CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE: WATER AT WALPOLE ISLAND FIRST NATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates connections between environment and identity, focusing on the Walpole Island First Nation and the impact that the contamination of the St. Clair River has had on perceptions of individual and group identities with corporate, political and community interests. Water quality is linked to identity in questions of authority, economics, politics and relationships with the environment. Models of discourse analysis are used to illustrate how identities are socially constructed and flexible. Linguistic analyses address the different underlying values which have led to conflict when members of the Walpole Island community, staff of the Ministry of Environment, and representatives of Imperial Chemical Industries have come together to discuss how the water quality of the St. Clair River can be improved. The consequences that identity processes have in interactions, where the power to act and exert influence is unequally distributed among members of these groups, are discussed. This research can be applied to interrelations among people with multiple perspectives, voices and ideologies, who wish to increase possibilities of successful communication.

KEYWORDS: Anthropology, Discourse Analysis, Environment, Identity, Walpole Island First Nation, Water Pollution

For Raimundo

whose faith in me as a scholar
has been my inspiration to continue

❖

For the waters and the islands
and all who live above and below;

none lives or dies alone

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Introduction

> Nearly every household in the community is affected by the marshes in one way or another... our marshes are integral to our existence and who we are at Walpole Island. Our marshes are the reason why we fight so hard to prevent environmental degradation. There would be no Walpole Island First Nation without our wetlands (Jacobs 1998:12).

Language is an integral part of human interaction, facilitating the communication of ideas and concepts as well as reinforcing social relationships. Moore addresses both functions of language, stating that "self-identity is thus something that has to be established socially through a set of discourses which are both discursive and practical. These discourses establish the grounds for identity and the framework(s) within which identity becomes intelligible" (1994:36-37). Individuals and groups are categorized into particular identities, by others and by themselves, based in significant ways on prior and emerging verbal interactions. While language may not be essential to all interactions, it is a primary means of structuring the context and content in most. Discourse and language are central to many anthropological discussions of identity, self, agency, and voice. In this thesis, I consider the ways in which linguistic practices form and articulate identity. I am not claiming that identity should be conceived of solely in terms of language; rather I am asserting that any theory of identity that does not take language use into account is inadequate.[1]

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In theorizing identity, it is important to consider what kinds of discursive practices are used in the creation and expression of identity. As human beings, we identify things and people, we categorize experiences and events, we name and refer. The process of identification is frequent and ongoing, and it is necessary for communication and thought. Yet, the identities of specific referents are often elusive, ever-changing and contestable. Each person makes his or her own associations based on previous experiences, acquired knowledge and contextual cues from the present situation. These associations are often unconscious, and result in multiple identities for single referents among different individuals. This thesis concentrates on shared perceptions which develop within groups about their own identity and the identities of others.

Identities are best described as processes in flux, continually undergoing redefinition (Scott 1992, Said 1995, Clifford 1988). The move away from essentialist concepts of identity stems from the recognition that identities are formed through interaction with others where the context and the participants change frequently. For Clifford, identity is "mixed, relational and inventive" (1988:10). Individuals or groups draw on past recollections, cultural symbols, and their language in order to construct identities of themselves and of others.

Said refuses the notion that identities have basic cores which endure through time arguing that essentialism ignores historical changes as well as the interests of the person or group being identified, reducing matters to stereotypical, ideological conflicts of 'us' versus 'them' (1995:37-8). He views the construction of identity as an interpretive process which "involves the construction of opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of what their differences from 'us'

consist in" (Said 1995:35). Due to the hybrid and heterogeneous nature of cultures, any essentialist treatment of them will be false or misrepresentative.

While theoretically I find myself in agreement with anti-essentialism, I concur with Said that at a given moment, "we all need some foundation on which to stand" because "no one finds it easy to live uncomplainingly and fearlessly with the thesis that human reality is constantly being made and unmade" (Said 1995:36). In spite of theoretical arguments for the avoidance of generalizations and essentialism, in the daily life of people, scholars included, identities are constructed out of categorizations, stereotypes, past experiences, analogies, rumours, suppositions, myths, fantasies, wishes, inferences, etc. These are transmitted through verbal exchanges, interpretations of nonverbal signals, and the general process of socialization.

People create images of others and act in reference to them, rendering the 'true' or 'real' inconsequential or irrelevant with respect to the way people actually function. Such processes need to be addressed and investigated, and not merely dismissed by theorists insisting on relativism or anti-essentialism. Rather than criticizing or exposing essentialist, stereotypical practices, I have attempted to understand the processes, the conditions for, and the manifestations of identities which are not necessarily insidious, oppressive or self-serving, but are common processes in human interaction.

The consequences of bearing or assigning identities are manifest in social constructions such as ethnicity, nations, and institutions. Identities are detached from specific entities and come to represent whole categories of individuals perceived to share common features. How is it that a meaning, or identity can be made fixed so that it is accepted by others? Eagleton (1991) talks of ideology as a power struggle over the sign. According to him, the sign

can only exist in a social situation where different parties all negotiate to fix the meaning in a way that best serves their interests. From Eagleton's point of view, this process is a conscious one and occurs in any type of discourse where meanings are contested, within and among speech communities. He suggests that the meaning which is ultimately established, albeit provisionally, depends on the existing power structures.

Bourdieu also takes up the idea that identity construction is a social contest over the distribution of power. He refers to structured but unconscious categorizations as doxa. This is related to the more well-known concept of "habitus" which describes the unreflective perceptions and actions which reproduce inequality in everyday life (Knauft 1996:116-117). Bourdieu uses the notions of habitus and doxa as part of his practice theory which is useful for analyzing discourse in terms of inequalities and identity politics. This theory allows the "critical illumination of the unequal results of structural orientation as they [play] out in the lived time and symbolic space of concrete social action" (Knauft 1996:113). It also highlights the continual movement between social structure shaping experience and actions realizing structures (Yanagisako and Collier 1994:197). This is the same type of movement that I am arguing exists between identity as a reflection of social structure and discursive practices as personal experience.

In interpersonal relations, there is the illusion that the concept of identity applies to an individual as a composite of personal attributes. Acknowledging that identity always and only exists in relation or in opposition to someone or some other group, the concept of identity is in fact based on at least *two* individuals who have at least one identifying feature that distinguishes them. At

the most basic level, this entails a distinction such as "I am not you; you are not me."

Discourse is not monologue, it involves exchanges between at least two parties, and consequently, involves at least two interpretations. Murray (1991) addresses the processes which produce stereotypes and the consequences they have. He demonstrates how stereotypes are reinforced through discourse and verbal interaction in which meanings and interpretations are not shared. Stereotyping is a form of generalization whereby people are seen to belong to certain groups which are identified by, and whose members are all said to share, particular (usually negative) characteristics. Because speakers are normally unaware that their own expectations are culturally conditioned and therefore are not universal, the resulting miscommunication often goes unnoticed as the cause of a "mutual negative evaluation" (Murray 1991:188). Stereotypes result because the effects of these "unconscious clashes of interactional style are cumulative" (Murray 1991:194). The negative attributes associated with a certain group come to be expected and are easily confirmed because individuals are perceived in these terms. Each interaction further reinforces stereotypes in a "micro-reproduction of stratification patterns" which links the individual encounters of everyday life with the larger social structures of identity (Murray 1991:189).

The concept of identity outlined here requires an interpretive anthropological approach. Perceptions and symbolic meanings are not readily observable, yet patterns exist and rules of interpretation can be discerned. An analysis of the formation and expression of identity must consider micro-level as well as, and in connection with, macro-level processes which shape

individual experiences as people acquire the knowledge necessary for membership in various speech communities.

Not all identities are equal in significance or consequence in every social encounter. Identification as a member of a particular group will be perceived as more or less important in relation to the context of the interaction, the participants and their motives. Identity is an ongoing process within the dynamics of discourse as speakers negotiate the meanings of identity categories and assign them to individuals. Agency exists at all times during this process. The assignment of identity categories can be an active choice, and individuals can choose to accept, resist or change the identity categories with which they are associated. These choices are manifest in linguistic practices as words are chosen and specific lines of discourse are adopted simultaneously by all participants.

People want their voices to be heard and heeded. This is especially clear in court cases, political negotiations and other formal or consequential interactions where participants must take into account multiple factors including the knowledge listeners have; their own goals; the powers, rights and obligations that influence the ability of listeners to act both for and against the speaker's interests; and the social conventions and communicative practices which shape both the performances and the interpretations. There are multiple perspectives in any interaction and each participant is aware of at least some of them so that he or she may adopt different discourses for different audiences.

The Case Study

In order to avoid a purely theoretical discussion of the construction of identity, this project focuses on the constructions of real identities and voices.[2] I chose a single issue, a dispute over water quality between Walpole Island First Nation and Imperial Chemical Industries, as a point from which to develop a more concrete illustration of the ways in which discourse and identity are mutually constitutive.[3] This detailed study of a specific case allows the discourses used by several communities and individuals to be analyzed, and the relations among them explored.

In her thesis on Mohawk nationalist identity, Simpson suggests that "threats to identity begin a transformative process that causes a group to rethink and redefine themselves, and in doing so, to assert themselves as 'national' body politic with interests that are different from those around them" (Simpson 1996:40). Simpson remarks that "much of the public culture of Native people in Canada has been stridently, remarkably assertive on matters of territory, jurisdiction, boundaries and self hood – demanding an understanding of their collective behaviour and aspirations as nationalist" (Simpson 1996:17). In fact, the goal of nationalist movements is not so much for statehood as it is "for an abstraction such as sovereignty, for moral victory, or for respect" (Simpson 1996:20).

Several aspects of Native culture and collective identity have come to the fore as points upon which to focus and build this identity. They include environmental management initiatives, political moves toward self-government,

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[2] To protect anonymity, some names have been changed.

[3] I have also included the voices of other individuals and groups not directly involved in the case because they are relevant to the issues.

revival of Native languages, and land claims. Often several or all of these are intertwined and therefore, any issue involving one calls for consideration of the others for a deeper, complete understanding. I offer only an introduction to the issues pertaining to Walpole Island as they respond to the degradation of the marshes and the pollution of the water. There is much room for future research to explores these areas.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found that generally, the "well-being of people depends on the well-being of the air, water, land and other life forms. This belief has been confirmed by the findings of countless scientific studies of poor health in a compromised environment" (RCAP 1996:2). Exploring issues linked to the water quality of the St. Clair River and its importance to the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the Walpole community allows an opportunity for an anthropological analysis of how people position themselves and how they interact with others around them.

Walpole Island Territory and Community

Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) is in southwestern Ontario, at the head of Lake St. Clair which is fed by the St. Clair River. The currently recognized territory comprises six islands in the St. Clair River delta: Walpole (the largest in area and in population), Squirrel, St. Anne, Seaway, Bassett and Pottawatomi. Locally, this First Nation is also called Bkejwanong, meaning "the place where the waters divide". The resident population ranges from 3,000 to 2,200, depending on the season, and is made up of Ojibwe, Pottawatomi and Ottawa people. By linguistic criteria, these are part of the Algonquian family. The political alliance of these three groups is known as the Three Fires Confederacy and the local government is called Walpole Island First Nation

Council of Three Fires. The approximately 58,000 hectares that make up WIFN's territory were never surrendered to foreign governments and have been occupied by aboriginal peoples for at least 3,500 years. For this reason the area is referred to as unceded territory (Walpole Island Heritage Centre 1997a).

Nearly half of Walpole's territory is marsh, including 6,700 hectares of world class wetlands. The significance of wetlands as an ecosystem should not be underestimated, as the following excerpt makes clear:

> Ecologically speaking, wetlands are among the world's most important landscapes. Shallow open water, fresh and salt marshes, and other types of wetlands provide critical nesting and feeding habitats for fish and shellfish. They are the preferred or required habitat for about one third of the wildlife species identified as endangered, threatened or vulnerable in Canada. In Ontario, this proportion rises to 86%, as 12 of Ontario's endangered species depend on wetlands (Environment Canada, cited in Jackson 1993:32).

Other important natural areas on Walpole Island include tall grass prairies and oak savannas. Altogether, the territory supports a diverse and distinctive flora and fauna. Numerous rare plants and birds, as well as several endangered species, can be found within Walpole Island First Nation (Sands 1997, Van Wynsberghe 1997: 266-7). Surrounded by heavy industry, urbanization and intensive agriculture, the excellent condition of the wetlands and prairies, and the extensive area they cover, are a source of pride for the community. "That they are in superb condition is a testimony of the strong cultural, social, spiritual and economic ties the Native people have with the land.... It is an entire way of life, a symbiotic relationship that goes beyond the desire to merely recognize and protect elements of former landscapes" (Woodliffe and Williams 1992).

While economic pursuits are varied, hunting, fishing and trapping activities involve almost every household either directly or indirectly (Sands

1997). Recreational tourism is the largest source of revenue, consisting of such activities as hunting, fishing, boating, attending pow-wows, camping, nature walks and cottage rentals. Agriculture is the second largest industry; with more than 12,000 acres under cultivation. Tahgahoning Enterprises is a 5,000 acre cash crop farm at WIFN, which is the largest in Ontario (Jacobs 1998:11). Clearly, the St. Clair River and the land that surrounds it is an important part of the daily lives of the people and wildlife of Walpole Island.

Contamination of the St. Clair River

The St. Clair River connects Lake Huron to Lake St. Clair, flowing south for about 64 kilometres. Approximately 170,000 people live along the shores of the river. A government report resulting from an investigation of pollution in the St. Clair River describes the river's importance to humans in the following areas:

> The St. Clair River is an important international waterway which is subject to extensive use as a major shipping channel and as receiving water for numerous industrial and municipal effluents. This is particularly evident on the upper river along the Canadian shoreline where there are eighteen dischargers including 6 municipal sewage treatment plants and 12 industrial waste dischargers. Approximately 1.7 billion litres of industrial effluent and cooling water is discharged to the river daily from the large petrochemical complex on the Canadian side. Municipal water intakes from the St. Clair River provide treated drinking water to several American and Canadian communities. The river is also a source of water for numerous industries, including once-through cooling water for electric power generating plants.
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> The river is used extensively for sport fishing and provides spawning grounds for over 20 fish species. In 1980 Canadian sport fishermen took home an estimated catch of 152,000 fish. The U.S. shore contains many recreation facilities including campgrounds, marinas and a state park while in Canada, the St. Clair Parkway Commission oversees 19 parks in total approximately 250 ha (Ontario 1986:2).

The St. Clair River has a remarkably large flow, ranging from 390 million cubic metres a day in the summer to 490 million cubic metres during runoff (Ontario

1986:1). It takes about 21 hours at the average rate of flow for water to travel the full length of the river.

The territory of Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) is located downstream from several petrochemical plants situated along the Canadian side of the St. Clair River. Since the beginning of their operations as far back as fifty years ago, enormous amounts of toxic substances have been discharged into the river from these industries. There are presently twenty-three industrial waste sites releasing effluent, containing both organic and inorganic chemicals, from the industries which are known as the "Chemical Valley". One source says that between 1974 and 1986, the Chemical Valley was responsible for more than ten tonnes of pollutants entering the river (Jacobs 1998:4). In addition, there are nine facilities in Michigan directly discharging into the river (Ontario 1995:15). In the last decade, pollution controls have significantly reduced the amount of contaminants entering the river (Johnson personal communication, Mathewson 1998), however WIFN continues to pursue its goal of "zero discharge" in order to allow the water to recover and to prevent further degradation.

By far, sewage from the city of Sarnia at the head of the river is the worst source of pollution at present. The city continually releases primary sewage from its 80,000 inhabitants into the St. Clair River. Primary treatment is inadequate because it only removes solids, sending heavy metals and most of the bacteria back into the river. Moreover, combined sewer overflows allow untreated sewage to flow directly into the river during heavy rain storms (Ontario 1987:1). Plans to eliminate combined sewer overflows and upgrade Sarnia's system to secondary treatment, which would remove ninety percent of the bacteria, have been very slow in implementation. This is largely due to the high cost ($35 million) and lack of public will (Dobson 1998).

Altogether there are eight municipal dischargers from both Ontario and Michigan, for a total of forty sites of environmental contamination (Ontario 1995:15). In addition to industrial effluent and municipal sewage, pollution also enters the river from agricultural runoff, precipitation carrying airborne pollutants, and sediments in the bottom of the river which become resuspended due to high winds or storms. It is with these forces that the WIFN community must contend in the struggle for clean water which is safe for themselves as well as the plants and animals they seek to protect.

There is concern at WIFN that their water and food supply is jeopardized by pollution of the river. The marshes act as a sponge, absorbing contaminants (Great Lakes Institute 1987). People are aware that developmental problems may occur in their children or grandchildren, even if they do not notice any signs of harm from exposure to contaminants in their own bodies. The effects on grandchildren are of particular concern because the seventh generation following the present one is used as a cultural reference for evaluating behaviours and outcomes. In discussions of health and illness, references to the pollution sources upstream from the First Nation frequently arise.

> Signs of minor illness (headaches, fevers, etc.) immediately raise questions among residents about whether there has been another spill in the St. Clair River. Other possible explanations for such illnesses are subordinate to this preoccupation with the water supply (Jackson 1993:17).

These fears are reflected in beach closures, water intake shut downs, the construction of a community water tower, and the Band Council's supply of bottled water for all members.

Walpole Island and ICI

Since 1995, WIFN has been involved in a hearing, court proceedings and appeals, in an attempt to prevent Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) from releasing treated waste water still containing relatively low amounts of contaminants into the St. Clair River. The First Nation was unsuccessful in preventing further discharges. Nonetheless, they have not given up the fight for "zero discharge" of contaminants into the river by ICI and other companies in the Chemical Valley. Having spent large sums of limited Band funds in the long legal process, and with so much public attention on the issue, the community has become divided and ambivalent. Some people say that since the courts decided in favour of ICI, no more money should be spent to continue a losing battle. Others believe that despite the negative outcome, legal progress was made and having obtained leave to appeal again from the court, they may finally be in a position to win.

As a result of the increased public awareness of pollution in the river, most households now buy bottled water supplied from a distilling unit located at the Bkejwanong Supermarket. This is both costly (the costs are currently paid by the Band Council), and inconvenient. There is a general sense of fear and skepticism with respect to the quality of the water used for consumption, and residents are hesitant to take fish and ducks from the river to eat. Children are advised not to swim in the river, nor to drink from fountains in the school. There are reports of skin rashes, ear infections and stomach problems from people who have drunk or come into contact with the water. The ICI discharge has become a symbol of polluted water in the community, as evidenced in such comments as: "I'm not drinking that ICI water", or the following remark made by a young mother:

> It's hard to tell the kids not to swim when it looks so inviting. Even I want to go in sometimes, but we can't. I got a pool for them to swim... I told my neighbours I sent the bill to ICI (laugh). I said they could have a pool too, just send the bill to ICI. They send their kids to swim in my pool.

My Research at Walpole Island

My first direct contact with Walpole Island First Nation was through Dean Jacobs, executive director of the Heritage Centre. The Heritage Centre does research for the community and Dean was interested in my idea of doing a linguistic analysis of the interactions among the groups involved in the water issues. I made a proposal to the Heritage Centre Committee, and they accepted me as a researcher in the community. The Heritage Centre became my home base while on the Island. The Centre has an extensive library including newsletters, theses, videos and maps, publications produced by their own staff, as well as by a large variety of other sources. Most of the printed data I have on Walpole Island was provided by the Heritage Centre. I was also able to obtain recorded interviews with some of the workers and have used these in my analyses.

One of the members of the Heritage Centre committee also participates in a local women's group, known as Akii Kwe (meaning "earth woman"). After the initial introduction when I made my proposal, I was invited to join the women's weekly meetings where they discussed water related issues such as pollution, health problems, the cultural and spiritual significance of the water and how best to restore its purity. The women's group (they did not yet have a name when I first met them in 1998) had come into existence in late 1995, just before the hearing regarding the ICI discharge application began. It was in response to the proposed discharge of the waste water that some women in the community got together to talk about what it would mean and what they could

do about water problems in general. Although the court cases had been abandoned by the time I started doing my fieldwork, the women's group had continued to meet through the intervening years. I attended their meetings for about three months, observing, taking notes and occasionally asking questions. Eventually, I extended my network, talking with and interviewing other members of the community, as well as non-Natives involved in these issues.

The women's group hosted some meetings that were attended by various representatives of government, environmental groups, community members and members of the general public interested in cleaning up the river. I was allowed to record these meetings to use in my analyses. Through my association with the women's group, I was also invited to go on a boat tour down river to see the Chemical Valley and in particular, the former location of ICI. On another day, I went on a boat tour around the Walpole marsh near the end of duck hunting season. Several people had suggested that it was important for me to "go out in the marsh" if I really wanted to understand a little bit about what it means to the people living on the Island. Although the few times I went to the marsh were brief, both by car and by boat, I can say that I agree. Talking about it and experiencing it are not the same.

I did not live on the Island; rather I made the two hour drive from London to Walpole Island several times a month. This made a big difference in my relationships with the community because I was not able to just "hang out" and get to know people less formally. I was almost always there with a purpose, although I did attend one Tuesday euchre night and the annual duck dinner which were purely social events. Many people I only met once or twice, including the day I interviewed them. Therefore, the ongoing relationships I have are with the Heritage Centre staff and the women of Akii Kwe. It is partly

for this reason that my study focuses on these two groups within Walpole Island. Another factor is that these are groups and not individuals, which is important from a theoretical perspective since I was investigating the construction of group identities. If this were a larger project, one could also look at other groups such as hunters and fishermen, youth groups, elders and workers at the water treatment plant. While I did talk with some individuals in these other groups, I was not able to develop a coherent collective perspective and so I have chosen to concentrate on the Heritage Centre and Akii Kwe.

Fieldwork Beyond Walpole Island

In order to study the interrelations among Walpole Island First Nation, ICI and the Ministry of Environment, it was necessary to do some fieldwork off the island as well. I conducted a number of interviews with non-Natives who were involved in the water issues in different ways.

I was able to interview the project manager responsible for the remediation of the ICI site. She took me on a tour of the site and she also provided me with a Summary Report prepared for ICI by an environmental consultant firm who was hired by the company for the Joint Board Hearings in 1995. It is from these two sources of data and an interview with a retired process operator who worked at the site for thirty years that my information and analyses regarding ICI are derived. There were no face-to-face interactions among members of WIFN and ICI that I was able to observe during my period of fieldwork. Written sources that I used to obtain a third party perspective included the Joint Board and Court Appeals decisions, as well as several newspaper articles.

I interviewed the senior project advisor for the St. Clair Remedial Action Plan (RAP) at the Ontario Ministry of Environment (MOE) in Sarnia, Ontario. He provided me with information on the RAP project as well as background on the MOE's perspective regarding pollution, scientific testing, and treatment and uses of the river.

During my investigation of other sources of pollution in the St. Clair River, I found it helpful to talk to a city engineer at City Hall in Sarnia. I interviewed him and he gave me some written information on the Sarnia sewage treatment plant and the City's plans to upgrade the system. I later interviewed another MOE employee with respect to this matter and I attended a Sarnia City Council meeting at which the upgrade to the system and its benefits for Walpole Island and other downstream users were debated.

Another man I interviewed was a retired chemist who lives near Walpole Island on the Canadian side of the river. He has been active in trying to raise public awareness of the pollution of the St. Clair River, and he has been to several meetings at Walpole. He is especially concerned with the chemicals that the government allows to be discharged into the river by the industries in Chemical Valley because he says that there are no studies to prove there will be no long term effects on health due to these toxic substances. He was one of only two non-Native people with a scientific perspective that I encountered who challenged the scientific claims of the MOE or ICI.

* * *

Chapter Two of this thesis explores the politics of environmental management, discussing the relationships among the groups whose voices are

most often heard on water issues. Some history is presented for context, and a case study is given to illustrate the different perspectives. Other issues which influence these relations and provide a wider view of where each perspective fits include the movement toward self-government for Walpole Island First Nation, their ongoing pursuit for recognition of particular land claims, government sponsored Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) designed to improve certain areas in the Great Lakes basin, and a general trend in public policy which places environmental protection and preservation as a priority for both government and industry.

Chapter Three considers identity construction processes through an analysis of the discourses presented in talk about water quality. I draw on theoretical and analytical models used by a variety of sources. Specific Ojibwe practices and cultural values are discussed. Concepts of entitlement, responsibility and accountability in discourse are included in the section on direct speech within quotes. Examples of how identity is negotiated through face-to-face linguistic practices are presented throughout the chapter.

Chapter Four presents the conclusions, as well as some suggestions and possibilities for increasing successful communication among the groups. Limitations and obstacles are also addressed. The final section includes some of the reactions of participants in this project, outlining what they have learned and how this research might be useful.

The appendices include a map of the St. Clair region which shows the relative locations of Walpole Island First Nation and the ICI site, as well as two current media representations of the water quality issue in the St. Clair River.

CHAPTER TWO

Politics of Environmental Management: Relations Among Groups

> Without a clear and unequivocal self-statement, to which society in general will pay attention, the Aboriginal vision risks fading into insignificance. Therein lies the challenge: to reassert valued traditional principles in such a way that they will be pertinent in a fundamentally changed world (Dickason 1998:28, underline added).

Murray Edelman, in *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, states that conflicts over meaning are the substance of politics. Politics is based not on what can be seen or demonstrated, but on "what must be supposed, assumed, or constructed" (Edelman 1988:105). This is an apt description of the issues surrounding water quality in the St. Clair River, which are highly political indeed. Moreover, much of the debate over contaminants and their effects is based on suppositions, assumptions and constructions of harm, safety, health, tolerance, and other relevant concepts. I have witnessed heated discussions in meetings where tensions and frustrations ran high due to both a lack of understanding and acceptance of particular definitions or constructions. People with multiple perspectives, voices and ideologies interact together with varying degrees of communicative and, consequently, political success. This thesis explores such interactions with a view toward increasing possibilities of successful communication.

The purpose of this chapter is to set the stage for the linguistic analyses in chapter three by introducing the main actors, providing a background to their perspectives on water in a wider environmental context, and presenting an overview of key points of conflict or solidarity among the groups. The main groups to be considered are the Walpole Island Heritage Centre, the women's

group known as Akii Kwe, Imperial Chemical Industries, and the Ontario Ministry of Environment which includes those working on the Remedial Action Plan (RAP). I have chosen to focus on these groups because their voices were the most prominent when I set out to investigate who had what to say about the water and about the others involved in the issue.

I started with the Walpole Island community as the centre of my study, and then I determined who they were talking with outside the community and what the divisions were within it.[4] My aim is to bring attention to some of the complexities which underlie the construction of group identities, rather than to reduce matters to simplistic and superficial labels. I stress, then, that what follows is based on the limitations of my own fieldwork and data. In no way do I suggest that this is an exhaustive study of the politics of water in the St. Clair River.

My criteria for dividing the groups as I did above were largely derived from "stock texts", a concept of fundamental importance in Edelman's book and one of enormous value for analyzing discourse. Stock texts are coherent sets of certain words, phrases, metaphors, analogies and narratives which are used repeatedly by a speaker or speakers in order to frame the events, issues, problems, etc. being discussed. Stock texts characterize a particular belief system, ideology, or set of values. These stock texts are available to the speaker who then applies them in a variety of contexts. For instance, a businessperson might talk about any situation using a stock text of "costs and benefits".

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[4]I acknowledge that there are far more voices within Walpole's community than I have analyzed or given space to in this work, but I was limited in both time for fieldwork and scope of analysis.

Particular discursive practices come to be identified with a certain speaker or group through their repetitive use. Care must be taken, however, not to assume that using the same or similar words means that two speakers share the same definition of those terms. Indeed, a particular word may be part of two different stock texts. For example, residents of Walpole Island refer to any discharge coming from industrial sources, intentional or accidental, as "spills". They talk of "legal spills" or "doing spills" and all are considered potentially harmful. Industry representatives, on the other hand, define spills as being uncontrolled and accidental. They are distinguished from controlled releases which are called "discharges". Spills in the industry's discourse may be harmful, but discharges are not. Simply put, the shared use and interpretation of stock texts allows members of a group to be identified as belonging to that group. The rest of this thesis considers interactions among and between members of groups who share stock texts, and ways of speaking and interpreting the speech of others.

Another way to differentiate groups of people, commonly used by linguists, is by referring to speech communities. Membership in a speech community is based on shared knowledge of "what should be said and how to say it, to whom it should be said and under what circumstances, and how what is said is interpreted" (Basso 1990:76). This includes political, economic, hierarchical and other factors which form identity categories and are experienced and expressed through linguistic interaction. Identity rooted in various speech communities is not based only on a particular language variety (such as Canadian English) but equally importantly on *how* language is used by speakers to negotiate multiple affiliations. The speech community serves as a useful unit for the analysis of identity categories both because it provides the

basis for acquiring knowledge of how to produce and interpret speech, and because it cuts across the usual divisions of social groups such as economic class, gender, and race.

In the sections which follow, I present various perspectives, displaying how the use of stock texts and discursive practices distinguishes each perspective. It was through these discursive forms that I became familiar with how the groups were constituted, their concerns, and their interpretations of the interactions in which they participated. My purpose here is to present each group as a separate speech community using discourse practices associated with that group. This will allow the readers to become familiar with the activities, perspectives and stock phrases of each.

Walpole Island Heritage Centre

It is not surprising that my first contact with Walpole Island First Nation was through the Heritage Centre. In many ways, the Heritage Centre and the people who work there serve as a link between the community and the general public living off the island. The Centre itself is a place that extends a welcome to visitors and to those who are interested in learning about the heritage and culture of Walpole Island, including members themselves. The research group, Nin.Da.Waab.Jig (meaning "those who seek to find") works out of the Heritage Centre. The Centre also maintains a website on the Internet and produces a newsletter.

Nin.Da.Waab.Jig was formed in 1983 and the Heritage Centre opened in 1989. The stated mission of Nin.Da.Waab.Jig is to preserve, interpret and promote the natural and cultural heritage of the Walpole Island First Nation community. This is done through various research projects within the areas of

history, land claims, environmental issues and cultural heritage, as well as through activities which involve both members and non-members of the community (WIFN n.d.). The work of Nin.Da.Waab.Jig tends to be co-operative and based in the Walpole Island community.

While the workers in the Heritage Centre may change, as an institution it has an identity both within and outside Walpole Island. "The Heritage Centre participates in numerous conferences, seminars and workshops, and is generally recognized as a credible spokesperson for First Nations' environmental approaches" (Walpole Island Heritage Centre 1997a). Over the years, the voice of the Heritage Centre has often been perceived as synonymous with that of the First Nation as a whole, unifying the two. But it must be made clear that this perception is shared only by outsiders as, in fact, some members of the Walpole Island community describe the Heritage Centre as removed or even acting contrary to community interests.

The perceived dissociation of the Heritage Centre from the community is based, in part, on perceptions of academic research as exclusive and inaccessible, or even irrelevant to community concerns, which puts the Heritage Centre researchers in a position of having to continually demonstrate the applicability and community-based nature of their work (Jacobs personal communication). Another factor which contributes to this identification is the contact between the Heritage Centre and outside agencies, including media, government agents, industry representatives, and other groups who are often seen as jeopardizing WIFN's struggle for Native rights. Heritage Centre staff sit on boards and committees and these positions are considered by some Islanders to be "selling out".

Other negative sentiments derive from the fact that the Heritage Centre receives funding from the Band Council, reports to a committee which includes Council members, and makes recommendations to Council based on their research. The Band Council is recognized as a government created by the Indian Act, and is therefore within the structure of the Canadian federal government. This association is seen as a negative one by some community members who consider the Band Council to be "an instrument of bureaucratic control rather than a forum for the meaningful expression of local interests" (Hedley and Jacobs 1991:9). The Heritage Centre has been an active and influential voice in environmental issues but I am not suggesting that it represents the only voice of the community.

Walpole Island First Nation, largely through the efforts of the Heritage Centre, is involved in a tripartite struggle to secure an "adequate land base and full self government" so that they can "manage [their] environment in a manner that respects traditional values" (Walpole Island Heritage Centre 1997a). There have been "a number of community-based initiatives designed to promote greater understanding and protection of the present community's natural environment and ecosystems". The recurrent themes which form the approach of the Heritage Centre to environmental management are: 1) improve the environment and counter external threats to its health; 2) research the historical relationship between aboriginal peoples and the land; 3) solve environmental problems with a balance of "traditional knowledge and values" and "modern science and technology"; 4) formally define the land base and secure the powers "for proper environmental management" (Walpole Island Heritage Centre 1997a).

While land claims can take decades to resolve, action taken to protect the environment has benefits in the present and in the future. Research done on historical relationships between land[5] and people is used both in support of land claims, and as a source of information for the treatment of the environment in the present and future. Walpole Island First Nation, in its opposition to the proposed discharge of waste water into the river by Imperial Chemical Industries, is asserting Aboriginal title to the waters and the riverbed, even though this has yet to be recognized by Canadian governments. The Heritage Centre's position is that they will continue to carry out their responsibilities to the land in their territory to the best of their ability, pointing out that self-government and respected Aboriginal jurisdiction, when they become reality, will only facilitate that work. The common view held by WIFN members active in these issues is that, given the history of environmental policies, neither the federal nor the provincial governments of Canada can be trusted to adequately protect the environment or the interests of the First Nation. Therefore, they must be more assertive and persistent in their efforts.

Many publications produced by the Heritage Centre refer to the concept of sustainability (see especially Jacobs et al. 1990, Jacobs 1992b and 1998). Sustainable development, as defined by the Heritage Centre, is "equitable social, economic, cultural and technological betterment in a way that does not pollute our ecosystem and deplete natural resources" (Jacobs 1992b:182). It is important to note that the focus is not only on economic development or technological progress. The Heritage Centre uses sustainable development to refer to the "improvement of human resources", building skills within the

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[5] "Land" is generally understood to mean the natural environment including water, plants, wildlife and the earth.

community to co-operatively work toward "the proper management of natural resources [which] depends a lot on having sufficient capital and information resources as well" (Jacobs 1992b:183). In this way, sustainable development means the development of a sustainable community; the resources and the people are inextricably linked.

Walpole Island is not "against development". On the contrary, the Heritage Centre promotes a combination of traditional values and modern technology, Western science and local indigenous knowledge. Development is desired, but it must be done "responsibly" and with the participation of First Nations people. Some principles for sustainable development have been outlined: sustainable development is an imperative, not an option; resources and products derived from them must be equitably distributed; technology must be used positively; and institutional mechanisms must be fair, efficient and based on co-operation (Jacobs 1992b:184-5).

From a cultural point of view, the Heritage Centre's discourse of sustainability mixes traditional with contemporary beliefs and practices in such a way that it resists ways of relating to the natural world that are imposed by the dominant Canadian society. It allows them to talk about the significance of the land and waters and all living creatures which goes far beyond their values as economic resources promoted in mainstream Canadian discourse. Spirituality, economics, health, politics and philosophy are all intertwoven in the relationship of people to the environment, which is often referred to as one of "stewardship". People must respect and preserve all elements of the natural world both because of their inherent value, and in order to ensure a good life for the next seven generations. It is upon this foundation that the Heritage Centre has built support for sustainable development, making cultural beliefs

political, judicial and scientific, and mobilizing the community toward a goal of a safe and healthy environment (Van Wynsberghe 1997:209-10). The sustainability discourse has also been instrumental in the education of the public outside of WIFN, encouraging industries, governments and private citizens to take responsibility for the state of the world in which they live.

By doing their own original research, the Heritage Centre is able to promote their vision of sustainable development together with the identity of Walpole Islanders as stewards of the land and protectors of the wildlife, an identity based in tradition, but which they hold to be relevant for all time. Community knowledge, values and beliefs are reflected in the kind of research done and the way it is presented. One example often talked about at Walpole Island is the EAGLE project (Effects on Aboriginals from the Great Lakes Environment) which was undertaken by Native community members, together with Canadian federal agencies. The project studied the health impacts of certain contaminants found in wild foods consumed by groups such as hunters, fishermen, and their families who were considered "high risk" because of their above-average consumption. Another local project involved gathering oral histories from older members of the community to be used for education of the youth and in the preparation of land claims. These projects are important because they give the community a reference which is local and from a Native perspective, so that they need not rely solely on external sources of historical or scientific knowledge which is frequently biassed against Native interests.

Publishing research and attending conferences also calls the attention of non-Natives to this construction of the WIFN community as protectors of the environment and sources of valuable ecological knowledge. This can be seen as part of a long term strategy to gain recognition and credibility so that they

may have more influence on the outcomes of environmental and development issues that affect community life, such as the ICI case. In other words, "extending control over the production of knowledge was seen as part of a movement towards furthering local autonomy" (Hedley and Jacobs 1991:1). The Heritage Centre, then, is an important institution at Walpole Island.

Akii Kwe: The Women's Group

As mentioned earlier, Akii Kwe was formed in response to ICI's proposal to discharge waste water into the St. Clair River in 1995. At a community meeting, it was decided that WIFN should fight the proposed discharge. Council adopted this resolution, but according to one woman, "nothing was happening so the women started having meetings in homes and getting organized" (Kicknosway personal communication). It was from a sense of responsibility as women, who are identified in their community as "keepers of the water", that they felt something should be done. Below is an excerpt from a position paper that the Women of Bkejwanong[6] presented at the Joint Board Hearing regarding the ICI discharge application:

> Now that we have been asked, it is our duty to speak out on behalf of our Earth Mother and the water so crucial to all life. We speak today not as victims, but as authors of our own future. We speak on behalf of our brothers and sisters, the plants and animals whose care and concern has long been ignored by the world.... Among all Native Cultures, no force is considered more sacred, or more powerful than the ability to create new life. All females are the human manifestation of the Earth Mother, who is the first and ultimate giver of life. In our instructions: "Minobimaatisiiwin – we are to care for her".... We are demanding spiritual and moral accountability from the industrial world that so blatantly ignores the condition of the Earth, the sacred water, and our people. We are asking for the understanding of all women, of all cultures, to

[6] The women were first known as "the women of Bkejwanong", but since September 1998, they have been publicly known as Akii Kwe.

> the concerns we raise about the care of our Earth Mother, and for the sacred water (Women of Bkejwanong 1996, underline added).

I have included this lengthy quote because it outlines the foundational concepts of the group's position and the identity which they are constructing for themselves as women from a particular Aboriginal culture. Myrna Kicknosway, the chairwoman of Akii Kwe emphasized to me that the group was intended to bring women together to work for a clean and healthy river. Cultural beliefs about women's roles and responsibilities to the earth and the water gave rise to the formation of the group, but they do not exclude others who share their concerns and goals.

Akii Kwe is committed to establishing relationships with people outside the Island, including other First Nations, non-Natives, environmental groups and politicians. They want people all around the Great Lakes to understand how pollution affects every aspect of life and how each person has a responsibility to reduce it. They have been successful in gaining support and bringing about positive change, more so in the United States than in Canada. The explanation I was given for this difference was that the government of Canada "is in the pocket of big business" and that Americans tended to be more active in raising awareness and lobbying government.

The cultural teaching that women are keepers of the water is symbolically linked to the fact that water sustains all life, including the human fetus, which lives in the mother's water for nine months. The women also see themselves as protectors and teachers of children. It is their responsibility to keep the water clean and to teach the children to respect the sacredness of the water as they are growing up. Because they believe that they have these responsibilities and the power within them to carry them out, the women do not

construct themselves as victims, but rather as capable actors who can overcome the challenges and obstacles that they face. They see themselves as "authors of our own future" as stated above.

Akii Kwe focuses on the social and spiritual aspects of the relationship between humans and water. They are concerned with the health of the community, of the plants and animals, of the creatures living in the water and of the water itself. They talk often about the meaning of the water, as a source of comfort or of pleasure, as something sacred, as having healing properties, and as a life-giving element. The activities that members of Akii Kwe participate in reflect this social and spiritual focus. They hold meetings in different homes to discuss the meaning and the contact they have with water in their daily lives. They conduct pipe ceremonies, "sweats", tobacco offerings and other forms of prayer. They attend meetings of other groups concerned with environmental or health issues, travelling around to gather support for their own cause, and obtaining information to share with the community. As Kicknosway puts it: "We try to keep it at the highest level and stay out of the politics." There is some political involvement as they try to raise awareness and secure funding to augment their limited resources, but the general attitude is that "other people can do that, so we do what's needed".

For the last two years, a scientist from Michigan has been working with Akii Kwe on a volunteer basis to provide Walpole Island with scientific evidence of the harmful effects of particular contaminants in the St. Clair River. The women have, on occasion, made joint presentations with him, giving a perspective that balances the scientific with the social/spiritual. This is considered to be effective as it legitimizes both sides. They recognize that in many arenas, scientific evidence is the only kind of evidence given any

credibility and they would like to be able to do their own testing of the water. They also recognize, however, that pollution in the water goes far beyond questions of science, so their focus remains on the daily issues of their community and the spiritual contribution they can make.

Akii Kwe has no formal leadership, but there is a continual sharing of information among the women. The structure of the group is flexible as each woman does what she can. The number of women in attendance at a given meeting ranges from two to ten or more. In the past year, Akii Kwe has taken steps toward becoming more organized. The need for a name became an issue when they started to apply for funding from certain granting agencies who wanted to know about the group and expected a more formal structure. The women also saw the benefits of having a publicly recognizable identity, so that when they travelled around talking about their work, trying to gain supporters, people would know who they were and would be able to associate individual women with the group. After careful consideration, they decided on Akii Kwe, meaning literally, "earth woman".

Akii Kwe has very little direct contact with ICI or other industries. Industries are seen as the adversary, and are not generally trusted, especially given the government policy of self-monitoring whereby the industries report the results of their monitoring and analyses to the Ministry of Environment. Members of Akii Kwe doubt that the government has any certainty of what the industries are discharging into the river, legally or illegally, and that anyone really knows what kind of effects those substances are having on human, animal or plant health. This doubt is shared by many at WIFN. It also reflects a distrust of government policies, which often change when different parties are elected. Despite the distrustful attitude, the women I spoke to described the

Ministry of Environment personnel as being co-operative when possible, answering their questions and accepting invitations to meet with the women to discuss the issues.

Relations between the Heritage Centre and Akii Kwe are described as co-operative by members of both groups. The Heritage Centre has been offered as a place where the women can hold meetings and the library resources are made available to them as well. The women extend invitations to the Heritiage Centre staff to attend important meetings with outside groups. The two groups are working separately and on different issues in most cases, but they do meet with some regularity to share information.

ICI

Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), headquartered in the United Kingdom, has more than two hundred manufacturing sites located in over thirty countries. ICI Canada operated a plant on a site located approximately ten kilometres upstream of Walpole Island First Nation, on the eastern bank of the St. Clair River. The phosphate fertilizer plant was built in 1967 by Canadian Industries Limited (C-I-L) and operated until it was closed in 1986. In 1990, C-I-L became known as ICI. The site continued operations under ICI until 1993 when the ammonia, urea and nitric acid manufacturing facilities were sold to Terra International (Terra). ICI retains ownership and responsibility for the remainder of the site which includes eleven large holding ponds containing sludge and both treated and untreated process water, as well as a gypsum "stack" which was created during nearly twenty years of phosphate production (Beak 1995:1).

The gypsum stack is about eighteen metres high and covers approximately forty hectares. Contained within it are nearly seven million

tonnes of gypsum and porewater. Water from precipitation continues to seep into the stack and there is continual leaching out of it (Beak 1995:3). Due to successive years of above-average rainfall, more ponds had to be built, to the present total of eleven. At least three Control Orders were given by the MOE to discharge treated water from the ponds into the river, in order to avoid an uncontrolled overflow. The stack and the ponds comprise ICI's present site and are the focus of the company's remediation project. The first step in the remediation of the site is to discharge the pond water, with a commitment "to minimizing risk to human health and the environment, and to satisfying the requirements of the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy"[7] (Beak 1995:1).

In order for the site to be fully remediated, the water has to be disposed of and the remaining sludge must be contained or neutralized in an environmentally acceptable manner. Solutions are also being sought to dispose of or manage the gypsum stack. In the long term, there has been a proposal to create an artificial wetland area where the ponds are currently located. Wetlands arose as a possibility because, according to the project manager, "wetlands need a source of water, and we will have a constant source of water at this site for a long time because of the seepage out of the stack". The benefit is that wet vegetative cover would prevent the sludge from drying up and "dusting" or blowing away and dispersing into the environment to potentially cause problems. Moreover, wetlands "can be used as a polishing treatment step" to further clean the water since the plants growing in wetlands need phosphorous, ammonia and nitrate to grow, substances found within the leachate coming from the gypsum stack (Lusby personal communication).

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[7] Prior to 1997, the Ministry of Environment was the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

There is a public relations value in creating a wildlife refuge as well. During my site visit, a large flock of Canada geese on the top surface of the stack was pointed out to me, along with some ducks on the ponds and some reeds growing along the edges. These are considered "good signs" that the area is habitable, and "it gives people a level of comfort when they see our wildlife" because if it were severely contaminated, they would not be there (Lusby personal communication).

ICI's perspective on water quality issues begins with the acceptance of the necessity of industry and the products of industry, and ends with an insistence on adherence to established scientific procedures. The first argument asserts that if society desires the modern conveniences made available through industrial processes, whether manufactured products or chemicals used to enhance agricultural production, then industries are required. Industrial processes require water at various stages, such as cooling, heating, creating steam to run engines, or for carrying suspended waste. The scientific principles and technologies used in manufacturing are also used in treating water by removing or reducing contaminants in it.

The protocols used by industries and required by the Canadian government are derived from very specific scientific tests which are set out to measure amounts of substances and subsequent changes in other substances or organisms with which they come into contact. If claims about water quality are to be accepted or made by ICI, they should be based on scientific data and analysis. This is not to suggest that results of these studies and procedures cannot be proven wrong in the future or by other scientific methods. But claims made and decisions for action are based on the information available at the

time and any new methods or technologies must be equally rigid in their scientific approach (Lusby personal communication).

The phrase "dilution is the solution to pollution" is used by some people to describe the policies of government and industries which allow contaminants to enter the river. Those opposed to this concept challenge it with an ideal policy of "zero discharge" meaning that no amount of persistent toxic substances should be permitted to be discharged. When I questioned the ICI spokesperson about this, she replied that "dilution is the solution to pollution" does not apply to ICI's situation because of the small mixing zones. That is, due to the low levels of contaminants in the effluent, and the high volume and rate of flow in the St. Clair River, most substances would be dispersed to the point of indetectability within ten metres or so. If the contaminants were still detectable after ten kilometres, for example, that would be considered using dilution as a solution. Since ICI treats the waste water before it is released, and with the mixing zones so small, Lusby is confident that the discharge is harmless because the concentration is extremely low.

ICI has made public consultation an important part of their planning process. There have been a number of community groups which met regularly with ICI personnel to discuss issues or solutions, exchange information and voice their concerns about ICI activities since 1987 (Beak 1995:26-28). A member of WIFN was on at least one of these committees, but there is also a separate consultation process for First Nations communities which includes WIFN and the Chippewas of Sarnia . In addition to these group consultations, there have also been "open house meetings" organized by ICI so that the management of the pond water could be discussed with interested members of the public. ICI attempts to be seen as open to the public so that people know

they are not trying to hide unethical or illegal actions. They invite concerned parties to come and visit the site, or to do analyses of the pond water if they wish, so that they can understand the procedures and become comfortable with the treatment and discharge process (Lusby personal communication).

Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the Remedial Action Plan (RAP)

According to a provincial officer for the Ontario Ministry of Environment (MOE), the responsibility of the MOE is to "the public". Their job is to protect the environment and control pollution through legislation dealing with air, land, water and waste, for the benefit of human use. This includes preventing disease, and protecting fish, wildlife and vegetation. The MOE identifies sources of pollution, develops plans of action to respond to environmental threats, and determines methods for measuring or evaluating progress. The technology and the means exist to have a cleaner environment, so there is a moral imperative to use this potential to the fullest.

The MOE does periodic sampling of water where people are known to swim, but not every beach is tested and the testing is infrequent due to limited financial resources. This means that, in many cases, water quality may be questionable. Common negative effects known to result from swimming soon after rain or high winds are skin rashes or diarrhoea, but the MOE admits that there are no long term studies done by them to determine the accumulated effects of contaminants on humans or wildlife.

The studies that are done by the MOE tend to isolate particular compounds or suites of compounds known to behave in similar ways.They conduct some studies on the aquatic organisms living in the riverbed in order to measure their health, and thus determine the quality of the water. Generally

speaking, however, there are no studies of combinations of pollutants which might show how contaminants interact. The procedure used is to isolate individual substances and their effects so that guidelines and standards can be developed for each one.

Any industry wishing to discharge effluent into the river must first apply for a Certificate of Approval from the MOE. The Ministry's decision to grant the certificate is based on the company's compliance with set regulations, standards and conditions. These standards are developed according to the size of the stream, the substances to be discharged, the amount of effluent and other factors. To people involved in the process, this is known as the regulatory regime which has been established to control what goes into the river and to ensure that no harm will come to the environment or to humans.

The concepts of dilution and concentration are important in these scientific standards. Contaminants are measured usually in parts per million, billion or trillion. Certain effects can be expected when the concentration of a substance in water reaches a certain level. Safety and harm are measured in this way, so that if a contaminant falls below a specified amount in a given volume of water, no effects can be detected. Water containing substances below the accepted level is deemed safe to discharge, whereas water having concentrations higher than the acceptable level, is considered contaminated and unsafe. Using this reasoning, larger amounts of pollutants can be released into larger volumes of water, as long as the proportion remains at the accepted level. It is to this policy that the opponents of "dilution as the solution to pollution" are referring.

Occasionally, accidental "spills" occur whereby pollutants enter the river in an uncontrolled fashion, without a Certificate of Approval. These spills can

result from leaks, malfunctions, or human error in the daily running of the plants. Residents of communities living downstream are concerned about spills because they cannot always prepare by shutting off water intakes until the danger is thought to have passed. Moreover, fish, plants and other living things in the water cannot turn off their intakes and must endure whatever pollution enters their habitat. The MOE will sometimes lay charges against companies which allow large or particularly hazardous spills to occur. Most often, the offending companies are merely fined and many times no action is taken against the company if the incident is not considered a "serious offense", meaning that contaminating substances did not exceed a set level.

With respect to the Sarnia sewage treatment plant, the officer I spoke to at the MOE cited money as an obstacle to progress in environmental protection because financial priority is usually given to other city projects. The same is true at the provincial level where other political issues are allotted limited government funds in preference to environmental projects. However, when environmental projects are approved and funded, implementation of clean-up plans are slow moving because people tend to push for the more visible problems to be solved first.[8]

In 1978, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement was signed by Canadian and American members of the IJC (International Joint Commission) "as a means of monitoring the restoration of the historically degraded areas" of the lakes and waterways (Ontario 1986:3). The IJC called for specific Remedial Action Plans to be developed for designated Areas of Concern around the Great Lakes basin which had severe, persistent environmental problems. With

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[8] WIFN Heritage Centre personnel brought this point up as well, saying that it is difficult to maintain public interest in issues which cannot always be seen. The St. Clair River has a clear, blue appearance so a visual inspection leads many people to believe that it is clean.

respect to the St. Clair River, the MOE has been doing research since 1977 "to determine the environmental impact of chemical contamination to the river" (Ontario 1986:3).

RAP research is based on water and sediment samples which are analyzed, as well as discharges from industries and drinking water intakes at Walpole Island First Nation, Wallaceburg and Marysville, Michigan. Sediments are classified as "acutely lethal" or "non-lethal" to certain organisms. Chemicals found in drinking water are designated as "posing a threat" or not, referring to guidelines provided by the World Health Organization (Ontario 1986:16). Other categories used to describe pollution include: "moderately contaminated", "significant/major/minor source", "detectable levels", "priority pollutants", and depending on how it enters the river, it is a "point source" such as a sewage drain, or a "non-point source" such as agricultural runoff. These categories are based on quantitative data and are used in developing the plans and measuring progress.

In qualitative terms, RAP seeks to ensure that the water is "drinkable", "swimmable", and "fishable". RAP follows the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in its pursuit of zero discharge as an ideal for persistent toxic substances. Recognizing that some toxins are persistent and cannot be completely eliminated, the goal is to reduce them to the point where they cannot be detected and where they will not bioaccumulate in organisms. Generally, RAP adopts the numbers and criteria for water quality which reflect the most stringent enforceable values taken from among the various federal, state and provincial guidelines. Some of the most sensitive are "yardsticks" for drinking water, for the protection of aquatic organisms, and for high fish

consumers (Ontario 1993:1). Since RAP has no legislative authority, the team is able to maintain their ideals to make the river as clean and safe as possible.

The IJC identified the Areas of Concern according to a list of "impaired beneficial uses". A number of these had to be restored in order for an area to be "delisted". The full list of fourteen is given here:

* consumption restrictions for fish and wildlife
* tainting of fish and wildlife flavour
* degraded fish and wildlife populations
* fish tumours and other deformities
* bird or animal deformities or reproduction problems
* degraded populations of animals living on lake bottom
* restrictions on dredging activities
* high nutrient levels or undesirable algae
* restrictions on drinking water consumption, or taste and odour problems
* beach closings
* degraded aesthetics
* added costs to agriculture or industry
* degraded populations of minute aquatic plants and animals
* loss of fish and wildlife habitat (Ontario c)

Nine of these fourteen applied to the St. Clair River and it is RAP's goal to delist it by addressing these specific problems.

The St. Clair River RAP team consists of government agencies from Canada and the U.S.A. at both the federal and state/provincial levels. In addition, the Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) exists to ensure public participation in the planning process. Four of these members are elected to serve on the RAP team (Ontario b). Decision making is described as being consensus-based and success comes from having local individuals and groups involved in identifying priorities for the community. Ultimately, it is up to the industries, municipalities and citizens to implement the recommendations made by RAP. There are always economic arguments which claim that once most of the pollution has been eliminated, large amounts of money spent to finish the job would better be spent on other issues. Without continual efforts to

educate the public about the economic and social benefits of environmental protection, industrial funding and participation in projects will not go beyond short term initiatives aimed at improving corporate image and public support will wane (Ontario a).

Gary Johnson is the senior project advisor and has been involved in the St. Clair River RAP since it began in 1987. He describes the MOE's work as ensuring that the quality of the water at the bottom of the river differs as little as possible from that at the top. Water is an important resource used by both humans and other life forms so controlling its quality is vital. Johnson reports that since 1985, the water quality of the river has improved greatly and that contaminants detected today are mostly coming from sediments rather than active sources. In the past, contaminants could be easily measured in a one litre sample of river water. Now, even with more advanced analytical technology, many substances are undetectable in a twenty litre sample because the concentrations are so low. Johnson explains that this change is due to companies making efforts to prevent materials from entering the river, either by treating the effluent first, or by other elimination processes. In light of the many pessimistic claims about pollution and degraded water resources, Johnson insists that people should be made aware of the positive progress that has been made.

Because government funding for environmental projects has been cut in recent years, it is no longer possible to do many of the extensive analyses and monitoring that was once standard procedure at the MOE. The approach has become much more focused, with the idea that larger, more beneficial effects will be possible if resources are concentrated in areas where they are most needed, rather than trying to make small improvements in all areas. Thus,

research and projects must be cost effective, and measuring progress in increments has become all the more important.

The research follows an integrated approach which combines biological and chemical data with information known about aquatic community structure and toxicity testing. The method is to use all available information in developing plans and evaluating impacts. Johnson acknowledges that even with this integration much remains unknown, but he is not critical: "It's a pretty simplified look at an ecosystem. It's probably not really representative of nature, but it's as close as we can make it for now." He also points out that standards are usually based on individual contaminants, so RAP must be able to provide data of this nature. Industries, on the other hand, bring up the difficulty in determining the exact links of particular substances to toxic effects in order to argue against costly clean-up efforts which they claim are perhaps the responsibility of other companies. Johnson warns that this point of view is problematic because "you can study a problem for decades and the material will eventually disperse and we won't have an issue".

Arguing over accuracy of information is a significant obstacle to overcome in co-operative environmental protection projects. Related to this is the resistance of industry to being told by government what to do to resolve pollution problems. The usual procedure was that RAP would identify problems and make several recommendations for possible solutions. The companies, however, responded negatively to that approach, saying that they would develop their own solutions once they knew what the problems were. Thus, while government and industry may agree to use scientifically based studies and solutions, there may be more than one acceptable way to achieve the same goal.

Johnson describes his relations with Walpole Island as relaxed and says he is always comfortable going there. "They have a passion about the issues, but they're willing to talk and listen." He acknowledges "friction" between the First Nations and the government which has a long history, but he says this is understandable. His role is to provide information which he believes they find useful, and he considers the Canadian government sensitive to the needs of First Nations communities when developing environmental protection policies.

Historical and Present Context of Relations: the ICI Discharge

The best way to examine the complex relations among government, industry and Walpole Island is to focus on a particular event or series of events. This way, the historical development of present situations can be traced, providing valuable clues to the interpretation of the ongoing interrelations. The story that follows in this section has many perspectives. I will set out four versions in order to highlight the similarities and differences, setting the context for the analysis of these discourses in the next chapter. The topic is ICI's application for a Certificate of Approval to discharge the treated waste water contained in the eleven ponds.

The first version of the story is my own. I have consciously tried to choose neutral terms, even as I recognize the impossibility of this. I want to present "facts" as they are agreed upon among those presenting the other three perspectives. I have already provided a history of the site, explaining how the ponds of waste water were created from the production of phosphate fertilizer. ICI seeks to dispose of these ponds in order to remediate the site. In February 1995, ICI applied to the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy for a Certificate of Approval to discharge "approximately 3.4 million cubic metres of

lime-treated and aged pond water to the St. Clair River... over approximately 4.5 years" (Beak 1995:i). The treatment used to remove or reduce contaminants in the water include liming and biological degradation, also known as "aging". Alternatives to discharging were explored and dismissed. ICI concluded that discharging to the river was the most environmentally responsible and feasible solution.

The MOEE's approval of the discharge was based in large part on toxicity tests which were set out by the Standards Development Branch in order to ensure that there would be no negative impact on the river. Public Consultation Guidelines in the Environmental Bill of Rights require that certain parties, including First Nations and the general public, must be notified of such proposals as the Controlled Discharge, either by the proponent (ICI) or by the MOE itself so that all concerns can be addressed before approval is granted. WIFN was one of the parties who raised objections to ICI's proposal and in the spring of 1996, the Ontario Environmental Assessment Board and the Ontario Municipal Board formed a Joint Board for a consolidated hearing regarding the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Planning Act. Opposing parties explained their positions and presented evidence and expert testimonies both for and against the discharge. Major opponents in addition to WIFN included the town of Wallaceburg and Parkway Over Waste, a group representing families residing downstream of ICI.

At the hearing, ICI presented scientific evidence that the water to be discharged met the requirements of the Provincial Water Quality Objectives and would pose no harm to aquatic life, nor compromise the drinking water supply for communities downstream. Walpole Island provided testimony by a toxicologist who stated that the Provincial Water Quality Objectives do not take

into account WIFN's unique relationship with the environment. Furthermore, there was insufficient information to determine what impact the discharge would have. Other speakers who appeared on behalf of Walpole Island explained that the environment in which they live had already been degraded due to chemical pollution and that there was a constant fear in the community about water quality issues. The town of Wallaceburg, after hearing ICI's testimony and testing the pondwater themselves, were satisfied that the discharge would pose no harm to them. ICI had also pledged over a million dollars to finance a water tower for Wallaceburg so that they could have their own reserve supply. They withdrew their objection.

Part of Walpole's participation in the hearing was a "community circle" held on the Island, to which they invited the members of the Joint Board. This is a traditional community forum which allows all those who have something to say an opportunity to be heard. Community members talked about their relationship to the water and why they felt the discharge was not the right thing to do. Testimony given at this meeting was not accepted by the Board as "evidence" but was taken into consideration.

In the end, the Board decided to approve ICI's proposal for Controlled Discharge of the pond water, stating that:

> ...the proposed discharge will contribute but a small fraction of the loadings already flowing in the River; all MOEE policies and requirements will be met; there will be no measurable impact on the River; no ecological impact will occur in the discharge zone or the Walpole Island ecosystem; and any increase in exposure potential from the discharge is scientifically insignificant (ICI v. Board:30).

WIFN appealed the Joint Board's decision to two levels of the Ontario court system, but each time the decision was upheld. The last rejection was in September 1997. A final appeal to the federal court was eventually withdrawn

due to lack of funds. Meanwhile, in November 1996, the MOEE ordered an emergency discharge to prevent the possibility of the retaining walls of the ponds collapsing as a result of exceedingly high water levels after increased precipitation. WIFN unsuccessfully appealed this decision in December 1996. In March 1998, the last emergency discharge occurred, lasting for about three weeks, releasing a total of 17.5 million Imperial gallons of treated pond water into the St. Clair River.

Conflict and Agreement: Constructing Identities

The other three versions come from very different perspectives and display values and beliefs which are sometimes in opposition to one another. Before presenting these stories, I will outline certain points of conflict and agreement which are significant in the processes of constructing identity. These points will be explored in further detail in the next chapter.

For ICI and the MOE, obtaining a Certificate of Approval to discharge the waste water is an ordinary, unremarkable process. WIFN, on the other hand, emphasizes the special nature of the situation, focusing on the contamination of the river, rather than on the controlling of the discharge. Jacobs identifies the MOE and ICI as short-sighted, making potentially life-altering decisions without knowing the possible outcomes. He presents ICI as minimizing the harm it is seen to be inflicting, and as rationalizing its actions in order to gain public and legal approval.

Lusby identifies WIFN as one of several groups with which ICI has dealt in the public consultation process. Her story is not one of adversaries, but one of negotiation and education of the fearful and distrusting. While admitting that she does not know why negotiations failed, she speculates that it was due to

WIFN's lack of understanding of the technology. Jacobs' explanation was that WIFN is a politically thinking community who chose to fight against the invasion of their territory by ICI's pollution.

Both ICI and the MOE claim to understand and respect WIFN's concerns, but Jacobs disagrees, describing how their ways of knowing and presenting evidence are not respected by the other groups. Lusby admits that she does not know what kind of non-scientific approach WIFN uses to measure water quality.

WIFN tends to broaden the issue to include self-government and general environmental degradation, for example. Johnson presents the MOE and the Board as practical and democratic, narrowing the focus to one question of whether or not the requirements of the regulatory regime have been satisfied.

These points should be kept in mind while reading the versions which follow. Note that each of the stories presented here is from one individual's perspective which creates a coherent and consistent voice. I have used the speakers' own words as much as posssible. In the case of WIFN, Jacobs of the Heritage Centre was chosen rather than someone from Akii Kwe because the interactions with ICI and the MOE most often involve Heritage Centre staff and not the women's group. The Heritage Centre has become the public voice for WIFN on the political and legal aspects of the ICI issue.

WIFN Version

For Jacobs of the Heritage Centre, the story begins about ten years earlier, in the mid 1980s. As he describes it, ICI was responsible for "managing the ponds containing contaminated by-products". Because of provincial standards, the company could not have an "open dump" and therefore applied for and obtained a Certificate of Approval to discharge in the St. Clair River.

At that time, Walpole was focused more on spills by other companies in the Chemical Valley and did not have experience with intervention or environmental assessment procedures. Wallaceburg objected to that discharge and eventually the MOE revoked the Certificate of Approval. For the next ten years, in an effort to be "good corporate citizens", ICI looked for alternatives to dispose of the water without discharging into the river. "They would say they spent millions, but it was a dead end. They knew there would be a backlash and a fight but it cost too much money so they made an economic decision to discharge" knowing that the government could not stop them since they met all the standards.

Jacobs calls the discharge "a step backwards after years of going in the right direction," referring to moves by all of the plants in Chemical Valley to "separate their operations from the river and make them self-contained". He attributes this separation in part to efforts of Walpole Island to stop pollution and "eliminate illegal spills". He asserts that "in our view, the province allows legal spills". WIFN's goal is "zero discharge which means zero, nothing, no contamination" whereas "industry thinks dilution is the solution" so that as long as the pollutants are undetectable, there is said to be no contamination. "That's why we lost, because the Sewage Act says if it's undetectable, it's OK." Jacobs maintains that the Sewage Act, which he says provided the guidelines for the hearing process, does not "allow for health effects downstream or alternative solutions". Jacobs says that WIFN cannot prove that there are "cumulative effects downstream" because there has not been enough time for accumulation, nor to learn of all the potential effects. "It takes years for these things to show up. Western science can't say what the effects are to our human health."

Before the hearing, negotiations took place between ICI and Walpole. The deal was that WIFN would not object to the discharge and in return, ICI would provide them with monitoring equipment. If any negative impact was found, ICI agreed to stop the discharge. This way, the First Nation could do their own original research, something which they could not afford to do without financial assistance. These negotiations failed, Jacobs explains, because when the proposal was taken to the Band Council, it was rejected on the grounds that it was "politically incorrect at the time to allow companies to discharge into the river." WIFN took the opportunity to find evidence that would back up their zero discharge position. They had been successful in reducing pollution in the past, through educating industries and media exposure, so they felt they had a chance, explains Jacobs.

After the Board's decision to allow the discharge, staff at the Heritage Centre, which had facilitated WIFN's participation in the hearing, considered going to court to appeal. The lawyers they had hired advised against it, saying that their case was weak on evidence and they would likely lose. Questions of self-government and land claims which might have bolstered their arguments against the discharge were "beyond the mandate" of the court case under consideration, and they could only focus on ICI's application. Nevertheless, at a community meeting, it was decided that they would go ahead with the appeal. The people of Walpole had become involved in this issue because ICI was the closest industry to their territory and the discharge was potentially preventable, unlike spills which were only announced after the fact. Moreover, there was a strong emotional response to the fact that the water was polluted with chemicals which are inherently more fearsome than bacteria. As Jacobs put it:

"The community reacted to the phrase 'over one billion litres of contaminated water' and they were motivated to act."

At that point, the lawyers took over and directed WIFN's case, something the community was not prepared for, in Jacobs' opinion. "They thought they'd be able to explain their concerns and show the harm it would do." At the "community circle" when the Board members came to Walpole Island, they thought they would have this opportunity. "The community felt: 'if we can just get the Board here, and they can see our community and see who we are, and get a sense of the community, we would win because nobody would do that to other people.'" They believed, according to Jacobs, that the meeting would be given equal weight to other evidence presented, but it was not. Instead, he says, it was considered "information", principally because the ICI lawyers were unable to cross-examine the people who spoke. The Board members were not prepared for that type of format for presenting evidence.

> Board members wanted to hear evidence on how this would impact our community, and what they heard was how the environment should be protected, what we're doing, what our responsibilities are. They saw the global picture of who we were. And this was different from experts that gave expert reports and evidence that were specific to laws, acts, statutes, legislation, engineering, chemicals. They were very specific. But the community here was specific on their impacts, how they felt for future generations but they didn't specify that in Western science terms.

The people of Walpole Island were accustomed to showing people what they thought and knew. They were not used to formal, lengthy and often boring legal processes.

After three years of rejected appeals, and much money spent, the frustration in the community took over, and it was decided not to continue despite their having attained leave to appeal once again. Jacobs expressed some of that frustration: "Our community has different kinds of experts but we

weren't recognized or respected for our knowledge." The community considers whether actions are good or bad, without allowing for degrees of each. "If something is bad, they will be against it," he says. The Board, in contrast, considers whether an action meets the criteria of a particular Act, and "if ICI is able to minimize the bad thing [by reducing pollutants to lower levels] they will accept it". Despite the Band Council's decision to abandon the court process for the time being, Jacobs insists "the fight's not over. In the long run I think we're going to win".

ICI Version

The next story presented here was told to me during an interview with the current project manager, Suzanne Lusby. Lusby did not talk about the appeals or the emergency discharges. Her focus was on the relations between ICI and the three intervening parties. What follows has been slightly edited from the interview transcripts to facilitate reading.

> I've only been involved in this project since May of 1997. I was not involved in the hearing. When the application for the Certificate of Approval was referred to a hearing, there were three interveners which were opposed to the discharge. There was Walpole Island First Nation, there was the town of Wallaceburg and there was a citizen group called Parkway Over Waste. As part of the public hearing process, the Board asked us and the interveners to sit down and try to resolve their concerns amongst each other.
>
> Wallaceburg and the Parkway Over Waste didn't believe our data. They didn't believe ICI. It's possible that they just heard ICI wants to discharge and: "Oh well, we don't want anybody to discharge!" So at that time we said: "come and test our water." The Parkway Over Waste came and tested our water, as did the town of Wallaceburg. Both those organizations, after they saw the results of it, agreed that: "this water's safe, there's nothing in it that's going to do any harm, we drop our opposition to the discharge."
>
> Walpole, from what I understand, did not test the water. Walpole did not drop their opposition and that's why the full hearing continued. There was approximately a week or so of testimony from Walpole's various expert witnesses and ICI's expert witnesses. Walpole didn't believe us. We tried to negotiate with

> Walpole. We tried to address their concerns. We actually almost had an agreement with them. They were concerned with contaminants in the river, not only from ICI's discharge, but from upstream. So we said, "OK, we'll provide you with a geographic information system, which is a setup where they can do all kinds of analyses of anything they want in the river. We would train them on it. They would have first hand information of the quality of the river before the Ministry or anybody else knew it. The people that we were negotiating with at that time almost shook hands: "yeah, let's do this."
>
> Unfortunately, Walpole works their whole community on a consensus basis, and I think when this was taken to the members, that either it was not presented well to them, or the people on the island didn't understand. They didn't agree with it and it was dropped. Instead, they decided to pursue their opposition to our application.
>
> We know that Walpole was not in favour of the discharge. I think that one reason is that there are a lot of industries in Chemical Valley which are discharging to the river and that is a concern to Walpole. They rely on the river for sustenance and that's their way of life. So they of anybody would have the most concerns about the quality of the river. If they relied on science, they would see that what we're putting into the water, our discharge, is clean and it's safe. I understand that Walpole doesn't necessarily believe in the limits and stuff that are imposed by the Ministry. That poses a question: "well, how do they determine what's acceptable and what's not?" I don't know.

MOE Version

The story according to the MOE is relatively short. The MOE personnel involved in this case were carrying out their duties with no personal stakes involved. In other words, this case did not have the same importance to the MOE as it did to the proponent and the opposition and therefore less time was spent discussing the events and issues.

There was a lawyer representing the director of approvals on behalf of the MOE at the hearing who outlined the procedure in straightforward terms. The Board first had to decide whether the proposed discharge would meet "the standards set by legislation, regulation and policy (ICI v. Board:8). If it did, the next step would be to decide whether approving it would be "in the public

interest." As for the latter, the MOE did not feel it was appropriate "to comment on the public acceptability of the proposal – this is something which the public will do, and this is one of the primary reasons why the Director referred this matter to the Environmental Assessment Board to hold a hearing" (ICI v. Board:9).

In deciding if the proposed discharge met the MOE's standards, certain documents were consulted, including the Provincial Water Quality Objectives, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Ontario Water Resources Act, and the "Blue Book" in which the MOE's policies for provincial water resource management are found. The MOE's Director of Approvals agreed with the data presented by ICI which showed that none of the substances classified by the MOE as toxic, bioaccumulative or persistent could be detected in the pond water. They concluded on that basis that the requirements for a Certificate of Approval had been met.

Johnson of the MOE commented on the context of the hearing:

> Living in the upper part of the river, you take water quality for granted. Living in the lower part of the river, you're very sensitive to these things. It's easy for an administrator in Sarnia to say: "Well that's OK, you won't be affected by it, based on our current knowledge." But if I have to drink that water or eat those fish or animals, even though you can't measure it, organisms can integrate it [so that is cause for concern].
>
> But you have to make a decision yes, or no. The decisions are based on the information that the decision-makers have at the time. You also have to factor in, not only the science, but politics and local sensitivities. In that particular case, it was referred to a board so quickly because it was felt that there were many other factors beyond just the fact that ICI met their Certificate of Approval qualifications. There were a whole lot of other issues that the community at WIFN needed to speak about. The Board needed to hear it and weigh that evidence and say: "Well OK, on balance, this is the position that we think we should take." It's not perfect necessarily, but that's the decision-making process that we have and it's about as democratic as you can get. Unfortunately, in that case, when you have to make a decision, one side is perceived as winning and one side is perceived as losing.

Having presented the various discourses and historical background of the interrelations among the groups, in chapter three, I turn to a detailed analysis of contemporary speech practices which influence identity construction.

CHAPTER THREE

Identity Construction Processes

> How we are represented by others shapes how we represent ourselves, what is real to us and the worlds we imagine; and images and representations are a formidable culture force (Madison as quoted in RCAP 1996, vol.3:597).

This chapter focuses on specific aspects of discourse and certain linguistic features that reveal how identities of groups and individuals are constructed during verbal interactions surrounding water quality in the St. Clair River. The examples which appear in this chapter have been selected from among hundreds of pages of text and an even larger amount of recorded data. While it is always possible to take exception to generalizations and find counterexamples, my aim is to interpret what is going on at specific moments with specific speakers, who may or may not be associated with a larger group in the given situation.

Association with a given group or organization may be sought or rejected by the same person at different times, as that person considers the identity of the group or its views on any particular issue. No one individual member can have the diversity of backgrounds to speak as a representative of a larger whole, but despite this limitation, those whose voices are heard are given the burden of representation and are perceived as spokespeople for the group (Knauft 1996: 256). Therefore, when a claim is made about what the group (such as "industry" or "Natives") is or thinks, individuals often make clear how their own views and practices differ from that of the group, simultaneously claiming membership while challenging the generalized identity. Based on the

way discourse about groups is used, it is evident that while individuals are massed together to form a group, the group itself has a collective identity which may not be represented by any of the individuals, but rather exists separately for each speaker invoking the concept. In this way, the group identity is continually redefined and articulated anew in every emergent context.

Foley describes the importance of talk in forming relationships, which in turn are the basis for identity: "Understanding the nature of the self is not through the individual or the contents of her mental states... but rather through social collaborations or [relationships] in the social environment" (Foley 1997:261-2). And later, "As we converse in a dyadic relationship... our verbal actions become co-ordinated as communicative practices in sustaining the [relationship]... and it is the summed lived history of these [relationships] which constitute the person" (p. 269). This chapter considers some specific instances of how relationships are negotiated through verbal interactions (among groups rather than dyads) and how these affect identity formation.

Markers of Authority; Legitimacy of Claims

The four perspectives described thus far, those of the Heritage Centre, Akii Kwe, ICI and the MOE, reflect different values, attitudes and points of focus. Who is trusted, or even given attention during verbal interactions is determined by these values, beliefs and experiences. What kind of knowledge is valued? What kind of person is respected? What kind of claims are legitimate? When someone speaks, listeners may always ask: "Why should I listen to this person? Why should I believe what she/he is saying?" Shuman discusses the answers to these questions in terms of entitlement or "the right to speak" about an issue. She observes that "entitlement challenges are one way of shifting attention from

issues of knowledge and accuracy of information to issues of distribution and relationships between people" (1993:135). Asserting entitlement to speak on a subject is a way of performing a particular identity. This section will address some of these issues of authority and consider how claims are legitimated within and across the four perspectives I have outlined.

For instance, the following statements are often heard by members of WIFN: "They don't live here." "They don't have to drink bottled water." "The effects on our community are unknown". "We don't want more pollution." Proximity to the river is important in determining affiliation and entitlement. People who are perceived as distanced from the river are considered to have less stake in its health and are less affected by the opinions and actions of those living close to the river. Location with respect to the river is also used as a measure of authority. Scientists removed from daily interactions with, and dependence on, the river's ecosystem have less claim to authority among the people of WIFN about the impact of the discharge than people who hunt and fish, and actually drink the water.

The value of local knowledge of the river goes beyond an interest in preserving its good condition. At WIFN, certain people are recognized as having an intimate knowledge of the way things work in a specific area based on their personal lived experience and the education they have received from others who lived in that area before them. This knowledge and technology is valued precisely because of its specificity. Scientific knowledge upon which government policies are most often based tends to use information and methods which can be generalized and transferred to different locations. This is useful and efficient for bureaucracy, but it is not always well-received by communities such as Walpole Island who have a tradition of "managing their

own environment" which goes back centuries -- a tradition which has been proven to be quite successful. One woman sums up a widely held attitude:

> Carrie: I don't trust the government ministry guidelines because... there's been so much mistreatment for so many centuries and centuries, why should I? I believe Walpole could do it [monitoring, studies] on their own and it's something we could trust and rely on and we'd know that it's right. [With respect to industry monitoring and studies]: Oh shoot, why would we trust them? (laugh).

The Canadian courts give authority to "experts" who are identified by their formal education and scientific training. This can be seen throughout the published decisions of the hearing and appeals, and in the standards and regulations upon which the decisions of the judges are based. Most often, the scientists who develop the regulations and determine environmental effects are not personally named; rather the document that results from their findings is identified as the authority. One example is the Provincial Water Quality Objectives contained in the MOE's Blue Book which are "intended as guidance in making water quality management decisions, and [are used] for determining waste effluent requirements included in Certificates of Approval" (ICI v. Board:11). These regulations do not specifically address the situation at WIFN or its relationship to the St. Clair River.

The testimony given by the women's group and by others with authority recognized within WIFN was not accepted as evidence by the Board at the hearing. Clearly, the identification of someone as an "expert", based on a Western scientific model, allows him or her a more powerful voice. The criteria for claiming expert status are themselves determined by those in power in situations where different value systems come together. In this case, the courts made the distinction between non-Native scientists and Native non-scientists. The decision made by the Board was based on "scientific evidence," and "established procedures" meant that only the claims made from this same basis

were given legitimacy. As Shuman writes, "the boundaries between challenges to authority and challenges to accuracy are never distinct" (Shuman 1993:136). Acknowledging the need to legitimate the authority of traditional or local indigenous knowledge, Jacobs explains the problem: "Aboriginal knowledge is a cultural package... It may not be possible to collect ecosystem knowledge for distant managers to use. Aboriginal ideas about conservation are not always compatible with non-aboriginal ideas. Both groups mistrust the knowledge of the other" (Jacobs 1992a:5).

Once the decision was made to approve the discharge with the belief that it would pose no risk, any appeal to change that decision was made in vain. The cases for appeal only consider whether the original board proceeded correctly. They do not challenge the Board's decision. This attests to the power of expert scientific discourse and to the authority of Board members. The matter of environmental impact was considered no further than the Joint Board Hearing, despite WIFN's four appeals in the three years that followed. Furthermore, the MOE ordered emergency discharges while the Certificate of Approval was still under appeal, which ostensibly reinforced the Board's support of ICI while denying even the possibility of an error in judgement. Judge Howden for the Ontario Court of Justice stated explicitly who has the power to inform decisions:

> It is not for this court to re-try the case but to ascertain whether any significant errors of law or jurisdiction were committed by the Board. The Board had ample evidence on which to base its findings and it was entitled on that evidence to draw the conclusion it did... It is clear that the issues of environmental impact and added contamination of the river by the proposed discharge go to the heart of the expertise of this Board... deference should be given to their decisions.... I do not see any basis for a finding that the Board misplaced the onus of proof. It clearly instructed itself that ICI bore the ultimate onus of proof and satisfied it. The Board merely pointed out that the evidence of

> WIFN did not rise above the level of speculation and concern, an in several instances that evidence to challenge that of the
>
> proponent and the Ministry was absent. (Walpole v. Ontario Board:8-10)

There is a basic division between Natives and non-Natives with respect to questions of authority. Cora, one of the women from Akii Kwe, illustrated this in a presentation she made at a meeting which addressed the role of science in the water quality issues.

> What we do here is natural because we're an island.
>
> Our ancestors before us were here and were alive. We live here. We still respect this water.
>
> That's how things work and we Indians know. Our monitoring system is with our eyes, our ears, our hands and our tasting.

These three statements claim an authority which is inherent and "natural". It is embodied rather than achieved or bestowed by an external source. The first claim is made on the belief that people cannot be separated from their home place. The people and their environment, in this case the Island, are one. In his book on Ojibwe speech practices and cultural values, Spielmann discusses the importance 'the land' has to identity. He states that the people were "not only shaped *by* the land; they were created *for* the land" (1998:258). Aboriginal people were put on the land (known as North America) by the Creator, and Spielmann explains how "the notion that Anishnaabe people were created for the land is the affirmation that they originated here. The belief is that they did not migrate from another continent, nor originate from any other peoples" (p. 258). It is because the islands and the marshes are the home of the present generation, and of ancestors going back for centuries that what they do is constructed as "natural". This naturalness and sense of

belonging gives residents of Walpole Island legitimacy when they talk about the water and its
significance.

The second statement has the same foundation. Derived from a sense of tradition and belonging, Cora refers to the fact that they live there as a claim to authority. They have survived and maintained the place as livable because they have the necessary knowledge and respect to do so. The two ideas are mutually dependent, for one could alternately say that they have the knowledge and respect precisely because their people have lived there for so long and passed down these traditions.

The last statement was made in response to accusations that WIFN does not have sufficiently sophisticated monitoring techniques to make valid claims about water quality or the effects of contaminants on organisms coming into contact with the water. Cora declares that their monitoring is through the senses. Again, it is embodied and personal experience, rather than objective calculations or learning from books which is given legitimacy and authority.

Contrast the above statements with these from non-Native speakers from the MOE and ICI.

> Suzanne: We rely on proven scientific tests to evaluate the effects of our water.
>
> Suzanne: The Ministry would be responsible for conducting these type of studies and establishing guidelines or limits for particular compounds, parameters, which are then imposed upon industry.
>
> Gary: As a scientist, you typically are looking for quantitative data.

Quantifiable, measurable information is the foundation for the scientific knowledge on which both the MOE and ICI rely for proof and legitimacy of the

claims they make about water. Lusby adds that the Ministry imposes standards and guidelines on industry, invoking a distant source of authority to back up ICI's claims. The MOE exists for the purpose of establishing these standards which are supposed to protect the environment and the public, so it is an *a priori* authority on these matters. Reliable information is that which is objective and unbiased, therefore disinterested third parties such as laboratories or courts are often consulted to evaluate claims.

Philips provides some valuable insights on evidentiary standards that can be applied to Canadian law and general understanding of knowledge claims and decision-making. She singles out the Christian moral concern with Truth, and the scientific concern with Factuality and Proof as having the most influence on what is accepted as evidence and how it can be interpreted (Philips 1993:248). The reliability of evidence is increased by imposing limits on the presentation and interpretation of evidence. At the Joint Board Hearing, this meant that the community circle and the women's group testimony were not accepted. The fact-finders or decision-makers attempt to determine who is telling the truth, who has the burden of proof, and whether or not it has been met. Relevance and reliability of information are essential in deciding what is truth and fact in a principled, rule-governed way (Philips 1993:250) and this, in turn, is an integral part of science. Therefore, the connection between science and legal processes is a very close one.

In contrast, members of WIFN are not necessarily concerned with proving specific cause-effect relationships through discrete facts. For them, the goal is to establish general truths by upholding principles of respect and healthy living relationships "in communion with family, community, other-than-human persons, the environment, the Creator and the spirit world" (Spielmann

1998:159). This does not require scientific studies which, as several people at Walpole have pointed out, "spend years and millions of dollars to tell us what our people already knew". From this position, even the smallest amounts of pollution are considered abuse because they do not belong in the river. Because the concern at WIFN is much broader than simply protecting human health or fish stocks, objective unbiased outsiders are perceived as less entitled to speak authoritatively than local people who have a stake in maintaining certain conditions and who are seen as the only ones with the best interest of the environment and people at heart. The adversarial presentation of evidence whereby two sides, each with competing versions of reality, constantly challenge the claims of the other is seen as counter-productive. Where science looks to debate and disprove evidence in order to find truth (Philips 1993:252), Native values at WIFN call for co-operation and balance in order to find the way to right action.

The position of the Heritage Centre as a liaison between Natives and non-Natives is evident in the discourse of balance used by people who work there. Consider these two quotes from Mark who works on environmental issues:

> We get reports from consultants and scientists, but we make sure that on an equal footing, if not more, is the knowledge that our people have. We cannot let Western science dominate our way of thinking, because if we do that, then we're well on the way to becoming a non-Native community and that's something I don't think anybody wants to happen.
>
> There are certain things that we offer that might give it a better balanced point of view... incorporate some of the values and philosophies that we have into their [non-Native society] way of thinking so that balance does come around.

He stresses, however, that the scientific studies with the most credibility for the purposes of the Heritage Centre are those done by Natives. This is also

reflected in the general opinion expressed by the women that Walpole needs to make use of the monitoring station on the Island and create other opportunities to do original scientific studies. Thus, despite the relatively low authority they ascribe to Western scientific knowledge, most members of WIFN acknowledge that in order to increase their own credibility within the dominant Canadian system, it is important to be able to provide that kind of evidence, too.

Responsibility and expert knowledge are part of job description, according to some non-Natives I interviewed. Having a job in a certain area requires specialized knowledge and education, which are criteria for claiming expertise or authority over others who do not hold such a job. A moral responsibility to do the job well is assumed, in addition to the forced diligence which is ensured by superiors and external regulators. Thus, having a given job is used to legitimate claims, while not having one removes responsibility because the person is not expected or required to know about such things.

Don, a retired process operator who worked at ICI, commented on the MOE's standards and limits for contaminants allowed into the river:

> I would assume they do it. Minister of Environment, I mean, if they don't know, who the heck does?

I asked Don what would happen if the company didn't comply with the MOE's regulations and he responded:

> They will be shut down, fined. You can't hide any more. They go and check, it's all on paper. We have a guy, I used to call him 'Mr. Pollution'. He went around to all the monitors. He was responsible for keeping them in operation. He was making sure that when he has to deal with the MOE, "Hey, I can prove everything here". But he also was responsible for answering all the questions if there's anything wrong. That's his job.
>
> They are taking care of it. Obviously, because if they weren't the guinea pigs would be coming with lumps and all the sickness and we'd know about it. You just can't get away with it is what I mean. It'd be different if you could do it and get away with it but you can't.

> The difference of being in the Valley, working in the industries and knowing, because we do actually pollute the water, but we also rectify it. And it's monitored. We do know that the water we use, it does go back the way it was. And we know how it's being done. Whereas the person off the street assumes it's being done. Probably don't even know how, why would they? It's not their job.

When the RAP team made recommendations to industries in the Chemical Valley on how to reduce pollution, they were told that the companies would find their own solutions. A RAP representative explains:

> They have whole engineering departments. They know the plants inside and out. Our consultants couldn't hope to be able to tell them what to do. It wasn't our job.

Thus, the industries are recognized as experts on their own processes, and it is left to them to control pollution so that they meet the MOE's standards.

Depending on the position of a particular identity category in the political, economic and social hierarchies, its members will be more or less successful in maintaining their interests through control of discourse. It is because of its power to legitimate and impose certain discourses that the dominant group's ideological interests are served (Eagleton 1991:196). Identities always exist in a state of tension, while shifts in discourses reflect shifts of power.

Expressing Relationships Between Water and Humans

Discourse surrounding the river itself reveals some interesting aspects of the identity building process. Expressions of relationships between water and humans reflect the values and worldview of the speaker. The interpretation of this relationship affects many issues, so that diverging perspectives at this most basic level can lead to irreconcilable differences elsewhere. Variations in views on the water-human relationship appear to cut along Native and non-Native lines.

According to members of WIFN, Natives view water as essential to human life, both giving life and sustaining it. Water, therefore, should be treated with the respect that this sacred status deserves. The relationship between water and humans is spiritual as well as physical. The women of Akii Kwe talk frequently about this relationship.

> Cora: We rely heavy on this water, for our substance, [subsistence?] for our culture and for our spiritual purposes.
>
> Paula: The essence of the life of our people here on the island is closely tied with the health of the water, as with all life.
>
> Anita: We're conceived in that sacred water. We carry our children nine months in that sacred water. And that's the connection to the sky, to the Creator.

The river itself is personified and regarded as kin. The earth is referred to as "Mother Earth" and all forms of life are considered relations, deserving of respect. Water is personified as someone who is capable of suffering, who requires protection, but who also possesses the power to give and take life. The water communicates with people and the people give voice to the water.

> Cora: I was told from the old people: water is touchable and powerful. If we hurt the water, the water will hurt us.
>
> Paula: We have this water all around us and yet we can't go in the water, we can't drink the water from the tap. These are clues and signs telling us "Be aware". St. Clair River is warning us.

Based on this perspective of the water, one's accountability for actions and decisions affecting the river is reckoned as spiritual and moral, not just legal as it appears to be in the non-Native discourse.

The non-Native perspective is strikingly different. Members of the Board and ICI talk about the river or the water as a "resource" to be used, shared, tested, contaminated or treated. It is inanimate and passive; in no way is it considered to have the agency or voice ascribed to it by members of WIFN. The river is the "receiver" of the discharge. The water is to be shared by all

"users". The responsibility of ICI and the MOE is to humans, the public, the people of particular communities first. They are concerned with plants, animals, and the quality of the water itself only when they affect or are of interest to people.

It is this definition of water as a passive object rather than as an active subject which allows concepts such as "undetectable" or "insignificant" to allay fears about the harmful effects of pollution and, in so doing, minimize the responsibility of the polluters. If no obviously adverse effects can be seen in people, either directly or indirectly (e.g. through loss of foods or medicines), then there is little need for concern. This perspective is illustrated in the following statements:

> The Board's decision is to be based on the public interest... and then determine if the public well-being, welfare and benefit are adversely affected (ICI v. Ontario Board:8-9)

> Don: We're polluting the minimum pollution to just infect one fish out of a hundred. Well, ninety-nine fish out of a hundred ain't bad to feed the world. That's good. Just don't eat that bad one. We can inspect it. Food's inspected, water's inspected. If you're worried about the fish in the water, buy the fish that's been processed.

A staff person of the MOE acknowledges that the water is important to organisms other than humans, but he admits that the MOE treats water as a resource to be used, by people and also by plants or animals.

> Gary: We look at more of a shallow definition. We look at it as a receiver of effluent, as a place for people to fish, as a place for people to windsurf... it's habitat, it's where things live, it's what we drink, it's a source of food, not only for people, but for the whole food chain as well.

Many people who work in the Chemical Valley live in Sarnia, upriver from WIFN. The MOE and RAP offices are also in Sarnia. Although residents of Sarnia live along the St. Clair River, their relationship with the river is quite different from that of Walpole residents. An immediate difference is that the city

of Sarnia takes all its water from Lake Huron. Their sewage outlets, however, go into the St. Clair River, downstream from water intakes and beaches where people swim. Most industries are also located downstream from the city. This means that pollution and its effects have not been as noticeable or as important in the daily living of Sarnia residents.

This relationship between Lake Huron as water source and the St. Clair River as sewage outlet has meant that discussions about upgrading the sewage treatment plant have focused on the cost compared to the benefits for Sarnia users. At a city council meeting regarding the sewage plant's upgrading at a cost of thirty million dollars, one councillor opposing the plan commented that "the upgrade would benefit Walpole or Wallaceburg or other downstream communities, but at a horrendous cost to Sarnia taxpayers, who wouldn't directly benefit". When another councillor responded that the aquatic life and their habitats must also be considered, he replied: "I love fish too, but not that much." A newspaper article reporting on the meeting the following day also focussed on the cost, privileging the view expressed by the opposing councillor. It read: "Local taxpayers will pay to ensure water quality in the St. Clair River for down river water users" (Bowen 1998). Evidently, humans are the centre and priority is given to animals, fish or plants only if the monetary cost is not considered prohibitive.

The terms people use to refer to the water also reveal differences in perspective and self-identification. Representatives of ICI and the MOE refer to water as "process water" when it is used in the cooling and settling process of making ammonium phosphate fertilizer, "waste water" when it is a by-product containing or once containing contaminants, "pond water" when it is held in constructed ponds for treatment before discharge, and "effluent" or "discharge

water" when the treated water is to be released into the river. While representatives of ICI and the MOE use all of these terms which reflect distinctions in the "life cycle" of industrial water, WIFN sources generally refer to the water to be discharged as either "contaminated water" or "waste water" which are the most pejorative terms. When mentioning the river, however, they use neutral terms like "river" and "water", whereas representatives of ICI and the MOE use these and others such as "receiving water", "the stream" and "the water column". How people describe the water then, is one way of marking identity and articulating a specific ideology.

Another key aspect to the relationships of humans and water is the idea that humans can control or alter water quality. There is much talk from government and industry sources about measuring, monitoring, controlling, studying, analyzing, treating, and contaminating water. The belief is that the controls on pollution, as developed by science, are effective in "protecting" humans and the environment from harm. The humans-water relationship then, becomes one of humans-water-humans, where the water is a medium through which some humans inflict harm on other people, or prevent it from happening. In such discourses, water quality, thus becomes a way of measuring social justice. If the controls work and people are not harmed, then the intervening actions are not wrong. Consider this quote, again from Don:

> With fifty industries going with these controls, it's probably better now than it was before. All fifty of them dumping controlled is better than five dumping unlimited. We don't see people walking around with humps, from Wallaceburg or down river. So therefore it's probably OK. There's your perfect test result: guinea pigs are down the river.

It is this belief which underlies the difference in view. Both Natives and non-Natives acknowledge that the water is used as a waste disposal site, although their reactions to this fact are quite different. The non-Natives from

government and industry tend to see this as inevitable, and establish controls to ensure the least amount of harm to humans or the environment. The Natives from WIFN oppose the idea of treating the water in this way, and hence maintain a "zero discharge" position. The Native perspective focuses on humans living *with* the water, whereas the non-Native perspective focuses on humans *using* the water.

Direct Quotes as "Kernels of Meaning"

An analysis of direct quotes can further our understanding of identity. These direct quotes represent the heart of the processes that form, maintain and challenge identities, of both self and others. This section will focus on direct quotes that contain what I have termed "imagined" speech, which I differentiate from reported speech. Reported speech refers to words that were actually spoken by an individual and repeated later. In imagined speech, the quoted words were not actually spoken by an individual, but are composed by a speaker, and are usually attributed to a group or a vaguely defined 'other'. Another key distinction I make is between the speaker and the author: the speaker is the person heard uttering the words in the context of the present interaction, and the author is the imagined originator of the words quoted by the speaker. Often the authors are collective identities, and as such their speech could only be imagined.

The tendency in imagined speech is to use collective and vaguely defined authors who nonetheless refer to very specific ways of thinking and acting. This is the stuff of stereotypes (in the social sense), or prototypes (in the cognitive sense) where the meaningful identity category is a group, not an individual. Specific, usually negative, characteristics are assigned to all

members of a group so that ways of thinking and modes of behaviour can be criticized on a group level, leaving little room for rebuttal since face-to-face interactions involve individuals and not whole groups. Moreover, the group or entity referred to as an opposing force is often not even present to offer an alternative interpretation.

I refer to the quoted text as "kernels" of meaning because they can be seen as the seeds out of which larger ideas, points of view, or identity categories grow. The idea of quoted texts as kernels of meaning can be best illustrated by looking at an imagined dialogue which has been reconstructed from various past experiences. Stewart, who worked at the Heritage Centre, was talking about the education he received at the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources where traditional knowledge of First Nations peoples was combined with Western science. In describing the different perspectives, he uses the device of direct quotes quite effectively, creating a hypothetical dialogue among a professor, an elder and students. The quoted text (in bold) can be extracted, giving a concise version of the position of each imagined speaker.

> The professor brought in more of the scientific aspects of the environment, he was more like going back, research, data, you know:
> **"You have to have these numbers down in order for it to be correct. If you don't have no numbers in place, it's no good."**
> So what we tried to do is we're saying, our elder was saying:
> **"No, it's not always that way,"** you know, **"there's times, when we're looking at the water where we don't need no data to show us that that water's polluted."**
> And we have the professor saying:
> **"Yes you need to have, you need to know the counts of this, the counts of that."**
> So in work and just that alone, that example we're able to say:
> **"OK,"** you know, **"we can use our own judgement to a limit, to see, do we need data for this, or is it just common sense that there's something wrong?"**

Again, these quotes are not reported speech in the sense that one person was supposed to have uttered these or similar words at some point. All of the authors in this imagined dialogue are collective composites. What is being said is Stewart's summary of the typical point of view of members of each of the identified groups: professors, elders and students.

These kernels of meaning which occur as part of direct quotes, are structurally marked by a form of IS SAYING, as in the above example: "we have the professor *saying*: 'Yes you need to know the counts of this, the counts of that.'" Rather than suggesting that the professor said those words several times or over a period of time, IS SAYING serves a condensing function which reduces an argument to a concise statement. This use of IS SAYING occurs in everyday discourse in such forms as: *all I'm saying is..., what he's really saying is..., so what are you saying?* where what follows is considered to be the crux of the matter or in other words, "the bottom line". This kind of bottom-line talk often involves direct, pointed utterances since the idea is to make very clear to listeners the position of the supposed author.

In Stewart's statements above, the quoted texts are kernels of meaning for three views about how environmental impact assessments should be done, and these views were underpinning all other discussions during the program. In his use of imagined quotes, Stewart made the alternative viewpoints explicit and concise, suggesting that those perspectives were key to the differences among members of the groups he identified.

Stewart frequently used "government" and "industry" interchangeably when referring to the scientific view of environmental issues. The standards, limits, regulations, numbers and counts used by scientists in both government and industry are mentioned by several speakers. Both government and

industry are described as being absolutely insistent on having scientific proof from scientific testing about any claim made on the quality of the water. Furthermore, accusations that Walpole Island First Nation lacks such proof come from both of these sources. Considering the variety of speakers who attribute similar quotes to similar voices, the identity of scientists, both in government and industry, is well-established and reinforced constantly in verbal interactions in more than one context.

What I have described as imagined speech involves text that is ascribed to an author but which has been constructed by the speaker, entirely from the speaker's perceptions of what might be said in a hypothetical but unspecified context. The speaker makes assumptions about what the author would say or IS SAYING based on past interactions or behaviour involving the author, or else purely on speculation of what is possible and probable. This a clear case of putting words into someone else's mouth, appropriating the other's voice. It reveals not only the supposed position of the author, but also the way this position relates to that of the speaker. The speaker is simultaneously creating or reinforcing his or her own identity, while constructing the identity of the author for whom she/he is speaking. There is a recontextualization of prior interactions or similar statements into the present context. That is, quoted material has meaning in at least two contexts: one external to the present, and the one presently being constructed.

The above piece of analysis reflects the importance given to language as an expression of identity, since what someone IS SAYING is equated with what that person thinks, believes and feels, and once it is determined what he or she IS SAYING, a whole host of behaviours and discourses are then expected. Who or what a person or group might be, then, is based on interpretations of

what is said or imagined to be said. Used in this way, direct quotes form the kernels around which prototypes of identity are built. Points of view, belief systems or political positions are reduced to such kernels of meaning for the sake of argument. In other words, this linguistic structure is a function of the present social relations, and very much a part of the ongoing context in which the speaker is engaged in a discussion or a debate with opposing views. Each group is seen as having an essentializable and different position from the others, which is often summarized as what they ARE SAYING.

My definition of imagined speech as that originating from a source other than the speaker focuses on the separation of the author, or the responsible entity, from the speaker. Hill and Irvine write about the ambiguous nature of the relationship between the two. They conclude that the separation of speaker and author is a matter of degree, depending on the use of certain discursive practices in a given context so that "recontextualizations manipulate the state of relationships between interlocutors" (Hill and Irvine 1993:13). In their discussion, the placing of responsibility for the quoted text is an important process in identity construction.

Consider the following exchange between Don and me. We were discussing the MOE requirements with which industries must comply, and the source of reliable information on water quality.

> Don: And you cannot release that until it's been approved that it's OK. Right? All right, so *they say*, **"Well, what do we have to do to make it OK?"** And *they'll say*, **"Well, we don't want anything in there that'll harm anything. Before you put it to the river."** Or they might have a- like I don't know this, right, because I don't know how the MOE and them work, but I know that this can happen, they might want it at a minimum level, that when it joins the river or with this body of water, that it just joins in with it and it's OK, because it's diluted. See, it's diluted. And maybe they'll say, **"Well you can- you have to bring it at least down to this level, not absolutely a hundred percent free, you just have to get it down to a point where we can enter it in, bleed it in the river,**

and it, and it doesn't hurt anything." And of course *you'd say,* **"Well how are you going to prove that?"** Well, the next step, they have ways of proving that...

Karen: OK now what about indigenous environmental knowledge? So you get people in Walpole Island or other native groups around the country around the world *saying,* you know, **"we have a different type of education, and our knowledge tells us that this isn't good and that there's these problems, and this problem and that problem."**

Don: *You* can't just *say,* **"we think it's this."** No, not **"we think"**. It's like **"we know this water's good, we don't think it's good."**

Karen: Yeah, well *they say,* maybe there's people out there saying, **"we know this water's bad".**

Don: Prove it. We proved it's good, prove it's bad... Now you're gonna have to get somebody and do some studies and *say* **"no it's not, see, this is what's wrong". "Oh, OK,"** and then we'll fix it. Until then, it's good.

The speakers avoid taking responsibility for the words they are saying by using distancing strategies, disclaimers and hedges. The underlining indicates some of these devices such as "maybe" or "I don't know". The italics show the forms of IS SAYING introducing the imagined quotes. Note also that the quoted texts are spoken from a first person perspective "we", but the identity of the speaker is not included and is kept separate from both membership in the author's identity category and from the words spoken. By using plural pronouns (we and they), the speaker diffuses the responsibility even further among all members of a group.

Despite these strategies for removing responsibility, the speaker does in fact retain some accountability for the points of view expressed within the quotes. This is where imagined speech differs from reported or reconstructed speech. In reported speech, the speaker can safely attribute words to an author who is known to exist or to be capable of carrying responsibility. The speaker is interpreted as merely reporting something that someone else said

and accountability exists only on the level of accuracy to the original source (Hill and Irvine 1993:15). With imagined speech, however, no individual author exists to which responsibility can be attributed. The quotes are rhetorical devices in that they are used to make a point in a discussion. The function is not to pass on information, but rather to create social identities around a specific issue. The speaker takes on the voice of a loosely defined entity (such as industry or other Native groups) which is characterized in a particular way by the quoted text created entirely from the point of view of the speaker. This is an effective strategy for identifying Others and presenting perceived differences among them, illustrated by the quoted kernels of meaning which represent larger imagined discourses.

Creating these dialogues is a safe way to confront the opposing views of others and argue the points without having to actually enter into conflict or contact with real people. Two or more sides may be presented by one speaker. He or she can then attempt to persuade listeners or other participants in the conversation that only one side is correct, makes sense, or is morally defensible. By performing more than one side of a contentious issue, the speaker appears to be allowing several voices to be heard, when in fact, only his or her own comes through since the discourses of the "opponents" are filtered through the speaker's verbal constructions. Since the opponent is not present, no challenge can be made directly from that source as to the accuracy of the speaker's description. The imagined dialogue serves to bolster the position and reinforce the desired identity of the speaker and associated groups, while simultaneously characterizing the other groups in less favourable ways. It also identifies points of conflict, since typically the quotes are only used to embody dissimilar attitudes or beliefs.

In order to discuss conflicting points of view among people who share essentially the same position, it is necessary to articulate the absent opposing side somehow in order to keep the conversation going. This can be done effectively with imagined dialogues. The two quotes below came from a meeting at WIFN about water quality.

> The message that this, this dump, is sending to every industry in the upper Great Lakes is: **"You can dump anything you want to into the Great Lakes, as long as you dump it in slowly. Because if you dump it in slowly, then you comply with the regulations for the quality of the water. Dilution is the solution to pollution."** (non-Native environmental activist)

> Very recent hearings, back in '94... our people being degraded for their own bio-monitoring technology. Saying: **"Yeah, you got a great argument, Walpole, but you lack the scientific evidence."** (WIFN member)

Both of these quotes deal with scientific tests which are used as the basis of regulations and laws, and as standards for determining "acceptable" limits on contaminants that can be legally released into the water. Thus, the speakers are articulating specific positions on the issue of whether or not these scientific tests are a valid measure to be used in making these decisions. There are two opposing positions identified within the quotes: one in favour of science, demanding scientific proof for any claim about water quality, and one which challenges the wisdom of science. In fact, based on their comments during the rest of the discussion that night, it was clear that both speakers are personally against relying solely on scientific evidence. The quotes they construct express the opposition that they face.

Responding to Perceived Threats to Desired Identities

What are the consequences of being identified with or of performing a certain set of identities? The inequalities in the degree of agency in identification processes call for a consideration of how identity categories are accepted,

resisted or changed with regard to linguistic practices. Those in an advantageous position try to maintain their dominance through discourse. Those occupying a disadvantaged position may resist an identity assigned to them "by using language strategies to change the criteria for group membership, and by differentiating themselves from the group with which they are being associated" (Giles and Coupland 1991:108). Another strategy is to indicate explicitly how the speaker wishes to be perceived in contrast to a generally held perception. Attempts to enforce a stigmatized or totalizing identity on a diverse population produce statements such as Gary's response below.

> Laura: Well, you guys are the representatives. [of government which allows controlled pollution]
>
> Gary: I'm here as an advocate for the river as well, so don't perceive me any other way, please. Please don't paint me with that brush. I can't speak for everyone.

One way to escape a negative identity is to try to assimilate the speech patterns and other behaviours of the dominant group. But similarity does not create an identity. "An imitation, even if it attains perfection, will never abolish the difference that occasions it in the first place" (Kilito 1994:xxvii). The words of the subordinate group will always be heard as those of outsiders, and as undesirable groups take on dominant speech patterns, further distinctions may be made so that the "language or dialect of the dominant group [becomes] an ever-shifting target to pursue" (Giles and Coupland 1991:111). No matter what its social position is, a group alters and reinterprets its own identity through language in accordance with changing conditions, always striving to preserve favourable distinctiveness.

It matters little whether or not entities exist in reality which correspond to identity categories constructed through verbal interaction. Membership in one

group or the other has real social consequences, and therefore, these identities have meaning whether individuals choose to acknowledge them or not. For this study, what is of interest is who people say they are, and who they say others are. The present analysis investigates the way people talk, and what they talk about, in order to show how they fit into the complex interactions that make up social life.

One category that several women in Akii Kwe did not wish to be identified with was "traditional". They took exception to the idea that the meetings were only for "traditional" women. This is sometimes used as a negative label by Christian community members who reject "traditional religion" or by others who perceive "traditional" as meaning backward or living in the past. One active member of Akii Kwe, who is herself often described as traditional, offered this response: "I was disturbed to be labelled. Our concerns aren't traditional. The tradition is our responsibility and our role to care for the water. It's important for life and our ways."

This is an interesting comment because she is saying that while there is a traditional base for Akii Kwe's sense of responsibility, the concerns they have for the health of the community and the water are contemporary and global. The effects of a contaminated river are not only felt by traditionalists; the work they do to care for the water will benefit everyone. The lack of participation due to the inappropriate labelling as "traditional" was seen as a problem that needed to be addressed by the group. This interpretation is confirmed by the statement that followed hers: "We should be giving information to the community about our meetings in a newsletter." In other words, efforts should be made to correct this perception, and to reinforce the identity they felt was preferable.

In some cases, the speaker makes an assertion which serves to "correct" or modify an identity which is assumed to exist in the imagination of others. Explicit statements characterizing that perceived and undesired identity do not usually immediately precede the corrective assertion, but they can be found in other texts or previous conversations. Therefore, analyzing these statements as "responses" is valid because the speakers are presumably responding to past identifications that were ascribed to them or to groups with which they are associated.

This discursive strategy illustrates the dialogic construction of identity which occurs within a context larger than the immediate speaking situation. It demonstrates that discourses and interactions among groups have a history, even if particular individuals have never spoken with each other before. Assumptions are made about the identity of listeners, their perceptions of the speaker, and other knowledge they may or may not have. These are part of the contextual cues which shape each turn at talk, and which are continually modified as interactions progress. The way identity is expressed in a specific situation, then, is shaped by perceptions, assumptions and interpretations of past talk and actions.

For instance, in contrast to the Joint Board's characterization of WIFN's claims as unscientific and speculative, the web pages on the Internet maintained by the Heritage Centre focus on "environmental management", stating that WIFN employs

> some of the best environmental scientists and engineers in Canada in managing its environment. Remote sensing techniques are used in a program of habitat protection; sophisticated equipment is used in monitoring air and water quality; and rigorous studies have been carried out on the health impacts of pollution (Walpole Island Heritage Centre 1997b).

Such claims about the use of Western science were virtually unheard of prior to the ICI hearing in 1995. They have since become part of the Heritage Centre's general discourse about balancing perspectives and using various forms of knowledge to achieve sustainable development through co-operation.

A speaker may never state explicitly what he or she IS SAYING using the same words another person describing the interaction uses. In spite of any ambiguity, omission or indirectness on the part of the speaker, listeners make meaningful interpretations of every utterance in order to determine what the speaker IS SAYING, at least from their own point of view. Those belonging to a group identified as the author of a particular discourse may disagree with what is attributed to them by others. They may choose to ignore that identity or to respond to it, following a pattern such as "I'm not saying that, I'm saying this."

Commenting on a presentation he gave at a meeting on Walpole Island, the RAP co-ordinator explains that he chose to focus on the positive changes that have occurred in the quality of the St. Clair River water in order to modify a perception he believed the audience had about the group he represents.

> I didn't want to be perceived as painting too rosy a picture, but at the same time, I felt obliged to at least describe some of the changes that have occurred because I know Dr. H [an American scientist working with Akii Kwe] is coming from an entirely different perspective. So, I wanted to make people aware that we're not just watching the world go by, that we are in fact trying to direct the way things go.

Sometimes the negotiation of what someone IS SAYING is explicit, as in the following exchange between a non-Native woman and a Heritage Centre staff member.

> woman: Non-Natives have to change their way for you guys to survive in your way, in your tradition. Is that what you're saying to me?
>
> WIFN member: No I don't want to think like non-Natives, and I don't want non-Natives to think like Natives. There are certain

> things that we offer, that might give it a better balanced point of view I think. Whereas a lot of Western society is dominated by and engined by the dollar, you know, that doesn't really motivate us.

The Heritage Centre worker responds to the woman's question negatively, offering further information or a restatement of his views that will create the desired interpretation of what he IS SAYING. He continues his discourse about the differences between Natives and non-Natives regarding the water by articulating his perceived identification of "Western society" as being "engined by the dollar". This is immediately followed by the statement that he and his group "us" should not be identified in the same way.

At a later point, the same speaker draws another distinction between Walpole Island and non-Native groups, this time responding to the woman's question about the importance of collecting scientific data on water quality.

> WIFN member: We're not in a position <u>to say</u> that we're going to be totally dependent on that data, but other people, groups, organizations that we have to deal with depend a lot on that data.

In both cases, a form of SAYING is used in these negotiations of identity, as indicated by underlining.

ICI has made public relations a priority since so much attention in the media has been given to their discharge and other industrial activities in Chemical Valley throughout the last decade. Public opinion has suggested that the companies are secretly releasing pollutants into the river or into the air, or alternatively, that governments turn a blind eye to cost-saving practices which are harmful to the environment. The spokesperson for ICI responds in this way:

> It's important to be open because we have <u>nothing to hide</u>. We have <u>nothing to hide</u>, therefore we don't want people to think that we're sloshing green goo around or something. The easiest thing we can do is: "<u>There's nothing to hide</u>, come and see for yourself. Come analyze our water." If you don't want to be open to the public, it's usually because you have <u>something to hide</u>.

She uses the phrase "nothing to hide" no less than four times during her turn, emphasizing the openness of ICI's corporate identity. In addition, she constructs an imagined quote with the kernel of meaning focused precisely on that concept of openness.

Further on in the conversation, she returns to this idea when talking about the hearing. The town of Wallaceburg and the citizens group, Parkway Over Waste, accepted ICI's invitation to test the pond water and concluded that it was harmless. Walpole Island did not, which she perceives as questioning the honesty of the company.

> So these guys tested the water and they confirmed that the evidence that we were presenting was good, that this water was safe. So I think their views of ICI was that we were what we were saying. Walpole didn't. They didn't believe us.

Often, there is a shared perception among different groups about the identity of another. How people position themselves in relation to the perceived identity of the other is based on categories which are not necessarily shared by members of other speech communities. This results in diverse responses. For instance, ICI is perceived by all groups as relying exclusively on scientific knowledge to determine the potential effects of the discharge. At WIFN, this is seen as narrow-minded and exclusive of their own knowledge. The MOE, on the other hand, views this positively and grants legitimacy to ICI's claims. While the perception of ICI as reliant on scientific knowledge is shared, the evaluation of that categorization is not shared by all groups. The different evaluations are not made explicit and are frequently not understood by the members of the other speech communities. The analysis of discourse makes this clear and offers clues as to begin exploring these underlying sources of difference which have led to apparent conflict over the issue of water quality.

Defining THEY, WE, YOU

Van Dijk describes ideology as co-ordinating social action within groups and with members of other groups. Ideology, defined as systems of knowledge and evaluation, protects group interests and provides a social identity (Van Dijk 1997:26). Another way to explore identity and the role of ideology is to examine the use of pronouns among members of different speech communities. Whether a speaker presents a WE versus THEY, or WE versus YOU discourse depends on whether one is talking with or about another group. The definition of such categories is not always clear and can change frequently during a conversation or even within one speaker's turn. Taking a closer look at the referents of these pronouns allows an examination of actions and attitudes, the positioning of the speaker, and the identification of others.

Many of the discussions about water that I have witnessed or recorded include forms of complaining. Complaints are an important part of the context in which the discourses are interpreted. Spielmann explains how complaints are used in "reinforcing cultural values and traditional ideologies" in order to remedy perceived problems, or gain support or sympathy for a certain point of view (Spielmann 1998:143). In general, he observes, Algonquian Natives prefer "categorical identifications over name recognition" (Ibid) which means that complaints or accusations are articulated without mentioning specific names. This anonymity is in keeping with the avoidance of direct conflict, but it also underlines the fact that people belonging in the offending category can have long-lasting negative effects, beyond one specific individual or instance (p. 137). Complaints are oriented toward a long-term vision of society rather than toward specific individuals and their immediate offenses.

Residents of Walpole Island attribute much of the responsibility for the degradation of water quality in the river to THEY/THEM. The referents vary, but the two most prominent categories are "industries" and "government". Some complaints and accusations are given here:

> Tara: They say it [pollution] comes from the factories. And no doubt they have facts and numbers from the factories. They're thinking about their economy. That's what comes first to them, making their money.
>
> Anita: The plants will keep on doing whatever they're doing. I don't think we have the power there to stop them.
>
> Randy: They have money and lawyers. And they have the swaying power over government so the government can decide that they can have a slow spill rather than a big spill.
>
> Carrie: The government has guidelines on, "OK, you can dump this much of this pollution or this much chemicals into that river right there. This is how much you can." So, they do it and "Woops, we put too much in". ...The government is responsible.

The complaints take two forms: industries are polluting the river, and government allows pollution to continue. The underlying displaced value which is perceived as the cause of pollution is the importance of money, and the resulting problem for WIFN to fight pollution is their lack of political and economic power. The complaints are restating commonly held perceptions in the community and reinforcing group values.

The most frequent position individuals of all groups spoke from was WE. The referents for WE were multiple, even within one speaker's discourse. Heritage Centre staff used WE to mean the Nin.Da.Waab.Jig researchers, Native people, and human beings generally, but the predominant WE referent is the WIFN community as a whole. This reflects the Heritage Centre's position as a liaison between the community and the outside. The MOE staff person spoke almost exclusively as a representative of RAP, using WE to talk about what the RAP team has done in the past, what it is presently working on, and

what is hoped for the future. Although the RAP team is a collective entity, Gary spoke as if the WE of RAP had a single mind, making evaluative and intentional statements such as "we've tried to think", "we want", "we need", "we have". Both the spokesperson for ICI and the retired worker also used WE to talk about the corporate identity in instances where the verb would normally imply an individual subject. It appears that the corporation takes precedence over the individual worker as the speaker gives voice to and constructs an identity for the company, while his or her own identity is given relatively little attention.

YOU was not used with any significant frequency in the data I obtained. When it was used, its referent was neutral and unspecified such as in "you never know what will happen". In that sense, all speakers chose YOU to refer to no particular person or group, or else as an alternative to WE in order to emphasize the universality of their experience. For example, "you can't trust the industries to stop polluting on their own," or "you have to monitor and you have to do tests if you want to get a Certificate of Approval to discharge anything." That YOU was rarely employed as a second person, specified referent indicates that the conversations I recorded were largely among members of the same group who were talking about an absent third. That is, there were very few encounters where those holding opposing views were talking directly to each other about water issues. This is important to acknowledge because, in terms of identity processes, the most common practice in this situation is to reinforce familiar, generalized identity categories within each group, rather than to challenge and negotiate them face-to-face among the groups or specific individuals. An analysis of the use of pronouns and their referents thus illustrates the ongoing and everchanging nature of discursive identity formation.

Consequences, Conflicts and Conclusions

Bourdieu's practice theory calls attention to the fact that social norms form a structure of inequality which has real influences on everyday practices (Knauft 1996:112). These structures of inequality are largely unnoticed in ordinary actions and are reproduced through daily social interaction. Knowledge of how to act is acquired unconsciously, forming habitual practices and attitudes which influence relations among individuals. This chapter has illustrated some of the ways discursive practices influence identity formation. The final section outlines some of the consequences of being identified in certain ways, conflicts arising from miscommunication, and conclusions drawn from the analyses.

The consequences of bearing a particular identity are made explicit in the power relations played out in the legal proceedings regarding ICI's proposed discharge. Within the legal documents, the Board, ICI, and the MOE all referred to the WIFN community as "downstream users", part of "the public", and "local citizens" among other terms. These usages all imply relations to some higher power such as a provincial government, the makers of "public" policy, or someone or something "upstream" having an effect on their "use" of the river. They are third person terms which effectively exclude the people identified as active participants in the talk or readers of the writing, despite their presence and their involvement in the proceedings. ICI, on the other hand, is always referred to as "ICI". The company's identity is fixed as an active participant with a degree of power seen in its association with words such as proved, controlled, monitored, determined, confirmed, satisfied, etc. The consequences of these identifications are manifest throughout the appeal process which did not in essence address WIFN's concerns nor give their statements any legal weight. Instead, those statements served only to fulfill

legal protocol and to confirm the original decision to dismiss WIFN as lacking any significant evidence.

People use creative strategies to challenge or change inequalities, not just to reproduce them. An example of such resistance can be seen in WIFN's claim to both scientific and traditional knowledge. They are not at the mercy of "Western science [which] can't say what the effects are to our human health" (Jacobs personal communication), yet they do not completely dismiss scientific knowledge. Instead, they use science for their own interests. For example, using its position of dominance, ICI imposed conditions on the type of water quality tests that could be performed. While ICI openly invited anyone to test the pond water as a demonstration of public accountability and co-operation, WIFN viewed it as an invitation to confirm the company's own findings which would strengthen its claims in court. Instead, WIFN wanted to conduct other tests, on sediments for example, but the conditions imposed by ICI would not permit them. For this reason, Jacobs asserts, WIFN refused to replicate the tests in an act of resistance.

The fact that virtually all members of WIFN speak English in most social encounters does not mean that language has ceased to be an important part of their Native or Anishnaabe identity. Resistance to assimilation to dominant Canadian ways is evident on several fronts, and a distinct Native identity persists in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. How these are embodied may change over time, but what continues is a sense of being Native, despite the linguistic hegemony which has institutionalized English as the primary language of the community along with conceptualizations based on English (Spielmann 1998:57).

The false assumption that speakers of a common language share the same rules for its use and interpretation often leads to miscommunication or lack of understanding. Members of the Walpole Island First Nation use English in different ways from the non-Natives mentioned in this research. The analyses presented in this chapter make it clear that part of the conflict surrounding the quality of water in the river is based on difficulties of communication among the major groups involved. Much of what may be assumed to be shared knowledge, in fact is not, and this has consequences in the outcome of the interactions.

Each side in a conflict may be sincerely listening to the others, but underlying assumptions and values are admittedly not understood by all parties. Individuals are often at a loss to explain why agreements are so difficult to reach, stating that they simply do not know why the other groups cannot see from their point of view. In order to begin to resolve wider conflicts over water quality, existing differences in the value of certain kinds of knowledge or authorities, and in beliefs about the water-humans relationship must be addressed. Because social interaction is largely verbal, the socially constructed identities of both self and others have an undeniable influence on how the interactions are realized. Examining the different constructions evident in the discourses moves us toward an understanding of differences among the groups with respect to water quality issues.

CHAPTER FOUR

Applications and Conclusions

> People get too caught up in planning all the steps and they miss the point which is simple -- don't do this to living creatures or the environment. (Mary)

The aim of this project was to explore how identities are constructed through discursive practices in both intentional and unconscious ways. I have demonstrated that verbal encounters serve to reinforce, recreate or articulate identities, both of the self and of others. The concept of identity, as I use it, is based on at least two individuals who are differentiated by one or more identifying features. These features generally relate the individual to a larger group or speech community. Hierarchies and unequal power distribution among groups were shown to result from the enunciation of differences which have social meaning.

Pre-existing identity categories form the basis from which discourses are developed but they are never static. Identity is a process in which speakers negotiate the meanings of identity categories and assign them to individuals and speech communities within the ongoing dynamics of discourse. Individuals exercise agency in this process as they create identities for others, and accept, resist or change the identity categories with which they are associated. These choices are manifest in linguistic practices.

* * *

In deciding upon a subject and a process for my research, I was determined from the outset that the project have some real world applicability. My aim was to do something that could be of use to the people who became involved both directly or indirectly. I am aware that much academic research is

completed and subsequently housed in libraries, and that only a small number of people read it. Many times, those around whom a study was constructed never see the final work. In the end, I cannot predict how much or how little this thesis will matter to the people who are part of it, nor how strong or weak its influence will be on the interactions among them.[9] My intent was to provide some new and relevant information to those with whom I have worked, so that I am not the only one able to learn from my experiences.

In what follows, I present some observations and suggestions aimed at increasing the possibilities of successful and mutually satisfying interactions among the groups to which I have referred throughout this thesis. I also outline some limitations and obstacles to this goal. I believe it is beneficial to set out clearly how the results of my analysis can be applied. It is a recontextualization of the stories already told, a place from which discussion can begin, and one that will hopefully lead beyond conflict and frustration into understanding.

It is apparent that communication among the people of Walpole Island, government agencies and industry has not always gone smoothly in the past. The reasons for this are multiple, and some have been explored in the present study. One important factor is the hierarchical inequalities which exist among the groups and contribute to the continuation of conflicts. If conflicts are to be resolved, the purpose of interaction should first be to communicate the concerns of all parties, and an effort must be made to address differences in language use, in the acquisition and expression of knowledge, and in underlying values. Then, agreements about and resolutions to water quality issues are more likely to be achieved. Paying attention to one's own speech

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[9]I recognize that what I suggest may already be known by some, or may have already been tried. I do not wish to imply that I have all the answers nor that I am telling people how they should act or what they should say.

practices, as well as those of others, is helpful when attempting to minimize conflicts by steering away from either aggressive or defensive positioning.

One of the main impediments to successful relations between governments or corporations who deal with primarily bureaucratic processes, and smaller, less formally organized groups is the divergence in approaches to problem solving. The Ministry of Environment or a company such as ICI tend to use "results-based management" which follows well-defined steps toward a predetermined goal. Before any action is taken, the answers to a series of questions are sought, such as: what is the goal? How will progress be evaluated? How will we know when the goal has been achieved? What are the short, middle and long term outcomes or impacts of the project? What are the risks or potential problems associated with each action? What resources are available? What are the limitations of the project? How long will it take? The general procedure is to identify a problem, analyze the situation, make recommendations for solutions and then implement them (Slavin 1999). This model is efficient for corporations and institutions which must report results to higher authorities in order to secure funding, or justify programs.

Grassroots volunteer groups such as Akii Kwe, or small local entities like the Walpole Island Heritage Centre may find the model described above undesirable or difficult to apply in their circumstances. For example, predicting results can be risky because it creates expectations within the community. If things do not go as planned, public support may diminish, and those involved in a project may not accept, or be allowed to accept, continued responsibilities in the face of criticism. When the hearing was decided against Walpole, for instance, some members of the community responded by identifying the Heritage Centre as having wasted the band's money. There may also be

cultural beliefs which preclude making definite predictions about the future, especially when the actions of other people are involved. In that case, talking about outcomes, problems and timelines seems to be begging disaster, arrogant, or even impossible when much remains unknown. This leads to frustration and negative perceptions of outsiders who want to know too much too soon, who enjoy prognostication, and who attempt impose their ways of doing things on others.

Becoming familiar with cultural differences before negotiations or more formal processes begin can be extremely helpful. Groups should do their best to understand the perspectives and values of the others, without rancour or condescension, and be willing to express their own positions explicitly. This takes work as underlying assumptions, such as relationships to water or markers of authority, are not easily brought to the surface, even when one is looking for them. My purpose in this project was to bring some of these to light and provide a starting point for the future. A useful exercise is to create a timeline or a history of what has been happening in the river, and how local, national, or world events have had effects on water quality. There are sure to be revealing differences in the histories presented by Walpole Island, the MOE or and industry such as ICI. Discussing these is a step toward understanding.

If representatives from all interested groups, such as the Heritage Centre, Akii Kwe, hunters and fishermen, industry spokespeople, RAP team members and provincial ministry officers came together in a context outside of a court or a hearing process, there may be more chance of arriving at agreements. This thesis has shown that issues of authority and legitimacy are important in the creation of identities. Therefore, a process where no one group has a greater advantage or disadvantage over the others has the best chance

of resulting in satisfactory communication because participants can focus on the issue instead of on their own positioning. A mediator familiar with all or several groups' interests may even be employed to facilitate the communication by highlighting common problems and assisting in the "translation" of perspectives. Starting with personal experiences rather than collective experiences is another way to break from the formal nature of this kind of meeting and it fosters a sense of familiarity. Water issues are not just part of a job, they are related to survival.

Suggestions to Improve Government-Walpole Island Relations

Recently, some government agencies have been making more of an effort to be sympathetic to indigenous knowledge and Native points of view. There is talk of co-operation or joint management, and Native people are invited to sit on committees and participate in "meaningful consultation". Public discourse coming from the government shows a move to broader thinking about environmental issues and the impacts of large scale human activities such as industrialization and other "development". There is recognition that past policies concerning Native communities and their territories have not always been beneficial to those communities. Consider these comments by an Environment Canada staff member who met with Akii Kwe one afternoon:

> Simon: In the past, the government has offered funding and said that projects have to be done on their terms, within their time frames, following their established and rigid protocol. We have come to the realization that it's not working and we're now trying to figure out why so we can make it work. Now we'll give an agreement which is essentially a blank sheet of paper with the amount of money agreed on but the details of the project to be filled in by the First Nation at some later point when they are ready, in their own way. We still might not be successful, but we are trying to find the right approach. We don't even know if we share the same goals for how clean the water should be, and what clean water means.

Innumerable studies and reports are produced by various government ministries concerning issues of environment, ecosystems and health. This information is used to create policies, standards and legislation in order to protect human interests. Most of the time, unfortunately, the results of these studies and specific information regarding a particular ecosystem in which a community such as Walpole Island exists are not made available to the people whose interests they are supposed to serve. Researchers enter communities, taking surveys and samples, but are rarely heard from again. This is frustrating to community members who wish to benefit and learn from these studies, especially if their co-operation is continually sought.

Walpole Island in particular has accommodated a large number of researchers over the years. Some people are skeptical and critical now, stating their views this way:

> Mary: We want to know what's in it for us. What do we get out of all these studies?
>
> Paula: Most of the people around here have been surveyed to death.
>
> Anita: We have to start doing our own studies, then we know we'll get the results.

Therefore, it is important for government agencies and other researchers to bring the final results back to the community so that protective measures, improvements or other changes will be made obvious to them. Studies on health and water quality are of particular interest, and people want results that are useful and easily understood, in language that does not focus on statistics and technical jargon requiring professional interpretation. Making the results available to the community builds trust and credibility among people who have long felt neglected, abused, or used by governments and their scientists. It also

builds bridges in the discourses, creating a common ground from which both groups can then speak.

To this end, presentations made at meetings or negotiations should not be entirely scientific, even if the main subject is the results of a scientifically framed study. The findings and relevance should be presented in such a way that they appeal to the social issues of concern to the people listening. One must not "talk down" to the audience as an "expert" lecturing from notes and charts. A discussion where all those interested may participate and "speak from the heart" would be more effective. It may even be helpful for two or more government representatives to attend such meetings, one to explain scientific issues, and another to present the material in a more socially familiar manner. Determining what this manner could be involves becoming familiar with the community, and listening with attention before making any kind of presentation.

Finally, one cannot assume that people are ignorant simply because they do not choose to reveal all that they know or how they came to know it. Silence does not mean lack of understanding, nor does it imply consent or approval. Lack of participation should also not be interpreted as lack of interest. For example, Dean Jacobs explained that the reason WIFN had never really participated in the RAP meetings was because First Nations have no real representation or capacity for action on those committees. Their values and knowledge are not respected, in his view, so he did not feel they could participate in any meaningful way in a "non-Native set-up, with their timelines and no community input" (Jacobs personal communication).

Governments intent on improving relations may want to find answers to the question of how the knowledge and expertise of local people can be legitimized in public processes such as hearings and policy-making.

Alternatively, the kinds of long-term holistic studies on ecosystems which Walpole is calling for could be undertaken for specific cases. This would be an acceptable scientific solution which would allow the First Nation to show links between the degradation of water quality, the wetlands, wildlife populations and human health. Presently, each industry separately claims to pose no harm, yet altogether there are obvious problems resulting from industrial contamination which are not being adequately addressed. Rather than choosing a discourse of blame and responsibility, collective solutions could be sought which would involve an inclusive rather than an exclusive WE.

Within the Walpole Island community, it would be beneficial to have some designated representatives who are willing to commit themselves to participating in negotiations and meetings over the long term until the First Nation's goals are achieved. It is important to develop relationships with other participants in the political process and the media. This would also allow community members to see that something is being done and they would know where to bring their concerns and ideas. These representatives already exist, in Akii Kwe, the Heritage Centre staff and the Band Council, who have been dealing with the other groups. Other groups or individuals who want their voices to be heard could also become involved in a more formal way.

The WIFN community as a whole and the subgroups within it may want to work together to make their problems, concerns and goals as specific and explicit as possible, framed in a way that is more familiar to Euro-Canadian representatives of government and industry. This is helpful when communicating with other organizations who are prepared to join in the effort to reduce pollution. Larger provincial and federal organizations can offer assistance in terms of resources and political clout, but they want to hear

problems and goals stated by the First Nation in ways they consider "well-defined".

If, as Jacobs claims, participation in certain legal and political processes is not considered worthwhile, then explaining how the processes are biassed could be the first step to changing them. In response to the lack of understanding or acceptance of "indigenous knowledge", demonstrations or concrete examples by WIFN members may be effective in communicating how water quality is assessed and how the impacts of pollution are determined. WIFN has already invited policy-makers to visit the island and see how things work there. I would strongly suggest that these visits be taken seriously as opportunities to learn, and not just to see the sights.

Shirley Williams, a professor of Native studies at the University of Trent, describes four kinds of knowledge that Natives rely on. Traditional knowledge is passed down through generations orally and often in ceremonies. Empirical knowledge involves personal observations and experience. Revealed knowledge is spiritual and comes after fasting and in dreams. Acquired knowledge is derived from stories and myths which are told in specific contexts (Williams personal communication). All of these types of knowledge are personal and open to subjective interpretation. They are based on interaction with the local environment and familiar people. The kinds of knowledge Williams describes cannot always be generalized or applied to other contexts and in some cases that would be impossible. The transference or acquisition of knowledge requires long-term participation of the learner, who not only learns information and techniques, but also the appropriate circumstances in which to apply them.

Mainstream Canadian society privileges a type of empirical knowledge. This is evident in the exclusive reliance of the MOE and ICI on science to answer questions about water quality, for example. The traditional, revealed and acquired knowledge that Williams outlined is not generalizable, is not found in books, and would not count as evidence in a court. When members of WIFN are asked how they know about the health of the water, the plants and the people, it becomes difficult to answer when only one form of knowledge is considered acceptable, and even that is questioned if the person does not have "proper credentials". The nature of the process of knowing needs to be explained so that if answers are perceived as vague or indefinite by non-Natives, they will at least be aware that some things must be shown or felt rather than read, and that some knowledge is secret or inaccessible to the general public.

Limitations on Improving Interrelations among Groups

Despite all explanations and good will, there are some limitations which should be acknowledged. There are a number of obstacles to overcome in order to begin to improve relations among WIFN, government agencies and industries such as ICI. In this section I outline some of the limitations which are immediately apparent, including history, a will to change, the tendency to oversimplify, time, money and distance.

Stereotypes, world views, and continually-reinforced perceptions are difficult to change. The history of mutual distrust and lack of respect that has existed among the groups described in this thesis cannot be simply ignored with the idea of developing new and co-operative relationships. It would be naive and unrealistic to think otherwise. Discourses divided into WE-YOU and

WE-THEY distinctions are sure to persist. Perhaps in time, the progress toward more equitable relations can be determined by re-examining who is included in the WE referent, and whether most negatively perceived actions are still attributed to THEM. Patience on both sides for meaningful change to occur is required.

A willingness to change cannot be assumed. Governments and industries may not recognize an advantage in reducing the authoritative monopoly they have given to science, in order to acknowledge the legitimacy of indigenous or other kinds of knowledge. While the rhetoric of "public consultation" may have benefits in relations with the public, structural change is necessary for other voices to be heard. Within WIFN, a move toward using scientific methods, engaging in friendly discussions with people considered to be "the enemy", and hiring lawyers and other outside professionals to advance the community's goal of clean, safe water may not be readily accepted by all members. Resistance to change can always be expected, no matter how beneficial the change is perceived to be.

As people become more aware of linguistic and cultural differences among groups, there is a tendency to simplify the various positions to what the group in general IS SAYING. This hides the complexities that exist within the groups, and reduces multifaceted issues to single black-and-white questions, which promotes the WE-THEY divisions. Moreover, breaking discourses down into smaller parts creates the potential for different groups to focus on different aspects of the issue which they consider most important, leading once again to conflicts over interpretations.

Time and questions of priority are always limitations when many groups are involved in the resolution of an issue. Corporations face economic

pressures that push them to act quickly and to demand that others make fast decisions. Governments also have timelines to which they must adhere for bureaucratic and financial reasons. First Nations trying to reach consensus with a community often need more time than outside organizations are willing to give. Building trusting, co-operative relationships among individuals representing larger groups also takes a certain amount of time and multiple encounters. On the other hand, government policy and bureaucracy are slow to change which means that First Nations land claims and demands for more protective environmental standards can take years to resolve. This is frustrating and impedes good relations.

Money is a problem for Walpole Island First Nation because the scientific studies needed to legitimate their claims about water quality, in the courts and to the MOE, require funding. This money may be provided by the government they are opposing, creating conflicts of interest since funding agents usually want reports of results. Securing money from other organizations often means having to establish a formal structure, such as Akii Kwe registering as a non-profit organization. Finding money demands skills, contacts, and time from individuals who may only be working on a volunteer basis for these goals.

Governments and industries also have budget restraints which limit their capacity to implement environmentally beneficial procedures and programs. The disparity in the amount of money available to each group to pursue their interests can build tension. WIFN members complain that they cannot possibly compete with the technology of industries, ICI spokespeople suggest that they have already spent millions of dollars to improve their discharges, and the MOE staff blame budget cuts for their inability to do extensive testing or monitoring.

Distance between the location of the MOE office, Walpole Island territory and the head office of industries such as ICI can be a limitation because it lessens the potential for frequent interactions. Meeting regularly so that representatives of the groups can become familiar with the perspectives of the others is hindered when travel is involved. Distance is also associated with different relationships to the river. Using terms such as "polluters up stream" and "down river users" for instance reinforces the separation of the groups into distinct factions. The location of government head offices in Ottawa or Toronto, hundreds of kilometres from Walpole Island, increases the distance in point of view, both perceived and real, between the two groups.

My purpose in acknowledging these limitations is to point out that interactions involve more than just talk. Other factors influence how and when people come together, and provide clues to the ways identities are formed and articulated which are not always found in the spoken words. Successful communication depends on more than a willingness to listen and an ability to express oneself in a manner acceptable to the interlocutor.

Reactions from Participants

Selected participants in this project were asked to read an earlier draft of this thesis. My aim in doing this was to check for accuracy of information and fairness in representation, as well as to discover how the research might be useful to various groups. Three people made comments which are paraphrased here. All respondents, including those not mentioned below, expressed that they considered the portrayal of their groups and their own comments to be fair and accurate.

Dean Jacobs, of the Heritage Centre, said that the long and continuous history that the Walpole Island community has in dealing with these issues should be emphasized in comparison to the corporate history of a company such as ICI, which has a relatively short view of the past and of its role in the future. A consequence of this long history is that many other issues are linked to water quality and one thesis cannot possibly address all of these issues in detail. While some community members may complain of being "studied to death", undoubtedly there are many more stories to be told and future researchers should not be discouraged.

Some areas of further research could include the differences in inter-group versus intra-group speech as groups develop discourses among themselves and then use them during interactions with others; the connections between land claims, self-government and the management of water resources according to the First Nation's policies; the effects of degraded water quality on particular groups in the community such as those who hunt, fish, or gather medicines, and their families who depend on those resources; the relations between WIFN and other industries, corporations and government agencies; and many others.

Jacobs commented that the conclusions presented in this research did not come as a surprise to him since he has been working with these issues for many years. He suggested that it might be useful for other First Nations who are faced with similar difficulties in how to approach relations with non-Native governments and corporations.

Mark, another WIFN member working at the Heritage Centre agreed that this research can be used as a tool in that way, but he made it clear that the preference is to persuade people to visit the Island so they can see for

themselves "what Walpole is about", rather than to present them with a report. For him, the differences in philosophies and ways of doing things are the most important questions to address. Mark explained that Natives are generally more aware of non-Native values, attitudes and practices than vice versa because the non-Native ways are dominant and communities such as WIFN have been forced to adapt to the mainstream. His opinion is that it may be more enlightening for non-Natives to read this thesis and possibly change their approach toward First Nations.

I received feedback from ICI in a letter from Suzanne Lusby, the project manager. Lusby doubts that the information presented in this thesis would have changed or will change the relations between ICI and First Nations because the differences are fundamental and the positions are unequal. She writes:

> I do not believe having had this information from day one, that it would have changed the outcome of this issue and I don't believe it will change the near-term relations between First Nations and industry. The First Nations and industry utilize a different set of foundations on which to judge acceptability.... As long as science dictates policy, industry will never accept the First Nations' methods of gaining experience and knowledge for policy setting -- science will rule (Lusby personal communication).

Lusby expresses the difficulty of challenging beliefs long held by individuals, and of subsequently changing a well-established system.

> I have limited knowledge of First Nations culture, customs, traditions and beliefs, and have grown up in a science based world, so it is difficult for myself (and undoubtedly others) to accept the ways of the First Nations.... The best we can hope for is that policy makers obtain a better understanding of the First Nations' knowledge of the 'Mother Earth' and can somehow incorporate this information into policy in more scientific terms (Lusby personal communication).

Unsurprisingly, reactions to the study followed the discourses evident in the data I gathered throughout the past year and a half of fieldwork. As relations among the groups change over time and with circumstances, these

discourses may also change. Language use will continue to both shape and reflect the processes by which collective identities are 'reinvented' and recreated in relation to ever-changing social and political contexts, according to present objectives and visions for the future.

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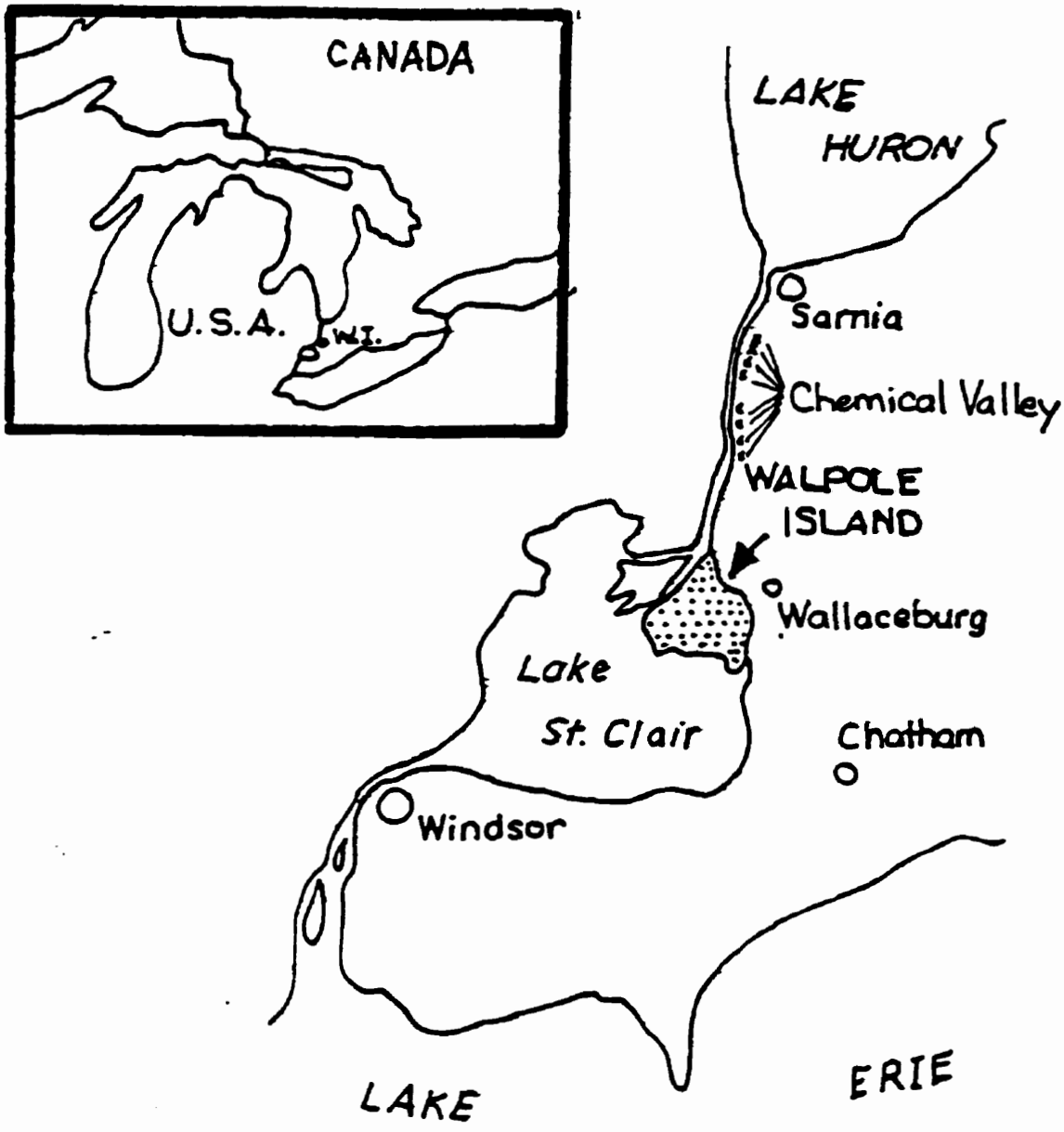
APPENDIX A

This map shows Walpole Island First Nation and the Chemical Valley which includes the ICI site (adapted from Walpole Island Heritage Centre 1995:13). The Ministry of Environment has its office in Sarnia.



APPENDIX B

The following two articles are included here as examples of current media representations of the water quality issues in the St. Clair River and the various groups mentioned throughout this thesis. Sections that are especially relevant appear in bold.

Waste water discharge poses no risk, says ICI

(From *The Observer*, 14 April 1999, Dan McCaffery)

Nearly a year after it began, **the discharge of millions of litres of treated waste water into the St. Clair River isn't causing environmental damage, ICI Canada says.**

The company, which received permission in April 1998 to begin dumping waste water into the river, eventually plans to discharge 3.5 billion litres.

ICI spokeswoman Suzanne Lusby said the first "batch" of 70 to 75 million Imperial gallons went into the river between July and October last year. A second quantity of a similar size started to flow last February. It should be completed by early June.

The water, which critics claim is contaminated with mercury, cadmium and other toxic substances, was left behind in 11 large holding ponds after ICI closed its Sombra fertilizer plant more than a decade ago.

Last year's discharge eliminated any danger of the ponds over-flowing as rain water fell into them, Lusby said.

Plans call for the entire 3.5 billion litres to be dumped by the end of 2002.

Downriver residents at Wallaceburg and Walpole Island opposed the dumping for a number of years, expressing concern that it would contaminate their drinking water. But Lusby insisted the project has not harmed the quality of water in the St. Clair.

"Before every batch is discharged **we collect samples and analyze it** for 40 some parameters. We look for any volatile compounds in the water. Once

we start (discharging) we collect water each week from the pipeline to the river. I'm happy to report the results have been very consistent" and no problems have been found. On Walpole Island, natives began buying bottled water last year.

Mike Williams, assistant director of **Walpole's Heritage Centre, said some residents of the island are still buying bottled water because they fear the river is contaminated.**

He added that **the band has set up its own water monitoring station** to keep an eye on the situation.

During a 1996 environmental hearing on the discharge plan, **concerns were expressed that despite standards being met, the large volume of contaminated water presented a hazard.**

ICI eventually hopes to convert the property into a wetlands and wildlife refuge.

* * *

Discharge limits lax

Pollution report rips Tories for reducing controls

(From The Observer, 30 April 1999, George Mathewson)

A change in Tory environmental policies that permits local industry to discharge more pollution is putting corporate interests ahead of clean water, says Ontario's Environmental Commissioner.

In a scathing new report, Eva Ligeti blames the Ontario government for letting environmental protection slide against the wishes of its citizens.

Last year, the Ministry of Environment and Energy quietly amended regulations for chemical and rubber plants that allows them to release more chemical waste, she notes.

Five of the eight producers are in Lambton County: Bayer Rubber, Dow Chemical, Ethyl Canada, Imperial Oil Chemicals and Nova Chemicals.

"The MOE is saying, we will make limits that won't kill fish or other aquatic animals right at this moment," Ligeti told The Observer.

"Of course, we don't know if it might kill them later on, but at least (the government) won't be in violation of the Fisheries Act. It's pretty dismal."

The amendments allow companies to increase discharges of nitrogen compounds, suspended solids, phosphorus and dissolved organic carbon.

The ministry maintains the environment is protected because other legal requirements ensure concentrations won't kill fish or small aquatic animals outright, the commissioner states in her annual report.

The Lambton Industrial Society, which is an environmental co-operative of Chemical Valley industries, says the ministry's new effluent loading limits are realistic and safe. **The old levels were so stringent that in some cases water entering a plant from the St. Clair River already exceeded the allowable limit,** general manager Scott Munro said.

Nor will the higher limits result in more water pollution, Munro said.

"There won't be any increases in the discharges to the river ... there won't be a move by any of the companies to go up."

But Ligeti is concerned about the potential. In an interview, she said the changes contradict the ministry's own statement of environmental values, especially its principles of pollution prevention and protecting the environment.

"Here, the rationale seems to be, we can do more to the water without there being a noticeable effect. It doesn't say anything about cumulative effect, and it certainly doesn't have anything to do with pollution prevention."

Part of the problem, she said, is **the Environment Ministry's conflicting roles. It has to act like an "enviro-cop" and still be sensitive to economic impacts on business.**

The 300-page report finds fault with several ministries for broken promises and commitments. Examples of deteriorating standards include:

* Failure to make good on a promise to overhaul 70 outdated provincial air quality standards.
* Downloading responsibilities to municipalities without ensuring they have the capacity to implement environmental safeguards.
* Failure to crack down on industrial pollution, including Ontario Hydro's successor companies.

* The government's new, mandatory Drive Clean vehicle emissions testing program, which Ligeti said exaggerates the benefits that can be achieved.

"There's a wide gap between the statements and the actual acts," she said. "It's my impression that the health risks continue to increase in this province and the programs meant to decrease the risks are in fact decreasing."