



**AN INNU-NASKAPI ETHNOHISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY
OF INDUSTRIAL IRON MINING DEVELOPMENT
AT SCHEFFERVILLE, QUÉBEC**

A thesis submitted to the
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Master of Arts

by
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Menutakuaki aimun,
apu nita nipumakak.

Tshika petamuat
nikan tshe takushiniht.

(Quand une parole est offerte,
elle ne meurt jamais.

Ceux qui viendront
l'entendront.)

—Joséphine Bacon

"They want a piece of land to build their shrine," said Uchendu to his peers when they consulted among themselves. "We shall give them a piece of land." He paused, and there was a murmur of surprise and disagreement. "Let us give them a portion of the Evil Forest. They boast about victory over death. Let us give them a real battlefield in which to show their victory." They laughed and agreed, and sent for the missionaries, whom they had asked to leave them for a while so that they might "whisper together." They offered them as much of the Evil Forest as they cared to take. And to their great amazement the missionaries thanked them and burst into song.

"They do not understand," said some of the elders. "But they will understand when they go to their plot of land tomorrow morning." And they dispersed.

—Chinua Achebe

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the era of iron ore activities at Schefferville between 1954 and 1983, a major period in the postwar industrial development of subarctic Québec. Relying on oral and written sources, it seeks to understand the roles and actions of Innu and Naskapi individuals during this phase of large-scale resource exploitation conducted by the Iron Ore Company of Canada at the heart of their ancestral homeland. If the mining experience in Schefferville evolved in part to the detriment of the Innu and the Naskapi communities inhabiting the region, it is also shown that these groups worked to determine their own engagement with the industrial world, adjusting and maintaining their practices notably in order to combine the labour opportunities at the mine with their life on the land.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse s'intéresse à une période phare du développement industriel minier au Moyen-Nord québécois, soit l'épopée de l'exploitation ferrifère à Schefferville entre 1954 et 1983. Nous appuyant sur une variété de sources orales et écrites, nous tentons de comprendre le rôle souvent oublié que les Innus et les Naskapis jouèrent pendant cette phase d'exploitation de ressources minérales à grande échelle menée au cœur de leurs territoires ancestraux par la Iron Ore Company of Canada. Si l'expérience minière à Schefferville se construisit en partie au détriment des communautés innues et naskapiennes habitant la région, nous démontrons également que celles-ci bâtirent à leur façon leur engagement au monde industriel, ajustant et maintenant leur propres pratiques notamment de manière à agencer le travail à la mine et la vie sur le territoire.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADI	Adriana Resources
BANQ	Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
CBA	Collective bargaining agreement
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
CMMK	Cartier Construction/McNamara Construction/Fred Mannix & Company/Morrison-Knudson Company of Canada
DSO	Direct shipping ore
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
HCGM	Hollinger Consolidated Gold Mines
HNSE	Hollinger North Shore Exploration
HUT	Hollinger Ungava Transport
IOC	Iron Ore Company of Canada
ITUM	Innu Takuaiakan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
LIM	Labrador Iron Mine
LME	Labrador Mining and Exploration
MAM	Ministère des Affaires municipales
MER	Ministère de l'Énergie et des Ressources
MLCP	Ministère des Loisirs, de la Chasse et de la Pêche
MQEC	McKay (Quebec) Explorers
MSRL	McGill Subarctic Research Laboratory
NEQA	Northeastern Quebec Agreement

NML	New Millennium Iron
OPDQ	Office de planification et de développement du Québec
QNS&L	Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway Company
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
USWA	United Steel Workers of America
WISCO	Wuhan Iron & Steel Corporation

INTRODUCTION

Geography schoolbooks from thirty years ago described the Ungava region, or Nouveau-Québec, as immense, rich in minerals, in wood, and in fur animals. An uninhabited and perhaps uninhabitable region. An uninhabited region, perhaps, but who would want these rocky lands, which the legend says that God gave them to Cain?¹

—Walford Hewitson, *Ungava*

I think it was a happy experience for everyone.²

—Brian Mulroney, November 9, 1982

In his 1954 movie entitled *Ungava*, Hewitson remarked that the northern region of Québec known as *Nouveau-Québec*³ had been portrayed in geography school books as “uninhabited and perhaps uninhabitable,” a sterile land, unsuitable for agricultural expansion and other civilizing ways of life. But, according to the film director, this perspective had begun to change, thanks to the work of professional geologists and engineers who had recently uncovered the hidden treasures of iron ore, “more sought after than gold or silver.”⁴ Beginning in the late 1930s, several prospectors visited the region in hope of identifying the richest iron deposits. It is only following the Second World War that the pursuit of iron treasures truly intensified, in a global geopolitical context where the demand for steel related to defense and construction programs sharply rose, as the American strategic reserves of the Mesabi basin (Minnesota) tightened.

1. The translation from French to English is mine (hereafter “The translation is mine”).

2. The translation is mine.

3. I italicize non-English terms only when they are first introduced.

4. *Ungava*, directed by Walford Hewitson, National Film Board of Canada, 1954. The translation is mine.

Finally, in that year of 1954, developers settled in and would soon begin to break the iron ore from the subarctic underground before loading it onto the newly constructed train travelling south toward the industrial port of Sept-Îles and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.⁵ Aboard gigantic cargo ships, the coarsely ground iron ore was to be offered in greatest proportion to America's hungry industrial heartland, via the steel mills of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio. Armed with arsenals of modern engineering techniques and equipment, hundreds of workers originating from different regions of the country gradually settled onto the shores of Knob Lake, with the purpose of "humanizing" this unexplored territory and establishing a mining center in Nouveau-Québec, which was to become Schefferville.

Although many people, including Hewitson, foresaw with optimism the outcome of this conquest after a long and fierce struggle, this expansive wilderness proved more difficult to tame than originally predicted. Far removed from the great urban centers, the region of Schefferville and all its professional resident miners—whom Hewitson characterized as the "obscure actors of the New World"⁶—remained constantly vulnerable to fluctuations in ore prices and in the global demand for steel products, as well as the search on the part of mining authorities for more concentrated deposits and for a cheaper labour force. Barely twenty years later, at the end of the 1970s, the North American metallurgy industry traversed a profound crisis, as steel consumption worldwide spiralled downward and as fuel prices jumped in the opposite direction

5. Unless otherwise noted, I translate the name of all hydrographical features referred to in the text from French to English, even though this typically goes against their most common usage. More generally, I retain the use of accents for French place names, unless I am quoting directly.

6. *Ungava*, Hewitson. The translation is mine.

following the second oil crisis (1979). At the time, the managers of the Iron Ore Company of Canada (IOC), the group exploiting the Schefferville mine, faced harsh competition from other countries that occupied a growing role in the global iron market. After reaping the benefits of the mineral resources extracted from the red soils of Ungava for nearly thirty years, the IOC weakly resisted the waves of change and eventually chose to abandon the “fight.” The great majority of miners who had become accustomed to the subarctic life in Schefferville were forced to return to their homes, most of which were located in the south; and it was in this funeral atmosphere that Brian Mulroney, then president of the IOC, confirmed in November 1982 that the decision to close the mine had indeed been very difficult to make. According to his own evaluation, however, the company that he directed had offered well-remunerated jobs to thousands of Canadian workers for several consecutive decades, and overall it had been a joyful and “happy experience for everyone.”⁷

If these large-scale developments took place throughout this period at the heart of Innu and Naskapi ancestral homelands, and without the Indigenous groups’ explicit consent, the unique experiences of these people in relation to iron mining activities have remained relatively unknown. Their encounter with the industrial world in the mid-twentieth century led directly to the relocation of their communities to Schefferville from other regions of the Québec-Labrador peninsula (figure 1). While the Innu mainly travelled from the Sept-Îles region (*Uashat; Waasaach*), the Naskapi came largely from Fort Chimo (*Uashkaikan; Waaskaaiikin*) and Fort Mckenzie (*Uashkaikaniss*;

7. Brian Mulroney, interview by Louis Martin, *Première Page*, Radio-Canada television, November 9, 1982. The translation is mine.

Waaskaatikinis), located in the Ungava region.⁸ Once in Schefferville (*Kaiatushkanut*; *Kaatuuskaamut*), several individuals engaged in wage employment at the mine, and the transition toward mixed subsistence-industrial livelihoods quickly accelerated. The IOC activities at Schefferville foreshadowed the establishment of many other industrial projects across Innu and Naskapi homelands, and despite a series of dramatic deindustrialisation phases, the externally driven, resource-based development of their territories generally continues unabated today. Even though significant transformations resulted from these large-scale, capital-intensive endeavours, the role of Indigenous people⁹ during the mining period has only emerged sporadically in the public discourse or through the socio-political, political-economic, and historical-geographic studies concerned with the postwar industrialisation of the Nouveau-Québec region.

8. I introduce alternative spellings for some important Innu and Naskapi concepts or toponyms. The *innu-aimun* spelling is always shown first, immediately followed by the *naskapi* roman equivalent. In order to lighten the text, the former is favoured (and becomes nonitalicized) for subsequent uses of the same concept or toponym.

Furthermore, this work follows contemporary convention and uses the term *Innu* when speaking about the Sept-Îles group, whereas the term *Naskapi* is preferred to refer to the Ungava-related group. However, it should be kept in mind, as Mailhot writes, that “those who have heretofore been called Montagnais, Naskapi, or Montagnais-Naskapi, and those who are today called Innu, whether they live east or west of the Quebec-Labrador border, constitute a single entity as to history, language, and culture” (José Mailhot, *The People of Sheshatshit: In the Land of the Innu*, transl. Axel Harvey (St. John’s: ISER Books: 1997), 38). In fact, Mailhot argues that beginning in the nineteenth century, the term *Naskapi* has been used much more generally “to impart the speaker’s notion of ‘primitive Indians’” (José Mailhot, “Beyond Everyone’s Horizon Stand the Naskapi,” *Ethnohistory* 33, no. 4 (1986): 384).

9. In this work, the term *Indigenous* is typically used to refer to the Innu and the Naskapi people of Schefferville (with some obvious exceptions). It is meant to be used in a locally specific sense to indicate the Innu’s and the Naskapi’s prior occupation of the Québec-Labrador interior and to respect their own designation as Indigenous people. For these reasons, I choose to capitalize the term, including, for consistency, when it is used more broadly (and unless I am quoting directly).

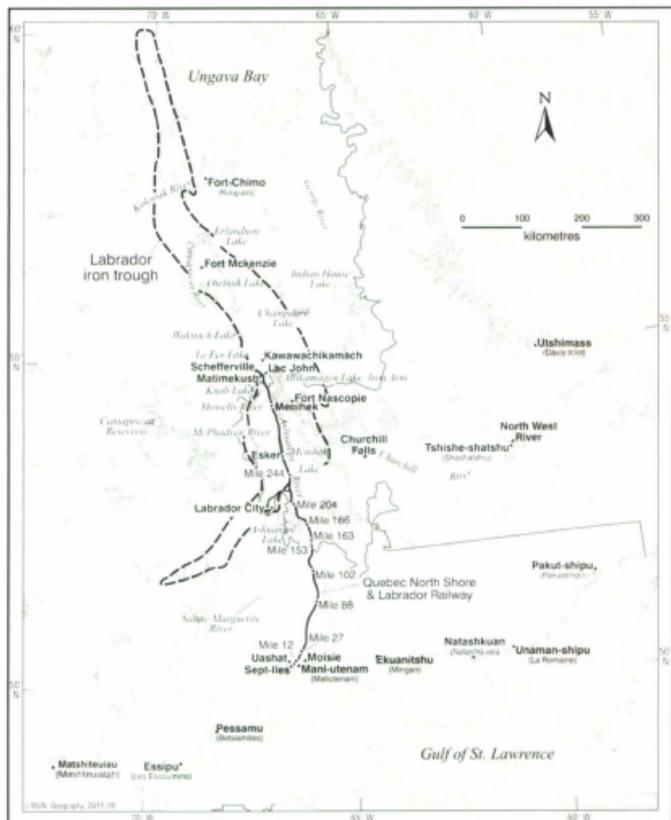


Figure 1. Innu and Naskapi homelands: the Québec-Labrador peninsula. Map by Charlie Conway, Department of Geography, Memorial University.

This work presents the results of research in historical and cultural geography which seeks to address this gap by paying close attention to Indigenous life histories at Schefferville, Québec, during the period of intensive changes that followed the arrival of industrial mining on their homelands. I begin by introducing, in this chapter, the methodological approach and the theoretical position that guide this study; as well as by sketching the conceptual contours of the argument that I develop in more detail throughout the substantive chapters. I then examine the historical practices of Innu and Naskapi individuals and their communities in the industrial era, considering several socio-economic, cultural, and ecological aspects of interest, and relying on a temporal sequence that closely mirrors the life of the Schefferville mine. As such, the historical narrative is organized according to the periods of exploration and predevelopment (chapter one), production and winding down (chapter two), and closure, abandonment, and reconstruction (chapter three). By making sense of the life stories which constitute the backbone of this narrative, and by shedding light on the complexity, the plurality, and the contingency of Indigenous worlds in relation to the mining world during each of these three periods, I aim to demonstrate that the Innu and the Naskapi did not simply remain passive recipients of the great upheaval that characterized the industrial period, but in fact continued to be significant actors of their own history. In the context of the numerous projects proposed by the iron industry in the region of Schefferville today, I conclude that a historical understanding of Indigenous people's experiences and their cultivation of a distinct Innu and Naskapi identity within the postwar mining world is of pressing contemporary relevance.

Methodological Approach

We need to shift the analysis to an almost “molecular” level and consider the structures of thought that underlie the construction of the moral person ... and constitute a specific practical logic of being in the world.

—Christopher C. Taylor, “The Cultural Face of Terror in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994,” 146

With the goal of understanding the Indigenous experience throughout this decisive moment in the industrial development of northern Québec, I rely on a mixed methodological approach which favours a fine-grained, locally-grounded analysis and interpretation of oral stories gathered among Innu and Naskapi communities. In the context of a six-week stay in the region of Schefferville (including in the distant but importantly related coastal town of Sept-Îles) in the fall of 2009, I proceeded to examine, to listen to, and in the majority of cases to record life stories relating to the people’s encounter with mineral development. As Cruikshank highlights, the ethnohistorical research strategy of paying special attention to “storied lives” is in part motivated by the fact that these stories can help to counterbalance a more universal account of history that gives little or no consideration to the local and cultural particularity of events, and to the meanings that individuals and communities attach to them.¹⁰ Indeed, for Portelli, the ability of oral historians to consider the specificity of each interlocutor, before demonstrating the vast array of subjectivities that constitute a certain group or social class, implies that in the final analysis, this type of research “tells us less about events as such than about their meaning.”¹¹ Inspired in part by the work of Brugge, Benally, and

10. Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), xii.

11. Alessandro Portelli, “The Peculiarities of Oral History,” *History Workshop* 12 (1981): 99.

Yazzie-Lewis, who have conducted extensive oral historical research pertaining to uranium development on traditional Navajo territory, I therefore seek to highlight the richness and depth of the life stories/storied lives shared during the interview sessions, rather than attempting to develop a historical narrative that enforces a “single internally consistent conclusion.”¹²

In this spirit, I privileged a qualitative type of interviewing techniques that were based on a series of key themes identified in advance of the fieldwork activities (appendix I). The interview sessions aimed to create a comfortable space for the interlocutors to discuss their experiences, knowledge, and memories of their historical encounter with the mining world. A total of twenty-six discussions were held with twenty-nine Innu or Naskapi individuals—six women and twenty-three men—from Matimekush (fourteen), Kawawachikamach (six), Schefferville (five), Lac John (three), and Maliotenam (one). The semistructured interviews were designed to allow flexibility for the participants to influence the direction and the scope of the discussions, but they remained mostly restricted to a set of themes related to Schefferville’s mining history, in particular since the majority of participants were identified on the basis of their past participation (or that of their relatives) in IOC activities. The great majority of the sessions, of a duration varying from fifteen minutes to two and a half hours, were held at the interviewees’ home (eighteen), typically in the company of other family members; while the remaining ones took place in a public space (six) or near the former mining sites (two). Most of the interviews (fifteen) were conducted in the presence of a research

12. Doug Brugge, Timothy Benally, and Esther Yazzie-Lewis, *The Navajo People and Uranium Mining* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 178.

assistant residing in Matimekush or Kawawachikamach, who was in charge of performing simultaneous translation (one assistant translated the discussions from innu-aimun to French, the other from naskapi to English). A minority of interviews (eleven) did not require the help of a translator.

Since the analysis of the life stories is conducted uniquely from the written transcripts of the interviews, I recognize “the loss of metanarrative qualities that this practice necessarily entails,”¹³ and I choose to concentrate almost exclusively—and perhaps somewhat reductively—on the ideas themselves as expressed during the discussions. With this in mind, I take the liberty to reproduce in written language passages drawn from the verbatim transcripts; this is done, I argue, without any meaningful loss for the reader. I also respect the choice of the interviewees either to be directly identified or to remain anonymous, as expressed through a written and/or oral consent obtained after each interview. The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University reviewed and approved the written consent form (appendix II) and the project proposal to conduct research with human subjects in the spring of 2009, prior to the beginning of all fieldwork activities involving interviews.

In order to address the potential methodological and analytical shortfalls inherent to oral historical research (I come back to these later on in this introduction), I considered it valuable, much as Ritchie suggests, “to design a project that relies on oral history evidence as *one* possible source of evidence that can substantiate additional sources of

13. Erin Jessee, Stacey Zembrzycki, and Steven High, “*Stories Matter: Conceptual Challenges in the Development of Oral History Database Building Software*,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2011).

evidence (both written and oral)."¹⁴ In doing so, I particularly seek to explore certain areas that cannot be accessed uniquely through orality. Due to the usual time and resource constraints, it is not realistic to directly confront here different representations of the same historical object that have emerged from the variety of sources consulted. For Gélinas, this type of comparative work is difficult and overly complex, and ultimately it is not even obvious that it can yield a desirable outcome.¹⁵ Instead, I make use of oral testimonies in conjunction with, and as a way of expanding upon, a variety of archival documents and published or unpublished materials, and (to a much lesser extent) a series of ethnographic field notes recorded in the fall of 2008 and 2009 in the same communities where I conducted interviews.

The most relevant archival material was located primarily in the Indian Affairs records groups of the Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa), and secondarily at the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec (particularly the Québec and Côte-Nord regional centers). For completeness, I also visited the McGill University archives in Montréal and the Musée régional de la Côte-Nord in Sept-Îles, where potentially interesting material had been identified ahead of the trips. Generally speaking, it was difficult to find in these archival fonds extensive government or company correspondence related to the Indigenous communities' involvement with industrial activities, a difficulty that was similarly voiced by at least one well-established historical researcher in the

14. Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 119.

15. Claude Gélinas, *Les autochtones dans le Québec post-confédéral, 1867-1960* (Sillery: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2007), 14.

domain.¹⁶ In particular, the Fonds Compagnie minière IOC listed at the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec—Centre régional de la Côte Nord,¹⁷ which potentially contains valuable information concerning Innu and Naskapi employment at the Schefferville mine, could not be accessed, since all the nonphotographic material was apparently reclaimed and returned to the company by the summer of 2009.¹⁸ Now fully in the hands of the IOC, I could not access this material directly from the company's headquarters in Montréal, in particular for reasons of "competitiveness."¹⁹

Despite the potential benefits that a mixed approach can contribute to a research project in ethnohistorical geography—for instance, by complementing oral and written source materials—it remains crucial, before moving on, to reflect on the methodological limits inherent to the representation of Indigenous history by non-Indigenous researchers. (I choose to focus this part of the discussion on oral material only, since it relates specifically to the problematic of doing fieldwork in Indigenous communities. On this topic, see also the afterword). For one, oral history necessitates a thorough understanding of the almost limitless diversity of contexts from which the research material is extracted, as well as care in how this material is treated in the analytical and writing stages. Cruikshank sums up this point eloquently when she argues that "oral traditions are not

16. Marc Hammond, e-mail message to author, June 4, 2009.

17. Fonds Compagnie minière IOC (ca. 1954-90), P21, Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec—Centre régional de la Côte-Nord (BANQ-CN).

18. Librarian, Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec—Centre régional de la Côte-Nord, conversations with author, 2009.

19. Michel Filion, Directeur, Communications et relations externes, Iron Ore Company of Canada, e-mail message to author, August 17, 2009. The translation is mine.

natural products. They have social histories, and they acquire meaning in the situations in which they are used, in interactions between narrators and listeners. ... Unless we pay attention to why a particular story is selected and told, we understand very little of its meanings."²⁰ The process of writing down oral stories can lead to a further degradation of sense since, as Portelli explains, their "ability to preserve important forms of communication, such as 'tone and volume range and the rhythm of speech' ... carry implicit meaning and social connotations that are absent in written language."²¹ According to Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, then, "the writing down of oral literature, no matter how well intentioned or how well carried out, petrifies it. ... The danger is that culture [expressed through language] becomes preserved, but not as a living thing."²² When acts of translation are necessary to carry out a research project, the shortcomings inherent in any manipulation of oral literature and oral stories are further amplified, and the source material risks additional degradation.

In the context of this research, the problem of translating discussions and removing them from their social contexts stands as a particularly tangible obstacle, which may in fact lead to a clumsy exposition or, much worse, to a distortion of the words that I gathered, transcribed, categorized, analyzed, and finally communicated (and continue to communicate) in the English form. Nevertheless, Cruikshank generally recommends the pursuit of such intercultural, interlinguistic, and multimedia dialogues (even if partial and

20. Cruikshank, *Social Life of Stories*, 40-41.

21. Cited in Jessee, Zembrzycki, and High, "Stories Matter."

22. Richard Dauenhauer and Nora Marks Dauenhauer, "Oral Literature Embodied and Disembodied," in *Aspects of Oral Communication*, ed. Uta M. Quasthoff (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 102.

limited), since they can still contribute to make accessible to readers some aspects of a written history that would not have been otherwise, had it remained limited to its oral form. As one Tagish elder from the Yukon points out to her, the writing down of oral literature is “just one more way to tell ... stories and to make them part of social practice.”²³ In this respect, the unfortunate reality with orality is that the passage of time is only bound to make matter worse if these acts of communication, however tentative, are not attempted as soon as possible. This was strikingly evident in Schefferville, where many people who have lived through the mining period and worked at the IOC in the earlier decades have now passed on with their knowledge.

According to Morantz, three analytical components, or braids, must necessarily be woven together in order to address these inherent limitations and guarantee research outcomes that are more complete and of a more egalitarian nature. The first component refers to the exogenous researcher and his/her representation of history as told by relying on Indigenous perspectives. The second braid represents the history of colonisation through territorial conquests and the corresponding imposition of Euro-Canadian institutions. The third one, finally, is largely absent from the academic discourse, since it refers to history as lived and told by Indigenous individuals and their communities. As Morantz explains, “the concept of a braided history has been called upon by Natalie Davis to reinforce the notion that the history must tell everyone’s story on equal terms, a

23. Cruikshank, *Social Life of Stories*, xiii. See also Sylvie Vincent, introduction to *Atanutshé, nimshum: récits racontés et recueillis par les Montagnais de Natashquan*, ed. Pipin Bacon and Sylvie Vincent (Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais, 1979).

concept recognized here but impossible to achieve."²⁴ With the latter remark, the author seems to imply that the concept of a braided history will be unattainable as long as the production and transmission of Indigenous history in Canada remains the privileged domain of non-Indigenous researchers.

If this type of ethnohegemony in the production of knowledge necessarily entails a partially biased historical picture, Morantz nevertheless hopes that researchers can move our understanding forward by choosing to focus their efforts—as she emphasizes with her first analytical braid—on understanding the Indigenous people's actions and perspectives throughout the colonial process. In this regard, it is crucial to mention the particular state of ignorance that pertains to the role of Indigenous *women* during this period, notably with regard to their involvement with wage labour activities.²⁵ Although I rely heavily on Morantz's first analytical component to frame this research, the reader will note that this narrative does not propose any gender analysis and as a result, it unfortunately contributes to reinforce the strong masculine flavour that characterizes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history in industrial Canada.

24. Toby Morantz, *The White Man's Gonna Getcha: The Colonial Challenge to the Crees in Québec* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 3. See also Nathalie Zemon Davis, "Polarities, Hybridities: What Strategies for Decentering?" in *Decentering the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700*, ed. Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 19-32.

25. See Nancy M. Forestell, "Women, Gender, and the Provincial North," in *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History*, ed. Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), 107-116.

Theoretical Position and Historiography

Resistance, hybridization, accommodation ... have been useful notions, yet they have tended to obliterate the potential of difference for worlds and knowledge otherwise.

—Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference*, 6

Notwithstanding significant limitations in the project design, the choice of research methods, and the analysis of source material, I adopt (and adapt) a particular theoretical position largely on the basis of the methodological approach discussed. This positioning leads me to situate this research within an active historiographical current that sheds light on the *roles and actions* of Indigenous individuals as they encountered the imposition of Euro-Canadian practices, institutions, and ideologies in the postwar era.

Broadly speaking, the conceptual framework emerges from the literature on Indigenous marginalisation and agency described in regional histories, ethnohistories, and ethnographies of the Americas, with a strong focus on Canadian works. The positions reviewed range, quite extremely, from emphases on near-total subjugation, socio-economic and cultural destitution, and integration or assimilation of Indigenous groups resulting from world-colonial enterprises, to a view of their continued affirmation of individual and collective identity amidst imperial activities. Instead of definitely anchoring the present work at one particular pole, I choose to move back and forth along a theoretical continuum demanded by the analysis and the interpretation of the historical events of concern. In this regard, Gélinas observes, regarding an earlier period, that a fundamental study objective must be to relate the “context of interaction” between industrial and Indigenous socio-cultural entities, in which both sides were able to

participate and exercise influence (though typically in a very uneven manner).²⁶

However, by examining in detail certain aspects of Innu and Naskapi practices carried out in the industrial mining context of interaction at Schefferville, I necessarily aim to construct a historical narrative that is overall situated closer to the “agency camp” on the continuum aforementioned. As will be demonstrated below, this choice reflects a knowledge gap in the literature concerned with postwar industrial development and Indigenous societies living in northern Canada.

In analytical terms, I develop this narrative by beginning with Indigenous worlds and by attempting to make sense of their relationship with the industrial world. I partly contrast this approach with a description of the impacts (typically cast in pejorative terms) that the unilateral actions of the state, the iron industry, and the economic markets imposed upon Innu and Naskapi groups via industrialism. In that sense, I first aim to reconceptualise the mining site that emerged at Schefferville following the Second World War as *one* possible locality, among others, for understanding historical events and historical spaces. This is an attempt to escape the totalizing power that the industrial-capitalist mode of development has exercised on many research efforts in the domains of socio-economic, cultural, and environmental history and theory.²⁷ Conceptually, a decentring of the mining industry as nonunique historical-geographic context enables to shift the focus from triumphant or critical accounts of capitalism and to emphasize

26. Gélinas, *Les autochtones dans le Québec*, 15. The translation is mine.

27. See J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996).

instead the activities and relationships established at several different localities by Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and nonhuman inhabitants.²⁸

I continue by developing a reading of historical events through the theoretical framework of the *political ecology of difference* proposed by Escobar, which defines an integrative approach founded on the affirmation of socio-cultural identity. Relegating the concept of domination to the background, this approach seeks to explicitly highlight and make sense of the plurality of economic, ecological, and cultural practices—Escobar’s “worlds and knowledge otherwise”—that are articulated by Indigenous groups through their encounters with the modern Eurocentric world. For Escobar, this framework represents a “theory of difference that is historically specific and contingent.”²⁹ His position differs in some respects from the approach proposed by classical political ecology, which looks at the interaction of Indigenous and industrial worlds in terms of conflicts regarding access to natural resources and territories, as well as the unequal accumulation of capital, the degradation of the environment, and the marginalisation of populations that are the inveterate consequences of these encounters.³⁰ Without silencing—quite to the contrary—the fact that these processes did in fact characterize the

28. See Sallie A. Marston, John Paul Jones III, and Keith Woodward, “Human Geography without Scale,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geography* 30, no. 4 (2005): 424-426.

29. Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life*, Redes (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 18. For an approach specifically focusing on the articulation of *economic difference*, see, for example, Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism*.

30. See, for example, Roderick P. Neumann, *Making Political Ecology* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005); Richard Peet and Michael Watts, *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

development of iron deposits in Schefferville,³¹ I privilege an interpretation of how, in an industrial context, local Indigenous communities were capable of articulating this alterity toward which Escobar wants to draw our attention.

In this work, alterity is not apprehended through defined cultural traits that would be seen essentially as "objective patrimony." As Simard emphasizes, it must be based, rather, on identity claims that are themselves "understood as a shared imaginary, an intersubjective dialogue through which actors discover, interpret, and express elements that sustainably and globally distinguish them from the 'privileged others' ... who oppose their own difference in a given structural context of social relationships, in a given period and at a given place."³² Informed by this view, then, I approach alterity through the study of life stories, as well as (more theoretically) through what Blaser, Feit, and McRae term "life projects," a concept that enables to focus our "attention to the uniqueness of people's experiences of place and self and their rejection of visions that claim to be universal."³³ According to Blaser, life projects take root in certain individual and communitarian visions or desires of what constitutes a "good life." Being embedded in highly particular local practices, these visions and desires cannot be interpreted solely as a function of totalizing and simplifying visions of development that are proposed by state

31. See John H. Bradbury, "Toward an Alternative Theory of Resource-based Town Development in Canada," *Economic Geography* 55, no. 2 (1979): 147-166.

32. Jean-Jacques Simard, *La réduction: l'autochtone inventé et les Amérindiens d'aujourd'hui* (Sillery: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2003), 11. The translations are mine.

33. Mario Blaser, "Life Projects: Indigenous Peoples' Agency and Development," in *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects and Globalization*, ed. Mario Blaser, Harvey A. Feit, and Glen McRae (London: Zed Books, 2004), 26.

and industrial actors, the capitalist markets and, more generally, the modern world.³⁴ As such, Indigenous life projects are not theorized uniquely as reactions or responses to development projects,³⁵ but rather as autonomous endeavours that are strongly informed by positive assertions of difference and worthiness.

Knowledge gap

To a significant extent, researchers have led successful efforts to produce locally grounded historical interpretations that focus on people's roles and actions throughout colonial and industrial processes. This has been the case with the rich insights developed by social history and its related fields of labour, gender, and environmental history; as well as certain areas of research in historical, economic, and cultural geography, ethnohistory, anthropology, and environmental studies. For instance, in the context of the development rush that followed the discovery of Yukon gold in the late nineteenth century, historian Charlene Porsild suggests that the study of ordinary people's lives—in her case, Klondikers—is crucial for a proper understanding of the past in Canada's northern regions.³⁶ In these isolated areas that are typically highly resource-dependent, geographers James Randall and Geoff Ironside stress the importance of considering

34. Mario Blaser, *Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

35. Blaser, "Life Projects," 26; Harvey A. Feit, "James Bay Crees' Life Projects and Politics: Histories of Place, Animal Partners and Enduring Relationships," in Blaser, Feit, and McRae, *In the Way of Development*, 93; Glenn McRae, "Grassroots Transnationalism and Life Projects of Vermonters in the Great Whale Campaign," in Blaser, Feit, and McRae, *In the Way of Development*, 111-112.

36. Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

“local heterogeneities”—for instance, the crucial role of women, of part-time and marginal labour forces, and the possibilities for regional diversification through secondary economic activities—and their essential contribution in the development and sustenance of single-industry settlements. These authors argue for the need to incorporate such heterogeneous variables within the more classical analyses of economic and labour structures, which commonly view the white- and male-dominated workforce engaged in primary economic activities such as mining and forestry as the main engine driving the prosperity and determining the fate of these communities.³⁷ As social anthropologist Hugh Raffles demonstrates through his historical-geographic reconstruction of a small region of the Amazon basin, the coming into and going out of existence of localities (places and communities) can be better brought to light, more generally, with the study of heterogeneous practices, notably by paying attention to the plurality of roles—rarely limited to the extractive sector—that humans have played in transforming socio-ecological landscapes.³⁸

With regard to places occupied by Indigenous groups, the transformations that result from industrial mining developments in particular are usually met, according to environmental scholar Saleem Ali, with community participation (or resistance) depending on the existence (or absence) of local sovereignty and self-determination possibilities. Understanding these core political variables from the Indigenous viewpoint is crucial for researchers, as Ali explains, over and above the technicalities that relate to

37. James E. Randall and R. Geoff Ironside, “Communities on the Edge: An Economic Geography of Resource-Dependent Communities in Canada,” *The Canadian Geographer* 40, no. 1 (1996): 17-35.

38. Hugh Raffles, *In Amazonia: A Natural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

the potential mining impacts or the projected economic benefits.³⁹ It is partly inspired by these broad research programmes that the need to describe the world of historical encounter between the Innu, the Naskapi, and the industrialists in subarctic Québec—a description anchored in the particularity of people, places, and practices—was first identified and conceptualized.

In relation to the industrial period in Schefferville, Innu and Naskapi perspectives have indeed rarely informed the selective popular histories, media analyses, and academic research produced in Québec. The province's national historiography has rather engaged in a regular and deliberate erasure of the ongoing Indigenous presence in the province, especially in the north and perhaps even more strikingly with regard to Innu and Naskapi societies. To be sure, the muffling or suppression of Indigenous voices is not a very original phenomenon in Québec or across Canada. It is perhaps the case, for instance, that several historical studies have focused on the Huron and their immediate neighbours during the New France colonial period,⁴⁰ and have contributed, as Ray explains, to move “the Native history of this part of Canada from the periphery, where it had been treated merely as an aspect of French and English colonial history, to centre stage.”⁴¹ However, this trend has largely failed to extend to other neighbouring First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups of central Canada, several of whom still remain on the fringe of regional and

39. Saleem Ali, *Mining, the Environment, and Indigenous Development Conflicts* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).

40. See Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976).

41. Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), xv.

national histories. For Vincent, multiple points of divergence still exist between Euro-Québécois and Innu interpretations concerning their early moments of encounter of the shores of the St. Lawrence River, in the seventeenth century.⁴² In collaboration with Arcand, she shows that these differences are rarely acknowledged in the provincial schoolbooks.⁴³ The “evacuation of the Indigenous experience” is particularly notable for the period that followed the fall of New France (1763) and even more so for the post-Confederation era (1867). According to Gélinas, this trend has led to a situation where, from the nineteenth century onward, Indigenous groups (especially, in his evaluation, nonwestern Canadian ones) have largely lost their status as historical actors, as “the popular imaginary was built on the idea that the Indians of the post-Pontiac era [1765] had promptly taken the route of the reserves and a full dependency upon the British Crown and, eventually, the Canadian government.”⁴⁴

More closely related—thematically, temporally and, in a certain sense, biogeographically—to the present case study, histories of twentieth century industrial development in northern Canada have characteristically paid scant attention to Indigenous lives, despite the fact that the social, economic, cultural, and environmental costs of these activities have been borne disproportionately by these communities.⁴⁵ With

42. Sylvie Vincent, “Compatibilité apparente, incompatibilité réelle des versions autochtones et occidentales de l’histoire: l’exemple innu,” *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 22, no. 2 (2002): 99-100.

43. Sylvie Vincent and Bernard Arcand, *L’Image de l’Amérindien dans les manuels scolaires du Québec: ou, comment les Québécois ne sont pas des sauvages* (Ville LaSalle: Hurtubise HMH, 1979).

44. Gélinas, *Les autochtones dans le Québec*, 10. The translations are mine.

45. A version of this argument, specific to twentieth century industrial mining development, is presented in Joan Kuyek, Catherine Coumans, and MiningWatch Canada, “No Rock Unturned: Revitalizing the Economies of Mining Dependent Communities” (MiningWatch Canada, 2003); and

regard to the mining economy more specifically, Abel and Coates write, for example, that “as the gold miners moved north through British Columbia and the Yukon, and the developers searched for workable claims across northern Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, they disturbed Indigenous communities and made little effort to accommodate the original people in the new economy.” Yet the authors explain that “these aspects of the Indigenous-newcomer relationship rarely filter through in discussions of the national experience, even though they affected very large numbers of First Nations people and provide revealing insights into national priorities and assumptions.”⁴⁶ Overall, the present research therefore looks to address a significant historical-geographic gap that characterizes the construction of Indigenous people’s history in Québec and in Canada, especially in the post-Confederation industrial era.

In strictly geographic terms, the Canadian north, and most specifically the provincial subarctic norths, have arguably been underrepresented as political-geographic units of study in Canada’s interwar and postwar historiography.⁴⁷ This is despite the country’s “long tradition of treating the North as a site of national imagining,”⁴⁸ and the related efforts by eminent Canadianists such as Harold Innis and W. L. Morton to demonstrate the critical importance of the northern regions in establishing cohesiveness

William Hipwell et al., “Aboriginal People and Mining in Canada: Consultation, Participation and Prospects for Change” (working discussion paper prepared for the North-South Institute, January 2002).

46. Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, “The North and the Nation,” in Abel and Coates, *Northern Visions*, 13-14.

47. See Kerry Abel, “History and the Provincial Norths: An Ontario Example,” in Abel and Coates, *Northern Visions*, 7-21; and Ken Coates and William Morrison, *The Forgotten North: A History of Canada’s Provincial Norths* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1992).

48. Matthew Evenden, “The Northern Vision of Harold Innis,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 3 (1999): 164.

and balanced growth for the entire dominion. For Morton, in particular, the distinctiveness of the Canadian nation-building project could be characterized by its “civilization of the northern and arctic lands.”⁴⁹ In the province of Québec, such perspectives were also echoed, as the affirmation of a distinct collective identity under the English-dominated social, political, and cultural life on the North American continent, and the economic expansion and desire for independence of the francophone nation, became partly tied to an imagined relationship with the northern territories, and the correspondingly justifiable notion that the natural resources that they harboured could be appropriated in the national interest.⁵⁰

Yet, as Abel and Coates point out, few efforts have been devoted to define the actual intricacies of Canadian people’s identity in relation to these regions, and increasingly several northern scholars have therefore looked to address this shortcoming and “explain exactly how and why the North is important to Canada and Canadian history.”⁵¹ In this regard, studies of large-scale resource extraction projects in the subarctic north—including Schefferville’s industrial development, a watershed moment in the modern settling of Québec’s hinterland—are helpful because of the significant contribution of these historical projects to the expansion of the Canadian and Québec states in the aftermath of the war. Moreover, the fact that these development projects

49. W. L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 93. See also Harold A. Innis, “The Canadian North,” *University of Toronto Monthly* 30 (1930): 163-168.

50. See Caroline Desbiens, “Défricher l’espace: lieu, culture et développement économique à la baie James,” *Géographie et cultures* 49 (2004): 87-104; and Caroline Desbiens, “Producing North and South: A Political Geography of Hydro Development in Québec,” *The Canadian Geographer* 48, no. 2 (2004): 101-118.

51. Abel and Coates, “North and the Nation,” 8.

have typically led to the displacement, at least in part, of Indigenous worlds means that such studies also hold the potential of challenging popular amnesia or deeply held misconceptions about the Canadian north and its first inhabitants.

While the origins of industrialization in northern Canada preceded the Second World War, the last half of the twentieth century saw several provinces make a strong push to affirm control over their hinterlands and exploit with increasing vigour the natural resources held in those regions. This economic expansion of the late 1940s resulted primarily in the appropriation of new energy sources, base minerals, and wood.⁵² In Québec, the growth of the mineral industry, more particularly, was almost uniquely sustained by the asbestos, copper, and iron ore sectors, each exploiting primary commodities for which the foreign demand soared after 1945.⁵³ This race for natural resources was often led to the detriment of local Indigenous populations, although this unfortunate situation is by no means a theme unique to the postwar industrial settling of northern Canada.

52. See J. R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Jim Mochoruk, *Formidable Heritage: Manitoba's North and the Cost of Development, 1870 to 1930* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004); Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 229; David M. Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); and Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1988).

For a brief description of the postwar expansion of mining megaprojects and the consequences for northern development in Canada, see, for example, Arn Keeling and John Sandlos, "Environmental Justice Goes Underground? Historical Notes from Canada's Northern Mining Frontier," *Environmental Justice* 2, no. 3 (2009): 119.

53. Pierre Paquette, *Les mines du Québec, 1867-1975: une évaluation critique d'un mode historique d'industrialisation nationale* (Outremont: Carte blanche, 2000), 86, 87.

Bearing in mind the deep history of capitalist incursions into Indigenous homelands,⁵⁴ it remains the case that the resource-based economic growth that followed the war was unique in both nature and scale. In particular, this was due to the novelty of the resources that Euro-Canadian actors sought to exploit, the capital-intensive technology that they used in the process, and the growing acceptance of the idea, within the federation, "that prosperity in remote parts of Canada was tied to resource development."⁵⁵ With regard to mineral production more specifically, Paquette suggests that the intensification of development activities requiring large capital expenditures and technological innovation facilitated "the establishment of industrial structures of an oligopolistic nature."⁵⁶ In Québec, this led to the transformation of the mining industry into a satellite of the American empire whose role was to supply raw materials to the growing (and largest) economic power.⁵⁷ It is precisely because of the scope of these exogenous transformations, brought about as a consequence of the rush for development in the Canadian north, that an examination of the roles and actions of Indigenous groups during this unique and difficult moment can be especially illuminating.

54. See, for example, Denys Delâge, *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600-64*, transl. Jane Brierley (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993); Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges," *Review: Fernand Braudel Center* 30, no. 1 (2007): 45-90; and Enrique Dussel, "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism: The Semantic Slippage of the Concept of 'Europe,'" *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 465-478.

55. Piper, *The Industrial Transformation*, 229.

56. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 87. The translation is mine.

57. John H. Bradbury, "The Rise and Fall of the 'Fourth Empire of the St. Lawrence': The Québec-Labrador Iron Ore Mining Region," *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* 29, no. 78 (1985): 359-360; Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 152.

The concept of agency in Indigenous ethnohistory

Northern historians such as Zaslow have recognized that the industrial development of the north has traditionally taken place on lands occupied by Indigenous people.⁵⁸ The corresponding introduction of wage employment opportunities in or near Indigenous communities has been commonly discussed in the northern and regional development literature, usually within the framework of socio-economic analyses that look at the dynamics of unemployment and underemployment suffered by these communities,⁵⁹ or at the interactions between paid labour and land-based activities.⁶⁰ If the persistence of the latter in the context of mixed Indigenous economies (subsistence plus industrial market sectors) has been examined, post-Confederation histories of northern industrialisation—particularly of the postwar era—have typically been cast in terms of dispossession, marginalization, and acculturation of the local people.⁶¹ Referring to the wild expansion at Dawson City that followed the Klondike stampede in the late nineteenth century, Porsild highlights the process of dispossession through settlement and the ensuing extraction activities that the settlers conducted at the expense of the Han First

58. Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion*, 271ff.

59. Elizabeth A. Hess, "Native Employment in Northern Canadian Resource Towns: The Case of the Naskapi in Schefferville" (master's thesis, McGill University, 1984), 5ff.

60. Peter J. Usher, Gérard Duhaime, and Edmund Searles, "The Household as an Economic Unit in Arctic Aboriginal Communities, and its Measurement by Means of a Comprehensive Survey," *Social Indicators Research* 61, no. 2 (2003): 176ff.

61. For the Innu, see, in addition to works discussed in the Schefferville historiography section (below), Paul Charest, "Les impacts de l'exploitation forestière sur le milieu physique, les activités cynégétiques et les droits territoriaux des Montagnais de la Moyenne et de la Basse Côte-Nord" (rapport au Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais, Village des Hurons, 1977); Denis Lachance, "L'acculturation des Indiens de Sept-Iles et Malioténam" (master's thesis, Université Laval, 1968); Colin Samson, *A Way of Life That Does Not Exist: Canada and the Extinguishment of the Innu* (London: Verso Press, 2003); and Alan R. Richardson, "Acculturation among the Seven Islands Montagnais" (master's thesis, Université McGill, 1961).

Nation.⁶² Historians Ken Coates and Frank Tough focus more closely their attention on the political economy of dispossession, arguing that the mining settlement and the expansion of transportation lines created a labour market that was attractive to foreign settlers and ultimately “eliminated much of the need for local Indian labour.”⁶³ As Tough further demonstrates, the fact that the settlers themselves became enthusiastically involved in casual harvesting activities meant that competition with Indigenous communities increased and led to conflicts where “white trappers and prospectors further disrupted the resource base of the Native economy.”⁶⁴ In Schefferville, as will be shown, the Innu and the Naskapi indeed remember that similar instances of land pressures arose in areas immediately surrounding the new mining settlement, especially at rivers and lakes that were popular among the non-Indigenous miners for fishing activities. Throughout this transitional phase, in which industrial wage employment gradually gained more economic importance, Indigenous groups in Canada were thus the victims of a double exclusion process from both wage labour and from their resource and animal base.

While certainly useful to understand the forces influencing Indigenous people and their economies, an overemphasis on the structural processes of marginalization and exclusion in the Canadian north also risks consigning Indigenous populations to a passive

62. Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers*, 14.

63. Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 42.

64. Frank Tough, “As Their Natural Resources Fail”: *Native People and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 291.

role of “withdrawal and nonengagement.”⁶⁵ In this regard, fewer studies have sought to reveal exactly how, in their everyday lives, people coped with the changes brought about by the encounter with industrial forces. In fact, Morantz observes that an analogous bias also characterizes ethnohistorical studies of the fur trade period in James Bay, between the years 1670 and 1870. As a result, she develops a counter interpretation that emphasizes the active role of the Cree within this European-driven commercial enterprise.⁶⁶ Much like Kelm, who also favours the agency approach by describing Indigenous trappers as indispensable participants in the trading activities,⁶⁷ Morantz in fact sees no evidence in her investigation of primary sources to support a writing of the fur trade period from the point of view of Indigenous subordination, powerlessness, or— even more extremely—destruction.⁶⁸ By arguing so, Morantz refers back to her important methodological position, which demands that researchers pay close attention to local people’s views of their own history, if they are to avoid reproducing narratives of the different contact phases that simply relegate the Indigenous presence to that of a supporting or subordinating role.

For Morantz, the postwar resource rushes and pervasive bureaucratic institutionalisation process nevertheless mark a significant shift in the way agency among

65. Georg Henriksen, “Hunters Coping with Miners: A Brief History of Innu Mobilization against Exploitation,” *Indigenous Affairs* 2 (1998): 47. The author uses this expression in a different historical-geographic context.

66. Morantz, *The White Man’s Gonna Getcha*, 22.

67. Mary-Ellen Kelm, “Change, Continuity, Renewal: Lessons from a Decade of Historiography on the First Nations of the Territorial North,” in Abel and Coates, *Northern Visions*, 79.

68. Morantz, *The White Man’s Gonna Getcha*, 23.

Indigenous societies should be conceptualized, as people's ability to maintain "political and economic autonomy" became seriously threatened. The Cree, in particular, began to engage in acts of cultural preservation in order to prevent "the dismantling of their world view and of their lifestyles," especially in the context of the historic land disruptions caused by the James Bay hydroelectric projects.⁶⁹ In this regard, Coates argues that the majority of anthropological and ethnohistorical analyses of the Indigenous-white encounter in Canada have tended (somewhat simplistically, in his opinion) to break down the contact period into two phases, each being characterized by a different degree of control of Indigenous groups in their interaction with the modern world. By this criterion, the fur trade becomes known as the "contact-stable" period, and it is followed by government interventionism after the Second World War, when the instability of Euro-Aboriginal relations intensifies as Indigenous people become increasingly deprived of their autonomy and sovereignty.⁷⁰ It is with this scheme in mind that several writers have turned to *state colonialism* as an interpretive framework to discuss this latter phase.

In part inspired by critical theorists like Frantz Fanon and Edward Saïd, Harris defines colonialism as a geographical and cultural phenomenon which facilitates "the displacement of people from their land and its repossession by others," in a process that tends to divide up the world and impose a "culture of domination" over the newly created compartments.⁷¹ For Harris, then, it is crucial that "a fuller understanding of colonial

69. *Ibid.*, 4.

70. Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, xvii.

71. Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xxiv.

powers is achieved by explaining colonialism's basic geographical dispossessions of the colonized."⁷² While the colonial dispossession was not solely orchestrated by state institutions, governmental intrusions into Indigenous lives did become increasingly pervasive after the Second World War, being in part justified by the fact that a growing number of people were gradually abandoning their activities on the land and therefore needed social and economic support as a replacement. Some of the most extreme forms of colonialism, where the state either enacted racist policies that resulted in cultural degradation or assimilation (a form of colonialism that Morantz describes as *bureaucratic colonialism*) or constantly acted on other people's behalf (a position she associates with *paternalism*) have been documented.⁷³ Tester and Kulchyski, for instance, argue that both paternalism and bureaucratic colonialism guided the relocation of entire Inuit communities from eastern Hudson's Bay to the High Arctic in the 1940s and 1950s. Interestingly, they show that, in the social atmosphere that fomented the Canadian welfare state at the conclusion of the war, federal authorities attempted to veil the relocation project with highly rhetorical "liberal humanitarian language."⁷⁴ As Quiring demonstrates, this kind of discourse found one of its most schizophrenic expressions in northern Saskatchewan, in the context of the socialist modernization project led by Tommy Douglas's Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) administration (1944-61). Since the CCF government accepted the ethnocentric premise that Indigenous

72. Cole Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2004): 165.

73. Morantz, *The White Man's Gonna Getcha*, 8-9.

74. Frank James Tester and Peter Kulchyski, *Tammarnitt (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), xi.

societies needed to be brought up to speed with the Canadian ideals for progress, civilization, and social democracy, it could appropriate in good faith their territories for the benefit of the provincial population at large and in the name of welfare for Indigenous groups.⁷⁵

The story of mineral activities at Schefferville similarly demonstrates that both state colonialism and geographic dispossession characterized bureaucratic policies toward Indigenous communities at different stages of industrialisation. As Canadian technocrats operated on the assumption that Innu and Naskapi families had to be integrated into the industrial complex of the region, they made it clear that Indigenous people would inevitably have to join wage employment—while inciting them to gradually abandon their presence on the land—in order to better “fend for themselves” economically (a phrase used repeatedly in internal correspondence). In this respect, the relocation of the Naskapi from the Ungava region to Schefferville in the mid-1950s stands out as a striking example of the federal agents’ desire to sever people’s dependency on the government aid that was handed out at the Fort Chimo trading post. Colonial attitudes were perhaps even more evident during the earlier stages of mineral development when the Québec government—seeking by every means to yield a profit from its subterranean resources—enacted land tenure policies that facilitated the penetration of American industrial interests onto Indigenous homelands. For Bradbury, different provincial administrations

75. Quiring, *CCF Colonialism*, xii-xiii.

supported “legislation permitting and encouraging the mining companies to invest in and explore the mineral base of the province, and later to build towns, mines, and railways.”⁷⁶

In particular, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century the Québec’s mineral exploration and exploitation activities had been underwritten (as they continue to be today) by a special legislative regime known as the *free mining system*. According to Lapointe, the free mining system “not only allows anyone to freely acquire property rights on mineral resources (on both public and private lands), but also to obtain guarantees for their exploration and, in case of discovery, for their exploitation.”⁷⁷ In practice, however, this form of land tenure favours large industrial interests, since they are the ones who typically own the capital, the technology, and the expertise necessary to support this kind of intensive development.⁷⁸ If government authorities sought to rely on “royalty structures and concession systems ... to ‘regulate’ the operation of the mining companies,”⁷⁹ Paquette reminds us that in reality, liberal state policies in favour of industrial oligopolistic interests generated very few monetary returns for the Québec treasury, including during the so-called “golden age of the industry” that took place between the 1930s and the 1970s.⁸⁰

76. Bradbury, “The Rise and Fall,” 359.

77. Ugo Lapointe, “De la ruée vers l’or californienne au Québec minier contemporain: le système de *free mining* and le pouvoir des communautés locales” (paper presented at the Colloque international de la Commission sur l’approche culturelle en géographie, Université Laval, May 21, 2008), 5. The translation is mine.

78. Lapointe, “De la ruée vers l’or,” 13.

79. Bradbury, “The Rise and Fall,” 359.

80. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 9. The translation is mine.

As a matter of fact, in the process of handing over part of the national territory to mining companies during this period, the government of Québec gradually lost power to exercise authority over the development of its natural resources, and ultimately had “little access to the decision-making faculties of the mining companies in the iron ore region.”⁸¹ As in other parts of northern Canada, the gradual decline of land-based activities in the Québec-Labrador peninsula coincided not only with diminishing populations of important wildlife and growing state interventionism, but also with an increasingly powerful industrial hegemony. Curiously, while the dominant position held by government agents has been relatively well studied, the critical role played by industrial miners—the accumulators of capital who are at the forefront of exploring and exploiting the subsurface—in overlaying patterns of modern development onto Indigenous worlds has often escaped scrutiny. But surely these actors who rely on particular sets of equipment, techniques, and ideologies to produce novel commodities for the commodity markets must also be included as part of an examination of the transformations resulting from postwar colonial pressures, both in the region and elsewhere in northern Canada.⁸²

In western subarctic Québec, for instance, Carlson voices his concern with industrial-scale development in the context of hydroelectric projects on Cree territory, particularly regarding the ability of heavily capitalized, fossil-fuel technology to bring “rapid and dramatic change ... to James Bay” and, in the process, to disrupt local

81. Bradbury, “The Rise and Fall,” 359.

82. I do not argue that this omission has been systematic. See, for example, Arn Keeling, “‘Born in an Atomic Test Tube’: Landscapes of Cyclonic Development at Uranium City, Saskatchewan,” *The Canadian Geographer* 54, no. 2 (2010): 228-252.

environments and cultures.⁸³ In more discursive terms (and in the distant context of Australian mineral development), Trigger also urges us to pay close attention to the ways in which “dominant ‘corporate narratives,’ focused upon growth and progress, marginalize alternative ‘stories’ about the meaning of landscape,” as these can usually lead to the replacement of alternative (Indigenous) narratives.⁸⁴ Indeed, in Schefferville, where geographer John Bradbury analyzed in detail the state-as-promoter-of-industrial-development interactions, that relationship also worked in reverse ways. The presence of a growing labour market and a thriving industrial culture at Knob Lake served as the primary justification, and in that sense introduced the possibility, for some of the most paternalistic government actions, in particular with regard to the coerced relocations of Indigenous settlements in 1956 and in 1972. Moreover, the abject failure of the mineral industry in the 1980s presented itself as a renewed opportunity for state colonialism, as the provincial authorities jumped in to take control of the municipality and reassert their territorial claims in the region. As will be shown particularly in chapter three, Innu and Naskapi voices clearly demonstrate this need to generate an interpretive focus on the nexus of industrial capital and state actions in order to understand the colonial geographies of mineral development in the region.

In this postwar environment of inextricably linked state and industrial colonisation of the north, it remains nevertheless useful to recall Harris’s more general yet crucial point that “Native people did not sit by while settler society appropriated their

83. Hans M. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 6.

84. David S. Trigger, “Mining, Landscape and the Culture of Development Ideology in Australia,” *Ecumene* 4, no. 2 (1997): 163.

land."⁸⁵ Some authors have indeed suggested that Harris's statement is particularly relevant to the period 1970 to the present, when Indigenous groups entered a third phase of Euro-Aboriginal relations (after contact-stable and government interventionism) that is characterized by renewed identity affirmation, reclamation of sovereignty rights, and modern land claim negotiations.⁸⁶ In northern Québec, for example, both Morantz and Carlson seek to demonstrate that notwithstanding the increasing pressures on their livelihoods, the Cree were able through the 1970s to organize a force of resistance powerful enough to retain partial control over their homeland and challenge a vision of industrial development that they did not support.⁸⁷ Among the Innu, Tanner and Wadden have described analogous grassroots organisation that partially succeeded in opposing the NATO occupation of the territory through low-level military training flights based near the community of Sheshatshiu during the same period.⁸⁸

This interpretive approach strongly anchored in cultural-environmental resistance is often associated, in contemporary terms, with the field of *political ecology*, which Martinez-Alier defines as "the study of social conflicts over the access to, and the

85. Harris, *Making Native Space*, xxiv.

86. See, for example, Kelly Vodden and John Kennedy, "From Resignation to Renewal: First Nations Strategies for Resilience," in *Power, Agency and Environment: Restructuring Canada's East and West Coasts*, ed. Peter R. Sinclair and Rosemary E. Ommer, 249-274 (St John's: ISER Books, 2006).

87. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*; Morantz, *The White Man's Gonna Getcha*.

88. Adrian Tanner, "History and Culture in the Generation of Ethnic Nationalism," in *Aboriginality and Ethnicity: Case Studies in Ethnonationalism*, ed. Michael D. Levin, 75-96 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Marie Wadden, *Nitassinan: The Innu Struggle to Reclaim Their Land* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991).

destruction of, environmental resources and services."⁸⁹ In North America, industrial development conflicts with Indigenous people have rarely been framed explicitly in political-ecological terms, since this discipline has "traditionally focused on environmental injustices in Third World settings, particularly local conflicts over access to resources that originate with colonialism and the expansion of global capital." But, as Keeling and Sandlos argue, a political-ecological approach to resistance could be fruitfully translated into First World historical contexts.⁹⁰ According to Kelm, such a framework applied to northern Indigenous land and resource conflicts can provide a useful counterpoint to a passive narrative of colonization (criticized by Harris and others), notably by relying on stories that demonstrate how Indigenous groups "were able to contain, resist, and subvert the colonizing agenda."⁹¹

In addition to the more obvious processes of resistance to colonial development, illuminated by political-ecological studies, the agency of northern Indigenous groups during the twentieth century can be examined through the subtler persistence of significant cultural-economic activities. Indeed, as Tough shows in the context of early mineral development in northern Manitoba in the 1920s, the marginal role of Indigenous labour within the growing industrial economy and Indigenous people's difficulty in accessing stable wage employment meant that fur trapping continued to occupy a

89. Joan Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2002), 73.

90. Keeling and Sandlos, "Environmental Justice Goes Underground," 117. See also, for example, James McCarthy, "First World Political Ecology: Lessons from the Wise Use Movement," *Environment and Planning A* 34 (2002): 1281-1302.

91. Kelm, "Change, Continuity, Renewal," 81. Kelm is referring here more specifically to Inuit and Dene groups and Canadian state colonialism.

significant place in the local commercial economy.⁹² Similarly, the structural uncertainty of wage labour opportunities at Schefferville contributed (though not exclusively) to motivate the preservation of Innu and Naskapi land-based activities during the industrial phase. For Ray, then, the capitalist dispossession carried out via northern industrialism and the ensuing Indigenous exclusion should be examined—much as Tough sets out to do—by looking at how “the commercial and subsistence sectors of Aboriginal economies expanded and contracted in response to local and external factors.”⁹³ In this study, I follow this approach by notably investigating both the tensions and mutual benefits that existed between the industrial economy and the land-based worlds in the Schefferville region.

The framework of social economy is one approach that has the potential to favour theorizations of some of the practical attempts that have been made by Indigenous individuals or collectives to preserve (and actualize) alternative economic spaces within industrial-capitalist economies. Social economy is a broadly defined category—not in fact restricted to Indigenous economies but rather inclusive of worldwide societies—that refers to areas of the economy that fall outside the typical state and corporate sectors. The social economy sphere largely consists of decentralized, independent organizations (with a strong representation from community enterprises and cooperatives) working to provide essential services to local communities, and whose primary motivation is not reducible to

92. This does not imply that Tough fails to recognize the participation of Indigenous societies in industrial wage labour. Quite to the contrary, he in fact refutes the notion that participation, dispossession, and marginalisation should be understood as mutually exclusive processes. Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native People and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 300ff.

93. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, xxi.

the profit logic inherent to market economies. In fact, their existence is often a directed response to the needs that are not entirely fulfilled by money-driven pursuits.⁹⁴ In Canada, the Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada has identified the land-based, subsistence Indigenous economies as key constituents of this sector, in particular since these economies typically rely on community values and sharing traditions that tend to be devalued by purely capitalistic enterprises.⁹⁵ The social economy of northern Canada, in particular, is embedded within a complex and diversified “mixed economy” in which the cultural and social values of land-based endeavours remain critical to community structure, even as “modern” resource economies continue to penetrate Indigenous societies.⁹⁶ Indeed, as Wuttunee argues, social economic activities necessarily coexist in these communities with more profit-oriented activities, which she categorizes as “community capitalism” and “social enterprise.”⁹⁷

While social economic activities exist side by side with wage employment in several Indigenous communities—and considering that the contribution of the latter to the former is formally recognized—paid labour can itself be considered as constitutive of the

94. Jack Quarter, *Canada's Social Economy: Co-operatives, Non-profits, and Other Community Enterprises* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1992), xii.

95. Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada, “Research Themes,” <http://dl1.yukoncollege.yk.ca/sernoca/themes> (accessed December 5, 2011).

96. David Natcher, “Subsistence and the Social Economy of the Canadian North,” *Northern Review* 30 (2009): 83-98.

97. Wanda Wuttunee, “Aboriginal Perspectives on the Social Economy,” in *Living Economics: Canadian Perspectives on the Social Economy, Co-operatives, and Community Economic Development*, ed. J. J. McMurty (Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications, 2010), 211.

social economy.⁹⁸ The historical case study of Schefferville at least suggests that Innu and Naskapi activities on the land were inextricably linked with their participation in the industrial mining economy. Indeed, the complex interaction between the two economic worlds clearly highlights the difficulty of considering them as rigidly defined, immovable categories; as Wenzel, Hovelsrud-Broda, and Kishigami write, one crucial line of inquiry in this regard is to explore how “forager relations of exchange, sharing, and reciprocity have been retained, or been modified, as material inputs from agricultural or industrial societies are incorporated into the subsistence cultures.”⁹⁹ Attempting to conceptualize historical Indigenous wage employment at the Schefferville mine, and drawing attention to the ways in which people’s involvement in these activities benefited and hindered their ability to hunt, fish, and trap, an expanded conceptualization of social economy that includes “nontraditional” Indigenous activities, such as industrial wage labour, can potentially be fruitful. As such, it would appear that social economy, broadly conceived, may echo Gibson-Graham’s concept of “diverse economies,” which considers the (possibly positive) interconnections that can be created, under the same economic system, between market-based, alternative market, and non-market transactions, labour activity, and social organization forms. (This would be especially useful if the concept were broadened enough to also incorporate, as some scholars argue, the growing economic

98. See, for example, David Natcher, “Indigenous Communities and the Social Economy,” Northern Summit on the Social Economy, Whitehorse, November 2-4, 2010, <http://ycdl4.yukoncollege.yk.ca/frontier/files/sermnoca/SEYukonPresentationNatcher.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2011).

99. George W. Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami, “Social Economy of Modern Hunter-Gatherers: Traditional Subsistence, New Resources,” in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Allocation and Modern Hunter-Gatherers*, ed. George W. Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), 2.

importance of non-profit activities managed under the auspices of local Indigenous governments, or “local states.”¹⁰⁰) According to Gibson, diverse economies are “exciting and significant attempts to develop the unique specificity of noncapitalist places,”¹⁰¹ and they can contribute to slowly displace the capitalist economy from its dominant position as the material, ideological, and normative referent against which alternative modes of production are typically evaluated.

Such all-encompassing, mixed approaches to understanding the history of regional economic development are not without critics. On the one hand, the idea of focusing so heavily on the very market activities which have contributed to “the loss of political and economic autonomy of Indigenous societies” is problematic,¹⁰² especially when one seeks to produce a narrative that highlights the historical agency of those societies. Moreover, for Carlson the people’s responses to colonial actions cannot be satisfyingly interpreted from the theoretical construct of “group behaviour” and the totalizing processes of participation, adaptation, preservation, or resistance. These processes ultimately consist of actions that are highly particular and localized, and they must therefore rely on “explanations of historical change that, so often, come down to individual choice and action.”¹⁰³ In an analogous spirit, historical political ecologists have argued against an atemporal political ecology framework that looks past such local

100. I am indebted to Kelly Vodden (Memorial University) for this insight.

101. Katherine Gibson, “Women, Identity and Activism in Asian and Pacific Community Economies,” *development* 45, no. 1 (2002): 77.

102. Rauna Kuokkanen, “From Indigenous Economies to Market-based Self-governance: A Feminist Political Economy Analysis,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 2 (2011): 275.

103. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 19.

heterogeneities, and have instead called for a “field-informed interpretation of nature-society relations”¹⁰⁴ that serve to reveal “the ingenuity of indigenous people in the past and linking those traditions to contemporary practices.”¹⁰⁵ At Schefferville, the Innu and the Naskapi perhaps did not respond as cohesively as other groups, like the James Bay Cree and Sheshatshiu Innu did during the 1970s, to organize politically and communicate their own cultural-environmental discourses as attempts to hold back “one-sided practices of development.”¹⁰⁶ However, a closer look at individual choices and actions during the industrial phase reveals a sophisticated level of creativity and expression of agency carried out by these groups, as they—much like the Québec Cree or Labrador Innu—continued to affirm their own identity amidst (at least some degree of participation in) dominant settler activities.

Schefferville historiography

The literature on Schefferville has unfortunately paid scant attention to Indigenous worlds during the mining years. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, researchers associated with the McGill Subarctic Research Laboratory (MSRL), primarily under the leadership of Wolfe and Bradbury, led comprehensive efforts to critically interpret political-economic issues related to mineral-based development in the region. Part of their work relies on Marxist political economy and Innis’s staples theory to propose an

104. Karl H. Offen, “Historical Political Ecology: An Introduction,” *Historical Geography* 32 (2004): 21.

105. *Ibid.*, 26.

106. Desbiens, “Défricher l’espace,” 115.

analysis of the hinterland-metropolis type of development that was characteristic of the Nouveau-Québec and Labrador resource frontiers. For Innis, the remote regions that overspecialize in the exploitation of a single primary commodity are by definition highly vulnerable to the volatility of international commodity markets.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, Innis considers mineral commodities to be less prone to the instability of staple-based development, since their exploitation contributes to stimulate the domestic demand in other industrial markets and the expansion of transportation infrastructure.¹⁰⁸ But Bradbury and other MSRL researchers used an Innisian framework and the Schefferville case study to argue that surely, mining settlements located in the hinterland do not escape the problems of staple underdevelopment. Bradbury additionally holds that mineral exploitation must be understood as part of an increasingly “global system of resource extraction” in which the Nouveau-Québec and Labrador territories were gradually integrated, particularly via the significant involvement of large American steel producers, who sought to acquire raw iron ore as primary material for their domestic industry. Much as in Ontario, where Nelles demonstrates that the provincial state ultimately acted as “a client of the business community” in its support for the prewar development (1849-1941) of the hydroelectricity, forestry, and mining sectors,¹⁰⁹ Bradbury maintains that the Québec government did not provide sufficient institutional protection and failed to act as

107. Daniel Drache, introduction to *Staples, Markets and Cultural Change: Selected Essays*, by Harold A. Innis (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), xxi.

108. Harold Innis, “Settlement and the Mining Frontier,” *Canadian Frontiers of Settlement*, ed. W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1936), 9: 171, 9: 304ff, 9: 390ff.

109. H. V. Nelles, *The Politics of Development: Forests, Mines and Hydroelectric Power, 1849-1941* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005): 495.

a counterweight to powerful American ore buyers. Yet while Bradbury hints at an interpretation informed by colonialism when he describes the state-industrial alliance as the “fourth empire of the St. Lawrence,”¹¹⁰ he remains generally more concerned—in spite of Innis’s own emphasis on the crucial role played by Aboriginal actors in the fur trade and other colonial ventures—with global processes of hinterland integration and underdevelopment than with the local Indigenous populations’ encounter with the mining world.

On the other hand, a few authors do contribute to shed more light on Schefferville’s Indigenous history. In his *Histoire des Naskapi de Schefferville*, Cooke deals quite extensively with the period preceding the relocation of the Naskapi from Fort Chimo and Fort Mckenzie to Schefferville, relying heavily on government and Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) records. According to him, when the HBC incited the Naskapi to move from Fort Chimo to Fort Nascopie in 1843, members of this group “did not control their destiny anymore.”¹¹¹ (This position interestingly complements Morantz’s view of Cree engagement with fur trading, whom she saw as active participants until at least 1870.)¹¹² Although his story of the Naskapi only deals briefly with the Schefferville period—the narrative ends in June 1957—it remains one of the rare in-depth investigations of the circumstances surrounding their transfer from the Ungava region to Schefferville.

110. Bradbury, “The Rise and Fall,” 363.

111. Alan Cooke, “Histoire des Naskapi de Schefferville” (projet préliminaire aux Affaires indiennes et développement du Nord canadien, March 1976). The translation is mine.

112. Morantz, *The White Man’s Gonna Getcha*, 22. The translation is mine.

Meanwhile, a handful of research has built on Bradbury's analyses to also include the impact of the wage economy on the local Indigenous groups. Hess, for example, produced an important socio-economic study that highlights the marginal position of the Naskapi workforce within the wage economy. In addition to her clear focus on economic history, she also argues that social and cultural factors played a determining role in the Naskapi marginalization from the wage economy, notably by creating a stark contradiction between their desire to participate in the industrial workforce and the importance of preserving land-based activities.¹¹³ In her 1963 ethnography of Lac John, Désy also deals with local aspects of socio-economic *and* cultural change as experienced by the Innu and Naskapi; quite uniquely, she does not restrict her interpretation to consider these changes exclusively in relation to the dominant industrial world or government institutions. In the following excerpt, for instance, Désy begins by describing people's involvement with winter hunting, before explaining the heavy restrictions introduced by schooling and wage labour:

It is during winter that hunting comes to life most prominently. Already by the fall, families leave one by one toward their respective territories. Today many children have to stay put because of school; other men, who work for the Iron Ore Company of Canada, cannot leave (such is the case for Jérôme St-Onge, who never goes to his territory anymore). The site becomes progressively empty, and everyone who can leave eventually follows.¹¹⁴

Even if many writers have emphasized that Schefferville's two Indigenous groups are ethnohistorically very closely related, Désy is one of the few authors to have considered

113. Hess, "Native Employment."

114. Pierrette Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économie chez les Montagnais et les Naskapi du lac John près de Schefferville" (master's thesis, Université Laval, 1963), 30. The translation is mine.

aspects of both Innu and Naskapi history in the same study. Yet it is probably through the unpublished works of Laforest and Grégoire commissioned by the Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais that one can find the most detailed documentation of local perspectives on the transformations that followed the arrival of industrialism in the region. In particular, the testimonies gathered by Grégoire—who specifically focused his attention on the mining economy—from Innu labourers in the late 1970s remain rare and invaluable.¹¹⁵

Overall, the ethnographic and archival research conducted by these individuals provides substantial and unique source material for a historical study of iron mining development and Indigenous societies at Schefferville. But their studies largely remain, I think, stories of acculturation, of exclusion, and of disruption, which fail to emphasize exactly how individuals responded to the cultural and socio-economic hegemony imposed at the time by the state agents and by the IOC company. In order to bridge this analytical and empirical gap, this work is therefore concerned with stories of difference, as it seeks to bring to light the roles and actions of the Innu and the Naskapi during the mining period. I particularly aim to demonstrate that this perspective is not mutually exclusive with stories of exclusion and marginalisation. Indeed, as I examine the constant tension between historical change and cultural continuity, I instead conclude, in the final pages, that the Indigenous experiences in Schefferville need to be reinserted—as Carlson argues for the James Bay Cree—within “a much longer process of change both locally

115. Pierre Grégoire, “Étude du travail salarié chez les Montagnais et Naskapi de Schefferville” (projet de recherche, Avril 1975); Pierre Grégoire, “Étude sur les travailleurs Montagnais de Schefferville” (rapport au Conseil consultatif des recherches amérindiennes, January 1976); Pierre Grégoire, “Impact du développement minier sur la population montagnaise de Schefferville” (rapport au Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais, 1977); Richard Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire par les Montagnais de Schefferville” (rapport au Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais, Village des Hurons, 1983).

and globally."¹¹⁶ Caught in the tumultuous process of both bureaucratic and industrial colonization, the Innu and the Naskapi ultimately resisted dispossession and continued to actualize their own practices, much as they did during previous rounds of Euro-Indigenous encounters.

116. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 23.

CHAPTER ONE

The Opening of Ungava to Industry and Civilisation: Lead-up Years

The hills will be brought down, the ravines will be filled; Man, against the work of Nature, undoes her work and even bumps into the order of Creation. Reward for the effort: the embankments for the railway are rising, regular and firm, replacing marshes and stones. It is the rail that will guide the development of Ungava, as it guided the development of the western frontier more than fifty years ago. ...

Geography school books will never speak again of a lost and useless country. They will say that it is now connected to America's great nervous system, by seaway and by railway.¹

—Walford Hewitson, *Ungava*

Without giving any rewards or compensations, the prospectors came up to conduct exploration activities. Soon afterwards, the contractors followed. The first houses came up. The first open-pit mines were excavated.²

—Joseph Jean-Pierre, *Innu*, 340

When the Twentieth Parliament of Canada first read the *Act to Incorporate the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway Company* on March 11, 1947,³ it put into motion a series of events that would ultimately lead to the opening of subarctic Québec to industry and result in the transformation of Innu and Naskapi homelands through the excavation of “the first open-pit mines.” The arrival of railway contractors and engineers indeed guaranteed that a permanent communication link from the “lost and useless

The subtitle of this chapter paraphrases Maurice Duplessis, cited in “Dès 1953 un train pour l'Ungava!” *Évènement Journal*, October 25, 1952, Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, Dossier du Bureau des chemins de fer, dossier 52.1 (1947-65), Québec North Shore & Labrador Railway, E25, S105, SS1, SSS2, contenant 1960-01-41/704, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec-Centre régional de Québec (BANQ-Q).

1. The translation is mine.

2. The translation is mine.

3. Bill H, *An Act to Incorporate the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway Company*, Third Sess., Twentieth Parliament, read a first time Tuesday, March 11, 1947, Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, Dossier du Bureau des chemins de fer, dossier 52.1 (1947-65), Québec North Shore & Labrador Railway, E25, S105, SS1, SSS2, contenant 1960-01-41/704, BANQ-Q.

country” of Nouveau-Québec to America’s great industrial “nervous system” was established. Following nearly three-quarters of a century of mineral reconnaissance activities, Bill H marked the true beginning of the “development of the Ungava.” In a memorandum to the Ministère des Travaux publics et de l’Approvisionnement, four years later, judicial adviser Maxime Morin warned the Québec government of the great powers that the federal Act attributed to the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway Company (QNS&L), most notably via article 20, which stated that “the works and enterprises of the Company are, according to the present law, declared to be of public utility to Canada.” According to Morin’s recommendations, the extraordinary nature and scale of the enterprise meant that no decision “concerning the exploitation of iron ore deposits and the construction of the railway on the Côte-Nord” should be made until the Premier ministre du Québec was briefed about the project.⁴ As it turned out, Maurice Duplessis⁵ readily agreed with the premise of public utility (to the province of Québec...) enshrined in article 20, arguing that “this railway ... opens the Ungava region to commerce and civilization, as well as to industry, and it will serve not only the company but also everyone who needs it.”⁶ In March 1951, the province officially transferred to QNS&L a strip of land covering more than eight hundred hectares between the village of Sept-Îles,

4. Maxime Morin, Conseiller judiciaire, Ministère des Travaux publics et de l’Approvisionnement, memorandum to the Honorable Roméo Lorrain, March 31, 1951, Québec, Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l’Approvisionnement, Dossier du Bureau des chemins de fer, dossier 52.1 (1947-65), Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway, E25, S105, SS1, SSS2, contenant 1960-01-41/704, BANQ-Q. The translations are mine.

5. Maurice Duplessis served as Premier ministre du Québec under the banner of the Union nationale party for the periods 1936-39 and 1944-59.

6. Duplessis, cited in “Un train pour l’Ungava!” Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l’Approvisionnement, Dossier du Bureau des chemins de fer, dossier 52.1 (1947-65), Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway, E25, S105, SS1, SSS2, contenant 1960-01-41/704, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

located on the north coast of the St. Lawrence River, and ending at Knob Lake, where the mining town of Schefferville would eventually be established.

In exchange for the modest sum of \$4,000, the Duplessis administration agreed to cede this part of Indigenous territory—by then considered a property of the Québec Crown—as it signed into law the transfer of land rights to the company directed by President Jules Timmins, which, according to the contract, “will be the absolute owner of the said strip of land, as and from the date hereof, and will take possession thereof forthwith.” Agreeing that this property was to be “free and clear of all hypothecs, charges and encumbrances whatsoever [and] not affected by way of taxes, assessments or rates,” the Québec government made it clear that, with potentially lucrative industrial projects in sight, it would favour a generous fiscal regime that encouraged the private ownership of its national territory.⁷ In this context, Duplessis felt compelled to provide justification for this transfer of land, arguing that the natural resources found in Nouveau-Québec had been underused for many years, leading to substantial financial losses for the province, and that these losses were in part due to the lack of proper means of communication and transportation into this remote region of the provincial hinterland. As Québec announced with optimism, the establishment of a land route that was to be paid for by the QNS&L, without any government subsidies, would facilitate mineral developments and would in turn “contribute powerfully, not only to the complete valuation of the Nouveau-Québec

7. Québec, Arrêté en conseil numéro 258 concernant les ordres en conseil numéros 222 et 223 en date du 7 mars 1951, Chambre du Conseil exécutif, March 22, 1951, Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, Dossier du Bureau des chemins de fer, dossier 52.1 (1947-65), Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway, E25, S105, SS1, SSS2, contenant 1960-01-41/704, BANQ-Q.

region, but also to the progress and prosperity of the province in general.”⁸ Moreover, Duplessis’ granting of immense territorial concessions for exploration purposes, directly into the hands of large Anglo-American corporate interests, consecrated the desire of his administration to establish a more permanent presence in its subarctic regions and to promote the industrial use of its natural resources.

Notwithstanding the stated principle of progress and prosperity for the province, the race toward the treasures of iron ore collided momentarily with Indigenous worlds and the relations that both Innu and Naskapi groups entertained with their ancestral territories. In order to understand how Indigenous and industrial worlds first came to interact—starting in the period that preceded the Second World War, and with intensifying vigour after 1945—this chapter begins by examining the ethnohistoric and geographic contexts in which mineral developments unfolded. The gradual establishment by state-industrial authorities of a new monopoly over this Indigenous space is taken up in the second section, and it is followed by a discussion of Indigenous people’s engagements with early industrialism, in particular with regard to the growing availability of wage labour opportunities through mineral exploration and railway construction. Special attention is paid to the corresponding adjustments that people had to make to their land-based practices. Because these initial mining activities largely took place in a region located southward of traditional Naskapi hunting territories, the second and third sections focus almost exclusively on Innu groups. The complex histories of the Innu and Naskapi

8. Québec, Arrêté en Conseil numéro 222 concernant le développement du Nouveau-Québec, et le progrès de la province, Chambre du Conseil exécutif, March 7, 1951, Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l’Approvisionnement, Dossier du Bureau des chemins de fer, dossier 52.1 (1947-65), Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway, E25, S105, SS1, SSS2, contenant 1960-01-41/704, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

relocations to Schefferville during the 1950s are finally discussed in the last two sections. In short, this first chapter provides a microanalysis of local livelihoods as experienced by these two Indigenous groups during the embryonic stage of mineral development, revealing rich stories of disruption, active participation, and cultural continuity amidst the deep upheaval that resulted from the arrival of industrial agents in Innu and Naskapi homelands.

Indigenous Histories, Geographies, and Territorial Identities

I have been Innu for a long time, I can tell you stories from a long time ago.⁹

—Marie-Louise André, September 17, 2009

The opening of subarctic Québec to industrial iron development took place in a region long inhabited by Indigenous people and thus rich in Indigenous histories, geographies, and socio-territorialities. The Innu-Naskapi, in particular, are an Algonquian-speaking people who have occupied for millennia the eastern interior of the Québec-Labrador peninsula as seminomadic or nomadic hunter-gatherers.¹⁰ Archaeologists generally argue that first humans appeared in the peninsula as early as eight thousand years ago, when people probably became established in the southeasternmost portion, near today's Blanc-Sablon.¹¹ While it remains difficult to

9. The translation is mine.

10. The Québec-Labrador peninsula is generally understood as a geographic region, named by botanist and ethnologist Jacques Rousseau in 1949, which comprises the area north of a line joining Moosonee and Tadoussac (Gilles Samson, "Le nord-est de la péninsule Québec-Labrador," *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 7, no. 1-2 (1977): 111).

11. Daniel Chevrier, "Les premières populations humaines: 8 500 à 2 000 ans avant aujourd'hui," in *Histoire de la Côte-Nord*, ed. Pierre Frenette (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996), 86, 103.

determine with archaeological certainty their origin, Lacasse writes that the Innu themselves believe that their ancestral roots are in Québec and Labrador, and that this belief is expressed in their oral tradition.¹² People have long referred to this place of strong economic, social and religious importance as *innu-assi* (*iyyuw aschiïy*; the Innu land) and more recently, *nitassinan* (*nitischiinan*; our land). The land was never conceived of as possessing strict boundaries, but rather more broadly as the place where the Innu people go.¹³ Philip Einish, a Naskapi individual from the Schefferville region, describes the intricate occupation of this immense territory, as his people travelled extensively through “the whole province, from the shores of the St. Lawrence River right up to shores of Kuujuaq. My people used to know all these routes, inch by inch.”¹⁴ The biogeographic and cultural diversity found on this territory make it difficult to characterize the moral economies of nitassinan in general ethnohistorical terms. But before the arrival of Europeans, most Innu groups depended on a certain degree of mobility to ensure survival through hunting, and they practiced food sharing. The specific type of resources that people harvested in turn had a bearing on the “forms of adaptation, social organisation, and settlement schemes”¹⁵ that structured the different groups inhabiting the territory.

12. Jean-Paul Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire: Innu tipenitamun* (Sillery: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2004), 28-29.

13. Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 249; Rémi Savard, *La forêt vive: récits fondateurs du peuple innu* (Montréal: Boréal, 1994), 16.

14. Philip B. Einish (2009: N-23a), interview by author, Kawawachikamach, September 23, 2009.

15. Daniel Chevrier, “La Côte-Nord du Saint-Laurent,” *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 7, no. 1-2 (1977): 77. The author uses this expression to describe the moral economies of the Côte-Nord region more generally. The translation is mine.

Today, the Innu who reside in the Québec-Labrador peninsula largely inhabit fourteen villages, twelve of which are situated within the borders of Québec. Their sedentarization resulted from a long and gradual process of encounter with Euro-Canadian fishermen, explorers, merchants, colonial officials, lords, missionaries, government agents, scientists, and industrialists, and it intensified to some degree in the mid-nineteenth century after the establishment of the reserve system in Lower Canada by the federal government (1853). In spite of the establishment of the Sept-Îles federal reserve in 1906, however, for several Innu groups inhabiting nitassinan the encounter with people of European descent in the first half of the twentieth century remained limited to seasonal contacts with missionaries and Hudson's Bay Company agents, as Innu families maintained their own (non-reserved) summer camps near Sept-Îles and Moisie.¹⁶ It is largely in the aftermath of the Second World War that the colonial relation grew more pervasive and presented new challenges for Innu sovereignty. Today, as a result, territorial identity is a difficult and continuously evolving question which can vary across—and even within—groups across the territory. As a general rule, however, the Innu believe that they are a sovereign people who must act as collective guardians of their homeland.¹⁷

In the region of Schefferville, two groups (or bands) inhabit three of the fourteen Innu villages found in the Québec-Labrador peninsula. One group, known as the Nation Innu Matimekush-Lac John, originated from the Sept-Îles regional band and formed after

16. Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 97; Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 51.

17. Jean-Paul Lacasse, "Le territoire dans l'univers innu d'aujourd'hui," *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* 40, no. 110 (1996): 200.

some of its members resettled to the Schefferville region after 1950. The Sept-Îles regional band was itself an amalgamation of several local bands that had ancestrally occupied different river basins of southcentral nitassinan.¹⁸ In the mid-seventeenth century, some of these local bands, particularly the coastal ones, became seasonally involved with French merchants working for the Communauté des Habitants (1652-66) or the Domaine d'Occident (1675-1759), who had installed trading posts at the bay of Sept-Îles (1658) and further east at the mouth of the Moisie River (1684).¹⁹ It is only much later, probably in the second half of the nineteenth century, that more and more members of the interior bands also began to visit regularly the coastal posts (administrated by the British Crown from 1760 and particularly by the HBC starting in 1831) and eventually merged with the Sept-Îles, Moisie, and Shelter Bay groups. These groups then gradually amalgamated to form the Sept-Îles regional band, "a band of considerable size with territories reaching far to the north."²⁰

In order to reach their hunting territory in the interior of the peninsula, the Sept-Îles Innu used the Moisie River, which had "for ages been an artery of movement from the coast to the interior."²¹ During the historic period, people who had visited the trading

18. These are roughly Speck's six central bands, the interior Petitsikapau, Kaniapiscau and Michikamau, and the coastal Moisie, Ste. Marguerite and Shelter Bay people. Frank G. Speck, "Montagnais-Naskapi Bands and Early Eskimo Distribution in the Labrador Peninsula," *American Anthropologist* 33 (1931), 565.

19. Steeve Dubreuil, "Circonstances historiques entourant la fondation de la réserve montagnaise de Sept-Îles et ses transformations subséquentes," *La revue d'histoire de la Côte-Nord* 18 (1993): 28; Pierre Dufour, "De la Traite de Tadoussac aux King's Posts, 1650-1830," in Frenette, *Histoire de la Côte-Nord*, 187, 198.

20. Mailhot, *The People of Sheshatshit*, 26.

21. Speck, "Montagnais-Naskapi Bands," 584. Some Sept-Îles people such as the Ste. Marguerite/Caniapiscau group used other communication routes (in their case, the Ste. Marguerite River),

posts of the St. Lawrence during the summer months left the villages of Sept-Îles and Moisie in August or September and proceeded into the interior. The Innu began their travels upstream on the Moisie, using long wooden sticks on the first stretch of the voyage (up to Matinipi Lake) to navigate their canoes against the strong currents, and carrying with them only the provisions necessary to make their way to the hunting grounds.²² All along the route, they maintained several temporary camps—in some cases, more than forty of them—as part of a comprehensive harvesting network that extended from the coast to the hunting territories.²³ Not every group would necessarily make it all the way to the Schefferville region, while some travelled far beyond, sometimes reaching the rivers Caniapiscou or George. In the course of the hunting season, several families continued their nomadic travels and visited trading posts located on eastern James Bay and at Fort Chimo, Fort Mckenzie, Fort Nascopie, Davis Inlet, or North West River (among others), in order to obtain basic staples such as “tea, butter, grease, and flour,” especially during scarce winters when a decrease in caribou kills necessitated greater territorial mobility.²⁴ One Innu remembers that “even before the opening of the mine, our grandfathers came to Schefferville, and they stayed in the bush for ten months.”²⁵ But

but because of its important relationship with the later mineral developments in the region, I emphasize the Moisie route here.

22. See Henry Youle Hind, *Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula* (Portugal Cove-St. Philip's: Boulder Publications, 2007); and Marcel Mongeau, *Mishta Pinamen: Philomène la formidable! Existence pathétique d'une indienne montagnaise*, Québec, 1981.

23. Raphaël Picard, cited in Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 44.

24. Interview by author (2009: I-28b), Schefferville, September 28, 2009. The translation is mine. See also Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 144, 158.

25. Interview by author (2009: I-29a), Matimekush, September 29, 2009. The translation is mine.

while the area was frequented regularly by a few families who hunted there, it was not a particularly important place in the harvesting network of the Innu. By contrast, one gathering place of much more significance was situated on the Menihék Lakes, at Esker, about one hundred kilometres²⁶ due south of Schefferville. It was usually only in the month of June, after the spring hunts, the ice breakup and in some cases, a large social gathering at Esker that the majority of Innu groups travelled back to the coast where they would spend the summer at the post.

A second Innu band occupying the Schefferville region today, the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, traditionally occupied the barren plateaus of the Ungava region, where they covered great distances nomadically following the seasonal movements of the George River caribou herds.²⁷ The Naskapi are associated with the northern regional groups known as the Ungava (or Fort Chimo) Innu and the George River (or Barren Ground) Innu.²⁸ These groups travelled extensively by way of walking and portaging in the regions of Clearwater Lake, Caniapiscou River and Cambrien Lake, Wakuach Lake, Whale River, George River, Nain, and Davis Inlet²⁹ (even reaching as far as Eastmain, North West River, and Sept-Îles³⁰), "with the focal points being the areas where the [caribou] herd crosses the Koksoak/lower Caniapiscou rivers in early and late winter, and

26. I generally use metric units, unless the imperial equivalent is more appropriate to the historical idea being expressed or if I am quoting directly.

27. Michael H. Weiler, "Naskapi Land-use Profile: Contemporary Land-use Patterns and the Socioeconomic Significance of the Renewable Resource Sector" (report prepared for Fenco Newfoundland Ltd, Centre for Northern Studies and Research, McGill University, July 1988), D7.

28. Speck, "Montagnais-Naskapi Bands," 594-595.

29. Déry, "Acculturation et socio-économie," 30.

30. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 49.

the George River at the long, narrow Indian House Lake early in the summer."³¹ In the historic period, the Naskapi became attached, quite late by comparison to other groups, to the HBC post at Fort Chimo, established in 1830 by merchants Nicol Finlayson and Erland Erlandsson near the mouth of Koksoak River. The operation of Fort Chimo was part of a commercial strategy to access the high-quality furs of the peninsula.³² With time, the HBC expanded its network, which grew to include a series of interior establishments that created a line of posts from Ungava Bay down to North West River. However, Fort Chimo was an onerous post to maintain, and it closed in 1842 when the HBC replaced it by Fort Nascopie, an interior establishment that had originally been built in 1838 on the lower northwestern part of Petitsikapau Lake, as part of a supply route into the heart of the territory. The HBC's eventual abandonment of Fort Nascopie and other related interior posts in 1866 had a great impact on the territorial occupancy of the Naskapi, as well as that of the Innu, who also visited this place frequently. According to Grégoire, the closing of Fort Nascopie led both groups to "go to the sea" and seek coastal establishments.³³ A few years later, the trading company reopened Fort Chimo (1871), before replacing it in 1916 by Fort Mckenzie, another interior post situated on Canichico Lake which remained in operation until Fort Chimo came back into business in 1948.³⁴

31. Weiler, "Naskapi Land-use Profile," D7.

32. Alan Cooke, "The Exploration of New Quebec," in *Le Nouveau-Québec: contribution à l'étude de l'occupation humaine*, ed. Jean Malaurie and Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1964), 142-144.

33. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," II9-II10. The translation is mine.

34. Cooke, "Histoire des Naskapi," 215.

The Naskapi were thus discontinuously attached to different HBC posts between 1830 and 1956,³⁵ during a period when they generally became increasingly dependent on religious missions, post supplies, and later on, government services. This was particularly the case at the turn of the twentieth century, when the George River caribou population declined dramatically and the Naskapi were forced to rely more heavily on the trading establishments.³⁶ Yet despite their growing dependence on these institutions, their lack of control over the terms of commercial exchange, and their eventual subjection to government influence (notably via relief handouts and schooling), the Naskapi maintained a high level of mobility throughout most of the fur trade period in Ungava. For instance, even after officially returning to Fort Chimo in 1949, it appears that some Naskapi families continued to occupy the region near Fort Mckenzie quite regularly for hunting.³⁷ Today, the countless routes, tracks, portages, hunting grounds, water crossings, spawning rivers and lakes, food caches, campsites, burial sites, and toponyms that are found all across the land are testimonies of both the Innu and the Naskapi people's deep

35. The official periods of occupation of the HBC posts by the Naskapi were roughly as follows (although it was common for them to be attached to several posts concurrently): Fort Chimo (1830-42); Fort Nascope (1843-70); Fort Chimo (1871-1915); Fort Mckenzie (1916-48); Fort Chimo (1949-56). Cooke, "Histoire des Naskapi," 211.

36. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 34; Weiler, "Naskapi Land-use Profile," D8.

37. Interview by author (2009: N-24a), Kawawachikamach, September 24, 2009. In fact, it was based on similar observations that government authorities supported the reopening of Fort Mckenzie late in 1953 and attempted to entice more Naskapi to trap, fish, and trade in its vicinity, but they only achieved limited results, in part due to the difficulty of resupplying the establishment from Fort Chimo. Cooke, "Histoire des Naskapi," 222-225.

ancestral rootedness in nitassinan, and knowledge of these important places continues to be passed on.³⁸

Non-Indigenous researchers have long understood that the caribou, in particular, occupies a fundamental role in Innu and Naskapi relationships with the territory. According to Innu zoology, animal kingdoms are ruled by animal masters, which are mythical beings from whom hunters must obtain the approbation before they can kill the animals guarded by them.³⁹ Depending on the region of the Québec-Labrador peninsula, some animals do not share a kingdom with any other animals; in Schefferville, for instance, the Caribou Master, known as *Kanipinikassikueu* (*Kaanipinikischikwaaw*), rules only over the caribou.⁴⁰ As Mailhot and Bouchard write, Innu taxonomy is most finely developed amongst animals “whose cultural pertinence is strongest,” and this clearly applies to the caribou, “for whom distinctions are established regarding generic species, growth phases, sex, and antlers characteristics according to age and seasons.”⁴¹ In the late 1920s, Duncan Strong qualified caribou as the “the dominant animal in Montagnais-Naskapi ritual,” describing the strong relationship that exists between the Naskapi hunters, the caribou that is killed, the spirit of the animal and the animal master who

38. P. B. Einish (2009: N-23a), interview.

39. José Mailhot and Serge Bouchard, “Structure du lexique: les animaux indiens,” *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 3, no. 1-2 (1973): 61.

40. *Ibid.*, 64.

41. *Ibid.*, 65. The translation is mine.

looks over him.⁴² According to Strong, hunters keep the soul of the hunted animals with them and when they die, "many deer thus go away, too."⁴³ Being ruled by the Caribou Master, the animal is also protected by its spirit; wasting or failing to share the products of a hunt can threaten to offend Kanipinikassikueu and possibly lead to harsh repercussions against the hunter and its close relatives.⁴⁴ Although these religious beliefs have continuously been modified and actualized through long periods of time,⁴⁵ Loring reminds us of the deep respect that Innu and Naskapi groups have maintained toward the caribou, in relation to its central importance throughout all phases of their history: "Core human traits such as cooperation, language, and social identity were first forged, or certainly reinforced, around Pleistocene campfires in both the Old World and the New as families of hunters sought both to capture and kill caribou and to appease the spirits of the animals and the animal masters."⁴⁶

During the historic period, hunting activities indeed kept a special place in the life of the Innu and the Naskapi, and the centrality of hunting continued to exceed the immediate needs for subsistence. One hunter, Mathieu Mestokosho, expresses this

42. William Duncan Strong, *Labrador Winter: The Ethnographic Journals of William Duncan Strong, 1927-1928*, edited by Eleanor B. Leacock and Nan A. Rothschild (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 147.

43. *Ibid.*, 144.

44. Mathieu Mestokosho, *Chroniques de chasse d'un Montagnais de Mingan*, ed. Serge Bouchard, trans. Georges Mestokosho (Québec: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 1977), 122. Similar restrictions apply in other kingdoms and for other animals, such as fish, porcupines, etc. See Kaniuekutut, "I Dreamed the Animals: A Hunter's Journal," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2009): 40.

45. See Peter Armitage, "Religious Ideology among the Innu of Eastern Quebec and Labrador," *Religiologiques* 6 (1992): 63-110.

46. Stephen Loring, "At Home in the Wilderness: The Mushuau Innu and Caribou," in Bergerud, Luttich, and Camps, *Return of the Caribou*, 124.

importance for his people's well-being, in spite of the hardships that are inherent to the life on the land: "The Indian knows how to hunt and he always hunted. It was difficult, but we figured it out on our own. We were proud of this work, of our hunt."⁴⁷ The relative rarity of many important animals, especially during certain winter months, imposed strong taboos against wasting and the unequal appropriation of the products of the hunt. The distribution of meat was often enacted through ceremonies such as *makushan* (*mikusaan*; feast, ritual meal), and during scarce winters or times of famine, sharing was reiterated.⁴⁸ As Jos Pinette understands it, this particular way of life comes with heavy responsibilities, and this was especially true before the industrialization of nitassinan:

The Innu could go where they wanted in the past. They liked to meet each other in the winter. They preferred to go and meet another Innu during the winter than to think that that person might be hungry, or that something else might be going on with that person. That's how things were, before things existed here in Schefferville; before the roads, and everything else. The Innu belief was that we had to meet each other during winter, to help each other and make sure that people were not struggling.⁴⁹

For the Innu and the Naskapi, the land was given to them at the beginning of times by the supreme being *Tshishe-Manitu* (*Chisaaminituw*; the Great Spirit, God) with a particular way of life associated with it, which is referred to as *innu-aitun* (*iiyiw iihuan*; the Innu

47. Mestokosho, *Chroniques de chasse*, 100. The translation is mine.

48. Adrian Tanner, "The Double Bind of Aboriginal Self-Government," in *Aboriginal Autonomy and Development in Northern Québec and Labrador*, ed. Colin H. Scott (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 398; Madeleine Lefebvre, *Tshakapesh: récits montagnais-naskapi* (Québec: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 1971), 115-116.

49. Jos Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview by author, Schefferville, September 19, 2009. The translation is mine.

culture).⁵⁰ As hunter-gatherers, they were destined to this space and entitled to collect the resources necessary to make their living, and this translated, according to Mailhot, into the guiding principle that “each group must respect the territory and the way of life of other groups.”⁵¹

This right to a particular livelihood, to innu-aitun, necessarily implied the ability to continue exercising responsibilities as collective guardians of the territory. Such responsibilities were not exercised under the legal apparatus of the nation-state, but rather within an Indigenous system of governance known as *innu tipenitamun* (*iyuw tipaayitimuun*; the Innu authority, responsibility, jurisdiction). “The tipenitamun of the Innu nation,” Lacasse explains, “has been, since time immemorial, the equivalent of the state,”⁵² which means that “when the Europeans arrived, Innu society was organized as a sovereign and autonomous entity with its tipenitamun.”⁵³ While the innu tipenitamun did not admit individual ownership over fragmented parts of the territory, people could still “claim, for them and for their descendants, a *titre prioritaire* [prior title] over the land that they had inherited.”⁵⁴ For Mailhot and Vincent, then, two important terms sum up the relationship that exists between the Innu and their homeland: *kanauenitam*

50. According to Lacasse, innu-aitun signifies “the Innu way of acting, of doing.” Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 247-248. The translation is mine.

51. Mailhot, *The People of Sheshatshit*, 166.

52. Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 47. The translation is mine.

53. *Ibid.*, 50. The translation is mine. For Lacasse, the tipenitamun is a central component of innu-aitun, since it refers to “the territorial management administered by the Innu, the Innu governance, the Innu power, the jurisdiction of Innu land, the Innu administration.” Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 248. The translation is mine.

54. Sylvie Vincent, cited in Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 37. The translation is mine.

(*kinuwaayitim*; she keeps, conserves) and *tipenitam* (*tipaayitim*; she has the power, controls it).⁵⁵ However, several decades of colonization in nitassinan have certainly contributed to shake the foundations of this governance system. Since the mid-twentieth century, in particular, industrial development has greatly intensified challenges to the notion of Innu and Naskapi sovereignty, as it worked to erase and replace the local histories, geographies, and territorialities that have permeated every corner of the Québec-Labrador peninsula through prehistoric and historic times.

Establishing a New Monopoly over Space

Geology, after all, recognizes no boundaries; the rich deposits were spread between the two political entities which comprised Ungava.

—Richard Geren and Blake McCullogh, *Cain's Legacy*, 30

In the immediate postwar years, the Québec mining sector grew rapidly, adding 7,400 jobs as the value of production jumped by a factor of 2.4 between 1945 and 1950. At the time, the industry relied largely on the production of asbestos, copper, and iron. While the global production of steel nearly quadrupled in the years 1947-67, the demand for iron ore correspondingly tripled between 1950 and 1965, becoming the third most traded commodity on international markets after petroleum and grain.⁵⁶ Within the tense geopolitical context of an increasingly bipolar world order, several state and corporate interests sought to identify new strategic reserves in Nouveau-Québec, becoming

55. José Mailhot and Sylvie Vincent (as well as Lynn Drapeau), cited in Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 40.

56. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 86-87, 124-125.

convinced that the region's iron deposits held great potential commercial value.⁵⁷

Rapidly, the region evolved into one of the most important iron mining centres in the Western hemisphere, making up 30 percent of Canadian and 2 percent of the total world production during Schefferville's first two decades of operation (1954-75).⁵⁸ According to Paquette, three main factors contributed to its sudden emergence: the exhaustion of American iron ore reserves, most notably in the Mesabi range (Minnesota); the favourable mining legislation put in place by the Québec government after the war to attract large capital investments; and the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the late 1950s, which enabled easier transportation access to the steel markets of the American Great Lakes.⁵⁹ Yet it was based on the sheer quantity of iron prospected and reserves identified, and the satisfying quality of the ore discovered, that George M. Humphrey, president of Ohio-based Hanna Mining, declared in a cautiously optimistic manner in late 1948 that "the ore in Labrador and Nouveau-Québec is at our disposal, and that ore is good. One day someone will make use of it, and maybe it will not be us. We must wait for the events to unfold."⁶⁰ In reality, Humphrey worked quite proactively, in concert with several other government and industrial actors, to establish a new monopoly

57. BUP, "Dépense initiale de 200 millions: 'Fortune' dit que l'on devra dépenser cette somme avant de retirer une tonne de minéral," *Action Catholique*, November 26, 1948, Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, Dossier du Bureau des chemins de fer, dossier 52.1 (1947-65), Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway, E25, S105, SS1, SSS2, contenant 1960-01-41/704, BANQ-Q.

58. On the Labrador side, by comparison, the region accounted for 2.5 percent of the world iron production and 42 percent of the Canadian production for the same period. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 136.

59. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 123.

60. Cited in BUP, "Dépense initiale de 200 millions," Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, E25, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

over space which served not only to concretize the political boundary between Québec and Labrador, but also to dismiss the prior Indigenous presence in nitassinan.

On the Québec side of the border with Labrador drawn by the London Privy Council in 1927, the government of Maurice Duplessis regularly couched the need to access the iron wealth of the subarctic lands in the rhetorical discourse of Québec nationalism and the movement of French Canadian civilization into the north.⁶¹ The future of the Québécois society and its mining frontier became closely intertwined in an imaginary geography of “sentimentalism for ‘the north’ and for resource-based industrial growth.”⁶² As Desbiens theorizes regarding the later reterritorialization of Cree space by the Québec government in James Bay, the state relied greatly on these discourses to advance its own political and economic agenda on the frontier. After initially clearing Indigenous cultural spaces (“*défricher l’espace culturel*”) with justification provided by a strong nationalist agenda, it could then proceed to claim the natural resources for the general population of Québec and begin to engage in the material exploitation of this territory (“*défricher l’espace matériel*”).⁶³ However, in contrast to the subsequent James Bay nationalisation project of the 1970s, the Duplessis administration “looked to private enterprises and encouraged the incoming of considerable capital,”⁶⁴ largely of American

61. See Union nationale, *Vers les Sommets: Mines; Bilan des réalisations de l'Union nationale de 1944 à 1959 au Nouveau-Québec*, film, 16mm, 9 min. 56 sec., 1960, Fonds Union nationale, Documents audiovisuels (1950-62), P555, S77, DFC02267, BANQ-Q.

62. Bradbury, “The Rise and Fall,” 359.

63. Desbiens, “Défricher l’espace.”

64. Union nationale, *Vers les Sommets*, Fonds Union nationale, P555, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

origin, in order to achieve these goals. Perhaps ironically, this approach (which greatly outlived Duplessis) reduced the role of the Nouveau-Québec region in the strategy of national development and the affirmation of French Canadian identity to that of an enclave of raw materials used to fuel the growth of the American industrial economy. In the post-Duplessis era of 1960 to 1975, half of the United States' iron ore imports originated from Canada, and a third of those purchases were extracted from Nouveau-Québec. Compared with other iron-producing regions of Canada, where roughly 15 percent of the primary commodity was used for domestic purposes, "Québec exported the entirety of its production outside of its borders" between 1955 and 1975.⁶⁵

In fact, the political administrations on both sides of the Québec-Labrador border offered to foreign-based companies privileged access to immense land concessions and land leases, as a way of encouraging exploration activities. In exchange, mining companies typically contributed humble rental fees to the state coffers. In Newfoundland, the Commission of Government (1934-49) allocated a large Labrador concession of roughly 22,000 square miles (57,000 square kilometres) to the Weaver Coal Company of Montréal in 1936, which was then transferred to the newly constituted Labrador Mining and Exploration Company (LME), incorporated later that year in Newfoundland under the presidency of New York financier A. H. McKay. This impressive concession, approved by England's Colonial Office, has been described as "one of those giant land grants by which all great imperial powers of Europe had developed their colonies for

65. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 127, 136-137.

hundreds of years of modern history."⁶⁶ In return for these rights, LME was required, "after the third year, and within ten years ... to select an area of up to 2,000 square miles [5,000 square kilometres], upon which a basic rental rate of five cents per acre was to be charged" during the exploration phase.⁶⁷ This concession was situated in the upper region of the Hamilton and Naskapi river basins, and extended all the way to present-day Schefferville to cover the same iron deposits that were found on the Québec side of the border.⁶⁸

Immediately adjacent to these Labradorian properties, the first Duplessis administration (1936-39) granted to newly established McKay (Quebec) Explorers Company (MQEC) an exploration lease covering more than 3,900 square miles (10,000 square kilometres) in the upper Swampy Bay and Whale river basins, including the regions of Attikamagen and Wakuach lakes. For this concession, known as the Special Development License (issued February 1, 1939), the provincial government charged a modest, flat rental rate of up to \$2,000 for the first two years of exploration, with possibilities of annual renewal at a slightly increased rate.⁶⁹ Following MQEC's failure to gather the necessary capital in order to finance the exploration fees and launch the commercialisation of its leased properties, in December 1941 Jules R. Timmins, of the Torontonion company Hollinger Consolidated Gold Mines (HCGM), formed the

66. Richard Geren and Blake McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy: The Building of Iron Ore Company of Canada* (Sept-Îles: Iron Ore Company of Canada, 1990), 33.

67. *Ibid.*, 18.

68. Bradbury, "The Rise and Fall," 355.

69. Geren and McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy*, 30-31.

Hollinger North Shore Exploration Company (HNSE) in Québec, and the following year it obtained the rights to the Development Licence that had been abandoned by MQEC. The next month, in January 1942, the Timmins group took majority ownership of McKay's LME, securing control over the Labrador concessions. Finally, late in 1943, HCGM officially joined forces with Humphrey and his Cleveland-based M. A. Hanna Mining, which acquired minority interests in both LME and HNSE in exchange for providing exploration capital.⁷⁰ In parallel to these major developments, a handful of less significant exploration companies also gained access to other regions of the Labrador iron trough (appendix III) during this period, with the consequence that by 1947 the province of Québec had conceded most of this important geological region to mining companies.⁷¹

In order to develop their exploration program, these large conglomerates benefited from a generous tenure regime that was further deregulated during the second Duplessis administration (1944-59). In particular, the *Loi pour faciliter et encourager le développement minier dans le territoire du Nouveau-Québec* guaranteed that "all properties were held according to the new and very liberal regulations adopted in 1945 by the Union nationale government; the leases were issued for a maximum period of fifteen years; in principle, the intended area was unlimited and the annual charges fixed by the state came to only about 50¢ per square mile every year."⁷² Following the

70. Geren and McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy*, 36-39; Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 130. Timmins' HCGM retained majority interests in both HNSE and LME (60 percent), whereas M. A. Hanna had minority interests (40 percent and up to 22 percent by 1978, respectively). Bradbury, "Toward an Alternative Theory," 158.

71. Cooke, "Exploration of New Quebec," 165; Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 132.

72. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 131, 143. The translation is mine.

implementation of this law, HNSE signed an agreement in 1946 with the Québec government which stipulated that by 1952, the exploration company would have to reserve some seven hundred square kilometres from its original concession for exploitation activities, and that the new lease would be valid for eighty years.⁷³ This generous accommodation of business interests were retrospectively celebrated by the Union nationale as “courageous and perceptive” for facilitating the early industrialisation and the civilisation of the province’s hinterland.⁷⁴ But by openly favouring the development through mineral exploration and exploitation activities of what it perceived as the blank canvas of Nouveau-Québec, the provincial government’s optimism inevitably conflicted with the reality of Innu and Naskapi guardianship responsibilities in nitassinan.

Exploration and early development activities

Away from the public offices and corporate headquarters of southern metropolises, local Innu guides played a critical role on the ground, leading explorers and developers across a geographic space that was largely unknown to them. Yet the association of these explorers with Indigenous people have been poorly documented and as a result, stories of ore exploration and discovery in the Labrador iron trough remain quite fragmented and contested—a situation that is echoed by other “origin stories” of

73. BUP, “Dépense initiale de 200 millions,” Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l’Approvisionnement, E25, BANQ-Q; Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 133.

74. Union nationale, *Vers les Sommets*, Fonds Union nationale, P555, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

famous mineral finds elsewhere in northern Canada. The history of early prospecting (1866-1937) usually links the first identification of Québec-Labrador iron deposits to the evangelical travels of Father Louis Babel, o.m.i. (1866-70), who observed earth of a reddish colour in the region of Menihék Lakes.⁷⁵ Innu contributions to these early discoveries have rarely been acknowledged, even though Babel was regularly accompanied by Innu and Naskapi guides;⁷⁶ of them, he respectfully remarked that “they only have the memory of places, but it is perfect. They relate to us every small topographic feature, every lake and river sinuosity; they know every tree of the forest.”⁷⁷ An Antane Kapesh, an Innu elder from Schefferville, related the story of Atshapi Antane and identified him as one of the guides who led Father Babel across the Innu homeland, in addition to attributing the original iron discovery to another local guide, Tshishenish Pien. In 1970, on the occasion of the centennial celebrations organized in Schefferville to commemorate the Babel explorations, Kapesh’s father strongly disapproved of the recognition given to the famed missionary and stressed instead the decisive role of the local guides in these expeditions: “It is not his name but the name of the Indian who brought him north that should be associated to the ore that was discovered there.” According to him, “when Father Babel considered coming here, he could never have managed to navigate the interior territories on his own and to take care of himself, in a

75. Huguette Tremblay, introduction to *Journal des Voyages de Louis Babel, 1866-1868*, by Louis Babel (Montréal: Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1977), xiii; Geren and McCulloch, *Cain’s Legacy*, 7.

76. Tremblay, *Journal des Voyages*, xii.

77. Louis Babel, cited in Alain Pontaut et al., *La grande aventure du fer* (Montréal: Leméac, 1970), 26. The translation is mine.

tent, for an entire year," had he not benefited directly from the help of Atshapi Antane and other Indigenous characters.⁷⁸

In part based on this early missionary-exploration work, geologist Albert Peter Low led scientific parties financed by the Geological Survey of Canada (1892-96) to search extensively the interior of the peninsula, and to map iron formations around Manicouagan River, Menihék, Astray, Dyke, and Petitsikapau lakes, as well as the more remote Larch, Koksoak, and Caniapiscou rivers.⁷⁹ Early prospecting activities in the peninsula continued haphazardly in the first three decades of the twentieth century, notably through the work of Robert Flaherty and Reuben D'Aigle, who were invariably accompanied by "Eskimo" or "Indian" guides.⁸⁰ In 1929, geologists W. F. James and J. E. Bill finally identified the first high-grade iron deposits in the regions of Ruth Lake, Shabogamo Lake, and Knob Lake, and four years later they observed another iron formation of significance at Wabush Lake.⁸¹ (According to Mathieu André, the Wabush formation, which was eventually developed, was in fact first identified by an Innu individual whom he referred to as "*le vieux Pierre*."⁸²) However, more intensive mineral exploration, largely oriented toward gold and base metals, only really picked up in the

78. An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* (Montréal: Leméac, 1976), 47. The translations are mine.

79. Cooke, "Exploration of New Quebec," 148, 155-157; Geren and McCullogh, *Cain's Legacy*, 9; H.E. (Buzz) Neal, "Iron Deposits of the Labrador Trough," *Exploration and Mining Geology* 9, no. 2 (2000): 113.

80. Cooke, "Exploration of New Quebec," 161-163.

81. Geren and McCullogh, *Cain's Legacy*, 13-14; Neal, "Iron Deposits," 113.

82. Mathieu André, document 34, *Prospection: première partie*, 2.52.10., enregistrement vidéo, 20 min. 18 sec., October 5, 1973, Collection numérique, Collection Arthur Lamothe, Histoire régionale et locale, BANQ.

mid-1930s. At the time, a cohort of professional geologists led by Dr. Joseph A. Retty, who was at the helm of LME, set up several exploration camps and seaplane bases across nitassinan and intensified the searches, in particular in the vicinity of Ashuanipi Lake.

By the end of the 1937 season, a significant find moved the interests of professional miners more firmly toward iron ore. Accounts of this discovery—both written and oral—commonly give credit to Mathieu André, an Innu man who located a rich deposit near Sawyer Lake, about one hundred kilometres southeast of today's Schefferville, before guiding Dr. Retty there.⁸³ As compensation, LME offered him a finder's fee of \$2,500, which was "promised to [Mathieu André] when they were to begin drilling operations."⁸⁴ ("Official" accounts typically put this figure at \$7,000.⁸⁵) This sum is the only known monetary benefit that was ever paid to Mathieu André, and it pales in comparison to the original promises made by Dr. Retty, who had reportedly offered him—according to André's own recollection—1.5¢ for every ton of iron that was to be extracted from the deposit.⁸⁶ Notwithstanding work wages, this modest amount is

83. Geren and McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy*, 23. This deposit was eventually developed by the IOC.

84. Mathieu André, *Prospection*, Collection Arthur Lamothe, BANQ. The translation is mine.

85. See Geren and McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy*, 24.

86. Mathieu André, *Prospection*, Collection Arthur Lamothe, BANQ. Vakil writes that in a 1976 letter written by Mathieu André to the company, he asked—possibly referring to this earlier agreement made with Dr. Retty—to be compensated for all his unremunerated prospecting work which had "revealed iron ore veins 'that were the most important by weight and by content.'" But his request apparently went unanswered. Anna C. Vakil, "The Impact of the Iron Ore Industry on the Native People of Sept-Îles and Schefferville, Quebec, 1983," in *McGill Subarctic Research Paper 38: Recession, Planning and Socioeconomic Change in the Quebec-Labrador Iron-Mining Region*, ed. John H. Bradbury and Jeanne M. Wolfe (Montréal: Centre for Northern Studies and Research, McGill University, 1983), 133. The translation is mine.

Mathieu André himself argues, in an earlier discussion, that "everything that he [Dr. Retty] promised was lost. Every now and then, I work to reclaim what is owed to me, but nothing happens. ... The money per ton that they talked to me about, I don't know where it went. Finally he died, and we hadn't

reported as the only compensation ever offered to the Innu or the Naskapi for their prospecting and guiding work. Several people in Schefferville, including Jos Pinette, still remember this great lack of financial recognition by the exploration companies who operated in the region. "There is only one person here who benefited among the Innu, and it was Mathieu André," Pinette explains. "They gave him only seven thousand, and that was the end of the story."⁸⁷ For Vakîl, this unfair compensation is a strong indication of the "as yet unexpressed indebtedness in monetary and moral terms by the iron ore company to the native prospectors so important in the past."⁸⁸

Besides a passing reference to Mathieu André, professional miners typically take over the standard narrative of iron exploration in Nouveau-Québec from that point on. In 1948, the Québec newspaper *Action Catholique* presented the following origin story, based on a *Fortune* article (a similarly expurgated version was told in *Maclean's* magazine a year earlier):

In 1937, an Indian trapper discovered minerals of promising appearance. A geologist soon noticed that it consisted in ore with high content. He left shortly thereafter to conduct prospection activities in the region indicated to him. His own discoveries incited him to recommend to the company that he worked for [LME] to obtain exploration and exploitation permits. Preliminary works were undertaken, but had to be suspended at the beginning of the war.⁸⁹

signed any papers." Mathieu André, *Prospection*, Collection Arthur Lamothe, BANQ. The translation is mine.

87. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

88. Vakîl, "Impact of Iron Ore," in Bradbury and Wolfe, *Research Paper 38*, 133.

89. BUP, "Dépense initiale de 200 millions," Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, E25, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

However, much as Kapes's father challenged the familiar narrative of Louis Babel related to early exploration activities, others have questioned the simplicity of the origin story that recognizes Mathieu André as the only discoverer of a unique iron ore deposit. In fact, André himself remembers that as early as 1936, he guided Dr. Retty across the land and "showed him seven places in the course of seven seasons." Following this period, he continued doing casual work for other companies (including the IOC), prospecting all the way up to Fort Chimo: "Every year," he explains, "I gave him different rocks."⁹⁰ In the late 1990s, Silberstein gathered the story of Joseph Jean-Pierre in Schefferville, who presented an alternative—though not necessarily contradictory—narrative to the discovery story of Mathieu André and Dr. Retty. Today, Ben McKenzie makes the related point that the mining companies never fully acknowledged the Innu's involvement with the exploration phase, although they ended up profiting immensely from the local people's work toward the original iron discoveries. According to Jean-Pierre,

a few years ago, my wife had found there a beautiful iron ore. This ore, we discovered it by bumping into it with a toboggan. ... With my father-in-law, we went down to Menihék Lake, to show it to Dr. Joseph Retty. A prospector. I remember that when he saw this, Dr. Retty started to dance. I know that Mathieu André tells a similar story; he says that it was him, the first person to show iron ore to Dr. Retty. Maybe he had found another one and wanted to attribute to himself the paternity of this discovery? In any case, this was how things happened.⁹¹

90. Mathieu André, *Prospection*, Collection Arthur Lamothe, BANQ. The translations are mine.

91. Joseph Jean-Pierre, cited in Jil Silberstein, *Innu: à la rencontre des Montagnais du Québec-Labrador* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), 340. The translation is mine.

McKenzie continues:

It was not the company which found the mine, it was the Indians. It was us who found it. Dr. Retty was happy when my brother showed him the ore, but he should not have showed him. One year later, Retty brought his men there, it was in 1939, or something like that. Those were our territories. My father was there, a long time before him. Dr. Retty put his name there, and he said that it was him who found the ore. That's not true.⁹²

As these stories highlight, and as Grégoire similarly argues, it is in fact possible that many Innu individuals ended up bringing iron samples to geologists in Sept-Îles and helped them to identify several deposits (most likely without receiving any financial compensation), in particular during the more intensive exploration period of 1937 to 1939.⁹³

The quasi heroic tales of Babel, Low, Retty, and to some extent, Mathieu André, have helped to articulate a mythological origin story that rushes past the intricacies of Innu and Naskapi experiences during this period. For these people, participation in prospection activities in nitassinan was informed by a deep knowledge of the territory that was critical to the success of mining parties. The inclusion of a single paradigmatic Indigenous character in the "prospector mythology" is particularly significant, especially since it evokes other famous mythologies about mineral discoveries in Canada that have similarly relied upon Indigenous symbols to establish the moral credentials of the industrial project. In Yukon, where Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie have been attributed the role of the original gold finders that led to the famous mineral rush, Cruikshank

92. Ben McKenzie (2009: I-03a), interview by author, Maliotenam, September 3, 2009. The translation is mine.

93. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," III2.

argues that this historical construction in part “naturalized and justified the exploitation of native people that actually occurred in the Klondike by hegemonically recasting native values ... in Euro-Canadian terms.”⁹⁴ Yet a closer look at the oral record almost invariably reveals subaltern stories, buried under familiar prospector mythologies, which can contribute to challenge this moral hegemony and to redress the fragmented narrative that is characteristic of exploration activities in several northern Canadian settings. In this regard, some stories of the Schefferville region hint at an intricate form of engagement with early exploration, when Indigenous people actively participated in opening the interior territories to explorers and prospectors while remaining cautious about their growing presence in the area.⁹⁵

During the middle exploration period (1937-47), a few more Innu individuals became involved with LME, as the need for unskilled labour grew. By the end of this decade, more than eighty men of all origins were involved with prospecting activities.⁹⁶ One Innu elder recalls the long and lonely moments that he spent working for prospectors like Dr. Retty: “I worked there, I gathered rocks. I was on my own; I worked alone for ten years.”⁹⁷ The material reorganization of the Indigenous homelands sharply accelerated toward the end of that period, particularly after mining developers established a more permanent work camp at Burnt Creek in 1947. The camp was located at the center of a

94. Julie Cruikshank, “Images of Society in Klondike Gold Rush Narratives: Skookum Jim and the Discovery of Gold,” *Ethnohistory* 39, no. 1 (1992): 33.

95. See Kapesch, *Maudite sauvagesse*, 51ff.

96. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 64.

97. Interview by author (2009: I-28a), Schefferville, September 28, 2009. The translation is mine.

strip of land measuring thirty-two kilometres in length and ten kilometres in width, where explorers zeroed in on the most important iron deposits.⁹⁸ By the following year, HNSE and LME devoted their activities exclusively to iron,⁹⁹ as the international demand for this important commodity soared. Some Innu recall the increasing foreign presence in the Schefferville region during those years, especially at the Burnt Creek camp, where work crews under the supervision of Richard Geren and his associates at Hollinger harvested spruce from the subarctic taiga forest for the construction of new buildings. Jos Pinette mentions that the company installed a sawmill there to process the lumber locally, an activity that led to noticeable changes in the vegetation cover: "Here, all this area was for fire wood. [He then points in a different direction.] But for construction, to build houses, they took the large spruces over there. There used to be spruces everywhere, over there, where you only see dirt today. Everywhere where there are no trees, the company did all that."¹⁰⁰ In the process, Hollinger hired a few local Innu as loggers and to help erect new houses, and it is known that at least one Innu worked at the mill.¹⁰¹

98. BUP, "Dépense initiale de 200 millions," Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, E25, BANQ-Q.

99. Geren and McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy*, 54.

100. J. Pinette (2009: I-21b), interview. The translation is mine.

101. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," III3.



Figure 2. Log house where Hollinger and Hanna managers agreed to develop the Schefferville mine. Photograph by author, September 2009.

Finally, in the course of the 1947 summer, the senior managers of Hollinger and Hanna agreed to “a consensus to develop” in the famous historical cabin built with the contribution of Innu labour¹⁰² and the logs produced locally at the Burnt Creek mill (figure 2).¹⁰³ In order to guarantee the production of iron ore on an industrial scale, the mining authorities required a modern communication link between Knob Lake and the St. Lawrence shipping route, in addition to power stations designed to supply the port facilities at Sept-Îles and the mining center in Schefferville. The managers considered this gigantic infrastructure program to be quite risky, arguing that at least \$200 million would

102. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview.

103. Jos Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview by author, Matimekush, September 17, 2009. The translation is mine.

have to be spent before the first monetary returns could be earned.¹⁰⁴ As a strategy to address this uncertainty and raise the appropriate capital, they chose to form two years later the Iron Ore Company of Canada, constituted in Delaware in October 1949.¹⁰⁵ The IOC shareholders consisted of the original concession companies Hollinger and Labrador Mining, in addition to five large American steel companies which acted as ore buyers. This ownership structure contributed to make the company more attractive to private American financiers, whose investments were crucial to concretize the massive transportation project.

The Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway Company, which oversaw the construction of the railway, obtained its charter in 1947. The difficult route chosen for the railway followed in several places the ancient Innu paths into the interior territories,¹⁰⁶ on the Moisie River (up to the junction with Wacouno River, at Mile 27) and further north, from Ashuanipi Lake onward (Mile 204). The struggle to overcome numerous physical obstacles, described as "more considerable than the ones encountered in the Rockies for the construction of the Canadian Pacific and the Transcontinental,"¹⁰⁷ led to a significant transformation of Innu territories. In addition to opening a path for the right of way, the construction consortium made up of Cartier Construction, McNamara Construction, Fred Mannix & Company, and Morrison-Knudson Company of Canada (CMMK) cleared

104. BUP, "Dépense initiale de 200 millions," Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, E25, BANQ-Q.

105. Neal, "Iron Deposits," 113.

106. Armand MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview by author, Matimekush, September 15, 2009.

107. "Un train pour l'Ungava!" Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, E25, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

other areas all along the planned route in order to set up work camps, road access, and an expansive network of a dozen landing strips that constituted the Hollinger Ungava Transport (HUT) airlift.¹⁰⁸ The railway architects engaged in various clear-cutting and earth-moving activities to supply railway ties and to extract a considerable amount of rock fill needed to lay the train track where it approached river crossings and ravines. During the 1951 season, at the height of the construction project, train workers excavated 2.6 million cubic meters of solid rock, loose rock, hardpan, and earth; this figure represented merely 30 percent of all excavation activities that were necessary for the completion of the railway.¹⁰⁹ The CMMK also made extensive use of dynamite to remove hill sides that stood in the way of certain line segments, and to blast out ditches in order to drain the abundant wet terrain of muskeg and marshes characteristic of the region.¹¹⁰ Over a stretch of a few kilometres alone near Mile 12, where the contractors famously dug a tunnel through a mountain, workers removed three-quarter of a million cubic metres of rock.¹¹¹

A few individuals in Schefferville have reported the destruction of camps and portage routes which complicated people's travels across the land, as a result of the

108. Jean-François Boivineau, "Le pont aérien vers Schefferville: trente-cinq ans déjà, 1950-1954," *La revue d'histoire de la Côte-Nord* 12 (1990): 14. The war had already contributed to expand aerial infrastructure in the Québec-Labrador peninsula, notably with the construction of bases in Sept-Îles, Goose Bay and Fort Chimo (Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 64).

109. W. H. Spindler, "Airlift Construction of Labrador Railroad," *The Highway Magazine* (1951): 224.

110. Geren and McCullogh, *Cain's Legacy*, 143; Ewart Young, *Labrador's Red Gold: The Story of the Labrador Mining and Exploration Company and the Iron Ore Company of Canada, Its Conquest of a Frozen Frontier, and the Building of an Industrial Empire in the Wastes of Labrador* (St. John's: Guardian, n.d.), n.p.

111. Geren and McCullogh, *Cain's Legacy*, 126.

establishment of the railway.¹¹² For Ben McKenzie, the most problematic issue arose because of the noise created by the construction activities and generated by the train, once it begun operating: "The noise from the railway is strong; you can hear it from far away. When you go hunting, and the train screams, it creates a lot of disturbances. It impacts the animals, the caribou."¹¹³ On the other hand, Grégoire has reported that despite the fact that the railway route cut across an important migration route for one of the caribou herds at Mile 102, this did not have a significant effect on the animals.¹¹⁴ He also insists that the destruction of portages and camps only disturbed a minimal number of people, "since several men preferred to engage in wage labour rather than hunt while others went up [into the territory] by plane."¹¹⁵ This assertion, however, downplays the fluid interactions between working, hunting, and moving on the land by means of modern transportation that were characteristic of the evolution toward mixed economies. As will be shown in the next section, this gradual transition never completely led to the abandonment of ancient trails, portages, and camps that continue to straddle to train route nowadays.

In part because of the rugged terrain through which the CMMK dug the railway, the early history of the QNS&L construction is typically understood in terms of technical feats, the conquest or even improvement of nature by men, and the inevitable march toward a civilized industrial society. In this narrative, a curious assemblage of patriarchal,

112. See Vakil, "Impact of Iron Ore," 141.

113. B. McKenzie (2009: I-03a), interview. The translation is mine.

114. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," III5. In a similarly suggestive argument, Vakil argues that the QNS&L railway had a minimal impact on flora and fauna. Vakil, "Impact of the Iron Ore," 141.

115. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," III5. The translation is mine.

religious, and warlike metaphors are deployed to stress the immensity of the natural obstacles that had to be overcome in order to complete the "invasion of the north."¹¹⁶ The real heroes in this adventure are without a doubt the "railway men,"¹¹⁷ active in "penetrating ever onward into the virgin area of the far north where roving Indians had put a vague 'X' to mark the spot where 'red gold' was to be found."¹¹⁸ Armed with "the complete arsenal of industrial mechanics,"¹¹⁹ the railway men remained at all times ready "to step into the shoes of any worker who laid down his tools."¹²⁰ But progress was painfully slow: "Many winters are passing by. We are still far away from the Promised Land."¹²¹ Yet far from returning to a territory from which they had been originally driven out, these men in fact stepped onto a "promised land" that had been occupied by humans for millennia and continuously transformed through more than three centuries of European-Aboriginal relations. Whether they recognized this fact or not, industrialists chose to cast their enterprise in a language and a set of practices that contributed to erase the Indigenous presence from what they considered to be the empty, barren, harsh, uninhabited, frozen frontier located at the edge of Québec and Labrador wastelands. Late in July of 1947, when Hanna Mining president George M. Humphrey travelled to the iron deposits in Labrador, he was thus able to declare in all seriousness, while overlooking the

116. Young, *Labrador's Red Gold*, n.p.

117. Geren and McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy*, 130.

118. Young, *Labrador's Red Gold*, n.p.

119. *Ungava*, Hewitson. The translation is mine.

120. Young, *Labrador's Red Gold*, n.p.

121. *Ungava*, Hewitson. The translation is mine.

territory from the comfort of his airplane, that the Moisie River “is one of the great salmon rivers of the world, but the country is so rough, it had only been fished for a few miles from its mouth in the Gulf.”¹²² In a few seemingly innocent words, Humphrey dismissed the long occupation of the Moisie basin, a place where Innu people have always fished and established their presence all along the river route. As with the government’s attribution of land concessions to powerful foreign interests, the construction of the railway in the early 1950s by large private conglomerates inevitably challenged the Indigenous place in nitassinan, while also contributing to accelerate people’s transition toward new economic practices and livelihoods.

Transition into Mixed Livelihoods

My parents didn’t work much to build the new railway. But when they saw the train, they were happy. Before, it used to take them two months to get up to Schefferville. Now they could board everything on the train; the canoe, the luggage, the kids.¹²³

—Essimeu Tite McKenzie, September 16, 2009

The arrival of the railroad in nitassinan marked a transformative moment in Innu lives, even as the infrastructure project never received the local people’s explicit consent.¹²⁴ Memories related to this period are surprisingly varied and can appear contradictory at times, in part because they include diverse accounts of tension, conciliation, and the creative preservation of important local practices. While the railway

122. George M. Humphrey, cited in Geren and McCulloch, *Cain’s Legacy*, 66.

123. The translation is mine.

124. B. McKenzie (2009: I-03a), interview. In this discussion, McKenzie equates the arrival of the train, without the Innu’s approval, with “theft.” The translation is mine.

entrenched the 1947 decision to develop the mineral deposits at Schefferville, its construction acted as a catalyst for change itself, most notably by providing wage opportunities that consolidated the Innu transition toward a mixed subsistence-industrial wage economy. The operation of the train also contributed to facilitate access into the territory and the continuation of land-based activities, since it enabled people to reduce their transportation time and allowed them to pack more goods into the interior. At the same time, trapping and subsistence livelihoods became more and more complicated for the Innu, and important knowledge slowly trickled away as families relied on electric- and fuel-powered transportation for their travels.

The Innu generally regard the establishment of the railway as the beginning of the end of their annual trip undertaken by foot and by canoe to pursue game, fur animals, and fish. One elder who used to travel by foot up to Caniapiscou Lake explains: "That's what the Innu used to do, when we came to Caniapiscou: we travelled the entire river and the portages, until we got there. After the railway, that's when we stopped, we boarded the train."¹²⁵ Caroline Vachon also remembers well this transitional moment, relating it directly to the period when her family resettled to Schefferville: "We used to stay in Sept-Îles. We came up here in the fall, and we went back down in the summer, with a canoe. We walked the trails, all the ancient trails. I was small, and I accompanied my parents in the toboggan. We were here from the month of August until the month of June, and we travelled around here. Then one day we stayed here for the summer also."¹²⁶

125. Interview by author (2009: I-30a), Matimekush, September 30, 2009. The translation is mine.

126. Caroline Vachon (2009: I-18a), interview by author, Matimekush, September 18, 2009. The translation is mine.

The railway and the HUT airlift used during the construction enabled easier travels into the hunting territories and back to the coast. The use of company airplanes by the Innu had in fact preceded mineral activities, dating back to the period when the HBC post managers on the coast allowed some people to travel by air in order to transport a higher volume of pelts, and thereby increase the "enormous profits" of the trading establishment.¹²⁷ This practice became more frequent as air traffic grew in intensity during the middle exploration phase and later on, for the construction of the railway. According to Daniel Vachon, it was a time when "we always went up by canoe, but sometimes we had the chance to come back by plane."¹²⁸ The airplanes allowed Innu families that were out in the interior of the territory to visit relatives who had remained on the coastal settlements during the hunting season, and this was especially important during the Christmas holiday season.¹²⁹ Jos Dominique tells a story involving a company plane that took place near Schefferville where, as a youngster, he accompanied hunters in the bush in the winter of 1947. One of the elders present, Louis McKenzie, was granted permission to board an airplane in order to bring his furs to the post in Sept-Îles, while the rest of the group went about one hundred kilometres further inland to find the caribou herd. Dominique, who was nine years old at the time, stayed behind at an Innu camp that happened to be on the other side of the Knob Lake exploration base. The company men agreed to host him temporarily, but since there was apparently no room for a nine-year-

127. Daniel Vachon, *L'histoire montagnaise de Sept-Îles* (Québec: Éditions Innu, 1985), 25. The translation is mine.

128. *Ibid.*, 41. The translation is mine.

129. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 153-154.

old child in their camp, Dr. Retty told him that “you cannot sleep here, but we will still give you food.” This situation lasted for eight full days, until the other hunters from the group returned from their caribou expedition.¹³⁰

In 1952, Jos Pinette and other members of his family came back from a hunting trip at Michikamau Lake and made it down to the Menihek Lakes. At this place the contractors had set up a work camp and many non-Indigenous workers were employed on the construction of a large bridge over a tributary of the Ashuanipi River, to allow for the new train route to pass. The bridge was part of a larger structure which was designed to include a hydroelectric power station for supplying electricity to the town of Schefferville. At the time, Pinette’s father inquired to the “big boss” who was present at the site about the possibility to board a company plane with his family—nine persons in total—back to the coast. The supervisor immediately granted them the permission for the next day. In the meantime, the family learned with some surprise that other fellow Innu who had their hunting territory in the region of Le Fer Lake had come a good distance southward and had been clearing some wood near the Menihek bridge for over a week. According to Pinette, a different foreman had asked them to “chop wood for so many days, until they earned their trip on a plane” back to Sept-Îles. As he recounts, this was a common practice used by “the little bosses [lower-ranked foremen], who didn’t know anything about the life of the Innu. But the big boss knew what it meant to be an Innu, to travel by canoe and by foot. He understood that the Innu didn’t only earn their living with work, they earned it by trapping also.” That explains why, according to him, the big boss

130. J. Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview. The translation is mine.

was willing to accommodate his family's request to board a plane without having to necessarily exchange any labour, and even offered food to help them spend the night before they could set out for Sept-Îles early the next morning.¹³¹

Two year later, in February 1954, labourers completed the QNS&L railroad and the Innu quickly abandoned the ancestral route in favour of boarding the train.¹³² It appears that this transition did not meet noticeable resistance, in part because it provided a more efficient access to the hunting grounds, and since it also helped people carrying more food provisions and other materials, which were easily boarded onto the train platforms. Some people remember that their parents or grandparents were quite content to be freed from the long paddles, the gruelling portages, and the heavy loads. Continuing his story, Jos Pinette explains that

we were quite tired when we paddled the entire trip, from Sept-Îles all the way to Schefferville. One year we used the food that we brought with us on the train to go into the bush. We got off and left from Mile 186 and went up to Mile 244 with the canoe, to go camp there. From there we went to Labrador and Churchill Falls. There were six portages before we got to our final destination. We stayed there until June. Then we returned to Sept-Îles, paddling back to Mile 186 in order to board the train again.¹³³

By enabling families to increase their capacity to carry provisions, and by cutting down on transportation time, the company planes and the train decreased the likelihood that people would run out of food while out on their hunting grounds, especially during scarce winters. This is in part because in earlier periods when they used to travel by foot, Innu

131. J. Pinette (2009: I-19b), interview. The translations are mine.

132. In fact, some Innu families began boarding the train before the railway was even completed. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 134.

133. *Ibid.* The translations are mine.

families typically consumed most of their provisions during their travels, before they even had a chance to establish their first base camp in the interior during the fall.¹³⁴ Pinette concludes this subject by offering the following thought: "Often what happened with the canoe is that you would be hungry. Since you couldn't carry as much provisions in your boat, you had to leave some behind."¹³⁵

The challenge of carrying or obtaining enough food to spend many consecutive winter months in the bush was never completely eliminated with the railroad, especially since the faster transportation extended the period of time that could be spent in the interior. This meant that generally, more food needed to be brought up or harvested in a given season. Yet some individuals argue that overall, the train did contribute to lessen people's vulnerability to hunger, while at the same time it did not preclude them from continuing to use some segments of the old footpaths and waterways. As Grégoire Gabriel recalls, in some cases it even led to a more consistent presence on the territory, especially for those who had difficulty travelling by foot: "There were some Indians who were happy, because they could finally go up. They didn't have to struggle like in the old days. They descended the train in their territory, and that was it."¹³⁶ From that drop off point (typically at Menihek Lakes, an important hub in the Innu harvesting network), they could disembark with their canoes and provisions for the season, and "we could paddle as

134. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 127-128.

135. J. Pinette (2009: I-19b), interview. The translations are mine.

136. Grégoire Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview by author, Lac John, October 1, 2009. The translation is mine.

much as we wanted" along secondary routes, into the hunting territories.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, in this process the Innu gradually abandoned the skills necessary to navigate the Moisie River, and since this knowledge was less prominent, people became increasingly dependent on the train in order to move out on the land.¹³⁸

The opportunities for wage employment in the construction of the railway, meanwhile, created additional tension with the performance of other activities in the forest, notably by taking precious time away from hunting. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, CMMK employed thousands of workers of different origins and backgrounds, principally for clearing the train route, and also to prepare the site for the new industrial port and the ore classification yard at Pointe-aux-Basques, near Sept-Îles. In addition to working-class Canadians, Québécois, and Newfoundlanders, many immigrants, notably of Polish and Italian descent, laboured in the construction camps. Several Innu, including some who travelled from the lower Côte-Nord region, also came to work for CMMK and were hired mainly as loggers; according to Vakil, "as early as 1947 it was reported that at least one Indian worked cutting wood for the railway track."¹³⁹ The CMMK also employed Innu individuals to shovel the snow at the Sept-Îles dock, to guide the railway surveyors into the bush, to load the airplanes and the boats, and to resupply the network

137. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

138. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview.

139. Vakil, "Impact of Iron Ore," 137. Estimates for the number of workers employed by CMMK vary greatly from 6 900 in 1950 (Vakil, "Impact of Iron Ore" 137); 3 000 in the summer of 1951, with 500 from Newfoundland (Spindler, "Airlift Construction," 224); and 4,000 in the fall of 1952 ("Un train pour l'Ungava!" Fonds Ministère des Travaux publics et de l'Approvisionnement, E25, BANQ-Q). The proportion of Indigenous workers is not known.

of construction camps inland.¹⁴⁰ The logistics of carrying supplies into the camps were complex, and since the train route followed ancient travel paths over good distances, the Innu were particularly well suited for this task (figure 3). While much has been made of the crucial technical role played by the Douglas DC-3 airplanes, the Canso seaplanes, the Bell-47 helicopters, and the skilled bush pilots in command of operating the airlift,¹⁴¹ Daniel Vachon sheds some important light on the lesser known process of resupplying the work camps that was carried out by Indigenous workers:

In fact, [the Montagnais] were hired because white people had a lot of difficulty travelling on the Moisie River. We had to portage the supplies into the bush and every day we changed camp. The river was strewn with rapids and many portages were necessary.

The plane carrying the material went to land near the top of the mountain, on a small lake. We had to go there to fetch the supplies and bring it down to the foot of the mountain. Sometimes, the portages were up to six (6) miles in length and the loads were very heavy. We even carried crates. There were different groups of men, but the Montagnais were there in greatest number.¹⁴²

Once the workers extended the train track all the way to Ashuanipi Lake, at Mile 204, the planes could land closer to the camps, and resupplying became much less of a critical issue. At that point, "the number of Montagnais workers diminished and none more were hired."¹⁴³ While it remains difficult to know the precise extent of Indigenous workers' involvement with CMMK, it appears to have been quite significant. For the year 1951, for instance, Indian Affairs reported that "all able-bodied men found work with the new

140. J. Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview; Vachon, *Histoire montagnaise de Sept-Îles*, 43-44.

141. Boivineau, "Pont aérien vers Schefferville," 14.

142. Vachon, *Histoire montagnaise de Sept-Îles*, 42-43. The translation is mine.

143. *Ibid.*, 43. The translation is mine.

mining industry,"¹⁴⁴ and already by 1953, wage labour provided more than 82 percent of the total Innu income at Sept-Îles, if we discount federal allowances (table 1). For many people, such as Ben McKenzie, who worked for CMMK over the course of seven seasons, the employment associated with the building of the railroad between 1947 and 1954 thus remained available for a substantial period of time.¹⁴⁵



Figure 3. Two Innu (Welly and Auguste Jérôme) carry hay to feed the horses used during the railway construction: from Mile 163, they are going to Mile 153, 1952.

Source: Collection Centre d'Archives de la Côte-Nord, Welly Labrie (ca. 1952-53), P1000, D10, contenant 1984-11-000/1, photographie 6, scan, Archives nationales du Québec—Centre régional de la Côte-Nord.

144. Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1952, cited in Gélinas, *Les autochtones dans le Québec*, 206.

145. B. McKenzie (2009: I-03a), interview. The translation is mine.

Table 1. Annual revenues for the Sept-Îles Innu, 1953

Revenues	Amount (\$)	Share of subtotal (%)	Share of total (%)
Furs	20,000	13	10
Wage employment	125,000	82	64
Agricultural products	0	0	0
Crafts	7,000	5	4
Interest	0	0	0
Subtotal: Earnings	152,000	100	78
Family allowance	20,444	46	10
Security for elders	13,440	31	7
Old age pension	5,280	12	3
Mothers in need	4,836	11	2
Blind persons	0	0	0
Subtotal: Allowances	44,000	100	22
Total revenues	196,000	—	100

Source: Indian Affairs Branch, 1954, cited in Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," IV7.

Note: Data excludes hunting and fishing products.

The Innu generally thought the railway labour to be quite harsh, an idea that is implicitly expressed by McKenzie when he compares today's work with that of his own generation: "Today, it's the machine that does the work, but for us, everything was done by hand." This perspective interestingly contrasts popular accounts of the lead-up years, which are typically portrayed as mainly machine-driven, relying on the latest technologies and advanced engineering practices. To add to the challenges, part of the work was also done at night, and the living conditions were unusual and required some adaptation for the Innu. McKenzie relates his experience living in the camps where, as he describes it, "we were apart from everyone else. We were living in the tents."¹⁴⁶ People also had to rely on meagre foods like processed meats, since bush food would spoil quickly in the warm camps. This suggests that for those individuals who were seriously

146. B. McKenzie (2009: 1-03a), interview. The translations are mine.

involved with labour on the railroad, there was little opportunity for hunting during the work season.

An unfortunate event involving Innu labourers that took place in 1949 further illustrates the difficulty of the work schedule which, at least during the season of employment, did not favour the conciliation of wage labour with other activities on the land. At Mile 102, ten Innu who had been working continuously for several days in row and for ten hours every day demanded a day of rest for every week of employment. When the foremen turned down their request, these ten individuals chose—or were forced, according to a different version of the same story¹⁴⁷—to leave work, but it appears that they were denied food for the return trip out of the bush, and had to “walk back to Sept-Îles armed with their only axes.”¹⁴⁸ Although this incident clearly hints at the possibility of some discrimination directed specifically at the Innu railway men—one can hardly imagine non-Indigenous workers being left to walk one hundred kilometres in the forest after quitting work or being fired—it remains generally difficult to assess whether the CMMK treated the Innu differently than other workers who were also employed as low-level labourers on the railroad construction.

While early wage labour involvement complicated people's participation in land-based activities, Jos Pinette tells a slightly different story, which supports the idea that the work on the railway did not necessarily exclude the possibility for hunting, and that in

147. Cited in Vakil, “Impact of Iron Ore,” 137.

148. Working document concerning the renegotiation of the 1975 collective agreement requested by the Sept-Îles Innu, ca. April 1975, Sept-Îles, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 609.13 à 650.15, contenant 1982-11-002/30, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

some instances wages could in fact help to support non-wage practices. One year, when he was employed to unload cement bags from airplanes and carry supplies back and forth on Ashuanipi Lake for the railway crews, he recalls that “my father came to find me at Mile 244 to tell me that I was going up in the bush.” While he had to obey his father, Pinette also remembers that he felt free—as most Innu labourers generally did, he argues—to tell his boss that he had to leave his job temporarily. According to him, people could come back whenever they wanted, and the contractors would often hire them again.¹⁴⁹

Because of the casual and unpredictable nature of the wage labour that was available during this period, younger people like Jos Pinette, who had minimal family responsibilities, were particularly willing, or in fact encouraged by their parents, to leave the hunting group for several weeks in order to earn some cash, before joining the rest of the family in the forest. Alfred McKenzie tells the related story of his father Pierre-Jacques, who in the late 1940s also went up into the interior to work for a surveying crew. After only one month of work, he went back to the coast to meet his family in Sept-Îles, where he gave the money that he had earned to his father to help pay down the accounts at the HBC post. Soon thereafter, he left again for the bush, this time accompanying his relatives for hunting, since, as McKenzie explains, “my parents still lived traditionally.”¹⁵⁰ His family would have been part, if we rely upon Grégoire’s interpretation, of a dwindling group of families who continued to “go up into the bush for

149. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

150. Alfred McKenzie (2009: I-16b), interview by author, Matimekush, September 16, 2009. The translation is mine.

the entire year, especially people above fifty years old.”¹⁵¹ Despite the relatively low market value of subsistence hunting and trapping at this time, these cultural-economic practices remained very important during the exploration phase, as the money earned through wage labour was used in part to secure the equipment and the provisions necessary to pursue the life on the land. Yet if hunting and trapping activities continued to provide an important means of subsistence, this early period of industrial wage employment was also characterized by the growing difficulty of earning a fully independent living in the forest, clearly marking the beginning of an important transition toward greater dependency on mining-related income for Innu families.

Overall, the history of the railroad built between Sept-Îles and Schefferville in the immediate postwar era exemplifies the complexity of engaging with the mining past in nitassinan. On the one hand, the reengineering and conquest of nature through heavily capitalized equipment, modern labour arrangements, and the ideological promise of civilization’s progress into the hinterland worked to greatly transform Indigenous landscapes and living practices. Early mining activities altered, disturbed, but also facilitated, in very particular ways, Innu relationships with their homeland. Once in gear, the train provided the green light for the industrial project to move ahead in Schefferville, guaranteeing that vast amounts of mineral wealth in the form of unprocessed iron ores could be boarded onto the new trading route and shipped out of the Indigenous territories. Caught in its spiral, the Innu sought to reaffirm control over their destiny, and for many

151. Grégoire, “Impact du développement minier,” 16. The translation is mine.

families, this necessarily meant—physically or figuratively—jumping aboard and permanently relocating into the interior.

Resettlement of the Sept-Îles Innu

When I arrived in Schefferville, there was still nobody. In 1952, my husband came here first to look for work and to keep our hunting territory. That's when he told us to come join him, with all the children.¹⁵²

—Marie-Louise André, September 17, 2009

The gradual resettlement of the Sept-Îles Innu to Schefferville occurred in the postwar context when government agents sought to exercise increasingly strict control over Indigenous lives. For one, the viability of the fur trade was in jeopardy, in particular due to a decrease in the number of fur animals (especially beaver populations, which the Québec government aimed to protect in November 1951¹⁵³) and the depressed prices of pelts. This translated into a situation where close to thirteen thousand fewer beaver skins (a 32 percent decrease) were produced in Québec in 1948, compared to five years earlier.¹⁵⁴ In addition, federal authorities encouraged several families from Moisie and Sept-Îles to relocate to a reserved piece of land established in 1949 on a sandy plateau about halfway between the two towns. (Up to fifty Sept-Îles families resisted the move and remained on the old Uashat reserve, adjacent to Sept-Îles, where many of them and their descendents still reside today.) The federal government soon built a *pensionnat*

152. The translation is mine.

153. Vachon, *Histoire montagnaise de Sept-Îles*, 31-32.

154. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," IV2-IV5.

indien (residential school) there in 1951, and Innu children were forced to attend it.¹⁵⁵ As government aid grew, and since many families disliked the new settlement of Maliotenam, several Innu sought wage labour opportunities away from the reserve, as an attempt to escape the paternalistic control of these bureaucratic powers and, as Désy argues, as a way to leave the area.¹⁵⁶ Inevitably, the mining activities in the region provided the majority of employment opportunities at the time, which incited many people to board the train for Schefferville in order to “look for work,” as the QNS&L construction activities wound down.

Between the late 1940s and mid-1950s, the Innu thus traversed an important transitional moment, and the general movement of many families away from Sept-Îles is a complex story which should be understood in the context of severe socio-cultural, economic, and political change that developed concurrently during this period. As several individuals left the coast to live more or less sedentarily at Schefferville, families split when other people chose to stay behind in Uashat or Maliotenam, and/or had their children brought to the pensionnat. If the train encouraged and facilitated this social dislocation, it also allowed Schefferville families to travel back down to Sept-Îles to visit relatives more easily, as part of a continuous back and forth movement between the interior and the coast that preceded the arrival of industrial civilization and which still persists to the present day (figure 4).

155. Pierre Frenette, “Le développement institutionnel,” in Frenette, *Histoire de la Côte-Nord*, 533; Pierre Frenette, “Une société en voie d’urbanisation,” in *ibid.*, 510; Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 75.

156. Désy, “Acculturation et socio-économie,” 51.



Figure 4. QNS&L wagons arrive at the Sept-Îles train platform. Photograph by author, October 2009.

It appears that the Innu first formed a relatively permanent settlement near Schefferville as early as the second half of the 1940s, on a small point of land in the neighbourhood of what was to become known as Lac John.¹⁵⁷ According to some accounts, only four or five families lived on that land for about one year, and today the place is rarely mentioned in stories of the region's early settlement. At that time, members of these families—in addition to other individuals who frequented the region for hunting—were already involved more or less casually with the exploration

157. Since the lake John is also home of the Innu community of Lac John, I chose to depart from the general practice used in the text of translating French hydrographical toponyms into English. In the case of Lac John, I rely on the French toponym to refer both to the community and to the lake itself, for simplicity.

companies.¹⁵⁸ A somewhat larger settlement eventually formed at Dolly Ridge, located a dozen kilometres northeast of Knob Lake, where the HNSE built its first airfield in 1947 and later abandoned it when it established a new airport closer to the future mining town.¹⁵⁹ By at least the summer of 1954 (although probably earlier), several Innu families lived there, either in tents or in wooden shacks left behind by the former occupants of the old airport. Caroline Vachon settled at Dolly Ridge with her parents and remembers that some men worked at the IOC, while other Innu families slowly trickled in with the hope of obtaining a job.¹⁶⁰ However, the Innu individuals who had worked for the CMMK during the construction of the railway and the port at Sept-Îles were not automatically hired by the mining company, by contrast to other railroad workers who, according to Daniel Vachon, had an easier time picking up a new hired position in the mining industry.¹⁶¹

The following summer (1955), more Innu families came up to find work, and the IOC employed at least ten individuals. In addition, a few others worked for contracting companies who were putting up the infrastructure for the mining town, which was to be nestled between the lakes Pearce and Knob (figure 5).¹⁶² By the 1956 season, when about ten additional families took advantage of a free train ride offered by QNS&L to depart

158. Interview by author (2009: I-01a), Matimekush, October 1, 2009.

159. Geren and McCulloch, *Cain's Legacy*, 66.

160. C. Vachon (2009 : I-18a), interview.

161. Vachon, *Histoire montagnaise de Sept-Îles*, 44.

162. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," 17, III3.

from Sept-Îles,¹⁶³ the Schefferville Innu had relocated their settlement from the old airport to the north shores of Pearce Lake. But soon after the move there, IOC authorities attempted to convince them to transfer to a new piece of land at Lac John, expressing their concern that “the Indians are using contaminated water for drinking purposes,” which was itself a consequence of the sewage that was being emptied into the water body (Pearce Lake) by the town’s non-Indigenous residents.¹⁶⁴ Alfred McKenzie argues that the Innu perceived at the time that the move to Lac John was in fact motivated by the authorities’ fear that it was mainly the “Indians” who were going to pollute the water.¹⁶⁵ As a result, their initial attempts to transfer the Innu were largely unsuccessful since, according to McKenzie, most people rejected the authorities’ proposition which they simply interpreted as familiar paternalistic behaviour.¹⁶⁶ When the relocation was finally organized, reluctantly, later during that same summer, the IOC agreed to transport the wooden shacks, but these households were not very solid and many of them fell apart before they made it to the new settlement.¹⁶⁷

163. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 80.

164. J. P. B. Ostrander, Superintendent of Welfare, Indian Affairs Branch, to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Ottawa, June 1, 1956, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

165. A. McKenzie (2009: I-16b), interview.

166. *Ibid.*; J. P. B. Ostrander to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Ottawa, June 1, 1956, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

167. A. McKenzie (2009: I-16b), interview; Marie-Louise André (2009: I-17b), interview by author, Matimekush, September 17, 2009; Kapesh, *Maudite sauvage*, 193. The archival material consulted does not speak to the question as to why and how the relocation project actually materialized after encountering Innu resistance at first. Several local stories, however, point to signs of deep resentment and very low enthusiasm regarding the initial move to Lac John.



Figure 5. Aerial view of Schefferville settlement, located between Pearce (left) and Knob (right) lakes. Photograph by author of a mounted aerial photograph, Schefferville town office, November 2008.

The story of the Innu move to Schefferville, which stretched over several years, is complicated by the fact that the circumstances of this move were quite varied and that the decisions to relocate were made on a family or even individual basis. Some people, especially those of a younger generation, had been in the region at least sporadically since the late 1930s for exploration work or later on, for other type of wage employment such as the building of the railroad, the old airport or the original town at Burnt Creek. Among this group of early wage labourers were Innu individuals who continued, in the first half of the 1950s, to be seasonally employed by different contracting companies on odd jobs that included the erection of the industrial town at Knob Lake, the construction by Canadian Marconi Company of the radar station and the regional control centre—

established by the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in order to detect potential intrusions of Soviet aircrafts into subarctic Canada—near Schefferville, or preproduction activities such as the opening of roads toward the future mining pits.¹⁶⁸ The original settlers on the small point and at Dolly Ridge were also likely to be families who hunted nearby, and for whom wage labour opportunities—however sporadic or marginal—could be combined favourably with the convenience of remaining closer to their ancestral hunting grounds.

In fact, some families remember relocating to Schefferville uniquely for hunting, and initially they were not necessarily interested in finding wage employment there.¹⁶⁹ For those groups the move would have been primarily motivated by a desire to establish a shorter route between the town services and their territories. “There were many Indians who came here during the hunting and fishing period,” Marie-Louise André explains. “Since their trapping territory was here, they came to settle here for good, because the mine was now opened. At the beginning, they established themselves close to the old airport.”¹⁷⁰ For this subgroup—largely associated with the ethnohistoric group who frequented the interior of the peninsula, notably via the Moisie River—their presence in Schefferville corresponded “to the return of a population upon its ancestral lands,”¹⁷¹

168. Interview (2009: I-01a). The translation is mine.

169. Interview (2009: I-29a).

170. M. L. André (2009: I-17b), interview. The translation is mine.

171. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 93. The translation is mine.

where they were able to gain better access than many other Innu groups to caribou and fish resources, typically more plentiful in the interior regions.¹⁷²

By contrast, other subgroups only made the decision later on to come from other regions where they had been working on the land, or from Uashat and Maliotenam, where they had grown increasingly dependent on Indian Affairs agents and institutions. These families decided to relocate when it became known, after 1954, that paid jobs at the mine may soon become available. One elder recalls travelling from Caniapiscau, where he had been hunting on his family's territory, after learning that they were hiring "Indians" at the Knob Lake mine, a region that he had never frequented much before.¹⁷³ Grégoire Gabriel and Sylvestre Vachon further explain, each in turn, how their family's move to Schefferville was also largely motivated by the economic context of that period:

The fur went down, it was not lucrative anymore. My father always told me: "You have to work. Today, it's not worth going hunting for furs; you have to work to make a living."¹⁷⁴

As soon as the mine opened, hunting came to an end, and we came here to work. When the IOC was starting up, people did not hunt anymore because they went into mining work.¹⁷⁵

It is in this atmosphere that a large number of people decided to leave the coast; in the year 1957 alone, up to five hundred of them travelled to Schefferville (although as it

172. *Ibid.*, 197.

173. Interview (2009: I-30a). The translation is mine.

174. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

175. Sylvestre Vachon (2009: I-29b), interview by author, Schefferville, September 29, 2009. The translation is mine.

turned out, not everyone relocated permanently).¹⁷⁶ An Indian Affairs report produced at the time explained that “the new reserve in Seven Islands [Sept-Îles] is a ghost village mostly inhabited by old, sick and disabled Indians,”¹⁷⁷ a group of people who remained highly dependent on government services and subsidies or were simply uninterested by the prospects of yet another relocation.

The moribund fur economy, the deepening reliance on government relief, and the tightening grip of bureaucratic institutions in Sept-Îles imposed great constraints on people’s autonomy prior to the Schefferville relocation. As a result, some people still interpret the move not merely as individual or family responses to economic and ecological pressures, but also as stemming from particular social conditions that were largely controlled by the federal government. For them, boarding the train into the interior was motivated by a desire to escape the authorities’ command on the coastal reserves and the dependency on government allowances (notably by seeking other sources of income).¹⁷⁸ Even though the Innu move to Schefferville appeared to Indian Affairs R. L. Boulanger as a “backward step” in terms of their living situation, he observed that “it does not seem to worry them at all to have vacated their houses for cheap shacks.” According to him, the Innu would finally be capable to “look after

176. Grégoire, “Impact du développement minier,” 17.

177. R. L. Boulanger, Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Indian Affairs Branch, “Report on inspection made June 17 and 18, 1957 (Schefferville),” Québec, June 27, 1957, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

178. The allowances were part of a compensation program managed by federal authorities, which reached the Indigenous communities of the Côte-Nord region after Confederation. José Mailhot, “La marginalisation des Montagnais,” in Frenette, *Histoire de la Côte-Nord*, 341.

themselves” in Schefferville, where “they were enjoying now a freer life which they cherish more than anything else. By freer life they informed me that it meant no boundaries, no RCMP, no agent and other officials to interfere with their ways of life (their ancestral and acquired habits, whether good or bad).”¹⁷⁹

In addition to these powerful institutions, the forced schooling of Innu children at the Malietenam residential school played a major role in driving the relocation process, since it complicated the possibility for their parents to remain active on the land. For Essimeu McKenzie, this factor was even more significant than economic conditions in driving the relocation up north: “It’s not really because hunting had become difficult [that we chose to leave Sept-Îles], but because there was the school and the priest. Our children had to go to school now. The priests told our parents: ‘Today, your kids are not going up in the forest anymore, from now on it’s the residential school.’”¹⁸⁰ In order to be able to care for their children during school recesses, Innu parents had to be more permanently settled in a place where their children would be able to visit them, and in this context, the only way to maintain a viable connection to the hunting territories was to move closer to them. Furthermore, some Sept-Îles families took advantage of the opening of day schools in Schefferville in the mid-1950s to get their children out of the pensionnat and “register them in the provincial schools in Schefferville, as a way to get them back.”¹⁸¹

Meanwhile, hundreds of kilometres north of Sept-Îles, in the Ungava region of Fort

179. R. L. Boulanger, “Report on inspection,” Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

180. Essimeu Tite McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview by author, Matimekush, September 16, 2009. The translation is mine.

181. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

Chimo and Fort Mckenzie, government policies played a similarly decisive, if somewhat more coercive, role in guiding another Indigenous group toward Schefferville.

The Naskapi Relocation

The company and the government said: "There are jobs there that will last one hundred years."
—Joe Guanish, September 25, 2009

The story of the Naskapi resettlement to Schefferville is somewhat simpler than that of the Innu, if only for the fact that most individuals left the northern region of Ungava as a result of an official policy of removal instituted by the federal authorities. Within a period of only a few weeks, in the early summer of 1956, almost all Naskapi individuals—up to 175 persons in total¹⁸²—moved out of Fort Chimo and Fort Mckenzie. The period leading up to this relocation, however, was not completely straightforward, and even within the short history of the move itself one finds diverse and at times seemingly contrasting accounts.

For one, the Naskapi Nation considers the possibility that the transfer to Schefferville was largely voluntary, since the people "themselves decided to move in the hope of finding employment, housing, medical assistance, and educational facilities for their children" in the booming mining town.¹⁸³ This makes sense in the context where life

182. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 82; Richard H. Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation and Economic Change among the Schefferville Naskapi," in *McGill Sub-Arctic Research Paper 24: Field Research in Labrador-Ungava*, 124 (Montréal: Department of Geography, McGill University, March 1969).

183. Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, "History," <http://www.naskapi.ca/en/History> (accessed December 5, 2011). See also Déry, "Acculturation et socio-économique," 25-26.

in Fort Chimo and Fort Mckenzie had become challenging at the beginning of early twentieth century, but especially since the 1940s, largely due to caribou decline. By 1956, the traditional economy was disrupted, the fur trade economy was unreliable and in downfall, diseases and mortality rates amongst the Naskapi were high, and the George River caribou herd had virtually disappeared from the region. "The economic situation and state of health of the band," Weiler sums up, "was quite desperate."¹⁸⁴

While the archival and oral records generally do not fully support the view that the Naskapi relocated of their own accord, Cooke has at least argued, based on a review of Indian Affairs archives, that "it is difficult to determine exactly what happened in 1956 that led the Naskapi to leave Fort Chimo and Fort Mckenzie and settle in Schefferville."¹⁸⁵ In fact, many Naskapi have stated that the authorities coerced them into leaving the Ungava region by promising them "jobs that will last one hundred years," in addition to guaranteeing them services and the use of hunting territories that were to be established near their future homes. Perhaps surprisingly, in this context, some people remember the trip to Schefferville during the summer of 1956 quite fondly, especially since for many Naskapi it marked the ultimate travels made along the ancestral routes relied upon by their families to follow the caribou from the northern barren lands into the interior of the peninsula. Other individuals, by contrast, discuss their long relocation travels in much more cautious terms, particularly as they recount the weak physical and

184. Weiler, "Naskapi Land-use Profile," D9. See also Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, "History."

185. Cooke, "Histoire des Naskapi," 225. The translation is mine.

mental states in which some parties reportedly arrived in Schefferville at the end of that summer.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Naskapi had been in contact with European traders for over a century, it was not until 1949 that the federal government became directly involved with their internal affairs and provided welfare services such as relief assistance, health support, and some materials like clothing and canoes.¹⁸⁶ In 1954, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources opened a day school in Fort Chimo, and between twenty-five to thirty Naskapi children attended the establishment that summer.¹⁸⁷ Industrial incursions into Naskapi territories, on the other hand, slightly preceded this more direct form of government intervention. Starting in 1946, several companies, including Norancon Exploration, Fort Chimo Mines, Quebec Labrador Development, and Fenimore Iron Mines, were involved in exploring various geological formations across the Ungava peninsula and the Labrador iron trough, and offered wage labour opportunities for the Naskapi.¹⁸⁸ Tommy Einish recalls that some of those companies employed a few Naskapi men and that his father participated in rock sampling with other members of his community at the Otelnuke Lake deposit, near Caniapiscaw River.¹⁸⁹ According to Naskapi historian Marc Hammond, the employment of the Naskapi with these exploration activities was very casual, and their “work as guides to

186. Cooke, “Histoire des Naskapi,” 220-223.

187. J. P. B. Ostrander, memorandum for file, Ottawa, January 24, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Iles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

188. Neal, “Iron Deposits,” 114.

189. Tommy Einish (2009: N-24b), interview by author, Kawawachikamach, September 24, 2009.

mining parties was quite limited both as to season and number of seasons.”¹⁹⁰ Several of these individuals had previously been involved in other marginal labour activities, particularly starting in the early 1940s, when the United States Air Force built an aerial base near Fort Chimo, on the western shore of Koksoak River.¹⁹¹ After the Americans abandoned the base in 1948, a few employment opportunities remained available with exploration parties or with the infrequent freighting of supplies between Fort Chimo and Fort Mckenzie.¹⁹² But as David Swappie summarizes, “there were hardly any jobs in Kuujjuaq [Fort Chimo],” and wage labour remained generally quite sporadic for Naskapi families in the period leading up to their relocation to Schefferville.¹⁹³

In fact, the government’s largely unsuccessful attempt to relocate the Naskapi back to Fort Mckenzie in 1953 (see footnote 37 of this chapter) appears to have been motivated by the idea that these families should return to their former prewar economy based on hunting and trapping, given the considerable lack of job opportunities in the region.¹⁹⁴ It appears that by at least October 1955, a new policy of removal was discussed amongst federal officials, who argued then that “in order to gain livelihood by trapping, these Indians must be removed from the Fort Chimo area and established away from the

190. Marc Hammond, e-mail message to author, June 4, 2009.

191. Yves Cartier, “Fort Chimo, carrefour de l’est de l’Ungava,” *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* 9, no. 17 (1964): 67.

192. Paul F. Wilkinson and Denise Geoffroy, “A Parcel of Fools: Economic Development and the Naskapi of Quebec” (report submitted to the Native Economic Development Programme by the Naskapi Development Corporation, August 1989), 71.

193. David Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview by author, Kawawachikamach, September 25, 2009.

194. Cooke, “Histoire des Naskapi,” 222.

coastal barrens."¹⁹⁵ Once again, the government considered their relocation from Fort Chimo to Fort Mckenzie a possible option, but this time they also included the novel and much more dramatic possibility of a transfer to Schefferville or even to Sept-Îles.

In early 1956, Indian Affairs agents organized a meeting in Fort Mckenzie with sixteen Naskapi men in order present the outline of this project.¹⁹⁶ The individuals who travelled to the assembly made it clear that they preferred to relocate to Sept-Îles rather than Schefferville, in part because they hoped that their community would gain access to better services and schooling there. Regional authorities considered this option seriously well into the month of March,¹⁹⁷ but higher officials in Ottawa soon overturned their decision. On April 25, Ottawa bureaucrats univocally stated that the Naskapi people were now advised to move "to the vicinity of Wakuach Lake," just north of Schefferville.¹⁹⁸ From the officials' point of view, an important rationale for this resettlement was the fact that relief operations and transportation into Ungava had become too expensive, and that

195. H. R. Conn, General Supervisor, Wildlife and Fisheries, to Superintendent of Welfare, Ottawa, October 4, 1955, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

196. G. H. Roy, Assistant Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Indian Affairs Branch, to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Québec, March 5, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

197. R. L. Bélanger to Superintendent of Agencies, Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, March 7, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

198. L. Brown, Acting Director, Indian Affairs Branch, to Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, April 25, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC. See also Cooke, "Histoire des Naskapi," 227.

it was time for the Naskapi to get off this "gratuitous indiscriminate relief"¹⁹⁹ in order to move toward self-sufficiency based on industrial wage employment.²⁰⁰ Tommy Einish remembers quite clearly that Indian Affairs authorities made these motivations explicit as they attempted to push their relocation plan: "The government said: 'The child allowance, the other benefits from the government, and the trading post that is there for your survival, for trading supplies and everything, they will be closed, and you have to move over there, to Schefferville.'"²⁰¹ This colonial policy readily dismissed the preference of the Naskapi to relocate to the St. Lawrence coast (although to be fair, it appears that this choice was not completely unanimous either, since some individuals had also "expressed an interest in a proposed migration to more lucrative trapping grounds south of Fort Mckenzie, approximately sixty miles north of Knob Lake."²⁰²) In order to make their plan more appealing in the eyes of Naskapi families, Indian Affairs agents promised "a school, housing, and an infirmary equipped with a nurse, as in Chimo,"²⁰³ in addition to several decades of lucrative wage employment.

By early June, there was still enough confusion or reluctance on the part of the Naskapi surrounding their move to Wakuach Lake that Indian Affairs agent R. L.

199. J. G. Walton, Northern Service Officer, to B. G. Sivertz, n.p., ca. winter 1955-56, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

200. G. H. Roy to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Québec, March 5, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

201. T. Einish (2009: N-24b), interview.

202. J. G. Walton to B. G. Sivertz, n.p., ca. winter 1955-56, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

203. Rev. Gavin White, cited in Cooke, "Histoire des Naskapi," 230. The translation is mine.

Boulanger felt compelled to write directly to the Sept-Îles Agency to order that "we are not to interfere with the removal of these Indians for now, except that we must stop them from coming down to Seven Islands." Immediately contradicting himself, Boulanger also indicated, in typical paternalistic fashion, that the Naskapi were now in full control of their destiny, and that "once they will have made up their mind to settle permanently at a definite place, then and only we will work out plans for their future."²⁰⁴ These plans, however, had clearly been made for them already. As it turned out, the move to Wakuach was organized surprisingly quickly. Merely a week after Boulanger issued his directive to the Sept-Îles office, roughly half of the Naskapi families assembled at the post in Fort Chimo in order to get the supplies issued by the authorities and, being apparently "agreeable," they prepared to set out south.²⁰⁵

The first parties left Fort Chimo on June 23 by canoe. By mid-July, twenty individuals had arrived at Knob Lake, while a second group—the "main body" of twenty-three Naskapi families—were still en route.²⁰⁶ Indian Affairs officials expected these

204. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent, Seven Islands Agency, Québec, June 11, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

205. Fort Chimo detachment, wireless message sent to G Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Ottawa), Fort Chimo, June 18, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

206. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent of Welfare, Québec, July 17, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC. See also Cooke, "Histoire des Naskapi," 227. Cooke does not mention the twenty individuals who were already at Knob Lake by mid-July. Indeed, this information provided by Boulanger seems quite extraordinary and should be treated with care, considering that the travels to Schefferville generally took over one month. Désy, for instance, reports that "a first group was constituted in June, and a second in July. Sammy Paschene drew on a map his travels from Fort Chimo up to Wakuach Lake: he says that it took him sixty-

families to trickle in at Wakuach Lake through early August, although they apparently left out of the relocation planning the crucial issue of how to guarantee these people's means of subsistence once they were to settle at their new location. In mid-July, when the majority of Naskapi families were well underway, Indian Affairs officials were still indecisive as to which regional agency would be responsible for looking after them at Wakuach Lake. In fact, it is possible that neither the IOC nor the town agents at Schefferville were even warned of their imminent arrival in the region.²⁰⁷ By that time, only a few families, most of them related to the seven male individuals who were employed with a surveying party in the Fort Mckenzie region, were left in Fort Chimo.²⁰⁸ In order to accelerate the relocation of the straggling families, Chimo officials announced that because they were already receiving a sufficient income via their relatives' surveying wages, relief would be suspended for them for the remainder of the summer.²⁰⁹ This strategy was largely implemented in vain, however, in part because the Indian Affairs' organization and communication of the relocation plan was improvised enough that the Naskapi surveyors who were out in the bush only became aware that the move had taken place at the end of the season, after they got back to their base camp near Fort Mckenzie.

five days of walking and that thirteen portages were necessary." Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économie," 26. The translation is mine.

207. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent of Welfare, Québec, July 17, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC; Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, "History."

208. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent of Welfare, Québec, July 17, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

209. R. W. Green, Fort Chimo detachment, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Transfer of Indians from Fort Chimo, P.Q., to Wakuach Lake, P.Q.," report, Fort Chimo, July 8, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Iles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

Only then did they learn that most of the Naskapi group had already packed up and deserted the Ungava region.²¹⁰ At this point, late in the month of August, the remaining Naskapi surveyors immediately set out for Fort Chimo and, with their relatives who had been waiting for them, boarded a plane that the surveying company had made available in order to be transported down to Schefferville.²¹¹

Several Naskapi individuals still discuss their experience of the relocation with quite a bit of resentment, interpreting it as a coerced removal by the authorities, who relied on exaggerated promises and threats of cutting relief and other services in order to successfully carry out their policy. Joe Guanish makes it clear that “we were forced to move here. They told us that we were going to work, that we will be able to hunt and trap and fish at the same time, and that our kids will go to school, that we will live a good life. So we came here, we were forced to.”²¹² But despite this interpretation, a few Naskapi who relocated by foot and canoe in fact remember the four-hundred-mile journey quite fondly, sometimes even describing it as a cultural celebration and an important moment in their people’s history. One elder who moved with his grandparents when he was about seven years old recounts the travels to Schefferville with nostalgia. For him, the trip turned out to be the last time he had a chance to use the traditional hunting route. Having

210. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview; Joe Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview by author, Kawawachikamach, September 25, 2009.

211. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview; R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent of Welfare, Québec, August 24, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC. There were still fifty-one Naskapi in Fort Chimo at the time, according to Boulanger. Cooke, meanwhile, writes that “at the beginning of September, two chartered DC-3 brought to Knob Lake the fifty-six Naskapi who were still at Fort Chimo.” Cooke, “Histoire des Naskapi,” 228. The translation is mine.

212. J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview.

since moved to a more sedentary lifestyle and being busy with his daily employment as a policeman in his community, he has not gone back on the route ever since.²¹³ Beyond his expressed frustration with regard to the manner in which the lead-up to the relocation process unfolded, Joe Guanish explains in the following terms the actual journey down to Schefferville:

It was a good trip, I liked it. We used to make liquor, with berries, yeast and everything, for us to drink after a hard day of paddling. Then when we woke up, our muscles were not stiff. Then we just paddled again, and we drank the liquor, because it relaxed us. At that time the young people were dancing, the Indians were dancing, and the elders were playing the drums. During the move, on the way here, we used to celebrate.²¹⁴

In spite of the extreme uncertainty of their future life at Wakuach Lake, these Naskapi elders thus conserve nice memories of how their group maintained a rather optimistic outlook during their travels, explaining that some individuals in fact saw this moment as a unique opportunity to perform ancient practices and reaffirm relationships with meaningful Naskapi places.

The families that set out from Fort Chimo at the end of June, comprising of about one hundred individuals, eventually settled by late August, but they ended up on the shores of Knob Lake rather than Wakuach Lake, as Indian Affairs had originally envisioned.²¹⁵ Indeed, despite being issued rations at the HBC post before heading

213. Interview (2009: N-24a).

214. J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview.

215. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent of Welfare, Québec, August 24, 1956, *The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency*, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

down,²¹⁶ many encountered “great difficulties” on the trip, and some members of the group had to travel all the way to Schefferville to warn authorities that about forty women, elders, and children were in trouble at a small lake just north of Wakuach.²¹⁷ At the edge of starvation, the individuals who found themselves in difficulty had to leave their equipment behind and were quickly rescued by a RCAF helicopter and three other airplanes before being sent out for medical attention.²¹⁸ Following the evacuation, the Naskapi quickly reorganized themselves as best as they could in the vicinity of Knob Lake, near the train station where they were able to build small shelters with scavenged construction materials.²¹⁹

While the incredible difficulties encountered during the southbound travels may seem to contradict more uplifting, and even nostalgic, memories of the foot and canoe journey from Fort Chimo, Philip Einish reminds us that the relocation to Schefferville is a complicated story that was experienced differently by every family and every individual. “Some people were very tired here, hunger was coming in, and they had to be evacuated

216. R. W. Green, “Transfer of Indians from Fort Chimo, P.Q., to Wakuach Lake, P.Q.,” report, Fort Chimo, August 25, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

217. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent of Welfare, Québec, August 24, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

218. R. W. Green, “Transfer of Indians,” Fort Chimo, August 25, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC. See also Cooke, “Histoire des Naskapi,” 228; and Désy, “Acculturation et socio-économie,” 26, who only mentions the use of one Northern Wings DC-3 in relation to the Wakuach Lake rescue.

219. Matthew Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview by author, Kawawachikamach, September 24, 2009.

by float planes," Einish explains. "But some people arrived here in their canoes."²²⁰ On September 18, a RCMP divisional officer informed the Ottawa Commissioner that he had been notified by the Fort Chimo detachment, ten days earlier, that "the entire band of Fort Chimo Indians had now been transferred to Knob Lake District."²²¹ Despite the botched planning and the obstacles that stood in the way of the removal process, federal authorities appeared satisfied, in the end, that they had achieved the best possible outcome for the Naskapi in their long and difficult march toward civilization. According to Superintendent Lacombe,

all the Fort Chimo Indians are presently at John Lake and I think that for the advancement of this tribe it is preferable to see them where they are right now, because they are near mining companies and other companies and have a good chance to be employed, because they are not far from the doctor and can receive emergency treatments in the Iron Ore Company hospital ..., because it will be easier for the Department to find adequate teachers in this area and because they are not very far from their hunting grounds if they decide to go hunting.²²²

Three months earlier, before undertaking their arduous travels at the beginning of the summer in Fort Chimo, the Naskapi elders met with the rest of the group and pleaded for solidarity within their community. Matthew Mameamskum recalls that during this meeting,

220. P. B. Einish (2009: N-23a), interview.

221. W. J. Fitzsimmons, Inspector, G Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, September 18, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC. This presumably includes the families who were involved in surveying activities, although that is not explicitly stated in the wireless message.

222. J. A. G. Lacombe, Superintendent, Seven Islands Agency, Indian Affairs Branch, to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Indian Affairs Branch, September 12, 1956, Sept-Îles, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

the elders told us not to go our separate ways, but just to come together and be together; even if there are jobs, we should never to go in another direction. We should just to be in one place, all together. The Naskapi should be together as a nation. That's what the elders told us, before we left by plane and by boat. This is what happened: everyone is in one place. We all came here, where we met.²²³

Indeed, by the early fall of 1956, the Naskapi had turned a long page in the history of their occupation of the Ungava peninsula, when they reunited at last, on the shores of a small unknown lake, following a very turbulent summer.

The opening of Nouveau-Québec through the exploration and the early industrialization of Indigenous homelands, the corresponding growth of wage labour opportunities for guides, surveyors, and labourers, and the communities' respective sedentary resettlements at the midcentury exhibit a wealth of microhistories that bring to the forefront the socio-economic, cultural, and ecological complexity that characterized this important transitional moment for the modern Québec nation-state and for Innu and Naskapi worlds in particular. Of the large infrastructure programs established in the region, Adeline Ashini remarked that the railroad generated the most significant changes, thus reiterating, in a retrospective way and from a very situated point of view, Hewitson's optimistic announcement made in 1954 to the effect that this new mode of transportation would most certainly "guide the development of Ungava." "All these years before the railway," Ashini explains, "I remember them with great nostalgia. When I think about this era, I tell myself how I was doing well with my parents. I was rich, then. How I regretfully reminisce about these years when I never had to sit down with a white person.

223. M. Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview.

If only I could have educated my children as my parents educated me."²²⁴ Yet a close attention given to Innu and Naskapi life stories also reveals a continuous attachment to the harvesting networks that not only preceded but also superseded the establishment of the railroad or the communities' relocation to Schefferville. Still today, many people rely on the ancient footpaths, the canoe routes, or the bush camps, in addition to the train, the airplanes, and the snowmobile trails, to manoeuvre through their expansive hunting grounds in order to nurture social and community relationships and affirm their continued presence across nitassinan. In the context of this early phase of development, the practices of Indigenous actors act as powerful historical reminders of the adjustments made and the responses given by the Innu and the Naskapi to the renewed threats of colonization, paternalism, and assimilation that strongly resurfaced with the postwar iron mining project led by the Iron Ore Company of Canada. As the state-corporate authorities finally switched into production gear, these very threats to Indigenous sovereignty were not about to dissipate.

224. Adeline Ashini, cited in Silberstein, *Innu*, 325. The translation is mine.

CHAPTER TWO

The Surging Rush of Treasure Hunters: Production Years

We must be careful to avoid the development of a dependency complex amongst them. As soon as possible, and to an increasing extent, these Indians should be expected to fend for themselves in all respects.

—J. H. Gordon, Superintendent of Welfare, February 5, 1957

I worked all my life, all the time.¹

—Ben McKenzie, September 3, 2009

On August 2, 1954, the first cargo of iron ore was loaded onto the freighter *Hawaiian* and left the fishing village of Sept-Îles for the industrial port of Philadelphia.² Maurice Duplessis and Joey Smallwood, who made the trip to Sept-Îles to take part in the opening celebrations, two days earlier, symbolically discharged the first ore cars that launched the flow of minerals.³ The IOC's motivational slogan "Iron Ore by '54," which was aimed to expedite development into the production phase, had become a reality. On the occasion of his ceremonial speech, Duplessis welcomed the presence of foreign capital in Nouveau-Québec and foresaw "an extraordinary source of revenues for the

The subtitle of this chapter paraphrases Maurice Hackman, ed., "Red gold!" *Iron Ore* 3, no. 10 (1957): 2.

1. The translation is mine.

2. Robert Rumily, *Maurice Duplessis et son temps, 1944-1959* (Montréal: Fides, 1973), 2:495.

3. Lawrence McBrearty, Coordonnateur régional, United Steel Workers of America, report produced on the occasion of the Journée du Fer (Schefferville), October 30, 1978, Sept-Îles, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 756 à 758.2, contenant 1982-11-002/35 et 1982-11-002/36, BANQ-CN.

province," thereby reiterating the crucial contribution of his Union nationale government to the realisation of this project.⁴

Two full years of mineral production passed before the Naskapi were able to join "the rich industrial feast" in Schefferville, late in the summer of 1956, when their relocation from Fort Chimo was completed.⁵ But their stay near the shores of Knob Lake was short lived. Before the subarctic winter set in, federal and municipal authorities had them "settled adjacent to the Montagnais" at Lac John, located just a few kilometres outside of the growing mining town, where they were left "to build shacks in any manner they wish as a temporary shelter."⁶ Amidst very harsh living conditions, the two Algonquian groups were forced to coexist side by side for the first time, cramped on a miniscule piece of land, as their transition from an economic system based on hunting for food and for cash to one largely dependent on industrial wage income sharply accelerated.

The government and mining authorities' ethnocentric belief in the superiority of industrial civilisation shaped the encounter of the Innu and the Naskapi with the iron world in Schefferville. This ideology served as the foundation for bureaucratic and corporate policies concerning the participation of Indigenous communities in the

4. Rumily, *Maurice Duplessis*, 2:495. The translation is mine.

5. Robert Duffy, "Bonanza Town's Starving Indians Still a Problem," *The Globe and Mail*, October 4, 1956.

6. Dr. A. Roy, M. Chenier, and J. Skelding, Board of Health, Town of Schefferville, to Dr. P. E. Moore, Indian Affairs Branch, Schefferville, May 21, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, Library and Archives Canada (LAC). By comparison, Désy writes that the move to Lac John only took place in 1957, although she leaves the time of the year unspecified. Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économie," 51. In this regard, see also Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 82-83.

production period. Recognizing the challenge of integrating Indigenous groups into industrial society and motivated by the practical desire to sever their dependency on public aid, federal Indian Affairs and National Employment Services agents worked zealously, particularly through the late 1950s and early 1960s, to ensure that Innu and Naskapi families would join the wage workforce. As such, their main goal with the employment program was to turn “these Indians into a more self-dependent group of useful Canadian citizens.”⁷ Meanwhile, the mining industry sought to take advantage of a flexible yet readily accessible and stable pool of unskilled labour, with the apparent approval of local union representatives. These various objectives thus combined to dictate the conditions for the integration of Indigenous communities into the industrial order—conditions which, in practice, further led to their marginalisation and to the disruption of their livelihoods.

At no point in the history of iron mining in Schefferville did state or industrial agents appear to have made serious efforts to facilitate the coexistence of wage employment with other important Innu and Naskapi practices such as subsistence hunting. Yet these practices continued to occupy a central place in people’s lives throughout the period of mineral production. Wage labour doubtlessly gained economic importance as a means of subsistence for Indigenous families, who relied on it as a way to gain independence from the paternalistic state, to cover the rising cost of land-based activities, and to purchase other goods that had become desirable. At the same time, when labour opportunities suddenly became unavailable, when the Innu or the Naskapi deemed

7. R. L. Boulanger, “Report on inspection,” Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

them unsatisfactory, or when important annual hunting periods arrived, they did not hesitate to return to their life on the territory. This persistent fluidity of movement between the mine and the bush was a source of constant concern not only for mining officials, conscious of maintaining a strict control over its Indigenous labour capital, but also (and perhaps most significantly) for government officials, who worried that people's "employment is erratic as they continue to engage sporadically in hunting and trapping."⁸

In order to grasp the full extent of this coexistence of Indigenous worlds in constant interaction during the production years, this chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the socio-economic conditions in Lac John, as well as an explanation of the historical circumstances that led to the Indigenous communities' relocation to Matimekush in the early 1970s. The evolution of Innu and Naskapi engagement with wage labour through the period 1954 to 1983 is discussed in the second section. In particular, the challenging nature of the working conditions at the mine, as well as Indigenous workers' coping strategies with regard to discriminatory company policies, bureaucratic plans, and union agreements, are examined. Land-based practices, which both groups sought to preserve and actualize during the production phase of the mining operations, are investigated in the last section. Overall, it is argued in this central chapter that both domains of Innu and Naskapi livelihoods—in short, mining and hunting—should be understood from the perspective of a people's sustenance of individual and collective practices, the rich details of which cannot be reduced to narrowly conceived

8. H. M. Jones, Director, Indian Affairs Branch, to Deputy Minister, Ottawa, January 22, 1960, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

reactions against the dominant realities of an industrializing world. The multiple experiences of the Innu and the Naskapi in fact demonstrate that people also continued to construct life projects that were situated at the periphery of—and in some cases, quite independently from—iron ore production.

Socio-geographic Context at Schefferville

The Company proudly announced employment for ninety-nine years. And during this time, while they were building the town, dug holes here and there, us, the Indians, what did we receive for our nicely devastated territories? A few pieces of wood from their construction sites, which we were forced to use to build our own shacks! And when we finished these shacks, they told us: "Now you have to leave for Matimekush!" They talked to us like that—on our land! But we never wanted and never did move.⁹

—Annie, *Innu*, 340

Until 1972, the Innu and the Naskapi co-inhabited a small piece of land on the shores of Lac John, through a period that straddled seasons of relatively high and low levels of mineral production and employment. In spite of sporadic bursts of prosperity at the mine, both communities generally remember the Lac John period as very challenging, when people went through "a lot of misery" that was in large part due to the lack of basic infrastructure and services available on the settlement.¹⁰ Housing conditions were particularly dire, both for the Innu, who lived in the small shacks, some of which they had built at Pearce Lake, moved to Lac John, and fixed up; and for the Naskapi, who also constructed tiny dwellings before gradually transferring into overcrowded houses

9. The translation is mine.

10. M. L. André (2009: 1-17b), interview. The translation is mine.

provided by Indian Affairs in the early 1960s (figure 6).¹¹ During the first few years, people had to go out on the land to fetch water and wood, sometimes after long labouring days at the mine,¹² and as such women regularly had to take charge of these demanding chores while their husband toiled for salaries.¹³



Figure 6. Homes built to house Naskapi individuals relocated from Fort Chimo to Lac John, ca. 1960.

Source: Fonds Pauline Laurin, Collection personnelle de Pauline Laurin (1949-60), P60, S1, SS5, contenant 2007-02-001/1, photographie 23, scan, BANQ-CN.

When government officials declared the freshwater at Lac John unfit for human consumption as a result of the pollution that originated from the settlement, the residents were left with no choice but to buy their water from a non-Indigenous resident of

11. Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économique," 51; Kapesh, *Maudite sauvagesse*, 187-195; Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, "History." According to Désy, some people still inhabited tents on the shores of Lac John as late as the summer of 1962, when she visited the settlement.

12. Interview (2009: I-29a).

13. Interview by author (2009: I-28d), Matimekush, September 28, 2009.

Schefferville who drove around in his truck filled with large metal containers. This represented a very heavy economic and cultural burden to bear for people in order to access a resource that was fetched from their own territory and brought to their settlement by a stranger.¹⁴ In fact, An Antane Kapeshe remembers this as a determining moment in her people's history: "We understand the reason why we went through so much misery after we moved to Lac John: that was the moment when the white man started to sell us our water. ... But the water that he sold us, he gathered from our own lakes."¹⁵ As another Innu individual illustrates in striking terms, several people were particularly disenchanted by the fact that the authorities provided limited resources to help them build adequate infrastructure at Lac John, at the same time as the mining company was putting up brand new town houses for its employees in Schefferville, equipped with full services and personal lawns. "The company was building new houses while we were living in shacks," he explains. "I remember when I went to fetch water in the lake, while people who came from the south had their own house, with drinking water and electricity. To be equal, the company could have built our houses as well."¹⁶

In the late 1960s, government agents sought to close the Lac John reserve and agreed to move the two communities to a new piece of land (which would become Matimekush) contiguous to the town of Schefferville, back on the shores of Pearce Lake. By then, the authorities recognized that the living conditions at Lac John were untenable,

14. E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview; Interview (2009: I-01a); Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économie," 53-54.

15. Kapeshe, *Maudite sauvagesse*, 195. The translation is mine.

16. Interview (2009: I-29a). The translation is mine.

and their decision to relocate the communities was motivated by the idea that people needed proper houses and basic services, which would be more easily and more cheaply connected to the nearby municipal infrastructure from Pearce Lake.¹⁷ For Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Jean Chrétien, the new living quarters represented the culmination of Aboriginal integration into the modern lifestyle, particularly as they might provide “for Indian families a good communitarian base that would favour the multiplication of employment opportunities” and give them “the means to become educated and earn a living.”¹⁸ But this new chapter of coerced relocations in fact seeded discord within the communities, particularly on the Innu side, where several families opposed the move for both practical and principled reasons. On the one hand, people disagreed with the choice for the new reserve site and found that the apartment buildings to be built at Pearce Lake were culturally inappropriate since (among other factors) people would be tightly packed into row-housing units. Marie-Marthe Gabriel compares this unknown situation to the transformations that followed the arrival of the train between Sept-Îles and Schefferville, two decades earlier: “The apartment blocks, it didn’t work for the Indians, because we never lived like that. The blocks were like the train, you didn’t know about them then.”¹⁹

17. The federal authorities were still operating under the assumption that the Lac John water was unfit for human consumption. It is unclear whether the water was in fact ever tested (Désy argues that it was), but it appears that some families—in particular those who chose to stay in Lac John—refused to believe the government narrative about the polluted water. Marie-Marthe Gabriel (2009: I-01c), interview by author, Lac John, October 1, 2009; Désy, “Acculturation et socio-économie,” 53.

18. Jean Chrétien, cited in “Nouvelles résidences familiales pour le Indiens de Schefferville (Québec),” press release, Government of Canada, Ottawa, March 11, 1969, Fonds Gérard Lefrançois, Schefferville, P7, D16, contenant 1989-00-000/1, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

19. M. M. Gabriel (2009: I-01c), interview. The translation is mine.

On the other hand, residents of Lac John also questioned the cavalier attitude of the government, which rejected the results of a popular referendum regarding the location of the new Matimekush reserve and instead simply informed people ex post facto about the bureaucrats' final decision. Grégoire Gabriel remembers that the government explained it roughly in the following terms: "You, you take all your things, and you're going over there, you're moving back to town."²⁰ At the time of the move in 1972, as many as a dozen Innu families decided to remain in their houses at Lac John and watched helplessly as the federal authorities burned down the empty dwellings that were left behind by the relocated families.²¹ Marie-Marthe Gabriel, whose family resisted the move to Matimekush, remembers vividly the elders who led the fiercest opposition to the relocation project. She relates with a touch of admiration the response of one Innu who addressed a government agent and brushed aside the familiar Indian Affairs threats of cutting down the limited services that were in place, in order to force their eviction:

"I've never seen a tractor [used for snow clearing] of my entire life. Do you know what the tractor is for me? I used to leave from Sept-Îles, and I came all the way up here by foot. That's what a tractor is for me. And your electricity, you can keep it for yourself." He took off his shirt and ripped it apart; he covered it with animal grease and lit it on fire. "That's what electricity is for us." The government agent looked at him and didn't say anything. "Keep it for yourself, your electricity, your telephone; keep it for your white people."

Of these Innu who, as a group, resisted the move to Matimekush, Gabriel remarks:

The Indians that were here, they have already passed. But they were Indians that we will never forget, because they were very strong, those that stayed here at Lac John.²²

20. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

21. M. M. Gabriel (2009: I-01c), interview; Kapesch, *Maudite sauvagesse*, 211; Silberstein, *Innu*, 247.

22. M. M. Gabriel (2009: I-01c), interview. The translation is mine.

For Marie-Marthe Gabriel, as for her husband, these events leading up to the Lac John removal demonstrated once again the officials' paternalist attitude toward Innu and Naskapi people, whom they repeatedly "treated as children" during this period.²³

Once in Matimekush, the Innu and the Naskapi who went ahead with the relocation were packed into six large apartment complexes, which totalled over one hundred units, and both groups continued to live side by side, even more closely than before. The resettlement also brought them into daily contact with the non-Indigenous population living in Schefferville, which led to a substantial increase in a wealth of social problems. People gained access to services and public spaces in town, but many establishments, such as one of the most popular bars, the swimming pool, and the library, remained for a long time segregated places, where different regulations were in effect depending on one's ethnic background.²⁴

Overall, the failed legacy of the relocation away from Lac John has negatively tainted memories of the Matimekush period, remembered as a time when people were severely discontent with their living conditions and leading them, in retrospect, to heavily criticize the choice for the new reserve site established on the shores of Pearce Lake. This is especially the case since, as Joe Guanish argues, the government continuously refused to increase the housing capacity despite the obvious needs to accommodate a growing

23. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

24. Interview by author (2009: I-20a), Matimekush, September 20, 2009.

Indigenous population.²⁵ Others remember quite bitterly the very poor construction of the new units and the overall lack of amelioration in the quality of life at Matimekush:

Through the fate of my grandparents and my parents, I learned what it meant to be pillaged. The misery of the Lac John residents, while Schefferville reaped the fruits of its prosperity; the scandal of Matimekush, in 1972—of the new dwellings built on marshy terrain, not even adapted to climactic conditions... We were living in a jail. For fifteen years, it was real misery. The buildings were not insulated for cold. The pipes were freezing. Drugs and alcohol erupted everywhere. We were left on our own.²⁶

At the same time, some new residents were satisfied finally to live within at least thinly insulated walls and be able to access basic services such as the small hospital that was constructed nearby. "We were comfortable in a house," one Innu elder recalls today.²⁷ For IOC workers, more specifically, the relocation that brought them and their family substantially closer to the mine sites was also a mixed blessing. Transportation to the mine, which had been quite difficult from the more distant settlement of Lac John, since people regularly had to walk several kilometres to get to work, became easier for them in Matimekush. However, as Hammond highlights, Indigenous miners still had to travel regularly by foot the shorter distance to the mine, across or around Pearce Lake, depending on the season, since the "IOC shuttles were confined to mine property."²⁸

In short, the story of the relocation to Matimekush in the early 1970s is remembered by the local communities as an uneven story of modestly improved living

25. J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview.

26. Réal McKenzie, cited in Silberstein, *Innu*, 254. The translation is mine.

27. Interview (2009: I-28a). The translation is mine.

28. Marc Hammond, *Naskapi Emergent: Indianization in the North of Quebec before 1956*, manuscript in progress.

conditions, increasingly complicated social relationships, partially fulfilled government promises, and new iterations of the age-old paternalistic attitudes and pervasive colonial bureaucracies. The mostly abandoned and decrepit apartment infrastructure—for which only two of the original six buildings are still standing and inhabited by Innu families today (figure 7)—are incontestable testimony to the mitigated success of Indian Affairs' short-sighted vision regarding the long-term welfare of the two Indigenous communities. As Chrétien and other government officials asserted at the time, however, this relocation was supposed to provide the Innu and the Naskapi more direct access to the putative benefits of industrial society in the form of labour at the mine.



Figure 7. Original apartment building built for the Matimekush reserve in the early 1970s. Photograph by author, September 2009.

Evolution of Wage Labour and Working Conditions at the Mine

It will probably take a generation or more before a majority of these Indians accepts the discipline inherent in employment for wages.

—H. M. Jones, Director, Indian Affairs Branch, July 16, 1957

The evolution of Innu and Naskapi employment at the mine and the ability of Indigenous workers to “accept the discipline” of an emerging industrial order in Schefferville were closely tied to external factors such as the political economy of mining and the changing conditions of production, as well as the corresponding need of the authorities for casual labourers. In practice, the integration of Innu and Naskapi people into the wage economy turned out to be a highly nonlinear process marred by constant setbacks that were intimately related to the cyclical uncertainties of iron production (figure 8). Between 1954 and 1983, ten annual production periods were characterized by reductions in ore shipments of at least 20 percent in year to year levels, with devastating consequences for the vulnerable Indigenous workforce (whose oscillation cannot in fact be satisfyingly captured with yearly statistics, due to the highly seasonal nature of their involvement with the IOC). Yet if the economic importance of wage employment had already begun to seep into Innu lives prior to 1954, in part as a response to the dwindling fur resources and the instability of pelt prices, after that year wage labour clearly emerged as an attractive pursuit with the prospects—real or imagined—of obtaining work at the mine. By the beginning of the second decade of IOC operations, the company employed, although primarily in a temporary fashion, as many as ninety Indigenous labourers in a single year (1966). Marie-Marthe Gabriel recounts that her husband’s father repeatedly made it clear to them that their family and their community were living through deeply

transformative years, and that it was necessary for them to adapt to this new situation: “He always said: ‘You have to work. Today, the furs are not worth all the hardship.’”²⁹ Another elder from the region explains in his own terms the direct relationship between the difficulty of making a living based on trapping and the growing attraction of wage labour. “The Indians preferred working at the company, because furs were not worth very much,” he recalls. “That’s why the Indians preferred to keep their place at the company rather than being full-time trappers.”³⁰



Figure 8. Annual iron production and estimate of the maximum number of Innu and Naskapi labourers employed permanently or temporarily by the IOC at Schefferville, 1953-83.

Source: Data from J. A. G. Lacombe to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, September 12, 1956, *The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency*, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC; A. Blouin, report on last trip, Sept-Îles, May 8, 1958, *Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services*, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC; L. Morisset to Indian Affairs Branch,

29. M. M. Gabriel (2009: I-01c), interview. The translation is mine.

30. Interview (2009: I-28a). The translation is mine.

Québec, December 9, 1960, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC; C. R. Nadeau to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, August 8, 1962, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC; Indian Affairs Branch, Labour force survey conducted at Schefferville between August 11 and August 19, 1964, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC; in addition to Natural Resources Canada, *Canadian Minerals Yearbook: Annual Report*, 1953-83; Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économie," 64; Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 6, 21; Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," V3; Hammond, "A Socioeconomic Study," 18; Hess, "Native Employment," 60, 67; Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation," 125-126; Thorn, "Adaptation of the Montagnais-Naskapi," 24ff; Vakil, "Impact of Iron Ore," 139-140; Wilkinson and Geoffroy, "A Parcel of Fools," 103-104, 113.

On the Naskapi side, by contrast, fur sales made up the majority of the family income (if we exclude government aid) right up to their move to Schefferville in 1956, in spite of a slumping trapping economy.³¹ For many of these individuals, then, the transition into mining employment and an industrial way of life was much more sudden than among the Innu. As highlighted in the previous chapter, notwithstanding that fur trapping and caribou hunting had become quite difficult in the Ungava region, several people have interpreted their relocation as a coerced removal by state agents; therefore unlike some Innu the Naskapi interviewed as part of this study do not typically describe their migration to Schefferville in terms of personal attraction toward the wage labour opportunities offered by the new mining center.

Jos Dominique recalls that in 1955, the IOC hired several Innu,³² and it appears that up to ten worked there during that summer as well as the following one.³³ As opposed to their debut season, when nine of the ten workers abandoned their jobs before the fall and headed back to Sept-Îles, the Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies

31. Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation," in *Research Paper* 24, 124; Wilkinson and Geoffroy, "A Parcel of Fools," 101.

32. J. Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview.

33. Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 21.

evaluated that the Innu employed by the mining company during the 1956 summer obtained "good success."³⁴ Indian Affairs agents based in Sept-Îles and Québec were generally encouraged by the progress made, going as far as positing that "the employment of the Seven Islands Indians is the best one registered so far in this Agency if we consider that only five or six able-bodied Indians are not presently working and it is simply because they are refusing to go working."³⁵ Encouraged by these preliminary results, the federal authorities appeared confident that in the long run, "the Montagnais will likely all stay there [Schefferville], being on their own trapping grounds and able to secure employment much easier than the Nascopies," who soon joined them on the shores of Lac John.³⁶

Among the Naskapi, as many as ten men worked with different companies in 1956, despite their late arrival in Schefferville from Fort Chimo.³⁷ The next summer, several more individuals worked for the IOC and the local contractors on an informal basis, providing manual labour for the construction of the town infrastructure. Following his brief visit to the Naskapi settlement, Indian Affairs agent R. L. Boulanger noted that "most of the Chimos, with the exception of three or four, are employed now in casual

34. J. A. G. Lacombe to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, September 12, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

35. J. A. G. Lacombe to Indian Affairs Branch, Sept-Îles, September 29, 1956, Indian Affairs Central Registry Files, 1870-1967, Sept-Îles District, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency (1955-57), RG 10, volume 8214, file 379/1-1-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-13759, LAC.

36. R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection made August 9, 10, 11, and 12, 1957 (Schefferville)," Québec, August 15, 1957, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

37. J. A. G. Lacombe to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, September 12, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

work," going so far as predicting that "the prospects for next year are still better if their behaviour remains as it is."³⁸ During the 1957 season, as it turned out, exactly in the middle of a significant period of growth for iron production (1954-59), Schefferville employers provided work for roughly one hundred of the more than seven hundred Indigenous individuals present, an exceptionally high level considering that a labour force survey conducted a few year later identified 126 men as employable individuals.³⁹

Yet despite the fact that Innu and Naskapi wage employment generally increased during the initial five-year period, this evidently did not translate into work for everyone who desired a position at the IOC. In fact, at least four Innu and Naskapi individuals interviewed claim that it was generally quite difficult to be hired at the company, since the IOC initially offered most of the available work to non-Indigenous workers originating from other regions of the country.⁴⁰ One of the elders who recall looking for work at the time attributes this reluctance on the part of the company to hire Innu or Naskapi individuals to deeply-held prejudices amongst high officials: "They didn't want to take Indians because the labour was hard."⁴¹ Consequently, barely more than half of all Innu and Naskapi working individuals drew wage employment from the IOC over the

38. R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection," Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

39. R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection," Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC; L. Morisset, Québec Regional Office, Indian Affairs Branch, to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, December 9, 1960, Sept-Iles District Office, Economic Development, General, Placement of Indian Labour (1957-64), RG 10, volume 8911, file 68/19-3, part 3, LAC. The number of employable men (potential workforce) in 1960 included all men over the age of 15 who were employed, unemployed, hunting, sick, or at school at the time of the survey.

40. J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview; E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview; Interview (2009: I-28a); Interview (2009: N-24a).

41. Interview (2009: I-28a).

course of the 1957 season,⁴² and many people remember these early summers in Schefferville as a time when “there was just nothing to do” but to hunt, fish and camp in the forest.⁴³ It was only some years later that the situation changed when “the mining company started giving jobs to the Naskapi,” as Joe Guanish explains.⁴⁴ Likewise, the RCAF station employed up to 250 people, and although a handful of Naskapi found work there to load and unload the helicopters, “most of [the workers] were recruited from outside Schefferville ... and the station created little employment for the Native or non-Native residents of Schefferville.”⁴⁵

For people who were lucky enough to find work (particularly at the mining company), it could be challenging to adjust to the working life, and the labour conditions generally remained very precarious. This uncertainty resulted from the complex interaction of several factors, which included the seasonal nature of both mining employment and other casual labour, the IOC production slowdowns and the ensuing lay-offs, and the Innu and Naskapi people’s desire to leave work in order to go out on the land. Following the summer season of 1956, for example—a period that optimistic government officials considered successful for Indigenous employment—all Innu workers were either let go by the IOC or left on their own in order to find caribou, “to the great surprise of the foremen.”⁴⁶ By the next summer (1957), many Naskapi also affirmed

42. Grégoire, “Étude sur les travailleurs,” 12.

43. Interview (2009: N-24a).

44. J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview.

45. Wilkinson and Geoffroy, “A Parcel of Fools,” 102.

46. Grégoire, “Étude sur les travailleurs,” 12. The translation is mine.

their desire to go back hunting and trapping in the region of Wakuach Lake, "showing signs of restlessness after an unusual lengthy residence in this one spot."⁴⁷ Living conditions in Lac John were so dire, in particular with regard to basic sanitation, that Indian Affairs agents in fact offered some equipment and rations to support this Naskapi initiative to set out to Wakuach Lake, hoping that it would ease some pressure off the cramped settlement.⁴⁸ (It is unclear whether this demand was formulated by Naskapi individuals who were employed at the mine and who therefore would have expressed a willingness to abandon their paid position.) Contradicting in some ways the Indian Affairs' support for their request to leave for Wakuach Lake, it was also during the same period that the federal authorities began to envisage the construction of a school and a church nearby in order to address the stability problem among the Naskapi.⁴⁹

When the 1957 fall season arrived, the IOC decided to offer permanent work to roughly ten Innu,⁵⁰ but as soon as winter set in, the employment level of this group of workers plummeted and "was at its low [sic] level, due to the fact that the mining is not

47. R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection," Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

48. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent, Seven Islands Agency, Québec, October 4, 1957, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

49. J. H. Gordon, Superintendent of Welfare, Indian Affairs Branch, memorandum to Director, Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa, August 6, 1957, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

50. Grégoire, "Impact du développement minier," III3.

operating" at that time of the year.⁵¹ Illustrating the rapidly changing nature of employment opportunities available at the mine, a federal agent based in Sept-Îles reported only a few weeks later, in the spring of 1958, that by then "most of the employable Indians are working for the Iron Ore Company."⁵² Notwithstanding this great seasonal variability, however, employment generally expanded in Schefferville in the early summers of operation (1954-59), as more Innu families arrived in the region in hope of finding a job. After the 1956 fall season, over 150 Innu decided to spend the winter in Schefferville instead of travelling back to Uashat or Malietenam, despite the fact that everyone was without work at the time. Already, by 1959, the Innu population in Schefferville had roughly doubled and began to stabilize (figure 9).⁵³

51. J. A. G. Lacombe, report to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, March 13, 1958, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

52. A. Blouin, Assistant Superintendent, Seven Islands Agency, Indians Affairs Branch, "Report on last trip to Schefferville (April 24 to May 7)," Sept-Îles, May 8, 1958, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

53. Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 12.

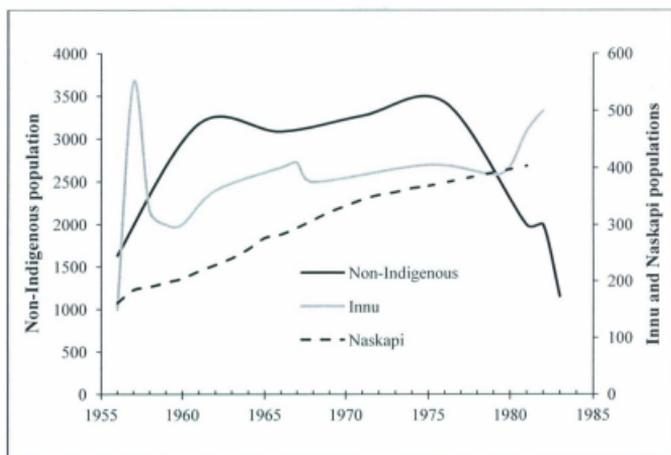


Figure 9. Indigenous and non-Indigenous population at Schefferville, 1956-83.

Source: Data from R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection," Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926; J. A. G. Lacombe, report to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, March 13, 1958, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC; F. Gendron, "Rapport sur les projets" to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q; in addition to Barbeau, "Schefferville," 31; Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Québec," 137; Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économie," 36; Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 21; Hammond, "A Socioeconomic Study," 7-8; Hess, "Native Employment," 65; Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation," 124; Vakil, "Impact of Iron Ore," 140; Vallières, *Des Mines et des hommes*, 367; Wolfe, "Schefferville," 199.

The unionization process

At the end of 1957, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) made a breakthrough in the Côte-Nord region and acquired the Canadian Labour Congress's bargaining unit in Schefferville. Despite earlier warnings that the IOC "would fight the United Steel Workers of America tooth and nails," the syndicalism giant succeeded in obtaining for its members a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), which was

established in 1958.⁵⁴ In theory, the CBA also covered Innu and Naskapi employees, but in practice it contributed to further their marginalization within the industrial society. Most significantly, a schooling level equivalent to Grade 9, combined with success at technical written exams, became part of the requirements to gain permanent employment at the company. These conditions (which did not apply retroactively to those few employees who had already gained permanency the previous year) strongly penalized Indigenous workers, who had very little formal schooling and could barely read or write the colonial languages when the union agreement was established.⁵⁵

In spite of these significant restrictions, it remained possible for the IOC to recruit Innu and Naskapi individuals. Under the CBA, the company could in fact hire these workers before laying them off at the end of every work cycle of sixty-five days, thereby inhibiting their hope of gaining permanent employment status (in which case they would be required to meet the minimum educational conditions established by the bargaining agreement). Depending on the production requirements and the amount of work available at the mine, the company was able to rehire them (sometimes immediately) and continue this practice until the end of the mining season, which normally ran from the months of

54. C. McManus, General Manager, Iron Ore Company of Canada, cited in J. MacKenzie, Canadian Labour Congress, to President, Canadian Labour Congress, n.p., July 16, 1956, Canadian Labour Congress fonds, Organization Department files, Transfers files, Schefferville Iron Miners' Association, Québec: Organizing Activities, Correspondence (1956-57), MG 28, series 1103, file 27, LAC. The collective bargaining agreement was established in 1958.

55. The average Innu of working age held 1.9 year of formal schooling by 1964 (this excludes students and individuals for which the schooling level was unknown or unaccounted for—most commonly, unemployed women—but it includes the three women who were working at the time of the survey). Indian Affairs Branch, Labour force survey conducted at Schefferville between August 11 and August 19, 1964, Sept-Îles District Office, Economic Development, General, Placement of Indian Labour (1957-64), RG 10, volume 8911, file 68/19-3, part 3, LAC.

For the Naskapi, this figure was still as low as 5.7 years in 1983; it includes both women (6.6 years) and men (4.8 years). Hess, "Native Employment," 59.

May through October. These Indigenous employees constituted a special class of temporary labourers, known as *employees on trial*, who served under these conditions as a readily available pool of casual workers in which the IOC could “draw according to its needs.”⁵⁶ At the time, a company liaison officer offered a candid justification for this practice, arguing that he was not the representative of a charity organisation, but rather that of a large conglomerate obligated to maximize production. In the context where the “Indians were not corresponding to the norms established by the Company” (such as basic educational requirements), the IOC therefore had to lay them off consistently to refrain them from automatically gaining permanency status, with the outcome that most of these workers, “except for about ten, were not given work with any responsibility.”⁵⁷ As Armand MacKenzie argues today, this resulted in a highly segmented and hierarchical workforce, within which “the company gave the positions that were better paid, most accessible, most stable, most secure, and least difficult, to the English, and then to the French. After that, they thought about the immigrants: the Poles, the Italians... Finally, it was the Aboriginals.”⁵⁸ In this inverted pyramid, where Innu and Naskapi workers were less numerous than non-Indigenous workers by a factor of about twenty (figure 10), Indigenous employees generally performed the least desirable and most arduous temporary tasks, “at the lowest level in the job hierarchy.”⁵⁹

56. Grégoire, “Étude sur les travailleurs,” 14. The translation is mine.

57. M. Desprès, Liaison Officer, Iron Ore Company of Canada, cited in R. L. Boulanger to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, May 11, 1961, Sept-Iles District Office, Economic Development, General, Placement of Indian Labour (1957-64), RG 10, volume 8911, file 68/19-3, part 3, LAC.

58. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

59. Hess, “Native Employment,” 53.

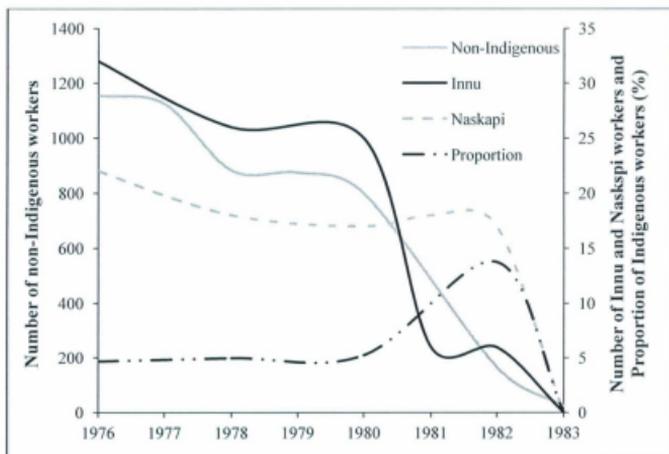


Figure 10. Estimate of the maximum number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers employed at the Schefferville mine, 1976-83.

Source: Data from Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Quebec," 137; Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 21; Hammond, "A Socioeconomic Study," 18; Hess, "Native Employment," 60; "La fermeture de Schefferville," Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN; Vakil, "Impact of Iron Ore," 139-140; Wilkinson and Geoffroy, "A Parcel of Fools," 103-104.

When asked about their employment at the mine, most Innu and Naskapi interviewed simply describe their position as that of "general labourer." Frequently, they also add that they handled a shovel, illustrating through this tool the monotony and austerity of the work that was assigned to them. People regularly talk about the difficulty of their daily routine with the company as they toiled away putting up electricity poles, making cement, removing the snow, carrying things back and forth, drilling, sampling and using dynamite, watching over straps and other parts of instruments, oiling and repairing the machinery, fitting pipes and maintaining the pipelines, operating the rock crusher, loading and unloading the train and the planes, keeping up the railway and the

rail yard, sweeping the plants, and cleaning the big bosses' cars or the white employees' bunkhouses (figure 11). One Naskapi elder remembers his winter employment, which consisted in digging up the frozen ground with a hand shovel in order to install the electricity poles. "One man had to do that," he says, "with a pick and a shovel only. You had to be strong."⁶⁰ Referring to the month of July 1968, Thorn writes that of all Indigenous individuals employed at the mine, "79 percent ... were employed as general labourers. Three others were also employed as janitors, which is also an unskilled job. ... There were ten Indians working above the level of general labourer. All but two of these ten workers were still at the level of labourer (pipeline and track labourer), these two being a 'car loader' and a 'shovel oiler.'"⁶¹

Indigenous workers had to compete for the few employment opportunities that were reserved for them at the lowest echelons of the industrial ladder. In the best of cases—those few labourers who managed to obtain a permanent position—they earned wages that, as late as 1978, remained about 20 percent less lucrative than the highest working-class salaries.⁶² One elder explains how the company used him and his fellow workers as relatively cheap labour, and he even refers to the wages as one of the worst aspects of their overall employment conditions:

60. J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview.

61. Carole Warlick Thorn, "The Adaptation of the Montagnais-Naskapi Indians to Life in Schefferville" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1969), 24.

62. By 1978, IOC hourly wages for labourers were as follows: janitor, \$8.27 (level 1, the lowest); general labourer, \$8.40 (level 2), shovel-operator, \$10.35 (level 17, the highest). Hess, "Native Employment," 103.

The company only took Indians because of the cheap labour. We worked with a shovel. That was a way to make profit on the backs of people. Indian labour was less expensive, that's how it was here. They barely paid anything, other than the salaries. The white people who worked here, they had houses; but the Indians, no. They only received a salary, and that was the end of the story.⁶³



Figure 11. Two men, including Innu labourer Augustin Vollant, are busy changing a tooth on a Marion shovel bucket, Redmond mine, December 1969.

Source: Fonds Compagnie minière IOC (ca. 1954-90), P21, contenant 1988-00-000/40, photographie 12,895, scan, BANQ-CN.

Moreover, the IOC practice of cyclical layoffs prevented people from accumulating experience and receiving benefits guaranteed by the collective agreement.⁶⁴ David Swappie describes with much resentment the fact that the IOC never offered him any compensation following his major work accident, when he slipped on a patch of grease

63. Interview (2009: I-01a). The translation is mine.

64. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview.

inside one of the garages and permanently injured his knee: "After I had a mishap with my leg, that's when I was given a job as a janitor, to make it easy for me. I was doing the clean up on one of the big loaders. That's when I fell, and I hit my knee; that's how I had my accident. And I didn't even have any compensation from the company, no insurance, nothing."⁶⁵

In effect, the mining company was able to use the first CBA to its own advantage, notably by systematically blocking the possibility of advancement for Innu and Naskapi workers. As such, it could ensure that a "reserve army of labour,"⁶⁶ without any reliable union representation, remained at its disposal and could be adjusted according to the fluctuating conditions of production that characterized the exploitation of iron ore. Perhaps ironically, the IOC valued this malleable pool of temporary Indigenous workers for its permanency and its ready availability, in light of the high turnover rate of the non-Indigenous workforce in the early years of operations.⁶⁷ The authorities anticipated the long-term settlement of the Innu and the Naskapi in the region, and because of the serious lack of employment opportunities available elsewhere in the municipality, the IOC

65. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

66. John H. Bradbury and Isabelle St-Martin, "Winding Down in a Quebec Mining Town: A Case Study of Schefferville," *Canadian Geographer* 27, no. 2 (1983): 138. See also Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977): 781ff.

67. The turnover rate for non-Indigenous personnel was over 100 percent in 1957. Robert Lévesque, Representative, Canadian Labour Congress, report of progress in Schefferville and Seven Islands, n.p., April 15, 1957, Canadian Labour Congress fonds, Organization Department files, Transfers files, Schefferville Iron Miners' Association, Québec: Organizing Activities, Correspondence (1956-57), MG 28, series 1103, file 27, LAC. See also Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 71.

By 1967, it had decreased to 15 percent (Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Quebec," 133), although Jackson reports a turnover rate as high as 44 to 52 percent for the years leading up to 1981. Lorne Jackson, cited in Michel T. Barbeau, "Schefferville: relations inter-ethniques et dynamique du développement en milieu nordique" (master's thesis, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1987), 24.

apparently never saw any real point in offering basic technical training to its Innu-Naskapi workforce that might have provided opportunities for advancement—despite that the transiency of white labourers could have logically motivated the company to train a locally-based workforce. These microspecific labour conditions emerged within the global processes of the mechanization of production, the growing productivity, the deskilling of labour, and the introduction of new technologies and job hierarchies that swept over many mining operations in Canada through the 1960s,⁶⁸ processes which overall made it particularly challenging for unskilled Indigenous labourers to integrate the IOC workforce sustainably.

Notwithstanding the authorities' precipitated forecast that, by later winter of 1958, the Naskapi would be permanently settled in Schefferville,⁶⁹ the construction of the town and the radar station began to slow down one year later and the number of jobs available decreased substantially. According to a fall 1960 labour force survey, only twenty-three Innu (from a potential labour force of seventy-eight people) and twelve Naskapi (from a workforce of forty-eight) were employed during the previous summer; this represented a decrease of over 50 percent with respect to three years earlier.⁷⁰ The winding down of construction activities coincided with a significant drop in the rate of production recorded between 1959 and 1961 that was "brought about by an impending recession in the steel

68. Hess, "Native Employment," 94-97.

69. J. A. G. Lacombe to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, March 13, 1958, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

70. L. Morisset to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, December 9, 1960, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC.

industries of the United States and Europe."⁷¹ In the earliest months of 1960, the IOC "concentrated its efforts in the Wabush area where the ore is reported to be of a better quality for the market to the detriment of the Schefferville operations." In this context of stiff internal competition, government authorities learned "that the unskilled Indian labour would be the first to be adversely affected by this policy."⁷² Compounded by the regular layoff cycles, the drowsy market conditions indeed created overwhelmingly unstable employment conditions for Indigenous workers. Jos Pinette, a former Innu worker, explains with great insight the doubly variable nature of work at the mine, a consequence of the sixty-five-day employment cycles that overlapped with the seasonal variations inherent to mineral production. According to Pinette, "they gave you your pink slip on the sixty-third day, and then they hired you again three or four days later. They did that to me for five years, just to make sure that they wouldn't have to take me on an annual basis. ... And during the winter season, they closed the mine; they didn't bring any iron to Sept-Îles. But as soon as they reopened, they called you up again."⁷³

In the fall of 1960, the IOC closed three mining pits and laid off half of its workforce, among whom were forty Indigenous employees. Given the moribund economic context, local Indian Affairs agents this time found comfort in the fact that in spite of their dismissal, these Innu and Naskapi workers would possibly continue to

71. Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Quebec," 131. By 1961, Schefferville's iron production had dropped forty percent with respect to 1957. Natural Resources Canada, *Canadian Minerals Yearbook: Annual Report*, Ottawa, 1957, 1961.

72. R. L. Boulanger to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, September 11, 1962, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

73. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

serve—by virtue of their temporary work status—as an attractive, “readily available working group that the company may utilize on a daily basis.”⁷⁴ However, this development also created parallel concerns amongst the authorities, who worried when they learned that, in addition to the sixteen Innu and nine Naskapi who were already out hunting, “some Indians who have been laid off are planning to proceed to their trap lines until work is available for them.”⁷⁵ While recognizing that this problem of sporadic employment was largely out of the control of local communities,⁷⁶ Indian Affairs agents nevertheless worked to implement a recently devised policy that was aimed at encouraging everyone who was unemployed to (re)join the wage-earning group as quickly as possible.

In fact, in 1959—almost a full year before the 1960 production downturn—Indian Affairs bureaucrats had already begun to seriously consider a “much stricter administration of relief assistance”⁷⁷ that would basically sever financial aid to all Innu

74. L. Morisset to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, December 9, 1960, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC.

75. R. F. Battle, Chief, Economic Development Division, Seven Islands Agency, to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, December 20, 1960, Sept-Îles District Office, Economic Development, General, Placement of Indian Labour (1957-64), RG 10, volume 8911, file 68/19-3, part 3, LAC.

76. For example, Superintendent C. R. Nadeau was aware that “some of the Indians who are good workers have been laid off” due to slow production. C. R. Nadeau, Superintendent, Seven Islands Agency, Indian Affairs Branch, to Québec Regional Office, Sept-Îles, June 13, 1960, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

77. J. H. Gordon to Director, Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa, November 23, 1959, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

"who although perhaps capable, are not working or trying to find work."⁷⁸ As the Superintendent of Welfare rationalized at the time, "our welfare assistance for both the Montagnais and Nascopies [must be] related to what we can reasonably expect them to do for themselves."⁷⁹ These government agents candidly expressed the paternalistic designs underwriting the use of the labour force surveys and the personal history forms, which enabled National Employment Services placement officers, according to them, "to get better acquainted with the habits and backgrounds of the Indians from our reserve."⁸⁰ This would help employment officers, Indian Affairs officials believed, to "eliminate the nonproductive members of the group"⁸¹ who not only cost significant amounts to the federal government, but also, in more ideological terms, "act as a brake and an obstacle for the Indians who are, in the main, gainfully employed."⁸² Federal authorities justified rather typically (and somewhat ironically) this intervention in the labour market by referring to their desire to foster independence from the Branch's social welfare supports.

Equipped with these intrusive bureaucratic tools, the regional agents' position soon evolved into a familiar Indian Affairs policy of *no work, no rations* that sought to

78. C. R. Nadeau to Québec Regional Office, Sept-Îles, June 13, 1960, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

79. J. H. Gordon to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Ottawa, November 24, 1959, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

80. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent, Seven Islands Agency, Québec, February 19, 1959, Sept-Îles District Office, Economic Development, General, Placement of Indian Labour (1957-64), RG 10, volume 8911, file 68/19-3, part 3, LAC.

81. J. H. Gordon to Director, Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa, November 23, 1959, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

82. J. H. Gordon to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Ottawa, November 24, 1959, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

shape and accelerate the transition of Innu and Naskapi families toward modern industrial life. This type of coercive policy classically served, as Miller argues in a different historical context, "to [re]assert the government's control" over Indigenous people's lives.⁸³ The Indian Affairs plan specifically targeted the Innu, in part because this group was considered at that stage to be better used to industrial life due to their longer history of involvement with wage labour; in this sense, it was hoped that they could "serve as an inspiration and example to the Naskapi" rather than impede their progress.⁸⁴ Seeking to maintain positive role models for the Naskapi, federal agents recurrently expressed concern about the negative influence of unemployed Innu individuals, which would ultimately slow down their integration into modern society. (In fact, already in June 1957, Supervisor R. L. Bélanger argued that "bad" Innu examples "should be severely dealt with and, in extreme cases, expelled out of Schefferville."⁸⁵) By the early months of 1962, the authorities devised a strategy of removal that was to be in part informed by the labour surveys statistics, in order to coerce all Innu individuals "who are not working at Schefferville and are receiving assistance, [to] come down to Seven Islands" with their family.⁸⁶ This was an outright attempt on the part of the state to purify the northern

83. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 174.

84. J. H. Gordon to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, November 16, 1961, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

85. R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection," Québec, August 15, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

86. R. L. Boulanger to Superintendent, Seven Islands Agency, Québec, June 26, 1962, Sept-Iles District Office, Economic Development, General, Placement of Indian Labour (1957-64), RG 10, volume 8911, file 68/19-3, part 3, LAC.

industrial space at Schefferville of what they perceived to be regressive, anti-modern, non-industrial ways of life. Yet, curiously repressing their own acts of bureaucratic colonialism, Indian Affairs authorities continued to refer to this removal policy as a "migration" that merely entailed the Innu's "voluntary movements" to the south, but which also required—in puzzling contradictory terms—"the maximum in patience and salesmanship from our field staff."⁸⁷

As it turned out, every Innu family refused to comply and resisted the plan. The authorities were unable, as Boulanger had hoped, to convince those who had been "earmarked for removal from Schefferville" to travel back to Uashat or Maliotenam and voluntarily cover their own moving expenses.⁸⁸ While both sides appeared unwilling to back down, it was the renewed cutbacks in iron shipments that temporarily settled the score. Late in the summer of 1962, the IOC significantly slashed its production level once again and was consequently forced to dismiss fifty-seven Innu and Naskapi workers; only twenty-five remained employed for the remainder of the season. At that stage, the federal agents determined that it had become unrealistic to relocate every unemployed worker to the coast, since it was evident that there would not be enough "places available for all these Indians here at Seven Islands." In part due to the strong reluctance of Innu residents, who acted in concert with the poor production conditions in the iron industry more generally, the removal policy could not be sustained and federal authorities had no

87. H. M. Jones to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Ottawa, August 8, 1962, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

88. R. L. Boulanger to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, May 30, 1962, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

other choice but to cancel the plan and continue to provide relief assistance for everyone.⁸⁹

Apart from this episode of mass layoffs, the number of Indigenous individuals employed at the mine generally increased through the mid-1960s, a time when the IOC proceeded with significant expansion in the region of Carol Lake and maintained a relatively constant level of production between 1963 and 1968 as market conditions improved.⁹⁰ Several people remember that during this period, many Innu and Naskapi worked at the IOC and that the company held a tight grip on the economic situation at Schefferville.⁹¹ In August 1964, for instance, only fourteen Innu, out of a total of fifty men and women who held a job, were employed outside of the mine (compared to forty out of a total of fifty in 1956). Among them, three men worked at fishing camps located near the municipality and five as labourers for either the city of Schefferville or the Laurentian Air Service, two occupied temporary student jobs and were about to return to school, one person cleared the railway and slashed wood at Mile 86, and finally, two women were employed as nurses and one worked as a kitchen helper at the Hôtel Montagnais.⁹² The Naskapi community, meanwhile, obtained close to 94 percent of its total wage employment revenues from the IOC between January 1965 and June 1966,

89. C. R. Nadeau to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Sept-Îles, August 8, 1962, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

90. Natural Resources Canada, *Canadian Minerals Yearbook*, 1963-68.

91. Interview (2009: I-01a).

92. Indian Affairs Branch, Labour force survey conducted at Schefferville between August 11 and August 19, 1964, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC.

compared with less than 5 percent provided by municipal labour, guiding work and trapping activities combined (table 2). These latter jobs generally remained not only rarer but also very temporary and much less lucrative than the work available at IOC, despite the fact mining employment was itself highly variable from year to year and inherently seasonal, and therefore could not offer solid financial security for Indigenous families.

Table 2. Total revenues for the Naskapi, January 1965 to June 1966

Revenues	Amount (\$)	Share of subtotal (%)	Share of total (%)
Iron Ore Company	115,596	94	65
Municipality	2,351	2	1
Guiding	2,250	1	1
Trapping	1,150	1	1
Other	2,126	2	1
Subtotal: Employment	123,473	100	69
Relief	33,052	62	19
Security for elders	7,740	15	4
Old age pension	1,350	3	1
Mothers in need	11,200	21	6
Subtotal: Welfare	53,342	100	30
Total revenues	176,815	—	100

Source: Data from Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation," 124.

Note: Data excludes hunting and fishing products.

In fact, from the perspective of the union, the new collective agreement negotiated in 1965 (and established in 1966) aimed to regularize the temporary working statuses by putting "all workers on an equal footing."⁹³ From that point on, the Innu and the Naskapi who were already working as seasonal employees could be hired permanently and could begin contributing to the pension plan. Jos Pinette remembers this moment when the company gave him credit for his previous working seasons and offered him a permanent

93. Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 14. The translation is mine.

job: "One day, the company took into consideration our seniority. The company said to me: 'We will keep you all year-round.' Then I started working permanently in the warehouse."⁹⁴ However, much as in 1958, the revised CBA in fact continued to complicate the Indigenous people's participation in the industrial economy, notably by grouping all those who did not meet the conditions established by the company—particularly (and always), at least nine years of recognized schooling—within a new category of *secondary employees*. This group of workers, almost exclusively Indigenous employees who did not hold at least a Grade 9, were confined to a handful of undesirable, low-level labouring positions, listed in the Annex H of the new agreement (later renamed Annex G), and found themselves without any real possibility for advancement. In parallel to these developments, it also became more difficult for prospective Innu and Naskapi workers to be hired at the company in the first place, because of a quota system that restricted to 65 percent the share of these low-level jobs that could be attributed to secondary (and thus largely Indigenous) employees.⁹⁵ Evidently, the local union representatives were aware of the marginalising effect of these various work agreements (1958 and 1966), but it appears that their reaction was largely limited to defensive affirmations to the effect that the Steel Workers "had nothing to do with the apparent discrimination sustained by the Indians concerning their admission to the union."⁹⁶ To the

94. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

95. Collective Bargaining Agreement, article 12, page 12, 1965, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 609.13 à 650.15, contenant 1982-11-002/30, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine. The remaining portion of these entry-level jobs had to be held by employees who were in a position to move up the industrial ladder.

96. Personnel agent, Schefferville office, local 5567, United Steel Workers of America, cited in R. L. Boulanger to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, November 3, 1961, Sept-Îles District Office, Economic

contrary, they merely offered vague guarantees to federal authorities of their complete and entire devotion to the “placement” of Innu and Naskapi workers.⁹⁷ The *laissez-faire* attitude of the union with regard to Indigenous labour rights contrasted quite strikingly the much feistier tactics deployed by the USWA to advance the cause of its labour force more generally. Indeed, the strike record on the Côte-Nord demonstrates that the union local 5567 did not relinquish long and difficult labour struggles, as it led the Schefferville workers through three significant work stoppages in the turbulent years between 1966 and 1972.⁹⁸

Indigenous labourers themselves rarely looked to the union for advice or support in order to confront situations that they considered unjust, despite their own recognition of the discriminatory nature of several company practices such as the cyclical layoffs and the restrictions regarding lower-level jobs. Linguistic and cultural differences stood as primary barriers between Innu-Naskapi miners and the USWA, but it was also the case that many people were either barely aware of the union’s existence and considered to be without any protection, or were plainly suspicious about its role. In her interviews with former mine workers, Hess indeed noted that “most Naskapi did not know that a union existed at the company, or did not understand what its purpose was,” while “others

Development, General, Placement of Indian Labour (1957-64), RG 10, volume 8911, file 68/19-3, part 3, LAC.

97. Secretary, Schefferville office, local 5567, United Steel Workers of America, cited in L. Morisset to Indian Affairs Branch, Québec, December 9, 1960, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC.

98. Marc Vallières, *Des mines et des hommes: histoire de l'industrie minière québécoise, des origines au début des années 1980* (Québec: Les Publications du Québec, 1989), 380-381. The Schefferville USWA local 5567 went on strike in July 1966 for two weeks, between May and August 1969 (along with Sept-Îles' local 5569), and between June and September 1972. One last major labour struggle took place between March and July 1978 (accompanied by the Sept-Îles workers).

claimed that the United Steelworkers of America worked with the Company, against the interests of the Indian workers."⁹⁹ When David Swappie badly hurt his leg on the shop floor, he remembers that even though he was aware of its existence, he could not go to the union to report the accident because, as he recalls, "I couldn't speak English, I was defenceless."¹⁰⁰ Among the Innu, these perspectives are similarly still echoed today. According to Armand MacKenzie, most "people were more or less informed about their labour rights,"¹⁰¹ and even when they were aware of these rights, they "would never go to the union office, because they didn't speak a word of French,"¹⁰² as the grandson of a former Innu IOC employee also recounts.

While some Innu and Naskapi workers did show independent resistance to the company practices, these actions tended to remain rather episodic. Grégoire, for one, discusses the story of an Innu elder who fought "against the company to obtain a better job" but who was also concerned that the organizing power of Indigenous labour was limited by fear of reprisal from the company.¹⁰³ It makes sense that people would have anticipated dismissal, according to one Innu, who remembers that his father was readily laid off for opposing the marginal working conditions at the IOC and standing up for his Innu colleagues. "My father didn't stick around for that long," he says. "He was fired

99. Hess, "Native Employment," 105.

100. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

101. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

102. Interview by author (2009: I-30b), Matimekush, September 30, 2009. The translation is mine.

103. Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 32. The translation is mine.

pretty quickly, because he didn't like all the injustice."¹⁰⁴ Receiving no tangible support from the union, these acts of resistance could easily result in arbitrary firings, and Indigenous miners rarely responded to these dismissals by participating in the grievance procedure. As Hess importantly revealed through her research on Naskapi employment, these workers did not file *any* grievances between 1975 and 1980, in part since "the Naskapi were particularly vulnerable ... because of their marginal status, economically and socially." In short, Hess concludes that "the union officials interviewed in Schefferville and Sept-Îles had very little to say about the special problems of the Naskapi workers."¹⁰⁵ Amidst disjointed Indigenous resistance and toothless labour representation, and despite the fact that Désy found in Schefferville a few local USWA agents who described themselves as "ardent defenders of Indian rights,"¹⁰⁶ the working conditions of Indigenous employees did not figure at the top of the priority list for company managers and union officers who were involved in negotiating the different collective bargaining agreements.

Despite these striking power differentials, Innu and Naskapi miners eventually put forth a series of concrete demands during the 1970s and challenged the lack of improvement made in the area of labour rights and working conditions up until that point.¹⁰⁷ Throughout the decade, two renegotiations of the collective agreement

104. Interview (2009: I-20a). The translation is mine.

105. Hess, "Native Employment," 105.

106. Désy, "Acculturation et socio-économie," 70. The translation is mine.

107. As noted in the introduction, the 1970s marked a new era in the domain of Innu organizing and political consciousness, in particular in Labrador where the people of Sheshatshiu stood up against military training exercises.

conducted under the auspices of the USWA (1972, 1975), but most significantly, ephemeral wildcat strikes led principally by Innu living and working in Sept-Îles (1973, 1975), allowed the Indigenous industrial class to register modest gains. Perhaps most concretely, Innu and Naskapi employees were able to obtain a slight increase in the scope of jobs listed under Annex H, in addition to eventually being permitted to write the technical exams that could enable them—in theory—to slowly climb out of these positions. For reasons that remain difficult to discern, it seems that the latter strike held in the 1975 summer even received the tacit support of the union representatives (although apparently after the fact), who considered it “a shining victory and ‘a breakthrough in the area of labour rights.’”¹⁰⁸ The IOC, meanwhile, resolved to never again yield to this type of “illegal” Indigenous resistance, presenting itself as an organisation composed of “substantial defenders of the Indians ... who are doing much more for them in this region than any other employer.” According to the company, the Innu strike stood as the ultimate affront to what it considered to be a very noble and altruistic contribution to the improving welfare of its Indigenous employees and their families.¹⁰⁹

And yet, the facts could hardly support such an affirmation. Throughout their participation in mining activities, very few Innu or Naskapi workers were able to make significant progress up the industrial ladder established in collaboration by the company

108. Spokesperson, United Steel Workers of America, cited in Gilles Ouellet, “Les Montagnais sont réengagés et pourront demander de l’avancement,” *Le Soleil*, August 20, 1975, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 609.13 à 650.15, contenant 1982-11-002/30, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

109. J. B. Galligan, Directeur, Services du personnel, Iron Ore Company of Canada, to President, United Steel Workers of America, and to Chef Innu, Sept-Îles, August 25, 1975, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 609.13 à 650.15, contenant 1982-11-002/30, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

and the union. Following the 1958 CBA, whose new regulations contributed to drive the few Naskapi who had managed to operate heavy machinery out of these semiskilled positions,¹¹⁰ these workers were never able again to obtain jobs that were classified as anything other than unskilled labour.¹¹¹ As such, the labour agreements institutionalized a segmented labour force through the creation of a rigid job hierarchy and corresponding income levels. Implemented in conjunction with the dual processes of the mechanization of production and the deskilling of labour, more globally, the CBAs thus served to normalize the conditions of employment for Indigenous workers by enforcing strict technical requirements for hiring and for vertical mobility.

Moreover, Indigenous workers registered their modest labour gains quite belatedly in the industrialisation process. In 1968, the IOC shipped over six million tons of ore at a time when it employed about sixty Innu and Naskapi workers,¹¹² and it proceeded two years later to construct a new concentrator and pellet plant at Sept-Îles to upgrade and pelletize the Schefferville ore.¹¹³ But by the turn of the decade, the mineral production entered into a highly erratic phase. A gradual decrease in output soon created a new set of uncertainties for the Indigenous labour and for the Innu and Naskapi communities. Less than a decade later, at the end of the 1970s, a serious crisis struck the North American metallurgy industry, which gradually lost ground to its European and

110. Hess, "Native Employment," 101.

111. Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation," 125.

112. Natural Resources Canada, *Canadian Minerals Yearbook*, 1968; Thorn, "Adaptation of the Montagnais-Naskapi," 24.

113. Natural Resources Canada, *Canadian Minerals Yearbook*, 1970.

Japanese counterparts.¹¹⁴ This took place within a context of severe competition with other iron-producing nations which had already begun to intensify for several years.¹¹⁵ The Schefferville operations, forced to extract low-graded ore at comparatively higher costs, rapidly felt the countershock produced by these global economic pressures. By 1977, the company decided to eliminate its subsidies to the municipality¹¹⁶ and to slash significantly its production level for the Knob Lake operations, in part because of a "loss of competitiveness of those ores in comparison with similar ores" originating from more efficient producers.¹¹⁷ After the 1975 season, the IOC never shipped more than 5 million tons of ore annually, sending an average of 3.5 million tons to Sept-Îles each year between 1975 and 1981. This represented a 54 percent drop with respect to the 1954-74 average production.¹¹⁸

These heavy cutbacks led the IOC to progressively shorten its production season as the years went on, and the amount of work available at the mine closely mirrored this downturn. As USWA director Jean Gérin-Lajoie complained at the time, "the company maintains a shorter and shorter production period" in order to reduce expenses, "hiring

114. Vallières, *Des mines et des hommes*, 310.

115. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 125.

116. "Toute activité sportive est paralysée à Schefferville," *Le Soleil*, February 8, 1977, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN. The impact of this policy was such that the municipality was forced, in 1978, to "give the arena and the cultural centre back to the company, no longer being able to support it financially." Michel Nadeau, "Iron Ore ferme à Schefferville," *Le Devoir*, November 2, 1982, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

117. Wilkinson and Geoffroy, "A Parcel of Fools," 104.

118. Natural Resources Canada, *Canadian Minerals Yearbook*, 1954-81.

the maximum workers during the summer and have them work overtime and perform tasks that were typically done in the winter, and finally throws them out on the street when fall arrives."¹¹⁹ Job instability rose as a result of the severe austerity measures implemented by managerial authorities, which targeted primarily the working class: "Spring and summer shutdowns, normally lasting from four to six weeks, were lasting up to three months by 1982 ... and some permanent employees were downgraded to 'seasonal' status."¹²⁰ Overall, this led to a situation where the company did not hire any new Naskapi employee from 1975 onward.¹²¹ In the winding down period leading up to the final closure of the mine (1975-81), this group of workers lost four permanent employees, while on the Innu side, twenty-six full-time workers were sent home. As they attempted to make the best of this debacle, industrial agents negotiated, by the end of the decade, a new collective bargaining agreement (1978) that was highly regressive from the point of view of Indigenous labour rights, with the consequence that "the only affirmative action clause in the CBA to encourage the employment of native workers was removed."¹²² Among white working-class workers, the employment situation was hardly more encouraging, as the company fired greater numbers of employees every fall. From

119. Jean Gérin-Lajoie, District director, United Steel Workers of America, to Ministre du Travail et de la Main-d'œuvre, Sept-Îles, ca. fall 1980, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 756 à 758.2, contenants 1982-11-002/35 et 1982-11-002/36, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

120. Kevin Archer and John Bradbury, "Schefferville: The Crisis in the Quebec-Labrador Iron Mining Region: The Life and Death of a Company Town," in *Coping with Closure: An International Comparison on Mine Experience*, ed. John Bradbury, Cecily Neil, and Markku Tyklainen (London: Routledge, 1992), 181.

121. Wilkinson and Geoffroy, "A Parcel of Fools," 103.

122. Hess, "Native Employment," 105.

the 149 seasonal layoffs registered in 1975, by 1980 that number had grown to almost 500, while 355 employees lost their job entirely during the same period.¹²³ In this context, Gérin-Lajoie took up arms against the uncompromising attitude of the mining company which went ahead with the long seasonal layoffs and the declassification of its employees, urging the provincial administration of René Lévesque (1976-85) to proceed with "a rapid and firm intervention in the face of massive layoffs performed by the Iron Ore Company." According to the union leader, the future of Schefferville depended on such a proactive and timely government intervention.¹²⁴

If, as Archer and Bradbury suggest, "the formally announced closure of the mine in 1982 caught most local people completely unaware,"¹²⁵ some Innu and Naskapi individuals clearly remember the winding down phase as yet another period filled with anxiety. From these early warning signs, they recall worrying constantly about their working future in Schefferville, easily foreseeing the inevitable outcome of the severe production cutbacks taking place before their eyes. Despite never being officially briefed by the mining authorities on the possibility of a permanent shutdown—but instead having to rely largely on rumours¹²⁶—one Innu labourer recounts that "the people had predicted

123. J. Gérin-Lajoie, cited in "Selon les Métallos, la survie de Schefferville dépend maintenant du Gouvernement," press release, Sept-Îles, October 6, 1980, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 756 à 758.2, contenant 1982-11-002/35 et 1982-11-002/36, BANQ-CN; Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Quebec," 137.

124. J. Gérin-Lajoie to Ministre du Travail et de la Main-d'œuvre, ca. fall 1980, Sept-Îles, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN.

125. Kevin Archer and John Bradbury, "Schefferville," in Bradbury, Neil, and Tyklainen, *Coping with Closure*, 180.

126. See Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Quebec," 142; and Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 72.

that the company was going to close, many years earlier. That's why it was difficult to live here, because we knew that they were going to leave."¹²⁷ In the fall of 1981, one full year before Brian Mulroney officialised the mine closure official, the company employed only six Innu and eighteen Naskapi men,¹²⁸ a 75 percent decrease with respect to the best years of Indigenous employment. Much as the arrival of explorers, surveyors, and early industrialists in nitassinan unfolded rather suddenly and without their prior consent, the Innu and Naskapi participation in the mining economy came to an abrupt end, as people had to seek other means of "fending for themselves" in the new socio-economic context of regional economic collapse.

In the final analysis, rarely more than one half of Innu and Naskapi men of working age (and very few, if any, women) were typically employed at the Schefferville mine in a given year, except during peak employment seasons such as 1962, when 56 Innu and 27 Naskapi individuals—out of a total of 138 available for work—were employed at the IOC.¹²⁹ Let us also recall the ephemeral nature of this labour. When, in August of that same summer (1962), the company suddenly laid off the majority of its Innu-Naskapi workforce, the rate of Indigenous employment at the mine, which up to that moment oscillated around 60 percent, rapidly fell to less than 20 percent. If and when work was available outside of the IOC, for instance at the municipality or as hunting and fishing guides, it was typically unstable, seasonal, and not very lucrative. As such, barely

127. Interview (2009: 1-30a). The translation is mine.

128. Augustin Vollant, cited in Vakil, "Impact of Iron Ore," 140; Hess, "Native Employment," 60.

129. Déry, "Acculturation et socio-économique," 64; Thorn, "Adaptation of the Montagnais-Naskapi," 24.

three-fifths of the employable men were able to find work anywhere at any given moment during the operational phase of the mine, even during the relatively "good" seasons of employment. In 1964, for example, just over 53 percent of the potential male Innu workforce was employed in any job,¹³⁰ and ten years later, the situation had only slightly improved, as 62 percent of Innu men and 44 percent of Naskapi men of working age were enrolled as wage labourers.¹³¹ As the Innu and Naskapi became increasingly dependent on monetary income to meet their basic needs in Schefferville, where the cost of living was, incidentally, very high,¹³² they were generally not able to access stable, consistent, and satisfying employment. Consequently, not only did government aid payments remain significant during the mining years—they represented up to 30 percent of all Naskapi revenues for the year 1965 and the first half of 1966, during a period of relative high employment for these workers¹³³—but even from a very narrow economic point of view, Innu and Naskapi families could not abandon their activities on the land.

130. Indian Affairs Branch, Labour force survey conducted at Schefferville between August 11 and August 19, 1964, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC.

131. Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 4, 6; Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation," 126.

132. Even for regular IOC employees who earned an average salary at the mine, gasoline, heating expenses, and food products, in particular, "strongly contribute to increase the cost of living." In June 1969, tomatoes were 61 percent more expensive at Schefferville than in the rest of Québec, chicken was 53 percent more expensive, bread 33 percent, milk 47 percent, and gasoline 19 percent. Jean-Paul Gagné, "Vivre à Schefferville est loin d'être une sinécure en dépit de hauts salaires," *Le Soleil*, ca. July 1969, Fonds Gérard Lefrançois, Schefferville, P7, D16, contenant 1989-00-000/1, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

133. Robbins, "Ecological Adaptation," 124.

Life on the Land

How could I have had a profession, I was always in the bush? My father taught me, but it was different.¹³⁴

—Grégoire Gabriel, October 1, 2009

We helped each other. For hunting, when someone killed a caribou, we shared it with everyone.¹³⁵

—Innu from Matimekush, October 1, 2009

The mining wage economy created a series of challenges for people's hunting life and contributed to "distract their hunting activities" on the territory.¹³⁶ In this sense, the relation between Indigenous and industrial worlds at Schefferville was particularly tensed. On the one hand, the time available for hunting became a major issue amongst Indigenous labourers, especially during peak seasons at the mine. Since a large portion of their week was now dedicated to obtaining a salary, land-based activities were largely restricted to weekends or to longer vacation periods, and it became more difficult for hunters to travel over long distances on a regular basis. This meant that some families who traditionally hunted far from Schefferville had to adjust their practices and hunt closer to the municipality. In this context, the total space exploited by Indigenous families shrunk, and hunters had to focus their activities on fishing, trapping, and the killing of smaller game, since these animals could be captured more easily near Schefferville.¹³⁷ During the winter of 1976, for instance, Hammond calculated that of all the hunts held by

134. The translation is mine.

135. The translation is mine.

136. P. B. Einish (2009: N-23a), interview.

137. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

twenty-two Naskapi households in the vicinity of the mining settlement, only slightly more than one out of ten led to the harvesting of a caribou, as hunters mainly brought back whitefish, northern pike, lake trout, and ptarmigan.¹³⁸ This “little hunt” in turn contributed to alter people’s dietary habits, but as David Swappie makes it clear, this did not necessarily preclude them from obtaining food from the forest as needed or desired. “When the work week was over, on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, the men went out,” Swappie recounts. “We still had caribou here and there, but not a lot. That’s what we did during our weekends: we went out and hunted ptarmigan, fish, grouse, porcupine. We harvested all kinds of wildlife.”¹³⁹

In parallel to these new temporal constraints, industrial activities also introduced significant physical obstacles to hunters near Schefferville. One of the most significant challenges to life on the land during the mining period grew out of the restrictions on people’s freedom of movement. As a result of extractive activities and the exploitation of open pits scattered across the territory (figure 12), the Innu and the Naskapi increasingly relied on the mining roads to access certain hunting grounds. For example, in order to reach popular spots for caribou hunting in the Greenbush region situated dozens of kilometres north of the town, people followed dirt roads that were teeming with Euclid trucks filled with iron ore—the “big, rugged, reliable character ... that carries the Iron Ore Company on his back”¹⁴⁰—as a way of bypassing the mining pits. The IOC,

138. Marc M. Hammond, “A Socioeconomic Study of the Naskapi Band of Schefferville” (preliminary report for the Naskapi Band Council of Schefferville, Montréal, April 1976), 13.

139. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

140. Maurice Hackman, ed., “Big Euc,” *Iron Ore* 3, no. 9 (1957): 9.

however, closely monitored access to these roads, establishing a barrier on the main route that led to the working areas. At this gatepost, hunters continually had to explain and justify their future whereabouts to the security agents, who asked them to communicate their intentions in a foreign language. Even though the security agents usually granted hunters the authorization to proceed, they could also “refuse to give them the permission”; Armand Mackenzie even discusses instances when his father’s truck was searched.¹⁴¹ Another Innu resident of Matimekush, Jos Dominique, remembers with serious discontent the company’s arbitrary control over his people’s movement across their own territory, since as he explains, “sometimes they didn’t want to give us the liberty to go where we wanted. That’s one of the things that the company did here that was not right.”¹⁴² This sentinel could be quite intimidating for hunters, to the point where many people perceived the IOC barrier as a complete restriction of access and movement imposed on that part of the territory. “They restricted us from going hunting where we wanted, they maintained a barrier,” Sylvestre Vachon remembers. “We went to get caribou in the Greenbush region, but one day the company blocked the road, we couldn’t go there anymore.”¹⁴³

141. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

142. J. Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview. The translation is mine.

143. S. Vachon (2009: I-29b), interview. The translation is mine.



Figure 12. Abandoned open-pit mine located a few kilometres northwest of Schefferville. Photograph by author, September 2009.

Because of these spatial and temporal restrictions, several families with distant hunting territories had to adjust their practices by performing land-based activities closer to Schefferville. Inevitably, however, certain tensions emerged concerning those hunting and fishing spaces, already occupied by other Indigenous families. As part of the extension of the Saguenay beaver reserve in November 1954, which integrated all land in the vicinity of Lac John and Schefferville, as far north as Wakuach Lake (and with disregard for the border with Labrador), the Québec government divided this land into lots that attempted to respect the limits of ancestral hunting territories. If certain domains including the responsibility to conduct beaver population censuses and the right to hunt caribou were attributed or reserved to Indigenous lot owners, Innu and Naskapi hunters had to obtain, “undifferentiated from all Canadians, ... a hunting and fishing license

delivered by the Québec province” in order to perform any other land-based activity.¹⁴⁴ Even though the system of land tenure already in place in Nitassinan allowed for different degrees of territorial mobility and communalism, depending on whether a hunting group originated from the southwestern or northeastern portions of the Québec-Labrador peninsula,¹⁴⁵ the creation of these new management units around Schefferville—situated at the limit of this great geographic axis—nevertheless solidified certain boundaries between hunting groups and thus restricted to movement of hunters.¹⁴⁶ As William-Mathieu Mark explains, “before, the Innu did not have strict hunting territories per say. For example, I could go hunting around Matimekush and everywhere across Nitassinan. It was only when the (Québec) government established individual trapping territories that the situation changed.”¹⁴⁷ In this sense, the land tenure system based on beaver reserves introduced new governing rules for hunting regimes in the region, encouraging in the process greater individualism with the establishment of well-defined boundaries that mirrored, but also contributed to greatly transformed, ancestral family territories.¹⁴⁸

During the first full summer following the Naskapi relocation from Ungava (1957), federal agent R. L. Boulanger remarked that these people now “intend to trap

144. Déry, “Acculturation et socio-économie,” 29. The translation is mine.

145. Mailhot, *The People of Sheshatshit*, 131-133. As Mailhot writes, “one cannot speak of a uniform land tenure system for the entire Innu territory, which extends ... from the Saguenay River to the Atlantic” (131).

146. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 192.

147. William-Mathieu Mark, cited in Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 35.

148. Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 35. See also Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 167ff.

closer to Schefferville than they used in the past,"¹⁴⁹ thus contradicting his earlier prediction that they would perhaps "agree to spend summer at Wakuach and winter in Mckenzie" after they were resettled at Schefferville.¹⁵⁰ When Boulanger visited the settlement during that summer, he attempted "to determine traplines for the Nascopies" and see if a piece of land could be set aside for them in the area of Wakuach Lake. However, he became quickly aware that the region was already occupied by Innu trappers who administered the "trapping ground no. 203 belonging to Joseph Jean-Pierre and his brothers and sons Bastien, Grégoire, and Raphaël."¹⁵¹ While this Innu family had, in principle, no "objection to the possible move of the Chimo Indians to Wakuach Lake," its members argued that this could only occur on the condition that "no trapping would be done on their ground." According to Fur Supervisor Lucien Morisset's own evaluation, this position was untenable. The tension was palpable on each side, although interestingly, both the Innu and the Naskapi appeared to have held legitimate grievances regarding this unfortunate situation. For one, Morisset argued that "practically all [Innu] consider the Fort Chimo Indians as intruders" and believe that they should use the same territories as "when they were living at Fort Mckenzie." He continued by explaining that the Naskapi "repeated many times that they want to go back to Wakuach Lake because

149. R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection," Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

150. R. L. Boulanger, cited in R. W. Green, "Transfer of Indians," Fort Chimo, July 8, 1956, The Move of the Fort Chimo Indians to the Seven Islands Agency, RG 10, volume 8214, LAC.

151. R. L. Boulanger, "Report on inspection," Québec, June 27, 1957, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Iles Agency, RG 10, volume 6926, LAC.

they consider they have been cheated by everybody.”¹⁵² (This feeling of being cheated was possibly related to Indian Affairs’ initial promises made back in Fort Chimo regarding the good trapping grounds that were to be made available for them at Schefferville.¹⁵³) It appears that no workable bureaucratic solution could be found to overcome this problem of territorial congestion, where it was “difficult for the Naskapi to hunt without stepping into Montagnais territory.”¹⁵⁴

Yet in spite of the rigid and exclusive division of space favoured by the Saguenay trapping lots, which confirmed “the appropriation of the territory by the state,”¹⁵⁵ Désy has described, based on her ethnographic research conducted at Lac John in the early 1960s, a system of informal land tenure that was jointly developed by the Innu and the Naskapi in order to address this issue. This agreement was strongly anchored in sharing and reciprocal exchange traditions, as well as an ancient nomadic principle according to which the hunters were able, under certain circumstances, to hunt across the entire territory:¹⁵⁶

The concerned individual, typically Naskapi, goes to see the owner of the territory (a Montagnais) and explains that he would like to hunt and trap there. As a general rule, the Montagnais grants the permission but asks for a gift in return; the Naskapi agrees to bring a piece of the caribou that he will kill, or a certain number of beavers or fish that he will catch.¹⁵⁷

152. L. Morisset to Regional Supervisor of Indian Agencies, Québec, July 30, 1957, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

153. See J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview (highlighted in chapter one).

154. Désy, “Acculturation et socio-économie,” 28. The translation is mine.

155. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 83. The translation is mine.

156. Lacasse, *Les Innus et le territoire*, 35.

157. Désy, “Acculturation et socio-économie,” 27. The translation is mine.

But while this ad hoc management structure possibly helped families who had not been assigned a nearby hunting lot by wildlife bureaucrats, it could not completely relieve the pressures that this new mode of territorial occupation exercised on local animal populations, and upon which hundreds of Indigenous residents cramped around the Schefferville hunting grounds continued to rely heavily.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, in contrast with other discussions regarding large-scale development activities conducted on Indigenous territories elsewhere in northern Canada,¹⁵⁹ the Innu and the Naskapi rarely refer to significant pressures on animals exercised specifically by mining workers near Schefferville. "The white residents," one elder argues, "did not create disturbances because very few of them trapped."¹⁶⁰ Regarding those who did engage in such extracurricular activities, Matthew Mameamskum remembers that "there was a good relationship; we shared the hunting grounds with them."¹⁶¹ On the other hand, several individuals discuss with evident frustration the unusual practices and the significant territorial stress introduced by non-Indigenous workers and mine managers who participated in weekend fishing, a very popular activity among these people who considered that "nowhere in the world is there better trout fishing than in the rivers and lakes of this boundless northern area."¹⁶² On the shores of road-accessible lakes, in particular at Iron Arm on the southwestern arm of Attikamagen Lake, high-rank IOC

158. Hammond, "A Socioeconomic Study," 19.

159. See Coates, *Best Left as Indians*; and Tough, "As Their Natural Resources Fail."

160. Interview (2009: I-30a). The translation is mine.

161. M. Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview.

162. Young, *Labrador's Red Gold*, n.p.

officials erected cottages for their own summer leisure and rapidly overfished the lake, which became out of bounds for Indigenous populations. Many local residents recount analogous experiences of exclusion and overexploitation at the lake:

They all had their own cottages there. You could not go there [Attikamagen Lake] anymore. It was dangerous; they did not want people there.¹⁶³

The white person did not hunt a lot, but he disturbed the lakes and the fish. The white person went there whenever he wanted, he filled up his nets. There were no fish left, the lakes were empty. There were so many people at Attikamagen Lake that the fish disappeared.¹⁶⁴

Fish are intelligent, they will not bite again. That's how it was at Iron Arm. The camps that were there belonged to IOC managers. When they went fishing, they would catch and release the fish that were too small. That's because the white fishermen don't go fishing in order to eat, they go just to show that they can catch a big fish.¹⁶⁵

With these insightful words, Sylvestre, Jos, and several other Indigenous residents of Schefferville remember the appropriation of Attikamagen Lake in order to highlight the new monopoly over their homeland imposed by state-industrial agents.

Mining authorities also contributed to the reterritorialisation of Innu and Naskapi hunting and fishing spaces by renaming, for example, Kaiatushkanut after the vicar apostolic of Labrador, Bishop Lionel Scheffer,¹⁶⁶ or by attributing the name Iron Arm to a section of Attikamagen Lake, known to the Naskapi as *Kaachikaayaahch*. This latter move highlights in an evocative manner their attempt to discard the history and the

163. Interview (2009: I-29a). The translation is mine.

164. S. Vachon (2009: I-29b), interview. The translation is mine.

165. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

166. Alexis Joveneau and Laurent Tremblay, *Missionnaire au Nouveau-Québec: Lionel Scheffer, o.m.i.* (Montréal: Rayonnement, 1971), 7.

profound meanings of Indigenous places (in this case, “the place where it narrows,” in naskapi), in order to supplant them with those of the mining world. Jos Pinette, a former Innu miner, describes in some detail this process used by provincial administrations which, according to his interpretation, erased two important hydrographical toponyms near the open-pit mines:

The government made maps, and it did not give the real names to these lakes. He did that with all our lakes and all our rivers, as if they belonged to him. After the maps, all the names changed here. That’s how white people were here.

Le Fer Lake used to be named *Upapushteshu*. Why did they name it Le Fer Lake? If there had been iron there, they would have taken it. They did not take any iron there. That’s how the government was. For Howells River, it used to be named *Papateu-shipu*. They took the name of a prospector, or someone like that, and they put his name there. But the Innu never use their own name to identify lakes and rivers.¹⁶⁷

Scientific research led by the McGill Subarctic Research Laboratory (MSRL) in the domain of regional biogeography also contributed in its own ways to transform this part of Innu and Naskapi territory. As was the case elsewhere in northern Canada following the war, “science and industry began to push out into the hinterland, and, as the land began to be understood and developed, it needed to be managed,” Carlson explains. “Much of science was aimed at understanding the land so that it could be developed to meet the needs of the growing industry.”¹⁶⁸ At Schefferville, the research laboratory (figure 13) was established by climatologist Kenneth Hare, who had helped the Canadian military interpret aerial photography of the Québec-Labrador peninsula during the war.¹⁶⁹

167. J. Pinette (2009: 1-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

168. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 197.

169. *Ibid.*

Hare founded the laboratory in the immediate postwar period and it was put into year-round operation by 1954, "at a time when northern activities were given a very high profile, and northern research was a major national priority for reasons of defence, sovereignty and resource exploration." Throughout the production phase, the financial situation of the research station remained closely tied to the growth of the mining operations in Schefferville, as "industry and government contract funding ensured research productivity and grant support for the operation of the station. ... In both cases, funding for research and infrastructure support from government and private industry were readily available; a situation that existed until the late 1970s and early 1980s."¹⁷⁰ In return, the MSRL led important applied research that enabled the IOC to map permafrost¹⁷¹ and to improve their technical knowledge in order to conduct more efficient blasting and drilling operations. This benefited greatly the IOC authorities, according to whom "arctic researchers and weather people have been among the pioneers in opening up the north, but Government Departments and industrialists are not the only ones who profit. Everyone does who travels and even those who just sit and listen to the weather benefit from the persistent research efforts."¹⁷²

170. Wayne Pollard, Scientific Director, McGill Subarctic Research Station, "37th annual report, McGill University Arctic and Subarctic Research Stations, June 1990-May 1991," McGill Subarctic Research Station-Schefferville, Administrative Records (1988-96), RG 3, box 967, file number 16822, McGill University Archives (MUA).

171. J. B. Bird, Professor, Department of Geography, McGill University, to Chairman, Budget Planning Group, McGill University, Montréal, May 25, 1973, Schefferville Sub-Arctic Laboratory (1972-86), RG 12, box 23, file number 165, MUA.

172. Maurice Hackman, ed., "Campus of the North," *Iron Ore* 3, no. 7 (1957): 7.



Figure 13. Obsolete building of the McGill Subarctic Research Laboratory, Schefferville. Photograph by author, November 2008.

Caribou hunting

While Innu and Naskapi living at Schefferville increasingly relied on nearby wildlife resources, many people believe that it is precisely these IOC-led drilling and blasting activities, in addition to rock crushing, which drove the dispersal of caribou from the region during the production years, most notably because of the ensuing noise and dust. Several Innu and Naskapi residents have reported similar stories regarding the impact of these industrial practices:

When the mining company was here, there were changes to the land, to the environment, and to the wildlife. The caribou did not come anymore because of all the blasting every day. They did not have any chance. People had to go far out to find one over there, two over there. We were so far away when we were out, but we could still hear the blasting. Some of the blasts travelled for one hundred

miles. ... Sometimes during the winter, you could see some sand on the ice. It was transported by the wind.¹⁷³

Before the mine, everyone hunted here. Thirty years ago, the mine affected the caribou. There were none anymore around here.¹⁷⁴

Our belief is that all the activities, the continuous movement between the mining sites, the light, the noise, all that had the effect of chasing the animals away, like the caribou.¹⁷⁵

The relation of causality between mineral development and regional caribou decline is difficult to verify on the basis of ecological data alone, given that population censuses of the George River (migratory), Caniapiscou (sedentary), and McPhadyen River (sedentary) herds—the three groups most likely to be found near Schefferville—began only after 1954. In fact, scientists generally consider that the years 1958 to 1984 corresponded with an explosion of the George River migratory herd (by far the most important of the three herds), which grew “from 15,000 animals in 1958 to 600,000 ... by 1984.”¹⁷⁶ (Meanwhile, the Caniapiscou sedentary herd appears to have peaked in February 1973, when a population census estimated the herd at 2,745 animals.¹⁷⁷) In addition, during that same period, and in particular after 1973, the George River herd generally extended its range distribution in the western and southern directions, toward Schefferville. Nevertheless, historical data demonstrates that in spite of the fact that

173. M. Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview.

174. E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview. The translation is mine.

175. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

176. A. T. Bergerud, Stuart N. Luttich, and Lodewijk Camps, *The Return of the Caribou to Ungava* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 324.

177. *Ibid.*, 88.

during this inflationary period, the herd established a handful of winter and rutting centres near the mining settlement, it generally only visited the region rather marginally.¹⁷⁸ In addition, it was not possible to know with certainty, through the interviews conducted with local residents, whether participants were in fact referring to the rarefaction of the George River caribou or the Caniapiscou and McPhadyen River caribou, two sedentary herds whose historical populations have been much less documented. In other words, studies that have reported significant demographic growth and territorial expansion of the animal cannot be interpreted in direct opposition to the decline thesis observed regionally by the Indigenous groups, especially since the latter refers to a relatively narrow geographic space in comparison to the overall area covered by the George River herd (which travelled as far away as Hudson's Bay to the west, and the fifty-second parallel to the south, between 1973 and 1994).¹⁷⁹

Certainly, at the local scale the disruptive effects of mining activity—whether they contributed to chase the caribou away or not—could be profound. As an Innu adult illustrates in vivid terms today, “when we resided at Lac John, we could see from there the clouds of dust after the explosion. All the dust would lift up. There was a loud alarm that screamed right before the explosion, woooooooooo. It reminded me of a war scene, it was the same sound. I prepared myself then; I knew it was going to explode.”¹⁸⁰ In fact, in 1980 a study published by Drake and Moore recognized the presence in Schefferville

178. *Ibid.*, 321-324.

179. *Ibid.*, 325.

180. Interview (2009: I-30b). The translation is mine.

of iron-silica dust resulting from mining and settlement activities, notably because of the exposure of mine faces and tailing dumps. According to the authors of the study, "the major effects of the mining and town site combination are that dust eroded from the mining area increases dust loading to the snowpack downwind, and that SO₂ [derived from the burning of fuel oil] generated in Schefferville lowers the pH of the snowpack within ten kilometres downwind of the town site."¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the possibility of a disturbing effect on the caribou resulting from such activities has been supported, more generally, by a comprehensive series of ecological studies aimed at evaluating the impact of human disturbances on the animal's behaviour. In their review of eighty-five such studies conducted across northern regions of the globe, Vistnes and Nellemann argue for the necessity to shift the scales of spatio-temporal analysis from local to regional and from short term to long term in order to properly assess the impact of anthropogenic change on caribou. In order to make this argument, they calculate that "83 percent of the regional studies concluded that the impacts of human activity were significant, while only 13 percent of the local studies did the same." The same collection of studies strongly demonstrate, according to Vistnes and Nellemann, that the caribou "reduced the use of areas within five kilometres from infrastructure and human activity by 50-95 percent for weeks, months or even years and increased their use of undisturbed habitat far beyond those distances."¹⁸²

181. John H. Drake and T. R. Moore, "Snow pH and Dust Loading at Schefferville, Quebec," *The Canadian Geographer* 24, no. 3 (1980): 291.

182. Ingunn Vistnes and Christian Nellemann, "The Matter of Spatial and Temporal Scales: A Review of Reindeer and Caribou Response to Human Activity," *Polar Biology* 31 (2008): 399.

Yet within the complicated and fragmented portrait of caribou population dynamics, many questions surely remain. Other crucially related variables—the prey population cycles of wolves and the availability of important foods such as lichen and dwarf birch, to name a few—must be considered, particularly in relation to historical and contemporary human interventions that are not limited to mining operations. In this regard, the story of the caribou in Schefferville highlights the inherent difficulty of simplistically comparing/aggregating local observations and scientific data, suggesting instead that each knowledge system is characterized by its own set of assumptions, uncertainties, and limitations that are not fully reconcilable.¹⁸³ For Bergerud, Luttich, and Camps, epistemological limitations are inherent to our comprehension of the animal's behaviour, and ignoring this fact could have potentially disastrous consequences for life in the northern regions: "Fluctuations in caribou numbers and distributions in Ungava and the Northwest Territories have a long history. ... The Natives say, 'Nobody knows the way of the caribou,' and they should know. Their fate has been intertwined with that of the caribou herds for centuries: intercepting the caribou, however unpredictable its wanderings, has often been a condition of survival."¹⁸⁴

The case of caribou hunting during the production phase illustrates particularly saliently the emphasis that Indigenous families put on preserving and actualizing ancestral practices. When the caribou deserted Schefferville, important social, economic, and religious relationships between Indigenous hunters and the animal were

183. See, for example, Paul Nadasdy, "Re-evaluating the Co-management Success Story," *Arctic* 56, no. 4 (2003): 367-380.

184. Bergerud, Luttich, and Camps, *Return of the Caribou*, xxxv.

compromised, and the Innu and the Naskapi responded with immediacy to this situation that they considered quite serious. As explained by Hess, the persistence of caribou hunters can be interpreted as both a “response to the ... seasonality and instability of work at IOCC,” as well as a desire “to relax away from the stress of wage employment and maintain links with their past traditions,” such as accessing bush foods, which were always considered “more nutritious and better tasting than store bought food.”¹⁸⁵ In order to address the dispersal of the caribou herds from Schefferville, several Innu and Naskapi individuals recount how they were forced to travel over long distances to find the animals, even though the time and the resources available for such travels were limited. Among other constraints, people had to wait until the weekends, the infrequent vacation periods, or the seasonal layoffs, in order to travel into the interior to reach the herds. According to Grégoire Gabriel, who worked as a permanent employee at the IOC, it was common for the company to provide one month off every fall, and he remembers taking advantage of this opportunity at all times to leave for Champdoré Lake: “I always used my hunting territory. I went up every year. I took vacations, and with my family we went up.”¹⁸⁶

Some employees, in particular those with temporary work status, argue that these time periods away from the mine were much too scarce to enable them to hunt as they wanted. As a result, they regularly found themselves under the obligation to leave work independently, initially by asking permission from the foremen. “You had the

185. Hess, “Native Employment,” 78-79.

186. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

authorization to hunt,” explains one Innu elder who worked at mine as a general labourer for more than two decades. “They gave you a job, and you had the right to hunt, but you had to ask for authorisation.”¹⁸⁷ In fact, depending on the timing of the hunt, the decision to leave work could very well suit the needs of the IOC management. After all, the company consistently fired its temporary employees in order to adjust the workforce as a function of seasons, of market conditions for iron production and, particularly before the 1966 CBA, in order to prevent Indigenous workers from aspiring to permanency status. Other Indigenous employees, meanwhile, remember that they barely bothered to ask for permission to excuse themselves from work. Since the IOC needed their labour force, it was often possible for them to be rehired with relative ease upon returning to town, despite the competition and the labour surplus available in Schefferville. Sylvestre Vachon, a hunter who worked at the IOC as a seasonal employee, describes this situation in the following terms: “I did not work all the time; only during spring and summer. In the fall and winter I hunted. The company let us do it, and when we came back they hired us again. I was a labourer; I did all sorts of jobs at the mine, everywhere.”¹⁸⁸

By contrast, several people also speak of the authorities’ desire to dictate the terms of their employment, by regularly imposing long work hours that could stretch over many consecutive days, without any time off. David Swappie illustrates this tight control by describing how the IOC asked them to “work constantly, never to take a break or

187. Interview (2009: I-30a). The translation is mine.

188. S. Vachon (2009: I-29b), interview. The translation is mine.

smoke a cigarette. The bosses were just there, looking at us.”¹⁸⁹ These restrictions could be particularly difficult to adjust to for autonomous hunters who were used to organizing their own schedule (albeit one that was strongly determined by natural cycles) when they worked in the bush. Some of them reacted to the authority of the company by maintaining a certain reticence to the strict industrial work schedule, turning instead to the practice of absenteeism during important hunting periods. As Hess highlights, “for the Naskapi, evening and weekends, rather than opportunities to work extra hours for higher wages, were seen as opportunities to hunt, fish, and to return to their familiar working situation with no time schedules and no bosses.”¹⁹⁰ Grégoire Gabriel explains in more personal terms that this was indeed a necessary strategy for him and his family to maintain close relationships with animals and with country foods. Although he reserved all his vacation time for the hunt, he also adds that “I never had any problems finding food in the bush. When I felt like eating caribou or partridge, we packed up and went hunting.”¹⁹¹ By refusing to be fully subjected to a work schedule that was devised to optimize iron production, and by choosing instead to participate in wage labour casually and on their own terms, some Innu and Naskapi workers were thus willing to sacrifice work stability or the possibility of receiving benefits and accumulating seniority, in order to maintain the ability to go out on the land when desired. Sylvestre Vachon sums up the compromise which he had to make in this regard, reminiscing how “those who reached twenty-five

189. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

190. Hess, “Native Employment,” 79-80.

191. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

years received benefits, they got a pension. I never got any benefits because I left to go hunting, then I came back later to work at the company. I never received a pension."¹⁹² In this sense, the very particular relationships that these Innu and Naskapi workers—who highly valued the freedom to leave for their territory—maintained with wage labour could at the same time imply severe opportunity costs for their families.

In fact, in a rare recognition of Indigenous people's agency, government officials such as Boulanger argued that the practice of cyclical layoffs that followed the implementation of the first CBA in 1958 was a joint company and union strategy aimed to bring under control the problem of casual employees who

were working during a few weeks and were leaving, without any warning, for a few weeks of hunting in the fall. After their hunting season, they were coming back to the employment office of the company requesting work. This procedure went in conflict with the ideas of the union representatives and it appears that in order to prevent any conflict between the company, the non-Indians, and the Indians, it was agreed that the actual procedure [of cyclical layoffs] be established.¹⁹³

The IOC management indeed did not easily accede to this form of worker independence, as it sought to maintain a certain level of authority and control over its Innu-Naskapi labour force. As late as 1975, Grégoire explained that one of the major problems for these workers was "to keep their job or to be rehired," arguing that "in the majority of cases, Indians leave the company on their own, often with a bad record."¹⁹⁴ In some other instances, however, it appears that absenteeism became so pervasive that a few IOC

192. S. Vachon (2009: I-29b), interview. The translation is mine.

193. R. L. Boulanger to Indians Affairs Branch, Québec, May 11, 1961, Placement of Indian Labour, RG 10, volume 8911, LAC.

194. Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 19.

foremen had no choice but to accommodate their Indigenous employees' demands to go hunting or to take part in important cultural activities, which could require travelling to different regions of nitassinan over several consecutive days.¹⁹⁵

In order to pursue their hunting and fishing activities within the shorter time periods available to go out, miners had to adjust their practices on the land. A Naskapi hunter remembers that the introduction of semipermanent structures helped people to optimize their movements and the time available for hunting: "We used to just set up tents, and from there we would go out more on the land. From the tent, we made trails there, there, there, in all directions. We used to find caribou in any directions from the tent. If someone killed a caribou, all of the guys came and helped me. So, it was teamwork."¹⁹⁶ Possibly borrowing from colonial techniques of land appropriation that the IOC managers used, for instance, at Attikamagen Lake, some people eventually installed more permanent structures such as small log cabins, in places like Key Lake, a desirable spot for the goose spring hunt. These spaces used for temporary camping and for more permanent structures—which although less numerous, partly replaced or complemented the expansive network of camps used in the preindustrial phase¹⁹⁷—would typically see minimal presence from non-Indigenous workers and hunters, as the Innu and Naskapi worked to (re)affirm their own presence across the land. The snowmobile, in addition, enabled people to bypass the mining roads and allowed them a more direct access to their

195. Foreman, Iron Ore Company, cited in Grégoire, "Étude sur les travailleurs," 25.

196. T. Einish (2009: N-24b), interview.

197. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 192, 205.

hunting spaces during the winter months. In 1977, David Swappie recalls using a ski-doo for the first time to reach Fort Chimo and visited some old friends there; during his travels, he relied on his prior knowledge of the route from having walked it in earlier hunting and trapping expeditions.¹⁹⁸ These new types of infrastructure and modes of transport—partly afforded through wage labour, but which in turn contributed to deepen people's dependency toward monetary income—were significant factors of change, as one Naskapi elder describes it here:

I used to walk, now I ski-doo. I don't know if I can do it [walking] now. It was fun. I miss that sometimes, I really miss when I used to hunt with my grandfather. I was a young man. I'm always thinking about that, just how far it was from Kuujjuaq to Caniapiscou, just walking.

I'm always thinking, I will try it again, but I never had time, since I work here, to go out. I'm over sixty now, so, I don't know what to do next.¹⁹⁹

On the other hand, these elements of “modernity” can be interpreted as active responses to industrial change: by allowing the Innu and the Naskapi to overcome certain physical or temporal restrictions imposed by the mining activities and the work schedule, they also favoured instances of cultural continuity, since they enabled people to pursue their extensive travels on the territory, to define new hunting spaces, and to occupy their land more expansively, in spite of the highly regulated and confining environment defined by the wage-dominated economy.

For several Innu and Naskapi families, one of the strategies used to face the decrease in animal populations, as well as to distance themselves from the territorial

198. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

199. Interview (2009: N-24a).

overcrowding near Schefferville, was to take the train or drive out on the service road in direction of the hydroelectric complex at Menihék Lakes (located some forty kilometres south of Schefferville), before travelling onto secondary routes by foot, canoe, or snowmobile.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, the continuation of the caribou hunt—typically practiced early in the fall and later during the winter—required the adoption of more radical measures. If some people were able to casually hunt sedentary caribou southwest of Schefferville, not very far away from the settlement, many remember that they had to charter planes in order to cover great distances and thus be in a position to access in a rapid and efficient manner the migratory herd. This necessitated travels as far away as Caniapiscou River, Champdoré Lake, and even George River. (Another factor, less emphasized here, encouraging Indigenous hunters to look for caribou further north was the placement of the Québec-Labrador border, which forced people to travel good distances in order to remain within the Québec provincial territory. At the time, Laforest explains that caribou hunting was strictly forbidden on the Labrador side—an important issue that is beyond the scope of the present work²⁰¹). The elders of Schefferville tell abundant stories about the need to board these planes:

There were no caribou around when the mines were here. We had to fly out to get the caribou.²⁰²

We always had to board a plane in order to get the caribou far away.²⁰³

200. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," 198.

201. *Ibid.*, 201.

202. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

203. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

We had to hunt somewhere else. People were not happy about that, having to go hunt so far, because of the mine.²⁰⁴

Up to a certain point, these chartered hunts enabled Indigenous families to increase their encounters with the dispersed caribou. While 143 small hunting trips listed by Hammond between January and March 1976 yielded only 36 catches, for example, a single outing led by six Naskapi individuals who travelled by plane to Erlandson Lake, over a period of only nine days, allowed them to bring back 58 animals at once.²⁰⁵ But despite these obvious successes, the economic burden resulting from these extensive movements, typically undertaken over very short periods of time, was quite stiff, and it was not unusual for hunters to spend several thousands of dollars on a unique expedition.

Moreover, Innu and Naskapi families generally did not receive any government support to participate on those hunts, and had to assume "autonomously the expenses related to this effect without any financial help."²⁰⁶ Relying on relatively higher and more consistent salaries, mine workers were therefore among those who could most regularly afford to leave in order to find the caribou. In his study, Hammond showed that households who had at least one member employed at the IOC not only hunted more often than other households, but also brought back a higher number of caribou and a larger amount of edible meat.²⁰⁷ Consequently, it was typically these very labourer-

204. C. Vachon (2009 : I-18a), interview. The translation is mine.

205. Hammond, "A Socioeconomic Study," 12, 20.

206. Gaston McKenzie, Chef Innu, to Ministre des Loisirs, de la Chasse et de la Pêche, Schefferville, April 25, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

207. Hammond, "A Socioeconomic Study," 12, 21.

hunters who, as a rule, could share most consistently the animals killed during these travels with elders or other members of the community who did not participate in the hunting trips, as two former Naskapi miners explain today:

We took bush planes to go to George River. We used to spend two to three thousands, taking so many trips to find the caribou, just to bring it here for the people.²⁰⁸

I remember that they used to take planes, bush planes. They flew out, got the caribou, flew back in again, and gave it to the people.²⁰⁹

These Naskapi accounts notably contribute to highlight the particular relevance of favouring an expanded version of the social economy concept which, as first discussed in the introduction, may incorporate not only the so-called “traditional” land-based activities but also industrial wage labour as an essential component of Indigenous mixed economies.

By contrast to the “little hunt,” the pursuit of the great caribou hunt in distant territories was not very viable in economic terms, even for those individuals who held a paid position at the mine, since it was not atypical for them to abandon work temporarily or even definitely in the process. These long trips, interpreted in conjunction with the chartering of expensive planes, as well as a people’s desire to take their vacations on the land or to abandon the mine to go find caribou, strikingly highlight the economic but also the cultural-ecological significance of hunting activities during mineral production. Two Naskapi hunters remember today the significance of preserving and actualizing these hunting practices for their community amidst their encounter with the mining world:

208. T. Einish (2009: N-24b), interview.

209. M. Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview.

People still hunted a lot; on weekends or during vacations, when they were not working, they would be out on the land. They didn't go down south to party or to have fun; they went back to their traditional ways. Up north, that's where they took their vacations. The whole family was in good spirits again, living in tents again, back there. After that, they moved back to the new lifestyle.²¹⁰

When I worked, on days off, I went hunting, and I still do that, I go hunting. That's why we were practicing the old ways, and we still do, as elders, just to preserve the culture.²¹¹

As the stories of each individual contributes to bring to life, it is through a multidimensional arrangement of their activities, accommodating their work at the mine with a life on the territory, that Innu and Naskapi families constructed very idiosyncratic relationships with industrialism. Throughout the production years, Indigenous hunters continued to challenge their integration within the industrial hierarchy and affirmed the existence of alternative worlds that could not be merely reduced to the practices, institutions, and ideologies favoured by the industrial project. In their everyday activities, they instead worked not only to confront the material reorganisation of their territory, but also to affirm their presence on the land and to perform certain sharing and mutual aid practices that reinforced community ties, maintained privileged relationships with the caribou and with Kanipinikassikueu, and enabled them to visit significant ancestral hunting sites such as the George River.

Navigating the turbulent coexistence of industrial and land-based worlds, Indigenous groups engaged with wage employment at the mine not simply as an inevitable result of assimilationist, paternalistic, or ignorant policies imposed by external

210. P. B. Einish (2009: N-23a), interview.

211. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

authorities, but also as a positive way of earning a living. While Indigenous workers did not always enjoy the labour offered by the IOC company, many individuals—though as we have seen, rarely the majority—did engage with this type of labour under a variety of circumstances. At a time when it had become quite difficult to make a living by relying only on trapping and subsistence activities, people often gravitated toward these opportunities, despite the fact that it complicated their access to the bush. They stuck it out, with rare complaints, as one Innu recounts the story of his grandfather, who “went up into the bush, and he also worked in the world of people from down south. It was hard, for sure, sometimes. But he still worked, to support his children, his family, us.”²¹² Yet even as the IOC remained the main employer of Indigenous people in Schefferville and held a tight grip on the regional economy, land-based activities continued to occupy a fundamental role in their livelihoods, adjusted to fit the constraints of mining activities, but also at the periphery of the mining world and strongly anchored in the Innu’s and the Naskapi’s own ways of acting in the world. To achieve this—to continue occupying their territories in order to enact their own “practices of difference”—people had to deploy immense strength in the face of the mineral industry’s great transformative powers.

In the end, the government and industry’s fantasies of leading the latest stage of civilization’s progress in Nouveau-Québec, and in the process overwrite Innu and Naskapi worlds, failed to materialize. Dependency on government handouts could never be completely severed, and as a matter of fact continued to be an important component of the new mixed economy, as it had been during the premining era. At the same time,

212. Interview (2009: I-29a). The translation is mine.

Boulanger's long-term (and in fact prudent) prediction, announced in the early years of operation, that "it will probably take a generation or more before a majority of these Indians accepts the discipline inherent in employment for wages," turned out not to have been completely unreasonable—except that by never coming to fruition, it ultimately proved overly optimistic.²¹³ Over almost three decades, the immense profits reaped from Indigenous homelands, on the backs of Innu, Naskapi, and foreign labour, finally could not counter the cold reality of international commodity and labour markets. By the early 1980s, the collapse of the Schefferville wage economy inevitably led to more government intervention, scarcer wage labour opportunities, and yet another wave of change for Innu and Naskapi societies.

213. R. L. Boulanger, report, in H. M. Jones, to Deputy Minister, Ottawa, July 16, 1957, Indian Affairs Headquarters Files, Correspondence Regarding Welfare Services in the Sept-Îles Agency (1952-64), RG 10, volume 6926, file 379/29-1, part 1, microfilm reel C-10984, LAC.

CHAPTER THREE

The Epic Struggle to Survive: Closing Years

By shutting its doors in November 1982, the Iron Ore jeopardized Schefferville's very existence. For a town that lived uniquely by and for the mine, it could no longer aspire to remain the master of its own destiny.¹

—Michel T. Barbeau, *Schefferville*, 17

I was here since the beginning of the Iron Ore, until the closing, and I am still here. I saw everything that happened, everything that the IOC did.²

—Jos Dominique, September 17, 2009

In the early 1980s, the development—if at times chaotic—of a resource-dependent, mature municipality went tumbling to a sudden yet brutal crash. Following a serious reduction in iron production in the mid-1970s, the Iron Ore Company of Canada was not in a position, by the turn of the new decade, to counter the declining fortune of international steel markets and the corresponding downfall of this once-promising mining center. On November 2, 1982, the company announced the closure of the mine, to be effective in July of the following year.³ The very same day, the mayor of the

The subtitle of this chapter paraphrases Gilles Lesage, "Pour redonner vie à Schefferville: Mulroney suggère un camp militaire," ca. February 1983, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Quellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN.

1. The translation is mine.

2. J. Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview. The translation is mine.

3. François Gendron, Ministre délégué à l'Aménagement et au Développement régional et Ministre responsable de l'Office de planification et de développement du Québec to Conseil des ministres, Québec, March 2, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

municipality, Charles Bégin, fatefully declared: "It's the end of the municipality."⁴ Yet despite the difficulty for the local communities to survive the death of their unique industry, several individuals, including most members of Schefferville's two Indigenous groups, resolved to pursue their lives in this economically frail region. Early pronouncements of the town's imminent closure and threats to its "very existence," foreseen by mayor Bégin and many others, never in fact materialized. As authorities worked ineptly to promote economic alternatives to mineral production that could rescue the municipality, Innu and Naskapi residents weathered another storm of change and reorganized their livelihoods through the region's deindustrialization phase.

The morning after did not come without immense challenges and uncertainties, as the major source of employment for the Innu and the Naskapi in Schefferville—by then certainly less important than during peak employment years—vanished virtually overnight. Indigenous residents remember with particular bitterness this phase of the mining project, holding both the IOC company and the government authorities accountable for failing to fulfill their promises of long-term development for their communities and abandoning the region after barely thirty years of operation. Notwithstanding their very real grievances and misfortunes regarding the mine closure, the near-complete dismantlement of a wage economy at Schefferville implied that people had to find, much as during the preceding lead-up and production years, alternate ways to earn a living—only this time around, literally outside of an evanescent mining

4. Nadeau, "Iron Ore ferme à Schefferville," Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

world which, for better or for worse, stopped exerting its gripping influence on the local people, their economies, and their environments.

In order to understand how Indigenous and mining worlds ceased to interact after 1983 at Schefferville, this chapter begins by providing an overview of the economic and political factors that led to the shutdown of mining operations. The first section also introduces some of the key events that marked the postclosure years, particularly with regard to the significant downsizing of town services and local infrastructure. In the middle section, Innu and Naskapi memories of the closure phase are presented in relation to longer-term interpretations of the entire iron mining experience in nitassinan. From this overview discussion follows, in the third section, a short description of some strategies used by the Innu and the Naskapi communities to reconstruct their livelihoods and actualize their practices in the postindustrial world. In short, it is determined that the shock of the closure introduced particularly difficult, though not insurmountable, challenges for Innu and Naskapi livelihoods and for people's ability to exercise their own agency. In this regard, the Indigenous experience of the postmining period bears elements of both continuity and departure with respect to the previous two industrial phases. As they remember the closing years, the people of Schefferville speak with more unanimous voices regarding their disapproval of government and company actions, which were largely responsible for creating hardships that were unique to this period. Yet much as during the previous rounds of industrial encounter, through the dying years the Innu and the Naskapi continued to actualize their life practices amidst the great upheavals that characterized the failure of this massive socio-economic re-engineering of the north.

Abandonment of Mining Operations

My problem is that ... I have to consider the bankers, who love their bottom line and who know this very well. It's a heavy responsibility, a unique responsibility that we encounter in the private sector.⁵

—Brian Mulroney, *Journal des débats*, February 10, 1983

The shutting down of mineral production in Schefferville was a remarkable turn of events for this mining center established at the heart of Duplessis government's push to industrialize the province after the war. In fact, the region had become widely known to the province's political and economic elites as an important "symbol in the peopling and developing of northern Québec."⁶ Particularly throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Schefferville project, a guiding star for the progress of civilization into "vast" and "uninhabited" territories, had fuelled optimistic scenarios of colonial expansion in the north, largely sustained by enthusiastic forecasts for the potential growth of the North American metallurgical industry. Archer and Bradbury even contend that at the time, "much was written about Canada's new 'growth pole' and the possibility that Sept-Îles eventually would overtake Québec City in size and overall economic importance."⁷ Brian Mulroney's sudden announcement in November 1982, coupled with the short timetable for the complete withdrawal of operations—less than one year—thus left some

5. The translation is mine.

6. F. Gendron to Conseil des ministres, Québec, March 2, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

7. Archer and Bradbury, "Schefferville," 174.

members of government apparently stunned and unprepared to face Schefferville's postmining era adequately.

Without a doubt, the decision to close did contain some elements of surprise, considering that the IOC was known to be quite profitable at the time.⁸ Between 1979 and 1981, the IOC offered up to 12 percent in annual dividends to its shareholders Hanna Mining, Hollinger, Labrador Mining and Exploration, and the American steelmakers Bethlehem, National, Republic, Youngstown, Armco, and Wheeling-Pittsburgh.⁹ This situation translated, for example, into shareholding payments of up to \$US 80 million for the year 1980 alone.¹⁰ According to Mulroney's own analysis, the enlightened managerial policies that he instituted during his tenure as company president (1977-83) meant that by the end of 1982, "IOC revenues had increased so much that shareholders received in only five years higher dividends than throughout the previous twenty years."¹¹ Nevertheless, in the context of an increasingly globalized iron market, a combination of various macroeconomic factors that included changes in technology, price, and demand for raw materials, in addition to overall operating costs,

8. Nadeau, "Iron Ore ferme à Schefferville," Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN.

9. Archer and Bradbury, "Schefferville," 181.

10. Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Quebec," 139. This figure is quite high if we consider that, according to an argument put forth by Brian Mulroney at the public audiences held at Schefferville in February 1983, through its twenty-eight years of operation "the shareholders received \$498 millions in Canadian funds" (Lesage, "Pour redonner vie à Schefferville," Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN). But while Mulroney declared that no dividends were paid in the previous year (1979), Bradbury and St-Martin argue that "the company gave its profits for the year, \$96 million (US), to its shareholders in repayment of money borrowed for the construction of the Sept-Îles pellet plant in 1970-3."

11. Brian Mulroney, *Mémoires*, trans. Serge Rivest (Montréal: Éditions de l'Homme, 2007), 227. The translation is mine.

forced the company to significantly “restructure plant and investment capital.”¹² Ultimately, the IOC’s bottom line was not satisfactory enough to shareholders and bankers, whose “love” for it inevitably took precedence over the long-term welfare of both local Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations that had become intimately tied to the company’s well-being.¹³

In particular, the sluggish demand for iron ore in the late 1970s from steel companies, upon which “the health and prosperity of the iron ore industry is utterly and completely dependent,”¹⁴ as well as “the quadrupling of the price of oil between 1973 and 1983,”¹⁵ were major factors that led the IOC to reduce its production costs to a strict minimum. Under this market logic, the mining center of Labrador City, established in 1962 by the IOC as a second-sourcing operation to exploit the rich iron deposits at Carol Lake, quickly became one of Schefferville’s fiercest internal competitors. This operation was equipped with better technology than its Knob Lake counterpart, it exploited ore of a higher quality with more consistent levels of silica, and it generally produced iron at a lower cost—roughly \$9 a ton cheaper—with which Schefferville could not compete in the context of a tightening world market.¹⁶ As a result, despite the mine’s operating

12. Bradbury and St-Martin, “Winding Down in Quebec,” 130.

13. See Comité de reclassement des employeurs and Association des travailleurs de Schefferville, “Rapport final: première partie,” n.p., ca. January 1984, Manpower Division, Labour Market Development, Manpower Consultative Services, La ville de Schefferville (1983-85), RG 118, file 7485/QUE.1303, part 1, box 15, LAC.

14. Geren and MacCulloch, *Cain’s Legacy*, 327.

15. Archer and Bradbury, “Schefferville,” 186.

16. Bradbury and St-Martin, “Winding Down in Quebec,” 138. By 1982, the Labrador City operations also underwent significant downsizing: in August 1982, for instance, “600 of the 2,500

surplus, its profitability—which remained positive until the mine closure—eventually “decreased in comparison with other operations in the region, and it therefore received smaller investments” from the IOC.¹⁷

In parallel to these developments, the supply structure of the iron ore industry underwent a significant shift in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The IOC faced stiff competition from foreign producers in Australia, Russia, India, Venezuela, and Brazil, who typically exploited higher-grade deposits, incurred energy costs at a fraction of those faced by the northern operations of Nouveau-Québec and Labrador, and often benefited from lower labour standards.¹⁸ According to a company newspaper published in January 1981, “three Brazilian workers earn as much as one IOC employee, yet the product they produce is sold in the same market” as the Québec-Labrador ores. (At the time, the IOC reassured its employees, quite cynically if one considers the later outcome, that “our personnel’s experience and ability are far more precious than cheap labour.”¹⁹) Describing this rapid shift in the world production of iron, which took place over less than two decades, Paquette writes that “India, Venezuela and Australia, for example, who supplied a negligible proportion of the total production in 1955, took up

workers lost their job for good.” Nadeau, “Iron Ore ferme à Schefferville,” Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

17. Bradbury and St-Martin, “Winding Down in Quebec,” 140.

18. Charles A. Olivier, Conseiller au directeur, Centre de recherches minérales, to Directeur général, Centre de recherches minérales, Québec, May 31, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q; Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 125.

19. *Dialogue*, cited in Bradbury and St-Martin, “Winding Down in Quebec,” 139.

nearly 30 percent of the world production in 1974.²⁰ Increasingly, these countries were able to offer much cheaper ores to iron buyers worldwide.

Notwithstanding the fact that the IOC profits soared to well over \$US 200 million in the thirty months prior to 1982, these new international developments eventually caught up with the difficult economic reality of mineral production in northern Québec. During the first quarter of that year, company surpluses were slashed by half, while two important ore-taking shareholders, Bethlehem and National, showed multimillion-dollar deficits in the second quarter. For the IOC management, it thus quickly “became out of the question to assume a deficit with the Québec operations, which overall have always been profitable.” At a general assembly meeting held in Cleveland in the fall of 1982, the company authorities agreed to eliminate the Schefferville component from its global mining network.²¹ Since most analysts estimated at the time that the iron reserves would still be exploitable for decades to come,²² the decision to close the mine was not the consequence of a depleted ore body—the inevitable outcome of “the natural history of a mine,” according to Aschmann’s classic argument²³—but was rather a direct response to rapidly changing conditions in the structure of world demand and supply of iron ore. Indeed, other important iron operations situated in the Labrador iron trough, including the recently

20. Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 124. The translation is mine.

21. Nadeau, “Iron Ore ferme à Schefferville,” *Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles*, P15, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

22. Archer and Bradbury, “Schefferville,” 175.

23. Homer Aschmann, “The Natural History of a Mine,” *Economic Geography* 46, no. 2 (1970): 172.

established mine at Fire Lake (1976), also could not sustain the market pressures and endured a similar fate. Barely two years after the IOC mine closed at Schefferville, Sidbec-Normines Company was forced to shut its Fire Lake operation, and by contrast to Schefferville, this event led to the complete eradication of the mining town of Gagnon.

During most of the operating phase of the mine at Schefferville, the federal and provincial governments remained largely uninvolved with the exploitation activities and with the affairs of the municipality. "The responsibility for the continuing existence and further development of Schefferville," Archer and Bradbury argue, "was left almost entirely in the hands of the private company and, to a lesser extent, the very dependent municipal council." As these authors explain, "federal and provincial authority and control over the development of the natural resources of the area was so lax that the Iron Ore Company was not even required to render its financial records and strategic intentions open to the public."²⁴ This hands-off approach regarding municipal management was especially the norm before 1976, since after that year, the town of Schefferville fell into receivership and from then on, the Ministère des Affaires municipales (MAM) had to approve all major town expenses from Québec.²⁵ By 1982,

24. Archer and Bradbury, "Schefferville," 184.

25. Bradbury and St-Martin, "Winding Down in Quebec," 136. The financial situation of Schefferville became especially dire after 1974, when the IOC cancelled its direct subventions to the municipality; the IOC only contributed taxes from that point on. In late 1976, the town of Schefferville was forced to suspend the cultural centre activities, and in 1978, had to give the arena and the cultural centre back to the IOC. Clément Godbout, Coordonateur régional, United Steel Workers of America, to Premier ministre du Québec, Sept-Îles, March 7, 1977, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 756 à 758.2, contenant 1982-11-002/35 et 1982-11-002/36, BANQ-CN; "Toute activité sportive est paralysée à Schefferville," *Le Soleil*, February 8, 1977, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN.

the provincial government contributed at least half of the municipal budget, while the IOC payments—up to 700,000 dollars annually, almost all paid in property taxes—accounted for 30 percent of the town's total revenues.²⁶

However, the abandonment of mining operations forced provincial authorities to drastically increase their participation in order to avoid the closure of the town, which appeared more and more imminent. In the eyes of the provincial administration, a shutdown was to be avoided (at least initially), in particular because it considered the region to be of high strategic value. The Labrador trough was by far the most important iron producing area in Canada, accounting for roughly 80 percent of the total national production in the early 1980s.²⁷ Although ore shipments at the Schefferville mine gradually decreased during this period and came to represent merely one-fifth of the entire region's annual output at the time (compared to practically all of it in 1960),²⁸ officials insisted on the importance of maintaining a presence in northeastern subarctic Québec. These provincial officials particularly hoped that significant mineral finds, if and when eventually combined with improving market conditions, could once again attract great business interest in the region. It was thus only at this hopelessly late stage of the winding down phase, when the closure of operations became inevitable and “as

26. Nadeau, “Iron Ore ferme à Schefferville,” Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN.

27. Archer and Bradbury, “Schefferville,” 174; Bradbury and St-Martin, “Winding Down in Quebec,” 130; Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 137.

28. Bradbury, “Rise and Fall,” 354; Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 136.

the company continued its withdrawal," that Québec authorities "literally flew into Schefferville to take 'responsibility' for the town."²⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the closure announcement, the provincial government organized a Parliamentary Commission in Schefferville, the first of its kind to be held outside of Québec City.³⁰ Mulroneu left his Florida villa in February 1983 to take part in the public audiences organized by the Commission, which was mandated to hear the different parties comment on the situation in Schefferville and to "propose actions that could be taken in order to help resolve the problems of this municipality."³¹ By that time, over two thousand residents had already deserted Schefferville, and only twenty-five maintenance workers—none of whom were Indigenous—remained employed at the mine (figures 8 and 9). The president of the IOC began his intervention at the public audiences by highlighting the pioneering role of his company in laying out the economic foundations of the Nouveau-Québec and Labrador regions in the late 1940s. He went on to reaffirm the social support assumed by his company toward its employees and the local communities throughout the mining years, explaining that "this responsibility, we always met it with pride."³² Mulroneu finished his funeral oration by

29. Archer and Bradbury, "Schefferville," 187.

30. F. Gendron, Assemblée nationale du Québec, *Journal des débats*, Commissions parlementaires, Troisième session, Trente-deuxième législature, Commission permanente de la présidence du conseil et de la constitution, "Audition de personnes et d'organismes sur la situation de Schefferville et les solutions possibles (I)," Schefferville, February 10, 1983, no. 237, p. B12138, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

31. F. Gendron to Conseil des ministres, Québec, March 2, 1983, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

32. B. Mulroneu, cited in Lesage, "Pour redonner vie à Schefferville," Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

presenting the indemnities and various monetary aids—which he characterized as part of a “global program that is ‘useful, generous and fair’”—to be offered to the Schefferville miners and to their families as compensation for the termination of their employment, for their lost investments and, if desired, in order to facilitate their professional reclassification and their relocation to a different mining center.³³ The severance package received the enthusiastic approbation of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s Liberal government (1980-84) and in particular of the federal Minister of Mines, Judy Erola, who congratulated Mulroney’s generous offer and his continued efforts to “diversify economic development at Schefferville.”³⁴ Some USWA members also interjected and referred quite positively to the IOC termination package as “an example that governments should consider adding to the legislation as a way of ‘civilizing the closing of industrial plants’ in the future.”³⁵ In Mulroney’s opinion, this public relations campaign was graciously received by the local and provincial populations at large, who understood well that the decision to leave Schefferville “was not easy for me either.”³⁶ Only a few weeks after the public hearings—and well in advance of the final shutdown of the mine in July—he announced his resignation as president of the IOC and embarked on a successful campaign for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, a journey that would ultimately lead him, just over one year later, to the highest elected position in the country.

33. Ibid. The translation is mine.

34. Judy Erola, cited in Mulroney, *Mémoires*, 266. The translation is mine.

35. United Steel Workers of America, cited in Mulroney, *Mémoires*, 263. The translation is mine.

36. Mulroney, interview by Martin. The translation is mine.

Not every local resident of Schefferville, however, was ready to accept as openheartedly Mulroney's use of coloured pie charts and global capital data to justify the abandonment of their town. Ben McKenzie still remembers this moment with much resentment today, especially in light of the fact that the IOC president quickly worked his way from Schefferville to become the new Prime Minister of Canada: "When he left, he shut everything down very suddenly. Brian Mulroney was president of the IOC. After that, he went into government."³⁷ At the public hearings held in February 1983, both Indigenous communities clearly expressed their desire to continue living in the Schefferville region after the official shut down of the mining operations.³⁸ The Naskapi expected to relocate very shortly from Matimekush to the new village of Kawawachikamach, which was being constructed only a few kilometres north of Schefferville as part of the conditions negotiated through the *Northeastern Québec Agreement* (NEQA, executed January 31, 1978), and following the popular referendum held in early 1980 regarding the choice of a new town site. The Innu, meanwhile, made explicit requests regarding the maintenance of basic town infrastructure and services, as they intended to continue inhabiting, at least in the short term, the apartment buildings in Matimekush. Both groups also demanded that basic means of communication be

37. B. McKenzie (2009: I-03a), interview. The translation is mine.

38. Naskapi de Schefferville, and Conseil des Indiens Montagnais de Schefferville, Assemblée nationale du Québec, Secrétariat des commissions parlementaires, Troisième session, Trente-deuxième législature, Commission élue permanente de la présidence du conseil et de la constitution, "Audiences publiques aux fins d'entendre des personnes et des organismes afin d'étudier l'ensemble de la situation de Schefferville et d'évaluer les actions qui pourraient être prises en vue d'aider à la solution des problèmes de cette municipalité," résumé des mémoires, Québec, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

upheld, in particular the vital weekly train services between the town and the St. Lawrence coast.

The Québec government responded particularly proactively to these demands, while reiterating its own political and territorial interests, as well as its economic hopes for the region. François Gendron, who served as *Ministre délégué à l'Aménagement et au Développement régional* and *Ministre responsable de l'Office de planification et de développement du Québec (OPDQ)*, made it clear that his government's desire to maintain a presence in the area was closely linked to its "significance in the political-economic problematic of the Québec-Newfoundland border,"³⁹ in particular because it stood as a "central point for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Labrador trough."⁴⁰ In order to assess the feasibility of this optimistic position, the Parliamentary Commission established a working committee, the *Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville*, with representatives from all the different parties concerned at the community, municipal, provincial, and federal levels. The primary task of this working group was to oversee the upkeep of basic services in Schefferville and to propose various avenues for future economic development in the area.⁴¹

39. F. Gendron, "Rapport sur les projets potentiels de développement économique," to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, *Avenir Schefferville*, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q. The OPDQ was a division of the Ministère du Conseil exécutif. The translation is mine.

40. F. Gendron, "Audition de personnes," Schefferville, February 10, 1983, p. B12138, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translations are mine.

41. Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, "Rapport sur les services essentiels (Identification et maintien)," to *Ministre délégué à l'Aménagement et au Développement régional*, Schefferville, June 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, *Avenir Schefferville*, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

Regarding the proposed severance package, the IOC offered lump-sum payments to its employees who were not eligible for the pension plan (\$16,400 on average for 151 permanent or full-time employees, \$6,000 for 375 seasonal workers, and a few other bonuses of up to \$2,200⁴²). In addition, “assistance to find jobs was provided, and various programs concerning life insurance, additional medical benefits, heating oil subsidies, and moving costs were extended until the end of the [1983] summer.”⁴³ While the mining company maintained ownership of eighty-two houses in the municipality, it also proposed to buy back at market value—“obviously quite low at this point”—the homes of former workers who wanted to leave the town, while offering the possibility to those who wanted to stay in Schefferville to purchase these very homes for one dollar.⁴⁴ Jos Pinette remembers well the IOC fire sale of the town houses: “They sold them for one buck when they left.”⁴⁵ This option, however, remained valid only until the beginning of the fall, at which time the contractors were scheduled to begin removing the empty dwellings. Theoretically, all Innu or Naskapi residents were eligible to buy a house in town for one dollar and become new home owners, although it appears that very few were even informed about the possibility. As late as August 3, with the purchase deadline fast approaching, Innu representative Augustin Vollant inquired

42. “La fermeture de Schefferville: programme détaillé du règlement des travailleurs de l’IOC,” *L’Élan Côte-Nord*, February 3, 1983, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN; Jeanne M. Wolfe, “Schefferville: The Crisis in the Quebec-Labrador Iron Mining Region: Mine Closure in Single Industry Towns and the Problem of Residual Activity,” in Bradbury, Neil, and Tyklainen, *Coping with Closure*, 200.

43. Wolfe, “Schefferville,” 200-201.

44. Archer and Bradbury, “Schefferville,” 186.

45. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

directly to the Groupe de travail to see whether only former IOC employees were allowed to acquire the old houses, to which the IOC representative present at the meeting answered in the negative.⁴⁶ While some people do indeed recall taking advantage of this opportunity to relocate out of the Matimekush apartments to Schefferville,⁴⁷ Pinette argues that overall, very few Innu benefited from the offer, not only because of a lack of awareness, but in fact because people wished to stay on the reserve. As he explains, people “could have bought houses but they didn’t like it in Schefferville, because they didn’t like to mix with the white residents. They were better off staying on the reserve.”⁴⁸ On the Naskapi side, the prospect of a brand new village in Kawawachikamach meant that they almost certainly never seriously considered the option of acquiring houses in Schefferville.

The severance package described as company generosity by several observers and by the IOC itself in fact delegated substantial financial responsibility to various government entities. As part of the *Accord d’encouragement à la mobilité de la main-d’œuvre* signed in May 1983, both the Ministère de la Main-d’œuvre et de la Sécurité du revenu du Québec (one quarter) and the Ministry of Employment and Immigration of Canada (one half) jointly contributed with the IOC (one quarter) to cover relocation expenses for former employees. Furthermore, the mining company did not have to cover

46. Yves Cartier, compte rendu de réunion, Cinquième rencontre du Groupe de travail sur l’avenir de Schefferville, Schefferville, August 3, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

47. M. L. André (2009: I-17b), interview; Interview (2009: I-28b).

48. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

any relocation expenses for people that it did not previously employ.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the responsibilities for all the town services in the domain of education, health, transport, communication, and basic infrastructure were split among several governmental, paragonovernmental, and private entities.⁵⁰ Yet in spite of these concerted partnerships, the rapidly shrinking population and the corresponding radical decrease in tax monies still led to a situation where some essential services had to be adjusted downward as a function of the evolving town demographics, while several nonessential services were completely eliminated.⁵¹

By the end of 1983, only 1,150 inhabitants were left in the Schefferville region, and among them were 900 Innu and Naskapi residents.⁵² This represented a total population decrease of over 65 percent with respect to seven years prior, and more than 40 percent from the previous year (figure 9).⁵³ As a consequence of this exodus, the

49. *Accord d'encouragement à la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre*, signed between the Minister of Employment and Immigration of Canada, the Ministère de la Main-d'oeuvre et de la Sécurité du revenu du Québec, and the IOC, n.p., May 11, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

50. Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, "Rapport sur les services," to Ministre délégué à l'Aménagement et au Développement régional, Schefferville, June 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. These entities included the IOC; the municipality of Schefferville; the provincial Ministère des Affaires municipales, Ministère des Affaires sociales (responsible for health-related matters), Ministère de l'Éducation, Ministère des Loisirs, de la Chasse et de la Pêche, Ministère du Transport, and Ministère de la Justice; the federal Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs; as well as the school boards, the Québec North Shore & Labrador Railway, Air Schefferville, Québécois, Télébec, and Schefferville Power (a subsidiary of Hydro-Québec).

51. F. Gendron, "Rapport sur les services essentiels sur le dossier de l'avenir de Schefferville," to Conseil des ministres, Québec, June 30, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

52. F. Gendron, "Rapport sur les projets," to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

53. Vallières, *Des mines et des hommes*, 367; Wolfe, "Schefferville," 199.

provincial government proposed a withdrawal of financial support for social-recreational services and infrastructure that included the important cultural centre—the IOC had already closed the swimming pool and the bowling alley in October 1982⁵⁴—despite the fact that Minister Gendron himself considered them vital for northern communities notably in order to cope with isolation.⁵⁵ Moreover, during the summer of 1983, local Indigenous groups began to worry seriously about a potential abandonment of essential services, several months before the Comité de reclassement des employeurs and the Association des travailleurs de Schefferville expressed analogous fears, in their final report, to the effect that “that the quality of life has deteriorated or is about to deteriorate to the point where several individuals who are interested in remaining at Schefferville will leave the town, barring rapid changes.”⁵⁶ Despite the commitment of Schefferville Power to continue supplying electricity to the municipality and to the “Indian” reserve, Chef Innu Gaston McKenzie voiced his concerns in a letter sent to the OPDQ about the long-term reliability and security of electrical installations. Being apparently unaware of the existence of two oil-powered backup generators, McKenzie reminded southern authorities of the potentially devastating consequences of a power blackout in the dead of a subarctic winter.⁵⁷ In the same vein, the Groupe de travail

54. Nadeau, “Iron Ore ferme à Schefferville,” Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN.

55. F. Gendron, “Rapport sur les services,” to Conseil des ministres, Québec, June 30, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q.

56. Comité de reclassement des employeurs and Association des travailleurs de Schefferville, “Rapport final,” n.p., ca. January 1984, Manpower Division, RG 118, LAC. The translation is mine.

57. G. McKenzie to Coordinateur, Groupe de travail sur l’avenir de Schefferville, Village des Hurons (Québec), August 2, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires

raised questions about the supply of hot water, which until then had been obtained through the IOC boilers that the company envisaged to stop operating in August.⁵⁸

Just one day earlier, on August 1, McKenzie forwarded another complaint to the OPDQ regarding a situation which he interpreted as symptomatic of a decline in health services at the local hospital. The complaint reported the July 1983 incident involving an Innu individual, Alexandre André, who had suffered severe injuries as a result of a major house fire, but who was only able to receive the local doctor's approval to be evacuated to a health establishment outside of Schefferville two days later.⁵⁹ While the Ministre des Affaires sociales Pierre-Marc Johnson immediately countered that this episode was merely circumstantial and not in fact the result of a shortage of health professionals in Schefferville,⁶⁰ the Innu complaint did receive the full support of the Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais and the Groupe de travail.⁶¹ This latter group pleaded

autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q. See also Yves Cartier, compte rendu de réunion, Quatrième rencontre du Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, June 22, 1983, Schefferville, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

58. Yves Cartier, compte rendu de réunion, Troisième rencontre du Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, Schefferville, June 1, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

59. G. McKenzie to Coordinateur, Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, Schefferville, August 1, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

60. Pierre-Marc Johnson, Ministre des Affaires sociales, to Coordinateur, Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, Québec, August 10, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

61. Gilbert Courtois, Coordonateur des dossiers, Santé et services sociaux, Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais, to Coordinateur, Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, Village des Hurons (Québec), August 2, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

directly to Johnson that “your ministry must develop rapid solutions to this problem that strongly worries the [Indigenous] population, already deeply aggravated.”⁶²

As they reflect critically on the period that followed the abandonment of the mining operations, many Innu and Naskapi individuals blame the government and company officials, interpreting the unfortunate outcome of the mining project and the corresponding loss of employment and services as inextricably linked to the short-sighted, colonial, and indeed greedy vision held by the authorities with regard to the development of their region. Today, they continue to witness on a daily basis the consequences of these political and economic choices, living alongside the remnants of falling infrastructure, vacillating services, and a frail economy, all of which contributed, during much brighter days, to nourish the pride of state-industrial agents for what ultimately turned out to be an ephemeral experiment in the large-scale modernisation of the provincial north.

Memories of Closure and Perspectives of Change over the Longer Past

The mine closed in 1982. The company packed its bags and took off. Open pits, destruction everywhere; our animals driven away. We made the company rich. Where’s my share? Where’s my thank you? The money, the revenues? There was none of that.

—Philip B. Einish, September 23, 2009

According to my own knowledge, it did not bother the Innu to see the company dig holes in the ground and occupy our territory, because the company gave us work.⁶³

—Sylvestre Vachon, September 29, 2009

62. Claude P. Côté, Coordinateur, Groupe de travail sur l’avenir de Schefferville, to Ministre des Affaires sociales, Québec, August 4, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

63. The translation is mine.

Many Innu and Naskapi individuals talk about the closure and the postmining period in terms of severe disruption and abandonment by the IOC and government authorities, who (in their view) operated illegitimately on a territory that never belonged to them in the first place. This is especially disconcerting, according the several people interviewed at Schefferville, considering the immense wealth—millions and millions of dollars⁶⁴—that state and industry extracted in the process:

We weren't even told and we didn't even know what they were using the ore for, why it was so precious to them. And years later, once they had distracted our way of life, we learned that the ore was in demand in foreign countries. They just came, took what they needed, and left.⁶⁵

Back then the company took out much iron from here, a lot of iron, an enormous amount of iron, because for them it was like gold. It brought a lot of money, back then, it was very profitable.⁶⁶

Another Naskapi elder, David Swappie, shares a related interpretation, arguing that as the IOC withdrew from Schefferville, it left behind a legacy that included very few tangible benefits for the local communities, other than a pension for a handful of long-time Naskapi employees. "We got a certain amount from the company," Swappie explains. "Certain people worked for so many years, and they received different amounts. But they didn't care, they just left. They didn't care about us, and all the people, when they left from here. They didn't give any benefits to the people, or any contributions."⁶⁷

64. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview; E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview.

65. P. B. Einish (2009: N-23a), interview.

66. J. Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview. The translation is mine.

67. D. Swappie (2009: N-25b), interview.

The marginal employment opportunities did provide non-negligible compensations for the local residents in exchange for the impactful and profit-generating activities of the IOC.⁶⁸ But as Swappie explains with remarkable feelings of unfairness, he as well as many others was not even in a position to receive a pension after the company left, because he was never employed as a full-time employee: “We got laid off and on, so some people like me didn’t get the full benefits that the company offered after it left. There weren’t a lot of benefits from the IOC. No other benefits were given to the people and the communities; it was only them and their money.”⁶⁹ Beyond a few decades of employment and some fruit baskets that the company usually distributed to the communities during the holiday season,⁷⁰ Marie-Louise André shares widely held sentiments about how the mining adventure, overall, created “a lot of troubles.” She makes the point that “the white people that were here, they left with a lot of money. I’m eighty-two years old now, when I look back over what they did to us, I see that we were always served badly. It was never good; the government always treated us badly. We never received any money, any compensation, nothing. I’m eighty-two years old, and it’s still like that.”⁷¹

In addition to experiencing an ongoing decrease in the quantity and quality of town services and infrastructure, as well as severely reduced employment opportunities,

68. See S. Vachon (2009: I-29b), interview (highlighted in this section’s epigraph).

69. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

70. Interview by author (2009: I-28c), Matimekush, September 28, 2009; A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview.

71. M. L. André (2009: I-17b), interview. The translation is mine.

the communities must still live amidst a deeply scarred landscape—covering an area of up to one thousand square kilometres⁷²—littered with tailings piles, industrial wastes, and pollutants that were left behind in the early 1980s, but only marginally cleaned up many years later, when remediation projects were conducted in the early 2000s (this aspect of the closing years is explored in a subsequent section). For the Innu and the Naskapi, the postindustrial environment acts as an incessant material reminder of three decades of intensive land exploitation by a company that prioritized shareholder dividends and the needs of the American economy during the cold war period,⁷³ but produced minimal value-added for local populations.

At the same time, it is also evident that the decrepit mining landscape, the different town sites, and the corresponding diversity of life stories that are shared and kept alive also interact in complex ways with people's present activities near and around Schefferville, to create a fluid repository of historical interpretations of the longer past that include the premining, the mining, as well as the postmining periods. These interpretations do not appear to be strictly reducible to black and white stories of appropriation, dispossession, destruction, and abandonment by insensitive foreign agents. Several Indigenous residents who continue to move extensively over the degraded territory, for example, speak regretfully of the hazards associated with winter travels across a territory that has been colonized, mined out, and eventually left behind without much afterthought. At the same time, they also continue to make use of the old

72. Laforest et al., "Occupation et utilisation du territoire," B74.

73. See Paquette, *Les mines du Québec*, 127.

mining roads to access the cabins that they have built at places like Key Lake for hunting, fishing, or spending time on the land, and they even reminisce nostalgically about the relatively plentiful jobs that were once offered by the company. If the repulsive landscape and the various town sites still contribute to fan the flames of people's discontent today, and if feelings of resentment associated with past exploitation remain dominant, these attitudes also tend to coexist with subtler affirmations of local agency and, in some cases, even of a vanished mining history that is in a sense still missed today.

As one engages with such diverse interpretations of the past—inextricably linked to the contingency of contemporary life—an intricate picture of local history, of nitassinan, and of the legacy of industrial development begins to emerge. This perspective can contribute, I think, to challenge certain assumptions regarding the role of oral history, originally conceived of in this research project as a counternarrative to the dominant discourse typically held by industrial developers, government bureaucrats, or union representatives (I return to this methodological point in the afterword). For Cameron, the practices and outcomes of (oral historical) research should in fact be understood as a “fluid community process rather than simply material to be mined for and ‘preserved’ by storage.” In the context of large industrial projects that contributed to destroy a socially and culturally significant lake in British Columbia, Cameron seeks to grapple with the complicated array of local interpretations related to these developments: “Yes, Sumas Lake had been drained, but that hardly proved that it and

the surrounding floodlands were valueless to all the people who lived there.”⁷⁴ In Schefferville, where some areas of the territory were similarly obliterated through mining activities, it does not follow that the contemporary landscape has become completely without value for the people who continue to inhabit it and frequently visit it under a multiplicity of circumstances. As local life stories generally reveal, however, a deep sense of loss appears to underline several of the Innu and Naskapi perspectives about the mine closure and the mining experience more generally, an experience which, in the final analysis, continues to defy any singular comprehension or meaning.

Relating to a postindustrial landscape

Several people in Schefferville are particularly moved by the former mining pits, which extend hundreds of metres deep over an area of several kilometres across the subarctic landscape. The removal of trees and other “overburden,” the blasting of hill tops, the digging of holes, the large resulting tailing piles and debris, and the oxidizing iron-rich earth have contributed to create a red-coloured, uneven, yet generally less rugged landscape, which at least one local Innu resident has metaphorically associated with extraterrestrial scenery (figure 14).⁷⁵ An older hunter describes the major changes to the landscape that resulted from open-pit mining, as he speaks of the beautiful territory near Schefferville as an unrecoverable element of the past: “We were already coming here before there was a mine. We came here to hunt. It was quite undulated

74. Laura Cameron, *Openings: A Meditation on History, Method, and Sumas Lake* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 18.

75. E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview.

here; there were beautiful mountains, beautiful rivers, beautiful lakes. It was nice here, before the mine."⁷⁶ Similarly, Essimeu McKenzie brings to light the disturbing changes to the territory with respect to the years that preceded industrialism, when people frequented the Schefferville region for hunting and trapping activities. "When they came here ten years before [the mine], everything was pristine," McKenzie recalls. "Ten years later they made large holes. It's something to see the landscape where people hunted, and a decade later they see these big holes. It's something to see all that."⁷⁷



Figure 14. Tailing piles, near Schefferville. Photograph by author, September 2009.

For some individuals, then, the scarred, deeply altered, overturned landscape, the drained out lakes, and the scattered open pits evoke angry memories that relate to the

76. Interview (2009: 1-28a). The translation is mine.

77. E. T. McKenzie (2009: 1-16a), interview. The translation is mine.

company's lucrative exploitation of mineral resources. Caroline Vachon remembers that people did not particularly appreciate to see their land being shovelled out to the profit of large companies, but, as she describes somewhat helplessly, "people didn't like that, but they couldn't do anything."⁷⁸ Indeed, when probed about the overall record of the IOC and its long-term legacy, a few residents like Marie-Louise André and Matthew Mameamskum simply point to the impressive mining pits that were left behind as self-explanatory evidence for the disruption, the abandonment, and the reckless attitude of the mining managers:

I would love to go up and show you over there in the mountains, all the holes that are there. I would show you how they left it all like that, and then ran away. It's still like that today.⁷⁹

They left, and after that the pits were flooded and everything. They just left everything.⁸⁰

By difference, though not necessarily by contradiction, people also express at times their awe at this surreal landscape, and even their appreciation of some of the beauties encapsulated in the physical and human immensities of those scenes of abandonment. Driving with his grandson to and around the old mine, one elder repeatedly evokes his appreciation for the landscape, whether we are passing by the mine tailings, the open pits, or the surrounding lakes and rivers.⁸¹ Initially, these comments can seriously threaten one's own preconceived notions of another people's relationship with what is

78. Caroline Vachon (2009 : 1-18a), interview. The translation is mine.

79. M. L. André (2009: 1-17b), interview. The translation is mine.

80. M. Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview.

81. J. Dominique (2009: 1-17a), interview.

often simply denigrated as a postapocalyptic industrial wasteland. As Essimeu McKenzie points out, the mining landscape is indeed largely synonymous with ravage, squander, and the unequal appropriation of wealth by foreign interests. But interestingly, these memories do not lead him to abandon or look with mere disdain at the Innu territory near Schefferville. Rather, he makes use of powerful imageries and unusual metaphors in relation to the mining landscape to explain his personal difficulty of “living between two cultures,” of having to share the land with strangers who are primarily interested in reaping financial benefits from it.⁸² As he sets up his traditional tent in the middle of the mined out and desolate barrens, he seeks to reaffirm his own Innu identity and demonstrate his people’s enduring presence on their homeland: “It makes me feel good, to hang out here on the barren mountain. It doesn’t discourage me. At least it tells me one thing: that even if I’m on a mountain without vegetation, I am on my territory.”⁸³ Thus walking around and reiterating stories about his territory near Schefferville, there is even, for McKenzie, a favourite time of the day to revisit the old mining sites. Right before sunset, the light arrangements reveal most effectively the scale of destruction and yet the strangely poetic beauty of this highly modified, human-made environment.

The empty territory that surrounds the former mines—repulsive, stunning, majestic, or mysterious—as well as certain abandoned areas of the municipality, continually evoke nostalgic sentiments of a more active or entertaining past. When

82. E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview. The translation is mine.

83. E. T. McKenzie, cited in *Une tente sur mars*, directed by Martin Bureau and Luc Renaud, Productions Thalie and Les Films du 3 Mars, 2009. The translation is mine.

people revisit or come across former work spaces—an old shed, a rotten wooden bridge, a water-filled mining pit, and an overgrown road—they tend to share memories of a time when Schefferville was teeming with people and bustling with noises and activities. Such uninterrupted human-material relations, intermingling people and things across changing landscapes, and nourished by reminiscences of the mining history, do not only refer back to the harsh and unjust working conditions at the mine, the complicated coexistence of mining labour and activities on the land, or the difficult and changing ecological conditions that involved rarified caribou and overfished lakes. They also speak to an employment period that enabled working families to support their relatives and keep busy with wage labour, and through which Innu and Naskapi labourers even nurtured some close friendships with their fellow non-Indigenous workers. One Innu evocatively expresses this sense of loss regarding the lively old days with friends that have either passed on or moved back to southern regions: “I knew many white people with whom I worked. I knew a whole bunch of them. Many of them have probably died. I also knew some bosses; at the end they were almost sixty-five years old. They must be dead today. It’s troubling when I think about those that I knew. They’re almost all dead now.”⁸⁴

The abandonment of the town and some of the infrastructure near or on the reserves, as well as the emptiness of the sites that the younger generations used for leisure activities, also call to mind feelings of regrets about a time when people actively participated in social and athletic activities. As he encounters the material leftovers

84. Interview (2009: 1-28c). The translation is mine.

dating back to the mining years, Armand MacKenzie vividly reflects on his more youthful days:

When I think about the desolation here in the village, the desolation following the exploitation of the mine, when before the cultural and social life was so lively. It was lively here. My playground was everywhere, all the sidewalks that you see there; that was my playground. The hospital, for me, because it was asphalted, it was nice, there were some nice hills for someone who wanted to bicycle there. I could circulate freely when I lived in Matimekush.⁸⁵

Several people in Schefferville, especially elders who used to work at the mine and befriended other workers, as well as adults who benefited from leisure infrastructure and sporting opportunities in their youth, remember such significant elements of the social past with some nostalgia, especially since much of it rapidly vanished following the IOC departure.

The legacy of environmental change

Besides the deeply altered landscape, the abandoned town infrastructure, and the much quieter social and economic life, Innu and Naskapi individuals have expressed displeasure with the ruined industrial machinery and other wastes—vehicles, pipes, cement blocks, used combustibles, empty oil drums, electrical appliances, batteries—that the company left on the territory after the mine closure. The overall environmental legacy of the Schefferville mines, meanwhile, remains largely unknown in strictly scientific terms. Notwithstanding that researchers have recognized certain pollution problems associated with metal mining, establishing “true historical records of trace

85. A. MacKenzie (2009: 1-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

metal loading from mining” remains a complex enterprise that is typically costly to undertake for the state and for the mining companies involved.⁸⁶ Generally, very few studies have been conducted to assess the biophysical impacts of the Schefferville mining developments. To the knowledge of local residents and current town administrator, the provincial Ministère de l’Environnement never conducted (or at least never reported to the local communities the result of) soil characterisation studies, in order to assess and communicate the potential cumulative damage of mineral operations and abandoned industrial equipment.⁸⁷

Regarding earlier exploration activities, it is unknown how many sites were completely abandoned and never cleaned up by HNSE, LME, and IOC. But as Duhaime, Bernard, and Comtois argue with regard to drilling programs that were established in the province more generally, before the government adopted the Environment Quality Act in 1976, “mining companies were not legally required to clean up exploration sites,”⁸⁸ with the consequence that “many left everything behind, from prospecting equipment to buildings for workers and workshops,”⁸⁹ in addition to surplus materials such as oil products. In the region of Nunavik alone, a vast area situated immediately north of Schefferville, the authors identified “595 potential mining

86. Yves Couillard et al., “A Test of the Integrity of Metal Records in Sediment Cores Based on the Documented History of Metal Contamination in Lac Dufault (Québec, Canada), *Journal of Paleolimnology* 32 (2004): 150.

87. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview; Interview (2009: I-01a); Marcella Beaudoin, Administratrice, Schefferville, personal communications, October-November 2008.

88. Gérard Duhaime, Nick Bernard, and Robert Comtois, “An Inventory of Abandoned Mining Exploration Sites in Nunavik, Canada,” *The Canadian Geographer* 49, no. 3 (2005): 26.

89. *Ibid.*, 262.

exploration sites that contain equipment, dwellings, vehicles or other items that might have been abandoned during works conducted before 1976.⁹⁰ Consequently, they warn, “major environmental impacts are expected to occur, which is causing great concern among the populations using these lands.”⁹¹ For Armand MacKenzie, environmental impact studies could have at least enabled local authorities to take proper action and help them formulate specific demands to the IOC company. Perhaps they could have even guaranteed, for the benefit of their communities and others elsewhere, that “this type of *maldéveloppement* [underdevelopment] can be repaired, as much as possible, and even avoided” in the future, particularly in the context of the region’s current iron redevelopment phase (see conclusion).⁹²

Beyond the impacts of industrial development on caribou dynamics (discussed in the previous chapter), a handful of studies conducted near Schefferville nevertheless shed some light on the environmental legacy of the operational phase. These studies demonstrate that the best understood impacts of mining are related to the historical release of organic and inorganic sediments into nearby water courses. In 1979, Dubreuil undertook one such study at Kata Creek, a tributary of Howells River situated thirteen kilometres west of Schefferville which “received waste water from an iron mine until late 1978.” Her study shows that the impact of pumping water with high inorganic sediment content from the Fleming 3 mining pit directly into the creek was readily

90. *Ibid.*, 265.

91. *Ibid.*, 262.

92. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

discernible with respect to biological indicators, which were “responding much more slowly to the improvement in water quality.”⁹³ In the upper section of the creek closest to the mining pit, benthic life had yet to return several months after the end of pumping activities, while bushes and lichens growing along the creek “were heavily stained in red.”⁹⁴ Meanwhile, physico-chemical parameters such as specific conductivity, turbidity, and suspended solids had “apparently returned to normal” downstream from Tapio Lake, located roughly one kilometre from Fleming 3.⁹⁵

A more recent study by Laperrière et al. demonstrates that at Dauriat Lake (Pearce Lake), the water body adjacent to the municipality and the Matimekush reserve where municipal waste waters were discharged until 1975 (when a treatment plant was finally installed), both biological and physico-chemical indicators had not yet recovered from the impacts of mining and town development activities, more than two decades after the cessation of industrial activities. In particular, the authors correlate the changes in lake eutrophication and toxic heavy metal concentration—most notably arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, and zinc—with the premining, mining, and postmining periods, showing that the most important effects were registered during peak activity years.⁹⁶ Moreover, the study demonstrates that preproduction activities such as

93. Marie-Andrée Dubreuil, “Some Aspects of the Recovery of a Stream from Iron Ore Mining Activities near Schefferville, Quebec,” in *McGill Subarctic Research Paper 32: Environmental Studies in the Central Québec Labrador Peninsula*, ed. T. R. Moore (Montréal: Centre for Northern Studies and Research, McGill University, 1981), 39.

94. *Ibid.*, 53-54.

95. *Ibid.*, 39.

96. Laurence Laperrière et al., “Paleolimnological Evidence of Mining and Demographic Impacts on Lac Dauriat, Schefferville (subarctic Québec, Canada),” *Journal of Paleolimnology* 40 (2008):

small-scale prospecting, deforestation, the establishment of the railroad, and early town development could have also contributed to environmental changes of a similar nature at Dauriat Lake, in particular due to the "increased runoff" that invariably results from these activities.⁹⁷ In short, Laperrière et al. conclude that

following a period of strong pollution and fertilization, such as that seen in Lac Dauriat, many years are necessary for the lake to reach its original ecological state. The detrimental effects on the environment are still in evidence more than twenty years after the closure of the mines, and Lac Dauriat has yet to reach its natural state of the period preceding extreme anthropogenic impact.

These findings, though perhaps limited in scope and building on few previously held studies in the region, should nevertheless be interpreted, according to the authors, as "representative of the fate of many northern lake ecosystems that are located at the centre of important mining activities."⁹⁸

In the same vein, local perspectives expressed by Indigenous people with regard to environmental change and mineral activities correspondingly focus heavily on observations about possible effects on water and fish. In particular, concerns are regularly raised in relation to waste waters, mine tailings, and other pollutants that were carried (and possibly continue to be carried today, especially following the snow melt) into the waterways:

Some of the rivers were red. They put pollutants in the lakes, at Timmins and also at Howells River. There were many kinds of fish there. With the blasts, the red soil went into the river, and it impacted the fish.⁹⁹

322. According to the authors, "the iron ore mining was conducted to the south and west of the town site and not directly upstream of Lac Dauriat" (311).

97. *Ibid.*, 319.

98. *Ibid.*, 22.

99. M. Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview.

Fish is everywhere around here. Close to the mine, water was dirty with oil or gas, and everything went downstream into the lakes. The fish were not good anymore. At Bean Lake, we took a big fish, but we were not able to eat it. It smelled like fuel, it was not edible. The mine disturbed very, very, very much.¹⁰⁰

When spring arrives, the river is all red. Then, in August, it's clear again. Every year is the same. The river is not far from here, it's only two or three kilometres away. Today [in September], if you go see it, it will be a nice river. But in April or May, it will be red. There are for sure other rivers that are like that in the spring. It must be mainly in the spring that there are problems.¹⁰¹

This last comment by Essimeu McKenzie in fact enriches observations made by Dubreuil three decades ago near Kata Creek, when she noticed that “the red colouration and high turbidity, which were truly remarkable, extended a great distance downstream while the mine was operating. By August 1979, though, the red colour and turbidity decreased rapidly downstream from the mine ... such that Airi Lake [located three to four kilometres downstream from the Fleming 3 mining pit] appeared totally unaffected by mining.”¹⁰²

Also echoing to a certain extent some of the scientific conclusions presented by Laperrière et al., Jos Pinette argues that many other activities, such as the construction of infrastructure, could also have had major impacts on the local habitats. As we travel around the mining landscape, he begins his discussion on this topic by describing the historical consequences that he observed on beaver populations, after one of the nearby creeks was redirected to make way for a mining road. He then goes on to describe the pollution of an important fishing lake, before concluding somewhat fatalistically:

100. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

101. E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview. The translation is mine.

102. Dubreuil, “Recovery of a Stream,” 41.

There was a beaver there before, many beavers. There was a lot of wood everywhere around here, to help him find his food. Now that the company closed the creek, it killed everything, the wood is all dead. Before it used to be named 'The presence of the beaver.' There was always a beaver here.

After that, when the train passed there, the Iron Ore named this place Gilling Lake. The company changed the name. Before it used to be named 'Where there are many fish.' Today if you go there you won't kill any fish. That's what happens, when water is dirty and polluted.

If the company had been right, when it said that there would be work for a hundred years here, all the fish would not be any good today. If the company was still here, the rivers and the lakes, sixty or seventy miles downstream, there would be nothing good there. You see the lake over there flows into Le Fer Lake, about forty-five miles from here; the pollution would have reached all the way there. Everything would have been wrecked.¹⁰³

Interestingly, Pinette makes use of ancient Innu toponyms, which the company and government authorities worked to replace, as a way of understanding and interpreting the historical transformations that industrial activities introduced on the ecosystems and the territory.

Travelling with community residents on the land further reveals some of their worries about the IOC's overall environmental legacy in Schefferville. Some people point to the negative aesthetic value or dangers associated with the old equipment that hasn't been removed and continues to litter the land; others also hint at the possibility that much material was buried or thrown into the mining pits, and once again reiterate concerns about potentially harmful contamination. Below, one elder (Jos Pinette) remarks with agitation the undesirable visual aspect of the abundant steel wastes, while another Innu individual presents his views regarding the health hazards that such

103. J. Pinette (2009: 1-21b), interview. The translation is mine.

material may currently pose to local residents and their environments (figures 15 and 16):

Look, there are abandoned pipes there. There are lots of wastes there.¹⁰⁴

There are so many things that the company left, and we don't know where these things are. The transformers, these things are apparently very carcinogenic. Then there are also the used oils. In any case, I have never seen them putting these oils on the train to send them back down. No. The car batteries too. Where are they, where did they put them? They buried them somewhere, for sure. When they tore down the houses [in Matimekush], there were fuel reservoirs everywhere. They didn't siphon off all the fuels, they buried them. They left all their wastes there; nobody came here [to remove these things]. The cement blocks, they never took them back. They left a lot of things over there... Today, if you went into the lakes, you would find oil drums.¹⁰⁵



Figure 15. Abandoned fuel drums, near Schefferville. Photograph by author, November 2008.

104. *Ibid.* The translation is mine.

105. Interview (2009: I-01a). The translation is mine.

Overall, these interpretations of local change by Indigenous residents serve to illustrate the nature and the magnitude of the negative ecological impacts that resulted from waste dumping, infrastructure construction, and other related anthropogenic transformations. Some hunters recall that these changes were significant enough that they had to alter their harvesting habits in order to adjust to new ecological realities. David Swappie explains that one of the reasons he and his relatives had to travel further out onto the land was to avoid disturbed rivers and lakes near Schefferville. "That's why we went out in different directions, away from the mine, when we were hunting," Swappie recalls. "The good hunting grounds are over there, away from the pits. Iron Arm, Petitsikapau Lake, the big lake over there, and many other lakes."¹⁰⁶ Yet local people's observations of these anthropogenic changes also show the deep limitations related to our knowledge of these problems experienced today by Innu and Naskapi individuals who continue to frequent the territory. In this regard, some have even made the counterpoint that the sheer vastness and regenerating capacity of the land can at least partially act as a buffer against these detrimental but ultimately highly localized ecological disturbances.¹⁰⁷ This perspective is perhaps expressed most saliently by Jos Pinette, who in some ways brings to mind Dubreuil's findings with regard to the observed regeneration of Kata Creek, as he offers his final yet never definitive thoughts on the issue: "The pollution went as far as Key Lake. Vacher Lake was also not good,

106. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

107. Interview (2009: I-29a).

during the Iron Ore period. But the creek is always functioning. It was created to flow until the end of times.”¹⁰⁸



Figure 16. Old waste materials, including rusting metal pipes, left at the former mining pits, near Schefferville. Photograph by author, September 2009.

Dismantling the vestiges of modernity

In addition to the scenes of abandonment that characterized the end of the mining operations, mainly in the form of a degraded landscape, leftover equipment or pollutants, and significant changes to the environment, the two Indigenous communities also maintain particularly strong memories of the physical removal of town buildings in the years that followed 1983. As Bradbury describes, the desertion and demolition of infrastructure, considered by companies “as part of the production sector of the mine or

108. J. Pinette (2009: 1-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

mill," is a common corporate strategy aimed to sever the financial responsibility from a municipality in the closing phase of industrial projects.¹⁰⁹ In Schefferville, the IOC proceeded with a series of demolitions, with increasing intensity after 1986, as a way of reducing its financial engagement with the town, to which it still contributed up to 80 percent of municipal taxes in the years 1984 and 1985 (in addition to servicing all of its debt). As a consequence of this disengagement, the MAM expected local taxes to increase beyond measure for the local residents, with the possibility of even tripling over one year and reaching up to \$1,200 for the 1986 fiscal period.¹¹⁰ This untenable situation once again required swift bureaucratic intervention. Contradicting at this stage its earlier position regarding the need to maintain a significant human presence in the region, the provincial government recommended in June of that year a \$6.5-million plan to shut down the municipality and to remove a good portion of the infrastructure, including the local hospital, "for which Indians are by far the most frequent users."¹¹¹ In order to avoid the complete erasure of the town, the provincial administration suggested that the federal government should transform part of the municipality's territory into a reserve extension for Matimekush and take over the administration of the remaining municipal, school, and health services. At that point, the MAM observed that "the town

109. Bradbury, "Toward an Alternative Theory," 155.

110. André Bourbeau, *Ministre des Affaires municipales, "Projet de mémoire portant sur l'opportunité de la fermeture de la ville de Schefferville,"* to Conseil des ministres, Québec, March 4, 1986, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN.

111. Marc St-Pierre, "Fermer Schefferville: une question d'argent," May 14, 1986, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

only exists now to essentially provide services to Indigenous residents ... who now represent close to 80 percent of the total population," therefore suggesting that the financial involvement of the federal government, estimated at about \$90,000 a year, was clearly insufficient.¹¹² For the federal Conservative administration led by Brian Mulroney (1984-93), the Schefferville closure would not compromise its financial support for the Innu reserve of Matimekush (the Naskapi were by then covered by the provincially regulated NEQA, with federal responsibilities largely discharged). But at the same time, Mulroney also conceded that the fate of northern mining towns often rested with their final obliteration by bulldozers, and surely he was not about to move heaven and earth in order to defeat this impending outcome at Schefferville.¹¹³

To provide justification for their plan, provincial officials also argued that a municipal shutdown might eliminate what they observed to be growing conflicts between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of Schefferville and Matimekush, while it would allow the Innu and Naskapi communities to acquire more autonomy and, rather cynically, force them to finally take charge of their own economic development. But in spite of what they understood to be obvious financial and socio-economic incentives to erase Schefferville from the colonial map, the Québec government remembered the strategic importance of this region and thus also expressed certain reservations regarding the ultimate shutdown of the municipality. In particular, a full

112. A. Bourbeau, "Projet de mémoire," to Conseil des ministres, Québec, March 4, 1986, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

113. B. Mulroney, cited in "Schefferville: réserve indienne, l'idée plaît à Ottawa," *Le Soleil*, March 13, 1986, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN.

capitulation implied at the very least a public recognition of the failure of the modernization project in Nouveau-Québec. Moreover, it meant that the Lévesque administration would forego an important access point to the subarctic north, displace the remaining non-Indigenous population, and eliminate a regional base that may one day facilitate economic rebirth in the form of renewed mineral exploration programs and improved tourism activities.¹¹⁴

On the Innu side, people remained initially suspicious about the Québec offer to amalgamate part of the municipality—a territory that, as they saw it, had always belonged to them—into the Matimekush reserve.¹¹⁵ By April 1988, however, several individuals representing their community made the long trip to Ottawa. Led by their chief Alexandre McKenzie, they demanded support from the federal authorities, requesting that “the Québec government respect its initial promise of closing Schefferville definitely and give the territory back to them” in order to enable an expansion of the reserve. For reasons that are difficult to discern, it appears that by that point the Québec government was backing down on its latest promise to permanently close the municipality, suggesting that it now favoured (as it initially did) keeping “a certain core of white residents at Schefferville, which risks relegating into oblivion the project of moving the Montagnais reserve to the municipality.”¹¹⁶

114. A. Bourbeau, “Projet de mémoire,” to Conseil des ministres, Québec, March 4, 1986, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

115. St-Pierre, “Fermer Schefferville,” Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN.

116. Marie Tison, “Dossier de la fermeture de Schefferville: les Montagnais blâment Québec et Ottawa,” *Le Soleil*, April 13, 1988, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN. The translations are mine.

According to Chef McKenzie, this uncertain situation was extremely frustrating for his people, who could see with their own eyes the “comfortable single-family houses and the infrastructure deteriorating at Schefferville, while the Montagnais are settled in multifamily dwellings, equipped with minimum services and without any space for children to play.” As he argued himself in Ottawa, there was no doubt in his mind that cohabitation with the non-Indigenous population living in Schefferville was “clearly possible.”¹¹⁷ Armand MacKenzie remembers today the anger associated with the innumerable delays and the rapid degradation of housing infrastructure during this period:

I became quite mad, in the context of the discussions between the Affaires municipales and the band council, regarding the transfer of the municipal territory. All the municipal land, all the way to Squaw Lake, we wanted it to be transferred to the Indians. Unfortunately, there were a lot of administrative and legal delays, with the result that the dwellings that were there, perfectly habitable, were becoming less and less habitable, because they were not heated, they were being left abandoned.¹¹⁸

Some Innu decided to occupy abandoned houses as a way of directly addressing the overpopulation of the apartment buildings in Matimekush. But as they received very little support from government representatives, the local police, and even their own elected officials, MacKenzie remembers that people were eventually forced to return to Matimekush and wait for the situation to unfold.¹¹⁹

117. Alexandre McKenzie, Chef Innu, cited in Tison, “Fermeture de Schefferville,” Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN. The translations are mine.

118. A MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine.

119. *Ibid.*

In the end, the municipal site became the responsibility of the Commission municipale du Québec, which proceeded to demolish more infrastructure in order to tighten the urban fabric of the town and to facilitate the maintenance of the remaining essential services. In the fall of 1989, 119 housing units were thus taken down in the “neighbourhood next to the route to the airport and contiguous to the Montagnais village,” with 75 more demolitions planned for the following spring.¹²⁰ It was only shortly thereafter that the provincial and federal authorities finally agreed to annex a portion of the municipal territory to the Innu reserve.¹²¹ Meanwhile, for the Naskapi, now settled at Kawawachikamach, the abandonment of Schefferville as a mining hub and thriving municipal centre jeopardized the implementation of some of the central provisions that had been negotiated as part of the NEQA, in particular those “dealing with health and social services and with training and job creation.”¹²²

In short, people’s memories and interpretations of the closure, the abandonment as well as the destruction phases point to the failure of the modernization program in Schefferville and reveal the importance of considering long-term perspectives on the history of exploitation and the uneven development that characterized the mining project. Several individuals in Schefferville discuss with resentment and great

120. Yves Joncas, “Démolition à Schefferville: la phase 1 est débutée,” September 24, 1989, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

121. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview.

122. Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, “History.” In 1990, the *Agreement Respecting the Implementation of the Northeastern Québec Agreement* was signed between the Naskapi and the Government of Canada in order to address any potential shortcomings of the NEQA that would result from a reduction of services in Schefferville.

disappointment the various rounds of infrastructure removal and the gradual disappearance of significant social spaces. They remain especially puzzled by the fact that a great number of houses, a hospital, and even the cultural centre were torn down during a period when there were outstanding needs in the domains of health, housing, infrastructure, social life, and youth support in Schefferville. As Philip Einish recalls, "they demolished the hospital, at a time when people really needed essential services, like health services. ... Us, the owners of this territory, we were asking the government for more housing while the company that made money was demolishing houses. That scene was not respectful. It was a destructive scene."¹²³ The people of Schefferville also recall angrily the removal of the swimming pool, the movie theatre, the bank, a few restaurants and bars, the churches, the bowling alley, the town gymnasium, the ski hill equipment, and the asphalted roads and sidewalks. Practically only the arena was left standing.

For Armand MacKenzie, the demolition exemplified the authorities' familiar scorn for Indigenous populations, in this case fuelled by the belief that Innu and Naskapi communities could not possibly maintain and operate the buildings and services on their own terms, without the administrative and financial support of the IOC, the municipality, or the government. But he, as well as many other people such as Tommy Einish or the Gabriel family, strongly believes that at a bare minimum, some of the installations could have been left for the local communities as compensation, and even

123. P. B. Einish (2009: N-23a), interview.

that new infrastructure might have been built for them upon the IOC's departure.¹²⁴ In the difficult context of the reconstruction years, when local residents attempted to build their lives anew independently of an industrial economy, many maintain that the IOC should have been compelled to leave some sort of positive legacy behind, perhaps in the form of roads to enable easier access to the territory and facilitate hunting, financial support to help out with the expensive airplane outings and the caribou hunt, or at least a proper restoration of the mining sites.

Reconstruction Years

The closure was more or less good and bad, because the caribou came back, but there were not many jobs here.

—Tommy Einish, September 24, 2009

If the Québec government worked to maintain a minimum of services in Schefferville while overseeing the dismantling of other infrastructure, it never commissioned a proper reclamation of the abandoned mine, which by then had become a hazard for the local communities. Clearly, the authorities' main priority in the postmining period was to reorient the economic future of the region. During the closing year (1983), provincial bureaucrats laboured intensively alongside a few community representatives to implement lengthy development plans—some more realistic than others—that designed to ensure the survival of the municipality and kick-start the

124. T. Einish (2009: N-24b), interview; Françoise Gabriel (2009: I-01d), interview by author, Lac John, October 1, 2009; G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview; M. M. Gabriel (2009: I-01c), interview; A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview.

faltering regional economy all over again. Interestingly, after the failure of large-scale industrialism to bring sustainable development and modern civilisation to the north, government agents in part reverted to pale imitations of millennial-old Innu and Naskapi practices in order to prepare the future of Nouveau-Québec, most notably by promoting outfitting activities. Amidst the very real and immediate socio-economic and material devastation of the mine closure, the Innu and the Naskapi could not afford, however, to sit idle while the plethora of bureaucratic and corporate plans stumbled to get off the ground. The fact that “there were not many jobs” in the immediate aftermath of the closure meant the people continued to engage regularly in land-based activities to ensure subsistence, especially in the context where, as many individuals remember the reconstruction years, “the caribou came back” closer to the Schefferville settlements (though not immediately). Not every family, however, was in a position to return to their activities on the territory following the IOC era, and many of them continued to encounter serious challenges.

In the context of his testimony at the public audiences, in February 1983, Mulroney expressed great optimism regarding the possibilities for new mining projects in the region. At the time, the president argued that hopeful entrepreneurs could (and should) make use of the IOC’s fixed assets as soon as possible—they were worth more than \$275 million and were quickly depreciating—and that the most promising way to do so was to encourage further mineral developments. Mulroney also considered several other possibilities for salvaging the regional economy, including the establishment of a military training camp for Canadian and NATO forces, a northern scientific research

center, and a mining research institute.¹²⁵ He additionally highlighted the potential for nature tourism and the commercialisation of hunting, particularly in relation to caribou,¹²⁶ which was increasingly considered a "big business" within Québec's outfitting circles.¹²⁷ During the next few months, the Groupe de travail worked laboriously to implement some of these embryonic proposals initially laid out by Mulroney.

However, the provincial government authorities led by Minister Gendron quickly recognized, after sobering up from the intoxicating media circus held at Schefferville in February, the limited potential of many of the projects presented, which were evidently not "of a scale that could counterbalance in terms of number of jobs to be created the primary role played by the IOC until now."¹²⁸ Québec bureaucrats had to discard several of the ideas originally considered, including the military camp, the northern and mining research centers, as well as the establishment of a detention center and the creation of a northern regional services center for Hydro-Québec, largely because of their weak economic potential. The Direction générale de l'Exploration géologique et minérale, a government branch related to the Ministère de l'Énergie et des Ressources (MER), also rejected propositions that were "impracticable or very random" regarding the

125. Lesage, "Pour redonner vie à Schefferville," Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, P15, BANQ-CN.

126. Ibid.

127. Presse Canadienne, "Schefferville bientôt envahie par les chasseurs de caribous?" *Journal de Québec*, February 25, 1983, Fonds Cercle de presse de Sept-Îles, Le Soleil-Ouellet-Fessou (1960-85), P15, S2, dossiers 138 à 150.6.2, contenant 1982-11-002/3, BANQ-CN. The translation is mine.

128. F. Gendron, "Rapport sur les projets," to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

exploitation of manganese, the production of aluminum, and the harvesting of lichens.¹²⁹ The latter project, for instance, which was supposed to output marketable products to be sold as primary materials for the construction of miniature models or for making organic dyes, was dismissed on the grounds that “the employment prospects stemming from this market are negligible.”¹³⁰ By a similar logic, the MER discouraged the idea of reopening Schefferville’s iron ore deposits for exploitation in the near to middle future.¹³¹

The most plausible options for sustained economic growth in the region revolved around the development of three primary sectors, namely non-iron minerals, animal resources, and tourism. According to the MER, the closing of iron ore operations in Schefferville “did not eliminate the mining potential of the Labrador trough where the town is located.” Using as evidence the ongoing IOC exploration activities that were taking place in the region of Strange Lake (Lac Brisson) to boost their enthusiasm, MER officials thus pushed for continued and systematic exploration, with particular hope for rare earth minerals. Their goal was to re-establish as fast as possible the Schefferville region as an important exploration base and eventually, a production center—a project for which the ministry “aims to spend several millions to explore in the next couple of

129. *Ibid.* The translation is mine.

130. Marc Denis Everell, Directeur général, Centre de recherches minérales, to Coordinateur, Groupe de travail sur l’avenir de Schefferville, Québec, May 31, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

131. F. Gendron, “Rapport sur les projets,” to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

years.¹³² By the end of 1983, the MER had indeed already disbursed over \$2.3 million toward such exploration activities and claimed that these expenses contributed to retain a certain number of mining-related jobs in the region.¹³³ It remains difficult, however, to assess if and how much of these investments directly benefited the local Indigenous residents in the form of casual employment through the postmining years.

Regarding the exploitation of animal resources, the main proposals involved the creation of new outfitting companies and the expansion of commercial hunting. In terms of the latter, the Ministère des Loisirs, de la Chasse et de la Pêche (MLCP) and the OCDP notably undertook a joint study to evaluate the economic potential of a commercial-scale caribou hunting industry, but they rapidly shelved the project. Meanwhile, the MLCP also took quick and more concrete actions regarding noncommercial caribou hunting, notably by increasing the number of allowable catches from one to two per individual (1983); and it also attempted to improve outfitting infrastructure in the region and dispense training related to the administration of outfitting businesses, with the hope of increasing "hunting traffic" through Schefferville.¹³⁴ According to Michel Goudreau, of the OPDQ, nine outfitters who employed 130 workers operated near Schefferville at the time, and roughly 1,300 hunters and fishers transited through the region each year.¹³⁵ Many observers

132. Ibid. The translations are mine.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid. The translation is mine.

135. Michel Goudreau, Office de développement et de planification du Québec, "Plan d'intervention favorisant le développement du tourisme à Schefferville," document préliminaire, Québec, October 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir

nevertheless raised serious doubts about the long-term viability of this industry in subarctic Québec, especially due to the highly seasonal character of the caribou hunt, but also given the remoteness of the region, the high cost of transportation, and the limit in the number of outfitters imposed by the *Convention de la Baie-James et du Nord québécois* and the NEQA;¹³⁶ as well as because of ongoing disputes between the local Indigenous communities and the MLCP—and thus southern hunters—over the “right of first choice” for caribou kills.¹³⁷ One provincial bureaucrat working for the Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones expressed his concerns regarding the marginal role that the preliminary plan for the development of the outfitting industry attributed to Indigenous hunters:

In this project under study, we are condescending to the point of foreseeing the presence of only one Aboriginal in service for each of the four expeditions, and one Aboriginal in each of the four villages, whose role will be to count the number of caribous killed by Aboriginals in their subsistence hunts. It is doubtful that they will be content with such a limited role, when we know that they consider this herd to be their essential source of food, as well as their main way of pressuring the Comité conjoint [Groupe de travail]. Moreover, they are the ones who have mentioned for many years the ... potential of caribou as one of the rare economic activity that may be reasonably successful. They will probably demand to be involved more significantly so that the entire operation can also be profitable to them.¹³⁸

Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q. It is not known how many of these 130 workers employed as hunting and fishing guides were Indigenous, but according to Laforest, the strong majority were non-Indigenous workers who originated from the Basse Côte-Nord region. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 215.

136. F. Gendron, “Rapport sur les projets,” to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

137. M. Goudreau, “Plan d’intervention,” Québec, October 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

138. Gaston Moisan, Secrétaire adjoint, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, to Coordonateur, Groupe de travail sur l’avenir de Schefferville, Québec, June 7, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

In fact, two members of the Groupe de travail, IOC representative Robert Girardin and his Innu counterpart, Gaston McKenzie, both believed that the economic spin-offs stemming from improved outfitting infrastructure and better adapted regulations for the caribou hunt would be minimal, especially since in these early stages of the postmining phase, it was still the case that "the caribou herd is much closer to Fort Chimo than to Schefferville."¹³⁹ (In 1988, Weiler remarked that since 1984, the caribou herds have been "seasonally present in large numbers in the immediate area around Schefferville offering easy access to this important resource, [although this] is an inherently unstable situation which cannot be relied upon in economic terms."¹⁴⁰) At around the same time, a Naskapi advisor similarly argued that the proposed outfitting activities would provide negligible financial returns locally, since "sport hunting and fishing in isolated areas do not create a large number of jobs, and the jobs that they do create are very seasonal. ... Further, most of these hunters and anglers spend little time or money in Schefferville, and a large proportion of the money that they do spend accrues to southern-based enterprises and individuals."¹⁴¹ As early as December 1983, Minister Gendron was concluding that the legislative changes now governing the noncommercial caribou hunt had yielded very few tangible results during the first season, when "the number of

139. Yves Cartier, compte rendu de réunion, Quatrième rencontre du Groupe de travail, Schefferville, June 22, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

140. Weiler, "Naskapi Land-use Profile," D2. The translation is mine.

141. Paul Wilkinson, Advisor, Naskapi Development Corporation, to Groupe de travail sur l'avenir de Schefferville, Montréal, August 15, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q.

hunters has tended to stabilize, despite the extension of the hunting season and the increase in the number of authorized kills."¹⁴²

The Groupe de travail in Schefferville also proposed to develop a third sector of the regional economy by favouring an expansion of northern tourism. The brainstorming sessions regarding this program led to wide-ranging propositions that in some instances bordered on exoticism. The possibilities included adventure tourism projects focusing on trekking, skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledding, and ice fishing; ethnocultural tourism that would involve caribou festivals, visits of the Innu and Naskapi reserves, support for Indigenous crafts, face-to-face meetings with the "Indians," and the creation of "Indian" historical museums comparable in size to Oklahoma City; industrial heritage tourism that proposed to lead tours of abandoned mining sites and the Menihek hydroelectric central; and finally, nature tourism in the form of excursions to observe the tundra, the taiga and other geomorphologic features.¹⁴³ With regard to the recreational touristic potential of the region, policy experts recognized that the Innu and the Naskapi "do not lack resources with the Northwestern [sic] Québec Agreement, nor talent. Their support must be integrated with that of the white population or vice versa in order to be efficient."¹⁴⁴ (As was not entirely atypical, authorities failed to recognize here that the

142. F. Gendron, "Rapport sur les projets," to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

143. M. Goudreau, "Plan d'intervention," Québec, October 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

144. Henri Jamet, Responsable du développement touristique de la baie James et du Nouveau-Québec, "Portrait synthèse du tourisme à Schefferville," document de travail, n.p., June 20, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, Avenir Schefferville, parties I-IV (1982-83), E5, contenant 1994-08-003/39, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

NEQA only covered the Naskapi.) All things considered, however, each of the three pillars designed to support growth in the region—mining, outfitting, and tourism—were generally seen as highly conjectural in the summer of 1983. As several people maintained, none of these options offered “absolute guarantees regarding Schefferville’s future development”¹⁴⁵ and appeared clearly insufficient to rescue the municipality from a moribund postindustrial economy.

The provincial government in any case strived, with the joint participation of different ministries, to boost the local economy by injecting roughly half a million dollars for the creation of about seventy-five jobs in Schefferville, hoping that these temporary positions would enable “some individuals to absorb, at least in the short term, the shock caused by the closure of IOC’s installations” and enable them to “entertain a new future with more serenity.”¹⁴⁶ Yet only twelve of these jobs, funded through local governmental and paragonmental organisations, and with the support of some outfitting companies, became permanent positions, with an unknown number of them attributed to Indigenous individuals.¹⁴⁷ Some, like Jos Dominique, remember being hired temporarily to remove the train tracks that were no longer in use after the mine closure. “The IOC hired a contractor,” he recalls. “It took us two years to remove the rails. There were many of us, about twenty or thirty.”¹⁴⁸ But this casual labour was

145. F. Gendron, “Rapport sur les projets,” to Conseil des ministres, Québec, December 21, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, E5, BANQ-Q. The translation is mine.

146. *Ibid.* The translation is mine.

147. *Ibid.*

148. J. Dominique (2009: I-17a), interview. The translation is mine.

evidently insufficient and could not offer long-term solutions to Indigenous residents who expected (and desired) to remain in the region permanently.

A handful of additional work opportunities did become available in the early 2000s when the IOC undertook a modest “restoration” project of the mining landscape (as the company labelled it) after much lobbying from local residents, who made the point to the Québec government that

it didn't make sense to continue like that and leave the entire mining infrastructure in place, including the old garages, the old structures, the abandoned trucks, the wastes here and there, the scrap metals of all kinds. We saw all that, the fact the people went there to play, children and adolescents went there and they could injure themselves. It became a dangerous place.¹⁴⁹

Even though the company claimed to have completed the restoration of the site in September 2003, the reality is perceived somewhat differently by the Innu and the Naskapi. Several people argue that the IOC reclamation project, undertaken “for the safety of the people and maybe of the animals,”¹⁵⁰ simply amounted to securing the abandoned sites with the installation of berms alongside roads outlining the mining pits, in addition to removing the most dangerous materials (figure 17).¹⁵¹ In this regard, Tommy Einish makes the point that “when the company left, it just left, but didn't restore the pits. It was really dangerous. There were no fences or barricades around the pits. But now, there are rocks there, for our safety.”¹⁵²

149. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview. The translation is mine

150. M. Mameamskum (2009: N-24c), interview.

151. A. MacKenzie (2009: I-15a), interview.

152. T. Einish (2009: N-24b), interview.



Figure 17. Berms and warning sign delimiting an old mining pit, near Schefferville.
Photograph by author, September 2009.

In this context, other Innu and Naskapi individuals continue to express concerns and disbelief about the way the securing project was conducted, arguing that the mining sites remain quite hazardous, especially in the winter when hunters must travel regularly through snowstorms or darkness. A few accidents where people fell down the pits have been registered since the mine closed in 1983. For Grégoire Gabriel, given the devastation of the territory, the IOC should have at least put fences around the mining pits or better yet, fill up the holes, in order to minimize the likelihood of such potentially dangerous situations. “It’s a pitiful scene,” Gabriel illustrates. “Before, all the sites were dirty. At least [the company] picked up a few things because it was obligated to do so. But the mine is still dangerous. They left big holes behind. ... With the snowmobiles,

during the winter, someone will fall in the holes one day.”¹⁵³ Jos Pinette echoes these concerns and explains that the sites are still quite unsafe today, particularly for people who are less familiar with the territory:

The Indians travel around here at night to get porcupines, and maybe even caribou, because there was often caribou here [after the mine closed]. Some beavers, foxes, and partridges too. It’s dangerous for young people who go out in snowmobiles, they don’t know the snow very well. But the elders, the people of my age, we know the terrain. We saw it when it was pristine, we saw it with the mine, and we still see it today. We know this land very well.¹⁵⁴

The commemorative plate designed by the IOC to officialise the completion of restoration activities emphasizes the participation of the two local communities in the project (figure 18). In reality, it appears that few economic benefits accrued to the Innu and the Naskapi from the restoration years, partly because the IOC originally awarded the contracts to Les Équipements nordiques, a company based in Sept-Îles, despite the fact that some local companies also submitted their bids. In response, Schefferville residents had to negotiate with the successful contractor to ensure that some Indigenous labourers would be employed on the project and that a portion of the equipment would be rented locally. While a few Innu and Naskapi individuals worked as labourers on the mine restoration and on additional reconstruction activities that included housing developments and the renovation of the schools and the health center (CLSC), these opportunities came quite late in the deindustrialization process, and only after people

153. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

154. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

pushed the authorities to consider their candidacy for the few casual employment opportunities available through these projects.¹⁵⁵



Figure 18. Plate commemorating the completion of the IOC restoration project, Schefferville town hall. Photography by author, November 2008.

Looking forward

As we have seen, the mine closure and the lack of working opportunities in Schefferville led an overwhelming portion of the white working-class population to leave the municipality and pursue their career elsewhere. Looking forward to a better future, some Indigenous people followed a similar path and went on to get training in order to gain new qualifications or to find work away from their communities. After working as a Naskapi negotiator for the NEQA in the late 1970s and early 1980s, one elder describes his move to Nicolet (north of Trois-Rivières) to obtain his professional

155. A. MacKenzie (2009: 1-15a), interview; Interview (2009: 1-30b).

police accreditation.¹⁵⁶ Tommy Einish remembers leaving for Brisay, in the Caniapiscau region (where other Indigenous workers already participated in various woodcutting projects¹⁵⁷), in order to gain skills in the construction industry, before coming back home to be employed with the building of the new Naskapi village in Kawawachikamach.¹⁵⁸ A few people also moved into entrepreneurship. Grégoire and Marie-Marthe Gabriel, for instance, started their own outfitting company for fishing and caribou hunting, and this gave them the opportunity to continue visiting their family territory at Champdoré Lake every year. For them, going back to the trapping lifestyle entirely was not a practical option at that point: “The furs continued going down and down. I said to my wife Marie-Marthe, ‘We will do something else; we will start an outfitting camp.’ Every year, we went up, we spent the summer. When winter came, we went up a little bit to trap also.”¹⁵⁹ For those people who either had enough previous schooling or were willing (and able) to move away for a couple of months or years—typically people of a younger generation—it was possible to bank on these small opportunities to move out of the marginal employment situation which they had previously occupied at the mine or elsewhere.

However, for many Indigenous residents this was not a very realistic or even a desirable option, and a return to the bush remained the most sensible path to follow. In this regard, some individuals relied on the few seasonal jobs that were available during

156. Interview (2009: N-24a).

157. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 215.

158. T. Einish (2009: N-24b), interview.

159. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

the deindustrialisation and reconstruction phases—largely house building, renovation work, and guiding labour—solely in order to accumulate enough hours to become eligible for government support programs, before leaving for the bush when work eventually ran out. Essimeu McKenzie explains that “all that was done was to work on small summer projects, in order to get unemployment insurance in the winter. After that we were able to leave for the bush. We could buy enough provisions and material to go in the forest. Everyone did that. There weren’t many people who worked all year long, except maybe for office or school workers.”¹⁶⁰ The Innu and the Naskapi share memories of returning to the territory, sometimes for extended periods of time, immediately following Mulroney’s announcement in November 1982. The 1982-83 season, for example, saw a sharp increase of more than 100 percent in the number of captured marten—the most important trapping animal among local Indigenous residents at the time—with respect to the previous four-year average (1978-82).¹⁶¹ During the closing and reconstruction years, much as the previous phases of industrialism at Schefferville, Indigenous families thus continued to actively seek out opportunities to preserve and actualize their life on the land:

That’s when they closed, in 1982. Suddenly, without any warnings. After that we left for the territory, to find marten and furs. At Mile 244, that’s where my territory is; people know me there.¹⁶²

I returned to the bush, with all the Indians; I returned in the bush to hunt. I spent one year over there, in Caniapiscou.¹⁶³

160. E. T. McKenzie (2009: I-16a), interview. The translation is mine.

161. Laforest et al., “Occupation et utilisation du territoire,” 204. These harvesting statistics only include the number of animals captured on registered hunting lots.

162. J. Pinette (2009: I-19a), interview. The translation is mine.

After the closure, in 1982, I continued going up for hunting. We brought our grandsons for hunting, trapping, everything. We returned to the bush.¹⁶⁴

When there was no work anymore, we went hunting.¹⁶⁵

Yet beyond these relatively positive and optimistic testimonies, it appears that in the challenging postmining world, the distant caribou hunts continued to impose a stiff financial burden on Indigenous communities, at least in the immediate aftermath of the closure and before the caribou slowly began returning to Schefferville. In April 1983, the local Innu administration informed the provincial government that the rarity of the caribou near Schefferville heavily compounded the harsh unemployment conditions. In this context, the community was no longer able to assume the full costs of the annual hunting expeditions, and pleaded to the MLCP to provide some financial assistance in order to help them cover their deficit.¹⁶⁶ Far from achieving the original promise of bringing a full century of durable economic development to nitassinan, the displacement caused by industrialization led to a bitterly ironic situation where Indigenous groups required external support to undertake their hunting activities. The ultimate failure of the industrial vision to civilize the north and its inhabitants had indeed come full circle, in the most cynical way.

163. Interview (2009: I-30a). The translation is mine.

164. G. Gabriel (2009: I-01b), interview. The translation is mine.

165. J. Guanish (2009: N-25b), interview.

166. G. McKenzie to Ministre des Loisirs, de la Chasse et de la Pêche, Schefferville, April 25, 1983, Fonds Ministère du Conseil exécutif, ES, BANQ-Q.

CONCLUSION

Only our hunters have the right to colour our lakes red, the caribou blood from their kills. They have the right to color our lakes. The miners don't have the right to color our lakes, to destroy our fish.

—Philip B. Einish, September 23, 2009

[Schefferville] languished after its 1950s heyday, until the emergence of China and India as major consumers of steel made miners scour the globe to feed the Asian economic giants' appetite for raw materials.

—Martin Mittelstaedt, *The Globe and Mail*, March 8, 2011

The people interviewed in the communities of Matimekush, Lac John, Kawawachikamach, Maliotenam, and Schefferville—Tommy, Napaïen, but also Marie-Louise, Matthew, Caroline, and many others—have demonstrated that the experience of Innu and Naskapi families with industrial mining cannot be merely expressed within the confines of a simplistic, homogenous narrative. In spite of the obstacles that stood in the way of my listening to their life stories, I have been a modest witness to many different ways of living—in the contemporary form of a people's understanding of their own historicity—for which the historical subtleties have been somewhat overwhelming at moments, at least from the researcher's point of view. Notwithstanding this fact, I have tried to communicate, through the analysis of a series of primary and secondary sources, useful interpretive markers that may contribute to make sense of the entanglement of indigeneity and industry at Schefferville, during this decisive phase of large-scale industrial development that followed the Second World War in northern Québec. By attempting to capture something of the Innu and Naskapi experience during this period, I have sought "to explore people's actions as rooted not in marginalisation or opposition or

opportunistic participation, but in the practice of everyday life in communities and on the land." This is in part because, as Feit argues, a people's expression of "agency does not arise solely as response to development projects."¹ This exploration has led me, finally, to propose two principal elements of synthesis as concluding remarks.

On the one hand, I suggest that the Schefferville industrial episode exhibited the characteristics of a type of development that was inherently and unquestionably progressive in the eyes of the non-Indigenous mining world. The highly bureaucratized, corporatized, and ethnocentric attitude toward Innu and Naskapi groups was supported by a more general belief in the movement that Indigenous societies were destined to follow toward industrial wage labour and "modern" citizenship. Yet in reality, the Indigenous people of Schefferville experienced these developments as part of a process that led to their dispossession from a portion of their territory and resources, to their marginalization, and to the disruption of their economies and livelihoods. Quite contradictorily, authorities never actively sought to address the marginal conditions of Innu and Naskapi employment in Schefferville, which stood as major obstacles for the success of the integration project.² As I have shown, it was only after the complete

1. Feit, "James Bay Crees," 93. It is revealing to look at Feit's motivation for proposing this approach. In simplified terms, Feit seems interested to grapple with a situation that arose in 1996, when the Grand Council of the Crees (Eastern James Bay) attempted to garner support from the Massachusetts legislature to boycott Québec electricity supply, in order to protest the new hydroelectric dam project that the provincial government proposed to build at Great Whale River. This took place at the same time as the Cree had recently accepted fifty million dollars in compensation payments from Hydro-Québec, which wanted to proceed with the construction of a new dam as part of the La Grande project (a different development program). Feit's insights have proved useful for interpreting the complexities of the Schefferville story, as I sought to consider elements of the past that similarly appeared contradictory, notably in terms of different approaches to and perspectives regarding industrial development.

2. This contradiction is reminiscent of the idea that one finds within colonialism "moments of incoherence and inchoateness, ... internal contortions and complexities." John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 183.

collapse of the mining economy in the region that a series of (better intentioned?) southern representatives began to consider alternative options for the economic improvement of Innu and Naskapi societies, alternatives that were in part tied—somewhat ironically—to a “return” to the land or to a celebration of “ancient” practices and cultural identities. By then, however, these attempts proved largely unsatisfactory for these communities, given the new socio-economic and ecological contexts gripping their homeland of nitassinan. In this regard, rarely did the Innu or the Naskapi appear to show any real confidence in the authorities’ ability to lead them out of a collapsed industrial civilization that had once carried hopeful promises for their societies. Today, these groups still discuss and remember the industrial period as one when their people were in fact further colonized and their territories increasingly appropriated by statist and industrial interests.

It remains the case—and this is the second element of conclusion that I seek to emphasize—that Indigenous individuals and Indigenous groups also manoeuvred to affirm their own ways of living in the midst of these great transformative forces. Despite the disruption caused by externally imposed resource-based development activities, the Innu and the Naskapi exhibited tremendous strength and cultural resilience in the face of powerful external actors and remained themselves active “agents of change,” not simply “passive recipients of history,” throughout the period.³ This has meant that their mining experience was never merely characterized by complete participation, total subjection, or full resistance to the mode of development that the iron industrial complex set into

3. Offen, “Historical Political Ecology,” 19. The author uses these expressions in the context of a more general discussion.

motion at Schefferville. The histories of Innu and Naskapi involvement with industry should instead be seen—following conceptual arguments put forth by Blaser, Escobar, Feit, Gibson-Graham, and others—as part of a broader articulation of economic, socio-cultural, and ecological difference, under an approach that ultimately aims to “resist the tendency to see all forms of economic activity as becoming capitalist merely because they interact with capitalism.”⁴ Situating the present work within the ethnohistorical-geographic literature that emphasizes, to varying degrees, both the Indigenous oppression and agency that has characterized people’s interactions with colonizing forces, I believe that articulating this difference is particularly crucial to our understanding if history is to move beyond “stories of pain, suffering, and dysfunction”⁵ that have been common themes for postwar studies in Indigenous Canada.

This study demonstrates that the nature of people’s engagement with the mining industry took on a variety of attributes that included mitigated benefit, degrees of complementarity, tension, or destruction, and asserted autonomy. As David Swappie summarizes, on the one hand Indigenous workers generally thought of the mining labour that was reserved for them at the IOC as challenging work.⁶ His people, nevertheless, chose to engage in these activities, both as a way to earn a living and in order to pursue their life on the land. In fact, one of the main tasks underlying this work has been to demonstrate that these two motivations were never fully reducible to one another, even at the very heart of the industrial period. In this sense, people’s memories of land-based

4. Escobar, *Territories of Difference*, 101.

5. Wuttunee, “Aboriginal Perspectives,” 207.

6. D. Swappie (2009: N-25a), interview.

activities during the IOC era do not appear to be simply restricted to narrow economic interpretations that emphasize the necessity of obtaining food from the territory in times of hardship. Resisting or simply being uninterested in fully integrating into modern society, Innu and Naskapi people positively pursued a life on the land that continued to occupy a central place in their lives, with an evident desire to remain partly independent from labour at the mine and the mining world more generally. Successfully at times, they were able to negotiate some of the conditions imposed by industrialism, as they constantly reworked their own practices, recreated their personal hunting spaces, and reaffirmed their unique social-territorial identities. In doing so, Innu and Naskapi groups exhibited in complicated ways instances of both dramatic change and fluid continuity with respect to the prewar period. This work shows, finally, that establishing this balance was rarely an easy achievement, as the mining industry exercised continuous pressures on their homelands, altered people's movements and the nature of their activities on the land, took time away from hunting and fishing, escalated wage (and maintained government assistance) dependency, and generally attempted to determine the terms of their integration within industrial society.

Overall, the seats occupied by Innu and Naskapi individuals at the table of the great "industrial feast" remained extremely marginal, despite the key role played by Indigenous guides, explorers, discoverers, and working-class labourers all along the way. In that sense, it appears risky to propose an argument analogous to Gélinas, who holds (in an altogether different historical and geographical context) that Indigenous labour contributed to configure the evolution of Québec's industrial development following Confederation. Ultimately, the original vision of state-industrial agents, who dreamed of

a complete anchoring of Innu and Naskapi societies to the mining world, could never be realised. Much as Tough observed with respect to the industrial development of northern Manitoba, "frontier capitalism brought with it a very incomplete form of modernization" for these societies.⁷ An application of cold economic dicta may suggest—wrongly, in my view—that the unfavourable dynamics of international iron and steel markets sealed the fate of the integration project at Schefferville. But as this research shows, a consideration for Indigenous worlds that were continuously deployed within and at the periphery of this project seems to rather demonstrate that the vision held by mining authorities was for all intents and purposes destined to fail in its very first faltering steps, when Indian Affairs agents arrived in Fort Chimo in the winter of 1956 with the goal of convincing sixteen Naskapi individuals that a century of industrial employment was waiting for them on the shores of Knob Lake.

This idea, that the historical changes wrought by colonial and industrial forces after the Second World War were not mutually exclusive with instances of cultural continuity for the communities inhabiting this territory, is central to the story of the Schefferville Innu and Naskapi people during the mining period. For Tough, dispossession and participation need not be understood as mutually exclusive processes; instead, we should consider the very real "possibility that Natives actively participated in historical processes that contributed to the inequality of the present."⁸ With this result in mind, an expanded view of Indigenous agency should contribute, I think, not to mark a

7. Tough, "As Their Natural Resources Fail," 306.

8. *Ibid.*, 301.

radical break with our current understanding of the prewar colonial period, but rather to reinsert postwar industrialism in northern Québec as the perpetuation of a long and intricate process of European conquest on the American continent. By continuing to assert difference and construct life projects amidst the colonization (via industrial activities) of their homelands, the Innu and the Naskapi indeed affirmed great commonalities with their ancestors who lived under previous phases of European invasion of Indigenous worlds. There is perhaps a sense in which this latter conclusion provides modest support for Blaser's more general yet powerful principle, according to which (industrial) development has been "a successor to imperialism and colonialism."⁹ Yet by relegating the familiar story of imperialism, colonialism, and industrial development to the background for a moment, and focusing instead on the Indigenous story, Kahnawake scholar Taiaiake Alfred explains that such an approach may ensure that the former does not remain the sole "story of our lives ... because it is a narrative that in its use privileges the colonizer's power and inherently limits our freedom."¹⁰

If we consider the strength of exogenous forces present in the second half of the century at Schefferville, one notes, perhaps, the surprising persistence of Innu and Naskapi worlds in the Québec-Labrador peninsula. Today, in the context where the region is about to be engulfed by an even grander cycle of reindustrialisation, the new mining companies involved in "scouring the globe" are once again predicting, exactly as the Iron Ore Company of Canada promised in the mid-1950s, iron reserves—in addition

9. Blaser, "Life Projects," 26.

10. Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005), 25.

to the employment opportunities that will be created in the wake of their exploitation—that can be sustained for another century. For this upcoming phase, the centers of power have partly shifted and in some cases moved further away from Schefferville than during the IOC era, from the “great nervous system” of an industrialising postwar America to the emerging markets of India and China.

One important industrial player in the region today is Indian megacorporation Tata Steel, which holds 80 percent joint venture ownership and will act as sole ore buyer in a direct shipping ore project (DSO) led by Calgary-based New Millennium Iron (NML).¹¹ Tata is one of the largest steel producers in the world, and represents NML’s most important shareholder. In addition, the Indian steelmaker has paid for a feasibility study (no joint venture signed yet) regarding NML’s much more significant Taconite project—the “real company builder,” envisions Chairman of the Strategic Advisory Committee Robert Martin—which covers the KéMag (Harris Lake) and LabMag (Howells River) deposits. Together these iron formations constitute one of the largest undeveloped magnetic taconite deposits in the world, according to NML.¹² While the DSO project will rely on the existing QNS&L railway (still owned by IOC, but now operated in conjunction with Tshuëtin Rail Transportation, a joint Innu-Naskapi venture)

11. This project consists of twenty-five deposits of high-grade hematite, part of former IOC operations, that are located on both sides of the Québec-Labrador border; they are expected to produce at least 4.2 million tons of sinter fines and super fines products per year. Proven and probable reserves are estimated at 64.1 million tons, for a mine life of eleven years. New Millennium Iron, “On the Path to Production: Corporate Presentation,” September 2011, <http://nmliron.com/pdfs/201109%20Corporate%20Presentation.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2011).

12. The proven and probable reserves for this project are estimated at 5.6 billion tons. At production rate of 22 million tons per year (15 million tons of pellets and 7 million tons of concentrate), the mine life is expected to oscillate between twenty-eight (KéMag) to forty-six (LabMag) years. “New Millennium: Advancing the New Millennium Iron Range,” *The International Resource Journal* (June 2011): 4, 9-10; New Millennium Iron, “On the Path to Production.”

to transport the refined ore, the company plans to establish a 600 to 700-kilometres slurry pipeline to bring the taconite fine-grained concentrate down to the Sept-Îles pellet plant.¹³ Continuing the long tradition of appropriating Innu and Naskapi homelands near Schefferville, the junior company has already renamed the 210-kilometre long mountain chain that is home of these rich deposits the *Millennium Iron Range* (figure 19).

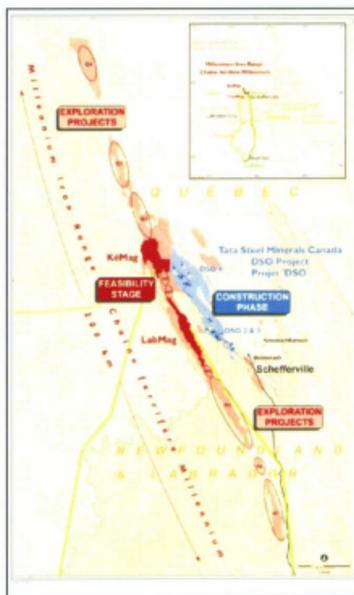


Figure 19. Millennium Iron Range, with DSO, taconite, and exploration project locations.

Source: New Millennium Iron, "Projects Overview." <http://nmliron.com/images/MillenniumIronRange.jpg> (accessed December 5, 2011).

13. New Millennium Iron, "On the Path to Production."

Boosted by strong projections in the global demand for steel in the near future, iron development projects are sprouting everywhere in the Schefferville region, literally threatening to encircle Innu and Naskapi communities. In 2011, Toronto's Labrador Iron Mine (LIM) began operating a direct shipping ore project at the James deposit (figure 20). Following the departure of an ore train from the mine on June 30, 2011—the first commercial shipment to leave Schefferville in nearly thirty years—the vessel *Salt Lake City* sailed from the port of Sept-Îles on October 3, bound for Chinese markets.¹⁴ The company, which will also rely on the QNS&L/Tshuuetin railway for shipments, plans to expand its DSO operations to exploit other historic IOC deposits that include Redmond and Knob Lake (phase 1), Houston (phase 2), Howse (phase 3), Astray Lake and Sawyer Lake (phase 4), and finally Kivivic and Eclipse (phase 5).¹⁵ Meanwhile, Toronto-based Adriana Resources (ADI), in partnership with China's steel conglomerate Wuhan Iron & Steel Corporation (WISCO), is seeking to develop the gigantic Otehluk Lake deposit—located 155 kilometres northwest of Schefferville and, according to ADI, the largest iron ore deposit in Canada, if not in the world—and ship the iron pellets processed at Otehluk via a massive 815-kilometre railway line to be connected to the Sept-Îles port.¹⁶ Other

14. Labrador Iron Mines Holdings, "First Shipment of LIM Iron Ore Sails to China," press release, Toronto, October 3, 2011, <http://www.labradorironmines.ca/pdf/First%20vessel%20draft.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2011).

15. The project consists of twenty Québec and Labrador deposits expected to produce up to 3.65 million tons of lump, fines and ultra fines products per year, with no proven and probable reserves. Resource estimates are mainly based on historical data and projected at more than 150 million tons, for a mine life of more than twenty years. Matthew Allan, "Forging Deals in the Labrador Trough," *Mining Markets* 4, no. 3 (2011): 24; Labrador Iron Mines Holdings, "Fact Sheet," http://www.labradorironmine.ca/pdf/LIM_Fact_Sheet.pdf (accessed December 5, 2011).

16. ADI expects production to reach an impressive fifty million tons of pellets a year. There are no proven or probable reserves at the moment, but the mineral resource estimate exceeds six billion tons, for a projected mine life of seventy-five to one hundred years. Adriana Resources, "Investor Presentation," April

major exploration programs being pursued in the vicinity of Schefferville include the Sunny Lake (Rainy Lake and Le Fer Lake deposits) and Attikamagen properties, respectively held by Century Iron Mines and Champion Minerals (with WISCO possessing significant interests in both projects); Cap-Ex Ventures, whose Block 103 and Redmond properties are adjacent to NML and LIM projects; and Altius Minerals' Snelgrove Lake project.¹⁷

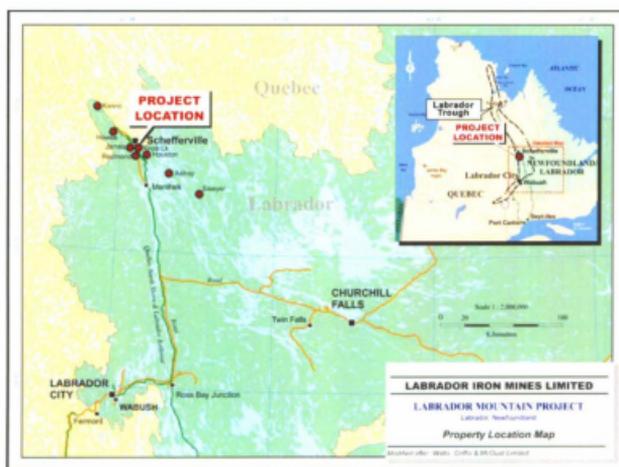


Figure 20. Labrador Iron Mine DSO program.

Source: Labrador Iron Mines Holdings Limited, "Home," http://www.labradorironmines.ca/display_image.php?id=101 (accessed December 5, 2011).

2011, <http://www.adrianaresources.com/i/pdf/CorporatePresentation.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2011); Adriana Resources, "Lac Otenluk Iron Deposit: The Largest Iron Deposit in Canada," <http://www.adrianaresources.com/i/pdf/LacOtenluk-FactSheet.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2011); Adriana Resources, "NI 43-101 Technical Report on the Preliminary Economic Assessment for 50MTPY: Otenluk Lake Iron Ore Project," April 8, 2011, <http://www.adrianaresources.com/i/pdf/LacOtenlukTechReport.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2011).

17. Allan, "Forging Deals," 26-27.

As major consumers of steel rush to “to feast on Canadian resources, tapping vast reserves of iron ore in a race to secure much needed supply,”¹⁸ provincial authorities continue to facilitate this foreign appropriation of public wealth. For the current provincial administration, the great dreams of industrial development across the Québec hinterland, the same region where the second Duplessis administration boasted about opening the difficult paths of civilisation for the greater benefit of the general population, are redeployed with increasing vigour. In this fresh iteration of industrial megalomania, the agenda favours a northern development plan founded on the *désenclavement* (opening up) of isolated territories, by means of massive public investments in transport, communication, and energy infrastructure that will support the exploitation of new open-pit mines. With its most recent *Plan Nord*, the Liberal government of Jean Charest (2003-) thus aims, in the next quarter of a century, to “make Québec more prosperous, to stimulate growth and to favour business investment,” hoping this will be carried through in large part by an “acceleration of mining development, notably by increasing our knowledge of the mining potential and by improving access infrastructure.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, the corporate-friendly free mining legislation and generous fiscal regime in place, which guarantee that only modest royalties circulate back into the state coffers, remains held in high regard by public officials. Addressing this issue in 2009, the Vérificateur général du

18. David Ebner and Brenda Bouw, “Tata Joins Race for Canada’s Iron Ore,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 8, 2011.

19. Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune du Québec, *Plan Nord: pour un développement économique socialement responsable et durable*, document de travail, Québec, November 6, 2009. See also Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune du Québec, *Plan Nord: faire le nord ensemble, le chantier d’une génération* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2011). The translations are mine.

Québec remarked, alarmingly, that between 2002 and 2008, “fourteen companies did not contribute any royalties while their annual gross production revenues reached \$4.2 billion. During the same period, all other companies paid out \$259 million, which represented 1.5 percent of their annual gross production revenues [\$17.3 billion].”²⁰ In this attractive business environment, Québec is regularly—and not so surprisingly—designated, from the perspective of the industry, as one of the best jurisdictions in the world to conduct mining operations.²¹ The provincial government’s support of the mining industry through its recent *Plan Nord*, as well as the long tradition of supplying electricity below market price while enforcing a free entry system for mineral resources and offering an enticing royalty regime, invariably figure as talking points in shareholders presentations and business profiles of foreign companies looking to establish their presence in nitassinan.²²

It is amidst the current festival-like atmosphere that the people of Schefferville have described their hopes, and their corresponding worries, about the region’s future. Surely, some of the overall context has changed. Many companies operating in Schefferville today are working in concert with Indigenous groups to put in place

20. Vérificateur général du Québec, *Rapport du vérificateur général du Québec à l’Assemblée nationale pour l’année 2008-2009*, Chapitre 2: Interventions gouvernementales dans le secteur minier, Québec, April 1, 2009, 2:3.

21. Fred McMahon and Miguel Cervantes, “Fraser Institute Survey of Mining Companies, 2009/2010”(Fraser Institute, April 2010), 6-8.

22. See, for example, Adriana Resources, “Investor Presentation”; Cap-Ex Ventures, “World Class Iron Ore discovery: Corporate Presentation,” December 2011, http://www.cap-ex.ca/i/pdf/Cap-Ex-Presentation_2011-11-30.pdf (accessed December 5, 2011); Century Iron Mines, “An Introduction to an Emerging Canadian Iron Ore Company,” November 2011, <http://www.centuryiron.com/sites/default/files/fer-presentation-18-11-2011-en.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2011); Champions Minerals, “Building the Next Major Iron Ore Mine in the Labrador Trough: Corporate Presentation,” October 2011, http://www.championminerals.com/vns-site/uploads/documents/CHM_%20PresentationOctober19_2011.pdf (accessed December 5, 2011); and New Millennium Iron, “On the Path to Production.”

exploration agreements, memoranda of understanding, and impact and benefit agreements that are designed to provide revenue-sharing deals and to guarantee that some collateral benefits accrue to the local communities.²³ Significantly, researchers have begun to investigate with more scrutiny how these agreements translate into the reality of Indigenous people's lives, particularly with regard to power imbalances that inevitably characterize the negotiation process.²⁴ Yet as a result of these new initiatives, Indigenous capital is in some cases invested in contemporary mining projects, as is the case with the Naskapi Nation, for instance, which recently gained 20 percent ownership in New Millennium's LabMag venture. It will be of particular interest to follow in future years whether the contribution of local capital can influence the way industrial mining development is conducted in the subarctic north. Or, will the interests of steel giants headquartered in Mumbai and Wuhan ultimately prevail, as they did the first time around when they were established in Delaware?

For many, the recycled program of northern modernization indeed carries a heavy burden of the past in Schefferville. After all, several of the (promised) conditions presented today as reliable indicators that this round of development will undoubtedly procure benefits to local Indigenous communities for many years to come—strong global demand for raw materials, well-intentioned, sensitive state and corporate officials,

23. See, for example, "Cap-Ex and ITUM Reach Agreement," press release, Vancouver, December 1, 2011; "LIM Signs Impact Benefits Agreement With Innu Matimekush-Lac John," press release, Schefferville, June 7, 2011; and "New Millennium Concludes an Impact and Benefit Agreement Related to its DSO Project with the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach," press release, Calgary, June 10, 2010.

24. See, for example, Ken J. Caine and Naomi Krogman, "Powerful or Just Plain Power-full? A Powerful Analysis of Impact Benefit Agreements in Canada's North," *Organization & Environment* 23, no. 1 (2010): 76-98.

consideration of Innu-Naskapi labour force for employment positions in the field and at the mine, partial redistribution of iron-generated profits toward community infrastructure programs and services, informed and capable Indigenous leadership, and, above all, Innu and Naskapi people as revitalized agents of their own history—were to a great extent already present during the IOC period. Understandably, a young Innu individual from Matimekush considers, when asked about the upcoming projects around his community, whether “all the negative things with the old mine might come back. It would not be fun, for me and for all of us here.”²⁵ For Essimeu McKenzie, the ephemeral nature of the IOC record speaks for itself, and he remains very pessimistic about the countless promises of long-term development for his region and his community: “What do I see in twenty-five years? ... I see the closure of this mine that is opening today. Then we will live through a second closure. They will say: ‘Schefferville, goodbye.’”²⁶ Given these interrogations, it is justified to at least wonder, ‘In what exact ways have the conditions for mineral exploitation in nitassinan truly evolved?’ If a single historical lesson can be drawn from the first iron ore era in subarctic Québec, it must be that the potential for the affirmation and the preservation of Indigenous difference in the context of a marginalising industrial order is not limitless; in this sense, we cannot exclude the possibility that a second mining cycle that would rely once more on an unequal appropriation of natural riches from the territories and the incapacity to consider a people’s alternative life aspirations could have far worse consequences for Innu and Naskapi worlds.

25. Interview (2009: I-20a). The translation is mine.

26. E. T. McKenzie, cited in *Une tente sur mars*. The translation is mine.

AFTERWORD

If much of the academic literature seems to universalize or to work against the notion that people lead storied lives in distinctive ways, the primary lesson I learned from these women is that narratives providing the most helpful guidance are inevitably locally grounded, highly particular, and culturally specific.

—Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories*, xii

This conversation ... is neither about the imprint left on a particular world region by an allegedly unstoppable process of globalization nor solely about how this region responds to it. Instead, it is about a complex, historically and spatially grounded experience that is negotiated and enacted at every site and region of the world, posing tremendous challenges to theory and politics alike.

—Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference*, 1

Before ending with a final methodological reflection, I present here two abbreviated life stories gathered near Schefferville in order to illustrate further how the Innu and the Naskapi negotiated their relationship with modern industrialism. Largely written in the third person, these “locally grounded, highly particular, and culturally specific” discussions can potentially be helpful in order to understand this unique relationship from the Indigenous perspective. The array of sentiments and personal historical interpretations expressed by these two Indigenous characters were chosen since they not only provide a sample overview of the complex nature of people’s engagement with the different phases of iron mining at Schefferville, but also because they draw our attention to the inextricable connections that exist between a seemingly distant, yet never forgotten, industrial past, and the major contemporary iron developments which have returned to the region since the early 2000s. In both of these ways, these stories serve to illustrate, I think, the important point made by Escobar regarding the “tremendous challenges to theory and politics” that this particular approach to history entails.

One of these stories was told by Tommy Einish¹ in the fall of 2009, at his house located on the Naskapi of Kawawachikamach reserved territories. He recounts that he was born “in the bush” near Fort Chimo. At the time, his father participated in exploration activities with a small mining company operating in the vicinity of Otelnuke Lake; but in general, he makes clear that “there were no jobs in Fort Mckenzie.” Much like many of his fellow Naskapi, Tommy moved to Schefferville during the summer of 1956, while he was still quite young, and he made the trip by foot and by canoe in about one month. He explains the reasons that led his community to relocate toward the new industrial centre: “At Fort Chimo the government announced to us the date of our move. The company had already started to drill near Schefferville. The government told us that we were going to work there. They said: ‘The trading post will close, the allocations and the benefits will stop if you stay here, so you have to go to Schefferville.’” Eventually people left the region only to reunite and resettle at Lac John, where they received minimal aid from the federal government, aside from the few small houses that were built for them.

After two or three years spent working sporadically for contractors, the IOC hired him, and he ended up labouring there for eighteen seasons. He describes in the following terms his time spent working at the company:

With regard to the train, I worked at shipping and at repairing the railway track. We used to install the ties with a sledgehammer. It was pretty hard working on the railway back then. Eventually the machinery came in, to make it easier for us.

Sometimes, when the train broke down, we had to work all night long. That’s because the shipping of iron ore on the railway was ongoing; if the train stopped, they were losing money, so for us it meant that we had to work, work, work, out on the tracks. The railway was hard for me.

1. All quotations that follow are from T. Einish (2009: N-24b), interview.

I also worked as a rock crusher. We used to break the rocks in different sizes. During the winter, I installed pipes.

He also recalls that several women whom he knew very well worked intensively at craft-making while the men went out to the mine. More rarely, a few of them were able to obtain a salaried position in town, as secretaries or housewives.

In spite of the demanding work schedule, Tommy discusses the fact that people in his community continued to hunt frequently, even though they constantly had to be on the move. In this regard, he clearly remembers how the mining activities contributed to prevent wildlife from approaching Schefferville:

There were hardly any caribou here, and other wildlife, when the mining was here; there was less available. There was not as much food; we had to go out in order to get it.

The land that was not disturbed by the mining company, that's where we used to go. It was about one hundred miles out. We used snowmobiles and bush planes, to go one hundred miles from here. That's where we got our caribou.

Because of the disturbances, the outfitting camps, the mining, the prospecting, the exploration, that's when the caribou were not around that much. After the mine shut down, it was quiet.

In fact, he explains that Naskapi people had to travel great distances to reach faraway territories such as the George River, and in the process they incurred great expenses to ensure that certain sharing traditions could be maintained: "We used to spend a lot of money when the IOC was here. We flew out to get the traditional food. We used two bush planes at the same time, with so many hunters, just to get food for the elders."

According to Tommy, if the relocation to Schefferville and the arrival of the mine in Naskapi territory marked a significant period of upheaval for his people, who had to

learn how to live “like the white society,” the abandonment of operations that took place in 1983 also brought severe changes to the community:

When they closed the mine, we were not notified that the mine was going to shut down. The company didn't give us anything in return, no benefits or bonuses. They didn't give us anything. They just left everything: the equipment, the buildings. There were even some buildings in town that were demolished; the theatre, the bank, the hospital, some of them were destroyed.

Even during the mining operations, they wouldn't give us access to the roads, for us to reach our hunting grounds and go hunting. They wouldn't even do that, like they do right now with all the new benefits that they promise. They should have given that to the people.

The closure was more or less good and bad, because the caribou came back, but there were not many jobs here. There were only some construction jobs when they built the new community in Kawawachikamach.

As he emphasizes, the closing phase of the mine brought into focus the cavalier and uncompromising attitude that the company had entertained toward Indigenous people and their territories all along.

Toward the end of our discussion, Tommy expresses several of his reservations regarding the large construction projects that have sprouted all around Schefferville in the past few summers. For him, the new companies—by contrast to the IOC—must absolutely guarantee financial and material returns to the communities while “respecting our tradition, our wildlife, and our land.” Most importantly, they should construct roads that can be used solely for the purpose of bypassing the mining pits and facilitating hunting and fishing activities, while also allowing the wage labour schedule to coexist with people's life on the land. “The caribou are coming here now, but they won't come here, if they hear all the commotion, the noise, the trucks, the equipment, the drilling, and everything,” Tommy says, before he finally concludes:

My main concern is conserving access to our territory. To access the bush and be away from the mining activities, that's my main concern. I'm afraid that we will continue to lose the younger generation to the white lifestyle, the non-Native society. We have to integrate the new lifestyle to the bush, and never lose our knowledge and our traditional ways. What if some people leave their job or are let go from the company? The only way to cope with the hardships would be to go hunting and to use the land. That's why I'm scared that it will disappear, the culture.

I really want the kids to go the bush, to use the roads and the hunting routes. Some kids today go to Churchill Falls to get caribou, during the winter, and after they come back here. It's a long distance, using the snowmobile. One snowmobile can bring about five caribou or more, on a big sled. A long time ago, we went out with several snowmobiles and got about twenty-seven caribou in one day. There was no IOC anymore when we had that. The caribou was relatively near.

The second story was shared by Napaïen André,² whom I met in the company of several members of his family at his home situated on the Innu reserve of Matimekush. A man of seventy-three years of age, he explains how he worked hard in his youth, especially during the period when, until the age of seventeen, he accompanied his brother, who "carried his children in the forest with the toboggan." At the time, Napaïen mainly occupied himself with cutting wood for his family. For him, this work was even harsher than the one he eventually carried out at the mine, since as he explains, "there was always work to do and we had to carry the caribou on our shoulders."

As early as the 1940s, Napaïen frequented the Schefferville region, which he reached by foot and by canoe after departing from the St. Lawrence River. This was a time when "there was nothing here, nor anybody." Once there he conducted exploration activities with a few other Innu individuals, and eventually he installed a small camping establishment at Natakameïkan (Attikamagen Lake) in order to facilitate his involvement

2. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations that follow are from Interview (2009: 1-28c). A pseudonym is used in these paragraphs to facilitate the writing. The translations are mine.

with both mining and hunting activities. It was only a short time after the opening of the mine in 1954 that he relocated to Schefferville permanently, after boarding the train in Sept-Îles. He remembers the opening years and the difficult working conditions at the mine, which overall did not prevent him from labouring at the IOC for several seasons:

I arrived here in 1956, during the month of May. My mother was in Sept-Îles, and I left to look for work. I began with small entrepreneurs and worked as a carpenter. I worked small jobs like that for two or three years. At the beginning we had difficulty getting in at the IOC because of white workers. There were not many Indians who worked there.

I began with the company in 1958, but I lost a year. I was laid off, and then I started again in 1959. It was like a rehiring. Overall, I managed to work there for twenty-five years, until 1982. We were well treated by the company, except for the wages; they did not want to pay us well. In the course of those twenty-five years, I did not even reach ten dollars an hour. It was not only me, but also many other people.

I executed all the tasks that I was told to do. It was tiring. In the winter, the work consisted in shovelling and carrying things back and forth; there were many labourers. We were not picky [about our work]. It's mainly perseverance that enabled me to become comfortable at the company, to be stable. At one point I ended up occupying the same position. I spent seventeen years making cement near the overpass, where the train went by, close to the large open fields.

The living conditions were problematic during this period, particularly at Lac John, where he lived with his family until 1972, before relocating to the new Matimekush reserve. He recalls going through quite some "misery" for a time, especially since it was complicated for him to harmonize salaried labour with other daily tasks that were necessary for subsistence. His wife Nipishit interrupts him and adds: "It was more difficult for women at Lac John. Women were responsible for getting heating wood while men worked at the

mine. They went to fetch wood by hand, there were no chainsaws. We also had to get the water. It was difficult.”³

Despite this situation, Napaïen remains proud of his employment at the mine since, as he says, “I was thinking about my family and my relatives.” It was also with them in mind that he sought to pursue his activities on the land, even though it meant that he ended up far away from them during many of his days off. He and his family also had to modify their eating habits, since the weekend hunts did not enable them to find caribou on a consistent basis, the animal being much rarer and farther away during this period: “I hunted often when I worked at the mine, when there were vacation days. Saturdays and Sundays, I left to go hunting and obtain provisions of fish and partridges, so that my kids could eat it. ... The company disturbed hunting, especially when they used dynamite. The caribou went somewhere else.”

Beyond all the disturbances, he recalls with a lot of nostalgia the years when there was much more activity and many more people around him. Today, the redevelopment of the town and the mining sites bring back memories of a very active life, which in some sense is about to be reborn before his very eyes. But, always a great hunter and teacher of his rich knowledge, he worries about the possible effects that a new industrial cycle could engender, notably with regard to the relationship future generations will entertain with the Innu territory:

I find it sad when I go up to the mining sites today. I think about all the movement that used to be there, all the action around me, all the operations that were in place. Today it's saddening, there is nothing left.

3. Interview (2009: I-28d). The name used is a pseudonym. The translation is mine.

I see all the new projects, and life will start again. I always think that I will see all my old friends returning. The other day I went to the bar to see if my old friends had come back. They were not there. *C'est dangereux de devenir malade à force de penser à ça*. [It's dangerous to become sick thinking about this continually].

Today I have forty-eight children and grandchildren. I still hunt every day. I show to the children how to install hare collars. It's risky what the children are doing today. One day maybe we will be told that we don't have a homeland anymore. That's why we have to look carefully at what they will do.

Doing Oral History in Indigenous Communities

Oral historians who focus their inquiry on a particular place may involve themselves in a messy enterprise. Oral history does not recover the unsullied history of the past.

— Laura Cameron, *Openings*, 16

I knew ahead of time that it was going to be a story about the little guys up against an international trading company, and I was sure it would have a good-guy versus bad-guy scenario. It did not turn out that way.

—Toby Morantz, *The White Man's Gonna Getcha*, 22

I end this discussion by presenting a final reflection that stemmed from my short period of time spent in the Schefferville and Sept-Îles regions, and from my listening engagement with the local communities there. These insights are included here because they serve to reiterate, I think, the main argument that this study develops.

For Ritchie, researchers interested in oral history should not merely attempt to collect "data" that is only relevant to a set of narrow research questions, but rather to keep in mind that the stories may remain available and useful for future researchers.⁴ As an attempt to follow this idealistic advice, and also as a way to possibly limit the power inequalities inherent in the production and reproduction of oral stories for academic

4. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 114-115.

purposes, I devised interviews which purposely left the terms and content of the discussions loosely defined, and I very rarely resisted situations when interviews appeared to be getting "off topic." Thus I hoped to foster a space in which Innu or Naskapi interviewees would feel comfortable to lead the discussions in the preferred direction. Beyond producing somewhat wide-ranging interviews, this strategy allowed me to challenge several of my own underlying assumptions about this historical period, in a way that I could not necessarily have entirely foreseen before I begun studying the oral record.

After engaging with archival material and secondary literature and familiarizing myself with a certain narrative of industrial development, I roughly expected to find in Schefferville stories of a people's struggles against a giant corporate conglomerate and its imposition of a dominant industrial culture (in a somewhat typical "good-guy versus bad-guy scenario"). In many ways, I envisioned the gathering of these stories quite narrowly and instrumentally as a logical methodological choice for achieving the basic goal of documenting experiences of a time period that I had myself predetermined. Hopefully, these stories would act as a counterweight to the standard historical narrative of the region's industrial era. If the archival record was mostly mute about the Innu and Naskapi experiences during this period (as I indeed suspected it to be the case), *certainly the oral record was going to correct that*. In other words, I conceived of oral history, rather simplistically, as "the egalitarian method *par excellence* of creating history by and for the people."⁵ Yet as Cameron suggests, the role of oral historians cannot be to "recover the

5. Cameron, *Openings*, 26.

unsullied history of the past.” The “messiness” of this enterprise became evident as I listened to people’s stories in Schefferville, and saw that by conceptualizing oral history as a way of balancing the dominant narrative of industrialization, I risked producing a narrative which could lead to a reduction of Innu and Naskapi worlds. This process of cultural reification has particularly significant implications, and I briefly mention two here in relation to contemporary issues in order to illustrate this point.

As a response to increasingly significant local resistance to large-scale development activities that are located on Indigenous homelands, some have argued that mining industries, governments, and global society more generally, are gradually opening to the idea of accommodating “difference and heterogeneity within itself.”⁶ But as Blaser writes, this is typically only done “as long as they do not disrupt the wider logic of the market.”⁷ While social economy theorizations, for example, seek to carve out a space for the nonmarket aspects of Indigenous economies, these attempts also risk becoming merely accommodated within a dominant industrial capitalist world, on terms that ultimately remain dictated by non-Indigenous actors (and the prevalent ideologies). This situation is reminiscent of previous colonial encounters, when a consideration for Indigenous alterity “was only done as long as these cultures were integrated within the dominant culture.”⁸ There are indeed pressing concerns that this situation continues to be

6. Mario Blaser, *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 139.

7. *Ibid.*, 140.

8. Joëlle Gardette, *Les Innus et les Euro-Canadiens: dialogue des cultures et rapport à l'Autre à travers le temps, XVIIe-XXe siècles* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1998), 292. The translation is mine.

reproduced in the context of modern industrial development projects. For Escobar, then, it is crucial that a political ecology focused on difference pays close attention to the (never balanced) power relations that exist between various epistemological and ontological assumptions. As he mentions, one needs to ask, "Whose knowledge counts? And what does this have to do with place, culture, and power?"⁹ Examining these questions can at least contribute to bring to light the genuineness and practical motivations of corporate and state powers for seeking to accommodate indigeneity.

There is additionally a flip side to this process of reification, which is that Indigenous practices that do not fit neatly within the predefined categories of difference—for example, that are not considered traditional, ecological, subsistence-based, etc.—in turn risk becoming further marginalized. For Carlson, the measure of what constitutes so-called "traditional" activities, and the degree to which Indigenous groups continue to practice them today, is regularly used as a yardstick for evaluating people's claims to indigeneity. This calculus of difference is supposed to help determine, for instance, the extent to which societies have "moved away from that older practice [and] have somehow forfeited their ability to define their environments and their rights on the land";¹⁰ or, according to a different but related formulation proposed by Nadasdy, whether they can constitute worthy strategic allies for environmentalists' struggles to protect territories.¹¹ The very idea of Indigenous alterity, then, is itself controversial, since there is always the

9. Escobar, *Territories of Difference*, 4.

10. Carlson, *Home is the Hunter*, 17.

11. Paul Nadasdy, "Transcending Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous People and Environmentalism," *Ethnohistory* 52, no. 2 (2005): 291-331.

risk of equating it with “essentialized understandings of culture and identity.”¹² But for Escobar, difference cannot be merely reduced to an atemporal and ahistorical essence, because it is itself “always in the process of being transformed.” In this sense, he argues that “what persists is difference itself, not any unchanging essence.”¹³ Indeed, if the concept of Indigenous difference may lead to undesirable outcomes, the converse danger also exists since, as Cameron, de Leeuw, and Greenwood warn, the “deconstruction [of indigeneity] can result in the very real and ongoing marginalization of Indigenous people through a denial that they have distinct ways of life.”¹⁴

In order to defeat the dualistic logic that informed the early conceptualization of this research project, I thus aimed to make use of oral history, as Cameron urges, not narrowly as a direct counterweight to the dominant historical narrative—an approach that risks reifying Indigenous difference by notably relying on totalizing discourses of marginalization or resistance—but rather as a way to expand upon it, and therefore “avoid a simple condemnation or celebration of dominant narratives.”¹⁵ Based on the plurality and diversity of stories told in Schefferville, the history of the Innu and the Naskapi as it relates to industrialism cannot be told simply as either one of withdrawal or agency, but rather as a complex assemblage of individual and collective life stories, of people who were actively trying to define the direction they wanted to take in life, on the basis of the

12. Emilie Cameron, Sarah de Leeuw, and Margo Greenwood, “Indigeneity,” in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Rob Kitchin and Nigel J. Thrift (Oxford: Elsevier, 2009), 5: 353.

13. Escobar, *Territories of Difference*, 18.

14. Cameron, de Leeuw, and Greenwood, “Indigeneity,” 354.

15. Cameron, *Openings*, 40.

place they occupied in the world. For Blaser, Feit, and McRae, "Indigenous communities do not just resist development, do not just react to state and market; they also sustain 'life projects.'"¹⁶ These life projects, according to Blaser, are "embedded in local histories" and they are "based on visions of a good life premised on densely and uniquely woven threads of ontological assumptions, the materiality of landscapes, memories, practices, expectations, and desires."¹⁷ Admittedly, constructing a narrative that merely considers a small sample of these local historical perspectives cannot automatically lead to a complete absolution from the charges of instrumentalisation and reification. My goal, nevertheless, with this story, has been to briefly follow Innu and Naskapi practices through industrialism, and to explain, within the limits of my own ontological and epistemological assumptions, and constrained by my linguistic abilities, how these groups were able to pursue their personal life projects and claim the existence of worlds that were in the end different from industrialism. Hopefully, I did not convey the message that this was easily achieved, as this story should also make it clear that mineral development seriously restricted the possibilities for Innu and Naskapi people to enact these worlds. To the extent that it is successful, such an approach to Indigenous history may contribute modestly to apprehend some of the uncomfortable complexities that are inherent to colonial encounters of the modern industrial kind.

16. Blaser, on behalf of Blaser, Feit, and McRae, "Life Projects," 26.

17. Blaser, *Storytelling Globalization*, 2.

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APPENDIX I

Sample of Discussion Questions Used with the Naskapi

1. Where are you from? Where is your family from? How long have you lived in Schefferville?
2. Can you talk about the move from Fort Mckenzie or Fort Chimo to here? How long did it take? Do you know why you and your family moved here? What did your family do before they relocated here?
3. What did you do when you arrived in Schefferville? Where did you live when you settled here?
4. When you arrived here, was the mine already opened? Was there work available for you then?
5. Did you work at the mine? What kind of work did you do there? How did you find the work?
6. How did you get to work? What was the work schedule like? How were the wages?
7. Were there possibilities of advancement for you in the company? Did you change position during your career at IOC?
8. How were the working relations with the other workers? With white workers in particular?
9. What did Naskapi women do when men worked at the mine?
10. Do you remember any changes in lifestyle from your time in Fort Mckenzie or Fort Chimo to your time here?
11. Did you hunt, fish or trap around Schefferville? How was the hunting here during the IOC mining years? The fishing? The trapping?
12. Were you able to hunt, fish or trap when you worked at the mine?
13. Did people of your community eat bush food during the mining years?
14. How was the sharing of the hunting territory with the Innu? With the white people?

15. Were there changes to the territory as a result of mining activities? To the animal populations?
16. Do you remember when the mine closed? Did it have any impact on you and your family? Did hunting practices change after the mine closed?
17. What did the company do after they shut down the mine?
18. What benefits did people get from IOC mining?
19. Can you talk about the various resettlements that you encountered in your life? To Lac John? To Matimekush? To Kawawachikamach?
20. How is hunting, fishing, and trapping today? Do people eat bush food? Do people share food? How does it compare to the mining years?
21. How do you feel about the new mining projects in the region today?
22. Were there mistakes that were done in the past, with the IOC mining activities? Is there anything that could be done differently with regard to the new mining projects in the region?
23. Are there other stories you would like to share, which you feel are important to remember for you, your family or your community?

APPENDIX II

Research Project Consent Form

Research Project

Mining history in Schefferville.

Objective of the Study

The research aims to gather Innu and Naskapi perspectives of the iron mining history in the Schefferville region.

Information Use and Conservation

- The information obtained during the interview will be used strictly for the purposes of this research and possibly for the writing of articles documenting the mining history of Schefferville.
- Interview tapes and transcripts will not be distributed, sold or disseminated in any way. Selected quotes may be used in a published essay or book, with proper credit attributed (anonymous or not, according to the participant's choice).
- The data gathered will be kept for two years under strict confidentiality before being destroyed by deleting the audio recordings and shredding any paper material that contains interview information. A copy of the audio recordings and the interview transcripts can be given to the participant, if desired.

Discussion Type and Choice of Language

Open interview, which will be recorded if permission is granted. The language used during the interview will be determined by the participant.

I, _____, (name in capital letters) freely consent to participate in the research project: "Mining history in Schefferville." I have been informed of the objectives of the project to which I participate. I understand that appropriate measures will be undertaken to ensure that the interview remains anonymous, unless I consent to be identified.

I also understand that I will be able to refuse to answer any question, or to abandon the project at any point without having to give reasons and suffer prejudices for doing so.

Finally, I understand that it is my right to interrupt the interview at any stage and demand that particular statements be removed from the recordings, if applicable.

[]

I want my name to remain anonymous.

or

[]

I do not want my name to remain anonymous.

[] I consent to the audio recording of the interview.

[] I want to receive a copy of the audio recording and the interview transcript.

[] I want to consult and comment on the audio recording and the interview transcript before it can be used.

Signature of participant _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date: _____

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 737-8368.

Granting Agency

Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada.

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APPENDIX III

The Labrador Iron Trough

The mineral deposits that were exploited in Schefferville are situated on the Canadian Shield, in a geological region known as the Labrador iron trough. The trough stretches over a long (1,100 kilometres) but narrow (100 kilometres at its widest, in the central portion) strip of land at the heart of the Québec-Labrador peninsula, in a roughly north-south axis, from a region slightly north of Payne Bay, in northwest Ungava Bay, all the way down to the northern end of the Manicouagan reservoir, at Pléti Lake.¹

In geological terms, the bedrock generally consists of metamorphosed calcareous and dolomitic sedimentary rocks of Proterozoic origin, with the presence of rich iron oxide and hydroxide formations such as hematite (Fe_2O_3), goethite (FeO_2H), and limonite (HFeO_2); as well as taconites and metataconites. Hematite, goethite, and limonite are "soft iron ores formed by supergene leaching and enrichment of the weakly metamorphosed cherty iron formation"; taconites are "weakly metamorphosed iron formations with above average magnetite [Fe_3O_4] content which are also commonly called magnetite iron formation"; and metataconites are "more intensely metamorphosed, coarser-grained iron formations ... which contain specular hematite and subordinate amounts of magnetite as the dominant iron minerals."²

1. Neal, "Iron Deposits," 114.

2. Laperrière et al., "Paleolimnological Evidence," 311; Neal, "Iron Deposits," 114-115; Richard Leclerc, "À la conquête du fer: une synthèse historique de l'exploration du Québec-Labrador," *Saguenayensia* 30, no. 3 (1988): 3.

The Labrador trough is composed of three sections divided according to differences in lithology and metamorphism. In the middle section, the Knob Lake Range runs from the Koksoak River down to the Grenville Front, a few kilometres north of Wabush Lake. It is in this range that the rich Schefferville deposits exploited by the Iron Ore Company of Canada are located. The iron formations of the Knob Lake Range are found in weakly metamorphosed sedimentary rocks, and these formations have either remained unaltered and have been altered through leaching or enrichment.³ The Grenville front is the other important geological province of the Québec-Labrador peninsula (in addition to the Labrador iron trough). It runs from western Ontario all the way to the eastern Labrador littoral and in terms of iron content, it is rich in hematite, magnetite, and ilmenite (FeTiO_3).⁴

3. Neal, "Iron Deposits," 114-115.

4. Leclerc, "À la conquête du fer," 3.

