

Constructing "the Other" across Cultures and Agendas

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In Canada, both Quebec and First Nations have entered into constitutional negotiations with the federal (or federal and provincial) government(s) over their status. Those negotiations illustrate the procedural limits and the capacity of structurally entrenched interests to use the process to their own ends.

The paper reviews the performances of the Cree peoples and the Quebec and federal governments, especially with respect to the topics of economic development and political self-determination. It focuses on the power of various systemic filters to maintain the traditional constitutional process. The alternate constructions of worldviews (Lakoff, 1996) is used as a framework to contrast the cross-cultural miscommunication that complemented the duplicity of the governments (federal and provincial) in the policy arena as they sought to increase Canada's exports.

The paper, through the analysis of discourse, or the situated praxis of language use, presents constructions of the major players and their perceptions of "others." The data are taken from public documents and publicity material presented by the National Film Board. The constructions offer insights into the dynamics and steering effect of the formal and informal political systems and offer an analysis of marginalization of groups in Quebec.

La Construction de l'autre à travers les cultures et les agendas

Au Canada, le Québec et les Premières Nations ont entamé des négociations constitutionnelles avec le gouvernement fédéral (ou fédéral et provincial) sur leur statut. Ces négociations illustrent les limites procédurales ainsi que la capacité des intérêts bien enracinés structurellement d'utiliser le processus à leurs fins.

Ce document reverra les performances des peuples cris, du Québec, et du gouvernement fédéral en particulier

comme elles se rapportent aux questions de développement en expansion économique et en autodétermination politique. Il visera le pouvoir de filtres structurels variés pour maintenir la règle consitutitonnelle traditionnelle. Les constructions alternées de vues mondiales (Lakoff 1996) seront utilisées comme la charpente pour faire contraster le malentendu transculturel complimentant le doublage des gouvernements (fédéral et provincial) dans l'arène politique pendant qu'ils cherchaient à augmenter les exportations canadiennes.

Ce document, par l'intermédiaire de l'analyse du discours, ou le praxis situé de l'utilisation du langage, présentera des constructions des principaux intervenants et de leurs perceptions des "autres." Les données sont prises des documents publics et des textes publicitaires présentés par l'Office national du film. Les constructions offrent un aperçu des rapports changeants et de la direction des systèmes politiques formels et informels, et une analyse de la marginalisation des groupes au Québec.

Background

The last forty years have witnessed the transformation of Québec. Starting with the Diefenbaker victory of 1958, which created a huge unemployed talent pool for provincial Liberals, and the untimely death of Premier Paul Sauvé, which led to a weakened Union National government, a rejuvenated Liberal party came to power in 1960. Under Jean Lesage, the Liberals dedicated themselves to the modernization of Québec. In 1962 they campaigned under the slogan of "Maître chez nous"; a major plank in their platform was the nationalization of private hydroelectric companies. Under the leadership of Lesage's minister of Natural Resources, René Lévesque, Hydro Québec emerged as the public corporation that provided electricity throughout the province. A province-wide grid and the strategic development of the province's hydro potential became foundational components of the province's economic development program. Cheap renewable energy would nurture growth in the secondary sector.

In 1971, Premier Robert Bourassa extended the program by announcing that Québec would harness the hydroelectric potential of northern Québec. To the Premier it was a strategic advance in the development of the Québec economy. The Cree, who were not consulted,

opposed Hydro Québec's plans, and despite early disorganization they managed to have the project stopped through an injunction, and to negotiate the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement of 1975. The intervening years witnessed the OPEC crisis. The result was a comprehensive agreement which included hydro developments on the Grand River with diversions from two other rivers to augment its flow. In the process, communities like Fort George were relocated, land was flooded and transformed. The Hydro Québec project was producing hydroelectric power by 1984. Then, in the early 1990s Hydro Québec announced plans to extend its facilities by damming the Great Whale River system. By that time, however, Cree experience with the impact of the development of the Grand River made Hydro's plans unacceptable to them. This paper focuses on the construction of "the other" as the debate over the Great Whale project was played out.

Approach

Following in the tradition of Americanist anthropologists, Sapir and Whorf and the recent work of C. Mouffe and E. Laclau in political science, we build on the assumption of a fundamental unity between thought, language and the world.¹ This unity is reflected in our language at any point in time.² Thus the analysis of discourse becomes a window into the contingently located speaker. That location, however, is defined by the speaker's context, or in this case, those external entities which require speaking to. The act of speaking, dialogically focused on an issue or event offers insight into the position and thence to the identity of the speaker. As is well known, individuals have many faces depending on the situation or activity. The identity presented is largely dependent on the externally imposed context of the speaker and the specific histories of the words used to cast that identity. One could build a composite identity of a speaker but it would remain in flux, at least in its manifestation as the external factors changed.

In this case, we pursue a different approach: we focus on the "construction of the other" through discourse in an attempt to define the identities of the major actors in the struggle over the future of the Great Whale River. This paper contains two cases. The first addresses the construction of the other in public debate where the participants are setting their positions in contrast to or in concert with other participants before the public eye. The second focuses on the construction of the Cree

by the federal and provincial governments in internal documents designed to further the agenda of the state.³ The contrast in the constructions in the two cases reveals incongruities imposed by public and internal governmental contexts. They also lead to perceptions of duplicity as inconsistencies in the public and internal agendas emerged.

The pictures that emerged from this study bear witness to the ingenuity of people's constructions of centres and peripheries of power. To Hydro Québec, there appears to be a virtual international environmental conspiracy against their goals of hydroelectric development. According to Québec nationalists, the Cree are in league with Ontario, the United States and European jurisdictions to plot against the rightful future of the province. To Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Ottawa, the challenge is to stop negative messages about Canadian "products" in foreign markets and especially "untrue" messages from the country which might disturb investors.

The definition of the other, in the context of the Great Whale issue, offers a more stable view of the place of each in the mosaic of interests than does the definition of self. In the latter case, revelation of self is partial, a counterfoil to the self-perception of the significance or impact of external factors. Self-definitions are fluid, dependent on the perception of where one finds oneself in the context of external players or factors. The construction of other, in contrast, is less complex, representing an assessment and picture of that other from the perspective of the speaker in the context of the issue. The comparison and contrast of the perspectives of the "other" by multiple participants can be used in turn to construct definitions of self (as offered by "the other") as well as their systemic positioning through their implicitly expressed preferences and goals as they relate to the Great Whale project.

The lead actors in the Great Whale saga are the Cree, including the Grand Council, Grand Chief and local Chiefs, and their lawyers; the Québec government, including Premiers Bourassa, Parizeau and Bouchard, along with senior officials of Hydro Québec; spokespersons for environmental groups; the Federal Environment Assessment Review Office; and export development officers who played a minor but significant role on the federal side. Throughout the interactions, three language domains underpin aspects of the case: the legal domain of court cases, textual analysis, and positioning of agreements; the nationalist domain of ties to the land and heritage; and the economic domain of trade

and development. In each case the specific discourse has its own horizons and privileges certain arguments over others. Occasionally, these domains are juxtaposed and conflict or miscommunication ensues.

An illustration of conflict can be found in Cree reaction to the lawyers advising the Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come after he told them that he would sign the second Grand River agreement (*Power*, National Film Board, 1996). His direction, after a strategy meeting with his lawyer in a board room in Montreal, was in conflict with the Cree practice of community decisions. On the basis of the decision made, the local chiefs challenged whether their lawyers were representing the interests of the Cree people. Illustrations of miscommunication are numerous and can be found in the relative definitions of relevant evidence, goals and objectives in the Hydro-Cree negotiations. It is only when the Cree sought and received international recognition, and the partition of Québec (into two regions: roughly, a northern Aboriginal regions and a southern Quebecois one) was seen as a threat by the government of Québec, that the gulf between the two was mediated. Then, the need to be recognized by the Cree, if the national aspirations of Québec are to be secure, became the venue for open discussion of policy in the context of lifestyle. Coincidentally, the Great Whale project has been shelved.

The changes in the context for negotiations – in this case, the entrenched Cree position on the Great Whale River, the referendum loss by the Parti Québécois, and the international recognition of the Cree – illustrate how the construction of identity and position respond to external stimuli. All of the parties adjusted their discourses to reflect the changed contexts. As the discourses changed, so did the constructions of the other(s) and, subsequently, the potential areas for conflict and/or mediation. It is in this sense that one can understand Edelman's assertion:

My focus in short is upon people and developments with multiple and changing meanings to one another. That perspective offers a difficult analytic challenge because entities do not remain stable while you study them and subjects and objects are continuously evolving constructions of each other. . . . In every era and every national culture, political controversy and manoeuvre have hinged upon conflicting interpretations of current developments.⁴

Constructions of Others

In this section, we present some of the ways in which the players in the northern Québec situation are constructed by others. The constructions addressed here are of Cree peoples, the federal and Québec governments, Hydro Québec, and environmentalists.

Cree Peoples

The group most actively constructed by others consists of First Nations peoples in northern Québec, who are only occasionally differentiated into either separate Nations or communities by those involved in such constructions. We have found many different presentations, but have selected the most widely used images which fall into the following categories:

a. As part of the landscape ("romantic other")

This is most evident in environmentalist materials designed for their membership and the broader public interested in environmental issues. The first example is taken from the Sierra Club (Sierra Club 1998) website in which they educate the public about the "Hudson Bay/James Bay Watershed Ecoregion":

Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi; fens, marshes, and bogs: all depend on the vast sea that washes the northern shores of Manitoba, Ontario, and Québec.

While three First Nations groups are distinguished in this sequence, this differentiation appears to have been made to create a rhetorical parallel with aspects of the landscape. In the Sierra Club website document accessed, this was the only case in which First Nations peoples were presented prior to presenting environmental issues. The following synopsis is more typical:

In 1972, with no environmental assessment and over the objections of Native peoples, Québec's energy corporation, Hydro Québec, launched the first phase of hydroelectric developments here. . . . Thus has begun the most massive and destructive engineering and river-replumbing scheme in history, one that threatens to alter the entire Hudson Bay/James Bay ecosystem and destroy Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi societies.⁵

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) presents a similar picture in

its newsletter (EDF, 1992): "New York Decision Could Halt Huge Canadian Hydrodam Project." Again the image of "ancient cultures" is juxtaposed with images of fauna and flora for the attentive public concerned with the environment, but it appears to be presented as an add on to a list of environmental concerns.

With *ancient cultures* and vast ecosystems at stake, EDF is advocating alternatives to electrical power. . . . The Great Whale project would destroy thousands of square miles of habitat for caribou, whales, polar bears, rare freshwater seals, and migratory birds; release poisonous mercury into the newly formed reservoirs; and irreversibly harm the Cree and Inuit inhabitants of the region, who strongly oppose the dams. EDF and others are challenging the project's cost-effectiveness, in addition to its severe ecological and *cultural* impacts.

On the other hand, there is an active attempt to downplay those images in the publicity released by Hydro Québec. The Cree, in this case, are removed from their pristine environmental construction as illustrated in the following statement by Daniel Granger, Public Relations officer of Hydro Québec (*Riding the Great Whale*, 1994). Notice that the constructions coming from environmentalists are the target for this counter-construction of the Cree.

. . . we've seen the approach the Cree and their communication consultants are taking. They have put together a simple, not to say simplistic, message and to use words that shock, like the genocide of peoples, cultural genocide, the threat of collective poisoning, threats to health and obviously to the traditional way of life. The Crees play that card as though their entire population practised a traditional way of life. They never mention that they have offices at the Place Ville Marie in Montreal or that they have a modern lifestyle. Or that their chief lives in a house, a two-story Victorian townhouse in Ottawa. It's all part of a Cree life, but it's obviously not a part they want in the public eye because *they are acting out the myth of traditional values*, etc. The cameras show them in tents and so on. So with the help of the media and with prominent players from the States and even Ontario, they play the cards to the hilt, *this idea of traditional values and the relationship of between man and nature*.

b. As "not Québécois"

A second construction, used often by Hydro Québec and Québécois, is that Cree peoples are not proper Québécois. This is explicitly addressed by Lise Bacon, Québec Minister of Energy under Bourassa in a 1991 interview (*Power* 1996) again targeted at the general public:

The campaign the Crees have had in the States and in Europe, all over the world. Maybe they were successful at it *but are they Québécois or not?* They live in *our territory*. They live *with us*. They work *with us*. I hope they are still Québécois. And they're penalizing Québécois for that. And that's what I cannot accept and will never accept.

(Interjection: They don't think they're Québécois.)

Well I hope they still live in Québec because *their territory that they claim is theirs is still ours*. We haven't given it up. Yet.

This ambivalence of the relationship between First Nations peoples living within the geopolitical boundaries of Québec ("are they Québécois or not?") is evident in the introduction of the Québec government website (accessed 1998) on "achievements in their relationships with Aboriginal peoples." Notice the wording which places Aboriginal peoples under the jurisdiction of *Québec* by virtue of lands "granted to them" but not as part of Québec in any other aspect.

Since 1985, all Québec government action in regard to the aboriginal peoples has been based on 15 principles laid down in a resolution of the National Assembly. These principles recognize that the Native peoples have, among other rights, the right to develop according to their culture and language, the right to govern themselves on the lands *granted to them* and the *right to participate in Québec's development and to benefit from it*.

In this construction, "Native peoples" are not explicitly included as a cultural part of Québec, only as having land rights granted to them by Québec.

c. As opponents in a fight for Québec economic growth

Some of the most fascinating images of the Crees were constructed by Bourassa as he actively sought to develop and export hydroelectric power

through the James Bay projects in the 1980s and early 1990s. The following excerpt from an interview (*Riding the Great Whale*, 1994) presenting the Québec government's position to the general public is in the context of positively constructing Québec (in this case, it is a self construction), but the subsequent construction of the "Natives" as enemies is particularly telling:

When I was elected leader of my party, my guiding political principle was finding what we could do to make Québec stronger. There were a number of possibilities. But chief among them was developing its strategic assets. Its strategic assets were its energy resources – hydroelectricity. And *developing hydroelectricity meant conquering northern Québec*. I know the word has an unfortunate connotation, and I don't mean to boast, but *it was a conquest. It was a matter of conquering northern Québec economically speaking. . . . And when we have a territory northern Québec that enables us to develop this form of power. So, it wasn't hard to convince myself to fight for it and I did. And there was opposition, plenty of opposition from several quarters. . . . I was taken to court by the Natives. It isn't often that a Prime Minister is taken to court. . . . It was a battle for the future of Québec.*

d. As compensated and dealt with by treaties

The metaphors of war used by Bourassa in the 1970s were quickly replaced by more moderate constructions. The Québec government and Québec Hydro's most common construction of First Nations peoples in northern Québec is as peoples who have been generously compensated and accommodated through treaties. In the early 1990s, these constructions were presented as arguments against further negotiations with First Nations peoples. The first statement is from Daniel Granger (Public Relations, Hydro Québec, in *Riding the Great Whale*) who emphasized Québec's generosity in extending a place for First Nations people:

Find us a country whose Native people play as important a role. We gave them four and a half million dollars to allow them to participate in the exercise. Find us a country that has historically paid as much attention to its minorities.

A second excerpt, from Serge Dubé, *Indian and Inuit Affairs, Hydro Québec (Riding the Great Whale)* continues this construction:

All together we currently calculate that a total of \$500 million dollars in compensation has been paid out. . . . Everything is provided for, so we don't actually need further consent from the Natives to go ahead with these installations. They are already provided for in the agreement.

e. As an organized negotiating community

Later constructions under the leadership of Premier Jacques Parizeau and especially Lucien Bouchard, after the Cree and Québec referenda in 1995, have made the negotiating process itself the focal point for the definition of the "other" so that an "ongoing dialogue" with First Nations peoples is being positively constructed. The First Nations peoples are presented as partners in negotiation and as benefitting from Québec (and Hydro Québec) development through treaty negotiations. From Hydro Québec (1998) is the following:

In the territory north of the 49th parallel, the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA), signed in 1975, has responded to many of the concerns in this regard. We have negotiated some 25 agreements since then with the Aboriginal communities affected by our generating and energy transmission facilities. These agreements provide for mitigative measures and compensation for unmitigated residual impacts.

On 2 April 1998, a "new political deal" was announced by the Québec provincial government:

The Québec government has proposed to aboriginal nations the creation of a political forum in order to develop harmonious relations based on mutual respect and trust.

The *Globe and Mail* version of the story continues the construction of the other as potential negotiating parties (Seguin, 1998):

The provincial government is inviting Québec's 11 aboriginal bands to define a structure of self-government that could include sending representatives to the province's legislature. . . . "We are proposing a *partnership* that will guarantee native communities a

stable and regular source of financing," Mr. Chevrette said.

He said that at a meeting last Friday more than 50 of the province's 60 *native leaders showed a willingness to open negotiations.*

As the constructions of the Cree as "other" develop an historical fixity, they tend to become components of the public definition of the Cree through the public media who accept and replicate such constructions. In this case, the "negotiating partner" construction which has been pushed by the Quebec government has been assumed by Canada's most widely read newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*. The constructions thus migrate from arena to arena and as they are adopted and maintained, they become the definition of the "other" to a public with little direct knowledge of the situation.

Québec/Federal Government

As expected, the most explicit, public constructions of the Québec and/or federal governments as "other" come from First Nations spokespersons.

a. As in a war against First Nations peoples of northern Québec

The data are quite consistent, with the initial constructions of the Québec and/or federal governments, mirroring those of Bourassa as "conqueror" of the economic north. From the Cree Eeyou Estchee Commission and Grand Council of the Crees (Final Report, 1996, accessed on the Internet) are the following statements:

The governments of Canada and Québec have attempted to *fully dominate* Eeyou and *control* Eeyou Estchee and its natural resources. Historically, the attempt to *dominate* Eeyou and Eeyou Estchee and its natural resources has always been and remains reflected in the activities and policies of external government and economic forces.

In the 1990's, *this act to dominate and control* is more evident as the *present government of Québec plans to secede and separate Québec* including Eeyou and Eeyou Estchee from Canada regardless of the rights, interest, claims, concerns and political will of Eeyou. [Cree Commission Report, 1996]

The policies of the governments have been the annihilation,

destruction, assimilation of native peoples into their societies and the annihilation of the culture and way of life. They convinced themselves that we are inferior. This assault has been the greatest source of pain and continues to be a major obstacle to our healing. [Chief Billy Diamond, Waskaganish]

b. The governments collectively ignore responsibilities to First Nations communities

While progress has been made in the implementation of certain sections of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, important sections of the said Agreement have been *misinterpreted and ignored* by the governments of Canada and Québec. The review process has not been finalized and proceeds into a vicious *circle of lies, deceit and broken promises* as the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement falls into the *long trail of broken treaties*. . . . *Broken promises, lies and deceit perpetuated by greed in the pursuit of land, power and profit* are serious flaws of the hearts and spirit and therefore cannot be resolved by laws, treaties and constitutions of nations and governments. [Cree Commission Report 1996]

Under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, *there are obligations and undertakings of the governments not yet fulfilled*. Consequently until the governments have fully respected their obligations, the whole of the Agreement is not in full force and in effect. [Cree Commission Report 1996]

The governments have not respected their obligations and undertakings. [Chief Billy Diamond, Waskaganish, in Cree Commission Report, 1996]

c. The governments are not concerned with northern Québec except for resource development.

Again, all of the excerpts are from the Cree Commission Report (1996).

With the exception of resource development Québec appears to be absent within Eeyou Estchee. Considering the *historical indifference* of Québec towards Eeyou and other Aboriginal

peoples of Québec, . . .

*Wemshtigousheo*⁶ who once considered Eeyou Estchee as a vast empty wasteland has realized within the past half century that it is a land rich in wildlife, mineral, forestry and water resources.

d. *Québec's desire for separation from Canada takes precedence over Cree rights*

Québec contends that according to international law, Eeyou does not have a right of self-determination and to secede from Québec. According to the separatists, the Eeyou right of self-government would be recognized in a limited way by a sovereign and separate Québec. . . . Canada has a special and fiduciary obligation and responsibility to protect Eeyou rights. The government of Canada has not stated how it will exercise and respect this obligation and responsibility in the context of the possible secession by Québec from Canada. [Cree Commission Report, 1996]

Eeyou cannot risk the loss of such fundamental rights, undertakings and obligations as *Québec rushes towards its goals of sovereignty and secession without taking into account the social, economic, political and legal realities* of Eeyou and Eeyou Estchee in a fair and just manner. [Cree Commission Report 1996]

From Matthew Coon Come, Grand Chief, Grand Council of the Crees in *Le Devoir*, 12 February 1998, is the following construction of Québec's policies, which illustrates ways in which he has adapted discourse from other arenas to make his case:

To ensure the sustained growth of the French culture, *the government of Québec exercises its authority in countless ways*. In particular, it uses its authority in the area of immigration to ensure that Francophones' numbers in the province remain largely a majority. . . .

In the context of secession, the government of Québec continues to deny the Crees and other Aboriginal peoples *the right to determine their own future*. In various areas of the world, oppressive regimes have transferred populations in order to deny distinct peoples the fundamental right to self-determination.

e. *Unequal under the law*

There is very little respect and tolerance for aboriginal human rights and each time there is a so-called "native crisis", respect and tolerance for such rights diminish. *Wemshtigousheo feel threatened by aboriginal human rights*. When aboriginal peoples act to protect their rights, they are accused of violating the rules of law and order. [Cree Commission Report, 1996]

Hydro Québec

Constructions of Hydro Québec come from two primary sources, the Cree commission and the environmentalists. However, in the 1970s and then late 1980s, Bourassa presented images of Hydro Québec to symbolize the Québécois spirit:

Developing hydroelectricity seemed to me to be more Québécois than developing nuclear energy. Nuclear power was considered to be the energy of the future before being recognized as the energy of despair. But my sixth sense, if I could call it that, or my instincts said, why develop a source of energy that would put us in competition with every other industrialized nation when we are blessed by an energy source that, by its very nature, is superior to nuclear power since it is renewable and doesn't cost anything. It's just water. [Bourassa (ca. 1991), *Riding the Great Whale*⁷]

Environmentalist groups present Hydro Québec as a massive corporation, profit driven and environmentally destructive as in this excerpt from the Sierra Club website.

In 1972, with no environmental assessment and over the objections of Native peoples, Québec's energy corporation, *Hydro Québec*, launched the first phase of hydroelectric developments here. . . . Thus has begun the most massive and destructive engineering and river-replumbing scheme in history, one that threatens to alter the entire Hudson Bay/James Bay ecosystem and destroy Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi societies. . . . *Hydro Québec*, however, continues to press for all the dams on its drawing board. Sierra Club activists on both sides of the border are working to combat this *multibillion-dollar boondoggle*.

The Environmental Defense Fund, in its EDF letter of January 1992,

also presents the environmentally and culturally detrimental aspects of Hydro Québec's project, but in this case, Hydro Québec is named as a Canadian, not a Québec, corporation, and the focus of EDF's argument (as seen in later newsletters) is on the "cost effectiveness" of the project:

Environmental and human rights groups and energy experts are opposing a huge hydropower project that *Hydro-Québec, a major Canadian utility*, proposes to build in the James Bay region of northern Québec. The Great Whale project would destroy thousands of square miles of habitat. . . . EDF and others are *challenging the project's cost-effectiveness, in addition to its severe ecological and cultural impacts.*

The Cree commission report gives a very similar construction:

An increasing demand from Québec, *crown corporations and industries* for these resources has spurred intensive development policies, search and projects *without proper regard and respect of the rights and interests of Eeyou, their society and culture and the protection of Eeyou Estchee and its environment.*

Environmentalists

The final category, environmentalists, is best addressed in the government construction of impediments to trade, which follows.

The construction of the other offers coherence to the party doing the constructing. If one adopts the broader assertions of Mouffe and Laclau, if one analyzes the "stock phrases" (Edelman) and metaphorical constructions through which others are defined, one finds each party uses its own experience as the reference point, presenting its constructions of others using its own images. Thus, the Québec government adapts the rhetoric of "special status" to the First Nations, but omits control of territory – a sore point given the recent experience of the referendum and partition movement. The Cree peoples extend the metaphor of harmony and balance with nature and thereby gain an easy alliance with environmentalist groups. At the same time, they adapt rights and economic discourse to foster the economic development of the worldwide Aboriginal community. The environmentalists preoccupied with the preservation of things "natural" define First Nations peoples as part of the landscape, equivalent to fens, marshes and bogs.

At the same time, each group adopts and adapts their discourses to the

constructions of others. Each group has its own position that is constructed in an externally generated context. The agenda of each contributor is often invoked. The mosaic creates a framework where communications evolve, anchored in the constructed reality of an attentive public whose (at best, partial) understanding is based only on those external constructions presented by the parties.

At a second level, communications within and between governments present different constructions both of the Crees and of the role of the governments. The contrast between the public constructions described hereto and the governments' internal constructions provide oblique insights into the gulf between public and governmental agendas, a gulf which has led to concerns of duplicity and distrust in relations between governments and the Cree. The case of the federal response to the Cree campaign against Quebec Hydro's efforts to export electricity to the United States are used to document this point. The constructions of the Cree found in the government documents examined here were not designed for public consumption. Instead, they document internal governmental responses to public Cree initiatives in the Great Whale project. The documents reveal how constructions of the other become reified over a period of time and how they are heavily influenced by contextual and systemic constraints.

The data set analyzed comprises governmental documents pertaining to the Grande Baleine (Great Whale) project. It includes internal correspondence between Ottawa and regional offices of Canada's Department of External Affairs and then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, dating from August 1992 through July 1994, which chronicle the scripting of the government's public stance on the export of hydro power while simultaneously documenting private machinations to make sure that the public image of Canada as a good place to invest is not tarnished.

As we shift the focus of our analysis to internal governmental documents, we find that the international concerns meandering through many of the discourses are addressed directly in the back-stage scripting of public, governmental performances. These texts reveal a careful, overt construction of a Canadian federal government position, or identity. In the texts we find the writers from External Affairs portraying Americans as powerful and as having both the will and ability to meddle in internal Canadian affairs, particularly in the area of environmental sanctioning. The U.S. public's willingness to sanction "Canada" is seen as prompted by their susceptibility to environmental propaganda. At the same time, we

find the government officials worrying about the international, public image of Canada, particularly in the area of human rights.

On both economic and human rights issues, we find memos consistently working to minimize the First Nations voice (entitlement) in international venues, one of the strongest cards played by First Nations peoples. The first text below, an internal departmental wire to Geneva from Ottawa, illustrates these. (Capitals are as found in the original but names of individuals have been omitted.)

31 March 1992, External Affairs and International Trade

—JAMES BAY CREES AND CONFEDERATION HAVE SENT TO INFO POSTS/ DEPTS COPY OF CREE SUBMISSION TO UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (CHR) IN GENEVA ENTITLED QUOTE STATUS AND RIGHTS OF THE JAMES BAY CREES IN CONTEXT OF QUÉBEC'S SECESSION FROM CANADA UNQUOTE (FEB92) UNQUOTE. DOCUMENT WAS BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF CHR BY GRAND COUNCIL OF CREES UNDER AGENDA ITEMS 9 (RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION); ITEM 12 (QUESTION OF VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF WORLD); AND ITEM 17 (REPORT OF SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES).

2. BELIEVE THAT CREE REPORT WILL BE BASIS FOR THEIR INTERVENTIONS AT WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE (WGIP) THIS SUMMER (JULY 20-31, 1992), AND SUBSEQUENT FOLLOW THROUGH AT NEXT SESSIONS OF SUB-COMMISSION AND CHR. SIMILARLY, WE WOULD EXPECT CREES TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY THEIR ACCESS TO CTTEES AND MEMBERS OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OAS TO MAKE SIMILAR ARGUMENTS BEFORE WHATEVER AUDIENCES THESE INSTITUTIONS MAY PROVIDE. IN CASE OF OAS, CREE HAVE ALREADY MADE ONE PRESENTATION ON BASIS OF EARLIER DRAFT OF THEIR DOCUMENT.

The Cree are constructed as having an homogenous voice in international arenas. The ministry, while acknowledging the Crees right to speak, assumes that it must ensure that the position of the Canadian state is recognized. This construction of the Cree is maintained in other venues as well. For example:

24-Feb-1993, External Affairs

... we will be pleased to provide whatever support we can muster

with respect to the visit to Québec City and James Bay by New England and New York legislators. Nevertheless, *of greater importance than hosting any hospitality event is the need to have a federal presence during these briefings. . . .*

FEARO's [Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office] role is to explain the review process only. The fact, however, that the Québec Crees have now begun to target the federal government in their US propaganda and to depict it as an unreliable and disingenuous protector of the environment underlines our need to accent the important role FEARO and other federal offices play in this matter. . . .

The ministry later constructs the National Assembly as a relatively powerless figurehead, and the Americans as, in this case, (over-)prepared for battle:

The use of the National Assembly as host for this event is a good choice in order to avoid the ethics problem that impeded the last visit. Nonetheless, it will be important that participating MNA's be very well briefed since, following the New York experience, we can assume many of the New Englanders will have done their homework and will not necessarily be predisposed to accept either Québec's or the utility's point of view.

Finally, at the end of the same memorandum, we find the machination of performance in which FEARO is distinguished from Hydro Québec:

It would be helpful if you would emphasize in your discussions with your Québec colleagues the importance we attach to FEARO's participation in this exercise; indeed it should be a *sine qua non* for any assistance from this department. *You should also make it clear that FEARO's role must be completely distinct from that of Hydro Québec.* They must not be thrown together in a joint panel discussion involving Hydro Québec, for example. It may be appropriate to have the FEARO briefing in a different venue in Québec City from that used by the province or the utility.

The importance of constructions of others is illustrated by the following terse message of 8 April 1993 from External Affairs:

Subject: Grande Baleine: Visit by US State Legislators to Québec

Do you know if the Cree or their US reps have gotten to these people yet or are likely to?

It would be useful to know what they are telling the US legislators in order to help FEARO prepare its briefing.

This is a case where External Affairs anticipates that the Cree will be granted entitlement within the US political sphere and actively works to control it by preparing alternative discourses.

In January 1994, a year and a half after the statement above, Foreign Affairs sent the following message under the subject heading, "Hydro Québec: Departmental support of Québec's international interests with respect to the Grande Baleine Issue." In a single memo we find two very different presentations of the role Foreign Affairs had played and would play in the Grande Baleine Project. Under "suggested reply" we find the following statement:

SINCE 1990 OUR CONSULATES GENERAL IN NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND HAVE SUCCESSFULLY LOBBIED AGAINST STATE BILLS WHICH WOULD HAVE IMPEDED THE SALE OF QUÉBEC ELECTRICITY TO THE NORTHEASTERN USA.

However, in the next section, we get a different message from "Briefing notes for ministerial use prepared by the Department of Foreign and Affairs and International trade, January 14, 1994." In this case, the statements are all constructions of events which the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade felt would further their objectives.

In 1991, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and Daniel Latouche of *Le Devoir* said that this Department was not adequately defending the interests of Québec abroad and specifically mentioned the Grande Baleine issue in this regard.

The issue has become less active in the US in the last six months because: a) our message that there is an exhaustive review process at work is increasingly understood by legislators b) the Québec Cree have not sustained their publicity campaign at the same pace as in previous years c) the issue has been eclipsed by other priorities like Clayoquot d) prospects for increased electricity exports from Québec are poor in the short term and e) public hearings on Hydro Québec's environmental impact statement are not likely to begin until late this year or next.

You should note that the Québec Crees have complained to

you that the Department favours Hydro Québec in this debate. We have made it clear to the Crees that the federal government has no brief for or against Grande Baleine and is only interested in the efficacy of the review process. We are prepared to offer the same assistance to the Crees as we provide to the utility.

The "review process" became a construct, however, which was used to defuse environmental concerns voiced by the Crees, environmentalists, U.S. lobbyists, and U.S. politicians sympathetic to the Crees.

By May 1994, the discourse had become reified as had the players, as illustrated by the headings for the following memorandum:

ISSUE: . . .

BACKGROUND: . . .

AMERICAN POSITION: . . .

CANADIAN POSITION: . . .

TALKING POINTS:

-CANADA IS COMMITTED TO A COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS ON GRANDE BALEINE.

-THAT PROCESS IS AS EXHAUSTIVE AS ANY SIMILAR PROCESS IN THE US

-QUÉBEC NATIVES ARE MEMBERS OF THE REVIEW PANELS STUDYING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF GRANDE BALEINE.

-PUBLIC HEARINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROCESS ARE OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES, INCLUDING US ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LEGISLATORS.

-THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA HAS NO VIEW ON THE DESIRABILITY OF CONSTRUCTING GRANDE BALEINE; ITS INTEREST IS CONFINED TO ASSURING THAT THE REVIEW PROCESS IS CARRIED OUT PROPERLY AND THAT THE INTERESTS OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE ARE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IS OTHERWISE A PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. . . .

However, despite these assertions in May, the construction of Native groups as major opponents in External Affairs' efforts to deal with the Great Whale Project becomes front and centre by July 1994:

-The Québec Cree have focused their attention on New York, New England and, to a lesser extent, Washington. They have recently stated that they intended to increase their public relations expenditures in the northeast US.

-On the whole they have made common cause with non-native environmental groups and professional lobbyists and lawyers. However, a recent full-page advertisement in the New York Times directed against Hydro Québec was sponsored by a variety of US native groups.

-Other native groups at odds with Hydro Québec, notably the Montagnais, have also looked to the US for support and publicity, though sometimes the resulting hyperbole has not served them well, such as when a Rhode Island Indian told the press Québec had sent tanks into Montagnais territory.

This focus on Native groups in the memos indicates their impact, or increased entitlement, in circles outside Canada. However, that entitlement was perceived to be at the expense of the entitlement granted to the Canadian government by the Americans. At this point, the government needed to co-opt First Nations voices as being within a hierarchy beneath them, where the government would be viewed as the one granting the Crees entitlement. This is done by including First Nations peoples in the "review process" and in "environmental management." A later memo, also dated July 1994 presents this new construction. Note the positioning of Canada as more ethical in its resource development than the U.S.:

POINTS TO REGISTER:

-CANADA AND THE USA ARE AT DIFFERENT STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR NATURAL RESOURCES; DEVELOPMENT HAS REFLECTED THE ETHICS OF THE TIME, THUS IT IS NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE TO EXPLOIT NATURAL RESOURCES WITHOUT FIRST TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE INTERESTS OF NATIVE PEOPLES.

-NATIVES ARE NO LONGER PASSIVE; THEY HAVE BECOME MAJOR PARTICIPANTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND REVIEW AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE ABOVE EXAMPLES.

-CANADIAN NATIVES ARE FORMING TRANSBOUNDARY ALLIANCES WITH BOTH US ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WHEN IT SUITS THEIR PURPOSES. SOME AMERICANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO QUESTION THE ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS OF THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT TO MANAGE THE ENVIRONMENT IN CONSEQUENCE.

-IN EXPLAINING THE GRANDE BALEINE ISSUE TO AMERICANS, WE HAVE

ALWAYS UNDERLINED THE FACT THAT THE QUÉBEC NATIVES (CREE AND INUIT) ARE NOT ONLY CONSULTED AS PART OF THE REVIEW PROCESS, BUT ARE ALSO REPRESENTED ON THE PANELS THEMSELVES.

The quotes above illustrate the impact of statist assumptions. The federal and provincial governments are the vehicles for economic development. The success of the Cree, beyond state boundaries, is transformed into anti-statist action undercutting the status of the state. The response is to assert the quality of governance in Canada. The assumptions of system underlie the construction of the Cree and thence the constructions of the political issue and the appropriate response. The National Film Board production, *Power: One River, Two Nations* (1996) offers a parallel case study of evolving constructions of the other. It focuses on the impact of publicity on Hydro Québec's aspirations. A statist reaction is documented but couched in the stock phrases of nationalism. Since the above documents are also available to the Cree their presence confirmed fears of governmental duplicity as negotiations continued.

Conclusion

An analysis of the construction of the other in complex political arenas offers the opportunity to follow the evolution of the potential points of conflict and agreement, of potential alliances and their limits. The significance of the systemic location of voices constrains their agenda and fosters their definition of the other. The analysis of discourse permits one to include not only the institutional location and role of actors, but also to situate them in the broader political, cultural and human space which they occupy. In this sense the breadth of alternatives, hierarchy of priorities and values of the participants remain open to review. The recent shifting of the Québec government's policy priority with respect to the Great Whale River project, because of a more significant governmental priority, the integrity of the territory of Québec, emerges from the data. Similarly, the agendas of peoples across cultures need not be ordered, but the configuration and limits of potential and realized alliances and actions offers insight into the accrued experience of each and thus their base for the construction of "themselves" in response to the impact of the "other."

The federal response to the Cree offers a complementary analysis. Here, its campaign to export hydroelectricity displayed ways in which the

construction of the Cree as "other" was heavily influenced by established governmental priorities (trade, in this case). The federal Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade mobilized its resources and rhetorical potential to protect and promote "Canada" when exports, including the export of electricity by Hydro Québec were threatened. In so doing, the federal and Québec governments worked in concert while the Cree activities in the U.S. were defined as threats to investor confidence. At the same time, the Crees held their own referendum to distinguish themselves from Québec separatists, which was then used by the interested public in English Canada to declare First Nations peoples in Québec as Canadian nationalists as opposed to separatists.

Constructions thus evolve in public debate, and in the definition of the other within the departments of the state. In the latter case, the agenda and place of the organization frame the construction. In the former, the public interplay of constructions offers challenges and opportunities as the definitions of the "other" emerge and evolve in an intricate dance. Inconsistencies in positions can emerge across closely related fora. When they do, however, duplicity may be inferred from the definition of "the other" which, when disclosed to the other, will influence the progress of the dance.

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Notes

1 For an overview of the groundbreaking work in Americanist anthropology, by Sapir and Whorf, read D. Mandelbaum (ed.) *Edward Sapir: Culture, Language and Behaviour* (University of California Press, 1970) and J.B. Carroll (ed.), *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf* (MIT Press, 1956). Much more recently, critical analysis of modern politics has reasserted this linkage under the deconstruction of modern democratic practice. Two books of note are Chantal Mouffe's *The Return of the Political* (Verso Press, 1993) and Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (Routledge, 1996). The significance of the perception of the other to the construction of self runs throughout this literature as the source of pluralist dynamics. In this paper, we shift the focus of analysis from the construction of the self to the construction of the other. The reason for this shift is twofold: first, the construction of self is often tied to the self-declared agenda pursued by each, so an analysis of constructions of self slips easily into the study of strategy and motive, clouding alternative analyses. The second is that the construction of the other offers insight into the imbalances in relations (or "lacks" following Laclau). The identification of those lacks or "issues" as defined by various actors *for others*, offers insight into the place "the other" is assumed to occupy in the political landscape. In a society where most have not direct contact or first-hand knowledge of "others" or even of the "issue(s)," those constructions assume a fixity which then can be transformed into assumptions of background context by the participants: these constructions include labels of the other. However, these become embedded factors to be addressed if the actors are to press their agendas. The mosaic of constructions of others around an issue are key to tracing and understanding the definition(s) of the other in political currency.

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- 2 See Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (Verso Press, 1993), p.76, and H-G Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, 1984).
- 3 We wish to thank Brian Craik and the Grand Council of the Cree for making the internal documents available to us. These documents were provided to the Grand Council through the Freedom of Information Act.
- 4 See J.M. Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1988), p. 2.
- 5 We have added the underlines in all materials (unless stated otherwise). We prefer to maintain enough of the context to make sense of the excerpts and for this reason we have added underlines to highlight the specific examples.
- 6 *Wemshtigousheo* is the word used in Cree to designate "White person," but in this case is used more specifically to designate the "newcomers' government." It is an interesting means of "othering" in Cree.
- 7 From one of the producers/interviewers in *Riding the Great Whale* comes a similar construction: "We don't have the kind of consensus we had back in the 60s when Québeckers had a real sense of being great builders, Castor Québécois, the beavers of Québec. That strong faith isn't there any more. But the economic equations remain the same. Québec's greatest wealth is its hydroelectric potential and whoever controls it will need to control the territory where all the rivers and lakes are found."