in HBC inventories. Simpson's intent was to reduce a formerly intensive harvest to sustainable levels, allowing depleted animal populations to recover. The effectiveness of these measures was limited for various reasons, many related to the mobility of subarctic hunter-gatherers and the inability of the HBC to closely control harvesting behaviour (Ray 1998: 198-203).

Fort Severn was mostly insulated from the next century of conservation management. Prior to 1870, it was part of Rupert's Land and trade within it was administered by the HBC. In 1869, the HBC relinquished its territory to Britain, who then transferred the territory to Canada by an Imperial Order in Council. The community remained part of the Northwest Territories until 1912 when Ontario annexed the Patricia Portion and, for much of this time, it was subject only to federal game laws, of which there were few. When it became part of Ontario, it had yet not entered Treaty and continued to lay at the administrative fringes of the province and country alike, remaining largely self-governed with occasional influences from the HBC and federal departments. The rights of Aboriginal people in Ontario to hunt for subsistence and commercial purposes were defined with the Robinson Huron and Robinson Superior Treaties in 1850, Treaty No. 3 in 1873, and Treaty No. 9 in 1905-1906. For example, Treaty No. 9 stipulated that its Indian signatories "shall have the right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered", subject to regulations made from time to time (Canada 1964). By the time Fort Severn joined Treaty No. 9 in 1930, it signed on to an existing legal and statutory framework that afforded certain rights, but at the price of its autonomy.

In the intervening time, Ontario had continued to develop its regulation of natural spaces and resources. Unless noted otherwise, the sequence of events in the following section is largely summarized from Hansen (1989: 33-34). Proceeding from the legal substrate of the pre-Confederation Game Laws, Ontario had a legal precedent for closed seasons for game animals and furbearers, though these limits did not then apply to Aboriginal people within its borders. In 1867, the *British North America Act* granted the provinces jurisdiction over the land and natural resources within their borders, including game and furbearing animals. Changes to provincial legislation in 1892 stated that provincial game laws did not apply to Aboriginal people; explicitly exempted them from season closures and certain licensing requirements; and, stated that game laws did not supersede treaty rights or apply to areas of Ontario that were not yet ceded to the Crown. The exemption from provincial game laws was removed in 1907 with the *Game, Fur-bearing Animals and Fisheries Act*. From 1909 to 1911, the Ontario Game and Fisheries Commission reviewed the state of wildlife-related activity in the province. It recommended that Aboriginal people obtain permits to hunt on Crown land, but restrict them from hunting in forest reserves. It also endorsed that trappers and fur buyers report their harvests to the province. A number of its recommendations were followed in the *Ontario Game and Fisheries Amendment Act* (1916), which licensed fur dealers and hunters, and appointed game wardens to enforce the Act. The legislation extended its reach to apply to Aboriginal harvesters, though it did not subject them to licensing that designated their trapline areas as previously considered.

Restrictions on trappers continued into the 1930s. Following repeated disputes between southern trappers over trapline boundaries and a concern that Aboriginal trappers were unable to make a living, Ontario began assigning trappers to specific traplines (Crichton 1948: 1-2). Licensed traplines were introduced in southern Ontario that confined a trapper to a single township and needed to be renewed annually. This was applied to Aboriginal trappers living south of the CNR main line. At the same time, quotas were imposed on furbearer harvesting, restricting resident trappers to ten beaver annually per trapline. Beaver populations rebounded, but frequent irregularities in the number of trappers per township meant that trappers continued to compete with one another on some traplines (Crichton 1948: 4).

Following World War II, a close relationship existed between the federal Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and the Ontario Department of Game and Fisheries (later Lands and Forests, and part of the Ministry of Natural Resources) and the two parties negotiated amendments to regulations concerning Aboriginal trappers. *The Ontario Game and Fish Act, 1946* had significant implications for Aboriginal populations in northern Ontario, including Fort Severn, which will be reviewed in the next section.

4.3.2 *Regulatory Changes and Trapline Management after 1946*

In 1947, the government of Ontario issued new regulations under the *Ontario Game and Fisheries Act, 1946*, including the creation of the Registered Trapline System (Ontario 1946). This system was implemented first in the south portion of the province and extended in 1948 to the Patricia Portion, including Fort Severn. Under the new system, trapline areas were established and registered in consultation with Aboriginal residents. These trapline areas were based on watersheds as opposed to the township system then in use in the south.

Hansen's (1989) general overview of this regulatory system represents the best summary of Ontario's wildlife management (Heydon pers. comm. 2012). In the course of this current research, Hansen's report was utilized in conjunction with the RG 10 series of archival records of the federal Department of Indian Affairs (now Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada) and of the provincial ministries responsible for wildlife management. This review confirmed the close working relationship between the federal and provincial governments as they set policy for wildlife management in Ontario's north.

Closely associated with the genesis of the system were two individuals: Hugh R. Conn, Chief Fur Supervisor of the Department of Indian Affairs, Department of Mines and Resources, and Jack L. Grew of the Ontario Department of Game and Fisheries (which became the Department of Lands and Forests by 1949). As noted by John Macfie in *Hudson Bay Watershed*, both men

had extensive experience working with Aboriginal people and in the fur trade industry, “Conn as a Hudson’s Bay trader and Grew as a Mackenzie River trapper” (Macfie and Johnson 1991: 8). Grew had previously worked for Indian Affairs in Manitoba before taking a position with Ontario’s wildlife service.

Other players present in the correspondence leading up to northern trapline registration included DIA officials G. Swartman (Indian Agent for the Sioux Lookout region that then included Fort Severn), and T. Orford (Indian Agent in Moose Factory), as well as representatives of the HBC. Other fur trade companies played marginal roles. Révillon Frères was active in DIA correspondence for the James Bay region during the 1920s and 1930s but afterwards the company disappears from the record. Notably absent from the RG 10 records is correspondence with the people of Fort Severn, though their opinions were sometimes captured in the correspondence of the Indian Agents and the RCMP.

In the 1920s and 1930s as a means to create sustainable fur returns, the HBC and the federal government promoted the idea of beaver preserves – management districts that featured the stocking of beaver in depleted areas coupled with exclusive or near-exclusive Aboriginal harvest rights (e.g. Parsons 1938). After a fallow period during which the beaver numbers increased, the communities would resume harvesting under HBC contract. Preserves were opened in Quebec and Ontario, and at least three additional preserves in northwest Ontario were considered in the 1930s, but ultimately did not occur (Fry 1941). In 1933, a provincial committee recommended that much of the Patricia

Portion of northern Ontario be set apart “for the exclusive benefit of Indians” and trapping grounds be divided on a township basis (Special Report of the Game Committee, 1931-1933, in Hansen 1989: 24, 35). The committee’s report suggested regulation of trapline areas as an alternative to closing seasons. In 1937, the idea of exclusively Aboriginal trapping areas was abandoned in southern Ontario, but remained under consideration north of the Albany River (Hansen 1989: 25). During that same year, DIA’s Indian Agents began recording trapping territories in large regions of the province in anticipation of making arrangements with the Ontario government approving exclusive Aboriginal territories (Hansen 1989: 25-26). In 1942, Grew undertook an extensive trapping survey of the lands north of Big Trout Lake between the Fawn and Severn Rivers, apparently while he was in the employ of Indian Affairs (Grew 1942). The federal and provincial governments were setting the stage for the 1947 registered trapline system even as they were competing to set the agenda.

Indian Affairs staff promoted the watershed basis of trapline areas by following the review of sketches made by Cree trappers near Rupert’s House, now called Waskaganish (Allan 1941a, 1941b; Denmark 1941). These sketches depicted rivers and lakes with dots representing beaver houses. Allan noted that the department thought “it speaks eloquently for what the Indian can do in the matter of fur conservation if he is given encouragement and protection” (Allan 1941b).

Correspondence between DIA and the province supported the idea that the federal government acted on the behalf of Aboriginal trappers. Indian Affairs

attempted to secure Aboriginal livelihoods first by supporting the proposed beaver preserves, and then acting as strong proponents of the watershed basis for registered traplines. The province pushed back on these issues, perhaps attempting to carve out its own niche, even as the Department of Games and Fisheries underwent repeated restructuring, including two name changes in five years. In a letter from Indian Agent T.J. Orford to Fur Commissioner Hugh Conn, Orford stated (1947: 1):

Following our recent meeting in Cochrane with Provincial Game and Fisheries officials it struck me that very little thought or discussion was really given to the Indian trapper on organized or un-surveyed Crown lands, Yet these trappers must be in greater numbers and cover more ground than all the White and Indian trappers combined who operate in township licenses at present.

It is assumed from the tone of the discussion that the Province really intends to carry out a conservation programme, particularly with beaver and that this will do away with the necessity of our sanctuaries as such. I also assume that Indian Affairs will be allowed to hurry along restocking of Indian grounds where required on much the same basis as has been carried out in projects developed to date.

The question of registering the Indian trap line on the established Family trapping ground system should be thoroughly pursued. While Mr. Grew admitted that some plan other than township or definite surveyed boundaries would probably be needed I don't think that either he or Mr. Lewis were favourably inclined to registering a complete watershed in one family name but that is the only system which I can imagine will be feasible.

In a reply, Conn reassured Orford by sharing that "Mr. Grew's attitude on family trapping grounds is exactly the same as yours and mine and that wherever advisable this plan will be adopted" (Conn 1947a: 1). He indicated that Grew was of the opinion that "by mutual agreement of the people concerned that these

township registrations can be converted into trapping areas in the sense that we know them”.

Evidently not all bureaucrats in Ontario felt the same way as Grew. Conservation concerns sometimes assumed a higher priority than human welfare, particularly when furbearer harvesting conflicted with wildlife management. In 1938, DIA intervened on behalf of an Aboriginal trapper named Beaucage who had trapped beaver illegally. In a rather prickly response to Indian Affairs, D.J. Taylor, Deputy Minister for Games and Fisheries, stated that a major focus in provincial wildlife policy was tourism revenue and not the benefit of Aboriginal trappers (Taylor 1938):

While we have every sympathy with the Indian, I might point out to you that with a revenue from tourist trade in this Province which reached about \$70,000,000 in the year 1935 and attracted principally by the Game and Fisheries Department we will not, even to the extent of having to defend our rights in any test case that may come up, tolerate any unnecessary slaughter of this tourist attraction for the Indians or any other class of citizen in this province. As pointed out to you in previous letters, it would be much cheaper for these to be kept in luxury than to allow the wanton slaughter to be carried out in this province [...]

This underscores the differences in mandate between the major partners; the federal government advocated for Aboriginal trappers and promoted development in so far as it increased local options and reduced reliance on welfare; while, the province focused on game management to extend their authority and increase general revenues. In a letter to federal Superintendent T.L. Bonnah, Conn (1948a) expressed some difficulty getting Ontario to address

issues facing Aboriginal trappers, and discussed a strategic need to pre-empt provincial plans.

My object in getting this information before the provincial authorities is to establish a prior claim to the area on behalf of the Indians in case the Province decides to institute a development or management program in that section. We have learned from sad experience that in many cases the provincial authorities secure the information concerning white trappers first and the Indians quite often [are] frozen out of the development. In this particular case we are beating them to the punch by getting our claim in first.

To address their difference in focus and develop the north cooperatively, the two governments formed the Fur Advisory Committee in 1949 and signed the first Ontario-Dominion Fur Agreement in 1950. The Committee held annual meetings in northern Ontario to discuss mutual issues of concern. More cooperation was evident with the secondment of federal employees to fill provincial roles (Conn 1948a), the cross-training of personnel (Conn 1949), and the cost-sharing of the provincial air service by making inspections and meetings coincide with treaty payments (Conn 1948b; see Figure 4.2).

In 1950, any internal objections to the system seemed to be resolved. The watershed boundary system was extended south to the rest of the districts in northern Ontario as well as some counties in southern Ontario. After that time the registered trapline system continued to be administered by the successors to the Ontario Department of Games and Forests (i.e. Ontario Lands and Resources, now the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources or MNR). Details of its operation in the years between 1966 and 1989 are lacking, due to retirements and a seven-year records retention policy (Heydon pers. comm. 2012).

Figure 4.2

Provincial Air Service Norseman OBS moored on river edge at Fort Severn. August, 1950. John Macfie fonds, C 330-10-0-0-2, Archives of Ontario.



Hansen's historical review was conducted in 1989, several years before the transfer of trapline management to the Ontario Fur Managers Federation (OFMF) in the late 1990s. The province prepared to delegate its authority for harvest licensing and education during a period of increased fiscal austerity. The OFMF is a non-government organization that represents Ontario trappers, provides trapper training and licensing, and works with MNR and local trapper councils to implement Ontario's fur management planning. As the Ontario government redefined its role in the mid-1990s, MNR established a new business relationship with trappers and established the OFMF. Its funding was generated by user fees, principally through licensing.

The provincial tribal organizations (PTOs) representing Treaty Nos. 3, 5, and 9 did not agree with this transfer. Instead, they assumed responsibility for trapline licensing and training in their communities, leaving the OFMF to license non-aboriginal communities only. Starting in 1992, the PTOs and the federal and provincial governments negotiated harmonization agreements to spell out their respective areas of responsibility (Grand Council of Treaty #3 2013). In 2005, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) entered a five-year agreement to administer fur management in NAN territory. It applied to all active NAN fur harvesters, including those from Fort Severn, and identified key responsibilities including the licensing and trapline registration (Nishnawbe Aski Nation 2013). NAN has issued licenses to its member trappers since 1997, with an average of 750 licenses each trapping season. Through the NAN fur harmonization agreement, NAN maintains compliance to the licensing program and has effectively assumed control over trapping on its treaty lands. NAN operates a fur depot, established in 1994, and acts as a fur agent for two auction houses and offers trappers in remote communities a freight discount through a partner airline. NAN has assumed some of the regulatory functions of the provincial government as well as those of the old fur trade companies by means of their agent status.

Kaaren Dannenman, an Anishinaape trapper and the head instructor for Treaty No. 3 trapper education, provided an account of this transfer (Dannenmann 2013; includes question posed by author):

A. In the 80's and 90's the [provincial government] was downsizing whatever it could, and tried to get us all under the Ontario Fur Managers but we would have none of it and all PTO's opted for their

own agreements. [...] T#3 started gearing up with a resolution 92-015 that was to include trapping as a tripartite matter of discussion under the self-governance negotiations. [W]e started issuing our own authorities shortly after that, before the agreement was signed. We had a pilot project with some T#3 communities, to show the province and feds what the transfer might look like after the agreement was reached. (Note that we don't call them licenses because we don't legally need a license to trap -- that was won thru case law with Cheechoo in NAN territory). It was interesting to us that we had to fight with it out with our own lawyers every step of the way, as much as we had to fight the MNR. Oh, let me tell you, we had to have long and accurate memories! When they tried to take away our right to issue our own authorities, we knew exactly which meeting minutes to find information where they acknowledged that we had that right.

Q. So the situation now is one where trappers have assigned traplines, but licenses are not necessary?

Legally, yes. But we are using an authority system because we needed some time to train our young people about traditional ways to be on the Land. There was still a notion that MNR was our authority on the Land and a part the rationale of our trapping course is to dispel those remnants from the residential school teachings. We describe our "management system" as internal to us, coming from a lifetime of sacred teachings that began at birth. When our teachings are as internalized and self-generated, we won't need that authorizing system any longer, nor the trapper education courses.

So, T#3 had actually begun that process of authorization (with the pilot project) but there were so many other details that had to be dealt with, details that were important to us as Anishinaape trappers. The other PTO's signed their agreements before us, but they did use our drafts. Sort of like the treaty-making process, T#3 was the longest and hardest won and set the pace for the numbered treaties. [...] We were never pushing so hard for the completion of the agreement because we were using that time to strengthen internally[,] deciding what we wanted for trapper education, etc. We decided that the trapline boundaries would be kept for now until we have been able to re-establish traditional ways of being on the land [...] we try to keep disputes looked after at the local level. It is a way of resilience and survival and maintaining sacred relationships to one's ancestral land.

While Dannenmann spoke from the point of view of a trapper in Treaty No. 3, her comments about the general process are informative. The two PTOs asserted their authority over land tenure processes that had been held by the province for over fifty years. As of 2013, the harmonization agreement between NAN and the two governments does not appear to have been formally renewed, but continues in general application.

4.4 Circumstances Specific to Fort Severn

In the middle of the 20th century, Fort Severn experienced several changes despite being at the periphery of provincial conservation. The community and surrounding area was a relatively late addition to Ontario and the signing of Treaty No. 9 had occurred only one or two generations prior. In rather quick order, Fort Severn became subject to wildlife regulation whose origins were in European game management, and then driven by multiple new philosophies that were sometimes at odds with one another. Previously fluid means of land use and tenure were altered, first in the 1930s and 1940s by the imposition of conservation limits on furbearer trapping, and then in 1946-47 with the imposition of a new land tenure system. While it is clear that the federal and provincial governments consulted with affected trappers before creating the registered traplines, at the time the effects of the traplines on community subsistence and treaty rights may not have been clearly understood.

The traplines registered in Fort Severn were established on a watershed basis, with individual families assigned (or registered) to specific river basins. The boundaries were likely modified based on local input. The end result was a series of trapping areas that were superficially similar to pre-existing patterns of land use, with one fundamental difference: the former negotiated patterns of shared usufruct were replaced with fixed ones with set memberships and firm boundaries.

Maps of these traplines from the 1940s were unavailable. However, maps of trapline areas are available from 1966 (Rogers 1966b) as well as the current day (Hamilton pers. comm. 2013). The trapline boundaries, shown in figures 4.3 and 4.4, remain virtually unchanged between 1966 and 2013.

Even as Fort Severn adapted to this new system of land tenure, social and economic changes had altered the field of engagement shared by the community and the government. The continental fur trade was still active, but its overall contribution to the Canadian economy was greatly diminished. Fort Severn's economic options diminished accordingly, except for the brief increase in wage labour in the 1950s. Fort Severn was no longer a hub of activity as it had been during the 17th through 19th centuries, and instead had become a socially and economically marginal hinterland whose staple of production was no longer valued.

The reduction of the fur trade meant that the former field of cross-cultural interaction was being replaced with a new one featuring increased government

Figure 4.3
Trapline areas in Fort Severn, 1966 (from Rogers 1966a: 47)

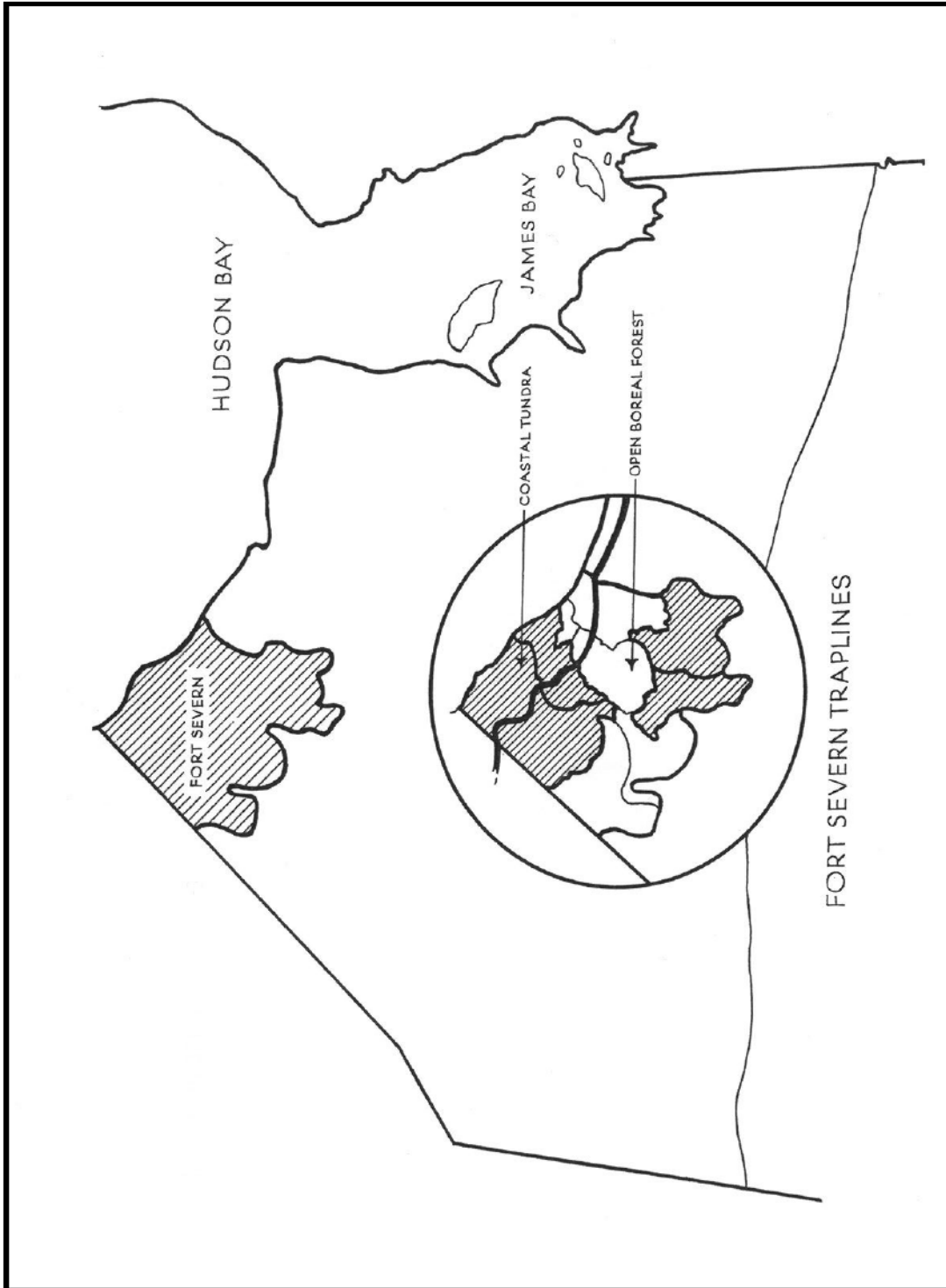
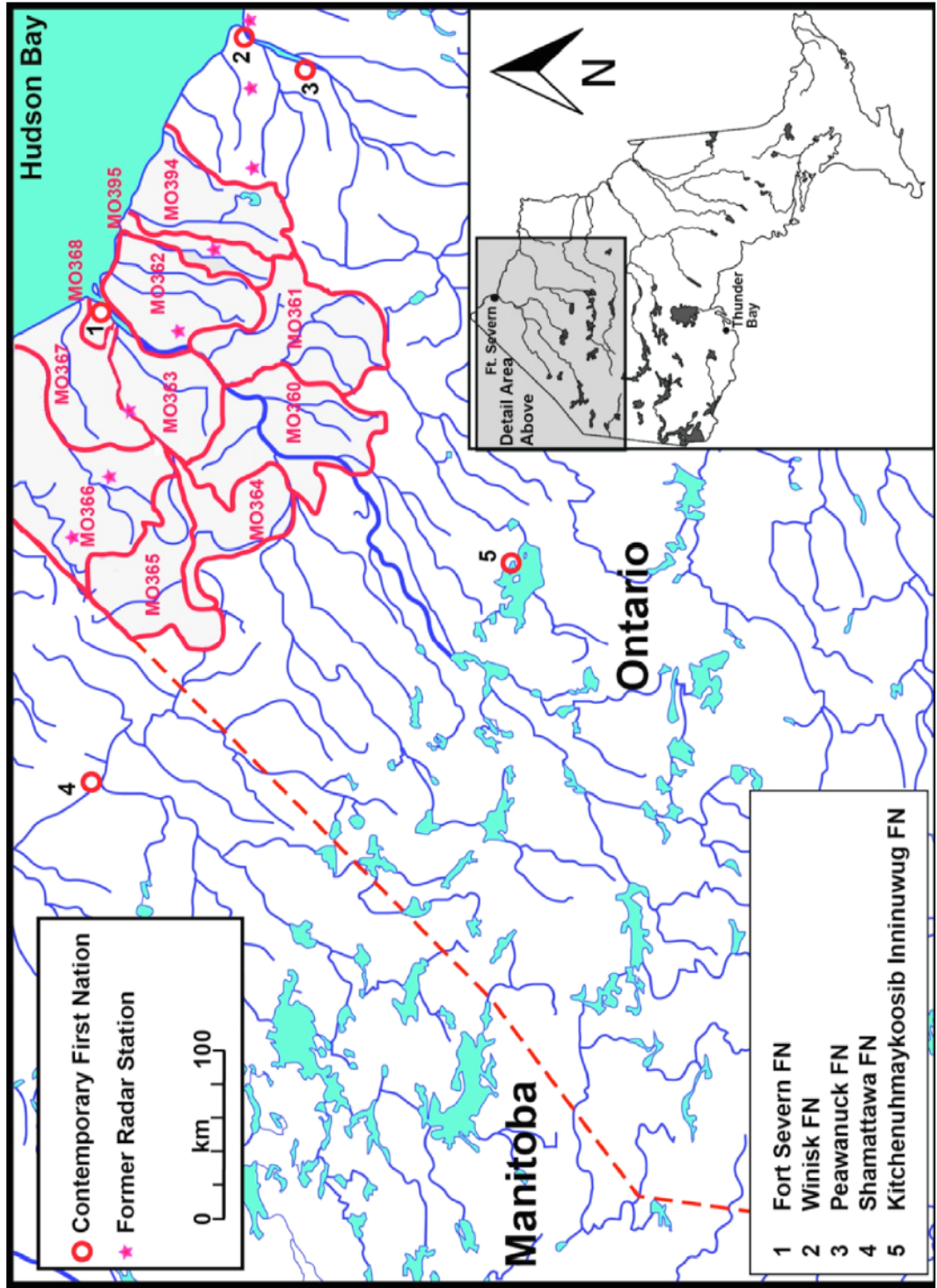


Figure 4.4
Trapline areas in Fort Severn, 2013



regulation of the land and its natural resources. The decades around the introduction of the registered trapline system are as much a window into Ontario social history as they are conservation policy. The changes imposed upon the community were products of these myriad forces: the move towards scientific management; the view of nature shifting from a place for commodities to a space for recreation to a fragile ecosystem; and, the conflicting desires of a paternal federal government and a provincial government increasingly focused on non-consumptive uses. The Mushkegowuk of Fort Severn had their own needs and satisfying them required navigating these competing agendas.

The interviews conducted for this research focus on this period of change. Subsequent chapters in this research outline the methods used to obtain community members' perspectives of the changing field of land tenure and management, and detail the results of this work.

CHAPTER 5

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research utilizes an ethnographical approach to land use with a joint anthropological and historical framework to situate historical decision-making related to common property resources, specifically the trapping of fur-bearing mammals within the tenure system in Fort Severn in the mid- to late 20th century. The objective was to document an Aboriginal perspective on history, describing how Fort Severn community members construct Aboriginal land tenure as it was in the past. It also documented changes in natural resource management and the reasons put forward to account for these changes.

A series of semi-directed interviews with elders from Fort Severn was conducted in February 2011. This information is supplemented by conversations with land managers and current land users, plus the extensive literature review described in Chapters 3 and 4. Using multiple methods strengthens the research by drawing upon complementary forms of data and provides a context for interpretation. This type of information is frequently lacking in historical analyses that are often based on written sources and include little to no community narrative.

5.1 Theoretical Situation of the Research

The theoretical approach employed in this research is grounded theory via the method of open coding (Gray 2009: 502-505). This is an inductive method used in social sciences research to compile data that is “discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon” (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 23). This iterative process of comparing points of data as they are parsed (in this case, the statements made by interview participants), proposes new categories in relation to previous instances. The comparison allows categories to be refined, primarily by their properties (i.e., their common attributes or characteristics) and secondarily by their dimensions (i.e., their degree or position along a continuum). (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 62).

An underlying assumption in this research is that narratives reflect social interactions in their discussions of boundary spaces, or fields, in which patterned relations occur (Bourdieu 1977). History is an image of a social landscape populated by spaces, values, and forces. By extension, the geographical landscape can also be construed as having moral and physical components that contextualize the informant and community (Carson 2002). The association of values with the land (and by extension, land use) is demonstrated in Usher’s (2000) scaling of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Usher divided TEK into four categories of which only the lowermost factual pair were easily reconciled with scientific enquiry. Higher orders of indigenous knowledge often remain

relatively opaque to science. These contain symbolic and spiritual values that shape decision-making or encoding the knowledge system itself. This is not to say that Western science is itself value-free, simply that it finds difficulty in addressing these types of information when they have markedly different cultural backgrounds.

The origin and direction of change is a central theme in this research, one that describes an issue of asymmetric power relations and multi-party agency. At question is what was the nature of this agency, what changes did the relationship create, and how were these changes perceived by the actors involved?

Another influence on the research is resilience theory (Walker and Salt 2006). By documenting historical changes in the Mushkegowuk social-ecological system (SES), one can address outcomes and choices within the framework of its resilience. Threshold conditions are identified, and changes in the community's adaptive capacity are discussed in terms of the range of control (access) that the community could exercise on its physical and social environment. The history of Fort Severn specific to its experiences with the registered trapline system offers an opportunity to examine the variables present in a complex adaptive setting limited to a specific topic and time range.

5.1.2 *Ethnohistory as History*

Folke et al. (2005) stated that the community-level perspective is essential in effective ecosystem management and the most direct means to understanding the relationship between ecosystem services and human well-being. Similarly, Davidson-Hunt and Berkes (2003) indicated the importance of Indigenous perception of SESs as a component of adaptive learning and therefore a factor in community resilience. However, the emic perspective is only one of several that can be examined. As mentioned previously, archaeological and historic material will be used to create a meaningful synthesis of internal and external dynamics and views.

The merging of multi-vocal data is not without its challenges and will incorporate suggestions from Trigger (1982), Doxtater (1996), and in particular Morantz (1996) who encourages multiple historical narratives to be seen as complementary but different (see also Haraway 1988 for a discussion on situated knowledge). This research espouses Morantz's suggestion that blended histories are most effective when small-scale and woven around a single issue, resulting in multi-vocal data told in parallel and defining the social geography of the groups involved in this research.

5.2 Methods

The research was divided into four phases: 1) a review of relevant background literature; 2) semi-structured interviews; 3) participant observation; and 4) analysis of the data. The section below describes these phases and the methodological choices made in the process.

5.2.1 *Background Literature Review*

Data collection began with an extensive literature review that identified extant historical and ethnographic research. Much of this material has been synthesized into background chapters, and the remainder reviewed to provide a solid contextual understanding of the region's history, current issues, and the history of the registered trapline system.

Research consulted includes: research on Cree ethnography (Honigmann 1956; Cummins 1992, 2004); history (Brown 2007; Lytwyn 2002; Ray 1990, 1998); ecology (Winterhalder 1977, 1980); and, archaeology (Noble and Pollock 1975; Lister 1988; Pilon 1987, 1990). Paramount among the historical works, Victor Lytwyn discussed the long-term occupancy and economic role of the Lowland or Swampy Cree. Lytwyn's work relies upon historical documents contained mostly in the HBC archives, describing the Hudson Bay Lowlands in the context of the fur trade up to 1821.

Relatively little ethnographic research has been conducted in the lower Severn basin. Honigmann and Cummins focused their efforts on Attawapiskat and some work was conducted in Weenusk as part of the Technology Assessment in Subarctic Ontario (TASO) research program in the early 1980s (Graham 1988). In his many publications, Louis Bird provided a Muskego perspective of the regional history and beliefs of Weenusk and Peawanuck (e.g. Bird 2007). Additional ethnographic work on symbolic and ecological human/animal interactions was done by Brightman (1993) on the related Rock Cree and by Tanner (1979) on the Westmain Cree of eastern Ontario. These were discussed previously in Chapter 4 with reference to reconstructing Aboriginal land tenure in the subarctic. As far as is known, Jean-Luc Pilon performed the sole example of academic ethnography conducted in Fort Severn prior to this research during his doctoral work (Pilon 1987). The Ojibway and Cree Cultural Center in Timmins, Ontario, has also published the stories of several Fort Severn elders, although these are presented without scholarly analysis.

Several other studies are relevant to understanding furbearer trapping along the lower Severn River. The analysis of fur trade and trapping statistics made by Edward Rogers (1966) represents one of the earliest syntheses of anthropological and economic data for the region, components of which can be considered a form of harvest study. Pilon and Sieciechowicz (1982) conducted a traditional land use study of Fort Severn; however, it profiled then-current land use, which was not relevant to previous decades. Berkes et al. (1995) prepared a

regional harvest study based on projects conducted under the TASO research program (Berkes et al. 1992) but it was also not historical in nature.

5.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The second phase of the research program consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews with Fort Severn community members. The Keewaytinook Okimakanak Research Institute (KORI) facilitated contacts within the community including arranging for a translator and research space. In the fall of 2010, Chief Matthew Kakekaspan of Fort Severn granted permission to conduct ethnographic field research in the community. The interviews were conducted in the community over a two-week span in February 2011. Upon arrival in the community, the chief and councilors provided a list of potential interview participants. Julie Miles, a resident of Fort Severn, acted as an interpreter, interlocutor and translator. Follow-up interviews were conducted by Irene Miles, a Fort Severn resident who worked for KORl on files related to traditional land use.

A total of sixteen individuals were interviewed in a total of fifteen interviews on issues of wildlife harvesting, land use, and occupancy (see Figure 5.1). The participants were at the time between 64 and 88 years of age with an average age of 75. All participants had spent time living and working on traplines during the implementation of the registered trapline system.

A preliminary question list was reviewed, and approved, by the chief and council. Interview questions fell into four broad categories: 1) trapline use in Fort

Severn, 2) the history of interaction between Fort Severn residents and government wildlife regulators, 3) human/animal relationships including spiritual

Figure 5.1

Phase 1 data collection using maps as visual aids



Image © David M. Finch, 2013

and ecological aspects, and 4) the disposal of animal remains. In some cases, the questions were used more than others but most interviews followed a conversational pattern to allow the participants to speak on topics of their choosing. Interviews ranged in length from a half hour to almost two hours.

The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder, to produce an accurate transcript and to preserve the testimony of elders for posterity. To compensate them for their time, participants were remunerated in the form of \$50.00 gift certificates at the community general store. Gift-giving such as this is

an established practice in northern fieldwork and fosters goodwill in the community.

5.2.3 Participant Observation

In the fall of 2012, the author travelled to Fort Severn a second time to observe trapping and other activities on the land first-hand. The guide was Chris Koostachin, an employee of KORl and a member of the Fort Severn Canadian Ranger Patrol. Mr. Koostachin shared his trapline experience and traditional knowledge on a series of trips along the Severn and Pipowitan Rivers. This travel was also an opportunity to clarify with current trappers certain outstanding questions raised during the interviews.

5.3 Data Analysis

Two streams of data make up the majority of this research – interviews and written texts – and the presentation of the historical data is marshaled in text to support points of logic. This research goes further in the handling of the interviews whereby the participants' narratives are aggregated and classified by theme. This involves making inferences by identifying categories within the transcripts (Gray 2009: 500). These criteria for selecting these categories can be determined deductively (e.g., content analysis) or inductively (e.g., grounded theory analysis). An inductive method was chosen in order to handle the large

quantities of information and to allow themes to emerge naturally. As noted earlier, data analysis was performed using open coding. Statements within the interviews were isolated and assigned codes based on the topic and meaning. The codes were a combination of *in vivo* codes, suggested by wording in the interviews, and constructed codes that reflected academic concepts or combinations of *in vivo* codes. Categories within the codes were then created by means of induction, and then evaluated for their consistency. Exceptions were noted and used to test the initial category; differences that could not be resolved resulted in the theme being re-defined, split into sub-themes, or abandoned. This adaptive process reduced the number of codes from 70 to a more manageable 32, and eight themes refined to four.

An adaptive component was built into the research as participants could review and correct the content of their interviews after they had been transcribed. Errors in translation and transcription were fixed during this round of review. It was initially hoped that the themes observed in the data could also be confirmed with the participants, but this was not possible due to budgetary considerations. The review process was inspired by the Aboriginal Forest Planning Process (AFPP) (Karjala et al. 2003, 2004), which selected, classified, and organized archival and interview data into criteria for forestry planning. Karjala et al. incorporated feedback mechanisms in the interview process where participants reviewed their statements and could discuss and/or modify the themes generated in the preliminary analysis. Their method was comprehensive and integrated multiple sources of data; however, for this research, it did not lend itself to either

the volume or complexity of the ethnographic and historic information encountered. Its feedback protocol was incorporated in the participant primary review process.

5.3.1 Coding and Identification of Themes

A total of 32 individual codes were derived from the data and aggregated into 4 thematic areas. Data are presented in Chapter 6 in the form of interview summaries outlining the dominant themes, followed by tabular information charting the range of themes and codes. The focus is on the trapline registration system and relations with government, but also includes a variety of other material that is mostly descriptive in nature. The complete interview transcripts are presented in Appendix 1.

During data analysis, the interview transcripts were broken into discrete meaningful segments, which were assigned codes and organized thematically. The analysis identified 39 codes arranged into 4 themes: knowledge; animals; access; and, relationships. In the following discussion, the themes are defined, as well as sub-themes within them. Subsequent sections address the range of statements made within the individual code topics.

The first theme identified is Knowledge. Codes in this theme pertain to aspects of the Mushkego knowledge system including traditional knowledge (TK), traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), and specifics of culturally-transmitted belief and practice. This analysis applied the division of TEK by Berkes (1999)

and Usher (2000) that described traditional ecological knowledge as occurring in four ordered levels (reflected as codes in the data):

1. factual or rational observations of the environment;
2. statements on ecological processes and practices for interacting or managing the environment;
3. cultural value statements that explain or define behaviours; and,
4. statements of cosmology or worldview that allow the generation of facts and the replication of the knowledge system itself.

As they involve discrete physical phenomena, the first two levels are more easily incorporated into Western scientific thinking. The last two levels are more ephemeral and not easily translated into scientific or management schemes. The four levels do not have clean divisions and a single statement might address multiple levels.

The second theme established deals with Animals. Although some statements overlap with the Knowledge theme, remarks about specific animals were broken out for purposes of comparison. The theme includes sub-themes of use and type, divided by use on based on descriptions of animal species as having a commercial or subsistence focus. Doing so allowed identification of animals that the participants considered important. Specific types of animals were examined more closely because of their economic or symbolic importance among other Subarctic hunter-gatherers. These included bears, beavers, caribou, and dogs.

Access was determined to be the third theme, concerned with mechanisms of land use ranging from rules of land tenure, conservation measures, and compliance monitoring. The discussion has been divided into two areas: internal drivers that influenced or determined land use patterns; and, external agencies that did the same.

The fourth theme is Relationships, also divided into internal and external sections. The first deals with social roles in the community (i.e. men, women, elders, youth). The second details interactions with various government organizations and other external agencies.

5.3.2 Quality Control

Steps were taken in the design of the research protocol to enhance validity and reliability of the data. Validity is a statement of whether “the data gathered are sufficiently objective to provide a true reflection of events” (Gray 2009: 416), which is addressed by maximizing its ability to be generalized. The author concluded that an adequate sample was reached when saturation was conveyed through repetition of content in the interviews, and a lack of new themes or codes emerging. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility to address an issue, including asking the same question in different ways. Accurate transcription and comprehensive field notes also maximized validity.

Reliability is the degree to which an instrument (in this case, the data collection) will produce similar results at different times (Gray 2009: 580). The

term is used to describe the overall consistency of a measure. Reliability is enhanced through the process of data triangulation, which reduces error by gathering data from multiple sources or by employing a variety of methods or theoretical approaches (Gray 2009: 417). This necessitated a high degree of immersion in the subject material, relevant cultural practices, and historical information. The participation phase of the research informed the interpretation by providing a practical hands-on experience in order to better situate oral and historical observations.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

Prior to initiating the research, the author completed the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics' Introductory Tutorial for the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics 1998). In so doing, he agreed to abide by the standards of the Tri-Council policy: to obtain informed consent from participants; to provide fairness and equity in research participation; and to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

All interview participants were informed in advance of the nature and purpose of the interview and given a release form that duplicated this information and advised them of their rights in the research process. The release authorized the publication of the interview as part of this research as well as the use of the participant's image and name. The opportunity to remain anonymous was offered.

None of the participants chose anonymity; in fact, several participants indicated that they wanted their words to be a matter of public record. Prior to beginning an interview they were informed that they had the right to decline any question and also the right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were given printed copies of their interviews and their release forms. In June and July 2013, they were asked to review the transcripts and make changes as required. Participants were again reminded of their rights to decline to answer and to withdraw if required, and informed that they could change, clarify, or delete any of their previous statements if they wished. The final interview transcripts reflect their changes and clarifications.

Correspondence was later received from one participant specifying that he did not want the researcher to “erase some of my words”. He questioned the researcher’s “right” to do so in light of having been silenced enough during their time at residential school. Apparently the desire to put control of the statements in the hands of the participants had not been effectively communicated to at least one of them. Subsequent correspondence allowed the researcher to reiterate the original intent and make explicit the participant’s control over the process. No text was cut or modified from any of the interviews without direction from the participants. This incident reveals the complicated nature of social research, the value of a good translator, and the occasional dose of humility required.

5.5 Financing of Research

The interview phase of the research was supported by a one-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant held by Drs. Martha Dowsley and R.H. Lemelin of Lakehead University. The research constituted part of their broader research program on issues related to environmental and land use research including polar bear management (SSHRC project #410-2009-1759). Travel funding for the participation and observation phase was obtained from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) through the 2012-2013 Northern Scientific Training Program (NSTP).

5.6 Limitations of the Research

No program of research is perfect, and this endeavour comprises its own set of limitations. In some cases, archival information was incomplete. Gaps are visible in the Indian Affairs RG 10 archives, due to document classification as well as mislaid records over the years.

Furthermore, the researcher did not examine all records available through Library and Archives Canada and the Archives of Ontario, in part due to the sheer volume of records, but also the limits of finding aids. Due to constraints of budget and time, visiting the archives in person was impossible and research depended on remote access. The archival material consulted should be

considered a cross-section of available records even though, as noted earlier, they are incomplete.

Information has also been lost at Ontario MNR due to a loss of corporate memory with recent retirements in government staff as well as a finite period for documentation retention, affecting sources for background review and policy analysis (Heydon, pers. comm. 2012). Recent cuts at Library and Archives Canada may also unfavourably affect research timelines and resource access.

A limited number of Fort Severn elders were interviewed, though the total number was judged sufficient due to the observance of repetition in the content. The sample size was large, but not exhaustive. Based on the author's observations in the community, the number of similarly aged elders in Fort Severn is probably two to three times of the size of the sample. Moreover, the elders may not have shared all information available to them for reasons such as the effects of time on individual memory or reluctance to share with an outsider. The use of multiple informants eased this limitation and provided greater precision.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

This chapter begins with summaries of the interviews with community members (section 6.1), and then outlines the themes and issues observed in the sample (sections 6.2 and 6.3). Complete transcriptions of the interviews are provided in Appendix 1. Despite adding considerable length to this chapter, the summaries are useful for retaining the voice of the participants. Sixteen people participated in this research over the course of fifteen interviews (two participants were interviewed jointly). Ten of the participants were women and six were men. All of the participants were elders in the community. Their ages at the time at the time of the interviews ranged from 64 to 88 years of age, with an average of 75.4.

6.1 Interview Summaries

The following are brief précis of the interviews conducted for this research.

Rhoda Albany (born about 1933) spent her youth near Niskibi River, northwest of Fort Severn (see Figure 2.1: 15). She recalled that when the province's trapline boundaries were implemented, her family stayed at the Fawn River (between Fort Severn and Big Trout Lake; see Figure 2.1: 5, 9). They

would sometime trap with another family on their trapline. She stated that people respected the beaver hunting restrictions but also feared the game wardens; this comment probably referred generally to the 1930s and 40s. She recalled from this time meetings between the chief and council and the province to discuss changing beaver conservation limits. Eventually the limits were lifted, alleviating food security concerns and allowing the sale of pelts once more.

Looma Bluecoat (born about 1923) was interviewed at her home in Fort Severn. She recounted that the registered traplines resulted in people ceasing to help one another. Seasonal travel changed and people faced starvation. During the 1930s and 1940s, families on traplines would travel to Fort Severn to resupply at the Hudson's Bay Company post and then go back to their traplines in the fall. The trapline boundaries prevented people from hunting or trapping where the animals were, but at the time there was no government assistance to offset this. People generally agreed among themselves to cross trapline boundaries to help each other. However, not everyone would share. In order to survive, people often disregarded the MNR quotas on animals. She reasoned that restrictions on beaver hunting in the 1940s caused the animals to become over-populated and diseased, which then led to their decrease. She linked decreasing animal populations to a failure by people to properly respect what they are given by the Creator because proper disposal of animal remains is not observed. People should show respect through moderation, by only taking what is needed for that day instead of over-hunting. She also perceived a lack of

respect by government towards the land itself. The government controls the land and promised to protect it, but shows it no respect.

Jemima Gray (born about 1923) was interviewed at her home in Fort Severn. She was born on a trapline to Jimmy and Emma Matthews. She recalled few problems when the registered traplines were assigned to families. After the registered traplines were established in 1947, her parents were assigned land around Niskibi Lake, at the head of Niskibi River (see Figure 2.1: 15) and everyone stayed within their own boundaries. After MNR restricted beaver hunting (on-going though the 1930s and 1940s), beavers became overpopulated and diseased. This caused the beavers to drop in number, and people to go hungry. The rigidity of the trapline boundaries complicated harvesting as animals were mobile and not necessarily available on one's assigned trapline. This resulted in conflicts between community members.

Ezra Kakekaspan (born about 1934) was interviewed at his home in Fort Severn. At the time of the interview, his sons Matthew and George were the band's chief and manager, respectively. Mr. Kakekaspan was raised in Fort Severn and learned to trap from his father, training upriver on a trapline near his father's main line. He stated that people began to starve after MNR established the boundaries for the registered trapline system in 1947. In some areas, people switched traplines in order to procure more food. MNR was aware of the situation but it was the responsibility of chief and council to provide assistance to the

people. During the time of restriction (i.e., the 1940s), the beaver population initially increased but then started to decrease from disease. In terms of the relationship between the people and the province, he asserted that there is still no communication with MNR unless it pertains to land use for mining and exploration. He linked diminished resources on the land to his perspective that “MNR has no respect for the animals.”

Moses Kakekaspan Sr. (born about 1945) was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office in Fort Severn. Of all the participants, his interview was the most focused on the spiritual aspect of living on the land, which is perhaps to be expected as he is an Anglican minister. He was born on a trapline and recalls his family moving around “travelling wherever the animals go.” His father and brother drowned in an accident in 1972 when he was 21 years old. He was very young when the registered traplines were defined. The people of the community largely determined the trapline boundaries that were then recorded by the province. He recalled conservation limits on beaver harvesting and their effects. On this topic, he recounted two stories about persons affected: Alec Wenjino from Attawapiskat, who killed a beaver for food, and then had to flee from the MNR overland to Fort Severn; and, Moses Bluecoat who starved during the 1930s. He spoke at some length about respect for animals and the land engendering success for people on the land. Mr. Kakekaspan himself had not trapped in 32 years, but he still hunted rather than subsist on store-bought food. He also spoke

about the effects of climate change on the northern environment, particularly changes in permafrost.

Theresa Kakekaspan (born about 1934) was interviewed at her home in Fort Severn. She was born in Beaver River (see Figure 2.1: 12) and lived in Weenusk before moving to Fort Severn as a young woman. During the 1950s, Fort Severn men went to Weenusk in search of wage labour during the construction of the Mid-Canada Line radar sites, which is how she met her husband, Ezra. She recalled the hardship for her family when her father was not allowed to kill beavers. During this time, beaver numbers appeared to be high, before they started dying on their own. There was no explanation for this but she recalled provincial wildlife officers collecting beaver carcasses.

Adelaide Koostachin (born in 1947) was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office. Her interview repeatedly emphasized the importance of education in bush skills. She stated that she learned her skills on the land by doing, and she now takes young people on the land to help keep these skills alive in her community. While acknowledging that the teaching continues the old ways of using the entire animal, she noted that modern harvesting was more a matter of “kill as much as you can.” She discussed the early years of the registered trapline system and expressed a concern that people had that might not be enough land to account for animal migration. When limits on harvesting beaver were implemented, she related that people went hungry. Her father ignored the MNR

restrictions in the early 1960s and killed what he needed for the survival of his family and his dog teams. She recounted a story of the RCMP being involved in a fatal conflict with a guide over conservation monitoring. She felt that “there will be no peace” while MNR is involved with their lands. She stated that Aboriginal people want MNR’s respect and attention and she remained hopeful that the information shared at meetings would help MNR understand how much the people need the land for survival.

William Koostachin (born about 1945) is Adelaide’s husband, and he was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office. He was born on a trapline and began working on the land when he “became enough to go out travelling” with his brothers and father. He later trapped on the family trapline along Pipowitan River (see Figure 2.1: 14) until 1991 when his legs were seriously injured in an accident. He expressed great concern about MNR taking “things away from us. It’s torturing us.” He described the early relationship between trapping families and provincial conservation authorities as being adversarial, sharing anecdotes of intimidation and preferential treatment given to southern sportsmen over local people. For example, he recounted a story his father hiding beaver pelts in a hole and putting pepper on them so the MNR dogs would not find them.

Elizabeth Matthews (born about 1933) was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office. She was born in York Factory and raised by her grandmother, from whom she learned her skills on the land. In 1942, Elizabeth moved to Fort

Severn to be with her father who started trapping in the area. After the introduction of registered traplines, people generally kept within their own boundaries for commercial trapping; however, if they crossed into another area for subsistence hunting they would share meat with the family that owned it. She related the inflexibility of conservation measures, including people starving in the Whitefish Lake area (west of Rocksand; see Figure 2.1: 8) because they were prohibited from killing beaver. She expressed concern for future generations over MNR restricting harvests again in the future, though she believed that people seemed to have more control over their land today than in the past. She also observed that older traditions related to the respectful disposal of animal carcasses were no longer being passed from parent to child. Things are different today as young people do not learn about the land until later in life and do not have the same respect for elders or the land, relying instead on technology and modern-day conveniences.

Isaac Matthews (born about 1936) was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office. His family trapped in the area around Niskibi River and, when he was seven, he started trapping with his grandfather, Phillip Matthews, along the Blackduck River on the Manitoba/Ontario border. At that time, there were 35 members of the Matthews family living and trapping in the area northwest of Fort Severn. The province assigned the Niskibi Lake trapline to the Matthews family. Phillip Matthews was the head of the family and dealt with MNR regarding the boundaries of the trapping area. In general, communication between MNR's

predecessors and the people of Fort Severn was good, but he recalled that the people were afraid of them. When the traplines were set up in the 1940s, there was conflict over the boundaries of his family's area resulting in tampering with traps, and theft of bait and equipment. The family head reported this to MNR and the perpetrators were threatened with jail time, which resolved the issue. He stated that when the registered traplines were put in place, traditional practices of sharing ceased and fighting began. He said that in practice the registered traplines no longer exist today. The heads of family clans have passed away so people trap where they want. He also discussed other regulations such as closed seasons and equipment restrictions. He and his father continued to trap beaver during the restriction period.

Sally Matthews (born about 1937) was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office. In her interview, she recalled that her parents were unhappy about the traplines assigned to them by the province. Conflicts occurred when people trapped on others' traplines, issues that were solved by discussion in community meetings. Her father passed away when she was young so her mother engaged in commercial trapping. Mrs. Matthews did not approve of MNR quotas and limits, and was critical of the ministry's control of animals. She recalled general information about historic restriction on killing beavers in which people alternately cooperated with and resisted wildlife officials. People might trap in secret, sometimes risking arrest if they killed a beaver. At the same time, the province was an employer, hiring local guides to take game wardens onto traplines. In

terms of current practice, she does not see people respecting the remains of animal today as they once did.

Esais and Illa Miles (both born about 1930) were married when they were interviewed together in their home in Fort Severn. Mr. Miles passed away in 2013 before this research was completed. He was born upriver from Fort Severn and lived in Fort Severn all his life. His family trapped on the Dickey River when he was young (see Figure 2.1: 13). Mrs. Miles was born at Beaverstone and lived there with her family for about 20 years. Her father traded his furs in Fort Severn, where she met her husband in 1942. When the province assigned the Miles family a trapline in the 1940s, it was across the Severn River so they were able to continue living in Fort Severn. There were a lot of confrontations when people did not respect trapline boundaries. They also discussed the beaver quotas and bans, and related how some people starved without adequate food. Mr. Miles described the historical relationship with provincial wildlife officials as including a fear of prosecution, framing the conflict between government and community as a struggle for rights. Mrs. Miles pointed out that the introduction of traplines changed how people related to the land and with each other. Today, people trap where they please and there are no confrontations. Mrs. Miles commented that the government and MNR control the land, and people are now fighting for their rights. She also stated that if animals were mistreated (i.e. over-hunted or not disposed of properly), they would disappear for 2-3 years.

Delia Stoney (born about 1937) was interviewed in her home in Fort Severn. She grew up at Fawn River with her family; note that the Fawn runs from near Big Trout Lake to join the Severn River (see Figure 2.1: 5, 9). Her late husband Jack Stoney worked for MNR to stamp furs from 1964 until his death in 1998. Together, they lived on a trapline on Dickey River. Before the boundaries were imposed, everyone shared access to resources. She stated that initially there was good communication with provincial wildlife authorities. For people who abided by their laws, things were good; for people who did not respect the traplines or the hunting restrictions, things did not go as well. She noted that some people did not follow the law because they needed to survive, though if someone hunted for sustenance on another person's trapline, they would share with the trapline's owner. After the traplines were assigned, people generally stayed within the boundaries though the animals kept moving, resulting in some periods of shortage. On the matter of trapping limits, she observed that harvest restrictions on beaver caused them to become overpopulated and die. Currently, people trap where they want because the trapline boundaries are no longer relevant; nonetheless, the government has more control over the land and can still limit what people do.

Lucy Stoney (born about 1934) was interviewed in her home in Fort Severn. She was seven years old when the registered traplines were introduced. She recalled provincial wildlife officials coming to the community and her family moving to Beaver Lake (west along Beaver River; see Figure 2.1: 12). Her father,

Esais Thomas, and her three brothers worked the trapline. During her youth, people obeyed wildlife laws in part because provincial wildlife officials were accompanied and supported by the RCMP: “People would either be taken to court but were also afraid of being killed.” She expressed the opinion that none of the changes made by provincial wildlife authorities were good ones, and was concerned about modern protected areas restricting subsistence harvesting. In the past, families in need might be allowed by others to trap on their traplines. Disputes over trapline boundaries were handled by the chief approaching MNR though the province frequently asserted its right to manage trapping and animal populations.

Ernest Thomas (born about 1945) was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office. During the formal interview and an informal follow-up, Mr. Thomas discussed a broad range of topics including his various employments with different organizations, INAC proposals for animal husbandry projects in the north, remediation concerns, First Nations cultural practices, and the community’s relations with MNR. He stated that the traplines offer traditional lands and land users a form of protection from development. He understood that decisions on where to set the registered traplines’ boundaries were the product of a 5- or 6-year process of meetings with the government. People were not happy about the implemented boundaries and conflicts between families happened over boundary lines. He discussed historic cooperation between provincial and federal governments in enforcing wildlife law, and expressed

frustration with the province in exchanges over its authority and the Treaty rights of Fort Severn's people. He stated that the government destroys the land by not respecting it and went on to outline his concerns about the effects of mining, hydroelectric development, and pollution from radar sites on the regional food chain. He drew a clear connection between water quality and effects on terrestrial wildlife.

Outlier Interview (George Thomas)

One additional interview was conducted with a person who was considerably younger than the other participants. His statements were not aggregated with the others, but are discussed separately. They will be revisited in Chapter 7.

George Thomas (born about 1971) was interviewed at the Fort Severn Lands Office. He was born in Sioux Lookout (his mother was from the Severn area but was flown south for delivery. He now lives and works on a trapline in Beaverstone year round (see Figure 2.1: 17). Though he is not currently trapping, he described numerous pressures that were affecting trapping in the area. These included licensing problems with the local fur purchaser, proposed restrictions on polar bear harvesting, and pressures from anti-fur activists that have a negative effect on fur markets. In return, the lower trapping activity resulted in what he saw as greater numbers of nuisance animals active in the community. He disputed the notion that polar bears were in danger of going extinct, noting that their numbers were low in the 1930s and 40s but have since rebounded. He argued

that hunting is not affecting polar bear numbers, but rather pollution and increased mercury levels in the food chain.

Mr. Thomas, a self-described activist, demonstrated great concern over the conflicts between government regulation and the Treaty rights of First Nations. In his estimation there was, and still is, tension between MNR and the native people. In discussing the registered trapline system, he stated that it was invented by non-native people and meant to “disrupt the unity” of Aboriginal people. He attributed conflicts over land use to the introduction of that system (a comment echoed in a number of the interviews with elders). In his view, the registered trapline system created boundaries where none had previously existed, restricted nomadic and seasonal life ways, and assigned a monetary value to the land. Restrictions on beaver harvesting caused people to starve, and their over-protection led to over-population, disease, and contamination of waterways.

Mr. Thomas had much to say on regional acculturation during the Post-Contact era. Life on the reserve changed greatly since the arrival of Europeans, including the loss of language and traditional values in favour of English and non-native cultural influence. People generally do not live on the land anymore, not even to go camping. He stated that environmentalists who have depressed the demand for furs have made trapping difficult and unprofitable. He discussed traditional practices for disposing of animal remains after use within the context of respectful relations with animals and the land. This included the systematic removal of animal bones from campsites, which were then burned or hung in

trees, descriptions consistent with those described by the sixteen elders. These traditional practices waned when Christianity took on greater influence. In his opinion, the trapline system changed how people related with animals, as people overharvested out of greed. This latter point was directed at the registered trapline system but it is possible that he intended for it to apply to the entire commercial fur trade. He expressed frustration with the distribution of funds by the local trapping association, stating that he is trying to follow a traditional lifestyle but receiving minimal support.

6.2 Themes Identified in Interviews

As discussed in Chapter 5, the four themes identified in the coding process were Knowledge, Animals, Access, and Relationships. Knowledge included all references to traditional knowledge, place names, and specific cultural beliefs and practices. Animals comprises information on commercial and subsistence use of animal species. Access examines statements on mechanisms of land use, conservation, and compliance. Relationships contains discussion of social interactions within and without the community.

The following sections include summary tables that outline the themes, sub-themes, and categories (equivalent to the individual codes). The tables contain a breakdown of the incidence of responses (i.e., how many participants discussed the topic) and their frequency (i.e., how many times the topic was mentioned in the interview). The latter was determined by identifying discrete

meaningful statements on the topic within the interview, as a single issue might be revisited repeatedly by the participant, and a single sentence might touch on multiple issues. The totals for these values are refined further by gender.

Table 6.1
Summary Table for All Themes

Theme	Incidence			Frequency		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Knowledge	6	10	16	83	83	166
Animals	6	9	15	40	47	87
Access	6	10	16	98	119	217
Relationships	23	32	56	77	75	152
TOTAL				297	324	621

As seen in Table 6.1 above, the most common theme was Access, followed by Knowledge and Relationships. Incidence values are similar for men and women, with women's interviews containing greater numbers of statements related to Access and Relationships. The relative numbers narrow in total frequency, suggesting that when men spoke on those two themes, they did so in greater detail.

6.3 Results

The following sections summarize the data according to the individual codes. They are organized into the four thematic areas: Knowledge codes are found in section 6.3.1, Animals in 6.3.2, Access in 6.3.3, and Relationships in 6.3.4.

6.3.1 Theme 1: Knowledge

Ten codes were included within the Knowledge theme (see Table 6.2). Only one code included a large body of statements, namely the disposal of animals after harvesting. Within the interview process, the researcher asked specifically about disposal practices with an eye to informing future archaeological analysis of campsites. Other topics with significant responses were the knowledge system itself, food customs, and mobility.

Table 6.2
Summary Table – Knowledge Theme

Theme	Sub-theme	Category	Incidence			Frequency		
			Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Knowledge	Traditional Knowledge	Toponyms	2	0	2	4	0	4
Knowledge	Observations	Species Change	3	7	10	9	8	17
Knowledge	Processes	General	2	0	2	5	0	5
Knowledge	Processes	Seasonal Round	5	3	8	16	4	20
Knowledge	Processes	Material Culture	3	3	6	6	4	10
Knowledge	Values and Rules	Animal Disposal	5	10	15	19	32	51
Knowledge	Values and Rules	Food Customs	3	4	7	12	10	22
Knowledge	Values and Rules	Health	3	3	6	8	4	12
Knowledge	Worldview	Knowledge System	6	6	12	8	19	27
Knowledge	Worldview	Beliefs	3	1	4	4	2	6

6.3.1a *Traditional Knowledge (Toponyms)*

This category included specific explanations of traditional place names. Only three statements were assigned to this general category, all related by men.

6.3.1b *Observations (Species Change)*

Participants mentioned fluctuations in animal populations. Three people stated that they felt that animals were now more scarce, though one disagreed and thought they were more numerous. Two people mentioned that marten were a relatively recent (post 1970s) arrival in the area and are now plentiful. Similarly, moose were rare or absent prior to the 1950s, suggesting that they were slow to move back into the area following hunting pressure in the 19th century. The statements also reference beaver populations declining in the 1950s, after the beginning of the registered trapline system. The reason for the decline was generally thought to be in response to a prior overpopulation, possibly caused by trapping restrictions.

- “When the beaver population went up [in the 1940s], they started to die on their own. It wasn’t caused by anyone, it happened on its own.” (Ezra Kakekaspan)
- “There was a disease with the animals but not the people. I can’t really tell what it was. There was lots of beaver then. When beaver was overpopulating they were slowly dying. When I was travelling around with my mother we came across a beaver that was dying. It had some sort of ticks. We came across a few beaver that were dying.” (Jemima Gray)

6.3.1c Processes (General)

Only a few men referenced this category, which included descriptions of cultural practice such as hunting and storage techniques. For example, Moses Kakekaspan told how to store food in a moss-lined pit, taking advantage of the effects of the permafrost: “They’d heap them in the ground, that moss is wet and cold, about four feet down. That was the fridge.”

6.3.1d Processes (Seasonal Round)

Seasonal movement patterns were only discussed by men. Trapping was largely a winter activity, running from November to June. Several observed that people were more mobile in the past, linking increased sedentarism to the presence of schools and services. The distances on trapline could be considerable, in some case up to 80 km, and necessitated the trappers (mostly men) spending long periods away from the family. During the youth of many participants (i.e., 1930s-1940s), Fort Severn was lightly populated except for gatherings in the summer. The description by Moses Kakekaspan of the seasonal round matches Mushkego patterns inferred from archaeological and historical sources that were presented in Chapter 3.

- “There’s four seasons in the year. In the winter we had the caribou mostly. In the springtime we had ptarmigans and rabbit, and watched the geese come back, snow geese and Canada. In summer there was fish. In the fall we have a different kind of caribou [that] comes in [...]” (Moses Kakekaspan)

- “People didn’t stay in one area. The food would be scarce so they would keep moving.” (Isaac Matthews)

6.2.1e Processes (Material Culture)

This category included descriptions of tools and crafts, the physical products of traditional knowledge processes. Only a small number of participants mentioned traditional tools but they described a flexible, utilitarian approach to survival. The dates associated with these crafts are unknown but are consistent with historic descriptions from the Contact Traditional Period (i.e., before 1945).

- “We didn’t rely on the store for tools; everything was made from animal bones. The same with medications. No one depended on medications.” (Adelaide Koostachin)
- “Sealskin garments would be greased. [...] Mattresses used to be made from animal hides, mostly moose and caribou hides. Wolf was very warm.” (Ernest Thomas)

6.3.1f Values and Rules (Animal Disposal)

This category was almost universally discussed in response to direct questions from the researcher about animal disposal. The women generally gave more details than the men. The pattern of disposal of animal bones was consistent between participants. Tradition and necessity espoused whole-animal use and any remaining material would be collected and burned at a distance from the camp. In the event that burning was not possible, bones might also be placed in trees. Participants linked these practices to concepts of respect to the

animals as well as being clean, though one person stated that it was also done to keep the bones away from scavengers. No participants indicated that an offering or other ritual accompanied that disposal. The practices are consistent with accounts by Rock Cree elders recorded by Brightman (1993). The dates associated with these practices are unknown but appear to have been more common during the participants' youth (i.e., before the 1950s).

- “The bones of animals would be disposed of properly by putting them in a tree or by burning away from home. People back then weren't allowed to step on anything, on a piece of meat or on a bone. There are not too many people who have respect for the animals these days. I'm displeased when I see bones or carcasses in the dump. People don't use all of them or respect the carcasses. They should be disposed of properly.” (Sally Matthews)

6.3.1g *Values and Rules (Food customs)*

This category captures statements on food preferences and eating practices. The participants described eating a wide array of animals including fish, birds and mammals. The diet during their youth appears to have been opportunistic in the sense that little went to waste and almost any animal was consumed (though one person did not like the taste of otter).

- “Whenever someone had a chance to kill a caribou, nothing was thrown away. We had a use for everything... the stomach, the brains, even the hide. Even the blood from the body cavity, we stored it.” [Q: *What was the blood used for?*] “We made soup out of it.” (Adelaide Koostachin)

6.3.1h *Values and Rules (Health)*

A small number of participants discussed health, including personal concerns and injuries. Most of these made an association between consuming wild foods and having good health, an association that was in some cases explicitly medicinal.

- “Even up to today, that’s what I eat. When I don’t eat them for a long time I don’t feel well. Young people provide the food for me now, the moose, beaver, caribou and waterfowl. I always end up calling one of my relatives to see if they can provide for me.” (Rhoda Albany)
- “I still hunt. I couldn’t live on what you get at the store. You get weak. You can’t crank the engine. Same thing with the native people, they’ve got to have the wild food. If your body is weak you can’t do anything. You have to build up energy from the wild because that’s where they belong. We never got sick when we were living on the land. When we started living here we got all kinds of sickness, disease.” (Ernest Thomas)

6.3.1i *Worldview (Knowledge system)*

A greater frequency of comments came from women on the gaining and transmission of knowledge, though it was mentioned by equal numbers of men and women. The responses largely describe a mixture of self-teaching and inter-generational transmission of knowledge, particularly through hands-on means. Some women expressed concern that modern youth were not learning these lessons and emphasized the need for time on the land to develop well-rounded skills.

- “I was travelling with my dad during my teenage years. My dad didn’t tell me what he was doing but I learned by watching.” (Ezra Kakekaspan)
- “I learned to look after myself from my grandmother, to live on the land. To this day I use what I was taught.” (Elizabeth Matthews)
- “My parents weren’t always around to hold my hand, so if I was told to do something I did it.” (Adelaide Koostachin)
- “I only grew up in the bush [i.e. did not attend school]. That’s how we became aware of how animals are because you live around them.” (Illa Miles)

6.3.1j *Worldview (Beliefs)*

Many participants did not broach the issue of belief and ritual, particularly pre-Christian ways. Those few respondents revealed the relationship between humans and animals as being one of reciprocity with consequences for mistreatment. This is consistent with the observations of Brightman (1993) that were described in Chapter 4 (section 4.2), as are the norms for cleanliness and animal disposal listed in section 6.2.1f. Two participants also described means of bringing harm upon other people via supernatural forces. None of these were characterized as current beliefs or practices.

- “In the old days, people had a way of telling things. They even talked to animals and animals talked to them.” (Ezra Kakekaspan)
- “To my knowledge, animals don’t stay in one place. They travel a far distance where they gather together. They gather together every ten years and talk to each other. There’s a secret gathering place and they tell each other if they’ve been mistreated. They would become scarce if they were mistreated.” (Rhoda Albany)

- “They believed where they kept the tents clean they got blessed. If they weren’t clean, there would be no blessing. That’s how they believed. By doing, by respecting the tent, they can call the animals. Sometime you are wondering where are the animals? And you could call them and they would come. You have to believe and it would work. Was it really the animals that hear them or was it the Creator?” (Moses Kakekaspan)

6.3.2 Theme 2: Animals

Six codes were included within the Animals theme (see Table 6.3). The largest number of responses was about beaver and smaller numbers on bear and dog. Caribou was only mentioned intermittently. The researcher asked general questions about the types of animals used commercially and for subsistence, as well as specific queries about four types of animals (bears, beavers, caribou, and dogs), which in the author’s experience are frequently mentioned in reference to Cree subsistence and ritual.

Table 6.3
Summary Table – Animals Theme

Theme	Sub-theme	Category	Incidence			Frequency		
			Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Animals	Use	Subsistence	3	6	9	9	11	20
Animals	Use	Commercial	5	7	12	5	8	13
Animals	Type	Bear	3	4	7	5	7	12
Animals	Type	Beaver	6	7	13	13	19	32
Animals	Type	Moose and Caribou	4	5	9	5	11	16
Animals	Type	Dog	3	1	4	8	1	9

6.3.2a *Subsistence Animals*

For the most part, participants listed the animals that were consumed domestically. The animals most commonly mentioned were beaver, fish, caribou, rabbit, and waterfowl including ducks and geese. Mentioned less frequently were polar bear, fox, lynx, mink, moose, muskrat, marten, otter, and ptarmigan. Opinions differed on the palatability of otter and mink. Squirrel and whiskey jack were categorized as emergency foodstuffs; one woman recounted trapping and cooking mice as a child. Women recalled a more varied list of animals whereas men focused on the first group of animals. Seal and whale were used as dog food.

- “Most of the people ate everything... otter, beaver, mink, muskrat. There was nothing else for them to eat, so to survive we ate what we trapped. The main diet was beaver.” (Rhoda Albany)

6.3.2b *Commercial Animals*

This general category is comprised of animals that were trapped commercially. These included beaver, fisher, fox (Arctic, red, and silver), lynx, marten, mink, muskrat, otter, squirrel, and wolf. The ones most frequently trapped were beaver, otter, and lynx. Marten were not commonly trapped as participants related that the animal was rare in the area until the 1970s. No harvest restrictions were discussed in reference to animals other than bear and beaver, which may not reflect a lack of regulation but rather the importance of those particular animals.

6.3.2c *Bear*

Only a few participants mentioned traditional knowledge about bears, which was unexpected as polar bears are currently the focus of considerable management research (and are depicted on Fort Severn's logo and flag). The majority of references were to polar bears with a single reference to black bears. Polar bears appear to have been eaten by humans only occasionally, and one participant was aware that bear livers are toxic if consumed (Rodahl and Moore 1943). While polar bear hides were historically traded with the HBC (Beaulieu 2010), the interviews contained no references to the animal's commercial value. Polar bears were also reported to kill and eat beaver, confirming an account in Kakekaspan et al. (2010).

- "Where the beaver lodges are, the polar bears can get in and kill them." (Ezra Kakekaspan)
- "About the polar bear, often times I would come across them. Not all are aggressive. MNR harassing them makes them aggressive. They come closer to town now." (Sally Matthews)
- "For instance, today there are birds that are laying eggs and black bears are eating the eggs. Bears never used to eat eggs." (Looma Bluecoat)

6.3.2d *Beaver*

Beaver were mentioned frequently, often in reference to trapping quotas and limits, as well as being important both commercially and for subsistence. Their populations fluctuated a great deal, with declines observed in the years

after the introduction of the registered trapline system (i.e., late 1940s, early 1950s) and possibly again in 1958.

- “Next thing is when you eat beaver its [only once] in 12 hours or a day. You not going to get hungry when you eat the beaver. It’s not like store food where you want to eat again after a few hours.” (Ernest Thomas)

6.3.2e *Moose and Caribou*

Moose and caribou were mentioned less frequently than beaver and generally only in the context of animals that were hunted for subsistence. Some participants emphasized the importance of caribou and related specifics of its use or preparation but overall its discussion was limited. Only one specific reference was made on caribou anatomy and behaviour. Moose were infrequently referenced, some participants stating that when they were young there were few moose in the area.

- “In the fall we have a different kind of caribou [that] comes in, inland caribou. There’s big ones and another one, smaller, barren-land they call them. The inland caribou are almost the size of a moose.” (Moses Kakekaspan)

6.3.2f *Dog*

Dogs were described as working animals as dog teams were the normal mode of long distance transport in winter before gradually being replaced by snowmobiles. Koostachin (pers. comm. 2012) reported that the last dog team kept in the community was in the 1980s. Dogs were generally fed whatever

humans were eating, as well as seal and whale meat (neither of which were consumed by humans). Two people made reference to dog behaviour being a useful indicator of environmental changes, including break-up of the river ice.

6.3.3 Theme 3: Access

The Access theme comprised 12 codes dealing with controls on land and natural resources (see Table 6.4). These have been divided into three sub-themes: General, Internal, and External. The internal sub-theme refers to processes within the community, and external to those without. Effectively this is identifying the presence and character of directed and non-directed change.

Table 6.4
Summary Table – Access Theme

Theme	Sub-theme	Category	Incidence			Frequency		
			Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Access	General	-	6	6	12	19	21	40
Access	Internal	Indigenous Land Tenure	2	5	7	4	9	13
Access	Internal	Indigenous Conservation	0	4	4	0	5	5
Access	Internal	Indigenous Compliance	4	5	9	6	9	15
Access	Internal	Trapline Implementation	4	3	7	10	3	13
Access	Internal	Trapline Concerns	4	6	10	6	8	14
Access	External	Trapline Adaptation	3	9	12	6	14	20
Access	External	Trapline	5	3	8	14	4	18
Access	External	Conservation - Quotas and Limits	3	10	13	9	22	31
Access	External	Conservation - Seasons and Closures	3	4	7	7	8	15
Access	External	Compliance	4	3	7	12	10	22
Access	External	Assistance	4	4	8	6	10	16

6.3.3a Access (*General Issues*)

Participants observed that the land was still being used though less so today than in the past. Generally, they agreed that continuing to use the land was important for expressing the community's rights and for maintaining social cohesion. Several observed a conflict between the rights of the people to use the land and the authority of government. Exactly who held control was uncertain, even though traplines had recently come back under community control. One person mentioned that land had been removed from use by the establishment of parks.

- "Both government and MNR are in control and people are fighting for their rights, to claim the land for survival." (Esais Miles)
- "People get too old and too sick and can't use them, but all that matters is that people use the land." (Isaac Matthews)
- "They're going to take our hunting grounds. What's going to happen to our children, our future?" (William Koostachin)

6.3.3b *Indigenous Land Tenure*

Some participants referenced the way land was co-habited before the registered traplines came into force (i.e., before 1946-47). Indigenous systems of land tenure were poorly described but characterized as being more extensive and less organized than at present. Overlaps between family trapping areas were either disregarded or were negotiated by the families involved. While the interviews recorded an ideal of resource sharing, some level of competition on the traplines existed.

- “For my clan, the Matthews, before the boundaries were set up everyone got along and shared. After that is when people started fighting.” (Isaac Matthews)
- “I can remember my uncle and his father, they would go over a trapline and determine who would set up traps in the area. So the person would leave early and get out there before the other family.” (Sally Matthews)
- “There wasn’t literally any fighting or killing. We would talk to each other to resolve disputes over traplines. [These were in] earlier times before MNR set up trapline boundaries.” (Jemima Gray)

6.3.3c Indigenous Conservation

Only women made the few references to conservation practices dating to before 1946-47. There were no organized conservation practices but rather acceptable practices for interacting with animals. Some of the statements on beaver over-population (e.g., Rhoda Albany and Jemima Gray, see 6.2.1b) suggest that a certain amount of hunting was necessary for a healthy ecosystem.

- “Everybody shared the boundaries with everyone, trapping and harvesting what they could.” (Delia Stoney)
- “Mistreating animals is by overhunting them, or leaving them around, not putting them up on trees.” (Illa Miles)

6.3.3d Internal Compliance

This category included mechanisms in the community for settling disputes and for ensuring compliance with locally initiated conservation measures. Based on their context, the stories related are from the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Disputes over access apparently increased when the traplines were introduced, at which time the province became more active in enforcement and dispute resolution. This transition appears to have been rapid but no information is available on the exact pace of change.

As trapline access was largely conferred at a personal or family level, disputes between individuals were also negotiated. On occasion, the wider community became involved to hear disputes or to intervene on behalf of community members during conflict with provincial wildlife officials. The effectiveness of these attempts is unclear.

- “The war was just starting and those guys hated each other. Those traplines were like war. Guys were asking, why are you coming to my trapline, why do you go to my trapline?” (Ernest Thomas)
- “Within the boundary of a trapline, if I left my meat from moose or caribou, the people who owned the trapline could destroy the meat because the others were crossing the boundary. At times the chief would get involved. The chief would approach MNR and they would tell people that they were in control of what animals they trapped. People could still hunt for moose and caribou. Some people would listen and some people wouldn't. Some people were pretty mean and some would share.” (Lucy Stoney)

6.3.3e Land Tenure – Registered Trapline Implementation

Participants were asked about the implementation of the registered traplines in the late 1940s. Few stories were shared overall, but participants provided details on consultation, the extent of the traplines, and what precipitated

their imposition; men gave a greater number of responses than women. The idea for the registered traplines was recalled as a government initiative (i.e., the province of Ontario, based on the context of the responses). Some participants recollected that trapline boundaries were determined at least partly in consultation with the community. Decisions were announced at a community meeting following what may have been several years of preliminary work (i.e., mid-1940s). This agrees with a description of the process by Hansen (1989: 30) as being undertaken “in consultation”. Correspondence indicates that during the summer of 1947 federal and provincial officials travelled across northern Ontario and mapped existing trapping territories with the aid of Aboriginal trappers (Conn 1947a, 1947b).

- “The government started everything. The traplines covered the whole land long ago. We had a meeting here [about the] government plans at the big meeting. It didn’t happen at once, it took five or six years.” (Ernest Thomas)
- “I don’t know what they were doing but Phillip Matthews was with MNR for two years on Blackduck River. He showed MNR how much land they needed [for trapping].” (Isaac Matthews)
- [Q: *When the trapline system was introduced, how were people told about it?*] “I guess there were some people in the community back then. That’s how people would inform each other of certain traplines and where they could trap.” (Rhoda Albany)

6.3.3f *Land Tenure – Registered Trapline Concerns*

Concerns regarding the efficacy of the newly introduced registered traplines were expressed. The exact period in question is unknown but based on

the context of the responses probably ranges from 1947 to the mid-1950s. The consensus among participants was generally negative. The new trapline areas were characterized as being too rigid, and, in some cases, too small for commercial and subsistence purposes. There were instances of disputes over access occurring between families. Some participants discussed problems of diminished territory, which may refer more accurately to their confinement to a discrete territory. Whereas previously families focused their hunting and trapping on specific watersheds, they were not limited to them. Circumstances of the hunt or local conditions might require that they cross into other families' areas, which was suggested in section 6.2.3d to have been negotiated and/or ignored. After the imposition of the registered traplines, there appears to have been fewer exceptions made, in part because of fear of prosecution. The limit may have been social.

- “Nobody was happy with the traplines set up for them. A lot of people starved, there was no food.” (Ezra Kakekaspan)
- “For some people it really changed because there was a limited space where they could hunt and trap.” (Isaac Matthews)
- “At first when MNR put up the traplines it worked out for everybody. Later when animals moved in migrations you could only get them at certain places at certain times of the year. When MNR put in the traplines, people started fighting over who had the right to trap. They would destroy other people’s traps.” (Jemima Gray)

6.3.3g *Land Tenure – Registered Trapline Adaptation*

The interviews captured the responses of community members to the aforementioned concerns. A larger proportion of responses in this category were from women, who possibly retained a better memory of the social processes at work during the transition. Adaptation to the new land tenure system was a mix of wait-and-see approaches and intentional deviations from wildlife law. In some cases, internal mediation solved access disputes (see section 6.2.3d above). The statement by Looma Bluecoat (below) is interesting for her reference to how survival trumped how the people related to the land. On a similar note, Berkes (1999: 95) noted that “[a]nyone who has worked with hunting peoples knows that rules of ethics are sometimes suspended. But one can say that about any culture... there is always a gap between the ideal practice and the actual.”

- “People really did what they were told to do and everything worked out if they did what they were told.” (Rhoda Albany) [*It is assumed here that the participant meant ‘told by the province’.*]
- “We would have to look for ways to make things better. It didn’t matter how we felt about the land. It was survival of the fittest. Whatever laws the MNR imposed, people really didn’t follow them because they knew what was better to survive.”
(Looma Bluecoat)

6.3.3h *Land Tenure – Registered Trapline Transformation*

Ultimately the operation of the registered trapline system underwent some fundamental changes. Participants described an internal change in which trappers gradually came to disregard the rigid registered trapline boundaries.

However, the concept of proprietorship of trapline areas was not abandoned; rather, it was modified. Customary ownership of trapline areas was retained on a family and individual basis but greater flexibility infiltrated their daily operation. Two participants described traplines as an expression of their rights, connecting the retention of the trapline system to maintaining legal tenure and Treaty rights.

- “No one really cares about the traplines now. They’re basically sharing. They trap where they please. No one gets into any confrontations now.” (Illa Miles)
- “People are all over the place nowadays. No more trapline, no more can I say this is my trapline, so they use it.” (William Koostachin)
- “Today we trap where we want.” (Isaac Matthews)
- [Q: *So the traplines act as a sort of protection for you?*] “For everything. If anybody wants to come in on our traplines they have to [ask] our permission, before they start a mine or something. They signed a treaty.” (Ernest Thomas)

6.3.3i *Conservation (Quotas and Limits)*

Discussion about harvest quotas and limits were examined in this category. All references pertained to beaver harvesting, with no references to other species. This was an extremely active topic, being mentioned over thirty times. Women made the majority of comments, perhaps reflecting their traditionally greater domestic role or a greater degree of social memory.

The recollections of conservation numbers appear to extend back to the 1930s, when some of the participants were children. As described in Chapter 4, the HBC and province imposed conservation measures during the 1930s and 1940s including season limits and quotas, which were intended to keep beaver

populations stable. Historical quotas on beaver were portrayed by those interviewed as compounding hardship during periods of poor trapping harvests.

A story was shared in two interviews that illustrated the perceived negative effects of the quotas. Esais Miles and Moses Kakekaspan discussed the case of Moses Bluecoat, who was reported to have died from starvation and injury around 1935. This occurred prior to the imposition of the registered traplines but serves to illustrate the poor reception of wildlife conservation measures in the community. This episode will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

- “ There was hardly any beaver at that time, just here and there. As soon as he lifted the ban he gave quotas to people as to how much they could get. [...] When I was pretty young myself there was already a ban. By the age of 17 there was still a ban. They had the quota on beaver of ten per family per year. It depended on the family. If it was a family of twelve, then each family member was allowed ten a year.” (Illa Miles)

Note the use of ‘he’ in reference to provincial wildlife authorities. This personification occurred in several interviews. While this may be a translation error, it may also be similar to Cree on James Bay that called conservation officers ‘beaver bosses’ and ‘goose bosses’ (e.g., Scott 1989: 95-96).

6.3.3j *Conservation (Seasons and Closures)*

Related to the discussion of quotas and limits was that of absolute prohibitions on harvesting some species, be they seasonal or for longer periods. All examples were in reference to beaver harvesting. Longer closures were not

popular and deemed contributors to hardship. The context of the statements suggests that most of these episodes were in the 1930s and 1940s, occurring before and simultaneous with the introduction of registered traplines.

- “I remember that my dad wasn’t allowed to kill beaver at all. It was hard on the family back then [*i.e., in the 1930s and 1940s*]. MNR used to come up, land [the plane] and check on the beavers that were dying on their own and would collect them.” (Theresa Kakekaspan)
- “It was the early 30s when they banned the snares. In 1945 I was still out with my dad and sometime in that time that’s when MNR banned killing beaver. I don’t understand why MNR banned the beaver; there was plenty of it.” (Isaac Matthews)

6.3.3k *External Compliance*

Participants described instances of cooperation between provincial game wardens and the RCMP, including police enforcement of wildlife laws. People indicated that they complied with game laws though there were exceptions. All exceptions, save one, were for reasons of subsistence. Some community members assisted government officials by acting as guides on inspections. At least in part, fear of prosecution and/or seizure of trapping equipment motivated compliance with game laws. The period of time covered by their responses is mostly the 1930s and 1940s, but other references may be more recent.

- “I guess a lot of people [even though they didn’t come face-to-face with the MNR] still followed the rule to not kill beaver. My dad died in the early 1990s and still talked about that.” (Adelaide Koostachin)

- “During that time [*i.e.* 1930s] there was a ban on beaver. If I ever did kill beaver they’d put me in jail.” (Esais Miles)
- “The only reason why MNR got around was they hired a person to take them around people’s traplines. I never heard that there was any payment made for people to take them around to other people’s trapping on their land. There was an RCMP going around trying to control the beavers.” (Adelaide Koostachin)
- “One time my father took furs into hiding, when he heard that the game warden was going to search for fur and take it away. He took a whole bundle of fur and buried it in a dry place to hide it, and on top and under the fur he put pepper. These game wardens had dogs with them. That pepper [covered] that fur. That’s why we call it ‘pepper water’.” (William Koostachin)

Both William Koostachin and Moses Kakekaspan related a story about the plight of a man who killed beavers out of season. In or around 1949, Alec Wenjino avoided arrest by travelling overland from Attawapiskat to Fort Severn. The chief of Fort Severn intervened on his behalf with the authorities and he eventually returned home. This story was confirmed by a living relative (Kakekaspan pers. comm. 2012) and his two-month trek was referenced in passing in the diary of MNR employee John Macfie (Macfie 2002:84). This story will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

6.3.3k Assistance

Several interviews mentioned that social assistance was not available during the early years of the registered trapline system. Indeed, most types of federal personal and family assistance were not accessible to Aboriginal citizens

until the late 1940s (Shewell 2004). Some recalled the Hudson's Bay Company providing aid, though as part of a transaction. In some cases, the concept of assistance was blurred with social services, such as schools. Assistance was perceived as being only available from the band and federal government, and not from the province. Its earlier absence hampered the ability of families to respond to changes in trapline extensiveness and yield.

- "It was hard when the trapline system came into effect because we couldn't go everywhere to hunt and trap, and there was no government assistance. For the traplines to be imposed was very hard." (Looma Bluecoat)
- "It was completely different in the old days. There was no assistance from the government. I guess you can call that self-government. [laughs]" (Moses Kakekaspan)
- "[In the mid 1940s] there was a chief named Jeremiah Albany and a councillor named Nancy Albany. They didn't really help providing for people in need. MNR was aware but it was up to chief and council to help their people." (Ezra Kakekaspan)

6.3.4 Theme 4: Relationships

This theme was divided into eleven codes encompassing the relationships between community members and with external bodies, including different levels of government (see Table 6.5). There are a relatively small number of associated statements, except for comments made about provincial game authorities. As this focus in the research was intended, this pattern is not unexpected. In all

categories, responses were more or less evenly distributed among men and women, except for those related to Industry, which were made exclusively by men.

Table 6.5
Summary Table – Relationships Theme

Theme	Sub-theme	Category	Incidence			Frequency		
			Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Relationships	Internal	Men	2	3	5	2	3	5
Relationships	Internal	Women	1	4	5	2	7	9
Relationships	Internal	Elders	2	2	4	4	5	9
Relationships	Internal	Youth	3	4	7	3	8	11
Relationships	External	MNR	5	9	15	40	40	80
Relationships	External	DIA	2	1	3	4	2	6
Relationships	External	DND	1	2	3	5	2	7
Relationships	External	RCMP	1	2	3	3	2	5
Relationships	External	Other First Nations	3	2	5	6	3	9
Relationships	External	Residential Schools	1	3	4	1	3	4
Relationships	External	Industry	2	0	2	7	0	7

6.3.4a Men

General statements about male roles were occurred infrequently. Men learned to trap from their fathers. During winter, men would spend up to two weeks at a time trapping away from home. Increased opportunity for wage labour became available in the 1950s when workers were required to construct Radar Site 500 in Weenusk.

6.3.4b *Women*

As with statements about men's roles, direct statements about women's responsibilities were few. Many women contributed to subsistence fishing and trapping, and some contributed to the family's commercial trapping. One man reported that in the absence of a father, his mother did all the trapping, being allowed to work a trapline though it was not registered to her. Beyond these comments, the roles of women were not specifically mentioned. Based on the statements concerning male roles, it is assumed that they played a prominent role in maintaining the household while the men were away trapping.

6.3.4c *Elders*

The role of elders was referred to only rarely. Three statements suggested that in the past elders were influential in local decision-making, one linking this to their degree of understanding. One person noted that some elders are now unable to get to their assigned traplines, allowing younger trappers to trap where they wished.

- "Everything came from the elders, what they said. If you don't follow what they said then things won't work out because they knew what was good for you and how to go about it." (Illa Miles)

6.3.4d *Youth*

This category was referenced most frequently among the relationship cohorts inside the community, women being slightly more vocal on the subject

than men. Some participants emphasized the importance of learning on the land and connected the transmission of traditional skills to greater cultural survival. These skills were not necessarily being passed on to every child. The cultural and physical continuity of the community was linked by some to the importance of youth learning to live on the land.

- “Even the young people today, they’re not letting go of the land even though they’re not on it, [they are] still living off the land. They may not stay out there [all the time] but they still go out there. [...] The young people that are being told about the land stay within the reserve [*and not leave the community*].” (Adelaide Koostachin)
- “As far back as I remember [we lived on the land]. Now kids don’t have those experiences now. They go to school and learn there. I don’t know how they’ll live on the land. They won’t last too long. [laughs] They learn everything with a computer and not the brain.” (Moses Kakekaspan)

6.3.4e Relationship with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)

This category boasted the single highest frequency counts of all topics, with a total of eighty statements spread over fifteen interviews. An area of focus for this research was to investigate the working relationship of the community and MNR and its antecedent departments.

The province was criticized on a variety of issues with the two largest being: closures and limits (including the beaver quotas); and, the registered trapline system. The relationship with MNR was frequently depicted as one-sided, in which the ministry dictated regulatory changes that were often not well

understood by the people affected. A frequent complaint was that the province was historically unresponsive to the concerns of residents. Relationships with individual employees could be respectful, and in fact some community members worked for MNR as guides and fur stampers. There was however a great deal of mistrust and animosity directed at the ministry. There was also confusion over some decisions related to the traplines and quotas, which did not reflect local conditions. The latter may be an observation of remote decision-making, and the application of southern principles and standards to a northern situation. Similar complaints were raised by one individual in reference to provincial parks and increasing restrictions on harvesting.

The interview statements conveyed a sense of uncertainty and lingering distrust, though not outright hostility. Many individuals indicated that the province did not understand or appreciate their concerns. The province's approach to the land and wildlife was occasionally criticized as running counter to Mushkego concepts of proper engagement between humans, wildlife, and the land. MNR was occasionally described as owning or wanting to own the land.

- "In some ways we were getting along and not in others. At that time [*i.e., in the 1940s*], I know that when MNR came there was good communication and people got along with them even though they were telling us what to do. We still got along. Every time they came people would greet them. Not too many avoided them because people had to learn what they had to say." (Delia Stoney)
- "There was good communication and people got along. The only reason there were problems was because of a fear of MNR." (Isaac Matthews)

- “MNR never asked in particular people what they thought of it [*i.e. regulation*].”
(Rhoda Albany)
- “So far what the MNR is saying [now] is good, but some is not good because he wants to set up provincial parks and the people need the land for survival.”
(Rhoda Albany)
- “Everything is becoming scarce because MNR has no respect for the animals.”
(Ezra Kakekaspan)
- “People came across MNR saying they owned the land, and people would die or go to jail if they disobeyed the law. There’s going to come a time where everything is going to change and everything is going to disappear.” (Esais Thomas)

6.3.4f *Relationship with the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA)*

The infrequent mentions made of Indian Affairs focus on accounts about Indian Agents or treaty issues. Three participants stated that during the 1940s and 1950s Indian Agents would visit in summer, bringing supplies and treaty payments (\$4 per person). People appeared to be clear about the different roles and mandates of MNR and DIA. Ernest Thomas described this relationship from his point of view: “There’s Indian Affairs and the MNR sits lowest, below it.”

- “The only time we’d see a white person was when they brought our treaty money. It was \$4 a year. [Q: *Who brought the money?*] It was Indian Agents. They’d bring \$4 to each family every year. The Agents would provide food and supplies when we were on the land.” (Looma Bluecoat)
- “There were hardly any planes in the old days. The only time I saw a plane was on Treaty Day. [Q: *So MNR and Indian Agents did different things?*] MNR would

impose different laws on people when we'd meet up. The Indian Agents imposed different laws." (Moses Kakekaspan)

6.3.4g Relationship with the Department of National Defence (DND)

A small number of interviews referred to the construction of the Mid-Canada Line radar sites, particularly site 500 near Weenusk. Some talked about the social dynamics associated with the project, when wage labour drew men away from trapping. The largest number of comments was made by Ernest Thomas regarding his ongoing concern over remediation of decommissioned radar sites, now reported as sources of contamination.

- "When they started putting up radar sites and people were offered jobs, people stopped competing [on the traplines]." (Illa Miles)
- "When the men built the radar bases, men from Fort Severn came to work in Winisk [=Weenusk]. This is when I met Ezra." (Theresa Kakekaspan)
- "One [radar] site could be \$10 million for one area [to clean up?]. Those guys they need a billion dollars for sure. We had [millions] on Winisk [=Weenusk], three years ago. That's what it cost, but that's not across Canada. Not enough. They can only afford to do three or four sites." (Ernest Thomas)

6.3.4h Relationship with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

Most references to the RCMP concerned patrols enforcing provincial wildlife laws. This predates the establishment of the current Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS), and most likely refers to events in the 1930s and 1940s. A scan of DIA archival information clearly indicates RCMP activity in provincial wildlife matters during this time. The relationship between community and police

was not always positive. Adelaide Koostachin recounted a story about an RCMP officer enforcing game laws that reportedly shot and killed a guide who would not assist in trapline inspections. No corroboration of this story could be found, but it illustrates a measure of distrust in the community for law enforcement. This episode is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

- “RCMP was most of the time doing the surveying in the traplines with the dog teams. I guess they’d check the campsites and fires too, looking for bones. That’s what they do.” (Ernest Thomas)
- “[Q: *Were they doing that for themselves or for MNR?*] He was looking for anybody to put in jail. That’s what he was up to. [...] They worked together, like today. Even today [it is like that]. I was in Peawanuck a couple of years ago and there was MNR flying with RCMP.” (Ernest Thomas)

6.3.4i Relationship with Other First Nations

Some references were made to nearby Aboriginal communities including Weenusk, Peawanuck, Sachigo, and Big Trout Lake. More distant connections encompassed Attawapiskat, York Landing, and York Factory. Among these few references were accounts of interactions with people from these communities. None of these were of a hostile character, usually just statements of who lived where. Marriages were chronicled between Fort Severn residents with those from Weenusk, York Landing, and Attawapiskat.

6.3.4j *Residential Schools*

A small number of participants referred to the residential school system. No substantive discussion of peoples' experiences occurred, merely mention that the children of some people had been educated that way. Only one interview participant discussed attending residential school while growing up in Weenusk in the 1950s.

6.3.4k *Relationship with Industry*

This category was small and discussed primarily by men, and in particular by one man for whom it was an important topic. Exploration and mining were cited as possible sources of pollution and an infringement of territorial rights, with specific references to a defunct gold mine near Sachigo and to aborted plans for hydroelectric dams on the Severn River in the 1970s.

- “We can stake [mining] claims but we can't open mines. Besides, cleaning up the garbage is first. Before anything new happens, some things need to be cleaned up.” (Ernest Thomas)

6.4 Summary

The narratives contain some details on the implementation of the registered trapline system that are corroborated by archival and synthetic sources. Interview participants expressed a variety of opinions, sometimes contradictory, on the effectiveness of the land tenure system. There was a general consensus that it did not work well, particularly in combination with conservation measures implemented in the 1930s that limited subsistence and commercial harvests. At some unspecified period the registered trapline system was abandoned and people had largely reverted to previous customary norms of land tenure. They expressed some uncertainty regarding the motivations of MNR and there was a widespread perception that the province still exercised great control over the land, though they noted some recent changes. The interviews also noted that the traplines were important for expressing the community's rights and for maintaining social cohesion. Retention of treaty rights were linked by some to the continued use of the land.

A variety of other data were generated by the interviews, including the relative importance of animal species to commercial. Beaver was overwhelmingly considered the most important, at least historically, due to its combined subsistence and commercial value. This may have changed in recent decades. Koostachin (pers. comm. 2012) commented that beaver was no longer trapped extensively due to low fur prices. Its subsistence value may also have decreased

given the late arrival of moose to the area and the availability of store-bought food.

Some data indicate that Aboriginal beliefs regarding the human-animal relationship continued into the generation that was interviewed. The stated patterns of animal disposal were generally uniform, involving burning or hanging of animal bones and an emphasis on keeping living areas physically and spiritually “clean”. Interviews suggest that these patterns have waned in subsequent generations. Historic campsites may be expected to have areas of bone disposal located near them.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

This chapter describes how Fort Severn was subjected to an array of externally directed changes that profoundly altered the social and ecological landscape. The bureaucratization of common property resources, specifically wildlife, reduced the options for a people already affected by a diminished economic role. This chapter outlines the mechanisms at work in the local economy, and describes a 'tipping point' at which the social and ecological landscape precipitated political change. The early responses of the community included a mix of acquiescence and resistance, followed by widespread disobedience when a disease in the beaver population compromised subsistence and commercial income. This eventually culminated in a transformation of the registered trapline system.

For over three centuries, the fur trade was the central field of interaction between the Mushkegowuk and outsiders. As described in earlier chapters, the fur trade underwent significant changes in the 20th century. The Mushkegowuk changed from being relatively free agents during its early years to ones with

relatively fewer tools with which to transform their social-ecological system (SES) into the variety of desired goods and services. In Fort Severn, the relative importance of trapping in a mixed economy declined as regulations hampered their trapping and other opportunities for cash income increased, be they from wages or social transfers (Rogers 1966: 6; Abele 1997). These new opportunities involved much less autonomy than the previous fur trapping system. The historically important fields of interaction through the fur trade shrank markedly, and with it Mushkego autonomy waned in relations with government and corporate entities (see Figures 7.1 and 7.2). The new field was one of increased bureaucratization and reliance on government funding. Power dynamics, which were more symmetrical in the Early Contact period, assumed the more asymmetrical pattern seen today.

At the same time, Euro-Canadian agency was not simple. A multitude of parties with competing interests, whose actions influenced Mushkego land use and land tenure, alternately facilitated and diminished their access. This alternation of factors is integral to understanding the historical and modern state of the Mushkegowuk SES in Fort Severn.

7.1 The Dynamics of Change

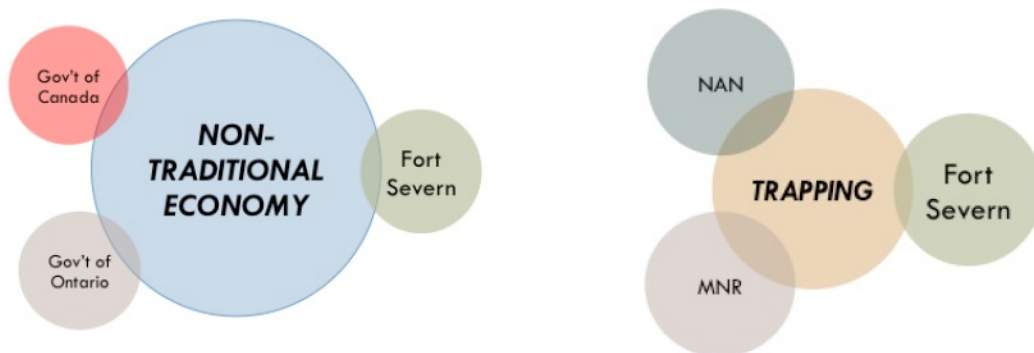
The registered trapline system was not unique to Fort Severn. Examples exist in other Aboriginal communities in Ontario of its implementation, evolution, and transformation. Charles Bishop's (1974) study of Osnaburgh House makes

Figure 7.1
Idealized Depiction of Field, Habitus, and Direction of Change (pre-1946)



(after Bourdieu 1977)

Figure 7.2
Idealized Depiction of Fields and Habitus (c. 2013)



(after Bourdieu 1977)

passing reference to the abandonment of the system. A similar but more extensive analysis is chronicled in Bryan Cummins' ethnography of Attawapiskat (Cummins 2004). Bishop wrote that the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests (later MNR) took over the responsibility of supervising trapping activities in 1947, including establishing registered traplines and requiring the tagging of furs. Annual tallies of fur and game catches were made by provincial officials on Treaty Day (Bishop 1974: 31), which recalls the mention made earlier in this work of cooperation and cost-sharing between the provincial and federal governments. Bishop's informants in Osnaburgh reported that the government presence was resented and fur catches would be deliberately under-reported to game wardens.

On the issue of the traplines, he noted that "[t]here is an increasing tendency to ignore boundaries, especially in cases where adjacent territories are not occupied" (Bishop 1974: 32). He described customs of visiting trappers compensating the registered holder for the right to use the land, and a tendency for groups of related trappers to trap *en masse* on areas outside their allotted territory. Territorial boundaries, he concluded, had less meaning than they once did, owing to a reduction in the overall economic importance of trapping (Bishop 1974; Rogers 1966).

Fur trading had by that time diminished considerably. The fur trade industry entered a decline after World War II owing to changing fashions and increasingly global markets (Ray 1990). The HBC had already diversified into other sectors before moving away from fur wholesale and retail. These patterns were also seen in the community. In a survey of three northern Ontario Aboriginal

communities, Rogers (1966) observed that between 1950 and 1964, there had been a general reduction in the total number of pelts taken (see Table 7.1). This was attributed to a decrease in trapping rather than decreases in animal populations. Per trapper yields remained fairly stable over a 14-year period, excepting changes in beaver during disease outbreaks in 1950 and 1955. Prices for furs also declined during this time.

Table 7.1
Changes in Fur Harvests and Prices, Fort Severn
(from Rogers 1966, Tables 8 and 11)

	Pelts per year		Price per pelt	
	1950	1963	1950	1963
Beaver	1023	654	\$23.63	\$14.08
Otter	298	222	\$27.36	\$30.98
Mink	425	132	\$27.45	\$11.73
Muskrat	260	411	\$2.04	\$1.55

Rogers observed a reduction in active trappers despite the fact that reserve populations had increased, and fewer younger trappers learning the craft. Fort Severn trappers were more likely than other communities to harvest all furs instead of specializing in one species (taking advantage of all opportunities regardless of price). He also observed Fort Severn traplines also had the lowest density of trappers of the three communities that Rogers examined (3.9 per trapline in boreal forest, 5.5 on the coast), which he attributed to the limited resources of the region. These numbers are consistent with the modern estimate by MNR of 3.6 trappers per line (Beaudin pers. comm. 2012). Rogers suggested that Fort Severn trappers more closely resembled the idealized 'hunting groups' of the Early Contact period, which he attributed to their relative isolation from

acculturation. In any case, the people of Fort Severn were shifting towards an economy increasingly based on wage labour and social transfers, and away from the traditional trapping mainstay. Abandoning the strictures of the registered traplines by then may have incurred relatively few risks and increased flexibility for the remaining trappers.

Cummins (2004) described a similar abandonment of the registered trapline system in Attawapiskat, a Mushkegowuk community on James Bay. In a series of interviews with elders conducted in 1990, he heard stories similar to those from Fort Severn. They described resentment about an external land tenure system being imposed upon them, resulting in expressions of territoriality and conflict between harvesters. Some characterized the registered trapline system as too inflexible and impractical and the areas allotted being too small. The process was seen as restricting people to lands with insufficient resources (Cummins 2004: 42). The system eliminated situations that seemed disorderly to outsiders, but to the Mushkegowuk, the rigidity disrupted traditional practices of sharing and negotiated land use. As described by Cummins (2004: 99), this disconnection between imposed versus traditional values ultimately led to the system's functional demise in Attawapiskat:

The most disruptive factor between 1953 and 1985 was not downswings in game population or the introduction of technology; it was the carryover of the registered trapline system. Its implementation provides a valuable lesson in the cross-cultural imposition of unilateral decisions. Suffice it to say that the registered trapline system was adhered to by the Cree for only 15 or 16 years (until the mid 1960s) and then essentially rejected in favour of their previous practices.

Cummins described the relationship of Attawapiskat and external governments as one of encapsulation and resistance (in other words, of alternating directed change and non-directed response). Encapsulation is the process where the dominant society or culture limits the access of another through superior numbers and/or political instruments, and thereby subjugates the other group (Bailey 1969: 147-148; cited in Cummins 2004: 2). This is a political process whose rules are set externally to the encapsulated. Changes in the relative position of the actors or in the legislative environment will affect the rules and the balance of benefits.

Cummins listed five possible forms of encapsulation, after Bailey (1969: 149-151) and Rodman (1987). These overlap to some degree and multiple methods may be employed to obtain compliance. He observed that each of these approaches has been used at different times in Canadian history (2004: 3). The forms are the following:

1. nominal – the dominant group does not interfere with the subordinate group;
2. predatory – the dominant group does not interfere with the subordinate group provided that tribute is paid;
3. integration – radical change (i.e., a transformation of the political component of the SES);
4. abolition – the relationship is dissolved; and

5. indirect rule – the dominant group does not interfere with the subordinate group provided that the latter adhere to the former's normative pattern.

He then listed three possible responses to encapsulation that a subordinate group may employ:

1. acquiescence – the subordinate group submits to the control of the dominant group;
2. resistance – the subordinate group actively or passively resists external control; and
3. compromise – some combination of the above.

Cummins related that Aboriginal groups in Canada have used all three approaches at different times. He characterized self-government as a hybrid approach, a form of “resistance through negotiated compromise” (Cummins 2004: 3).

The process of encapsulation in Attawapiskat was “one of increasingly formalized and restrictive actions on the part of Euro-Canadians” (Cummins 2004: 137). Whereas the older links with fur trading companies were customary and not codified, the community's ties to Canada and Ontario became increasingly formal, including Treaty No. 9 and the introduction of the registered trapline system. The policies imposed bound the community to an external framework, and subjected them to rules made from a considerable social and physical distance. The people of Attawapiskat responded to their encapsulation

in various ways, ranging from petitions to government to legal action, but of concern for this research is their gradual abandonment of the registered trapline system.

Morantz (2002) discussed similar changes that occurred in the land tenure of the Eastmain Cree of Quebec; while there was great persistence in land use from the 1920s through 1970s, there had been a shift in the formal nature of the family hunting territory. Morantz wrote: “What had before been customary and flexible according to family circumstances was now rigid and subject to disposition by the trader or government official” (2002: 172-173).

The interviews conducted in Fort Severn describe a similar back-and-forth pattern of encapsulation and resistance. Directed, external change imposed an alien land tenure system that the community followed for a time, but ultimately abandoned and/or modified. Mushkego hunters and trappers were not passive spectators in the operation of their SES (*sensu* Fabricius et al. 2007), but rather conscious evaluators of the efficacy of the new land tenure system. As the new system was observed to limit access and foster competition between community members (decrease resilience), then it ceased to be a viable option.

7.1.1 Community Narratives of Encapsulation and Resistance

The interviews contained a number of active concerns in Fort Severn in the mid-20th century. It was difficult to consider the effects of the registered traplines in isolation from licensing, quotas, season closures, and the other

regulatory mechanisms imposed on the Mushkegowuk; all of these factors had the potential to independently affect resilience, but their cumulative effects were probably much greater. Participants recounted three stories that illustrated their situation and responses to it. The first of these stories dates after the beginning of the registered trapline system; the others occurred in the preceding generation.

a) The Alec Wenjino Story

William Koostachin and Moses Kakekaspan told the story of Alec Wenjino, which offers insight into the nature of the relationship between Aboriginal communities and government officials during the time of interest. In or around 1949, Wenjino killed beaver, which at the time was a restricted activity. He then fled westward across the muskeg and bush of the Hudson Bay Lowlands from his home community of Attawapiskat, covering a distance of approximately 500 km on foot in two months. He crossed the Severn River during the break-up of the river ice, a time when it is very dangerous, and remained hidden for several months. In June, he was spotted by people from Fort Severn about twenty miles upriver from Limestone Rapids and was brought to the community. The chief interceded on his behalf with the authorities (likely Jeremiah Albany; see Miles pers. comm., 2012). Eventually Wenjino married a woman from Fort Severn and returned to his home community. He died from tuberculosis during the 1950s or 1960s and is buried near Kapuskasing (Kakekaspan pers. comm. 2012).

Wenjino probably took advantage of the eskers and cheniers that constitute *de facto* highways above the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Former MNR

employee John Macfie suggested as much when he made a brief mention of Wenjino's cross-country trek in his diary (AOO C 330-18-1: 84-85):

Coming back from fishing a mile inland I saw a man with a gun over his shoulder traveling westward, coming toward me. I assumed it was one of our Indians hunting, and crossed in front of him and on to the tents. But in arriving I found all our Indians here. Looking back I could see the man 3 beaches inland, still plodding westward, and by now past us. I drew our Indians' attention, immediately the two boys took out to intercept him, running the whole mile. After a bit they returned, but the stranger plodded on. It was Alex Winginow of Severn who got to Severn by walking there 300 miles cross-country from Attawapiskat in two months, living by his gun, a few years ago. He is working on the radar base [under construction] at Weenusk, and having made a good bit of money he is going home for a week by the only means of travel available – walking the 120 mile each way with a gun over his shoulder and his bed on his back. He is on his third day out from Weenusk and hopes to make Severn tonight! But the beach ridges make good walking, there are ducks to eat, and Alex has lots of money to spend at Severn and, according to you [*sic*] Pat Koostachin, "lots of kinds of cigarettes."

Macfie's account supports the statement made by Rogers (1966) that wage labour in Weenusk was a considerable lure for Severn residents, which is also supported by data in this research. The Wenjino story is significant because it showed the fear of prosecution that accompanied infractions of Ontario wildlife law. It demonstrated the political mechanisms by which band leadership could intervene in such cases. In this case, an attempt was made to compromise with the state following an act of resistance against provincial law. The story is also a testimony to the tremendous stamina and resourcefulness of Mushkego trappers and hunters from that time.

b) The Moses Bluecoat Story

Esais Miles, Illa Miles, and Moses Kakekaspan shared the tale of Moses Bluecoat, a young man who died in the 1930s (prior to the registered trapline system, but after the introduction of quotas and season closures). All three participants linked Bluecoat's death at age 16 to starvation. Moses Kakekaspan's version also noted that Bluecoat was injured from falling in a fire while weakened state by hunger. Elizabeth Matthews' account directly attributed his death to a refusal to trap beaver despite their being present, out of respect for (or fear of) the law. His death was one of several linked to restrictions on beaver harvests imposed by the province of Ontario during the 1930s.

This compelling story illustrated the perceived negative effects of pre-existing conservation measures. The John Macfie fonds at the Archives of Ontario contains a picture of Moses Bluecoat's grave, which records his date of death as January 13, 1936 (see Figure 7.2). Macfie's journal listed no reason for his taking the photograph but it does confirm the personal details of the deceased man.

c) The RCMP Story

A third story told by Adelaide Koostachin, and obliquely referenced by Ernest Thomas, was dated to the generation before hers. Wildlife inspectors and police relied on guides from the community to help them locate and inspect traplines. She related that an RCMP officer attempted to hire a band member as his guide; but when the guide refused citing the dangers of the trip, the officer

Figure 7.3

Grave of Moses Bluecoat at Fort Severn, 1955. John Macfie fonds, Archives of Ontario, C 330-13-0-0-130.



killed him. The officer then went onto a trapline alone and died of starvation. The body of the guide was found in spring.

This story could not be corroborated using archival sources. Even if it is apocryphal, its telling is a strong indicator of the unpopularity of provincial wildlife laws, and the deep distrust of law enforcement, providing an example of active resistance to provincial authority. It also records the cooperation between provincial and federal authorities in upholding game law, as discussed previously in Chapter 6.

While these three cases focus on the responses of individuals, the next section will examine how a natural event compounded by external stresses affected the community of Fort Severn.

7.2 Interpreting the Data

According to resilience theory, many systems can exist in alternate stable states (Walker et al. 2004; Resilience Alliance 2013). The state of a system at any time is defined by the values of the variables that constitute the system. Altering the balance of components alters the configuration of interactions on the land and makes certain alternative configurations possible. The metaphor often used for this is a ball moving in a basin-like depression. The ball represents a state in the SES, such as the number of trappers in the SES, and the basin is the current configuration or regime in which the SES operates. The basin is defined by a series of physical and ecological constraints but also encompasses social and regulatory forces. The ball is unlikely to skip outside the basin of attraction, but changes to the state or the basin can cause it to change to another configuration that was previously less likely.

Conditions that precipitate these changes are called thresholds. If certain thresholds are crossed then the SES can destabilize and transform into a new regime that may or may not be desirable for human occupants. A society that is sufficiently resilient can avoid or forestall these changes, as if increasing the inertia of the ball within the basin and making it less likely to escape. These

thresholds are often undetectable until they are crossed, in which case resilience theory becomes a forensic tool in social-ecological analysis, as demonstrated in this research.

In the case of Fort Severn, the SES included the land, animals, and the Mushkegowuk themselves (in this case, as the ball in the previous metaphor). The basin of attraction was defined physically by the ecological constraints of the system, and socially by the interaction between Mushkego trappers and Euro-Canadian corporate and government entities. Various factors potentially affected the resilience of local trappers by limiting their range of choices, altering the configuration of the basin or directly altering the trappers' trajectory. These included externally imposed conservation measures and a bureaucratized land tenure system. By themselves, these factors appear to have remained below the threshold for triggering a regime change, but the sum of changes diminished Mushkego resilience and left the SES vulnerable to perturbation.

The generalized hunter-gatherer way of life practiced by Fort Severn's ancestors during the Pre-Contact Era was likely resilient to many changes owing to its flexibility, mobility, and limited scale. Adaptation to an SES-wide perturbation could in some cases be managed by switching to alternate resources or simply moving to a new area. However, after the 1940s, traditional responses were impaired by a number of factors that precluded the latter mechanism from operating fully. These included: new wildlife laws; the increasingly sedentary nature of the community; the increase in wage labour opportunities that offered an alternative to a hunter-gatherer lifestyle; and the

increased availability of government aid tied to a location of residence. Conditions were ripe for an event that would test the resilience of the Mushkego SES.

7.2.1 Conditions in the Middle and Late 20th Century

The trigger came in the form of tularemia outbreaks in 1950-1951 (Millar 1953; Clarke 1954) and again in 1954-55 (Ontario Department of Lands and Forests 1955). Tularemia is an endemic insect-borne infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*, including a type that affects beaver and muskrat (Petersen et al 2009). It occasionally crosses the species barrier to infect humans. The disease affects white blood cells, resulting in enlarged lymph nodes, skin lesions, and occasionally causes meningitis or pneumonia. The disease was reported as epidemic in northern Ontario and Manitoba (Labzoffsky and Sprent, 1952). Macfie (AOO C 330-18-1: 22) noted that the province was testing beavers for tularaemia near Fort Severn during 1951. The province outlined the scope of the problem as follows (Ontario Department of Lands and Forests 1955: 23-24):

The area most seriously affected by beaver die-off was part of the Severn River drainage of Patricia Central and West in extreme northern Ontario. This was the area similarly affected in 1950. Some of the large traplines near Sachigo had no occupied beaver houses left in the spring of 1955. This is a serious situation because these fine Indians are dependent on them for resource and when this falls, there is no alternative source of income for them.

Participants made many comments about the sudden decline of beaver

populations after World War II. The descriptions and timing of the deaths are in accord with the accounts above. Hardship was associated with this decline, following a decade of limits or outright bans on harvesting. Adaptation to the then-new registered traplines must have been tested by the sudden reduction of beaver populations (as well as memories of starvation in the 1930s).

The interviews indicate that strict obedience to trapline restrictions gradually waned and people eventually trapped where they wished. As demonstrated through the interviews, Fort Severn followed the pattern of Osnaburgh House and Attawapiskat, and trappers ultimately tested the limits of the traplines' rigidity.

The trapline registry shifted the community's economic and social focus from being based on the land to being anchored to the community and spending less time on the land. This increased access to specific governmental resources, such as social assistance (after 1946), postal services, schools, nursing stations, and the benefits of legal and regulatory instruments, expanding on a bayside 'resource patch' dating to the Fur Trade. The cost of this access was an increased degree of reliance on these resources as the traditional economy model was gradually replaced by a wage economy one.

Between 1955 and 1956, construction of the radar base in Weenusk sharply increased wage labour opportunities for Fort Severn men, during which time Rogers (1966) observed a decline in trapping. This was confirmed by Illa Miles who said: "When they started putting up radar sites and people were offered jobs, people stopped competing [for trapping opportunities]."

7.2.2. Post-study Period Trapline Use

Isaac Matthews' interview indicated that registered traplines became increasingly irrelevant after the 1980s or 1990s. He linked this to the deaths of heads of extended families who had been the driving force behind continued trapping, but external factors apparently accelerated this process. As discussed at the end of Chapter 4, trapping in the region is believed to have undergone a transformation in the 1990s. The province began to shift away from old patterns of game law enforcement in light of budgetary reductions and the maturing understanding of Aboriginal and treaty rights. Harmonization agreements transferred many trapline management functions from MNR to provincial tribal organizations, which have been largely content to take a hands-off approach to trapping licensing and regulation.

At this point, it is worthwhile to return to the interview with George Thomas. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mr. Thomas was a generation younger than the other interview participants so his interview results were not combined with the others. However, his interview has value as an alternative perspective on the issue of the registered trapline system and its associated conservation measures. Mr. Thomas observed that the registered trapline system was not an indigenous creation, that it was rigid; and that it commoditized the land. He commented that conservation measures operating in the 1940s to 1960s contributed to general hardship, as did present day measures including restrictions on harvesting polar bears. In his view, the traditional Mushkego

relationship to the land was extensively disrupted through cultural loss and a one-sided power dynamic that favoured provincial authority.

He assigned intent to the creation of the registered trapline system, considering it a deliberate attempt to “disrupt the unity” and to “kill the spirit” of his people. As he was not present for its implementation, he could not provide details on how the trapline areas were assigned or if any consultation occurred, but it was his assumption that they were unilaterally imposed on the people. He indicated that trapline assignation had been taken over by the band office (which is in keeping with the devolution of authority following trapline harmonization). Now, a more informed population, fluent in English and benefiting from a series of legal decisions that expand treaty rights, makes decisions on land use.

These rights are in part why the trapline system still exists. Several participants mentioned that the trapline boundaries were largely ignored but acted as a form of protection for land use rights. The harmonization agreement that transferred some trapline-related powers to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) was effectively a limited self-government agreement, what Cummins referred to as resistance through negotiated compromise (2004: 3). In turn, NAN turned access back to the community, allowing the band to make most trapping-related management decisions. The land tenure may be nominal, but the system retains value as a declaration of continued use and occupancy. This itself is a form of resistance: a co-opting of the machinery of wildlife management and its transformation into a means to preserve and expand resilience. The conditions for doing so were right, as a combination of fiscal restraint and reduced economic

value of trapping meant that MNR was less able or willing to enforce wildlife law through centralized processes. Taking Mr. Thomas' statements in conjunction with the others, what emerges is a picture of the registered trapline system retained in form but jettisoned in essence. This is similar to what Cummins observed in Attawapiskat (2004: 99), but with positive implications for improved self-determination, expanded access, and possibly enhanced resilience.

7.3 Synthesis

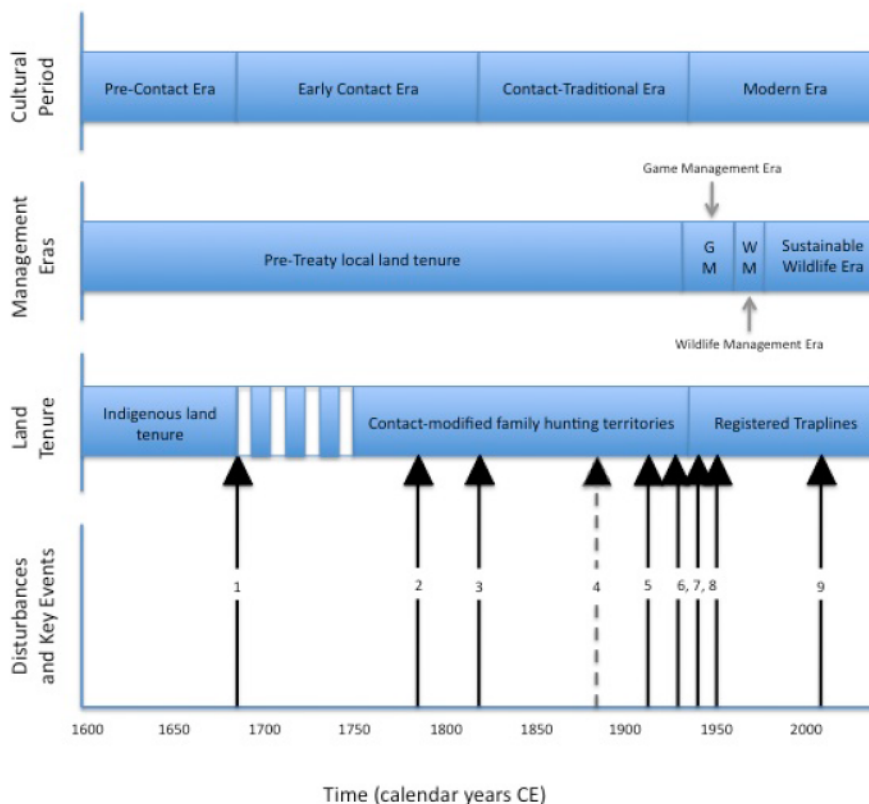
The history of Fort Severn is punctuated by a series of events like markers on the road. In less than four centuries the Mushkegowuk experienced an astonishing array of changes. Following contact with Europeans and the introduction of new customs and material culture there was also the appearance of new epidemic diseases. The waxing and waning of the continental fur trade also caused or exacerbated fluctuations in the animals upon which the community depended. The bureaucratization of land and common property resources began with the entry into Treaty with the federal government, and then expanded to include the natural resources that fell under the purview of the Province of Ontario. Wage labour increased in the years after World War II and reduced the numbers and knowledge base of trappers in the community. All these factors reduced the options for people to live their traditional lifestyle. The outbreak of epidemic disease among beaver and muskrat populations stressed the community and the traditional economy became less certain than wage

labour and social assistance. The externally imposed land tenure system was briefly followed and then ignored, but two generations later its framework was co-opted for a new transformation. All of these events with the exception of the last were either negative or neutral in terms of community resilience. It should be stressed here that the resilience lost was that related to the Mushkego ability to live on the land. The modern economy offers a diversity of cash-based instruments, so its resilience has been changed qualitatively.

Figure 7.4 is a timeline of Fort Severn that references these key events, superimposing them on the chronologies of culture periods introduced in Chapter 3 and management eras introduced in Chapter 4. Most of these events also occurred in other Aboriginal communities in Ontario though their exact timing and effect may have varied. Direct acculturation was late to Fort Severn. The community joined Treaty No. 9 a quarter century after it was drafted, and it had little industrial or commercial activity beyond the fur trade. Even the residential school system was a late addition. In his analysis of trapline returns, Rogers (1966a: 6, 28) noted that some demographic changes did not occur in Fort Severn as in other communities, and that trapping intensity remained fairly stable during the study period. In his estimation, the activity of its trappers more closely resembled his Early Contact idealized hunting group (Rogers 1966a: 33; Rogers 1966b: 57). This suggests that Fort Severn may have been isolated from some forces and even acculturative processes, probably by dint of its extreme physical isolation, and that it was resistant to some of the changes that did occur.

Undoubtedly had it been located closer to the centre of power in Ontario, directed change may have played an even greater role in its history.

Figure 7.3
Timelines and Key Resilience Events in Fort Severn



Legend:

1. Contact
2. Smallpox epidemic, 1782-83
3. Unification of HBC and NWC, 1821
4. Game depletions in late 19th and early 20th century
5. Adhesion to Treaty 9, 1929
6. End of World War II
7. Trapline registration implemented in Patricia District, 1947
8. Tularemia outbreak, 1949-51
9. Trapline harmonization agreements signed, 2005 (in negotiations from 1992)

In summation, a combination of external historical factors altered the SES and its social and political dynamics, hyper-regulated what remained of the original field of cross-cultural interaction, and limited local access and resilience by limiting wildlife harvesting choices. Participants suggested that the community's response to this limited access initially appeared to be one of acquiescence, motivated in part by fear of prosecution and loss of livelihood; however, some examples of resistance occurred, particularly when the perceived need was great. Mushkegowuk adapted to the new statutory framework through a combination of compliance and resistance, though many more legal and administrative tools were in the hands of the provincial government. Responding to periods of resource scarcity and fluctuating access, the registered trapline system was ignored and eventually repurposed under Mushkego control to prove occupation of the land.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

For most of the 17th through 19th centuries, the Mushkegowuk of Fort Severn approached their interactions with Euro-Canadians from a position of relative autonomy. During the 20th century, the control of land management shifted in favour of national and provincial authorities, which diminished the ability of the Mushkegowuk people to regulate their economic and environmental activity. They proved remarkably resilient as they adapted to changing conditions in their social-economic system (SES), including environmental, socio-economic, and political factors. Wildlife harvesting has persisted throughout time, though over recent decades, the practice has gradually declined and contributed less to the local economy. Nonetheless, wildlife harvest remains to this day a culturally significant endeavour and a ready supplement for subsistence and commercial needs.

The interviews conducted during this research will contribute to a record of the history of Fort Severn during the mid-20th century. The elders' memories and opinions of their interactions with each other, with outsiders, and with their environment are a valuable window into a time and place that has not been clearly articulated in Canadian awareness. As elders age and pass away, their stories disappear. The preservation of their words has important implications for

maintaining the community's knowledge of itself. The community members who participated in the interviews related their past concerns and their hopes for the future, drawing strong links between the community's future well-being and its continued use and presence on the land. They were sharply critical of past and present conservation measures including externally imposed limits on harvesting, the establishment of protected areas and the registered traplines themselves. Given the cumulative effect on community hunting and trapping, the distinction between conservation and land tenure is at some level arbitrary.

The second outcome of this research has been the analysis of the interviews, identifying themes present in elders' statements, and focusing on details of their relationship with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). The origin and implementation of the registered trapline system can be treated as a proxy of their larger relationship. Other factors affected its evolutionary trajectory including external processes of conservation and governance, and internal processes of acculturation and resistance. Also at work were changing philosophies of land use, from a place where one worked and lived, to one with a value based in part on tourism revenue. Recent years have seen the rise of an ecologically preservationist ethic, and a tendency for land to be removed from human use.

The roots of the system lie in philosophical and legal approaches to land management, stemming from the Euro-Canadian conceptualization of land as divisible property. Even when resources are held in common, the rights of access are arranged hierarchically. This ideology conflicted with indigenous systems of

land tenure, which were based on necessity, customary use, and negotiated access. The Euro-Canadian land tenure system was initially met with compliance, then resistance (both subtle and overt). This externally imposed system was eventually abandoned, as it had been in Attawapiskat and other Aboriginal communities in Ontario, though its framework has been retained in a co-management exercise. Some community members equated continued use of the land as a means to retain it, and some interviews clearly stated that the traplines are a legal instrument to argue for aboriginal title.

This is a hybrid view of the land, for while it involves the co-opting of an alien tenure system, it also involves some degree of acceptance. Paul Nadasdy (2002) commented that the assertion of aboriginal title is to accept the Euro-Canadian idiom of land-as-property, which requires walking a fine line possibly at odds with the aims of self-government (2004: 258). How much this concern applies to Fort Severn is unclear, for trapping is today a less central practice in the community than in the past. At question is the exact effect of the transformation of the registered trapline system and the re-localization of control. The final chapter of the situation in Fort Severn has yet to be written.

In his study of Cree goose hunters from Wemindji, Peloquin (2007) observed that Cree harvesters were capable of fine-tuning local arrangements to suit local environmental conditions. Even when local management strategies were employed, they could be overwhelmed by macro-scale changes such as climate change, anthropogenic disturbances, and social-cultural changes that influenced land use (Peloquin 2007). A similar set of circumstances occurred in

Fort Severn, where the balance of access-related tools was held remotely. In such a case, outside management priorities were favoured over local ones even when not wholly appropriate to the situation. If and when they were found inappropriate, a season or more could separate observation of a problem from response. Limiting the ability of a community to make fine adjustments is to eliminate the role of local knowledge and to reduce systemic resilience.

While the creation of the registered trapline system appears to have incorporated some local knowledge, overall control was largely non-local and change imposed externally. The presence of relatively immutable, outsider-directed rules governing wildlife harvesting implied a relative absence of community-level control. Unless managers interface with local knowledge systems, the regime is limited in its sensitivity and responsiveness. This weakness became apparent during disease-related declines in the beaver population in the 1940s and 1950s. While this decline by itself would have tested community resilience by reducing a major commercial and subsistence resource, the hardship was exacerbated by long-standing limits on local harvesting imposed by provincial wildlife authorities residing in southern Ontario. An episode of reduced resilience collided with a pattern of limited access, making Fort Severn's trapper all the more willing to resist and abandon the registered trapline system. The interview participants linked provincial conservation measures to an imbalance in beaver populations, culminating in disease. Perhaps abandoning the registered traplines also served to bring human-wildlife interactions back into a 'proper' alignment.

Future avenues of research exist in exploring the history of wildlife conservation, especially concerning the imposition of quotas and closed seasons in the 1930s. The participants in this research raised this topic repeatedly and it was clearly significant in their minds. Likewise, additional research tracking modern trends in harvesting and land tenure, such as the efficacy of the fur licensing program run by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and its interaction with the community and MNR, would be valuable for the historical record. It would have been interesting to get the impressions of community members a generation older, people who were already adults during the imposition of the trapline system. Unfortunately these voices are gone, though their echoes persist in the words of their children. In the future, these otherwise absent community narratives may be expanded through identification of government, ecclesiastic, and private sources that were not available at the time of this research.

It is clear from the words of the elders that the community's grievances of the past are linked to those of the present. Even with the reduced focus on trapping, they tied the community's cultural survival to continued use of the land. In some interviews this sentiment was expressed with some urgency. When asked if she felt optimistic about the relationship between Fort Severn and MNR, Adelaide Koostachin stated the following:

Whatever the MNR is starting up, there will be no peace, it is the beginning of a war over our lands. It is only the beginning. By the information and the meetings they have, we're hoping that MNR will understand how much we need the land for survival. Can you understand what I'm saying?

This statement is not so dire a prediction, though its words are strong. Throughout the interviews there were expressions of frustration with the

provincial government but in many cases there was also a frank desire for their words to be heard. As with any beginning, events can unfold in many directions. The people of Fort Severn appear willing to embark on the process, ideally in partnership but without compromising their rights.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW RECORD

The following is a transcript of interviews conducted in Fort Severn, Ontario, between February 14-20, 2011. Interview participants reviewed a draft text in July 2013 and this version incorporates their changes. Translations in the field were provided by Julie Miles. Review of transcripts with participants was performed by Irene Miles. Any errors or omissions are the author's. All profile photos of participants were taken by the author and are reproduced with permission.

Text enclosed in square brackets represents either the author's asides or bridging text to fill in gaps in the transcript. Comments and questions to participants have been italicised. An ellipsis in square brackets, i.e. [...], indicates missing text or a break in recording.

No.	Last Name	First Name	Sex	Age	Language Used	Date
1	Koostachin	Adelaide	F	64	Mushkego	2011-02-14
2	Koostachin	William	M	66	English	2011-02-14
3	Gray	Jemima	F	88	Mushkego	2011-02-14
4	Stoney	Lucy	F	77	Mushkego	2011-02-14
5	Kakekaspan	Moses Sr.	M	66	English	2011-02-15
6	Matthews	Sally	F	~74	Mushkego	2011-02-15
7	Kakekaspan	Ezra	M	77	Mushkego	2011-02-15
8	Kakekaspan	Theresa	F	74	Mushkego	2011-02-15
9	Thomas	George	M	40	English	2011-02-17
10	Bluecoat	Looma	F	88	Mushkego	2011-02-17
11	Stoney	Delia	F	74	Mushkego	2011-02-17
12	Thomas	Ernest	M	66	English, Mushkego	2011-02-18
13	Matthews	Elizabeth	F	78	Mushkego	2011-02-18
14	Albany	Rhoda	F	78	Mushkego	2011-02-19
15	Matthews	Isaac	M	75	Mushkego	2011-02-20
16	Miles	Esais	M	81	Mushkego	2011-02-20
	Miles	Illa	F	81	Mushkego	2011-02-20



Interview: Adelaide Koostachin
Age: 64 (born 1947-10-26)
Born: near Beaverstone
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 14, 2011

I only knew about what was going on with the animal issues recently. I grew up on the land, travelling with family. The young people that grew up on the trapline area, it's important that they were out there and they had a lot of knowledge of animals and the land, knowledge that the elders had. I learned things on my own, survival skills. My parents weren't always around to hold my hand, so if I was told to do something I did it. I had to carry on from there. Even the young people today, they're not letting go of the land even though they're not on it, [they are] still living off the land. They may not stay out there [all the time] but they still go out there. Right now there are kids going to school and they're some of them are not in school, those that are not in school have come to depend on the land for survival. The young people that are being told about the land stay within the reserve. I'm one of the ones that take them out there [on the land]. As they get older they become more aware of their surroundings. From their thirties on they become more active on the land for survival. I take them out to let them know about survival.

Is this different from when you were young?

There isn't any change in what kids are interested in. Once we take them out [on the land], they concentrate on what they were taught, and the more they want to be out there.

What animals are important for trapping?

Muskrat, lynx, squirrel, weasel, beaver, otter, marten, mink, fisher, and bear but very rarely.

What about black bear or wolf?

Some of the other people ate bear but closer down here nobody ate that. My family ate lynx, muskrat, otter, marten and beaver.

What about other animals, the ones that were not trapped? Which were important for survival?

When food became scarce there would be others sources... fish, rabbit, ptarmigan. We didn't kill a whole lot if we came across [animals]; we only killed for that day. If you had a garden we'd have a limit, just enough for survival. We didn't kill everything, not like today's harvest where you kill as much as you can. It was fresh. Whenever someone had a chance to kill a caribou, nothing was thrown away. We had a use for everything... the stomach, the brains, even the hide. Even the blood from the body cavity, we stored it.

What was the blood used for?

We made soup out of it. For geese there's only a certain time of year they come, in the spring. We'd harvest the geese from April and we made sure we had enough for the next year until the next arrival.

How did you store them?

We used a canvas. We made bags out of canvas. The food was dried. Once the meat was dried it was ground like a powder. We could add oil to it so you could eat it. It's cooked slowly and it's dried, when we travelled we could eat it. We made sure there were no flies able to get into the canvas bag where we stored the food. When we used dog teams, that's how the dog teams

survived. We'd share the food with the dogs. Back in the day the dogs would be aware for two days when people were coming, two days before they actually arrived. The people that ate everything from the store they find that people that eat the processed meats get weak easily, not like when everyone ate food that wasn't processed. The store-bought foods don't have the strength.

When people were done with the animals, what would people do with them?

[Comment from her husband, William Koostachin: The joined bones, they'd boil them. The arm, elbow, shaped like a chisel, they'd work the hides with it, makes a nice smooth hide. There's another bone on the leg side [*indicates a femur*] that they'd split open and work the hide with that.]

When people eat the fresh kill from the arrival, they are rejuvenated. They have no additives on there. That's why people are still holding on to their land, because many of them are still in school. If the schools didn't exist, if they're cut off in the future, they'll be all over the land. [...] Their only source of survival is to go back to the land.

In the old days people would show respect to the animals. Is this still done today or is it forgotten?
They're still being taught to respect them. It's passed on to respect them, don't overkill. [...] Everything is used. Hair was singed off the head of the caribou. Nothing was wasted. [...]

When I was here last year, you brought in tools made from the animals, scraping tools.

We didn't rely on the store for tools; everything was made from animal bones. The same with medications. No one depended on medications. [...] When we travelled we made out dry meat like jerky and we'd keep food in our pocket for a long journey and chew on it. We did the same thing with fish. Mostly it's done in the spring and summer months. We made sure we had enough for the next season.

Do you know any stories about when MNR put in the trapline system?

When they did that, a lot of people worried because the certain bit of land you that MNR said might not be enough. Not all the animals are there because certain animals migrate, they travel all over. People would respect each other's trapline; we wouldn't go over to someone's trapline and kill something. That's like we're trying to fight against the MNR trying to set up another provincial park, [where] no one could hunt. It's so huge. There are a lot of animals that move through there.

Do you remember how people reacted when it [registry] came in?

You should ask my sisters. The only thing I can remember is when MNR set up those traplines it was hard on the people.

Did you hear any stories about when beaver hunting was limited?

When we were told not to kill any beaver, a lot of people starved. The random places that MNR would travel to [...] and tell people not to kill. They travelled with guns and whoever was killing the beaver sometimes they would shoot them [the people] but it was their only way of survival.

[...]

Did you hear any more stories like that?

I heard from my mother and my grandparents that there was a lack of food and a lot of people starved in those days. The only reason why MNR got around was they hired a person to take them around people's traplines. I never heard that there was any payment made for people to take them around to other people's trapping on their land. There was an RCMP going around trying to control the beavers. There was an RCMP who would kill natives because they wouldn't take them. When this RCMP killed this native, this native didn't want to take him certain places or limit his travel, the RCMP didn't listen to this native and he would go there alone. He killed one native. In early spring they found the body of this native. Later on that RCMP died of starvation

himself. They covered his body. I guess that guide knew he was going to die. He knew the routes and ways to go. When the RCMP wanted to go his own way, the guide refused because it was dangerous. I'm just talking about things randomly. This was early in the 1960s when we weren't able to hunt the beaver. My father didn't bother listening to the MNR when they said not to kill the beaver. He went ahead and killed what he needed for survival. We were travelling by dogteams and we needed to feed the dogteams.

How did he keep MNR from finding out?

I guess a lot of people [even though they didn't come face-to-face with the MNR] still followed the rule to not kill beaver. My dad died in the early 1990s and still talked about that.

How old were you when that RCMP thing happened?

Starting from age 6 until now. I'm 64. I heard these stories second-hand. Back then people didn't need computers. Everything was stored up here. With my sister, I was 5 years old, we would kill mice and skin them and cook them by the fire. We were able to do a lot by age 5. At an early age I'd be harnessed and pull furs upriver. I can remember a lot...

Are things getting better with MNR or they the same?

It's not getting any better. More like they're making a war against natives, for the people to fight for our land.

Do you feel optimistic or in control?

Whatever the MNR is starting up, there will be no peace, it is the beginning of a war over our lands. It is only the beginning. By the information and the meetings they have, we're hoping that MNR will understand how much we need the land for survival. Can you understand what I'm saying?

I understand.

What's going on in Egypt, there's a lot of bloodshed, they're trying to fight for the rights for their land. It's like this. Right now the native people are being taught to obey and listen to MNR. We want the same thing, for MNR to listen to us; we want respect in return. If anything is supposed to start with MNR I'm sure there will be surrounding communities that will help.



Interview: William Koostachin
Age: 66
Born: Pipowitan River
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: English
Translator: n/a
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 14, 2011

The stories to old times, you want to know a little about our old lives, how we go around our lives too, and places. There was another guy who did interviews like that, about things that happened way back before.

Were you around here in the 1980s when a guy named Jean-Luc Pilon came through? He was here around 1982 or 1983.

I was here but I couldn't go around to the meetings. I was always outdoors. [laughs]

He put out a report, it went to the University of Toronto. I found a copy a while ago and it has family trees. They're out of date but it has the family trees of everyone he talked to in Fort Severn back in the 80s. I gave a copy to the band, and I think they're going to update it. Everyone looked at it and said, oh, they have kids. It's pretty cool.

[The researcher explains to the participant the details of the agreement, who then signs the consent form.]

If you don't mind me asking, how old are you?

I'm 66, I think. 1943.

Where were you born?

Pipowitan.

You live here in Fort Severn now?

Yes, we came here. [...] No doctor, no planes back then, ladies looked after themselves with their babies.

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

I have nine brothers and two sisters... no, three. One died a long time ago. That was my older sister.

If you were born on a trapline, you must have worked on a trapline right?

Yes.

How long did you work on trapline?

Since I was became enough to go out travelling with my brothers, travelling my father. I trapped with my wife and my kids.

Are you still trapping or no?

I'm sick now. I stopped trapping in September 1991. I have bad knees.

Both of them? Do you have to get them replaced?

They're not broken. A gravel truck full of gravel, it came on top of me. My joints came off. After I came out of hospital I was moving around, I was in a wheelchair, I was crutch walking, I used a cane. They put me in a can to stretch my legs ... I thought I was getting bigger in the hospital.[laughs] They put in plates.

Was there any difference between people living inland or on the coast? Do people go between the two, or does it depend on family?

People go off and on, they go hunting and trapping. They do that. They do everything outdoors and come back. Some of them they set up tents and hunt from there, they trap from over there, from the tents. Some of them have houses outdoors. They do much the same thing on the land as when I grew up not far from the store. [...]

I've heard before that Fort Severn people live on the coast and others live inland, but that's not the case?

No.

Has it always been that way? They go back and forth?

Yes. In spring they go down to the coast to hunt geese, and go down the riversides down to the Hudson Bay coast. You know this MNR, we keep hearing about this MNR wants to take things away from us. It's torturing us. I call it torture. Every time you wake up.

Why do you feel that way?

They're going to take our hunting grounds. What's going to happen to our children, our future? I know this one... MNR built a house on Pipowitan River on my trapline. A white man used to go fishing there, my father was hungry and my two sisters. My little sisters set a net. The men in the cabin complained and MNR took it out, you can't do that, you can't fish here. My father did it for a long time, and then we can't. It was some other guy in the house, not MNR. It happened before and he wants to do it again. Finally that house is gone.

Who was in that house?

It was MNR and some other guys.

When you were young, is that when MNR set up those traplines?

MNR gave people traplines, that's how it was. The game wardens used to scare a lot of people, they were starving because they keep on telling people not to kill a beaver.

Did people actually starve or were they suffering?

Some people were suffering from that, not to hunt, not to kill beaver. One time my father took furs into hiding, when he heard that the game warden was going to search for fur and take it away. He took a whole bundle of fur and buried it in a dry place to hide it, and on top and under the fur he put pepper. These game wardens had dogs with them. That pepper [covered] that fur. That's why we call it 'pepper water'. They buried the fur there.

That's the location where this happened?

Yes. Someplace in the high reaches of Pipowitan. Lots of stories, eh?

If MNR came to camp and you had beaver bones and you were eating them, what would you do?

They used to do everything, people were scared. One guy ran from the cops, don't know which year, he got scared. I don't know what year this was, he lived here quite some time ago, that man Alec Wenjino. He killed a beaver, and was scared the warden would come. [...] We already told you about the bones of caribou, we used all of them. We already told you about what we did with them.

I used to do archaeology. Do you know what that is? It's when you dig in the ground and look for bones and tools.

Yes.

We usually do it for First Nations, when they want it. Often times you can tell what people were eating based on the bones you find, or you can find tools and they'll tell you, this was a campsite or this was a trapline. Every once in a while you'll find something like a pile of skulls or something.

Were animals ever given respect in a physical way? Were they ever buried like people, or did you just throw the bones away when done?

They put them away. They'd take everything they'd want to use and then put the rest in one pile and burn it.

You would do that for beaver, for caribou, for everything?

You do that for everything.

Back when the MNR put the trapline system in, did they notify people or did it just happen?

I wouldn't know that exactly because I wasn't born yet, maybe. I was born in 1943.

You would have been a wee lad, about three or four.

My father decided to build his trapline cabin. [Name unclear] didn't want to stay here because too many of us tried to trap so he decided to move. He had his trapline way up the river someplace, up Severn River, we had our trapline... they were partners.

Where was your father's trapline?

I told them I'd bring evidence just in case you gave me a hard time.

[Produces a biography of his father, Mason Koostachin. The researcher recognised this as an excerpt from Frogg and Spence (1987). He also shows the researcher his gun licence and a map of his trapline area along Pipowitan River, in trapline area MO367.]

There it is, Pipowitan River. My father's dogteam used to make north side here all through the creeks, all through these creeks, way to the end, to the end of these creeks then south side all the way back this way again. All the creeks he camped on Pipowitan River. In the springtime we'd travel right inside this Pipowitan River. The cabin sued to be here someplace. You can't see it now. Beaver houses in there.

Can I take a picture of that map? I promise not to print it. It's just for me. I'm not from here.

Yes sure.

Who drew this map? Did you draw it?

Those guys from MNR. One of the workers. That's the main thing you need to know. I was using that cabin for Arctic fox trapping when they set it up, eh? They came back [MNR] and said they wanted to burn it down. It slumped down inside. Someone said I can't use it. I tried to fix it up.

[audio unclear] The MNR came back and said you can't use this cabin and burned it down.

[Produces a letter from OMNR dated September 5, 1990, denying a request to move the cabin. It contains no mention of its destruction but is probably part of a larger chain of correspondence.]

You requested to move...

I was using it for Arctic fox way out on the coast. I used to trap Arctic fox.

Who else would be on that trapline?

Right now quite a few. People are all over the place nowadays. No more trapline, no more can I say this is my trapline, so they use it. Now they're building a road there, not the winter road.
[audio unclear]

You were talking about how you couldn't hunt beaver. Did they do that before for other animals?

They did that for a long time. You can't hunt, can't shoot the beaver. They don't want people to hunt beaver anymore but people died. But beaver die, there's too many of them. I don't know.
[audio unclear]

With MNR and the way things are going, are they getting better or worse?

We're mistreated... the way he takes everything away from us. It's just like when they used to go around and shoot people to take their land. [audio unclear] It's like the polar bear plan. We relate to the polar bear as our friend. Polar bears were with us all the time. When I used to trap I used to laugh. Polar bears grabbed my fox trap. Get out! [laughs]

What do you think would make things better?

I don't know what else. If he changed his mind and did something, did something normal, to share. [...] [Not this] get out of there, you can't come in, you can't cut wood. That's how it's taken from you. That's what happens.



Interview: Jemima Gray
Age: 88
Born: Goose Creek
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 14, 2011

I was born at Goose Creek on December 25, 1923. I can't be specific about when I came to Fort Severn. Back then we really didn't care about the date.

Were you born on the trapline?

Yes. Before we started having traplines we used to travel everywhere. My parents were Jimmy and Emma Matthews.

Before the traplines were set up, how did people decide where to hunt?

I can't remember that far but my parents were given the land to trap, around what is named Niskibi Lake. After the MNR set up the traplines that's where they would trap and hunt, that's where they would stay.

When MNR set up the traplines, did they work well for your family or were they a problem?

They never had any problems when people set up their own traplines. We stayed within the boundaries of the trapline, we never went beyond it.

Was adjusting to this new system easy or difficult?

It was pretty easy to stay within the trapline because we didn't have to move to a new area to hunt or trap.

The trapline area gave you all you needed?

It was plentiful because we killed only what we needed. I set up nets for our family so we could have food.

What kinds of animals would be important on the trapline?

The first [most important?] thing we trapped for was beaver. Otters as well.

When MNR began regulating beaver trapping, did it affect the way people fed their families?

There was no problem in our area. There was plenty of beaver and what we needed for food.

Did MNR regulations affect the beaver numbers?

When MNR didn't want anyone to trap beaver, there were problems with beavers building dams and flooding areas.

What about disease?

There was a disease with the animals but not the people. I can't really tell what it was. There was lots of beaver then. When beaver was overpopulating they were slowly dying. When I was travelling around with my mother we came across a beaver that was dying. It had some sort of ticks. We came across a few beaver that were dying.

Were people working with the conservation officers or avoiding them?

As far as I can remember we never had any come in to our trapline area. As far as I remember, MNR used to travel in planes.

Did any regulations affect what you were hunting?

Mostly with beaver, when MNR went around trying to conserve beaver. A lot of people starved because beaver was the main part of the diet.

Did the new traplines affect your relationship to the land?

At first when MNR put up the traplines it worked out for everybody. Later when animals moved in migrations you could only get them at certain places at certain times of the year. When MNR put in the traplines, people started fighting over who had the right to trap. They would destroy other people's traps.

How was that resolved? By the chief?

Most of the things I remember are what I'm telling you. I don't want to make up things I don't remember. There wasn't literally any fighting or killing. We would talk to each other to resolve disputes over traplines. [These were in] earlier times before MNR set up trapline boundaries.

Did regulation ever affect people's ability to show respect to the animals?

Nothing changed. Anything that was killed was respected, not just thrown away. We would put it in a special place, or bury it.

Where would you put things? What would you put there?

We would gather up the bones we wouldn't need to use and hang them up in the trees. That was a long time ago. When my dad would kill a certain animal we wouldn't throw it away, we'd show respect by hanging it up or by burying them.

Were any animals treated differently?

My parents taught me that any animal would be put away where it wouldn't just be scattered. We'd be careful with them.

Did you ever hear about people in the old days making clay pots?

No. It's not like today where people can get Styrofoam plates. In the old days we could use tree branches and use them as a plate. We would make bags out of canvas to throw over our shoulders, [to carry] only what was necessary for when we travelled. We would use tree bark and make birchbark baskets. It would only be at a certain time of year because we'd have to be careful not to destroy the trees.

Did you ever hear stories from the old people about the Hudson Bay Company regulating beaver hunting?

[Turns to her son to discuss. She indicates that she can't remember that far back.] There used to be a quota of how many beavers a family could kill.



Interview: Lucy Stoney
Age: 77
Born: near Rocksand
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 14, 2011

We stayed at the traplines. I was born upriver from Fort Severn.

Near Rocksand?

Yes. MNR came and implemented the traplines. We moved then to Beaver Lake and my father preferred to be in the area. Beaver Lake belongs to the Thomas family. Esais Thomas was my father. All my siblings, my late brother Geordie, my late brother Stanley, my late brother Thomas... that was their trapline area. Some people [from the family] still trap there. I did some trapping myself.

What did you used to trap?

Everything. Otter, beaver, mink, marten, fisher, squirrel, skunk...

Did you hunt caribou too?

That side of the family did all the hunting for survival. Other families starved but we did all right. We used the sled and pulled ourselves to the camp from a fresh kill. There were seven women and five men. Two died as infants. One of my brothers died but there was rarely any sickness of any kind. The other was born in very cold weather and succumbed to that.

You would have been very young when they set up the traplines.

I must have been about seven. I remember it clearly when they implemented it. Whenever the MNR came with the law, people had to abide by what they wanted on the trapline. Later it didn't turn out so well because of problems. In one family, they were only allowed to kill ten beavers for the family. It depended on the size of the family. That was for the year.

Was that enough?

No. Even though there was a lot of beaver they couldn't kill them. People still abided by the law even when MNR wasn't around. The MNR went around with an RCMP officer telling us that we couldn't kill any beaver. People would either be taken to court but were also afraid of being killed.

By switching to a trapline area, did that make things hard for people?

Whatever the MNR said to set up the trapline, people were cautious to not go over it.

What if a family was in need? Could they make arrangements with MNR or with a family to trap outside their area?

Some people close to each other would visit each other. Some were very friendly and would allow them to hunt in their area. Others would not allow them to trap outside their trapline. Even within

the boundary, if they had moose or caribou (there were no limits at that time), sometimes there would be a dispute between families because someone else was trapping on their trapline.

How would disputes be solved? Did MNR or the chief ever get involved in settling disputes?

Within the boundary of a trapline, if I left my meat from moose or caribou, the people who owned the trapline could destroy the meat because the others were crossing the boundary. At times the chief would get involved. The chief would approach MNR and they would tell people that they were in control of what animals they trapped. People could still hunt for moose and caribou. Some people would listen and some people wouldn't. Some people were pretty mean and some would share.

Are there good parts to the MNR trapline area system?

MNR came in to bring the laws for native people. Nothing good came of the changes that MNR made.

How were people told about the changes?

When people would gather in the summer and come to town, that's when MNR would talk to people, when they were back from the trapline.

Before MNR, did anyone else like the Hudson Bay Company regulate animal trapping?

What Hudson Bay would do is when a family was prosperous, they would be willing to provide for them. The more they got, the more help they would get. The only thing Hudson Bay would say is that June 15 was when they would no longer be buying fur and no trapping should happen after that. What Hudson Bay would do when the barges would come in at the end of trapping season is have a feast for the people.

Has there been an effect on animal populations by regulating the trapping?

Within the boundaries of the traplines, beaver would become scarce as every man would hunt. During that time, things would get tight and beavers and otters would swim upriver and that's how we would survive.

Did MNR ever tell you not to engage in practices with animal remains, to show respect for them?

Back in the day, whenever our people stayed we would keep things clean. If we killed ten caribou we would put the bones up in trees or burn them so no garbage was left. The water was pretty clean because no garbage was thrown in it.

Did any of that change after regulations came in?

I can remember wherever we spent our winter we would pick up our garbage so that in spring everything would renew itself. Nothing was left behind.

By using trapline areas, did that change the way you looked at the land or felt about it?

When MNR came up with the traplines you couldn't cross another unless someone said it was okay to do so. That was the only time that people could share, and not all did it.

When I was seven years old that's when I started making my own hides.

Did you brain tan?

I use the brains to soften the hides, not for the tanning.

Are things getting better, worse or staying the same?

Things are getting better now that people aren't fighting over where to trap. People are sharing when they use the land. MNR has set up Polar Bear Provincial Park. Back in the days when we couldn't hunt on each other's land, the same thing will happen here. There isn't enough to hunt on.

Did you ever hear about people making pottery or lamps from clay?

We never made these ourselves but we came across them. The only things we would make were birchbark baskets. We would come across them where previous people had stayed. I would see them but never bothered to pick them up. Somewhere upriver. I've never seen my people make stone tools but upriver there's a rock where there are bones. Not that far, just past Limestone Rapids. There were lots of those bones there. The only reason they are disappearing is when the ice breaks [up] they get buried by gravel and sand. I went upriver recently but never came across them. The only thing I found was the joint of a hip bone. [She draws a large circle, roughly 15 centimetres in diameter.] I am certain that it was a bone.



Interview: Moses Kakekaspan, Sr.
Age: 66
Born: near Black Currant River
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: English
Translator: n/a
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 15, 2011

Were you born on the trapline?

Yes.

How big was your family?

A long time ago, we had to move around then. It was completely different in the old days. There was no assistance from the government. I guess you can call that self-government. [laughs] People were travelling wherever the animals go.

You were with your parents and brothers and sisters.

My oldest brother is Norman. He lives in Sioux Lookout now. Norman Kakekaspan. My second oldest is Ezra, [then] myself, my sister Myla. Only four of us left in the family.

How many were there originally?

I lost three brothers and a sister, [and my] mom and dad.

You told me a story before about a drowning.

My dad drowned with my brother Lesley in 1972. I was 21 and with my family.

Were any other families with you on the trapline?

There were another nine families living there in cabins at the time. My father-in-law was Isaac Stoney. There was his son Jeremiah, his son Archie, Norman Bluecoat, and Abel Bluecoat my uncle. There was Simon Crowe, Stephen Matthews. Norman passed away. There were about nine families, all the people living at that junction there [of the Sachigo and Severn Rivers].

What was life like on the trapline? What kind of things did you do?

We were trapping beaver, otter... hardly any mink and fox. Lack of marten but a few fox. We had a few lynx. Mostly beaver, otter and lynx. There are many now, eh?

The populations have gone up?

Most of them spread out and most of the people there moved to Big Trout [Lake]. Simon Crowe and Norman Bluecoat moved to Big Trout.

What kind of things were you eating?

There's four seasons in the year. In the winter we had the caribou mostly. In the springtime we had ptarmigans and rabbit, and watched the geese come back, snow geese and Canada. In

summer there was fish. In the fall we have a different kind of caribou [that] comes in, inland caribou. There's big ones and another one, smaller, barren-land they call them. The inland caribou are almost the size of a moose.

So you were mostly living inland? You weren't working on the coast much?

At that time, yeah, started growing up inland. There was a little bit we bought from the store... tea, oats. We had a little store there, Hudson Bay. Supplied camps for the people living there, Beaver Lake, Fawn River, the Albanys. People there were trapping beaver up Sachigo River. The little store was there so people didn't have to come all the way to Hudson Bay to transport stuff in September when the trapping starts.

Do you remember when MNR put in the trapline areas? You would have been very young.

Yes, I was young at the time. I didn't start trapping until 1960. My brothers were working on a site along the coast so my dad wanted someone to help on the trapline. That was from 1960 to 1973. That's the time I started working with MTU, March 1973.

Did you keep trapping after that?

No, I couldn't trap until 2005. I worked for 32 years. I'm still not trapping because I'm a medical driver. From time to time I'd go hunting inland, just for a day. 18 hour trip. When I was young. [laughs] I'd go 90 miles up the river and come back back in 18 hours. That's how far it is by Ski-Doo, 8 hours driving to the settlement at that junction. At that lake where they have the camp now, where the diamond drilling is, that lake [on the] south-west side of the lake, I shot five caribou. I managed to bring them all back on the sleigh. No trapping because it was just one day. I left at one in the morning. I had two eggs for breakfast, it lasted eighteen hours. I had my toast and that was it, and never stopped for anything. I had to go, go, go.

Do you know what people were doing before MNR set up the traplines?

At the time [before MNR set up the traplines] people would go around and meet guys from the other trapline. That's where they would have a mark. My dad would go on this side of the boundary. You would stop when you met people on the other side. Just up the river towards Big Trout we met those McKays. There's only two still alive, Josie and Jeremiah McKay.

Where was that?

About 59 miles north of Big Trout Lake, Windigo River or White Man's River, I'm not sure. [Participant points to a map at an area near Agusk Lake.] The first rapids down Windigo River. Chiba sipi they call it in Cree. Wendigo. They call it White Man's River. [laughs] That's just across the Agusk side, the first rapids.

You don't know why they called it that?

I'm not sure why they call it Wendigo. Chiba sipi means Wendigo [river].

How did MNR decide where to put the boundaries?

I guess people just sat around and told MNR where to mark them down.

Were there ever any complaints or were people happy with the boundaries?

I never had any complaints. I don't know. Most of the time, I guess, from those guys from Manitoba and from Big Trout Lake. [...] Down around the Sachigo area was the Fox family, John Fox. We used to go and visit him. His son still comes and hunts with us in spring, Bob Fox. He is

working. Everyone is basically working [now] and hardly anyone is trapping. Why the trappers disappeared was the status quo about 1969.

What happened then?

People had to go to school. That's why everybody's living here now. Before that people lived all over the place. It was just two families here, Miles and Matthews. The ladies, Maryanne and Sally [Matthews], their old man was Angus. Everybody would leave in September but they would return in summers.

Would people gather in Fort Severn during the summers?

Yes.

Where else would they gather?

Wherever they were. At the time there was no assistance from the government so they had to move around. They go down that river, the small rivers, Fawn River. [...] Down the river called Pitikaya, near Fawn River. [...] There was a stone there, people got married there. That was down the Pitikaya River.

[The participant checks the maps. On the trapline maps it falls in MO361, and was labelled Pettikow River.]

Where was that marrying stone?

It's at a lake called Pitikaya Lake. It was just a small stone kind of sticking up there.

Do people still do that?

A long time ago. People made their living trapping. The rest of the time people had to go around. Life was different then, not like today.

Do you know any stories about trapping regulation or quotas?

When trapping season is open, it's trapping. The rest of the time you go where the animals go. There was no boundary line or anything. You had to follow the animals to survive. There were not marks or anything. People would trap from November to June. People wouldn't start trapping until November 20 when the fur was good, [and it] stops on June 10.

Was that June 10 date set by the government?

No, the last day was set by Hudson Bay [Company].

Do people still hunt and trap at those times?

Now they just trap when the season starts. Back then most of the time they had to go around. You needed a meal each day.

Did you ever hear about limits on beavers or quotas?

The only time I heard about limits on beaver, I was just a kid at the time, I guess after World War 2. Something about to do with the war, or [...] flying around. The willows died, beaver died, fish, just about everything. So then MNR didn't allow anyone to kill the beaver.

How long did that last?

I don't know how long it was. I remember as they started opening the beaver again, people were trapping as I grew up. I remember that man that arrived here from Attawapiskat by the name of Alec Wenjino. He killed a beaver and MNR wanted to kill him for killing a beaver. The only date I know for Alec Wenjino was... I'm a minister in the Anglican Church. He got married in 1949. I don't know any other dates but I lived here and I saw him. [...] He was from Attawapiskat. He killed a beaver. You weren't supposed to kill them at the time. There were hardly any beaver after World War 2.

Do you know why he killed the beaver?

It was for food. There were other men who starved to death. They saw beaver but they could not kill it. I knew a story about Moses Bluecoat. He almost died about 8 miles up the river. At the fire he got weak, he couldn't stand and fell face down in the fire and was burned [because he was weak with hunger]. There were people who starved at the time. But this guy I'm talking about, Alec, he ran away for [his] life. It was very dangerous at that time during the break-up. He was running for his life from the mounties. The time when he crossed the river was when the ice jams. He stopped. It would have cost his life if he had fallen through. He was lucky. When the people came in just before closing time for trapping in June, they saw a little boat. Alec made a boat. Birch, I don't know. He was hiding. Couldn't see him. Mid-summer then about twenty miles up the river where the rapids [are], where people would go out fishing, that's the time they saw someone coming out there. It was him. [...] They were delighted. They wanted to bring him in but they had to have permission from the chief.

So they had to get permission from the chief for him to come in?

Yes. He's right-minded, it's okay, bring him in.

What happened to him then?

That man married after running away. It was a year or two and he got married. He started trapping for a few years. He went out because he was sick, down to Thunder Bay and that's where he died.

Do you when he died?

I don't know. [This was] probably in the early 50s. They lived here and I lived inland.

Did people get along with MNR or did they avoid them?

They would just come in. I don't know how many times they'd come in a year. There were hardly any planes in the old days. The only time I saw a plane was on Treaty Day. There were hardly any planes. You'd get your last plane in October, and again in January. There were hardly any planes in the old days until we got the runway, and then we got for charters. After that we had a schedule.

When was the last plane again?

That was just before freeze-up.

These trapline areas, do they work well?

I never saw MNR but I know they put in traplines but I was too young to know about it. When I grew up everything was there, what you see today.

Overall, do you think things are good? Bad? Getting better, getting worse?

Things seem to be good except that time when that happened when Alec Wenjino ran away and guys starved to death because the beavers weren't allowed to be killed even when beavers were around. They respected the beavers and they lost their life. [...] There was hardly anything in the old days, after World War 2, there was hardly any moose around. You'd go around, you'd go a hundred miles away and you'd be lucky to find a beaver house. Not like today. We have a beaver house right back here. We have beaver houses there, there, there. All over.

You said that people were respecting the beavers and they lost their lives.
They couldn't kill it because they were told. MNR put the law that no one should kill the beaver.

I wanted to talk about respect for animals. Can you explain how you give respect to an animal if you're hunting or on trapline? Are there ways you show respect for animals?

I don't know about that. Back when we went to school [i.e. when we were taught], we didn't go out and shoot any animal, we just shot when we needed them. We were told not to just go and shoot as many as we can. People long ago respected the animals. They didn't waste anything. Even the bones were boiled and crushed, and the grease came out and it was used. The fish, we'd boil the heads and make grease. Mariah fish, skin that, pull the skin out and that's where they put the grease. We had everything. We had a rabbit skin as a Thermos bottle. Put the meat in there so it doesn't freeze. It's just like a Thermos bottle. You put everything in the Thermos. Travel for a few hours and at least it's not frozen when you just pack it away.

You were saying with the bones, boiling the bones...

They used the bones and boiled them, used the liquid that came off them. They didn't just scatter the bones. They packed them in one place. They didn't want anything just lying around because they believed the Creator was respected that way.

Would they pick a special place to put them?

Yeah. They had a place for them. They didn't just leave them lying around.

What makes a place good for doing that?

Sometimes they buried them, the bones, as long as they're not lying around.

Would they ever put them in trees or in water?

Sometimes they'd put them up. There weren't too many things they could use in the old days. They had to do this and this. Things were completely different.

Did they get rid of the bones close to camp or was it far away?

People would keep moving so wherever they camped on that day they'd spread them there, where they camped on that day. You had to put them away. You didn't just leave them around making a mess. They had to be clean. They believed where they kept the tents clean they got blessed. If they weren't clean, there would be no blessing. That's how they believed. By doing, by respecting the tent, they can call the animals. Sometime you are wondering where are the animals? And you could call them and they would come. You have to believe and it would work. Was it really the animals that hear them or was it the Creator?

My dad called a goose one time when all the geese were gone. I couldn't believe it. I said, are you crazy? All the geese are all gone! He's calling there, a Canada goose. He looks at me and says just wait. Twenty minutes to a half-hour, I see Canada goose in the sky. I sprung up by the river there. There were three Canada geese. So I got myself a gun and shot them. So you got geese and then you had a fridge. [laughs] Not one you buy in a store. There were ways you'd

keep things. They'd heap them in the ground, that moss is wet and cold, about four feet down. That was the fridge. We'd keep it there. The other way to do it was to smoke it and dry it, geese and fish. It would keep longer. Just a different way of doing things.

That's how we'd keep stuff when I did work in the bush. We'd dig a pit and put our cooler down there, and line it with moss.

That's how you keep it. In the permafrost. All that cold air down there from the bottom.

How deep is the permafrost?

Down four feet it's permafrost. At that time when we were building the runway. Out here, inland, at this time normally it's four feet down.

Has that changed over the years?

There are places that's open ground, like just back here, [where] there's an open pot hole. It's frozen there. It's just a pot hole. It's hollow, just water. We're on muskeg here. There's one by the airport, that little creek there by the runway, there's another hole there. We have running water at the airport. You have to go 20 feet down to spring water. It's a spring.

The potholes, that's where water collects?

Water collects in the potholes.

There is permafrost there too?

The permafrost is there but it's deeper. Yes. The water's under pressure though [at the airport].

Has trapline registration changed the way that you think of animals?

I haven't trapped in 32 years but I still go. I still hunt. I couldn't live on what you get at the store. You get weak. You can't crank the engine. Same thing with the native people, they've got to have the wild food. If your body is weak you can't do anything. You have to build up energy from the wild because that's where they belong. We never got sick when we were living on the land. When we started living here we got all kinds of sickness, disease. I don't know where they come from. Sometimes I watch films and TV and they put needles in chickens and cows. They're killing us. I think that's what's making us sick. In the early 50s when the Mid-Canada Line was around we'd get cow meat. It tasted really good, just like the wild meats you get like moose and caribou. It used to taste really good but now when you buy it you don't know what you're chewing. The taste is different. I don't know why. [...] By the time they get they're outdated. That might explain the difference. People are living on the land are healthy people. In the old days people used to die of old age, not sickness. It's different today. As far back as I remember [we lived on the land]. Now kids don't have those experiences now. They go to school and learn there. I don't know how they'll live on the land. They won't last too long. [laughs] They learn everything with a computer and not the brain. I use my head and not a calculator. Today's different. I see kids going to school... the old people, like Jack Stoney had a coffee shop and he knew how much change you'd get back. When you go to the high school and get a coffee and they can't do it, they need a machine to tell you how much change to give back. There's a big difference. [...] They depend on a machine to tell them everything. How can they survive? That's completely different. The computers runs out of power and what's going to happen? There are a lot of things I've learned. We were talking about the otter. The otter goes from place to place. It looks around, [and asks] where's the water? The old man I used to trap with way the name of as Peter Patrick. I learned a lot from him. He said how does it know? It's just like a beacon that they have. The places like Fort Severn are the beacon. The otter has that kind of thing, like those submarines underwater. He was talking about that. There's a lot of things that come from the animals. [...] You have to learn from the animals.

In the old days, people had a way of telling things. They even talked to animals and animals talked to them. That's why you respect them, you put everything away. You call them and the animal comes, and you get your gun. [laughs] It's just like a cowboy but the wild Indian is different compared to the farmer. The wild Indian needs to know what how to get these things, what direction are we? They use the stars, everything, they have to know. Even a dog. In 1957 I was shopping with that old man and it was five or five-thirty and dog got up all shaking. We went back to town and the dogs knew the break-up was coming, that's how they knew. The dogs started barking at seven o'clock in the morning. We had time to get ready to travel again in the morning. That dog told him. There were a lot of things you could use to tell things. The same guy I was talking about, old man Peter [Patrick], he caught a fish with the branch of a tree. An old woman started laughing. You think that's impossible? He says. It works. The white man when he wants [a fish] he needs a hook, goes to the tackle store and buys a fly reel, the ones with the bugs on them, flies that float on the river. The fish see the branch and see a dragonfly or something, and that's you're fish!

You have to believe in God. Everything's possible. That's how we survived. [...] You can put an open [i.e. forked] stick in a fish mouth and it gets stuck. There's a lot of things. It's hard to believe some of them but that's how people survived in the old days. There are special places where things happen, where you go. I know where they are but I'm not telling. That's my secret! [laughs] It's my land and if it's taken away where will I go? It's there for me to survive. I got to keep it secret. There are certain places you go to. And there it is. [*points to map and laughs*]

Wait a minute, I don't think that's the place... you're trying to throw me off.

I try to be honest with you. [laughs] I know. There's a lot of things I am saying, that I have learned. I'll probably meet him again now that he's passed on. I might meet him.



Interview: Sally Matthews
Age: around 74
Born: near Beaver Lake
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 15, 2011

I can remember from about 1950 and I can remember my parents not being too happy with the traplines they were given. I can remember the stories when people would cross traplines and people would get into conflicts and destroy the traps or whatever was in it.

How did people deal with that conflict? Did they rely on the chief or MNR, or work it out themselves?

There would often be a gathering of people to solve [the problems] when people would cross the boundaries. All the people would solve their problems with the meeting.

How did they do it before then?

I can remember my uncle and his father, they would go over a trapline and determine who would set up traps in the area. So the person would leave early and get out there before the other family. That's what I remember from listening to my father and mother.

Did you ever hear about Hudson Bay Company restricting when or where you could hunt, or was it just MNR?

The MNR restricted hunting.

What was good or bad about the traplines?

The land would be set up with certain areas so people could have their trapline. From what my family said there were a lot of disputes over the traplines between families.

How did that affect people moving around?

I can't really remember. At an early age I had no father. I was dependent on my mother, she did all the trapping.

What did she trap?

Beaver, otter, muskrat, mink. Marten just recently came around, around 1977.

What kind of animals would you eat?

We would eat rabbit, ptarmigan... we were staying in a certain area so we never had caribou [but] we had fish. Also moose.

[Interpreter explains that this was near the Fort Severn townsite before it became fully established, close to the Hudson Bay post.]

There was also a priest who came to help us, Peter Francis. The other person who helped us was Lazarus Stoney. Otherwise it was just me and my mother Emma and my sister Maryanne. My dad was named Johnny Matthews. My mother never actually got a trapline [assigned to her] but she was told it was okay to trap in certain areas. I'm not sure by who, either the chief or someone else.

Do you have any stories from when beaver trapping was restricted?

It was a very long time ago when we couldn't kill beaver or the Hudson Bay wouldn't buy pelts. Some people would secretly kill or trap beaver. They got arrested when they killed beavers. I guess the men would have means to convince MNR to allow them to trap beaver. There are a number of people that might know more about the restrictions on beaver.

Did beaver populations change because of the regulation?

I don't really remember if the beaver numbers changed but I remember people coming back to their traplines in summer to sell their pelts to Hudson Bay. That's all I can remember right now.

Did people work alongside MNR or did they avoid them?

Certain people would be hired by MNR to take them out to certain traplines. Not everyone would be in agreement when this happened. I'm not sure. I was young and I can't remember how it was.

Did it cause hard feelings?

I'm not sure.

Did making the traplines change the way people felt about animals?

I didn't grow up on trapline, I was in the community. When I lived somewhere in the bush there used to be all sorts of animals but today you don't see them, especially the waterfowl.

After people trapped or hunted the animals, how would people dispose of the bones?

The bones of animals would be disposed of properly by putting them in a tree or by burning away from home. People back then weren't allowed to step on anything, on a piece of meat or on a bone. There are not too many people who have respect for the animals these days. I'm displeased when I see bones or carcasses in the dump. People don't use all of them or respect the carcasses. They should be disposed of properly. That's all I can remember.

When they were burned, was it done close to home or away?

It was away.

Is there anything else that you'd like to say?

Why is MNR trying to take control of the animals? They were given to everybody to be used. I don't agree with what MNR is doing putting up a quota for certain animals, saying what can be used. Every person in the world has their own purpose and use for the animals. About the polar bear, often times I would come across them. Not all are aggressive. MNR harassing them makes them aggressive. They come closer to town now.



Interview: Ezra Kakekaspan
Age: 77
Born: Muskrat Lake
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 14, 2011

Where were you born?

My parents were travelling from one trapline to another but I was raised in Fort Severn until 14. I worked on trapline when I was growing up.

How did you learn to trap?

I was travelling with my dad during my teenage years. My dad didn't tell me what he was doing but I learned by watching.

How many people were with you on the traplines then?

I had an older brother, myself and a younger brother, and my dad. Where we trapped it was a small river. I trapped in the area between Rocksand and Goose Island, east side of the Severn.

[indicates location on map]

I learned on a creek [on the west bank of the Severn] where I could learn.

How long did it take you to learn to trap?

It wasn't that hard for me to learn, I just learned as I went. I trapped mink, otter, beaver, muskrat... there was no marten at that time.

Did you hunt any animals for food while on trapline?

Moose, caribou... every now and then we would hunt waterfowl. There were no Canada geese at that time, just snow geese. If someone were lucky at that time of year they'd get just one Canada. This was in the spring. There were plenty of ducks.

Have you been back to your old trapline?

I used to be in-and-out of there but I haven't been back. I went back to the cabin but I haven't been back recently because the shingles of my cabin came off when MNR flew by. I was there in spring [of 2010].

Has it changed?

When I first married my wife, we went there for trapping. There was plenty of beaver for two years and then it got scarce. That was 1958. They died, I don't know why.

Tell me about the trapline areas that were set up in the 1940s.

We were here [in Fort Severn] around 1942 and went up river in 1947. That's when MNR implemented those traplines.

Were the lines assigned to people okay or were there problems?

After MNR set up those boundaries for everybody, a lot of people started to starve. I came back to Fort Severn to get food for everybody.

Was everyone doing poorly?

There were certain areas where people would [let] other people take over their trapline and do their hunting there. For the people that took over the traplines, they didn't do too well.

Did MNR know about people switching traplines?

The MNR was aware that people were starving and people were trapping on other peoples' traplines.

Did anyone receive any government assistance during this time?

MNR was aware of this. There was a chief named Jeremiah Albany and a councillor named Nancy Albany. They didn't really help providing for people in need. MNR was aware but it was up to chief and council to help their people.

Did beaver return after that?

When the beaver population went up, they started to die on their own. It wasn't caused by anyone, it happened on its own.

Did people agree with where the traplines were placed?

Nobody was happy with the traplines set up for them. A lot of people starved, there was no food.

Did people ever settle arguments over traplines?

Everything was run through magic... people would send things to other people to harm them or their traplines.

Did people work with MNR or did they avoid them?

No, there was no communication with MNR.

Are things now getting better, worse, or staying the same?

Things are easier for people today but back then surviving was hard. People had to live day-to-day [because] food wasn't there the next day.

Has communication improved with MNR?

There's nothing good coming out of MNR. The only time they come up is if our land is signed away for exploration or mining.

Has the regulation of traplines affected peoples' relationship with animals?

It varies from one family to another depending on what they learn from the elders. It's important we show respect to the animals. Although some people don't show respect to the animals, MNR has paid people off to kill waterfowl. Everything is becoming scarce because MNR has no respect for the animals.

In camp, what would you do with the parts of an animal that you didn't use?

We would have to put everything up in trees or else they would be exposed to wolves, wolverines or polar bears, though they [polar bears] did not go as far as they do now. Now there are coyotes and polar bears. Where the beaver lodges are, the polar bears can get in and kill them.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

I used to travel by skidoo with my son George. My cabin is by Woman's Lake and we'd travel in a single day to Goose Island. We'd stay at the cabin that MNR destroyed, check traps on the way, in a 12-hour period. [...] There are people that go upriver to that cabin for moose hunting in the fall. Other community members are welcome to use that cabin, it's not just mine. My oldest brother, my youngest brother and my cousin, Alec Stoney, built it.

Is the community more or less in control of its own trapping?

It's recently that the community has been in control of its own trapping.



Interview: Theresa Kakekaspan
Age: 74
Born: near Fort Severn but raised in Peawanuck
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 14, 2011

Did you grow up on the trapline?

I was born in Beaver River. We lived in Fort Severn for a few years then later we moved to Winisk. From Winisk, I was sent to residential school at age 8 so I don't remember much, but I can remember about going upriver with my family [before that].

What did you do after that?

I did not leave residential school until I was 14. It was in 1955 when I came back and continued to live in Winisk. I was 21 when I got married.

How did you meet Ezra?

[laughs] When the men built the radar bases, men from Fort Severn came to work in Winisk. This is when I met Ezra.

Do you remember the trapline boundaries being set up?

Yes but I can't remember much.

What do you remember from when beaver harvesting was limited?

I remember that my dad wasn't allowed to kill beaver at all. It was hard on the family back then. MNR used to come up, land [the plane] and check on the beavers that were dying on their own and would collect them.

Was there any explanation of this from MNR?

No.

Some traplines were better than others. Do you remember people sharing them or fighting over them?

No, not where I'm from.

What would people do with animal parts that they wouldn't use?

They would burn them so nothing was left.



Interview: George Thomas
Age: 40
Born: Sioux Lookout
Resides: Beaverstone area
Language of Interview: English
Translator: n/a
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn)
Date: February 17, 2011

Where were you born?

Sioux Lookout. I was born and had to go for medical. We didn't have a nursing station here.

Are you working on a trapline currently?

Yes. I live there 365 days a year.

Where is it?

Beaverstone.

What's it like? What kind of land?

It's very nice. It's a river, it's got birchbark, spruce and tamarack.

What are you trapping for there right now?

Right now? Right now I'm not doing any trapping. The store manager doesn't have his license to sell their furs. Also there's the pressure from animal rights activists. There's so much pressure from everywhere, from these 'rainbow people' they call them.

What kind of pressure do they put on?

Cruelty to animals, chewing their legs off [in traps], or whatever. They don't really care about the human race, all the people slaughtered in warfare, people dying by the millions in Africa. Also what the native people are going through with the government, they don't really care. They'd much rather have feelings for animals.

That's had a negative effect on selling furs?

Yes. The foxes, there's been a complete ban. For one fox it's \$8, not hardly worth the effort to go hunt them. Their population is exploding everywhere. Last winter those foxes came running into town and they were trying to attack people.

Is that Arctic fox?

Red and Arctic fox. That's from banning the fur harvest. They had rabies too. It's pretty dangerous for kids who are running around to get attacked by those foxes.

That's outside pressure, that's not coming from government, that's coming from organizations.

Yes.

What about restrictions from government? Are you told that you can hunt or trap certain things or not?

One of the restrictions they have right now that is having that ban on polar bear. You can't sell hides because they're saying that polar bears are going extinct which is totally not the case. Past records that indicate from the elders when they had that meeting here, when the elders indicated that there were few polar bears back then and now their numbers have exploded. They're just wondering why they're saying it's going extinct when its numbers are so great, and why are they banning the polar bear harvest to sell those hides?

So when did the populations seem to go up?

Probably the 1930s and 40s. Around that time. The population started to rebound then. It's not the people hunting where those polar bear numbers go down, it's not the case. We've been hunting them since time began, ever since the world began, and we're still living with them. And now if their numbers are diminishing it's from the radar site, the pollution. As my uncle stated he worked at the Gillam Dam, it's stagnant water, it's pollution, mercury poisoning. That mercury poisoning flows out through the Hayes River to Hudson Bay. Where the seals are out in the bay they eat those fish that are contaminated with mercury and other toxins. As those toxins go up the food chain, ingested by animals, with polar bears at the top of the food chain they ingest all those toxins. That's how they died. It's not from pressure from overhunting or over-harvesting, whatever, not as government or MNR tries to suggest. And also from radar sites, stuff like that.

What about the townsites? Or is it mostly industrial?

There's no pollution here, no toxins, whatever. If there would have been toxins on the rez people would have had cases of cancer and there are very rare cases of cancer. There's hardly any cancer. That's how we know. Also the water we drink from the river is still pretty clean, its not contaminated by pollution from mining or whatever. If those pollutants had been there, we would have known cases of cancer. There are virtually no cases of cancer, maybe just one lady who passed away. That's how we know that the water is still pretty safe to drink, and the animals and fish.

I also studied how those toxins travel up the food chain. Those little fish eat those toxins, and as the little fish eat those toxins the bigger fish eat the little ones, then the other bigger fish, and that's how they begin to accumulate. Finally the predatory fish like the jackfish, the master predatory fish, after having eaten those fish that have accumulated the toxins. That's how you know where those poisons come from. As of yet we don't have any mining companies or whatever, any tailings like arsenic, PCBs, mercury, heavy metals that go in the river.

Just to change gears now, with the trapline system that came in the 1940s, before you were born...

That was 1947.

Yes. Do you know any stories from when it came in, or heard from family how it that affected things? Did it make things better or worse?

Actually, what happened was that the unity that was practised by native people, being nomadic... when the trapline system was introduced by MNR, it was a scheme developed by the MNR to disrupt the unity. When that trapline system was invented by the non-native people, with the MNR telling them that this land is yours, stay here, don't bother this other person's land, this land is worth money with the trapline system. When other people started trapping on each other's lands they started going after each other's throats. Fighting and conflict. Most people do not know this

but I do know: that it was a scheme developed by MNR to disrupt the unity of the people. Today that's how it is. Still today people can't get along. There are groups of people everywhere fighting one another, cousins, families, relatives. Everything is disrupted.

Has there been any good side to the trapline system?

According to my knowledge --- I did my own personal research, I'm a native activist, I'm not organized yet but I will reach a point where I am organized --- when they introduced the system everything was just totally disrupted.

Have you come across any references to how these boundaries were made? Like how did MNR

determine where these trapline boundaries were, or how people were assigned to those

traplines?

Say, for example, this is where we are at Beaverstone. The Beaverstone area goes all the way to Sturgeon Lake, from Sturgeon Lake it connects to Blackduck River, to Kettle River. People did not stay in one area. They were migratory, they followed the patterns of the caribou, the geese, whatever, to get the best access to food. There was no such thing as one small group living in a small area all the time like this, 365 days a year. They revolved with the seasons. They lived at Fort Severn, they lived at Beaverstone, they lived in Manitoba, they lived at Beaverstone Lake. That's how it was.

So when MNR set up these boundaries, do you have any idea why they set them up where they

did?

I have totally no idea. The only idea I can come up with was to disrupt, to create chaos, to disrupt the harmony that was once practised by the native people. If I said this was private property, this whole area would be private property for native people. Instead, when the MNR came in they told the people you stay here, this land is yours, and over here this land is yours, blah blah blah. It was divided into small little pieces divided between I don't know, how many members there were at the time. That's how it is today. It causes trouble for people, conflict. It doesn't help out with anyone. Also there have been cases where people have taken each other to court, where they have accused of stealing furs from each other. According to the federal and provincial governments when they took this case to court with MNR trapline system, and as well other people have declared their traplines as 'this land is ours, we want compensation for it', and according to the federal and provincial governments they say that do not recognise the trapline system because it's a European invention, which was introduced as recently as 1947.

So the courts don't recognize them?

No, the courts don't recognize them. They've been thrown out.

Do you know any of the names of the cases involved?

I have a book called the Aboriginal Handbook. It deals with past and present cases as precedent and how to deal with native cases into the future, because we are not like the rest of Canada. We are native people. With those cases we're totally different. These traplines don't even stand up in court. They're not even recognized. They've been taken to court already.

So the court basically suggests that this is an internal matter, not our problem?

It's a European invention. It's not native.

So when the trapline system was introduced, based on what you know, were people notified or was it sprung on them one day?

Just one day, just like that. Back then people were illiterate, they didn't even understand a word of English. They were just living in the bush. Even if they had the interpreters at that time those interpreters were crooked and didn't fully comprehend what those words were. They short-shafted the native people. That's what they did.

Were they working for MNR or another agency?

They were probably working for a five-dollar bill, or three dollars.

The relationship between MNR and other government agencies with the community, has it improved?

Back in the day, the MNR used to literally push people around, throw them around. People were setting up their nets. The MNR would just fly in in, take their nets, throw them away or burn them, whatever. They'd charge those people. There were cases where people's nets were taken and they were thrown in jail, just for living off the land. Back then we didn't have money even though we're most of the people that are living on these reservations are living on potential mines that are worth billions of dollars.

What about today? Does MNR or any other agency do anything like that?

Well, we're being educated, we are not as isolated as we were before, we know what's going on, and we know how the system works. Knowing what our protection are, our human rights after thirty years of struggle, we know what's going on. If MNR continues they way they're doing they'll be liable in court, an international tribunal of the Geneva Code convention.

So back in the day people were avoiding MNR?

Yeah, they were scared. The MNR would go around telling people... I guess at one time the beaver population was almost going extinct, not by native people but by Europeans for their hats and fancy clothing. At that time when the people were told not to hunt beaver there were cases where people starved, they literally died because they couldn't hunt beaver. The MNR would check the ashes in the fire looking for bones and refuse. When that beaver population rebounded back, there were so many beaver but still the MNR declared no trapping. The beaver population just died from disease. The beaver, they were just floating on the river, they were saying. When those infected beavers that were dying from those diseases, as other animals ingested them they ingested those diseases in return. The beavers diseases went up the food chain and people died. Acting on behalf of MNR for restrictions.

You said that MNR was checking fires for bones and other evidence, Back before this, how did people dispose of bones they weren't using?

In my family, on my dad's side, they respected animals so highly, they were very valuable, they didn't even throw the beaver bones on the ground after they ate those beavers. Sometimes they didn't even feed their dogs. What they did after they ate those beavers was they'd hang the bones in the trees, tied them up. After years and years they were saying they'd see those bones in the trees. That was out of respect for those beavers for providing nourishment and clothing. That's how much they respected them.

Were certain areas chosen or was it near campsites? Specific trees?

Yeah, specific places, specific places.

What would make a place good?

Probably with a land of abundance, lots of caribou and animals to use as sustenance.

Did these practices continue after MNR started coming to campsites?

All of these practices that I'm telling you [about] stopped with the introduction of religions on the reservations. For example, on this reservation we have six religions, and there is one final last one and that is the traditional medicine religion, so altogether there's that's seven. What do you call them? Pow wow people?

Do a lot of people still follow traditional ways?

It's mostly Catholic, Anglican, whatever else from Europe. I'm surprised there's no druid religion. [laughs]

Historically, with the way the trapline system has been set up, have there been any positives to come out of it?

Nothing. It was for the benefit of MNR I guess, not for the benefit of the people.

What do you think they were trying to get out of it?

To kill the true Native American people, to kill the spirit. That's all I can think of. But some people persevered. Is MNR listening? People now are more aware... giving good reasons why, where, how. There are still some people who survived. I'm one of those people.

Is MNR talking or listening more?

It's more like people are aware, they're more informed and they know how to talk back to MNR. To give them good reasons why, why not, why it's this.

In your opinion, who is in control of traplines and regulation now? Who's setting the agenda?

The way I see that things are going, most people have completely lost their traditional way of life. Most of the people on the reservation they're living like white people. Nobody really cares about native input, they don't even speak their language. They don't even talk to their kids in their native language; it's white. There are very few people left that are the true Native people, maybe three or four families on this reservation. For me, me and my family, we haven't lost anything yet. Two days ago I just got back from Whitefish Lake. It took me 12 hours one way, 24 hours return. When the treaties were signed in 1930, eighty years ago, all the people left that were living on the land left and moved for Fort Severn. That land was just sitting there for almost a hundred years, dormant, nobody using it until I came around. I went back there again. To this day I'm the only one there along with my family and a few friends that I have and a few people that are on my side.

How many people in total are using that area?

From this reservation there's probably ten or twelve people. There was always a nation there, Beaverstone Nation, that was totally separate from Fort Severn band. Different families. Half of those are connected to Big Trout Lake and Bearskin Lake, and Shamattawa nation on the Manitoba side.

Do they fall under Fort Severn's jurisdiction or is it separate?

I think it is all Beaverstone. They were always independent.

Where do you consider it is that you live?

Beaverstone. Fort Severn really isn't my home.

The trapline registry, by breaking the land into these little boundaries, has it changed the way people showed respect to the animals?

Over-harvesting. Greed. Power. A true native person doesn't over-harvest when they take what they want. They save the rest for the following year. When the trapline system was introduced it was all money, greed and power.

Have the camps changed since when you were a kid? I mean, where they put things, or where they put things away?

I don't think anyone really cares anymore. Hardly anybody goes camping anymore. They just threw that land away.

Is there anything else you think I should know? When someone is assigned a trapline, who actually assigns the trapline?

I don't understand how. It's just one guy at the band office who runs it, that whole scheme. His name is Tommy Miles. He decides how to write the paper being the one in charge. He writes it to anybody who he wants to give it to. I've been asking for my trappers' license, he hasn't given me my trappers' license for three or four years. Same thing when the treaties were signed we were supposed to be issued trapline cabins. I haven't even gotten my trapline cabin yet. I've been fighting with them for the past seven to ten years. Everyone got their cabin except me. That money is there. The government gives out \$35,000 a year, they just take all that money for themselves and don't even give it to the people. We're supposed to get tents, traps, gas, everything but we don't get nothing. The chief and council they take that money for themselves. I've been trying to talk to people at the Trapping Association but they don't do anything for me.

Where are they from?

Fort Severn. They take everything, all the gas. They don't give it to the real people who are still using the land like me. We have the farthest traditional land, it's 12 hours away, but for them it's only two or four hours away from the reserve. We were supposed to get boats, canoes from that \$35,000 grant but we got nothing. They're not even traditional.

So it's hard to live a traditional lifestyle.

For them. For me that's how I live. There's obstacles [for me].

Any parting words of advice for MNR or other government?

We have an exploding goose population. It's exploded in the past 10 or 15 years, snow geese and lesser Canadas. Those lesser Canadas they're eating the Arctic out, literally eating it out. I was watching a documentary about them on TV with that overpopulation of the geese and they said that MNR biologists know what's going on. Of course they know what's going on, they aren't stupid, they see what's going on. They ask, should we let the goose population and starve itself out and wait for disease to sweep in, or so should we let non-native people come and hunt here? By that meaning the white folk. That's what I've been asking the MNR to do, to let the non-native people come in the springtime to hunt because they really want to hunt too. When I brought that question up last week they said it's not us that are not letting those non-native people hunt, it's the people. But it's the people who are saying they want them to hunt for the revenue. That's what I'm after. Either we let the geese starve to death, or we wait for disease to sweep through, or everyone will benefit from the hunting.

In July 2011, Mr. Thomas provided the following addendum to his interview:

BEAVERSTONE (BEAVERSTONE NATION) boundary goes all the way to Sturgeon Lake past the Manitoba border halfway between York Factory and Fort Severn, and is still inhabited to this day.



Interview: Looma Bluecoat
Age: 88
Born: Shamattawa, Manitoba
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 17, 2011

[Trapline registration] wasn't a pleasant thing and didn't work out so well when MNR imposed the boundaries on people.

How did the government inform people about the trapline boundaries?

We came to know about the trapline boundaries when men came to trade furs at the Hudson Bay store.

How did they help each other out?

When the traplines came in, people couldn't help each other out. A long time ago they'd travel from one camp to another when they knew someone wasn't doing well or was facing starvation. A few family members would come and help them out.

Were people ever allowed to move where they were trapping or hunting?

After the trapline boundaries were imposed, people didn't move from one area to another. MNR didn't want people to trap or hunt beaver, which then became over-populated and diseased.

When was that?

Back then, people weren't really concerned with the year, just day to day survival. I must have been in my early 20s. I was already married when we were told not to trap. [Around] 1940.

How old are you now?

I was born in 1922.

Tell me about your husband.

He was Sammy, or Samuel Bluecoat. He did a lot of trapping. That's how we survived.

Where did he trap?

In the Beaver Lake area, and in Beaverstone.

Where were you born? Was it on the land?

I was born in Shamattawa in Manitoba. We were just travelling around from one area to another. My mother delivered me in Shamattawa.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

I'm the oldest child. I had five brothers, and three are deceased, and five sisters.

How did you come to Fort Severn?

As a young girl, I grew up in the Beaverstone area. We would only be in Fort Severn during the summers. Every family on their traplines would come up in the summers and in the fall would go back to their traps. Every family did that. The Hudson Bay Company was here so that's why we would come in, to take the furs to Hudson Bay. There was no government assistance in those days whatsoever. Another reason people would come to the coast was for waterfowl.

Was there a difference between people living on the coast and on the land?

There were quite a few people who lived on the coast, plenty of waterfowl and fish. They were all one people.

Was adjusting to the trapline system easy or hard?

It was hard when the trapline system came into effect because we couldn't go everywhere to hunt and trap, and there was no government assistance. For the traplines to be imposed was very hard.

Did it get easier?

At one point it got easier when they built the community here [near the mouth of the Severn River]. There was some work for people. We would get government assistance [around] that point. At one time they were going to build a community at Rocksand to harvest the lumber there. They tried to claim the land as far as Beaverstone.

What happened with that?

It didn't work out and the only place we stayed was at Rocksand. We'd only build houses there.

Did people always obey the traplines and wildlife restrictions?

People would gather and talk about who should stay in their areas and not cross over to others. Some would come together when people weren't doing well and share things from their traplines.

Did MNR know or approve of that?

It was the decision of the people to help others out. Some of the people who didn't share [with others] froze to death or starved.

Did people ever work with or for MNR?

MNR never bothered to hire people or help them out. We were scattered. We were just given orders and there was no direction from MNR. For example, my late brother-in-law, as a child he lost his parents on the trapline because there was no help. The kids managed to survive on their own.

Was there any good side to the relationship?

It was all negative, it had negative effects. There was never any assistance from MNR. Today some people get gas to help with trapping. That never happened back in the day.

Did the trapline boundaries affect the way that you felt about the land?

We would have to look for ways to make things better. It didn't matter how we felt about the land. It was survival of the fittest. Whatever laws the MNR imposed, people really didn't follow them because they knew what was better to survive.

Do you mean the quotas or limits?

That's the only way we'd survive, we wouldn't follow the quotas. We'd ignore that and get what we needed for survival. There was no assistance.

Did the government ever check to see if people weren't following the rules?

I'm not aware of anyone going to our campsites, they were out on the land. The only time we'd see a white person was when they brought our treaty money. It was \$4 a year.

Who brought the money?

It was Indian Agents. They'd bring \$4 to each family every year. The Agents would provide food and supplies when we were on the land.

So MNR and Indian Agents did different things?

MNR would impose different laws on people when we'd meet up. The Indian Agents imposed different laws.

What kind of animals would you trap or hunt?

We would eat beaver. Some people would eat otter and marten but I never tried them myself. The only other things we'd eat were caribou, moose, fish, rabbit and ptarmigan. Not all of the animals exist now, only a few are here. Things have changed. Things are coming to an end. I went to Moosonee about 40 years ago for medical. I was quite surprised at how it was. It was an island with lots of water, only one dry spot. That's where most people starved and died because they were on an island or a bay, without much wood or animals. It's only getting worse with the animals becoming scarce.

Why are the animals disappearing?

Not too many people respect the animals that were given to them by the Creator, that were provided to the people to exist on. Because of a lack of respect for animals they will go extinct again.

How would people show respect for animals?

They never over-hunted in the past. We only killed what was needed for meals or for that day. For instance, today there are birds that are laying eggs and black bears are eating the eggs. Bears never used to eat eggs. Everything is changing. There are animals starting to eat humans and it was never like that. They're eating their own kind. Even the insects are starting to disappear and the birds are being eaten by other birds. It amazes me when I think of how things are today. Even the polar bears are going far inland, going after the beavers in their lodges. They used to stay on the bay but now they go inland.

In camp, how would you dispose of bones that you did not use?

In every campsite we would gather up the bones and bury [burn?] them. That way they were not scattered all over. The animals considered that to be disrespect. By burning them, everything was clean, it renewed itself. We never gave the bones to dogs but we'd give them the food we ate. Dogs were in use then and we didn't want them to starve.

Were animals' bones ever put in water or in trees?

The only time we would burn the bones was in winter. We'd never burn them in spring and summer. Whenever we came across a beaver floating in the river we would leave it there, we didn't want to catch a disease. We would never throw anything in the rivers or lakes because we wanted to keep them clean. We made sure that every bone we burned was turned to powder. We'd just use the trees to burn them.

Do people still show respect to animals like that?

I see most people do that. It continues from one family to another, especially on my side of the family. That's how we learned and continue to do it.

The water isn't as clear as it used to be. There are people down south and they put garbage in it. The water here is starting to get contaminated.

Are you more in control of the land, or is government?

The government is in control. Back then, the government also promised to look after the land and the people but now everything is contaminated. There is no respect.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

What's the point of me talking if no one is going to listen to what I have to say? Back then, people suffered a lot. Old people lived in tents, Now in Fort Severn, it's cold in winter. People used to stay in tents and would get cold and sick. My husband and I built a log house but it burned down shortly after we moved in. The only reason we built it was to keep our kids out of the cold.

Did your children go to residential school?

There were four of them who went to residential school, two boys and two girls. There was another one, too, my daughter, who went to high school in Thunder Bay. Nothing was provided for them there. Some were provided money and some weren't, everyone was treated differently. I graduated from high school but I never got anything from the government.



Interview: Delia Stoney
Age: 74
Born: near Fawn River
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 17, 2011

How old are you and where were you born?

I am 74 years old. I was born at Fawn River, at the mouth of the Severn.

Who was there when you were growing up?

[There was] an elder by the name of Abel Bluecoat, and of course my parents and my grandmother. My grandmother was on my mother's side. My brother was also there, and Eli Albany – he was my father's nephew.

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

There was Tonina, Elijah Albany and Rhoda. There was another baby but it died on the trapline. Sheba.

Were you married?

I wasn't married then. I got married in 1959 to Jack Stoney [now deceased]. He was a trapper. My husband worked for MNR and also ran goose camps, [starting] around 1964.

[Translator explains that Jack Stoney was employed to stamp furs for MNR, and that he was also a coastal ranger that monitored river levels.]

How long did he work for them?

He started around 1964 and worked until the day he died in 1998, August 1998.

When you were married, did you move to your husband's trapline or did he move to where your family was living?

He stayed on the trapline on Dickey River, alongside my father's family. He moved there when we got married.

What were you hunting and trapping for on your trapline?

Moose, caribou, rabbit, ptarmigan, fish, beaver. That's what we had when we were upriver. The main harvest we had for trapping was mink, beaver, otter, muskrat, squirrel and weasel.

Did you ever eat the other animals, the ones you trapped for fur?

We ate otter and muskrat. Muskrat tastes like chicken. Otter was good because it mostly ate fish. We still eat muskrat but only where it's clean, not near here but out on the land.

What was it like before trapline registration was introduced?

Everybody shared the boundaries with everyone, trapping and harvesting what they could.

How did that change after the traplines came in?

After the boundaries were imposed on people it was difficult for people to make a living. People just stayed where they were when the traplines were assigned. The animals kept moving.

Do you remember any stories from when beaver trapping was restricted?

A lot of people starved. I vaguely remember that.

Do you know how people avoided starving?

Everything was very scarce, especially beaver. It's only been recently that moose and caribou have been here.

What did the beaver population do after regulation was introduced?

There was an over-population when there was a restriction on [trapping] them, and the beaver died.

How were people told about the traplines, when they came into effect?

MNR went to certain areas where people were camping and trapping and that's how the people learned where their traplines were and that there were restrictions of beavers. It went from there, people would tell each other.

What was the relationship like between the people and MNR?

In some ways we were getting along and not in others.

How were they getting along?

At that time, I know that when MNR came there was good communication and people got along with them even though they were telling us what to do. We still got along.

Did people work with MNR or did they avoid them?

Every time they came people would greet them. Not too many avoided them because people had to learn what they had to say.

Did people ever not follow MNR's instructions?

Yes. Some would follow the laws but some wouldn't because of [the need for] survival.

Are the trapline boundaries a good thing, a bad thing, or neutral?

For the people that abided by the laws and respected the boundaries, it worked out well. Some people did not respect other peoples' traplines and it wasn't all good.

How did people not respect the traplines?

Some people didn't respect the boundaries. They'd just harvest what they could.

Was it different for food and skins?

When people were able to harvest, if they got something on someone else's trapline they'd share it with the owners.

Did they have to ask permission first?

Sometimes people would ask, and some people wouldn't.

What are ways that you could show respect to animals?

People didn't overkill. They respected [animals] by burning the bones so they wouldn't be scattered. It's just today that people just put it in the dump, which is not respectful to the animal, just burning them or hanging them up in trees.

What made you choose burning or hanging in the trees?

It was more respectful to burn them, that way nothing was scattered.

Was the hanging done in a certain season?

In the fall.

Where would you burn them, and where would you put the ashes?

We wouldn't burn things close to camp. We would take it someplace else so it wouldn't be disturbed.

Was it close or far away?

Not far from the camp but far enough that no one would disturb them.

Did this practice continue after MNR set up the traplines and introduced regulation?

Yes, it continued.

In terms of where people can trap, are things better, worse or the same?

It's basically the same. People trap wherever they want because no one is living on the traplines anymore. They can trap as long as they respect the land, not littering.

Do the trapline boundaries seem to matter anymore?

Some people abide by the boundaries and some don't.

Who has more control over the land, the people or the government?

The government has more control and can limit what people can do.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I've told you enough already. [laughs]



Interview: Ernest Thomas
Age: 66
Born: Beaverstone area
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: English, Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn)
Date: February 18, 2011

If you don't mind me asking, how old are you now?

Oh, I'm old. [laughs] I'm 66.

Were you born in Fort Severn or on trapline?

I was born on trapline.

Whereabouts?

Beaverstone. That's the area.

When you a kid there, how many people lived there?

There were Hudsons, Beardys, Thomases and Crowes I guess.

Did they stay there the whole time?

Yeah. [indicates the area on a map] That's where the Severn River and Sachigo River connect there. Those guys were from Manitoba, the Hudsons and Beardys, the Thomases there. There were a lot of people there. For a long time, maybe 2000 or 3000 years before, people were living there. My dad was running the Hudson Bay post, the store there, there was a store there, eh? It was from the 1930s to the 1960s. He was running all those traplines [at the same time].

How many families lived out there?

About six families.

What about your family? Any brothers or sisters?

There were about twelve in my family. With all the grandsons now, they're overpopulated, the traplines.

How did you learn to work on the trapline?

I learned from my dad, maybe when I was about six years old. I was with my dad and my mother.

What kind of things were you trapping?

[We were trapping for] beaver, mink, otter, marten, lynx, wolf and fisher.

What kind of things were you eating when you were there?

Wildlife --- fish, moose, caribou, bears.

What was the best one?

They're all good. Geese and ducks too. They ate polar bear there also. At the same time we shared with the dog team, the food we were eating. We used to have about 30 dogs and they need a lot of food. Today we don't use much food, we don't use that much caribou, that much moose, polar bear. Back then we'd have to share with the dogs. They didn't eat that much caribou, mostly fish. In a year we used to get 30,000 or 40,000 pounds of fish for the dogs, maybe 50,000. It would last one year for the dogs. But not any more.

What was the preferred food for dogs?

Whatever got on my table. Whatever. Moose meat and caribou meat were the best for them. Beaver, black bear meat, seals...

You ate polar bear?

Oh yes. Best thing in the world. Not too much though.

What parts of the polar bear would you eat?

Whatever. You can't eat the polar bear tongue or the liver. They're poisonous. Same, you can't give the dogs the liver either, its too strong for them, they could die. Overheated I guess. You know what? My dad used to tell me that when you dried from the sun, the meat, you see the salty stuff come out on the polar bear meat. I guess that's why you can't eat it too much. You have to watch it but that's the best thing to eat in cold weather. The next thing is beaver, the best for cold weather. You can stand in -45 with no problem, you could work like this with no gloves on. It gives you lots of heat. My dad one time, it was very cold and my dad was checking the traps around 9 o'clock. He was cooking beaver because it was too cold. It was -45 that night. My body was so warm that I didn't use much blankets. That was after eating beaver. Any kind of food [keeps you warm] but that beaver was real good. [smiles] After being in -45, if the temperature [rises] to -20, it's so warm outside because you've been eating that stuff. So much energy. Next thing is when you eat beaver its [only once] in 12 hours or a day. You not going to get hungry when you eat the beaver. It's not like store food where you want to eat again after a few hours. Same thing with caribou. Same thing with fish, too, really good in cold weather. Everything is there. If I don't eat stuff like that, like moose, caribou, ducks or beaver, my body gets weak.

Do people still eat a lot of wild food?

I don't think so. Everything's in there. They eat rabbit and beaver, [and] some geese on the water. They ate all the things like that. It's a medicine. It works like a medicine.

You were pretty young when it happened, but when the traplines came in, do you have any stories from then?

They made an agreement with the government. The government started everything. They put in the traplines, not us. That's our protection. Like mining companies, they cannot walk in, or logging or hydro. Nobody can walk in. They made an agreement with the government, not us. I guess white people was travelling on the coast, white trappers.

So the traplines act as a sort of protection for you?

For everything. If anybody wants to come in on our traplines they have to [ask] our permission, before they start a mine or something. They signed a treaty.

Was that always the case?

Yeah. That's always. We didn't sign any agreements after that.

How did they tell people that the trapline boundaries were being set up?

The government started everything. The traplines covered the whole land long ago. We had a meeting here, [about the] government plans at the big meeting. It didn't happen at once, it took five or six years.

When the traplines were set up, that was in the 1940s. Who told you that they were being set up?

The government set everything. Those traplines, go there and there and there and there. They covered the whole land. Yeah, we had a meeting here, a big meeting [about the] government plans. It didn't happen at once, it took five or six years before they set those traplines.

Were people happy with the traplines the way they were drawn?

No.

How come?

The war was just starting and those guys hated each other. Those traplines were like war. Guys were asking, why are you coming to my trapline, why do you go to my trapline? That kind of stuff. The hate comes from there. They hated each other. But people... MNR... that was a long time ago, they were called Lands and Forests back then, in the 50s. MNR said to my neighbour, his trapline, you guys don't fight over the land. It was about the government. Those mining companies. We'll have a meeting. [We'll deal with the mining companies.] It's all about our protection. Any big company can't walk in and do what they want with the land; it's about our rights. We didn't made any agreements after that.

Some people weren't happy with the way it was drawn?

A long time ago we used to share the whole thing. Even today, Fort Severn is like one big trapline. That's what it should be, no this and this and this. A big trapline is like a big reserve line.

Were people ever stuck with the territory they got or did they move around?

People could still move around.

A question about when you couldn't hunt beaver. Do you have any stories ...?

Lots, lots. Threats. RCMP was most of the time doing the surveying in the traplines with the dogteams. I guess they'd check the campsites and fires too, looking for bones. That's what they do. Same with geese bones, that's what they do. At that time no one had any government assistance, nothing. Everything was cheap. You could live on a dollar a month. A hundred pounds of flour cost only a dollar. Everything was so cheap. You could live for a month on a dollar.

[The translator stated that if someone had ten dollars they'd be rich. The interviewer replied that's how he felt most days.]

When I was twelve years old, I got a mink that I took to the Hudson Bay store and they paid me \$25. That was like \$250 at that time. It took me three months to spend that money. In the 1950s and 1960s, things were still good, \$20 could put stuff on the table. After that it went up. The Inline was only about \$400, the Inline 250 Ski-Doo. How much today? An Olympic 350 was something like \$650, a 440 was something like \$750 by the time the 1960s came around.

You said it was the RCMP going along checking campfires?

It was RCMP. He was always on the trail like that, that guy. On the canoe.

Why was he checking campfires?

I guess he was just an asshole, I guess. [laughs]

Were they doing that for themselves or for MNR?

He was looking for anybody to put in jail. That's what he was up to. [...] They worked together, like today. Even today [it is like that]. I was in Peawanuck a couple of years ago and there was MNR flying with RCMP.

What was the relationship like between the people and MNR?

[unclear] Especially MNR, they'd go after us all the time.

Did any local people ever work for MNR?

No, no. I don't think so.

Generally speaking, would people work with MNR or would they avoid them?

They worked together but we would always tell them about our rights. We wouldn't allow MNR to control how we were trapping. Even today MNR is trying to shut down trapping and fishing. People are trying to stand up to the MNR.

Is the MNR listening now?

No, never. Never going to listen. That's why we should have justice now. We need justice now.

What would happen if the RCMP found bones in the fire?

I guess they would have shot you in the head. They're going to could strip you [of equipment], take your gun, your canoe and your motor, and the guy who had the beaver they'd put him in jail. You'd have kids and they would suffer. It was a long time ago but it's probably the same today.

Do they still do that today?

Oh yeah. The MNR was trying to stop the harvest of Canada geese around 1985.

[Translator explains that people were not telling them about what they were harvesting as they needed them for survival.]

In your opinion, did the traplines work well as they were set up?

This area has to be clean all the time. We have to clean this whole trapping area. The government wants everyone to live on their trapping lines but no one wants it that way because this area has to be clean. We'd have log cabins all over the place, the whole area, and we'd have to clean it all the time.

How would you clean it?

I guess you'd have to burn everything down. Complete. Burn all the garbage left behind, even the bones, you'd put them away. The bones... caribou, beaver bones. Put everything away.

I've heard from some people that the bones would be burned, and from others that they'd be put in trees. Would you do things differently at different times of the year?

The only time you'd burn them was on or before the springtime. Sometimes you could do it in the fall to clean that camp area. If sometimes they couldn't do it in the springtime they'd do it in the fall. It was nice, natural.

When you cleaned the area, would you burn the brush, or the cabins?

The cabin, you put everything there, in the campsites. To be clean. *[It is unclear here if the participant meant burning the entire site or the garbage from the site. The latter seems more logical.]*

You wouldn't burn the cabin every year, though, would you?

Just when you were done with it. No matter how messy it is it is you'd burn it.

Where were the bones burned in a particular area? Were they close to the camp or away from the camp?

Away from the camp. *[points to map]* I've been here for years. There were two log cabins here on Beaver Lake, one here *[at Beaver Lake]* and one there *[points to the south end of the lake]*. I never saw that one. For years ago it was underground already. There's another one there. There were more cabins here on Amisk sipi *[Beaver River]*. I used to use that campsite on Beaver River.

Who do you think is in control of the land? Is it the people or the government?

The people, I guess. The reason I say that, today the First Nations, is right here. This is how government takes care of the land. The really bad stuff is here.

[He presents some documents that he has written on traditional knowledge and hunting, which outline his concerns about the effects of hydroelectric development, pollution and the radar bases on the regional food chain. He also refers to a map of the Hudson Bay coast that shows overlaps between trapping areas and radar sites. He draws a clear connection between water quality and effects on terrestrial wildlife.]

The government destroys the land. It doesn't respect it. It treats the land like a terrorist.

[He shows several pictures drawn by his 11 year old grandson, Logan Wanakamik, among which show a fallen tower at a radar base and passing caribou, with comments about the effects of industrial waste in the foodchain.]

At the military building there *[at radar base 521]*, maybe 200 feet around it, the flies die. Paint chips have lead and it blows in the wind. You don't see it but it gets on you. It gets far away. The caribou eat it and then I get lead and mercury, right? There's explosive around the sites. There

was a trapper who saw a big explosion there once. All of the sites are like that. There's no freshwater there, it's all destroyed. They're every 35 miles, 35 miles apart. [...] One missionary was landing in Fort Severn and [they flew] near to one of the radar sites, and from there the military intercepted their flight. That was 1961 or something.

After the radar bases closed, did people ever take things from there or were they left there?

Nobody bothered. We're still waiting to have them cleaned up, the garbage and the waste. That's been buried there and some of the contents are very dangerous. I told those guys from Timmins that that stuff when you put it underground is very dangerous. You don't see it but you can't even stand downwind from it. It's on your body.

With MNR working in the north, has any good come out of the work?

Nothing good ever comes out of MNR. They just want to make more laws.

What do you think MNR is interested in?

He just wants to wipe out the people and the animals.

Have MNR or other government agencies changed the way you show respect to animals?

No. [He refers to a picture from his grandson.] They don't need to care about the water, or the polar bears. They destroy everything. It's like Nelson River [in Manitoba] and hydro. I used to work there in the 1960s. He was talking about fresh water in Canada. There's no more fresh water around Nelson River. That's why we have to sit at a round table, a month from now, and talk more and more, talk to government about the land. We need justice for sure.

Who would sit at that table?

The government, I guess. The government made all the mistakes they can have all the expense. The government will take everything otherwise. If I destroy my own land, how can I talk about it? The mining companies, that's another thing. They'd destroy the land too. Those lines paid every year. We pay the price for the land every year. They destroy my land, so they can pay at court. You can write that down. It's been 60 years that the land has been destroyed. Complete, no meat.

In your opinion, what makes MNR and Indian Affairs different from one another?

There's Indian Affairs and the MNR sits lowest, below it.

Do they do similar things or do they do different things?

They just hide. They open their mouths and sit there. One [radar] site could be \$10 million for one area [to clean up?]. Those guys they need a billion dollars for sure. We had [millions] on Winisk, three years ago. That's what it cost, but that's not across Canada. Not enough. They can only afford to do three or four sites.

Is it getting easier to talk to MNR?

He's hiding over there behind closed doors. They don't want to mention [talk] about anything. We had meetings with those guys since 1987. When I'm talking about something, I'm talking about something. They know it. That's why.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

In the area around the Severn and Sachigo [river] junction, there was a mine there in 1929. It was pulled out in 1941. There's a lot of garbage sitting there.

What kind of mine was it?

It was a gold mine. After the 1970s we drilled there when I was working for INCO. We dug seven or eight holes there, looking for gold. No luck. I was there two years. Not two years, just the summers.

How was INCO to work for?

I made good money there. They paid my hotel, they gave me free beer, everything. All my paycheque and overtime was mine. I used to charge them my air ticket. It was a good deal. [...] We have to finish this, this mine I'm talking about. This mining shaft that went down, they didn't completely seal that shaft. After the 1930s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s, that mercury comes out. That shaft is on the main river. [*discusses high mercury levels on Big Trout Lake*] It gets into the fish and the moose, and the water, and then people die. I don't make up any stories. If any government saw this, I would take the government for what they did to the land. I have no problem with that. I don't need any witness. There's a lot of garbage, a lot of fuel. The area from here to here [*points to map, crossing east to from Fort Severn to the Manitoba border*], it's where I trap here. I see a lot of fuel on the ground. There's moose on the ground. They were using this area here. I used this land as far as Manitoba, to the Seal River, that's how far I go on the Ski-doo. [*He points to the Nelson River area.*]

Do you still work trapline or are you finished?

We have permission to trap in Manitoba, permission from those trappers there. This is my trapline here [*points to map*] and we had another trapline here. [*He points to Beaver River.*] That was my dad's long ago. This is how much we use the land, this area. A real big area. When you get in the bush, [*you are*] in it for in a month's time. We cover everything [*in a month*].

What years were you using that area?

The late 70s. I was working at that time, I used to work in winter and come back here again and here again, work in Pickle Lake and Gillam in Manitoba. I was working trapline. It's my life. It's my lifestyle.

Meeting Two: afternoon of February 18, 2011

[Ernest Thomas came by for a second conversation that ranged over topics of local history and economy. The following notes are presented in a point-form manner.]

Interview:	Ernest Thomas
Language of Interview:	English, Mushkego
Translator:	Julie Miles
Location:	KO Lands Office (Fort Severn, ON)
Date:	February 18, 2011

- He shows a newspaper clipping from Wawatay News (2009) describing the formation of a team for support on land planning and resource development. It involves 13 northern Ontario communities, all treaty 9 adhesion members. So far it has not met again but he said that it was a good start.

- He outlined the government entities that he felt could be held responsible for the remediation of radar sites. These were Environment Canada, Department of Transport, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, Natural Resources Canada, and Department of National Defense.
- Ernest showed certificates of enrolment and discharge from the Canadian Rangers, in which he served in the 3rd Patrol Group from March 1998 to May 2005. He received 18 hours training on GPS, military radio, etc. They were on call 24 hours a day, mostly working to find people on the land if they did not check in on time. They were issued old guns [*Lee Enfield Mark IV* .303] but they were still good guns. No one used scopes on their rifles. Could still hit targets at 400 metres but they'd have to use full metal jacketed long rounds.
- His father was on the band council for ten years, quitting when he got too old. Council terms are two years in length.
- Some people lived near the post full-time. They moved to York Landing in Manitoba, around treaty time or before [*ca. 1929?*]. In his dad's day, Fort Severn was mostly empty.
- His family came from the Fort Albany area, his grandfather being born there.
- Rocksand was an old place where people lived. There was an elder there who wanted to start a reserve there. The government wanted to relocate people to Kenora but the chiefs thought they were being fooled.
- In the 1960s when he worked for Manitoba Hydro, there was talk about damming the Severn River with as many as 14 dams. He said that he told the Fort Severn chief and council that this would not be good for the community.
- In the 1980s there was a proposal from INAC to raise chickens in the area. They may have been also interested in cattle.
- Around 1997, there were plans to extend roads and hydro to Fort Severn. This did not occur and is probably too expensive now. Companies wanted assurances from each community, which was not practical.
- Tourism is now important in the north.
- He travelled a lot, which he said was unusual. He would spend two or three weeks away at a time, working for extended periods in Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories. In the NWT he worked in diamond mining where they put in an 80 foot rail line.
- "We can stake [mining] claims but we can't open mines. Besides, cleaning up the garbage is first. Before anything new happens, some things need to be cleaned up."
- "Spend money overseas? They should give me \$25 million for my pocket money."
- Ojibwa people sometimes would cut the beaver tail off and throw it in the water. He said that the people here don't do that and that it's the best part of the animal. When asked if the old people would break sideplates or images of animals into halves, he said, "That's an Ojibwa thing."
- People would use seal and whale for dog food. Seal skin was used for mukluks and waterproof jackets.
- People would also eat seal. Seal is like beaver in that it keeps you very warm when you eat it.
- He once saw a European man in a caribou jacket. European jackets would have no hoods. People here used to wear pointed hoods which allowed the heat to rise and not plaster the hood against the wearer's head. Today's parkas are tight and your head sweats. He remembered seeing the peaked hoods when he was a child.
- Military pants and mitts are no good, they get wet easily.
- Sealskin garments would be greased.
- Mattresses used to be made from animal hides, mostly moose and caribou hides. Wolf was very warm.
- A dogsled was pulled by 4 or 6 dogs. Each dog could pull a hundred pounds. They were fed at night time and "Anything I ate, they ate."
- People stopped using dogs for transport in the 1960s after snow machines came in. There were machines before but the dogs were still used for a while. No one knew how the machines were, but now they have good frames. People weren't encouraged to use snow machines, it just happened on its own.
- There is cedar growing in the upper reaches of the Rocksand River. This was used for gunwales, boat struts, etc. There is a medicine that grows in the Fort Severn area,

somewhere southwest of the town, whose effects are like hemp. After commercial tobacco was brought in by Europeans this other plant dropped out of use.



Interview: Elizabeth Matthews
Age: 78
Born: York Factory, Manitoba
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: John Wabano, Julie Miles
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn)
Date: February 18, 2011

I was born in York Factory and came here in 1942. At that time there were two families that I came with, my extended family and their children and grandchildren. I was raised by my grandmother. I was only 8 months old when I lost my mother and I grew up in Manitoba.

How did she die?

She got sick. She died in 1930. I also lost my grandmother when I was 10 years old. I learned to look after myself from my grandmother, to live on the land. To this day I use what I was taught.

I've been here since 1942. I didn't like it at first. I was only 12 years old when I came here with my father, he found another woman here. I was travelling on Beaver River with him.

Was he trapping there?

Yes.

What was he trapping?

Mink, marten and otter. We weren't allowed to trap beaver at that time. Back then we weren't allowed to kill beaver. It was hard for people. When I was five years old we were trapping around Sturgeon Lake. One day my grandfather just left and went to Whitefish Lake where he had family. Something was happening to them, there was no communication by phone or radio but he sensed it and went there. There was John Bluecoat, Margaret, Henry, Moses... and Moses died soon afterwards. He starved to death. He was in his teen years. The young man lost his life even though there was beaver in the area but they did not trap them. Back then the people of Fort Severn respected the law of MNR and the RCMP and did not kill the beaver because they were told.

How did MNR tell people where and what to trap?

I don't know how people were notified by MNR but I remember as a young child that we weren't allowed to kill beaver. In 1943 it opened again. We were able to trap beaver when we moved to Fort Severn.

Around the same time, MNR made the trapline boundaries. Do you remember any stories from when that happened?

I don't remember anything from that but someone is bound to know. For people who grew up in Fort Severn they're aware of it. Most of them grew up in the bush and on trapline. I guess what MNR did was give out maps to a number of people and [told them] where the trapline boundaries were. I guess that's the same time when MNR started selling trappers' licenses.

Did people always pay attention to the boundaries or did they trap in other areas?

People usually kept within the boundaries of their trapline and kept people out of their area. My father trapped in the Beaverstone area, from Beaverstone River to Whitefish Lake. Nowadays I'm surprised that people kept within their boundaries. They didn't use GPS; they just knew where they were going.

What would happen if someone crossed the boundary and trapped on someone else's trapline?
 Nobody ever crossed my dad's boundary. Whenever people came across they would tell people where their trapline was. That way they wouldn't harvest on their trapline. I'm concerned today that MNR won't allow animals, water or waterfowl to be harvested in the future, and the next generation will starve.

Did that apply to food or just animals for trapping?

It was mainly trapping but if you saw moose, caribou, whatever, if you saw it on someone else's trapline you could kill it. We would also share it with people [who owned] the trapline.

Do people today pay attention to the trapline boundaries or do they ignore them?

People now just go ahead and trap anywhere, because to them they don't exist anymore. Not too many people trap anymore and they can just trap anywhere.

In the past, people would respect everyone, and respect their elders. Now they hardly show respect to anyone at all. These days no one really takes the time to teach their kids about how to respect the land. People today are now also delayed [getting on the land] by high school and they are reliant on technology rather than living on the land. Everything is getting in the way. Young peoples' lifestyles are different. They can run to the store. We couldn't do that. It was day-to-day.

The other way people would be able to teach young people was to take them on the land. If there were funding to take people on the land for 2 weeks, a month, then these teachings would continue.

What do you think is important for people to learn?

People need to be taught carefully and to talk to their children. It's not a one-night conversation. It has to start at an early age. The traditional way of survival is the most important. The current way of doing things won't last forever, people need to go back to their traditional lifestyle.

Just by looking at the map, my grandfather left from Sturgeon Lake when he had his premonition. He had nothing to guide him but he went straight to Whitefish Lake to help that family. He must have camped once or twice [on the way].

My grandparents told me most of the things that would come in the future, and that I would need to do everything myself because no one would hold my hand. They would just give me material and I learned to make mitts. I'm amazed at people today. They go straight to their computer.

Of course, you're talking to the guy with a computer here and two gizmos, right?

[laughs]

When there came a time when Anglican priests flew to certain communities to pick up children for the residential school, my father didn't let me go. He said it was better for me to learn the traditional life than to be stuck in school.

I'd like to ask another question about trapping. Did people adjust easily to the traplines or not?

Pretty much most families adjusted to the traplines and the boundaries set up for them. Relatives would trap in their areas and they had no problem with it, and everybody abided by the law.

What if they weren't related?

With my side of the family, even if a stranger crossed over our side of the boundary we were taught to respect them.

Did you ever hear about the government destroying traps or things on traplines?

No.

Who is in control of the land, the people or the government?

The people are more in control than they were before.

Are MNR and other government agencies listening more now?

The MNR doesn't want to listen to what people say. The other levels of government don't understand how people live off the land and make their living. They [government employees] are only here for a few weeks. MNR has been trying to impose a law on the people of Fort Severn, that people aren't allowed to hunt in the spring. It's how we survived for years. It's really expensive getting food in spring.

Are they looking to restrict hunting of geese, or everything?

Everything. Fishing, hunting. The MNR has no control over the land that God created because God created it for the people to use. The Creator above created everyone and everything.

Are things improving with MNR or no?

There's nothing good about MNR. They are trying to shut down everything for people and a way of life. I would like to see hunting continue in the future.

How would you dispose of animal bones in camp?

Back then people really showed respect to the animals. We wouldn't leave their bones or meat on the ground. They would either burn them or hang them on a tree. That's how we would show respect. Everyone showed great respect to everything. It's not like that today. Not too many people show respect to the animals.

What do they do that is disrespectful?

The parents are not teaching their children how to dispose of the remains of the animals. There should be a great respect for the animals because they provide everything. Some people today continue to teach their children about the land. Not too many.

When would you decide to put bones in the trees or to burn them?

Some of the big bones we weren't able to destroy in the fire, we would put them in a tree so they were kept in one place. People were really clean back then; they wouldn't even spit on the ground.

What would happen if you found old bones, like ones from someone else's campsite?

We would pick up whatever was on the ground and clean it [i.e. burn it].

Did you choose special areas for burning or hanging the bones?

Everything was separate. We would find a separate area to burn them and one to hang them up.

Did that ever change by season?

It was any time of year. Everything was kept clean, no garbage anywhere. When someone killed a moose, they would eat everything, even the hoof, they threw it in the fire long enough to make it soft. We would eat the bone marrow.

The Rock Cree around Nelson House used to make something they called 'asshole pudding'.

They took oats and raisins and such and put them in a moose intestine and steamed it or boiled it.

People here would do that too but not with the raisins. I never saw a raisin when I was young. [laughs] When did they do that?

They still do that, as far as I know. They also cook mariah livers in jackfish pipes.

My favourite part is when you boil the liver of the mariah with onions. Sometimes I buy wild food from the kids or ask someone to go hunting for me. Everything is pretty good when it's fresh. My favourite part of cooking ptarmigan is using salted pork with the meal.



Interview: Rhoda Albany
Age: 78
Born: near Niskibi River
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 19, 2011

How old are you?

I was born in 1932. I'll tell you only what I know. That's not the correct date [on her status card].

Were you born in Fort Severn?

I was born on Niskibi River, up north here.

How long did you live there?

I don't know, I was just born there.

When did you move to Fort Severn?

When we moved from Niskibi River, we didn't move to Fort Severn. We stayed someplace else for more trapping, on Fawn River.

Who was living with you at that time?

Just my family but occasionally we'd come across people coming towards our trapline.

Did those people trap on your trapline?

People went from one place to another for trapping.

When MNR put in the trapline boundaries in the 1940s, did people still move around or did they stay in one area?

Even though the MNR imposed the boundaries, we stayed where we were and would go to another trapline to trap with another family.

Did government people ever come onto your trapline?

I don't recall anyone coming to the trapline. I have no memory of that.

When the trapline system was introduced, how were people told about it?

I guess there were some people in the community back then. That's how people would inform each other of certain traplines and where they could trap.

What kinds of things did your family trap on the trapline?

Beaver, otter, mink, muskrat squirrel and weasel.

Did you ever eat them or were they just for furs?

Most of the people ate everything... otter, beaver, mink, muskrat. There was nothing else for them to eat, so to survive we ate what we trapped. The main diet was beaver.

What else would you eat when on the trapline?

Moose, caribou, rabbit, ptarmigan and fish.

Which did you like the most?

Everything. Even up to today, that's what I eat. When I don't eat them for a long time I don't feel well. Young people provide the food for me now, the moose, beaver, caribou and waterfowl. I always end up calling one of my relatives to see if they can provide for me.

Do you know any stories from when beaver was scarce?

My parents would tell me stories when a lot of things were scarce. Not like today where there are lots of things to kill for the family. People would long for food that they missed and it was hard to feed the family. Some years were plenty and others were not.

Do you remember a time when hunting beaver was restricted?

Yes, I heard about it. Even though there were beaver people wouldn't kill it because they were afraid of MNR. That's why people starved.

How did people get along with MNR?

They didn't show hatred to MNR. We would get along with them without any problems. That's why people obeyed the law of MNR, they showed respect for them. That's how they showed respect, by not killing beaver.

Did MNR ever ask people what they thought?

MNR never asked in particular people what they thought of it [i.e. regulation]. Come spring, beaver would be floating around because of overpopulation.

How old were you when that happened?

I'm not sure but I was pretty young. At one point the chief and council had a meeting with MNR asking them to lift the ban but they had a quota for how many beaver a family could kill. The quota was only ten beaver a year for a family.

Did that quota ever go up?

Eventually the MNR just lifted the ban on beaver. Eventually they saw that there were too many of them and people went ahead and trapped them.

Were any of the trapline rules or quotas a good idea?

The only thing that came about was when the ban was lifted and people could sell their pelts to the Hudson Bay. That's the only good to come out of it.

How much did a beaver pelt sell for?

I don't remember. It wasn't that much. The highest was about twenty dollars.

Thinking from then to now, has MNR improved in the way it deals with people?

So far what the MNR is saying is good, but some is not good because he wants to set up provincial parks and the people need the land for survival.

Who do you think is in control of the land, the people or government?

I'm not really sure who's in control now. [laughs] I'm not sure who's in control of the land. That's why people are speaking up to the MNR now. The younger generations need the land for trapping and survival and whatever they need. What will become of them without the land? That's why they're trying to speak up to the MNR, because of the protected areas and parks.

Did government regulation of trapping change the way people used the land?

People really did what they were told to do and everything worked out if they did what they were told. I hope that people can keep working on the land, especially the young people.

Did government regulation of trapping change the way you felt about the land?

I never thought of the land any differently. We just lived off the land that we were given.

How would you show respect to animals?

It wasn't just one specific animal you would show respect to, it was all of them. Any one we had bones that you would not use, they were burned so they weren't scattered. We respected every living thing. Mostly they were burned and some were put in trees.

When would you burn them and when would you put them in trees?

Even now it continues. Some people burn them and some people don't respect them enough. The animals know when you don't respect them enough.

What happens when the animals aren't respected?

To my knowledge, animals don't stay in one place. They travel a far distance where they gather together. They gather together every ten years and talk to each other. There's a secret gathering place and they tell each other if they've been mistreated. They would become scarce if they were mistreated.

When the beaver was scarce when you were young, was it because they were mistreated?

There's always someone who cares for everybody. They [the animals] know that. When it comes time for them to become plenty, there is someone who cares for them. When they are needed, they go where they are needed if they are respected.

Has your interaction with government ever changed the way that people show respect?

It hasn't turned out good all the time. Sometimes the government doesn't know what it's talking about but sometimes the people do.

That's all the questions that I have. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

I have a brother who is in an old age home. He's still aware of everything. He lives in Sioux Lookout. He dealt with the laws of MNR. You could talk with him --- Elijah Albany.



Interview: Isaac Matthews
Age: 75
Born: near Niskibi River
Resides: Fort Severn
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Niska Inn (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 20, 2011

How old are you again?

I am 75. [I was born] April 12, 1935.

Where were you born?

On Niskibi River. My parents told me that there were already geese flying at that time of year.

[Translator explains that this is early in the season. The earliest ever recorded in the area was in 2010 when the geese returned on March 29.]

What was your family doing then?

It was trapping mostly, all year round until the month of June. I started walking, leading the dogs at age 7. I was walking around with my grandfather at age 7. My grandfather was Jimmy Matthews. That was on Blackduck River.

How many other people were there?

When the traplines were set up [in the 1940s] there were about 35 people living in that area. We were just staying together at that time. Half of those people are gone. There's a lot of young people that travel there [now] for hunting and fishing.

Which families were there at that time?

It was all just family, all of the Matthews clan. That's why the Niskibi area is a good area. Up to Niskibi Lake we were assigned that trapline area. The reason was that no one was living up north at that time so MNR assigned us that land for trapping and hunting. The head of the Matthews clan was Phillip Matthews; he was the head of the clan for trapping.

[Translator explains that traplines pass from one generation to the next. If an elder dies the right to trap that area is passed to the son(s).]

Was Phillip Matthews the family member who dealt with MNR?

He was always around MNR. I don't know what they were doing but Phillip Matthews was with MNR for two years on Blackduck River. He showed MNR how much land they needed [for trapping]. From Blackduck River he went about 60 kilometres. During that time my uncle Phillip Matthews was with MNR. They never told him what they were doing but they cut a line [*in the bush*] to mark the boundary. Within the tree cut they put something under the ground but he never knew what it was. Years back I went back to where my uncle said MNR made a clear cut and I followed it. There's a hill at the end, there's big rocks sticking up. I think they contained precious metals or stones.

Whereabouts was the clear cut?

We went upriver on the Blackduck, somewhere up there. They were there for two years. I don't know what they were doing. When I was out there no one really spoke English. There was a man named Douglas Kakekaspan who translated for Phillip for a year, and then Albert Koostachin translated after that.

What was the relationship like between people and the MNR?

There was good communication and people got along. The only reason there were problems was because of a fear of MNR.

Why were people afraid of MNR?

I don't really know why there was fear. They were seen as some sort of officers.

When the traplines were set up in the 1940s, how did they work? How did people react to them?

During that time when the traplines were set up for the people, it didn't work out so well. At the time my uncle was trapping there [near Niskibi] but people came in from the west. There were confrontations with people. Phillip Matthews set up a trap for an otter. There was bait in the trap. The people who came onto the trapline were Sammy Bluecoat and Geordie Thomas. Sammy and Geordie took the bait and put it on their trap. In the springtime when people would gather here in the community, Phillip Matthews told MNR what happened to his traps. The MNR called Sammy Bluecoat and Geordie Thomas to have a talk. Phillip wasn't too happy when he checked his traps and someone had [tampered] with them. It was a long walk from Blackduck River to the Niskibi Lake area it took seven days to get there, camping on the way. We only used dogs at that time. I guess what MNR did to Geordie, [because] he was the one who put the bait in the trap, MNR had a meeting with them and said if Geordie did that again he'd be facing jail time.

Did it ever happen again?

That was the only time that I'm aware of. They were on their own trapline when they did that and crossed over.

Would people share their traplines, or was it one family to a trapline?

We would share but once the traplines came in we had to watch where we were trapping. Today we trap where we want. Some of the elders can't get out to their traplines and young people trap where they want. People don't say anything because they can't get out to their land anyway. A couple of years ago I went out with people trapping and it didn't matter where we went. People get too old and too sick and can't use them, but all that matters is that people use the land.

Is MNR aware that people do that?

I don't know if they're aware of that. I'm pretty sure that they are. The reason why people trap anywhere, especially young people, is that the heads of the clans [*i.e. extended families*] have passed away. For example my dad and family trapped in the Niskibi Lake area and no one said anything. They're gone. As long as there is someone working the land.

What happens if someone doesn't work the land?

That way MNR knows that people are still using the land.

Before the traplines were set up, how did people organize trapping?

For my clan, the Matthews, before the boundaries were set up everyone got along and shared. After that is when people started fighting. When the traplines came into effect the very first time, people would communicate through other people or [do] witchcraft and send messages to one another. They would send beads and the beads would turn to worms inside them. After the traplines came into effect people had confrontations with each other and sent things to each other. The person who sent it would go to a sacred place so no one would know that they did it. They would send something in the form of a wolf or something. This is what my grandfather told me.

[Interpreter explains that this was intended to scare someone.]

Did people compete with one another for furs and traplines when Hudson Bay Company was in charge?

There was no competition as long as someone got what they needed for the next winter. Even if someone got less, someone would chip in and help them.

[Interpreter explains that basic needs included flour, sugar, baking powder, milk and tea.]

What were you trapping for?

Beaver, otter, mink. There was hardly any marten. There's plenty today, just recently. Also fox, both Arctic and red, and fisher. The only time I would get fisher was when I was setting traps for mink. Sometimes I caught them in my mink traps.

What did you use of bait for otter and mink?

They basically just eat fish. That's what we would use for bait.

What else would you eat off the land when trapping?

Mostly beaver. When I wasn't able to trap I would go for beaver. [NB: He has not been able to trap for the last three years.] Someone offered me otter but I didn't like it. I had a distant relative who liked otter but I didn't like it. Once when I was travelling with my grandfather we got two mink. My grandfather skinned them right away and roasted them at the fire. I liked it, better than otter. I also ate muskrat. There are lots of nutrients in muskrat.

What foods would you take with you while you were trapping?

When I was trapping on my own, the Hudson Bay store existed already and I'd buy canned food for travelling. Everything was pretty cheap then... flour, milk, sugar, lard, and so on. Nothing was artificial in those days. It was real. Everything was good. Nothing was over a dollar then. Today you can barely afford anything. A pack of cigarettes now is \$10.78 and back then they were 25 cents, twenty to a pack. They would sell tobacco in cans for 45 cents and papers would be 5 cents.

Did you ever hear any stories from older family, your parents and grandparents, about when beaver was scarce?

I experienced and heard it. There was always food for people and beaver was always available. Then MNR came and beaver was banned. They wouldn't sell snare wire for snares. MNR banned snares for killing or trapping beaver, and then they introduced conibear traps for beaver.

[Interpreter explains that these are square traps that are supposed to kill instantly.]

Before there were planes, people would come from Churchill... there was this guy who came from Churchill named Tim Horton who came to check the snares. They had a different officer just for beaver. In the fall I came across those officers at Shagamu River where some Americans had a camp and they were checking on the Americans who were there for geese in the fall. There was an elder named Mason Koostachin. When he left Niskibi River to buy supplies at the Hudson Bay [store] they were always cautious of MNR along the way. They [MNR] would check your sleds for wire snares. People who worked for MNR went camp to camp. Mason had a snare under his sled but MNR wasn't smart enough to check under there.

Roughly when did they ban the snares?

It was early, when I was younger. It was the early 30s when they banned the snares. In 1945 I was still out with my dad and sometime in that time that's when MNR banned killing beaver. I don't understand why MNR banned the beaver; there was plenty of it.

How did the MNR and government tell people about rules and restrictions?

There was an MNR officer who dealt with beaver going camp to camp to tell people that there was a restriction on beaver. MNR couldn't come to the camps anytime they wanted because it was a long journey for them. My dad and I went ahead and trapped anyway.

How long did the restrictions last?

I don't know how long but I was aware of them. When MNR put the restriction on beaver [trapping], whenever we went to beaver houses we would find beaver floating around. There were too many of them, they were dying. I'm not sure why they put a restriction on them. How we knew the beaver were dying was because foxes would smell them and dig under the snow and ice, where they were frozen.

If I had a map I'd point out where I went [trapping]. Your map has no names so I can't show you. [...] People didn't stay in one area. The food would be scarce so they would keep moving. If you saw a lot of rabbit tracks you'd stop and trap rabbit. I can show you where we would stop, where we travelled.

You said that people don't really pay attention to the traplines. When did that change?

It was in the early 80s, early 90s. Once the people who were the heads of the clans started to die. Also, when people started to use Skidoos they went everywhere. I was happy when I was young and saw people trapping. Everything was clean. I was with the Thomas clan for two years. I went trapping with the late Gordon Thomas and followed that MNR clear-cut [on the border]. We followed it as far as Sturgeon Lake. There was no Skidoo then; we were using dog teams.

When the trapline boundaries were put in, did it change the way people felt about the land?

For some people it really changed because there was a limited space where they could hunt and trap. When MNR set up the boundaries and someone was hunting caribou, people would run behind them. If they killed it in another trapping territory they'd have to share it with the owner.

How would people show respect to the animals?

Everybody just respected everything they came across, especially caribou. The bones, after we took the marrow out, we'd take the bones and burn them so they wouldn't be scattered by other animals. We'd make sure that they were destroyed and that's how we would show respect to the animals.

Were any of the animals treated differently?

Nothing was ever thrown away. We'd eat the caribou head. After everything was cooked, we'd make broth from the bones and then burn them. Nothing was thrown away then; it was all being used. Nobody threw anything away because people were starving, especially upriver. Far inland things became scarce but along the coast they were plentiful. Especially in spring when there would be plenty of waterfowl.

In which seasons would you fish?

In the fall we'd set up a wooden fish trap [*mitchiskan*] along the creek. The fish would swim in but water would go out. If people needed food they'd fish at any time of the year, even make holes in the ice.

What kinds of fish would you catch?

Trout, charr, herring, whitefish, and sturgeon. All sorts of fish.

Which do you like?

My favourites are trout and char. People like eating suckers but they have too many bones. I'd choke on all those bones. We would smoke the fish, especially in fall, and use them through the whole winter.

Did people ever leave offerings for the animals?

I have no memory of that. I don't do that myself. I don't remember anyone doing that. Animals fend for themselves; they're just like humans. [laughs] When the otter gets fish, it takes it out of the ice and eats it. When he eats it, another scavenger comes by and eats it when he's too full. Every year I'd travel and I'd see fish left by the other animals.

What would people do when they came across old bones, either left by people or animals?

We would leave things alone when a wolf killed an animal like a caribou. It wasn't us who killed it; it was the other animals.

Did people ever dispose of bones in a way other than the fire?

Not all animals were put in the fire, especially the otter and the mink. They were put up on trees. When they were left like that they were left for the birds to feed on, so they have something else to live on. Any sort of animal would come along, like wolf, fox, bear, birds... if they were searching for food they'd eat it.

Was that done differently in different seasons?

It was only during the winter that we'd put them up like that. That's the way of properly disposing of it, in the tree.

Where would the tree be, near camp or in a special area?

Where it's clean, not near the camp.

How long of a walk [was it away from camp]?

About here to the garage. [*about twenty metres*] As long as no one was able to step on the remains. No one would want to waste their time to dispose of an otter. [laughs]

That's great, you gave me a lot of information. Is there anything else you that would like to add?

No, that's about it. I would have really liked having a map to show you where I went. I want to show you everywhere I went as a boy. We didn't stay in one place for a long time.

Meeting Two: morning of February 21, 2011

[Isaac Matthews came by for a second conversation. He used various topographic and place name maps to expand on the information from the first day. The following notes are presented in a point-form manner.]

Interview: Isaac Matthews
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: KO Lands Office (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 21, 2011

- He was born at the mouth of the Niskibi River. His family was travelling to Natena [?] which means a hill that you can see from far away. They were not camping there when his mother went into labour.
- His cabin is/was on the Tamuna River. Frank Koostachin was born there.
- His trapline starts on the Black Currant River. Traplines can extend into Manitoba.
- Winter trapping was done on Mintiagan Creek. The area would be good if someone had a boat and motor.
- He would never go to East Pen Island in summer due to large waves off the coast. From the mainland to the island is about 45 minutes. That's where all the polar bears are.
- He stayed on West Pen Island and trapped Arctic fox. Trees are starting to grow there.
- There is a clear-cut on the border between Manitoba and Ontario. It was put in around 1948 or 1949. In 1950 they put up a cement marker to mark the border, close to the coast on the Blackduck River. The marker has a metal pole with 1950 on it and has the names of the two provinces on opposite sides. There is a smaller wooden marker where the rivers meet just south of there.
- There is fishing at Bowman Lake, for trout, pike and sucker. Also good fishing on Otsi Sipi (Little Auntie Creek). Sturgeon Lake (Minahiko Sakahikan) feeds Little Auntie Creek and is the location of Radar Base 521.
- He trapped at Mansi River, which runs to the east of Niskibi River.
- There are big hills at the head of the Mansemegos River. He overnighted there. There are no trout in the big lake there but there are very large pike.
- There is an old trail between Radar Bases 521 and 518. It used to go north of the hills but that area never fully freezes, so now it goes south. In the area of the hills things look frozen but they are not.
- People would go from Fort Severn to trap around Kaskatamakan River in Manitoba. No one used to live there. They would go up to Omantomin Sipi (Mantomin River). Sometimes they would overnight and then go to Kaskatamakan. When skidoos were available, you could go from Fort Severn to Kettle River in seven hours. You could do this as early as mid-November.
- They had camps all over the trapline area.
- In spring they would go upriver on Niskibi River to the Tawaskweyew River [which is quite far south].
- People from York Factory used to fish at the lake with the big island at the head of the Little Auntie River. It is sometimes called Mistahi Sakahikan. It means big lake.
- At Beaver Lake (Amisko Sakahikan) people came from all over to trap. That is where the people mentioned in the participant's first interview took the bait from his traps.

- On Beaver River there is a creek that drains into it called Sasakanay Sipi [*sounds like sasakanayan; possibly Sasakinikatewi Sipisi*]. An elder and his wife were travelling and their boat tipped. As they dried their clothes they sat around naked. Another group came along and saw them and the spot got its name.
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Figure A-1

Albert Koostachin and Philip Mathew on Hudson Bay coast near Fort Severn. 1955. John Macfie fonds, Archives of Ontario, C 330-13-0-0-163.





Interview: Esais and Illa Miles
Language of Interview: Mushkego
Translator: Julie Miles
Location: Home (Fort Severn, ON)
Date: February 20, 2011

[To Esais] *How old are you? Where were you born?*

EM: I was born May 2, 1922. Wawiyaaastanak, about 20 kilometres upriver from here.

When did you come to Fort Severn?

EM: All my life, I've been living here.

Was your family trapping on Dickey River when you were a child?

EM: Yes. Also trapped all over the place, even across the river too.

What were they trapping?

EM: Mink, muskrat, otter, red fox, Arctic fox, silver fox, marten, lynx, fisher and beaver.

Was the area better for one kind on animal?

IM: More marten and otter.

How long did you live on the trapline?

EM: I was in and out. Basically I stayed in the community and I'd leave to check my traps, sometimes overnight.

How many traps would you set? How long would it take to check them?

EM: About 80 traps a day. Altogether about 60 to 80 kilometres. To cover the whole 80 kilometres, I'd overnight sometimes. 10 to 12 days when animals are not plentiful.

Did you get a lot?

EM: It didn't matter how much I killed. I'd killed plenty, but the most Hudson Bay would pay for otter was \$4 and mink \$3. During that time there was a ban on beaver. If I ever did kill beaver they'd put me in jail.

Were they [government] checking traps in those days?

EM: MNR didn't check the camp areas of the people but he would meet with the people and there would be a ban on beaver. All they would do is an air search to check on the beaver lodges and see if anyone was hunting them.

Did people do it [i.e. hunt] anyway, even though it was illegal?

EM: Once that law was set by MNR, everyone abided by the law. Everybody feared getting beaver because we were told we would go to jail if we trapped or killed it. I came to where people were starving because they couldn't trap beaver.

Did anyone die?

EM: I heard people starved but I only witnessed one person who did. I heard a lot of people died that year due to starvation.

Who died?

EM: Moses Bluecoat.

IM: It was 1935.

EM: He was pretty young, about sixteen years old. I was only seven years old at that time.

IM: Two infant babies died that year too, the same time, because the mother couldn't produce any milk.

EM: Those people died because MNR kept on their trail and eventually found the people at that camp. That's why people were afraid on MNR at that time. An MNR landed in Big Trout Lake and walked to Fort Severn, checking where people were staying. That's why people were in fear of MNR.

Before they restricted beaver trapping, what were beaver populations like?

IM: There was hardly any beaver at that time, just here and there. As soon as he lifted the ban he gave quotas to people as to how much they could get.

How long did the ban last?

IM: When I was pretty young myself there was already a ban. By the age of 17 there was still a ban. They had the quota on beaver of ten per family per year. It depended on the family. If it was a family of twelve, then each family member was allowed ten a year.

EM: Part of the reason why people starved was because there was no government assistance at that time. The Hudson Bay Company managers and clerks helped out the people, put geese in their iceboxes, salt cured [the geese], and when people came to trade their furs the manager made sure that they ate before they traded their furs.

Around the same time, the government set up the trapline boundaries and told people where to trap. Do you know any stories from that time?

EM: People were assigned their traplines. Everyone left from the community and went to them. We stayed here because ours was just across the [Severn] river. We'd check our traps and come back. That's all I remember.

IM: It's been recently that the government has given assistance to people. There was no assistance back then; we just got what we could day by day. Once the government was stepping in to help the people they would give the family \$6 a child. It was hard for me to make a living off the land. When it was bitterly cold, I'd eat squirrel, whiskey jack, anything I could get to eat.

EM: There came a time where the government would come every year to pay \$4 for your land.

What time of year was that?

EM: In the summer. People would only come around in summertime.

Were people happy with the trapline boundaries, or were there problems?

EM: There was a lot of confrontation between people because some people didn't care and would go on other peoples' traplines. Animosity grew in the people. Some people would stay within the boundaries of their trapline. Once that came into effect people started fighting and destroying their traps because MNR told them those were their traplines. Before then everybody shared.

How did people solve the disputes?

EM: No one ever settled anything, it just kept happening. I came across people who didn't really appreciate me trapping. Someone beat me up over their trapline. Most of them are gone already.

Did people ever stop competing? If so, when?

IM: When they started putting up radar sites and people were offered jobs, people stopped competing.

Do people still pay attention to the trapline boundaries?

IM: No one really cares about the traplines now. They're basically sharing. They trap where they please. No one gets into any confrontations now.

Who is in control of the land, the government or people?

EM: Both government and MNR are in control and people are fighting for their rights, to claim the land for survival.

When the land was broken up into traplines, did it change the way people felt about the land?

IM: Everything changed. How we looked at it and how we got along.

Was that change for the good or the bad?

IM: Both. It depended on the family.

EM: People came across MNR saying they owned the land, and people would die or go to jail if they disobeyed the law. There's going to come a time where everything is going to change and everything is going to disappear.

Before I forget, Illa, how old are you?

IM: I am 81.

[Esais quotes a bible passage stating that God provided for everything. Not translated except for that line.]

Illla, where were you born?

IM: I was born at Beaverstone.

How long were you there?

IM: About twenty years or more.

How did you come to be in Fort Severn?

IM: My dad would come here to trade his furs, and as a base for our family.

EM: And then she met me.

How did you two meet?

IM: [laughs] We came in the summer of 1942.

Julie Miles: That's when she first laid eyes on my dad.

EM: I'm glad I met her. She looked after me after my parents died. My father died of a heart attack at 65.

IM: It was in 1964. February 19, 1964.

Did you inherit the trapline from your father?

EM: Yes.

IM: Yes that's how it happened.

Now I have some questions about animals. What are ways that you would show respect to the animals?

IM: I only grew up in the bush [i.e. did not attend school]. That's how we became aware of how animals are because you live around them. If the animal is mistreated you won't get it for two or three years at a time.

What would be considered mistreatment?

IM: I guess it depended on how that family raised its children. Mistreating animals is by overhunting them, or leaving them around, not putting them up on trees. Everything was burned. Garbage was put in a certain area so it wasn't where you lived. Otherwise we'd burn them. In most cases where people really needed food they would eat fox, otter, mink, marten. That's the only time we would eat them, when the food was scarce.

Sometimes you would put the remains in trees?

IM: Just the main [large?] bones we would put on trees. They were moose, caribou and beaver, after they were cooked, after we had eaten and cleaned the bone.

Was that done in a certain season?

IM: All year round. It was just in the family. It depended. If you provided for another family you would have to decide how to dispose of the bones.

Were they specific parts of the animal, or just any part? Legs, skulls, ribs...?

IM: Everything.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

IM: Today that's how I treat the bones and don't leave them around. I burn them or put them up somewhere.

Do young people still do that?

IM: Not so many people now. It depends on who is teaching you. That's why that land was so clean. Some people don't care about what they do. Everything came from the elders, what they said. If you don't follow what they said then things won't work out because they knew what was

good for you and how to go about it. Not all bones were disposed of. We used some for scraping hides.

Which were good for scraping hides?

IM: The leg bone from a polar bear.

[Illa leaves and returns with a hide-scraping tool made from the leg bone of a polar bear, probably a tibia. It has a hide thong on one end and the other has been shaped into a thin wedge. It shows considerable polish as if well used.]

What is the word for this in Cree?

IM: Mikikwan. *[According to the Wasaha Ininiwimowin Dictionary (2007): mihkikwan, a scraper]*

Is there another kind, one that you pull toward you?

IM: Paskakigan. *[According to the Wasaha Ininiwimowin Dictionary (2007): paskowahcikan, a beamer]*

[The translator explains that it is a tool used to remove the hair from a moose or caribou hide. The interviewer imitates the motion that he has seen for using a beamer, a type of hide preparation tool made from a bone that has been split longitudinally. Illa nods at the motion, presumably agreeing with it.]