

A CENTURY OF PARKS CANADA

1911-2011

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Hunting, Timber Harvesting, and Precambrian Beauties: The Scientific Reinterpretation of La Mauricie National Park's Landscape History, 1969–1975



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Introduction

The idea that national parks have a beneficial influence on the environment characterizes a dominant – although increasingly debated – trend in North American parks history.¹ Many historians have shared the conviction of the governmental agencies that they study: that national parks protect one of the fundamental dimensions of North American history in great unspoiled nature and true wilderness.² In that sense, those scholars followed the seminal claims of American historian Roderick Nash, who argued in 1970 that

parks “reflect some of the central values and experiences in American culture.”³ From the Sierra Nevada to the Canadian Rocky Mountains, wilderness has effectively been the pride of North American political, intellectual, and artistic elites. This is evidenced by the famous naturalist John Muir (1838–1914) and the twenty-sixth president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), who both campaigned for the creation of the first national parks in the United States near the end of the nineteenth century; by transcendentalist poets Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), who philosophized about the moral and spiritual virtues of wilderness; and by the Canadian painters of the Group of Seven, who illustrated the magnificent landscapes of Canada. All were sensitive to the sublime beauty of North American wilderness. Their masterworks, such as Muir’s Yellowstone Park, Thoreau’s *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*,⁴ or Tom Thomson’s (1877–1917) *The Jack Pine* have all contributed in shaping the idea of wilderness as a fundamental component of North American culture and national history.

But recent works in environmental history have criticized this concept of wilderness, especially that of national parks. A growing number of American and Canadian historians have demonstrated how national park wilderness is a powerful cultural product. Following William Cronon’s myth-breaking essay on “The Trouble with Wilderness,” they have shown how national parks served state initiatives to dispossess native inhabitants of hunting and living grounds, or to rework inhabited landscapes into human-free, “pristine” wilderness.⁵ Although growing in number, those critical voices are still somewhat marginal, “voices crying in the wilderness” as described by historian Alan MacEachern,⁶ compared to the strength of the image sanctioned by Parks Canada for the public imagination. Indeed, the wilderness ideal is still deeply ingrained in many laudatory representations of national parks. A careful look at this history shows that, since the very creation of the first national parks of Banff and Jasper in 1885 and 1907, Parks Canada has often used this idealized representation of wilderness to promote its parks.⁷ Even today, its website reads that national parks:

[...] celebrate the beauty and infinite variety of our country.
Protected and preserved for all Canadians and for the world,
each is a sanctuary in which nature is allowed to evolve in its

own way, as it has done since the dawn of time. Each provides a haven, not only for plants and animals, but also for the human spirit.⁸

As for the Parks Canada *Guiding Principles and Operational Policies* of 2008, they stipulate that the National Parks of Canada serve to “protect for all time representative natural areas of Canadian significance in a system of national parks, and to encourage public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of this natural heritage so as to leave it unimpaired for future generations.”⁹

If this mandate appears today as self-evident, during its history Parks Canada has used a number of discourses – scientific, economic, political, and touristic – to promote its national parks. At different moments in the evolution of environmental thought in North America, Parks Canada has promoted its parks as resource reserves, as icons celebrating the picturesque landscapes of the country, or as natural areas protecting the dynamics of natural ecosystems in the Canadian environment. Canada initially created national parks at Banff and Jasper using the utilitarian logic of protecting resources for their eventual commercial uses. In these parks, the government of John A. Macdonald permitted the exploitation of resources such as timber, mines, or pasturing even as it encouraged the development of tourism.¹⁰ Only at the end of the 1920s did certain civil servants of the agency begin questioning this approach. The first commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch, James B. Harkin, contributed especially to changing the parks’ industrial mandates. By 1927, Harkin was arguing that “areas deemed suitable for a National Park must possess scenic beauty and recreational qualities of a character so outstanding and unusual as to be properly classified National rather than merely local.”¹¹ It was during Harkin’s administration, which lasted from 1911 to 1936, that “scenic beauty” and the picturesque nature of Canadian landscapes became essential in justifying the protection of the already established parks, as well as in the selection of the sites of future national parks.¹²

The transformation of parks’ mandates suggests that their “wilderness” state is, in fact, a social construct.¹³ The protected environment of a national park is an amalgam of its natural environment’s material dimensions and the multitude of its social representations. Different stakeholders, such as Parks Canada, industries, Aboriginal populations, or local inhabitants who

use the territory for recreational purposes, articulate such different representations, and all have views on the territory being made into a park. This connection between environment and society creates those hybrid spaces, the parks, which consist equally of material and symbolic dimensions. La Mauricie National Park provides an exceptional field of investigation for understanding the social construct of this material and symbolic “double nature.”¹⁴ Established in 1970, this park is one of the first in Canada to preserve marsh ecosystems and other types of wetlands. But the great sub-boreal forests of the Canadian Shield, which make up the largest ecosystem of this park, have supported a thriving industrial activity for centuries in the Mauricie region. This is particularly the case for forestry, a true pillar of the local economy. This industrial presence also opened up the territory to hunters and fishermen, who exploited its game and fish resources from the beginning of the twentieth century. Although diminished by the end of the 1950s with a marked economic depression, these industrial and recreational activities were still well in place within the Mauricie landscape at the time the national park was established.

Considering these human-modified landscapes of the Mauricie region, this chapter analyzes how Parks Canada succeeded in creating here “a representative natural area of Canadian interest,” where, according to the official history of the park, the visitor could find an “atmosphere of primitive wilderness ..., much as it was when discovered by the early travelers and native Indians so many years ago.”¹⁵ In order to justify a national park in the hybrid landscapes of the Mauricie region, Parks Canada would have to transform local territory, with all its industrial and recreational imprints, to correspond to this wilderness ideal. To achieve this, the agency presented the natural and cultural history of the territory through concepts taken from the science of ecology, while at the same time erasing any contradictory human dimensions of the landscape. Instead of a socially neutral space preserved by a legal and scientific framework, La Mauricie National Park thus appears, in the course of this chapter, as a tool for structuring landscapes and for transforming local territorial characteristics in accordance with Parks Canada’s wilderness ideal.

The “Natural Beauties” of Canada and the Project of a Park in the Mauricie

The idea of a recreational park in the Mauricie arose during a period of profound changes for this industrial region. In the early 1970s, the Mauricie, like other resource-based regions of Quebec such as the Gaspé and the Lower St. Lawrence, was having difficulty adapting an economy traditionally based on resource and manufacturing industries, such as mines, timber, or textiles, towards those of the tertiary sector or service activities.¹⁶ Early on, both the federal and provincial governments recognized outdoor tourism as an activity likely to stimulate economic recovery for these regions.¹⁷ Increase in outdoor activities in the 1960s, as well as interventions by the expanding Canadian welfare state, lead to the creation of numerous federal and provincial programs aimed at developing recreation and touristic projects in these parts of Quebec. For example, the Bureau d'aménagement de l'Est-du-Québec (BAEQ) supported a series of touristic initiatives in eastern Quebec, notably the creation of the first national park in Québec, at Forillon on the Gaspé in 1971.¹⁸ Established by the province's Liberal government in 1963, the BAEQ enjoyed a significant input of funds from federal programs, such as those from the Canada Land Inventory (1961), the Fund for Rural Economic Development (FRED, 1966), and those originating from the *Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act* (ARDA, 1966), designed to introduce economic diversification into single-industry peripheral regions. But the federal and provincial governments were aware that national parks were enjoying greater popularity. In 1966, the Pearson government created a new Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to govern the management of “Indian affairs, Eskimo affairs, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon Territory, the national parks, the national battlegrounds, the historical sites and monuments, the migratory bird and wildlife.”¹⁹ In July 1968, the federal government entrusted this substantial mandate to a young minister from Shawinigan, also a Member of Parliament from the local riding of Saint-Maurice-Lafèche: the Honourable Jean Chrétien.

From the start, Chrétien indicated that he was a fervent promoter of national parks. During the “Canadian National Parks: Today and Tomorrow” conference held in Calgary in October 1968, Minister Chrétien outlined

what he intended to do for the promotion and improvement of the Canadian parks system. He agreed with many at the conference about the pressures of popularity: too many visitors visiting too few parks were threatening the “natural heritage” that parks represented. Chrétien therefore proposed creating more national parks throughout Canada, with a minimum of one national park in each province. In his estimation, “to achieve an adequate representation of Canada’s heritage at suitable scale, we would require forty to sixty new national parks in a complete system.”²⁰ With a public commitment (formalized a year later in the parks policy of 1969) and equipped with a sizeable budget, Chrétien suggested the creation of a second national park for the province of Québec, in the Mauricie region.

Chrétien believed strongly that the landscapes of the Mauricie were particularly suited to the status of a national park. In a speech addressed to the committee for the national park in the Mauricie, he confirmed that:

... in a splendid region such as this one, I don’t need to convince you of the merits of conservation and of the joys of outdoor recreation. The Mauricie region has just as many picturesque landscapes than the most beautiful national parks that I have visited. [There is] no need also to insist on the economic advantages that the whole Mauricie region would gain from the creation of a national park, as well as from its association with the system of Canadian National Parks.... As in the case of Kootenay, Kejimikujik, Yoho, Banff, Jasper and all the others, your national park will celebrate the beauty and grandeur of our country.²¹

If the landscapes of Western Canada sufficed to make Banff and Jasper parks popular, picturesque, and lucrative, then the “natural beauties” of the proposed La Mauricie Park could have the same effect on the Mauricie. As C.J. Taylor points out in his contribution to this book, Banff was effectively the flagship of the Canadian parks system in the 1960s. Accordingly, park committees in the Mauricie organized many field trips to Banff and other iconic parks between 1969 and 1971, in order to promote the project of a national park to the local population.²² However, the National Parks Branch still faced the challenge of making a picturesque park out of an industrial landscape: a

substantial and complex undertaking in a place that still bore the imprint of timber harvesting and fish and game exploitation. It is precisely these human dimensions that the Branch would try to erase from La Mauricie Park, as it attempted to turn a sow's ear into a "wild" silk purse.

Hunting and Timber Harvesting: The Industrial and Recreational Imprint in the Mauricie

The industrial and recreational dimensions of the proposed park were still alive and well in 1970. This was particularly the case with timber harvesting, one of the pillars of the regional economy since the construction of the first logging camp in 1830 by Edward Grieve.

One forest company in particular, Consolidated-Bathurst Limited, had exploited different forest concessions and private lands – which together made up almost the entirety of the site of the future park – until the end of the 1960s. In addition to concessions of Crown lands under provincial jurisdiction and a territory of 26 square kilometres obtained from the federal government as private lands, this company also managed an experimental forest of fifteen square kilometres, created in 1918 by the Canadian Forest Service, and a spruce plantation established by pulp and paper company La Laurentide in 1915. Consolidated-Bathurst used parts of the Mattawin and Saint-Maurice rivers (which were to form parts of the northeastern boundaries of the park) for stream driving and constructed dams to regulate the water level of certain lakes.²³ Meanwhile, another forest company, Domtar, was exploiting a forest concession in the southern part of the watershed of Lake Wapizagonke.

Signs of this forest exploitation were still clearly visible in the Mauricie at the end of the 1960s. Indeed, the first master plan of La Mauricie National Park cautioned in 1971 that "visitors strolling through paths might have the impression that the forest is considerably disturbed, even dilapidated, for he will have access only to the areas more recently affected by logging."²⁴ The imprint left by forest harvesting was particularly apparent because a vast logging road network ensured access to the territory. With the blessing of the forest companies, the local population used these roads to reach the interior of the forest to fish and hunt.



FIG. 1. LA COUPE DU BOIS EN MAURICIE, 1921. [CENTRE INTERUNIVERSITAIRE D'ÉTUDES QUÉBÉCOISES, COLLECTION RENÉ HARDY, FONDS GROUPE DE RECHERCHE SUR LA MAURICIE, N60-365.]

Fishing and hunting was indeed a popular activity in the Mauricie. Since 1883, when the Shawinigan Club was established, numerous private hunting and fishing clubs had occupied vast stretches of territory. These were mainly owned by wealthy Canadian or American businessmen, but some of the smaller clubs were also frequented by the locals, who enjoyed the Mauricie's fish and game resources.²⁵ Among the 450 private clubs present in the region by the end of the 1960s, sixteen held lands designated for the future park.²⁶ The government of Quebec began nationalizing these private lands to create "controlled exploitation zones" (*zones d'exploitation contrôlée*, ZEC).²⁷

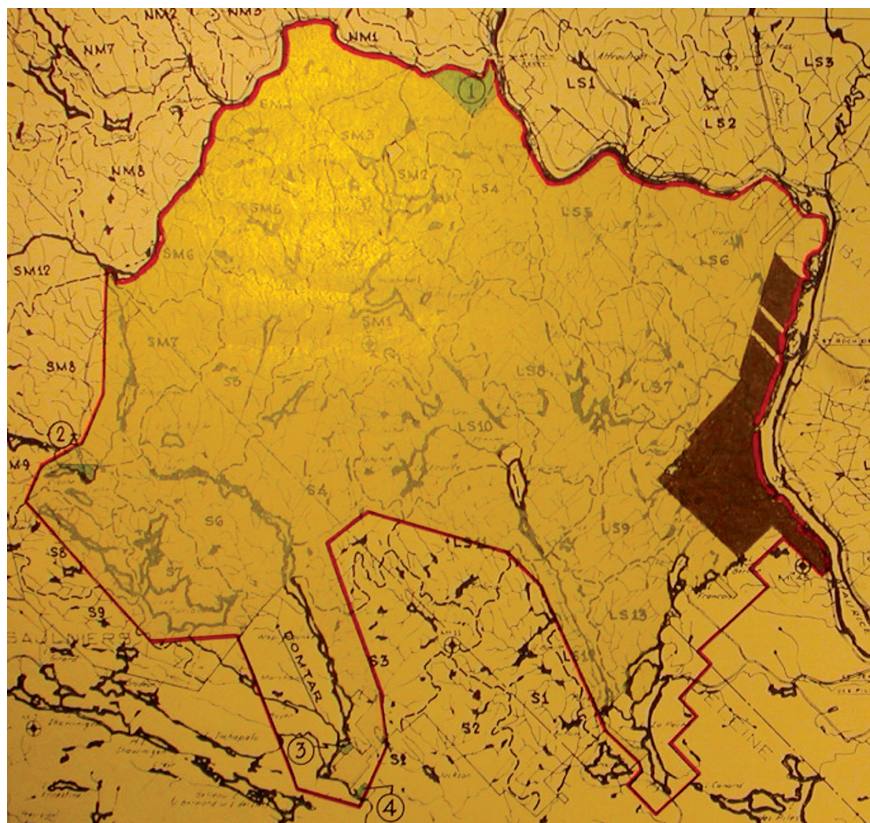


FIG. 2. EXPLOITATIONS AND LAND HOLDINGS BEFORE 1972 ON THE TERRITORY OF LA MAURICIE NATIONAL PARK, 1959–1972. IN YELLOW, THE PROVINCIAL FOREST CONCESSIONS OF CONSOLIDATED-BATHURST (CB); IN BROWN, THE PRIVATE LANDS OF CB (GRAND-MÈRE SPRUCE PLANTATION); IN WHITE, AT THE SOUTHWESTERN EDGE OF THE PARK, THE LANDS OF DOMTAR. [SOURCE: CONSOLIDATED-BATHURST LTD, EXPLOITATION ET TENURE DES TERRES AVANT 1972 SUR LE TERRITOIRE DU PARC NATIONAL DE LA MAURICIE, UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À TROIS-RIVIÈRES, MAP LIBRARY, +615.43GCRKIN (Q) CAQTU.]

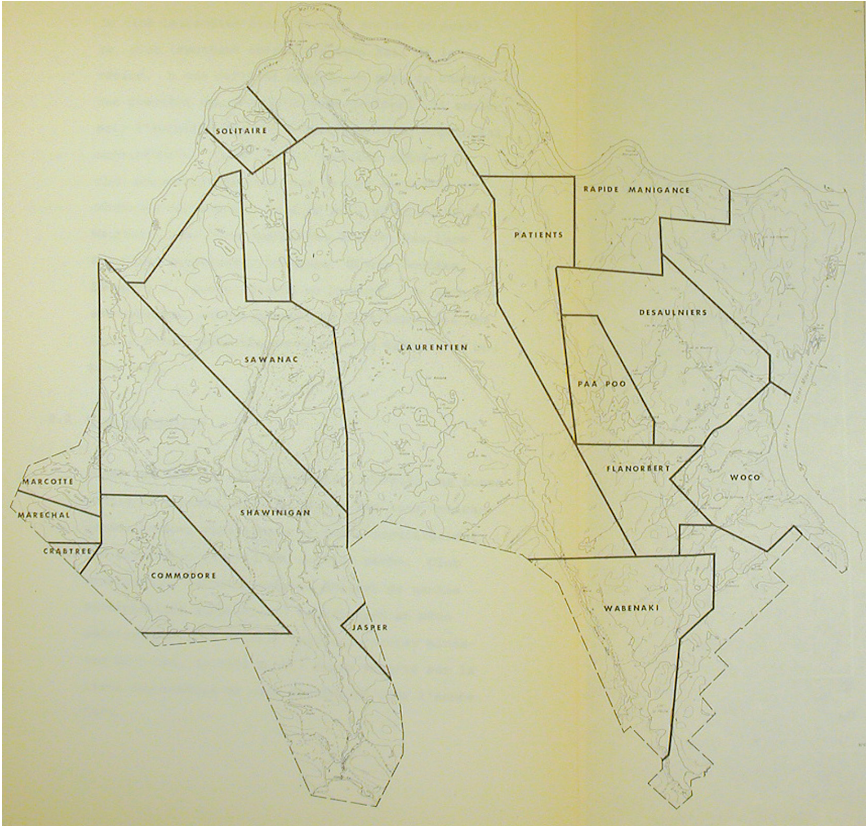


FIG. 3. MAP OF THE HUNTING AND FISHING CLUBS THAT SHARE THE TERRITORY OF THE PARK BEFORE 1970. [SOURCE: AMÉNAGEMENT ET EXPLOITATION FAUNIQUE ANTÉRIEURS À LA CRÉATION DU PARC NATIONAL DE LA MAURICIE (1970), SERVICE DE LA CONSERVATION ET DES RESSOURCES NATURELLES, 1979, 4–5. © PARKS CANADA AGENCY.]

But erasing their presence was more laborious, in part because these clubs had constructed numerous buildings and hunting camp facilities throughout the future park. Park superintendents' weekly reports indicate that ongoing cleanup work was aimed specifically at eliminating these structures. According to one of these reports, it is only in 1973 that:

... garbage was removed and the debris of an old saw mill were removed and burnt, and the dump sites of old clubs were cleaned up. In the Wapizagonke sector, the dump of the Shawinigan Club, where garbage had been accumulated for more than fifty years, has been completely emptied.... At Lake Wapizagonke, all the camps of the Shawinigan Club were demolished and burnt, except for one garage.... The five camps of the Désaulniers Club were demolished and burnt.... The camps at the western end of Lake Maréchal are demolished and burnt, and at Lake Waber, all that is left of the Consolidated-Bathurst camps is the section used for the construction site office.²⁸

In addition to these buildings, and rather more seriously, the clubs had also undertaken substantial "improvements" to the local ecosystem in order to support their hunting and fishing activities. In 1969, for example, the Woco Club had a dam built at the outlet of Lake Bouchard to block the access to white suckers (*Catostomus commersonii*). As early as 1910, the Shawinigan Club introduced Atlantic salmon to the region, while other clubs experimented with speckled trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) and lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*); eventually these clubs introduced fish into more than twenty lakes within the future park. The Laurentian Club went so far as to fertilize two of its lakes in 1947 with seven tons of phosphate fertilizer in order to increase fish size. The same club also tried planting wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*) in three of its lakes to improve waterfowl production.²⁹ In short, a variety of local stakeholders had occupied and modified the territory of the future national park. Many of them, whether as employee, tourist, or resident, knew the Mauricie region and its resources well. In order to destabilize this industrial and recreational past and then reinvent it as wilderness, the Parks Branch would have to reinterpret the region's natural and cultural history.

The Scientific Reinterpretation of the Mauricie's Landscapes

Science played a key role in the establishment of the national park in the Mauricie region. By focusing on the natural environment, using data collected during inventories of its geology, fauna, and flora, federal scientists were able to construct a new and authoritative “natural history” for La Mauricie National Park. This official portrait of the park as wilderness erased certain dimensions of its industrial and recreational past. Maps of bioclimatic domains and ecosystem-based zoning plans presented the landscapes within park boundaries in an abstract and non-human way, simplifying any social complexity.³⁰ In the same way wildlife films funded by the agency sought to transform perceptions of the Rockies into wild “bear country” (as discussed by George Colpitts in this book), the Parks Branch used scientific abstractions to erase a human presence in favour of a boreal wilderness in the Mauricie.

During the 1970s, the biological and ecological sciences held an ambiguous status in the management of national parks in both Canada and the United States.³¹ Scientists working for the Canadian government and the U.S. National Park Service had to deal with the traditional mandates for development or tourism, while producing new knowledge about ecological health (this growing tension between tourism and environmental protection is also discussed by C.J. Taylor). But what is surprising is that in the case of La Mauricie National Park, scientific findings were used *for* touristic imperatives instead of as “pure” research for the advancement of knowledge. For example, when the head of the Department of Chemistry and Biology of the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières wrote to Chrétien in October 1970 to propose “the establishment of a biology station on or near the territory of the park, for purposes of monitoring, teaching and research,”³² Chrétien referred to the parks policy of 1969 as a reason not to grant permission, arguing that “it goes without saying that national parks are not established mainly for scientific research.” Research in the national parks was to be limited to “the observation of natural conditions, without taking any specimens and without any manipulation of the environment.”³³ Indeed, the 1969 document specified that “the main goal of a national park is to resemble a museum or

an art gallery.”³⁴ The fauna inventory work compiled by the interpretation service at La Mauricie National Park confirms the Parks Branch’s interest in using scientific findings to promote “spectacular” aspects of nature for tourism. In an internal memo in 1971, the park’s head of natural resources, Pierre Desmeules, notified the Ottawa head office that “consideration should be given to attempting to re-establish populations of fur-bearers such as marten, otter and fisher. These species have decreased markedly and their re-establishment could be beneficial, although they are not as spectacular from a publicity point of view.”³⁵ The subordination of ecology to the agency’s traditional mandate of highlighting the “natural beauties” of the country is especially noticeable in the master plans produced during the establishment of the park. These were designed to provide a framework for the park’s development and ensure its harmonious integration within the national parks system. They also served to render official and operational representations of nature – and representations of the park *as* natural.³⁶ In particular, the master plans achieved a scientific reinterpretation of the Mauricie landscape by characterizing the new national park as “The Laurentian Heritage.”

From 5 to 15 June 1971, an “interpretive specialist” from the Branch, R.C. Gray, visited the territory of the future park with a working copy of the preliminary master plan drafted by the Société d’exploitation des ressources éducatives du Québec (SEREQ). SEREQ relied on the dominant landscape architecture practices of the time to make this plan, best represented by the ecological planning approaches developed by Scottish-American landscape architect Ian McHarg. In effect, using McHarg’s system of transparent plastic coloured maps, SEREQ proposed a layered cartography of the multiple bio-geographical and human dimensions of the future park. With this proto-GIS cartography, SEREQ established different zones of activities (i.e., “special preservation areas,” “Wilderness areas,” “Natural environment areas,” and “Outdoor recreational areas”) based on the “ecological values” of the land.³⁷ Those four zones provided the basis of the future park’s infrastructures, such as camping sites, roads, picnic areas, a “boating complex,” and trails.

With this first plan in hand, Gray was to evaluate its quality with regard to the “interpretive possibilities” of the Mauricie territory. Although generally satisfied with the work of the SEREQ, he argued that the authors were unable to recognize “the primary values inherent to this landscape.” He went on to say that:

La Mauricie National Park is, at present, almost completely unspoiled in terms of prime wilderness lake and forest land located very near industrial centers of the lower St. Maurice valley. Granted, there are forests areas that have been logged, areas where logging has only recently ceased and sites of major logging camps (Consolidated Bathurst) still within the Park area. Still, the Park contains clear, unpolluted lakes of varied dimensions, wide zones of mixed forests, pure stands of hardwood, swamps, fresh-water marshes, streams, cascades, waterfalls, beaches, bogs, valleys and rivers; all the components of the natural wilderness of the Laurentian Shield.

Gray continued by defining more clearly what he believes the authors of the SEREQ document have failed to recognize in this landscape. In his judgment,

... the outstanding feature of La Mauricie National Park is not its lakes and forests, or streams or waterfalls considered as separate land forms. The sum of these parts is more than their separate entities. It is the wilderness that makes La Mauricie National Park a vital addition to the system of National Parks in Canada. It is the wilderness that dictates the value system we must use when assessing priorities in this new National Park territory.

In short, he concluded that “La Mauricie National Park is nothing less than a true ‘Laurentian Wilderness,’” confirming eloquently the Parks Branch’s mission of recognizing true wild nature and promoting its good uses.³⁸ Gray disliked the overly utilitarian emphasis of the draft master plan, particularly its zoning arrangement. He proposed “radically” reducing the zones dedicated to intensive activities or moving them to more “appropriate” areas. For example, Gray suggested clustering campground development near the old Grand-Mère plantation in the southeastern part of the park, “since this is a completely artificial plant community.” He also recommended changing the zoning of lakes Maréchal, Weber, and Atikamac, located in the western

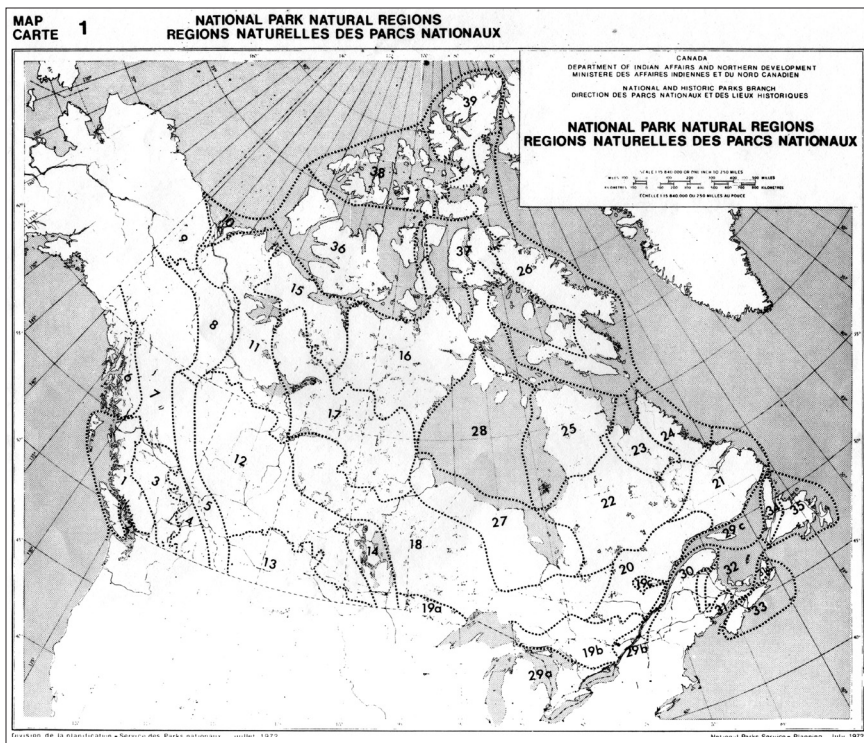


FIG. 5. THE THIRTY-NINE “NATURAL REGIONS” OF CANADA. [SOURCE: MANUEL DE PLANIFICATION DU RÉSEAU DES PARCS NATIONAUX, 1972, 9. © Parks Canada Agency.]

part of the park, from type III, a “Natural Environment Area” (a type of buffer zone between areas of intensive recreational activities and the “back country”) to type II, a “Wilderness Area” (which permitted only activities without significant impact on the environment, such as hiking, canoeing or camping). According to Gray, “only then will the lake country of the south-western portion of the Park be true wilderness and officially considered as such.”³⁹ Parks Canada took Gray’s recommendations into account and incorporated them into its second temporary master plan in 1975.⁴⁰

Gray’s comments give us some indication of the process by which a “true Laurentian Wilderness” was constructed in La Mauricie National Park. In

order for visitors to be able to recognize the wilderness expected of national parks, official zoning plans had to initially circumscribe and label it as such. In the same way as the National Parks Branch was trying to contain long-established towns within or near Banff National Park by the 1960s (as C.J. Taylor discusses), this rezoning in La Mauricie National Park was meant to transform the forms and functions of the backcountry. As a tool for structuring the territory, the zoning plan materializes the abstract representation of different kinds of nature in national parks.

This new zoning representing the “wild” backcountry of La Mauricie National Park was only the first step necessary in reconstructing the history of the Mauricie landscape. Following the new policy of system planning after 1970, the Branch integrated La Mauricie National Park into the management plan laid out in the 1972 National Parks System’s Planning Manual. This manual, largely inspired by a similar plan from the U.S. National Parks Service, aimed at “formulating a plan ensuring the creation of a network of National Parks that would be a judicious sample of the landscapes and natural attractions of Canada.”⁴¹ Equally important, this plan “must be objective and use criteria that all those interested can accept and understand” – so it is to be “based on the natural sciences and be free of all political or social impediments.” This manual, then, was meant to integrate all of Canada’s national parks into a scientific grid of land management and land categorization that largely excluded local cultural practices. In order to free it of “all political or social impediments,” the Parks Branch adopted the maturing discourse of scientific ecology. The 1972 manual proposed a nation-wide territorial classification based on “natural regions” and “natural history themes worthy of representation.” These themes were to be the “primary imperatives” in choosing the site of a future national park – *together with* the “outdoor recreation needs” of a given region. The manual also identified which geological and ecological features best conveyed “the essence of the natural regions.”⁴² The Systems Plan defined thirty-nine “natural regions” covering all of Canadian territory; these regions are still in use in the national parks system.

As a new park, La Mauricie was carefully positioned to exemplify this new approach to park planning. First, the 1972 Planning Manual designated La Mauricie Park as part of the “Canadian Shield” region, also identified as “19 b – Centre of the Precambrian region of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes.” Then, it identified the themes of “Precambrian,” “the Age of primitive

invertebrates,” and the ecosystems typical of the “Great Lakes – St. Lawrence forest region, section 4a, Laurentians.” Finally, in a stance that clearly showed the Parks Branch’s new commitment to nation-building-through-science activity,⁴³ the manual specified which “natural values worthy of being represented”⁴⁴ would best illustrate these themes. For La Mauricie, this was the presence of the Canadian Shield, chains of lakes and rivers, the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence forest, and the “steep point of contact with the centre of the St. Lawrence lowlands.”⁴⁵ In short, the manual clearly presented the “natural values” of the landscape as being the primary interest of national parks. It contained no mention of local uses or of the social and cultural history of the landscapes made into parks. In the specific case of La Mauricie, forest or fish and game exploitation were nowhere mentioned, although they had, as we have noted, an important role in shaping the region. By using concepts taken from geology and ecology, as well as maps that rendered these new scientific representations of the landscape concrete, Parks Canada generally succeeded in recreating its wilderness ideal on this territory.⁴⁶

In such a wilderness, human activity is, by definition, absent.⁴⁷ Although the agency recognized the traces of a past human presence in La Mauricie National Park, the humanized characteristics of the newly protected ecosystems became, at best, artifacts of the “museum” of natural history that national parks were supposed to be.⁴⁸ An internal memo from the director of the Parks Branch in Ottawa illustrates very well this effacement of the social and cultural dimensions of the Mauricie landscape. This memo outlined choices by the head office regarding material presented at the official opening of the park’s interpretation centre on 4 August 1972.⁴⁹ After a visit to Ottawa by Gilles Ouellette, who was in charge of the park’s interpretation service, Branch Director John I. Nicol decided that the “natural history” of the park should be divided into four thematic sections: the “Laurentian Uplands,” the “Diversity of Forest Types,” the “Aquatic Environment,” and “Human History.” Nicol then selected a collection of objects that were characteristic of each theme: samples of gneiss and photos of taluses and eskers to represent the “Uplands”; approximately thirty samples of nuts, insects, and stuffed animals for the “Wildlife Mosaic”; and about twenty photos of fish and specimens of aquatic insects for the “Aquatic Web.” For the last theme, “Human History,” out of the ten or so objects proposed by the regional director, such as axes, logger cant hooks, and sculptures of a trapper and a logger,

he retained only three photographs of a canoe, a logging camp, and stream driving and a few Aboriginal artifacts.⁵⁰ Compared to its geological, faunistic and floristic history, La Mauricie's human history was limited to a "folklorized" presence marked by the use of Aboriginal artifacts⁵¹ and by photos of industrial and recreational activity that the Branch considered over and done with in this part of the Mauricie region. It would be indigenous peoples in the north who would more effectively challenge this selective exclusion of human practices – or *historical* practices – that has been part of the institutional culture of Parks Canada.

Without the scale and grandeur of the mountain parks, the agency nevertheless (re)created, through scientific representations, a significant wilderness in La Mauricie. This "scientification" of the landscape was evident by 1975, when Parks Canada presented a temporary master plan for the park:

[...] an overview of the territory of the park allows one to observe a great homogeneity of the elements composing the biophysical environment. We observe a uniform distribution of interesting sites that can be retained as having potential for interpretation. This uniformity is also found at the level of the comparisons and evaluation among the components. The absence of large disparities among the elements composing this potential brings us to pay a particular attention to natural groupings that can occur at certain sites. Taken from a more general perspective, several isolated phenomena of moderate importance can create, in a given sector, as a set, a high interpretation potential.⁵²

The plan encapsulates several elements of this essay. The search for "interesting sites that can be retained as having potential for interpretation" reveals the traditional sensitivity of Parks Canada for the picturesque in Canadian nature. The first Canadian parks established in the Rocky Mountains at the end of the nineteenth century, with their "large disparities" in geology, were the reference for deciding what is "interesting" in the Canadian landscape (and the plan asserts that the Mauricie territory is devoid of this type of "large disparities"). Taken separately, the biophysical characteristics of La Mauricie National Park, such as the marshes or great conifer forests, are phenomena of

only “moderate importance.” Seeking new arguments to justify the presence of a park, then, Parks Canada used the science and mapping of ecology to create a landscape that is scientifically significant, transforming the Mauricie territory into a new “representative natural area of Canadian interest.”⁵³ The key moment of this scientific reinterpretation was the integration of the park into the 1972 planning manual’s classification system, which was to be “based solely on natural sciences and thus detached from any political or social considerations” (“fondé sur les sciences naturelles et être dégagé de toute entrave politique ou sociale”).⁵⁴ At that moment, the park, too, became a scientific object, completely detached from the social and cultural web that surrounds it and runs through it.

Conclusion

Far from being a natural area composed of biogeographical dimensions, La Mauricie National Park appears in this chapter as an object laden with interpretations of what wilderness should be, according to Parks Canada. In considering the natural and cultural history of landscapes, we can compare national parks to historical productions. They are the materialization of a discourse that has its roots in the history of human relations to the land. Indeed, in establishing La Mauricie National Park, Parks Canada joined an important current of environmental thought that contrasts the wild frontier of the North American west with the industrial landscapes of the East.⁵⁵ During its history, Parks Canada institutionalized this representation of wilderness, first through its iconic parks in the Canadian Rockies, and then sought to transpose it to the Mauricie territory. The area made into a park therefore bears the cultural stamp of the creator agency, in the same way that it bore the industrial and recreational territorial marks of the Mauricie’s human presence.

This chapter also shows how scientific rationality is, like the environment, never neutral. Scientific discourse, especially that of ecology, has the power to “naturalize” the institutional culture of agencies in charge of national parks. When Parks Canada presents its ideals of wilderness through scientific discourse, and with material support such as maps and master plans, these ideals become a tangible reality. The materialized representations of the environment that are the national parks can then transform the territory and

its uses, in relation to the political, economic, scientific, or cultural objectives of the institutions that promote the parks. The map of the thirty-nine “natural regions” of the 1972 Planning Manual speaks volumes in this respect. Through concepts taken from biology and geology, the federal agency presented Canada as a totally integrated geographical unit, where provincial political boundaries – as well as their associated social issues – disappear under the scientific lenses. Like Hamber Provincial Park served as a gambit to involve Ottawa in the development of the Canadian Selkirk region (as Ben Bradley discusses in this book), the science offered in the case of La Mauricie National Park contributed in strengthening federal power in Quebec.⁵⁶ This effaces local territoriality in favour of another promoted by a government agency in charge of the management and protection of the environment. In a radical way, this can be seen as a subtle form of cultural colonialism (a concept raised by Brad Martin in his essay here). The new scientifically informed parks of the 1970s, like the one in La Mauricie, effectively served to control local population activities in accordance with Parks Canada’s idea of wilderness and to “educate” park visitors about the agency’s preferred relationships with the environment.

More ethnological analysis of protected areas in Canada, of their social as well as ecological histories, would illuminate the multiple trajectories that have constructed these environments. Such an analysis would reveal the social complexity of contemporary Canadian landscapes and the issues at stake. As I. S. MacLaren critically demonstrates, even if not established in apparently humanized landscapes, as in Jasper’s case, national parks now support – and always did – a rich and complex web of human practices and relationships to the land. Those relationships question the very notion of wilderness, especially, as we have seen, when parks are established in long-inhabited lands, such as in the Mauricie. More studies on the material and symbolic ties between local inhabitants and conservation areas might reveal the existence of territorial uses that are beneficial for the environment, or that support the sustainability of natural resources. Those studies in environmental history and cultural geography would surely help support Parks Canada’s mandate of promoting protected areas that adequately reflect the biogeographical richness, as well as the social and cultural diversity, of the Canadian environment.

NOTES

- 1 This chapter is based on my master's thesis, *Idéal de nature sauvage et transformation des territorialités au parc national de la Mauricie, 1969–1977*, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, 2008, 130 pages. Many thanks to my supervisor, Professor Stéphane Castonguay, Chairholder of the Canada Research Chair in the Environmental History of Québec.
- 2 For examples of stories celebrating national parks, see: W.F. Lothian, *A Brief History of Canada's National Parks* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1987); Kevin McNamee, "From Wild Places to Endangered Places: A History of Canada's National Parks," in *Parks and Protected Areas in Canada: Planning and Management*, ed. Philip Dearden and Rick Rollins, 21–49 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Kevin McNamee, "Preserving Canada's Wilderness Legacy: A Perspective on Protected Areas," in *Protected Areas and the Regional Planning Imperative in North America: Integrating Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development*, ed. J.G. Nelson et al., 25–44 (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003); R.G. Wright and D.J. Mattson, "The Origins and Purposes of National Parks and Protected Areas," in *National Parks and Protected Areas: Their Role in Environmental Protection*, ed. R.G. Wright, 3–14 (Blackwell Science, 1996).
- 3 Roderick Nash, "The American Invention of National Parks," *American Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1970): 726.
- 4 Henry-David Thoreau, *Walden: or, Life in the Woods; and on the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (New York: Signet Classic, 1999).
- 5 William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 13; Karl Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Alan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935–1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 328; J. Keri Cronin, "Manufacturing National Park Nature: Photography, Ecology and the Wilderness Industry of Jasper National Park," (PhD dissertation, Kingston, Queen's University, 2004), 419.
- 6 Alan MacEachern, "Voices Crying in the Wilderness: Recent Works in Canadian Environmental History," *Acadiensis* 31, no. 2 (2002): 215–26.
- 7 The federal agency responsible for Canada's national parks changes names several times during its history. From 1966 to 1973, it is known as the National and Historic Parks Branch. From 1973 onwards, it is named Parks Canada. Much of the development of the park at La Mauricie occurs before 1973, so this essay accordingly uses both names.
- 8 http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/np-pn/res-syst_e.asp [Consulted 31 August 2008].
- 9 *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*. <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/docs/pc/poli/princip/sec2/part2a/part2a2.aspx> [21 July 2008].

- 10 Kevin McNamee, "Preserving Canada's Wilderness Legacy"; MacEachern, *Natural Selections*, 328; R.C. Brown, "The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resources and National Policy in Canada", in *Canadian Parks in Perspective*, ed. J.G. Nelson and R.C. Scace, 46–62 (Montreal: Harvest House, 1970); C.J. Taylor, "Legislating Nature: The National Parks Act of 1930," *Canadian Issues* 13 (1991): 127; Janet Foster, *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 6.
- 11 Harkin to C.D. Richard, 13 June 1927, in Taylor, "Legislating Nature," 133.
- 12 Taylor, "Legislating Nature," 5; MacEachern, *Natural Selections*, 23ff.
- 13 A truism of the environmental historiography since Cronon's *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 561.
- 14 K. Olwig, "Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore – A Meandering Tale of a Double Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. W. Cronon, 379–408 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).
- 15 Lothian, *A Brief History of Canada's National Parks*, 144.
- 16 Patrick Moquay, "La référence régionale au Québec. Les visions étatiques de la région et leurs incarnations," in *L'institutionnalisation du territoire au Canada*, J.P. Augustin, 92ff. (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996); René Hardy and Normand Séguin, eds., *Histoire de la Mauricie* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 2004) 837ff.
- 17 M.S. Searle and R.E. Brayley, *Leisure Service in Canada: An Introduction* (Venture Publishing, 2000), 22ff.
- 18 Paul-Louis Martin, *La chasse au Québec* (Montréal: Éditions du Boréal, 1990), 162; Michel Bellefleur, *L'évolution du loisir au Québec: essai sociohistorique* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1997), 163–69; Canada Land Inventory, *Objectives, Scope and Organization, Report 1*, cited by C.S. Brown, "Federal-Rural Development Programs and Recreation Resources," in *Canadian Parks in Perspective*, ed. J.G. Nelson and R.C. Scace, 239 (Montreal: Harvest House, 1970); Bruno Jean, "La 'ruralité' bas-laurentienne: développement agricole et sous-développement rural," *Recherches sociographiques* 29, no. 2 (1998): 242; Bruno Jean, "Les études rurales québécoises entre les approches monographiques et typologiques," *Recherches sociographiques* 47, no. 3 (2006): 511; Moquay, "La référence régionale au Québec." For a critical history of the project of a park in the Gaspésie region, see J.M. Thibeault, "La création d'un premier parc national au Québec: le parc Forillon, 1969–70." Master's thesis, Université de Sherbrooke, 1991.
- 19 Lothian, *A Brief History of Canada's National Parks*, 25.
- 20 Jean Chrétien, "Our Evolving National Parks System," in *The Canadian National Parks: Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Nelson and Scace, 10.
- 21 Parcs Canada – Centre de services du Québec (PC-CSQ), *L'aménagement d'un parc en Mauricie*, 24 March 1971, 5–6.

- 22 Parks Canada's economists referred heavily to Banff and Cape-Breton parks to estimate that 1 million visitors per year would visit the new park in the Mauricie (in Library and Archives Canada, RG22, 1229, 321-1, 3, *Prévisions sur l'effet économique d'un parc en Mauricie*, 26 février 1970). According to Parks Canada's Planning Division, touristic expenses for the region, based on a 1.5 million visitors per year projection, could also reach "a conservative estimate of \$5.4 millions" (in Parks Canada, *Economic Aspects of the Proposed St. Maurice National Park, March 1970*, 1). Those numbers never came; the average for the ten first years of the park's activity topped 250,000 visitors per year (in Denis Pronovost, "Les retombées économiques du parc national: les meilleures années sont à venir!", *Le Nouvelliste*, 4 septembre 1981).
- 23 The spruce plantation established by La Laurentide became known as the "Grand-Mère plantation." Lothian, *A Brief History of Canada's National Parks*, 135–42.
- 24 SEREQ, *La Mauricie National Park*, 1971, 27.
- 25 Thierry Bouin, *Aménagement et exploitation faunique antérieurs à la création du parc national de la Mauricie* (1970). (Ottawa: Service de la conservation et des ressources naturelles, 1979), 4–5; Martin, *La chasse au Québec*; Hardy and Séguin, *Histoire de la Mauricie*
- 26 SEREQ, *La Mauricie National Park*, 1971, 27; Jérémy Pringault, "Le parc national de la Mauricie: mise en valeur d'un espace protégé dans la perspective du développement durable" (master's thesis, Université de Caen, France, 1994) 67; Royal St-Arnaud, "La Mauricie est la région la plus importante au domaine forestier," *Le Nouvelliste*, 17 September 1971; PC-CSQ, Bouin, *Aménagement et exploitation faunique*, vii.
- 27 Martin, *La chasse au Québec*, 170; Serge Gagnon, *L'échiquier touristique québécois* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2003), 295.
- 28 Archives nationales du Canada (ANC), RG 84, 2344, C-1445-101/L1, 3, Rapports semi-annuels des surintendants, 24 May 1973.
- 29 Pringault, "Le parc national de la Mauricie," 67, Bouin, *Aménagement et exploitation faunique*, 36 and 47.
- 30 Paige West, James Ingoe, and Dan Brockington, "Parks and Peoples: The Social Impact of Protected Areas," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006): 260ff.
- 31 Thomas R. Dunlap, "Wildlife, Science, and the National Parks, 1920–1940," *Pacific Historical Review* 59, no. 2 (1990): 187–202; Thomas R. Dunlap, "Ecology, Nature, and Canadian National Park Policy: Wolves, Elk, and Bison as a Case Study," in *To See Ourselves/to Save Ourselves: Ecology and Culture in Canada*, ed. Rowland Lorimer, 139–47 (Montreal: Association for Canadian Studies, 1990); Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Gerald Killan and George Warecki, "J.R. Dymond and Frank A. Macdougall: Science and Government Policy in Algonquin Provincial Park, 1931–1954," *Scientia Canadensis* 22, no. 51 (1998): 131–56; Alan MacEachern, "Rationality and Rationalization in Canadian National Parks Policy," in *Consuming Canada:*

- Readings in Environmental History*, ed. Chad Gaffield and Pam Gaffield, 197–212 (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1995).
- 32 ANC, RG 22, 998, 321-10, 1, Lefebvre to Chrétien, 7 October 1970.
 - 33 ANC, RG 22, 998, 321-10, 1, Chrétien to Lefebvre, 4 November 1970.
 - 34 Article 9 of the National Parks Policy indicates that “no research, except that which is needed by the park itself, can be pursued within a park if an appropriate site for the research can be found elsewhere.” Canada, Direction des parcs nationaux et des lieux historiques, *Politique des parcs nationaux* (Ottawa: Affaires indiennes et du Nord, Parcs Canada, 1969), 4, 6.
 - 35 Parks Canada – Office national – Bureau central de classement (PC-ON-BCC), C-98103L1, Desmeules to Lesaux, 26 January 1971.
 - 36 Louis Machabée, “La double nature de la nature: une analyse sociologique de la naturalisation des espaces verts en milieu urbain.” **Doctoral thesis**, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2002, p. 26.
 - 37 SEREQ, *La Mauricie National Park*, 1971, p. 60.
 - 38 PC-ON-BCC, C-8320/L1, *La Mauricie National Park – Visit of the Interpretive Specialist R.C. Gray, June 9th to 15th, 1971*, 25 June 1971, 9–10.
 - 39 Ibid.
 - 40 PC-CSQ, Parcs Canada, *Plan directeur provisoire: parc national de la Mauricie*, 1975, p. 53.
 - 41 PC-CSQ, Parcs Canada, *Manuel de planification du réseau des parcs nationaux*, 1972, p. 3–4.
 - 42 Parcs Canada, *Manuel de planification*, 48.
 - 43 Suzanne Zellers, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).
 - 44 Parcs Canada, *Manuel de planification*, 107.
 - 45 Parcs Canada, *Manuel de planification*, 115.
 - 46 The annual report of fiscal year 1971–72 confirms this effacement of human dimensions of territories made into reserves. It indicates that the new scientific management of Canadian National Parks is inspired by “the principle that the natural park system must protect not only the unique and characteristic regions of the Canadian landscape, but also those that present physical and biological elements that are typically Canadian” (in Parcs Canada, *Rapport annuel: Année financière 1971/1972*, 1972, p. 9).
 - 47 “The place where we are is the place where nature is not,” in William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 17.
 - 48 MacEachern, *Natural Selections*, 3–4.
 - 49 Carole Pronovost, “Au parc national de la Mauricie: Inauguration d’un centre d’interprétation de la nature,” *Le Nouvelliste*, 5 August 1972.
 - 50 PC-ON-BCC, C-8333/L1, Nicol to the Regional Director (Central Region), 1 February 1972.
 - 51 On the use of Aboriginal folklore by governmental agencies, see: Tina Loo, “Making a Modern Wilderness: Conserving Wildlife in Twentieth-Century

- Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (2001): 101–103; and Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 13 and following.
- 52 PC-CSQ, Parcs Canada, *Plan directeur provisoire: parc national de la Mauricie* (1975) 31.
- 53 *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*. <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/docs/pc/poli/princip/sec2/part2a/part2a2.aspx> [accessed 21 July 2008].
- 54 Parcs Canada, *Manuel de planification...*, 3.
- 55 Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness,” *loc. cit.*; Eric Kaufmann, “Naturalizing the Nation: The Rise of Naturalistic Nationalism in the United States and Canada,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 4 (1998): 666–95.
- 56 For a recent discussion on this subject by one contributor of this book, see David Neufeld, “Indigenous peoples and protected heritage areas: Acknowledging cultural pluralism,” in K. S. Hanna et al., ed., *Transforming Parks and Protected Areas: Policy Governance in a Changing World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), chap. 10.