Temagami’s Tangled Wild
Race, Gender, and the Making of Canadian Nature

JOCELYN THORPE

FOREWORD BY GRAEME WYNN
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Some thirty years ago, after reflecting critically and historically on such concepts as culture, society, individual, and class, the novelist, critic, and cultural studies scholar Raymond Williams famously suggested that “nature” might be the most complex word in the English language. Despite the nominal continuity of its use through many centuries, the term is richly freighted with intricate and quite diverse meanings. Does “nature” refer to the “essential constitution of the world” or to the inherent and immutable laws that govern (or describe) its physical processes? Is it “red in tooth and claw” or an “extraordinary interlocking system of mutual advantage”? Do references to “nature” include or exclude people? What of the common idea that “nature” betokens the “essence,” the “ultimate, irreducible character or quality of something,” as in the “nature of things,” the “nature of existence,” or in the way that we explain human characteristics or athletic gifts as “natural”? Little wonder that the American cultural historian Leo Marx concluded, toward the end of a career devoted to studying such matters, that “the word nature is a notorious semantic and metaphysical trap.”

The lean and “proper” definitions found in dictionaries provide neither escape nor intellectual comfort for those alert to these contradictions and fascinated, as Williams was, by the ways in which the shifting and contrasting connotations of certain words expressed “radically different and often at first unnoticed changes in experience and history.”

Much ink has been spent, since Williams wrote, pondering the nature of Nature (so to speak). Indeed, the Australian environmental historian George Seddon used this very phrase in 1991 as the title of a lively essay...
devoted to understanding how various meanings have been ascribed to nature. After exploring some of the antonyms to “Nature” and “natural” – including Supernatural, unnatural, human, and artificial – Seddon concluded that the contrasts between human and “not-man” and natural and unnatural underwrote “most current discourse using the word ‘Nature’” and that the use of “unnatural” often carries “specifically moral overtones.” To illustrate the latter claim, he recalled the once common assertion that “sodomy is an unnatural practice” to remind his readers that although “not many people use that expression today [this] does not mean that the concept of the ‘unnatural’ has disappeared, but rather that its range of application has changed. Some will now say, for example, that celibacy is unnatural, or that it is not natural for a young girl to lock herself away in her room reading books all day, or whatever.” The larger point, of course, is that the societal consensus about what is natural and unnatural changes through time and that “our concept of Nature is a cultural product.”

Postmodern and post-structuralist scholarship has made similar claims, more formally and more strongly, in describing nature as a social construction or insisting, more tendentiously, that it is solely a product of discourse. As the geographer David Demeritt noted a decade or so ago, much writing in this vein “has challenged the apparent self-evidence and ontological fixity of nature,” to the point of insisting that unmediated knowledge of the material world is impossible. These are complicated matters. Following the philosopher Ian Hacking, Demeritt has usefully sought to categorize and clarify the various forms of constructionism by distinguishing between two broad types – social construction-as-refutation (which usually evinces strong political commitments) and the “more metaphysically inclined” sense of social construction-as-philosophical-critique. The latter is further subdivided, according to the primary intellectual wellsprings from which differing approaches derive, into phenomenological and discursive constructionisms, approaches associated with the reflexive stance of those interested in the sociology of scientific knowledge, and ideas of embodied practice as reflected, for example, in actor-network theory. The intricacies of these distinctions are of little concern here, except to note, as Demeritt does, that “construction-as-refutation” generally maintains the “conventional distinctions between culture/nature, subject/object, and representation/reality” upon which divisions between true and false conceptions of nature rest, whereas “construction-as-philosophical-critique” generally challenges these dualisms. Beyond this, all these approaches share a commitment to the notion that things are not what they are generally taken to be and insist that “what we had once accepted as self-evidently pre-ordained and
inevitable is in fact contingent and might conceivably be remade in some other way, if only we would try.”

Similar impulses have affected the ways in which scholars have come, in recent years, to think about many things, from race, gender, and class through wilderness to the nation. These and more have come, increasingly, to be understood as made rather than given, as ultimately malleable products of history and relationships, rather than as preordained immutable entities. Contingency and power, it is now widely acknowledged, shape knowledge claims and the ways in which the world and its constituent parts are comprehended. In the end, of course, it may be true, as Ian Hacking has pointed out, that all constructionist arguments “dwell in the dichotomy between appearance and reality set up by Plato, and given a definitive form by Kant.” And it may thus appear that contemporary discussions are prefigured to some degree in earlier works. Indeed, Hacking has gone so far as to suggest that although “social constructionists bask in the sun they call postmodernism, they are really very old-fashioned.” But scholarly agendas, emphases, and purposes shift, for they, too, are constructed, and it is unwise to draw too direct a line between past and present, or to posit continuities where there may be ruptures.

Consider by way of example the shifting reception of E.P. Thompson’s 1963 book _The Making of the English Working Class_. Emphasizing agency in its title, this landmark work offered an intricate, robustly empirical account of “out-workers, artisans, and factory workers” constructing, in ways that were clearly historically and geographically contingent, “a consciousness of their own interests as opposed to the interests of those who sought to dominate them.” It argued that class was not a structure or a category but something that “happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships.” In this view, the English working class was forged through a complex dialectical relationship between experience and consciousness; it was created by men and women living in particular circumstances, coping with a certain “ensemble of social relations” and interpreting (and acting within) their specific situations on the basis of their inherited culture and expectations. It was the result of “an active process, which owes as much to agency as to conditioning.”

Hailed as a tour de force of historical scholarship and serving as an inspiration to a long generation of social historians, the book spawned considerable debate in the 1960s and 1970s for its rejection of the base-superstructure model of Marxist thinking, which Thompson described elsewhere as reducing “human consciousness to a form of erratic, involuntary response to steel-mills and brickyards, which are in a spontaneous
process of looming and becoming.” A quarter century or so after its publication, however, the fundamental arguments of The Making were found wanting for other reasons. Although Thompson’s central claim – that culture was as important as economic activity in shaping people’s lives – may have contributed to the rise of discourse theory, Gareth Stedman Jones and Joan Wallach Scott drew inspiration from “the linguistic turn” and post-structuralist theory to offer sharp critiques of Thompson’s work. Elevating discourse above agency and experience, they made “cultural dynamics” the driving force of class formation. For Jones, it was the radical discourse of Chartism, derived from Thomas Paine and the idea of natural rights, not the harsh experience of economic exploitation and political oppression, that “determined the form taken by the democratic movement.” By Scott’s account, both experience and agency are “actuated in discourse,” and class is a discursive field with “multiple and contested meanings.” In her view, Thompson marginalized the feminine by locating the roots of class formation “in labour exploitation and rationalist radical politics” and failing to treat class construction as contingent on shifting meanings of gender.

All of this discussion of social constructionism, and of the ways in which scholars have sought to understand the lives of poor English “stockingers” and “obsolete hand-loom weavers,” might seem to have carried us a long way from considerations of nature and nation, and even further from the wilds of Temagami, which are the declared subjects of the significant, provocative book that you hold in your hand. Not so. With this work, Jocelyn Thorpe follows along the trail opened, in earlier part, by Gareth Stedman Jones and Joan Wallach Scott, turning to discourse analysis and asking us to rethink the ways in which we interpret the world by constructing such categories as wilderness, race, gender, class, nation, homeland, forest, park, and tourist attraction. Trained in English literature and equity studies, women’s studies, and environmental studies, Thorpe brings the perspectives of post-colonial theory and social nature scholarship to her inquiry, and thus brings social constructionism to bear as both refutation and philosophical critique. She employs Michel Foucault’s genealogical method to shape Temagami’s Tangled Wild as “a history of the present” intended to question contemporary convictions about this place and to demonstrate how knowledge and power have joined to yield particular, and by no means unimpeachable or self-evident, ideas (“subjects and truths”) about the territory and those associated with it. At the same time, she challenges “the fiction of a culture-free nature” to insist that “nature and society are everywhere implicated in one another.”

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With this book, then, Thorpe aims, as she writes on page 5 of her Introduction, to have us “examine again the ground we thought we knew” — and that ground ranges from the storied indigenous territory of n’Daki Menan, through the region later known as Temagami, Ontario, to the larger invention we call Canada.

These commitments differentiate Thorpe’s work from most other writing about Temagami, of which there has been a significant amount because the area has long been valued — in different ways by different groups who have often disagreed over how it might be used. From Thorpe’s perspective, even the most thorough of attempts to see the contested past of Temagami as a series of struggles between competing interests fails to account for the making of this place as “a site of Canadian nature” and falls short of explaining the asymmetries of power that made the region available to some people and denied it to others. In her view, such approaches are not only wanting, they are dangerous because they tend to reinforce the status quo. Continuing to address contemporary and enduring conflicts in Temagami through compromise, by balancing the competing claims of diverse interests, “risks reproducing colonial and nationalist relationships of power and inequality” (29).

Thorpe is not the first, on the larger canvas of Canadian scholarship, to develop such a perspective. She acknowledges the methodological and substantive parallels between Bruce Braun’s account of the historical and contemporary processes that produced the British Columbia rainforest as a site of nature and her own interpretation of Temagami, noting that environmental activists not only drew attention to destructive logging practices in both places but that these protests “also helped to mask contemporary Aboriginal claims to land, thus making the forest appear unproblematically a part of the Canadian wilderness” (16-17). There are echoes, too, in this account of Temagami, of Braun and Joel Wainwright’s discussion of the BC rainforest as a discursive construction, which concludes that “struggles over nature, land, and meaning are simultaneously struggles over identity and rights” — of indigenous peoples, the state, corporate interests, forestry workers, and others. For all that, Thorpe moves analysis of these matters in new directions as she examines persistent portrayals of the Temagami region as both a wild territory and a space encompassing iconic Canadian characteristics to expose “the processes of colonization upon which a racialized and gendered Canadian nation rests” (24).

Through the successive chapters of this book, it is clear that Thorpe has a message to convey and an important purpose to her argument. By recounting how the indigenous homeland of n’Daki Menan was reconfigured
as a forest reserve and part of the Canadian wilderness, through the im-
position of powerful colonial (and, to those with power, seemingly obvious)
ways of thinking about, describing, and organizing the world, she hopes
to better equip readers of this short but impassioned book to “tackle the
complex questions and demands that result from the history of colonial-
ism, exclusionary nationalism, and environmental exploitation.” More
than this, she would aspire to bring non-Aboriginal Canadians to “support
rather than impede or remain silent about Aboriginal struggles for self-
determination” (129).

Because these aims are not universally embraced, and because the ideas
of several of the scholars from whom Thorpe draws theoretical insight
remain relatively unfamiliar to many, some may carp at the way in which
she explicates the arguments underpinning her advocacy. There are pre-
cedents to hand. As ideas about the construction of nature have come to
prominence, critics have noted a certain ambiguity in much writing about
the hybridity of nature and culture; some discussions of socio-nature, for
example, couple strong idealist claims that things can be known only
through words and concepts with assertions of the materiality of the world.
Others have suggested that those who are critical of the ways in which
people living in different circumstances framed their understandings of
the world might be a little more reflexive about the rhetoric and the con-
texts of their own accounts.17

There are shades, in such claims, of the criticisms leveled at Gareth
Stedman Jones and Joan Wallach Scott for their unsympathetic assessments
of The Making of the English Working Class, which drew fire for constructing,
as Marc Steinberg had it, “a neostructuralism of discourse in which lan-
guage is invested with imperial ascendancy, and actors have diminished
agency,” and for assuming that “experience has no reality outside of its
signification.”18 Reflecting upon these tendencies and the linguistic turn
in historical scholarship more generally, Marxist historian Bryan Palmer
argued that something important was “lost in the assimilation of agency
and structure, culture and materiality,” and that Thompson’s claims had
been “all too easily incorporated into an emerging orthodoxy,” in which
“the cultural became the material; the ideological became the real.”19

But much has also been lost in the adversarial tone of intellectual debate
over these issues, and this is worth bearing in mind in thinking about
Temagami’s Tangled Wild. Here it is important to recognize that although
Thorpe draws upon Foucault’s theory of discourse in her analysis, she also
insists that “this book maps stories” (6). This is significant. Although the
formal term “discourse,” as it has come to be understood in the humanities
and social sciences, bears some similarities with the everyday concept of “story,” they are not equivalent and there is important interpretive space between them.

“Discourses” have been defined in various ways, but for followers of Foucault the term generally implies “systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.” Although Foucault noted that discourse “contains the power to say something other than what it actually says, and thus to embrace a plurality of meanings,” some insist that discourses set “the limits of acceptable speech” and define what can be said about a topic. By more self-conscious definition, discourses are specific, heterogeneous, regulated, embedded, and situated “representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible.” To put this slightly differently, discourses “shape the contours of the taken-for-granted world, naturalizing and universalizing a particular subject formation and view of the world.”

Stories also help people to make sense of their world and of their places in it, and they have been shared in every culture as a means of entertainment, education, and cultural preservation, and in order to instill moral values. Typically, stories are accounts of events (actual or imagined) in words, images, and sounds; they include plot, characters, and narrative point of view, and their narration is often marked by improvisation or embellishment. Much has been written on the differences and relations between stories and discourse (in the formal sense outlined above), but one recurrent distinction, worth attention here, can be expressed quite simply: the story is what is told, but discourse shapes the way in which it is told.

Although Thorpe pays little explicit attention, in the pages that follow, to this difference between “what” and “how,” to this distinction between mapping stories and identifying the systems of thought that constitute a prevailing discourse, her treatment of Temagami works between these poles to open space for further reflection upon the ways in which people make sense of their places in the world, and indeed their very being, even as it “demonstrates that wilderness and nations are made” and challenges us “to tackle the complex questions and demands that result from the history of colonialism, exclusionary nationalism, and environmental exploitation that brought us here in the first place” (129).

One way of thinking about these things actually returns us to Gareth Stedman Jones’ discussion of English radicalism, in which he sees discourse
less as a naturalizing, universalizing force than as a construct mediating之间的经验和意识。在这种观点下，它不兼容于语言和历史的材料论观点，因为话语不仅建构我们知识的对象，而且还标记了“通过在其他行为者和情境之间构建这些关系来创造语句或评估性描述的过程”。23 换句话说，话语帮助人们理解世界，或者赋予它意义，通过将“行动者和情境”以“历史地和相互地”联系起来。通过日常活动锻造的，通过社会惯例和与物质世界的互动，它们被社会网络所塑造，并反映了人们集体努力来理解他们的经验。它们可能是意识形态和霸权性的，但它们不可避免地“与特定的社会和机构背景相关。”而且每个都与其他的“存在”。“个体通过采纳或接受他们认为最合乎逻辑、合理和可理解的这些不同的说法来行使他们的权利，来结构他们对情况的看法。”24

另一个是J. Edward Chamberlin在他的非凡著作《If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?》中所建议的，该书提供了一个光辉的反思，展示了故事如何赋予我们意义和价值，同时赋予我们叫作“家园”以及其他世界的意义。25 取其精神，并以其为题，一个由吉特克桑长老提出的问题，Chamberlin广泛地展示如何故事将我们联系在一起，并使我们分开。至关重要的问题是—“我们属于哪里？”和“我们应该如何生活？”，其中最突出的问题——这是Chamberlin的唯一职责，展示即使人们面对这些存在性的谜团，作为几乎所有人，他们也愿意接受在“故事”中框定和传递的“容易的答案”，这些故事有各种各样的形式，从救赎故事到宪法，从南部的史诗和北方的传奇到美洲原住民的故事和非洲的歌颂诗歌，从童谣和国家的国歌到神话和数学。26 大部分而言，这些故事来自两种基本形式——一种描述“过程和序列，原因和影响”，另一种讲述“事物和事件满足一个整体目的和设计。”但大多数“在两种形式之间穿梭”这些原型，而且——识别它们是重要的——几乎所有的故事都带来“在信仰中的想象和现实的结合”，因此它们是“信仰的仪式，而不是事件的记录。”

另一方面，Chamberlin的故事与Jones的论述相当，即它们以群体和个人认为最合乎逻辑、合理和可理解的这些不同的说法来结构他们的观点。
intelligible, plausible, and comprehensible account of their particular circumstances. But precisely because these accounts exist in severalty – because different groups invoke different stories to guide their actions and explain their place in the world – they work to produce multiple forms of “Us” (we who subscribe to this particular version) and “Them” (who don’t). So, too, the varying constructions of, or stories about, Temagami to which Thorpe draws our attention in the pages that follow – the indigenous inhabitants’ view of their homeland n’Daki Menan, the foresters’ vision of the territory as a timber reserve, the recreationists’ conception of it as an empty land of woods and water, the legal professions’ assumption that truth is arbitrated rather than produced by law – worked to separate, divide, and entrench asymmetries of power and entitlement among groups and individuals.

Need it be ever thus? Stories of the sort we have been considering here – creation stories to constitutions and myths to mathematics – are powerful and enduring. Shaped by history, embedded in tradition, compelling to those who believe in them, and dear to hearts and minds, they are neither easily forgotten nor readily cast aside. Yet surely, one hopes, the answer is no – although the future is unlikely to turn out that way unless we learn to see things anew and act accordingly. Injustices produced by time and chance, by “colonialism, exclusionary nationalism, and environmental exploitation,” or by other circumstances, will not be resolved by continuing insistence on the particular virtue or unassailable “rightness” of any single discourse or foundational story (129). Distinctions between “Them” and “Us” are inevitable, inescapable corollaries of our ways of being in the world. Moving forward requires a commitment to tolerance and understanding, a capacity to see things from multiple perspectives and a willingness to embrace and respond to the consequences of difference. This will require serious, careful, and thoughtful attention to the stories of others and the ability to marvel at what is new and strange. To develop inclusive, mutually respectful, and more equitable communities, we need, Ted Chamberlin and Jocelyn Thorpe insist, to avoid the monocular vision that ultimately translates religion into dogma, myth into ideology, and community into conflict, and to find the common ground of wonder that lies at the heart of all our stories.
The most complex word claim appears in Raymond Williams’ *Keywords* (London: Collins, 1976), but the larger discussion of these matters, on which much of this paragraph rests, is Raymond Williams, “Ideas of Nature,” in Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980), 67-85.


Williams, “Ideas of Nature,” 68.


Ibid.


Thompson, *The Making*, 9; the phrase “ensemble of social relations” is widely attributed to Karl Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach* (6th Thesis); see Marx/Engels Internet Archive, available at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm (accessed 9 November 2011).


Foreword

15 “Stockingers” and hand-loom weavers from Thompson, The Making, 12.
17 See, for example, Demeritt, “What Is the ‘Social Construction of Nature’?” 785.
21 M. Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 134. I am indebted to Matt Dyce for this point and for his careful reading of and insightful comments on a draft of this essay.
24 This discussion depends substantially upon arguments outlined in ibid., especially 187-91.
25 J. Edward Chamberlin, If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories? Finding Common Ground (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003). Ted Chamberlin’s characteristically gracious reflections on this foreword arrived too late to affect its substance, but, as so often, his words led me to consider horizons beyond the limits of my current vision.
26 Ibid., 210, 2-3.
When I began this endeavour, I had no idea how much work it would be for the people around me. I am sure that many of them had no idea either. But when they figured it out, they neither stopped talking to me nor suggested I choose another path. Instead, they walked this one with me, for which I am more grateful than I can express, but I will do my best to try.

Members of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai welcomed me onto their territory, gave me a place to stay, put me to work, allowed me to sit in on meetings, let me access records, taught me about their history on n’Daki Menan, and shared with me food, laughter, and stories. I will never forget this generosity; nor will I forget that stories are much bigger than books. I am particularly indebted to Victoria Grant, who took me on as a student and as a friend, and whose wisdom about life’s complexities has very much informed my thinking and writing. I owe thanks as well to Chief Alex Paul, Chief John McKenzie, and the Joint Council for making me feel welcome and for allowing me to observe council and negotiation meetings. Great thanks also to Florence Becker, Deb Charyna, Holly and John Charyna, Leanna Farr, Doug Friday, Monty George, Fabian Grant, Joe Katt, Mary Katt, Peter McKenzie, Marie Paul, and Betty Ann Turner for sharing their perspectives and stories. I also appreciate the insights offered by the First Nation’s negotiator, Ian Johnson, and lawyer, Alan Pratt.

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All of this moving around makes me think about what it means to be at home. From my new vantage point at the eastern edge of Newfoundland, I see home as where my people are. Sometimes the fact that they are so scattered makes me feel scattered as well, but it also reminds me of the importance of family, of friendship, and of finding home in new places. Deborah McPhail and our daughter, Willa, have made this process easier. They have come with me, and they are my home. My parents, Wendy and John Thorpe, have encouraged my sisters and me to be brave and kind, to do our best, and to follow the paths of our lives, even when those paths have resulted in having daughters and granddaughters living far away on opposite sides of the continent. My faraway sisters, Hilary and Dinah Thorpe, are never more than a phone call away. Thank you to them, to our parents, and to my other people who make home home, wherever that is: Dawn, Judi, and Quinn Burgess Dalley; Libby Dawson; Cindy, Anne, and Kate Fleming Holmes; Gillian, Paul, Emma, Maggie, and Rebecca Hilchey Street; Sarah Lamon; Zoë Newman and Sapphire Newman-Fogel; Tyler and Hazel Peet; Wendolyn Schlamp; J.J., Angela, and Clayton Sheppard Donnelly; and Julie Sinden.

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Temagami’s Tangled Wild
On Highway 11, about an hour’s drive north of North Bay, Ontario, a new sign marks the entrance to an ancient territory: “Welcome to N’Daki Menan,” it reads, “Homeland of Teme-Augama Anishnabai” (see the photo on p. 2). The sign has stood on this spot since 2007, but the Teme-Augama Anishnabai – People of the Deep Water – have called n’Daki Menan home for thousands of years. Nonetheless, many non-Aboriginal people know this same place as Temagami, Ontario, and consider it not the Teme-Augama Anishnabai’s homeland, but an iconic site of wild Canadian nature (see the map on p. 3). Temagami is forested with pine and other tree species, including maple and birch, and contains many lakes as well as the rocky shores and thin soils considered typical of the Canadian Shield. It has served as a popular destination for campers and canoe trippers since the turn of the twentieth century. This book examines how n’Daki Menan became a famous Canadian wilderness, even as the Teme-Augama Anishnabai continuously asserted their rights and responsibilities toward a very differently understood territory.

The main argument of the book is that Temagami has been *made* – imaginatively and materially – as a site of wild Canadian nature. Its appearance as naturally wild and Canadian is the result of historical processes and relationships of power that disguised themselves as natural and worked to dispossess the Teme-Augama Anishnabai of their territory. For many generations, the First Nation governed the use of n’Daki Menan according to a system of family hunting territories, where each family had a responsibility to steward its two- to three-hundred-square-mile area in a way that
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ensured the continuity of the species upon which the nation depended for survival. As non-Aboriginal people began to encroach in growing numbers upon n’Daki Menan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai found their ways of life and relationships with n’Daki Menan disrupted. Over the ensuing years, they became increasingly excluded from their lands until, with the creation of a reserve in 1971, the federal and provincial governments officially recognized them as having claim to only one square mile of the four thousand comprising n’Daki Menan. Since then, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai have taken legal and direct action to assert control over n’Daki Menan, but according to Canadian law and popular imagination, the region exists, with the exception of the one-square-mile reserve, as part of Ontario.

Temagami’s reputation as wilderness has travelled far beyond the boundaries of the region itself. Tourist operators certainly try to tempt visitors
with the promise of “pristine lakes,” “magnificent old pine,” and “miles upon miles of unspoiled wilderness to explore,” but many people who have never set foot (or dipped paddle) there also know of it. Its fame stems in part from a 1980s conflict that is widely remembered as a fight between environmentalists and the provincial government regarding the construction of a logging road. In 1985, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources announced its plan to extend the Red Squirrel Road, which would connect two logging roads and open up new stands of timber south of Lady Evelyn Smoothwater Provincial Park for extraction by local forest companies (see the map on p. 3). Environmentalist critics of the government’s plan soon formed the Temagami Wilderness Society and managed to attract national and international media attention as well as a great deal of public support for their attempt to block the logging of what they began to call the “last great pine wilderness.” They gained support from prominent Canadians such as Margaret Atwood, David Suzuki, and Bob Rae, which helped to raise the profile of the Temagami issue, as did the arrest of more than ninety environmental protesters who blockaded the logging road in the fall of 1989. (Bob Rae was arrested with other protesters.) The road extension was eventually completed, but it never opened. In response to environmentalist pressure, the province decided to prohibit logging in this “particularly sensitive area” of the Temagami forest. Since then, the issue has faded from mainstream attention. What remains, however, is the idea of Temagami as a wilderness, a wilderness worth fighting for.

My argument – that the Temagami wilderness is a product of history and relationships of power rather than simply of nature – hinges upon the understanding, elaborated in Chapter 1, that wilderness is a social category that works alongside other social categories such as race and gender, gaining legitimacy through its appearance as self-evident, or natural. The naturalizing force of wilderness, race, and gender disguises the exclusionary practices through which places and subjects are created. As I explain in the following chapters, the existence of Temagami as a Canadian wilderness space depended variously upon the Teme-Augama Anishnabai’s eviction from n’Daki Menan, their confinement onto a tiny fraction of their traditional territory, their collapse into the category of wilderness, and the denial of their presence in and claim to the region. The creation of Temagami as a Canadian space was also part of a larger nation-building project that attempted, in part through the exclusion, or limited conditional inclusion, of immigrants of colour, to make Canada into a white settler society. To unravel the Temagami wilderness, as I aim to do by
revealing the cultural threads holding it together as a site of wild Canadian nature and making it seem self-evidently so, is to remove the naturalizing power of this social construct.

Such an unravelling is a necessary part of moving toward more just futures for those of us living in what has become the Canadian nation. As most non-Aboriginal Canadians now acknowledge, the first explorers in what eventually became Canada did not discover an empty wilderness. Instead, they happened upon territory new to them but familiar to the many First Nations whom they met along the way and who led them to the lakes, rivers, and landscapes that they later named and claimed. The diverse First Nations who encountered European explorers spoke approximately fifty languages, divided lands according to their own systems, and depending on their geographical and cultural circumstances, lived by fishing, trading, trapping, hunting, gathering, and farming. When French, then British, then Canadian governments divided First Nations lands into colonies, a nation, provinces, and territories, they imposed new orders onto pre-existing systems, thus disrupting those systems. And yet, like the Temagami wilderness, colonial and national territorial divisions have come to assume a certain naturalness, at least to the extent that non-Aboriginal Canadians rarely consider, as we drive north on Highway 11 or walk in downtown Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver, the contested character of these “Canadian” places. The Teme-Augama Anishnabai’s sign challenges the Canadianness as well as the wildness of Temagami, demanding that we examine again the ground we thought we knew.

This book provides such an examination with the hope that readers will understand and take seriously the embeddedness of colonial relations in the present, even in terms as seemingly innocuous as “Canadian” and “wilderness.” Colonial relations include a Canadian nation built upon the dispossession of First Nations peoples, the preferential treatment of certain settler groups, and the exploitation of the non-human world. We are shaped by and left with these legacies, albeit in differing ways depending upon where we fit within the nation, but we do not need to pass them along unquestioned to future generations. Indeed, the persistence with which First Nations have demanded lands, rights, and recognition, as well as the efforts by marginalized groups within the nation to have their concerns addressed, has made this virtually impossible. The non-human world has also grabbed our attention recently, forcing us to recognize what some have been saying for generations – that our actions affect the world around us and that if we hope to live in a world with clean air and water, with
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healthy soil and good food, a world that will sustain the lives of humans and others, we need to live with rather than against the non-human life that comprises and shares our world. Movement toward justice requires not only the recognition that non-Aboriginal people and governments live on Aboriginal lands, but also the establishment of more equitable relations among First Nations, the diverse population of non-Natives who live here as well, and the (again diverse) animal and plant worlds upon which we depend for survival and with whom we inhabit this earth.9

This book maps stories. It shows how the making of Temagami as Canadian wilderness had and has everything to do with the (incomplete and always contested) dispossession of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai and therefore with the non-Native Canadians who have benefited from this process. I recognize that non-Aboriginal people living in Canada are a diverse group (as are Aboriginal peoples). Some, many with white skin, have been encouraged to make Canada their home, whereas others have had to fight systemic discrimination to carve out a place in the nation. But in spite of our significant differences, the fact that we all live in Canada, that we all arrived later to this Native land, makes Aboriginal issues our issues as well. The story that I tell is very specific. It transpired as it did because of the particular interactions that occurred over the years among the Teme-Augama Anishnabai, n’Daki Menan, and people from other places. Yet I hope that this specific story also resonates more broadly. The processes through which the lands of particular First Nations became part of the Canadian nation are inextricably linked to a larger story of colonialism and nation building, and this larger story becomes visible through the place-based account I tell.

Learning about the history of n’Daki Menan/Temagami has made it impossible for me to think of the region (or any other) as a Canadian wilderness, but it will always be one of my favourite places on earth. I first visited Temagami as a teenager in 1992, when my fellow campers and I embarked on a two-week canoe trip organized by the summer camp I attended for many years. The purpose of the trip was to develop our leadership skills in a wilderness setting, and we took turns leading the group as we paddled past tree-covered shorelines, portaged along trails carved out of the forest, and camped in small clearings beside big trees.10 Temagami’s wilderness character appeared so self-evident that it never occurred to me to ask questions of wilderness. Instead, I embraced it wholeheartedly and paddled hard, stopping only when we approached a stark treeless slope to wonder what had happened there. Clear-cutting had happened. The experience of seeing this clearcut, devastating and frightening as it appeared,
affected me profoundly and helped to shape an environmental consciousness that remains with me today. In part because Temagami appeared so wild, the destruction of even a small part of it seemed a crime. For this reason, I find myself sympathetic to the environmentalist efforts of the 1980s: I do not want Temagami destroyed by unsustainable forestry practices either.

And yet my attachment to this place is also connected to the history that first brought me there, a history that I now argue needs to be re-examined in the context of colonialism. We campers travelled through the wilderness region of Temagami, Canada, rather than through the Teme-Augama Anishnabai's n'Daki Menan. Indeed, our canoe trip followed hard on the heels of a 1991 Supreme Court of Canada ruling that the Teme-Augama Anishnabai had lost any Aboriginal rights they once enjoyed in n’Daki Menan. We paddled through Temagami, then, coming to know and care about it as part of the Canadian wilderness, whereas the Teme-Augama Anishnabai found themselves excluded from the territory that they knew differently, and intimately. I now believe that we campers, and our Temagami wilderness experiences, contributed to the Teme-Augama Anishnabai's difficulties in having their territory recognized by non-Aboriginal governments – and so it is my own implication in the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples that leads me to question and to study this place.

We were not the only campers/environmentalists, however, to participate in the creation of the Temagami wilderness and thus to perpetuate the erasure of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai and n’Daki Menan. In the 1980s, while environmentalists struggled to save it, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai battled in court to have the same land recognized in Canadian law not as wilderness, but as n’Daki Menan. In 1988, the year before the environmental blockades, the First Nation set up its own roadblocks to prevent the extension of the logging road. Chief Gary Potts spoke out not only against the industrial logging of the region, stating that it would create “a desert,” but also against the environmentalist vision, which would make the region into “a zoo.” More fundamentally, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai challenged the assumption that either the provincial government or environmentalists had the right to determine the future of their territory. They camped in the bush for more than six months to stake their claim, removing themselves only when the province agreed not to begin building the road until after the Ontario Court of Appeal had heard their case. Within environmentalist representation of the conflict, however, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai struggle became invisible. Even after, separately
from environmentalists, they again blockaded the logging road in 1989 to stake a claim to their homeland – this time over two hundred Tem-Augama Anishnabai protesters and their supporters were arrested – the issue was represented, and continues to be remembered, as a contest over wilderness.\textsuperscript{14} Even as I sympathize with environmentalists and share many of their concerns, I am disappointed by their persistent reliance on the concept of empty wilderness, particularly given that criticisms of the idea are no longer new.\textsuperscript{15} I write this piece in the hope that those who, like me, care deeply about the more-than-human world will see in this book solid reasons to let go of the wilderness concept while continuing to struggle, in perhaps quite different ways, toward a world in which all of us might live well.

Chapters

Each chapter of this book focuses on a specific period in the production, contestation, and transformation of n’Daki Menan/Temagami. The chapters cover differing time frames and differing discourses, following chronologically from scientific forestry in the late nineteenth century to Canadian law in the 1980s. The chapters reveal multiple constructions of the region – empty Canadian wilderness, tourist mecca, wasteful old trees, n’Daki Menan – and make it clear that it has long been a contested space. But it also becomes apparent that some versions of the region (Temagami as part of the Canadian wilderness) have come to dominate the imaginative and physical landscape at the expense of others (n’Daki Menan). By showing the contestations and fissures in the social construction of national nature, as well as by demonstrating how particular understandings of the region have come to exist as the common-sense truth, this work enters into the struggle for the constitution of the region, aiming in part to help put n’Daki Menan back on the map.

Chapter 1 outlines the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the book and explains what it contributes to writing on race, gender, and nationalisms, as well as to writing on Temagami. Chapter 2 traces how the Temagami forest became a timber commodity in the early twentieth century and how this process placed the region within the context of resource conservation, the Canadian nation and British Empire, and displaced the Teme-Augama Anishnabai from n’Daki Menan. Chapter 3 investigates tourism at the turn of the twentieth century, showing how travel writing constructed Temagami as a part of the pristine Canadian
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wilderness for white men (and, to a small extent, white women) to explore. Within this narrative, the Teme-Augama Anishnabai, who were vital to the success of tourism, appeared as part of a disappearing wilderness rather than as cultural beings with their own systems and connections to n’Daki Menan. Neither forest conservation nor tourism was an innocent enterprise, and both were implicated in gendered, classed, and racialized relationships of power and inequality through their fashioning of a wilderness. Chapter 4 examines a conflict between the Teme-Augama Anishnabai and the Ontario government that started, in 1929, when the province demanded that Teme-Augama Anishnabai members pay rent for the privilege of living on Bear Island. In the ensuing controversy, the racial and spatial order that had been (imperfectly) imposed through earlier tourist and forestry discourses and practices was uprooted and reconfigured, and the Teme-Augama Anishnabai found themselves spatially confined and temporally displaced in a process that also revealed the instability of categories such as race and wilderness. Chapter 5 focuses on another struggle between the First Nation and Ontario, a legal battle over title to n’Daki Menan/Temagami that took place between 1973 and 1991. More than a contest over a given territory, the court case served as an avenue for the construction and contestation of land and the categories of race and gender. This chapter shows how historical discourses and practices, often colonial in character, emerge in the present to deny subjectivity and land to Aboriginal peoples. The Conclusion revisits the main points of the book, discusses present-day implications of the creation of the Temagami wilderness, and considers how the arguments advanced here might provide an opening for considering alternative futures in n’Daki Menan.
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