

Waswanipi Post

Volume 2, Number 1 Winter 1997

Harry Blacksmith

Recollections from an Elder

Inside:

- Canada's First Autonomous Justice System: the Waswanipi Justice System
- Diamonds in Québec
- Québec historian Vaugeois asks if Indians respect treaties: The other viewpoint



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By N. Sanson d'Abbeville
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The First Nations Magazine

Waswanipi Post

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The *Waswanipi Post* is committed to freedom of speech and exchange of ideas. We will print letters and opinions.

However, for ethical reasons, every written submission must be signed by the author.

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Editor-in-chief Diom Romeo Saganash navigating in Barcelona



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Background photo:
Director of Publication Benoit Tremblay
with his son Ulysses

Cree Destiny



"All Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their social and economic and cultural development."



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A Word from the Chief

A farewell to Sarah Dixon, David Neeposh and Noah Eagle

Before I start, I would like to express the deeply felt sorrow of the community at the recent passing of some of our most distinguished citizens: Sarah Dixon, David Neeposh and Noah Eagle. I wish to convey my profound condolences to the bereaved families. I have prayed to the Creator to ease the pain of our community each time our loved ones depart and to give us the strength and the will to remember their wisdom and teachings.

The Waswanipi Justice System

Since the publication of the first issue of the Waswanipi Post, a number of events have changed the life of the community and helped us move closer to our goal of governing ourselves as we did not too long ago. The first event is of prime importance. In November 1996 we inaugurated what seems to be the first autonomous First Nations justice system in Canada. We can



Chief John Kitchen and Wendy Grant-John

safely say that, after more than eight months of activities, our Community Justice Panel is now an intrinsic part of the community fabric. Regular community hearings have already been held.

That we managed to succeed in establishing our own way of applying our laws and keeping the peace is a visible testimony of our collective strength and will. I have received information

that other Aboriginal communities are taking an interest in our experience. The latest request originates from Kuujjuak in northern Quebec, where youth representatives have been requesting information about the Justice Panel.

For this success I wish to congratulate the members of the Community Justice Panel: Flora B. Kitchen, Elizabeth Ottereyes, Edith Gull and Ella Neeposh, as well as the people of Waswanipi for their forbearance.

There are many issues to address to make the system even more effective. These include:

- helping the Police Department to understand its role in the system
- expanding the role and jurisdiction of the Justice Panel
- interesting the Grand Council in setting up discussions with the other communities to explore the possibilities of a National Cree Justice System and a long overdue Regional Cree Police Force

These enhancements to the existing Justice System will reinforce the peace and security of our people and finally create real career opportunities for our police officers.

The establishment of a sawmill in Waswanipi

In June 1997, the Waswanipi sawmill, locally controlled and operated by Nabakatuk, was opened in a ceremony attended by the people of the community, Premier Lucien Bouchard, Minister Guy Chevrette, as well as the federal MP for Abitibi, Guy St-Julien, the provincial MLA Michel Letourneau and Raymond Royer of Domtar.

I wish to offer special thanks to all those who participated in the creation of this vital community project, especially Peter Gull, President of Mishtuk, Roger Lachance our untiring forestry consultant, Pierre Landreville of Industry Science and Technology Canada who is instrumental in obtaining \$1M in grants for the project, Eddy Ross, former vice-president of Domtar who helped us overcome many serious obstacles, the trappers and Elders of Waswanipi who contributed their wisdom and advice, and finally



Chief Kitchen, Premier Bouchard and provisional local MLA Letourneau surrounded by Waswanipi sawmill workers

the people of the community who unfailingly supported me even in difficult times.

I also wish to share in the pride of our people who successfully underwent a rigorous training course and who now have obtained regular employment at the mill. I will make sure that this project conforms to the preservation of our traditional way of life, and that it serves as a model for any future project involving natural resources. I have declared repeatedly to the Grand Council that Waswanipi will cooperate in the formulation of a uniform policy concerning natural resources and the development of Cree Territorial guidelines.

Cree-Mohawk Treaty of Friendship and Commerce

While in Vancouver for the election of a National Chief during July 1997, I met with Grand Chief Mike Mitchell of the Mohawk Territory of Akwesasne (whom I congratulate on his recent election) and with some members of his Council. We discussed implementation of the Cree-Mohawk Treaty. This Treaty, which is an initiative of past Chief Abel S. Kitchen, will encourage cultural and commercial interaction between the Mohawk people of Akwesasne and the Cree people of Waswanipi.

We have discussed, among other things, the formation of a Cree-Mohawk committee, which will oversee the application of the Treaty. Meetings have already been scheduled for August 1997, and I will report to Council on our progress. It is hoped that we can expand the scope of the Treaty to include other First Nations communities.



Grand Chief Mike Mitchell and Chief John Kitchen

We used to help each other in the past. We built camps together; we chopped wood for the older people, we hunted for food for those who could not. This ideal of sharing made our community strong and united. Now we seem to be getting more selfish.

Commercial fisheries

It is my firm intention to reopen the local fish plant in Waswanipi. I will soon explore with Council the different ways to restart this necessary project for the benefit of our people. To my mind, and given the potential, it is essential that the fish plant be operated locally to ensure its ultimate success.

The building of a Waswanipi Justice Hall by the people of the community and the lost practice of volunteer public service

In these changing times, I think that we have lost the traditional practice of offering our labour and time as volunteers for the good of the community without expecting to be paid for that labour and time. It seems nowadays that we cannot ask for the assistance of anyone without this person asking for some money in return.

Fighting forest fires is an example. I always thought that defending our community against the rage of forest fires is the duty of volunteers who should not expect to be paid. It is indeed disturbing to think that if Council called for people to fight forest fires on an unpaid volunteer basis, nobody would show up!

We used to help each other in the past. We built camps together; we chopped wood for the older people, we hunted for food for those who could not. This ideal of sharing made our community strong and united. Now we seem to be getting more selfish. I will be discussing this issue at a coming General Assembly.

Meanwhile, in that same frame of mind, I will shortly be proposing the building of a Waswanipi Hall of Justice so that the hearings of the Community Justice Panel can be held in a proper place. I have no intention of asking Ottawa or Quebec to pay for such a building. I will be calling on every member of this community to give their time, skills and energy – as unpaid volunteers – to help me build this hall at the onset of the building season 1998.

This will be our test to see if the community can accomplish such a project in the spirit of the

teachings of our Elders and of our traditions. I will soon propose and describe this project at the January 1998 General Assembly. I hope that we will be able to show that we are a caring and giving community. I will be the first to volunteer.

The election of a new National Chief

I wish to take a few lines to congratulate Phil Fontaine on his election as the new National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. I assure him of my full support in his coming term. National Chief Fontaine will soon receive an invitation to visit this community. I also offer the heartfelt thanks of this community for the extraordinary work accomplished by the former National Chief Ovide Mercredi, who always defended his people as the true warrior he is, even if he always described himself as a man of peace.

My parents, Jossie and Caroline

Last July 10, my parents Jossie and Caroline have celebrated their 59th anniversary of marriage! I want to express my grateful love to them, who have taken care of all their children. Now they are surrounded by numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. I pray to the Creator that they will be with us as long as He will permit them to be.

Ending with these words, I hope you will enjoy this edition of the *Waswanipi Post*. ♦

The Finances of Waswanipi

Matthew Happyjack, treasurer and Nick Whitbread, comptroller

Public finances in Waswanipi are what they are meant to be: 'public'. Reporting on the finances of Council, as we did in the first issue of the Waswanipi Post is unavoidable and sometimes touchy, but every issue will present or discuss one aspect or another of these.

We share with other First Nations many uncertainties in managing the public purse. The process of appropriating funds from the federal government has been subject to all kinds of difficulties. The people of the community are becoming increasingly touchy about how we spend moneys. In a future issue we will analyse the source of Waswanipi's public finances.

Generally speaking, we are able to say that Council has a relatively good control over its finances, and that upon analysis of past performances, we are actually improving steadily.

General operating funds

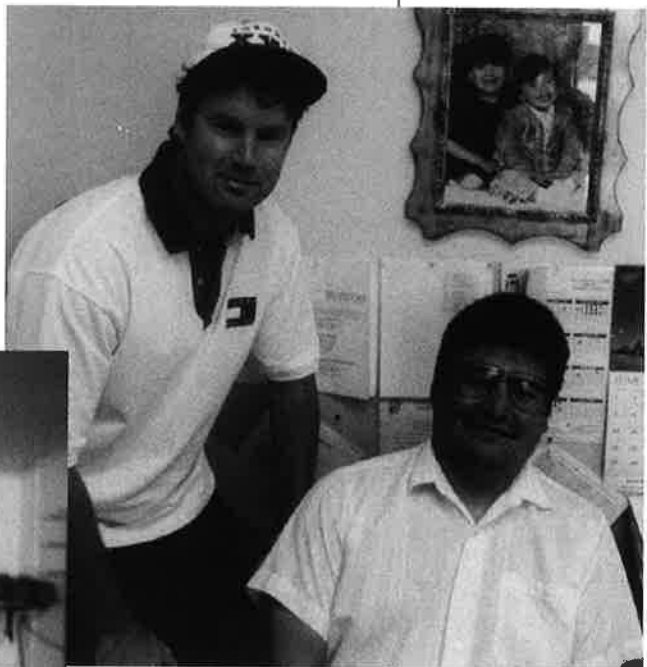
With a total budget of \$3,500,000, for fiscal 1996-97, we managed to post a modest surplus in income over expenses. However, we achieved

this by taking painful but necessary decisions. Indeed, when our finances were analysed during mid-term, the figures did not look good. It turned out that the suggested corrections produced the desired results.

Special projects funds

Among the corrective principles applied by Council during 1996-97 was the 'no funds, no projects' strategy. If a project could not be funded appropriately, then the project was not approved by Council. Thus, as a result of increased fiscal caution, we have been able to chip away at deficits accumulated from the previous administration under certain headings, such as the Youth Council.

Nick Whitbread and
former treasurer Robert L. Ottereyes



Nick Whitbread and
new treasurer
Mathew Happyjack

Robert Ottereyes is now
treasurer of the Cree
School Board.

As a result of increased fiscal caution, we have been able to chip away at deficits accumulated.

Capital additions funds

There was a lot of activity during 1996-97 in capital additions. Council purchased a vehicle, two pick-up trucks, a grader and a bulldozer, all of which came in handy in last year's house construction season (nine houses), well as the installation of 20 serviced lots. Both of these capital projects were successfully completed in time and under budget due to the increased efficiency of our construction crews. Another economy factor is our practice of hiring as many local people as possible on these projects.

Rental housing

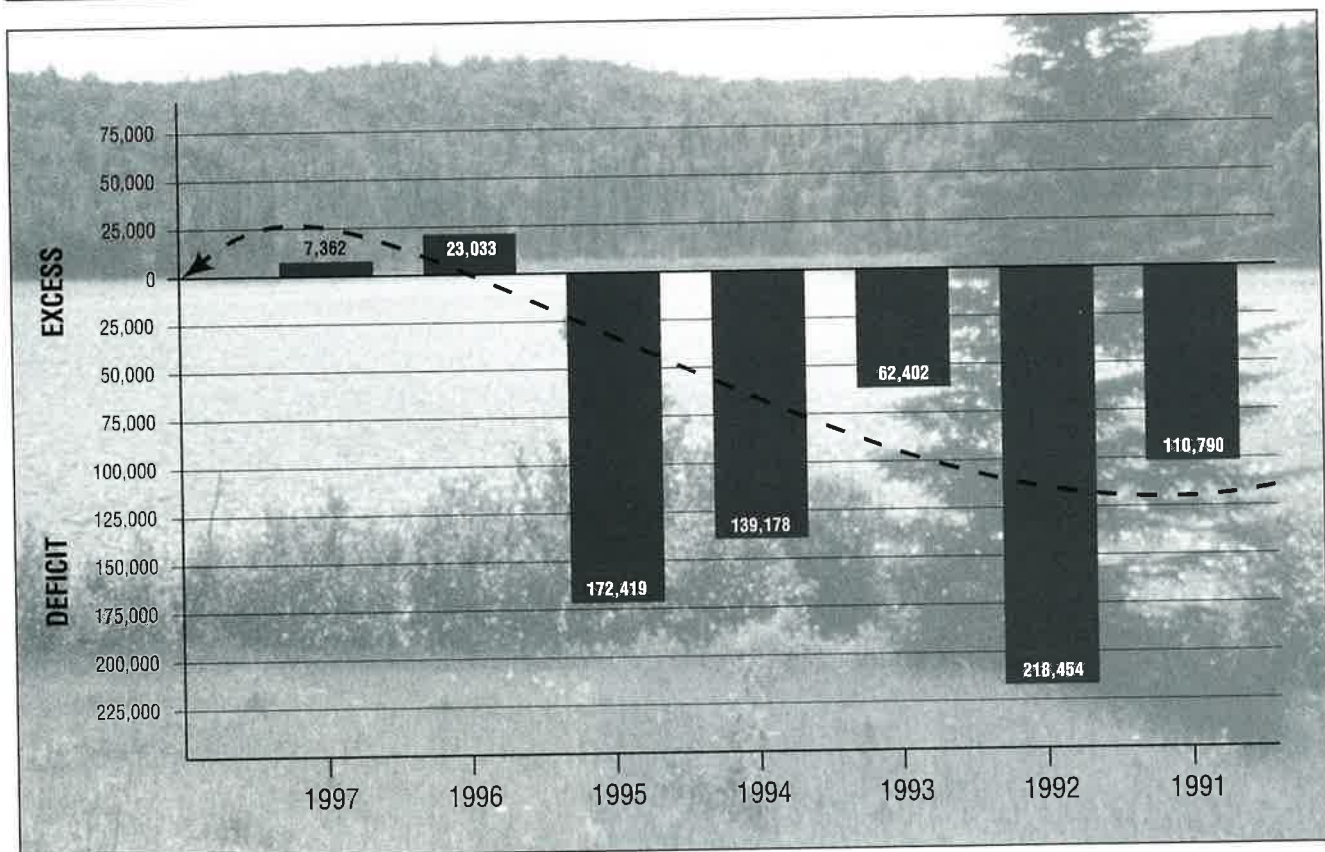
Rent collecting is a persistent challenge and continues to be a porcupine quill stuck in the backside of Council. Despite many efforts to encourage people to honour their rent

payments, the collection rate for 1996-97 stood at a dismal 64%. Consequently, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation refused to grant Waswanipi its share of housing projects for the summer of 1997.

The fact that no houses are being built in 1997 has hit the community twice: summer jobs for construction workers have been lost, and many people will not get the housing they need, thus increasing the problem of housing shortage.

Council is quite concerned. Discussions will be held with the Housing Commission and Council to find ways to impress on the people the duty of paying rent. ♦

General Operating Fund Results for Past 7 years



A word from the editor

We are proud to present this second issue of the Waswanipi Post. Each successive issue reinforces our hope that we will be able to publish this very special publication in the years to come. We have been pleasantly surprised by the interest it generated. We have already mentioned that the main objectives of the Waswanipi Post are to reflect on the life of the Cree community of Waswanipi as well as discussing and reporting on issues that affect First Nations and Aboriginal peoples of the world. These objectives might seem ambitious, but we are gradually setting ourselves to accomplish these.

This mixture of local and general news and subjects is what makes the Waswanipi Post the original publication it is. In fact, it was our inability to produce the Council's annual report that led us originally to the creation of the Waswanipi Post.

What makes Waswanipi so special to talk about? In many ways, Waswanipi is a typical 'Indian Reserve' community. We share with other First Nations across Canada many of the social and political problems that seem to characterize us in our not very successful attempts to co-exist with the descendants of Europeans settlers and other new comers.

Externally, Waswanipi is no different from other First Nations communities: houses are not surrounded with neatly trimmed lawns, and nobody will win flower-garden prizes. There is a general sense of neglect about the community; we seem to love keeping old cars and trucks, and the dogs keep you awake at night.

Hockey pools are discussed on the hoods of pick-up trucks in front of the grocery store; bingo is hugely popular; the Chief is regularly criticized at general meetings (whether he does right or wrong); and people are clannish in their voting patterns. Kids are heaped with gifts at Christmas; people laugh easily at themselves; the ladies go around in tights made for athletic youth; and everyone plays hockey and the game of gossip. Deer-flies the size of four-engine bombers relentlessly attack humans and beasts alike, clusters of runny-nosed kids pester you for "shuliauh" at the door of the grocery store for

pop and candy, Elders usually sit in the last rows of the assembly hall, a portrait of Jesus is pinned prominently in living rooms and everyone loves Coach Owen Nolan (even if he's just an Ojibway). Everyone owes tons of money, the roads are not paved and many, tragically, have diabetes.

However, the community is different in many ways, especially in the ways it tries to solve its problems and address issues. Some would even call us "reckless". You will read about two of the community's initiatives that have made many people nervous: the establishment of a local justice system and the setting up of a sawmill.

Waswanipi is not a "follower" community. Once the people decide something, the community has a tendency to forge ahead and damn the torpedoes. That makes us interesting, yet infuriating to some who prefer wringing their hands in perpetual sorrow.

Waswanipi's unique character will be reflected in each issue of the Waswanipi Post. Each issue will include a lengthy interview with Waswanipi Elders, those men and women who represent the strength of the community and are the keepers of its traditions and customs.



There is a sense of urgency in talking to the Elders. Once this generation of Elders passes away, it will be very difficult to retrieve our origins. Our older parents are the bridge to a

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**Ovide Mercredi and
Romeo Saganash**

The author dwells on the uneasy cultural and military relations of the peoples and warriors of Akwesasne, Kanesatake, Kahnawake and Oswegatchie with the French military (and later with the British), and the effects of the war on the lives of these communities.



less knowledge, and which certainly had very little part in Canadian and Quebec history as it was taught in the schools in my time.

When I read in this issue that Denis Vaugeois, a Quebec historian, considers Sir William Johnson a most important historical figure of colonial history, I fell off my chair. Ask 100 Quebecers if they know who Sir William Johnson was, and 100 of them won't have the foggiest idea of who you are talking about! And yet this man and his relations with the Iroquois is one of the principal reasons for the fall of New France in 1760. This is how ethnocentric Quebec history (as told by the Ministry of Education) was and, I suspect, still is.

Although the prose in Mr. MacLeod's book doesn't measure up to the kind of exciting writing I am used to from Alan W. Eckert (*That Dark and Bloody River*, Bantam, 1995 *A Sorrow in Our Heart, The Life of Tecumseh*, Bantam, 1992), it is nevertheless so well researched that we can forget about the style. It is comforting to see that historians are getting to be more sensitive to the contribution of First Nations peoples to the events that are and should be part of our collective consciousness.

The book covers the period of the Seven Year's War (called the French and Indian War in the United States). The author dwells on the uneasy cultural and military relations of the peoples and warriors of Akwesasne, Kanesatake, Kahnawake and Oswegatchie with the French military (and later with the British), and the effects of the war on the lives of these communities. Also included are accounts of the participation of the other Nations (formerly the "Seven Nations" of Canada) to the war, and thus developing the concept of "parallel warfare".

The book forced me to reread traditional accounts of certain well-known episodes of the war, for example, Braddock's disaster of July 13, 1755, when a large Anglo-American force of 1500 was cut to pieces by a smaller force of French and Indians (108 regular French troops, 146

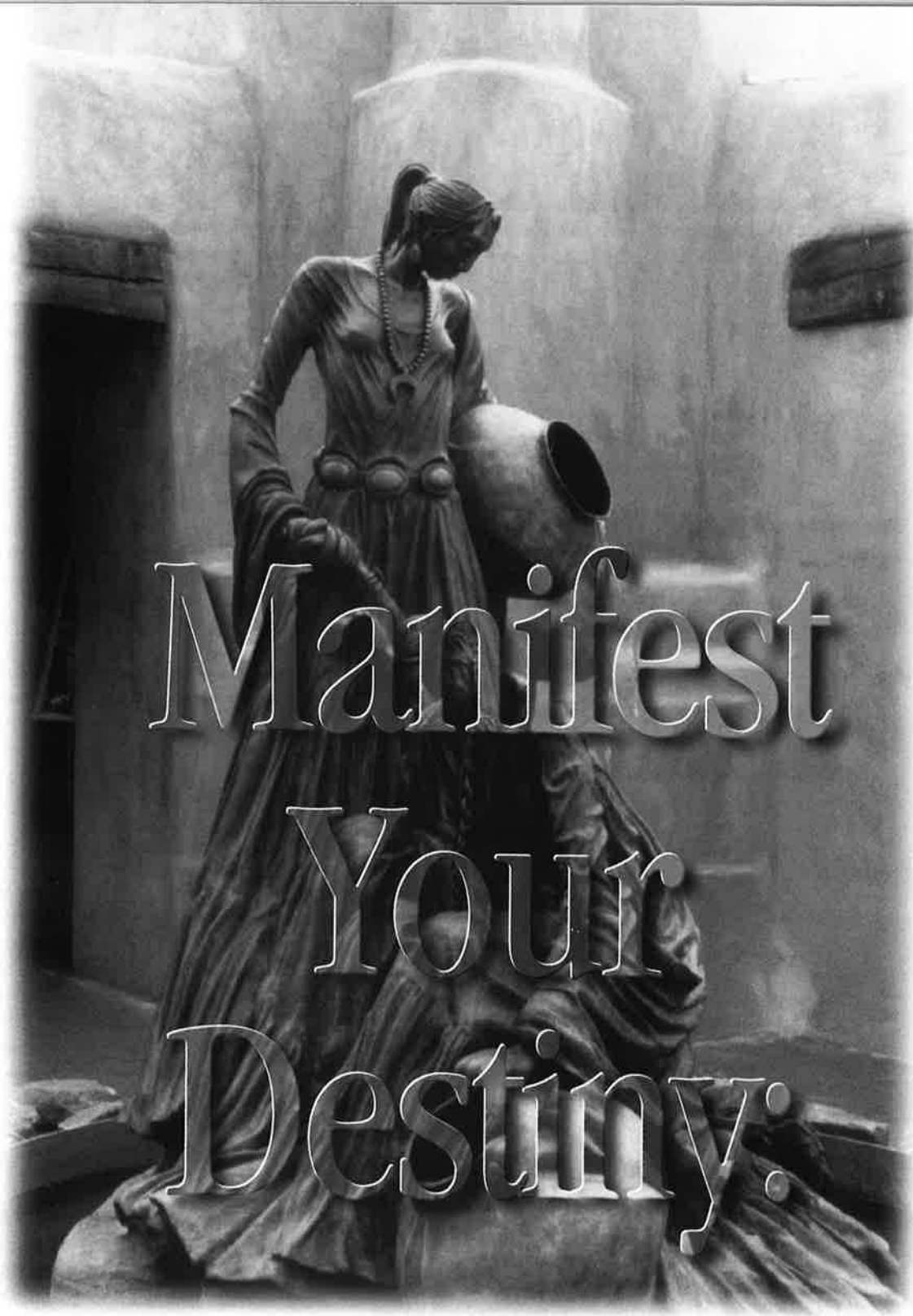
Canadian militiamen and 637 Indian allies), near Fort Duquesne on the banks of the Monongahela River. As a measure of the disaster, it was reported that 714 British were killed and 250 wounded while the French and Indians had only 23 dead and 16 wounded.

If you read the much respected French-Canadian historians' accounts of the battle (Fregault, Guy, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France, La Guerre de La Conquete 1754-1760*, Fides, Montreal 1955, and Lanctot, Gustave, *Histoire du Canada, Du Traite d'Utrecht au Traite de Paris, 1713-1763* - Volume III, Beauchemin, Montreal, 1966), it is quickly apparent that the warriors are collectively identified as "Indigenes" and "Indiens" (in Fregault) and "Indians" and "Sauvages" (in Lanctot) without attempting to find out who they were and where they came from.

You would have thought that these historians would be a little more curious about those Indians without whom victory on the French side would not have been possible. In fact Lanctot is more concerned about including a quote describing Braddock's mistress in his account than worrying about describing the Indians: "Parmi les morts, se trouve 'la maitresse du General Braddock, belle comme l'Amour, habillée en Amazone' qui 'montée sur un superbe cheval' fut tuée, combattant a côté de son amant'" (page 194).

In MacLeod's account we learn that among the Allies, there were 22 Hurons, 22 Kahnawakes, 18 Kanesatakes, 6 Oswegatchies, 21 Nipissings, 100 other 7 Nation warriors and a young Kahnawake Mohawk warrior called Atiatonharongwen, probably better known as Colonel Louis, who later participated in the capture of Oswego (August 1756) and the Battle of Carillon (July 1758) and who was later appointed Lieutenant Colonel by the Second Continental Congress (he never supported the British).

The account is more accurate in describing in detail how the warriors saved the day for the French at the Battle of the Monongahela. In other words, authors like MacLeod personalize and put a human face on the First Nation warrior as well as offering a better explanation of what happened. In MacLeod, I find further hope that non-native historical accounts of the Americas are finally maturing. ♦



Eenouch, law of peoples
and development

by Diom Romeo Saganash

Let us begin by taking a page from the *Law of Peoples (International Law)* which proclaims that:

"All Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their social and economic and cultural development."

Now, what is that suppose to mean to the Cree people? I can already imagine some asking: "Where the hell Saganash is taking us again?" I have this horrible penchant for risk, you see, so allow me to reply.



The subject has great significance for the Cree people in these times, with infinite possibilities perhaps but, as you guessed, with equally infinite challenges and perils as well. Everything is a matter of trial and error. Therefore to illustrate my perilous but nevertheless earnest attempts to provide some thoughts, if not answers, I'll call on concrete

examples I've experienced personally over the years.

Self determination

Self-determination is being referred to more often these days by Cree politicians, especially in the debate over Quebec sovereignty. The Quebecois claim that on the basis of this right, which belongs to all peoples, they may separate from Canada without interference from anybody or anything after winning a referendum on the question, representing the expressed will of the people (50% + 1!).

What is important to consider at the onset is the fact that the right of self-determination belongs to "all peoples". In essence, if you are a people, you have the right. If you have the right, then you may freely determine your political status. And finally, freely means without interference. On this last point, it is perhaps worthwhile to recall what the 1970 United Nations' Declaration on Friendly Relations affirmed:

"By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, all peoples have the right to freely determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every state has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter."

A number of questions arise. According to this 'right', are the Quebecois a People? Are Crees a People with the right of self-determination within the meaning of International Law? If the answer is "yes" to both questions, do we have a situation of conflicting human rights, a clear case of clash of fundamental freedoms?

If we do, is there a dominating right of self-determination and an inferior one? If people are free to choose their own destiny (or political status, whichever expression you prefer), does it necessarily imply secession, separation and the formation of a Nation-State?

What is the definition of a "People" and what are the characteristics required to qualify as such? The sheer number of questions one can ask with only three words out of the paragraph demonstrates how carefully chosen the terms were and what they may imply in practice.

Social, cultural and economic development

The *Law of the Peoples* also states that we can pursue our social, cultural and economic development with equal freedom. Now that's interesting. We Crees have gradually accepted that 'development' is a strictly economic concern, at best related to sustainability. How narrow-minded can we be?

As an Indigenous person belonging to a distinct people, I am grateful to those framers of International Law to have openly associated the word 'development' with the social and cultural aspects of a given society, and to lay bare the word's implications of evolution.

The social, cultural and economic development of a people may change or evolve and thus, do not remain static, frozen in time. Octavio Paz said it best when he wrote in *Tiempo Nueva*, "Modernization does not mean a mechanical imitation of the United States or Europe: to modernize is to adopt, adapt. It is also recreating."

If people are free to choose their own destiny, does it necessarily imply secession, separation and the formation of a Nation-State?

Economic Development

Let's examine an economic development debate that has raged for the past three years. Should Waswanipi proceed with a venture that was divisive, explosive and, as some put it, very unCree. The clever political animals among us called this initiative the Wood Transformation Center proposal. Others were less eloquent and just called it the proposed sawmill. I will call it the Nabakatuk Project because, other than the Cree term of Dasjabujigan, this is what the project is called now.

Peter Gull's commitment and perseverance, and John Kitchen's leadership and bold courage to make Nabakatuk his priority after a first tough term as the Chief of the community, made the project a reality in Waswanipi. After about 10 years efforts, debate and questioning.

If you want to have access to 'Crown' land and its forest resources, you must have a sawmill. Nabakatuk was made possible through a partnership between the community and one of the province's main forestry companies Domtar. Each partner invested equally; the balance of financing was obtained with federal funding and a bank loan.

Apart from its involvement in Domtar and its designation of a 'CAAF' area (which is a modern type of forestry concession under the form of an agreement), in effect a piece of Cree land and access to Cree resources, Quebec did not contribute a single penny.

When working at full potential in the near future, the Nabakatuk project will employ well over 50 people. For a community of just over 1000 souls, it will have a significant impact.

Traditional impacts

Waswanipi has been affected by forestry development activities in its traditional territory for more than 30 years. It was actively involved in the 1980s through its own forestry company, Mishtuk Corp.

Next to hydro development in the James Bay, forestry is the most pressing issue the Cree Nation faces today. Not only does it have a major effect on the Cree way of life, including the constitutional hunting, fishing and trapping rights of the Crees, but the exploitation of forests has significant economic, social and environmental consequences for the entire region.

Opponents to the Nabakatuk project assembled themselves around these concerns, but they were in the minority. The project received an overwhelming support from the people of Waswanipi, failing unanimity.

A journey to the land of ignorance

It is difficult to describe what it is. Some people say, it's total ignorance. Some claim it's simple racism, and others still believe it is the old attitude problem of European superiority complex. Nevertheless...

Chief Kitchen and I journeyed to Quebec City to meet with provincial officials and inquire whether the Quebec Government would provide financial assistance to the Nabakatuk project. The Chief felt that the new era of collaboration ushered in by a recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Quebec and the Crees would provide a framework to work within.

Negative. Not only was the "no" so resoundingly clear and unequivocal, it also came with this vexatious and senseless exclamation: "A sawmill? that's not part of your traditions!"

Needless to say, I was completely overwhelmed, fell off my chair and thought: "Shit! Christopher Columbus and his gang have returned, they're back!"

If my people did not use the forest for anything other than heating, cooking, or fabricating snowshoes and teepees at the time the Europeans





Rodney A. Grant, long hair and moccasins riding the contemporary horse.

The edifice of colonialism, the legacy of the European invasion of the Americas is still built on the firm belief that peoples of Christian European ancestry have more rights than we indigenous peoples, or rather have similar but superior rights.

arrived, then we could not consider for even one moment the possibility of doing otherwise today, and especially not for commercial purposes.

Chief Kitchen was astute enough, as usual, to leave it at that. I felt I was being challenged on the basis of my race, colour and creed. I consoled myself afterwards. Perhaps, even in 1997, I should expect these kind of remarks from others. The edifice of colonialism, the legacy of the European invasion of the Americas is still built on the firm belief that peoples of Christian European ancestry have more rights than we indigenous peoples, or rather have similar but superior rights.

Because we were supposedly "stupid, inept, uncivilized, cruel, idolatrous and immoral" when the Europeans discovered us, we were therefore (and, to some, we remain) inferior peoples: savages. For those who doubt that such 16th century thinking is no longer supported today, look again. In a 1990 decision, the Supreme Court of British Columbia's Honourable Chief Justice Allan McEachern reasoned:

"The plaintiffs' (Gitskan and Wet'sutwet'en) ancestors had no written language, no horses or wheeled vehicles, slavery and starvation was (sic) not uncommon, wars with neighbouring peoples were common, and there is no doubt, to quote Hobbs (sic) that Aboriginal life in the territory was, at best 'nasty, brutish and short'"

I further invite you to consult the judicial reasoning behind court decisions that refuse to acknowledge that gambling and fishing for commercial purposes are part of what the Constitution calls Aboriginal and Treaty rights. This ideology has guided, and in some cases continues to influence, policy-making and socio-economic thought about Aboriginal peoples. The doctrine of assimilation, the Indian Affairs mentality – it's amusing how we never lack descriptions for such a strange colonial behaviour.

I requested the opportunity to set the record straight. "Okay!" I said, "when we go to court on the basis of our rights to hunt and to fish as we always did, you never fail to accuse Aboriginal peoples of 'backwardness' and you invite us into modern times, thinking that it would be best for us Indians to abandon our 'primitive ways'. But when we attempt to diversify (or modernize if you wish) our economies, then it becomes unacceptable under pretext that it is not part of our so-called stone-age traditions. Your confusion is disconcerting me Mr. Government!"

The official countered that Aboriginal peoples must choose between our ways and their ways. I confirmed that we had the right to choose either or both, because this is supposed to be standard practice for any society, people or Nation.

"If I recall", I continued, "building hydro-electric dams was not part of your traditions when you arrived. And besides, were would Hydro-Quebec be if it wasn't for the Aztec's and other indigenous peoples' discovery of caa-o-chu (or rubber) on this continent, even before you came?"

The debate went on for a few moments to cover a range of issues and questions, including the existence of casinos on this side of the Atlantic or, for that matter, on the other side when Cartier or Champlain stumbled onto our shores. And who said that certain peoples may not diversify their economies, while others can?

I left the man's office before I remembered that we did gamble in our own way long ago.¹ Certain Indian Nations, such as the Plains peoples, instead of waging a destructive war and risk the lives of many to settle a conflict, simply

¹ See Gabriel, Kathryn, *Gambler Way Indian Gaming in Mythology, History and Archeology in North America*. Johnson Books 1996, Colorado.

appointed their best warriors to challenge the other side's best warriors at battle. Whether it was for a question of land, or use of a waterway or portage, or to right a wrong, the winning warriors took all in the name of their tribe. Sure we gambled.

Governments must start acknowledging our freedom to pursue our aspirations, whether these be the protection of our cultures and languages, or development as we perceive it. This includes our right to be different but it also implies that, we may expect access to our own resources for development to respond to the pressing economic and employment needs of our people.

Contrary to what certain Nabakatuk dissidents charged, this project was far from being "unCree". We may live in different times but the basic needs of the people remain the same. Without a doubt our environment has been transformed in significant ways, but this doesn't mean we may not retain many of the characteristics of the past.

For instance, we used to select our leaders on the basis of their ability to provide for the people and their capability to secure the survival of the Nation from the social, cultural, economic and political perspectives. Potential candidates were usually the good hunters of the community, among other qualities. Modern leadership may require providing jobs and charting the path of self-determination. Changing times, same aspirations.

Cultural and Social Development

Walking in the streets of Santa Fe a year ago, the words kept haunting me. I asked myself endless questions about my own people, what they thought, how they were, by what they were moved or thrilled. Have they gone from a traditional way of life to an 'American way of living'? Why stumble on such an inquiry while I was the very heart of American Indian celebrations?

Heavy burden? I was brought to this state of mind by an author called Frantz Fanon¹, who wrote a book about French colonialism in Algeria in the 1950s and early 1960s. During the endless hours of waiting between Montreal and Santa Fe, one must carry a few books and magazines to waste time the appropriate way. I was struck in my reading by this troubling passage from *The Wretched of The Earth* (1961).

"Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves constantly: 'In reality, who am I?'"

The 1996 Indian Market Festivities was the 75th year that Indigenous art, artists and art collectors had made a pilgrimage to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Each year, the city greets over 100,000 people from around the world. These visitors spend over \$20 million on arts and crafts by some 1,500 artists and artisans. Each August, Santa Fe becomes City Different. The focus of the event is "Bringing people together through the arts".

Indian Market weekend is not just the hundreds of booths that display the work of the artists; the weekend is also all sorts of side events, pow-wows, festivals and competitions. Traditional Native American dances occupy a select place in the programming.

A weekend, I thought, that may carry the seeds of response to my cultural ponderings. Not that these matters constantly linger in my mind. It just so happens that some crucial events had taken place in the lives of my people and my own.

Several months before, your humble servant had co-chaired the Cree Eeyou Astchee Commission in the wake of the 1995 Quebec Referendum. This experience was, to say the least, empowering for the 10 commissioners, not only because almost everything we thought about our own people was confirmed or validated by this historic public conversation with them. As well, a political education process quickly took form both ways.

Destiny had given me a chance to meet the people intimately once again. It provided the opportunity to attempt an explanation of what was happening in Quebec, to Canada and what all this meant to them – momentous, though not life-changing.

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Is the Cree hunter any less a Cree because he now travels to his hunting territory by plane, and uses rifles and guns in his traditional pursuits?

Another episode relates to an odd invitation I received a few months afterwards from Cineflix Inc. to attend a focus-group to preview the almost final cut of the film *Power*, the film by biologist Magnus Isaacson and producer Glen Salzman, about the Cree struggle against the proposed Great Whale River Development project by Hydro-Quebec.

I qualify the invitation "odd" because I hadn't been around, so to speak, for some time, thereby becoming what the powerful like to call an "out-of-the-loop"

(unconnected) Cree. So I thought, perhaps being that I was the Deputy Grand-Chief of the Cree Nation at crucial moments of the fight (1990-1993) against the project, I'm in the film. Exciting thought, no? Isn't being in the movies something everyone would entertain without hesitation?

Well, anyone who has seen the movie will know that I'm absolutely not in the film, completely out of the picture. Or rather, my participation (if you call it that) amounts to some 0.02% of the film, or about two seconds: less than a glimpse.

Worse, my only two seconds in the movie show me smiling plottingly and firmly shaking the President... of Hydro-Quebec's hand! Not Bob Kennedy Jr., not the Grand-Chief. No! My rendezvous with history portrays me as a Cree master of conspiracy, or simply an uninfluential amateur in the art of peace-making. Whichever, my foes must have just gleefully loved that one.

But seriously, the almost-final product had supposedly elicited some nasty criticisms and had, I was told, provoked some internal controversy over petty aspects, to the point that even an injunction was being contemplated by the Grand Council of the Crees. The viewing lasted about two hours, after which the four of us were invited to provide comments and perhaps suggestions: We all did. I will spare you my appreciation of *Power*, which was eventually written in a letter to Magnus and Glen.

One remark, one comment troubled me. In one of the last scenes of the film, we see and listen to a group of Chisasibi Crees drumming and chanting the Prairie Indians' way; a performance I thought was pretty good... for James Bay Crees, to be able to drum and chant like our Great Plains brothers and sisters. The Cree politician of the group of four privileged felt otherwise. He suggested that this part be removed from the film because "It's not Cree. Our people do not drum and sing like that!"

I had heard that one before from yet another well-known Cree politician in similar circumstances. In a general meeting in my own community of Waswanipi, while debating healing avenues, pow-wows were questioned for essentially the same reasons. If that's not Cree, I thought as I strolled along the Old Santa Fe Trail, then what is Cree? If we chant like our brothers and sisters of the West, if we sometimes celebrate like this, what does that mean to our Creeness?

Is the Cree hunter any less a Cree because he now travels to his hunting territory by plane, and uses rifles and guns in his traditional pursuits?

Is my Cree mother any less a Cree because she watches the *Young and the Restless* on TV every day although she doesn't understand a word of English?

Is the Cree Grand-Chief any less a Cree because he wears silk ties, Hugo Boss suits, Gucci shoes and slick-looking Giorgio Armani glasses at times?

Is the Canada Goose any less Canadian because it travels to the US and Mexico every fall or any less a goose without its feathers come feast time?

If we know we have adopted some of the tools, methods, ways and institutions of other Nations, Aboriginal or not, are we less Cree for that? As I said to Magnus and Glen: "If I had a choice between adopting what comes from Europe, or from another Aboriginal culture; my choice would be obvious, I think, especially if it involved culture."

I visit other places on this huge (but nevertheless small now) planet to check out what's new and what remains traditional to try to comprehend my own personal musings. "Education only ends with death," Eleanor Roosevelt once said. For some questions, I go North, for others I travel to the South, East and West. My dreams take care of the four other directions. I hope.

My recollection of many words spoken, strong and powerful, which sometimes evoke disquieting experiences, continued to inhabit my mind as I finally approached the courtyard of the Palace of the Governors. I came here to see the Southern Plains Indians dancers, scheduled to perform the Hoop, Intertribal, Round, Lance and Shield as well as individual dances.

In spite of what experts such as Fanon or Albert Memmi have ruled on our State of Being, some, including our very own, are unable to accept nor acknowledge our people's development. I remained sceptical. After all, what I have seen and heard mainly throughout the Cree Commission travels was pride, strength and a readiness, perhaps without being aware at times, to confront the world at it comes. There is despair and depression, a certain sense of loss in our communities, certainly. But there is also hope and opportunity, if we dare to take up the crucial challenges ahead of us as Distinct Peoples.

I was still there, gazing, when William Sunrise stepped into the circle to perform the first indi-

vidual dance before a crowd of mainly Americans and Europeans. I was touched by the way he moved around, practically looking at everyone straight in the face as if he was saying to them: "You see? I'm still here! And I'm dancing exactly the way my grandfather's grandfather used to. You see? look at me!"

The eyes pierced the crowd. He was moving, poignant. I wept! ♦



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¹ Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist and revolutionist who was born in Martinique in 1925 and died in Washington, DC in 1961. He practised in Algeria from 1953 to 1956, and sided with the Algerian people during the war that led to independence in 1963. Well known for his work on racism, *Peau Noire Masque Blanc* (1952) and other titles, he wrote his most influential work *Les Damnés de La Terre* (The Wretched of The Earth) in 10 weeks in 1961 when he discovered that he was suffering from incurable leukemia.

Harry Blacks

Recollections from an Elder

I met Harry Blacksmith and his wife Maggie at their small but comfortable home in Waswanipi on June 10, 1997. Although I have known Harry and Maggie for a long time, this was my first chance to share in the intimacy of their long memories. Harry's dark eyes still retain the fierceness of younger times. He did most of the talking, but constantly checked the accuracy of his facts with Maggie.

Harry was born at Miquelon, a few miles south of the Old Post, on October 4, 1925. He was one of the sons of the famed and long-time Waswanipi Chief, Diom Blacksmith and Emily Gull, the daughter of Jacob Gull of the Old Post and Jane Cheezo of Fort Rupert (Jacob Gull was the brother of the Reverend John Gull).

At the time of Harry's birth, Diom trapped during winter and hauled supplies by freighter from Fort Rupert to the Old Post during summertime on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company. Diom Blacksmith himself was the son of Willy Wiskeyshan, a trapper from Fort Rupert (now Waskaganish). According to Harry, the name "Blacksmith" is the English word for "Wiskeyshan", which loosely means iron worker or stove maker. Although, I have been told it could also mean "Blue Jay."

This is the second in a series of interviews with Waswanipi Elders. Clarence Gull was first to share his memories with us was in the first edition of the Waswanipi Post. We have made it our duty to talk to as many Elders as possible in an attempt to preserve in writings their wisdom, teachings and stories.

Many people make up Harry's immediate family: He had four brothers, late Abel (who married Helen Icebound), late Jacob (who married Lilian Miller and whose children include Flora B. Kitchen, Senior Justice Panellist and Nabakatuk President, Jack Blacksmith, Cree Regional Authority, Louise "Lou-Lou" Saganash and many others), late Norman, William Blacksmith (all trappers), and six sisters, late Caroline (who married trapper Sydney Otter), Charlotte (who married line-cutter Lawrence Dixon), Mary (who married cook and then outfitter Roger Ulrich Ratte), Marlene (who married John King), Annie, and Cecile (who married Cree School Board head maintenance man Abraham Happyjack).

Harry does not have many memories relating to his childhood in Miquelon: "All I remember is my father and other people paddling me to Senneterre to send me off by train to the Chapleau Indian Residential School."

His stay at the Chapleau was anything but pleasant, although the school housed many young people from First Nations, including some Crees from Mistissini. At first, he did not know why he was constantly spanked. Then it became clear to him: he and his companions were being punished for speaking their language. By the time he was finally released from the Chapleau school at the age of 16 in 1941, he could no longer speak Cree. But he had been taught to speak English and ... Latin!

During the summer of 1941, he returned to his parents' summer home at the Old Post – trying to live with a family he hardly knew. In the first years of his return, he struggled hard to learn Cree, his lost maternal language. He immediately sought employment with the Hudson's Bay Company, but his first opportunity came when the Department of Indian Affairs appointed him as a fire ranger stationed at Cedar Rapids, a position he held for the next seven summers. In 1945 he married Mary Happyjack, the daughter of Joseph "Joe" Happyjack and Maggie Jimiken (Mary passed away in 1960).

From 1948, Harry worked in exploration projects for a succession of mining companies, including American Metal¹ and Dominion Gulf Company². Although he was a salaried employee during summer time, he spent his winter months sharing his family's trapping life, staying at his father's main camp and in a series of temporary "fly-camps".

The family's economic life was assured by selling the furs of beavers, otters, lynxes, foxes, minks, martens, muskrats and fishers. The life of a family of a trapper was hard. Income would follow the cycle of prices paid for furs. In addition, there was no such thing as social benefits or income security and nobody could run to the Band office for emergency grocery money.

Smith:

with Benoit Tremblay

Harry remembers the life of a trapper very well. He would wake up before daylight. His breakfast would consist of leftovers from the previous day's supper. A typical meal would be rabbit meat, tea or, if they were lucky, coffee. Touring the trapline would take all day, returning long after dark for a quick supper followed by a grateful sleep.

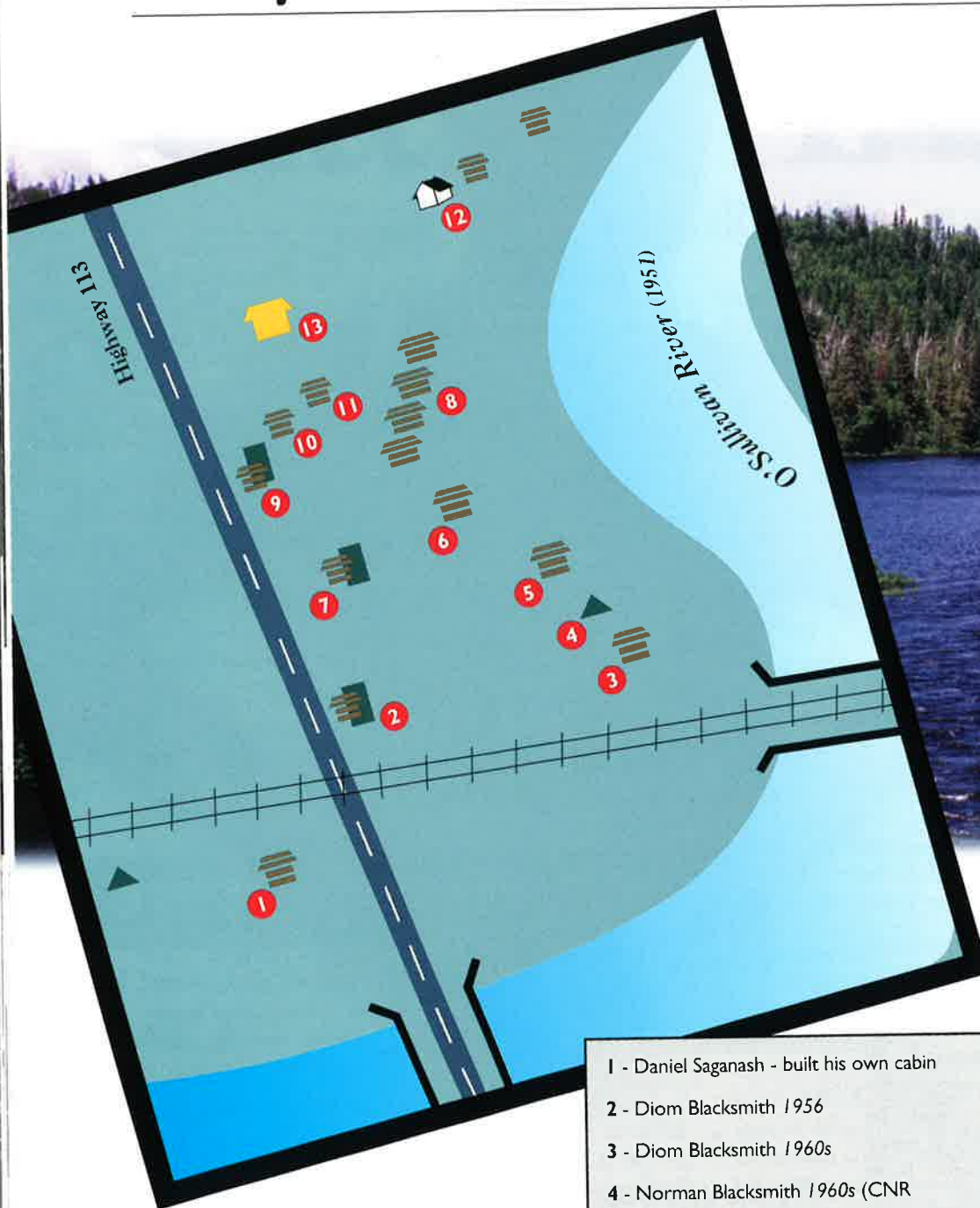
Hunting for food was a constant preoccupation and was done while running the traplines. The elder Blacksmith had a .22 rifle. If they ran out of bullets, the men would resort to the bow and arrow to hunt rabbits and partridges. Harry says that he was good at hunting the old way. In those times, people did not believe working on Sundays. All the work, such as cutting wood was done on Saturdays.

Sometimes, the family would rest, especially during summer time when the favourite sport at the Old Post was soccer (Harry calls it by the British name, 'football'). Even the older people participated in the rough soccer games. Albert Trapper and Willy Kitchen were famous soccer players. An occasional baseball game would be played, or some of the men would try to outdo each other at high jump. Harry's brother Jacob was a good high jumper.

Everyone's favourite idea of a good time was an evening of square dancing at the occasion of weddings or at feasts. Alcohol had no place in social life. Harry admits that some tried their hand at home brew, but not enough was produced to have any effect on the life of the collectivity. Harry says he never made home brew.

The life of a trapper's family was hard. Income would follow the cycle of prices paid for furs. There was no such thing as social benefits or income security and nobody could run to the Band office for emergency grocery money.

Harry's World at Miquelon



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 - Daniel Saganash - built his own cabin | 7 - Haris Jacob, Jonney Ottereyes, Annie Eagle (Lily Blacksmith's mother), Louis Blacksmith. Cabin given by Baptiste Lebel. 1950s |
| 2 - Diom Blacksmith 1956 | 8 - Outfitters cabins |
| 3 - Diom Blacksmith 1960s | 9 - Abel Blacksmith |
| 4 - Norman Blacksmith 1960s (CNR worker) | 10 - Jonny |
| 5 - William Saganash (Romeo's father - trapper, bucksaw forestry) 1960s | 11 - Eva Ottereyes (Maggie's mother) |
| 6 - Harry Blacksmith 1960s (one of the last to move in 1979) | 12 - Ulrich Ratte (cook with CNR), Mary Blacksmith 1956 |
| | 13 - Store |

Weddings were a time also for the older people to tell stories. Dating consisted of climbing the hill (called Cherry Hill) at the Old Post to share a smoke and look at the lake. Harry sees his time



after residential school as a happy period of his life. However, he would have liked to have some of the things the younger people have today.

Harry remembers one special event. He had just came back from residential school when Diom Blacksmith and John C. Neeposh had managed to kill a moose with a stick which was normally used as a float for a fishing net. He affirms that Diom, a very strong man, had carried the gutted moose to his tent ... on his back ! He also witnessed his father chasing a lynx with an axe: the unfortunate lynx was not agile enough to escape its fate. These events happened when Diom Blacksmith was the people's choice for Chief for a very long time. In living memory, nobody has served for a longer time. Harry also remembers other Waswanipi Chiefs such as Joe Saganash and Alec Cooper.

In Harry's time, there were few things to read. Harry used to go to the HBC office at the Old

Post to read the diaries that related events from before his own time. The diaries explained the origin of the name Waswanipi. Long time ago, a geologist had noticed the habit of the people to use many lights over the water as a way to lure sturgeons into shallow waters where they would be more easily speared. This method of fishing with lights over the water inspired the name of the community: 'light over water: Wash-te-ou-nebi' transformed by usage since into 'Waswanipi'.

Harry remembers his maternal grandfather Jacob Gull, who was the HBC mailman. In winter, Jacob transported the mail between Fort Rupert and the Waswanipi Old Post by pulling a toboggan. No dogs were available to help him pull the heavy load.

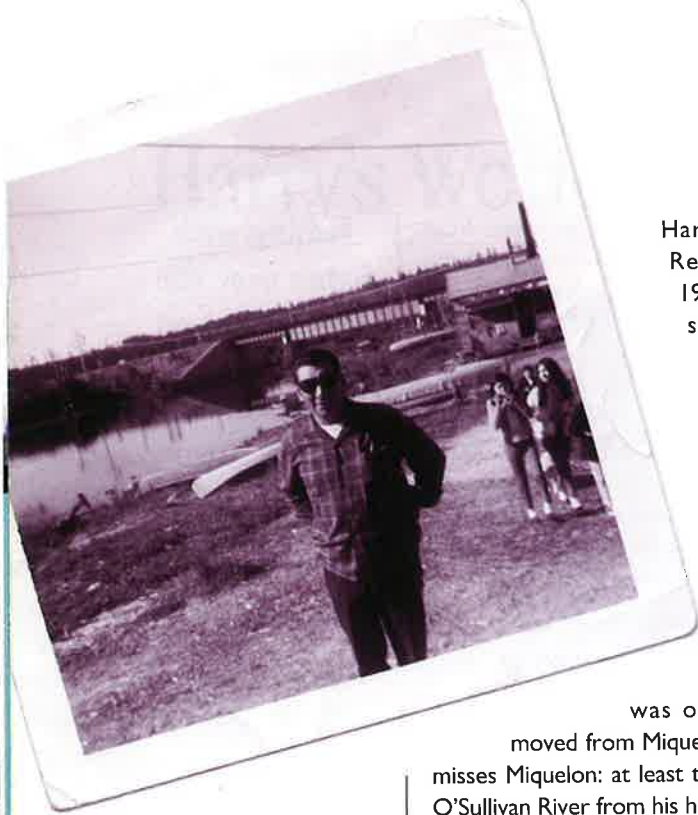
After working awhile for mining companies, Harry started his career as a public employee. He started as a Band administrator (the holder of the position was later called Band Manager, then the Director-General). At that time the bulk of the work consisted in updating the Band list and distributing welfare cheques on behalf of Indian Affairs.

Council was composed of the Chief and three Councillors (then called 'leaders'). The Chief was appointed (not elected) by the people from among the best and strongest hunters. If the community was bothered by a troublemaker, the 'leaders' would talk to the man. He would invariably agree to spend time on the traplines.

Harry says that the system worked in his time. People used to listen to the Chief, "not like today," said Harry referring to the present situation. Harry witnessed the first election of a Chief, as ordered by Indian Affairs. That election was won by Louis Gull. Harry worked five years as a Band administrator, earning the sum of \$285 a year as salary.

Meanwhile, Harry remarried on June 10, 1963 at the Old Post, this time to Maggie Ottereyes. She was born in the bush near present-day Matagami, on April 11, 1941, the daughter of Thomas Ottereyes and Eva Ottereyes, both from the Old Post. His uncle John Gull married them, as he did for many other couples.

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He says that younger people today are breaking the system built by the older people. As a result, traplines are now in the process of losing their original land area.

Harry joined the Cree Regional Authority in 1976, not long after the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. He was appointed Community Liaison Officer, a position he held for about 10 years. He was then transferred to the Cree Trappers Association. It

was only in 1979 that he

moved from Miquelon to Waswanipi. He misses Miquelon: at least there he could see the O'Sullivan River from his home.

Harry had much to say about traplines. In 1940 he remembers the establishment of the first registered traplines, numbered 1 to 8 in what was called the Nottaway Beaver preserve. In 1945 came the rest of the traplines. People from Ottawa would indicate on maps the location of each trapper family to determine the borders of the traplines.

He says that younger people today are breaking the system built by the older people. As a result, traplines are now in the process of losing their original land area. Here, according to Harry, are some of the norms guiding the trapline system and its social organization:

1. When the tallyman died, the wife (or the daughter, depending on the case) would not inherit the trapline. The trapline is traditionally left to the eldest son.
2. The area of a trapline should follow a river. Harry says that younger people are tracing the dividing line across rivers, which diminishes the harvest potential of the trapline. He says that the trapper's committees should protest this method subdividing a trapline.
3. Written wills did not exist in his time. However certain rules were applied. At the death of the tallyman, the eldest son would in principle inherit the essential trapping equipment as well as the main cabin. However, his mother (if surviving) could

keep that equipment unless she decided that the son might use these before her own death. If she had retained the equipment, they would at the time of her death automatically revert to the eldest son.

As for the rest of the tallyman's possessions, these would be collected and put in a single place for one year. At the anniversary of death, once his mother had chosen to keep some or all of the objects, anyone would take what they needed. This is, according to Harry Blacksmith, the essential aspect of traditional Cree inheritance law as far as the trapline system is concerned.

On the forestry issue, Harry supports Chief John Kitchen. He said the people patiently waited for the CRA to give some direction on the matter of forestry and traplines. He does not believe that the present arrangements can be construed as the selling of the trappers' rights. He also supports the establishment of the sawmill now in operation.

As far as the community of Waswanipi is concerned, he is satisfied with the Trappers' Committee and the Council of Elders. However, he says, the administrators and employees of the Band are too young. He says the Elders have concerns about the way these young people are running things. If he was the Chief, "I would not spend that much money." He thinks that much money is wasted on buying new machines instead of taking the time to maintain and repair the older ones.

He is pessimistic about the trapline system as he knew it. Once today's Elders die, he says, no one will be able to handle the traplines properly. In fact, Harry is generally worried about the future of his nation. ♦

¹ It is now a worldwide company well known under the name Amax.

² Still in existence today. This company started by applying aeromagnetic technology developed to detect German submarines during World War II to pioneer in aerial survey that enabled it to investigate magnetic anomalies on the ground.

The short (and growing longer) history of Waswanipi

Part II

by Benoit Tremblay

This segment of the history of the north is an important one. It describes how the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) valued their trade with the Crees and other Nations, and how it stubbornly refused to be swept aside by the invading French. We may not be concerned at this stage with Waswanipi itself as a community, but we will be slowly inching our way in that direction. The fate of the HBC in this difficult period concerned the Crees in general and their relationship with the company.

THE FRENCH PERIOD, PART I

Pierre de Troyes's raid

Few people are aware today of that most interesting period when James Bay and Hudson's Bay virtually became French territory, a period that lasted nearly 30 years from 1686 to 1713. France never recognized England's exclusive right to trade fur in the north, even if the HBC had established trading posts all along the coast.

To support France's colony in North America, the French Minister of the Marine Colbert

In the first edition of the Waswanipi we covered the period of the ancient arrival of the Cree people into the James Bay-Hudson's Bay area until the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company and the first years of its commercial activities with the Crees. We ended on an ominous note with the arrival in 1686 of a group French raiders led by the Chevalier de Troyes, an army officer, which signalled the start of a period of extreme turmoil in James Bay and Hudson's Bay that would last until 1713.

encouraged the establishment of the Compagnie de La Baie du Nord (1682) to trade in the rich fur producing areas controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company. French missionaries also had an interest in the north; they considered the English traders heretics and were anxious to convert the Aboriginal populations to Roman Catholicism.

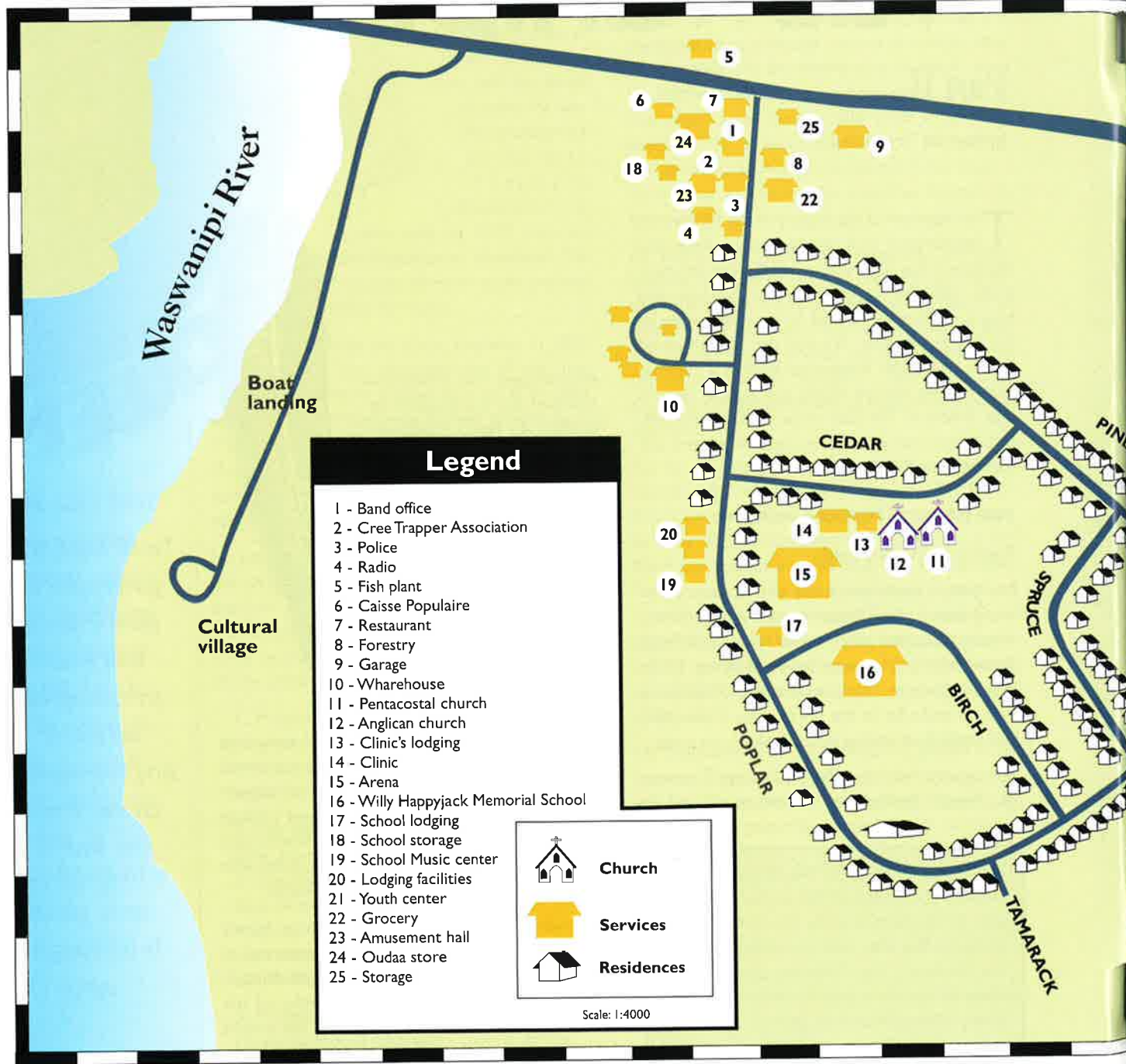
Until now, the governors of New France had been preoccupied with the Anglo-Iroquois threat from the south. Finally after years of uneven results, King Louis XIV finally appointed a tough old soldier as Governor General of New France in January 1685: the Marquis de Denonville, who replaced the ineffectual Governor La Barre.

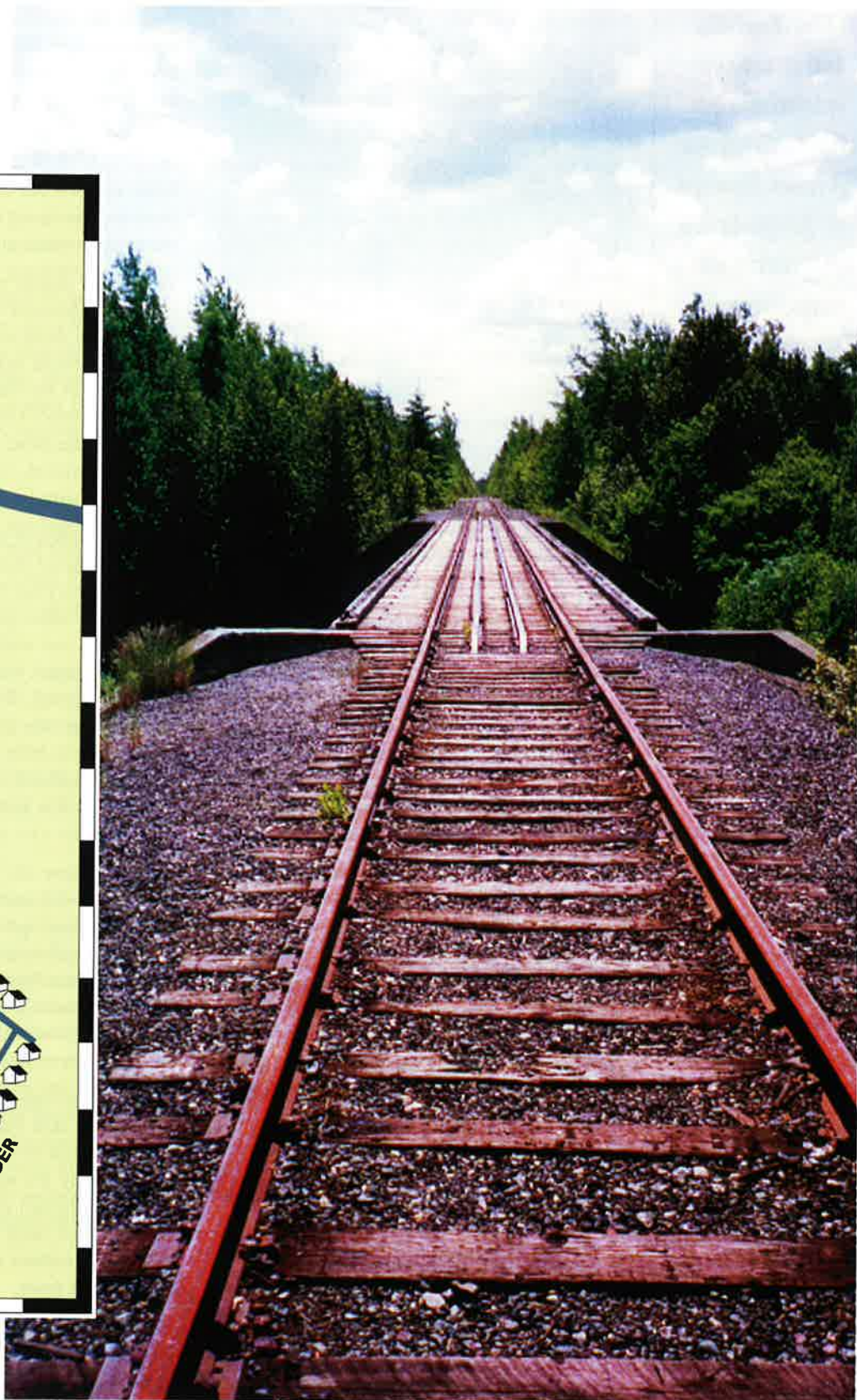
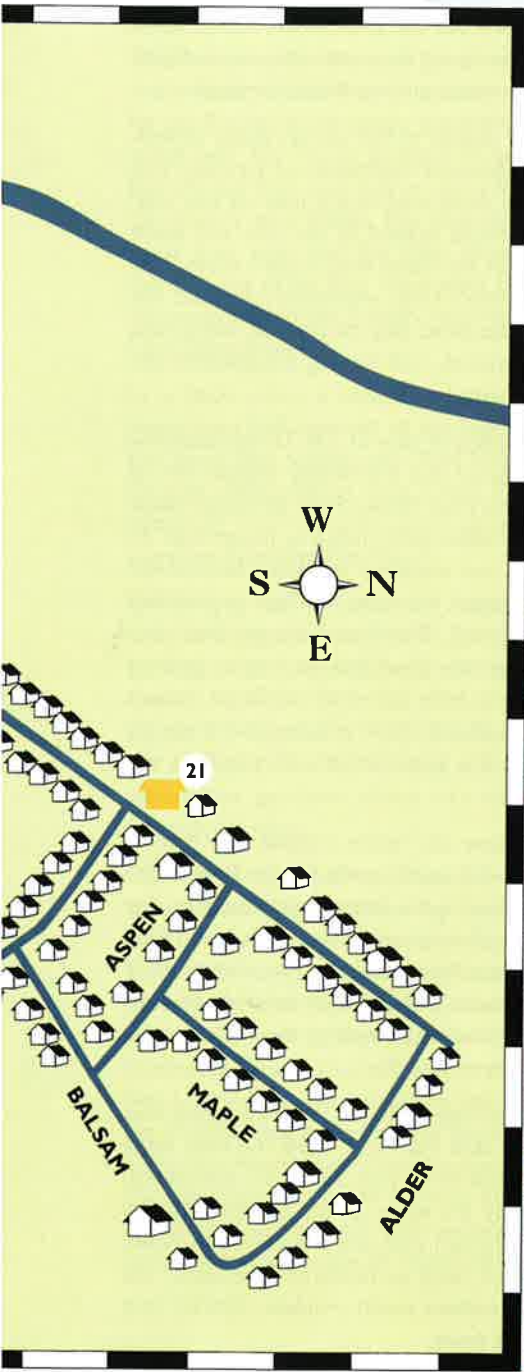
Denonville came from an old military family whose Protestant parents had just converted to Roman Catholicism the year before his birth in 1637. The stern Calvinist philosophy of life permeated Denonville's life, and he would remain stoutly devoted to the Church and the clergy. He was also an aggressive fighter, and his military policies would improve the fragile colony's chance of survival against the stronger and more populous English colonies along the



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Map of Waswanipi





The French fought their way through the main door and the English garrison surrendered. It is said that the local Indians welcomed the French and helped them by describing the layout of the fort before the attack.

Atlantic sea-coast, whose staunch allies included the powerful Iroquois Confederacy (Hodensonee), particularly the Mohawks² inhabiting the area situated between the St Lawrence River valley and the populated areas of New England.

The fuse was lit in 1684 when Radisson (who had rejoined the Hudson's Bay Company after the French authorities wiped out the trader's hope of ever profiting from the fur-trade by the imposition of a heavy tax), sailed back to the Bay and captured, through treachery, the French Fort Bourbon he had helped found at the mouth of the Nelson River in 1682.

The commander defending the fort was none other than his own nephew Jean-Baptiste Chouart! It is possible to imagine the effect that the news of the capture of the fort (reported in 1685) had upon the authorities of New France. It was clear by then that English and French could not co-exist in that region.

In the south, the situation was not better. The Iroquois had recently humiliated Governor La Barre and, encouraged by the energetic New York Governor Dongan³, were now escorting a group of Albany traders to Michilimackinac to conduct business with the Ottawa Nation, who were normally allied with the French. (The Iroquois were frequently seen in the Ottawa River and St Lawrence River valleys hunting and trading with the Nations established in these areas.)

At the same time, tensions were slowly building up in Europe. The European States saw King Louis XIV of France, the most powerful monarch of the time, as a menace who needed neutralizing. Until the appointment of William as new king of England in 1689, nothing overt was considered. But the French colonial authorities in New France could not wait for a formal declaration of war in Europe. The situation in the Hudson's Bay and in the trading areas of the west had become intolerable. The new Governor of New France, Denonville, boldly decided to act.

In February 1686, Denonville struck northward before turning his attention to the south. He ordered, in sufficiently vague terms (we must remember that there did not yet exist a state of war between France and England), the Chevalier Pierre de Troyes, a regular officer of the Troupes de la Marine, to chase the English out of

the James Bay and to capture unauthorized traders working for Radisson, if not Radisson himself⁴.

Departing from Montreal on March 30 and with a detachment of 5 officers, 30 soldiers and 70 militiamen, de Troyes paddled up the Ottawa River and reached the head of the Abitibi River in early June. Along the route, the men suffered numerous mishaps and incredible hardships.

De Troyes' journal of this extraordinary expedition is a continuous description of accidents that dogged the tired men every mile of the way: "The men were soaked to the skin and spent more time in the water than in the canoes."⁵ de Troyes writes. They eventually reached the shores of the James Bay on June 20, exhausted, but determined, and having maintained the element of surprise.

On the morning of June 21, De Troyes faced the well-positioned and impressive English fort of Moose Factory (or Moose Fort) on Hayes island. The English defenders, including fewer than 20 men, were not prepared and their five cannon were not loaded. However, the fight is described as being "lively". The French fought their way through the main door and the English garrison surrendered. It is said that the local Indians welcomed the French and helped them by describing the layout of the fort before the attack.

Four days later, de Troyes crossed over to Fort Charles (Fort Rupert) on the Rupert River in the hope of capturing the fort and the company ship the *Craven*. Taking some cannon from Moose Fort (renamed Fort Saint-Louis by the captors), the detachment took to their canoes and after more difficulties finally reached the vicinity of the Charles Fort on June 30.

On the morning of July 3, a small group was ordered to take the vessel while the main force attacked the fort. The 30 or so defenders, confused by the noise of the cannon and the grenades thrown into the windows and down the chimneys, soon surrendered. The vessel was also taken without much problem. Charles Fort was burned down.

By mid July the raiders had returned to Moose Fort to prepare for the capture of Albany Fort

with the assistance of the now French-controlled vessel the *Craven*, armed with the heavy cannon from Moose Fort. When de Troyes appeared near Albany, it was soon apparent that the English garrison there were not aware of the presence of the enemy, mistaking the French in their canoes for Indians.

The French raiders were, at this point near starvation point and de Troyes' problem was not to let the English know about the weakened state of his men. De Troyes installed his guns and on July 25 the first two salvos were fired at the Governor's own house. The next day, the guns were fired again and the shots knocked down the defences of the fort. Here again, the garrison surrendered and the French renamed the place Fort Sainte-Anne.

In a little over a month, a small band of Frenchmen had captured all the English posts of the James Bay, leaving only Port Nelson to the English. Meanwhile, the local Crees had remained neutral, although it appeared they were not hostile to the French.

De Troyes left the area on August 19 and reached Quebec in October to be congratulated by Governor Denonville. De Troyes subsequently played a role in the military expeditions against the Senecas in 1687. He died of scurvy the next year, on May 8, 1688 at Fort Niagara where the garrison there was harassed by Iroquois warriors.

However, before leaving James Bay, de Troyes took a momentous decision that had a profound effect on the history of Hudson's Bay and James Bay. As Governor he left behind his second-in-command Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, a man who would later be described as New France's greatest and most determined soldier. D'Iberville was a remarkable person indeed, nearly succeeding in eliminating by himself the English from the Canadian North and changing the course of Canadian history. He will figure at the centre of the second part of the French period, which will appear in the next issue of Waswanipi Post. ♦

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¹ Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) was one of King Louis XIV's most energetic and effective Ministers. It was during his administration that New France was finally assured of a future. As Minister of the Marine, Colbert was directly responsible for the welfare of the French colony of North America, Canada being considered administratively as a department of the Navy.

² The Mohawks identify themselves in their language as the Kanienkehaka, pronounced Ganiengahaga. The French called them "Agniers".

³ Thomas Dongan (1634-1715) is one of the most interesting persons in American history. Ironically an Irish Catholic who served in Louis XIV's armies as a young man, he was appointed British Governor of New York in 1682. Considered one of the best colonial officers, he is chiefly responsible for ensuring the alliance between the Iroquois and the English colonies. In a certain sense he prefigures that other fascinating historical character, Sir William Johnson.

⁴ Radisson was installed out of reach at Port Nelson, enjoying the last years of his career. He retired in 1687 and went to England where he died in 1710.

⁵ English version of De Troyes' journal in Kenyon, W.A. and Turnbull, J.R., *The Battle for James Bay, 1686*, Macmillan of Canada, 1971, p. 48.

**D'Iberville
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remarkable
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indeed, nearly
succeeding in
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English from
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great ESCAPE stories

by Benoit Tremblay

One autumn
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about
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(600 miles)
north. He was
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other
Waswanipi
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with him.

Before the advent of on-Reserve schools and education from nearby non-native communities, it was a long established policy of the Department of Indian Affairs to separate First Nations children from their families and send them to residential schools. The objective of this policy: "the destruction of the children's link to their ancestral culture and their assimilation into the dominant society."¹

This is not to say that all residential schools were bad, but the experience of separation and the prison-inspired regulations of these schools made it extremely hard for any inmate-student to find fulfilment in education. (I should know, I also experienced such a school in my own troubled youth.)

In some cases, these schools harboured sexual predators disguised as teachers or members of religious orders, and today so many social problems found in the communities are attributable to the trauma suffered from this policy meant to "civilize" Indians.

Hence, many tried to escape these schools. This is the story of two such attempts involving, among other persons, a brother and a sister: Jack Blacksmith and Flora B. Kitchen.

THE BRANTFORD ESCAPE

Let us start with the older story. In 1965, Jack Blacksmith was about 11 years old and at the Mohawk Indian Residential School situated in Brantford, Ontario. One autumn day he yearned to go back home to Waswanipi – about 1000 km (620 miles) north. He was not alone. Five other

Waswanipi boys were ready to go with him: Albert "Kung Fu" Ottereyes, John Gull, Malcolm Saganash and two others.

Right after supper the boys fled the school and immediately began following a rail line heading out of the city. They had no maps but they were quite confident that by following the line they would eventually end up near Waswanipi. The rail track also represented safety from the cops and truancy officers who would be watching for a bunch of escaped kids on the roads.

For a while everything went well, but eventually an argument broke out. Some wanted to take the road; others wished to remain on the rail line. The road solution was finally adopted. But after walking for some time in the cold fall night, everyone had second thoughts about the soundness of the escape plan. From a small hill, the group spotted the lights of a house. They knocked and where let in. Someone possibly phoned the police (Jack doesn't remember; this was such a long time ago). One of the boys managed to steal a beer. They went back on the road.

Not long after, at about two in the morning, a police car found them. They were promptly sent back to the school where, as punishment, Jack and another boy were strapped for the offence of leaving the school without permission.

Though Jack's attempt ended in failure, he says that another Waswanipi boy did manage to escape the school successfully and made his way back to his family. This story is presently being documented.

THE LA TUQUE ALL-NIGHT ESCAPE

The La Tuque Indian Residential School was in the lumber town of La Tuque (north of Shawinigan), and it used to house a few Waswanipi and Mistissini students. The La Tuque School is one of the last federal residential schools. By the 1960s and 1970s, the discipline, although still severe, was more relaxed than in the past. The old certainties of the past were rapidly dissolving while Canada was experiencing its own hippie revolution.

Pierre Trudeau was in his first term as prime minister while 35-year-old Jean Chretien was the Minister of Indian Affairs (coincidentally, LaTuque is located in his riding). Robert Bourassa, the new Quebec premier, was supervising plans to build huge dams in the James Bay – his now infamous (or famous) “project of the century”.

One La Tuque Waswanipi student was of course John Kitchen, who experienced many adventures there as a ringleader. However, in 1971 or 1972, another student was trying to complete her Secondary II – the teenaged Flora Blacksmith.

This story begins when a group of three girls went out for an evening in town. One of them decided to go on her own and not come back. The



two others, Flora and her friend Annie “Fannie” Happyjack, returned to the school before curfew.

A school counsellor decided the pair were to blame for the absence of the third. The two girls determined they would not stay and take the blame. Late that autumn evening, they decided to escape and hitch-hike back to Waswanipi. At about midnight, the girls cleared the school fence and crossed the railroad track to reach a road that would lead them to the northern highway.

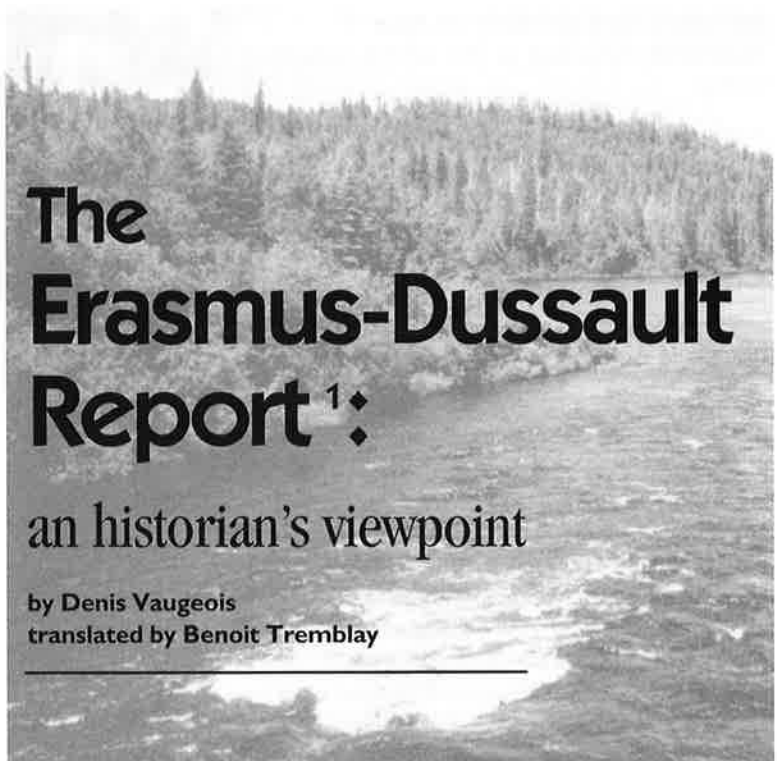
Flora remembers that they were not afraid. At one in the morning they got lucky and a motorist picked them up, leaving them at Roberval on the west shore of Lake St. John. There, in the wee hours of the morning, they got another ride to the south side of the Chibougamau Provincial Park. Recklessly, they accepted a ride in a car with three youths. All the while, Flora scanned the road behind, watching for the police in pursuit. When the boys stopped at an all-night coffee place in the middle of the park, the girls stayed in the car for fear of being recognized as school fugitives.

It never occurred to Flora that they might be in any kind of danger. The boys brought them coffee in the car, and off they went northward. It was still dark. They finally reached Chibougamau as dawn was breaking up. The girls thought they had made it! If only someone could drive them to Waswanipi.

They hit upon the idea of presenting themselves to the Chibougamau Indian Centre where they were received by a very suspicious Ella Neeposh. She asked the girls why they were not in school. Flora said they were on holidays. After sending the obviously hungry girls to breakfast, Ella immediately called on Peter Gull. When the girls returned to the centre, they happily thought Peter would drive them to Waswanipi ... and freedom. Instead, Peter drove southward. Before the day ended, Flora and Annie were back at the La Tuque school, explaining their escapade to the director. ♦

At about midnight, the girls cleared the school fence and crossed the railroad track to reach a road that would lead them to the highway north.

¹ Titley, E. Brian, *A Narrow Vision, Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1986, p. 75.



The Erasmus-Dussault Report¹:

an historian's viewpoint

by Denis Vaugeois
translated by Benoit Tremblay

Denis Vaugeois is a well known Quebec historian who was a cabinet minister in the René Levesque government and still advises the Quebec government on Aboriginal issues. His views give us insight into how the 'other side' thinks, especially on treaties and on the RCAP report. The opinions presented here are those of Mr Vaugeois and do not reflect those of the editors.

Can you think of any unfair treaty in the history of the world that continued to be supported by the disadvantaged party when it recovered its power to ask for redress?

The study of the past informs us on who we are and about our origins," begins the Dussault-Erasmus report. "It often reveals buried secrets that some may wish to hide and others will try to reveal."

There was a time when Indians were absent from Canada's history. That era has passed. For many years now, there are more books published on Indians than on any other subject and programmes such as the popular television series "Une épopée en Amérique" (An Epic in America) which gives ample space and time to Aboriginal peoples.

In fact, it is not possible to imagine the history of Canada without the Indians. Were it not for the Indians, the French would not have competed in North America for the fur trade, nor would 65,000 Franco-Canadians² have been able to

contain more than 1,600,000 Anglo-Americans between the Alleghenies and the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, the War for the Spanish Succession³ and the Seven Years' War⁴ were known to the Anglo-Americans as the French and Indian Wars. New France held itself together by an exceptional network of French-Indian alliances.

One Anglo-American understood the value of this alliance: William Johnson owed much to his Mohawk companion, Mary Brant. Through Mary Brant, Johnson entered the Amerindian universe and soon found himself comfortable there. He was so respected that the Iroquois suggested his name to the British as the first Superintendent of Indian affairs.

William Johnson was able to neutralize France's Indian allies and the French and Indian War eventually ended to the advantage of the Anglo-Americans. What promises had been made to the Indians? The question must be answered before we fulfill our obligation to respect such treaties.

According to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Europeans rarely – if ever – respected their treaties. This seems scandalous until you ask the question whether the Indians themselves respected their own treaties. The answer is no more and no less.

Treaties were rarely negotiated in a atmosphere of equality and serenity. The strongest participant wins the advantage and maintains this advantage until the balance of power changes. Agreements will last only as long as each party allows them to last. Can you think of any unfair treaty in the history of the world that continued to be supported by the disadvantaged party when it recovered its power to ask for redress?

Writers such as Francis Jennings prevent us from making much ado about these famous treaties. They are but the short-lived expression of the relative strength of the parties.

Precisely what was and is the strength of the Indians? As long as the French and English confronted each other, the Indians were in a position to negotiate. The Indians sided with those who could offer the most and who seemed to present the least danger to the Indians. In many cases, that was the French, who

wanted to do business but weren't interested in claiming Indian lands.

When in 1763, France lost America, the Indians lost their power of negotiation. They became the prey and soon the victims. The American War of Independence offered the Indians another chance to broker their influence. Many of them sided with the British; others offered their services to the Americans. Most, however, chose to remain relatively neutral.

In any case, the Indians could not win. In my opinion, they were the great losers in 1783. Progressively, Indians entered into a great dark period. In Canada that period lasted until the rise of Quebec separatism.

The constitutional disputes of the 1960s gave the Indians a new chance. The White Book on the future of Indians presented by Trudeau in 1969 unleashed a formidable outburst of awareness and affirmation.

Few First Nations peoples support the independence of Quebec. They instinctively distrust Quebec and it is useless to tell them otherwise.

Do they fear the new policy of the Quebec government? They know very well that Trudeau and Chretien gave them sections 25, 35 and 37 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982 with reluctance. In fact they owe these provisions to Quebec! If the repatriation of the constitution had been accomplished uneventfully, the Indian lobby would not have been as successful. It is entirely possible that Trudeau would have forgotten them and taken his revenge for the pullout of 1969. Indian leaders feared that kind of reaction.

Instead, the federal strategy was designed to break an emerging alliance between the Indian lobby and Quebec representatives in London. What the Indians obtained was a promise of a constitution that would recognize their aboriginal and treaty rights. They even called forth the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as support for these rights.

After the failure to settle constitutional issues in 1982, two constitutional conferences followed. The Meech Lake Accord failed, and was followed by another proposal (the Charlottetown Accord) that was more sensitive to the demands of aboriginal peoples. This proposal was rejected by the Canadian people. Faced with a deadlock,

the Aboriginal peoples proposed the creation of the Erasmus-Dussault Commission.

The Commission report is an extraordinary gold mine, but for historians and researchers, it is an especially valuable source of information and study.

The evidence shows that the temptation to subvert history to the service of the cause was not always resisted. How were the authors of the studies chosen? What kind of leeway did they have? Of course, in the minds of the Commissioners, the freedom enjoyed by the authors was total.

The aboriginal peoples are represented in the Commission report as the good guys, the European, the bad guys. But I see things differently.

As suggested in the report of the Commission, two continents contacted each other in 1492. For centuries, this story was seen through European eyes: the civilization, the techniques, the diseases. However, in the past few years this point of view has changed. We now recognize that the contact in 1492 began a formidable exchange between two old worlds, and that a new one was born.

Europe, and the rest of the world, China included, have profited from what the Americas and their inhabitants have had to offer. America also. And last but not least, the Europeans who installed themselves there. The tragedy is that the first inhabitants of the Americas have not been known to benefit from what was offered by the Old World.

This is where we are today.

When I hear about Aboriginal rights (erroneously translated as ancestral rights) of hunting, fishing and trapping rights, I ask, Where is the future? Where is progress? Isn't progress founded on meetings and exchanges?

The city is the prime area of such exchanges. What is the future of those who must rely on hunting and fishing to ensure their subsistence if this is so?



The aboriginal peoples are represented in the Commission report as the good guys, the European, the bad guys. But I see things differently.



Today Quebec finds the Aboriginal peoples very bitter, largely anglicized, deeply dissatisfied with their treatment by Ottawa, but conscious that they may benefit from constitutional quarrels.

It is very well to talk about traditions and cultures. But we should not bask in nostalgia or worse, hypocrisy. Where is the future of Aboriginal Nations? Where is the future of Aboriginal peoples themselves? We should learn to ask those questions in all honesty and realism.

Confronted with the conclusions of the Erasmus-Dussault report, should blame be laid at anyone's feet? Maybe.

If this is the case, then we should distribute the blame generously. After all, are we not a bit responsible for our own miseries?

What of the past injustices? They cannot be denied. Man is a wolf to man. What should we do? Repair the injustices? Be generous? Give social welfare?

The real solutions can only come from the interior. Man is great only for what he accomplishes, not for what is given to him.

The report of the Commission has a tendency to simplify. The Indians were good, the Whites, bad. So what? Do we want it otherwise? Indians or Whites, human beings are all equal.

History is, in this sense, pitiless. The Commission's version of history is somewhat slanted. The history of the world teaches us that all men are similar. They can be either good or bad. To develop and to realize themselves, men must be at the origin of what happens to them. Hence the only solution: the ability to govern oneself, to ensure one's own development, to take control.

The Erasmus-Dussault Commission proposes just this. It is up to the federal government to respond.

Faced with its own problems, the people of Quebec have left the Aboriginal peoples to the good hands of the federal authorities, who indeed had that constitutional responsibility. Today Quebec finds the Aboriginal peoples very bitter, largely anglicized, deeply dissatisfied with their treatment by Ottawa, but conscious that they may benefit from constitutional quarrels.

They are suspicious of Quebec's own demands. Starting as allies of the French, they have become the consenting orphans of the British and their successors, the federal government.

Today, they are trying to take their own destiny in their hands as never before. The Erasmus-Dussault Commission proposes some solutions.

Despite appearances, I will wager that their best allies remain the people of Quebec.

The future will tell me if I am right. ♦

McGill, February 2, 1997

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

² Trans. note: Until the 1960s the French-speaking people of Canada described themselves as "Canadiens", in opposition to "Les Anglais", English speaking people living in Canada. Only recently have people in Quebec started calling themselves "Quebecois" since the term "Canadian" is now taken to mean English-speaking people living in other provinces.

³ Also known as Queen Anne's War, the American phase of that war.(translator's note)

⁴ Trans. note: Although it is true that Queen Anne's, King George's War and the Seven Years' War were collectively known as the French and Indian Wars, the proper appellation of French and Indian War is ascribed to the American phase of the Seven Years' War.

The Waswanipi Justice System

The first fully independent First Nation justice system in Canada

by Benoit Tremblay

Since November 1996, the Cree First Nation community of Waswanipi has operated its own justice system, which was established following a long community-based process. By taking over justice, the community has taken an important step towards self-government.

What makes the Waswanipi system unique is that it was created without the involvement of the federal or provincial governments. Other community-based justice systems that do exist generally are "sentencing circles" or "justice committees" that work in conjunction with the non-native justice system.

Some other First Nations communities allow the appointment of local Justices of the Peace based on Canadian law. The Waswanipi system differs in that the community applies its own laws.

Establishing a justice system is long and difficult process, but it is also an exciting experience. Because Waswanipi's is the first of its kind, the community could not draw from the experience of others. There was also concern about how Ottawa and Quebec would see this initiative.

Waswanipi also rejected the possibility of support from the Grand Council of the Crees, which was seen as having a tendency to take control of such processes and finance large scale studies conducted by non-native experts that, in the end, were of no practical use to the community-based initiative.

This experiment in community justice is Canada's best kept secret. The Waswanipi justice system was inaugurated in November 1996 in a local ceremony attended by the community members, the Grand-Chief of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (at the time Russell Roundpoint), Chief Harry McDougall of

Abitibiwinni, representatives from the Algonquins of Lac Simon, Henry Mianscum of the Grand Council of the Crees (of Quebec)-Cree Regional Authority Task Force on Justice, Louise Thompson, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Justice Department Coordinator, and others. The system has since functioned with relatively few attempts at advertising its existence in other communities.

The inaugural ceremony presided by Chief John Kitchen enabled the local Council officially to appoint the Senior Community Justice Panelist Flora B. Kitchen and her Community Justice Panelists colleagues, Elder Ella Neeposh, Elizabeth Ottereyes and Edith Gull. (People often refer to them as 'judges', and the Community Justice Panel as the 'court'.)

This simple system is guided by the Waswanipi Peace Act (a form of community behaviour code adopted by the community).

Grand Chief (as he was then) Russell Roundpoint, Louise Thompson, Vaughn Sunday, Chief Delormier and Martha Lafrance



Louise Thompson and Flora B. Kitchen

For our outside readers, Waswanipi is a Cree community of more than 1000 people situated in the eastern James Bay territory, between the non-native Quebec communities of Senneterre and Chibougamau. It is about seven hours drive north of Ottawa. Its lands are part of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (JBNQA) area. The JBNQA, signed November 1975, is the first of the 'modern' Treaties.

The Cree communities of northern Quebec nominally fall under the jurisdiction of the Cree-Naskapi (of Quebec) Act which replaces the *Indian Act*. The people of the community speak Cree, but are also fluent in English and French. The community is part of the Grand Council of the Crees (of Quebec) and of the Cree Regional Authority (these are two aspects of our version of a Tribal Council).

The Act includes sections on keeping of the peace, alcohol and drug prohibitions, protection of the local environment and other elements. Wrongdoers who violate one of the Act's provisions are ticketed by the local police officers and summoned to explain themselves within 14 days of the commission of the offence.

Their case is heard by a team of Community Justice Panelists presided by the Senior Community Justice Panelist. The hearings are conducted in Cree and are non-adversarial. Lawyers are not allowed at the proceedings. Sentencing, based on Cree traditions, stresses healing, restitution, community work and forgiveness. Any fines are used to help pay for the system.

To support the justice system, the local police department is now regulated under the Waswanipi Police Act, another first in Canada. Police officers are authorized to apply the Peace Act and to account for their actions to the General Assembly of the people.

The Peace Act and Police Act are designed to be modified as we learn lessons from their application. Already, there is discussion in the community about expanding the scope of the system. For example, it has been suggested that the Peace Act (which also regulates the Community Justice Panel) be modified to include provisions on wills, arbitration and mediation (a service that could be offered to resolve disputes in other First Nations communities), the payment of rents and on trapline dispute resolution.



Edith Gull

The system is revolutionary in one important aspect. For the first time since the adoption of the original *Indian Act*, the Cree First Nation community of Waswanipi has unilaterally decreed that the Peace Act and Police Act can be applied outside of Category I lands (reserve) assigned to it by the Federal and Provincial governments.

Waswanipi does not recognize the federally imposed borders of its reserve. It supports the concept of 'traditional lands' (the sum of the area of its traplines), which Waswanipi intends to control entirely as it did in the days before the recent presence of the Quebec government (early 1960s) and the signing in 1975 of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*. (Waswanipi does not adopt "by-laws" any more except in very particular situations)

After more than a year in operation, the system is a relative success. Panel hearings are being held regularly, and more and more people are now conscious of its existence and importance. The Panelists are aware that the system still needs improvement, but the community feel pride in having achieved what was a dream not too long ago.

Waswanipi is gaining the reputation of a community that does things, instead of just talking about it. Looking into the future, the community hopes that a uniform system of Cree justice will be adopted by the other eight Cree communities of eastern James Bay. It also hopes that the Cree Nation will soon be entirely autonomous in matters of administration of justice.

Provincial non-native judges are starting to express their interest by the Waswanipi experiment. Those interested in the administration of a complete First Nation community-based justice system should contact Flora B. Kitchen, Senior Community Justice Panelist at 819-753-2587 (fax 819-753-2555). Ms Kitchen is also available to explain the process of establishment of a community-based justice system to any First Nation or Tribal Council. ♦

Letter from **WINNIPEG**

by Michel Allard and Daniel Bork (Sioux)

Those who have had the opportunity to visit Winnipeg over the last 10 years will notice the tremendous changes in its racial and sociological tissue. The city's aboriginal population almost tripled during that period, bringing the aboriginal proportion of the total population to almost 10%. Many are experiencing a decent life but for many others, life is extremely difficult.

With an unemployment rate of over 30% in a city where the global rate is around 7%, one realizes that we still have a lot of work to do for our people to equal the average standard of living. One solution is to support business activities and entrepreneurship within the Aboriginal community by implementing an Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and an Aboriginal Business Development Centre.

Public or private?

A group of individuals and organizations in Winnipeg is taking these initiatives to develop tools for the Winnipeg Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal Council in Winnipeg is supportive but some Aboriginal business leaders are skeptical and would rather see those initiatives in the hands of the private sector.

This fairly recent debate between public and business leadership is interesting and crucial, because the model implemented in Winnipeg will probably be followed by other cities in Canada before an evaluation of results will be available.

In the past, the First Nations communities have often passed the mandate of their development corporations to private individuals and/or corporations. The reason is that their development corporations' ventures were often unprofitable, delivered bad services and competed with private initiatives in the community.

Establishing a public-controlled business center goes against this general trend. However, we have no reason to believe that it will not work since it has not been tried before in an urban environment in Canada.

Maybe the optimal solution would be to develop a partnership of public and private interests, which would share the control of a hybrid entity.



How would such a project work out? There are many decision levels, personal interests and political implications to consider. What is really important is that both sides would have the opportunity to present their vision and arguments before decisions are finalized.

**Danielle Bork,
Michel Allard and
Kathleen Curtis**

**The
"Aboriginal"
industry in
Manitoba is
big business
for a host of
non-natives.
Most of the
money spent
on Aboriginal
health care
and social
services,
Aboriginal
business
development,
Aboriginal
education and
public policing
goes to non-
Aboriginal
companies
and
organizations.**

An entrepreneur's perspective

The push from a group of individuals and organizations in Winnipeg to develop an Aboriginal Business Development Centre is an interesting approach to changing the many perceptions and prejudices of Manitobans about the Aboriginal world. However, it is not receiving crucial support.

Many people who will use the Aboriginal Business Development Centre will have good ideas, enthusiasm but no basic business development fundamentals. To succeed, they need bridging assistance – both financial and experiential. For the first few years, they will need money for start up and access to someone who has management experience practices, whether in the public or private sector.

Success requires a complete solution: financing, expertise and information. A business development centre that provides information without start-up money or expertise in marketing, money management and people, will accomplish little.

Whether you are First Nation, Inuit, Metis or Non-Status, you still need access to capital and funding programs to support you in building a retail operation, manufacturing outfit, or a knowledge-based business. For the time being, this type of fund is not available.

Similarly, money alone does not create success. If an entrepreneur secures financial and management support to begin an operation, that person will still need access to training in accounting, marketing, computers, and knowledge of the provincial and city markets.

Depending on the business, the would-be entrepreneur needs access to a business support system where good business advice is available. This type of support system for Aboriginals in Winnipeg is not available. It is far from evident that the provincial or federal governments are interested in doing this. Most public officials appear to be happy with the status quo.

There could be a reason for this. The "Aboriginal" industry in Manitoba is big business for a host of non-natives. Most of the money spent on Aboriginal health care and social services, Aboriginal business development, Aboriginal education and public policing goes to non-Aboriginal companies and organizations.

Why change the status quo when it means possibly putting your income, your job and your future on the line. ♦



The election of a National Chief:

observations from outside in

by Benoit Tremblay

In July 29, 1997, I was sitting with more than 500 other observers and media people in the great hall of a Vancouver harbour-side hotel, anticipating the electoral speeches of the three main candidates to the position of National Chief: Ovide Mercredi, Wendy Grant-John and Phil Fontaine. Three other candidates also hoped for a showing in the results: Joe Dion, Bob Manuel and Larry Sault.

I am here principally because of a friendship that developed over the years between Ovide Mercredi and myself. I was more than curious to see how this intense and serious man would fare during these elections after being recently criticized from all sides (including, sadly, Grand-Chief Matthew Coon-Come) for his lack of diplomacy and for having an unyielding attitude towards Ottawa.

I had twice worked with Ovide, once during the summer of 1990, when he was a AFN Vice-Chief for Manitoba and charged with coordinating AFN's response to the Oka Crisis, and later in 1996 when I became his assistant on the Land Claims issues when he was National Chief.

I always been fascinated and impressed with Ovide since the first time I encountered him in Montreal in March 1989 at the Special General Assembly called by the Grand Council of the Crees (of Quebec) at the time when I was the special assistant to Grand-Chief Matthew Coon-Come (just before being hired by Chief Abel S. Kitchen to be legal counsel to Waswanipi).

Last year when Romeo Saganash and I met an obviously tired and worn out Ovide in Ottawa, he had told us that he was not going to run for National Chief after holding it for two mandates. Things had not been working well between himself and the Minister of Indian Affairs, Ron Irwin.

The Minister, among other annoyances, was trying to push his version of amendments to the Indian Act. These amendments had clearly been dreamed up by his officials without real consultation with First Nations, although he was claiming otherwise. The Minister was clearly missing a unique chance to re-examine the very nature of the Indian Act, and to work with First Nations governments and AFN on the existence and role of the Department of Indian Affairs, finding ways to re-establish a respectful Nation to Nation relationship between Ottawa and Aboriginal peoples to replace the Indian Act, which is a living legacy of imperial colonialist thought that still affects the daily lives of First Nations communities.



On another front, it became quite clear to Ovide that the reform of the land claims process was not progressing as planned. The Ipperwash affair was clearly preoccupying him. He had done enough fighting on the political front in the past 15 years and it just seemed that Ottawa was turning into a huge, unbreachable brick wall.

The winning campaign team: Norma Diamond, Phil Fontaine and Ken Young

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Last year when Romeo Saganash and I met an obviously tired and worn out Ovide in Ottawa, he had told us that he was not going to run for National Chief after holding it for two mandates. Things had not been working well between himself and the Minister of Indian Affairs, Ron Irwin.

The Minister, among other annoyances, was trying to push his version of amendments to the Indian Act. These amendments had clearly been dreamed up by his officials without real consultation with First Nations, although he was claiming otherwise. The Minister was clearly missing a unique chance to re-examine the very nature of the Indian Act, and to work with First Nations governments and AFN on the existence and role of the Department of Indian Affairs, finding ways to re-establish a respectful Nation to Nation relationship between Ottawa and Aboriginal peoples to replace the Indian Act, which is a living legacy of imperial colonialist thought that still affects the daily lives of First Nations communities.



On another front, it became quite clear to Ovide that the reform of the land claims process was not progressing as planned. The Ipperwash affair was clearly preoccupying him. He had done enough fighting on the political front in the past 15 years and it just seemed that Ottawa was turning into a huge, unbreachable brick wall.

The winning campaign team: Norma Diamond, Phil Fontaine and Ken Young

The National Chief is a person without power. He cannot legislate; he cannot give orders. He can only act within the narrow confines of mandates that Chiefs are prepared to entrust to him.

I had met the Minister twice and I could understand from these encounters that it was difficult for Ovide to get along with this man. Ovide, when you know him, does not suffer fools gladly, and his patience with the rough speaking ex-mayor of a Minister had just about ran out. To the Minister, Indian politics can be summarized in one simple expression: divide and conquer. This quite accurately sums up the historic relations between whites and Indians since the 17th century in Canada and the United States.

So, a year ago, Ovide was ready to retire from political life and return home to his family. The responsibilities and duties of being the National Chief, including reconciling the many divergent views of First Nations leaders, were wearing him down.

The National Chief is a person without power. He cannot legislate; he cannot give orders. He can only act within the narrow confines of mandates that Chiefs are prepared to entrust to him. He has to report constantly to them on his actions. However, the perception is out there that the National Chief must solve issues and lead the agenda. He must at the same time be a moral leader, a negotiator, a peace maker, a warrior, the epitome of First Nations collective strength, a media celebrity and the receptacle of all frustrations and ingratitude, all rolled in one – in essence, all pressure, no praise.

Rewards are few, and headaches are the norm to anyone holding that position. By going to Vancouver, I was returning to meet a friend I had not seen in while. Amazingly Ovide had meanwhile changed his mind and was here as a candidate.

At the front of the room more than 500 Chiefs or proxies were waiting to hear the candidates. Although the candidates are known to the Chiefs and have campaigned across the country, few people were wearing buttons declaring their loyalty. Most Chiefs and proxies prefer not to show their preferences openly and are prepared to listen respectfully to all the candidates. (Had Romeo Saganash played a role in this?)

I suspect that most have not made up their minds, although the consensus in hallway conversations is that Ovide is not going to make a good showing. The media had declared Wendy Grant-John of BC as the front runner, but the general feeling was that Phil Fontaine, the AMC



Top photo: Bill Erasmus
Bottom photo: Ovide Mercredi



Top photo: Betty Recollect, F.N. women's business representative

Bottom photo: John KimBell, celebrated Mohawk conductor and philanthropist.

Winter 1997

Grand Chief and eternal rival to Ovide, was in a strong position to capture the title.

Gradually the candidates came to the podium. Ovide looked sombre and collected; Phil was scanning the assembly confidently. Joe Matthias made an inspiring speech to present the first candidate, Wendy Grant-John, who is well known in British Columbia for her defence of Treaty rights and her role in the famous Sparrow case.

Ms Grant-John also served three times as Chief of Musqueam First Nation and as AFN Vice-Chief for BC. Joe Matthias called her a challenger of old attitudes, which is precisely the impression we all got when she started to speak.

In her speech, given in a measured voice used to speaking to large groups of people, Wendy Grant-John expounded on the role that AFN should take, respecting the autonomy of First Nations and recognizing the role of the Chiefs. She also warned the assembly that AFN's house must be put in order to remain relevant.

Wendy Grant-John promised that if she were elected, she would establish a Secretariat that would inform First Nations on the works of AFN's diverse commissions. She constantly evoked the spirit of the warrior. In an oblique reference to Ovide, she said that a National Chief must be tough but diplomatic to open doors, and must foster cooperation, healing and reconciliation as well taking the focus away from despair. However, her tone did not invite applause until the very end.

Wendy Grant-John was followed by Phil Fontaine who made his introductory comments in Ojibway, then reverted to English. His speech was given with authority, two hands gripping the podium and looking straight at the members of the Assembly. He immediately stressed the need to change the national organization. He said that AFN must be inclusive and be guided by the collective wisdom, respecting the regional processes designed by each region. AFN must recognize the differences of each Nation and establish an agenda that belongs to the First Nations and that addresses its priorities. Such an agenda, he said, will become Canada's agenda. In a direct criticism of Ovide, he said that AFN could not ever be silent as it was during the last federal elections.

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AFN must belong to all, become political, work for the communities, support economic development (the necessary condition to self-determination) and to defend treaty and Aboriginal rights.

It was a good speech, delivered with conviction. The assembly interrupted it many times with applause. Phil Fontaine added that AFN was there to conduct skilful negotiations, and if all failed, then it could resort to direct action. But, he said, the leadership must listen, and give a voice to women and youth.

He was again applauded when he said that First Nations peoples must never allow themselves to be divided by a government that insists on distinguishing between on- and off-reserve Indians. Applause followed when he mentioned the importance of women in the process.

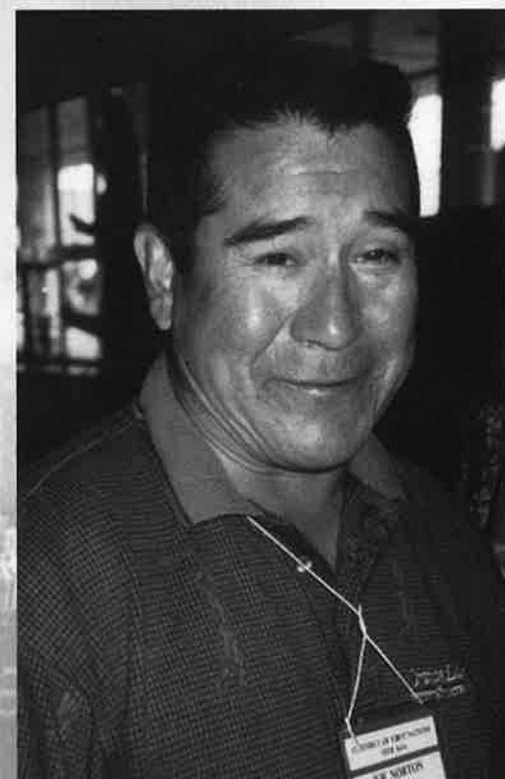
Respect, he said, would be accorded to initiatives at local and regional levels. He gave as examples the treaty resolution process in Saskatchewan, the struggle for resources in BC, education initiatives in Alberta, and the job market in Ontario.

In conclusion Phil Fontaine said that AFN must belong to all, become political, work for the communities, support economic development (the necessary condition to self-determination) and to defend treaty and Aboriginal rights. He added: "We are not victims. We control our destiny. We control our future..." Applause again. One could but admire the tenacity and strength of this survivor of the residential school system who seemed to have fire in his eyes.

Then Ovide took place at the lectern. I had been waiting for this moment. I had seen Ovide make a forceful emotional speech in Whitehorse, Yukon, following a United Nations conference at the end of March 1995. What he gave here in Vancouver was electrifying, the kind to make the spine tingle.

Ovide knew he was the under-dog, that he carried the disadvantages of the incumbent and he knew he could not leave without fighting and accounting for himself. In a typical preacher style, with no notes whatsoever, he started in a low voice by saying that change could be brought about by experience. Then he looked at everybody, the tone of his voice rising: "Some have said that the government closed the door on the national Chief. No! It is the government that closed the door on us all! What the government wants, is a National Chief that it can control!"

Each sentence was delivered in Cree, each time he translated. He reminded the Chiefs that in his



**Top photo: Gary Farmer, publisher and actor
Bottom photo: Joe Norton, Mohawk, Grand Chief of Kahnawake**



Top photo: Roger Augustine, N.B.
Bottom photo: Harry McDougall, Chief
Abitibiwimmi Nation

first term, they had asked him to act kindly in his relationship with the government. Then he related that the publication of Jean Chretien's Red Book in 1993 had given him hope. "What Jean Chretien said was that he was going to honour the Treaties."

But the treaties were not honoured. By then Ovide had passion in his voice, always speaking Cree and English alternately. "Another broken promise was economic development," he told the assembly. "I have listened to the Chiefs. You have asked me to fight. I have fought!" He continues with a hint of irony, "And now, certain persons have told me that I was not diplomatic!"

In a more conciliatory voice, he said that he tried to change the perceptions of the Canadian people had about First Nations: "While people think we have lots of land, we actually occupy but 0.3% of Canada," he gives as an example.

He said he understood the dilemmas of the Chiefs. The expectations of the people are growing, but the resources are not available and the Chiefs are those who must endure the frustrations of their people. Ovide's speech was interrupted many times by appreciative applause. "The government of Canada can't even take care of its own poor people. It is a government that serves the rich!"

At the end of his speech, he told the assembly that as a National Chief, he could not be all things to all people. Choices had to be made when faced with conflicting demands from the Chiefs. But when the message was clear, when the Chiefs told him to fight the Indian Act amendments, then he acted and forced the Minister to back down.

I had been there, on December 1996 in Winnipeg, when nearly 300 Chiefs supported Ovide in his fight against the amendments to the Indian Act. Ovide's speech ended in enthusiastic applause from the assembly. The three other candidates followed, but I was already out in the hallways. I was curious now about the voting pattern of the electors following these speeches.

The Chiefs and proxies now lined up to vote, a process that lasted many hours. Then gradually the great hall filled again. Everyone was anxious. By chance, when the director of elections was ready to read the results, I was standing close to

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**Michelle Audet and
Ghyslain Picard,
AFN Vice-Chief for
Québec**



**Violet Pachanos and
Bill Wilson, B.C.**



Elijah Harper



**Brian Shawana, D.G.
Cree-Naskapi
Commission and
Joe Miskokoman,
Ontario**



Phil Fontaine. He seemed confident enough, surrounded by a cohort of media people and TV cameras.

When the voting results for the first ballot were read, people were astonished. Wendy Grant-John got 123 votes, Phil Fontaine 126 votes and Ovide ... 127 votes. I could see that Phil was trying to hide his disappointment. Ovide had at least shown he was not a write-off. He was a fighter and had demonstrated the courage of a warrior in face of adversity. If it had been a Band election, that would have been enough! But I also knew that Phil would ultimately win.

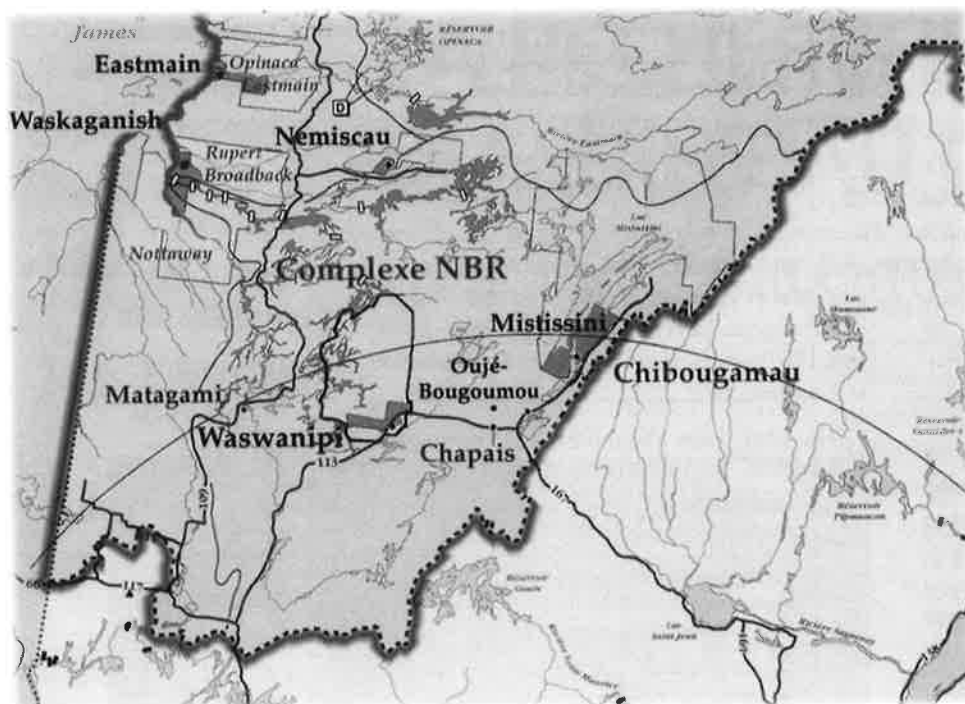
I hope that Ovide's experience will not be lost on the Chiefs in Canada. It is extremely important for the leaders to show their entire support to the new National Chief, who will need that more than ever.

Phil Fontaine has shown through his years in Manitoba that he can reach consensus on many issues. That quality will serve him well during his mandate. He is well known as a person who finishes whatever he starts. Already, the new Minister of Indian Affairs, Jane Stewart has shown her willingness to cooperate with the new National Chief in a sensitive and open-minded speech given on the next day. She made the point of telling us that she was seriously reading the RCAP report and studying its conclusions and recommendations.

As for Ovide, I met him the next day and expressed my sadness to see him go. He has served his people with honour and dignity. But I think this is not the last we will hear of him. ♦

As I waited, I recognized many faces moving around, discussing in groups or simply waiting for the first speakers. Among others, I saw and sought the opinions of Brian Shawana, Director-General of the Cree-Naskapi Commission, Grand Chief Mike Mitchell, recently elected Grand-Chief in Akwesasne, Chief John Kitchen, Ghyslain Picard, soldiering on as AFN Vice-Chief for Quebec, Chief McDougall of Abitibiwinni, Norman Gull from the Cree Regional Authority, Violet Pachanos, voting for Wemindji, Chief William Mianscum of Mistissini, Chief Angus Toulouse of Sagamok, the irrepressible Joe Miskokomon, Billy Erasmus from NWT (who always speaks to me in surprisingly good French), Grand-Chief Joe Norton, actor Gary Farmer (who was also selling subscriptions to his new magazine *Aboriginal Voices*), Norma Diamond, Anne Chalmers and Ron Maurice of the Indian Claims Commission and many others. I was missing the presence of Algonquin Grand-Chief Albert Tenasco whom I got to know well during our many times together in previous AFN meetings. He would have given the Elder's point of view about this important event in the life of AFN.





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en valeur.**

trouvés antérieurement par DeBeers sur les berges du fleuve McKenzie dans les Territoires du Nord-Ouest dans la province géologique de l'Esclave dont l'âge est presque similaire à celui de la province du Supérieur. C'est ainsi que fut découvert le champ kimberlitique du Lac de Gras, dont un bon nombre de pipes sont diamantifères et dont une a été déclarée rentable. Celle-ci et probablement d'autres seront exploitées à partir de 1999. Les autochtones de cette région ont eu beaucoup à dire sur la façon la plus acceptable, à leurs yeux, de poursuivre et de réaliser ce développement économique.

J'ai tenu à raconter l'histoire du diamant au Canada pour démontrer jusqu'à quel point les découvertes qui ont été faites et celles qui restent à faire, l'ont été et le seront dans les régions Moyen Nord et Grand Nord du Canada occupées en grande partie par les groupes autochtones, dont les Cris. Ceux-ci, surtout les Cris qui sont jeunes aujourd'hui, auront un rôle grandissant à jouer dans la découverte, la mise en valeur de ces gîtes et sur les discussions et les jugements à exercer lors de leurs mises en valeur. Ceci se fera au fur à mesure de l'introduction des cours de formation et de

programmes d'études appropriés et des choix de cours d'études offerts aux jeunes autochtones.

La grande province géologique du Supérieur au Québec n'a été prospectée en reconnaissance systématique pour le diamant que dans sa partie sud entre le 47^e et le 50^e degré de latitude. Des intrusions de kimberlites ont été découvertes aux abords de Waswanipi. Des prospections de reconnaissance dans des régions choisies et de grandeur limitée ont été faites plus au nord entre le 50^e et le 55^e degré de latitude. Jusqu'à ce jour il n'y pas eu de travaux de prospection organisés et systématiques sur la majeure partie de la section Moyen et Grand Nord, particulièrement au nord du 55^e degré de latitude jusqu'à la frontière nord de la province géologique aux environs du 61^e degré de latitude nord.

La propection organisée et systématique de cette immense région qui est particulièrement favorable au diamant et à d'autres minéraux doit devenir une des préoccupations d'ordre économique des Premières Nations de la région et un focus de leur système d'éducation.

Cela est valable pour toute l'étendue de la province du Supérieur du Québec mais vaut surtout pour l'étendue sise au nord du 55^e degré de latitude là où les ressources forestières sont nulles et où les roches vertes volcaniques riches en métaux précieux et usuels sont rares.

Il s'agit pour les jeunes autochtones, de relever le défi de l'éducation et de la formation. Il s'agit, pour leurs professeurs et leurs aînés, de les encourager et de les motiver. La direction du développement économique et social de leur Nation par tous les moyens, y compris le développement du secteur minier dépendra de la qualité de leur formation et de la mise en place d'une politique d'exploitation des ressources naturelles. ♦

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b7WX
b7WY
b7WZ
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b7XB
b7XC
b7XD
b7XE
b7XF
b7XG
b7XH
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b7XJ
b7XK
b7XL
b7XM
b7XN
b7XO
b7XP
b7XQ
b7XR
b7XS
b7XT
b7XU
b7XV
b7XW
b7XX
b7XY
b7XZ
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b7YB
b7YC
b7YD
b7YE
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b7YK
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b7YU
b7YV
b7YW
b7YX
b7YY
b7YZ
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b7ZJ
b7ZK
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b7ZM
b7ZN
b7ZO
b7ZP
b7ZQ
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b7CL
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b7CN
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b7DH
b7DI
b7DJ
b7DK
b7DL
b7DM
b7DN
b7DO
b7DP
b7DQ
b7DR
b7DS
b

▷ L' $U^A C \Delta$ 1 $\Delta C \Pi \delta$, $\sigma \rightarrow \delta \Delta \Pi^{\circ}$ 1 $\Gamma C \Gamma$ C° 1 Δ° $\Delta \Pi C \Delta$ Δ° ▷ $U^A \cdot \Delta \delta$.



