

Abstract:

The 1979-1982 Ardoch-Mud Lake wild rice confrontation is a microcosm of aboriginal issues throughout Canada. It began when the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) issued a wild rice harvesting license to a private harvester without consultation with local peoples. This action shocked and mobilized the community, and raised many broader issues.

The wild rice community at Ardoch consists of non-status Algonquin, status Mississauga, and non-aboriginal residents. These people found themselves entangled in a system of laws that ignored their values, interests, access to, and authority over a local resource. They faced a history of exclusion regarding Algonquin peoples, Aboriginal rights, and local communities' wishes to shape their own environments. The story of the Ardoch Algonquin community and its historical connection to the Mud Lake wild rice not only demonstrates a community's attachment to its environment, but also shows the great potential for unity in adversity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Part I describes the settlement and development of the Ardoch region, including the local wild rice history; the exclusion and denial of Algonquin and other Aboriginal people in the Ottawa valley; and the evolution of Aboriginal and resource policies in Canada. Part II uses academic writing and research on resources, Aboriginal issues, the mechanics of power and social categories to analyze this history.

The author pieces together the story from documentary and original sources, then explores the themes of authority and Aboriginal rights, 'Indianness', and resource use, management, and development contained within. By contrasting state

perspectives with local perspectives, she uncovers underlying meanings and power structures, demonstrating that the belief structures of the state are power-laden, culturally loaded constructs, deeply influenced by colonial ideologies.

The Mud Lake conflict is not over. The 1982 dispute ended in stalemate - an agreement to leave the substantive issues for another time. The MNR continues as the official Provincial authority over wild rice, and the Mud Lake community continues its communal harvesting and management of wild rice. The issues of Algonquin and other claims, Aboriginal rights, and authority continue to be disputed country-wide in similar struggles over natural resources.

Coming out of the shadows:
Asserting identity and authority in a layered homeland:
The 1979-82 Mud Lake wild rice confrontation

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