**Assignment:** Read the following two articles “First Nations Face Border Struggles” by Richard Wagamese and “A Canoe Expedition With Purpose” by Conor Mihel. Compare and contrast how these two articles show and reflect the importance of the connection to the land by first nations peoples and conflicts/problems that happen as a result. You must use specific support for your opinions from both articles in your answer. Your answer must be a minimum of 1 ½ -2 pages (approximately 3-4 paragraphs in length).

**First Nations Face Border Struggles**

**In a land with no lines, how do you define the end of one territory and the beginning of another?**

 *By*[*Richard Wagamese*](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/contributors/default.asp?contrib=Richard_Wagamese&id=1205)

**My Ojibwa family name is Wagamese.**By itself, it means nothing. That is because when the registrars came to sign up the Ojibwa for treaty, they wrote down only the parts of the names they could pronounce. Or they gave us English translations, such as Redsky and Otter Tail, or English surnames, such as Green, Kelly and Smith. Wagamese is part of a longer phrase that translates to “man walking by the crooked water.”

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| *“There is no word for boundary in the Ojibwa language. There is no word for map either. There was only ever the land.”* |

The name refers to my great-grandfather. He is remembered in the northwestern part of Ontario north of Minaki for walking the 72-kilometre length of our traditional trapline along the Winnipeg River in both directions in three days. That river is the crooked water referred to in our name because of the way it snakes from Lake Winnipeg southeasterly to Lake of the Woods, close to the Canada–U.S. boundary. It is the great landmark that allowed my family to declare the boundaries of our trapline.

The shoreline is marked by bogs, marshes, coves, steep cliffs and huge expanses of spruce, pine and tamarack. There were no straight lines in Ojibwa culture, so there were no grids or maps or delineations to assume or claim territory. Instead, my people used the land itself.

**[The Jay Treaty of 1794](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/ja10/first-nation-border-struggles.asp)**

**In the beginning was the Jay Treaty of 1794**

It may be over 200 years old, but the Jay Treaty remains the authoritative agreement between Canada and the United States governing the movement of First Nations people across the international boundary.

**On paper…**The treaty, negotiated between Great Britain and the United States without consulting First Nations, recognizes the natural and historic right of aboriginals to cross the border at will.

**…and on the border:**The treaty’s observance has always been interpreted and implemented differently in Canada than in the United States. Though it seemed to recognize a fundamental right of mobility for First Nations, the promise of the treaty is ever vulnerable to political motives and circumstances in Ottawa and Washington.

Sometimes, the end of one family’s or band’s traditional territory and the start of another’s was marked by a huge boulder or a cliff. Other times, a bend in the river itself referenced a boundary, even though there is no word for boundary in the Ojibwa language. There is no word for map either. There was only ever the land.

For the Ojibwa and other native groups across North America, land could not be divided. It was whole, as defined by the Creator. It was sacred, because the idea of wholeness contained principles such as sharing, harmony and equality. When territory was decided upon, it was an honourable agreement based on those principles, and the agreement became sacred, too, because it involved the land.

The trapline my great-grandfather walked followed the twists of the river. There were beaver dams, muskrat lodges and plenty of foxes, wolves, mink and game, such as moose, deer, geese, ducks and rabbits. It was rich and bountiful in everything our family needed. That was the other thing that defined territory; no band or family ever arranged for more than what it needed.

When I see the number of land claims negotiated these days and the reams of maps backing up those claims, I wonder how it all came to pass. The idea of the land as sacred remains a native principle. But nowadays, we have learned to see it in straight lines and value it in terms of the resources and money it could yield rather than the spiritual principles it gave our cultures.

There is a man walking by the crooked water. He stops to enjoy the feel of the land all around him. There are no boundaries between him and the world. There is only a critical joining: balance, harmony, belonging. No one ever needed a map for that.

<http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/ja10/first-nation-border-struggles.asp>

**A canoe expedition with purpose**

First Nations canoeists trace an ancient trading route — and assert their sovereignty

*By [Conor Mihell](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/back_issues/contributor.asp?contrib=Conor_Mihell&id=1347)*

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| Some Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation members canoed the Fawn River Watershed last summer to renew their links to the land. (Photo: Allan Lissner/KIlands.org/earthroots.org) |

Last August, a group of canoeists traced an ancient trading route that winds through northwestern Ontario from Big Trout Lake to the shores of Hudson Bay. The two-week, 350-kilometre descent of the Fawn and Severn rivers included wildlife encounters, whitewater thrills and fresh-fish dinners.

But there was also purpose in the paddle strokes of the eight members of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation who made the journey from their community 600 kilometres north of Thunder Bay. They were renewing ageold links with lands they have been fighting to defend from mining development for years. This summer a new group of youths hope to repeat the journey.

According to Richard Anderson, the band’s former watershed community worker, maintaining the historic canoe routes asserts Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug sovereignty of the watersheds of Big Trout Lake and the Fawn and Severn rivers. “Water is all we have up here,” he says. “And everyone understands that we’ll need this water in the future.”

Five of North America’s twelve remaining undammed and unregulated watersheds south of 55 degrees latitude are in northern Ontario, including the Fawn-Severn. The region is also home to the Hudson Bay Lowlands, which at 245,000 square kilometres make up the world’s third largest wetland and act as a critical carbon storehouse. “We’re just starting to appreciate the ecological value of these lands,” says Anna Baggio, director of conservation planning for the CPAWS Wildlands League, a wilderness advocacy non-profit group.

So are other organizations, but for entirely different reasons. Mining companies looking for gold on traditional Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug territory sparked a conflict that climaxed in 2008, when six band members were jailed for obstructing operations. In 2011, the band responded by passing a motion to ban “all industrial activity from the watershed of Big Trout Lake and the Fawn River forever,” an area of 13,025 square kilometres, under its own system of indigenous law. Ontario, which doesn’t formally recognize indigenous law, eventually bought out the controversial claims from mining companies Platinex and God’s Lake Resources for a combined $8.5 million, and in March 2012, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines made an interim withdrawal of 23,000 square kilometres from mineral claim staking, encompassing a portion of the Fawn River watershed.

“While Ontario does not endorse KI’s position,” says Cindy Blancher-Smith, the assistant deputy minister of mines and minerals, “the hope is that this step provides greater certainty to industry.” Further conflict between the band and mining companies may have been avoided for now. But meanwhile, development continues in a 5,120-square-kilometre patch of boreal forest known as the Ring of Fire, southeast of the reserve on Big Trout Lake. Here, prospectors have discovered North America’s largest known deposit of chromite, a mineral used in the production of stainless steel. Blancher- Smith notes that meetings between the government and local communities about proposed developments in the region are ongoing. “The KI situation remains unique,” she says, “and doesn’t influence the province’s approach to aboriginal relations in the Ring of Fire.”

Anderson insists his band has no interest in negotiating mineral developments. “We’ve seen what mining can do to the land and waters,” he says, citing reports of development-related water pollution near Kingfisher First Nation, a neighbouring community just south of Big Trout Lake. “We don’t want any part of it.”

<http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/jun13/fawn_severn_watershed.asp>