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Narrowing the Road: Co-Management with Anishnabe at the Riding Mountain National Park (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

1.0 Introduction

“Parks and protected areas are very much part of the socioeconomic region in which they are located” (Nelson 1993:50). From a preconceptual perspective, however, parks and protected areas are established in areas with *existing* socioeconomic characteristics that should reflect the nature, values and needs of local communities. Past efforts to establish national parks in Canada did not focus on the intimate relationship between Aboriginal traditional land use and the resultant socioeconomic health and well-being that would potentially be impacted when common property territorial lands became designated as protected areas under the earlier or more current versions of the *National Parks Act*. Consequently, these impacts were, and often continue to be, unmitigated.

This essay is focused on Aboriginal communities adjacent to Riding Mountain National Park (RMNP), a protected area located in the south-western corner of Canada’s centrally-located province of Manitoba. Background on the historic approach to establishment and management of Canada’s first national park at Banff, Alberta, and RMNP is provided to assist the reader to understand the resulting implications to Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. Preliminary results of ongoing research for two Aboriginal communities adjacent to RMNP are presented that capture the historic relationship to the lands now integrated within the boundaries of this protected area. From this review, it will be shown that the impacts from establishing RMNP have resulted in adverse change over time to the communities’ social, cultural, and economic sustainability through subsequent loss of access to their common property territorial landscape. Parks Canada (the responsible regulatory agency for national parks), through amendments to current regulatory and management practices, are challenged to be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal communities left impaired from national park establishment and without recourse through outstanding land claims.

2.0 National Parks and the Aboriginal: the historic relationship

The establishment and management of national parks in Canada have until the most recent decades proceeded without direct Aboriginal involvement or advisement. Once national parks were established, unoccupied Crown lands became occupied; traditional lands once used by the Aboriginal became a forbidden place to seek sustainable subsistence livelihoods. After the 1973 ruling in the *Calder* case, the federal government began settling land claims with First Nations and, with the 1982 *Constitution Act*, existing Aboriginal and treaty rights were formally recognized and affirmed. Thus began a new challenge for Parks Canada: to integrate Aboriginal land uses, rights, and knowledge into management and stewardship activities. This section reviews the historic evolution of the national parks and Aboriginal peoples relationship.

The history of parks in Canada follows the precedent established by the United States in creating protected areas and excluding Aboriginal people. In 1872 the Yellowstone Park, Wyoming, was established by Congress “in the midst of the post-Civil War campaign to subdue the Sioux and other plains Indian tribes. The inhabitants of the Yellowstone - mainly Crows and Shoshones - either left for reservations or were driven out by the United States Army, which would manage the Park until 1916” (WWF 1993:11). In a more civilized approach, the new government of Canada made treaties in 1877 with the Nakoda (Stoney) and Siksika (Blackfoot) Aboriginal peoples. Thus Canada obtained the ceded territory of Treaty #7 in the southwestern portion of Alberta, including the foothills and mountainous regions which are now almost exclusively within national parks boundaries (WWF 1993; Snow, pers. comm.).

Although this Treaty #7, like other numbered treaties, protects the Aboriginal right to usufruct (using the ‘fruits of the land’) on surrendered lands, this guarantee was excluded for lands of Banff National Park that was established in 1885, and was further rescinded for other lands subsequently integrated when the park boundaries expanded in 1877. Although the original national park was small in size, 26 sq. km (10 sq. mi.) (McNamee 1993), in comparison to the traditional land use territory of the local Aboriginal, the effect was to isolate the Nakoda and Siksika from the site-specific medicinal and sacred resources that had been relied on for cultural, spiritual, and community well-being (Snow, pers. comm.).

The hot springs at Sulfur Mountain were desired by the Canadian government to be exploited for their “economic benefits” (McNamee 1993:18). The non-economic value and the cultural importance of this healing center to the Nakoda was overlooked. The appropriation by the state to control the hot springs serve as one example of First Nation discontent with management practices in protected areas since these are considered a natural gift from the Creator. It is ultimately disrespectful to charge a price for this gift, to exert control over the hot springs, or to have modified its natural environment into the unnatural, tourist-attractive pool setting found today (Snow, pers. comm.). As a further source of disrespect, the Aboriginal who were the *a priori* stewards of the hot springs when they were a common property resource must now pay a fee to gain admission to this public attraction.

The boundaries of the Banff National Park were expanded to 673 sq. km (260 sq. mi.) in 1877 (McNamee 1993), further impinging on the ability of the local Aboriginal to meet their livelihood needs in the area. During this time, traditional lands were additionally being lost to settlement. When Indian Reserve lands were established, the Aboriginal were encouraged to pursue an agrarian lifestyle (Department of Indian Affairs 1882). However, at the Morley Indian Reserve, the soil at the base of the foothills proved too stony and thin to be well suited for cropping (Snow, pers. comm.). The Euro-Canadian occupation of the rich lands that were to be

shared, the poor quality lands set aside for use as Indian Reserve lands, and the subsequent restriction of both access and use of the lands and natural resources through regulatory and management practices within Banff National Park have today left the Nakoda First Nation impaired in its ability to meet community needs (Snow, pers. comm.). Presently, there are no formal means for the Aboriginal to offset these losses through participation in stewardship or management activities of the Banff National Park (pers. obs.)

The efforts to establish parks and protected areas continued in similar fashion across Canada. To focus on the location of interest in this essay, in 1895 and 1906, 297,800ha of land within the Riding Mountain district of Manitoba received the designations of Riding Mountain Timber Reserve and Riding Mountain Forest Reserve, respectively. At that time, these lands were withdrawn from the 1886 *Dominion Lands Act* jurisdiction and placed under the *Dominion Forest Reserves Act*. Subsequently, on 28 December 1929, this Forest Reserve was redesignated and transferred to the authority of the *Dominion Forest Reserve and Parks Act* and remains today a protected area known as Riding Mountain National Park (RMNP) (FNC 1981; RMNP 1988). The Riding Mountain district had been occupied as a traditional land use area by different Aboriginal societies over time. The Anishnabe (Ojibway) have been in this territory since the early 1800's (FNC 1981). In the present, there remain four Anishnabe First Nation communities having Indian Reserve (IR) lands adjacent to or within RMNP: Keeseekoowenin (IR 61 and 61B); Waywayseecappo (IR 62); Valley River (IR 63A); and Rolling River (IR 67).

The establishment of RMNP did not integrate the existing socio-economic characteristics of local Aboriginal people. Their cultural values and community needs were ignored. It was the settlers to the Riding Mountain district that realized the benefits when RMNP received its formal designation 28 December 1929 as a national park. One particular meeting that had been held to advance the national park designation was apparently viewed as being particularly successful. Ringstrom (1981) writes that "judging by the wide representative gathering, enthusiastic and purposeful discussion, (and) the leadership of two federal members present, Manitoba had every reason to hope for a favorable reply to (national park designation) when it went before the next session of Parliament" (p. 90).

Like other national parks already established, emphasis was placed on the recreational and economic benefits to be secured to the local region. As cabins and cottages were built, those first settlers recruited others to visit and build in the area. A townsite named Wasagaming within RMNP quickly grew to accommodate the needs of the new residents and tourists (RMNP 1996). Evidence of the new attitude towards the land use of this burgeoning period is reflected in Ringstrom's (1981) comments that follow:

"(The) period (from 1935) was a long step in bridging the gap between the facilities of the Riding Mountain Reserve and those of the national park. "The wreck of a forest" emerged as a beautifully treed park with reforestation and clearing, with landscaping, swamp drainage and construction, with favorable publicity which attracted tourists. Nature had given a good start but it was man's labor which completed the program" (p.96).

It is highly doubtful that any Aboriginal persons were present at the 'widely-representative' gathering that met to pursue the designation of the Riding Mountain area as a national park, or that they had been contacted by either of the two federal members of Parliament

who had been in attendance. This would provide evidence of federal disregard for Canada's fiduciary responsibility towards "Indian" people as stipulated in the *Constitution Act*, 1867, s. 91(24). Recreational and economic opportunities, important factors in the decision to establish a national park in the area, are not mentioned in terms of the Aboriginal. While newcomers were busy "Snapping up Lakeside Lots" (Ringstrom 1981:101) to build cottages fronting on Clear Lake, the Aboriginal, who were rightfully residing on their Clear Lake IR lands, hunting, fishing, bearing children and burying their deceased, were forcibly evicted and had their homes burnt to the ground (WWF 1993; White Bird, pers. comm.).

Traditional land use of the Riding Mountain district (including RMNP) was documented extensively by Keeseekoowenin First Nation during a specific land claims process which resulted in the successful reclamation of IR lands within RMNP. In this case, the Keeseekoowenin Band had the Department of Indian Affairs designate and establish IR lands for a fishing station on the northwest shore of Clear Lake through a formal legal process in 1896. This action was taken to protect the Anishnabe people from the rapid encroachment of European settlers to region. After the national park was established at the end of 1929, the presence of the Keeseekoowenin Band on Clear Lake encumbered management actions and confounded regulation enforcement as park wardens attempted to ensure that hunting and other Aboriginal activities were confined to IR lands (FNC 1981).

In an attempt to resolve what was considered to be an undesirable situation within RMNP, the legal standing of the Indian fishing reserve land was questioned and forwarded for decision from the Department of Justice in 1931. The decision that followed this application found that the formal legal process to establish the IR lands had been ineffective in protecting these lands for the Keeseekoowenin First Nation. On the basis of that decision, in 1935 park wardens evicted the Keeseekoowenin Band members from their Clear Lake IR lands (WWF 1993; White Bird, pers. comm.).

This situation was not redressed until the claim against the federal government for the lost land was concluded in 1994. At that time it was determined that the Department of Justice had made an erroneous decision in 1931. Compensatory measures were provided to the Keeseekoowenin First Nation. Lost lands were regained, a financial award was made, and a further stipulation requires the First Nation and RMNP to co-manage the Clear Lake fishery. No tangible progress has been made to date to implement this agreement (Fenton, pers. comm.). Even though a decision has been made to correct the erroneous decision and wrongful actions, the long-lasting effects, including hostility and distrust between this adjacent community and RMNP management, will only be resolved through persistent and patient efforts between both parties. Since the balance of the neighbouring First Nations do not have the legal leverage proffered by a land claim, there have been no other formal opportunities for the Aboriginal to participate in the stewardship or management activities at this national park (pers. obs.).

The historic approach used to establish national parks held the Aboriginal peoples, needs and perspectives in disregard. The loss of Crown lands (through settlement or redesignation into protected areas) to meet subsistence needs which had been guaranteed under treaties has left many First Nations impaired. The past rationale for national park land protection (recreation, enjoyment, and natural resource exploitation, such as timber cutting and grazing (McNamee 1993; RMNP 1996)) and regulatory control (restriction of access and resource use and entrance fees) these approaches hold contrary and distasteful to traditional beliefs. The continued discounting of the Aboriginal knowledge, perspectives, and long-standing intimate relationships with the lands

and resources now included within national parks remains a major issue of contention. To illustrate this point, some Elders in communities adjacent to RMNP have refused to further enter the lands within this national park (Longclaws, pers. comm.).

3.0 Management Practices in National Parks

Legislation, including early forms of the *National Parks Act*, regulations, and policies over time until the early 1970's held a complete disregard for the Aboriginal's dependence on traditional harvesting and the need to ensure their access to culturally significant resources. "In 1974, the National Parks Act was amended to recognize Aboriginal hunting, fishing and trapping in parks or park reserves north of the 60th parallel. But, with the exception of Pukaskwa in Ontario, the same recognition has not been extended to southern properties" (WWF 1993:12). The amendment to recognize these rights in the north are a direct result of the 1973 ruling in the *Calder* land claim case after which the federal government began settling land claims with First Nations.

In 1977, the Parks Canada Policy manual articulates this recognition by guaranteeing that in new national parks, "certain traditional subsistence resource uses by local people will be permitted to continue in parts of national parks for one or more generations when such uses are an essential part of the local way of life and when no alternatives exist outside of the park boundaries" (Parks Canada, 1977:s.3.2.11). At first glance, this new policy could be construed to be a positive step in protecting the rights of Aboriginal. However, the reality is that the effect of establishing a new national park could remain the same: destruction of the subsistence way of life and disregard of Aboriginal needs and aspirations. This policy places the onus on the Aboriginal to defend their needs and rights by proving that no other means of subsistence is available. The eventuality could be an enforced enculturation of the Aboriginal into the Euro-Canadian lifestyle and method of securing a livelihood. The policy also provides no assurance to access of cultural heritage resources.

Although parks and protected areas have been created to defend the public interest, the Aboriginal contend that they have been "overlooked" (Snow, pers. comm.; White Bird, pers. comm.). Due to the inclusiveness of the term 'public', the interests of the general (majority) public overwhelm the interests of the Aboriginal (minority) public. The history and perspectives presented in national parks has not effectively included Aboriginal peoples. The ethnocentric bias of Parks Canada became evident through an extensive review of the existing treatment of Aboriginal history across Canada, which was conducted between 1991-94 by the Historical Research Branch, Parks Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage. The findings of this review illustrated "various shortcomings in the way Aboriginal history is presented or overlooked" (Buggey 1995:iv).

In 1992, Parks Canada made a formal commitment to the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, convened jointly in 1990-92 by the Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations (AFM / CMA 1992). In this commitment, Parks Canada indicated a clear desire to improve and extend the current application and presentation of Aboriginal history and traditional knowledge at the parks and sites under their authority (Buggey 1995). However, as has been already illustrated in 1997 for both the Banff and Riding Mountain National Parks, there have been no formal means for the Aboriginal to participate in management activities nor to present their historical perspectives of land use and traditional knowledge.

A number of important implications are evidenced in the preceding discussion regarding the nature of the relationship and management activities between national parks and adjacent Aboriginal communities. Except in the most recent decades, the establishment and management of national parks have proceeded without direct Aboriginal involvement or concern for their socio-economic or cultural needs. Sustainable livelihoods and societal well-being has been adversely impacted. In recognition of highly-overlapping kinship institutions between adjacent communities and extensive communication networks, impacts which ordinarily would be considered in-direct, often have direct consequences. For example, when the community at Clear Lake in RMNP was forced to relocate in 1935, Band members were absorbed into other adjacent First Nation communities, in addition to the principle Keeseekoowenin First Nation community located outside of RMNP. This dispersal served to reduce immediate resource and population pressures at Keeseekoowenin IR. However, the other adjacent communities had to quickly respond to those desperately needing to reestablish or seek immediate residence.

Therefore, a management decision affecting those Keeseekoowenin residents at the Clear Lake IR within RMNP had direct and tangible adverse impacts on adjacent communities. Further, resolution of the land claim in 1994 fueled inter-community competition since the financial award was made only to the Keeseekoowenin First Nation, even though the Band members residing at Clear Lake were absorbed into other adjacent communities. While able to have legal standing to make a claim against the financial settlement provided to Keeseekoowenin First Nation, these other communities resisted this opportunity and remain uncompensated.

The events that occurred at the Clear Lake IR established a precedent, revealing that RMNP management was unsympathetic to the rights and needs of Aboriginal communities. Such an experience serves to negatively bias the perceptions and expectations of adjacent communities in relation to the opportunities, costs, and benefits of a near-by national park. These circumstances, combined with legislated restriction against traditional land use and the loss of cultural heritage resources in RMNP, has provided fertile ground for poor relationships between the adjacent Aboriginal communities and park management staff.

4.0 Historic Common Property Use and Management of the Riding Mountain Landscape

Through the Keeseekoowenin First Nation land claim process, it was documented and acknowledged that the lands in and around RMNP had been traditionally used for hunting, trapping, fishing, and cultural purposes such as burial grounds (FNC 1981). Current research for the Rolling River and Waywayseecappo First Nations indicate similar land uses. Although not yet formally documented, it can be assumed that land use of this region by Valley River First Nation is comparable to the other adjacent communities.

Specific discussion related to on-going research for Waywayseecappo and Rolling River First Nations adjacent to RMNP requires that traditional land and resource use be appropriately situated by identifying the territorial landscape of the Anishnabe as a common property resource. The territorial landscape of the Riding Mountain district is referred to by the local Anishnabe as *Wacheewing*, which generally translates into “the ecosystem”, but further embodies spiritual and sacred connotations. *Wacheewing*, a common property resource, offered goods and services to ensure sustainable livelihoods to the people while at the same time providing the spiritual and cosmological link necessary for cultural sustainability.

Research concerning the traditional land use and management of the Riding Mountain landscape (*Wacheewing*) is organized into three time periods: Pre-Contact; Contact to Pre-

RMNP; and Post-RMNP Establishment. These periods reflect how the Anishnabe rights to and use of the territorial landscape changed over time, as experienced by the Waywayseecappo and Rolling River First Nations now located adjacent to RMNP. This information was generously shared by the community Elders, the living repositories of their peoples' oral history.

4.1 Pre-Contact Period

Dynamic occupation and use over space and time characterize the pre-contact period within the Anishnabe territorial landscape. Groups of families, organized into Bands within the society, traveled the *Wacheewing* landscape extensively on foot to meet livelihood and cultural needs. Since this landscape included a greater territory than that currently defined in the boundaries of RMNP, travel did also occur to areas outside of what is now the protected area. However, Elders noted that the area now encompassed in RMNP has always been known to be exceptionally rich in resources and is highly-valued for its ability to provide all the necessities that would ensure long-term Anishnabe survival. For this reason, the oral history relates that community leaders, before and after contact, relied upon this area as a social 'safety net'. For example, Waywayseecappo Band members retreated to this area to seek sanctuary from the great sickness that decimated Aboriginal populations when the Europeans arrived. Unfortunately, in this case, the retreat came too late and almost the entire Waywayseecappo population is reported to have perished at a community site now within RMNP. Similar reliance was reported by Rolling River First Nation. After Treaty #4 had been signed in 1874, the Rolling River leader had attempted to designate IR lands within the RMNP area to provide a safe refuge with all the requisite life necessities to wait out and avoid the warring confrontations that were occurring in Manitoba because of the Louis Riel uprisings of that time.

Anishnabe Bands traveled extensively within *Wacheewing* to harvest and transform natural resources into household goods and services, although it appears that there were 'home base' locations that were seasonally returned to within this resource-rich area. As a management technique, some Bands chose to travel greater distances to more marginal areas for their harvest but returned to their 'home base' locations when resources became scarce. This technique would have had the effect of dispersing the impacts of harvesting while ensuring that richer areas were not over-harvested. During the pre-contact period, all Band members considered this landscape as 'home' and occupation was continual. The Anishnabe protected their common property rights to this landscape from intruding non-member groups. A descendant of Waywayseecappo recanted one such conflict (that occurred before the time of treaties) that was fought with spears and other hand-weapons between her great-grandfather's Band and a "black" group originating from the south. RMNP, therefore, reflects not only the history of this country, but also that other countries.

The *Wacheewing* landscape continues to provide the means to ground cultural teachings and legends for the common good of the people. Toponyms (place names) provide location-specific information while also transmitting cultural understanding. For example, *Wasagaming*, adopted as the name for the townsite in RMNP, means 'clear lake'. Aside from the obvious environmental characteristics revealed by this word, it is also one of the few readily identified lakes where reliable fishing was known to occur. The north shore of this lake is connected to a legend that accounts for the fish found in the lake. It also provides a behavioral prescription regarding the use and management of the water in the lake.

This time period offered the least amount of mappable information from the Elders of the two communities. Attrition of the knowledge base through death of Elders and the loss of intimate contact with the landscape since the establishment of RMNP has meant a diminished ability to sustain the oral history associated with the *Wacheewing* territorial landscape.

4.2 Contact to Pre-RMNP Period

It was during this time period that treaties were made with the Anishnabe Bands of the Riding Mountain Region. Both Waywayseecappo and Rolling River Bands are included by Treaty #4 signed in 1874 at Fort Ellice, now known as St. Lazare, a small town southwest of RMNP. Treaties were made to facilitate the peaceful settlement of colonists to this area. The treaties provided the “Indians” a secured base of land and continued rights to hunt, trap, and fish on unoccupied Crown lands. In addition to the information provided during research activities with the Waywayseecappo and Rolling River First Nation Elders, the importance and significance of the *Wacheewing* territorial landscape was confirmed by an “1881 Annual Report” compiled by the Department of Indian Affairs (1882).

This report establishes the Riding Mountain traditional land use territory as a significant focal point for sustaining livelihoods and the socio-cultural well-being by providing specific reference to the Waywayseecappo First Nation within the report. Every year on the 31st of December, each First Nation is routinely required to submit a written census of the status and location of their Band members for that date. On 31 December 1881, in the middle of a cold Manitoba winter and seven years after IR lands were established, the official census taken of the on-reserve “Indian” population reported that over 84% of the Waywayseecappo Band members were “Hunting on Riding Mountain” (Department of Indian Affairs 1882:56).

This time period reflects the efforts of treaty nations to define a new order in their relationship with territorial landscapes. Treaties provided rights to harvest natural resources on unoccupied Crown lands. However, intensive timber requirements by settlers building homesteads seriously jeopardized the forest resource and ecosystem health of the now-surrendered territorial landscape. To prevent further environmental destruction, the Riding Mountain Timber Reserve was established in 1885, was subsequently renamed as the Riding Mountain Forest Reserve in 1906, and has ultimately become RMNP. As settlement pressures increased from newcomers and as Aboriginal communities were persuaded to adopt agrarian livelihoods by the Department of Indian Affairs, Band members selected differing land use and lifestyle options. These options included persistent occupation on the territorial landscape, intermittent occupation between the territorial landscape and the IR lands, and persistent occupation within their IR lands. It was noted from the research that the demographic structure of those making traditional use of the landscape during this period selected against the accompaniment of aged, infirm, and pregnant members of the community thus changing family structures, functions, and relationships.

Before RMNP was established, the Anishnabe adapted to the introduction of horses and wagons. This proved advantageous to families traveling through the Forest Reserve, both in pursuing livelihoods and in maintaining kinship ties. By this time, relatives had been separated into a number of distant IR lands around the Forest Reserve. A highly-developed trail network was established to facilitate this travel and harvest efforts became more efficient. Sacred sites may have assumed a heightened importance since these could have been attended to with greater frequency. This would have had the effect to strengthen cultural teaching and affiliations during

the period when foreign religious teachings were being introduced and imposed on-reserve. The new mode of transportation therefore also expanded the opportunities to select between spending time on-reserve or in the traditional territory. Transportation further offered the Anishnabe an extra benefit: a greater ability to avoid the non-native who had settled in and were also using the area.

Those Anishnabe who maintained their contact with *Wacheewing*, either continuously or intermittently, could choose their level of dependence upon the land and supplement their unmet needs opportunistically. The presence of the Euro-Canadian introduced new resources such as bannock and farm goods (Notzke 1994) and trade between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal occurred. Trade most often involved wild meat harvested by the Anishnabe from the Timber or Forest Reserve, although hand crafted items such as moccasins were also sold or traded. The Anishnabe further participated in a cash economy at this time by harvesting seneca root, highly desired for its medicinal properties. Even though most of this resource was sold, a certain portion was usually kept for household use.

The Anishnabe Elders revealed that many of their ancestors were exceptionally knowledgeable in the identification and use of a wide variety of medicinal plants that were, and potentially are, still available within the RMNP land base. Those who possessed this knowledge and administered healing were afforded a highly respected status within the community. However, once RMNP management and enforcement practices had been implemented (which included loss of harvest rights and homeland within the territorial landscape), the ability to maintain transmission of this skill and knowledge became significantly impaired. Direct community health, labour and cultural values were felt. Further attrition of this important knowledge base has continued through the deaths of Elders and is now almost completely lost forever.

4.3 Post-RMNP Establishment Period

The most calamitous impacts to the Anishnabe have been noted to have occurred during the period following establishment of RMNP. During the decades that followed, many examples were offered by the Elders that revealed that the relationship between the Anishnabe and the park wardens was highly adversarial. Increasing numbers of Anishnabe moved on-reserve as the park wardens attempted to gain more complete control over protected area lands in *Wacheewing*. The need to avoid the park wardens and the speed required to accomplish this contributed to a further change in the demographic composition of those participating in traditional land and resource use. For the most part, it was the men and young males who frequently traveled to RMNP to hunt and trap while families, including the women, young children, and elderly, attended usually only in the summer. This change was also due, in part, to children's more frequent attendance at on-reserve schools.

Cash cropping of the seneca root persisted after RMNP was established through the use of a permit-system. Those wishing to harvest seneca root had to obtain a permit for collection from the "Indian Agent". This permit also provided authorization for the Anishnabe to leave the IR lands. It was during this period that Waywayseeccappo and Rolling River communities became permanently defined as being *adjacent* to the protected area, rather than *immersed* in their territorial landscape. This fact serves as a continued source of frustration and resentment on behalf of the Anishnabe people.

The Anishnabe dietary regime also changed most rapidly after RMNP was established. Wild meat had been the main dietary staple. Wild potatoes, wild carrots, and berries completed

nutritional requirements. Although new types of food were available (from gardening, animal husbandry and trade), wild meat maintained its position as a primary staple for many decades after RMNP was established. One Elder revealed that, although their family kept fifty head of cattle on-reserve, these were never eaten; meat requirements would be met with wild game from RMNP. On the one hand, it could be said that this strategy merely protects the financial interest in cattle as a cash crop. However, the Elder stressed that their family did not view beef as a substitute to wild meat since they were unaccustomed to and disliked the flavour of this meat. Beef was not part of, and had no place in, their traditional culture. Therefore, the men of this particular family group, like many others, routinely traveled up to ten miles in one direction with their wagons in an attempt to harvest wild game from RMNP. Elaborate and well-orchestrated strategies were developed to avoid detection by park wardens during their harvest activities. These strategies to obtain meat were highly labour and time intensive and often involved personal hardship and grueling conditions to be suffered by the men. Therefore, attention was focused on harvesting wild game because this resource returned the highest benefit in terms of food and other products, such as hides for clothing, in relation to the costs of time and labour, and risk of detection and arrest by park wardens.

With the exception of wild meat, as people became increasingly bound to the reserves and as the costs and risks more equally countered the benefits from resource harvest, communities became less dependent on all other country foods and resources during this period. The communities reorganized due to this reduced dependence. For example, those persons who were skilled in traditional medicines found it increasingly difficult to obtain their stocks and conduct healing practices. Skilled hunters would have increased their status in relation to the medicine people. Families increasingly abandoned their traditional hunting and trapping areas that had been the centers of traditional and cultural learning along with their direct ancestral connection to *Wacheewing*.

The summer season predominated in providing renewed opportunities to retain individual connections to the historic territorial landscape, even if it was only on a seasonal basis. During this summer time on the landscape, however, Anishnabe harvesting methods and cultural behaviors had changed over time, being guarded and cautious of the new restrictions and monitoring by park wardens. Although certain sacred areas continued to be used for ceremonial purposes, the children (now the Elders participating in this on-going research) were often kept from attending at these sites or knowing what transpired during ceremonies. Elders feel that this may have been done to safeguard discovery of these activities by park wardens. Consequently, this cultural knowledge, like other information about the historic traditional land and resource use of the communities adjacent to the protected area, has been almost completely lost to successive generations of Anishnabe.

5.0 The Loss of a Common Property Resource: *Wacheewing*

During the successive time periods following European contact until after RMNP was established and managed under state ownership, the ability to depend on the goods, services and sacred sites of *Wacheewing* diminished, along with the right to manage what was once a common property resource. Diminished use was a result of a combination of factors: the change to sedentary lifestyles on-reserve, an increased dependence on non-country medicines and food products (available from gardening, animal husbandry, and trade), the introduction of European education and religious practices, and the imposition of state regulation and management of

Wacheewing. The perceptions of the people to the changed climate of RMNP eventually brought visitation to a halt. A number of explanations were offered by the Elders during the research. These included feeling that the “white” people didn’t want them there, too much development had occurred on the landscape within RMNP, park wardens became vigourous with their enforcement activities, and wagon trails, upgraded to accommodate automobiles and increased traffic, had become too wide to cross safely, undetected by park wardens.

Today remnants of the Anishnabe management techniques that had been applied to *Wacheewing* remain embedded in current daily practice. Scrupulous attention to ensuring control of personal camp fires continues to be important. This would have protected the forest resource from anthropogenically-caused fires while at the same time safeguarding the lives of the many Anishnabe simultaneously using the lands and resources of *Wacheewing*. All natural resources used in meeting livelihood needs must be completely used and not wasted. Resources are never to be taken without first giving something back in return for their use. Appropriate respect and behavior is required at all times. This respect is extended to the resources, sacred sites, and landscape alike. Since these are all considered gifts from the Creator, it can also be considered disrespectful to not acknowledge and respectfully use these resources as they were meant to be. This last point provides a potential divergence between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world view concerning whether conservation and harvest of resources are mutually-exclusive ideologies as promoted in current legislation governing protected areas in Canada. In this vein, continued harvest at sustainable rates is thought to better ensure the overall health of natural resources by maintaining balanced populations and age classes.

It is possible that the extent of cultural erosion could have been diminished if the original administration of this national park had incorporated the existing socio-economic characteristics, needs and aspirations of the local Aboriginal into its management plans. In the current situation, the Anishnabe communities are defined as those being adjacent to this protected area. Such a definition does not adequately represent their rich culture and heritage that has been buried, like their ancestors, in the lands now called RMNP. The social landscape of *Wacheewing* was inextricably tied to the transmission of knowledge, cultural identity, laws and rules, pride and prestige of the Anishnabe. These suffered deleterious effects when *Wacheewing*, the source of travel, place and narrative, was taken.

Adjacent Aboriginal communities may finally be afforded opportunities to regain some measure of lost history and management control. Parks Canada has emphasized the value of seeking partnerships with Aboriginal peoples and has also integrated a multi-stakeholder decision-making process at RMNP. Further, in light of the recent resolution to the Keeseekoowenin land claim and in an attempt to provide more equitable treatment to the adjacent Anishnabe communities, RMNP administration is amenable to considering change to the management status quo. The following section explores these opportunities and reveals process uncertainties that should be addressed to maximize Anishnabe community empowerment.

6.0 “Narrowing the Road”

In 1994, the Parks Canada (1994) “Guiding Principles and Operational Policies” mandated an ecosystem-based approach to conservation management of protected heritage areas. Ecosystem-based management “integrates scientific knowledge of ecological relationships within a complex sociopolitical and values framework toward the general goal of protecting native ecosystem integrity over the long-term” (Grumbine 1994:31). Ecosystem-based management is a

proactive holistic tool, providing responsive management to meet the ecological, social, political, and economic challenges of today without compromising the needs of future generations.

The general goal of ecosystem-based management is ecosystem integrity (Grumbine 1994). An important aspect in managing for ecosystem integrity is management of the human uses, desires and expectations held by disparate stakeholders. A stakeholder is someone or a group of individuals with a similar vested interest in the value or use of a particular resource. In managing RMNP, there is great potential for conflict due to differences in land-use management philosophies and perspectives between the staff and local residents (RMNP 1988; Whaley, pers. comm.). At RMNP, a consortium of stakeholders participate in the collaborative management forum, the Riding Mountain Round Table Advisory Board. Through this means, representatives from each of the 15 surrounding municipal districts, three outside agencies (the local Chamber of Commerce and two environmental groups), as well as three local First Nations (Keeseekoowenin, Rolling River, and Waywayseecappo) who share jointly the last two of 20 seats, participate in the Park's ecosystem-based management planning and activities (Fenton, pers. comm.).

The Riding Mountain Round Table Advisory Board, which includes working members of RMNP, provides a forum for stakeholders to share their individual needs and aspirations while learning about the needs and aspirations of others. Two of the key elements of participation by external parties in ecosystem-based management are communication and education between and within the stakeholder groups. A criticism extended by members of the Aboriginal community across Canada to this author, is that this method of participation does not recognize the priority rights and status of First Nations as guaranteed under the *Constitution Act*, 1982, and as supported by the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in *Sparrow*, 1991. In the case at RMNP, First Nations are reconciled to sharing two seats on the Board between their three communities. Of further concern, their issues and concerns bear an equivalent weight to those of the other non-Aboriginal stakeholders. This form of advisory input is often referred to by the Aboriginal as a form of co-opting their participation without offering meaningful authority, rights or responsibility.

Meaningful participation of the Aboriginal in planning, decision-making, and activities has usually only been evidenced for those First Nations whom have successfully defended a land claim, such as occurred for the Inuit under the following agreements: Inuvialuit Final Agreement (INAC 1984); the Yukon Umbrella Agreement (Jessup, pers. comm.); and the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut Agreement (Riewe, pers. comms.; WWF 1993). In the case of Manitoba's second and newly-ratified Wapusk National Park, co-management with First Nations was not catalyzed by a comprehensive or specific land claim initiative. Other considerations may have provided the impetus for ratifying a meaningful partnership agreement with local First Nations. These include outstanding Treaty Land Entitlements, land entitlement provisions under the Northern Flood Agreement of 1977 and a claim by the Fox Lake First Nation for compensation related to hydroelectric development impacts (Hill 1993). The Wapusk National Park agreement offers participation in national park management and continued use, but the success of this partnership is as yet untested.

Berkes (1995) noted, based on a recent study of co-management agreements between government agencies and First Nations in Manitoba by Alison Haugh (1994), that most agreements "tended to be sectoral, and of the crisis-response variety, and not comprehensive or well coordinated" (p. 206). From this author's working experience with First Nations, supported by Berkes (1995) and many others, including Usher (1991), it is accepted that for co-management

or partnering to be meaningful, a critical element to be incorporated is real power-sharing and responsibility between the parties.

At RMNP there is reason to be hopeful of efforts to establish meaningful co-management relationships with the adjacent Aboriginal communities. Firstly, there is the legal requirement to implement co-management of the fishery at Clear Lake with the Keeseekoowenin First Nation. Secondly, this essay reflects some of the preliminary results of on-going research to investigate the traditional land and resource use of the adjacent First Nations. The final objective of this research is to develop recommendations to that integrate traditional knowledge and effect comprehensive, well-coordinated co-management partnership agreements between the neighbouring First Nations and RMNP in areas pertaining to park stewardship; natural resources; and cultural resources (Peckett, 1997). This goal has been accepted and supported by both the First Nations and RMNP. There exists a desire on behalf of both parties to develop a new, synergistic working relationship and implement co-management, particularly regarding cultural resources (White Bird, pers. comm.; Fenton, pers. comm.).

There is evidence to illustrate that this protected area can benefit from Aboriginal participation in protecting and ensuring natural and cultural integrity. Parks Canada staff are mandated to “striv(e) to ensure that management decisions ... are made on **sound** ... management ... and practices” (Parks Canada 1994:16) (emphasis added). Considering that the cultural resources of this protected area in many instances originate from the Aboriginal peoples local to the area, there exists ethical grounds for their direct inclusion in decision-making and management activities. How would decisions and practices be judged to be sound without input from the peoples whose traditions or resources are being protected? Sacred sites are often not associated with built structures which makes it difficult to ascertain significance without Aboriginal participation. Additionally, through the on-going research into the Anishnabe traditional land and resource use, RMNP staff can gain insight into the traditional knowledge that was once an integral part of managing this area and obtain baseline ecological information to complement the partial understanding of this region’s ecosystem.

More and better communication of the Aboriginal’s knowledge, perspectives, and long-standing, intimate relationship with their neighbouring national parks can facilitate efforts to create the means for the First Nations and Parks Canada partners to share in the process of establishing and evolving protected area management policies and activities. The benefits of cooperating for mutual benefit which accrue to co-managing partners have been summarized by Berkes (1995):

“From the point of view of the government, user participation in management is likely to lead to (a) stronger commitment to sustainable use, a higher degree of acceptability and compliance, and lower enforcement costs. From the point of view of Aboriginal groups, co-management makes it possible to articulate community concerns, protect the traditional economy (and culture), and safeguard rights against threats to the land (and cultural) resource base” (p. 206).

Seventeen short reports summarizing collaborative management activities were published in the IUCN (1996) issue of “People in Charge: The emerging face of conservation”. A review of these global initiatives in India, Pakistan/China, Africa, Uganda, Nepal, Tanzania, Canada,

Australia, and other countries, revealed a number of consistent themes of 'best practices' or 'lessons learned':

- There should be a shared desire to between stakeholders to managed a particular resource or region in question;
- All critical stakeholders should be identified and involved in the process at the start, i.e. from the conception stage;
- Communication and learning must occur between and within the participating stakeholder groups;
- Consultation must be continuous between the stakeholders through all phases and activities;
- Participation must be meaningful, incorporating some degree of decision-making authority: participants then have a stake in the conservation or management of the resource i.e. both the benefits (e.g. of use) and responsibilities (e.g. of risk and enforcement);
- Success must not be monitored in an ethnocentrically biased framework but may rely and be quantified, instead, on the sustainability of the resource; and
- Compromise of basic positions must occur for mutually beneficial and complementary results to be achieved.

Although much has been written on co-management (collaborative management, partnerships), each specific situation must be responded to within its own constraints of the ecological, economic, social, cultural and political framework. There are no set rules on how to integrate the Aboriginal into more meaningful relationships regarding management and stewardship of national parks in Canada. However, in the beginning it must start with respect.

Co-management is as much a mindset of the managers as it is a management strategy. If that mindset is ethnocentrically-biased towards the superiority of one management system, one world-view, or one legal system, co-management attempts will fail. Nepinak and Payne (1990) have identified that failures in attempts at co-management were found to be in the area of human development i.e. in not being able to accept another's social and cultural values as not being inferior to their own. This can be a major stumbling block when one considers that "much wildlife-conservation law is based on social and cultural values and not always on biological-management principles" (Nepinak and Payne, 1990:239).

Establishing a new relationship based on mutual respect and partnership between adjacent Aboriginal communities and RMNP will require attention to be focused on first establishing trust between the parties. Considering the long history of adversarial relations between the groups, this may be a long and difficult process unless there is a firm commitment to forging this new relationship. It will be important that the First Nations do not feel merely co-opted into the process but that there be a cognizance of their priority stakeholder status that more adequately reflects the federal government's fiduciary responsibility and the results of recent court cases, such as *Sparrow* and *Delgamuukw*.

On this point, multi-stakeholder decision-making processes, such as the Riding Mountain Round Table Advisory Board, do not meet the criteria. A central premise to this process is that the needs, aspirations, and concerns of Aboriginal members of the Board are viewed with equal weight and merit as other stakeholders. This fact overlooks the nation-to-nation agreement that exists within Treaty #4 which should provide priority attention to the contractual agreements between the federal government and the First Nations.

The point to be established here is that Parks Canada, as a federal agent representing Canada, and the First Nations should first develop consensus on the principles and framework of RMNP administration and management in a separate process before involving all other stakeholders. That this important step is often overlooked remains the reason that multi-stakeholder decision-making processes often fail to generate greater sustained participation by the Aboriginal. Equal weighting of stakeholder concerns and objectives will only continue to detrimentally impact the ability of First Nations to protect the sustainability of their cultures and the sustainability of their livelihoods as guaranteed in their treaties. The development of co-management institutions will therefore require that the culture of the Aboriginal people be not appropriated, but be integrated in a way that permits on-going participation in process evolution.

7.0 Conclusion

The history of the Aboriginal with national parks has been one tempered with contentious issues and managed with disregard. Aboriginal communities adjacent to the RMNP protected area is no exception. Parks Canada is beginning to address their challenges to integrate Aboriginal land uses, rights, and knowledge into management and stewardship activities. In the interests of ecosystem-based management and the sound management of cultural resources, Parks Canada is making slow but positive strides. In terms of the complexities in managing ecosystems, traditional knowledge may provide new insights. Finally, in the role of public education, the Aboriginal have much to share regarding respectful cohabitation with and conservation of the natural environment. In their view and when approached with respect, conservation and use are not necessarily mutually exclusive ideologies. To narrow the road between two 'ways of knowing' will require a fundamental shift in the approach used to establish new co-management relationships. It also requires federal acknowledgment of responsibility to mitigate the detrimental impacts to the many First Nations affected by the past practices used to establish protected areas in Canada.

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