The Culture of Hunting in Canada

Edited by Jean L. Manore and Dale G. Miner

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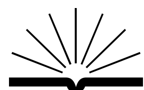

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To Lyle J. Miner and Walter N. Miner,
mentors in hunting and in life.

And to Maggie, who's gone ahead.

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Preface

The idea for this book arose from a rather heated conversation between my partner, a non-Native hunter, and my colleague, an anthropologist who studies First Nations and sympathizes with their quest for recognition of their Aboriginal rights and title. She was arguing in support of their rights to hunt (and fish), while he was insistent that he too should have the same rights to hunt because hunting was just as integral to his identity as it was to those of the First Nations. As someone who felt that discretion was the better part of valour at this point, I sat on the sidelines listening and realized that this debate had been going on a long time and was still being discussed not only among individuals but also within government, public organizations and lobbies, and the courts. It therefore seemed to me that hunting was a pivotal issue within Canada, not only currently but historically as well. It also seemed to me that academics, especially within the social sciences and humanities, were paying too little attention to hunting as a field of study and that, if the debates (there are more than the one noted above) over hunting were ever to be understood, if not resolved, then research would have to be done, and hunters, whether Aboriginal or not, would have to have their say. Hence this book and its attempts to bring the issues surrounding hunting and its importance to Canadian history and society to a broader, more public, audience.

In putting this collection of articles together, I must first and foremost acknowledge the help and support of all the contributing authors. It has been a long and sometimes arduous process, with all the contributors being very busy individuals. I am deeply appreciative of their patience. I would also like to thank the people at UBC Press, especially Randy Schmidt, who has been an enthusiastic supporter of the book. Finally, I would like to thank Dale Miner, who has been pivotal as an editor and compiler of the manuscript.

Jean L. Manore

The Culture of Hunting in Canada

Introduction

Jean L. Manore

In Canada, hunting is a human activity often associated with the primeval, yet to many it remains as fundamental to their identity and their way of life as any manifestation of our 'modern' experience. On the other hand, others believe that hunting by humans is a violent practice best left in the past. As a result, there has been a great deal of debate and controversy over the practice of hunting, both within and between each of the two groups. In recent years, the disputes between Native and non-Native hunters have intensified, as have conflicts between hunters and animal rights activists. The *Powley* case respecting Métis hunting rights and the cancellation of the spring bear hunt in Ontario are just two recent examples.

There should be no doubt that hunting has been integral to Canadian history and culture. To many, it still is. The First Nations, who have been categorized as *hunter-gatherers,* hunted for many reasons, among them food, material benefit, and trade before the arrival of Europeans. When the fur traders arrived, hunting for furs and their exchange became the backbone of the Native-European economy. First Nations also helped to provision the posts with food from animals and fish, as did the traders themselves. Hunting continued to be fundamental in pioneer societies, with settlers dependent on game resources until their farms, and a market for their crops and animals, could be established. In this economy, First Nations continued to hunt and fish and often acted as provisioners of the foods derived from their activities to the settlers. With the success of agriculture and the advent of industrialization and urbanization, 'leisure time' arrived as an opportunity for an increasing number of people coupled with the means whereby they could experience the 'great outdoors.' Hunting for these people became more of a social activity than an economic one, and as a result hunting became politicized as these groups developed different attitudes about what hunting meant and what it should provide: sustenance and survival, or recreation and enjoyment. The rights to hunt by Aboriginal hunters were also increasingly challenged at this time.

Currently, hunters, whether they are Aboriginal or not, feel that their *way of life,* as they characterize hunting, is under siege. Animal rights activists, shrinking areas of land that they can access to hunt, and finally the Chrétien government's gun-control legislation have forced hunters to take the offensive and fight to preserve what to them is vital to their identity as individuals and as members of the natural world. Programs have been launched to educate the public on the benefits of hunting to individuals and society. Court challenges have been mounted in an attempt to get hunting recognized as a constitutional right. There have been increased efforts at wildlife management through private organizations and government lobbying. Whether these efforts will be successful remains to be seen. Regardless, from an intellectual perspective, the hunters' cause can raise several lines of inquiry.

In a broader context, the issues surrounding hunting highlight the fundamental political differences that exist, and have existed, in Canada between those advocating primacy of Aboriginal rights to hunt and fish and those advocating equal individual rights for all Canadian citizens. Also, various groups of environmental advocates have argued among themselves over humanity's relationship to, or role in, nature. Should it be exploitative or protectionist? Hunters have been at the forefront of environmental advocacy for over a century, yet today they find themselves the brunt of criticism for their efforts. This criticism has often taken on a geographic character, with northerners advocating the right to harvest living resources and southerners arguing for 'wilderness' preservation. How has this rift between wilderness advocates and hunters come to pass when both groups seek to enjoy and protect the natural environment? What roles have ideologies of conservation, preservation, and animal rights had in causing this rift? How might have government policies contributed to the current conflicts? How do urban and rural interests play into this debate?

Additionally, hunting is, by and large, a social activity. It is often done in groups of family or friends; it is a shared activity and consequently helps to support or build communities. It also transmits culture through stories and repetitive, if not ritualized, behaviours. To many, hunting is a tradition; to some, it is a religion. Given the social nature of hunting, points of inquiry are innumerable. What is the nature of a hunting community? How does hunting shape or influence familial bonds and friendship? What do hunting stories tell us about hunting societies or communities? How has hunting shaped the Canadian identity? How influential have hunters been in determining Canadian attitudes toward the natural world? How have hunting communities interacted with each other and with non-hunters? The list goes on ...

Certainly, there has been some research done on hunting and the questions that the practice raises. In the United States, Jose Ortega y Gasset wrote

a seminal book entitled *Meditations on Hunting* (1972), in which he discusses hunting as an activity integral to human nature and analyzes the rationalizations developed to justify killing animals. It is in this work that the oft-quoted sentence 'I kill to know that I have hunted' appears. In the same vein, J.A. Swan has written *In Defense of Hunting* (1994) and *The Sacred Art of Hunting* (1999) to analyze the sociopsychological benefits of hunting to hunters. Randall Eaton, in *The Sacred Hunt: Hunting as a Sacred Path* (1998), discusses scientific theories on the role of hunting and how it shaped the evolution of human social behaviour. Literature on the conservation movements in the United States is well documented, with a few authors noting the important contributions of hunters to these movements, in particular Theodore Roosevelt. The well-known book by Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967), is an example of this literature, as is Char Miller's *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (2001). Other American writers have debated the ethics of hunting, focusing almost entirely on the values and attitudes of what are usually called sport hunters. J. Ward Thomas, in his 'Fair Chase and Technology: Then, Now, and Tomorrow' (1998), has looked at the ethic of fair chase and how it is affected by technological improvements. S.R. Kellert (1978) has written an article comparing the 'Attitudes and Characteristics of Hunters and Antihunters.'

In contrast to the United States, interest in hunting has been limited and sporadic in Canada. Anthropologists and ethnohistorians such as Charles Bishop (1974), Edward S. Rogers (1983), and Toby Morantz (2002) have focused on hunting by Aboriginal peoples, and a few historians, such as Arthur Ray (1974, 1990) and Daniel Francis (1985), have looked at hunting but only within the context of the fur trade. Recently, however, newer scholars have taken the study of hunting beyond First Nations and/or the fur trade. This is ably demonstrated by the papers and publications of Tina Loo (2001a, 2001b), Gregory Gillespie (2001), and George Colpitts (2002). Yet, while research is being undertaken on hunting and the issues surrounding it, if the deeply rooted and controversial cultural, political, and economic perspectives surrounding hunting are to be understood and reconciled, then more research is required, and what research there is must be published. This book represents a preliminary attempt to do just that.

The Culture of Hunting in Canada focuses mainly on game hunting, both animals and birds. There are, however, some references to fishing and trapping. The book is multidisciplinary and includes essays from academics, independent scholars, and laypersons. The essays discuss hunting in Canada from regional, national, and international perspectives. The book does not offer, however, an exhaustive examination of hunting, nor does it try to provide 'representative' essays on a geographic basis. But the book does demonstrate the importance of hunting to Canadian history, society, and culture by highlighting the long-standing issues surrounding hunting and

how they unite or divide people, as individuals or members of collectivities, however they are defined. Our hope is to stimulate more research in a long-neglected but pivotal aspect of Canadian culture.

The book is arranged in three parts. The first part seeks to demonstrate the importance of hunting to individuals, communities, and cultures. The first three articles examine the importance of hunting to non-Native people. The authors are hunters and describe why hunting is important to them. While some may think these reflections of little academic value, they do in fact represent a unique source of information, since there are no documented oral histories in Canada among non-Native hunters that detail the importance of hunting to them and their families. Jason McCutcheon, an individual new to hunting, expresses his sheer delight in experiencing nature as he had never done before as a result of his hunting excursions. This delight is amply conveyed by his fascination with the minutiae of nature and the thrills and chills of his first grizzly bear hunt. Robert Sopuck and Leigh Clarke, both hunters of long standing, reflect on how important hunting has been to their lives, to their relationships to family, especially fathers, and to their understanding of the natural world. Both speak intimately and passionately about their love of hunting and offer some criticism of those who denigrate it. The next two articles examine Aboriginal hunting. Peter Kulchyski identifies himself as a 'hunter of stories,' and his article is, among other things, a reflective account of how stories of hunting build connections among participants in the hunt and how those connections build communities. From this activity, Aboriginal identities are created and secured. Finally, Roland Bohr has provided a transcript of the Swampy-Cree elder Louis Bird. Bird relates his understanding of the importance of hunting to his people. He explains the connections that hunting created between the Cree, the animals, and the Creator and notes, almost in passing, how those connections were changed by the fur trade and missionaries.

In the next section, hunting is looked at within historical contexts. Jean Manore, in examining the establishment of Algonquin Park in the 1890s as a forest and game preserve, demonstrates that the hunting community was by no means homogeneous, with conflicts over hunting practices and access to the game arising between urban or southern sport hunters and rural or northern 'pothunters' and First Nations. She also demonstrates that metropolitan-based state regulations were interpreted with some leniency by the state's agents at the local level. Greg Gillespie also looks at the culture of the sport hunters, but through the lens of imperialism, as he traces the appropriation of the Canadian landscape by British sporting elites who tried to transform it into 'Empire's Eden.' Americans too had their own interests in the Canadian landscape, as is demonstrated in Mark Simpson's analysis of a text written by William Hornaday, a renowned American conservationist, on his hunting trip to the Canadian Rockies.

David Calverley and Ken Coates trace the development of state policies with respect to conservation of game species, with Calverley arguing that Ontario's interest in such regulations crystallized in the 1890s when the province realized that game resources were economically valuable, whereas in the Northwest Territories, during the first half of the twentieth century, Coates argues, among other things, that wildlife regulation was motivated by the federal government's desire to keep 'Indians' from being a 'burden on the state.' In the last article in this section, J. Alexander Burnett also looks at the federal regulation of game resources but does so by tracing the development of the Canadian Wildlife Service and its enforcement policies, during the last half of the twentieth century. In this, Burnett demonstrates that conservation was a policy that met with considerable opposition or derision. Opposition came from Newfoundland outporters and from First Nations who depended on game birds for sustenance, and derision came from the bulk of the RCMP force, which had been charged with enforcing the game laws. Apparently, the Mounties saw apprehending poachers as far less important than apprehending 'real' criminals.

The third section of the book focuses on current issues with respect to hunting. The hunting community was and is incensed over the Chrétien government's gun-control legislation. To many hunters, this legislation denied them fundamental rights of citizenship since it interfered with their ability to practise long-standing traditions, often family-based, and with their right to privacy and even freedom, since peace officers were given unprecedented power to monitor gun owners and search their property. Two papers, by Simon Wallace, an urban youth, and Dale Miner, a rural hunter, debate the legislation's necessity and effectiveness.

Do hunters have the right to hunt? If so, then how is that right defined? What about the hunted; do they have rights too? Both Bruce Hodgins and Ed Reid address the issue of the right to hunt in their articles, with Hodgins arguing that Aboriginal peoples have a limited right to hunt, but a right that is greater than that of non-Aboriginal citizens, and Reid writing in support of the argument that hunting is a form of expression and therefore should be recognized as a fundamental right under Section 2b of the Constitution. Tim Sopuck and Edward Hanna address questions of ethics with respect to their relationship to the animals that they hunt. Sopuck details the campaign launched by hunters in Manitoba to stop animal rights advocates in their attempts to cancel the spring bear hunt in that province. Hanna takes up the question of ethics in his article by examining the idea of 'fair chase,' in which hunters should allow an animal a fair chance of escape. The paper is controversial, to say the least, because Hanna finds the 'age-old' idea illogical, given the nature of the relationship between hunter and prey, and counterproductive to assisting hunters in their attempts to legitimize their activities to the larger public.

Aside from the specific categorization of the articles as noted above, there are many other themes that connect the articles to each other and to the general aim of demonstrating the importance of hunting to Canada's political, economic, and social development. Anyone interested in Native-settler relations will find several of these articles useful because they discuss sites of conflict between the two groups as each competes for access to the land's resources. This is particularly evident in the articles by Calverley, Manore, Kulchyski, Coates, and Hodgins. Other articles also provide some insight into Native-settler relations. Simpson discusses ideas of race and class in his paper on Hornaday, as do Calverley and Manore.

Other themes discussed include the relationship between environmental advocacy and hunting, north-south relations, the role of the state in mediating conflicts over hunting and access to game resources, enforcement, and ideas of nationalism and imperialism. Finally, the articles demonstrate that hunting in one form or another has often been under siege within Canada over the past 100 years, with various interests opposing hunting or certain aspects of it but with others rising to its defence. For discussions on conservation and hunting, see Calverley, Manore, Coates, Burnett, and Simpson. For discussions on north-south or urban-rural tensions, see Manore, Kulchyski, Coates, and Burnett, and for discussions of the tensions between hunters and non-hunters see Tim Sopuck, Wallace, and Miner. For developing an understanding of the relationship between hunters and the state, whether federal or provincial, see Tim Sopuck, Coates, Calverley, Manore, Burnett, Hodgins, and Kulchyski. For discussions on the interplay between hunting and nationalism and/or internationalism, see Simpson and Gillespie. Finally, for an understanding of how hunting shapes community formation and creates identities, see Kulchyski, Clarke, McCutcheon, Tim Sopuck, Bohr and Bird, and Robert Sopuck.

In conclusion, *The Culture of Hunting in Canada* seeks to demonstrate the importance of hunting to Canadian history, society, and culture. It does so by highlighting particular themes, issues, and events that resonate across the country and through time. While anthropologists and sociologists have led the way in investigating this important aspect of Canada, other areas of investigation still need to be addressed by other social sciences and humanities specialists. Additionally, because hunting is so fundamental to individual and group identities, the political conflicts that exist between hunters and non-hunters and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal hunters will remain, until the voices of hunters are heard and understood. This book therefore crosses the boundaries between scholarship and personal reflection, academia and advocacy. The result is, we hope, a stimulating and provocative exploration of a fundamental aspect of our heritage and posterity.

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Part 1
Hunting and Identity

1
Why I Hunt
Leigh Clarke

Why I started to hunt is simple. I went to be with my dad. He wanted me to come with him to learn to hunt and to like hunting. I was just pleased to be with him and pleased that he wanted me there. In retrospect, I learned more about my father and about nature than hunting per se. The first time, at about seven or eight, I cried because of the nettles and the tramps' ticks. When I was ten or eleven, I got to go again. I learned that putting up with physical discomfort is probably one of the cardinal virtues if you want to be a good hunter.

Dr. C.H.D. Clarke was a biologist. He was the chief of the Fish and Wildlife division of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests when I was growing up. I was regularly taken fishing or birdwatching or just walking outdoors exercising the dogs. Every outing was an informal course in botany, zoology, fish and game management, forest management, or whatever. Whenever I asked 'What bird is that?' – whether by the song or by the bird itself – he always knew, without even having to look through his binoculars. The result was that by eighteen I was a reasonably competent naturalist, pretty well by default. This is little credit to me. Other than being blessed with a retentive memory, all this fell into my lap unsolicited. I was privileged to have as my mentor a man of world stature in his field, a former president of the Wildlife Society in the United States, a winner of the Aldo Leopold Medal for excellency of contribution to conservation plus other awards, and the author of many articles and learned treatises. To me, he was just Dad.

He taught me hunting safety and the unwritten laws of responsible behaviour. He never left a wounded bird or animal if he could help it. I saw him spend three or four hours looking for a duck I had shot in the Holland Marsh near Toronto. We found three others before finding the one I'd shot. He used to go to Pelee Island and get his limit of pheasants without ever firing a shot: there were that many cripples left by lazy or dogless hunters. Father hunted waterfowl with a retriever and upland birds with a setter and

a retriever. I spent hours as a boy helping him train his dogs. It spoiled me for bird hunting. I gave up after a while on my own until we got a dog.

Father not only hunted but also gathered: apples, puffballs, morels, and berries. Anything edible was grist for his mill. Even on the rare days when we were skunked, we never went home without food. He believed that hunting and gathering, with the intimate understanding of nature that these activities require, were the original occupations of humankind and therefore something intrinsic to our own humanity. The shift to agrarian and then urban societies has shifted the bulk of our kind away from our roots. We ignore nature at our peril.

In college, I hunted with Dad as I was able. There were certain places where I was not invited. At the time, it rankled me. But I see now that the annual duck hunt at Bob Bradley's on Lake St. Clair and their annual trek to the Bruce Peninsula during woodcock migration were off limits to me because of the special bond between the minister's son with a PhD and the farmer's son with plenty of savvy, as Dad put it. They were very close friends. The same was true of Jim Windsor, who owned the deer-hunting camp at Black Donald Mine near Ottawa where Dad went every year. Jim still ran with dogs at ninety-eight. Other men brought their sons, but Dad did not and was unable to tell me why when I asked. There were certain relationships and things about hunting that were too personal for Dad to share.

I think it was just as well, for it obliged me to find my own places and relationships. I was unwell for many years and hunted only occasionally, until my son became interested in hunting. I used to drive him to his friend's farm to hunt and fish, and when he was fourteen I decided to hunt with him to share what my father had taught me. John is a better student of hunting and a better shot than I ever was, so the pupil quickly outstripped the father (to my great pleasure). I more or less tagged along and stood, where I was told, on watch. The only thing I did better than anyone in our gang was to stay up a tree in the cold the longest. I had to learn everything. It took me ten years to get a moose and fifteen to shoot a deer. Both were lucky. Last year, for the first time, I got a deer alone in the woods. Dad would have been almost fiercely proud – not of the kill but of the skill. He wanted so badly for me to share this joy of his.

John was leaving home, so three years ago my wife took her hunter safety course and began hunting. She grew up in a family of artists. Her grandfather was Franz Johnson, one of the Group of Seven. So we have a shared love of nature. Hunter and artist are kindred spirits. What they do requires keen attention to detail if it is to be done well. It is humbling to do something that requires excellent physical coordination and quick reflexes with people who are naturals at it when you are not. My wife was a champion athlete in her youth. The first time I took her deer hunting she had never fired a rifle. She had studied where to aim in her course, and I had to load

the gun for her because it was a type she was not familiar with. Twenty minutes later she saw some deer, calmly picked one with horns, and shot it through the heart, at 160 yards, without a hand rest, with the first shot she had ever fired in her life! Luck, you say? That I put her where the deer were – maybe – that she hit one – no – she's a natural. Hunting will, I fear, never be quite the same.

Why do I continue to hunt? When you get out of your car, you check the wind direction before you do anything else. You must move quietly, listen, look around, not just at your feet. You have to recognize and often imitate the calls of the birds and animals you hunt, and you must understand their behaviour. At times, you must sit motionless for hours. When you do, the bush forgets you are there! Mice and squirrels come right to you without noticing. Hawks and owls perch a few feet from your head. A fox with a partridge in its mouth trots soundlessly four feet away until it gets downwind, and then it jumps, looks at you, and vanishes in a second like a spirit. A friend had a fisher run right over his boot. My son set a world record for the backward standing broad jump when a fox he was looking at under a snow-covered fallen spruce turned out to be a female black bear with two cubs, exploding through the branches as she ran for better cover.

Why do I hunt? I love it. So does my son. So does my wife. The problem for wildlife in North America is not that there are too many hunters but that there are too few. Nature trekkers storming aerobically along well-beaten trails pass within feet of bedded deer and never see them. They walk by scrapes and rubs and tracks without even knowing what they are. The poorest hunter is more aware of nature than many people who enjoy it mainly for its scenery and clean air.

Who puts up the money to reclaim wetlands and pay for habitat protection? Mainly hunters. They do it not just to kill things but primarily because they understand as a group better than anyone that we will lose part of ourselves when there are no more wild places, when it is no longer possible to be outwitted by your prey because it is gone forever.

What kind of men and women will we be in a world without game birds and animals, where it is no longer necessary to respect the land because of them? God created a beautiful world that humanity has been trying to 'improve' ever since. As my father wrote: 'Soon there will be nothing left but a monoculture, biological, wasteland and the raucous clamour of a trillion starlings.

Being a hunter compels me to care.