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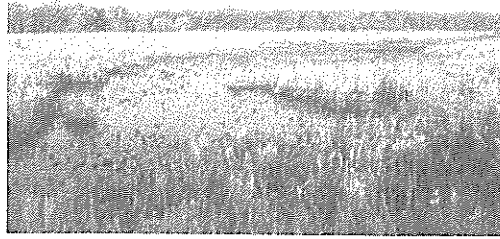
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Over a number of years the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada ([HSMBC](#)) has identified the need to increase the national recognition of the history of Aboriginal peoples. Traditionally, the [HSMBC](#) has used historical and anthropological frameworks and specified criteria as the bases for assessing the national historic significance of places, people or events. The Board has, however, recognized that its conventional criteria, structure and framework for evaluation do not adequately respond to the values inherent in the history of Aboriginal people. Ultimately the question is:

Can the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada develop a commemorative approach to Aboriginal history in Canada in ways that are meaningful to Aboriginal people while at the same time upholding the rigour of its own evaluative process?

Since 1990 the Board has explored [various approaches](#) to this challenge. This present web presentation offers the approach of 'cultural landscape' as one possible response. It does not presume to speak for Aboriginal peoples. The original background paper, upon which this presentation is based, was commissioned for and addressed to the [HSMBC](#). The aim was to provide the Board with a framework that could encompass the traditional values of Aboriginal peoples, including spiritual views of the natural world and associative values in the land, while still being understandable to Board members whose world views are typically based in Western historical scholarship.

To accomplish this the author, historian [Susan Buggey](#), approached the field from a policy and social science perspective. She presented an understanding of [Aboriginal world views](#) and notions of place gleaned from her own extensive readings, and from consultation with knowledgeable colleagues. She then situated these views in relation to the field of [cultural landscapes](#) and to [national historic site designations](#) related to the history of Aboriginal people. She offered a working definition of "Aboriginal cultural landscape" and proposed [guidelines](#) for the identification of such landscapes.



Marsh in spring, Point Pelee National Park,
Ontario
© Parks Canada / W. Lynch / 06.62.03.23(27), 1991

It is now time to enlarge participation in this dialogue. The current presentation includes the essential content of the original background paper tailored to a web format and invites your comments.

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Is the Aboriginal view of the world fundamentally different from that of Western tradition?

Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world regard landscape in ways common to their own experience, and different from the Western perspective of land and landscape. The relationship between people and place is conceived fundamentally in spiritual terms, rather than primarily in material terms.

Many Aboriginal peoples consider all the earth to be sacred and regard themselves as an integral part of this holistic and living landscape. They belong to the land and are at one in it with animals, plants, and ancestors whose spirits inhabit it.

For many, places in their landscape are also sacred, as places of power, of journeys related to spirit beings, of entities that must be appeased. Aboriginal cosmologies relate earth and sky, the elements, the directions, the seasons, and mythic transformers to lands that they have occupied since ancient times.



Mersey River at Kejinkujik National Park/National Historic Site, Nova Scotia
© Parks Canada / W. Barrett / 03.31.01.12(101). 1995

Guided by these cosmological relationships, many have creation stories related to their homelands, and they date their presence in these places to times when spirit beings traversed the world, transformed themselves at will between human and animal form, created their ancestors, and contoured the landscape. Laws and gifts from these spirit beings and culture heroes shaped their cultures and their day to day activities.

Aboriginal peoples' intimate knowledge of the natural resources and ecosystems of their areas, developed through long and sustained contact, and their respect for the spirits which inhabit these places, moulded their life on the land.

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Traditional knowledge, in the form of narratives, place names, and ecological lore, bequeathed through oral tradition from generation to generation, embodies and preserves their relationship to the land. Landscapes "house" these stories, and protection of these places is key to the long-term survival of these stories in Aboriginal culture.

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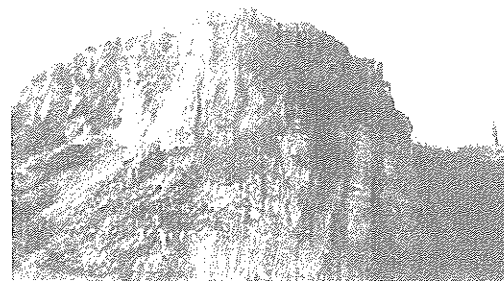
Aboriginal versus Western World Views

Why is it important to recognize the differences between Aboriginal and Western world views?

Commemoration is based on what is valued. To recognize the values within Aboriginal cultural landscapes and to commemorate these places, identification and evaluation have to focus on Aboriginal world views, rather than on the world views of the non-indigenous cultures derived from the Western scientific tradition. The orientations of these two broad cultures differ radically. The Aboriginal world view is rooted in identification with the land. Western experience is rooted in objectification and rationalism. (*Johnson and Ruttan, 1992; Stevenson, 1996: 288-89; Federal Archaeology Office, 1998a*)

Aboriginal peoples in Canada, like indigenous peoples worldwide, approach history not primarily through the Western constructs of causal relationship, record, and time sequence, but through cosmology, narrative, and place. Recent examples of the integration of oral tradition and multi-disciplinary science reflect the sophisticated research approaches now applied to complex historical issues.

Widespread mapping projects in the Northwest Territories, Labrador, northern Quebec, northern Ontario, and Yukon have documented traditional harvesting areas through oral evidence and place identification. Individual hunters, trappers, fishers, and berry pickers actively participated in identifying lands that they have



The Ramparts, Mackenzie River, Northwest Territories
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used and species that they have hunted in their lifetimes. The impressive degree of consistency among independently prepared maps and the striking extent to which maps from different communities fitted together have persuaded scholars of their reliability. (*Slim and Thompson, 1995: 52-53*)

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Dene oral traditions tell of the dispersal of their ancestors from their homeland long ago following a volcanic eruption. Subsequently they became separate linguistic groups. In one recent study, evidences developed from archaeology (such as dendro-chronology and radiocarbon dating techniques), environmental sciences (especially geology), and recent linguistic theory have been connected with traditional narratives of the Hare, Mountain, Chipewyan, Yellowknife and Slavey peoples to create a cohesive story out of the multiple clues. The analysis convincingly locates the volcanism both geographically, in the White River volcano, Alaska, and chronologically, in A.D.720.(*Moodie, Catchpole and Abel, 1992*) It thus supports the validity of both oral tradition and science.

The validity of Aboriginal oral history has been an issue for both indigenous peoples and academics, one which the Dene Cultural Institute has long been addressing. Traditional knowledge points to the qualities for which Aboriginal peoples value the land. Scholarly analysis based on the methodologies of archaeology, history, ethnography, and related disciplines can contribute to the identification of values, but does not play the lead role that it has played in cultural resource management practice.



Salmon drying on racks on beach of Yukon River, Trondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Site, Yukon.Parks
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Traditional Knowledge

What is traditional knowledge?

In 1991 the Northwest Territories Traditional Knowledge Working Group defined it as "knowledge derived from, or rooted in the traditional way of life of aboriginal people. Traditional knowledge is accumulated knowledge and understanding of the human place in relation to the universe. This encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the use of natural resources, relationships between people, and is reflected in language, social organization, values, institutions, and laws."

Two years later the Government of the Northwest Territories, apparently the first jurisdiction to assign traditional knowledge a formal role in policy, stated it to be: "[k]nowledge and values which have been acquired through experience, observation from the land or from spiritual teachings, and handed down from one generation to the next". It derives from Aboriginal peoples' experience in "living for centuries in close harmony" with the land. It means knowing "the natural environment and its resources, the use of natural resources, and the relationship of people to the land and to each other". (cited in *Abele, 1997: iii*)

Emphasizing the fundamental role of relationship to the environment in the lives of Aboriginal peoples, the Dene Cultural Institute has defined traditional environmental knowledge as "a body of knowledge and beliefs transmitted through oral tradition and first-hand observation. It includes a system of classification, a set of empirical observations about the local environment and a system of self-management that governs resource use. Ecological aspects are closely tied to social and spiritual aspects of the knowledge system...." (cited in *Stevenson, 1996: 281*).

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Unlike the written word, traditional knowledge is not static, but responds to change through absorbing new information and adapting to its implications.



Woman tapping birch trees.
Resolution, Northwest
Territories
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Cosmological Relationship to Place

What is unique about the Aboriginal view of land and the human relationship to it?

The widespread view of all land as sacred derives from beliefs about cosmic relationships centred on earth and sky, land and water, and perceptions of power and place. The intensity of the relationship to the land is based in cosmological and mythological patterns of experience with the land over centuries.

For the Anishinaubaeg people of the Great Lakes region, for example, the sun, earth, moon, and thunder had kinship relationships as father, mother, grandmother, and grandfather. The Creator, Kitche Manitou, brought forth spirit beings who embodied the four directions. Mythic stories of Waubun, the east and morning, and Ningobianong, the west and evening, as well as Zeegum, summer, and Bebon, winter, who all engaged in eternal power contests, are moral tales for directing human behaviour among the Anishinaubaeg. (*Johnston, 1976*)

Is it possible to understand Aboriginal landscapes without knowing their particular cosmologies?

To understand the landscape requires an understanding of the related cosmologies. For the Beaver people of the subarctic, for example, the creation story focussed on Muskrat, the diver who brought a speck of dirt from the sea bottom to the surface, at a point that represented the coming together of trails from the four directions. Equally, it focussed on Swan, who flew into the sky and brought back the world and the songs of the seasons. Transformed in vision quest from the boy Swan to culture hero Saya, who travels across the sky as sun and moon, he was the first man to follow the trail of animals and thus established the relationship between hunters and their game. (*Ridington, 1990b: 69-73, 91-93*)

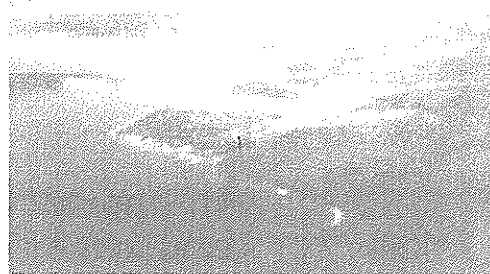
Certain places embody these cosmological contexts. Ninaistákis [Chief Mountain] near the Montana/Alberta border, the home of Thunderbird,

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is sacred among the Niitsitapi (the three Blackfoot-speaking peoples) as the traditional and continuing focus of their spiritual activity. (Reeves, 1994: 265-282)

For the Cree, the rock which was flooded by the creation of Lake Diefenbaker in Saskatchewan was the gateway between the earth and the underworld.

Its explosion in conjunction with the lake construction ended forever their hope that the buffalo, disappeared from the Prairies for nearly a century, would return from their underground sojourn. (Dr. George MacDonald, pers.comm)



Aerial view of Great Bear Lake, Northwest Territories
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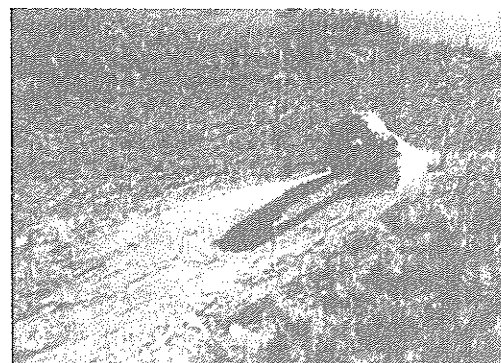
Spirit Beings and Places of Power

How do traditional narratives about spirit beings and culture heroes shape Aboriginal views of landscape?

Traditional narratives connect specific places with the journeys of spirit beings who traversed between the 'Old World', where humans and animals moved interchangeably between human and animal forms, and the 'New World', where they no longer move from one form to another. The tales relate how events in their travels, such as struggles with others and good deeds, shaped geographical forms and features. Narratives associated directly to a specific people or shared among several peoples record the exploits of these spirit beings. Such stories often focus on the journeys of culture heroes, like Glooscap, the transformer of the Eastern Woodlands, who is credited with creation of the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia (*Carpenter, 1985*), or Yamoria, the law giver of the Dene in the Northwest Territories (*Blondin, 1997*).

The stages of the journeys and exploits of Yamoria and his namesakes through the Mackenzie Basin can be related to specific features in that landscape. (*Andrews, 1990*) The narratives vary from group to group, but their climax occurs at the same geographical point, Bear Rock on the Mackenzie River. Many Dene regard Bear Rock as a sacred site, and its symbolic importance is reflected in its selection as the logo of the Dene Nation, which represents the relation between the Dene and their homeland, Deneneh. (*Hanks, 1993*)

The Gwich'in cycle of stories of the trickster Raven records how the hollows in the landscape known today at Tsiigehtchic are his camp and bed. (*Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, 1997: 800-07*) In northern Quebec sites associated with the travels of the giant beaver still in transformation mode populate the



Aerial view of stone arch, Bear Rock,

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demographically vacant
map. (*Craik and
Namagoose, 1992*) The
main street pattern of

Northwest Territories
© Parks Canada / Archaeological Services Branch /
Flen Lee / 1999

Wendake, Quebec follows the mythological route of ancient serpents.

For the Stó:lō people of lower mainland British Columbia narratives tell how places contain the powers of transformers or spirit beings, such as the transformer Xa:ls, the son of the sun, at Th'exelis overlooking the Fraser River and at Xá:ytem National Historic Site. (*Mohs, 1994: 189-195. Lee and Henderson, 1992; Smyth, 1997; HSMBC Minutes, November 1997*)

What are places of power?

Sacred sites are experienced as places of power which intimately link the physical and spiritual worlds. Interfaces between land and water are often places where power lies, for example the whirlpools in Kitselas Canyon, British Columbia. Mnjikaning Fish Weirs at Atherley Narrows in Ontario, where two lakes converge, exemplifies such power. Fish arrive annually, and band councils bring together different peoples who are fed by the abundant resources. (*Sheryl Smith, pers.comm.*)



Kitselas Canyon, British
Columbia
© National Archives of
Canada / C 46603, 1909

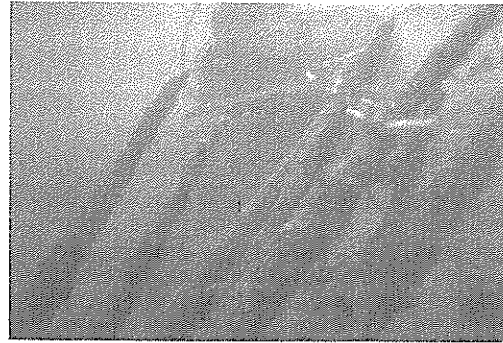
Places of power in the landscape consolidate spiritual energy. They can be places of strengthening as in vision quest sites, or places experienced as malevolent and threatening. Both are approached through rules of conduct, customs, rituals, ceremonies, and offerings. In the Dogrib vernacular, it is said that these places, and the entities inhabiting them, are being 'paid'. (*Andrews and Zoe, 1997*)

Some places of power are reserved for shamans. Over time, the power of transformation between human and animal came to belong only to selected people. These individuals were shamans who possessed medicine power. They were, however, proscribed from sharing their knowledge at the risk of losing their capacities. In Dene culture, the medicine power of shamans is a spirit, with a mind of its own, which attaches to them and gives them supernatural abilities. (*Blondin, 1997: 51-53*)

Sites where people
obtain materials used in
ceremonial activities,
such as mineral
resources and native
plants which are key
elements of spiritual
practices, are also places

of power.

The spirits residing in places of power guide the daily activities of people in their lives on the land. They also provide guidance for the placement of camps, the timing of crossing water, crossing points on rivers, and successful approaches to the hunt.



Fish weir stakes underwater at the Mnjikaning Fish Weirs, Alherley Narrows, Ontario
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Narratives and Place Names

How is knowledge about the land passed from person to person, and from generation to generation?

Traditional narratives record the locations of sacred sites and other places of importance. Knowledge of these places is passed from generation to generation through narratives, instructional travel, and place names. "Legends are from the land, and even though there were no maps, the stories made maps for the people". (*cited in Hanks, 1996: 889*)

Traditional knowledge relates contemporary Aboriginal cultures directly to these places. "The Sahtu Dene narratives create a mosaic of stories that envelop the cultural landscapes of Grizzly Bear Mountain and Scented Grass Hills. The web of 'myth and memory' spread beyond the mountains to cover the whole western end of Great Bear Lake, illustrating the complexity of the Sahtu Dene's landscape tradition". (HSMBC Minutes, November 1996)

Narratives also tell of journeys through landscapes while naming

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names and narratives in the North Slave Dogrib claim area, which has documented nearly 350 Dogrib place names, has shown that "[a]s part of a knowledge system, traditional place names serve as memory 'hooks' on which to hang the cultural fabric of a narrative tradition. In this way, physical geography ordered by place names is transformed into a social landscape where culture and topography are symbolically fused". (*Andrews and Zoe, 1997; Andrews, 1990: 4*) For both the Dene and the Inuit, some tales comprise mainly lists of places.



Ider Noah Piugattuk with his great grandson Adam Inatsiaq, Igloodik, Nunavut
© Parks Canada / T Pearce / 113.01.06.14 (02), 1993



The Ramparts, Mackenzie River above Good Hope, Northwest Territories
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Mackenzie River, serves to evoke the complex system of values attached to such places by Aboriginal cultures. The link between place, name, and cultural value is a world wide phenomenon among indigenous peoples.

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Social and Economic Life on the Land

In traditional Aboriginal cultures are social and economic necessities distinct from more spiritual values attached to land?

Inter-connectedness rather than categorization characterizes Aboriginal relationships to the land. Traditional lifeways integrate economic, spiritual, and social aspects of life in use areas through the centuries. For the Stó:lo, "the people of the river", life centres on the Fraser River. The river is a living force. Its resources sustain them and their spiritual sites lie along its course. (Mohs, 1994: 185-188)



Frontal poles at Kitwanga, British Columbia
© National Archives of Canada / PA 11215. 1915.

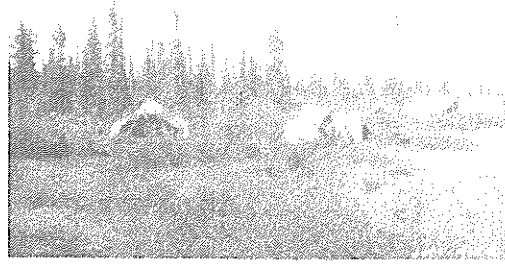
Among Aboriginal people, successful hunting also compels observance of the living forces of the land. Knowledge and respect for the land and its spirits are integral to living with it. As Harvey Feit has explained so vividly for the Cree of northern Quebec, the hunt is not an isolated event, but a stage in an on-going process that involves reciprocal relationships of power, needs, obligations, and moral responsibilities among creator, spirits, hunter, animal, and community. To achieve success, hunters must plan carefully and behave towards both spirits and animals in a respectful manner. Recognizing human characteristics in animals, they hunt in accordance with mutually understood signs. They acknowledge the gift of a successful hunt by sharing its bounty not only with their kin and community but also with the spirits who can favour their future efforts. (Feit, 1995)

Abiding life on the land has characterized Aboriginal experience since time immemorial. The seasonal round of yearly activities shaped traditional lifeways. As animal, vegetative and marine resources changed with the seasons, they shaped the movements and activities of peoples, who depended on them for food, as well as materials for

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clothing, shelter, tools, and other necessities.

Extended families or households wintered separately in diffused areas within the territories of their larger affiliations. Kinship often grouped those who wintered together. It also identified the territories where they hunted and trapped. Annual social gatherings, which usually occurred in summer, brought these many groups together for weddings, feasts, games, dances, songs, and other traditional customs. Such activities provided opportunities to instruct children in traditional knowledge and to develop their skills for living on the land.



Camp on the north shore of Keith Bay, Great Bear Lake, Northwest Territories
© National Archives of Canada - PA 101056, 1928.

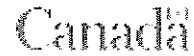
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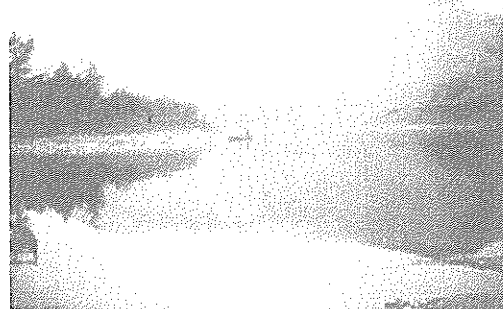
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Aboriginal Relationship to the Environment

How do the foundations of traditional knowledge differ from those of Western science?

Nineteenth century Western science, which still shapes Western values, makes a distinct separation between the observer and the observed. It is rooted in objective principles and rules which involve systematized observation, experimentation and testing of hypotheses and conclusions.

In contrast, Aboriginal people define their relationship as belonging to the land, and they see themselves as one element of a fully integrated environment. As Charles Johnson explains, "we, as Native people, are part of the Arctic ecosystem. We are not observers, not managers; our role is to participate as a part of the ecosystem".



Red Deer River, Northwest Territories
© National Archives of Canada / T.C. Weston / PA 150933. 1889

(Johnson, 1997: 3) As such, humans co-exist with fauna and flora, with equal rights to life. In this belief lies commitment to respect all living things. In the words of Dene Elder George Blondin, "We are people of the land; we see ourselves as no different than the trees, the caribou, and the raven, except we are more complicated". (Blondin, 1997: 18)

The skills inherent in living on and with the land, such as observation, interpretation, and adaptation, are related to traditional knowledge. The complexity of Aboriginal understanding of the land and its resources is evident in language, and one of the reasons language is currently a key concern. Study of the James Bay Cree hunting culture, for example, revealed five basic meanings associated with the root term for hunting, *nitao*. These meanings combine cosmological, ecological and psychological aspects of Cree life and beliefs that

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include complex relationships between the hunter and the hunted.
(*Feit, 1995*)

Numerous studies involving traditional knowledge and science as partners have demonstrated the intensive knowledge of natural processes, ecological indicators, faunal behaviour, and techniques for survival and safety in an often hostile environment. Recent studies, for example of sharp-tailed grouse in the Fort Albany First Nation, and of caribou among the Inuit, have likewise shown fragility of this traditional knowledge in the face of permanent settlements and cultural change. (*Tsuji, 1996; Thorpe, 1997; Ferguson and Messier, 1997; Huntington, 1998*)

However, the extensive studies of their culture by scientists, who typically see themselves as objective observers standing outside Aboriginal value systems, have also intensified Aboriginal concerns about misinterpretation, appropriation, and misuse of their "intellectual property". (*Stevenson, 1996: 279*)

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Why can the concept of 'landscape' be a particularly useful one for the national recognition of Aboriginal history?

Landscape can provide a conceptual bridge between Aboriginal world views and heritage conservation theory. The concept of cultural landscapes is a relatively new one in the heritage conservation movement. Although geographers have studied cultural landscapes for about a century, it is only in the past ten years that they have actively emerged in the field of heritage conservation. The approach offers a significant way of looking at place that focusses not on monuments but on the relationship between human activity and the natural environment.

Landscapes have always been seen in many different ways by different viewers. In a seminal article, geographer D.W. Meinig identified ten perspectives on the same landscape, ranging from landscape as wealth to landscape as system. Each accentuated a different aspect of value in the landscape. As he pointed out, "any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads". (*Meinig, 1976*)



Darwin Sound, Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, British Columbia.
© Parks Canada / D. Andrews / 10.105.03.20(118), 1996

In Australia, landscape architect Ken Taylor has observed that the preconceptions of landscape on the part of colonials and Aborigines there were different, but both reflected a concept of place, inherent experiential qualities, constructs informed by memory and myths, and links of the past with the present and future. (*Taylor, 1997*)

Anthropologists and Aboriginal people working on traditional use studies and undertaking to re-establish cultural landscapes on the west coast of Canada have applied this dilemma to ways of seeing west coast landscapes: in contrast to the visitor and the scientist, who

perceive wilderness in Gwaii Haanas, the Haida people see their homeland, Haida Gwaii, rich with the historical and spiritual evidences of their centuries-long occupation.

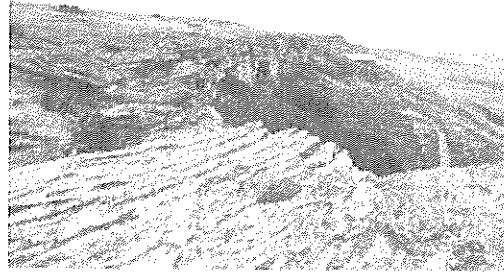
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evolved. The essence of the organically evolved cultural landscape, whether relict or continuing, is that its most significant values lie in the material evidences of its evolution from a cultural initiative to its present form, in association with the natural environment.

The emergence of cultural landscapes as an integral part of cultural heritage has coincided with world wide recognition in natural heritage communities that areas long identified as pristine wilderness and celebrated for their ecological values untouched by human activity were often the homelands of indigenous peoples. Management of their landscapes by



Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump World Heritage Site, Alberta.
© Parks Canada / Jachari Studios / H.09.86.11.10 (03), 1993

indigenous peoples has altered the original ecological system, but it has equally contributed to the biological diversity that has long been regarded as a prime value of wilderness (*McNeely, 1995*). The World Heritage Convention guidelines make this relationship explicit in recognizing a spiritual relation to nature, modern techniques of sustainable development, and traditional practices for maintaining biological diversity.

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Associative Cultural Landscapes

How is the concept of 'associative cultural landscapes' a break through in thinking about heritage resources?

Associative cultural landscapes mark a significant move away from conventional heritage concepts rooted in physical resources. Cultural heritage has been dominated by monuments, while natural heritage has celebrated pristine wilderness. Associative cultural landscapes accentuate the indivisibility of cultural and natural values.

What distinguishes an associative cultural landscape?

While many landscapes have religious, artistic or cultural associations, associative cultural landscapes are distinguished by their associations with the natural environment rather than by their material cultural evidences, which may be minimal or entirely absent. The range of natural features associated with cosmological, symbolic, sacred, and culturally significant landscapes may be very broad: mountains, caves, outcrops, coastal waters, rivers, lakes, pools, hillsides, uplands, plains, woods, groves, trees.



Hatzic Rock, Xá:ytem National Historic Site, British Columbia.
© Parks Canada / Archaeological Services Branch / David Smyth / 1997.

A 1995 UNESCO workshop on associative cultural landscapes, held in the Asia-Pacific region, elaborated on their essential characteristics: "Associative cultural landscapes may be defined as large or small contiguous or non-contiguous areas and itineraries, routes, or other linear landscapes - these may be physical entities or mental images embedded in a people's spirituality, cultural tradition and practice. The attributes of associative cultural landscapes include the intangible, such as the acoustic, the kinetic and the olfactory, as well as the

visual."

Cultural landscapes associated with indigenous peoples are most likely to fit in this category.

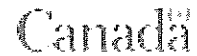
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Canadian Approach

Has Canada entered into this growing dialogue on cultural landscapes as heritage resources?

In the past decade national heritage agencies have recognized cultural landscapes within their various cultural resource management programs. Parks Canada defines cultural landscapes as "Any geographical area that has been modified, influenced, or given special cultural meaning by people" (*Parks Canada, 1994a: 119*) and has included them in the National Historic Sites System Plan.

Designated national historic sites include all three types of cultural landscapes: parks and gardens as designed landscapes, urban and rural historic districts as evolved landscapes, and several associative cultural landscapes related to the history of Aboriginal peoples.

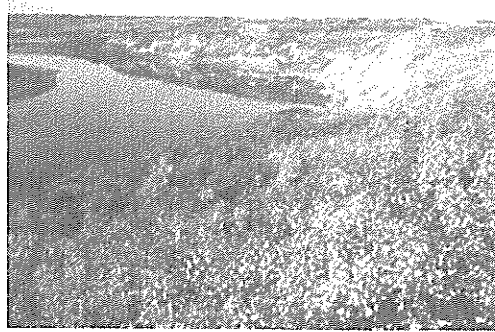


Pronghorn in short grass prairie, Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan.
© Parks Canada / A. Cornellier / 03.81.10.01(43). 1988

Most provinces, including Ontario and Nova Scotia, have developed an approach to cultural landscapes. However, both the provinces and the territories have generally used an archaeological rather than a cultural landscapes approach to the commemoration of Aboriginal heritage. They recognize, nonetheless, that some designated sites, such as Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park in Alberta and White Mountain on Lake Mistassini in Quebec, have cultural landscape values. British Columbia's traditional use studies program (*British Columbia, 1996*) and Yukon's address to Aboriginal values of place in its planning processes are examples of other approaches to recognizing cultural landscapes.

Aboriginal decision-makers, as well, have their own approach, including the study of place names for the management of symbolic

values.



North Saskatchewan River at Batoche.
Saskatchewan.
© Parks Canada / Photo Services / H 08.81.04.03
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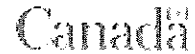
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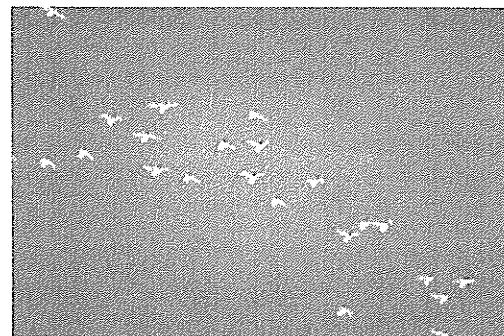
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Intangible Values and Identity

Does the international heritage community recognize, for the purpose of heritage designation, the legitimacy of intangible values that indigenous peoples attach to land?

In addition to Parks Canada, the concept of 'cultural landscapes' has become widely accepted internationally by diverse heritage bodies including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, the World Conservation Union, the Council of Europe, Environment Australia, and the US National Park Service. While individual definitions vary, their direction focusses consistently on the inter-relatedness between human society and the natural environment.

These leading participants in the international heritage movement, where Canada is also an active party, have overtly recognized cultural landscapes which are characterized by the intangible values that indigenous peoples attach to landscape. In according heritage status to places with spiritual associations in the absence of material remains, they acknowledge human values crucial to the identities of these peoples. They also explicitly accept that the associated peoples identify such places and values.



A flight of thick-billed murre, Birmilik National Park, Nunavut.
© Parks Canada / W. Lynch / 13.01.10 02(09) 1996

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An Approach to Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATIONS OF ABORIGINAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

The Perspective of the 1990s

How has the HSMBC's approach to designation related to Aboriginal history changed since 1990?

The movement from viewing objects through perspectives of art history and archaeology, characteristic of the HSMBC's experience in commemorating Aboriginal history from the late 1960s through the 1980s, to seeing cultural landscapes associated with living peoples reflects the new standards of the 1990s. One of the key implications of this redefinition in approaching landscapes is the involvement of associated peoples directly in the selection, research design, designation, and management of places of heritage significance.

Under the Commemoration of Northern Native History initiative of 1990-91, the Board explored issues and a preliminary classification of sites related to the commemoration of the history of Native people. That year the Board recommended that sites of spiritual and/or cultural importance to Native peoples generally should

be considered to be eligible for designation as national historic sites even when no tangible cultural resources exist, providing that there is evidence, garnered through oral history, or otherwise, that such sites are indeed seen to have special meaning to the culture in question and that the sites themselves are fixed in space. (HSMBC Minutes, February 1990)

Background papers identified that "from a Native perspective commemorative potential seemed to derive from one or a combination of the following: the traditional and enduring use of the land; the relationship between the people and the land; and recent events in a



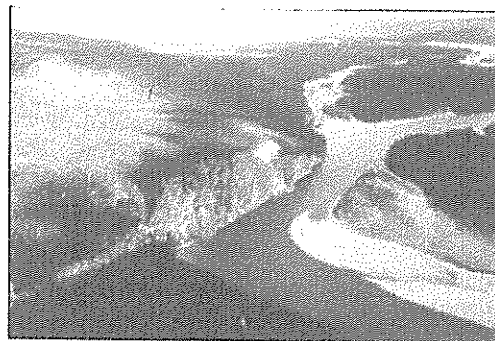
Inuksuit, Spence Bay, Northwest Territories.
© National Archives of Canada / Richard Harrington / PA 129873. 1951

First Nation's history, such as its relationships with newcomers...."(Goldring, 1990; Goldring and Hanks, 1991)

Inspired by a presentation on the Red Dog Mountain and the Drum Lake Trail in the western Northwest Territories, the Board took particular interest in exploring the significance of mythical or sacred sites and in the potential of "linear sites or trails encompassing a number of tangible resources ... and emphasizing linkages between a people and the land".(*HSMBC Minutes, March 1991*)

As a result of formal and informal consultations during 1990-91, it was apparent that any framework for addressing Aboriginal history must conform with emerging prescriptions in successive northern land claims regarding heritage and cultural sites (*Lee, 1997b*). It must also respect Aboriginal world views encapsulated in the enduring relationship between people and the land, and to achieve the latter objective, must recognize that "[w]hat distinguishes Native Peoples' understanding, however, is the extent to which the human relationship with places has ethical, cultural, medicinal and spiritual elements, which are interwoven with patterns of economic use. Stories are told about particular parts of the land, spiritual powers exist in certain places which are absent elsewhere, and teachings are annexed to specific places in ways that have little counterpart in non-Native society. In Native cultures, these attributes are often more important than the physical, tangible remains of past human use of land."(*Goldring and Hanks, 1991: 14*)

This latter holistic vision has proven the most difficult to implement. By 1991, the Board had already before them a basic outline of perceptions, issues, and structures for approaching northern Aboriginal sites that would gradually and increasingly direct their considerations and recommendations on the commemoration of the



Red Dog Mountain, Northwest Territories
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history of Aboriginal peoples for the rest of the decade. The decision not to proceed with a study of petroglyphs and pictographs and to shift resources to community-based studies marked a key stage.

The Board has come only gradually, through a series of thematic and site specific studies, to consider how effectively the values of Aboriginal peoples in relation to their history can define national historic significance and identify places that embody that significance.



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The Perspective of the 1990s

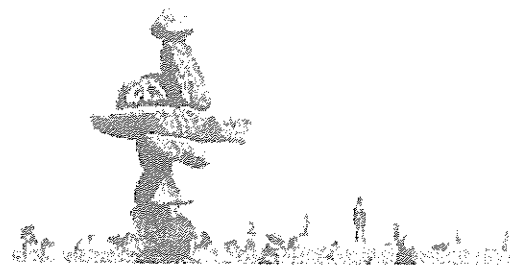
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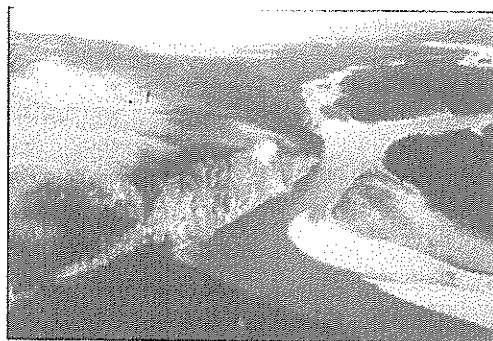
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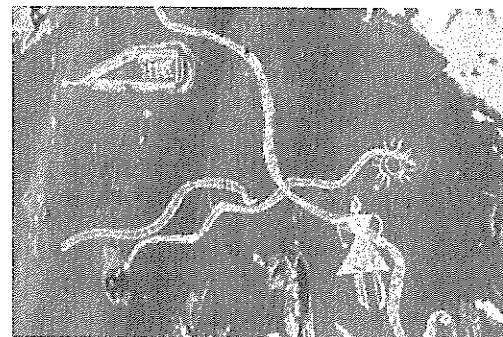
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Consultation and Participation

What effect is the participation of associated peoples having on the process of designation related to Aboriginal history?

The active involvement of Aboriginal people, particularly Elders, has refocused the investigative effort from the analysis of physical resources to recognition of the holistic and essentially spiritual relationship of people and land. When the petroglyphs at Kejimikujik National Park, Nova Scotia, were initially identified for commemoration, they were seen as the primary cultural resources of the park. Consultation with the Mi'kmaq people reoriented the commemorative focus from the single resource type to the whole park area.

Arguing the "strong sense of connection between people and place", the paper prepared jointly by representatives of the Mi'kmaq people and Parks Canada's Atlantic regional office proposed three bases for commemoration of the "cultural landscape" of the region:



Mi'kmaq Petroglyphs, Kejimikujik National Park/National Historic Site, Nova Scotia.
© Parks Canada / P Hope / 03.31.04.13(07), 1982

- the 4000 year history of traditional land use in which the archaeological resources were largely undisturbed;
- the natural environment of the park which enhanced an understanding of Mi'kmaq spirituality with the land;
- and the petroglyph sites, which are a significant part of Mi'kmaq cultural and spiritual expression. (*Mi'kmaq*, 1994)

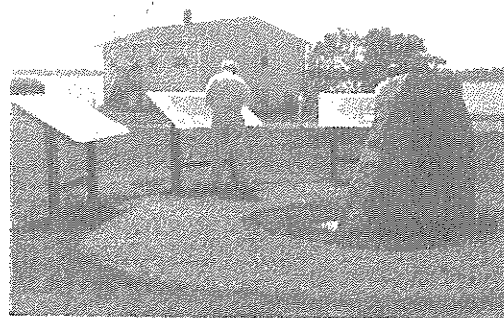
The HSMBC recommended that : "the cultural landscape of Kejimikujik National Park which attests to 4000 years of Mi'kmaq occupancy of this area, and which includes petroglyph sites, habitation sites, fishing sites, hunting territories, travel routes and burials, is of national historic significance...."(HSMBC Minutes, November 1994)



Waterfalls on the Mersey River, Kejimikujik National Park/National Historic Site, Nova Scotia.
© Parks Canada / Barrett & Mackay / 00.31.03 0-1(61) 1995

The Mi'kmaq on Malpeque Bay, PEI (NHS 1996, 1997), designated as an "event" rather than as a place, focusses on the historical significance of 10,000 years of enduring use and settlement of the bay - "continuity and attachment to the land are seen as the defining factors in determining historical significance" - and on the bay as "a site of Native spirituality". For centuries, a traditional area for hunting, fishing, and gathering for the Mi'kmaq of Prince Edward Island, today the bay has a "profound symbolic value for many Mi'kmaq"(Johnston, A.J.B., 1996; HSMBC Minutes 1997, 1996)

The Deline Traditional Fishery and Old Fort Franklin, NWT (NHS 1996) were designated because of the Dene and Métis people's assistance to Sir John Franklin's second expedition and the impact of Franklin's and later expeditions on the Aboriginal people of the region, particularly in contributing "to the emergence of the Sahtu Dene as a distinctive cultural group".(Hanks, 1996; HSMBC Minutes, November 1996) As well, the Sahtu Dene identified the cultural significance of the fishery at Deline to their occupation of the region. The Sahtu Dene's request for protection and presentation of the site emphasizes the importance of place as an expression of Aboriginal history.



Commemoration for the Mi'kmaq at Malpeque Bay on Lennox Island, Prince Edward Island.
© Parks Canada / Barb MacDonald / 1999

Equally, when Parks Canada initiated a commemorative integrity exercise at Nan sdiins/Ninstints National

a sixth which represented identifications of significance from outside their culture. (Andrews, Zoe and Herder, 1998: 307-08)

Recent research projects submitted to the HSMBC have consistently and actively included involvement and consultation of local communities, including Elders. In July 1998 the HSMBC once again "reaffirmed the principle ... that consideration of Aboriginal Peoples' history must be predicated on active participation and consultation". (HSMBC Minutes)



Harry Simpson, Dogrib Elder, examining the remains of a birchbark canoe along Idaa Trail, Northwest Territories. © Parks Canada / T.D. Andrews / 1994

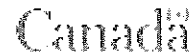
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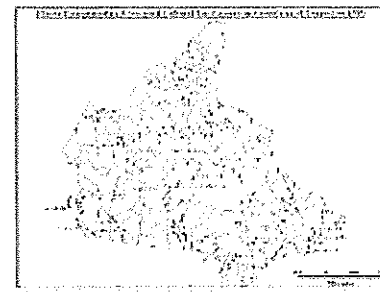
An Approach to Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATIONS OF ABORIGINAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Designated Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes

How is the changed approach of the HSMBC reflected in recent designations of Aboriginal history?

Since 1990 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has considered a number of Aboriginal cultural landscapes in addition to Kejimikujik National Park. As early as 1991, Hatzic Rock, now known as Xá:ytem, in British Columbia presented not only archaeological evidences of potential national significance but also the importance of this transformer site in terms of Aboriginal cultural values. Drawing directly on Gordon Mohs' research on the Stó:lo people, it demonstrated the cosmological relationships that underpinned its role as a sacred site. (Lee and Henderson, 1991) Cost-sharing recommended in 1998, following consultation with the Stó:lo people, endorsed the Board's acceptance of the exceptional national significance of sites valued primarily for their spiritual importance to Aboriginal peoples.

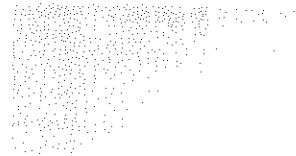


Map: Places Designated as Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes in Canada as of December 1999.
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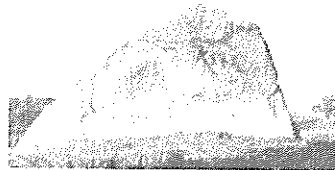
The inland Kazan River Fall Caribou Crossing and the coastal island of Arvia'juaq with the adjacent point Qikiqtaarjuk in the Eastern Arctic, designated in 1995, provide exceptional illustrations of the integrated economic, social and spiritual values of Aboriginal cultural landscapes. Chosen respectively by the communities of Baker Lake and Arviat to conserve and depict Inuit history and culture in this region, these areas "speak eloquently to the

cultural, spiritual and economic life of the Inuit in the Keewatin region ... and as sites of particular significance to the respective communities". (HSMBC Minutes, July 1995)

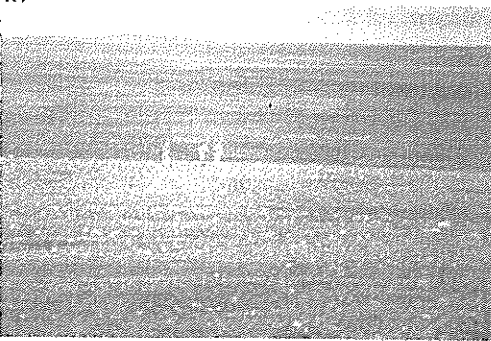
The results of earlier archaeological investigations, mapping using a global positioning system, site visits with Elders, oral interviews with other knowledgeable Inuit in the communities, and recording of traditional stories associated with the areas identified both the traditional Aboriginal values and the scientific values associated with these places. (Keith, 1995; Henderson, 1995)



Matzic Rock, Xá:ytem, National Historic Site, British Columbia.
© Xá:ytem Longhouse Interpretive Centre



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Fall Caribou Crossing, Kazan River, Nunavut.
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cultural
landscapes:

"For centuries, the fall caribou crossing on the Kazan River was essential to the inland Inuit, providing them the necessities of daily life and the means to survive the long winter. Once in the water, the caribou were vulnerable to hunters in qajaqs who caught and lanced as many as possible. The Inuit cherished and cared for the land at crossing areas in accordance with traditional beliefs and practices to ensure the caribou returned each year during their southward migration. To inland Inuit, the caribou was the essence of life. All parts were valuable for food, fuel, tools, clothing and shelter."

And:

"For centuries, the Inuit returned here each summer to camp and harvest the abundant marine resources. These gatherings also provided an opportunity to teach the young, celebrate life, and affirm and renew Inuit society. The oral histories, traditional knowledge, and archaeological sites at Arvia'juaq and Qikiqtaarjuk provide a cultural and historical foundation for future generations. These sites continue to be centres to celebrate, practise, and rejuvenate Inuit culture in the Arviat area."

Presented to the Board for designation by the Société Matcite8eia and

the Aboriginal community of Pikogan, Quebec in 1996, Pointe Abitibi is a point in Lake Abitibi, the centre of the traditional territory of the Abitibi8innik and of the water routes they used to travel through vast areas. The point is important to the Abitibi8innik as it has been their summer gathering place over the centuries where they have shared resources from the winter hunt, fished, feasted and developed social relationships. It has been the place of cultural contact and exchange, both with other Aboriginal people and with Europeans and Canadians. It is also a sacred site to the Abitibi8innik. While use ended with permanent settlement in 1955, Elders' traditional knowledge has been collected and there is "symbolic attachment to the point which is very strong in the collective memory".

Archaeological resources indicated 6,000 years of use, including post-contact sites of church, cemetery, fur trading posts, and camp sites. The Société Matcité8eia also identified a rich historical record related to the fur trade as part of the historical significance of the point. The community supported both designation of the point to commemorate the history of the Abitibi8innik and development of it as a historic site. (*Société Matcité8eia, 1996*)



Family travelling by canoe, Abitibi River, Quebec.

© National Archives of Canada / PA 44220 / no date.

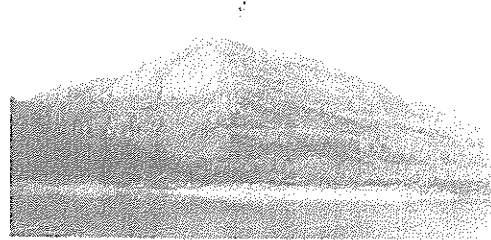
Building on the earlier Northern Native History initiative, the Keewatin area project, and the Deline fishery study, Christopher C. Hanks in 1996 wrote of the fundamental link between culture and land as the core basis for understanding the cultural landscape of Grizzly Bear Mountain and Scented Grass Hills in the western Northwest Territories. With a firm base in both local traditional knowledge and the relevant scientific and academic literature, the agenda paper he prepared on behalf of the Sahtu Dene identified three bases for national historical significance:

- the Sahtu Dene had lived on this land since time immemorial,
- they had evolved there as a distinct people,
- the interplay of place names and traditional narratives in Grizzly Bear Mountain and Scented Grass Hills has characterized their relationship to the land. (*Hanks, 1996: 885, 888*)

Selected narratives relate to specific landscape features and larger landscape meanings, which are now mapped on the Great Bear Lake region. Five broad time periods group the narratives thematically, but for the Sahtu Dene, "thematic connections of spiritual power and relationships with animals are more significant than time". (*Hanks, 1996: 906*) The narratives play important roles in sustaining Sahtu

Dene culture by transmitting language, prescribing behaviour, and identifying sacred sites from generation to generation through the association of place and story

In 1997 the Gwichya Gwich'in of Tsiigehtchic in the western Northwest Territories presented for commemoration, protection, and presentation the segment of Nagwichoonjik [Mackenzie River] from Thunder River to Point Separation, which they identified as the area of their traditional homeland most appropriate for designation. Following Hanks' approach closely, a series of oral narratives of Raven, Atachukaii, Nagaii, Ahts'an Veh, and others are closely tied to the identified land and its defining features. (*Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, 1997*)



Bear Mountain, Great Bear Lake, Northwest Territories
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The superimposed five period time grouping of the stories served to develop a "holistic understanding of history, encompassing the whole of the land and assigning the river its meaningful place within it ...[;] the stories of their history and the experiences of their lives on the land ... [are the] fundamental cultural themes [that demonstrate] the important place the river occupies in Gwichya Gwich'in culture". (*Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, 1997: 824*)



Nagwichoonjik near Thunder River, Northwest Territories.
© Parks Canada / D. Neufeld / 1999

In presenting Yuquot in Nootka Sound, British Columbia for designation in 1997, the Mowachaht-Muchalaht First Nations requested "balancing history" by having their history recognized as it is represented by the integration of place and narrative. In this place "where the wind blows from all directions" and "where all the people of Nootka Sound come together", they elaborate the significance of Yuquot, their "most important community", in terms of a "place of power and change".

They describe this centre

of the Mowachaht world where they have lived since the beginning of time, where they have hosted European travellers since 18th century imperial exploration, where they developed whaling power of which the Whalers' Washing House is the physical encapsulation, and where they have deep spiritual bonds to the



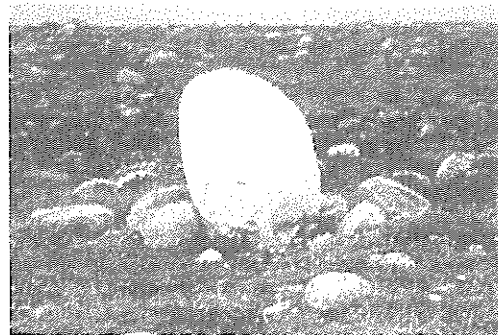
Friendly Cove, the site of the former village at Yuquot, on Nootka Sound, British Columbia.
© Parks Canada / Lyle Dick / 1997

"immense natural power and beauty" of the environment. Western historical values such as archaeological, iconographic, and artifactual evidence as well as primary historical sources complement traditional knowledge in showing the central place Yuquot holds in their culture. (*Mowachaht-Muchalaht, 1997*)

The recently completed study of the history of Nunavut from an Inuit perspective, based on consultations with Elders and others in the community, and prepared under the guidance of an Inuit steering committee with the input of knowledgeable scholars and Parks Canada staff, has identified clear priorities for identifying places of principal importance to the Inuit.

Three principles express these thematic priorities:

- enduring use,
- Inuit culture,
- Inuit identity and regional variation.



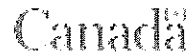
Weight-lifting stone, Arvia'juag and Qikiqtaarjuk, Nunavut
© Parks Canada / Archaeological Services Branch / Lyle Henderson / 1993

All centre on the "close traditional relationship between culture and land use, and many traditional dwelling sites, travel routes, resource harvesting sites and sacred places have a rich

complex of associative values, combining economic, social, and spiritual purposes in a sequence of annual movements from place to place, with people gathering in greater or smaller numbers according to their needs and opportunities". (*Goldring, 1998*)



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What definition is now proposed for Aboriginal cultural landscapes?

Based on the literature and the consultation to date, the following definition is proposed for consideration and further discussion:

An Aboriginal cultural landscape is a place valued by an Aboriginal group (or groups) because of their long and complex relationship with that land. It expresses their unity with the natural and spiritual environment. It embodies their traditional knowledge of spirits, places, land uses, and ecology. Material remains of the association may be prominent, but will often be minimal or absent.

It is to be recognized that other people than the associated group (or groups) may also have used these landscapes and may attach values to them. The experience in the Americas has particularly shown that the rapidity of waves of immigration and the diversity of cultures they have introduced have significantly shaped the cultural landscape. The result has been not so much a layering of cultures and uses as a concurrence of cultures and uses, all of which are recognized to have validity. (*US/ICOMOS, 1996*)





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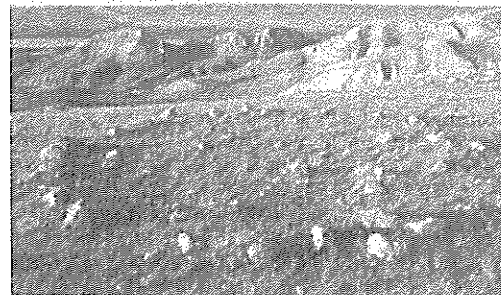
Consultation of Experts

In preparing the background paper for the HSMBC, what kind of consultation did the author undertake?

The concept of Aboriginal cultural landscapes was explored with about forty people in the course of developing the paper. They represent disciplines ranging from history and archaeology to landscape architecture and park management. They include Parks Canada, provincial and territorial staff in all parts of the country, consultants with extensive experience in working with Aboriginal communities, and Aboriginal people in umbrella agencies and in various other positions.

Consistently, they pointed out the complexity and intensity of Aboriginal tradition as it relates to the land. They emphasized the importance of the relationship with land within Aboriginal culture, and the holistic nature of that relationship. They noted that the concept of "land" included water and sky as well as earth. They consistently drew attention to the continuous living relationship Aboriginal people have with the land, as well as the interrelationship of people, animals, and spirits in the land.

Traditional Aboriginal cultures value the spiritual, mental and emotional dimensions of living with particular environments in addition to the physical aspects. Cosmology, places of power, narratives associating spirit beings with the land, kinship and language attachments to place were recurrent themes. Those consulted also underlined the



Remnant teepee rings near the Badlands, Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan.
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importance of uses and activities, from harvesting physical resources and social gatherings to rituals and ceremonies, as core expressions of relation to the land. They signalled, as defining attitudes, Aboriginal

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peoples' attachments to these aspects of land, rather than to place as a thing to be owned. They elaborated on the diversity of historical experience across time and place as well as differing situations of Aboriginal peoples today. Those differences of historical experience, geographical contexts, and current status influence Aboriginal peoples' relations to landscapes today.

Those consulted consistently emphasized the crucial role of Aboriginal participation in any identification of landscapes for commemoration as national historic sites. The associated people will not necessarily be current occupiers or users of the land, but may have a historic relationship still significant to their culture, such as the Huron of Loretteville, Quebec, to the territory in southern Ontario that they left in the mid-17th century.



Coastal Dunes and Beach, Kouchibouguac National Park, New Brunswick.
© Parks Canada / M. Dwyer / 04.41.03.01(39), 1990.

Traditional knowledge was continuously identified as the key sources for understanding and recognizing the values of place to Aboriginal people, while archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnography were acknowledged as the most relevant academic fields.

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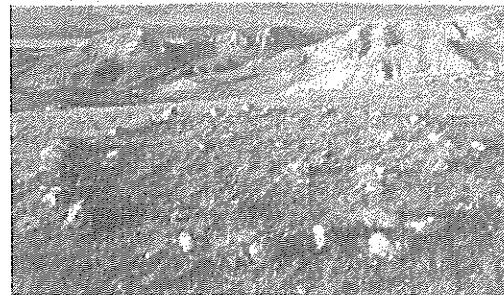
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Identifying National Historic Significance

How does the HSMBC now propose to identify national significance in Aboriginal cultural landscapes?

Traditionally, the HSMBC has used historical and anthropological frameworks to specify criteria as the bases for assessing the national historic significance of places, people or events. The Board has, however, recognized that its conventional criteria, structure and framework for evaluation do not adequately respond to the values inherent in the history of Aboriginal people. It has reiterated in its discussions that "nature, tradition, continuity and attachment to the land are seen as the defining elements in determining historic significance" when dealing with Aboriginal peoples. It has likewise emphasized that "its interest was not only in considering groups for commemoration, but in focussing on the importance of place to the Aboriginal group" (*HSMBC Minutes, July 1998*). The concept of cultural landscapes provides a direction for responding to these concerns.

The HSMBC has agreed, with regard to the number of cultural groups, that "any future deliberations could be accommodated by the 60 distinct groups identified in the *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples*" and has requested an analysis of "the implications of using language groups to represent a field against which to determine national historic



Tepees at the elbow of the Saskatchewan River
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significance". (*HSMBC Minutes, July 1998*) It has also initiated discussion with regard to using "the traditional territory of an Aboriginal nation ... as the comparative universe for the site proposed for commemoration or designation". (*Federal Archaeology Office, 1998a*:



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Guidelines for Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes

What principles could be used for both suggesting and evaluating Aboriginal cultural landscapes for possible national designation?

The following guidelines are proposed for the HSMBC's future examination of the national significance of Aboriginal cultural landscapes.

1. The long associated Aboriginal group or groups have participated in the identification of the place and its significance, concur in the selection of the place to commemorate their culture, and support designation.

This guideline derives from the HSMBC's consistent direction since 1990 that Aboriginal peoples will be consulted, involved and participate in the identification of frameworks and sites related to their history. It is consistent with the established consultation process for Aboriginal heritage sites (as described in *Federal Archaeology Office 1998a*, 17-18) and the Statement of Principles and Best Practices for Commemorating Aboriginal History, draft 3 (*Federal Archaeology Office 1998c*, item 2).



Paallir.miut at Arvia'juag, Nunavut.
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Lyle Henderson / 1994.

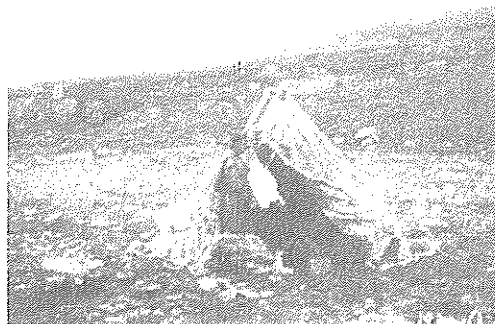
It is likewise consistent with recommendation 1.7.2 of the *Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. It can conform with the comparative or contextual framework that the Board chooses for evaluation, such as the proposed traditional territory of an Aboriginal group or First Nation. (*Federal Archaeology Office 1998a*, 14 and 21)

It is likewise consistent with recommendation 1.7.2 of the *Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. It can conform with the comparative or contextual framework that the Board chooses for evaluation, such as the proposed traditional territory of an Aboriginal group or First Nation. (*Federal Archaeology Office 1998a*, 14 and 21)

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2. Spiritual, cultural, economic, social and environmental aspects of the group's association with the identified place, including continuity and traditions, illustrate its historical significance.

The guideline focusses on the identification of national historic significance through the associated group's long attachment to the territory, its enduring use and activities, its social and kinship relationships, its intimate knowledge of the area, and its spiritual affiliations with it.



Miortog's tent, Kazan River, Northwest Territories.

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3. The interrelated cultural and natural attributes of the identified place make it a significant cultural landscape.

This guideline recognizes the integrated nature of Aboriginal relationship to place, including the inseparability of cultural and natural values. Identified places, which will likely be of widely diverse types, will illustrate this core interrelationship of cultural and natural forces.



Stone chimney and cabin remains at the abandoned Dogrib village known as Nidzik's K'ogolaa, along Ikaa Trail, Northwest Territories.

© Parks Canada / T.D. Andrews / 1991.

Tangible evidences may be largely absent, with the attributes rooted primarily in oral and spiritual traditions and in activities related to the place. However, there could be tangible attributes; they include natural resources, archaeological sites, graves, material culture, and written or oral records.

The guideline anticipates that the identification will incorporate diverse aspects of the group's association extended over time. The guideline also recognizes such natural components as ecosystem, climate, geology, topography, water, soils, viewsheds, and dominant and culturally significant fauna and flora in the context of the associated Aboriginal people's relationship to the place. The Aboriginal expression of these aspects may occur in animal or other natural metaphors.

The guideline accommodates the geographic and cultural diversity, as well as the individual experiences, of Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

(Federal Archaeology Office 1998c, item 2)

4. The cultural and natural attributes that embody the significance of the place are identified through traditional knowledge of the associated Aboriginal group(s).

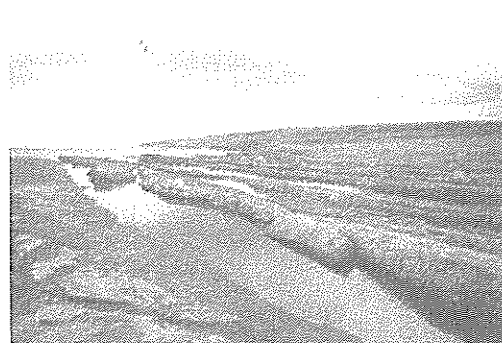
This guideline anticipates that the traditional knowledge, including traditional environmental knowledge, will likely encompass narratives, place names, language, traditional uses, rituals, and behaviour related to the identified place. It recognizes that some knowledge cannot be shared, but available knowledge must be sufficient to demonstrate the significance of the place in the culture of the associated group.



Malzie Rock, Xázytem, National Historic Site, British Columbia.
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5. The cultural and natural attributes that embody the significance of the place may be additionally comprehended by results of academic scholarship.

This guideline recognizes the contribution that academic scholarship makes to the understanding of place. History, including oral history and ethnohistory, archaeology, anthropology, and environmental sciences are the most likely, but not the only, relevant disciplines.



Area of archaeological investigations into Dorset Paleo-eskimo habitation, Port au Choix, Newfoundland and Labrador
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An Approach to Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes

GUIDELINES FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF ABORIGINAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Size, Scale and Values

What is distinct about the size and scale of Aboriginal cultural landscapes?

Those consulted in the preparation of the Board paper pointed out that the size and scale of Aboriginal cultural landscapes would challenge both Aboriginal people and Parks Canada because of their very differing contexts and views.

Aboriginal world views focus on landscape rather than landscape features. Specific sites certainly have associated cultural significance and oral traditions related to their history. However, given the holistic relationship of Aboriginal people and their land, such places are seen primarily not as isolated spots but as parts of larger landscapes. Identifiable landscapes may equally be only parts of still larger cultural landscapes.

The Dogrib sacred sites identified along the Idaà Trail illustrate this relationship of sites to the larger landscape. Moreover, the Trail itself is part of the Dogrib cultural landscape, which comprises 100,000 square miles.

The scale of whole landscapes provides significant challenges to the approach of commemorative integrity which underlies Parks Canada's national historic sites commemorative program. Securing the "health or wholeness" of these vast areas may require close examination of the current understanding of the concept as it applies to historic place, historic values and objectives for large cultural landscapes.



Baldy Lake, Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba.

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Boundaries

How then are boundaries to be drawn?

Some preliminary investigations identify several possible approaches. Canada's national parks use a zoning system to identify park areas requiring different levels of protection to guide their management and use.

(*Parks Canada, 1994a:*

11.2.2) Biosphere

reserves also apply a zoning approach that

provides for a core area, a buffer zone, and a transition zone. Each zone allows for different levels of protection and intervention.

(*UNESCO, 1996b: 4)*



Family in birch bark canoe. Mackenzie River, Northwest Territories.

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The emergence of bio-regional planning in protected area management, applicable to enormous areas such as the 2000-mile Yellowstone to Yukon Corridor and the 1500-mile Mesoamerican Biological Corridor through Central America (*Salas, 1997*), may offer some potential applicability for Aboriginal cultural landscapes.

Downer and Roberts, who are working with the Navajo Nation in the United States, consider the "broader context ... based on landscapes or ecosystems rather than artificially-defined impact zones ... is emerging from various disciplines in environmental planning. We are convinced that this is the only realistic approach to meaningful consideration of traditional cultural properties and the cultural landscapes of which they are integral parts...." (*Downer and Roberts, 1993: 14*)

Such planning frameworks and co-management approaches (*Collings, 1997*) may provide opportunities for developing mechanisms to ensure commemorative integrity of cultural landscapes such as the

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designated area of Nagwichoonjik [Mackenzie River].

In Australia, many Aboriginal sites are discrete areas separated by long distances but interconnected by trading routes or the paths of ancestral beings. They are most clearly understood when they are recognized as parts of a network rather than individual components. (*Bridgewater and Hooy, 1995: 168*) "Anangu, whose political system is egalitarian and uncentralised, visualise places in the landscape as nodes in a network of ancestral tracks. The Anangu landscape is not susceptible to division into discrete areas". (*Layton and Titchen, 1995: 178*)

The American Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, a multi-route and multi-site network which commemorates the forced removal, march overland and resettlement of the Cherokee [Ani'Yun' wiya] from the southeastern United States to Oklahoma in 1838-39, is a partnership of diverse groups and diverse sites with linked interpretive programs over nine states.

Historian John Johnston, exploring the adaptation of this concept of nodes to the commemoration of Aboriginal history in Canada, notes that it applies to "... places that tell an inter-connected story extending over time and place", such as trails and water routes associated with seasonal movements for food. (*Johnston, A.J.B., 1993*) Nodes within a network, each of identified importance, could be focal points of protection and presentation in a recognized larger cultural landscape.

Noting that there is "sometimes no obviously correct boundary", the National Park Service indicates that the selection of boundaries for traditional cultural properties should be based on the characteristics of the historic place, specifically how the place is used and why the place is important. (*King and Townsend, n.d.*)

This approach was taken at the Helkau Historic District in California, whose significance area was identified as "a substantial part of California's North Coast Range". A compromise decision on boundaries was developed along "topographic lines that included all the locations at which traditional practitioners carry out medicine-making and similar activities, the travel routes between such locations, and the immense viewshed surrounding this complex of locations and routes". Traditional uses, viewsheds, and changes to boundaries over time were factors considered in developing the rationale for the boundary. (*Parker and King, 1990: 18-19*)

In several respects the American approach can be recognized in existing national historic site designations of Aboriginal cultural landscapes. At Kejimikujik, for example, the existing national park boundaries defined a sufficiently large and appropriate area of traditional Mi'kmaq occupancy to represent the larger Mi'kmaq landscape. While in this case administrative convenience provided the basis for accepted boundaries, it is not a recommended selection approach.

At Arvia'juaq and Qikiqtaarjuk, clearly defined geographical features - an island and a point - with strong spiritual, social, economic and

archaeological values related to the Caribou Inuit culture identify the boundaries. Given the importance of the adjacent waters to the cultural significance, future consideration might be given to defining site boundaries that include the key water areas.

At Grizzly Bear Mountain and Scented Grass Hills, where the designated sites are also two clearly defined land areas related to water, the site analysis and discussion of values effectively articulate the significant cultural relationships of the larger Great Bear Lake landscape. As well, the historic values of the viewsheds at this site are particularly significant in the identification of objectives for the "health" of the site. While discrete geographical features can be very useful in identifying boundaries, it is evident that the values for which the place is to be designated must predominate in establishing appropriate boundaries.

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Aboriginal cultural landscapes are a way of approaching Aboriginal history that both relates to the HSMBC mandate and focusses upon the complex relationship that Aboriginal people have with the land. They are not relicts, but living landscapes which encompass the cosmological, mythological, and spiritual worlds interwoven with their peoples' day to day activities of living from the land. The seasonal round of life on the land, practised over millennia, relies on the intimate connection of human and animal movements. Bequeathed through oral tradition from generation to generation, Aboriginal traditional knowledge embodies the relationship of the people to the land through narratives, place names, sacred sites, rituals, and behaviour patterns.

Aboriginal cultural landscapes examined to date have been seen primarily as associative cultural landscapes. Consideration of national significance must address the holistic relationship to the land of the people(s) long associated with it. Aboriginal people must have a core role in identifying places they value, in documenting them, and in defining their significance in the context of Aboriginal culture.



Mouth of the Saguenay River, Saguenay Marine Park, Quebec

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Parks Canada invites you to comment on this approach to aboriginal cultural landscapes which is presently being considered by the Agency. If you have any questions or comments about this subject, please email us at: