7 Frenchman's Island and the *Naatuwaau* Bones: Archaeology and Cree Tales of Culture Contact

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Research paradigms that explicitly integrate the traditional knowledge of Native peoples are now today being developed by archaeologists in many parts of the world. This is especially true in places like the Canadian subarctic, the homeland of indigenous groups whose intimate familiarity and ongoing economic and spiritual relationship with the land is rooted in many generations of occupation and use. Archaeologists have become increasingly open to the idea that such knowledge may have much to contribute to all aspects of archaeological research and interpretation, a development that has been inspired by changing social contexts and by a new empowerment of First Nations and Inuit, and their explicit demands relating to research on their cultural heritage.

At the same time, archaeologists are increasingly aware of the degree to which their own methods and interpretations may be value-laden, and coloured by or serving to bolster aspects of Western ideology (e.g., Shanks and Tilley 1987). They are also more cognizant of the limitations inherent in the physical record relating to problems of preservation, sampling, and the myriad complexities of site formation processes (e.g., Schiffer 1987). Many are thus more receptive to alternate or supplementary sources of knowledge of the past that may enhance appreciation of the social, ideological, and historical context under which the archaeological record was formed and which may permit access to information impossible to obtain through archaeology alone. These developments closely parallel the recognition by some environmental scientists, resource managers, and even government and international agencies, of the legitimacy of *traditional* or *indigenous knowledge* (or *traditional ecological knowledge* [TEK]) and the acceptance that such knowledge can have important implications for the sustainable management of particular ecosystems (e.g., World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 115).

In Canadian subarctic archaeology, integration of traditional knowledge has resulted in the recognition of many archaeological sites, either through direct identification of sites by Native participants (Greer, Ch. 9; Hart 1994) or through the use of traditional land-use patterns, indigenous perceptions of the land and its resources, and oral traditions (especially narratives and place names) to identify potential sites (Andrews and Hanks 1987; Hanks and Winter 1986). Knowledge offered by Native people has also served to challenge or correct archaeological interpretations of the function of sites, features, or tools (e.g., Nagy 1994).

The historical legitimacy of oral traditions extending deep into the past is now being acknowledged. For example, Cruikshank has demonstrated that some Aboriginal narratives from northwestern North America contain precise information regarding the past environment, such as glacier surges and volcanic eruptions (1981), while Hanks (Ch. 11) suggests that such knowledge may extend back in time to incorporate Pleistocene megafauna. Archaeologists are increasingly inclined to look at the historical content of some Native "myths" and to weave these into archaeological interpretation—a recognition that legitimizes them as historical accounts (Pettipas 1993, 1994). Archaeological research has also been used to corroborate indigenous, orally transmitted, versions of past events that may be completely at odds with official, accepted histories that are based on documentary evidence (e.g., McDonald et al. 1991).

The use of information provided by local Indigenous people in archaeology is not new in Canadian subarctic archaeology (Greer, Ch. 9), and in the broader history of archaeology there have been periods when programs of archaeological and ethnographic research have been, to varying degrees, integrated (e.g., Trigger 1989). Nor is the integration of oral history and other elements of oral tradition in archaeological research novel. What *is* new is the political context and a degree of involvement on the part of Native people in research programs that never existed in the past. Closer contacts have created a greater awareness on the part of archaeologists of the depth of traditional and historical knowledge and a greater respect for elements of traditional Native culture.

Despite the great potential, there are risks in bringing together ways of knowing the past that are derived from such different traditions and founded upon such divergent cultural assumptions.

Attempts to sift out the historical content (from a Western historical perspective) of oral traditions are ever open to dangers of interpretive error resulting from problems of language and semantics, and from misreadings of the cultural context. Modern reinterpretations of ancient traditions or the merging of elements of Western and Native interpretation may add to the complexities of the historical puzzle.

There are other issues to consider. From the Native perspective, a synthesis in which archaeological data are used to validate Aboriginal traditions could be considered demeaning. Certainly, the mining of Native narratives for relevant bits that fit with pre-existing, accepted archaeological constructs is a questionable procedure that runs the risk of extracting the narratives from their context, stripping away other meaning, and placing them within an external frame of reference (Lawson, Ch. 3). Conversely, an archaeology used simply to *illustrate* traditional stories is effectively stripped of its power to contribute to historical knowledge.

Interpretive integration of oral traditions and archaeology raises many questions and no clear rules exist on how this should be done: How do we deal with cases of apparent disjuncture between the archeological information and oral traditions? On what basis may we assess the strengths and weakness of each version of the past? Are we always obliged to adopt a relativist position in presenting parallel and equally valid stories about the past, or can some historical facts be derived by looking for congruence in diverse data sets? From whose perspective does the search for congruence take place? In what way may the different stories be seen as relating to different aspects of the same past, and hence be complementary rather than contradictory? How do we determine what should be read as literal historic account vs. metaphorical statements? Questions of this nature have been raised in connection with recent archaeological work in the Quebec Cree territories.

Cree Archaeology and Oral Tradition

The Cree Cultural Heritage and the Land program of the Cree Regional Authority emphasizes two aspects of Cree cultural heritage research. The first is on-going work with Cree elders to assemble a corpus of traditional knowledge regarding the history and significance of particular places throughout Cree territories. Here, the emphasis has been on Cree place names, stories, legends, and myths (or sacred stories) that are associated with particular places. The second aspect is archaeology. Over the last ten years, archaeological projects of varying scales have taken place in collaboration with many of the nine Quebec Cree communities. In many such projects, the emphasis has been on traditional knowledge as a starting point for the archaeological exploration of local sites (e.g., Denton 1993, 1995).

In this chapter, I examine two instances of apparent incongruity between oral tradition and archaeology that have been brought to light in the course of the Cree archaeology program. The two examples presented relate to events from the post-contact period, and in both cases, the availability of historic documentary information is an important element in the interplay between archaeology and the oral traditions. Both examples relate to the arrival of outsiders in the Cree territories and the narratives describe the ensuing contacts between the outsiders and the local *Iiyiyuu*.[1]

The first example focuses on a European site located on the central James Bay coast, to the south of the Cree village of Wemindji (Figure 1), which is regarded by Wemindji residents as the location of the first contact between local people and Europeans arriving by ship. While it is identified in local tradition as having been occupied by "Frenchmen," documentary records and archaeological interpretation originally suggested a different interpretation.

The second example relates to a place near the Broadback River, not far from the Cree village of Nemaska. The site is known to some Cree residents of Waskaganish, Nemaska, and Waswanipi as a place of a battle between local Cree inhabitants and invading *Naatuwaau*[2] warriors. Yet in the course of an archaeological survey carried out in collaboration with the Nemaska First Nation, nothing was found at this location.

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[1] In this paper, the term *Iiyiyuu*, which Crees use to refer to themselves in the coastal dialect, is used interchangeably with the term *Cree*.

[2] The spelling of Cree words used in this paper is based on that used by the Cree School Board (McKenzie et. al. 1987).

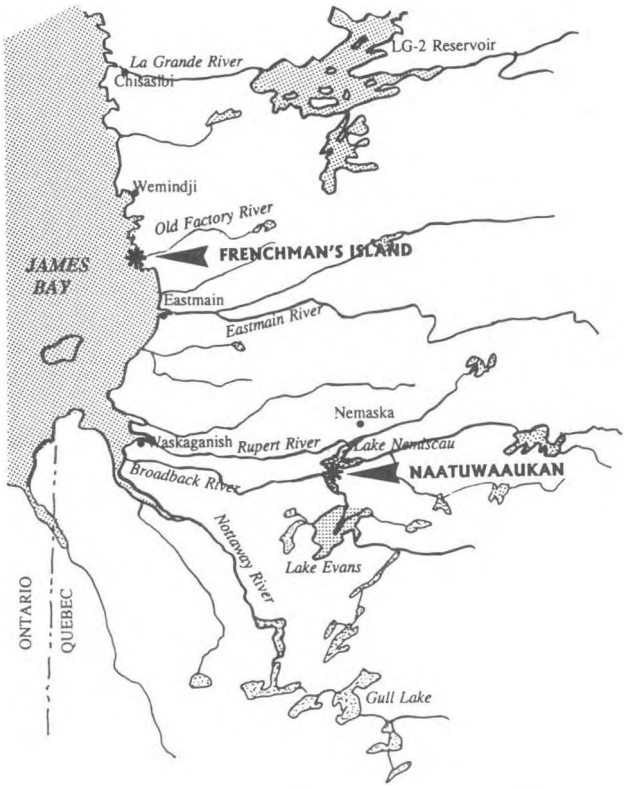

Figure 1. Location of Frenchman's Island and Naatuwaaukan, Quebec.

By focusing on these examples of apparent disjuncture, it will be shown that a dialogue between these two sources of knowledge, involving a reaching out for broader contextual information, is possible, and may result in at least a partial resolution of interpretive problems. The two examples demonstrate that there is a great deal of specific historical information encoded within Cree oral tradition, and that, at least in some cases, it is possible to establish convincing parallels between events constructed on the basis of archival records, archaeology, and oral traditions. While such sifting and searching for congruence between diverse data sets may indeed remove narratives from their cultural context and subject them to external assessment and comparison, it is shown that this process can be a very enriching one for archaeology. On the other hand, the gulf between those sources of knowledge may sometimes be so wide as to raise questions regarding the possibility or appropriateness of interpretative integration.

FRENCHMAN'S ISLAND

As part of the Wemindji Archaeological Project, elders were asked to identify the oldest places of Cree or European settlement in the coastal zone near Wemindji. Several elders mentioned Upishtikwaayaaukaamikw, in Old Factory Bay, as an early European site. In 1987, the archaeological survey crew was taken to the site by local resident, George Stewart. Some surface collection of artifacts was done at this time, a chain and compass map was made, and surface features of the site were photographed (Denton and Larouche 1990). In 1989, this work was followed up with more extensive archaeological testing (Lueger 1990).

Old Factory Bay is important in the more recent history of the Wemindji *Iiyiyuu*. In 1934, a trader named Jack Palmquist, known by Crees as *Taauwaasuu* [trader] set up a store in Old Factory Bay; by 1936, the Hudson's Bay Company (hereafter, HBC, or "the Company") had followed suit and established their own store on a nearby island. Anglican and Oblate missions were also established. From the mid-1930s until 1958, when the community was relocated to its

present site, Old Factory was the home base both for local coastal dwellers and those hunting and trapping far inland. The historic association of Wemindji residents with Old Factory Bay is currently celebrated in an annual event, the "Old Factory Reunion."

My presentation of the Frenchman's Island example begins with the *Iiyiyuu* narrative histories. This is followed by the presentation of documentary and archaeological evidence relating to the site and, then, the introduction of material relating to a historic figure who provides a common thread between oral tradition and the HBC records. There follows a general assessment of the potential archaeological significance of the Wemindji stories. The section on Frenchman's Island concludes with a brief examination of the significance of the stories as metaphor, followed by the introduction of a similar narrative from another Cree community as a means of establishing a broader geographic context.

Frenchman's Island and the Narrative Histories

The place known as Upishtikwaayaaukaamikw (literally "Frenchman's House" or "Frenchman's Trading Post" and more commonly known in English as "Frenchman's Island") figures prominently in the tradition of Wemindji residents. Many Wemindji *Iiyiyuu* are aware that artifacts from the site were found here when, in the 1940s, Oblate fathers, assisted by local Inuit and Cree residents, prepared the ground to grow potatoes. Cree oral tradition is expressed in a story told by Geordie Georgekish to Colin Scott in 1979:

> This is an old story that goes all the way back to the time before the Whiteman first came to this land. There was a certain man living at that time who could conjure (*kuusaapitam*) using the shaking tent (conjuring lodge) and he had the ability of being able to know what would happen in the future, with the help of a *mistaapaau* (spirit helper).
>
> [Narrator assumes the voice of the *mistaapaau*, who is seeing into the future for the man who could conjure]: "I see someone out in the ocean. He is standing in the water. He looks like a huge person in the form of a white spruce (*minhiikwaapaaiiyuu*)." The strange person was just standing there. After a while, the *mistaapaau* spoke to the man again: "Remember what I saw in the ocean? I told you it was a huge person in the form of a white spruce. It is not a person. It is called a ship (*chiiman*)." So he looked around, and it was still just standing there. He spoke to the man once again: "He might find you, but don't be afraid of him. You can go to the ship. You can go to the ship."
>
> The people saw the ship. The man wanted to paddle over to the ship, but none of the men wanted to go with him. Only his wife wanted to paddle to the ship with him. Soon he was on his way, and shortly he arrived. Their jackets were made of fur from animals that he had trapped. So the people on the ship gave them some other clothes to wear. "Take your clothes off," they were told, and they understood what they were told. So the woman, whose pants were made of muskrat fur, removed her pants. And they went home wearing the clothes that the people from the ship had given them.
>
> As for the other people who hadn't wanted to go to the ship, they paddled over, and they were also given some clothes to wear by the people in the ship. And that's when the first Whitemen came to the Indian people, in a place called *Paakumshumwaashtikw* ["River spills out"; Old Factory or Vieux Comptoir on official maps].
>
> They lived on an island known as *Upishtikwaayaaukaamikw* [Frenchman's Island, in the bay at Old Factory]. They began building houses there. The news of the first Whitemen's meeting with the Indian people spread in the world. As the news was heard more and more Whitemen came to the Indian's land. They started living on the Indian's land.
>
> Here in a place called Maatuskaau [Poplar River]...it is said an old Englishman lived. The place belonged to the Indian people. Of the Whitemen that had come to the Indian's land, I guess he was the oldest. So he got the name *Chisaawaamistikushiiu* (Elder Englishman; *chisaa*, meaning "old," also connotes "wise" and "great"; *waamistikushiiu* translates as "Englishman"). His (Indian) wife also came from the place called Maatuskaau. It is said that he had a son-in-law who was Indian.

> There was another Englishman who lived in Eastmain. He was the first Whiteman who ever came to that place. He sold rifles and shotguns. He sold them to the Indian people. People came from the north to Eastmain to pick up firearm supplies such as powder for their shotguns...
>
> Concerning some people from the north who went to pick up ammunition in Eastmain, when they returned (from trapping), they just walked by [place reference unclear] and headed straight to Frenchman's Island. That's where the Frenchmen lived here at Old Factory. The Frenchman runs toward them, and when he reaches them, he unfastens their dog sleds and takes all the fur that they had wanted to sell him. But they get nothing at all from him.
>
> Now Elder Englishman who lived at Maatuskaau, when he heard about this, wanted to see for himself what he had heard. He wanted to see what the Frenchman did to the Indian people. "Well, if I had the chance to return to where I came from, I could show the Frenchman something he wouldn't like, for what he had done to the people. So I guess I'll go home," said Elder Englishman.
>
> He asked his son-in-law to go with him. ...Soon, he and his father-in-law were on their way to that place. That's where the big fight started, the fight between the Englishmen and the Frenchmen. The Company (*Kaampaanii*, referring to the Hudson's Bay Company), as it turned out, won the fight. That's when the Company first came to the Indian's land. [Narrator's aside: "But I just wonder what year it was when all this took place."] This was something that the old people did in the past. It was from long ago that the Indians first lived in this country, before the First Frenchmen, who found the Indians, came to this place. Then the Frenchmen, who found the Indians, came to this place. Then the Frenchmen and the Company fought. The Company won the fight. Right now, the Company still stands for the Indian people[3] (Geordie Georgekish, cited in Scott 1992a).

Another Wemindji elder, Jacob Georgekish, provided a slightly different version of the first contact (Scott 1992a, 1992b). The story also appears to locate the events of the first contact specifically at Old Factory Bay. It begins:

> Before the first Englishman arrived here, and even before the first Frenchmen arrived, only the Indian (*Iiyiyuu*) was here. The first Indian people who lived there had their home at Old Factory.

This version states explicitly that the first ship belonged to Frenchmen, not Englishmen. After recounting the story of the first meeting, the narrator continues:

> It is said that the French were the first group to see the Indians. They stayed with the people for a long time. I don't remember what happened after that. I wasn't born yet, and my father wasn't born yet, either. The French were the first ones to come to the Indian people. Then after a while, the Company (Hudson's Bay Co.) came to the people.
>
> When these people from the ship stayed with the Indian people, the only food they relied on was fish. They gathered hundreds, and put them in barrels, then buried these barrels under the snow. From time to time they took some out to eat.
>
> Finally, the time came when they had to leave for home. After the French left, it was the Englishman's turn to meet the Indians. But the Company never had any intention of leaving the Indians.

The narrator ends with a description of the arrival of other ships, the establishment of trading posts on the coast (e.g., "Eastmain was one of the first ones built around here"), and trading at Waskaganish.

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[3] All notes in parentheses are in the original. The spelling of the words *Iiyiyuu*,*Upishtikwaayaaukaamikw* and *Chisaawaamistikushiiu* in this text and the following one have been modified to make them consistent with the spellings elsewhere in this paper.

Documentary and Archaeological Evidence

While the Frenchman's Island site was identified through the oral tradition and local knowledge, its interpretation has focused more on the documentary record, in particular the archival record of the Hudson's Bay Company. In the late 17th and early 18th century, for example, there are references to a place on the East Main (east coast of James and Hudson bays) called Gilpin's Island. In the mid-1680s, HBC officials ordered the establishment of a post for mineral exploration (mica) along the James Bay coast (Rich 1948: 122, cited in Lueger 1990: 5). While documentary sources do not indicate whether this post was ever built, Gilpin's Island would have been a likely location.

In 1692-93, Captain James Knight and a party of 123 men wintered at Gilpin's Island prior to re-capturing Albany Fort, an important post located on the west side of James Bay, from the French early in the summer of 1693. Ships based in Albany wintered over here in 1702-03 and 1705-06, and perhaps, on other occasions at the very end of the 17th and in the early 18th century. During this period, Gilpin's Island was one of two places on the East Main, along with the mouth of the Eastmain River, where HBC personnel spent the fall to spring period putting in provisions of game and trading with local Crees. There is no mention of the use of Gilpin's Island after 1706; by the end of second decade of the century, the HBC had chosen the Eastmain River as the most favourable place for trade, and a seasonal post was established there in 1719 (Lueger 1990: 7-10).

There is one important 18th century reference to Gilpin's Island. In 1744, the sloop *Eastmain* sailed north along the coast from Eastmain House under Thomas Mitchell. Mitchell took time to visit an "old house" (trading post) whose location was provided by Crees. He notes:

> I went to view ye Island ye Natives told us ye old house was on and there we found Like a pinnacle of Stones & Post set up in ye Middle with this Inscription or Righting as viz In ye year 1692 Winterd here 3 Ships at this Island with 123 Men under ye Government of Captn James Knight then we Erected this monument in remembrance of itt.
>
> I suppose this Island Cold Gilpins Island (B.59/a/10, cited in Lueger 1990: 12).

Following our 1987 visit, it was suggested that Frenchman's Island and Gilpin's Island were probably one and the same and that the archaeological finds here could be related to the wintering of the Knight expedition in 1692-93, and to subsequent winterings by HBC ships in the very early 1700s (Denton 1987; Denton and Larouche 1990; see also Gaumond 1968). A two-meter high pile of rocks located in a boulder field at the summit of a hill on the middle of the island was proposed as a candidate for the "pinnacle of Stones" erected by members of the Knight expedition (Denton 1987: 33). Lueger's subsequent archaeological testing at the Frenchman's Island Site and his examination of the documentary record strongly supported the association between Frenchman's Island and the Gilpin's Island of the HBC records. The artifact sample, including construction materials (e.g., large quantities of English bricks, Dutch bricks, roof and floor tiles and wrought nails), as well as the other artifacts (e.g., more than 2700 clay pipe fragments—almost all English, ceramics, gunflints and gunspalls, and lead shot), is compatible with the use of Gilpin's Island by the Knight expedition and in ensuing winterings in the late 17th/early 18th century (Lueger 1990). The trash pit, which produced a large proportion of the artifacts, could well have been used during the wintering of the large Knight party. Test excavations also revealed a house foundation of cobbles in packed clay, 12 m by 12-14 m, although it cannot be determined whether this structure was associated with the Knight expedition or another occupation of the site during the late 17th/early 18th century period.

A much smaller number of artifacts and a cellar pit that overlies part of the foundation of the earlier house have been identified. These are proposed to be associated with the use of the site in the 1804-06 period by the North West Company, which operated a trading post in Old Factory Bay during this period (Lueger 1990).

While there appears to be a good fit between the documentary and archaeological information, on the surface at least, the Cree narrative histories do not agree. Both Denton and Larouche (1990) and Lueger (1990) note that the identification of the Europeans as "French" in Wemindji oral tradition, and the corresponding toponym "Frenchman's House," appear to contradict the archaeological and historical interpretation of the late 17th and early 18th century use of the site

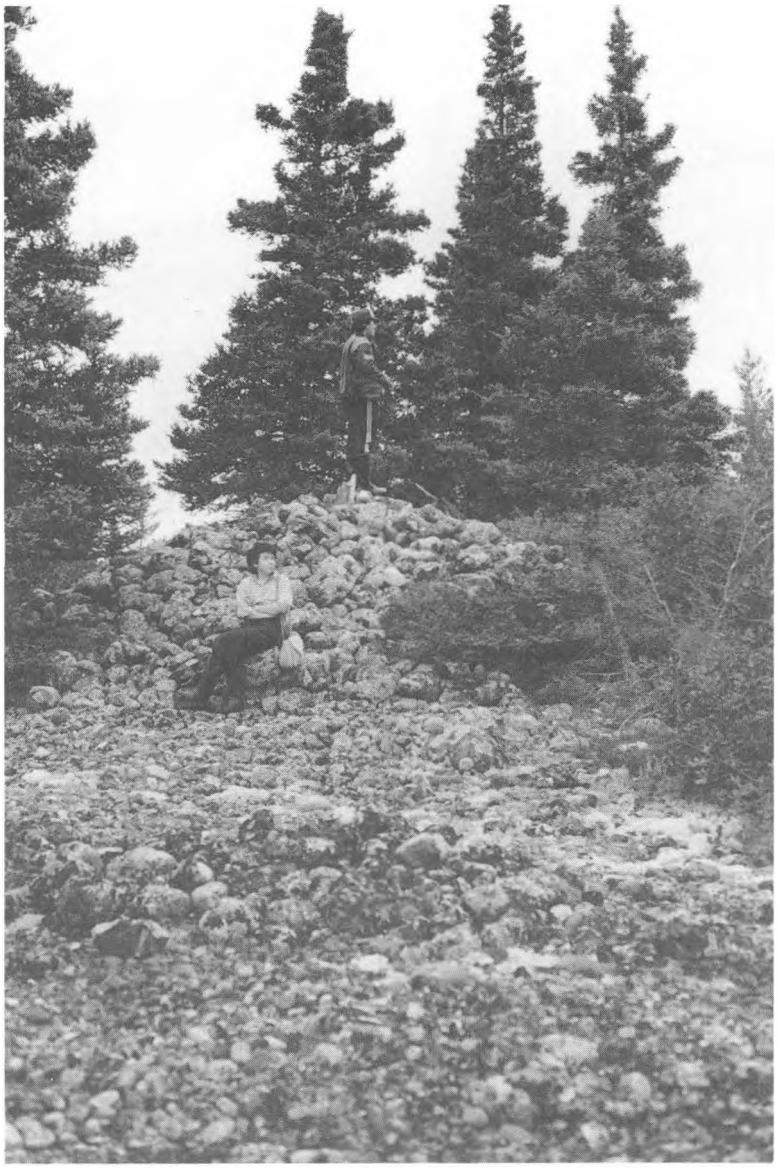

Figure 2. Elma Moses and the late Leonard Visitor are shown with a two meter high boulder feature thought to be the "pinnacle of stones" erected as a monument by members of the Knight expedition in 1693. (Photo: D. Denton)

by the English and the Hudson's Bay Company.

In the following section, it is shown that the resolution of the contradiction between the oral tradition and the archaeological/historic information is contained within the Cree oral tradition itself, which can be read within the context of additional information provided by HBC historical records.

Chisawaamistikushiiu and the North West Company

The second portion of the narrative provided by Geordie Georgekish describes an aggressive incident in which a "Frenchman," based at the Frenchman's House in Old Factory Bay, takes furs from Crees on their way to trade. The man who Wemindji Cree tradition refers to as *Chisaawaamistikushiiu*, the "great" or the "elder" Englishman, intervenes on behalf of the Cree people.

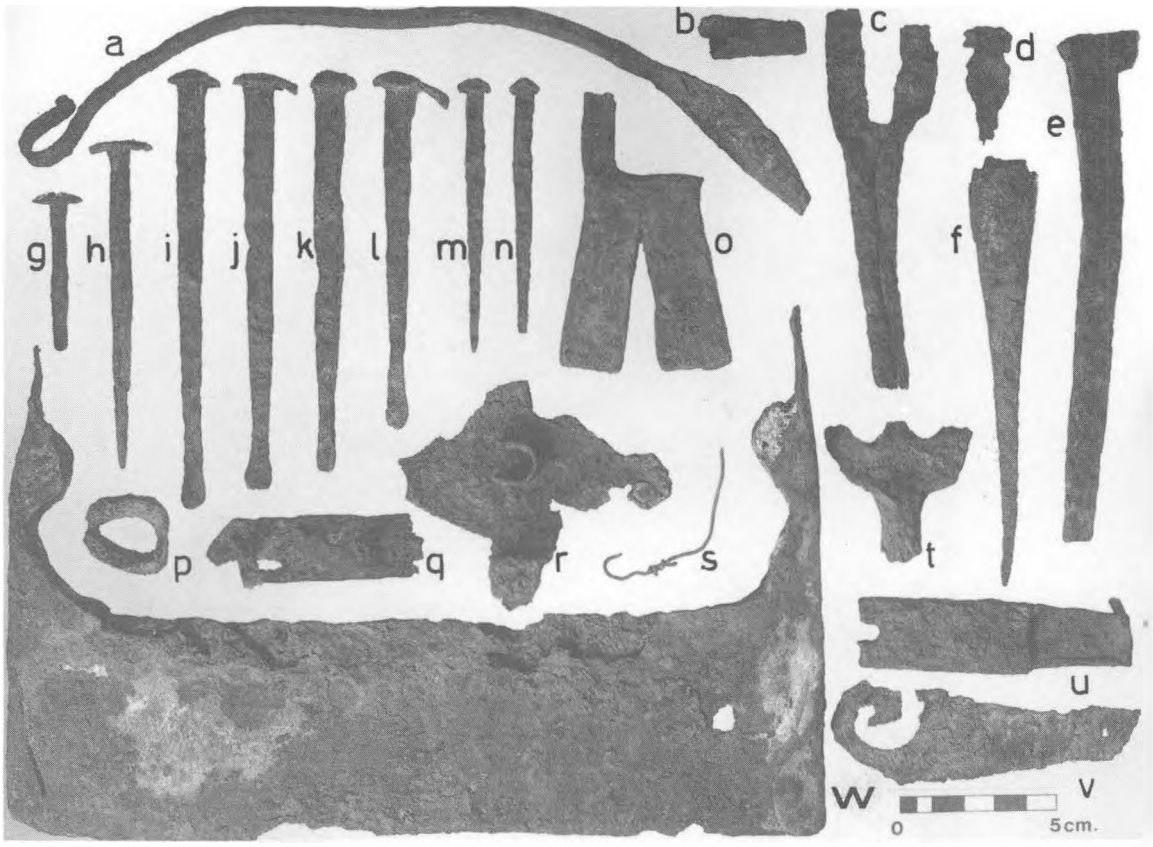

Figure 3. Tools and building hardware from Frenchman's Island. (Photo: R. Lueger)

Other stories and genealogical information offered by Wemindji residents in relation to the Wemindji Archaeology Project allow us to connect the *Chisaawaamistikushiiu* with George Atkinson II, a Métis trader as famed in the HBC documentary record as in local lore. Atkinson was born in 1777 of George Atkinson I (the chief trader at Eastmain) and a Cree woman named Nucushin. Known to the Cree as "Sneppy" or "Snappie," he spent almost all of his life on the James Bay East Main. Atkinson is generally regarded as an "Indian," or "half-breed" in the HBC records, yet the *Iiyiyuu* tradition, while clearly recognizing him as Métis, bestows upon him the epithet of "Whiteman."

In the service of the HBC during its most intense competition with the North West Company, Atkinson was instrumental in implementing the Company's new policy of exploring the interior hinterland and establishing inland posts due to his knowledge of bush life and his influence with the Cree. Nonetheless, he was often criticized by his superiors and fellows for being too close to the Cree. In 1795, James Fogget wrote that Atkinson would "never be of any service upon the account that he is sent for, for he delights always in the company of the Indians, and not in the Englishmens" (Davies and Johnson 1963: 330-1). Atkinson's influence over the Cree in the eyes of the traders was extraordinary. In 1813, the London Committee wrote: "The great difficulty appears to be to reconcile with George Atkinson... we are aware that the influence of Atkinson over the Indians is such that unless they can be brought to cooperate there would be but little prospect of success and we fear that there may be some difficulty in establishing cordiality between Atkinson and any European officers for long continuance..." (Davies and Johnson 1963: 335).

The HBC records indicate that Atkinson was "retired" on half pay for one year in 1821 and then granted an annuity of £20 per annum for seven years. Although he was also offered an opportunity to buy land in the Red River colony, he preferred to remain at Maatuskaau (Poplar River) near the James Bay coast, where he lived until about 1829. Finally, he left with some of his family for Red River Settlement, where he died in 1830 at the age of 53. His will mentions his

wife, Winnepaigoraquai, seven sons, and seven daughters. At least two of these sons were by his "old wife" (Davies and Johnson 1963: 340-1).

Atkinson's support for the Cree and his willingness to assist them in the face of unfair dealings with traders is clear in the oral accounts. A parallel view is strongly conveyed in written comments of Atkinson's HBC colleagues or superiors, both during the latter part of his employment with the HBC and following his retirement to Maatuskaau. Atkinson's ideas for dealing with the Cree were often in conflict with those of other Company employees who felt that his approach was inimical to profitable trade. In 1822, Clouston blamed Atkinson for the dissatisfaction felt by the *Iiyiyuu* in the Big River (Chisasibi) area saying Atkinson informed them that they were being cheated and advised them not to hunt fur bearers until they received better prices. Again in 1824, Clouston complained that Atkinson gave the Indians exaggerated ideas about the value of furs and geese in England and advised them that if they stopped hunting for a time they would receive "more pay in future" Davies and Johnson 1963: 340). Clouston wrote that the *Iiyiyuu* "esteem his knowledge to be equal to that of the spirit which enters the conjuring house and his words equally true" (cited in Davies and Johnson 1963: 340).

Some of the comments offered regarding *Chisaawaamistikushiiu* by Wemindji residents in the framework of the archaeology project are as follows:

> I heard that *Chisaawaamistikushiiu* got fired because he married an Indian woman. He himself was half Indian and half Whiteman. [After he was fired] he sailed his boat to Maatuskaau and this is where he stayed. His first location was at Aanaataaukaashit (Spruce tree point). Then he moved his camp to Upichuun[4]. As far as I can remember the spruce trees have always been large at that place called Aanaataaukaashit. Chisaawaamistikushiiu's boat got loose and drifted east of the river on the north shore and where it drifted there are now large spruce trees, so it must have been a long time ago when this happened... The ground is very low in that area... there is a large swamp and at the end of the swamp is where his boat reached shore. There was a point there at the time (interview with William Asquabaneskum, 1990).

> There were a lot of them in his family...*Chisaawaamistikushiiu* hunted the same way as the Crees. He used to live with Mistikush. One time he went away for one year to tell the Europeans how the Indians lived. He came back to the same place when he got back... A long time ago they never had tea. My "grandfather" mentioned it to Chisaawaamistikushiiu who passed the word to the Whitemen when he went away and in this way he helped the Indians to get tea (interview with Frankie Asquabaneskum, 1990).

> The French traders would come and take the people's fur even if the people did not want to give it—that is what they were like. *Chisaawaamistikushiiu* told the people that they were not to do this. He said to the Indians that if he told this story to the people in England that the French people would not be here. I guess the Company manager told Chisaawaamistikushiiu to go on the ship to tell the people [in England] what the French people were doing. The reason he did this was the French people were cheating the Crees. That is all I heard about this (interview with Sam Hughboy, 1990).

The linkage between Chisaawaamistikushiiu and George Atkinson II suggests the "French"on "Frenchman's Island" can be associated with the 1804-06 North West Company's presence in Old Factory Bay. While a certain proportion of the North West Company personnel were French Canadian, most were of Scots ancestry; none of the traders who are documented as having worked at the North-West Company post in Old Factory Bay were French (Lueger 1990: 24). The identification of the traders as "French" would appear to reflect a semantic shift, as hinted by Denton and Larouche (1990) and Lueger (1990): whereas the HBC men consistently refer to the competition as the "Canadians," Crees likely employed the term *Upishtikwaayaau*. This term, currently used to designate French Canadians and by extension French speakers (McKenzie et. al. 1987; Vaillancourt 1992), appears to derive from the Montagnais (Innu) toponym for Quebec

[4] During the archaeological survey, these two locations were precisely located in the field with the help of Frankie Asquabaneskum (Denton and Larouche 1990: 40-5).

(Quebec City) (Martijn 1991: 59); it is one of the Innu terms designating the Saint Lawrence River (*uepishtikuiau-shipu*) (Vincent 1992: 28n.). In the early 19th century, the term likely had a geographic rather than an ethnic or linguistic connotation. To the 19th century HBC personnel, the *Iiyiyuu* toponym *Upishtikwaayaaukaamikw* would probably translate as "Canadian House."

A Trip to England and the Fight Against the "French"

It is tempting to draw a link with events referred to in the HBC documents for 1804-06, the period of the North West Company presence in Old Factory Bay. A key event in the Cree narratives quoted above is Chisaawaamistikushiiu's return to England to seek justice for the Crees wronged by the French. The archival documents indicate that in 1803 Atkinson was sent to establish and maintain an outpost at Big River (mouth of the La Grande River), 140 km to the north of Old Factory. The trading season of 1805-06 was one of considerable hostility between the two companies. On September 7, 1806, it is reported that the North West Company had burned their post at Big River and abandoned the Old Factory post after partially dismantling it (Lueger 1990: 16) before retreating completely from the eastern James Bay coast. At about this time, following a summer trading expedition to Great Whale, Atkinson made his way south to Eastmain and then to Moose Fort, where he took passage to England to discuss the competition with the North West Company with HBC officials. His meeting with the latter in London resulted in his being made a Council member in recognition of his efforts on behalf of the Company and in support of "...his plan to increase the trade and encourage the Indians to pay a decided preference" of the Company. In April 1807, he was given a "gratuity" of £50 in lieu of expenses and extra services in the Bay. Atkinson returned to the Bay in the summer 1807 (Davies and Johnson 1963: 334).

While the hazards of drawing such specific ties between oral traditions and documentary history are legion, the parallel here is strong enough to suggest that the same trip is referred to in both versions.[5] In this context, the fight between the French and the English in the stories refers most directly to the period of fierce competition between the traders of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, although it is likely coloured by, and to some extent, fused with more distant, analogous memories of military struggles between the French and the English in James and Hudson bays (see, for example, Scott 1989, 1992b).

The Cree Stories and Archaeological Interpretation

The Wemindji narratives quoted here contain much of interest for the archaeologist. First, the oral tradition lends support to the interpretation of Frenchman's Island as the site of the North West Company trading post, an interpretation otherwise based on somewhat scanty archaeological data (i.e., a very small number of late 18th/early 19th century artifacts and a root cellar). Second, the narratives identify Frenchman's Island as the locus of the earliest trading by Europeans arriving by ship on the central James Bay coast. It recognizes that these events happened well before, and were very much a prelude to the opening of the first, much more permanent post at Eastmain, which became the centre of trade on James Bay for most of the 18th century. Most importantly for the archaeologist, the narratives identify the location where these events took place. On these points the local tradition and the documentary evidence complement each other perfectly. Third, the oral tradition includes details that may clarify the historical context. For example, mention in the second narrative of the large number of casks used for the storage of fish for winter food is probably significant[6] The narratives also suggest that, following the initial contact, the new arrivals began to build trading posts; this may be read as support for the idea that the winterings of various parties in the late 17th/early 18th century period involved the construction of a building or buildings (also indicated by the archaeological evidence) that functioned, at least in part, as a trading posts. Finally, a direction for future archaeological investigation is also suggested in the affirmation of the *Iiyiyuu* presence at Old Factory Bay before the time of arrival of

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5 For slightly different interpretations of this voyage, see Scott (1992b: 53) and Morantz (1984: 183).

6 This seems to be mirrored in the HBC documents for both periods of use of the site. The HBC governors noted "*the great number of fish* & and other fresh provisions during all the time of [Knight's] stay [on Gilpin's Island].." (emphasis added, Rich 1957: 228-9, cited in Lueger 1990: 8]). In 1804, North West Company personnel arrived in Old Factory Bay to build their post "with a quantity of casks." (B.59/a/81: 29, cited in Lueger 1990: 15) which must have been for the storage of wild food, especially fish.

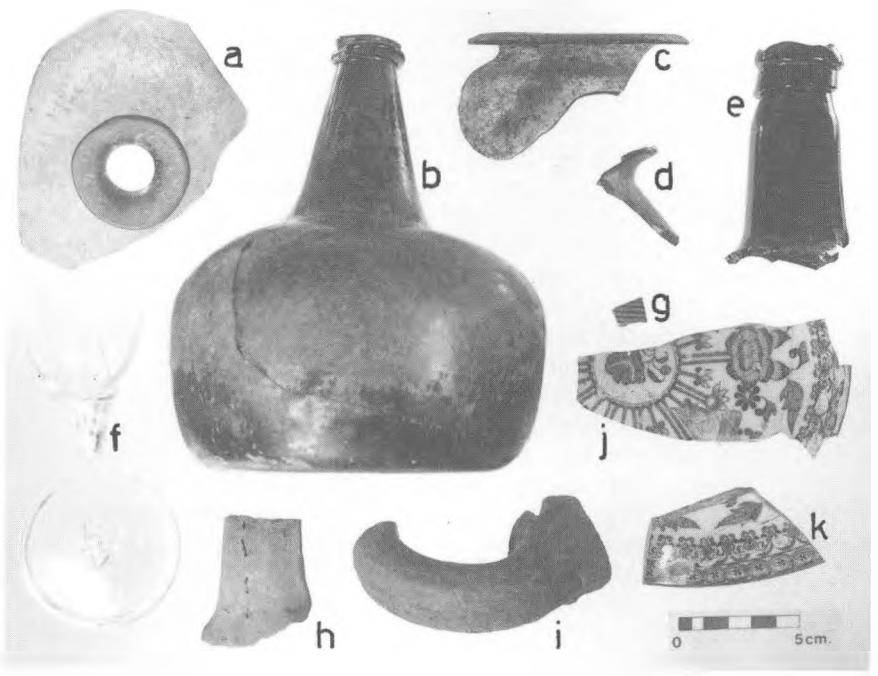

Figure 4. Glass and ceramics from the Frenchman's Island site. (Photo: Richard Lueger)

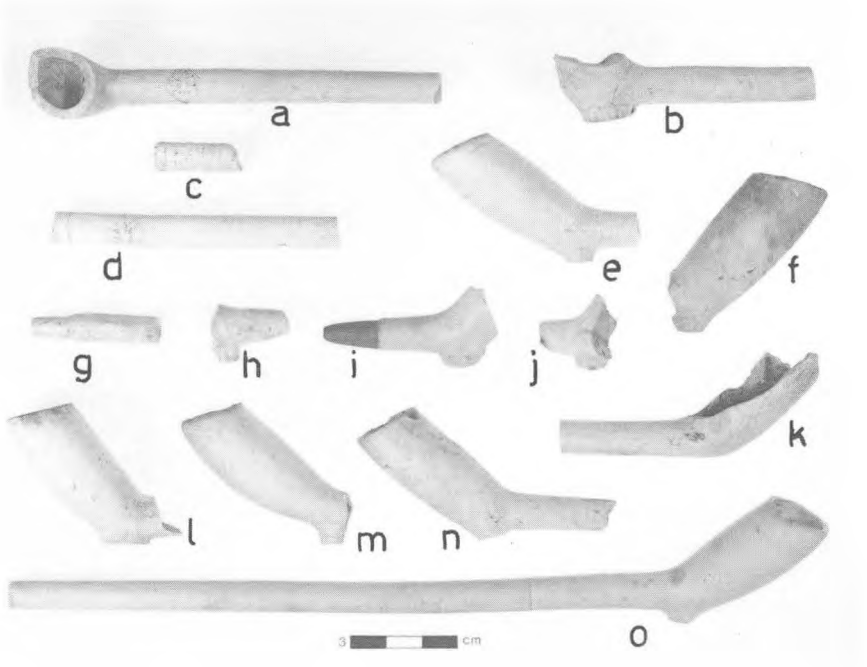

Figure 5. Clay pipes from the Frenchman's Island site. (Photo: Richard Lueger)

the first Europeans. While this could be read as a general statement of the priv-macy of *Iiyiyuu* occupation, it might also be a hint that Old Factory Bay was a traditional summering place, perhaps used by the "people of the sea" referred to Jesuit Charles Albanel at the time of his 1672 visit to the eastern James Bay coast (Thwaites 1896-1901: 203).

But what about the identification of the *earliest* European traders as French? While both Wemindji narratives insist that the French were the first to contact the *Iiyiyuu*, only the second would appear to explicitly identify the ships arriving in Old Factory as French. One could suggest that the "French" (*Upishtikwaayaau*) identification relates to an undocumented French post in this area in the 17th century, or perhaps even to the presence of Médard Chouart (des Groseilliers) on board the Nonsuch in 1668, when Charles Fort, the first post of what in 1670 would become the Hudson's Bay Company, was established. However, it is more plausible to read this as a more general statement on the arrival of the French in the Saint Lawrence Valley and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in the 16th century and the trading contact between the French the Innu, who together with the Cree and the Naskapi, formed part of a linguistic and cultural continuum across the Quebec and Labrador subarctic. It is thus an expression of the long period of trading contacts with the French, contacts that certainly affected *Iiyiyuu* living near James Bay well before the arrival of English traders and the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in this area. This chronology agrees in all respects with that of the Western historical tradition.

If the above interpretations are correct, the narrative histories can be seen as relating to three different epochs: the period of early contact with the French in the Gulf of St. Lawrence; the arrival of the ship in Old Factory Bay in the late 17th century and the subsequent development of HBC trading posts in this area; and the period of rivalry between the HBC and the North West Company in the early 1800s. In a sense, they are capsule historic commentaries on the arrival of Europeans and their subsequent relations with Crees. Geographically, the stories are both general, reflecting broad trends, and specific, tied to a particular location. Any possible confusion (from a western historical perspective) may be one of scale, and the linking of the broad trends of regional history to a particular historical site in the Wemindji territory. Frenchman's Island *was* the location of the first major European contact for *local* people, and, on a broader geographic scale, the first Europeans to meet with Crees and their close neighbours were French. The fact that the island was used at a later date by the Euro-Canadians identified as "French," may be at the root of an association between the two, with distinctions blurred by a shift in the meaning of the word *Upishtikwaayaau*.

Metaphor and Literal Historical Accounts

Scott has shown the dual nature (positive and negative) of Cree representations of the "Whiteman" in Cree history and mythology (1992b, 1989). In contrast to the negative images of anti-social behaviour symbolically associated with Europeans in certain kinds of stories where they may appear as pseudo-human beings or even cannibal monsters, the historical narratives such as those quoted above emphasize relations based on positive reciprocity. They are also excessively charitable in their representation of the Company: "The English are seen as generous and legitimate partners in trade, more interested than their colonial and commercial rivals in the Indian's welfare. Loyalty to the Company is presented in a positive light, an important factor where material means of enforcing Company authority were always limited" (Scott 1992a: 17). Concerns relating to fairness in exchange relations are very clear in these stories. The favourable representations appear to be aimed at committing Europeans to relations of positive reciprocity and providing an idealized view of the past as a model for future exchanges (Scott 1992b, 1989).

These historical narratives, like other first contact stories (Delage 1992: 113), also emphasize the spiritual superiority of the Natives, who, through their contact with the spirit world are able to predict the arrival of Europeans, much as Crees tell now of elders who prophesied the James Bay hydro-electric project. In terms of this broader meaning of the narratives, the lack of distinction between the French and the North West Company is less significant than the opposition between the Company and its competitors. Chisaawaamistikushiiu himself likely played a role in promoting a favourable view of the Company and the negative view of the rivals that is ultimately reflected in *Iiyiyuu* historical tradition; this does not diminish the significance of the stories as metaphor and model for exchange relations.

As we have seen, these stories are also literal historical accounts containing clear chronological referents. In general, Cree elders are very aware of the chronology of events such as the order of establishment of major fur trade posts, stretching back to the 18th century. Also, in contrast to the view that oral history is more concerned with the events than the actors involved (Allen and Montell 1981, cited in Morantz 1984), some of the narratives quoted here suggest that the identification of the personalities may be critical.

First Contact Stories in a Regional Context

As we have noted, the narratives are at once general in a geographic sense as well as local, tied to a particular place that relates to the history of the community. A very similar "first contact" story is told in at least one other Cree community, that of Whapmagoostui, located at the mouth of the Great Whale River (Trudel 1992). In this version, a shaman conducts a shaking tent ceremony in order to determine the origin of a loud booming noise heard (cannon fire) and later observes the ship like a tree in the water. He goes to meet the ship and is given a new suit of clothes and brandy in exchange for his fur clothes, a drink of brandy (though not enough to get him drunk), and a strange hat called *chichikawan* or *chichikauniyu*.

Like the Wemindji story, a more complete version of the Whapmagoostui story is rooted to a particular site, a location at the narrows on Carin Island in Lake Guillaume-Delisle (Richmond Gulf) where the HBC maintained a trading post from 1750 to 1757. In this version (Mamianscum, cited in Masty and Marshall, n.d.), as the man paddles back following the trading encounter (and his first experience of brandy), he begins to sing a song (which the narrator sings) of the ship that would anchor at the island and the building (trading post) that would soon be built. The man gives brandy to the other Cree, who get drunk; the next morning they go to the ship and are given guns, have their clothes taken from them and are provided with new clothes. Arrangements are made to meet at the same location next summer. The following summer the ship returns to the location in Richmond Gulf with wood to construct a building. This story can perhaps be related to two exploratory voyages undertaken by HBC personnel along the coast to the north of Eastmain House, as far as Richmond Gulf; one in 1744, led by Eastmain House master, Thomas Mitchell, and a second in 1749, led by William Coats. These were the first HBC expeditions north along this portion of the coast and very much a prelude to the establishment of Richmond Fort in 1750 by Mitchell.

As noted by Trudel (1992: 66), the strange hat in the story likely relates to the distinctive hats and coats provided by the HBC as a symbol of office to those Natives designated by the HBC as "captains" (Morantz 1977, 1983). Captains were provided with brandy and tobacco which they distributed to their followers in order to encourage fur production and trading with the Company. The first mention of a captain's suit at Eastmain House was in 1744, when the suit and gifts were conferred on a "northern captain" (Morantz 1983: 135), just a few months before the Mitchell expedition to Richmond Gulf. Mustapacoss, the first "homeguard captain" (i.e., captain of the Cree living relatively near the post who played an important role in supplying the post with meat) at Eastmain acted as a guide on the Mitchell expedition (Francis and Morantz 1983: 66). Mustapacoss played an important role in extending the trade to the northern Crees (Morantz 1983: 42). In 1750, Mustapacoss's son, Cobbage, became, for a short period, a captain over the "Great River Indians" at Richmond Fort. Thus, these HBC efforts to expand their trade to the north coincided in time with the development of the trading captain system, both for the northern trade and for the Eastmain trade, in general. Both these initial efforts and the role of the trading captain would seem to be portrayed very clearly in the story from Whapmagoostui.

THE *NAATUWAAU* BONES

Somewhat different issues regarding the integration of archaeology and oral tradition are raised in the case of the other site referred to in the title of this paper. The place named Naatuwaaukan, or "*Naatuwaau* bones," is located near the end of a 4.5 km long portage between Wittigo Lake (which is connected by a shorter portage to Nemiscau Lake) and the Broadback River (Figure 2). The story is told that this is a location of a battle between Crees and a party of foreign raiders from the south identified as *Naatuwaauch*. The *Naatuwaauch* (*Naatuweuch* in the inland

Cree dialect), for whom the Nottaway river is named, are usually identified as Iroquois. According to the story, the members of the raiding party were ambushed and killed by Crees. Several elders presently living in Nemaska and Waswanipi remember their parents pointing out human bones located on the surface of the ground near the portage trail and telling them that the bones were those of the *Naatuwaauch*. It is said that the last time the bones were seen was about 55 years ago.

In 1987, as a part of an archaeological project undertaken in collaboration with the Nemaska Band, I was asked to examine this area archaeologically (Denton and Chism 1991). An elder whose trapline is located on the Broadback side of the long portage blazed trees to mark the location prior to our visit. The marked area is a clearing about 30m by 30m near the southern end of a low, sandy ridge. While there was apparently little tree cover here at the time the bones were last seen, the forest has grown up here in the intervening period as has the vegetation covering the ground. The area marked was tested intensively. While nothing was found at this time, it was later suggested by the elder that our testing had not been quite in the correct place.

What does the absence of archaeological materials corresponding to the oral tradition mean in this case? Did we dig in the wrong place, as the trapper suggests? Or were we in the correct location, but still missed the evidence? Could the elder have been mistaken regarding the location? Or might the story have no factual basis?

It is obvious that finding any particular archaeological site referred to in historical tradition (whether written or oral) may be a "needle in the haystack operation," especially in areas of relatively dense forest cover, where archaeological visibility is extremely low and recovery of archaeological evidence requires test pits. To this, we must add preservation problems: in general, bone material in the subarctic forest environment disintegrates within about century or less; could the bone have decomposed since the regrowth of the forest in this area?

Given these potential sampling and preservation problems, it is clear that a short program of archaeological testing is poor evidence compared to the knowledge of events contained in oral traditions. In fact, in the course of the Cree Regional Authority's archaeology program, archaeological assumptions and methods are often called into question based on very precise information provided by Cree elders. For example, the contrast between the detailed description of activities and use of some 20th century sites and the small number of artifacts recovered indicates that some activities may leave relatively few archaeological traces and that archaeological methods and interpretation must be adjusted to account for such problems of visibility (Denton and Chism 1991: 53, 58, 60).

Still, in a case like Naatuwaaukan, it is reasonable to ask whether the oral tradition should be taken as literally as an archaeological "confirmation" would seem to require. From the Cree perspective, this is not to be questioned. Naatuwaaukan is only one of a number of places in the Cree territories that relate to raids by Naatuwaauch, usually located on the principal canoe routes into the Cree territory from the south. Crees have also noted material remains in the ground in connection with at least two such places. In one case, the finding of arrow points is interpreted by local residents as proof of the accuracy of the battle story. In another, the finding of glass beads is used to add detail to the story, in which the raiding Naatuwaau were dressed in beaded loincloths.

Algonquian tradition throughout Northeastern North America is replete with stories of raiding Iroquois being vanquished by local people who were able to trick the invaders in some manner (often resulting in their going over a large falls in their canoes and drowning), or to ambush them successfully along a portage, or to dispatch them using magical powers. The historical component of these stories has been highlighted by some scholars who link them to Iroquois aggressions into Algonquian territory for control of the 17th century fur trade (e.g., Morantz 1984; Rousseau and Rousseau 1948). Other authors (Smith 1983; Trudel 1986) have underlined the sociological significance of these stories with respect to group identity and world view.

Many of the Cree stories of the *Naatuwaauch* have a strongly mythical quality. The places associated with such stories in the Cree territories, occurring at least as far north as the central James Bay coast (Denton and Larouche 1990), are indeed part of a cultural and mythological landscape in which the southern quarter is, in part, defined in relation to this threat of penetration by non-Cree aggressors. Trudel (1986: 94-96) notes that the ethnic identity of the *Naatuwaauch* may not always be clear and that there is a strong parallel between these stories and some accounts of the *pwaat* (*pwaatich*, plural)— humans or pseudo-human's (usually male) who travel

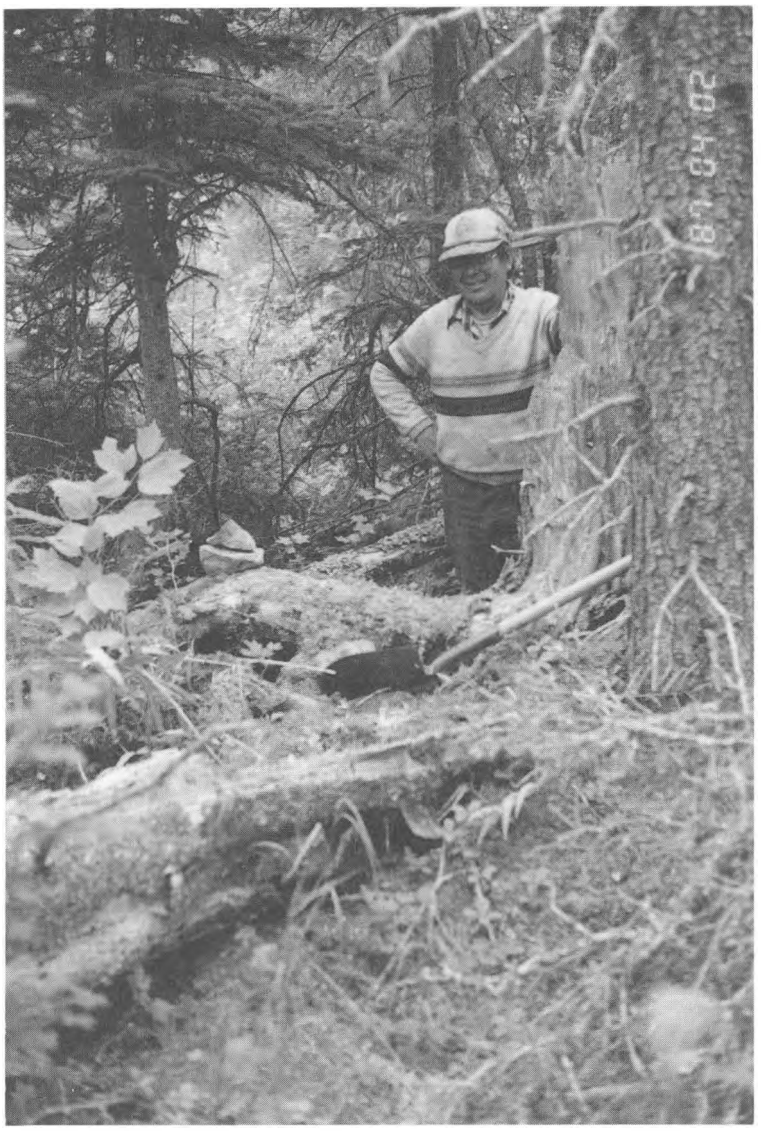

Figure 6. Frankie Asquabaneskum at the site of Chisawaamistikushiiu's first house at Anaataaukaashit, in the Maatuskaaw (Poplar River) area. (Photo: D. Denton)

in the bush and, in some stories, attempt to attack Crees and kidnap Cree women. This is clear as well in the story of a Cree ambush of marauding *Naatuwaauch* on a portage south of Wemindjiin which the *Naatuwaauch* are also referred to as *pwaat* (Denton and Larouche 1990: 172). While most of the *Naatuwaau* stories portray the Crees as successfully defeating the invaders there are examples of stories in which Crees are attacked in their camps and killed or taken captive (Morantz 1984: 178-9).

Certainly, the stories associated with these places reflect and perhaps fueled the palpable fear of the Iroquois noted as late as the mid-20th century throughout much of the Quebec Cree world. On the other hand, the convergence of some of these stories and documentary accounts left by Jesuit missionaries is noteworthy. This is especially true in the Lake Nemiscau area. Following his visit to Nemiscau in 1672, Jesuit Father Charles Albanel writes:

> Five large rivers empty into [Lake Nemiscau], making it so rich in fish that the latter formed the main subsistence of a populous savage nation dwelling here eight or ten years

> ago. The sad monuments of their place of residence are still to be seen; and also, on a rocky islet, the remains of a large fort constructed of stout trees by the Iroquois, whence he guarded all approaches and made frequent murderous sallies. Seven years ago, he killed on this spot, or led away captive, eighty persons; this caused the entire abandonment of the place, its original inhabitants departing thence. Owing to the size of the river and the nearness of the sea, there was formerly much traffic here, people coming from various quarters (Thwaites 1896-1901, vol. 56: 183).

The geographic association of the Albanel account and the Cree story is surely significant and suggests that the same general episode is referred to in both. It is doubtless significant that the place called Naatuwaaukan is located on the portage between the Broadback River and Lake Nemiscau. This portage, which came to be known to the HBC as "the long portage," was used at the end of the 1700s, when the HBC began their first tentative efforts to establish inland posts from their base at Eastmain House (Davies and Johnson 1963: 273) and was the principal route used for the resupply of Waswanipi post from Rupert House during most of the 19th century. As the Nemiscau Lake-Broadback River route is the only practical canoe way connecting Nemiscau Lake with most other areas to the south, it is likely that this route and the long portage were used during earlier periods, as well. Thus, the juxtaposition of the Cree story and Albanel's account strongly suggest that this was the route taken by a raiding *Naatuwaauch* party, probably around 1665.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have examined two examples where there has been some integration of oral tradition in the framework of an archaeology project and an attempt made to establish a dialogue between data from diverse sources. As noted at the outset, reflection on both of these cases began from what appeared to be a divergence in views. In the case of Frenchman's Island, this divergence turned out to hinge on a question of semantics. The consideration of a larger body of narratives served to clarify the context and to assist in drawing parallels with both archaeological and documentary data. Once these parallels were established, it was shown that the oral tradition contains additional elements that contribute not only to an understanding of the context of the archaeological site, but can identify other related sites, and suggest new ways to orient future archaeological research. The Frenchman's Island case also suggests that a chronological reading of oral tradition, which an integration with archaeology would seem to require, must pay careful attention to internal consistency, both within a single narrative and within a body of stories, and that external (documentary) accounts, specifically, the HBC records, can be of great assistance in this respect.

In the second case, the strong convergence of the historic accounts of the Jesuits, the geographic context of recorded travel routes, and the Cree tradition of *Naatuwaau* raids in this area suggest that a more sustained archaeological search in this locale might well be rewarded with archaeological evidence of *Naatuwaau* incursions, or at least of Cree settlements occupied at the time of these incursions. Although a non-Cree historian or archaeologist might question the outcome of any individual raids, noting the strong mythical and heroic character and the similar structure of many of the stories, there is no reason to doubt that such raids took place. It can be argued that such *Naatuwaau* narratives throughout the Quebec Cree territory closely follow the actual routes taken by the invaders from the south. Little clear significance can thus be attributed to the fact that no archaeological evidence was found at the site identified as the location of the battle at Naatuwaaukan.

Still, the mythical character of some of these stories raises questions for all those seeking an integration of archaeological data, archaeological confirmation, or an archaeological illustration for a traditional narrative. In Cree tradition, there are two principle genres of narrative: *atiyuuhkaan* (often translated as "myth"), which include stories that took place before the world assumed its present form) and *tipaachimuun* (often translated as "news" or "tidings"), which are stories that are "understood literally to have happened in the experience of living people or their ancestors" (Scott 1992a). However, as in other traditions (including that of Western scholarship *and*

archaeology), distinctions between myth and history are not absolute. There are many hundreds of Cree traditional narratives tied to particular places on the landscape (some *explaining* particular landscape features) that are, from a Western perspective, *fantastic,* and reflect the close links with the spirit world and its diverse manifestations that are a part of the traditional belief system. While these narratives contain strong spiritual and metaphorical elements, like the *Naatuwaau* stories, they are considered *tipaachimuun*. Archaeologists can record such places and note their significance within local tradition and cosmology, and they may record associated habitation sites. But it may be asked whether any interpretive synthesis of the events literally recounted in the narratives and the results of archaeological investigations is possible or appropriate. I simply raise this issue, without being able to set out any rules or criteria, and note that there will always be uncertainties regarding the degree of figurative or literal meaning to attribute to such stories for the purpose of archaeological integration.

The same point is as much true for a reading of the exchange events recounted in Frenchman's Island narratives as for those of the battle with the *Naatuwaau*. That an archaeologist may opt for a more figurative reading versus the literal one chosen by the story-tellers themselves reflects a significant divergence in understanding and world view. Clearly the integration attempted in this paper is from the perspective of a Western archaeologist and anthropologist: very different conclusions might have resulted if a similar exercise were to be attempted by someone from within the *Iiyiyuu* tradition. The only general conclusion I can draw on this issue is that if the dialogue is carried out with mutual respect, the possibility exists for expanding the margins of understanding in both directions or, at the very least, for defining more clearly the appropriate field for, or the limitations of, each form of knowledge.

In both cases presented above, the oral tradition is at once metaphorical and literal, reflecting at once general notions of history and how these broader events are played out on the local scene. For archaeology, it is important to stress that the tradition is geographically anchored and that the places designated form part of both the historical landscape and the cosmology of the people concerned. In this sense, it is significant that there is more than one first contact site and more than one *Naatuwaau* battle site, reflecting both the cosmological significance of such narratives for local people *and* the fact that the events were actually played out in many areas across the Cree region and beyond.

By way of conclusion, it is vital to note that the oral traditions themselves may be read as indigenous archaeological interpretations. In this sense, they already represent an integration of oral tradition and material (archaeological) evidence, being reflections on material remains from events stretching back into the past. In the case of the Frenchman's Island site, it is likely that the familiarity with these material remains resulting from the late 17th/early 18th century European settlement was fairly continuous, with local hunters guiding Mitchell to the place in 1744 at a time when remains from the occupation were still clearly visible, with local residents retrieving material from this site early in the 19th century (Denton and Larouche 1990: 51; Lueger 1990: 12-15) and again observing European artifacts coming out of the potato garden in the 20th century.

We suspect that there may often be a complex interplay between oral traditions and such aspects of the archaeological record, conceived in this very broad sense. On the one hand, historic locations on the landscape and the physical remains associated with them may serve as a mnemonic devices, helping to keep narrative histories alive; on the other hand, it can be suggested that oral traditions are not cloistered from other sources of information about the past. Among other things, they may be open to material (archaeological) evidence, and develop or change to help explain that evidence. One possible reading of Naatuwaaukan is that human bones were found at this location by local hunters traveling over the portage and were interpreted in the framework of traditional knowledge of the *Naatuwaau* raids in this area. My point is not to give any particular weight to this interpretation, but simply to note it as a possibility. In sum, while oral traditions represent unbroken chains of knowledge of past events passed from generation to generation, they may also be responsive to material evidence from the past, and these remains may be interpreted (and re-interpreted) within the context of existing knowledge of local and broader regional history and within the framework of possibilities set out in local cultural tradition.

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