

**TRAPPING BEARS IN ALGONQUIN TERRITORY:
CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS IN PRACTICE**

by

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Abstract

Who or what is a bear in Ontario? This thesis explores which knowledges matter in provincial resource management policies about black bears. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in traditional Algonquin territory in Ontario, this thesis explores categorizations of black bears and how those categories are used to justify actions with, for, and to bears. This is done through a discussion of provincial policy, as well as focusing on harvesting bears, living with bears and learning from bears. This thesis contributes to scholarship against the separation of nature from culture, and advocates for the recognition of the value of lived experience.

Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished work of Michelle Lianne Hak Hepburn. It is based upon fieldwork which was done under UBC Ethics Certificate H15-00253.

A portion of the fieldwork and this thesis was presented at the Society for Applied Anthropology Conference, Hak Hepburn, Michelle. 2016. (There are no) Bears on Bloor Street: How living in untamed spaces shapes Northern Ontario perceptions of black bears. March 30, 2016. Vancouver, BC.

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List of Abbreviations

AOO	Algonquins of Ontario
CO	Conservation Officer
MNRF	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (Ontario)
WMU	Wildlife Management Unit

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Prologue

A Dream:

I am high above a forest, towering pines and evergreens all around. Ahead there is a clearing with a cabin, smoke billowing from its chimney. We descend, and I am with a small group of people, 3 or 4 us. They are staying at the camp for the weekend, and they are coming back from a day of hunting. It is dark outside. I am now one of the group, and they are showing me their cabin. We enter the main room, and it has the feeling of fresh-cut lumber, an earthy feel. We settle around the fire, and not long after, there are bears outside. They enter the cabin and some of the humans in the group transform and become bears. There are now four or five bears and they have come to rectify the wrongs done to them and to their kind. I find myself feeling fearful, for they have surrounded me and are moving to attack. They tell me that they are here to exact retribution, to balance the scales. I plead with them, for I have done them no harm. Their message is not violent, yet they do not relent. They answer, “You may not personally have caused us harm. But you are more than an individual, and we must balance the wrongs that have been wrought by those that have come before you, of your ancestors. We must begin again.”¹

¹ Dreams are not only important way of knowing, including for the Algonquin (see below), but paying attention to inner visions and dreams (and discussing them with others) is also used by some anthropologists as a methodology. Tedlock (1991) delineates the importance of paying attention to dreams in anthropology, both of others and of your own. Goulet (1994) also calls for anthropologists to pay attention to their own inner lives and voices during fieldwork. While I had this particular dream prior to my fieldwork, I spoke about it during my research and I have chosen to include it here, honouring the suggestion of a Nipissing Elder involved in the Algonquin community.

Introduction

In Canada, management of natural resources is one of the most contested and defining issues of contemporary national and provincial politics. Particular species are managed in an effort to conserve biodiversity, while others are seen as potential threats to human life or property. Trapping and hunting are framed as a means to regulate ecosystems and control overpopulation of any one species and thus are integral to a resource management strategy (OMNR 2014a). Canada as a nation-state emerged from the successes of the fur trade. Colonization began with French and English fur traders, but long before Confederation Algonquin (and other First Nations) trapped animals for their furs and meat. Bears, greatly revered, require special rituals if killed in honour of the great respect for the species (Berres, Stothers and Mather 2004; Hallowell 1926; Nadasdy 2003).

Bears fascinate the human imagination. Representations of bears permeate popular culture, from plush toys (teddy bears²) to children's stories (Winnie the Pooh, for example), to environmental campaigns (bears are the "spokesperson" for many environmental campaigns, notably World Wildlife Fund). But what about the bears themselves? Who or what is a bear? How do we live with them? What are the stories we tell about the bears with whom we share our lives? Humans classify particular bears in different ways, and this classification is relevant to how we choose to act with or upon bears. "To classify is human," and categories we use are "artifacts embodying moral and aesthetic choices that in turn craft people's identities, aspirations, and dignity" (Bowker and Star 2000, 1, 4). Bears can be game, eligible to be hunted and eaten. They are also fur-bearing and can be trapped for their hides. Bears can be a problem –

² For a discussion on the origins of the teddy bear, and how it relates to man's domination of, and responsibility for, nature, see Jon Mooallem's TED talk, "How the teddy bear taught us compassion" (2014).

or a nuisance – that needs to be addressed. Persistent “problem bears” are trapped to be relocated, away from human settlements. These bears are resources managed by government bodies. But bears can also be sources of wisdom and guidance and are thus consulted and invited into sacred spaces. Apparent contradictions of bears-as-economic resource (as a fur-bearing animal and game mammal), bears-as-human-threat (as nuisance bears infringing upon human territory) and bears-as-powerful-persons (as understood through Algonquin respects for the species) need to be reconciled in management policies and in everyday actions with bears. How does a bear become a resource? How do we, as humans, create and reinforce these categories with our actions? We engage and interact with our representations of bears, and some of us interact with real bears. How do our imaginings and representations affect and shape our interactions with, around, and for bears?

I argue that resource management policies marginalize both First Nations and rural peoples’ lived experiences. These policies produce bears as objects and resources that must be managed by the state. Foucault argues the state increasingly regulates the reproduction and death of its populations (1978); I am not the first to extend biopolitics to how the government and the law relates with animals (see, for example, Wolfe 2012). By definition, biopolitics is the regulatory control of bio-power, which is “what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation” (1978, 139, 143). It is about the “calculated management of life” to “achiev[e] the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 1978, 140). In this thesis, it is about controlling bear populations and constraining the ways in which humans can act upon bears. What are the biopolitics of black bears in Ontario, Canada? Whose voices matter when making decisions about which and how many black bears can live and die in Ontario? Which knowledges matter?

Nadasdy (2003) argues knowledge about the bush, and about animals that live there, is a form of Bloch's non-sentential knowledge; it must be learned by doing – through experience – and cannot be taught through language.³ Biologists need to base policy recommendations on data that can be “generalizable and quantified” (ibid., 111). Although lived experience and knowledge of the land are not easily quantifiable by scientific metrics, they *do* have value and deserve recognition.

As in the dream, bears call us to reflect upon ourselves and to take responsibility for our actions. I dreamt this dream a number of years ago, and I remember it vividly. It is one of the reasons my research is focused on black bears. I spoke about this dream and its message of retribution with multiple people during the course of my fieldwork. Retribution is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a recompense for, or requital of, evil done” (Simpson and Weiner 1993). It commonly evokes images of violence. However, retribution is not necessarily violent. During a conversation with an Algonquin Elder, I asked his opinion of the word. He was surprised, and asked me to explain further. In that particular conversation, I did not go into details about the dream, but I expanded upon what I was thinking. He proposed another definition, more aligned with my own – “to restore; go to court for damages, balance circumstances; to make amends.” This evokes a similar image to “reconciliation,” “the action of bringing to agreement, concord, or harmony” (Simpson and Weiner 1993). He prefers reconciliation, because it is not associated with violence. Bears, he tells me, signify reconciliation. The dream, however, *is* a message of retribution. The bears told me to accept and take responsibility for the actions of my ancestors, so that we may move forward. It is about

³ While Nadasdy bases this argument on research with Kluane people in the Yukon, he also references similar ideas from other circumpolar peoples and other First Nations in North America. As will be argued below, this belief is shared by many of those with whom I spoke.

respectful relations, and recognition and responsibility for harms exacted in the past. The bears in the dream call for a recognition and an examination of how settler-colonialism and the dualism of nature/culture have marginalized humans and non-humans alike. To move forward, we must recognize our own implicit and explicit roles in these patterns of domination; we must address power imbalances. It is not necessarily violent, but it does require sacrifice and acceptance of response-ability, following Donna Haraway (2008). The dream shows the bears' "capacity to respond" which "can be shaped only in and for multidirectional relationships" (ibid.,71). With growing human populations expanding into black bear territory, we must find ways for co-existence and make room for multiple ways of becoming. By calling attention to the bear, I highlight the power relations inherent in resource management.

In this thesis, I analyze how different narratives surrounding the American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) are translated into practice within the part of traditional Algonquin territory that is in modern-day Ontario. This area is demarcated by the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) land claim map (see Figure 1). Although I use the generic term "bear", I am referring exclusively to black bears (*Ursus americanus*), the only type of bear that lives in the research area. I explore how bears are made into objects, into resources, that must be managed by the state – in this case, by the province of Ontario. I discuss the conflicting categories that we use to classify bears and how those categories are mobilized in everyday experience to justify our relations with bears. I also question whether bears can be recognized as subjects and actors in policies, and whether it is possible to make space for First Nation and Algonquin perspectives and bear teachings.

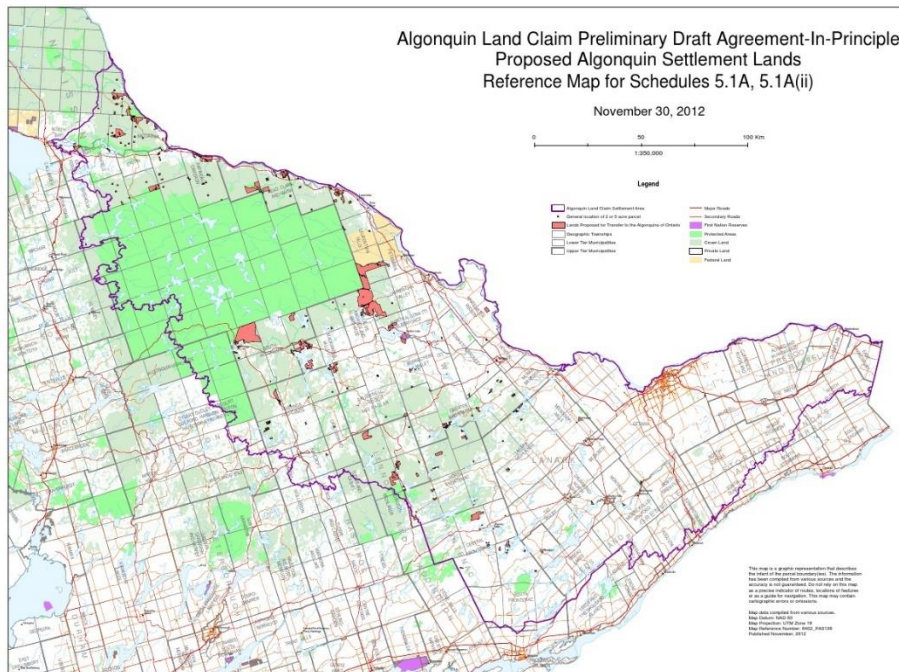


Figure 1 AOO Settlement Claim Map (AOO 2012)

I base these analyses on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in the spring and fall of 2015, to coincide with black bear hunting seasons. I was in the field from May into the first week of June, and I returned at the end of August and remained until the end of November. During this time, I worked closely with the Mattawa-North Bay Band Council and I was based in and around the rural areas surrounding Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park. Black bears cannot typically be hunted within the park, which is one of Canada's oldest. It was created in 1893 to preserve forestland from encroaching farmlands, and to conserve wildlife (Tozer, Strickland and Friends of Algonquin Park 1986). Despite being named after the Algonquin people, they themselves were outlawed from hunting and trapping on their traditional lands within the park's boundary. Around the park today is a mixture of farmland (mostly oats), small towns, and Crown land. There are a number of logging concessions both within and around the park. Stretches of bush are also privately owned.

I spoke with local residents, hunters, provincial resource management professionals, and community leaders – although these labels are not exclusive. I spent my time with rural residents who had grown up in the area, whose families had lived there for generations. The majority are of Algonquin ancestry and self-identify as Algonquin, although some identify as Métis. Other residents have no Algonquin ancestry but their families also have long-standing ties to the area. I attended meetings and visited people in their homes. I spent as much time as possible on the land and in the bush. Following Julie Cruikshank (1998), I listened to people's bear stories. She argues that "narrative provides a framework for experiencing the material world" and thus "local stories intersect with larger social, historical, and political processes" (*xii*). The narratives that people shared with me, however, are not only passed-down stories relating how to be in the world, but are mostly reflections on personal experience. Drawing on Taussig, Cruikshank notes "that people delineate their understandings in stories, or story-like creations, such as gossip and small talk" (2005, 20). Almost everyone in the area has a bear story; whether it is about the bear sleeping behind the post office or about an encounter in the bush, these stories are examples of how people experience and interact with their world in general, and bears in particular.

While, in general, bear hunters see bears as game mammals, large rural land-owners and farmers see bears as problems, and Algonquins see bears as sacred, categories are not clear-cut. An applied category is dependent upon the emerging circumstance of the human-bear encounter. However, the applied category does determine and constrain potential actions with or to a particular bear.

The research comes at a critical period in the development of Ontario's bear management policy. Prior to 1999, Ontario had regulated spring and fall open hunting seasons. The spring hunt was cancelled in 1999 because of objections from animal rights groups over the possibility

of orphaned cubs. Due to continued pressures and a perceived increase of human-bear conflict, Ontario re-introduced the spring hunt as a two-year pilot project in 2014. The pilot spring season is only open to Ontario residents and applies to eight Wildlife Management Units (WMUs)⁴ which encompass major urban centers in Northern Ontario. In February 2016, Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) announced the pilot would be expanded and extended for another five years. These changes in policy and the reactions to them are explored further below.

⁴ The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry of Ontario divides the province into areas known as "Wildlife Management Units". Area-specific hunting and trapping regulations can be applied to specific WMUs. For example, certain WMUs have distinct seasons for the same animal.

History of Place

Provincial policies must be evaluated in local contexts. As mentioned, my research is focused in the rural areas around Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, which are included in the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) land claim. Traditional Algonquin territory extends both east and west of the Ottawa River, which is now the boundary between the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The Algonquin people self-refer as Anishnaabe or Omawini. The Anishnaabe⁵ (or various spellings there-of) include Algonquian-language speaking groups and the descendants of those groups, including neighbouring Ojibwe peoples. In order to differentiate between other Anishnaabe and the Algonquin, for simplicity, and most importantly to acknowledge the self-denomination of many people I spoke with, I will use the term Algonquin.⁶

Prior to Confederation, the Algonquin were allies to the French in the wars against the English settlers (AOO 2013). At Confederation, all Algonquin reserves⁷ were located in the province of Québec – despite the fact that their territory extended west across the river into Ontario as well. The only Algonquin reserve in Ontario, Pikwàkanagàn (Golden Lake), repeatedly petitioned the government for recognition, eventually being granted the title of “reserve” to a small portion of their land in 1873 (Pikwàkanagàn N.D.). However, there were and are other concentrations of Algonquin people throughout the current land claim area.

⁵ There are variable spellings of Anishnaabe, depending on regional preference. Some variations include Nishnaabe, Anishinabe, etc.

⁶ For a fuller discussion the complicated history of names for the Algonquin in Ontario, see Puppe 2015, 17-21.

⁷ A reserve refers to a tract of land “granted” to a group of First Nations, referred to as a “band” and governed by a band council; a reserve is specifically associated with the Indian Act and falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

In 1991 and 1992 respectively, the governments of Ontario and of Canada formally entered into treaty negotiations with Pikwàkanagàn and other unrecognized Algonquin communities. The land claim area is the largest in Canadian history, extending across 9 million acres (AOO 2013). The AOO is able to make a claim because they never entered into treaty with British or Canadian governments. After the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Algonquin and Nipissing Nations made repeated petitions to the British government for recognition of their “hunting grounds”. They sent multiple letters from 1772 until 1862.⁸ In 1983, Pikwàkanagàn again presented a petition for recognition, this time to Ontario and Canada. Currently the Algonquins of Ontario, as their united communities are called, include ten Band Councils across Ontario.⁹

AOO members have recognized hunting rights. This means they are able to legally hunt outside of province-established seasons and are not required to buy game license tags. However, anything they hunt or trap must be personal use (and must be used) and not for commercial gain. In practice, almost all hunters respect limits and follow established seasons for game. Band Councils also request that members report their harvests; this information is shared with the MNRF to be considered in calculations for population management. One key gain for the AOO in securing their hunting rights is the recognition of Algonquin Park as their traditional territory, and are thus legally entitled to hunt within the Park boundaries – after it has been closed for the

⁸ Digital archives of petitions from 1772, 1835, 1847, and 1862 are available on the AOO website. <http://tanakiwin.com/algonquins-of-ontario/our-proud-history/>

⁹ The land claim is not without controversy. Some Algonquin Nations in Québec oppose the AOO land claim, claiming tenuous Algonquin ancestry and overlapping territorial claims (Barrera 2016). There have been internal disputes over ancestry as well (Barrera 2015). The accusations are contested. I cannot and do not speak for the either the land claim or the enlistment process, but it is important to note that those with whom I worked self-identify as Algonquin and are actively involved in their community. For an overview of the AOO, see Bonita Lawrence (2012) *Fractured Homeland: Federal Recognition and Algonquin Identity in Ontario*.

camping season. The AOO administers its own internal tag system for moose and elk, following similar protocols as the MNRF. This is in response to the popularity and importance of moose meat, non-member hunting pressures on moose populations, and a reportedly declining moose population. They do, however, ensure that some tags are reserved as “community tags.” This meat is shared amongst the seniors of each community, and served at community gatherings, which are held to mark various holidays.

The AOO are the Bear Nation. Many consider themselves to belong to the Bear Clan, although many others no longer know which clan they belong to.¹⁰ Within a community, members of the Bear Clan are responsible for healing. This includes not only medicine people (doctors, nurses) but also those who are responsible for healing the community and maintaining order (police, lawyers). *Makwa*, bear, is recognized as a relation to all people. It is said that long ago, bears and the Algonquin people lived together in one village and could understand one another. For these reasons, many Algonquin do not hunt bear.¹¹

¹⁰ Because of the disconnect caused by years of colonial assimilation policies, many First Nations peoples in Canada may no longer know which clan they belong to; this is the explanation that was given to me by AOO individuals with whom I spoke.

¹¹ Some Algonquin *do*, however, hunt bear. Those that do hold the bear in great respect, just as those who do not hunt bear.

Black Bears

For the Algonquin, Makwa is a strong animal and a strong spirit. Bears are the keepers of the medicines and the protector of the forest. When they hibernate, they visit the spirit world, bringing back knowledge to the earth when they awaken in the spring. They are intimately connected with the earth, and are very knowledgeable of their land. Bears are “other-than-human beings... especially attuned to power” (Berres, Stothers and Mather 2004, 7). Their power is recognized by many Anishnaabe, as shown by Pomedli (2014) in reference to Ojibwe, and by Scott (2006) in reference to the James Bay Cree.

Bears are intriguing to science, with few experts on the subject. Their biology – in terms of the mechanisms of how they survive hibernation, for example – is poorly understood. Biology classifies all bears as carnivores, even as biologists recognize black bears’ diets as primarily comprised of vegetable matter (the berries and nuts they forage where they live). They are “opportunistic” eaters and will adapt to a variety of food sources. Hunters will tell you they are particular fans of popcorn, and, despite their reputation for eating garbage, don’t particularly like processed foods like hot dogs.

Bieder (2005) finds “black bears are extremely intelligent – some consider them to be the most intelligent of all bears” (35). Black bears are also extremely powerful; despite their strength, many scientists believe “they are scared of humans and, given the opportunity, prefer to flee rather than attack” (ibid., 96). Algonquin Elders frame it slightly differently, sharing that bears exercise incredible restraint; despite their powerful strength, they *choose* not to attack. People worldwide, including Europeans (especially historically) have powerful stories about bears (Bieder 2005). However, Bieder argues that with widespread adoption of agriculture, bears were “desacralized, made to represent an ogre or a fool, and marked for destruction” (70). He

goes on to say, “now, devoid of their sacredness, most societies regard them as objects in a crowded human landscape or as a potentially dangerous nuisance, to be controlled or exploited for human ends” (75). Bears in Ontario are also objectified in an attempt to manage and control them.

Nature/Culture

The nature/culture dualism is important to understanding the objectification of bears. This dualism, Plumwood argues, calls us to recognize the inherent politics and power relations of the category of “nature” (1993, 3). She defines dualism as “a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterized by radical exclusion” (ibid., 47-8). Culture is seen, then, as radically separate and distinct from nature, which is inherently inferior. Latour refers to the separation as the Great Divide – the difference *in kind* rather than *in degree* of all dualisms including between emotional/rational, female/male, experience/science (1993). The nature/culture divide has repercussions for how we, as humans, relate with forms and nature, including animals and especially wild ones.

Anthropologists have critiqued this dualism since the mid-century. Plumwood notes that one of the key aspects of “nature” is “to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject, as the ‘environment’ or invisible background condition” (1993, 4). Sabloff, drawing upon Bourdieu, uses *nature-habitus* “to emphasize the largely unconscious yet shared proclivities of individuals to perceive, conceive, and act upon the physical world in characteristic ways conditioned by their particular tradition and history” (2011, 25). The externality of nature is specific to the Euro-North American thought; it forms the predominant *nature-habitus*. This belief in nature’s passivity, building upon Christian ideals, rationalize Man’s¹² dominion and/or¹³ stewardship of nature (Fudge 2002). An examination of the nature/culture dualism through a lens

¹² My use of “Man” refers to the archetype of the white, western male – the dominant category. It is often used as a stand-in representing the “Western” ideology, emerging from Descartes and often equated with culture (see, for example, Haraway 1989).

¹³ While Fudge opposes these terms as alternate readings of Genesis, I use and/or because both rely on the separation of human/nature, as will be argued below.

of political ecology, which is defined by Latour (2004) as an examination of how power relations constrain conceptions of place and space, foregrounds the deep-seated ideas of the dominance of nature by Man. Political ecology, by highlighting the power relations inherent in human/non-human relations, is drawing attention to the non-human and to blurring the divide between what is nature and what is culture.

While anthropologists have often been vocal in critiquing nature as a concept, Annabelle Sabloff, in her examination of animals in a Canadian urban environment, argues that anthropology as a discipline has actually reinforced the nature/culture boundary even as they actively critiqued it (2001). By focusing on purely utilitarian ideas about non-humans, anthropology has helped to sustain the concept of difference between humans and other living beings, she argues (ibid.). Is it possible to cross the divide and include bears as subjects in anthropological research? Bears are active beings, mobile and intelligent. They are also evasive, and their lifestyles are not conducive to scheduled encounters. How can anthropology include “wild” animals, those that fall far out of our domestic spheres, as subjects in research? In grammar, the subject is the doer of the action, but becoming a “research subject” is *passive*. The subject becomes the object, *subjected to* the research. Is the turn to the non-human another colonial attempt to speak *for* the subaltern? Anthropologists combat power imbalances between researcher and researched through collaborative practices, but how does one collaborate with a wild animal? Madden (2014) argues that good ethnography is about trust, built out of an intersubjective understanding. In order to include the subjectivity in animals in ethnography, “we should explore if there are ways to know what it feels like to be them” (285). Madden also asks, “How can we build a reliable system of knowledge that at least treats animals as potentially knowable and interpretable without paying more regard to the systems and programs with which

we build our knowledge?” (ibid., 288), as in, how can we truly include animals in ethnography without solely focusing on human structures around animals?¹⁴

One way to move beyond these questions is to pay attention to how subjects and objects are created in the encounter. Haraway, invoking Barad, notes that both subjects and objects are created through intra-action (2008, 71). Barad (2011) uses the term “intra-action” in contrast to “interaction” to emphasize that things are constantly co-constituting themselves in relation and in conjunction with other things. She uses this term to blur boundaries between actors. For Barad, the co-constitutive intra-action creates entanglements of matter and meaning; these constant relatings produce individuals that cannot be entirely extracted from their “environment” (2007). It is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as an assemblage (1987). It is also what they refer to as “becoming”. It is not fixed; it is continual emergence. As Tim Ingold (2011) also argues, “[p]roducers, both human and non-human, do not so much transform the world, impressing their preconceived designs upon the material substrate of nature, as play their part from the world’s transformation of itself” (5). These scholars are speaking against one individual having complete agency and control over an event. A being is never fixed; a being is constantly becoming. They argue against the externality of nature of the environment; we are *within* the world. Nature, therefore, cannot be an object. It is both the subject *and* the object; in other words, it is neither.

A recognition of these entanglements and multiple becomings moves beyond the nature/culture dualism. These theoretical currents have turned to pay attention to the intersubjective and interspecies (or intra-) relations, but Tallbear (2011) reminds us that many

¹⁴ While I remain conscious and intrigued by these questions, this thesis also focuses on the human categorization of bears in an effort to respect what became know-able in the course of the research. However, I draw attention to these categories in order to question the role of the bear in policy creation, and whether it is possible to create spaces for the bears themselves.

Indigenous people and scholars have been arguing this all along. She notes that this turn in the “western academy” aims to primarily “dismantle hierarchies in the relationships of ‘westerners’ with their non-human others” (n.p.). The nature/culture dualism and its boundaries are maintained in formal resource management policy, and policies and regulations are often reflections of the *nature-habitus* of the most powerful group, in this case primarily Canadians of European descent. How does living in and with nature change our perceptions of it? This scholarship helps recognize the complex human-bear encounters and the motivations of each involved.

Animal/Human

Attention to entanglements has led to increasing scholarship dedicated to the non-human beings with whom humans share their lives. Multispecies ethnography (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010), anthropology beyond the human (Kohn 2007, 2014), and anthropology of life (Ingold 2011) all aim to recognize the subjecthood of other beings. This scholarship highlights the interconnectedness of all things (Tsing 2009), showing how the non-human can influence human behaviour. Houle (2011) argues animals are “*the non-human*” (91, original emphasis). Fudge (2002), following Stuart Hall, argues the category of the animal is always *constructed* as other, but that those constructions come to seem natural, true” (163, original emphasis). Despite being close to humans, “the concept of ‘the animal’ has played the lead and proximate role for marking, conceptually, what differentiates ‘the human’ being from every other being” (Houle 2011, 90). Bears, despite their prowess, are produced as animals, and are thus inferior to, and separate from, humans. Bears are managed by the state as resources, as objects, to assert human superiority and control. Bears become resources so that they may be used as things. Bears are recognized, that is, as animals but not as beings.

The “animal” has been relegated to the realm of nature, to instinctual drive. They are seen as incapable of intentional action of their own. Broad categories often rely on a species’ particular characteristics, behaviours and tendencies; policy and biology speak of bears being driven by instinct without the true ability to *act*. Bears are neither slaves to instinct, nor have complete agency – just as humans lack agency to compel bears to act in a particular way. The ability to act, to *respond* – and not just *react*, or act according to instinct – is a theme that will be returned to throughout.

Calarco (2008), drawing on Continental philosophy, argues the human/animal binary is maintained to justify mistreatment of animals. While Calarco is interested in animal rights and the ethical treatment of animals, others argue this binary allows for human consumption of animals and other “nature”. The binary is simultaneously used to value human life over any other type of life (Houle 2011). The death (or threat of a death) of a human caused by an animal (or other “nature”) is not acceptable. Hatley (2004) notes “our appropriation of nature does not so much eliminate predation as codify it in asymmetrical terms: we make over the space in which we live as if humans had become inedible and everything else is revealed to be more or less available for ingestion” (20). Humans become superior so that they don’t become lunch. Bears are managed to avoid humans becoming edible to them (problem bears), while simultaneously ensuring that bears can remain edible to humans (game mammals).

Is consumption of animals and other beings always unethical? Haraway (2008) calls us to recognize the violence inherent in all of our choices. Below, I explore how bears can be objectified to justify their death – but this is not always the case. A proximity to, or living-with (Haraway 2008), bears can teach us to recognize their subjecthood. It is possible to recognize the bear as a being (even in death). While human lives may still be held in a higher regard,¹⁵ a bear’s life can still be honoured and respected.

¹⁵ During my fieldwork, I was often told that this way “it had to be”. Valuing human life, however, is not exclusive to valuing a bear’s life – or caring about a pointless death.

Indigenous/Settler

My research was based in traditional Algonquin territory, which was continually encroached upon by settlers during Canada's colonial period. Land was taken from its inhabitants, often justified through "terra nullius" – seeing the land as unoccupied – because colonizers did not and could not recognize the ways that First Nations lived on the land (see Weaver 2006 for a discussion of the acquisition of Native land). It continues to be dominated by colonial ideas¹⁶ – those ideas associated with rationality, males, and those of European descent. Many scholars argue that the category of the 'human' was shaped in the colonial encounter, in contrast to the slave and the colonized indigenous person (Coulthard 2014, Maldonado-Torres 2007, Wilderson 2010). Indigenous people continue to be made invisible, equated with nature or erased from the land (see, for example, Cronon 1996). Anthropologists have been part of this history, by studying the exotic 'Other' and by publishing stories that became their own. As one Grandmother¹⁷ told me, "You have been studying us for years."

I chose to focus my work within Algonquin traditional territory in Ontario because it is my home – where I was born and where I grew up. I focused on the Northern expanses of the territory around Algonquin Park because it allowed me to better reflect upon the pilot spring bear hunt in Northern Ontario. I asked one Algonquin scholar how I could respectfully acknowledge the importance of Algonquin teachings and stories without appropriating them. She told me the easiest way was just to not do it – just don't appropriate. Following Indigenous scholars such as Leanne Simpson (2011), I will only include knowledge and stories already widely available. Including Algonquin perspectives is not about making them an object of study, but rather

¹⁶ In the field, these ideas were racialized, referred to as "white ideas."

¹⁷ Grandmother is an earned title of respect for women; it is used by many First Nations including Algonquin.

including them as important and relevant voices that cannot and should not be continually erased. Kirby Whiteduck, current chief of Pikwàkanagàn, wrote “Traditional Algonquin Culture”, which is a published version of his thesis detailing Algonquin culture at the time of contact. Despite his own Algonquin identity, academic conventions required that he base his assertions primarily on written archival texts. Although he was able to incorporate his own knowledge in his organization of the material (Whiteduck 2002), it is one example of the ways in which Algonquin voices are silenced or minimized. I cannot tell the story of bears in Ontario without acknowledging the Algonquin people in Ontario (and the numerous other First Nations groups that lived there since before time immemorial). I include reference to Algonquin teachings not in an effort to be their voice – there are formidable Algonquin scholars and leaders who are speaking for themselves¹⁸ – but in an effort to *recognize* their voices.

First Nations voices are often absent in provincial and federal resource management policy. Increasingly there have been efforts to include Traditional Ecological Knowledge in co-management strategies for particular resources, especially since the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. Although this is with good intention, often systems of indigenous knowledges are not easily extracted from their cultural context to be incorporated into government policy and bureaucracy. In the Yukon, Paul Nadasdy (2003) and Julie Cruikshank (1998) both problematize this process, highlighting issues of translatability and continuing power imbalances between First Nations and Canadian bureaucracy. Nadasdy notes that the simple act of participating in the bureaucratic process can have repercussions and change

¹⁸ See, for example, Kirby Whiteduck, who wrote *Algonquin Traditional Culture*, and Aimée Bailey, who has worked to include First Nations content in education, from Pikwàkanagàn; Larry McDermott, who has served on Ontario’s Human Rights Tribunal, from Shabot Obaadjiwan; Claudette Commanda and Simon Brascoupé, both academics from Kitigan Zibi; not to mention the many spiritual leaders, Chiefs and activists in each community.

knowledge systems and ways of life of First Nations peoples in the North. Yet the Algonquin people have been relating with Canadian, British, and French governments since before Confederation. As Ian Puppe (2015) notes in his dissertation, they have lately received little academic attention because they are considered to be more assimilated into Canadian dominant culture. What is the Algonquin experience of being included (and not being included) in resource management policy decisions? Furthermore, is it always impossible and incommensurate to have First Nations teachings reflected in policy? These questions are explored further below.

Provincial Policy

In Canada, wildlife and resource management fall under provincial jurisdiction and the province continually updates policies. Tina Loo, an environmental historian, discusses how wildlife management in Canada changed throughout the century to become less localized and more scientifically-informed (2006). Bacon, in the 1600s, believed that new scientific knowledge would restore control and dominion over wild animals (Fudge 2002); science was used in the 20th century in a similar manner. Loo argues that “game laws were instruments of colonization, imposing an urban and bourgeois sensibility about wildlife on rural Canada” (2006, 40). Similarly, Cruikshank, citing the economic historian Harold Innis, argues power was asserted in non-urban areas by “silencing local traditions that don’t fit official categories”; this was done through “official observations, categories, and statistics in written texts” (Cruikshank 2005, 62). At the turn of the twentieth-century, wildlife was only beginning to be managed at a macro-level. At the time, local people and non-government actors were key players in managing wildlife, as shown through both hunting practices and responses to human-wildlife conflict. Wardens, who at first were rural people hired primarily for their first-hand knowledge of the land, began to be scientifically trained in provincial programs and schools. Ontario began its warden-training program in the 1950s (Loo 2006, 125). In 20th century Canada, wildlife management goals became focused on conserving and managing a species long-term, and thus required a macro-lens and biological approach.

At the same time, Loo shows that wilderness¹⁹ was increasingly marketed to the urban middle-class as a place to escape and refresh themselves from city life. Subsistence hunting was marginalized and hunting as sport was promoted as more acceptable and more ethical (ibid.). She bases this assertion on laws and regulations that reflected the “sportsman’s creed.” For example, wild meat sales in most jurisdictions, including Ontario, was outlawed. Prior to this, many rural people would sell wild meat as a form of income. Eating wild meat was not only unnecessary (for urban dwellers), but Loo quotes the creed saying “the highest purpose” of killing a wild animal “is in furnishing objects to overworked men for tramping and camping trips in the wilds” (Loo 2006, 27). Hunting, and the eating and sharing of wild meat, remains an important part of life for Algonquin people.

The transition to science-based management strategies continued into the second half of the 20th century and into today. Jeff,²⁰ a local resident and skilled hunter with experience in the bear hunting industry, tells me, “MNR just sits in their offices. And the C.O.s²¹ all have school in their heads, they just think of tickets. Before they would actually talk to people. Now they do their counts in their airplanes with their formulas... before they would ask a neighbour, “Oh, hey Johnny how’s the moose population doing?” And he would say, “Oh, it’s hurting, we should ease up a bit [on hunting] – and he knew that because he lived in the bush for 35 years, and knows how things were when there were a lot of moose and how things were when there wasn’t.” Jeff wasn’t referring to the 1950s – he was talking about the 1980s and 1990s. This type of intimate

¹⁹ Wilderness is a term that has been problematized for its erasure of indigenous people on the land; see Cronon 1996. I use it here to refer to the concept of wilderness, without subscribing to the underlying meanings of the label.

²⁰ All names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

²¹ Conservation Officer

knowledge is gained from lived experience in a place. Ingold (1988) would argue knowledge is gained from engagement in the world in which we dwell. Nadasdy (2003) asserts “to truly know a place, you must spend a great deal of time there and experience it in all seasons over a period of many years. Similarly, if you want to learn about animals, then the only way is to spend time out on the land hunting and observing them” (97). This is contrasted to biology’s emphasis on studying animals “on exclusively human terms” (110). Radio-collaring and other scientific methods “wrest knowledge from [animals] by force” (ibid.). Wildlife management policies specifically about black bears have also followed this trend, increasingly becoming the responsibility of the state. Bears are managed as a hunted population and to reduce human-bear conflicts. However, this was not always the case. Bears were not classified as game mammals until 1961 (NBRC 2003). Prior to that, about 850 bears were annually submitted to the ministry for a bounty (ibid.); bears were grouped alongside wolves and other large predators as “vermin”, emphasizing their potential for damage to agricultural crops and property (Loo 2006). Being classified as a game mammal did not negate the view of bears as threats; it was rather an acknowledgement that hunting bear was becoming increasingly popular and should be regulated. Commito (2015) notes “non-resident enthusiasm for the sport continued to climb” after the Second World War (7). Bears, as game mammals, can be hunted by somebody with a hunting license and a purchased bear tag during the open hunting season. There are currently no limits on the number of resident bear tags in Ontario. Game mammals are managed by the MNRF to “sustain wildlife species and their ecosystems while managing their use to meet the present and future needs of our citizens” (Ontario 2014, 12). MNRF set hunting seasons and limits for harvest. Meanwhile, property owners continue to be able to kill a bear in defense of property,

including livestock. When the spring season was closed in 1999, MNRF simultaneously adopted a policy of mandatory reporting for these “problem bears” (NBRC 2003).

Current provincial strategies for addressing nuisance bears are focused on avoiding all bears. A “nuisance” or “problem” bear is one that visits human property, and poses a threat either to a human life or to the property. If the threat is immediate, urban residents are required to call 9-1-1, the emergency line to the police. Alternatively, you can call the Bear Reporting Line and, if necessary, a Wildlife Technician will address the issue. The MNRF Wildlife Technicians work closely with police forces around Ontario to ensure that police are trained in responding to bear calls. Technicians themselves are trained in a “Problem Bear Management Course,” a three-day educational course with practical components. This course not only teaches bear behaviour and biology, but how to understand and to respond to it. A primary strategy is hazing or “re-conditioning”. The purpose is to teach bears that humans and human-populated areas are not safe places for bears. Wildlife technicians respond to bear calls and educate both the bear and the person about how to avoid human-bear conflict. The human is told to remove bear attractants – garbage, bird feeders, dirty barbecues; the bear is told to leave by more physical acts – loud noises and rubber bullets. In some cases, technicians will rely upon trap-and-transfer, which is relocation of a bear. In extreme situations, a bear may be chemically-immobilized or destroyed.

In February 2016, Ontario announced it is re-introducing a spring black bear hunting season as an expanded 5-year pilot program across the province. The spring hunt was initially cancelled in 1999 due to pressures from large environmental groups based in urban centers. Animal Alliance Canada was and is a key player (Animal Alliance Canada 2016, Commito 2015). They raised awareness in the mid-90s about the problem of orphaned cubs. They argued bears are at their most vulnerable in the spring, making them more susceptible to being lured to

hunter's bait sites. Since cubs are not always immediately apparent, some hunters accidentally kill a female mother, thereby endangering the survival of her cubs.²² They mobilized the public and mounting pressure on the government resulted in the indefinite closure of a spring bear hunting season. The cancellation of the spring hunt has become something of a folk tale, with rural residents each holding a different, but similar, story of how it happened. One outfitter told me that the hunt was cancelled because two activists attended an outdoor show under the guise of being hunters, and, discovering that the spring hunt was the most important to the outfitters financially, chose that season to target. Many of the stories included reference to large environmental groups; no one mentioned Animal Alliance Canada (one of the most vocal groups in Toronto) but they often assigned blame to activist groups like Greenpeace.²³ During my research, I was often asked to confirm that I was not, in fact, a secret animal rights activist.²⁴ Many people I spoke with – not only outfitters, but residents and other business owners as well – bemoaned the financial cost of the end of a spring season. It was also seen as a factor to increased human-bear conflict. More importantly, however, the cancellation of the hunt was spoken of in tones of resentment. Residents feel the government has a disregard for the realities of living in the bush, and that is forefronts urban, middle-class experience and knowledge before rural, lived experience. Northern Ontario and rural residents argued the spring hunt was and is necessary to reduce human-bear conflict. The government responded to the concerns about

²² Survival rates of yearlings are much higher than cubs that had been born that year. Especially in the spring, orphaned cubs of that year have an extremely low survival rate. Some cubs are also orphaned in the fall season. Many orphaned cubs are trapped and taken to be cared for in a bear sanctuary.

²³ Notably, I could find no connection between Greenpeace and the cancellation of the spring black bear hunting season in Ontario.

²⁴ I do consider myself a supporter of animal rights. I am not, however, “a secret animal rights activist” and do not support misleading tactics.

public safety by enacting a Nuisance Bear Committee. Following recommendations from the Nuisance Bear Committee Report, Ontario introduced the Bear Wise program in 2004, at a cost of \$9 million (OMNR 2009). Bear Wise is primarily educational, promoting the removal of attractants such as garbage and bird feeders. A 24-hour reporting hotline was made, active from April until November. While educational programs are important (and should be continued), especially for people who are new to rural areas or are only temporary residents, it is patronizing to those who have spent their lives in the bush. “BearWise is stupid,” Jeff told me, “We know how to take care of bears... Bears, you see ‘em once, take away the food. If he comes back, scare him away. If he still comes back, you have to shoot him.” He explained further, “There was this BearWise girl, maybe about 26, from the city. She’s probably never even *seen* a bear and she’s going around telling people to clean their barbecues.” The emphasis is on avoiding *all* bears, and there is no space for recognizing knowledge gained from living-with. It’s worth noting the strategy Jeff (and others) shared with me for responding to “problem bears” is the same method employed by MNR Wildlife Technicians, trained in the aforementioned Problem Bear course.

In 2014, the Ontario government announced a two-year pilot spring bear hunt in eight WMUs in Northern Ontario. The pilot was to counter the high levels of human-bear conflict, especially around large population centers (OMNR2014b). While many Northern townships and municipalities supported the spring hunt, they also critiqued it as being insufficient to address high levels of human-bear conflict. They want it open to non-residents, as American hunters from the United States need to pay outfitters to go bear hunting, and this can bring millions of dollars into Northern and rural Ontario (Commuto 2015). One person told me they believed the hunt was “opened to alleviate MNR problems,” as a token offering to appease Northern voters. They argue that there are only a small number of Ontario hunters, not enough to affect levels of

human-bear conflict. Animal Alliance of Canada and Zoocheck brought a law-suit against the pilot hunt, but it was dismissed by the courts days before the spring hunt was due to open on May 1, 2014 (Jones 2014; Moodie 2014).

All environmental legislation in Ontario is open for public input prior to its legislative adoption.²⁵ Policy makers also seek input from specific stakeholder groups.²⁶ Although Ontario implemented trapper's councils in 1950 to incorporate input from local and Aboriginal peoples (Loo 2006), some faith has been lost in the efficacy of these councils; one trapper told me that he no longer attends because he felt that the government comes to the table with their decisions already made; the consultation is simply a formality, a box to be checked. Which knowledge matters when making decisions on policy?

As Tina Loo (2006) has shown in her historical analysis of wildlife management in Canada over the twentieth century, resource management decisions are political. On October 31, 2015, Ontario shared a proposal to expand the pilot spring bear hunt. One MNRF employee lamented just how political these decisions were, commenting on how nobody in the department was even aware of an impending legislation proposal until it was announced to the public. Comments from opposing groups were publicized through news media (see, for example, Robinson 2015, CBC News 2015b, CBC News 2015c). Debates about the ethics of a spring season continue (CBC News 2016a, 2016b).

The polarity surrounding the spring black bear hunt echoes the general sentiments that rural residents hold towards current MNRF policies. The increasing professionalization of

²⁵ How this input is taken into account is, however, unclear. A scheduled interview with provincial policy makers was indefinitely postponed.

²⁶ Which specific stakeholder groups could not be clarified due to scheduled interview with policy makers being indefinitely postponed.

wildlife management means that conservation officers are increasingly trained in universities rather than on the land (Loo 2006). This increasing specialization also means that responding to wildlife becomes the responsibility of trained professionals. Individuals are no longer responsible (unable to respond); they have not learned to live *with* bears. There is a general malaise with the modern approach to enforcement of hunting laws – laws that do not resonate with local perceptions and knowledge of the land – which is focused more on punishment, ticketing and abstract formulas rather than on building personal connections with local hunters and trappers. How can these concerns be addressed? When groups are arguing for opposite policies to be implemented, how can all be heard and represented in decision-making? For rural residents, it becomes an issue of perception of power and different ways of knowing. Opposing groups argue about the ethics of when and if it is acceptable to kill bears. What role do the bears have in these debates? Policies are written about bears in general, but how are decisions made to act with a particular bear? How does one decide to kill a specific bear?

How to Kill a Bear

There are many ways to kill a bear, to cause a bear's death. You can "cull" the bear population, and you can "destroy" an individual bear, "dispatch", "euthanize", or "harvest" a bear. You may choose to "take" a bear, or you may be forced to "take care of it." If I used the incorrect term in referring to a bear's death with a particular individual, I was often corrected, especially by police and MNRF employees. On more than one occasion, the "correct" term was heavily emphasized when referring to bear death. Verbs describing how a bear is killed do not refer to the *method* of the bear's death. They are laden, rather, with the ethical justification for a particular bear's demise. There are also the other, un-sanctioned reasons for killing a bear, summarized by the common phrase "shoot, shovel, and shut up." Depending on your position, different reasons are mobilized to justify the death of a particular bear. Underlying these terms are protocols for how to treat the bear in death. And yet most of these verbs negate the individuality of the bear, the recognition of the bear as a self. Most – but not all – of these actions transform the bear into an object. As Eduardo Kohn notes, there is a "tension... between recognizing animals as selves and the subsequent desubjectivization that killing them requires" (Kohn 2014, 154).

The words "cull", "destroy", and "euthanize" are used in reference to avoiding human/bear conflict. Some residents call for a need to cull the bear population. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "cull" as "4.a. To pick out (livestock, etc.) according to their quality. Also *absol.* b. *spec.* To select and kill (wild animals or birds) usu. in order to improve the stock or reduce the population" (Simpson and Weiner 1993). One individual compared the high levels of problem to the issue of wolves in the area – and how the government alternately protected the species, allowing it to grow, and then needed to respond with a cull to avoid human/wildlife

conflict. MNRF biologists have shown that culling a bear population, to a certain extent, can actually increase the reproductive success rate of female bears (Obbard and Howe 2008); they do caution, however, that similar studies have shown conflicting results. In conversation, MNRF biologists I spoke with argue that the only way a cull would have a tangible effect on levels of bear-human conflict would be if the bear population was diminished by 95% - which won't and shouldn't happen.

Individual problem bears are, in some cases, killed. If a particular audacious bear is a consistent visitor to human areas, or poses an immediate threat to people, that bear may be “destroyed” or “euthanized”. Destroy, in this sense, means to “4. to put out of existence (living beings); to deprive of life; to slay, kill” (Simpson and Weiner 1993). Depriving a bear of life, even in its death, is a failure to recognize the bear as a being. Bears may also be euthanized by authorities, whether police or MNRF technicians. Bears who have been chemically immobilized in the past year are considered not to be edible; these bears will often be returned to Crown land just as if they had died naturally.²⁷ Some regions also keep lists of interested persons who will receive a killed problem bear (or other animal) if it has not been previously chemically immobilized. The ministry will also keep one or two bears as anatomical subjects for the purposes of their Problem Bear Management Course, to train new technicians on full bear biology.

This is not to say that technicians have no respect for bears – paradoxically, at times they hold bears more highly than the people reporting them as problems. But multiple MNRF

²⁷ Health Canada recommends one year before eating a bear that had been chemically immobilized. There have not been any studies to determine how quickly the drugs leave the bear's system, but similar studies in cattle show that a recommended 30-day period is all that is required. There is not considered to be any danger to other scavengers who may feed on a bear that has been previously chemically immobilized.

employees used the word “destroy” to correct my verb use describing this action of last resort. Their experience allows them to recognize when a bear *does* and *can* pose a threat to humans. But I would argue the language used to describe this action, this objectification and desubjectivization, allows them to take lethal action when required. For technicians, the desubjectivization is needed because of their high respect for bears.

Technicians and police are not always called to respond to problem bears, however, especially in rural areas. People who have grown up in the bush are, generally, familiar with bear behaviour and know how to respond to it. In small towns, there are often specific people who will be called to “take care of” problem bears – modern-day bounty hunters (without the bounty). Bears are sometimes killed by property owners as well. Sometimes these bears can be used for meat, and the pelt and fat may be given to specific, local First Nations people who will use it to make medicines or crafts. Sometimes the bear is buried in the bush – given back to the earth, providing food for ravens and other bears. Often, this goes unreported. Jean-Pierre, a local land-owner, told me that MNR actually called him up once, asking, “I hear you’ve shot a few bears. Are you reporting it?” “Why would I bother?” he says. “They’re up on my property if you want to come check them out, I tell them. I can’t have them around with my grandchildren; they need somewhere to play. The other day a boar had gotten into the truck and eaten up the car seat. Just ripped to shreds.” One of the reasons for not reporting adhering to the mandatory reporting for killing problem bears, as explained to me by Jeff, is that is an expensive waste of time. If he reports it, the police and the MNR have to investigate. They have to check his gun license; they have to spend hours writing a report. Meanwhile, the bear is left untouched.

Sometimes “shoot, shovel, and shut up” is taken too far. Jeff considers it murder, bears being killed for no reason. Eric, an avid bear hunter, called it a waste. Jean-Pierre, responsible

for the deaths of a number of “problem bears” also stated, “I don’t like killing something for nothing.” But there were frequent reports about bears being killed by hunters because they were seen as competition for moose, a prized meat.²⁸ “I’ve been in the bush hunting with guys who will shoot a bear if they see it, because that bear will kill a moose calf in the spring, they say.”²⁹ Although these may also have been stories of bravado (and some people thought that’s all they were), many also reported finding dead, shot bears left in the bush. Chris, a local resident, trapper, and hunter, was telling me that he “found a bear carcass the other day on [his] property. There must have been some hunters who made a bad shot, and it got away from them. In this heat, it spoiled and they couldn’t recover it.” I asked Chris about the stories, of hunters shooting bears in the bush to protect moose – he didn’t believe them. “It’s a lot of tough talk,” he says, “I mean, a lot of guys will say they will take care of them. But honestly, you don’t come across that very often.” And yet others spoke to me about abandoned bears they found in the bush, as if it wasn’t unusual. I spoke with some of the people reputed to have “taken care of” a large number of bears in some years. They did not proclaim a vendetta against bears; rather, they recognized and emphasized bear’s potentiality for aggression and danger. Henry, a large land-owner, framed it as “us-versus-them” – he did not believe it was possible to live *with* bears, to share the same space and territory. He told me that, “if we keep encroaching on their territory, only one person³⁰ can win.” Fudge, drawing on Walter Benjamin, notes that “mastery – control, domination – is the

²⁸ Interestingly, some bear hunters with whom I spoke began hunting bear because of decreasing moose populations (and therefore increased competition for moose tags).

²⁹ Bears can and do prey on moose calves, especially in the spring. Declining moos populations, however, are likely due a complex set of factors including loss of habitat and associated natural food sources, compounded by hunting pressures, other predation, and other natural causes (Patterson et al 2013).

³⁰ His choice of word.

means by which we annihilate fear” (2002, 8). “Shoot, shovel, and shut up” is the ultimate domination of fear by death.

When an individual intentionally seeks a bear, when an individual is hunting a bear and is successful, they *harvest* the bear. Harvest as a transitive verb is “to kill or remove (wild animals belonging to a local population) so as to provide food (or other useful product) or sport, or to reduce the population” (Simpson and Weiner 1993). When someone spoke of harvesting a bear, it referred to the intentionality of that particular bear’s death; hunters and trappers would also use the word when they were going to use the bear for its meat, its pelt, and its fat. Essentially, when the bear would become food and medicine, it was harvested. No one claimed to harvest a “problem bear” – although some hunters would be encouraged to hunt close to farmers’ oat fields. Eric was asked to hunt a particular bear that had been eating a farmer’s oats. Although this bear was arguably also a “problem bear,” since Eric was looking to eat the bear meat and killed the bear for that purpose: he told me he harvested that bear. Chris also mentions he, or other trappers, may “harvest as many bears as I need [on my trapline] – and some of those may be nuisance bears.”

To “take” a bear is closely related to harvesting one. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “take”, in relation to animals, as “to catch, capture (a wild beast, bird, fish, etc.); also of an animal, to seize or catch (prey)” (Simpson and Weiner 1993). This definition excerpt is part of the transitive definition of take: “to lay hold upon, get into one’s hands by force or artifice; to seize, capture, esp. in war; to make prisoner; hence, to get into one’s power; to win by conquest (a fort, town, country)” (ibid.). This is not the way it was used in reference to choosing to kill a particular bear. It was in reference to accepting, to taking, a gift. It was used in the context of a reciprocal relationship with a bear. It is the recognition of a bear as a self. To take a bear is not to

shoot the first bear one sees – it is an ethical decision based on intuition and feeling. Taking a bear will be returned to below.

Harvesting Bears

There are protocols for when and how to hunt a bear. As mentioned, bears are classified as game mammals. However, bears are simultaneously classified as a fur-bearing animal. This means that seasons and limits are set for hunting, but bears may also be harvested, without buying a tag, by a licensed trapper on their registered trapline. First Nations peoples, including Algonquin, may also harvest bear (but they often do *not*). Protocols of how to kill a bear are established and enforced by provincial policy, community norms, and, in the case of First Nations, by their own established laws and teachings. Policies, as mentioned, set seasons and limits in order to manage populations and ensure long-term viability of the species as a whole. They are also *ethical* – rules are established to minimize suffering in death.

One of the most common methods of bear hunting is baiting. According to 2003 statistics, baiting was the method used by 80% of non-resident hunters and 36% of Ontario hunters (NBRC 2003). This involves identifying an appropriate location in bear territory and continually and consistently stocking it with an easy food source for bears. Considerations for location include road access and proximity to human dwellings. Hunters ensure other wildlife cannot access the food by using large tree branches or rocks as a deterrent to smaller mammals and birds. The success rate of hunters who use baiting methods is significantly higher than those who are either opportunistic hunters or who stalk bears. Non-resident hunters, through an outfitter, primarily employ baiting as a hunting technique; they have success rates of approximately 50% according to the ministry, although the outfitters I spoke with sometimes quoted even higher success rates for some years.

Baiting is controversial because it is seen to be giving an unfair advantage to the hunter, who will set himself in a concealed location within shooting range of the bait. My friend and I

went to sit in a crow's nest to watch for bears with a local hunter, and she was telling me how she shared that sentiment – it seemed too easy. In 2014, the state of Maine held a referendum in an attempt to ban bear baiting, arguably because it is a cruel practice; it was not passed (Dell'Amore and Morell 2014). People also argue against feeding wild animals and habituating them to human-provided food sources.

Ontario's proposed changes to legislation include limiting the use of baiting. Regulations are required "to avoid creating habituation in black bears to artificial food sources" (Environmental Registry 2015). In Canadian society, we are taught not to feed wild animals, and it is illegal in some jurisdictions: Ontario municipalities such as Hamilton and Mississauga have by-laws against feeding wildlife and in British Columbia you legally cannot "attract dangerous wildlife" (BC Wildlife Act). Yet, birds, arguably also "wild animals", are not generally included in this restriction. Suburban bird feeders are common attractants for bears to visit human-populated areas (bird feeders are responsible for about 8% of bear complaints from Ontario residents). The dependency argument is rarely extended to bird feeders endangering a bird's ability to find other food sources.³¹ Size and potential for risk are obvious considerations, but the argument against baiting is that we do not want bears to become habituated to food provided by us.

Critiques against bear baiting rely upon the nature/culture dualism. Baiting *does* improve hunting success, and increasingly hunters are developing more strategies to further improve their chances. Yet, the presence of bear bait does not automatically result in a bear being killed. The presumption that bears are slaves to their instinctual drives and cannot choose when and if to

³¹ The Australian Wildlife Society, for example, has issued a guide against feeding native animals; it highlights that bird feeders have not been found to alter bird's feeding patterns but do offer steps to avoid dependency (Australian Wildlife Society n.d.)

visit a baiting site, follows the belief that bears are not active, thinking selves. It *is* true that bears will more actively visit bait sites in poor natural food years. When multiple bears are visiting a site, the smaller bears tend to visit earlier in the evening. Bears are incredibly intelligent – one bear in particular was known to a hunting outfitter as Einstein. Einstein would visit baits on a regular basis, and was a large boar (male bear). He knew when a hunter was present and either wouldn't make himself visible to the hunter, or position himself in such a way as to prevent the hunter from getting a shot. Similarly, bears tend to visit bait sites after dark, when hunters cannot legally discharge a firearm. We need to remember that bears can act as well – they are not only agents of their instinct, driven solely by a need to consume food.

Baiting bears is conflated with feeding bears. One problem with feeding bears in urban areas is that most people do not know how to act with bears, and cannot understand their body language. Even those who are familiar with bears recognize that one should not directly feed a bear. George, a biologist, told me a story about when he was working at a protected park, and they had been running scientific studies on black bears. Him and a friend were returning to their cabin late one night after a Hallowe'en party. They arrived to see a bear, eating the Jack-O-Lanterns on the porch. It was a large boar, and he did not seem aggressive. They began tossing it apples and other treats. They were both laughing; the bear had managed to wear the hollowed pumpkin as a helmet. Suddenly, the bear decided it was no longer a game and rushed at them both. They were able to secure themselves away – but not before being chased around a pick-up truck. It was a sobering experience and one not to be forgotten. George tells me this bear story, using his expressions and his body movements to show me how the bear was acting. George is more familiar than most with bear behaviour; he still cannot understand what changed the bear's mood that night. "Perhaps he was showing you he didn't like being made fun of," I offered.

The potential for aggression, and the inability of most people to recognize warning signs, are the reasons why feeding bears is not a good idea. These are the reasons why, in a park one day, I reacted strongly to a visitor from Southern Ontario complaining that she had not seen any bears in the area. “I want to leave food out for them, so that I can see one before I go!” I reacted quickly and loudly, saying that it was not a good idea. She was confused and so I, along with the woman she was visiting, explained that if bears knew they could find food there, they would likely return. Just as we learn where an easy meal can be found, they do too.

Some Algonquins do not share this view against feeding bears. While they do not feed bears in order to hunt them, they recognize that bears are our relations. As such, we have responsibilities of respect and reciprocity. When we recognize there is a poor year for naturally-available food sources, such as occurred in 2015, it is our responsibility to help bears make it through the winter. This means that some Algonquin people will leave small amounts of food in the bush, without any intention of hunting them.

While the common argument is that baiting can draw more bears to human-provided food sources, the opposite also exists. Many rural people call for baiting as a method to draw bears *away* from towns. They argue if bears had enough food in the bush, whether from a bait site or not, they will not venture into towns looking for barbecues, bird feeders, and garbage. The relationship between baiting and human-bear conflict is unclear.

One hunter explained that the reason they use bait is because bears *respond* to it. Moose, he tells me, don’t respond to bait and so they can’t hunt with bait for moose. But it works with bears. Bears *do* respond to certain food sources. That is how trapping bears works. In order to be able to relocate problem bears, a bait is left inside a cage to entice the bear to enter. Bear baiting blurs the line between trapping and hunting.

Other methods of hunting bears, such as stalking, require intimate knowledge of the bush and of bear behaviour. You need to be able to recognize when bears will visit particular areas for their favourite meals, and you need to be able to recognize their signs. An imprint of a paw or a bent branch may be the only sign of a recent bear visit, and they are difficult to discern if you don't know what to look for. Bears leave marks and messages for each other along their paths, which we may not always understand – but we have the capacity to recognize. We cross paths with bears, even if we don't always see them.

Regardless of the chosen hunting strategy, many local hunters (including non-Algonquin) note that it needs to *feel* right before they take a shot. In the mandatory provincial hunting course, you are told you should wait until you have a good, clear shot before dispatching an animal – but this isn't what they were referring to. Many hunters want to appreciate the bear as a self, and, even if they have a clean shot, will only take it if it feels right.

Bears will rarely show themselves to you in the bush. Despite the fact that bears are large, they are incredibly silent and invisible. Very often they can appear close to you without any prior warning or view of them advancing. This was explained to me by one Algonquin Grandmother, leader, and hunter. “The rare time you see a bear,” she tells me, “and you happen to have a gun... that bear is offering itself to you. And then you have to decide whether or not you need that bear, for its meat and for its medicine. You decide whether to take that bear.” This is a recognition of the bear's capacity to act. A bear in this instance is not only a mobile meal, but a living being capable of giving itself to a hunter. The idea of the animal as a gift is a common reference in many indigenous explanations of hunting (see, for example, Blaser 2009; Watson & Huntington 2008). Harvesting *and* taking a bear is always an exchange, and carries with it an obligation of mutual respect. One cannot take without giving.

Nadasdy notes that hunting “is a set of practices that are deeply embedded in specific sets of social relations and ideas about how humans should relate to one another as well as to animals” (63). Although anthropology tends to restrict hunting to the “finding and killing of animals” (ibid., 65), it is “the practice of an ethical relationship with the nonhuman” (Watson and Huntington 2008, 257). Beyond harvesting bears, how else do we act with and upon bears? How do we live with them?

Living with Bears

Current policies about co-existing with bears only focus on avoiding human-bear conflict. Ontario tracks the number of complaints about bears, but many of these reports may only indicate a bear sighting (not an encounter). Wildlife management experts found “liberal hunting regimes contributed to high public tolerance for large carnivores but did not reduce human-carnivore conflicts” (Howe et al. 2010, 138). Essentially, when a bear hunt is less restricted, the public will make fewer complaints about the presence of bears in urban zones – even if the actual number of human-bear conflicts does not decrease. Yet there is a strong belief that more hunters in an area will teach bears to be afraid of people, and that is why a longer hunting season would reduce human-bear conflict. Henry, who framed human-bear interactions as us versus them, used to have a high density of bears on his property. Now, bears will not cross the boundary onto his land, despite being present in the area and despite the lack of physical barriers like fences.

Problem bear and human-bear conflicts stem from anthropocentric narratives and ideologies. Expanding human populations encroach on bear habitat, and yet, officially, bears are at fault for being present in areas that have been claimed by people. Bears are also considered to be territorial, often following the same paths from their denning to breeding areas in the spring and fall. Females tend to stay in the same area where they were born, while males seek out new territory as adolescents. Hatley (2004) argues that we domesticate spaces in order to avoid “human ‘victimization’ by animals and plants” (19). Since humans are primary, it is only our claims to land that matter. We domesticate our living spaces, demarcating the boundary between nature and culture, tame and wild. The wild should not cross.

Rural Ontario residents often have superficially contrasting perceptions about co-existing with black bears. Their ideas were shaped by having to live intimately with black bears for

generations. Some peoples' reactions, however, were framed in contrast to urban Torontonians – building upon their felt power imbalances in provincial policy decision-making processes. In conversations during my fieldwork, many residents called for a bear to “be dropped on Bloor Street”;³² this was echoed in a public comment on a CBC news story, calling to “return the GTA [Greater Toronto Area] to its former natural environment” (CBC News 2015a). The news story highlighted the high number of police hours spent responding to problem bear calls in Sudbury during the summer months of 2015. Calling for bears to be dropped on Bloor Street is in response to a perceived lack of lived experience with who or what a bear is and can be. Avoiding human-bear conflict is dependent on being able to recognize and respond to bear behaviour. Unfortunately, most of us, especially those living in urban environments, do not have the opportunity to learn first-hand the basics of bear communication. While black bears will not typically attack, and very rarely do, living with the real possibility, and reality, of bears in the backyard requires being able to know how to act with bears.

“Dropping a bear on Bloor Street” is about the perception of difference: the stark contrast of urbanites seeing nature as outside of the city and of rural and Northern Ontarians living in the bush. The people who shared their stories with me have spent their lives in untamed spaces. For them, nature is not a weekend getaway, but is their backyard and an integral part of who they are. The knowledge is tied to the land and tied to the place. “Dropping a bear on Bloor Street” is also about the increasingly hands-off approach to wildlife management. This wasn't just about bears. It was about the perceived predominant ideas that the health of a species can be managed and decided from within the confines of an office far away. As if somehow the land itself doesn't and

³² A famous, main road in downtown Toronto.

didn't matter. Living with bears depends on being able to recognize bear communication. George says, "You need to experience a bluff charge, you need to hear a boar's warning grunts." Once there was a bear who liked to spend time around a poultry store. This bear would wait until a customer walked out with a bag full of chicken, and then bluff charge. The scared customer would drop the chicken, get into their vehicle, and drive away. The bear would get the chicken. (This bear was eventually labelled a problem bear and MNRF had to remove him.) Bluff charges are often a warning, although they don't necessarily mean a bear will attack. In this case, a bluff charge is an interesting use of inter-species communication the bear would use to get himself fed.

Bears communicate with people through these types of physical acts. Just as humans use physical acts to teach bears populated areas are unsafe, bears will also mark their territory. A mother bear and her cubs kept visiting Laura's hunting camp. Laura and her husband, local residents, made some noises, but the bear didn't respond. They tried firing warning shots and she ignored them. Eventually she sauntered away. But the next day, Laura was alone at the camp with her young child, having a nap in the trailer. The bear was back and was at the trailer door, trying to come in. Laura was panicking, thinking of her child – this was unusual for a bear to be so bold. She was used to seeing bears eating blueberries on the roadside on the way up to camp; they don't bother with you. When her husband returned, he went out to look for the bear, but she never showed herself to them again.

Understanding bear communication is important because avoiding conflict requires being able to recognize warning messages and to be non-threatening in a bear sort of way. This is why people get particularly protective if there are young children in the household. Children are still learning *human* social cues, and some of their movements may be easily misconstrued by a bear. Furthermore, many Algonquin explain bears' eating habits in the spring or when they hunt as

preferring to eat the things that are *new*; this include new shoots, but also spawning fish, moose calves, sometimes piglets... and it is extrapolated that human children would also be a target. This is not to say that people should be scared of bears; it is about being able to respond to bears and respecting their responses to us.

While educational efforts to teach people about removing bear attractants are an essential component to the MNRF's approach to bears in urban environments, it is still the *bears* that are formally labelled as "problem bears" and "nuisance bears". MNRF biologists and technicians recognize, however, that it is almost always a *human* problem. They describe their role as about managing people, more than managing wildlife. I was told by one MNRF employee, "Everyone wants to get back to nature... until it shows up their backyard." Not all bears are problems. Jeanne, an older woman who lives alone, has a black bear who visits her property frequently. She said she can feel him watching her sometimes from the bush. But she is not afraid. The bear has never expressed any threatening intentions. Instead of *avoiding* bears, how can we move towards living *with* bears?

Learning from Bears

According to the Algonquin and other First Nations, bears are teachers. By watching bears come out of hibernation, you can learn of different medicinal plants. Bear hunters have stories of bears patching their wounds after being shot or injured. Spending time with bears allows bears to teach you about themselves. Learning from bears, however, is more than learning about bear behaviour; it is more than learning how to use the same plants a bear uses. Close encounters with bears can teach people respect for bears and can teach them to recognize bears as beings. While Nadasdy (2003) argues “most biologists think of animals as objects of study and/or as economic or ecological resources” (109), this was not true of the biologists and technicians working at the MNRF. One biologist told me, “My feelings about bears are probably closer to what I know First Nations people say about bears.” Although the respect for bears came from different understandings of the world, personal lived experience taught them to see bears as powerful sacred beings.

Bears can also teach us about ourselves. Many of the stories about close encounters with bears were followed up with a lesson, a reflection on how they were or became as a person. One of the most successful and most experienced trappers in the region told me a story of when he was a young man. He was out fishing, and he was sleeping in a tent. They were a group of young men, and they were slightly arrogant. They had left their food out, and he could hear a bear come. He was terrified. He lay there, controlling his breathing to the point that he gave himself pneumonia. He realized, despite the stories, bears are not dangerous. They *can* be dangerous, but a muskrat poses more of a danger than a bear. He told me this story as a lesson learned becoming a man. “When you interfere with their yard, you need to know how to respect them. You need to learn how to live in this world.”

When we recognize the power of bears, you can also learn how to communicate with them. Interacting with and using bear medicines is a way to communicate with the spirit of the bear. One Grandmother told me that using anything made with a bear was one way to keep its spirit alive. I had the privilege of being with her when she took out her bear drum in the spring. She stores it for the winter while the bears are sleeping, but since it was spring and the bears had already emerged from their dens, she took it out to play for me. Acts such as these are a way of communicating with and respecting the spirit of the bear and bears themselves.

Bears can speak with us through our dreams. Whiteduck (2002) frequently notes the importance of dreams and their messages for the Algonquin. Bears can bring messages, or remind us of what they are capable of. Some people who prepare bear medicines often dream of bears; it is one way to ask permission of the bear spirit. The bear spirit is invited in to sacred ceremonies. Messages via dreams or visions in ceremony are “part of the empirical, and they are a kind of real. They grow out of and work on the world” (Kohn 2014, 13). They are, Kohn argues, “a privileged mode of communication through which, via souls, contact among radically different kinds of beings becomes possible” (ibid., 140). Recognizing this is a crucial way to learn from bears.

Conclusion

One morning, I awoke to a dream. At the end of the dream, there had been two skin-less human-like forms hanging in a yard. A man was looking for a gut-hook, so that he could continue to clean them. Although the dream was strange, I didn't think much of it until later. I had planned to spend the morning catching up on emails before going that afternoon to sit on a bear bait and watch for bears (although not hunting them). However, at 9:00 I received a phone call informing me that a man had a bear in the back of his truck and was waiting for me in town. The man is a hunter, and had been hoping to harvest a bear for several weeks at that point. When I arrived in town, he told me that a farmer in the area had shot the bear the night before, and a cousin of his had let him know. Since the farmer was planning on dumping the bear as food for carrion, the hunter asked to take instead, as food for himself and for his family. Since I lived outside of cell-phone range, he waited until the Band office opened so that they could call me at home. When I arrived, I followed him out to his camp, where I helped him skin the bear, take off the fat, and remove the meat.³³ After a bad food year, it was not surprising that he was looking for an easy meal of oats: the bear had hardly any fat, and given that it was mid-fall, likely would not have had enough fat to survive the winter.

Throughout the twentieth century, some conservationists have been adopting the idea of the "noble savage" in order to forward environmental policies. Famously in Canada, Grey Owl was a man from Britain who passed off as First Nations, and he believed that "humans had to become Aboriginal in order to be conservationists" (Loo 2006, 116). And yet romanticizing indigenous lifeways is not the answer. We cannot all reject our own histories. As one

³³ I was later present when the same hunter's nephew harvested a second bear, which I also helped skin.

Grandmother asked me, “what did *your* grandparents tell you?” We need to become accountable for our own stories, including recognizing our shared histories. Plumwood (1993) shows us that homogenization is not the answer to a dualism – it rather reinforces the power relations between the categories. Although she was referring to the powerless category assimilating into the powerful, the reverse can also be said to be true. While provincial policies can do better to learn *from* First Nations – should they choose to share their teachings – they cannot simply adopt the teachings themselves. There is also a danger that consultation with First Nations becomes simply a formality and a box to be checked. Rather, they could learn to listen, and to focus on mutual obligations of respect.

Nadasdy notes “the politics and bureaucratic realities of wildlife management” does not allow “management recommendations... based on these alternate understandings of the world” (2003, 112). MNRF’s own staff hold bears in high regard. They recognize bears as incredibly intelligent selves. Their insights, also based on lived experience, point to learning to live *with* bears. Many Algonquin (and other First Nations) acknowledge the multitude of teachings, each specific to its time and place. Written policy, at a provincial, macro-level cannot adequately represent the specificities of each local reality. Policies can, however, be written to better reflect the subjecthood of bears. We can work towards categories that promote mutual respect for bears. Bears are neither helpless animals in need of our protection nor are they aggressive beasts that we need to be protected from. They are both, and neither. Bears are bears: powerful beings deserving of our respect.

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