

# National Recognition without a State: Cree Nationalism *within* Canada

HOWARD RAMOS

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This article questions the assumption that nations either have states or seek them. In doing so, it is argued that the concept of nations and states were awkwardly joined and that increased access to and speed of communications has highlighted this. It will be argued that such change has led to the appeal of the politics of recognition and the use of flexible goals and means to achieve national agendas. The case of the James Bay Cree will be used to illustrate the argument.

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Nation-states are taken-for-granted entities. They are often seen as the primary unit of our contemporary societies. The popular belief is that nations either have states or seek states. In this article, I would like to question these assumptions. I will argue that the concepts of nation and state were awkwardly joined and that the increased access to and speed of communications has highlighted the incongruence that exists within the notion of nation-states. It will be argued that such incongruence has led to the appeal of the politics of recognition and the use of flexible goals and means of action to achieve national agendas. As a result, new sites of power and means of social action are being sought. Nations are again beginning to search for legitimacy outside the state because the state is no longer the sole means of gaining national recognition. The nationalist struggle of the James Bay Cree will be used as an example to highlight and illustrate the argument.<sup>1</sup> It will be shown that the Cree seek legitimacy and authority by appealing to a non-Cree middle class instead of formally seeking statehood. The recognition the Cree seek is attained through the pursuit of flexible goals, such as self-determination and the exploitation of grievances that have been abstracted.

## **A Doomed Marriage: A Quick Sketch of the Creation of Nation-States**

In the following section I will show how the concepts of the 'nation' and 'state' were joined, and in turn argue that the two were never fully able to fit together as a homogeneous concept. I use the term 'nation' to refer to a

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Howard Ramos, Department of Sociology, McGill University

People (in the French sense of the word *Peuple*) or collective identity.<sup>2</sup> A nation can be understood as a social grouping of individuals that is primarily bounded by social-psychological attachments, such as symbols, beliefs, commonalities and political associations.<sup>3</sup> The 'state' is the bureaucratic, material and organizational framework of a bounded physical and geographic community. 'Nation-state' is understood as the joining or overlapping of the two concepts.

The notion of the nation-state is a relatively new concept, one that has emerged with the growth of capitalism and the emergence of modernity. According to Hobsbawm, the objective of early nationalist movements was to invent a link between four concepts: a people (in the sense used above), a state, a nation and a government.<sup>4</sup> While Hobsbawm differentiates between a people and a nation, this distinction will not be used in this article. But, like Hobsbawm, I argue that peoples/nations were linked to states and political entities, which has led to the creation of the modern notion (joining) of the 'nation-state'.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the pursuit of nations tied to states has been the invention of nations.<sup>6</sup> Hobsbawm and Anderson<sup>7</sup> have explored the notion of the invention of nations and nation-states. The latter illustrates the creation of 'imagined communities', which are communities/nations that were invented where they did not exist before. Anderson does this by illustrating the power and homogenizing effects of print capitalism and, to a lesser extent, notes the possibility of other media's ability to create homogenizing nation-states. But as Anderson shows with his exploration of 'official nationalism', not all people fit into the newly invented categories of nations (which he tends to equate with nation-states). 'Official nationalism' can be understood as the party line, the idealized type, or symbol of what being a member of the nation and the nation-state should be. For example, John Q American who is a law abiding, god believing, 'White-middle-class-man', living in suburbia with a white picket fence, with two kids, a wife, and a car can be seen as an 'official' image of what an 'American' is and should be. But rarely do all citizens of a nation-state, all people living within the geographic boundaries of state, fit the image of 'official nationalism'. Instead, there are many groups of people that do not fit the norms propagated by the image, often controlled by a state elite and bureaucracy.<sup>8</sup> Anderson shows that within our 'modern' history, states and nationalist struggles have used ethnic or collective cultural images to displace opposition, rally support and legitimacy for their cause, and in turn create and/or reify the power and authority of states. States and political elites have done this successfully by using and manipulating propaganda, as well as institutionalizing education and nationalist symbols. The aim of such use and manipulation has been to align idealized images/identities to given geographic and bureaucratic regions. Perhaps the most vivid and

frightening example of this can be seen with Hitler and the era of Nazi Germany. It was an era where the Nazi party was able to create an image, a false image, of German *volk* and Aryan 'purity'. The horrific consequence of this was genocide on a massive scale. The problem with the Nazi campaign was that many people did not fit into the new image they were attempting to create and that this was further exacerbated by the Nazi's 'living space' policy of extending the German state. The justification of the 'living space' policy was based on uniting and connecting territory where supposed ethnic Germans lived. It was a project that was designed to create ethnic/cultural hegemony over a given region and was to be enforced by a single state. It was an expansion that was justified through the image of Aryan-German superiority – a false image, an invented image, the creation of an imagined nation. Thus Hitler's project was one of creating an image that was used to solidify and hold on a given geographic region. It is a classic example of the goal to merge nations with states, the creation of nation-states. In this way states and national elites manipulate and link ethnicity and culture, their idealized images, to territory. By no means is this example isolated. It frightfully reflects the not so distant discourse and actions of Hutus and Tutsis or Serbs and Croats. Very few real nation-states exist; few are homogeneous.<sup>9</sup>

What should be evident is that nation-states were in fact merely creations. Idealized images of nations were not, and are not, able to fully encapsulate the states or geographic/bureaucratic regions to which they are tied. One does not have to look far to see how this is true. In Canada the state has not been able to integrate and assimilate Québécois or First Nations into the fabric of its nation-state; in Spain there are the Basque; in Britain, the Irish and Scottish; in the US, Blacks; in Mexico, Zapatistas; and so the list could go on. With all of these examples one finds a striking similarity, that the 'nation' does not fully encapsulate the 'state'. By this I mean to say that nation-states usually lay claim to the cultural and political authority of a given region/state. But nation-states are not able to exercise their legitimacy and authority over all the peoples that live within their territory.

The late twentieth century has seen a rise in the awareness of the incongruence between the nations and states. With the increase in the ability to communicate as well as the development of technology and the increased speed of communications, it has become increasingly difficult to hide or suppress the multiple nations that may exist within a single state. Moreover, it has become increasingly difficult to prevent the creation of diasporas within and between states.<sup>10</sup> For example, as will be shown in the following section, Mexico has been prevented from having a *carte blanche* in dealing with indigenous uprisings by the media, communications networks and

increased awareness. As well, such changes in communication have altered the utility of the nation-state as a goal of gaining political legitimacy. It is no longer clear that nations either have states or want them. As will be shown, using the Cree case, nations have begun to seek legitimacy and authority *within* states, that is without pursuing a state of their own.

### **New Strategies and Goals: The Politics of Recognition**

A politics of recognition, or of social-cultural difference, has emerged because it is a strategy of empowerment that is not confined by the boundaries of nation-states. It does not seek to join nations with states. The politics of recognition exacerbates the cleavages created by the awareness of the falsity of the hyphen that joins nations and states. Such a politic gains legitimacy and authority through new means and sites of social action. It is a means of action that exploits the porousness of state borders and restraints. It offers a voice to those who once did not have one. With the emergence of the Internet and wireless communications, new larger and more diverse networks of information are beginning to emerge. It is no longer easy for states to control the image of a nation-state. Instead, contradicting information, emerging from foreign lands, begins to surface.<sup>11</sup>

An example of the difficulty in controlling a nation-state's authority and legitimacy can be seen in recent events in Mexico. In dealing with the 'rebels' in Chiapas, the Mexican government has traditionally been able to exercise its authority and legitimacy through its military. Dissidents would be beaten, threatened and even killed. The struggles in Chiapas largely went unseen, both domestically and internationally. But with the improvement of communication networks and the spread of information beyond borders, the struggles of the villagers of Chiapas gained voice and legitimacy. They did so through support from abroad.

An example of this can be seen with the uproar that surrounded the expulsion of two Quebec women, Julie Marquette and Sarah Baillergeron from Mexico. Both women were foreign aid 'observers' who the Mexican government claimed were aiding in the training and construction of a rebel government. The Mexican government expelled them for treason. The two women claimed that they were expelled because they witnessed the Mexican army's brutal attacks on villagers. Their story and that of brutality in Chiapas gained national exposure in Canada, with television coverage on the *National*<sup>12</sup> and making the front page of *La Presse*,<sup>13</sup> while at the same time gaining exposure in the US and rest of the world. Whichever account is true, the story told by the two women or that of the Mexican government, the expulsion of Marquette and Baillergeron led to international media coverage of the Chiapas issue, which gave credibility and legitimacy to the

rebels. Thus the actions of the Mexican government, if anything, strengthened the international support base and legitimacy of the 'rebels'. Dissidents and their supporters can no longer be shoved under the rug or displaced to a periphery. Instead the rug seems to have disappeared, the distinctions between spheres of political influence are becoming blurry.

The same porousness that allows for the transmission of information and foreign culture across borders also allows nations to gain authority and legitimacy beyond states. As markets, transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations, and social movements have begun to move beyond the confines of restrictive states, so too have nations. As a result, there is the need to find new strategies, means of action, and markers of identification – ones that are not bound to states and not confined by the concrete reality of their regimes. I will argue that the most successful strategies and means of action within the Western context are ones that are substanceless and flexible. Successful strategies and social action today are easily adaptable to a world that has experienced the computer and technological revolution. Successful strategies are found in flexible goals that appeal to divergent audiences.

Culture and information no longer respect the borders and markers constructed by states.<sup>14</sup> As a result the cultural authority and legitimacy that states once brought to ethnic or national struggles have come into question. Such questioning has led to the emergence of nationalism or nations that are not bound to states. The issues and sites of contention are moving away from the state and towards sites removed from time and space – for example recognition of 'human rights' and 'self determination'. As a result, there has been a (re)turn to goals of social action that are not bound to material and territory; nations have begun to make their goals and markers abstract, flexible, and inclusive. To illustrate this I will use the James Bay Cree as an example of a nation that seeks to gain legitimacy and authority through the strategy of recognition of nationhood, instead of seeking nation-statehood. The difference is that the former is a situation where a nation seeks national recognition that can be achieved without formal control of a territory, whereas the latter, in a Weberian sense, seeks definitive and absolute national control over a given piece of land. Because of the strains placed on the legitimacy and authority of the nation-state, the former strategy of social action seems to be gaining in appeal and feasibility.

### **Strategies and Goals Outside the State: A Look into the Cree**

At first glance the Cree may not appear to be the ideal case to illustrate the features of the (re)turn to strategies and goals that are not bound to material or state seeking. The Cree appear to be an identity movement that seeks

monetary/material compensation.<sup>15</sup> But if one looks closer, one realizes that the means, strategies, and actions of the Cree are not solely bound to material or state seeking. Both the markers and the goals of the Cree struggle are abstract and flexible; they are neither ossified nor bound to a concrete material existence. The Cree seek power outside of the state by appealing to a non-Cree middle class.

Unlike nations-states who gain power, authority, and legitimacy through the state, the Cree do not. Cree power, authority, and legitimacy stems from their ability to gain recognition from internal and external audiences. Cree nationalism is able to gain such recognition because its goal is rather flexible. The Cree seek to gain the *recognition* of their *right* to self-determination or self-government. It is not the goal of attaining a Cree state, but instead attaining recognition *within* the Canadian state.<sup>16</sup> Thus unlike nationalist movements that seek legitimacy through the control of a given territory, the Cree do so through gaining symbolic recognition. It is hoped that in gaining such recognition, they can in turn gain a more secure placing *within* Canada.

### **Self-determination**

In order to understand how goals have changed, it is useful to deconstruct and analyze what gaining 'self-determination' means and achieves. On the surface self-determination appears to be a political-legal means of obtaining control over a given piece of territory. On further examination, however, one finds that a legal appeal to the right to self-determination is more symbolic than realistic. Pursuit of the legal right to self-determination does not offer the Cree outright control of their territory; instead it can at best be used to gain recognition of injustice. This is because self-determination is an ambiguous legal term that holds very little legal power.

As a result, the goal of self-determination is less than concrete. As Alfredson illustrates, international law recognizes approximately five notions of self-determination: (1) the right of a people to determine their own international status, (2) the right of a state to determine or form a government, (3) the right of a state to recognize territorial integrity, (4) the right of a minority to human rights, and (5) the right of a state and its population to maintain and improve their culture.<sup>17</sup> Alfredson rightly concludes that self-determination is too broad a concept. In defining self-determination a number of additional ambiguous terms are used, such as peoples, minority groups and human rights.

Steinzor and Eide argue that Aboriginal demands for self-determination overwhelmingly tend to be demands for autonomy and recognition of a people *within* a state.<sup>18</sup> Steinzor clarifies that Aboriginals usually demand

recognition of their status as a unique socio-cultural group *within* a dominant society.<sup>19</sup> This demand complies with many legal scholars' understandings of the definition of self-determination. Scholars argue that 'every culture and historically distinct people should have the right to choose its political status by democratic means under international supervision.'<sup>20</sup> Even so, such a claim to self-determination is not commonly recognized by state or international law. As a result in pursuing such a form of self-determination the Cree are unlikely to gain absolute control over their territory.

The self-determination Aboriginal peoples tend to demand is generally not recognized by international law because it has what is called a 'salt/blue water' bias. International law that deals with self-determination was created at the end of the Second World War and was designed to deal with demands of former colonies seeking the goal of nation-statehood.<sup>21</sup> As a result international law distinguishes between lands that were conquered and lands that were settled.<sup>22</sup> Lands that were colonized (conquered) must recognize the prior self-determination of those who inhabited them, whereas lands that were settled<sup>23</sup> (based on an argument of *terra nullius*) do not have to recognize the self-determination of the people(s) that inhabited the land before being settled. The latter category of people, under international law, is left under the jurisdiction of the dominant state. Moreover, international law places a primacy on recognizing the self-determination of nations that seek states.<sup>24</sup> Thus Aboriginal peoples are twice jinxed. The rights they seek are not recognized by international law and they are in turn forced to accept the 'justice' of the very entities that they struggle against.

Nevertheless, the recognition of self-determination remains a prominent goal for Aboriginal groups, as can be seen through various movements for self-determination such as that of the James Bay Cree. Aboriginal groups often argue that the *terra nullius* argument cannot be used because governments (such as those of Australia, Canada or the US) signed land treaties recognizing various Aboriginal groups as nations. This is further complicated by the legal recognition of these nations during the 1800s and 1900s by US and Canadian courts, both of which upheld the recognition of Aboriginal peoples in this way.<sup>25</sup> Groups such as the Cree argue that because such treaties were signed, they have been recognized as nations and therefore must be treated as such by international and domestic law. In turn they argue that their right to self-determination, fundamentally linked to their human rights, has been denied through colonial policies that deal(t) with their people.<sup>26</sup> Examples often cited by the Cree are the land grants of 1872 and 1912, in which their citizenship was changed without their consent.<sup>27</sup> As a result the Cree have waged a campaign against the Quebec sovereignty movement, based on their right to self-determination, to 'resist

forcible inclusion into a sovereign Quebec' and to choose the destiny of their future.<sup>28</sup>

Because self-determination is a goal that is unlikely to be achieved through appeals to international law, one is left wondering why it is still pursued. The answer to this question can be found in the appeal and support that recognized, or publicized, injustice can bring for the Cree. Moreover, it is a goal that allows the Cree, approximately 12,000 in total, to gain legitimacy and authority over a territory that is almost the size of France. It allows the Cree who could easily be militarily or physically outnumbered, to find a place on the Canadian political stage. As a result, the Cree use their legal struggle in an effort to escape the constraints and obligations tied to the material reality that prevents them from exerting outright control. In order to illustrate this I will examine how the Cree political leadership use the goal of self-determination to appeal to a non-Cree middle class as well as their own people.

As a goal, the right to self-determination is flexible; different audiences can interpret it differently. Internal and external audiences can both believe in the right for self-determination but at the same time can understand it in quite different ways. The goal is adaptable and not bound to context. For the Cree, self-determination is a goal that is not based in the explicit exclusion of others (such as Quebecers or Canadians), but instead is founded upon recognition of the Cree's human right to decide their own future.<sup>29</sup> It is couched within the morality and logic of those that are opposed to them. Yet, at the same time, it is a goal that appeals to the Cree because it aims to resolve an injustice. For example, a Cree that spoke before the Eeyou Estechee Commission noted: 'The challenge is to view this [the right to self-determination] as an opportunity to regain our power. Our gift to the future is preservation of Eeyou Estechee [the land] and control of our destiny.'<sup>30</sup> At the same time the Cree right to self-determination appeals to non-Cree because it is a goal that is justified within a North American/European morality and sense of justice; it is seen as an injustice that needs to be corrected. The appeal it holds for non-Cree can be seen in the results of a poll that showed two-thirds of Quebecers agree that the Cree and other northern Aboriginal groups should have the right to decide their own future should Quebec secede from Canada.<sup>31</sup>

The Cree gain authority and legitimacy because their nationalist goal, to be recognized, is flexible and not bound by a state. Such a goal allows for the inclusion of people(s) that would otherwise not rally together under the support of the same cause. In projecting Cree identity, the Grand Council of the Cree (GCC<sup>32</sup>) have created a number of markers of identity and images that can be interpreted in an internal and external manner. By internal images or markers I refer to those that are oriented towards the Cree and by



external images or markers I refer to those that are oriented to non-Cree. The internal interpretation of images/markers is used to build solidarity between the nine nations, villages that comprise the James Bay Cree. At the same time external interpretations of the same goals, images, or markers are used to build pan-tribal, provincial, national, and international support.

### **Flexible Grievance**

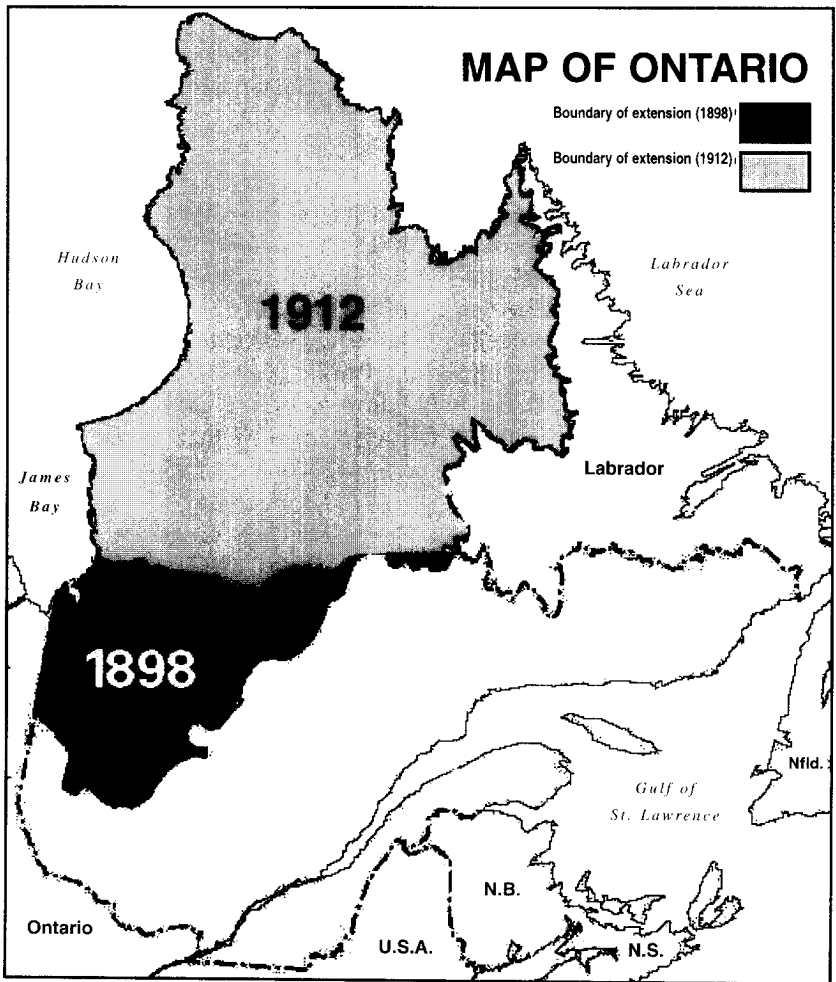
The pursuit of self-determination is one example of a flexible strategy of national action; another is the symbol of the Cree's unjust loss of land. The latter is the source of internal and external support. At first glance one may wonder how territory could be seen as a flexible marker of grievance, but as I hope to demonstrate, it is flexible in many ways. Politically the Cree use the land in a symbolic form, separating it from its physical and temporal context, in turn relegating it to a 'right' or metaphysical goal. They use the symbol in a way that transcends the remoteness of their communities, bringing their remote issue into the living rooms of Quebecers and Canadians in the south.

One now famous marker of the Cree's grievance is a map that has appeared on national television (it appeared on the CBC's the *National*<sup>33</sup> during the Cree referendum to remain in Canada), in numerous GCC and CRA publications (like *Sovereign Injustice, Never Without our Consent*, or the GCC web page), and has become incorporated by a few non-Cree scholars. The map I am referring to is a map of Quebec, a map that is divided into three sections. One is white, which runs along the St Lawrence river, another is black and runs along the lower James Bay (in which 1898 is written in large letters), and the third is grey and covers the Northern section of the current boundaries of the province (in which is written 1912 in large letters). The black and grey sections represent boundary extensions of the province of Quebec, extensions that 'forcibly included' the Cree into Quebec.

The map has been used in two ways. First it has been used by the Cree to define a sense of home, to establish a sense of belonging. The map has been used to link the nine villages (geographically remote and distant from each other) that now comprise the James Bay Cree. Markers such as Cree land, or in this case land that was stolen, are used to create solidarity amongst nine otherwise autonomous communities.<sup>33</sup> The Cree use it as a reminder of a common experience of exploitation by the Quebec and Canadian governments. At the same time, the map (as a grievance) has been used as an external symbol of support. It has been used as a symbol of injustice, to rally sympathy from the Quebec and Canadian public.

The map is easy to comprehend and appealing for television news bites. As a result, the Cree have been able to turn a land issue in a remote area of

FIGURE 1  
MAP OF QUEBEC



Quebec into a moral issue in the middle of Montreal and the rest of the world. The map is a symbol that has been strategically used by the Cree. They have placed it (via their publication *Sovereign Injustice*) in the hands of academics and law libraries across North America.<sup>34</sup> It has also appeared in numerous press conferences and has been viewed and distributed across Europe. By using the map in this manner, by appealing to the Quebec and Canadian public, not to mention the international public, the Cree have managed to force the Quebec and Canadian governments to acknowledge

and deal with them. In turn, the Cree have used this flexible grievance in a way that lends legitimacy and authority to their cause. They have done so by including the individuals that comprise the bases of support and legitimacy of the Quebec and Canadian governments and have appealed to the network and distribution of information that lends those states legitimacy.

Externally the map illustrates a grievance rather than 'real' territory lost. It is not presented in a manner that demands the return of the 'land', but instead asks for recognition and compensation for their loss. Thus the image becomes the grievance that is transmitted across borders and cultural/ethnic divides. It breaks the barrier of material demands that would have in the past relegated the Cree's grievance to a remote and unheard region of the country. As a result, territory is no longer the manifest issue of contention. Instead the map and the idea of loss replace it. The map as a symbol of Cree grievance is thus used to appeal to both internal and external audiences. The power of framing grievances in a flexible and abstract way, such as the map, stems from the ability to appeal to both the internal and external audiences.

### **Using the Media**

The Cree use of flexible strategies and symbols is ideally suited for contemporary information networks. The Cree story and demands are easily compacted into visual images and oral sound bites, which makes the format of their message media ready. The rhetoric of self-determination and visual markers, such as the map, are comprehensible and appeal to a wide audience. Media and information networks do not have to struggle with Cree nationalism because it is already formatted for their exploitation. As a result, the Cree have used such networks to gain legitimacy, which like the case of the villagers in Chiapas gives the Cree a voice and authority. By appealing to the media, instead of using armed struggle, the Cree have been able to put pressure on their adversaries through support from outside their remote communities. Thus the Cree, who are numerically insignificant, appeal to a significant mass in order to gain the recognition they seek. Moreover, unlike the struggle in Chiapas, the government does not have any basis for the legitimate use of force against Cree resistance. This is because both the Cree goal of self-determination and their means of attaining it are in the slippery realm beyond time and space. Their goal is not self-determination in their own state, gaining a state, but instead self-determination *within* an existing state. They essentially seek recognition and 'rights', not a state.

Evidence of the success of the media friendliness of the Cree nationalist struggle can be seen on the Canada newswire web site, which lists current press releases and has an entire page devoted to releases and issues concerning the Cree.<sup>35</sup> By submitting press releases to the Canadian press, the Cree increase the frequency by which the Canadian or international media outlets cover their issues. It allows their message to be heard beyond the confines of Northern Quebec.

Moreover, the media friendliness of the Cree nationalist movement can also be seen in the popularity of Cree issues depicted in Canadian newspapers. In examining newspaper articles that covered the results of the recent reference<sup>36</sup> to the Canadian Supreme Court, I found that the Cree hold a prominent place in the discourse of Quebec and Canadian politics. For example, in the August 20th edition of the *Ottawa Citizen*<sup>37</sup> (published one day before the court ruled on the reference) an overview of the 'key figures' in the Supreme Court ruling appears. The article has nine pictures and nine profiles. On the first row, the first three pictures and profiles were those of Lucien Bouchard, Jean Charest, and Matthew Coon-Come. Bouchard is the prime minister of Quebec and is the leader of the Parti-Québécois – the separatist party of Quebec. Charest is the leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec and is the official opposition of the Parti-Québécois. Coon-Come is the former leader of the Grand Council of the Cree. Coon-Come's picture appeared before that of Jean Chretien, prime minister of Canada, as well as pictures of the minister of intergovernmental affairs, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the leader of the federal opposition, Guy Bertrand (a Quebec lawyer who instigated the reference), and the former minister of Justice.<sup>38</sup> The order of these pictures is quite telling. Coon-Come's place in the *Citizen's* ordering of the 'key figures', suggests that the Cree hold a high profile position in the politics that surround the sovereignty debate. It shows that their issues hold salience within outside media sources and have a prominence within the Canadian political discourse. It shows that through flexible goals and means the Cree have been able to exert an authority and legitimacy.

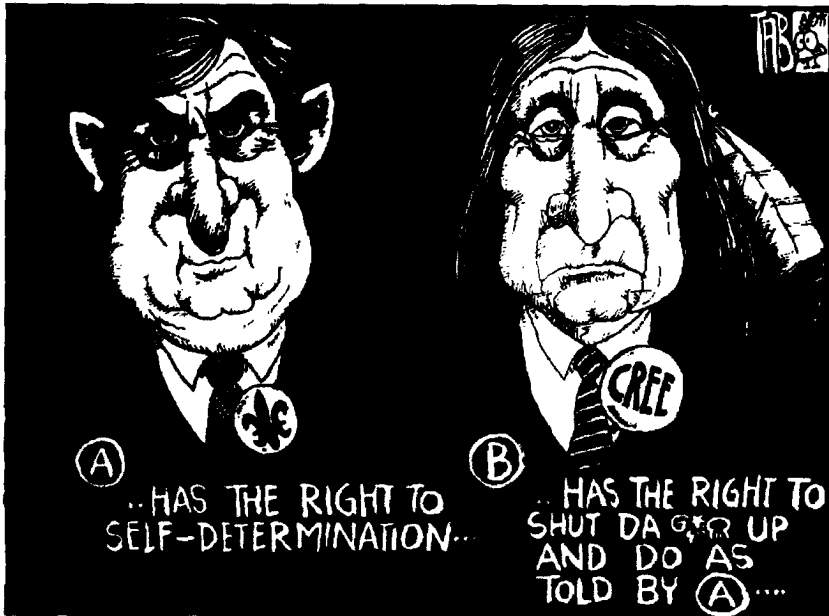
Another example can be found in the August 21st edition of the *Globe and Mail*<sup>39</sup> (published the day of the court ruling). In the lead article of a section called 'Day of Decision' (devoted to the Supreme Court reference), one finds a picture of Matthew Coon-Come and a lawyer of the GCC. The article questions the security of the borders of a sovereign Quebec and emphasizes that Aboriginal issues would 'have to be addressed' if Quebec was to separate from Canada. One of those issues would be the Cree right to self-determination, the right to remain in Canada, should Quebec separate.<sup>40</sup> Although the article is not entirely devoted to Cree issues, their issues nonetheless receive considerable coverage. The discourse that

surrounds Quebec's right to secede is now embedded with the warning clause – 'what about the aboriginal people that live within Quebec?'<sup>41</sup> – more specifically the Cree.

The prominence of Cree issues is also found within Quebec newspapers. This can be seen in articles that appeared in *La Presse*<sup>42</sup> and *Le Devoir*<sup>43</sup> on August 21st and 22nd. Both papers devoted articles to the Cree cause. The headline of the *La Presse* article was 'Open Door for Aboriginal Self-determination.'<sup>44</sup> The article noted that the Supreme Court had to recognize the importance of Aboriginal interests and widely quoted Matthew Coon-Come.<sup>45</sup> The headline of the *Le Devoir* article was 'Aboriginals Applaud: the Supreme Court recognizes that Quebec cannot decide its status without their consent.'<sup>46</sup> It is interesting to note that the headline uses wording that paraphrases the Cree slogan – 'Never without our consent!'<sup>47</sup> It is plain that such wording reflects the success of the Cree manipulation of symbols in order to advance their nationalist cause.

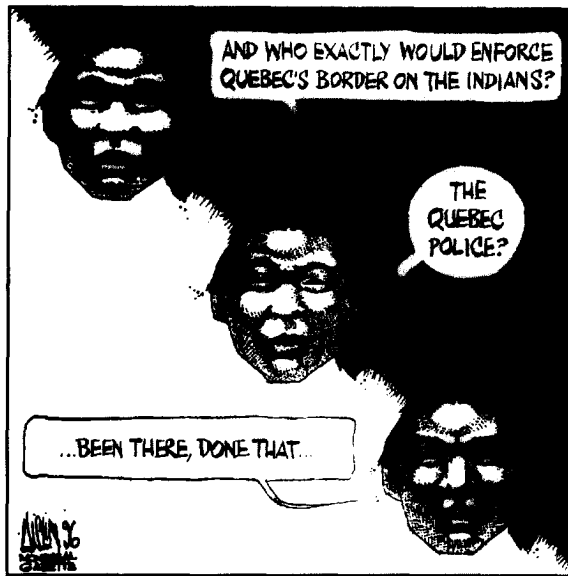
A last example of the media friendliness of the Cree nationalist movement can be seen in the popularity of Cree issues depicted in political cartoons of major Canadian newspapers. There are generally three kinds of

FIGURE 2A



Source: Tab, Calgary.

FIGURE 2B



Source: Aislin, *The Montreal Gazette*.

cartoons made about Cree issues. The first are those that are sympathetic and convey their desire for the right to self-determination.<sup>48</sup>

Figure 2A shows the injustice of not having the right to self-determination. Often, Canadian newspapers use the issue of Cree self-determination to vilify the Quebec campaign for the same right. In Figure 2, we see the Quebec prime minister, Lucien Bouchard, under which the caption reads: 'A) ...has the right to self-determination...'. On the left there is a picture of an Aboriginal person, with a button that says Cree; and the caption under this picture reads: 'B) ...has the right to shut da @\*%! up and do as told by A)...'. In Figure 2B there is a picture of an Aboriginal person pondering what would happen in the event of a vote for separation. The captions read: 'And who would enforce Quebec's border on the Indians?...the Quebec police...been there done that...'

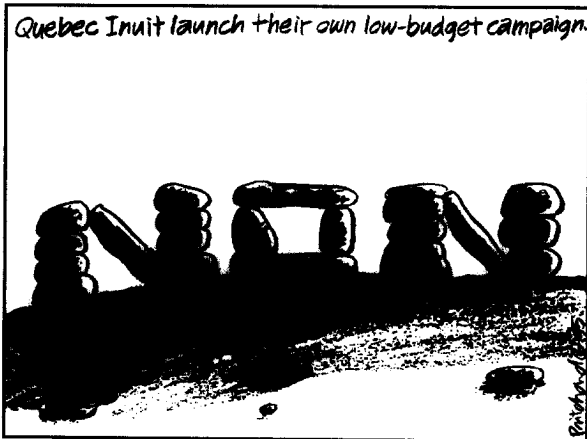
The second group of cartoons are those that show the Cree desire to remain in Canada and not to be transferred from one state to another without their consent. As can be seen in both cartoons, the Cree do not want to be part of a separate Quebec. In Figure 3A we see former Quebec prime minister Jaques Parizeau sitting on a branch, that symbolizes Quebec, cutting it away from the Canada tree, perhaps a maple leaf tree. At the same time he is anxiously looking behind at an Aboriginal person who is cutting

FIGURE 3A



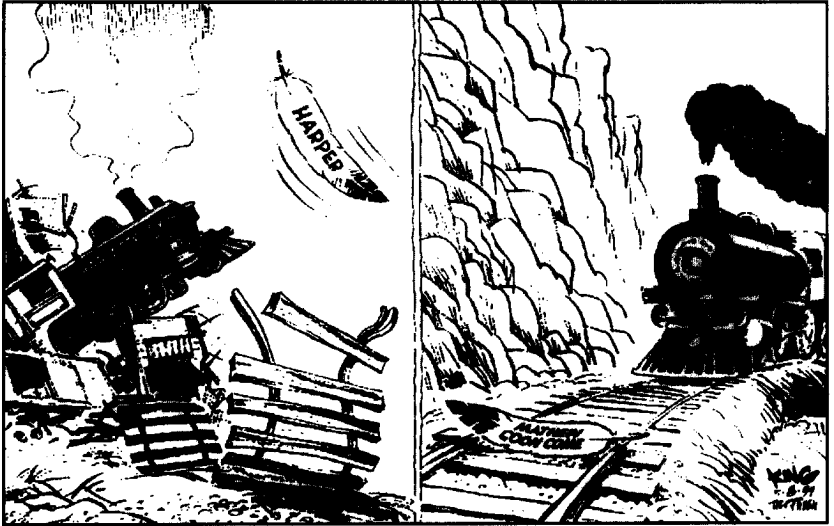
Source: Dusan Petricis, *Toronto Star*.

FIGURE 3B



Source: Pritchard, *The Ottawa Citizen*.

FIGURE 4A



Source: King, *The Ottawa Citizen*.

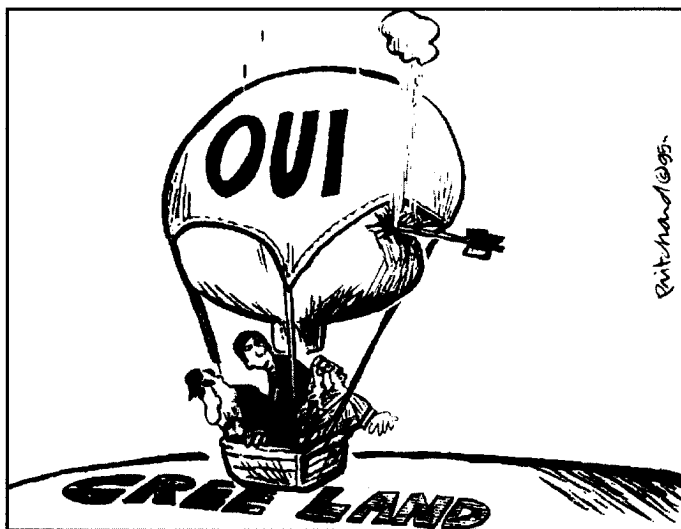
FIGURE 4B



Source: Hogan, *Moncton Times-Transcript*.



FIGURE 4C



Source: Pritchard, *Toronto Star*.

a chunk of the Quebec branch away from Quebec and hanging onto the Canada tree. Figure 3B actually looks at the Inuit campaign that was very much tied to the Cree campaign for self-determination. In the cartoon we simply see 'no' (written in French) using a pile of rocks.

The third kind of cartoon, perhaps the most popular, is that of the Cree's interference with Quebec's plans to separate. As can be seen in these images, the Cree are seen as the spoilers of Quebec separation. Such images are somewhat reflective of the folk hero-like status they have gained amongst Anglo (people of English descent) and Allophone (people of neither French nor English descent) Quebecers as a force opposed to separation. In Figure 4A there is a split picture showing two locomotives. The locomotive on the left represents the Charlotte Town Accord, which was a piece of legislation that attempted and failed to amend the Canadian constitution, in a bid to get Quebec to sign into the Canadian federation. The locomotive is derailed, with a lone feather drifting down, marked Harper for Elijah Harper, the Aboriginal MLA who led a campaign to block the passing of the accord. The locomotive on the right, the Quebec Separatists, is steaming full speed ahead, towards a feather on the track marked Matthew Coon-Come (Grand Chief of the Quebec Cree). The implication is that the Cree, however slight, will derail the separatist train. In Figure 4B we see Jaques Parizeau, the former separatist prime minister of Quebec, with his

referendum brief case, about to be trapped in an Aboriginal snare emanating from a village of teepees and an intimidating Aboriginal statue. In Figure 4C Lucien Bouchard and Jaques Parizeau are flying the 'Oui' balloon, an arrow strikes a balloon for separation, and it as it flies over Cree land. The balloon is deflating and the passengers look worried.

The small sampling of articles and political cartoons show the readiness of the national and provincial media to convey Cree issues and concerns. It also shows that the mainstream media is ready to portray Cree issues in a light that reflects the political desires of the Cree leadership. Media interest allows the Cree message to be heard and internalized over vast distances that in turn gives the Cree political authority and legitimacy over their region. Because of the media-readiness, abstractness, and flexibility of Cree goals and grievances, the Cree are no longer displaced to the periphery they inhabit. They have instead managed to become major players in the core of Quebec and Canadian politics.

## **Conclusion**

The twentieth century is seeing the return of nations that search for legitimacy and authority without states. It is no longer given that a nation either has a state or seeks one. As argued in the first section of the article, nations and states are concepts that where awkwardly joined. It was further argued that the increased access and speed of communications highlighted the incongruence between the two concepts. The example of the Cree demonstrates that nations do not necessarily need states in order to achieve legitimacy and authority over their constituents and territory. Moreover, the Cree case shows that being small, remote, and underdeveloped does not mean that a nation cannot gain political power. The Cree have gained power with the use of abstract symbols and goals as well as media appeals to a mass audience outside of their region and communities. In doing so they inflated the number of people that supported their cause, reaching beyond the 12,000 Cree that live in Northern Quebec, and have brought their peripheral issue to the forefront of Quebec and Canadian politics.

Nations that seek to gain legitimacy and authority through the goal of a state, or physical control over a given territory, face a number of problems the Cree have managed to escape. They face the dilemma of controlling the space in which their nation exists and in doing so, often face the danger of forceful retaliation from the dominant state. Such nations must also have the demographic numbers to control the area they claim, the material wealth and means to control their space, and they must clearly define their boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. As result, such demands are taxing and limiting. In choosing nationhood *within* a state – that is without a state

– the Cree have managed to avoid forceful retaliation. They also avoided dependence on large numbers of ethnic Cree, launched their successful campaign with moderate resources, and by blurring the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion have gained support from those outside the Cree nation. They have achieved success by escaping the constraints of state seeking. The Cree, like many other nations such as the Basque, the Scots, and other indigenous groups, have sought nationhood without a state. It is no longer solely effective, desirable, or necessary to bound identity or nations to physical territory.<sup>49</sup> Increasingly the appeal to seek power and authority through achieving statehood has begun to vanish. The Cree have wisely seen this and have successfully avoided the pitfalls of binding the rebirth of their nation to a state.

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#### NOTES

1. The analysis provided in this article can hardly be seen as complete. It should be noted that the account provided is based on written materials and primarily examines the overt political discourse used by the Cree leadership. As a result the article is unable to reveal many of the events, insights and beliefs that are held outside the written and political spheres.
2. Anthony D. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
3. Note, this does not necessarily include, but does not exclude, material or physical attachments, see Anthony Giddens (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), p.116.
4. Eric Hobsbawm (London: Abacus, 1994).
5. Pierre Van den Berghe (New York: Elsevier, 1981), p.3.
6. See Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), p.169; or Smith, p.51.
7. Benedict Anderson, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 1991).
8. Anderson illustrates this by exploring the Russification of Russia by the Czarist regime (See 1991, p.87); Also see Daniel Bell, 'Ethnicity and Social Change', N Glazer and D Moynihan (eds.) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p.153.
9. Van den Berghe, p.62; Harold Isaac (New York: Harvard Press, 1975), p.185.
10. Arjun Appaduri (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
11. A sign of such lack of control can be seen through nation-state's attempts to legislate increased border surveillance, controls over immigration, and cultural content. Each is an instance in which the nation-state is having to renegotiate its legitimacy and authority over its citizens because of a fundamental questioning of its current status.
12. 'The National', 14 April 1998.
13. [front page] 15 April 1998.
14. Renato Rosoldo, 'Ideology, Place and People without Culture', Vol.3, No.1 (1988).
15. Richard Salsbury (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 1986).
16. Ronald Niezen (Toronto: Allen and Bacon, 1995), p.55; Grand Council of the Cree (Montreal: GCC, 1998).

17. Gudmundur Alfredson, 'Fourth Session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations', R. Thompson (ed.) (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press, 1990) p.53.
18. Nadia Steinzor (Goetbory: Padriqu Thesis Series, 1992) p.32; Asbjorn Eide, 'United Nations Action on the Rights of Indigenous Populations', R. Thompson (ed.). (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press, 1990) p.76.
19. Steinzor, p.43.
20. Russle Barsh, 'Indigenous Peoples and the Right to self-determination in International Law', B Hocking (ed.) (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1988) p.71.
21. Rosalie Balkin, 'International Law and Sovereign Rights of Indigenous People', B. Hocking (ed.) (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1988) p.25; Delion Opekpew, 'International Law, International Institutions, and Indigenous Issues', R. Thompson (ed.) (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press, 1990) p.9; Barsh, p.72.
22. Balkin, p.30; Barsh, p.74.
23. There are obvious problems with this kind of distinction. Often most lands that were 'settled' were in fact conquered. Even so, I will not argue the intricacies of this debate here.
24. Steinzor, p.60.
25. Stephen Cornell (London: Oxford Press, 1988) p.45; Steinzor, p.41; Opekokew, p.6.
26. Grand Council of the Cree (Montreal: GCC, 1995) p.10.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Cree Eeyou Estechee Commission (Montreal: GCC, 1995) p.31.
31. Niezen, p.130.
32. The GCC at times is also referred to as the Cree Regional Authority (CRA).
33. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), The 'National' is a CBC English news programme.
34. It is important for me to note that I am speaking of the use of the symbol of land in the political sphere, as a marker used to define Cree/non-Cree relations. I am not referring to its use on a personal level. As a result it would be less than adequate for me to argue that the land is devoid of spiritual wealth for those who live off it. Moreover, it is important to note differences in relations to the land between generations of Cree. The older Cree have more attachment to the land than those who have been sent to residential school, or the great number of Cree under the age of 25 who grew up in villages, experiencing a great deal of contemporary technology, influences from the south, and schooling within a 'modern' school system.
35. John Gray, 'Cree Grand Chief Out to Destroy Separatist Dream: Reminding Ottawa, Quebec of His Peoples' Right. Matthew Coon-Comes Mission', 18 Feb. 1998.
36. Canadian Newswire Home Page, 23 March 1998.
37. On 21 August 1998 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on a legal reference questioning the legality of Quebec's right to secede. The reference was placed by the federal government. The Cree added a side reference asking the court to rule on the legality of their right to stay in Canada, should Quebec secede.
38. The Ottawa Citizen is one of the most influential newspapers in Canada. It is based in the capital and has sway over policy makers, bureaucrats and politicians.
39. Ottawa Citizen, 'Main Players Jockey for Position: Key Figures in Supreme Court Ruling Look for Support', 20 Aug. 1998.
40. The Globe and Mail is considered to be Canada's national newspaper. It is considered to be right of centre, federalist, and is widely read by Canada's elite.
41. Anne McIlroy, 'Supreme Court Leaves Hard Questions to Politicians: Judges Won't Decide What an Acceptable Formula or Clear Referendum Question Is, or Say What Happens if Negotiations Collapse', 21 Aug. 1998.
42. Ibid.
43. La Presse is a Montreal-based French language newspaper. It is generally considered federalist and the prime rival of Le Devoir.
44. Le Devoir is a Quebec-based French language newspaper. It is considered to represent the interests of the sovereignty movement.

45. The original headline appeared in French as 'Pour les autochtones, une porte ouverte à l'autodétermination'.
46. Gilles Toupin, 'Pour les autochtones, une porte ouverte à l'autodétermination', 21 Aug. 1998.
47. The original headline appeared in French as 'Les autochtones applaudissent: la Cour suprême reconnaît que le Québec ne pourra décider son statut sans obtenir leur consentement'; Hélèn Buzetti, 'Les autochtones applaudissent: la Cour suprême reconnaît que le Québec ne pourra décider son statut sans obtenir leur consentement', in *Le Devoir*. 22 Aug. 1998.
48. Grand Council of the Cree, 1998.
49. All of the cartoons used in this analysis are drawn from a collection used in the Cree publication *Never Without Our Consent*. The cartoons are drawn from various Canadian newspapers.
50. Even so, it is necessary to raise a caveat. Many contemporary thinkers see flexibility and abstractness, that is goals outside of time and space, as dangerous. They see it as dangerous because it allows for easy cooptation and the avoidance of substantive change. When nations and social movements begin to work in the abstract, the changes and success they achieve also remains abstract; see Alain Touraine, 'Le Nationalisme contre la nation', Vol.46 (1996), p.135; or Janine Brodie, 'New State Forms, New Political Spaces', R. Boyer and D. Drache (eds.) (London; New York: Routledge, 1996) p.393.