INDIGENOUS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN CANADA: BEYOND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

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Abstract / Résumé

Current knowledge regarding the motivations for Indigenous tourism development is deficient although it can be inferred that economic incentives are the driving force for tourism development. This paper expands the present understanding of the motivations for Indigenous tourism development by way of case study supported by empirical research in a northern Canadian Cree community. It argues that in addition to economic incentives; social, cultural, political and environmental factors are strong determinants for First Nation communities interested in pursuing tourism as a development option. The paper concludes by stressing the link between First Nation motivations for tourism development and the ability of tourism development to offer more access to and control over traditional resources.

Le contenu de l'article vise à rehausser la compIréhension des motivations en ce qui a trait au dévelopement du tourisme autochtone en présentant une étude de cas soutenue par des données empiriques recueillies en étudiant une collectivité crie du nord canadien. L'article met de l'anant qu'aux incitations économiques s'ajoutent des facteurs sociaux, culturels, politiques et environnementaux qui déterminent fortement l'intérêt des collectivités des Premières nations à l'égard du tourisme comme option de développement. En conclusion, l'article insiste sur le lien entre les motivations des Premières nations en ce qui a trait au développement touristique et la capacité du développement touristique de proposer un accès accru aux ressources traditionnelles et un meilleur contrôle de celles-ci.

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Introduction

Rather than viewing tourism development as an alternative to the 'boom and bust' economic cycles characteristic of rural and northern resource dependent communities, First Nation peoples are viewing tourism as an opportunity to strengthen traditional land based activities (Notzke, 1999) and to augment their existing mixed economies supported by both wage labor and domestic production. Transcending this interest in tourism development has been the drive for greater political autonomy and rights of access and ownership over traditional resources that have supported contemporary and traditional ways of life (Berkes, 1994). This move toward greater autonomy over traditional resources reflects Indigenous peoples' desire to extract themselves from dependent relationships with government and industry and instead, reassert Aboriginal control over traditional resources in order to develop equitable forms of local community development that influence not only the economic factors but also social, cultural, political and environmental factors as well. Given the socio-economic and political context in which Native development is transpiring (Elias, 1995), it is unfortunate that Indigenous tourism literature rarely reflects this situation.

Studies of Indigenous tourism (Anderson, 1991; Hinch, 1995; Milne, Ward & Wenzel, 1995; Butler & Hinch, 1996; Smith, 1996; Zeppel, 1998; Notzke, 1999) while offering insight into the issues associated with Indigenous tourism development, have contributed little to the broader understanding of the social and cultural dimensions associated with the pursuit of community-based tourism development. What we do know relates to the dynamics of host and guest interaction, the impacts of tourism development and the infrastructure requirements and the need for Native control over the processes associated with development. While this provides a foundation for the development of knowledge regarding the growth of Indigenous tourism, it does little to answer the question why Indigenous people are inspired to pursue tourism development in the first place. Are they driven primarily through economic incentives most often associated with the pursuit of tourism development or does tourism development allow First Nation people to address issues on a socio-political level? Given the growth of Indigenous tourism development in Canada, it would appear that a better understanding of First Nation motives for tourism development is warranted.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to better understand the motivations for Indigenous tourism development by focusing specifically on an Indigenous community; the Woodland Cree First Nation (WCFN), located in northern Alberta, Canada. In doing so, the author seeks to extend the current understanding of Indigenous tourism development

by articulating the context in which the desire for tourism development occurs.

Indigenous Tourism and Development

A widely accepted definition (Ewert & Shultis, 1997) of Indigenous tourism was developed by Hinch and Butler (1996) who noted that Indigenous tourism "refers to tourism activity in which Indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction"(9). This definition implies a pragmatic approach to understanding the possible manifestations of Indigenous tourism development and the degree to which First Nation peoples are involved. Control is the key word in this definition and is an integral element in developing Indigenous sustainable tourism (Zeppell, 1998). *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (Butler & Hinch, 1996), the first comprehensive academic text to address Indigenous tourism stressed the importance of Indigenous control or lack thereof through numerous case studies (e.g., de Burlo, 1996; Berno, 1996; Hall, 1996). Other literature has reflected these issues such as Hollinshead's (1992), post-modernist critique of Indigenous tourism studies which stressed the importance of understanding the cultural context and research related specifically to tourism development issues (e.g., Altman, 1989; White, 1993).

Generally lacking from this literature, however, is an appreciation of the social, historical and political context in which tourism development occurs. Exceptions would include Smith's (1996) 4 H's of Native tourism development, Notzke's (1999) insightful perspective on Indigenous tourism development in Canada's arctic regions and Zeppel's, (1998) international examination of Native tourism development. The 4 H's of tourism include *habitat*, *heritage*, *history* and *handicrafts* and have been used to assess the potential for tribal tourism in the American Southwest (Smith, 1996). Through a self-assessment Native communities can determine where their strengths lie. Examples of questions that can be addressed in this framework include "what historical events occurred in our area of interest to outsiders?" and, "how can we give visitors an understanding or experience of our culture and life?" Unfortunately these questions offer little insight into the context for development although they do determine if a host community has what it takes to develop tourism. On the other hand, Indigenous tourism development in the arctic regions of Canada has been driven by the desire to take full advantage of the economic benefits that can be derived from tourism (Hinch, 1995) and also the desire to create innovative opportunities to support traditional land-based economies (Notzke, 1999).

It is not surprising that Native communities are motivated to de-

velop tourism given their poor socio-economic status (Frideres, 1993) and the possible economic incentives such as job creation and economic diversification. In this way, tourism has the possibility of creating a higher degree of economic independence that can lead to greater self-determination (Hinch & Butler, 1996; de Burlo, 1996). However, it should not be assumed that economic aspects are the only motivators for tourism development. As Hinch (1995: 122) aptly states in considering Aboriginal tourism development in the Northwest Territory, "the anticipated economic benefits of tourism may be the driving force for the increasing involvement of Aboriginal people in the tourism industry [but] the argument that tourism may actually strengthen traditional cultures is also very important." Echoing this sentiment is the supposition that "Indigenous cultural values and sense of history may also play a significant role in the involvement of Indigenous people in ethnic tourism" (de Burlo, 1996: 256). Unfortunately, the tourism literature has not verified these claims and as result, little is known about these other motivating factors from a tourism perspective. Elias (1995), indicates that Native development is driven by simultaneous progress towards political, cultural, and economic goals in an effort to reduce dependence on outside forces such as government and industry. This integrated approach to Native development seeks to reassert control over traditional resources, which may ultimately influence the success of community tourism development. Community control over traditional resources, therefore, appears to be a potential catalyst for development strategies such as tourism.

Community control can be conceived on two levels. For example, through the power of dominant ideology and discourse (Mowforth & Munt, 1998), concepts such as sustainability and environmentalism are imposed on cultures who may define these concepts differently. The practice of trapping, while considered a potential sustainable activity by Indigenous people, might be perceived very differently by tourists. That Indigenous communities across Canada must consider whether or not their culture will play a role in tourism development is also a form of control (Mowforth & Munt, 1998) since most Native communities are well aware that tourists want to see and experience 'traditional' Native culture.

At another level, control and or power can be considered as a tangible asset. Hall (1994:53) defines power as "including the ownership of land, financial sourcing, input from local people, and the relations of local traditions to tourism development." In the case of Indigenous people such as the WCFN, control can imply access and ownership over traditional resources which support cultural continuity. Zeppel (1998) argues

that the element of control is, in fact, a key element for successful and sustainable Indigenous tourism. But Berkes (1994) refutes these understandings of control and would suggest these perspectives are based on a Euro-Canadian perspective rather than Indigenous.

The issue of control or property rights from an Aboriginal perspective implies a different kind of relationship to the land base. Where non-Natives perceive the land as belonging to them, Native people maintain that they belong to the land (Berkes, 1994). Underlying this relationship is the sense of responsibility for stewardship that applies to both the people and the land as the provider of sustenance and a place where cultural values are reinforced through the practice of traditional activities like hunting and trapping. Tourism development, like other development strategies, has been perceived by Indigenous peoples, like the Woodland Cree First Nation, as having the ability to provide both economic benefits in addition to the much sought after benefits associated with cultural continuity and autonomy over traditional resources.

The People, Place and Tourism

The Woodland Cree First Nation are signatories to Treaty 8 signed in 1899. According to the formal text of Treaty 8, Native people including the WCFN in the region ceded their traditional lands to the government in exchange for a wide range of promises including the establishment of reserves. Of greater significance to the WCFN and other Native bands were other promises related to traditional pursuits. Treaty Commissioners noted the great concern exhibited among the Native people regarding the curtailing of traditional activities and assured them that Treaty 8 would protect their traditional pursuits such as hunting, trapping and fishing. Given this great concern, Treaty 8 noted that "the Queen hereby agrees with the said Indians that they shall have right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered...subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the Government of the country." (Government of Canada, 1966: 12).

Protecting traditional livelihoods was essential to the WCFN and other Treaty 8 signatories. In addition to the subsistence and trading value of furs, the land-based activities of hunting, fishing and trapping have also provided a medium through which the Elders teach cultural values to their young such as respect and reciprocity. Underwriting this way of life was a mixed economy based on the reliance on the game and fur bearers for both subsistence and commercial purposes (Elias, 1995; McCormack, 1994). Other activities included occasional wage labour, craft production and government assistance (McCormack, 1994).

However, as McCormack remarks, "The structure of the mixed economy and the way of life it supported changed greatly in the 1950s and 1960s, in response to a major decline in the fur trade and the expansion into northern Canada of new industries, including forestry, commercial fishing, and mining" (McCormack, 1994: 24). The loss of income acquired through subsistence harvesting directly affected Native people of the boreal forest and their ability to obtain implements used in subsistence production. Cash-poor and lacking job skills required by the emerging industries supporting the provincial and federal governments push for northern development, many Native families began to converge on the reserve lands that had eventually been allocated to them under Treaty 8.

It was during this crucial post-war period of social and economic transformation that the WCFN communities took form as major Cree settlements populated by Cree families that formerly lived in small bush settlements. The federal government assumed that Cree families would now support themselves by wage labour and possibly farming which would replace the traditional activities of hunting and trapping. Meanwhile the provincial government introduced individual trapping areas which imposed new restrictions on the ability of Cree to govern their own trapping (McCormack, 1993). "They expected that Natives would want to abandon the bush economy, considered to be primitive and unproductive, and become a new northern labour force" (McCormack, 1993: 99). Unfortunately, this did not work. The Cree people continued to pursue traditional bush activities off-reserve for both their economic and cultural significance (McCormack, 1993).

Because Indian Reserves were intended to be stepping stones to assimilation (Elias, 1991; Friesen, 1987), the "right of access to resources off-reserve was never considered essential to the economic development of Aboriginal communities" (Natcher, 1999: 8). Accordingly, Native communities such as the WCFN, found they had very little control or authority over lands which had traditionally provided for them. Without Aboriginal title to these traditional lands, the WCFN were unable to regulate the development of their traditional lands by resource-based industries. Thus, the only lands the WCFN controlled -their reserves- did not meet their socio-economic needs while lands they had traditionally used for subsistence activities were being exploited by resource development industries such as forestry and oil and gas exploration.

The WCFN's interest in tourism development emerged in the mid-1980s when they expressed a desire to pursue non-consumptive tourism activities on their traditional land in the Community Tourism Action Plan (CTAP), an Alberta provincial government initiative (Alberta Tour-

ism, 1988). While members of the WCFN could still continue their traditional pursuits of hunting and trapping, the self-determined CTAP objectives suggested a tourism industry based on activities related to wildlife viewing, hiking and participation in cultural experiences. The WCFN CTAP (1988) explained the need to refocus land-use in a portion of their traditional territory called the Caribou Mountains from unsustainable to sustainable use.

The Caribou Mountains are located in northeastern Alberta and have been the traditional home of Woodland Cree First Nation (WCFN) First Nation for over 500 years. Intermittent lakes and a dense forest of black and white spruce characterize these mountains. The WCFN continue to use the Caribou Mountains for subsistence activities such as hunting, trapping, food gathering, and spiritual sustenance, which comes from a close association with the land. Rather than viewing themselves as being outside the landscape and its master, the WCFN see themselves as part of the landscape. During the author's travels in the Caribou Mountains with Andrew, a Cree trapper, the essence of the WCFN's relationship with the land began to emerge. The land, Andrew explained:

> brought spiritual renewal to his people. When you disturb the land, you disturb the people. Andrew explained that rather than just being a place to hunt and trap, the land became a place to learn the values associated with traditional activities like sharing, respect and cooperation. But also, it was a place for spiritual growth since traditionally young males would go on vision quests in the bush seeking spiritual guidance. But while the bush is not used as it once was in a traditional sense, especially with all the changes when people moved onto reserves, the relationship is the same. (Field Journal, August, 1997)

Yet, despite this attachment to place that is embedded in the WCFN culture, their claim on the Caribou Mountains is tenuous in that it is based on traditional proprietorship which does not allow them legal title to the land under the Treaty 8 negotiations.

The WCFN First Nation has perceived tourism development as a strategy for addressing issues related to control over traditional resources and the preservation and continuity of traditional practices. Reflected in this approach to development is the desire to address other than economic issues but social, political and cultural issues as well. Frideres (1993) argues this strategy for development is more conducive to First Nation peoples who have become marginalized economically, politically, and socially by government policies of assimilation.

Research Approach and Methods

Field research was conducted from August 1996 to August 1997 which consisted of several month long trips during the summer and visits of a shorter duration in the winter. As only a limited number of WCFN individuals were involved in this study, the issues raised in this paper do not necessarily represent the entire community. Individuals participating in the study included members of the band council, Elders, several youth and non-Native political advisors working for the WCFN. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of these individuals and the community.

Theoretical perspectives underlying the research design were based in part on dependency theory and the contingency perspective. Dependency theory views underdevelopment as being attributable to external forces in which the core exploits the periphery. Underdevelopment... ..includes...a condition which leads to the diminution of Indigenous control over their social, cultural, and economic systems (Weissling 1991, p.32). Examples of dependency theory in relation to tourism are usually found in an international context (e.g., Nash, 1989; Britton, 1982) and are portrayed as a dualism between rich and poor, the northern or southern hemispheres and those who have control over their lives and those who do not. This theory can also be related to a regional context in which a dominant group controls a marginal group. This would certainly apply to the relationship between Indigenous communities such the WCFN and non-Indigenous communities in Canada. The contingency perspective (Anderson, 1995) recognizes the need to shift from a dependent relationship by means of entering into alliances with government and industry to effect more control over traditional resources. Unfortunately, the contingency perspective also denotes a recognition by Aboriginal communities that the only meaningful way to address their economic, social and cultural issues is to acknowledge their lack of control to act independently of the dominant economic system.

The research methods were framed within a qualitative paradigm, as it is generally believed that data collection methods associated with this strategy, such as participant observation and formal and informal interviewing, are more conducive to cross-cultural research (Berno, 1996). The dominant research method chosen was participant observation as it allowed a flexible and unobtrusive manner (Burgess, 1987) in which to collect data through informal interviews. A field journal and transcribed interviews in addition to secondary literature formed the bulk of the collected data although text from the author's field journal became the most important source of data. Thus the data collected and subsequent analysis reflected an interpretive process (Henderson, 1991) focused upon

the description of the motivations for tourism development. Member-checks became an important element in the study as themes arose from thematic analysis of the collected text.

Motivations for Tourism Development

Broad themes discovered from this study include *economic, social-cultural,* and *political-environmental.* Within each of these themes, issues have emerged that further illustrate the underlying motivations for tourism development. The following discussion highlights keys issues identified by participants in the study.

Economic

The economic base of the Woodland Cree First Nation is dependent on forest industry sector jobs. Additional income is provided by work related to fire-fighting, band administration, and reliance on social assistance. Underlying this wage based economy is subsistence production in activities such as trapping and hunting. Andrew, a Cree trapper, exemplified the important role that trapping plays in the WCFN community. While traveling on Andrew's trap-line, the author noted:

> The trap-line we were traveling on had been in Andrew's uncle's hands for over 50 years. Before that, the trap-line belonged to his father who had received it from his father. Andrew was born on his father's trap-line. Even though he left to attend a residential school, he never lost his connection with the bush, returning to trapping as soon as he could. It seems that trapping is much more than just a way to earn money because it doesn't seem like Andrew earns very much. More importantly, it seems to define Andrew and also his role in the community. (Field Journal, February, 1997)

Given the significance of trapping to Andrew's identity, it was interesting to find in a government supported evaluation of the resources of the Woodland Cree First Nation (Price & Associates, 1968: 12), that trapping and other subsistence activities were ignored. In a report written in the late 1960s, government consultants indicate:

> the principle elements of opportunity for members of the Little Red River Band are agricultural development of the John D'or Prairie Reserve and the Fox Lake Reserve and off-Reserve employment.... Should agricultural resources of the area be developed, the economic pattern of the area will be altered to such an extent that employment opportunities of Indian people will be greatly enhanced....

It was also noted that the Band was affected by a high rate of unem-

ployment which was reflective of their overall lack of marketable skills since many members of the WCFN have "spent most of their lives in isolation..hunting and trapping.... The type of work that many of the men have been doing has been such that they have not been forced to learn new skills (e.g., fire fighting and seismic line cutting)" (Price & Associates, 1968: 11).

Recent economic development initiatives have included the acquisition of a small charter plane service and two sport-fishing lodges located in the Caribou Mountains portion of the WCFN traditional land. The purchase of the two fishing lodges was viewed as a "strategic investment by the WCFN in long-term, sustainable economic development...that [would] provide employment for Band members ...compatible with traditional values concerning respect for the environment" (Pannel Kerr Forster, 1992: 1). Additionally, the purchase of these lodges reflected tourism development goals reflected by the WCFN's Community Tourism Action Plan (Alberta Tourism, 1988) which articulated the desire to develop "consumptive and non-consumptive commercial renewable resource wilderness recreation" opportunities (1988: 4). Together, the acquisition of these businesses have provided the WCFN with additional economic opportunities, but the collective economic base falls short of providing overall diversity and the sport-fishing lodges have not provided the economic and cultural benefits sought by the WCFN.

The WCFN's drive for tourism is based on their desire to improve their poor economic conditions which the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs indicates as severe. For example, sixty five percent of the WCFN population are dependent on social assistance where only one-quarter of those people over 15 are employed in wage paying positions (DIAND, 1997). These statistics are characteristic of many Native communities in Canada (Frideres, 1993) and serve to illustrate the growing importance of the role of economic development in First Nation communities.

Nature-based tourism development has been advocated as a strategy that would both diversify the economy and support the infrastructure provided by the sport-fishing lodges were the WCFN to replace sport-fishing. Ecotourism in particular has been a form of tourism advocated by several members of the WCFN in addition to their political advisors. Field notes indicate that "several of the advisors have high hopes for tourism development...in the Caribou Mountains and for the communities of the WCFN. They've been told they have the opportunity to develop a world-class ecotourism destination with a boreal/subarctic focus" (June, 1996). Despite the lack of knowledge regarding the specific ten-

ets which ecotourism is considered to be based upon, members of the WCFN understand that its focus is nature. Given that the Caribou Mountains are indeed, unique in both flora and fauna the potential for nature-based tourism development exists.

Interest in nature-based tourism development at the two sport-fishing lodges is not a new concept to the WCFN. In 1992 when the lodges were purchased, the WCFN initiated a feasibility study that indicated market potential exists for the development of nature-based tourism providing a clear distinction is maintained between the fishing operations and those operations catering to nature-based tourists. In fact, it was recommended that the WCFN "remove elements of the hunting and fishing experience from key areas of the lodge itself" (Pannel Kerr Forster, 1992: 3). Except separating these elements of tourism may not be enough especially since the culture and traditions of the WCFN are embedded in a consumptive, albeit respectful, use of their traditional land. For this reason, alternative types of tourism development have been advocated that more reflect the WCFN's traditional relationship to the land.

Trap-line tourism has been advocated as a small scale economic development opportunity that would reflect more closely both the historical and contemporary relationship many WCFN have had with the bush. Realizing this, Bill, an economic and political advisor to the WCFN suggested that the research explore this in more depth.

An opportunity arrived in February 1997 for the author to accompany Andrew on his trap-line in order to experience life on the trap-line and to discuss the potential for this type of economic development. We discussed the possible economic and social benefits that might accrue from this type of development for individuals like Andrew. For example, Andrew noted how trapping was not always economically feasible given the costs of maintaining his cabins and skidoos. "Andrew said that last season he only trapped 16 marten and did not cover his costs...it appears that although trapping is important from a cultural perspective, it is becoming increasingly expensive" (Field Journal, August, 1996). Andrew believed that tourism development focused on experiencing the cultural practice of trapping could bring economic benefits to individuals who participate in this cultural practice by off-setting the costs associated with trapping, especially during those seasons when fur-bearing animals were scarce. More importantly, Andrew indicated that trapping could provide opportunities for younger Cree children to become involved in a business that teaches cultural activities. Notwithstanding the potential benefits that can be derived from trap-line tourism, it is obvious that challenges would exist in developing, marketing and implementing a product based on the practice of trapping animals.

Tourism development may not significantly alter the economic crisis confronting the WCFN community but it may serve to diversify the existing economic base and provide large and perhaps small-scale business opportunities to WCFN individuals. If planned appropriately, the market orientation of the fishing-lodges can be addressed where instead of relying solely on the serious fisherman; the shoulder season can focus upon those nature-based tourists interesting in stalking the elusive Woodland Caribou with their cameras. In addition, providing the challenges associated with developing trap-line tourism were mitigated, this form of development could provide economic opportunities for individuals who trap and hunt in the bush.

Social-Cultural

Understanding tourism's ability to address social and cultural issues meant trying to comprehend the history and experience of the people of the WCFN. Frideres (1993) and other Native studies scholars (e.g., Dawson, 1988; Bull, 1991) have documented the results of enforced assimilation and acculturation imposed on First Nations peoples by the government of Canada and its representatives. Given increasing attention in the popular media are the abuses carried out in residential schools from the early part of the 20th century up until the early 1970s. Members of the Woodland Cree First Nation did not escape these institutions and several times during the research reference was made to the effects these schools had on the WCFN people. A political advisor for the Cree noted how the:

> [WCFN] world views have been shaped by the process of assimilation and acculturation. Their young have been born and raised on the reserves, which Bill indicated were established sometime in the 1960s. The parents of these children were born in the bush, many on trap-lines. Their world view has been influenced by their experiences in the bush and on the reserve. But, more significantly, it appears that this generation also experienced residential schools. (Field Journal, May, 1996)

Andrew noted that "in residential school he was not allowed to speak his own language. Andrew said that they tried to make him a White man. If you made a mistake, such as speaking Cree, you would be punished" (Field Journal, February, 1997). The effects of these schools have been far reaching and influence the type of relationships youth experience with members of their own family who experienced residential schools. Caught in a contradictory world, WCFN youth are simultaneously pulled toward and pushed from their culture. Pressure is placed upon them to

conform to the dominant society, but there is also pressure for them to recapture their traditional roots. Gerald, a WCFN individual in his early twenties, remarked that "he didn't know if he was coming or going. One minute he's expected to be an Indian, the next he's suppose to act like a White man" (Field Journal, August, 1996).

These comments reflect the difficulties that many WCFN individuals experience in their lives. In the *Northern River Basin Study Traditional Knowledge Component* (Crozier Information Resources Consulting Ltd. [CIRC], 1996: 111), Elders that were interviewed in the study expressed great concern that their knowledge was not being transmitted to the young people before they died.

> The Elders often mentioned that children and parents did not speak to each other and that they were further hampered because the children do not speak Cree, which prevents them as Elders from communicating with their grandchildren. The Elders indicated that traditional skills are almost all gone, such as snowshoe making, hide tanning, hunting skills, and the ability to read the water and the land. The young people do not seek advice or consultation with the Elders on matters pertaining to lifestyle and traditional practice. It used to be important to know who was related to whom in the Elders' youth, and this is virtually non-existent for the youth today.

Critical proponents of tourism have argued that development of tourism can adversely effect the social and cultural fabric of communities (e.g., Mathieson & Wall, 1982; de Burlo, 1996). On the other hand, it has been argued (Pearce, 1995; Hinch & Butler, 1996) that tourism can promote cross-cultural exchange. As one Elder in the WCFN community indicated, this exchange was needed from within their own community as well. "He said that rather than bringing outsiders here (Caribou Mountains) to learn about their culture and traditions, he would rather see their young people come up and learn traditional activities from people like himself and others. Our children, the Elder said, would be the tourists" (Field Journal, August, 1997). It is difficult to gauge the effect tourism development would have on the nature of the relationship between Elders and young people. Most likely it would depend on the scale and nature of tourism development, and also the willingness of individuals to allow themselves the experience of learning from an Elder.

Ecotourism and trap-line tourism could provide opportunities for WCFN youth to re-connect to the land and to Elders. As Elders have traditionally been responsible for the instruction of youth, tourism products associated with travelling and working on the land may provide a

new medium for perpetuating the traditional practice of teaching. Of course, questions remain regarding how this practice might affect the significance of these teachings as the context of the teachings will be very different. Rather than based on an intimate transfer of knowledge between the Elder and the youth in the bush, the teaching of traditional knowledge through a tourism experience may diminish its relevance and worth.

Of course, the fundamental issues underlying the teaching of traditional activities in the bush are the principle values of respect, reciprocity and empowerment. These values serve as the cornerstone of Native societies (Frideres, 1993) including the WCFN First Nation. Perhaps these same values can be taught through the provision of tourism experiences. While some members of the WCFN believe that it is the value, which is important not necessarily the context in which it is taught, others believe that teaching these values through the medium of tourism will diminish their importance. One WCFN Elder remarked that the "teaching of values while working as a guide would be hard because he would always be distracted by the customers and not be able to focus on the importance of the task and to relay its significance to the youth" (Field Journal, August, 1997).

The Woodland Cree First Nation are just beginning to explore their options for tourism development. Although several types of tourism experiences have been articulated, it is still unclear as to what type of tourism will eventually evolve in the Caribou Mountains. What is clear, however, is that tourism development will have the potential to positively or negatively influence the social-cultural dimensions of the WCFN community. Obviously, it is hoped that through cautious development, tourism development may serve to reconnect individuals to the land and to each other.

Political-Environmental

The Caribou Mountains and their surrounding territory have traditionally been used by the WCFN for hunting, trapping and spiritual sustenance. As one WCFN woman remarked on her relationship to the mountains and lakes:

> The water is part of me...even the burnt trees and their carbon. They're a part of me. I bring my daughter up here so she can learn this. This is what I tell her.

Despite this attachment to place that is embedded in the WCFN culture, their claim on the Caribou Mountains is tenuous in that it is based on traditional proprietorship which does not give them legal title to the land under the Treaty 8 negotiations. In fact, "Treaty No. 8, in its

written form, is held by the Crown-In-Right-of-Canada to have been a Land Surrender Agreement" (Sewepagaham, 1998a: 1). The Woodland First Nation, however, refute this interpretation and have begun to re-assert their rights for self-determination in efforts to seek control over their traditional lands. As Chief Sewepagaham (1998a: 1) noted "Our Nation asserts ownership of a traditional territory which includes about fifty-thousand square kilometres of forest land within the lower Peace River watershed." The Caribou Mountains are an integral component of this claim. This statement reflects the late 1980s decision by the Tribal Council and Elders "To regain control within our traditional territory by any means available" (Sewepagaham, 1998b: 3).

Choosing to forego litigation and confrontation in efforts to gain access to the Caribou Mountains and other traditional territories, the WCFN have, instead, adopted strategies that would give them greater economic control of the Caribou Mountains. Purchasing the two fishing lodges was a strategic investment for the WCFN. As sole tourism operator in the Caribou Mountains, other services owned and operated by the WCFN such as their air charter service can be utilized to a greater extent. One advisor to the WCFN First Nation, however, highlighted a benefit of greater significance. "By controlling commercial activities on the Caribou Plateau, the WCFN are in a better position to gain even greater control of their land, especially if at some point they make the decision to make a land claim" (Field Journal, August, 1997).

This being the case, the WCFN are keen to point out that many people still use the Caribou Mountains for subsistence activities such as trapping and hunting. Practising culturally relevant activities are important reminders that, as a people, the WCFN are still dependent on this plateau. Except, the WCFN need to reinforce their traditional ties to the Caribou Mountains especially since trapping and hunting among the WCFN are beginning to decline.

> After speaking with several advisors to the WCFN and members of the Nation, it has become evident that ecotourism has become viewed as an opportunity to connect people to the land and to strengthen the WCFN's claim of ownership to the land...there is the belief that ecotourism based on traditional activities would provide the argument that the nation not only has commercial tourism businesses operating on the plateau, but that many of these activities are culturally significant. (Field Journal, August, 1997)

Tourism development, as one advisor indicated, would offset consumptive use of the Caribou Mountains and lower plateau.

> We want to refocus non-Indian use to non-consumptive

> uses. Tourism development such as ecotourism would allow us to offset these non-sustainable uses of the Caribous. By replacing these activities such as forestry and oil and gas exploration with sustainable activities and ones which are culturally relevant, we can control and strengthen our claim to our traditional land (Field Journal, August, 1997).

Ecotourism development in the Caribou Mountains presents opportunities for the WCFN to utilize their traditional land base. Likewise, ecotourism development based on traditional practices presents a potentially stronger argument that the WCFN continue to use their traditional lands in a culturally relevant manner. However, it is apparent that despite the WCFN's desire for ecotourism or other types of tourism development in the Caribou Mountains, there are significant hurdles that must be overcome. Even though the goal may be greater access and control of traditional lands that a combination of ecotourism and cultural activities may provide, uncertainty exists regarding the strategies available for gaining this access and control.

Recently, the WCFN have entered into a number of partnerships and cooperative management agreements with industry, the provincial and federal governments and educational and research institutions. This alliance have offered the WCFN the ability to influence land-use decisions regarding their traditional lands and has enabled the WCFN to acquire more knowledge with which to manage their traditional lands. But the WCFN view these partnerships as only an interim measure and assume they will one day have the necessary access and control over their traditional lands to manage their own affairs (Sewepagaham 1998b).

Discussion

Despite the fact that the WCFN community is economically depressed and in desperate need of sustainable economic growth, this need has not supplanted the importance of other motivating factors such as those related to socio-cultural, political, and environmental needs. Motivations for tourism development by the Woodland Cree First Nation extend well beyond the need to simply diversify their economy or to augment their operations at the two sport-fishing lodges. An inextricable link exists between the more pragmatic need of providing economic opportunities and the more philosophic and political need to control their land base and the traditional pursuits that support their culture. Implied in their exploration of tourism development opportunities is the WCFN's desire to create development options that allow them greater control over their social, cultural and political institutions. Although this paper presented a *snapshot* of key issues related to the pursuit of tour-

ism development, it speaks more broadly for the need among First Nation communities, like the WCFN, to develop new relationships with government and industry that allow them more control over traditional resources.

Tourism literature offers little insight regarding the issue of control and its relationship to motivations. Although White (1993) and Altman (1989) discuss the ability of economic development to strengthen Indigenous communities adjacent to protected areas, they do not discuss this development in relation to gaining more Indigenous control over economic, social and cultural dimensions. However, many Indigenous communities have suffered from a loss of control in the course of their relationship with the dominant cultural groups. As the WCFN have certainly experienced a diminution of control, tourism has become one mechanism in which to return toward greater autonomy. As Indigenous tourism has become defined as "tourism activity in which Indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction" (Hinch & Butler, 1996: 9), a complementary definition might denote that tourism development should facilitate a movement toward more local autonomy. The contingency perspective, alluded to earlier in this paper, signals this shift.

Although cognizant of dependency theory, the contingency perspective recognizes the current First Nation approach to development that stresses, among other things, collaboration between non-Native partners, capacity building, and the recognition of the growing global economy. As Anderson (1995: 325) observes, "First Nations acknowledge the necessity of participation in the global economy and are attempting to create a distinct mode of development that will permit them to do so." In a Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND, 1997: 59) publication, the Woodland Cree First Nation are highlighted as an Aboriginal community that has developed a unique approach to economic development that reflects their "community traditions but also [integrates] with the market economy." Reflected in this approach has been the establishment of alliances which non-Native partners that allow the WCFN greater access and control of their traditional land.

Perhaps it is through a number of development initiatives that the WCFN are striving to re-assert control over their traditional lands which may ultimately influence social and cultural issues as well. Tourism development, it would appear, may be one strategy among several to affect this drive toward greater autonomy. Understanding the WCFN's motivations for tourism development, therefore, lends insight into more complex issues that warrant further research. Although this study fo-

cused on a single Native community, it is likely that other Native communities across Canada, having experienced similar challenges, might also see the potential benefits tourism development may bring to social, cultural, political, and environmental dimensions of their communities.

Conclusion

Typical tourism research has not uncovered the social, cultural and political context of the dynamics associated with tourism development. Does not ecotourism or other forms of alternative nature-based tourism, for example, reflect changing societal values. These types of discussions are missing. In the case of Indigenous tourism, numerous studies have certainly shed insight into the myriad of issues that describe the essence of what Indigenous tourism is supposed to be and even how it should be planned. But often what's been left unsaid may be the most illuminating aspects of the research. Perhaps with Indigenous tourism it's the difficulties associated with conducting cross-cultural research and the fear of seeking out issues which are too sensitive that lead many researchers to forego specific research questions. This was certainly the case in the research presented in this paper and partially explains why the use of field notes became the integral means of reporting material. This may strengthen the argument for more longitudinal studies, which may allow the researcher to establish the rapport necessary to query sensitive issues. Notwithstanding the complexities associated with cross-cultural research, it is necessary to try and understand what motivates communities to pursue tourism development. In the case of this research, it was discovered that the Woodland Cree First Nation do indeed view tourism as more than an economic opportunity but as a median through which to gain greater autonomy over traditional resources.

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