Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism

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Abstract. Recent debates over the stereotype of the "ecologically noble Indian" have helped illuminate some of the ambiguities and complexities that characterize the relationship between indigenous peoples and environmentalism. But, while scholars engaged in this debate have examined the cultural assumptions underlying Euro-American notions of *indigenousness*, they have paid relatively little attention to the equally problematic concepts of *environmentalism* and *conservation*, and how use of these terms necessarily frames indigenous people's beliefs and values in Euro–North American cultural terms. This essay examines the cultural assumptions underlying these concepts and highlights political consequences of their use.

> The American Indians' cultural patterns, based on careful hunting and agriculture carried on according to spiritual perceptions of nature, actually preserved the earth and life on earth. . . . Indian conceptions of the universe and nature must be examined seriously, as valid ways of relating to the world, and not as superstitious, primitive, or unevolved. . . . Perhaps the most important insight which can be gained from the Indian heritage is reverence for the earth and life.
> —J. Donald Hughes, *American Indian Ecology*

> Save a whale, harpoon a Makah.
> —Slogan used by protesters opposing the hunting of whales by Makah Indians in Washington State

As the above quotations suggest, relations between indigenous people and environmentalists are deeply ambivalent.[1] Over the past few decades, environmentalist thinkers have increasingly looked to indigenous peoples for inspiration and guidance (e.g., Booth and Jacobs 1990; Callicott 1982; Hughes 1983). Subscribing to a view like that presented by J. Donald

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Hughes in my first epigraph, they regularly invoke native traditions and philosophies when they articulate their own visions of the ecologically ideal society, and they frequently seek to enlist indigenous peoples as allies in environmental struggles.[2] And there have, indeed, been numerous instances around the world in which environmentalists and indigenous peoples have managed to forge effective alliances. In some cases these alliances have scored important victories that neither environmental nor indigenous activists could likely have achieved on their own.[3] But for every success story, for every productive alliance between environmental advocates and indigenous peoples, there is a matching horror story, a story of misunderstanding and conflict. Time and again, environmentalists and indigenous people have found themselves on opposing sides in particular environmental struggles, including, to name just a few, the antisealing and antifur campaigns in the North American Arctic, fishing disputes in Washington State and northern Wisconsin, and the battle over Makah whaling. When environmentalists and indigenous people square off in this manner, emotions tend to run high. Relations between them often become openly hostile, sometimes deteriorating into racist vitriol and even violence, as they did in the case of the Makah whale hunt.[4]

So are indigenous people the "original ecologists" that many environmentalist thinkers would have us believe? Or are they the enemies of environmentalism and a threat to the earth, as others have asserted? Recently, most scholars considering these questions have taken as their point of departure what Kent Redford (1991) has dubbed the image of the "Ecologically Noble Savage." This common stereotype is based on the assumption that indigenous people live in perfect harmony with the environment, more *of* nature than *in* it. Those who subscribe to this view cast indigenous people as "original conservationists," age-old stewards of the environment whose ecological wisdom and spiritual connections to the land can serve as an inspiration for those in industrial society who seek a new, more sustainable relationship with the environment. If we in industrial society would only heed their ancient teachings, the argument goes, indigenous peoples could lead us off the path to environmental destruction. Because it portrays indigenous people as environmentalists par excellence, this image of ecological nobility has led New Age spiritualists and environmentalist thinkers of all stripes to regard indigenous peoples not only as an inspiration but as natural allies in particular environmental struggles.

Critics of this view point out that the image of the ecologically noble savage has deep historical roots and, indeed, that it is little more than a (marginally) new twist on the age-old stereotype of the noble savage (Krech 1999). And, as with the older stereotype, use of the image of ecological

nobility (despite its seemingly positive connotations) can actually have serious adverse consequences for indigenous people. The stereotype denies the realities of native people's lives, reducing the rich diversity of their beliefs, values, social relations, and practices to a one-dimensional caricature. Worse still, these critics point out, the image of ecological nobility is an unattainable ideal. Anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians have shown that indigenous people—even hunters, supposedly the most ecologically noble of all—do not live up to this ideal and never have. Instead, they have always altered their environments according to their needs, sometimes quite dramatically (e.g., Butzer 1993; Krech 1999; Paul Martin 1967; Redford 1991; White and Cronon 1988). But when indigenous people fail to live up to the impossible standards of ecological nobility, Euro-Americans tend to judge them harshly, as guilty of betraying their own cultural beliefs and values. As with older incarnations of the noble savage stereotype, the image of ecological nobility authorizes Euro-Americans to judge how "authentic" indigenous people are (see Beuge 1996; Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995; Cruikshank 1998: 60; Wenzel 1991).[5] Thus, when environmentalists unexpectedly find themselves opposed by indigenous people, they are more likely to dismiss any opposition as a result of cultural loss or "contamination" than to take indigenous people's concerns seriously.

There are two main problems with this standard refutation of indigenous ecological nobility. First, it is framed negatively; it focuses on what indigenous people do *not* do (that is, they *fail* to live up to an impossible ecological ideal), rather than on what they *do*. While this may help us understand why Euro-American environmentalists react the way they do when indigenous people do not act as expected, it tells us nothing about the latter's motives. Second, those critics of ecological nobility who make this type of argument retain an imperialist perspective insofar as they continue to evaluate indigenous people's actions according to a Euro-American ideal (they merely allow for indigenous people not to live up to it). Part of the reason the debate over ecological nobility has been unable to transcend its imperialist roots, I suggest, is that scholars have focused on only half of the problem. While they have painstakingly examined the cultural assumptions underlying Euro-American notions of "indigenousness," they have paid relatively scant attention to the equally problematic assumptions about "environmentalism" that underlie the image of ecological nobility.

Yet terms like *environmentalism* and *conservation* are notoriously ill defined. Some scholars embroiled in the debate over ecological nobility (see, e.g., Alvard 1994; Brightman 1987; Hames 1987, 1991) have responded to this conceptual fuzziness by coming up with more rigorous definitions. Their approach has been adopted by researchers interested in developing

techniques for scientifically managing land and wildlife that will be compatible with local indigenous peoples' beliefs and practices (e.g., Zavaleta 1999). Such an approach, however, does little to advance our understanding of the relationship between indigenous people and environmentalists, because it ignores the fact that the concepts of conservation and environmentalism are of Euro-American origin to begin with, thus rendering any attempt to use these concepts to classify indigenous ideas and practices—regardless of how subtly or precisely they have been defined—extremely problematic. While many scholars (e.g., Berkes 1987, 1999: 151–53; Harries-Jones 1993: 49; Krech 1999: 212–13; White 1985) have acknowledged the culturally contingent nature of concepts like conservation, most nevertheless continue to use them as yardsticks against which to judge indigenous peoples' beliefs and practices in the ongoing debate over ecological nobility (i.e., either Indian people are acting as conservationists or they are not). One notable exception is Steve Langdon (2002), who argues that the standard model of wildlife conservation is based on outmoded assumptions about ecological equilibrium that fly in the face of current scientific understandings of chaos and complexity—even among ecologists. Nevertheless, this standard "puritanical" model of conservation retains its power at least in part because its roots lie in Judeo-Christian—particularly Protestant—assumptions that link "the good" with sacrifice and self-denial, while evil is seen as the product of excess and self-indulgence. Thus, Langdon argues, contemporary wildlife conservation is a constellation of beliefs and practices rooted in a particular set of cultural values rather than in some "objective" understanding of animal population dynamics. As a result, any attempt to use "conservation" as an objective measure of behavior necessarily privileges one particular set of cultural values while simultaneously obscuring the power relations that make that very privileging possible. Significantly, he then goes on to demonstrate in detail how this dynamic plays out in the case of waterfowl management in western Alaska, where the discourse and practice of conservation have undermined Yup'ik goose hunters' claims to decision-making power over local goose hunting.

Langdon's analysis challenges the usefulness—indeed, the very meaning—of one of the fundamental questions underlying the debate over ecological nobility: "Are indigenous people conservationists?" What is more, it indicates that simply by posing the question (i.e., attempting to evaluate indigenous people—as well as their beliefs and/or practices—by the yardstick of "conservation"), scholars necessarily commit themselves to judging indigenous peoples' actions in accordance with Euro-American cultural assumptions—not only about indigenous people, but also about conser-

vation itself. And, as Langdon has demonstrated, this can have very real adverse consequences for indigenous people.

In this article, I examine a different concept, but one that is equally fundamental to the debate over ecological nobility: that of environmentalism. What is meant by the term *environmentalism*? How do unexamined assumptions about the nature of environmentalist thought and practice shape understandings of indigenous people and their relationship to the environment and environmentalists? I will show that if we hope to understand the ambivalent relationship between indigenous people and environmentalists we must refrain altogether from using the Euro-American ideal of ecological nobility to evaluate indigenous people's actions and focus instead on the specific social relations and cultural assumptions that underlie their actions in particular circumstances. Throughout, I draw on my research with the people of Kluane First Nation (KFN) in Canada's Yukon Territory.[6] In doing so, it is not my intention to draw conclusions about indigenous people in general, but rather to use the Kluane case to draw attention to some of the problems with the generalizing assumptions that already pervade the discourse on relations between indigenous people and environmentalists.

The Spectrum of Environmentalism

Scholars studying the politics of environmentalism agree that *environmentalism* is something of a catchall term, actually referring to a wide range of quite different beliefs and practices. In their attempts to make sense of this diversity, scholars of environmentalism (along with environmental activists themselves) have devised a variety of conceptual frameworks for categorizing the range of positions that might be considered "environmentalist." The result has been a host of different taxonomies. Depending on the particular typology, scholars have viewed environmentalist beliefs and practices as ranging from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism (Eckersley 1992), from resourcism to deep ecology (Oelschlaeger 1991), from anthropocentrism to ecologism (Dobson 1990), from technocentrism to ecocentrism (O'Riordan 1981; Pepper 1996), from egocentrism through homocentrism to ecocentrism (Merchant 1992), or from shallow to deep ecology (Devall 1980; Naess 1973)—to mention only a few of the more common formulations (for other formulations, see Fox 1990; Gottlieb 1993; Milton 1996: 74–88; Rodman 1983; Sale 1990; Worster 1985). Despite some important differences, these various schemes all have one thing in common: an underlying assumption that environmentalist thought and practice exists on a spectrum (Eckersley 1992: chap. 2).[7]

Most discussions of the range of environmentalist positions in the United States invoke the now mythologized rivalry between two icons of the U.S. environmental movement: Gifford Pinchot and John Muir. Gifford Pinchot, founder and first head of the U.S. Forest Service, is associated with the rise of utilitarian conservationism, whose proponents advocated the sustainable use of natural resources (to be achieved through government regulation) in preference to the short-sighted excesses of laissez-faire capitalism. This, they believe, will ensure that natural resources continue to be available to humans in the future. John Muir, on the other hand, is associated with preservationism, a more aesthetic—even spiritual—approach that sees the natural world as valuable in and of itself, rather than in its use by humans. Originally friends and allies, these two founders of the U.S. conservation movement became increasing estranged until their different philosophies led them to bitterly oppose one another in the now legendary battle over the damming of Hetch-Hetchy in Yosemite (Fox 1981; Hays 1959; Nash 1982).

The spectrum of environmentalism—in all its various incarnations—is clearly modeled on the "political spectrum," that widely accepted notion that the range of possible political positions exists on a continuum from right to left, from reaction to radicalism. Although many environmentalist scholars and activists (e.g., Dobson 1990: 29–32; Porritt 1984; Scott 1990) have denied that environmentalism can be placed on the standard political spectrum—arguing that green politics transcends traditional political categories like *right* and *left*—they nevertheless retain and reproduce the political spectrum's basic form by constructing typologies of environmentalist thought and practice that range from reactionary, through reform-oriented, to radical positions. Indeed, most scholars and activists engaged in the politics of environmentalism—even those who do not explicitly seek to develop environmentalist typologies—take for granted the idea that environmentalist thought and practice exist on a spectrum. This is evident in the fact that terms like *radical environmentalism* and *mainstream environmentalism* have become commonplace in the discourse and practice of environmental politics both inside and outside academia. The very notion that one form of environmentalism is "more radical" than another takes for granted the existence of such a spectrum. What follows is a brief "generic" description of this spectrum's basic features.

At one end of the environmentalist spectrum are "non-" or "anti-environmentalist" positions. This group is thought to be composed of capitalists, industrialists, and those mass consumers who have bought into "the system." These nonenvironmentalists supposedly draw a sharp distinction between humans and the environment and adhere to a strictly anthropo-

centric view of the world. They believe that humans completely dominate nature, which in their eyes is little more than a collection of resources for human use (hence the term *resourcism*). According to this characterization, nonenvironmentalists see the value of the environment as a function solely of its utility to humans. Many environmentalist thinkers have argued that it is precisely this anthropocentric and instrumental view of nature that is responsible for much of the environmental destruction in the world today.

Toward the middle or "light green" part of the spectrum are the utilitarian conservationists and environmental reformists. Inspired by the vision of men like Gifford Pinchot, this group supposedly consists of "mainstream" environmentalists, some politicians, members of hunting and fishing organizations, and concerned citizens who have become aware of the dangers of unconstrained environmental exploitation. As a result, they advocate changes in lifestyle, environmental protection legislation, and the rational use of the earth's resources, or "conservation" (as opposed to "preservation"). Although reformists, too, tend to see the value of nature as a product of its utility to humans, they are willing to recognize the importance of values that are not strictly economic, such as clean air and water, aesthetics, biodiversity, and so on.

Finally, at the far "dark green" end of the spectrum are lumped the so-called radical environmentalists. Tracing their intellectual roots to the likes of John Muir, they supposedly cultivate a spiritual relationship with the environment and deny any sharp distinction between humans and the environment (a distinction usually attributed to Descartes). Unlike more moderate environmentalists who call for restraint, they advocate a radical reconstruction of capitalist/industrial society as the only cure for today's environmental crisis. Radical environmentalists decry an anthropocentric view of the world and see the value of nature as an inherent quality, utterly independent of its utility to humans.

Any attempt to characterize the environmentalist spectrum in generic terms, as I have just done, necessarily runs the risk of overgeneralization. I do not mean to imply that the foregoing brief characterization of the environmentalist spectrum captures all the subtleties discussed by various scholars of environmental politics. As I have stated, there are significant differences among the various schemes for categorizing environmentalist thought and practice. There is considerable disagreement, for example, over how to categorize particular environmentalist approaches (i.e., where to place them on the spectrum) and even over what constitutes a particular "approach" in the first place. Nor do I mean to imply that the three very broad categories I described are homogeneous. Indeed, a number of

scholars have examined ideological disputes and political rivalries that have occurred between environmentalists located quite near one another on the spectrum.[8] Their attention to these disputes, however, does not undermine their implicit acceptance of the spectrum itself. In presenting this generic overview of the environmentalist spectrum, it is not my goal to capture all the details of any particular typology, but to present—in schematic form—the general outlines of the conceptual framework that most Euro-Americans (scholars and activists alike) bring to their understanding of environmental politics. Having done so, we are now in a position to see the debate over ecological nobility in a new light; we can now see that the argument over whether indigenous people are environmentalists or not is nearly always an argument about *where* they belong on the spectrum of environmentalism.

As I have already noted, the stereotype of the ecologically noble Indian has its roots in the much older image of the noble savage. Even in the nineteenth century, the architects of the conservation movement in the United States were drawing on their understandings of Indian hunting practices as a model for the nascent conservationist perspective. Historian George Cornell (1985) has shown how important the image of the ecologically noble Indian was to the thinking of two major figures in the birth of the American conservation movement: Ernest Thompson Seton, renowned naturalist and the founder of the Boy Scouts of America, and George Bird Grinnell, one of the founders of both the Audubon Society (in 1886) and the Boone and Crockett Club (1888) and editor of *Forest and Stream* (on Grinnell and Seton, see also Fox 1981: 350 and Krech 1999: 19–20, respectively). Both of these men attributed their conservationist views in part to their experiences with Indian people (Grinnell, in particular, traveled extensively among the Pawnee and other Plains tribes). Even Gifford Pinchot, who advocated a scientific approach to conservation, believed that he and others were merely reinventing what Indian people had already been practicing before Europeans arrived on the continent (Miller 2001: 377–78). In his book, *Breaking New Ground*, Pinchot wrote approvingly of the Algonquian family hunting territory (as described by anthropologist Frank Speck): “Centuries before the Conservation policy was born, here was Conservation practice at its best” (cited in Fox 1981: 350). Also writing in the conservationist tradition, Stewart Udall (1973: 32), secretary of the interior under John F. Kennedy, wrote that “much of our ecology does, in fact, represent a return to the land wisdom of the Indian.” Indeed, as Shepard Krech (1999) points out in his discussion of the “crying Indian” (from the 1970s Keep America Beautiful antilittering campaign) and its cultural impact, the image of the ecologically noble Indian has retained its sym-

bolic importance right up to the present. In viewing indigenous people as original conservationists, reform-minded environmentalists have regarded them as intellectual predecessors who possess critical knowledge of conservation techniques that might be harnessed for use in developing more effective conservation policies.

But it is not only those at the middle of the environmentalist spectrum who have invoked the image of the ecologically noble Indian. Henry Thoreau and John Muir, two icons of radical environmentalism—each of whom is revered for his spiritual approach to nature—both explicitly compared their own philosophies of wilderness with Indian spiritual practices (or at least their assumptions about Indian spiritual practices). Indeed, philosopher Max Oelschlaeger (1991: 139–70) convincingly argues that Thoreau's antimodernist writings on nature were an extended effort to recover what Thoreau himself referred to as "Indian wisdom," an environmental sensibility lost by Euro-American civilization sometime in the past.[9] Muir, profoundly influenced by Thoreau, was inspired by what he learned on his trips to Alaska about Tlingit attitudes toward the natural world. He wrote approvingly of Indian beliefs and practices, which he felt resonated with his own intensely spiritual approach to nature: "To the Indian mind all nature was instinct with deity. A spirit was embodied in every mountain, stream, and waterfall" (cited in Fox 1981: 350; see also Muir 1915: 235–36). Following Thoreau and Muir, thinkers from the radical end of the environmental spectrum have regularly invoked the image of the ecologically noble Indian (e.g., Devall 1980; Devall and Sessions 1985; Mander 1991; Marshall 1933; Oelschlaeger 1991: 4; Snyder 1991), but they have done so in a manner that differs fundamentally from that of more mainstream environmentalists. For radical environmentalists, the ecologically noble Indian is more than merely a practicing conservationist from whom Euro-Americans might relearn important techniques (as the Indian is for the conservationists). Rather, this figure becomes subversive, the antithesis of all that is wrong with Euro-American society. "Indian wisdom" can only truly be recovered through revolution, the wholesale replacement of industrial practices and sensibilities with preindustrial (or postindustrial) ones.[10]

Conservationists and mainstream environmentalists, then, tend to view the ecologically noble Indian as the original conservationist or as a natural antilitter activist, while environmentalists with more radical goals see in the ecologically noble Indian a subversive figure, one who holds the philosophical keys to environmental revolution. From whatever point on the environmentalist spectrum they hail, it seems, environmentalists invoking the image of ecological nobility seek to locate indigenous people beside themselves on the environmentalist spectrum. They legitimize their

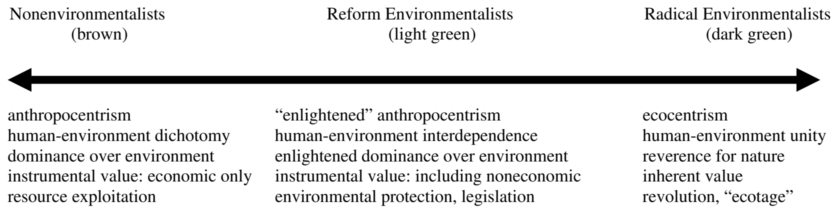

Figure 1. The Spectrum of Environmentalism.

own political positions by associating themselves with this mythic ecological figure—and all its associated symbolic capital. In contrast, scholars and others who criticize the portrayal of indigenous peoples as ecologically noble often end up arguing in effect that they belong at the "nonenvironmentalist" end of the spectrum. Those on all sides of the debate, however, tend to take the spectrum itself for granted. The problem with this is that it constrains how we can think about indigenous people and their relationship with the environment. Since the spectrum is itself a cultural construction, any approach that takes it for granted remains rooted in Euro-American assumptions about the range of possible relationships between humans and the environment. To see what I mean, consider the following.

Environmentalists and scholars of environmental politics alike tend to treat the spectrum of environmentalism as if it represented the range of possibilities for a *single* variable: something like the "degree of environmentalism." But "environmentalism" is not a simple variable that can be plotted along a mathematical axis. People are not merely "more" or "less" environmentalist. Instead, what we gloss as "environmentalism" is actually a complex set of overlapping, dynamic, and sometimes contradictory beliefs and practices. The spectrum of environmentalism obscures much of this complexity because each point on the spectrum seems to indicate a single thing: one's degree of environmentalism. In reality, however, each point represents a nexus of different beliefs, values, and practices, as sketched in figure 1.

There is nothing "natural" about this particular configuration of beliefs and practices (where they are placed and how they are grouped along the spectrum); instead, it reflects a set of culturally specific assumptions about people and possible relationships with the environment. For instance, the following are all generally agreed to be located at the radical "dark green" end of the spectrum: (1) a deep reverence for nature, (2) a belief in the oneness of humans and nature, and (3) an "ecocentric" view of the

world in which the value of nature is inherent rather than contingent on its use by humans. As a result, most environmentalist scholars and activists automatically assume (at least implicitly) that all three beliefs are inextricably linked to one another. In fact, however, there is no *logical* reason why this must be so. As we shall see below, for example, Yukon First Nation people generally subscribe to the first and the second, but not the third.

Those on both sides of the debate over ecological nobility typically focus on a limited number of indigenous beliefs and/or practices ranging from their reverence for Mother Earth to their implication in the destruction of certain animal populations and/or habitats.[11] They use these beliefs and practices as evidence to back up their arguments that indigenous people either do or do not qualify for the status of ecological nobility. The problem is that by picking and choosing isolated beliefs and practices from the extraordinary diversity of indigenous experience, one can always find evidence that "proves" that indigenous people belong at some particular position on the environmentalist spectrum. And, because different sets of beliefs and practices are associated with one another by virtue of their position on the environmentalist spectrum, placing indigenous people on the spectrum on the basis of a particular belief or practice necessarily entails making a series of unjustified assumptions about some of the *other* things that they must also believe and do. So, for example, if environmentalists find evidence that a particular indigenous people have a deep reverence for the environment and use that to place them at the dark green end of the environmentalist spectrum, they simultaneously make the implicit assumption that those people also subscribe to the notion that nature has inherent value. As we shall see below, this can lead to all kinds of political difficulties and misunderstandings. Before I discuss these difficulties, however, I will show that the people of Kluane First Nation cannot be placed anywhere on the environmentalist spectrum for precisely the reasons just described.

Yukon First Nations and the Spectrum of Environmentalism

One could make a compelling case that the people of Kluane First Nation—and Yukon First Nation people in general—are "environmentalists." One could make an equally compelling case that they are not. It depends entirely on one's perspective; there is ample "evidence" available to support either claim. In this section, I examine some of this conflicting evidence in an attempt to show that, at least in the Kluane case, the question "Do First Nation people qualify as environmentalists?"—implicit in most of the literature on ecological nobility—is meaningless. Then, in the following sec-

tions, I will consider some of the political consequences of characterizing Yukon First Nation people in environmentalist terms.

Many Kluane First Nation people, like members of other Yukon First Nations, feel a deep sense of reverence for the natural world. This is immediately obvious to anyone who spends time out on the land with elders or hunters. Their respect and reverence for the environment clearly derives from a sense of their oneness with it; they speak explicitly of themselves as "part of the land, part of the water" (McClellan et al. 1987: 1), and they derive great joy and satisfaction from a deeply personal relationship with the land and animals. As one Kluane First Nation woman eloquently expressed it to me:

> I remember going out in springtime . . . and Grandma grabbing the end of a brush like this . . . spruce trees . . . and just rub it on her cheeks like that. She say, "hello! *aché*! Good to see you again. You come out and grow some more." And talking to a tree like that. Or sometimes, you know, they watch baby gophers just running around. Just watch them, just enjoy what they're doing. Or else we'd sit outside like this and listen for the birds . . . listen . . . listen. "Ah, nice to hear the birds again. They come back and visit us from long ways. Just come here visit us just a little while. Just listen to them now." And I remember Grandpa used to always like to camp under that tree that they call trembling aspen. . . . It's got that little round leaves on it. And when the wind blows it goes "tlthlthltl;" it makes noise like that. And grandpa used to say, "Listen: summertime. Listen, hear the trees talking?" I mean, just little things like that, you know . . . just to make you enjoy that you're alive. We're alive to hear something like that for another year. (Interview with Mary Jane Johnson 1996)

Because of the reverence for the natural world evident in such statements, some Euro-Canadian environmental activists in the Yukon have regarded Yukon First Nation peoples as fellow environmentalists—even as radical environmentalists from the dark green end of the spectrum (see Jones 1997: 1–4, 23–25, 60). But Euro–North Americans must be careful not to superimpose their own understandings and assumptions on First Nation people. Elsewhere (Nadasdy 2003: chap. 2), I have argued that Yukon First Nation people's concept of respect is far more complex and culturally dependent than most Euro–North Americans are aware. I show that most Euro-Canadian Yukoners completely misunderstand what Yukon First Nation people mean by "respect" as they use it in debates over wildlife management. The former tend to understand this term as little more than shorthand for a moral injunction against wasting meat,

rather than as an English term Yukon First Nation people use to refer to a complex set of beliefs about the proper relationship between humans and their spiritually powerful animal benefactors. What is more, Euro-Canadians tend to judge First Nation people's behavior according to their own (mis)understandings of this term. This can have tangible political consequences for First Nation people, as it did in the controversy over catch-and-release fishing in the territory. Euro-Canadians were often surprised to discover that First Nation people believe live-release fishing to be *disrespectful* to the fish (even though it conforms to Euro-Canadians' "no waste" notion of respect), and the First Nation position on the issue was given little weight in the development of fishing regulations (Easton 2002).

I would like to argue here that a similar dynamic plays out in broader environmental/political contexts as well. Many Euro–North Americans also interpret First Nation people's talk of "respect" to mean that they have feelings of love and reverence for an environment that they regard as sacred and that these beliefs in turn keep them from exploiting and/or destroying it. But terms like *sacred* and *reverence*, like *respect*, are English terms used to approximate aboriginal concepts. It is dangerous to judge First Nation people's behavior against the meanings of these English terms as generally accepted by Euro–North Americans. Important as love and reverence (however one defines the terms) may be for First Nation ideas about respect, they are only part of the picture. There are other aspects of the concept that—to Euro–North Americans—can seem unrelated, or even contradictory, to the image of the ecologically noble Indian who loves an environment that he or she holds sacred. This is best illustrated with an example.

One afternoon I was talking with a Kluane First Nation hunter. He knew that one of the things I was interested in was "the environment," so occasionally he would bring up the topic on his own. On this particular afternoon, he started such a conversation in the following way: "Yeah, the environment . . . boy, it's one lean machine. It'll kill you dead in no time." He then talked about how dangerous the environment can be if you do not know what you are doing. He said that often out in the bush there is no room for error; there are no second chances if you make a mistake. The environment will kill you, he said, if you do not respect it. He then began to talk about the importance of having patience when you deal with the environment (see Nadasdy 2003: chap. 2 for a discussion of the integral role "patience" plays in Kluane people's concept of respect). If you do not have patience out in the bush, you can get into big trouble. You must be willing to let environmental conditions shape your actions, rather than sticking doggedly to your plans. For example, if it is –50° Celsius while you are out

on the trapline, you must be willing to stay put until it warms up, no matter what plans you may have back in town. If you try to stick to your plans regardless, you are liable to end up dead. Similarly, if you get cold when you are traveling in winter, he advised, "stop and light a fire. Sure, you'll be late for dinner or whatever, but at least you'll get there."

Nor is such a seemingly adversarial attitude reserved solely for the weather. As Robert Brightman (1993: chap. 7) has noted for the Rock Cree, there is a tension in many northern hunting societies between two seemingly contradictory principles governing human-animal relations. While at times hunters do view animals as munificent benefactors to be loved and respected, at other times they think of them as powerful spiritual beings who must be overcome and dominated through magic and cunning if humans are to survive. Not only must animals be cajoled, outsmarted, and/or tricked into giving themselves to the hunter, but they can also present a real threat to the hunter's life and the lives of his or her family. If the hunter fails to live up to his or her reciprocal obligations toward animals (obligations incurred through the very act of hunting), the animals may exact spiritual retribution, causing misfortune, sickness, or even death (see also Nadasdy 2003: chap. 2). Certain animals can also present an even more direct—if mundane—threat to life and limb. The same hunter who warned me about the weather, for example, on a different occasion warned me never to fire my last bullet if I am alone in the bush: "Always save at least one so you can get home." He insisted that even if I had wounded an animal but had only a single shell left with which to dispatch it, I should refrain from doing so. Instead, I should go home, get more shells, and then return to track the animal. He seemed to be suggesting that one was better off risking potential spiritual retribution from the wounded animal than walking unarmed into a chance encounter with a bear or wolf.

Such an adversarial view of the environment seems a stark contrast to the attitude of love and reverence expressed in the kinds of statements by First Nation people that tend to find their way into the environmentalist literature. Nevertheless, both attitudes toward the environment (reverential and adversarial) are quite common among Kluane people. Indeed, the same individual is likely to express each of these sentiments at different times, in different contexts. Clearly, then, Kluane people's concept of respect is more complex than most environmentalists imagine. When Kluane people speak about the importance of respecting the environment, they do not mean simply that one must love and revere the land and animals.

Indeed, Yukon First Nation people's actual attitudes toward the environment often stand in stark contrast to those that many Euro–North Americans *assume* they have—even if we ignore the complex misunder-

standings surrounding terms like *reverence* and *respect*. As we have seen, the assumptions embedded in the environmentalist spectrum can cause environmentalists to assume that since indigenous people have a reverence for nature they must necessarily also subscribe to an ecocentric view of the world and believe that nature has value independent of its utility to humans. Kluane people, however, generally do not share this ecocentric belief in the inherent value of nature, as the following story illustrates.

One day in late December, I accompanied a member of Kluane First Nation to a cabin of his on the Big Arm of Kluane Lake. Though I subsequently visited the cabin many times, that was the first time I had ever been there. As we got off our snowmobiles, my companion asked me if I thought the scenery was beautiful. The cabin is on the lake near the mouth of a small creek. Behind the cabin, a spruce-covered mountain rises steeply. All around are the mountains of the Ruby Range; across the Big Arm and to the north is Raft Creek Mountain, which drops clifflike into the narrow opening of Raft Creek Valley. To the south, across the lake, are the much higher mountains of the Kluane and Donjek Ranges in Kluane National Park. All was covered in snow, including the frozen expanse of Kluane Lake. In short, the view was spectacular, and I answered to that effect. He smiled and responded that "Indians don't care about the scenery." His father had decided to build a cabin there because the moose hunting is good up in the mountains behind the cabin and across the Big Arm; there are lots of Dall sheep[12] further down the Arm, especially at Raft Creek; the fishing is good right in front of the cabin and at Black Point, a few miles to the south at the base of the Arm; there is plenty of wood around; and there is good water in the creek right next to the cabin. He told me that native people choose where they are going to live and camp by the food that is available there. They think about "groceries" and other useful things and could not care less about the scenery.

I came to see this as something of an overstatement intended to highlight what he felt was an important difference between First Nation and Euro-American views of the land, but—to a large extent—Kluane people *do* view their environment through a lens of utility. Everywhere they go, they see the land in terms of what animals are around, how much wood is available, and where the nearest water source is. Though some are certainly willing to acknowledge alternate standards of value in addition to straight physical utility (including aesthetics and even biodiversity), the notion that nature might have inherent value is foreign to most of them. I never once heard anyone expound such a theory. Based solely on this anthropocentric and utilitarian view of the environment, environmentalists and scholars might be tempted to place Kluane people not at the dark green end

of the spectrum (as they would if they were basing it instead on Kluane people's reverence for nature) but in the middle, among reform environmentalists, or even at the extreme opposite end among nonenvironmentalists, who are frequently condemned in the environmentalist literature for just such a utilitarian approach to nature.

It is not only indigenous people's beliefs and values that have been subject to the form of cultural misappropriation I am describing. Some scholars and environmentalists have also claimed that the practices—and even the very social relations—of indigenous peoples are ecologically noble. Over the years, anthropologists and ethnohistorians (e.g., Berkes 1987; Feit 1973, 1978, 1987; Freeman and Carbyn 1988; Nelson 1983; Speck 1915; Williams and Hunn 1982) have described numerous social relations and practices that indigenous people have historically used to manage the land and animal populations on which they have depended. These include the development and use of exclusive family hunting territories, seasonally specific variations in hunting and fishing strategies, sharing practices, food taboos, ritually prescribed behavior toward animals, prohibitions against overhunting and meat wastage, and so on. Such practices are embedded within and given meaning by a complex set of beliefs and values regarding what kinds of behaviors toward the land and animals are appropriate and what kinds are not.[13] Some scholars have argued that while these practices may not be part of a conscious attempt to manage and/or conserve wildlife (and may in fact be based on a completely different rationale), they nevertheless have served—perhaps fortuitously—many of the same functions as Euro-American techniques for managing/conserving animal populations (see Berkes 1987; Krupnik 1993). It is the existence of such practices that has led many environmentalist thinkers to claim that indigenous people are the "original ecologists."

This is certainly the case in the Yukon. Elsewhere (Nadasdy 2003: chap. 2), I have discussed a number of the aboriginal "management practices" that were (and in many cases still are) prevalent among Kluane people. These include a complex seasonal round, a number of ritually prescribed behaviors toward animals, food taboos, and an injunction against wasting meat or killing more animals than needed (though this need is governed by cultural, not purely caloric, criteria). Historically, of course, Yukon First Nation people did not create formal written rules and regulations governing these practices, nor did they employ special officials whose task it was to monitor and enforce those regulations.[14] Rather, this responsibility was and continues to be assumed by everyone in the village, and they enforce the unwritten rules of behavior through gossip, joking, and other indirect means, rather than through the courts. Such forms of indirect

criticism remain crucial for teaching and "enforcing" appropriate behavior toward animals.[15]

Several years before my arrival, for example, a young hunter had killed several Dall ewes. Because of his constitutionally protected right to hunt, this was perfectly legal. Kluane people had been concerned about the sheep population in that area for some time, however; so most people in the village were unhappy with his actions. Shortly after the incident there was a community meeting that most of the village attended, including the young hunter. The original object of the meeting had not been to discuss the hunter's actions, but the topic came up nonetheless. A number of those in attendance (including elders) spoke up and condemned the killing of ewes in the strongest possible terms. In typical Athapaskan fashion, however, they did not address the guilty hunter directly; all of their criticisms were phrased as general statements, aimed at no one in particular. Even so, the hunter got the message. One of the people who related to me the details of this event described (with a certain amount of glee) how the hunter had squirmed through the entire proceeding. It had been obvious that he wanted to leave the room, but he could not because he knew everyone was talking to him. When the topic finally changed, however, he was gone in an instant. Everyone who recalled this incident agreed that they had never had trouble with that hunter again.[16]

Such behavior is not a thing of the past for Kluane people. Community members continue to exert this kind of indirect social pressure to enforce collective norms. One autumn during the period of my research, for example, a young man from the village and a First Nation friend of his from Whitehorse shot a cow moose just off the Alaska Highway north of Burwash Landing. Again, this action was not illegal, since, according to Canadian law, these men had an aboriginal right to shoot moose—cow or bull—wherever and whenever they chose. But members of the community were not at all pleased about what these young men had done. A couple of years earlier, KFN (along with the White River and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations) had agreed to urge its members to comply with the establishment of a two-kilometer no-hunting corridor along the Alaska Highway in its territory.[17] For several days, the incident was a major topic of conversation in the village. Everyone I heard talking about it roundly condemned the young hunters' actions. They said it had been irresponsible and had made KFN look bad. The young hunter from Burwash let it be known, also through indirect channels, that it was his friend and not he who had shot the animal. In fact, he claimed that he had told his friend not to shoot it, but that his friend had done so anyway. Once the animal had been shot, he had had no choice but to help butcher it and bring home the

meat. Regardless of whether this was really the case (and some in the village clearly doubted it), it is significant that the young hunter felt it necessary to let it be known that he had opposed shooting the moose in the corridor. The social pressure brought to bear on him indirectly through gossip was considerable, and he was never involved in another such incident during my stay in the village. In a similar (but much more highly publicized) case that occurred in a neighboring First Nation, the social pressure brought to bear on the offending hunter was enough to cause him to actually leave the village for a period of time (Norman Easton, personal communication).

Until relatively recently, few Euro–North American resource managers would have recognized such informal practices as constituting a system of wildlife management. Increasingly, however, scholars and environmentalists have begun to see them not only as a form of management, but as inherently "conservationist." When viewed in this light, such practices become "evidence" that can be used to place indigenous people on the environmentalist spectrum.

There are, however, often significant differences between indigenous people's practices and those typically viewed as "conservationist" by wildlife biologists, environmental activists, and other Euro–North Americans. Indeed, a number of scholars have argued not only that indigenous people's beliefs and practices can be incompatible with an environmentalist agenda, but that they can at times be distinctly *anti*conservationist (e.g., Brightman 1987, 1993; Fienup-Riordan 1990; Krech 1981, 1999; Martin 1978).[18] Robert Brightman, for example, argues that the Rock Cree of northern Manitoba historically believed that animals would reincarnate after being killed, as long as hunters treated them with the proper respect. This meant having the proper attitude toward them, following certain rules of behavior, and disposing of their remains in a ritually prescribed manner. According to Brightman, there is no historical evidence that the Rock Cree observed any prohibition against waste or overhunting until well after European contact. Indeed, he argues that precontact Cree ideology actually required hunters to kill *all* the animals they saw, whether they needed them or not. Since animals offered themselves to the hunter, to refrain from killing them was to risk offending them and jeopardizing one's chances of receiving such gifts in the future. Brightman argues that as a result of their belief in animal reincarnation, Rock Cree people did not believe that humans could affect animal populations through overhunting. The number of animals they killed was irrelevant: as long as hunters treated them with respect, the animals would be reborn and would offer themselves to hunters again in the future. It was this set of beliefs, Brightman maintains, that allowed Rock Cree hunters to play a critical though unwitting role in the near eradication

of local beaver populations in the early to mid-1800s. In his opinion, the successful long-term adaptation by the Cree to their environment prior to the fur trade had more to do with low population densities and their limited need for meat and fur than with the existence of aboriginal management and conservation.

Brightman goes on to argue, however, that as a result of the collapse of the beaver population in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Rock Cree began to rethink their relationship with animals. Gradually, they came to see human hunting as a potential cause of animal declines. It was during this period, he maintains, that the Rock Cree first began to look on meat wastage and overhunting as inappropriate and began to engage in practices geared toward "conservation," in the Euro-American sense. These practices, he argues, were modeled, at least in part, on recommendations made by representatives of the Hudson Bay Company. But the Cree did not uncritically adopt European ideas about conservation and all the assumptions underlying them; rather, they incorporated some of these new ideas into their own existing system of beliefs about human-animal relations. Over time, the prohibition against waste became a basic element of the Cree concept of respect. Significantly, however, Brightman notes that these new beliefs never completely replaced older beliefs about the reincarnation of animals. The two belief systems continue to exist side by side and, perhaps as a result, individual Cree hunters vary considerably in the degree to which they actively engage in "conservationist" practices. Similarly, Ann Fienup-Riordan (1990) argues that Yup'ik Eskimos of western Alaska not only historically believed that animals are capable of reincarnating, but that this belief remains strong (indeed, dominant) in the community today. As a result, many Yup'ik people continue to doubt that overhunting is even possible. This has led to serious tension between Yup'ik villagers and state wildlife managers.[19]

It is clear that Kluane people historically shared many of the beliefs and practices described by Brightman and others. Catherine McClellan (1975: 91) notes that Indian people of the southern Yukon, like many other native peoples, historically saw animals as capable of reincarnation, so long as they and their remains were treated properly by humans. The historical record does contain some accounts of excessive killing by Indian people in the Kluane area, but they are of dubious reliability. As a result, it remains uncertain whether Kluane people ever regularly engaged in practices of overhunting and meat wastage like those described by Brightman. Regardless of whether the injunction against waste is an age-old belief or a relatively recent addition to Kluane hunting ideology, however, there is no doubt that Kluane people today subscribe to the notion that human hunt-

ing can and does affect the size of animal populations. Thus, on the surface it might seem that their beliefs and practices are at least partially in line with some of the assumptions of modern wildlife conservation. But this is something of an illusion. Though Kluane people and biologists agree that overhunting is "bad," they differ fundamentally in their understandings of *why* it is bad. As far as at least some Kluane people are concerned, overhunting and waste affect the animals not merely because they reduce the number of animals in the total population, but also because they offend the animals, making it less likely that hunters will be able to kill them in the future. Most Kluane people view the prohibitions against overhunting and meat wastage as simply two facets of their complex relationship with animals, a relationship that also entails many other responsibilities that are not so easily classified as "conservationist," including prohibitions against talking badly about animals, against "playing" with them, against laughing at them, and so on (Nadasdy 2003: chap. 2).

Even when First Nation people themselves consciously view some of their own practices as part of an aboriginal system of wildlife management/conservation, however, there is room for misunderstanding. People's interpretations of such practices and their implications can differ significantly. At a meeting with wildlife biologists in 1996, for example, a Kluane hunter spoke about a place called *Mäy Yets'ädäla* (which he loosely translated as "go get 'em"; *mäy* is the Southern Tutchone word for Dall sheep). Mäy Yets'ädäla is at a steep place in the mountains. It is difficult to get there, and it has only one approach. Despite the fact that it is a dead end, however, Dall sheep use this spot to escape predators, because just before the dead end there is a section so steep that predators cannot follow them (sheep are very agile and can walk with ease on extremely steep slopes). Thus, the sheep can retreat to this place and simply stay there until their predators tire of waiting and leave. Though this defense works well against wolves and other predators, it is less than effective against humans. Once the sheep are trapped at Mäy Yets'ädäla, it is a simple matter for hunters to shoot (with a gun or bow and arrow) as many of the sheep as they want; and their bodies are easily recovered from the slopes below.

When the hunter described this place to biologists, he talked animatedly about it and laughed. He was proud of his people's knowledge of this place and the power it gave them to kill sheep. In speaking about Mäy Yets'ädäla, he sought to illustrate the depth of his people's knowledge about the land and animals. He was also trying to make the point that Kluane people have always been good managers of the land. Despite their ability to kill as many sheep as they wanted at places such as Mäy Yets'ädäla, there had always been plenty of the animals around—at least

until Euro–North American hunters showed up. This is a clear—if implicit—rejection of one of the most common arguments against the existence of indigenous conservation systems: that low population and simple technology alone are sufficient to explain indigenous peoples' relatively low historical impact on animal populations. But the biologists who listened to the hunter's account of Mäy Yets'ädäla seemed not to appreciate the point he was trying to make. They became quiet, looked uncomfortable, and quickly withdrew from the conversation. Here was a First Nation man who claimed to be concerned about sheep populations telling them with apparent pride that he and his people not only knew how to kill as many sheep as they wanted (and in a very "unsporting" manner to boot), but that in the past they had killed "five, or six, or as many as we needed" at a time. It is perhaps not surprising that the biologists were uncomfortable listening to what they took to be a "confession" of excessive killing.

I have argued that Yukon First Nation people's beliefs, values, social relations, and practices simply cannot be categorized as environmentalist or conservationist. Nor can they be categorized as nonenvironmentalist. To do either is to impose a whole set of inappropriate cultural assumptions on Yukon First Nation people and their relationship to the land and animals. But people *do* speak about Yukon First Nation people's beliefs and practices in precisely these terms. In the following sections, I examine the political consequences of this. I begin with a general discussion and then illustrate it with reference to specific cases from the Yukon.

The Politics of Ecological Nobility Reconsidered

As I indicated above, many scholars have criticized the image of ecological nobility. In so doing, they have highlighted many of the political consequences that arise from judging indigenous peoples according to the standards of Euro-American "environmentalism." As I also indicated, however, these same scholars have tended to overlook the fact that the terms of the debate over ecological nobility themselves serve to reinforce a number of unexamined and unwarranted assumptions about First Nation people and their relationships to the environment. Because of this, the standard critique of ecological nobility requires some modification if we are to take into account the culturally constructed nature of environmentalism itself (e.g., the spectrum of environmentalism). One of the most glaring weaknesses of the standard critique of ecological nobility is exposed by the following question: Why do indigenous people themselves make such extensive use of the ecologically noble savage stereotype if it is simply a European construction that serves Euro-American ends?

Most critics of ecological nobility are fully aware that indigenous people themselves make frequent use of the image. Generally, these critics have explained this in two ways: as a result of false consciousness or as an opportunistic political strategy. In an example of the first approach, Krech (1999: 27) argues that the image of the ecological Indian, like earlier incarnations of the noble savage, has become hegemonic: "At first a projection of Europeans and European-Americans, it eventually became a self-image. American Indians have taken on the Noble Indian/Ecological Indian stereotype, embedding it in their self-fashioning." In this view, Indian people, by subscribing to and using the image of ecological nobility, participate in their own exploitation and "dehumanization" (Krech 1999: 26; see also White and Cronon 1986: 20).

To view the ecologically noble Indian stereotype as an unmitigated evil for Indian people, however, is to ignore the very real clout that its use gives them in certain political contexts. The image of the ecologically noble Indian is an extremely compelling one, appealing to sympathetic audiences around the world. By invoking the image, environmentalists and indigenous people alike tap into the image's rhetorical power, enabling them in some instances to galvanize broad—even worldwide—support for particular local struggles (see, e.g., Brosius 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995; Ramos 1998). As a result, some critics of ecological nobility have argued that Indian people invoke the stereotype not out of false consciousness but as an opportunistic political strategy. Beth Conklin and Laura Graham (1995), for example, argue that Amazonian Indian people are more concerned with issues of land rights and self-government than with the environment per se, but some have adopted the stereotype of ecological nobility for political reasons (see also Ramos 1998). By representing themselves as ecologically noble, the Kayapo Indians of Brazil, for instance, suddenly gained access to a vast amount of symbolic capital. They were then able to use this symbolic capital to reach an international audience and forge an alliance with numerous international environmental organizations. The pressure brought to bear on the Brazilian government by this international environmentalist-indigenous alliance led to unprecedented gains—not only environmentally, but in terms of political power at home. The Kayapo were able to parlay their new political capital—gained in the environmental arena—to advance their own political goals. Along similar lines, some have argued that when indigenous people use the image of ecological nobility, they are often not really making claims about themselves all. Rather, in time-honored fashion, they are using it as a foil for criticizing Euro–North American society (e.g., Beuge 1996: 77; Krech 1999: 214). Conklin and Graham (1995), along with many other critics of ecological nobility (e.g.,

Beuge 1996: 86–87; Cruikshank 1998; Krech 1999: 26, 214–16), however, ultimately conclude that while the image of ecological nobility may be useful to Indian people in the short term, in the long run any use of the stereotype—even by Indians themselves—does them more harm than good.

At first glance, this view is compelling. According to its proponents, temporary alliances between environmentalists and indigenous people may sometimes develop, but these are necessarily based on a combination of colonialist stereotyping and false-consciousness that are ultimately detrimental to indigenous people. And, worse yet, if Indian people are not in fact "ecologically noble," as so many scholars have pointed out, there will inevitably be those who argue that indigenous people who use the image of ecological nobility (an image they know to be false) are guilty of cynical and opportunistic misrepresentation. As it turns out, this is precisely the argument used by opponents of the Makah whale hunt, and one hears it espoused by environmentalists everywhere who find themselves opposed by indigenous peoples. Thus, environmentalist-indigenous alliances are doomed, for as soon as the "true" nature of indigenous people's relationship to the environment comes to light, relations between the parties will dissolve—often in bitterness and amid charges of betrayal and denunciations of inauthenticity.

My own experience in the southern Yukon, however, suggests that this picture—though not exactly wrong—is somewhat oversimplified. Relations between environmentalists and Indian people in the Yukon—as elsewhere—are indeed often based on stereotypes, misunderstanding, and political maneuvering. But this is not the whole story. To get a handle on the complexities of these relations we must examine why and how indigenous people themselves make use of the image of ecological nobility.

First Nation people in the Yukon, like Indian people in Amazonia and elsewhere, make regular and strategic use of the image of ecological nobility. By identifying themselves with the image of the ecologically noble Indian, Yukon First Nation people do indeed gain a certain amount of legitimacy in the eyes of many Euro-Canadians, a legitimacy that, when wielded effectively, translates into very real power in certain political arenas, including those of wildlife management and environmental politics, as well as land claim and self-government negotiations. And Yukon First Nation people do sometimes use the image of ecological nobility as a foil, more to criticize Euro-Canadian society than to make specific claims about themselves. But does this mean that their use of the stereotype should be dismissed as (merely) political opportunism? On the contrary, most Yukon First Nation people with whom I have spoken invoke the image of ecological nobility at least in part because they really do feel that some

of their beliefs and practices are more appropriate and environmentally benign than those of Euro–North Americans. In such cases, it would be inaccurate to claim that they are either acting opportunistically or being duped by a false consciousness.

In my experience, it makes little sense to divorce First Nation people's political goals from concerns about the environment per se, as Conklin and Graham suggest. Like the Indians of the Amazon with whom Conklin and Graham worked, Yukon First Nation people are extremely concerned with issues of land and sovereignty. Their claims to land and self-government, however, are—and have always been—deeply entwined with broader concerns about what constitutes "proper" and "improper" use of the land (Yukon Native Brotherhood 1973). First Nation land claims and self-government in the Yukon simply cannot be understood except in relation to First Nation peoples' understandings of and concerns about the environment.

This is not to deny the very real dangers inherent in any use of the ecologically noble Indian stereotype. As so many critics have argued, the image of ecological nobility can and sometimes does backfire on the Indian people who use it. But this does not negate the fact that at least some aspects of the image of ecological nobility ring true to Yukon First Nation peoples' sense of themselves and their relationship to the land and animals. But this presents us with a problem. Why would the image of ecological nobility resonate with the lives and experiences of Indian people at all if it is—as so many critics have suggested—just a stereotype constructed by Euro–North American environmentalists for their own ends? The answer to this question, I suggest, lies in the different ways people conceive of and use this image in the first place.

As we have seen, most environmentalists who invoke the image of ecological nobility do so primarily to legitimize their own political positions. The ecologically noble Indian is the embodiment of the ideal relationship between humans and the environment, and those who successfully link themselves with this mythic ecological figure help legitimize their own political position in the process. To successfully exploit the image of ecological nobility in this way, environmentalists must portray indigenous people in terms consistent with their own and their audiences' assumptions about environmental politics. That is, they must locate indigenous people next to themselves on the ecological spectrum. And so they make all the unwarranted assumptions about indigenous people that this entails.

Indigenous people—in the Yukon at least—are generally doing something quite different when they invoke the image of ecological nobility. Like environmentalists, they seek to advance their own political agendas by

exploiting rhetorical and symbolic capital associated with the image of the ecologically noble Indian. What they are *not* doing, however, is claiming a place for themselves on the ideological spectrum of environmentalism. Most, I would argue, could not care less about whether or not they or their beliefs qualify as "environmentalist." There are, of course, plenty of indigenous people who consider themselves to be environmentalists proper (e.g., see LaDuke 1999), but there are also many who would vehemently reject such a label—often due to negative experiences they have had with Euro-American environmentalists in the past.[20] None of this, however, invalidates indigenous people's claims that (at least some of) their beliefs and practices are more ecologically sound than are those of Euro–North Americans. The problem is not that these claims are false (the results of either cynicism or false consciousness), but that when indigenous people do make such claims, Euro-Americans tend to judge them by their own entirely different assumptions and so find them wanting.

We saw that Kluane people have beliefs and values that often encourage them to act in the best interests of animal populations. We also saw that they have ways of sanctioning those in the community who fail to behave in accordance with those beliefs and values. When Kluane people stand up in wildlife management meetings and claim to be competent managers of land and animals, as they often do, they are referring to the practices described above and others like them, which they genuinely do see as more environmentally benign than are those of most Euro–North Americans. At the same time, however, such claims—and even the very notion of contrasting the "environmental impact" of First Nation practices with Euro-American ones—arise out of a particular colonial context, a context in which First Nation people are forced to struggle with Euro-American wildlife managers and other powerful interests to maintain their access to the land. Within this colonial context, many First Nation people honestly believe that they are better qualified to manage the land and animals than are Euro–North American politicians and wildlife biologists. Thus, although they make strategic use of the rhetoric of environmental nobility, they do not necessarily do so cynically. Rather, they are merely engaging with government bureaucrats and others in what has become the dominant colonial discourse of wildlife management: that of conservation. If they wish to be taken seriously by wildlife managers, First Nation people *have no choice* but to claim in effect to be ecologically noble conservationists. If they do not, their wishes and needs will be ignored—as they were in the not too distant past. By drawing on the image of ecological nobility in this way, however, they are *not* claiming a place on the spectrum of environmentalism, with all the implicit assumptions that would entail.

In the next section I take a closer look at the political dynamics outlined above by examining the politics of ecological nobility in the Yukon, specifically in the Kluane area. I examine some of the claims to ecological nobility made by Kluane people, how Euro–North Americans misinterpreted them, and the political consequences of such misunderstanding.

Environmental Politics in the Yukon: The Aishihik Wolf Kill

Disagreements between First Nation people and environmentalists arise for many different reasons, from simple intolerance to deep cultural misunderstanding. In the Yukon, such disagreements often take on a racial character due to the politically sensitive nature of aboriginal hunting. Many Euro-Canadian resident hunters in the territory (many of whom regard themselves as conservationists to some degree) resent First Nation people's aboriginal right to hunt, with their exemption from season and bag limits. Because of this, most cases of overhunting or meat wastage by First Nation people usually become big news in the territory, making the local papers and serving as topics of debate in letters to the editor for weeks afterward. Since First Nation hunters are not required to report their kills to the Fish and Game Branch, many non–First Nation hunters automatically assume that the abuses which come to light are only the tip of the iceberg. They tend to see an isolated case of flagrant waste or overhunting by a First Nation person and assume that all First Nation people behave in this way, even when the vast majority of them may actually condemn such behavior. This can result in wild exaggerations about overhunting by First Nation people, in which isolated instances of excessive or inappropriate hunting (which certainly do occur) tend to be blown out of proportion. I witnessed numerous instances of this while I was in the Yukon. One occurred, for example, in relation to the incident described above involving the two young hunters who shot a single cow moose in the no-hunting corridor along the Alaska Highway. As I have already noted, most people in the village disapproved of this activity and subjected the young Kluane hunter who had been involved to fairly intense if indirect criticism. As the story spread by word of mouth, however, it was gradually transformed beyond recognition; several months after the incident, the story circulating within the Euro-Canadian hunting community in the nearby village of Haines Junction was that First Nation people had killed twenty cow moose along the north highway. Such exaggerations understandably drive a wedge between First Nation people and environmentalists/conservationists when the latter believe them to be true. And this in turn can have powerful political repercussions in a context

where many Euro-Canadians view First Nation hunting rights as an unfair and undeserved privilege.

But not all disagreements between environmentalists and First Nation people can be written off as simple misunderstandings attributable to exaggeration and/or racial intolerance. Local First Nation beliefs and practices often do come into real conflict with environmentalist agendas. As many scholars have pointed out, environmentalists who subscribe to the stereotype of the ecologically noble Indian are often surprised by these conflicts and interpret them as the result of cultural assimilation, hypocrisy, and greed on the part of First Nation people (e.g., Beuge 1996; Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995; Cruikshank 1998: 60; Wenzel 1991). Many of these same scholars excuse indigenous people for their ecological shortcomings by arguing, in essence, that "nobody is perfect" (i.e., that no people anywhere could possibly live up to the unattainable standard of ecological nobility). The problem with this argument, true though it may be, is that it accepts—at least implicitly—the position that Euro-American values and assumptions can be used as the basis on which to judge First Nation people's beliefs, values, and practices. It also completely ignores First Nation people's own perception about what they are doing and thinking. In fact, First Nation people who come into conflict with Euro-American environmentalists are often acting in a manner that is quite consistent with their own deeply held beliefs and values. Conflicts often arise *not* because First Nation people are "only human" (i.e., unable to live up to the imposed standards of an environmentalist ideal), but because they *are* living up to their own cultural standards. The root of most misunderstandings between Euro-American environmentalists and First Nation people in the Yukon lies in a tendency to interpret First Nation behavior by Euro-American cultural standards and assumptions. A specific example should help illustrate this.

In the mid-1990s, there were serious concerns about moose and caribou populations in the Kluane and (geographically contiguous) Aishihik areas. In response, the Yukon government implemented the Aishihik-Kluane Caribou Recovery Program. One key aspect of this five-year initiative was a predator control program that consisted of shooting most of the wolves in the region by helicopter. Needless to say, the program was extremely controversial, drawing protesters from as far away as Germany. Given the political climate at the time, it is unlikely that the territorial government could have proceeded with this program without the support of the local First Nations, in this case the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN) and the Kluane First Nation. As it turns out, most Kluane people had ambivalent feelings about the wolf kill. On the

one hand, most agreed that because of a decline in trapping, the number of wolves had grown too large and was having a devastating impact on caribou and moose populations. On the other hand, many Kluane people were troubled by the methods the government used and would have preferred more land-based solutions (such as bounties or trapping subsidies) to a capital-intensive helicopter hunt. Although some Kluane people opposed the wolf kill, the Kluane First Nation government decided to support it. Not surprisingly, this decision was met with confusion and dismay by environmentalists, some of whom interpreted it as a betrayal and reacted by claiming that Kluane people could only support the wolf kill because they were no longer "really" Indians; that they had been contaminated by white society and lost their culture. One opponent of the wolf kill characterized CAFN (which, like KFN, supported the wolf kill) as follows:

> It is fair to note that the Champagne-Aishihik band retains only minimal economic or cultural ties to the land, that "few" of the band even hunt, and that trapping was not possible because they "lacked the skills." The impression conveyed by the Yukon Territorial Government and the Champagne-Aishihik that the local Natives are subsistence hunters who depend on the caribou for their existence is, quite frankly, untrue. The lifestyle described to us by the Champagne Aishihik differed in no respect from the lifestyle lived by non-native residents, many of whom strongly oppose the Wolf-kill.[21]

In the eyes of many environmentalists, charges of inauthenticity and cultural loss were borne out by the fact that Kluane people could support the wolf kill despite the fact that wolves are supposed to be of special religious significance to them. Yukon First Nation people do assert (sometimes quite publicly) that wolves are "sacred" animals. They do so because, for one thing, they regard wolves to be other-than-human persons who, in addition to being especially tough and intelligent, also possess particularly potent spiritual power. Wolves also have totemic significance throughout the region; half of the First Nation people in the Southern Yukon belong to the Agunda (wolf) moiety (see Allen 1994: 19; McClellan 1975: 135–39). Not surprisingly, many environmentalists had difficulty squaring Kluane people's assertions about the sacredness of wolves with their support for the wolf kill. Confusing "respect" for "reverence," Euro–North Americans tended to view the act of killing wolves as incompatible with respecting them. They argued that because Kluane people support the wolf kill, they must be lying about the sacred status and religious significance of these animals. But this assumption is based on Euro-American notions of religion and the sacred. In fact, Kluane First Nation's decision to support

Figure 2. Kluane trappers Buck Dickson and Mickey Blackmore with their winter's catch of fur, including wolf pelts, ca. 1950.

the wolf kill was quite consistent with most Kluane peoples' beliefs and practices.

The symbolic and spiritual importance of wolves (or, indeed, any animal) does not—nor did it ever—prevent local First Nation people from killing them. In the past, First Nation people in the southern Yukon killed wolves for their fur *and* because they viewed them as competition for moose and caribou (McClellan 1975: 137). Historically, First Nation people shot and trapped wolves; they also engaged in an activity known as "denning," which consisted of finding a wolf den and, after killing the female, pulling out all the pups and killing them as well. It seems clear that they engaged in these activities not only to collect the bounties[22] and sell the wolf pelts, but to keep the wolf populations down, since "Indians throughout the Southern Yukon are convinced that wolves have multiplied rapidly since the establishment of the large game preserves in the Kluane Lake and MacMillan River areas" (McClellan 1975: 135). First Nation people also view wolves as a potential danger to human life. Although wolf attacks are relatively rare, they do occur; and there are numerous accounts of fatal and near-fatal incidents with wolves in the region (Allen 1994: 14–15; McClellan 1975: 136–37). Also, wolves regularly kill dogs and horses. For these reasons, First Nation people tend to kill wolves whenever they see them, especially if they are near a camp or village (Allen 1994: 13). This practice continues today.[23]

At the height of the controversy over the wolf kill, I discussed the issue

with an experienced First Nation hunter who supported the wolf kill. He was acutely aware that many Euro–North Americans were having trouble reconciling his support of the wolf kill with his claim that wolves are sacred. More than one person had accused him of being duplicitous, arguing that wolves must not really be of religious importance to him because if they were, he would not be in favor of shooting them. He categorically rejected this argument. Yukon First Nation people do indeed have a great respect for wolves, he said, but this does not mean that they will not kill them. He himself is a member of the wolf moiety, but if a wolf threatened him or his food he would kill it without a second thought. And this is precisely what the wolf kill was all about, since the wolves—by threatening the moose and caribou populations—were threatening First Nation people's food supply. He argued that the problem with most Euro–North American people's reasoning on the subject is that they project their own Western ideas about religion onto First Nation people. Wolves *are* sacred, he said, but when a native person shoots a wolf, "it's not the same as shooting Saint Peter." Shooting a wolf is not blasphemy or sin. On the contrary, First Nation people's concept of respect is *based* on the need to kill animals. As long as hunters behave properly toward wolves and their remains, killing them can be a perfectly sensible and respectful act. Most Euro–North Americans, however, do not understand this and persist in interpreting First Nation behavior according to their own assumptions.

Not surprisingly, cultural misunderstandings of this sort can come to a head in situations where the killing of animals is public and controversial. The clash between First Nation people and environmentalists never became violent in the case of the Aishihik wolf kill, as it did, for example, over treaty fishing in Washington State and Wisconsin. One of the main reasons for this is that there was a great deal of public support for the wolf kill throughout the territory. As a result, Friends of the Wolf and other radical groups from outside the territory received little local support; even local environmental organizations such as the Yukon Conservation Society and the Yukon chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society—both of which opposed the wolf kill—publicly distanced themselves from these outside groups. Sensitive to the complexities of the local political situation, these local organizations were careful not to antagonize the First Nations who supported the wolf kill. In private conversations, however, some members of these local groups expressed to me their bewilderment at the First Nations' position and—like the Friends of the Wolf spokesman cited above—attributed it to the loss of First Nation culture. A few even told me that they privately supported the actions of Friends of the Wolf,

though they understood there were good reasons they should not do so publicly.

Scholarly writings about the politics of ecological nobility go a long way toward explaining environmentalists' reactions to opposition from First Nations peoples under such circumstances. Critics of ecological nobility would interpret the wolf kill as a textbook case: environmentalists who subscribed to the stereotype of the ecologically noble Indian interpreted First Nation support of the Yukon wolf kill as a betrayal and attributed it to cultural contamination and loss. Notably lacking from such a standard explanation, however, is the perspective of First Nation people themselves. In the case of the wolf kill, Kluane people did not simply "fail to live up to an impossible ecological ideal," as many scholars would have it. Rather than measuring their position on the wolf kill against an imposed Euro-American ideal, their actions are more properly understood in relation to their own very different set of cultural ideals, which, when interpreted from a Euro-American perspective, can seem to stand in stark contradiction to one another. On the one hand, there is the seemingly "dark-green" belief that wolves are nonhuman persons who are to be treated with the utmost respect. On the other, there is the apparently nonenvironmentalist attitude that wolves can be shot simply because it is "useful" to humans to do so. These two beliefs seem contradictory only to those who take for granted the assumptions embedded in the spectrum of environmentalism. As I have noted, Kluane people were themselves divided over the wolf kill; there were those who opposed it and those who supported it. But to speak about either position in relation to an "impossible ecological ideal" is to completely ignore Kluane people's own perspectives on the issue. In coming to terms with the wolf kill, individual Kluane people grappled with many serious issues: their beliefs about human-animal relations, the contingencies of a hunting way of life, and the realities of environmental politics in the Yukon. What they were *not* at all concerned with was living up to some Euro-American ideal of ecological nobility.

Conclusion

I have argued that the debate over whether indigenous people are or are not ecologically noble is a spurious one, since it necessarily entails evaluating their behavior according to imposed Euro–North American cultural assumptions. As a result, this whole debate serves to obscure rather than illuminate the complexities of the relationship between indigenous peoples and the environmental movement. Any attempt to place First Nation people

somewhere on the environmental spectrum, for whatever reason, is to impose on them the terms of a debate that is not their own. To claim that First Nation people are "environmentalists" or "antienvironmentalists," based on the evidence of a handful of isolated beliefs and practices, is to make a series of claims about them that are completely unjustified.

While Kluane people are often quick to make claims about the superiority, in environmental terms, of some of their beliefs and practices, I never heard a Kluane person claim to be an "environmentalist." In fact, the mere mention of the word *environmentalist* in Burwash Landing is liable to be met with a stream of criticism: "Environmentalists? Let me tell you about environmentalists . . . ." Many Kluane people still associate environmentalism with the antifur movement, which had a devastating impact on the local economy. It is true that some Kluane people are sympathetic to certain environmentalist causes, and KFN has on occasion worked closely with local environmental organizations (notably the Yukon Conservation Society) on some issues, but, just as often, Kluane people and environmentalists disagree with one another on a very basic level. As far as most Kluane people are concerned, environmentalists have their own agenda, which is often more in tune with that of other Euro–North Americans than with the interests of Kluane people.

Most Kluane people are not environmentalists. This is not because they are *anti*environmentalists, but because the terms of the debate do not apply to them. First Nation people's beliefs and practices do not fit anywhere on the environmentalist spectrum, and any effort to pigeonhole them in this way has serious political consequences for them. Those who do categorize First Nation people in this way, regardless of their intentions, end up viewing indigenous people either as rapacious despoilers of the environment, as sad failures unable to live up to the ideals of ecological nobility, or as inauthentic manipulators, cynically and opportunistically deploying environmentalist rhetoric (that they know to be false) for their own political gain. In fact, they are none of these things. They are simply people with a complex set of beliefs, practices, and values that defy standard Euro–North American schemes of categorization. To be sure, they sometimes make use of environmentalist rhetoric, because it confers on them a degree of legitimacy and power in certain political contexts. But in my experience, they seldom do so cynically; more often they genuinely believe that their own practices are more environmentally benign than those of the dominant Euro–North American society. Their claims to this effect must be considered on their own merits, rather than as part of a larger general debate over their ecological nobility.

Notes

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1 For a discussion of racist reactions to the Makah whale hunt in 1999, see Tizon 1999.
2 Numerous scholars have also explicitly linked the destruction of the environment by Euro-Americans with the destruction of indigenous peoples and cultures (see, e.g., Grinde and Johansen 1995 and Vecsey 1980 for discussions of this process in North America).
3 See, e.g., Conklin 1995, May 1990, and Brosius 1997, 1999 for (critical) discussions of successful alliances in the Amazon, Canada, and Malaysia, respectively.
4 The relationship between environmentalists and indigenous peoples can also vacillate wildly over time—even in relation to a single issue. As George Wenzel (1991) has shown, in the early days of the antisealing campaign, the Inuit of the eastern Arctic, if not exactly allies of the southern activists, were at least sympathetic to their goals. By 1983, however, they were among the antisealing campaign's fiercest opponents.
5 See Berkhofer 1978 for an overview of the noble savage stereotype and the consequences of its use. Krech (1999: introduction) and Redford (1991), among others, discuss the historical and conceptual relationship between the stereotypes of the noble savage and the ecologically noble savage.
6 For those unfamiliar with the Canadian context, *First Nation* is the accepted term for referring to Indian people and their governments. The Kluane First Nation has approximately 150 members, about half of whom live in Burwash Landing, a small village on the shores of Kluane Lake in the southwest corner of Canada's Yukon Territory. The village has a year-round population of about seventy and is located on the Alaska Highway approximately 280 km northwest of Whitehorse, the territorial capital. Though it was originally settled by people from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, most of the residents now consider themselves to be Southern Tutchone Indians (Southern Tutchone is a member of the northern Athapaskan language family). Nearly everyone in the village is a status Indian and member of the Kluane First Nation (a status Indian is someone enrolled under Canada's Indian Act).
7 Indeed, in his metataxonomy of environmentalism, Andrew Vincent (1993) clearly shows that in spite of the extraordinary variety of environmentalist

thought and practice, the vast majority of such taxonomies take for granted the existence of a spectrum. In the end, although Vincent offers a new and extremely complex taxonomy, it too is "premised on a subtle 'shading over' of concepts through a spectrum of judgements and positions" (249).

8 Much, for example, has been made of the dispute between Murray Bookchin, one of the leading theorists of the movement that has come to be known as social ecology, and Dave Foreman, one of the founders of Earth First! and a proponent of deep ecology (see, e.g., Ellis 1995). Both of these men are firmly ensconced at the "radical" end of the spectrum.

9 I am less convinced by Oelschlaeger's (1991: 154) characterization of Thoreau's "Indian wisdom" as a "Paleolithic consciousness" that predated not only industrialization and the Judeo-Christian tradition, but the rise of agriculture as well (see note 10).

10 Radical environmentalists, however, do not all agree on exactly when Euro-American society lost its own ecologically noble sensibilities. Many feel that this took place long before the industrial revolution. Some have blamed the rise of Christianity (for what is probably the best-known statement of this position, see White 1967; for an overview see Fox 1981: chap. 11), while others point to the invention of agriculture as the origin of an attitude of dominance toward nature (e.g., Oelschlaeger 1991: 9–30). In this latter view, Paleolithic peoples—including modern day hunter-gatherers—supposedly lived in perfect harmony with nature. Many radical environmentalists who subscribe to this view call for a return to a Paleolithic environmental consciousness (e.g., Manes 1990; Oelschlaeger 1991).

11 Indeed, the majority of the literature on this topic treats the question of ecological nobility at least partially as an empirical issue.

12 This is a northern species of bighorn sheep, historically an important source of food for Kluane people.

13 A number of scholars (see, e.g., Bruun and Kalland 1995; Ellen 1986; Kalland 2000) have pointed out that just because many indigenous peoples have beliefs and values that could be characterized as ecologically noble does not necessarily mean they *act* in an ecologically sound manner. This is true, to be sure; but, as Baird Callicott (1982: 318) and Julie Cruikshank (1998: 60) point out, such beliefs and values constitute a moral code, a set of rules for appropriate behavior. These rules can be broken, of course, as can the rules of any ethical system, but they then serve as the basis for criticizing the behavior of transgressors.

14 Interestingly enough, however, KFN members may soon begin doing these very things as they implement land claim and self-government agreements that give them exclusive power to manage resources on their settlement lands.

15 See Basso 1979 and Basso 1996: 56–62 for analyses of the Western Apache's very effective use of joking and other forms of indirect criticism to sanction inappropriate behavior.

16 This incident was recounted to me by several different people; it clearly stood out in people's minds as an important example of informal community-based social control. In a few versions of this story, the hunter did speak up in his own defense. Several of the elders then addressed his argument directly (i.e., they "really let him have it"), but they never once accused him directly of having acted improperly. See Nadasdy 2002 for a more detailed account.

17 The no-hunting corridor was established to protect wildlife from casual hunt-

ing by travelers and highway crews. While the First Nations agreed to comply with the corridor, they insisted on an exemption for elders who have more difficulty getting back into the bush to hunt. Quite apart from the corridor, Kluane people generally refrain from shooting cow moose, though not necessarily for the reasons espoused by wildlife biologists and other conservationists. As I have shown elsewhere (see Nadasdy 1999: 8), many Kluane people do not accept the standard biological arguments against shooting female game animals. Most, however, refrain from doing so anyway. Some do so because the biological arguments do seem plausible to them, while others simply wish to avoid the potential hassle. During late winter, however, Kluane people are much more likely to shoot a cow than a bull, because the bulls are skinny and tough at that time of year. Also, in the event of a death in the village, hunters will shoot anything they find, bull or cow, to get meat for a potlatch.

18 These different scholars disagree with one another over many particulars. Indeed, Krech (1999) and the contributors to Krech 1981 were explicitly interested in refuting Calvin Martin's *Keepers of the Game* (1978). Nevertheless, all share the view that Indian peoples' beliefs and values at times caused—and in some cases continue to cause—them to behave in ways that are incompatible with current wildlife management and environmentalist agendas.

19 In a subsequent article, Fienup-Riordan (1998) reports that some young Yup'ik people, especially those trained in scientific resource management, regard their elders' beliefs in reincarnation to be incorrect and potentially dangerous to the animal populations. This has led to tensions within the Yup'ik community in addition to those between Yup'ik people and Euro–North American wildlife managers.

20 Indeed, in the Yukon (and throughout the North) many First Nation people are quite antagonistic to environmentalists as a result of their experiences with the antifur movement.

21 Taken from a letter dated 3 March 1993 from Bill Hipwell to the membership of Friends of the Wolf, an international animal-rights organization. Hipwell, coordinator of his organization's Yukon operations, claims to have come to this understanding based on a single meeting with CAFN representatives, including CAFN chief Paul Birckel, as well as representatives of the Council for Yukon Indians. This quotation grossly misrepresents CAFN people's relation to the land and the importance of hunting to their present way of life. It is very difficult for me to believe that the representatives with whom he spoke actually told him that few CAFN people hunt. It is also unlikely that CAFN officials told Hipwell that most of their people "lacked the skills" to trap in general, though it is possible that they told him that few people had the skills to effectively trap *wolves*, which, because of their cunning and intelligence, are exceedingly difficult to trap. Since there has been relatively little trapping during the past couple of decades, many young people do not know how to trap wolves. At the time, there was talk in Burwash Landing of holding workshops specifically to teach young Kluane people how to trap these elusive animals.

22 The territorial government instituted a bounty on wolves in 1929, which continued intermittently until 1971. When the bounty was in effect it was especially lucrative for First Nation people to hunt wolves because one could both collect the bounty and sell the fur. There were also government programs to reduce wolf numbers through poisoning during this period, though few First Nation

people were comfortable with the use of poison because of its tendency to kill animals indiscriminately (Allen 1994: 16).

23 Indeed, one man shot a wolf not more than fifty yards from my cabin. It was an old starving male that had been hanging around the village for a week or two, apparently trying to make an easy meal of one of the village dogs.

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