



CREE CULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND SUSTAINABILITY

NRC 597CC (3 credits)

SPIRE #: 18909

Capacity = 7 students

312A Holdsworth Hall

Thursdays, 6-9 pm*

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* and a required Spring Recess experiential learning trip (March 12-23, 2011) in conjunction with the **Hulbert Outdoor Center**, Fairlee, Vermont ... <http://www.alohafoundation.org/hulbert-outdoor-center/adult-programs/cree-culture-snowshoe-trip/>. Deborah Williams and Hans Carlson will be the trip leaders (to the right and left, respectively, of David and Anna Bosum in the center of the photograph). They have decades of experience leading wilderness trips and working collaboratively with Cree communities.

BOOKS (available directly from publishers)

Carlson, Hans M., 2008. *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land*. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 317 pp. <http://www.ubcpres.ubc.ca/>

Richardson, Boyce., 1991. *Strangers Devour the Land*. Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, VT, 376 pp. (first published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1976) <http://www.chelseagreen.com/>

BACKGROUND

The Cree people have been part of the boreal forests of what is now northern Quebec for at least 3,000 years. The traditional knowledge, cultural, spiritual, and personal attributes developed over more than 150 generations lead them to refer to their homeland as a "garden" ...not the forbidding wilderness so often described by Europeans and their descendents. There is, of course, much that we can learn from these self-reliant and resourceful people. Our two worlds met when Henry Hudson arrived in 1610. The Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Company and other fur traders introduced European goods, technologies, and vices from ~1700 to 1960. Mining companies, forest products companies, and Hydro-Quebec rolled north in the 20th century. Each episode of what Boyce Richardson has called "force-fed acculturation" has compelled the Cree to adapt and change in order to sustain their cultural identity and time-tested way of life. As we strain the ecological limits this fragile Earth, our island home (BCP 1979:370), and the cumulative impact of 310,000,000 Americans comes more clearly into view, it seems prudent to for us to learn about and willingly acculturate the key principles, practices, values that have sustained the Cree people for millennia. We also need to come to terms, in an objective way, with our society's use of energy (a significant portion of the electricity used in New England and New York comes from Hydro-Quebec's massive James Bay system) and natural resources and the social, cultural, and economic effects on other people and places. To a large extent it is what Emerson, Thoreau, Marsh, Burroughs, Muir, Leopold, Carson, Maathai, and others have been trying to tell us for many, many years.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This small, interdisciplinary course combines reading and group discussions, a winter camping trip with a Cree family in northern Quebec (during Spring Recess), and an individual term project to explore (1) traditional and contemporary Cree culture, (2) the local, regional, and international use of natural resources (wood fiber, minerals, hydropower), and (3) fundamental issues of sustainability, stewardship of the environment, and social justice. The term project will be designed collaboratively with the instructor to build upon, integrate, and extend each student's interests, talents, and skills in relation to the core topics and activities.

This course is designed for self-motivated juniors, seniors, and graduate students with interests in native people and cultures, the conservation and stewardship of natural resources, and the lessons of history as they inform our individual and societal efforts to live more sustainably.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

A letter grade will be determined from the following activities and products. (I expect that every student will enthusiastically earn an "A" and will provide the mentoring needed for everyone to attain this goal.)

1. Thorough preparation for and active participation in group discussions. (20%)
2. Active (adaptive and flexible) participation in the Spring Recess experiential learning trip. (35%)
3. Term project developed in collaboration with Prof. Barten that that integrates your personal and professional development interests with the core subject (for example, an ecological, resource management, socioeconomic, political science, or historical research paper ...a creative writing project ...photography, painting, sculpture or traditional craft work, etc.). (35%)
4. A brief end-of-semester personal essay that describes changes in your awareness, perspective, values, attitudes, and behavior that have resulted from the course. (10%)



Weekly Schedule

Date	Topic/Activity (Thurs, 6-9pm with a light supper and two breaks)	Readings
20 January 2011	Introductions, discussing our motivation and goals for participating in the course and trip, viewing " <i>Cree Hunters of Mistassini</i> ," review of syllabus and 19-20 February overnight	course website
27 January	The Cree and their land, view and discuss " <i>Cesar's Bark Canoe</i> "	Carlson, thru Ch. 2
3 February	The Cree and their land, view and discuss " <i>Ikwe</i> "	Carlson, Ch. 3-4
10 February	The Cree and their land, view and discuss " <i>Mistress Madeleine</i> "	Carlson, Ch. 5-6
17 February	Hydro-Quebec and the Cree	Richardson, thru Ch. 3
19-20 February	Overnight winter camping at Great Mountain Forest, Norfolk, Connecticut (www.greatmountainforest.org)	Gear list distributed on 20 January
24 February	Hydro-Quebec and the Cree	Richardson, Ch. 4-8
3 March	Hydro-Quebec and the Cree	Richardson, Ch. 9-12
10 March	PACKING! ...using the Hulbert checklist	Packet from Hulbert
12-23 March	Hulbert Outdoor Center trip (details below)	Packet from Hulbert
24 March	no class ...re-enter the "real world" ...catch up on other work	Revisit your journal
31 March	Discussion of our trip experiences, sharing photos, etc.	Bring journal and photos
7 April	Hydro-Quebec and the Cree ...and New England in 2011	Carlson, Ch. 7-8; Richardson, Ch. 14-17
14 April	Cree art, culture, and ecotourism	Term project 1 and 2
21 April	Forest management/utilization	Term projects 3 and 4
28 April	Pathways to a sustainable future	Term projects 5,6, and 7



Itinerary for Cree Culture Snowshoe Trip (Hulbert Outdoor Center) (subject to minor changes)

Sat, 12 March	3pm arrival at Hulbert Outdoor Center, Introductions, equipment check, dinner
Sun, 13 March	early departure ...drive to La Dore, Quebec ...visit First Nations museum en route
Mon, 14 March	Travel to Ouje Bougoumou, tour Barrett Chapais sawmill, settle into lodge in Cultural Village, welcome from our Cree hosts: David and Anna Bosum, and their family and friends
Tues, 15 March	Tour Ouje Bougoumou and meet Cree community members, prepare and pack for bush camp
Wed, 16 March	Travel to trailhead, snowshoe to bush camp, settle in, explore, supper ...
Thurs-Sun, 17-20 March	Life in bush camp: exploring, gathering spruce boughs, fetching water, helping to prepare meals, learning about traditional lifeways and folklore, journals, craft work, etc.
Mon, 21 March	Breakfast, break down camp, snowshoe out to trailhead, return to Ouje Bougoumou, hot showers, hosting farewell dinner with our Cree friends, packing for the road south
Tues, 22 March	Early departure ..travel to Quebec City ...stay at <i>Auberge de la Paix</i> (a nice hostel)
Wed, 23 March	Mid-afternoon arrival at Hulbert Outdoor Center ...travel to UMassAmherst ...and home

Visit ... <http://www.alohafoundation.org/hulbert-outdoor-center/adult-programs/cree-culture-snowshoe-trip/> to learn more about the experiential learning trip. A valid U.S. Passport is required.

This sequence of photos roughly corresponds to the general trip itinerary on page 3.



Read the following, substituting “boreal forest” for “Plains” and “Cree” for “Plains Indian” (or “Omaha”), and you will have a clear sense of why I am anxious to lead this course and how it is likely to affect you. As Professor Emeritus Sidney Simon puts it, we all are in need of “values clarification.” This unique opportunity to live and learn with the Cree is a great start on that lifelong endeavor!

An excerpt (pages xix-xx) from the Introduction to the Reprint Edition (1987) by Roger L. Welsch to “*Prairie Smoke*” by Melvin R. Gilmore (1929), Minnesota Historical Society Press, St Paul, 225 pages.

There is, I believe, a predictable progression of attitudes that develops within any sensitive person who spends time on a landscape as distinctive as the Plains or with a cultural group as attractive as the Plains Indians. First the observer is curious about and fascinated by what he sees; there is almost a bewilderment at what appears to be a denial of what was clearly fact before. What seemed to be a matter of human nature is suddenly and clearly no more than a matter of cultural learning. Concepts as fundamental as the nature of time and the value of property are swept away as the fieldworker discovers that what had seemed to be the “normal order” of things is simply a set of ideas taught by one’s parents, and, what is worse, that these ideas can seem venal and petty in the face of another culture that languishes in a distinctly inferior position. What seemed right becomes wrong, and what seemed unthinkable becomes logical. When that happens to the anthropologist, folklorist, or even casual cultural traveler, the person has made the step of cross-identification that is crucial to substantive field work. Gilmore did that.

Then there is a period of sadness as the transcultural explorer worries about the injustice that the culture he is experiencing has suffered at the hands of the dominant, majority group – in our case, the imminent destruction of the Plains Indian culture by the dominant Anglo-American one. Why, the observer asks, have others not seen and appreciated the beauty and nobility that is so obvious to him? And the observer now takes steps, usually small and perhaps even pathetic, to alleviate what he perceives as mistreatment.

Next the outsider comes to realize that in addition to struggling on behalf of this new advocacy, it is even more important to continue learning what the landscape and its peoples have to share; the only way the rest of the world is going to find a similar appreciation is to know the same sorts of things that have brought the observer to a new understanding. In my own case, I found that far from stealing too much from the Omaha, we had actually not stolen enough. Having taken land, game, and place names, we left behind the most valuable of the treasures – the knowledge the Omaha still have of the Plains, its plants, its ways.

from Melvin Gilmore’s (1929) Dedication...

...To those first inhabitants of this land we now inhabit – that something of their appreciation, of their love and reverence for the land and its native life, something of their respect for its sacred places and holy associations, something of their sense of its charm, its beauty and wonder, may come to us, that we may more worthily occupy and more sympathetically enjoy our tenure on this land.