FROM WIGWAMS TO WAGE WORK

SYMBOLS AND REALITIES OF ONTARIO’S NATIVE ECOTOURISM GUIDES

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Abstract    This paper examines the ideas of the ‘authentic’ wilderness experience, the social construction of nature, and symbols of Indigeneity. This is accomplished through an analysis of Euroamerican-Native relationships in the setting of a wilderness adventure tour in Ontario’s Algonquin Park. These themes will be viewed through the lens of Bernard Wicksteed’s first-hand account of a trip through the Park with Joe Lavally, asserting that this historic tale offers insight into the ways in which preconceived expectations of Indigeneity and authenticity impact and interact with each other in complex ways. I argue that Wicksteed’s trip account effectively demonstrates that the authentic wilderness experience in ecotourism is often equated with an appropriated image of Indigenous culture.

Keywords: wilderness, guiding, Indigenous, social-construction, symbolism, Algonquin Park, authenticity

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Introduction

“Algonquin Park, some 2,700 square kilometers in area, is the best known, oldest and largest of Ontario’s six provincial and three national parks...most of the park is roadless, to provide a retreat not only for wildlife but for humans who crave real wilderness” (Encyclopedia of World Travel, 1961:361).

Ontario has often been characterized by its industrialists, conservationists, and tourists alike. These groups are typically surmised on a wealth of pristine and natural beauty in Ontario’s Northern regions; a wealth that has been sought to be both exploited and protected. Nowhere is this protected wilderness more encapsulated than in Algonquin Park, officially signed into legislation in 1893 making it the oldest provincial park in Canada (Saunders, 1946). This recently born idea of a protected natural space allowed for the ability of urban tourists to escape the mundanity of daily life – especially so in a post war society that lay ahead of 1893, as is seen in this paper – and enter a world often unknown to them through what is now commonly referred to as ecotourism. They could explore the depths of forests, enjoy the setting sun, and finally begin to grasp all the delights that time spent in the wilderness has to offer. In order to safely explore these places so foreign to them, however, they required guides. Naturally, the people best suited for the job were those already living in the region, which often included Indigenous Algonquin people.

There has been some research conducted on the marriage of the concepts mentioned above, with Otis (2014) and Walker (1976) both offering insights into the relationship between Indigenous guides and their non-indigenous counterparts. This paper seeks to echo and add to these studies by conducting an analysis on Joe Lavally and the Paleface in Algonquin Park, a detailed account of Bernard Wicksteed’s wilderness adventure led by his native guide, Joe (Wicksteed 1948). This primary source is utilized specifically because it highlights the ways in which assumptions concerning the ‘authentic’ wilderness experience are coupled, both
historically and presently, with stereotypical, hegemonic ideas of how Indigenous people should look and act. I draw upon different socially constructed tourist experiences of nature to highlight how appropriation of First Nations culture was, and is, prevalent. This may serve to offer insights on how new tourism initiatives that involve either the territory or participation of indigenous communities might conduct themselves in a more respectfully collaborative manner.

**Positionality**

This project began within the frameworks of two personal interests – Indigenous cultures, and guiding wilderness tours. Perhaps they began over a decade ago with some of my first introductions to nature. My interest in Indigenous cultures has expanded a great deal over my time at the University of Guelph, while the ecotourism aspect was one already deeply rooted within me. During my years as a guide, working primarily in the Algonquin Park area, I could not help but begin to think about what symbols were being presented through not only what I was doing, but where I was doing it. For example, while meandering down Highway 60 through the Park, I was always met with symbols of some sort of Indigenous presence, such as the teepees and totem pole set up outside a local gift shop with an overarching sign that reads “Trading Post” (Fig. 1). While these are most certainly not true relics of the Algonquian people who once nomadically lived in the Ottawa Valley region, they do hint at the suggestions that tourists still want to equate their experience in the wilderness with a people often seen as picturesque embodiments of the closest possible connection to nature. These symbols are themselves part of the present-day ‘authentic’ wilderness experience. Trip after trip, I eventually realized that all these symbols are not without some historical basis or cultural context. After learning to look at things through an anthropological lens, I soon realized that these symbols
pointed more to the historical positions that Indigenous people have held in Canada than they did to a meaningless borrowing of a profitable artifact.

Figure 1: Photo of the Dwight Trading Post; souvenir shop 5 km from the West Gate of Algonquin Park

Definitions

Before discussing at length the different types of relationships to nature in the ecotourism setting, it is beneficial to first define some of the terms being used to describe said setting. The notion of wilderness is very complex in and of itself, spurring questions such as what truly defines wilderness; do urban and rural dwellers see that definition any differently? In what ways did the notion of a wilderness experience entice Wicksteed to explore Algonquin Park? Cronon (1995:81) poses an interesting question – “Why, for instance, is the ‘wilderness experience’ so often conceived as a form of recreation best enjoyed by those whose class privileges give them the time and resources to leave their jobs behind and ‘get away from it all’?” In this case, while
Wicksteed may not have been a member of the upper class, his post-war predicament still gave him a class of his own. He has just lived through the torments of a World War, and while some of his service may have been in places that urban dwellers might consider a ‘wilderness’ setting, he was clearly enthralled by the idea of ‘getting away from it all’, which took the form of a canoe trip in Algonquin.

Perhaps *wilderness* just refers to the absence of human encroachment. That might be the case, however, in Algonquin, places deep in the backcountry interior are still accessible by road, and have felt the human presence for many years – does this invalidate the wilderness status of that area? Cronon (1995:86) notes that the frontier traditions of American history have encouraged mindsets where a place is only considered a true ‘wilderness’ if it has an absence of roads. What are referred to as “cultural traditions of the sublime” assume that in order to have the authentic wilderness experience, we must remove ourselves completely from the views of any manmade endeavor. Wicksteed is no exception, as he insists on going on an interior trip, as opposed to simply spending a few nights at the Highland Inn, one of Algonquin Park’s most prominent tourist destinations at the time. The definition that seems most fitting to Wicksteed’s allure with a backcountry canoe trips comes once again from Cronon (1995:80), who notes that the wilderness is “the natural, unfallen antithesis of an unnatural civilization that has lost its soul. It is a place of freedom in which we can recover the true selves we have lost to the corrupting influences of our artificial lives.” Wicksteed echoes this definition of finding the true self in the face of an unsatisfying life perfectly as he reads over the Algonquin Park pamphlet that first caught his eye, and notes in reference to wilderness experiences, that a “schoolboy in England can only read and dream of these things and as he grows up the fetters of civilization thicken and dull the resolve to escape” (Wicksteed 1948:10). Evidently, the resolve to escape had consumed
him completely. In this light, I argue that *wilderness* can be distilled to anything that conveys a sensation of escape and other.

Another useful definition for a commonly used term throughout the paper is *Indigenous*. In recent years, the term Indigenous has often been used to denote a politically separate entity from a larger, hegemonic nation state. A relatively recent definition put out by the United Nations defines *Indigenous* as “nations which have a historical continuity with preinvasion and precolonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them” (U.N. 2007). This definition becomes quite useful for Indigenous populations who face external forces beyond their capacity to mitigate, such as the negotiation of land claims or resource management issues. While Joe was not directly involved with land claims or provincial government negotiations, he most definitely considered himself distinct from other sectors of society which prevailed in his territory, which fits perfectly with the aforementioned definition.

**Background**

An analysis of the guiding experience in Algonquin Park would be incomplete without further reference to the progression of different inhabitants of the region. The groups discussed first are the Indigenous peoples. One article that deals directly with a broad documentation of the Algonquin cultural heritage titled “Indians of Algonquin Park at the Time of Contact - 1600 A.D.” (Taylor 1994) compiles information ranging from hunting territories and practices to religion and mythology, from kinship systems to seasonal activities. A better understanding of the current status of Indigenous experience in Algonquin Park is found in *Fractured Homelands*, written by Bonita Lawrence, which covers the struggle of modern Algonquin people in
attempting to reclaim both their status and historically land-based identity in the face of the federal government and various land claims processes (Lawrence 2012). While this may not touch directly on the idea of guiding and tourism, it does present a comprehensive understanding of the events surrounding indigeneity and the Park today, and echoes the impacts left from the colonial encounter.

Furthermore, a portion of *Algonquin Park: The Human Impact* touches directly on Aboriginal history in the Algonquin region, ranging from first-hand accounts of explorers such as Champlain, as well as archeological evidence of nomadic tribes from the Paleo-Indian period to the Late Woodland period (Whiteduck 2009:36). In addition, a portion of this book titled “The Spirit of Algonquin” contains the personal reflections of Linda Leckie (2009:322), an author/researcher working in Northern Ontario, on the experiences of gradual involvement with the park which brewed an internal sense of wonder and desire for the wilderness. Accounts such as this all share the visions of a peaceful escape that Algonquin elicits in people that travel through its backcountry, allowing us to further understand what a trip to Algonquin might have represented for a foreign traveller like Wicksteed.

Archival sources located in the Algonquin Park archives hold a wealth of information on the park, ranging from photographs and brochures of places such as the Highland Inn, to interview transcripts with guides working in the region. In addition to these sources, general histories of the Park such as those compiled by Saunders (2003) help provide a timeline of events, ranging from its initial exploration by characters such as Champlain and the fur traders, the lumber industry, its legislative inception, ending with some of the more recent impressions left on people by the serene beauty that permeate Algonquin.

**Algonquin History**
There is much to be said about the history of Algonquin Park, each era with its own characters, its own influences, and its own inhabitants, which the following section will outline. The Park’s topography and landscape is a product of thousands of years of glacial advance and retreat, which through its cyclical fashion combined with climate changes, painted the scenery we see today (Remmel 2009). When speaking of inhabitants, however, it is useful to think in different stages of Algonquin’s history. The earliest written records of the regions, besides for artifact remains, are the accounts of the first explorers who aimed to seek navigable routes to the West, such as Champlain’s accounts of interactions and experiences on the Ottawa River in 1603 (MacKay 1991). Its initial inhabitants were the Algonquin people, a culturally connected web of smaller nomadic tribes living in the Ottawa Valley region. While most of their traditions were orally kept, there has been considerable research done into the basic outline of their cultural traits. For example, Taylor’s (1994) article on Algonquin culture covers a wide array of practices. While there are few records of early life prior to European contact, the scattered bits of information do aid in our understanding. The Ottawa peoples who claim heritage in today’s Algonquin Park generally lived a nomadic hunting existence through the fall and winter, and would band together for the summer months to engage in things ranging from agriculture to social bond building. The changing seasons each brought their own resources to be utilized, from fall fishing to the syrup tap in early spring. These cycles, however, would have been disrupted after the arrival of Champlain, who brought with him the new economic value of furs. This caused the Algonquin people to shift the ways they hunted and trapped in the winter, realizing that obtaining more than an amount required for subsistence would allow for the purchase of new technological goods in trade deals with new settlers (Taylor 1994). This relates directly to a portion of the case analysis below, as it highlights how indigenous people, such as Joe, utilize
traditional forms of subsistence (such as fur trapping or maple tapping) to engage in an economy increasingly characterized by capitalism which accompanied the colonial encounter.

The next major actors on the Algonquin scene after the indigenous inhabitants were the first explorers to travel through the region. Champlain, who was of the first people to access tributaries through the park such as the Madawaska, Petawawa, and Ottawa rivers commented that “it is quite a wilderness, being uninhabited except by a few Algonquin savages who dwell in the county and live by the fish they catch…” (Saunders 2003:2). The explorers created a wake in which settlers were now able to create homes and communities, largely surrounded around areas rich in resource wealth. Addison notes that one of the benefits of early surveys of Algonquin Park showed little mineral wealth, aiding in the lack of exploitation allure, besides from the inevitable logging industry that would soon develop (Addison 1974:1). One area of wealth that was extremely prevalent, and had a large effect on the Algonquin people, was timber. Clear cutting forestry brought about many drastic changes, from more obvious ecosystem damages, to relatively conspicuous outcomes such as land dispossession of culturally significant hunting territory. Whiteduck cites an excerpt from a petition of the Algonquin people, which provides some sentiments towards the impacts of logging. “The day is now arrived which we never expected to see. Your red Children the Algonquins and Nippisingues have never been in the habit of tilling the ground…not so now Father, out hunting grounds are entirely destroyed. Our beaver and other furs have been destroyed by the constant fires and by the lumbermen in our majestic forests…grounds which were to be reserved for us, and us only, but from which we are sorry to say we derive not the least benefit” (Whiteduck 2009:36). It was encroachments such as these, direct extensions of a settler colonialist agenda, which combined to disintegrate the once nomadic lifestyle of the Algonquin people.
Conservation

As the natural resources in Canada began to be tapped, so too did efforts to mitigate environmental damage as a result of the disastrous errors often wrought by resource extraction, such as soil or water contamination. Conservation acted to bridge the gap from the thematic understanding of nature as the monstrous destroyer of humans to that of a refuge, solace from the complexities of modern life. An early proponent of creating this awareness was Archey Belaney, or Grey Owl, as he came to be known. Grey Owl is an interesting character for a number of reasons, not limited to his internalization and projection of himself as a true ‘Indian’ – a steward of the environment. Monkman (1981) notes in her book on Native Heritage that during the 1930s, the wilderness was being heavily eroded and erased from the memory of Europeans, Americans, and Canadians alike. In Canada, however, this memory was less faded for most urban dwellers than in other places, although their knowledge and interaction with the wilderness was limited at best. In Grey Owl, however, Monkman (1981:99) notes that they found their guide to get back to nature – getting back to the “land of Romance, gripping the imagination with its immensity, its boundless possibilities and its magic of untried adventure.” Important to note here, which relates to the third framework of anthropological inquiry towards tourism, is the superstructure of The Great Depression, due to which White readers had no problem in relating to Grey Owls desire to escape the mundanity and despair of urban society.

The Guiding Experience – Guide and Tourist

The tourism experience is one that has been studied heavily by anthropologists relatively recently. In Nash’s (1996) book titled The Anthropology of Tourism, he analyzes various aspects of the different frameworks through which tourism is studied. He notes three main frameworks: The first, tourism as acculturation or development, looks at the ways in which societies and
cultural identities drastically change as a result of interactions with other cultures’ visitors. He cites the asymmetrical exchange of symbols, values, and practices, generally with the more powerful, dominant culture taking from the subordinate. In the case of Wicksteed, there is not much mention of him borrowing any of Lavally’s cultural traits, although, as will be seen later, the summer camp system in Ontario could be said to engage in this asymmetrical relationship with the local, Indigenous culture. Wicksteed (1948:124) does briefly allude to this borrowing, however, when he notes that he tells the boys back home who play with the wooden tomahawk made by Lavally that it was made by a “real Indian.”

A second framework through which the study of tourist’s interactions has been studied is tourism as a personal transition. While the outcome of the transformation is often dependant on the type of tourism they engage in, as well as who they engage with, Nash (1996) notes that tourists interacting with any Indigenous cultures will often go through a personal transformation – a shifting of thoughts, values, and ways of seeing the world – while the Native locals are generally depicted as being in a static state of symbolic and cultural suspension. This projects an idea of immobility onto the Indigenous subject, and an assumption that their culture is not open to change, or is incapable of change at all. This idea can be seen in the whimsical dreams Wicksteed held of his anticipated experience in the Park – he wanted an authentic experience, with an authentic guide who was unlike himself; a real man of the woods. A second aspect that relates more to the experience of the tourist refers to the various differences in the tourists interactions with Natives. For example, Nash (1996:87-88) notes that the nature of their experience will change depending on whether or not the tourist is travelling alone (as Wicksteed did), the presence of a local guide, the nature of the host culture and the relationship of the tourist to it.
The final framework refers to tourism as a kind of superstructure which places a focus on the tourist generating society, analyzing what societal influences and cultural traits dictate the type of tourism undertaken. In the case of Wicksteed, I argue that the post-war happiness and ease allowed him to comfortably entertain the idea of travelling into the Canadian wilderness to fulfill a childhood dream. This idea is also highlighted by Wade Davis’s (2011) book *Into the Silence*, which looks at the superstructure of post-war life which set the tone for a team to undertake the first ascension of Mount Everest. This also ties into that notion of man’s need to conquer nature, and nature as the imposing monster ready to strip the life off of anyone who deems themselves brave enough to take her on. Research methods such as Nash’s frameworks help create a lens through which to look at the wilderness experience in Algonquin Park. There are several sources and accounts that deal more directly with the experiences of guides and tourists, which are discussed below.

*The Ecotourism Experience*

The first, and most significant account relating to this research is a book labeled *Joe Lavally and the Paleface in Algonquin Park*. This is a firsthand account by author Bernard Wicksteed detailing the events of an eight day canoe trip he was taken on in 1945 by Joe Lavally (Wicksteed 1948). Not only does it give insight into the typical events one might encounter on such a trip, but Wicksteed’s biography of Lavally’s life paints a fairly thorough portrait of the post-war experience of an Indigenous person living and working within the Park. The interactions between Lavally and Wicksteed seem somewhat atypical of the usual sentiments pointed towards Indigenous people during this time period. Atwood (1972) highlights some of
the tones with which Indigenous people have been described in Canadian literature, ranging from victor or victim, which relates to the notion of a fear or wish within the Canadian psyche has projected. This account is one of a small number of such portraits in Ontario, and indeed, Canada.

Beyond this first-hand account, there have been several studies conducted on the relationships between the upper-class, urban tourist and his Indigenous guide, each providing insight into the differing experiences of both actors. The idea that the Indigenous guide comes to represent something more than just a tour leader, rather acting as a material commodification of a cultural ideal is highlighted by Parenteau’s (1998) study on Canadian Natives in the Atlantic Salmon Fisheries. He cites that although Native peoples were actively excluded from the salmon harvest due to federal policies, their roles as angling guides served to act as cultural commodities aimed at an enhancement of the ‘natural’ experience sought after by the elite fishermen. He notes that anglers did not simply want someone to bring them to fishing spots, rather, they looked for “an authentic ‘primitive’ man to guide them into an imagined world of primeval wonder” (Parenteau 1998). This idea is applied to the Lavally narrative to uncover whether or not Wicksteed saw Joe as this primitive, authentic representation of the wilderness he sought, and will be discussed later in this paper.

In contrast to the mainly historical analysis of the Park done by Saunders (2003) mentioned earlier, Dickson’s (1997) account of a canoe trip through Algonquin Park provides a more personal interpretation of the Algonquin wilderness as seen through his own eyes. Gaining a more personal view of the Park, especially through the context of the guide, was achieved through Ralph Bice’s personal accounts of his time spent guiding through the region, accompanied by observations and interpretations of many major lakes and rivers, institutions,
and actors that all had a role in shaping the physical and cultural landscape of the region (Bice 1900).

Other studies highlight the relationship between the Indigenous guide and the Sportsman, such as Tina Loo’s (2001) analysis of upper-class trophy hunters’ views of their guides. She notes that while big game hunting acted as a means to reaffirm the power and control of those masculine identities that participated, much like Wicksteed who wanted to affirm a childhood dream, the Indigenous guide utilized this power relationship by acting as what Loo calls “tricksters” (Loo 2001). In this manner, Indigenous guides were able to comment on or complain about their sport hunters to each other, using this as a means to deviate from the subordinate values placed upon them by colonization. This analysis serves as a way of interpreting the relationship between Wicksteed and Lavally to uncover whether or not power relations and masculine identities played a role in their interactions.

In contrast to the relationships between upper-class White sport hunters and their guides noted by Loo (2001), Otis (2014) looks at the ways in which these cultural differences were virtually non-existent between Indigenous Algonquian guides and their non-native guides counterparts in the Adirondacks region, noting that through gradual intermarriage and cohabitation, bonds of kinship and labour (guiding) created a much more equal mode of living, with identities being weighted more on their shared experiences rather than their historically cultural differences. This view further explores the relationships between Indigenous guides in Algonquin such as Lavally, and other non-native guides working in the Park such as Ralph Bice (Bice 1980) and uncover what these bonds, if any, were predicated upon. In his autobiography about his experiences guiding in Algonquin, Ralph Bice (1980) speaks about many different eras and experiences in the Park. At one point, he lists all the guides in the Park that he can recall,
with Joe Lavally being mentioned. It seems that guides knew of one another and shared a certain camaraderie around being the only people with the ability and knowledge to lead tourists through an unforgiving wilderness. He notes an experience he had on Big Trout Lake as young apprentice guide. Another camping party had been staying at an adjacent campsite when both groups of tourists voiced their desire for fresh meat, namely, deer. Bice mentions that the older guides knew better than to meddle with game laws and restriction; however the younger guides were not blessed with such experiential knowledge. He and another young guide who he noted as his closest friend and Indian went out and retrieved the carcass of a young buck, which was shared by both parties – older guides and tourists’ alike (Bice 1980:92-93). While the relationship between Bice and his Indigenous counterpart was not predicated on intermarriage such as the ones mentioned by Otis (2014), it does still highlight that equal relationship based on the shared experiences of guides.

In efforts to further understand what role guiding played in the Indigenous person’s experience during the post-war era, Hodgins and Benedickson (1989:220) note that in the Temagami region (a few hours north of Algonquin), guiding often served as a form of transitional employment. It allowed guides to move from land-based subsistence activities to wage employment, letting them gain employment by utilizing skills in which they were already well versed. In essence, the summer months offered the opportunity for Indigenous guides to participate in the wage economy through guiding, while spending their winter months engaging in traditional, economically benefiting practices such as hunting and trapping. This offers insight into how Indigenous people conceive of their roles as guides, and raises questions as to which ‘role’ they identified with most. Were they a full time guide who trapped in the winter, or a full time trapper who guided in the summer?
As Tuan (1974) coined, the term ‘topophilia’ refers to the study of the relationships, perceptions, and values in worldviews that affectively bond people to places. It is within this framework that I sought to understand how people might ‘affectively bond’ to Algonquin Park and the experiences it offered. The differing conceptions of wilderness held by both people like Wicksteed and Lavally is something that still needs exploring, in an attempt to better understand how they might have interacted with each other. Cronon’s (1995) article titled the “Trouble with Wilderness” sheds light on this issue, referring to the notion of how the idea of ‘wilderness’ went from being that of a barren, desolate frontier that ought to be chased and exploited, to that which encapsulated notions presented by people such as John Muir - people who sought refuge in the ‘wilderness’ as places separate from the intensities of society. Wicksteed falls into this categorical outlook, with the wilderness experience being heavily romanticized before he had even step food in the park.

Throughout the nineteenth century, as both Dickson (1886:25) and Attwood (1976) note, the generally held view of Canadians towards the wilderness in their backyards was that of power, mastery, and conquest. As such, the different understandings of wilderness are revealed. Although there was still the unanswered questions as to how the Indigenous person leading this ‘refuge to nature’ saw wilderness. Clues to this answer were found in a report titled ‘The Indians Interpretation of Man and Nature’, located in a section of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada. It speaks about the idea that all things in nature possess innate life forces, bodies, souls and images, creating a mindset in which they (indigenous people) must treat everything in nature as they would any other human with a soul and image (Jenness 1930). With this, there began to be a clear distinction between the view of nature as ‘other’, and of it as the ‘same’.
The social and personal constructions of nature and wilderness have been studied a great deal by the social sciences. For example, there is the notion that our personal relationships to places are born out of the significances and values bestowed upon it, which we then use to construct the meaning the place itself, and provides a basis on which to interpret humans’ understanding of nature (Dvorak et al. 2013:1520). From this base, Dvorak et al. (2013:1521) provide a hypothetical model for how people create wilderness relationships, building on the self-others-place model that see a person’s relationship to the land through a multi-dimensional framework (Brooks et al. 2006). Their model consists of three theoretical frameworks – relationship to self; relationship to management agency; and relationship to place – and provide a metaphor with which to view experiences and meanings in a wilderness setting (Dvorak et al. 2013:1521). The first framework, the relationship to self, notes that through involvement with places, individuals are able to construct and affirm a sense of identity (Williams and Patterson 1999:148), which might serve to offer insight into the identity that Wicksteed hope to create and fulfill on his Algonquin trip.

The second framework - that of relationship to management agency - cites the idea that influencing factors, besides the personal wilderness encounters, include the interactions and notions of wilderness protection and management in terms of conservation areas (Watson and Borrie 2004). In this sense, the notions of conservation and management practices presented in Algonquin Park may have had an influence on Wicksteed’s view of the park prior to his arrival. The final framework noted is that referring to the relationships to place. By ascribing meaning and actively engaging with places, Manzo (2003) notes that people can foster relationships to those places. It is through this meaning that Dvorak et al. (2013:1522) constitutes two aspects of place-based relationships to wilderness, focussing on place meanings and place dependencies.
Place meanings, they note, can be both individually and socio-culturally created, embedded within the narratives of a cultural understanding, such as the socially created view of nature referred to by Cronon (1995). These meanings characterize the value of a given place, and help understand the social context in which places are ascribed importance. Place dependence, on the other hand, refers to the emphasis individuals place on specific places for the enjoyment of particular activities and to achieve certain experiences (Kyle et al. 2003). These different understandings of place interactions prove to help contextualize and interpret the means by which Wicksteed considered and created attachments to Algonquin Park both prior to and during his adventure.

**Methods**

*Archival Review*

The first method of research and analysis I have employed is a review of available archival sources at the Algonquin Park Visitors Center. The available data at the Algonquin archives ranges in its categorical type as well as its utility to this paper. Firstly, the archives contain a great deal of information on the Highland Inn, Algonquin Park’s primary tourist location during the mid-19th century. Information on the Inn ranges from brochures, itineraries, maps, and newspaper clippings, all about the Park and its tourist opportunities. These have been most useful when trying to understand the presented image of the Park in that time period, including things such as the themes and concepts of the wilderness experience. Additionally, the Algonquin archives contain a number of interview transcripts conducted with guides, including Joe Lavally himself. These will act as first-hand accounts of the experiences of the Indigenous guide, ranging from their year round endeavors to their particular feelings of those people whom
they guided. This offers invaluable insight into the mind of those guides which this papers aims to study.

Secondary Source Review

Ranging from first-hand ethnographical sources on the interactions between Indigenous guides and their tourists, to studies that place these experiences within theoretical frameworks, these sources have acted as concrete information on which to base my assumptions and conclusions about the Lavally-Wicksteed encounters. My primary method of acquiring these source has been research conducted in the University of Guelph Library, as well as its electronic database, Primo. In addition, secondary sources have been acquired in the Algonquin archives which hold a wide array of resources. My main method of reviewing these sources has been reading and analyzation, as well as note taking and coding. Coding has been accomplished using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to help distill themes and similarities across sources.

First-Hand Observations

My final method of anthropological inquiry has been first-hand participant observations. These has materialized themselves in a number of ways. Firstly, there are those observations I have taken over my six years working as a wilderness guide in Algonquin. These have given me personal insight into topics such as the ways in which tourists see and interact with the natural landscape, as well as how an appreciation of the land and its history is taught by the guide. These accounts will primarily be used as notions with which to underline my theoretical and secondary source reviews. Beyond this, observations taken from my more tourist-based experiences in the park will be evaluated. For example, this might include symbols of Indigeneity such as the Teepees and Totem Poles mentioned earlier. These types of observations help to shape the ways that the Indigenous experience fits into the larger realm of eco-tourism, how they are equated,
and what they might uncover. Primary methods of first-hand observation include things such as photographs and journal entries from various years spent traversing the Park.

**Social Symbols**

To properly understand what Lavally represented to Wicksteed, a clearer understanding of what the Indigenous guide represented must be developed. Atwood (1972) notes several themes of the ‘Indian’ in Canadian literature, and it is safe to assume that these sentiments would have permeated through the international literature on Canada, such as the pamphlet on Algonquin Park that first catches Wicksteed’s attention. The primary themes she notes as representations of Indigeneity in Canada concern the victim/victor duality. On the one hand, the victor aspect tends to equate Indigenous peoples with Nature, which was seen as the monstrous, white-people-killing entity – unforgiving, powerful, and senseless. Other aspects of the victor motif predicate more so on the ‘noble savage’ idea – clean, pure, and unaffected by the torments of industrializing society. On the other hand, the victim motif paints various pictures of the Indigenous person’s role in nature and society – some where they are seen as the victims themselves, separate from Nature but encompassing its exploitability, and others where they are looked at as just another resource that Nature has to offer, and still yet others wherein they are “seen as animals once free, wild and beautiful, now caged, captive and sickly” (Atwood 1972:100-102). Outside of the victim/victor duality, Atwood notes another symbolic representation of the Indigenous person, regarding them as our ancestral source of knowledge and mediation between the natural and supernatural worlds - between white people and their natural surroundings.

Symbols of Indigeneity were not only perpetuated in Canadian literature, as we shall see, but were also instilled by various means of tourism. The first of which that will be looked at are
the development of summer camps in Ontario, which have been referred to as “cultural islands” (Hammet and Musselman 1951:298). They reference the ways in which summer camps are ‘gifted’ certain cultural aspects and practices from ones outside their own, such as canoes, spirituals, animal stories, moccasins, to name a few. Noted here is the use of ‘gifted’ rather than taken, assuming that these practices were a welcomed gift from other cultures. The chapter also outlines a number of camp programming ideas, including a Tribal Meet and Indian Play. The Tribal Meet involved camper units choosing their own tribe name, selecting a chief, and referring to each other as ‘Braves’ – again, that underlying theme of Indigenous people representing a noble connection to nature is present.

A fine example of this appropriation can be seen in the Taylor Statten camps, which both appropriated Indigenous identities, while at the same time aiming to increase mindfulness about the variety of cultures presented in our world. Burry (1985) compiled a comprehensive history of the Taylor Statten camps, noting several interesting features. Firstly, he mentions the importance Statten placed on including Indian lore into the curriculum of the camp – “…he set up a rough Indian Council Ring, tried out his various campfire schemes and practiced generally his knowledge of Indian lore and campcraft.” (Burry 1985:19). One of the central activities at the camp was the Indian Council Ring, which was aided in creation by Ernest Thompson Seton, a friend of Statten’s as well as a proponent of the early movement to engage children with nature and survival skills. This activity was headed by a Chief (Statten, in most cases), who was clad in full Indigenous regalia (see Fig. 1.2), from the leather outfit to the feathered headdress, generally re-enacting various Indigenous ceremonies. The Chief headed the entire process, and was seen as the absolute, powerful leader – contrary to the image often portrayed of Indigeneity at the time, as shown earlier in Atwood’s analysis of Canadian literary themes.
A very interesting note on the development of these programs was the lack of inclusion of Indigenous people on the camp staff (Burry 1985:20). I speculate that this lack of inclusion may have stemmed from an unwanted competition that may have arose between Statten as The Chief, and the potential interpretation of an Indigenous person by the campers as being a more authentic Chief than Taylor.

**Joe Lavally and the Paleface**

“The wooded hills kept every breath of wind from the water so that the surface lay still and glossy...we were alone in the woods – just Joe the Algonquin and I.” (Wicksteed 1948:18).

One of the finest examples of an indigenous guide who challenges expectations of authenticity is Joe Lavally, the man who guided Wicksteed on the trip that this paper investigates. Joe Lavally was only half Indigenous, actually – his mother was a full Algonquin, and his father was a French Carpenter, however he was raised as an Algonquin, and always considered himself to be one. His background gives valuable insights into the experiences that
can shape the Indigenous experience at the time. He had earned the British Military Medal which he claimed in World War 1 as a sniper; he was a flying fire ranger once and sat beside a pilot surveying the Park for signs of forest fires, but left that as he wanted more time outdoors.

Guiding was typically summer work, until he went to jail and had his licence suspended for 10 years (the incident that caused this is somewhat unclear, but Wicksteed cites an altercation between Joe and a Park ranger). Upon leaving prison, he found a job at a Jewish summer camp working as an outdoor skills instructor, teaching young boys and girls to build birch bark canoes and wigwams (See Figure 1.3). He notes that he couldn’t stand that position, eventually leading him to leave the camp. From there, he served as a trapper, but left in conjunction with the beginning of World War 2 to work as an electrician’s mate in a synthetic rubber factory in Sarnia, Ontario. Following his time there, he spent time transporting timber for new war plant buildings at Chalk River. Finally, his guiding licence was restored, and he returned to his old routine – guiding in the summer, deer hunting in autumn, trapping in the winter until the snow became too deep, after which he would go work for the lumber companies until March. In April, he and his wife would spend a month in the city (presumably Toronto), where they would visit old friends, go to shows, and, as Joe put it, “go back to our room for a lie down (Wicksteed 1948:9-10). What this description highlights is that Joe, as much as he may have been dressed to look the part of a stereotypical ‘Indian’, was more akin to the common, wage-work based existence of people living in that region at the time.
In 1945, Bernard Wicksteed made his way to Algonquin Park from New York in search of his authentic wilderness experience. In his post-war ease, Wicksteed glances over a pamphlet he had picked up at the offices of the Canadian Nation Railways. The leaflet he peels over tells of the wondrous adventures to be had in the Park – the abundant game, the endless lake and rivers, the experienced, old-timer guides - some of whom are even ‘Indians’. He reads over the descriptive words of the wilderness, reminiscing over his boyhood dreams of carrying his canoe through the woods to navigable waters. Wicksteed is already building a relationship to the Park as a place of sentimental value; a place which has the potential to fulfill his youthful dreams. As mentioned above, sentimental value often acts to create strong bonds to places, whether the tourist has been there before or not. What I highlight are the assumptions held by Wicksteed surrounding Joe as the representation of his authentic wilderness experience. It is clear that to Wicksteed, in order to achieve the true, wilderness adventure tour, he must have a true,
wilderness adventure man. This becomes even more evident when listening to the words of Wicksteed himself, as he says “there was Algonquin Park but a day’s journey North with Indians, moose and 35 pound trout laid on, and there was I with 11 days leave” (Wicksteed 1948:12). He arrives to the Highland Inn, and deliberately asks the hotel manager to fetch him an Indian guide, disheartened by the fact that they were all out on trips, but is eventually met by Joe. While he anticipated his Indian guide being everything his boyhood told him he would be, after getting to know Joe better, we see that he is not the stereotypical Indian that Wicksteed sought. Wicksteed also clarifies the assumptions mentioned earlier when he is surprised that Joe did not look the part. “Joe wore no feathers when he came into the manager’s office, and except for a pink handkerchief round his neck, he was dressed more soberly than most of the hotel guests. But he was Indian all right. His mother’s race was stamped all over his brown unwrinkled face, on the high cheekbones and boyish back hair” (Wicksteed 1948:13). He does make sure to note, however, that his facial appearance was that of an Indian, outlining the features that define him so. Later on during their travels, Wicksteed once again denotes the impression that Lavally’s Indigenous status had on him. One night, while staying at a campsite in the Park interior, Wicksteed awakes and silently creeps around the shoreline. He describes the event as quite surreal, “imagining [he] was a captured paleface escaping from a wigwam while the guard slept” (Wicksteed 1948:46). The Native as victor theme which Atwood mentioned earlier is ever more prevalent in this case, even if just as a fantasy.

As the trip continues, Joe and Wicksteed become friends on an equal basis, and Joe’s indigeneity seems to not make a difference in their day to day interactions. A similar situation was seen by Otis, when speaking about the relationship between Michael Sabattis, a Native guide in the Adirondacks region, and his non-native guiding counterparts. She notes that ethnicity “did
not appear to be relevant in terms of social, political, economic, and spiritual connections between Indigenous and Euroamerican Adirondackers, at least not for those of the lower economic classes” (2014:565). It seems that a backdrop of ecotourism and wilderness adventure acts as a level playing field in which ethnicities and backgrounds can interact and mingle. This was further highlighted by Joe in an interview conducted by Ronald Pittaway in 1976 (interview at his home, December 16th). He was asked whether or not the visitors he guided ever pitched in and helped carry the trip paraphernalia. He responded that “Lots of them. Pretty near them all would pitch and carry as much as we would.” Clearly, a camaraderie would develop on backcountry canoe trips which both reinforced and disintegrated class distinctions. While there was still a very clear divide between the patron and the guide, these differences became relatively obsolete when tasked with wilderness travel; there was no room for unequal treatment in the bush. Assumptions may be present prior to and even during the outdoor experience, but there was never any mention of derogatory statements made towards Joe throughout the entire trip, much different to the common sentiments of the time, as mentioned above in Atwood’s analysis. This is quite a different relationship that once took place in these same wild forests between colonial forces and Indigenous groups who faced domination and land dispossession.

Much of this paper has so far dealt with symbolic representations of guides, indigenous people, and nature. However, I’d like to let Lavally speak for himself. The following is an excerpt from a conversation between Joe and Wicksteed, concerning Joe’s lack of desire to gain a formal education. Important to note here, rather than jumping to connect the stereotype of an ‘uneducated Indian’ to Joe, is Joe’s recognition and dismissal of non-Indigenous education systems. Furthermore, Joe recognizes the utility of the skills learned on his grand-father’s farm and is able to maximize those to engage in the wage economy. He truly begins to represent the
‘modern Indigenous’ person - both within and without his ancestral culture. Wicksteed asks Joe, “Don’t you wish you had ever learned to read?” to which he replies, “No...I learned other things that’s more useful than reading and writing. I didn’t go to school because I had to work on my Indian grandfather’s farm, and there was no law then to make me….I learned useful things on this farm, more useful than they teach you in schools…there’s going to be another compression after this war, and then I shall be the big man around here…then I bought an old truck and took the berries 75 miles into Kingston to sell at the market.” (Wicksteed 1948:103). This quote, I argue, quite perfectly encapsulates the notion that while Joe was still a self-identifying Algonquin, equipped with the traditional skills passed down on his family’s farm, he nonetheless was very aware of the need to participate in the wage economy to support his family, by whatever means necessary. It is the marriage of traditional practices and capitalist economies that creates the ‘modern indigenous person’.

Present Day Representations

I echo the above analysis with a claim that these anticipated representations of authenticity are still prevalent today, but in different ways. The above analysis highlights how the expectations Wicksteed had of Joe were often shown to be false, once Joe’s voice was allowed to be heard by itself. I relate these present day representations to some personal experiences and observations. As a young guide, I never quite anticipated meeting the same type of Indigenous person that Wicksteed did, as I myself was playing the part of Joe, the guide. That being said, however, during my time working as Head Guide for a local outfitting company in the Park, I spent time working alongside a woman, who was also of Algonquin descent, and had also spent time working as an ATV guide. Ori was my first introduction to a ‘modern day Joe’. She was someone actively engaged in retrieving lost aspects of her traditional, ancestral knowledge, and as such acted as a source of information on Algonquin culture. At the same time,
she had also been working different jobs, from lumber mills to grocery stories, actively participating in the wage economy. While I, unlike Wicksteed, did not hope to meet an “authentic”, modern Indigenous guide, I was lucky enough to have this experience to draw back upon when conducting my research. I still wonder whether or not the tourists she guided ever came to Algonquin hoping for their own Indigenous guide, but ATV’s may not equate to Indigeneity in the same way that a backcountry fishing trip did to Lavally. While I never did find out whether or not she saw her cultural heritage as a piece of guide ‘outfit’, it would be interesting to explore this question more in future research.

While Ori was never dressed up in traditional clothing to represent her heritage as Joe was, I still found there to be a sense in the Park that an authentic wilderness experience ought to be accompanied by an Indigenous person. Figure 1.4 depicts a statue currently sitting in a souvenir shop just outside of Algonquin Park in the town of Dwight. Much like figure 1.5, which depicts Joe dressed in traditional clothing at the camp, these images automatically present one with connotations of Indigeneity as they drive into the wilderness.

*Figure 1.4: Image of Indian Statue in gift shop a few kilometers outside of Algonquin Park. (above)*
Figure 1.5: Joe dressed in Algonquin traditional clothing while working at a summer camp.

This gift shop, and many others like it, are filled with statues just as this, and sell ‘authentic Native handcrafts’, ranging from totem poles to moccasins. The question arises, if these artifacts are part of the authentic wilderness experience, are they then authentic to those people who once inhabited these lands? I argue that they are not, and rather serve simply as cultural borrowings aimed at enhancing the overall ecotourism experience. I was struck most when comparing figures 1.4 to 1.5 by their inherent similarities. Much in the same way that Joe was adorned in full Algonquin regalia at the summer camp (although upon further inspection, we find a shirt and tie just beneath his outfit, a clear symbolic juxtaposition between his Indigenous heritage and his lived experience as a member of the wage economy) in order to give the campers a taste of a ‘real Indian’, so too do modern ecotourism initiatives seek to give urban explorers a glimpse of the ‘other’. What seems most problematic here is the lack of inclusion of local Indigenous groups to provide an authentic, truthful input to some of these souvenir shops. Figure 1.6 highlights yet another statue of a saluting Indian character, and proves to be even more alarming than the last, with the body wearing not only a
feather headdress, but an American flag wrapped around its waist as well. Nothing could be farther from the truth; he even has the skin and features of a white man.

Figure 1.6: Statue depicting Native man in gift shop a few kilometers from Algonquin Park

Discussion

In reference to some of the symbolic representations that underline tourists’ interactions with their indigenous guides, Wicksteed seems to be in line with the third motif presented earlier – that of the Indigenous person as a mediator between nature and the white-man. For example, Wicksteed once asks Lavally, in reference to the forest, “I suppose this is all quite natural to you, Joe, and you think nothing of it?” (Wicksteed 1948:39). Joe goes on to answer that he was born in the bush, grew up in the bush, and until his time in the military, knew nothing else except for the bush. The assumption that Wicksteed holds is quite visible. He comes to the Park looking for his ‘Indian’ guide, and expects that this guide would be a man inherently connected to nature, not due to the fact that his job requires him to be, but rather because Wicksteed thinks his culture does. These symbols were further perpetuated by the summer camp system mentioned earlier, to
which Lavally was no stranger. He had spent several summers working at an overnight camp, teaching young boys skills such as canoe making and fire building. He was dressed in full Indigenous attire – headdress and all – and referred to as Chief. Again, we find an Indigenous person being used for a job that negates their personal agency, and demands an outward appearance of their cultural heritage – from skills to dress. Often times, as Joe’s sentiments highlighted, this can become an aggravating experience for the Indigenous person trying to earn a living.

Wicksteed had created his own version of authenticity concerning his time spent in the park. This assumption, however, was not created out of nowhere. Equating the Indigenous with the authentic is was not only done by Algonquin advertising, but came from the overarching, hegemonic colonial discourse which placed the Indigenous existence into a category of a pristinely primitive other. Colonialism stagnated the ability of people to recognize Indigenous culture as a dynamic entity, and denied the agency of those people to define their identities on their own terms. Thus, Wicksteed automatically assumes that if he can acquire an Indian guide, then that guide would be the quintessential picture of the ‘noble savage’. As the trip carries on, however, we learn that Lavally is anything but what the hegemonic view cast upon him, and is rather the typical example of a middle aged man living in Northern Ontario during the time period.

Throughout all the analysis discussed above, it becomes quite clear that often times it is the tourists’ expectations which have an active role in the commoditization of culture. There are no examples of Lavally purposefully trying to exaggerate aspects of his Indigeneity to appease Wicksteed. Joe is as he is; a common man of the times, and a product of all of his life experiences. Only once he begins working as a guide, whether at the Highland Inn or the
overnight camp, does his Indian status get exploited. As was show, he is dressed up, told to play certain parts, and is marketed as one of the ‘authentic’ Indian guides, which inherently creates a larger allure for urban tourists such as Wicksteed.

**Concluding Positionality**

When this research project first began, I was very much under the impression that through learning about Joe as a guide, I would uncover a wealth of information about Algonquin culture; I was similar to Wicksteed in some senses, anticipating that the Native guide would be more akin to the statue in the gift shop than a man in a shirt and tie. As I continued to conduct research into his life, however, my perceptions became abruptly shattered. Joe showed me that the tendency of non-Indigenous people to project their expectations and assumptions onto Native people in any setting, from resource management to tourism, creates a situation where in the ‘truth’ is often blurred. If we as anthropologists allow the lived point of view to speak for itself, the reality of life experience will be much clearer, and create opportunities for broad, holistic understandings of any issues.

**Conclusion**

The relationships between Indigenous guides and their non-Indigenous tourists has been a very complex one. Through various theoretical underpinnings, I have shown how relationships to places are often predicated on the assumptions and expectations that people travelling to those places have. Before Wicksteed arrived to the park, his mind was already brimming with whimsical imaginings of what his time in the ‘wilderness’ would be like. His wilderness, however, was contrastive to what Joe might consider that same forest. To Joe, it was his home, his place of employment; everything. To Wicksteed it was a romanticized experience that had to perfectly align with his expectations, which included a romanticized guide. Nash’s (1996) three
frameworks are all highlighted through Wicksteed’s adventure. The first framework mentioned, of tourism as acculturation or development, highlights how the presentation of Algonquin culture, as well as the lived experience, were drastically influenced by the creation of Algonquin Park. From land dispossession and impositions on hunting rights, to the commoditization of culture, Lavally’s life was undoubtedly impacted by the Park as a place of recreation. The second framework noted was that of tourism as a personal transition, which Wicksteed goes through. He wanted his authentic wilderness experience, although it may have materialized differently that he imagined. He goes through an eight day trip of personal discovery, conquest, and exploration, yet comes out of it, as many urbanites do, very ready to return to the comforts of the city. As they take shelter from the rain that Joe had predicted all week, Wicksteed comments that “quite suddenly I felt very tired and if wishes could have transported me back to the bar in New York where it all began, I would have been there instead of sitting on the floor” (Wicksteed 1948: 190). Wicksteed evidently went through several changes in mindset about this trip, and I imagine that many of his previously held conceptions of Indigenous guides, and the wilderness, were dramatically altered. The final framework highlighted, that of tourism as a superstructure, which places a focus on the social influences and cultural traits that dictate the type of tourism undertaken, is also displayed in this case. In the case of Wicksteed, it was the social influences that brought him to Algonquin Park. He felt the need to get back to a peaceful, natural landscape after just having lived through a war, while Lavally’s cultural traits (in terms of his status as an Indian) were the very things that drew Wicksteed to him. The notion of Algonquin as a safe haven or refuge for Wicksteed were apparent, and may have been largely due to the fact that the Park had become a provincially protected place. This paper has effectively shown how a protected place designated for ecotourism can serve to reinforce or dismantle ethnic stereotypes.
In conclusion, this paper focusses on how perceptions in tourism can alter the amount of agency we allot to Indigenous tour operators. It sought to uncover truths surrounding the relationship between Wicksteed and Lavally, and did so effectively. Research such as this, when relying heavily on historical text, can often seem outdated in relation to the present day. I argue that while these adventure tales were written in the mid-20th century, many of the lessons still hold true. Just as the gift shop outside the Park is still clad with totem poles, wigwams, and statues of Native characters, so too do tourists still seek the full, authentic experience. Subtly, Indigenous people are often worked into this framework, either with their permission or without. Moving forward, I feel it is absolutely necessary to create a situation where Indigenous people whose ancestral landscape is to be used for ecotourism have an equally collaborative role in the decision making process surrounding what aspects of their culture will be commoditized. In many cases, Indigenous people seek to be actively involved in the process, and may even exaggerate certain aspects of their culture they feel tourists want to see; in other cases, they may want no involvement at all. Whatever the case may be, it is imperative that their voice always be heard and listened to.

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