CREE ETHNOGEOGRAPHY

Gwilym Lucas Eades

Department of Geography
Royal Holloway, University of London

Abstract

This paper explores the nature of Wemindji Cree territorial identity. It uses a mixed methods approach combining qualitative geographic information systems (GIS) and ethnography. GIS was used to categorize a database of Wemindji Cree place names within local and traditional naming systems. The resulting maps produce a picture of Wemindji Cree life as a 'view from nowhere' disconnected from lived life on the ground. Participant observation of life in Wemindji, especially amongst tallymen (trapline bosses), over two seasons provided an ethnography of Cree life both in town and on the land. The situated perspective 'on the ground' offers specifics of daily life that revolve around maps. Inscriptions such as maps have been incorporated into the everyday lives of tallymen, who are respected leaders in Wemindji. Rundstrom's categories of inscribing (written) versus incorporating (oral) cultures were found to elude mutual exclusivity. Wemindji Cree are a residually oral culture with a dependence on maps necessitated by the tracking and discussion of incursions from state-industrial interests in trapline territories and by the need to commemorate traditional life on the land. Maps are thus necessary but not sufficient for explaining Wemindji Cree territorial identity. Ethnographic depth was included to round out strictly inscribed accounts of identities demonstrated to revolve to a great extent around the leadership of the tallymen. A balance of inscribed (through GIS maps) and embodied (through ethnography) accounts of Wemindji Cree life as lived through movement, wayfaring and the business of life both in town and on the land, helped produce the resulting ethnogeographic account of Wemindji Cree life and territorial identity.

Etnogeografía de los Indígenas *Cree*

Resumen

Este trabajo estudia la naturaleza de la identidad de los indígenas Wemindji *Cree*. Se utiliza una metodológica mixta, combinando sistemas de información geográfica (SIG) cualitativos, y etnografía. Se utilizó el SIG para categorizar la base de datos de lugares de lxs Wemindji *Cree* según la nomenclatura tradicional. Los mapas que resultan de ello son imágenes de la vida *Wemindji Cree* como 'vista desde ningún lado', desconectados de la vida en el terreno. La observación participante de la vida de lxs *Wemindji Cree*, especialmente entre los jefes de caza (*tallymen*) durante dos temporadas, aportó una etnografía de la vida de lxs *Cree* tanto en la ciudad como en las tierras. La perspectiva 'sobre el terreno' ofrece especificidades sobre la vida relacionada a los mapas. Inscripciones tales como mapas han sido incorporadas a la vida cotidiana de los jefes de caza, que son líderes respetados en Wemindji. Aquí se puede ver que las categorías de culturas inscritas (escritas) versus incorporadas (orales) de Rundstrom eluden la exclusividad mutua. Lxs *Wemindji Cree* son una cultura oral residual que depende de los mapas, dada su necesidad de hacer un seguimiento y de discutir las incursiones de los intereses estatales e industriales en zonas de caza, y de conmemorar la vida tradicional en la tierra. Es decir que los mapas son necesarios pero no suficientes para entender la identidad de lxs *Wemindji Cree*. La profundidad etnográfica se incluyó en esta investigación para terminar de entender los relatos identitarios que evidentemente están muy relacionados al liderazgo de

los jefes de caza. El balance de relatos escritos (SIG) y vividos (etnografía) sobre la vida de los *Wemindji Cree* dio como resultado un relato etnográfico sobre su vida e identidad territorial.

Palabras clave: James Bay, Cree, SIG cualitativos, etnografía, métodos combinados, conocimiento indígena

A Introduction

This paper combines two theoretical innovations from the geographical and anthropological literature in order to answer the following question: what is the nature of Wemindji Cree territorial identity? Insights and innovations from critical GIS (geographic information systems) (Cope and Elwood 2009) and from environmental anthropology (Berkes 2008) form the theoretical framework for an exploration of Cree landscape, toponymy and identity. In order to answer the question posed above, a mixed methods approach is favored, involving, first, the categorization and symbolization of Wemindji Cree place names using GIS. Second, the GIS work is situated and contextualized through ethnography and participant observation. During two seasons living in Wemindji, Quebec, the author collected data about Cree place names and named places and how they fit into Cree worldviews. Applied insights from participant observation form the basis of an ethnography of Cree land-based identities. Western cartographic products such as GIS maps are necessary, but not sufficient, for conveying senses of Cree territorial identity to outside/academic audiences. For the Cree themselves, while embodied activity and performed mappings 'on the ground' are sufficient, as insiders, for maintaining senses of self in and through the landscape, there are equally strong senses that maps hold powerful sway and affect actions and outcomes, especially amongst trapline bosses. The latter, known as 'tallymen' were present during all phases of the present research.

Wemindji is located on the eastern shore of subarctic James Bay (a large bay opening onto the even larger Hudson Bay to the north in the Canadian arctic), Quebec, Canada. 'Tallyman' is an identity construct first formed in relation to the Hudson's Bay Company, which operated in the region for over 300 years (Francis and Morantz 1983; Morantz 2002; Cree Nation of Wemindji 2010). A tallyman is responsible for a trapline territory, each represented on trapline maps as a bounded entity, separate and without overlap with adjacent trapline territories. Historically, the tallymen 'tallied,' or kept track of the abundance of resources, especially marketable resources, on the land enclosed by the tallyman's trapline. The trapline areas themselves were formalizations of kinship based ties to the land, in which families and their hunting, fishing or gathering activities were associated with specific, but not rigidly defined, portions of land (Scott 1983).

The Cree word for trapline boss is *uuchimaau*, the person (a woman or a man can be an *uuchimaau*) responsible for the well-being of the portion of land enclosed by the boundary of his or her trapline. An *uuchimaau* will have a good idea of species abundance and quality upon that piece of territory, and usually more generally across Wemindji Cree territory as a whole. According to Berkes (2008, 110), the tallyman

> is the observer of nature, the interpreter of observations, the decision-maker in resource management, and the enforcer of rules of proper hunting conduct.

Being the *uuchimaau* means knowing the land and its human and animal inhabitants, their activities and their tendencies, and it usually means being a spiritual leader as well (Berkes 2008, 110; Scott 1983 and 1988, 39).

A primary means for keeping track of the large amount of information involved in effectively and responsibly carrying out one's duties as *uuchimaau* is toponymy, or place names (Wellen 2008; Eades 2010). Cree, and indigenous cultures more generally, produce and use place names somewhat differently than do western cultures (Muller-Wille 2001; Hunn and Meilleur 2010; Hunn 1996). The latter might name places to commemorate historical events and persons; to refer to named places in original homelands far away; or sometimes simply to label

or tag a place mnemonically. Indigenous peoples are different in their approach to toponymy (Monmonier 2006). In reference to North American 'Indian' place naming practices, and drawing from Afable and Beeler (1997), Meadows (2008, 16) identifies several ways of naming places, including "descriptive, locational, names referring to human activities at a site, and names referring to history, mythology or folklore, and other miscellaneous forms."

In many cases, modern North American place names reflect a choice by colonists, settlers and their descendants to retain the (ab)original name, in slightly modified form. For example, the island of Manhattan retains an echo of the people (Manhates) after which the small island is named (Short 2009, 39); and "at least 25 out of the 50 states of the union trace their names to Native American words, ideas or places" (Short 2009, 46). Retaining the old, indigenous, names for places is a form of tribute to the vanquished, a form of recognition that addresses traces of what went before. It is an established practice and it is a western place naming practice, not to be confused with indigenous place naming practices. Labelling the state of Utah, for instance, bounded and colored on a map, is very different from applying a similar name from which it is derived to a diminished people for whom the name has quite different meaning. For the original inhabitants of Utah, straight state lines cut across continuous surfaces of meaning, livelihood and affect (Larsen and Johnson 2012).

On the other hand, sometimes a 'native' name reflects reclamation of an original name that had been replaced. The town of Wemindji was once known as Old Factory (Morantz 2010, xi). Wemindji "is from the Cree 'wiimin uchi', which means 'red ochre mountain'" (Cree Nation of Wemindji 2010, 3), and this name is rich with meaning and history. 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the year Wemindji moved from an island at the mouth of *paakumshumwaastikw siipii* (Old Factory River) approximately 40 kilometres north to higher ground at the mouth of the *mwaakatuu siipii* (Loon River). Even the barest outline of the story of the town move highlights ways in which toponymic reclamation forms part

of Wemindji Cree identity. The name Old Factory, after which a river, a bay and an island are named, has associations with the productivity of the Hudson's Bay Company trading post once located in the old town site and island ('Factory Island'). It seems to be a retroactively named site, with the new town site sometimes referred to as 'New Factory' (or 'Nouveau-Comptoir' in French). The (ab)original names for rivers and bays are widely used in Wemindji today, reflecting a sense of pride in the traditional ways of this Cree community.

Keeping in mind differences between indigenous and western ways of naming places, it is crucial to keep in mind what the old, 'traditional,' ways of naming represent as modernization introduces a wave of 'modern' names, mostly within the city limits of Wemindji, but in the surrounding areas as well. In his book, *Kiowa Ethnogeography*, Meadows (2008, 292) implicitly maintains a distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' place names. This implicit dichotomy is problematic for a couple of reasons, partly having to do with the concept of 'tradition' as a political strategy in the face of development. Tradition can suddenly become a very modern construct when mobilized to garner public sympathy to counteract mining, forestry or other developments controlled by large companies with head offices often in distant metropolitan centers. This observation is not intended to call into question the authenticity of indigenous tradition, but instead to grant indigenous peoples the agency and choice to construct their own identities in keeping with, and as adaptation to, changing environmental and contextual realities (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Hornborg 1994).

Nor does this change the spiritual significance of place names generally. As both Basso (1996) and Meadows (2008) have pointed out, stories evoked by the utterance of the names of places on the land hold deep moral significance. For the western Apache, Basso noted an ongoing relationship between specific places on the land and life lessons learned. These often involved funny stories about the folly of human ways and greediness, sexuality or shortsightedness (Basso 1996). For the Cree, stories associated with specific places are more often about food resources, or

the lack thereof. There are a large number of stories about starvation on the land from the early to middle 20th century after beaver, caribou, beluga and many other species had been depleted in James Bay and further north into Hudson Bay, either directly or indirectly a result of the overseas market for furs (Cree Nation of Wemindji 2010; Morantz 2002 and 2010). In trying times many Cree turned to Christianity and, while the Cree nation of Wemindji as a whole is primarily Christian, some older spiritual beliefs are still alive, resulting in the often noted religious syncretism present in northern Quebec and indeed northern Canada more generally (Morantz 2010; Laugrand and Oosten 2010).

A negative aspect of life on the land in the 20th century, influenced by market pressures, partly explains the impetus for moving the community of Wemindji to its present location in 1960. Town life represents security as food availability in stores remains more reliable than the variable availability of country food from the land. The return of the caribou to northern Quebec (Begerud et al 2007) has not changed the opinion of Cree and Inuit hunters, that life in town is a very good thing. But great respect is given to those traditionalists who remain on the land for part of the year, with a hunter support program providing an incentive for doing so.

The ability of the tallymen to 'know' where animals and other resources are forms a great part of this respect. Spiritually, the sense of knowing with respect to animals and other land-based resources translates, for the Cree, into knowing how to 'be alive,' despite the shift to more town-based ways of obtaining food. A mixed economy in which store bought foods have come to supplement country foods has resulted in a tension, and sometimes a struggle, to balance older subsistence ways alongside newer senses of plenty in wage-based economies. This tension is reflected in ways in which places come to be named in town, as opposed to an older sense that place naming is an organic process, involving a dialog between the human senses, cultural models of experience and key characteristics and affordances of the environment (Thornton 2008, 111).

In town, places are named in a less organic way, and more as a way of labelling or 'tagging' space for orderly passage by motor vehicle. As described below, however, town and traditional ways of naming place might not, initially, be quite as different as they seem. There is a common emphasis upon movement and transportation. Traditionally, a focus upon river, stream and lake names for boat travel predominates. In town, street names facilitate transportation between equally important business names. A focus on the 'business' of obtaining a living by whatever means (i.e. hunting, gathering and fishing in the subsistence economy; and wage-labor in the mixed economy) necessary, whether by boat, car or walking, is the common denominator.

For Ingold, naming facilitates movement, an essential and universal aspect of being and becoming in the environment (Ingold 2007). He notes that, among the Navajo, place-names that index specific landmarks are told in sequence to form stories or 'verbal maps' describing lines of travel for people to follow. These however were guidelines rather than actual trails on the ground, for the latter, responsive to variations in the distribution of natural resources and other contingencies 'would wind back and forth along the guideline in the verbal map' (Ingold 2007, 89, with quote from Kelley and Francis 2005, 99)

Ingold differentiates between movement and transportation as reflecting fundamentally different ways of being in the world. Movement happens in the open and in a state of becoming in the sense that one is always between two or more places, or on the way to somewhere else or another line of movement. Pauses along the journey to reflect or collect resources are, for the wayfinder, points of tension where different lines of travel meet from an array of directions and previous journeys. Transportation, on the other hand, involves suspension of the journey as travel between bounded places occurs at high speed and in a closed container (Ingold 2010, 148-149).

Different ways of travelling result in different ways of naming place and of telling stories about those places. These and other, still strong, connections

between storytelling and place naming will be explored in greater detail below.

B Theoretical Framework

This study uses a mixed methods approach to answer the primary research question (i.e. what is the nature of Wemindji Cree territorial identity?). As Elwood and Cope (2009, 5) state, *mixed* methods projects weave together diverse research techniques to fill gaps, add context, envision multiple truths, play different sources of data off each other, and provide a sense of both the general and the particular

Using a GIS database of 898 place names, collected by Colin Scott and his colleagues in the 1970s and 1980s, and a categorization of those place names guided by Meadows (2008) ethnogeographic classification system, gives a general sense, through the use of GIS maps, of Wemindji Cree place naming practices. This 'view from above' is classic GIS territory, with disembodied and seemingly neutral graphic depictions of space from the perspective of 'nowhere,' high above life-worlds of Cree on the ground. Both place types and categories have been mapped below. Types are (from the perspective of western science) naturally occurring features, including rivers, lakes, peninsulas and many other physical geographic features. Place categories, on the other hand, are where *ethno*geography enters the picture. Categorization was guided by the nature of the meaning of each place name, as included in the original data collection mentioned above (Scott 1983).

Blaut (1979, 1) points out that "geography is a belief-system," and that beliefs about geography are ethnographic (as opposed to an objective) facts. Community validation of those ethnographic facts has occurred long before the arrival of the outsider-academic (Blaut 1979, 1). The latter (the author in the present case) can only verify what is already known to the community at large, and to local experts such as the tallymen. Ethnographically, Wemindji Cree place names are no exception to this rule. Toponymic categorization therefore proceeds upon long established naming traditions that generally follow Meadows

(2008) scheme, with one modification, discussed below.

GIS allows for a powerful and intuitive visualization (Schuurman 2004, 8) of distributed (spatial) aspects of geographical belief-systems. But in this study GIS does not, and cannot, claim universal or total knowledge of that belief system, precisely because of the disembodied representational system by which GIS operates (Curry 1998).

Following the GIS focused sections, and with newer ethnographic data, is a discussion of some particularities and contexts of life 'on the ground', with specifics about wayfaring and movement. These focus on four 'journeys' in which the primary author participated in the summer of 2008 and the winter of 2010. Participant observation and a global positioning system (GPS) device elicited a great deal of conversation and observation along the course of travelling and living with Wemindji Cree. The first very short introductory 'journey' occurred in the kitchen of a respected tallyman 'L' (shortened to maintain anonymity). The second took place at an archaeology camp on *paakumshumwaau sakhiikiin* (Old Factory Lake), and is included as an example of 'territoriality in action,' a conflict generated by the very inscribed lines represented on trapline maps. The third was a commemorative walk (called *kaachewaapechuu*, or 'going offshore') on the land, part of cultural awareness week in Wemindji, a symbolic return to the old town site, in which the author took part along with three youth, four adults and two elders. The last journey to be explored is a reminiscence recounted to the author at the end of *kaachewaapechuu* by an elder. This is a story of hardship and starvation associated with a specific place called *chipitukw* (ghost dwelling).

These journeys are included not as 'ground truth' but as situated knowledge perspectives, as observed by an outsider. The primary author's outsider status is emphasized by the style of narrative in which the four journeys are recounted. These 'ethnographic' accounts are intended to illuminate situated knowledge systems in a way similar to those carried out by Hugh Brody amongst Dene and Inuit groups (Brody 1975 and

1981). Reflections upon participation in journeys signals a struggle by the author to come to terms with divides between positionalities and subjectivities informed by widely divergent life experiences.

Traditional and Local Knowledges

Berkes (2008, 222) observations on differences between traditional and local knowledge systems, and the factor of time that produces these differences, inform a modification to Meadows (2008) classification scheme introduced in the categorization of Wemindji Cree place names. As noted above, in later chapters and an appendix of Meadows (2008) book *Kiowa Ethnogeography*, an implicit dichotomy is set up between modern place names and what Meadows calls land-based, water-based and astrological place names. The latter three categories can be read as non-modern, or the opposite of modern (i.e. traditional). Some modern Kiowa place names do refer to the land, so some overlap exists, but only within an assumption of knowledge loss as a by-product of the loss of fluent speakers of the native tongue with every passing year.

This paper relies upon Berkes (2008, 208) observation that traditional and local are not synonyms, and that the main difference between them is time. Local place naming practices are, according to Meadows' categories, and in keeping with Berkes, for all intents and purposes synonymous with modern place naming practices. Keeping the implicit traditional place name category from Meadows, and replacing his explicit 'modern' place name category with the term 'local', is a way of keeping straight the time aspect of generational place names on the one hand (i.e. local place names, or those that have not existed long enough to have become traditional through intergenerational transmission), and intergenerational place names on the other (i.e. traditional place names that have been handed down through the generations, or those that have been in existence long enough to have lost their 'local' status through time).

Inscribing and Incorporating Cultures

One final distinction is necessary before moving to the results of the GIS-facilitated categorization of place names on the one hand, and the exploration of place names from the perspective of participant observation in local activities in Wemindji Cree territory on the other. Rundstrom (1995) has differentiated between inscribing (writing) and incorporating (oral) cultures. Inscribing cultures are heavily invested in externally inscribed representations. Written texts, for instance in books or, more recently, on screens are the primary means of communication in inscribing cultures. Maps are the most important form of written document for the purposes of this paper. The GIS maps in the results section write land based knowledge into a form most readily understood within an inscribing (and academic) culture.

For incorporating, oral, cultures the spoken word takes precedence over the written word or representation. Information about the land, its places and its resources are transmitted from generation to generation through stories about the land. Furthermore, for oral cultures, performed knowledge is viable knowledge. Elders, adults and youth participating in life on the land observe and imitate each other in the daily and yearly round of securing an existence through intimate knowledge of places. With modernization and town life the embodied, performed nature of knowledge has to some extent faded. For the Wemindji Cree, as we will see below, there is a sense of pride in maintaining the old ways through continued practice of land-based ways of being.

In the descriptions below (following the GIS map section), of life on the land, the first person singular is sometimes used to convey observations made during participation in various activities. This personal, almost intimate, voice is considered appropriate in a section describing a residually oral culture (Ong, 1982), with whom the author became close, as far as being 'adopted' into a local family. It is also as close as the author was able to become to oral and performed ways of being on the land. It cannot capture the fullness of the indigenous perspective. Perhaps the shortcomings serve to highlight gaps between 'outsider' and 'insider' perspective. But every effort was made to elide or blur dichotomous and inside/outside boundaries, alongside the good faith community efforts at performing the same operations
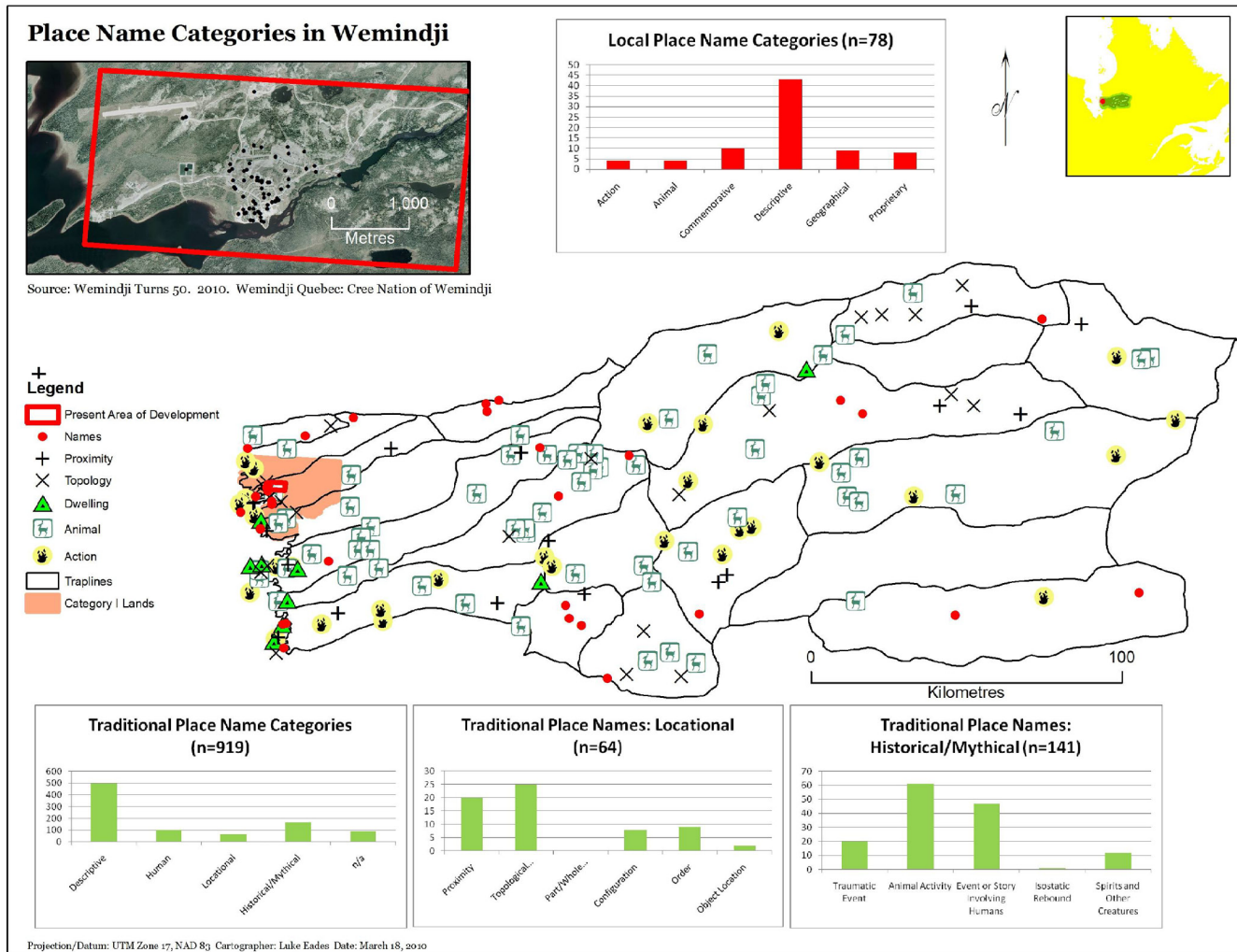
Figure 1 Place Name Categories in Wemindji

C Results

GIS Maps

Figures 1 and 2 show the results of the categorization of Wemindji Cree place names, according to the schema described above. Figure 1 tallies several categories of place name, guided by Meadows (2008) distinctions based in turn upon Afable and Beeler (1997). It shows a predominance of descriptive place names for both local and traditional categories. Commemorative, geographical and proprietary aspects of local place names are also prominent and, taken together, constitute a significant proportion of the total (78). Human, locational and historical/mythical categories form a significant proportion of traditional

place names, totalling 919 (898 after names with no meaningful data attached are removed).

'Human' place names are often those in which the name of a feature is associated with likeness to the human body or a part thereof. For example, *utiikanistikw siipii* means "shoulder blade river" because of the river's resemblance to the human body part. Another example is *mitisiwaayaapiistikw siipii*, which means "umbilical cord river." Naming features after resemblance to human body parts is a long established tradition in Wemindji Cree, and indeed other indigenous groups', place naming practices. The likeness is instantly recognizable to the extent that once the feature is seen there is no mistaking it for any other feature. This category of place name is rare

in modern toponymy. The reason for this is simple. The built environment in the town of Wemindji was designed with straight edges and lines in mind, not the human body. The traveller in Wemindji will most likely be using modern transportation to move from place to place, so bodily movement during travel is at a minimum. The body part/metonymical function of wayfaring on the land has been replaced with the transportation and 'clean lines' of road, walls, and sidewalks in town (Ingold 2007).

Locational place names are also absent in the modern toponymic category. Traditionally, proximity and topology aspects of certain places were used to situate the wayfarer in space. For example, *aapiitu-kamaach* means 'parallel beside lake.' This particular feature holds great interest for so-called ontologies, or ways in which features are 'broken down' into parts or, conversely, left as wholes (Wellen 2008). It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore ontologies fully, except to note that the Cree have a feature category that includes two attributes: that of being parallel, and that of being part of a lake. There is no single word for such a feature in English. Another example is *maataasaakw*, which means 'junction of rivers,' clearly a topologically named point feature used to locate the wayfarer geometrically in relation to two linear features (rivers). Junctions between throughfares in town (i.e. in the 'local' category) were not tallied because they are not formally named, instead going by hybrid names of two streets that come together at a point. An example of the latter is Indoho Road and Georgekish Road, a junction named by a hybrid action (Indoho means 'he is hunting')/commemorative (Georgekish is the name of a respected and long-reigning Wemindji chief, 1933-1958) place name (Cree Nation of Wemindji 2010, 30).

Historical/mythical traditional place names refer to actions or specific events that happened in the past. These exclude general human activities, such as 'good fishing place,' because the action in this case is general and not in the past. Furthermore, hybridities do exist in the traditional place name categories, as shown by the following names, categorized as historical/mythical. For instance, *sekaapaayaasuu saaki-*

hiikin is named after "an old man who had only leg and travelled by sitting on a toboggan and pushing with his good leg and one arm. He travelled 40 miles in one day" (Visitor n.d.). Many similar stories exist, with particulars and details about events and people and their struggles to make a living on the land. Stories about spirits and animals are abundant and, while it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore all the ramifications of spirituality for Cree hunters, it suffices to note that past hunting stories are scrutinized by tallymen and others for portents of future success in the hunt and, conversely, events that might indicate bad luck in the future (Preston 2002).

Much has been made of reciprocal relationships between hunters and animals. A recent article notes that the often touted 'gift' aspect of prey animals 'giving' themselves to hunters is in fact a relationship between the hunter and a spirit that regulates whether or not the hunt will be successful by allowing animals to give themselves to the hunter. This kind of 'gift' is quite different, however, from the kind of sharing of meat practiced amongst kinship groups in many Inuit and Cree communities (Knight 2012). The latter is not spirit mediated (at least not in the same way as the hunt is). These observations lead naturally to figure 2 and the 'business' of making a living both traditionally and in town (i.e. locally), and some changes that modernity has brought to Wemindji Cree as a paradigm of individualism asserts itself more fully.

Figure 2, depicting types of places, is included to show the diversity of features that are named in Wemindji Cree territory and in town. The presence of water features overwhelms all other types of named place on the land. Travel routes, traditionally, consisted mainly of water routes for accessing hunting, fishing, gathering and dwelling areas. These are the traditional activities of doing 'business' on the land. In this way, there is a good deal of similarity with modern places receiving names. In town, streets and businesses comprise the majority of named places. Everyday activity both on and off the land shows a good deal of continuity, with a focus on making a livelihood for kin and family. The difference today, of course, is that the means for doing so have changed.
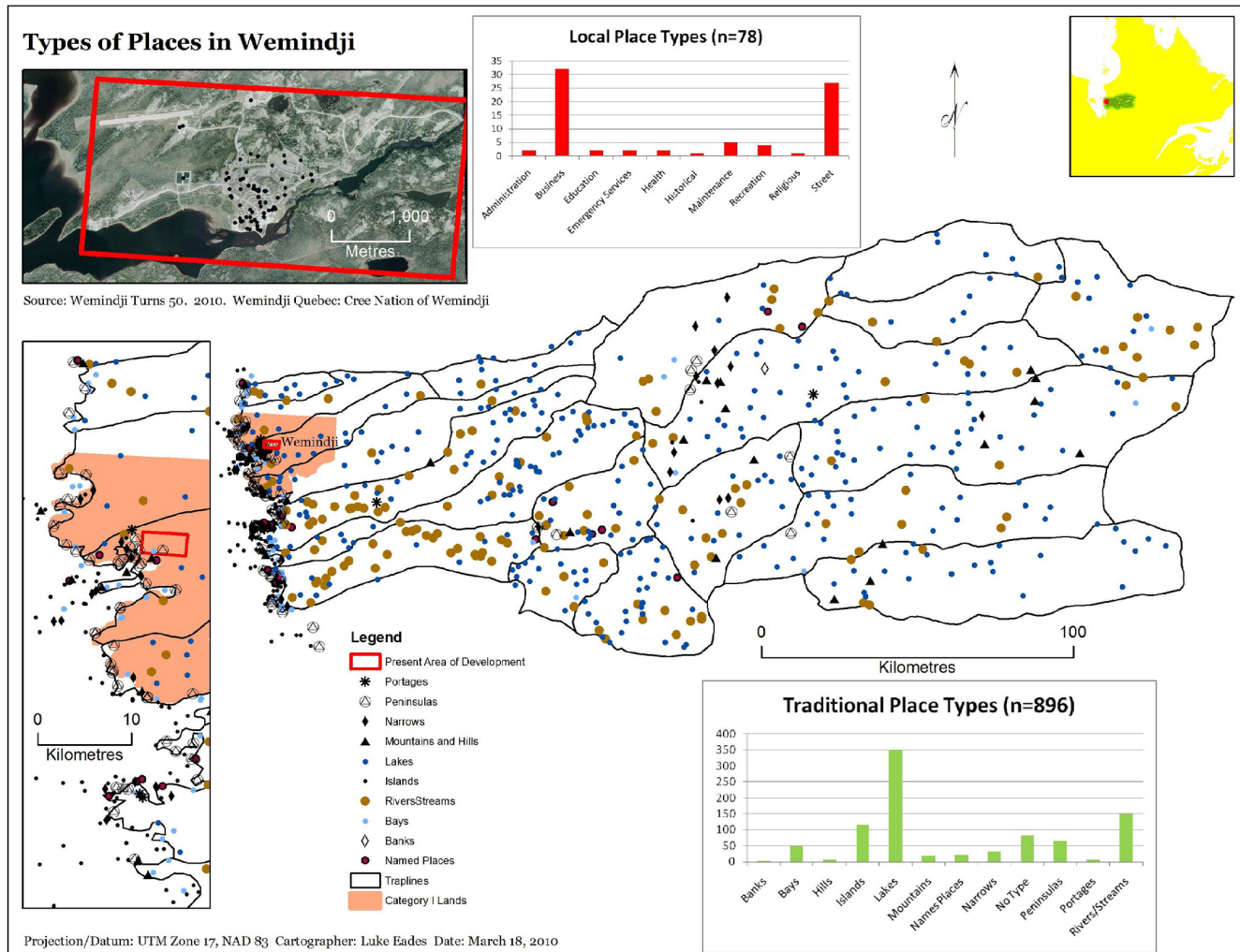
Figure 2 Types of Places in Wemindji

A mixed economy combined with drastically changed technologies for procuring a living mean the Cree have both a greater number of choices, as one can live in town and on the land part of the year; and fewer choices, as the amount of time a Cree spends on the land is constrained by the cost of fuel and equipment for getting there. The latter, in turn, is dependent upon having a job (or having a relative with a job) in town (Wenzel 1991).

The following 'grounded' stories are 'about' the land, in the sense that the author participated in several extended activities with Wemindji Cree participants. But these stories also show how, in various ways, modernity is asserting itself on the land. Maps are ubiquitous in discussions between tallymen, and

in decision making processes by those from outside with interest in resources. Maps change everyday lives by introducing conflict over boundaries. Maps allow people to 'see' themselves from a removed viewpoint, to reflect upon journeys taken and those yet to be embarked upon. Most of all, maps let people see the names of places where all of these things occur, and seeing those names almost always evokes some kind of story.

A Kitchen Table Talk

The events in this story took place in the home of a well known and respected Wemindji tallyman. This individual is particularly well known because of his 'old style' of year round (but discontinuous) residence

on the land. On an adjacent trapline, another tallyman is responsible for a large swath of land rich in wildlife, recreation opportunities, scenic beauty and many other valuable attributes. These two tallymen are friends, and part of their 'job,' as they see it, is to discuss evidence of incursions of 'outsiders' (mostly mining companies). This evidence ranges from helicopter landing constructions to sightings of aircraft to observation of residual materials such as flagging, waste or tracks.

Sitting at a kitchen table covered in maps, the two tallymen had a discussion while I and my Cree translator listened. One large map depicted traplines; it was a standard locally produced GIS map with colorful lines and polygons showing territories, rivers, bays, topography and other basic features useful for locating and describing events. A second map was also probably produced by GIS, but this one had been made by a mining company, and it was being used here to try and explain why mining companies would want to be exploring in the hunting and trapping territories of these two tallymen. A couple of red 'intrusions' were outflanked by wide swaths of green, and a very complex legend explained a number of other colours present or not (presumably some existed on other maps in a series of maps not seen here).

Gestures and stories flowed across the maps, punctuated by fingers pointing out particular places where events took place. The descriptions of mining company incursions were meted out slowly and were reiterated a number of times. Interspersed with those observations (and translated to me by the Cree woman beside me) were stories about relatives from past times; about one who died in a particular place, a rough spot on the river, and how she was buried near a large rock. That place was pointed out and its name was spoken, the names of relatives who had survived the ordeal were also spoken. This tragic tale was immediately followed by an inventory of good places to fish or hunt, fingers tracing down waterways to the coast. Jokes were told, themes were returned to over and over again. If a legend of this afternoon could appear on its face, like on a map, it would have looked like a strange and winding thing, not like the square

and lined up thing on the garish map we barely looked at, the small one from the mining company.

What our afternoon meeting of a couple of hours represented was positive action to protect Cree interests in the land, of livelihoods and relationships of trust built over generations to protect and conserve the very fragile bounty it hosts, sometimes contains, and sees pass through to other places far and wide and interconnected. The GIS-produced map, the large one we talked over that day, and maps like it, are quite common in Wemindji. The boundaries between traplines are inscribed into tallyman individual and collective memory. These maps do real work in the world, for better or for worse.

This story, or 'scene from life,' flows naturally into the next, about a dimension of territoriality introduced into Wemindji Cree life by maps. Tallymen are very comfortable with maps, to the point that it can be difficult to begin conversations with elders without them. Maps are part of the 'business' of being a tallyman. But, like modern business, it can be messy, with tensions in need of resolution. In the following case, tensions were introduced into a kinship group, the brother in law of the translator from the kitchen table talk that day.

The Shot Rang Out Across the Lake

I include a map of this story, as its nature revolves around territoriality and conflict generated by inscribed maps. Figure 3 shows *paakumshumwaau saakihiikin,* where I stayed with a team of archaeologists in the summer of 2008. During this time, members of the 'Stone' (name changed to preserve anonymity) family were responsible for driving boats to and from the camp as needed to shuttle equipment and archaeologists. The fact that the Stones had been employed to aid the team was the subject of some contention. An in-law of 'D' (who had been the translator in the 'kitchen table' story above), 'C,' felt the job was his by right, due to the location of the archaeology camp which, according to the official trapline maps, fell squarely within his territory. D's brother (also present at the same kitchen table), 'F,' on the other
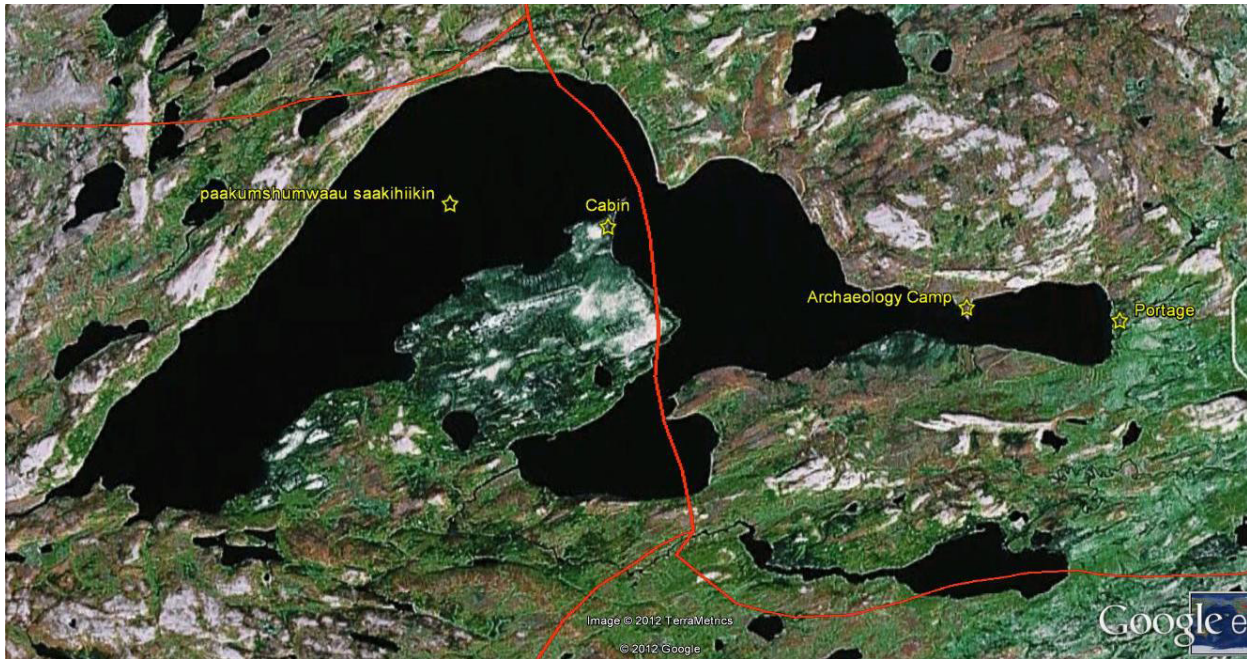
Figure 3 *Paakumshumwaau saakihiikin*

hand, had a cabin located just across 'the line' separating his brother in-law's trapline from his own, across the point from the previous year's archaeology camp on a point near a stream of fresh water flowing out of a smaller tributary lake (see figure 3).

The previous year, it had seemed logical that D and her brother F would carry out the work of helping the archaeologists. D and F are very easy-going and hard-working. F has a reputation for caution and intelligence in boat navigation. And they both have a long history of co-operating with researchers and scientists from the south. As a result, their experience and expertise are in high demand among outsiders needing navigational and other assistance.

But the presence of the trapline map, the same one used in the kitchens of tallymen all over Cree territory, divides *paakumshumwaau saakihiikin* in half and contributes to division and territoriality amongst even related tallymen and their kin. The fact of the archaeology camp moving east along the northern shore of the lake from one year to the next, necessary for a more complete survey, resulted in a modification of local claims to jobs. Despite the fact that the Stones were more reliable and safer than their kin across the

lake, an assertion of prior claim was made one day as the team approached the far eastern shore with equipment. F was, as usual, driving, taking some of the team to the landing from which we were to begin our portage. The equipment was to be carried approximately a kilometre to the road shown on the far right of figure 3, at which point it would be carried by all terrain vehicles pulling trailers to trucks waiting near the James Bay highway.

As the team approached the far, eastern, shore on its second trip during the still early morning, the sound of shotgun discharge echoed out across the lake. The immediate effect was a focusing of the team's collective gaze to the approaching landing point. D identified the man holding the gun angled up and to our left, out across the lake towards a ridge on the far shore, as C. She explained that C felt it his right to perform the work that she and her brother were presently performing. There ensued a slow approach with words of supplication called out across the diminishing distance to C and his family waiting on shore with their own equipment.

In the following days the principal investigator of the archaeology team worked out an arrangement

such that C would stand to gain something from the archaeologists' presence. The tension never entirely dissipated that summer, however, just as the lines on the trapline map never ceased cutting the lake in half so long as that particular spatial representation continued to be reproduced and used locally.

Preston (2002, 107) has noted that, in the days before Christianity, hunters would sometimes settle territorial differences through shamanism. In cases where a hunter felt that another man was taking too many animals from his territory, a *kwashapshigan*, or shaking tent, might be constructed. Within the shaking tent the spirits, or Mistabeos, of the two hunters would fight until one Mistabeo was dead. Modern times have seen the outlawing of shamanism amongst Cree and Inuit in northern Quebec, so the *kwashapshigan* method of dispute resolution is no longer used. As the shot that 'rang out across the lake' illustrates, those methods have shifted in accordance with inscribed regimes of territoriality and difference.

Kaachewaapechuu

As mentioned earlier, *kaachewaapechuu* means 'going offshore.' It follows the same path every year, alternately cutting across points, headlands and peninsulas and making straight traverses over frozen bays. Elders note that in traditional times the journey was often a solitary one that could be completed in one day (as opposed to the contemporary three day commemorative journey). Equipment was lighter then and since the trip was made more frequently, the travellers were more experienced, allowing them to make better time. This commemorative activity and route, when performed in groups, is transmitted from elders or adults to youth by performing the commemoration in the same way each year.

The meaning of the journey has changed in recent years, as the town move is commemorated each year by performing *kaachewaapechuu*. A group of youngsters, adults and elders pulls supplies with dogs and sleds from Wemindji, tracing the steps back towards the south and the old town site. During my participation in this event in 2010, a global positioning system

(GPS) receiver was brought and utilized from time to time, stopping in boreal forests full with snow covered black spruce or on broad white expanses of frozen bays to look at the data on the screen. Before this trip, the Cree place names database had been loaded onto the GPS in order to verify names as we moved through places associated with them. The presence of GPS among the company of travelers sometimes created discussion but more often elicited the question 'how far is it now?'

Kaachewaapechuu is a long haul on foot, by moccasin, snowshoe or hiking boot. At some point a few participants let a passing snowmobile take their gear to the next cabin or stopping place for the night. So the question 'how far?' is quite a reasonable one. Mostly we stoically pushed on through the trek. What I saw during my journey my companions (three children, four adults and two elders) was a cross section of life on the land that followed the shore. I noticed that the act of travelling was a form of dwelling, of 'being in place' (Thornton 2008) even though we were moving. At night, stopping in trapper's cabins, beaver were being skinned on the floor or supplies were being put up, no less forms of dwelling on the land than when moving upon it. Rounding a corner at *maatuskaach siipii* (lots of poplars river) we arrived, on the second day, at 'the strawberry eating place.' My GPS, loaded with the names, allowed me to read the Cree name (*aamuutaayiminaanuwich*) for this place to the young man, and future tallyman, accompanying us, and he confirmed that this was indeed the place shown on my small screen.

These places had been discussed beforehand with all participants, sitting together over a map in the community hall the day before our departure. An elder, our primary guide, who would not be walking with us, but would instead be checking our progress periodically by snowmobile, explained in Cree what would be involved in the journey, noting significant places along the way, the distance one could travel on foot in one day, and the names of cabin owners who would be providing each night's shelter. He noted the end point of our planned journey, described below.

Chipitukw *(Ghost Dwelling)*

At the end of my long walk with the others after we had completed *kaachewaapechuu* I sat with some elders at the other end of a large cabin from which I could see very young children playing and watching "Sponge Bob Square Pants." One of the adults with whom I was staying back in town had told one of the elders about my interest in place names. This man, lying on his side and looking out a window facing Old Factory Bay, recounted a story in Cree to my host, who translated. This was the story of *chipitukw,* which means "Ghost Dwelling" in Cree, the name of a place very near the end point of our journey where I sat on the edge of a bed across from this man who was about 80 years old. He told me about how *chipitukw* is haunted because in a cabin on the point just past some trees (he gestured towards the window indicating a place just over there) a group of three Cree hunters died of starvation about sixty years ago.

It had been winter and game was very scarce for a certain number of years in the middle of the last century. Many perished during that time, a time when colonial structures of power were giving way to the agendas of state and industry, which included indifference to indigenous peoples in the north. A way of sustenance that had been relatively stable through the long tenure of the Hudson's Bay Company was slowly being replaced by government as the fur trade collapsed. At McGill I had been studying how things changed with the arrival of hydroelectric power schemes and the ensuing James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA). I had read about starvation in academic books (Preston, 2002; Morantz, 2002) and local publications (Cree Nation of Wemindji, 2010), but hearing about it firsthand from someone who had been very close to it at the time was chilling.

I tell this story to illuminate what the end of the long walk means for the Cree. It means remembrance and return to a scene of devastation. But more than that it means a determination to survive in the face

of massive upheaval and change through successive waves of colonization by English and French settlers, state development schemes and industry collaborations. The Cree of Wemindji have survived and there is a tremendous optimism among adults, especially those with children. As I listened to the elder tell me the story of *chipitukw* I watched the children playing with plastic toy trains and dolls, and I appreciated their presence. Despite the childrens' preoccupation with play, I noticed brief pauses in that play that I had not noticed a little while earlier, before the elder had started his story. I could see that the very young had their own ways of listening that worked organically in the fray of everyday life with many different activities occurring simulataneously: TV, playing, stories, cooking, eating, sleeping and outside the sound of a snowmobile approaching with news from the land, the trapline, and what's happening outside. These sights, sounds and smells mixed together with the ghost story at the end of the long walk. *Chipitukw* is tied to senses of place past and present, contextualized by other related stories around Old Factory Bay. One story leads to another and like any worthwhile journey they are very difficult but well worth the effort of listening and heeding signs along the way.

D Discussion

Inscribed GIS maps do not do justice to life lived 'on the ground.' The mixed methods approach used in this paper adds ethnographic depth to abstract representations of toponymy and symbolic landscape as shown on figures 1 and 2. As Rundstrom (1995) noted, incorporating and inscribing cultures are often mutually exclusive. The GIS maps have a disembodied, abstract quality that is useful for generalization, but it fails to capture particularities or specificities lived by Wemindji Cree. The production of GIS maps performs an act of inscription that automatically leaves out (i.e. is does not incorporate) context and subtlety of specific place names, their meanings and associated stories. Participation in life on the land is therefore an act of re-incorporation with a couple of implications described below.

Inscribed Indigeneity

Re-incorporation of aspects of toponymy, territory and landscape left out of GIS representations is achieved by producing overlaps between mutually exclusive acts of mapping. The kitchen table talk taking place on Wemindji kitchen tables every day is an act of indigenous reclamation using inscriptive devices. Trapline maps played against mining and other dominant maps in the presence of an academic outsider are acts of resistance designed to highlight first, the incursion of state-industrial material interests and residues into the traplines, and second, the fact that Wemindji Cree are still very active in those same areas, as they have been continuously since generations before living memory. Cree identity on the land is now sustained by combinations of counter-inscription and remembrance epitomized by the telling of stories over maps on kitchen tables.

Johnson (2008) speaks of discourse as embodied and negotiated. Decolonizing research seeks to break down inscribed/incorporated, or disembodied/performed dichotomies. The embrace of maps by Wemindji Cree and the inclusion of GIS experts in Wemindji is testament to the non-exclusionary nature of geospatial inscription. The inscribing device need not be a weapon of power. But its use in indigenous worlds will be fraught with conflicts such as that played out on the shores of *paakumshumwaau saakihiikin*. Ever more sophisticated means of representing such concerns with ever more sophisticated and nuanced approaches to conducting indigenous research using maps and GIS have recently been encountered in the academic literature (Louis et al 2012; Palmer 2012; Pyne and Taylor 2012; and Hirt 2012).

Inscribed indigeneity is nowhere better epitomized than in the mapping of town (local) place names. Naming places in town is a kind of local tradition for the Cree, who include symbols of traditional life, commemoration of important elders and leaders, and even action-based (i.e. hunting) names for roads and other aspects of 'doing business' in Wemindji. Real continuities exist between such business-based ways of labelling the world, and older tendencies toward naming rivers, lakes and other water features essential for obtaining a living from the land.

Embodied GIS

The ethnographic performances are stories told from the author's point of view and contextualized by participation in a broad cross-section of local activities. Though they include the first person, these are not, strictly speaking, first person narratives. They are instead pictures of a presence struggling to make sense of something foreign and to bring 'outside' objects closer 'inside' for inspection. At the same time, the author remains something of an outsider to those with whom he participates. The tools at the disposal of the southern researcher are those very inscriptive devices being claimed in Cree counter-memory practices, those acts designed to bring forth the past to challenge intractable or unwanted presences on the land. The use of GIS and maps by southern researchers without embodied performances, participation in local life and an effort to contextualize abstract geospatial knowledge with direct experience of life 'on the ground' is to continue acts of exclusion whose purpose maps too easily serve.

Elders and tallymen are living geographic information systems who embody both the conflicts and creativities they perform. For the tallymen gathered around a kitchen table, story as counter-mapping serves not only to re-iterate, and thus preserve, traditional knowledge through naming and framing stories around particular places, it also provides a framework for contrasting Cree activity on the land with encroachments from state-industrial incursions. For tallymen on the land, now in the presence of many outsiders with an array of academic and material interests in Cree lands, ironically it is those very counter-maps that cause conflicts internally. The shot that 'rang out across the lake' sharply punctuates any narrative that would smooth over differences introduced by spatial inscription. The lines favored in locally produced GIS maps, and that are the default settings in most GIS software, have real impact on the ground in indigenous lands. In this case, a modern wage paradigm (i.e. competition for the job of shuttling archaeologists)

was seen to encroach upon a traditional system of land tenure with more blurry definitions of land boundaries that existed before capital, industrial and colonial interests became hegemonic.

Kaachewaapechuu is a modern tradition that serves locally to re-smooth boundaries inscribed by modernity and its representatives, state/industry and corporate mapping software structures. By naming places along the way, knowledge is transferred between all participants, from adults to youth, from 'insider' to 'outsider.' The performance of the 'long walk offshore' is a performance and demonstration of determination amongst the Cree to keep the old ways alive. The inclusion of dogsleds, or movement based means of journeying with real bodies performing and wayfaring, amongst the 'walkers' counter-maps recent trends towards motor-driven vehicles, and reminds the community of the costs of being on the land in the past. Snowmobiles, on the other hand, are a modern tradition all over the north of Canada, and certainly have much to do with recent trends towards greater food security. But the community sees fit to symbolically and temporarily, through *kaachewaapechuu*, do away with such transportation based means of travel that tend to draw a sharp boundary between the body of the traveller and the land (Ingold 2010).

In the *chipitukw* story, the elder embodies geographical knowledge marking the end-point of *kaachewaapechuu*, a symbolic place of return and commemoration. The 'final' story at the end of the three day walk is counter-point to the optimism and energy of the participants, and the story of starvation on the land serves as a reminder of the relatively recent nature of scarcity for Cree on the land. The elder's story is told from personal memory. With the passing of elders, firsthand knowledge of *chipitukw* and stories like it also pass away. But with celebrations around Wemindji's recent birthday, every effort is being made to preserve the memories of those elders in formats, and in maps, accessible to next generations and future community elders.

E Conclusion

Typologies of traditional and local, as well as incorporated and inscribed knowledge systems, do not easily map onto each other. The double binary explored in this paper through the lens of Cree life in Wemindji territories is, instead, an uneasy mapping in which the identification of traditional knowledge with incorporated (i.e. embodied and performed) ways of being on the land do not exactly coincide. Nor would their identification do justice to many local ways of inscribing Cree interests, or manifold expressions of incorporated geographic information in the bodies and brains of Cree elders. At the same time, local knowledge and inscription do not necessarily go hand in hand. Local knowledge is incorporated in and through activities at local band and municipal offices where not coincidentally the Cree GIS and mapping experts work. Elders seek out the maps these experts produce, both to gain knowledge of the evolution of outside interests on the land, and of the rapid expansion of construction activity that cannot keep pace with a swelling population of young people. It is these young people and future elders towards which the embodiment of local knowledge is imperative and for whom ever evolving mappings between tradition and modernity will have the greatest impact.

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