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Owls: Images and Voices in the Ojibwa and Midewiwin Worlds

MICHAEL M. POMEDLI

In a previous article I focused on otter, the animal on the first spiritual level of the Midewiwin healing society. For the Great Lakes Ojibwa,¹ otter is present in many ways: as an experienced corporeal reality in nature; as a central theme in stories, on scrolls and medicine bags, and in non-figurative patterns. I argued that otter had a vivid and expansive presence and was a powerful force not only in the life of the Ojibwa in general, but also in the ritual and life of the Mide practitioners. Since otter so thoroughly informed the spiritual practices of the Midewiwin and since these same leaders were also signatories to Treaty Three, their expectations about the treaty were informed by otter.²

In this article I will ascend the Mide ladder to the next ritual rung and examine the role another specific animal played in the life of the Ojibwa and the Midewiwin. Which animal symbol is on the second step in the Midewiwin ceremonies? With regard to the Woodlands Ojibwa, Robert and Pat Ritzenthaler list the second-degree Mide bags as those of owl or hawk skins.³ For the Minnesota and Great Lakes Ojibwa, Fred K. Blessing and Julia Harrison give hawk as a second-degree bag and owl as a third-degree one.⁴ For Northern Minnesota, W. J. Hoffman states that the pouch of the fourth-degree initiated contained an owl.⁵ For the more eastern Ojibwa, Ruth Landes places weasel and mink as second and third.⁶ I will focus on the owl, but will also make allusions to the hawk.

Stories, images, and voices of the owl offer a window into the Ojibwa world. These impressions give an indication of the prized qualities of the owl, qualities that the Ojibwa appropriated and brought with them to treaty signing. Animals, however, are not merely objects to be heard, viewed, and prized, but agents who have voices and fellow subjects on life's path. Their approach

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is multifaceted since they can scare, protect, guide, and mediate. Indeed, they are guardians that are sometimes indistinguishable from human persons, for they often reciprocally exchange places, features, and roles with humans.

Although the stories provide visions of the owl, they also, and perhaps preeminently, give voice to the animal being—voices articulated by the storyteller, the sonority of owls' names, the vocalizations of owl, and the human songs attributed to owl. Midewiwin ceremonies also feature the rattle sound of an evil-thwarting shaker together with other ritual reverberations.

NON-OJIBWA ETHNOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

I will briefly examine from non-Ojibwa sources the two types of owls that figure prominently in Ojibwa stories, although the Ojibwa did not rigidly classify them in this way. The information this examination provides is sometimes in contrast with subsequent stories, as well as pictographic and representational forms. The first type is the Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*). It does not regularly migrate, but moves in relation to food sources. This species is atypical of most owls because it hunts during daylight hours, using sight more than hearing to locate its prey. Hawk Owl is of medium size, and in flight its pointed wings, long tail, and swift nature appear hawk-like. Among its varied calls is a repeated hawk-like chattering. While it generally inhabits coniferous and deciduous forests, it can also be found in open tundra areas, which include tree-lined watercourses. Since the Hawk Owl is not afraid of people, it will nest close to human settlements.⁷ Humans, however, often have an eerie feeling about animals that exhibit such kindred characteristics as binocular vision and acoustic projections within the range of the human voice.⁸

The second species under consideration is the Boreal Owl or Tengmalm's Owl (*Aegolius funereus*). Mainly nocturnal, its most common call is the territorial song of the male, which varies widely among individuals. "It is a series of 'Poop' notes followed by a 3–4 second break, then another series. . . . The male will emit a low 'Wood' or 'Wood-whoohd' to contact a breeding female."⁹ The Boreal Owl will scan the ground by moving its head slowly from side to side, listening for the movement of potential prey as it hunts, using primarily its excellent directional hearing. It inhabits a range of forests from pure coniferous to pure deciduous.¹⁰

Some general considerations regarding owls are in order. There are 134 living species.¹¹ They have 70-degree, three-dimensional binocular vision, with a total field of 110 degrees. The bobbing and pivoting of their heads enables them to absorb several viewpoints, a parallax method, as their heads shift around.¹² Their ears, which are positioned quite far apart, can provide clues as to the direction and distance of prey. Their powerful talons and beak, plus their ability to fly silently, make them formidable predators.¹³ Their relatively large wings with feathers and velvet pile dampen the sound of air movement, enabling them to hunt by stealth in complete darkness using sound alone to guide them.¹⁴

I noted above that owls and other animals among the Ojibwa are more than "creatures out there," but are independent and interconnected agents.

Future considerations concerning the owl will indicate the formative power of owls. Their influence affects not only relatively isolated individuals but especially cultural locales and more specifically the political arm of the Ojibwa, the Midewiwin. This religious-political interstices is not developed in this article, but the power of the owl is singled out and highlighted.

OWL AS BAD LUCK, BAD MEDICINE

According to the Ojibwa, the owl has a multifaceted personality. Its negative characteristics are often recounted. Its presence as sinister power has frequently been used to frighten children into submission. Ojibwa parents taught their children that if they did not go to sleep or behave, an owl would carry them away.¹⁵

Howard Corbiere recalls an Ojibwa-Odawa story that illustrates this parental ploy. "The Ojibwe people call the owl *Ko-Ko-Ko*, because that is the kind of sound he makes. They believed that he possessed magical powers, which were not always used for the good."¹⁶ A specific story involves a young boy, his father, Nannebush,¹⁷ and an owl. The boy observes the owl's strange action of turning its head in a full circle, while the boy can turn his head only half-way around. Along with his father, he wonders if it is magic that enables the owl to turn its head so completely. To account for this magical procedure, the father tells the story of an owl.

The father began his narration by recalling kind and helpful Nannebush. Like the boy, Nannebush also "decided to go for a walk in the forest. He often did this. It was one of his favorite pastimes. It was a nice day—but the forest was thick and dark.

While Nannebush was walking along the trail, something struck him from behind. It kept striking at him, over and over again. It was an owl—and a very bold one, for he challenged Nannebush to a fight.

The two struggled together for some time. Each one tried to outwit the other. Then Nannebush suddenly grabbed owl's head with a firm grip. With all his strength, he twisted the head of the owl all the way around.

Ever since then, the owl has been able to turn his head all the way around. He can look in front of him and see where he is going. Then he can turn his head backwards and see where he has been.

Ojibwe children are warned by their parents never to act like an owl, because the same thing might happen to them. To Ojibwe people the owl is a sign of bad luck—even to this day.¹⁸

The strangeness and difference of the procedure of turning one's head completely around is off-putting and serves as a warning to avoid an owl and its actions. Although the procedure seems weird and awful, it nevertheless retains a certain awesomeness about it, and for an owl, a swiveling head is quite an asset!

W. J. Hoffman narrates a story of Manabush/Nanabozho who, with his grandmother Nokomis, notices an owl and a wildcat on the opposite side of a

stream. "Suddenly the Owl said 'Hu-hu-hu-hu, hu-hu-hu-hu; see how I shall strike him; I shall drive him off easily enough.' Then Ma'nabush became alarmed, and said to his grandmother, 'Grandmother, they are going to attack us; let us fly!'" With grandma on his back, Manabush fled the attack of the manitous "who were ana'maqki'u."¹⁹ These dreaded manitous are interpreted as antagonistic underwater creatures who give Manabush "much annoyance at the time of his growing to manhood, and at the establishment of the Mita-wit, or Grand Medicine society." On the other hand, thunderbirds have names cognate with these underwater creatures, so the scare can be interpreted as coming from both regions of the earth.²⁰

Two additional versions of the owl story, told mostly by mothers and grandmothers in Minnesota, involve a little girl.

The first version is similar to the previous one which featured a young boy. In addition to using the owl as a means of making children "be good," the story uses owl "as a threat to keep children close to the wigwam. One old man recalled his mother saying, 'If you go to the sugar bush at night, the owl will come and carry you away in his ear.' Besides the owl, Ojibwa parents used the Sioux and the Frenchman (or any other white man) as a warning or threat. We were told how important it was for children to be taught to be quiet, for sometimes it could be a matter of life or death."

The story has a reversal to it, for the owl's abduction of the little girl does not seem to hurt her or teach her the required lesson, but instead creates anxiety in the mother. In trying to teach her child a lesson, the mother herself had exposed her daughter to the owl. During the period of abduction, the owl and girl share a kindred spirit, for the child is never afraid, is nourished and clothed by the bird for four years, and is returned safely to her home. "The little girl said that she had been in a tree and that she was given all kinds of meat to eat, rabbit and other kinds. So the mother thought the owl must have taken her and cared for her."²¹

In the second version, the mother is more aggressive, even commanding the owl several times to take the child. Reluctantly, the owl takes her. The mother naturally becomes anxious and lonesome, and searches for the little girl. Feeling the mother's worrisome state, the owl returns the girl safely and in good condition. There is a lesson for parents to be temperate in threatening their children, for their actions might prove detrimental both to themselves and their child. "Never again did the mother tell her children that the owl would get them,"²² the story concludes. So we notice in these stories that the negative qualities of an owl are sometimes founded more in the perception of individual Ojibwa rather than in the owl itself.

But the Ojibwa did more than merely frighten children with their owl stories; according to Frances Densmore they used the medium of an owl to do evil. Densmore outlines a method whereby "the skin of an owl was removed, dried, and filled with 'medicine.' It was said this was sent through the air to the lodge of the person to be affected."²³ In fact, there is a song accompanying this poisonous missive. Persons in the camp nearly starved. Shooting the menacing bird and burning its skin, however, resulted in no harm to the inhabitants.²⁴

Victor Barnouw recounts the need for guarded actions toward owls, for their powers can result in mesmerizing effects and even death. In a story, a hunter merely intends to poke a sleeping owl, when “suddenly the owl opened its eyes and stared at him. ‘I couldn’t get my eyes off the owl. . . . I felt something hot go through me, and I felt weak. Then I walked away and could still feel those eyes on my back like a hot rag. I thought of what my grandfather used to tell me about the owl. I haven’t gone near one since.’”²⁵

In another story, after an owl disturbed his sick and grieving wife, a husband shot the bird. The subsequent death of an old man (in this and in another story) is associated with killing this owl. The narrator concludes: “It will be remembered that an owl is encountered on the road to the other world.”²⁶

According to a real-life incident on Manitoulin Island, bearwalker is portrayed as a “demon in the form of a hoot-owl.”²⁷ The term *demon*, however, has Euro-American affinities and bearwalker can take on many different forms.

Nodinens of Mille Lacs narrates an event in which he listened to an owl following him. In camp he said: “You must preserve every bit of deer. This is a bad sign, and we will not get any more game for a long time.” He concludes: “The hunters went out every day, but could find nothing.”²⁸

In Northern Ontario, even an Ojibwa recreational activity such as the moccasin betting game portrays owls in a negative way, for an owl confirms a bettor’s loss.²⁹

In summation, an owl’s personality is pluriform and complex. An owl can be regarded both as a threatening sinister power and a benevolent advocate. An owl can represent the power of the air but can curiously engender tandem powers in the water. It can have a mesmerizing effect and also be associated with sickness, grief, and death; it can thwart successful hunting and can confirm an obvious loss during a game of chance. The owl’s menacing eye, eerie sound, and predatory possibilities provide a measuring stick both for individual and community self-examination and correction.

OWL AS PROTECTOR

In several accounts an owl is regarded as a protector of humans.³⁰ The main character in a story from Big Trout Lake in Northern Ontario is covered with an owl skin, is called Owl Skin, and exhorts fellow humans to kill owls in order to use their skin to cover their shelters.³¹ Barnouw tells of a solicitous owl, an individual’s guardian spirit, that refers to a freezing individual as grandson, who in turn refers to him as grandfather. “Then the owl wrapped his big wings around him and sheltered him all the rest of the night.”³²

Alfred Kiyana of the Fox presents a rich and varied medicine song text and ceremony in which there is weeping over the killed and wounded. An owl provides blessings, enabling the people to cross rivers unimpeded and to heal wounds. A girl in the narrative invokes an owl pack that “gladdens the people” and makes cliffs passable, widens rivers, mends broken bones, resists the shots of enemies, and provides knowledge about unpredictable and inscrutable events.³³ An owl enters ceremonies and hoots “in the space

between the fires.”³⁴ An owl commands people to hoot, to make an offering to grandfather owl in order to live long. The healed begin to sing and smoke a catlinit pipe. There are assurances that grandfather owl will protect and bless both present and future generations as long as the world lasts.³⁵ An owl’s continuous song will oversee the earth through its seasonal changes, and protect his people by making them warriors. In a symbiotic relationship with an owl, people are commanded to sing loudly (women are to hum), hold their rattles firmly, while sounding them boldly. “The manitou himself listens to all of them and hears how the gourds sound. . . . If you desire long life for yourselves, that is what you are to do.”³⁶

William Jones narrates that Nanabozho and his brother created everything in the world, including owls, to help humans when they themselves are created.³⁷

Owls, therefore, protect humans physically by sheltering them with their skin and feathers. Those protected take on the character and appearance of an owl. In its positive personal relationship with humans, an owl aids them in distressing times and is a harbinger of the future. An owl’s sonorous hoot and its mimicked and appropriated expression assure long life.

The owl is medicinal in many different ways, an emphasis of the Midewiwin lodge and ceremonies.³⁸ The owl’s healing balm and songs inform and transform both the Ojibwa in general and the Mide participants in particular.

OWL AS ALTRUISTIC TEACHER

Joseph Morris gives a story from Big Trout Lake of Owl Man. Owl Man is by nature dependent on Kwokwokwo (Hawk Owl) with whom he has a pact to kill four owls per day, no more, no less. In this story, coverings and clothes are entirely of feathers and owl parts, and Owl Man’s *matakwan* (lodge) is of owl skin. When Owl Man meets someone in great need, he shares his goods with the unfortunate one and also counsels this person to kill the correct number of owls every day. Such a regimen and an adaptation to Kwokwokwo’s habitat ensure food and shelter. Wisdom consists in helping others.³⁹

Emmanuel Desveaux documents two additional stories, one going back to the Old Times, in which the same type of pact is enacted, this time concerning the killing of grouse.⁴⁰ True to patterns in many stories, the interdiction to kill only the allotted number is violated with the consequence of almost dying from hunger. There are allusions to imprudence and greed.⁴¹

In another story by John-George Morris, Mingesowash (Eagle’s Nest) is given the same restricted command as given above, which he seemed to violate unconsciously. The woeful result is that his child is swept away in a stream. His wife berates him for his disobedience: “Why do you not now understand what was said to you many times? When they taught you how to live they told you never to kill more than you should!”⁴²

In the story, “Nanabozho and the Hoot Owl,” some owls notice how stingy Nanabozho is with the fish he catches. These owls make their “funny noises,” thereby frightening Nanabozho. In fleeing he leaves his catch behind. At home he tries to save face with Nokomis about his failure to

bring home any fish by declaring his generosity in letting the Manitou have it all!⁴³

There is another story in which the animals get together to find a way to put some color into their white coats. On that occasion, Hoohoomisseu, the owl, was appointed leader, and sitting very solemnly on a stump he spoke to the other birds. These birds decided to send this owl as a delegate, along with duck and gull, to meet with the Great Spirit.⁴⁴

We already referred to Densmore's citation and song of an owl and bad medicine. To illustrate the virtue of sharing, let us examine it in more detail.

[A husband and wife came to an old Mide healer who] gave them food and made them comfortable. Late that night the old Mide got ready to sing, and while he was singing he sent an owl over to the camp where the Indians lived who were trying to starve this man and his wife. . . . The old rule was that if a man killed an animal he must first divide it among the camps; then he must cook his own share of the meat and invite all the old men to come and eat it with him. If he failed to do this they would be jealous and would "starve him out," as was the case with this man and his wife.

In addition to protection and sustenance, the needy couple was given medicine to enable them to approach animals in the hunt. "The other camp could get no food after the owl went to the camp. The Indians there nearly starved, but the man and his wife had plenty of game."⁴⁵

An owl thus provides an example of wise and generous sharing by giving its feathers and skin and commanding a regular regimen in life. Otherwise bad medicine will spread, affecting even the animals and thereby jeopardizing the survival of all. While the Ojibwa negotiations regarding Treaty Three concern their health and survival, the owl stories expand this context to include wholesome bonds which sharing ensures.

OWL AND DIRECTIONS, WINDS, AND SEASONS

Though thunderbirds are more frequently associated with the foursome of directions, winds, and seasons, owls have relationships with them also. In "Kwokwokwo and the Warm Wind," Solomon Begg narrates that Kwokwokwo and Odi'jak (crane) decide to search for the warm wind since some people are privileged to experience it and others not. They find that the warm wind is kept in the south, in a *matakwan* (lodge). Kwokwokwo and others attack the *matakwan* and free the warm wind. "That's why today, from time to time, the warm wind blows from the south."⁴⁶

Desveaux notes that ritual celebrations and the winds serve to punctuate the regular routine. While winds give the assurance that there is permanence or regularity to the seasons, they do account for variations.⁴⁷ Hawk Owl, as the intelligence and guide of the winds, announces the weather variations. Different seasons result in different conditions and possibilities in the natur-

al environment. When starvation looms, for instance, cold wind and snow might presage a successful deer hunt.⁴⁸

Owls mediate with and direct the four winds,⁴⁹ an importance mirrored by the prominence accorded the number four and the cardinal directions/winds in Mide rituals. In addition there are four (or eight) Mide stages, each with certain ritual instruments, pouches, bags, mats, poles, and variant practices.⁵⁰

Owls with other birds and their songs are also time indicators. Owls and other birds enliven the air with their songs, thus punctuating and specifying each particular season. Their soundings mingle with the wind, making it alive also and naming it a carrier of life. As an older Ojibwa remarks, "The songs are alive, more alive than us."⁵¹ Basil Johnston writes of diver bird whose singing conquers winter and brings summer into being.⁵² Death gives way to life.

Solomon Begg recounts events in the spring when the rapids are very powerful. Boreal Owl, Kashkejabish, tries so hard to shout the roaring rapids that he loses his voice. "It is thus that in spring Kashkejabish utters a cry which resembles that of the rapids."⁵³ In another story, crow and Canada Goose try to outvoice the rapids, but cannot mask its competing sounds. Only Boreal Owl's continuous call is equal to the rapids. "That's what he does still today in the spring."⁵⁴

There are several illustrations of the sonorous environment at the end of winter. At this time of year the ice begins to melt and the flowing water increases its noise and disengages itself progressively from the ice. One listens to the song of Boreal Owl, a little wild at first, perched in a tree very close to the encampment, even in the middle of it. Its song is as continuous as the reverberations of the waterfall. Thus this owl engages in a consonant but competitive song with the river. In this story, Boreal Owl loses the competition, but a tensile concurrence of the owl's song and the continuous sound of the river continues so that it is impossible to discern whether the auditory impression is the voice of the owl or that of the river. In fact, the competition ceases altogether and the utterances meld into one.⁵⁵

Desveaux notes that there is even more symbolism between owl and spring, owl and spring water, owl and warmth and new life. A continuous sound, except for the wind in the trees, is uncommon in the subboreal forest. The subtle and continuous gusts of the wind gather all events into its embrace. In contrast, an animal's sounding manifests a discontinuous presence. Thus the absolute silence and the seemingly total absence of life on the coldest days of winter are stirred by the least movements and expressions of animal life. Just as animals interrupt the silence of winter, so the hunter must act within nature's acoustical sphere of silence to approach game. In making sounds when striking the animal, the hunter, like the animal before him, ruptures the silence for an instant, and in the act of ensuring death also guarantees his group a livelihood.

The silence-sound interplay is continued in the healing process. To avert the perpetual silence of death, the healer uses the sounds of the rattle, drum, and recitative chant. Life itself is a reciprocity between voices and silence: lullabies and cooing provide a sonorous prelude to sleep, and vision quests are

in many ways acoustical quests. It is Kwokwokwo who speaks and understands all human conversations directly.⁵⁶

Sylvie Berbaum recounts the role that the rattle plays for the Ojibwa of the Treaty Three region. In the uncreated world there is merely the sound of the shaker/rattle, for not all of the world is manifest as yet.⁵⁷ But the shaker's sound is not unrelated to creation, for the seeds of the gourd in a gourd rattle are the elements of regeneration.⁵⁸ Such cosmic reverberations and other influences enter the Midewiwin lodge itself, for as Johnston notes, the "lodge was open at the top, free to receive life, light, and the sound of the whole world and the universe."⁵⁹

The rattles specifically "were shaken to dispel the spirit of suffering and ill health," Johnston writes.⁶⁰ Like the drum, rattles also gather the people, but while the drum gathers good spirits, the rattle dispels bad spirits.⁶¹ According to Berbaum, "the rattle has this expelling function because of its link with origins; the sound of the rattle, recalling the original one, returns to the source, to a beginning without sickness and bad spirits. The rattle is the reverberating presence par excellence of a therapeutic milieu."⁶²

We have already noted that owls were often barometers of and participants in change through the winds and the seasons of the year. Hoffman writes specifically of the Midewiwin ceremony and the owl. The lodge had ten poles, squared, with each of its four parts oriented to the four directions. The colors were a function of this orientation: white for east; green for south; red for west, and black for north. At the top of each pole is "the stuffed body of the white owl." The poles were distributed throughout the four Midewiwin degrees, with owl featured in all four degrees. Also the pouch of the initiated of the fourth degree contained an owl.⁶³

Ojibwa artist Ahmoo Angecone writes more generally about the role that birds, one the Creator's gifts, play as spirits of the air. "The spirit of the air is with us through our cycle of life. It brings greeting to us when we are born, and it is the last element to be with us when we pass on to the spirit world. The bird is also the bearer of messages for the Anishnawbek, because it can fly in the air, walk on the land, swim on the water, and dive underwater, going where we cannot."⁶⁴

In summary, while an owl is closely associated with the south wind, it also has a relationship with all four winds and four seasons. An owl intelligently mediates with and guides the winds to bring in the appropriate seasons, breaking winter's silence and speaking against and also in unison with the rapids. Silence and sound reciprocate in the seasons as well as in dynamic hunting rituals, in creation and regeneration, and in healing, sleep, and death. In the Midewiwin ceremony, the rattle reverberates and recalls mythic times of wholeness and dispels bad spirits, a ritual directed by the owl's presence and voice in all four Midewiwin degrees.

OWL AND THE DEAD

While an owl sings with the spring rapids and heralds the advent of new life, it is also associated with death. In the novel, *The Owl's Song*, owl manitou speaks with

an infallible voice of a coming death.⁶⁵ In fact, an owl's call can presage the death of specific beings, summoning them to a home where they belong.⁶⁶

Stories from Lac du Flambeau recount Nanabozho's causing the death of two of his brothers.⁶⁷ One of his brothers makes the road to the other world and places markers along the way. One marker, on the left side of the road, is that of an owl. "The Indians say that the owl's eyes are like a looking glass, and he looks just awful. When he speaks of the owl at the last supper with a dead person, sitting next to the coffin, the Mide priest says, 'When you see your grandfather's eyes shining like glass, don't be afraid of him. Just go up and offer him your tobacco. He'll take it.' They don't say 'the owl.' They speak of him as 'your grandfather.'"⁶⁸ Thus owls are protectors of the dead, but even more than that they are the very ancestors who have passed to the spirit world.

I have already noted the paralyzing and haunting effects of an owl's gaze.⁶⁹ An owl presents a double mirror with life on one side and death on the other. This is akin to the Mide mediation between life and death, with its healing lodge erected near water, thereby presenting not only ways to ensure life, but also a death or ghost lodge.⁷⁰

In another story from Lac Court Oreille, "the Great Mystery" had instructed various manitous to be at the service of Nanabozho to help his uncles and their descendants. Bear and Daylight come from the east, offering, respectively, strength and luminosity for meetings. Kukukuu, the Great Owl, says, "I shall come and sit by the burial place of the dead, to see that their resting place is not disturbed."⁷¹

The role an owl plays for the dead is more clearly delineated in some Midewiwin birchbark scrolls. Skwekomik's master scroll from Red Lake, Minnesota, shows a circular village of the dead containing a ghost lodge.⁷² The path of the dead runs from a Mide lodge to the ghost lodge in the direction of the setting sun. Some master scrolls have varieties of fruits and a tree on the side of the path to lure travelers away from the home of the dead. According to Johann G. Kohl's drawing,⁷³ a crooked log stretches across the stream but it is of inadequate length to reach the opposite shore. Infants and children therefore need help to cross the stream to reach the ghost lodge. In other versions, the log takes the form of a serpentine monster who hinders access unless proper rites are invoked.⁷⁴ According to Skwekomik's illustration, Kokoko the owl is the guide along this path. He had loaned his eyes to Nanabozho when he visited his brother wolf in the afterworld. On another scroll depicting the upper or sky degrees, Red Sky shows a flock of birds and Selwyn Dewdney assumes owl is among them.⁷⁵

To recapitulate, the owl presents several layers of meaning and several relationships in the Ojibwa world. An owl summons the dead and becomes a relative, a grandfather mediating between life and death, and guides by loaning its eyes to travelers on the path to death.

OWL AND CONSERVATION

In another story, Hawk Owl and Boreal Owl contest the paternity of a child from their mutual lover Wapise, Willow Grouse. The intricate test for paternity indicates that Boreal Owl is the father, much to the dismay of Hawk Owl.

At the conclusion of the story, Hawk Owl encounters Attitamo, the squirrel. Squirrel pleads for his life and promises to plant beautiful trees.

The north or west wind, when defeated, changes into a squirrel, an animal which like the wind takes part in the reproduction of trees. Squirrels are also part of this reawakening.⁷⁶

Hawk Owl and Boreal Owl are associated with the older and younger generations, respectively, both exhibiting their interdependence, tension (but also alliance), direct concurrence, and cooperation.

OWL AND THE ORIGIN OF DAY AND NIGHT

There is a Menominee story on the origins of night and day. In that story, Wapus (rabbit) encounters Totoba (the Saw-whet owl) and in the presence of all the animals in the forest, the two battle for the rule of daylight (*wabon*) and darkness by repeating the words *day* and *night*. Totoba errs and daylight wins, but Wapus gives conquered Totoba/darkness a meaningful place, and thus day and night are born.⁷⁷

In one being, the owl is “the integration of contraries for the sake of enduring, generative harmony,” Thomas D. Thompson notes. “Totoba, as dark, happily still has a place in the perpetuating of the fluctuating, generative qualities peculiar to life in all circumstances. That such an uncommonly good truth might be known, *Gook kook’oo’oo*, usually a night-flyer, proves the proper messenger. Her unusual voice indicates light-filled life always visiting everywhere, even the darkest places. She manifests the great mystery that physical objects may be seen in daylight, but the life force itself, unseen as if in darkness, is still to be recognized and respected.”⁷⁸

REPRESENTATIONS OF OWL

Representations of the owl occur both in Ojibwa life in general and on the Midewiwin scrolls and in their ceremonies. These images often join other avian Ojibwa forms. We have already noted that other birds vie with owl and hawk for the second rung in the Mide rites. According to Hoffman, thunderbird was in charge of the second-degree lodge of the Midewiwin as well as of the Jiissakid’s Shaking Tent.⁷⁹ Acoustical patterns of owls are present in the Ojibwa vocalizations of their various names. Their names, derived from the land according to George Copway, are the sounds that the animals produce.⁸⁰ Missionary Claude Allouez noted in the seventeenth century the mutual and reciprocal sounds made by the Ottawa and birds.⁸¹ Owls are the good manitous of the sky realm and of the four winds.

Grace Rajnovich notes a petroglyph at Picture Rock Island, Lake of the Woods, Ontario, with a hand, bird, and sky communication line.⁸² An open hand is a gesture of prayer.⁸³ There are effigy mounds in the shape of birds, as well as pipes, pottery, and other pieces decorated with birds.⁸⁴

While thunderbirds are often depicted in paintings and petroglyphs with powerlines from their wings, denoting knowledge and power from above, I have not seen such images of owls. Thunderbird is often the power manitou

which represents the four winds and makes things grow. We have seen owls performing in these capacities also.⁸⁵

Representations of a foursome are common in Ojibwa designs. Coleman notes that circles or dots are often arranged in groups of fours and eights. The “design is composed of two crossed spirals, forming either a single or double swastika. It represents the four directions or winds, symbolizing universal power. It is used in the Midé mnemonic scrolls which the Midé priests interpret as signifying the road of life the Ojibwa should follow if he wishes happiness and long life. According to informants the true Ojibwa swastika always contains a circle in the center, representing the sun or Kijé manito.”⁸⁶

Representations of real birds (very few owls) as well as imaginary ones are “used in decorating fire bags, birch bark baskets, Midé drums and birch bark scrolls.”⁸⁷ Coleman gives illustrations of birch bark baskets, boxes, and trays on which there are four branches, signifying possibly the directions and winds;⁸⁸ in the context of games, Coleman gives two bitten designs in patterns of fours.⁸⁹

Not illustrated are the seemingly irretrievable dream figures made of cloth or hide which were carried on the person who wanted the protection its presence assured. A specific article worn was the result of a dream command by a specific manitou, for in the article dwelled the manitou. While the article manifested the manitou and animal, the dream itself remained a mystery generally undisclosed to others. But some dreams became public through depictions of dream symbols. “One of my informants,” Coleman writes, “told of having seen an owl used as a dream symbol embroidered on a man’s clothing.”⁹⁰ Dream symbols were crafted on women’s dresses, and on head and neck bands.⁹¹ There is a four winds design on a rattle used by the Mide leaders in curing the sick and in a Midewiwin ceremony.⁹²

The spirit presence of the owl is pervasive in Ojibwa life, reinforcing the sounds and values the owl voiced in the stories.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to strictly informational accounts of owls as given in the beginning of this article, the owl has a more humanistic and contextual presence in Ojibwa life. I have noted owls’ nuanced voices which also provide information, but of a more relational type, that of the winds and the seasons of the year, for instance. As Vine Deloria states, “Indian knowledge provides a predictive context in which certain prophetic statements can be made.”⁹³

Owl had and still has an abiding presence in Ojibwa stories and cultural representations. Beyond that an owl had a presence in the ceremonies of the Midewiwin shown by its inclusion on their ritual birchbark scrolls. Owl’s proclamations and activities transformed Ojibwa lives, with some people appropriating owl so profoundly that they were called owls. Can we conclude that the Mide practitioners even more than the nonpractitioners appropriated owl’s qualities more readily? There is evidence that they made these appropriations in a significant way, for the owl as creature, symbol, and manitou is evident in Midewiwin scrolls. These scrolls provided the structure for Midewiwin ceremonies.

Mide leaders were immersed in stories, representations, and celebrations of owls. Stories provided accounts of owls which parallel those of the Midewiwin rites, for on the one hand the owl is a benevolent advocate and protector in cases of sickness, grief, and death. This role of advocate and protector was the main thrust of the Midewiwin ceremonials. On the other hand, the owl was also regarded as a sinister and threatening power, a threat mirrored in the fifth to eighth steps in the Midewiwin initiation. In like manner, the owl displayed contrasting but interrelated spiritual powers as it was associated with the air, but also with the earth and water, all concerns of Midewiwin rituals. We have evidence of an owl in a Midewiwin song, giving rise to speculation that the owl's sonorous hoot permeated the Midewiwin assembly assuring the Ojibwa of long life.

The owl shares his wisdom, commands a regular regimen in life, mediates with the four directions and winds, guiding them vocally to initiate reciprocally both silence and sounds. Such interplay is evident in hunting rituals, creation and regeneration, and healing, sleep, and death, truly cyclic and cosmic relationships. The owl is visually present in all four stages of spiritual initiation in the Midewiwin ceremonies, and acoustically present in the rattle which dispels bad spirits and recalls mythic times of wholeness. On the Midewiwin scrolls, the owl is portrayed as a relative, a grandfather, summoning the dead. The owl thus mediates life and death, and guides by loaning its eyes to travelers on the path to death. Just as the Mide ceremonies involve life and death, the owl integrates light and dark, the seen and the unseen. Also, in Ojibwa life in general there are many representations of the owl, from vocalizations to depictions on both ceremonial and domestic objects.

Ojibwa society in general and the Mide practitioners in particular were steeped in a culture which treasured the owl. But these people practiced not only in the spiritual domain, but also on the political front; of the leaders who signed Treaty Three those of the Midewiwin formed a significant part.⁹⁴ It is reasonable to assume that these Mide leaders became the voices and messengers of the owl and became the owl itself in treaty signing. The formative influence of the owl, then, spans pre-treaty times, the treaty negotiations and signing, and post-treaty days.

There are two general conclusions regarding the owl and the Ojibwa. First, that the owl needed places to dwell, a homeland, both in story and ceremonial form and in territorial locales; second, that the owl and other animals figured profoundly in the lives and lifestyle of the Ojibwa. There is a connection between the above conclusions and Treaty Three: the Ojibwa could not have willingly ceded proprietorship of their lands which furnished homes for the owl and which fashioned the very identity of the Ojibwa.⁹⁵

NOTES

1. There are several variant spellings of *Ojibwa* and also several variant terms for the same people: Anishinabe, Anishinaabe, Chippewa.

2. Treaty Number Three comprises an area in Northwestern Ontario and a small part of Manitoba. It was signed between the Ojibwa and the representatives of the

British Crown and the Federal Government in 1873. For a discussion on the first animal in the Midewiwin ritual, see Michael M. Pomedli, "The Otter: Laughter and Treaty Three," *Trente-deuxième Congrès des Algonquinistes* (Winnipeg: Université de Manitoba, 2001), 359–373.

3. Robert E. and Pat Ritzenthaler, *The Woodland Indians of the Western Great Lakes* (Garden City, New York: Natural History Press, 1970), 87. The Ritzenthalers list snake and fox, or wildcat claw, as a third-degree bag.

4. Fred K. Blessing, *The Ojibway Indians Observed* (St. Paul: Minnesota Archaeological Society, 1977), 111; Julia Harrison, "He Heard Something Laugh': Otter Imagery in the Midewiwin," in David W. Penney, ed., *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 62 (1986): 51.

5. W. J. Hoffman, "Notes on Ojibwa Folk-lore," *The American Anthropologist* 2 (1889): 218. Thunderbird or thunder god played a major role for both the Mide and the Jiissakid. It was in charge of the first-degree lodge of the Midewiwin as well as the Jiissakid's Shaking Tent (see W. J. Hoffman, "The Midewiwin or 'Grand Medicine Society' of the Ojibwa," *Bureau of American Ethnology, Seventh Annual Report, 1885–1886* [Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1891], 157, 176, Plates III and IV).

6. Ruth Landes, *Ojibwa Religion and the Midewiwin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 145.

7. Tim Osborne, The OWL Pages, [www.owlpages.com], 1994.

8. Edward A. Armstrong, *The Folklore of Birds, an enquiry into the origin and distribution of some magico-religious traditions* (London: Collins, 1958), 113.

9. Osborne, OWL Pages.

10. Osborne, OWL Pages. The Boreal owl is similar to the Saw-whet owl but is somewhat larger.

11. John Sparks and Tony Soper, *Owls, Their Natural and Unnatural History* (New York: Facts on File, 1989), 7.

12. Sparks and Soper, *Owls*, 12–14.

13. Osborne, OWL Pages.

14. Osborne, OWL Pages; Sparks and Soper, *Owls*, 23, 27, 29.

15. Ritzenthaler and Ritzenthaler, *Woodland Indians*, 34.

16. Howard Corbiere, *Ko-ko-ko: The Owl, an Ojibwe-Odawa Legend*, ed. Mary Lou Fox, ill. Martin Panamick (Manitoulin Island: Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, 1977), 2.

17. I will use the spelling *Nanabozho* as employed by the Northeast and Subarctic Ojibwa. Other terms used for the same being include Nannebush, Nanabush, and Winabojo. Michigan and Wisconsin Ojibwa use the name Manabozho and Menapus (Big Rabbit). Nanabozho is a complex trickster figure, often powerful and benevolent, but also deceitful and stupid (see Sam D. Gill and Irene F. Sullivan, *Dictionary of Native American Mythology* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], 340–341).

18. Howard Corbiere, *Ko-ko-ko*, 2–24.

19. Walter James Hoffman, "The Travels of Manabush," *The Menomini Indians* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1970), 173.

20. Hoffman defines the thunderbirds as "deities of the air, who cause the spring rains to come to produce vegetation" (Hoffman, *Menomini*, 296).

21. Sister Bernard Coleman, Ellen Frogner, and Estelle Eich, *Ojibwa Myths and Legends* (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1971), 39.

22. Coleman, *Ojibwa Myths*, 41. See Theresa Smith, *The Island of the Anishnaabeg*:

Thunderers and Water Monsters in the Traditional Ojibwe Life-world (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1995), 41 n10. A similar Carrier story concerns a petulant boy whose father uses the owl as a way of forcing him to go to bed on time. Like one of the above stories, the owl feeds him rabbit meat. The story accounts for the reason that owls hunt for rabbits and why they have very little down and feathers under their wings and inside their legs (Bernadette Rosset, *The Owl, a Carrier Indian Legend*, ed. Edward John Vanderhoof [Vancouver: Yinka Dene Language Institute, 1991], 4–34).

23. Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979), 114.

24. Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Music, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 45*, “No. 88. Song of the Owl Medicine” (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1929), 105–106. Thanks to Lawrence Martin, Ojibwa, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, who shared with me a Michigan Ojibwa owl song which speaks of the spirits of the woods and waters.

25. Victor Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales, and their Relation to Chippewa Life* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1977), 141.

26. Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa*, 141.

27. Frank A. Myers, “The Bear-walk (Muck-wa-bim-moo-say), A Witchcraft Belief Still Current Among the Great Lakes Indians,” *Inland Seas* 9 (1953): 17.

28. Frances Densmore, *Handbook of the Collection of Musical Instruments in the United States National Museum, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 136* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1927), 121.

29. Sylvie Berbaum, *Ojibwa Powwow World*, ed. and trans. Michael M. Pomedli (Thunder Bay: Northern Institute Press, 2000), 74.

30. Molly Loonsfoot, Ojibwa Elder, Assinins, Michigan, referred to the owl as protector (personal communication, July 8, 2001).

31. David Morris, “The Man with an Owl Skin,” trans. from Ojibwa by Jimmy Morris, in Emmanuel Desveaux, *La mythologie des indiens de Big Trout Lake, Ethnographie analyse des mythes* (Paris: Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1984), 2: 178. Volume 1 of this work is Desveaux’s commentary; volume 2 contains Ojibwa stories. Throughout this article, I have translated the Ojibwa accounts from French.

32. Barnouw, “The Village of Animals,” *Wisconsin Chippewa*, 141.

33. Truman Michelson, ed., *The Owl Sacred Pack of the Fox Indians*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 72 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1921), 47 and *passim*.

34. Michelson, *The Owl*, 49.

35. Michelson, *The Owl*, 55 and *passim*.

36. Michelson, *The Owl*, 59.

37. William Jones, *Ojibwa Texts*, Part II, ed. Truman Michelson (New York: American Ethnological Society, 1919), 547–559; see also 531–547.

38. For several treaty perspectives involving the spiritual and political, see Jill Oakes, Rick Riewe, Kathi Kinew, and Elaine Maloney, eds., *Sacred Lands, Aboriginal World Views, Claims, and Conflicts* (Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta, 1998). For an account of the relationship among healing, the Midewiwin, and Treaty Three, see in this same volume, Michael Pomedli, “Ojibway Healing and Ordering in Treaty Number Three,” 77–86.

39. Joseph Morris, “Owl Man,” trans. from Ojibwa by Rudy Morris, in Desveaux, *La mythologie* 2: 180.

40. Claude Levi-Strauss confirms the symbolic importance of grouse in *The Naked Man*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 393–395.
41. Joseph Morris, “Grouse Man,” trans. Rudy Morris, in Desveaux, *La mythologie* 2: 181–182. The story is from “Old Times, before human years—a time of great balance.” According to the Rock Cree in the neighboring area of Manitoba, the “good-hearted” share meat and fish while the “bad-hearted” hoard it; the latter is a violation of trust in the Great Spirit (Robert Brightman, *Grateful Prey, Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993], 158, 377).
42. John-George Morris, “Mingesowash (Eagles’ Nest),” trans. Jimmy Morris, in Desveaux, *La mythologie* 2: 183.
43. Coleman, *Ojibwa Myths*, 81.
44. “How the Sapsucker got his Colours,” *Wawatay News* 15 (1989): 20.
45. Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, 105–106.
46. Solomon Begg, “Kwokwokwo and the Warm Wind,” trans. Allan Brown, in Desveaux, *La mythologie* 2: 195.
47. Desveaux, *La mythologie* 1: 270.
48. Desveaux, *La mythologie* 1: 272.
49. Michelson comments on the directions: “The animikig were associated with the four cardinal directions, and they were said to control the four winds” (quoted in Jones, *Ojibwa Texts*, 102).
50. Desveaux, *La mythologie* 1: 271.
51. Berbaum, *Ojibwa Powwow World*, 47.
52. Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 161.
53. Solomon Begg, “Kashkejabish (Boreal Owl),” trans. Allan Brown, in Desveaux, *La mythologie* 2: 196.
54. Billy Morris, “Kakabish and the Rapids,” in Desveaux, *La mythologie* 2: 196.
55. In Montagnais accounts, Kukukeshis (Kwokwokwo) engages in a loud, protracted, vocalized seesaw battle with the rapids. In those accounts, Hawk Owl loses his part, as in our story Boreal Owl of Big Trout Lake loses. However, a parallel exists, for in both accounts the competitive owl song and the continuous noise of the river form a consonance of voices (Rémi Savard, *Contes indiens de la Basse Cote Nord du Saint Laurent*, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 51 [Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979], 33–37).
56. Desveaux, *La mythologie* 1: 269.
57. Berbaum, *Ojibwa Powwow World*, 45.
58. Beverly Diamond, M. Sam Cronk, and Franziska von Rosen, *Visions of Sound: Musical Instruments of First Nations Communities in Northeastern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 68.
59. Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 85.
60. Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 84.
61. Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage*, 84.
62. Berbaum, *Ojibwa Powwow World*, 46.
63. Hoffman, “Notes on Ojibwa Folk-lore,” 218–219. The transformative possibilities of all beings are evident here. In other accounts, the sacred pole can be viewed as a person. Reviving such sacred emblems as the pole can lead to a recreation of tribal identity, for the pole spanned many generations, and Aborigines revering the pole

may come to know past traditions, their deceased elders who cared for them, and may rediscover a common center. Through the person of the pole, present generations “may carry a blessing forward to their children and grandchildren” (Robin Ridington and Dennis Hastings, *Blessing for a Long Time, the Sacred Pole of the Omaha Tribe* [Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997], 240).

64. Ahmoo Angecone, Blake Debassige, and Roy Thomas, *The Art of the Anishnawbek, Three Perspectives* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1996), n.p.

65. “But the owl’s song . . . Manitou’s telling of a coming death, speaking with the owl’s voice. Manitou’s don’t change their minds, or make mistakes!” (Janet Campbell Hale, *The Owl’s Song* [New York: Doubleday, 1974], 147).

66. A film, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*, A Tomorrow Entertainment Production, 1973, based on Margaret Craven’s novel, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (New York: Doubleday, 1973). Stan Cuthand, Cree Academic Elder, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, confirms this link between owl and death (personal communication, August 16, 2001).

67. “The Wenebojo Myth from Lac du Flambeau,” in Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa*, 15, 17.

68. “Wenebojo’s Brother Makes the Road to the Other World,” in Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa*, 18. In two other stories, “Wenebojo Myths from Lac Court Oreille,” and “An Old Man in the Form of a Bear,” owl is swallowed by a big fish and sings near a boy’s burial plot (Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa*, 78–79, 139).

69. Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa*, 141.

70. Thanks to Joan Lovisek, researcher, Vancouver, British Columbia, for these thoughts.

71. Hoffman, *Menomini*, 91, 171.

72. Selwyn Dewdney, *The Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 103, fig. 96.

73. Johann G. Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Life among the Lake Superior Ojibway* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985), 215.

74. Dewdney, *Sacred Scrolls*, 103–104, fig. 97.

75. Dewdney, *Sacred Scrolls*, 104–105; 112, fig. 111.

76. Jeremiah Winter, “Kwokwokwo (Hawk Owl),” trans. Mark Chapman, in Desveaux, *La mythologie 2*: 191–194. In a more complex Swampy Cree story by Joby Maskunow, “Why Owls Die with Wings Outspread,” Horned Owl is both a provider and prophet of the future. The story also involves urinating and spitting as means to determine paternity (David M. Guss, ed., *The Language of the Birds* [San Francisco: Net Point Press, 1985], 24–30). Stories from the Montagnais on the northern shore of the St. Lawrence River also recount the events of Boreal Owl, named Kukukueshish. While the narratives are more complex than those of Big Trout Lake, they also feature the test for paternity (Savard, *Contes Indiens*, 37). Jacob Nibenegenesabe gives two variations on the popular story, “Why Owls Die with Wings Outspread,” in Howard A. Norman, *The Wishing Bone Cycle, narrative poems from the Swampy Cree Indians* (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson Publishing, 1982), 186–197.

77. “The Rabbit and the Saw-whet,” in Hoffman, *Menomini*, 200–203.

78. Thomas D. Thompson, Anishinabe, Torrance, California (personal communication, February 2, 2002).

79. Hoffman, “Midewiwin,” 157, 176.

80. George Copway (Kahgegagahbowh), *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1950), 127.

81. In writing about the Ottawa, Claude Allouez notes: “and some other birds are genii, and speak just as we do; and that there are even people among them who understand the language of birds, as some understand a little that of the French” (Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* [Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896–1901], 50: 289). John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm give the Ojibwa terms *gookooko’oo* for owl and *gaakaabishiinh* for screech owl (*A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995], 224).

82. Grace Rajnovich, *Reading Rock Art, Interpreting the Indian Rock Paintings of the Canadian Shield* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Nature History, 1994), 82, fig. 60.

83. Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami*, 141.

84. Rajnovich, *Rock Art*, 110.

85. Sister Bernard Coleman, *Decorative Designs of the Ojibwa of Northern Minnesota* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 68.

86. Coleman, *Decorative Designs*, 6. Coleman displays the swastika design on a child’s moccasins suggesting the protection of the four winds (*Decorative Designs*, 19, fig. 9).

87. Coleman, *Decorative Designs*, 7.

88. Coleman, *Decorative Designs*, 29, Plate 6. Carrie Lyford notes such designs on an Ojibwa woven bag and bark bags (*The Crafts of the Ojibwa* [Washington, DC: US Office of Indian Affairs, 1942], Plates 43, 46, 83, 86).

89. Coleman, *Decorative Designs*, 56.

90. Coleman, *Decorative Designs*, 70.

91. Coleman, *Decorative Designs*, 71.

92. Coleman, *Decorative Designs*, 82.

93. Vine Deloria, *Spirit and Reason, the Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader*, ed. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 1999), 147.

94. J. A. Lovisek makes a credible case for the political influence of members and leaders of the Boundary Waters Midewiwin around the time of Treaty Three. An otherwise egalitarian society tolerated an integration of leadership, rank, wealth accumulation, and social control. Boundary Waters Ojibwa thus developed a more organized socio-political system than the northern Ojibwa (“The Political Evolution of the Boundary Waters Ojibwa,” *Papers of the Twenty-fourth Algonquian Conference*, ed. William Cowan [Ottawa: Carleton University, 1993], 300–301). James Redsky notes that a chief had to be a member of the Midewiwin “to gain the respect from his people” (*Great Leader of the Ojibway: Mis-quona-queb*, ed. James R. Stevens [Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972], 43–44).

95. I am adapting a conclusion that Harold Cardinal made concerning the spiritual stewardship the Cree people had toward timber, and the spirit they brought to the treaties: “Our pipes are an integral part of our religious ritual. The pipe stem is made of wood. Our elders would never have agreed to give away the forests because they would have been giving away part of the responsibility they had to their religious ceremonies” (Harold Cardinal, *The Rebirth of Canada’s Indians* [Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1977], 149).