

# Spanning the boundaries of wild food governance:

## A case study of lake sturgeon and Actor-Network Theory in Nemaska, Eeyou Istchee

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### Introduction

- Wild food species in Eeyou Istchee, like lake sturgeon (*nameu*), have enormous social, cultural, nutritional, and economic value
- Sturgeon cross many dichotomies during their life cycle, epitomizing the complexity of transboundary resource management
- Collaboration is necessary for more informed and effective governance, but these physical, social, and cultural boundaries create obstacles
- Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which challenges boundaries by describing how the agencies of human and nonhuman actors transform networks, may offer new insights for natural resource governance

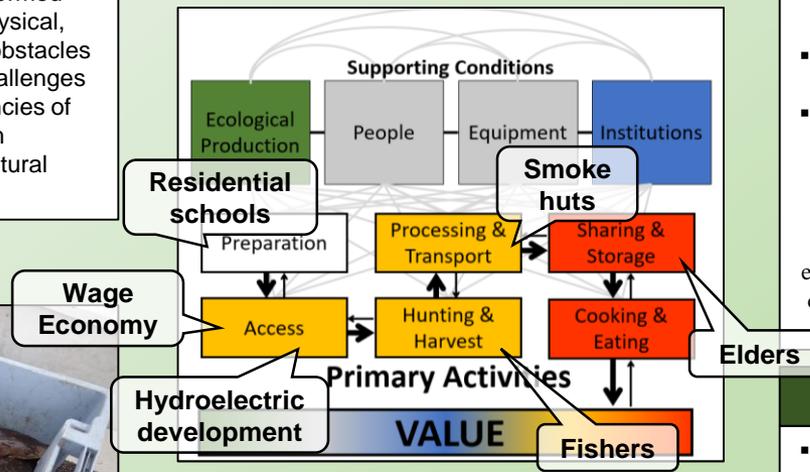


### Research Question

Can ANT inform a methodological approach to wild food governance that facilitates collaboration and recasts actors and their relationships to better reflect the complexity of transboundary natural resource systems?

### Methods

- Case study of lake sturgeon governance in Nemaska, Eeyou Istchee
- 3 visits to Nemaska in 2019
- Interviewing and participant observation
- Key actors and relationships were identified in the wild food value chain



### Preliminary Findings

- Relations with sturgeon are being impacted at all steps of the value chain, from dams, to changing fishing practices, to socio-economic changes, and from “historical” impacts like the Relocation of Nemaska and Residential Schools
- Many of these key governance actors span the traditional conceptual boundaries of governance research and practice

### Preliminary Findings

“Like, before the Rupert Diversion, he says, you could clearly see. The water was really clear. You could clearly see where the water was shallow, where it was deep, where there were rocks.”

“And ever since we’ve left Old Nemiscau, he says, the generation now, they were never exposed to the way the sturgeon used to be.”

- There are concerns that sturgeon traditions are in jeopardy because of these impacts
- But other actors, initiatives like fishing programs, in which elders pass on sturgeon knowledge to youth, help keep relationships alive

“But if you do it by hand, then you are really experiencing it in real life. You feel. There is a spirit that comes with the culture, and our language. That’s how it works. It all connects.”

### Conclusions and Next Steps

- Sturgeon governance in Nemaska can be analyzed as a complex web of human and nonhuman relationships
- An ANT-inspired approach to collaborative wild food governance could help span boundaries restricting shared understandings
- Next steps in this research include:
  - Member checking with participants
  - Working with research collaborators and partners to contextualize findings within wider world of sturgeon governance
  - Future case studies of wild food governance