



### Ethnologia Europaea

Journal of European Ethnology

37:1-2 2007

#### Ethnologia Europaea

Journal of European Ethnology

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Bank

IBAN: DK10 5202 0001 5151 08

BIC: AMBKDKKK

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By

Nik Luka

E-article

In

Ethnologia Europaea
Journal of European Ethnology
Volume 37:1–2

2008

Museum Tusculanum Press University of Copenhagen Waterfront Second Homes in the Central Canada Woodlands. Images, Social Practice, and Attachment to Multiple Residency By
Nik Luka
E-article
Copyright © 2008 Museum Tusculanum Press
ISBN 978 87 635 0993 0
ISSN 1604 3030

IN
Ethnologia Europaea
Journal of European Ethnology 37: 1-2
E-journal
Copyright © 2008 Museum Tusculanum Press
ISBN 978 87 635 0981 7
ISSN 1604 3030

Unaltered version in pdf-format of:

Copyright © 2007 Ethnologia Europaea, Copenhagen Printed in Sweden by Grahns Tryckeri AB, Lund 2007 Cover and layout Pernille Sys Hansen Cover photos Pernille Sys Hansen and Robert Lau Photos Susanne Ewert, page 6 Richard Wilk, pages 16, 34, 44, 50, 70 ISBN 978 87 635 0885 8 ISSN 0425 4597

This journal is published with the support of the Nordic board for periodicals in the humanities and social sciences.

Museum Tusculanum Press University of Copenhagen Njalsgade 126 DK-2300 Copenhagen S www.mtp.dk

## WATERFRONT SECOND HOMES IN THE CENTRAL CANADA WOODLANDS

Images, Social Practice, and Attachment to Multiple Residency

Nik Luka

In Canada's densely-forested yet highly-urbanised provinces of Québec and Ontario, second homes have been a defining feature since the early twentieth century. These second-home territories are deeply imbued with images and meanings that link landscape, urban form, folklore, and socio-cultural identity. The waterfront second home is now an icon of regional and even national identity.¹ Known variously as *cottages*, *camps*, or *cabins*, these waterfront second homes, when considered in aggregate, constitute highly-charged cultural landscapes: settings with particularly strong symbolic or iconic value to their users and to larger social groups.

This article discusses patterns and meanings of multiple residency involving these ecologicallyrich, meaning-filled, and rather ubiquitously Canadian second-home settings. It explores how they epitomise the hypermobility of the North American metropolis and the entrenched imagery of the suburban/countryside ideal so familiar across the Anglo-American world - and how these second homes provide intriguing comparisons with the second-home patterns observed across Europe. The first part of the article gives an overview of secondhome phenomena in central Canada (the country's two most heavily-populated provinces of Québec and Ontario), describing their material form, extent, and historical prevalence. The focus then shifts to a detailed case study of the second-home territory spreading northward and eastward from Toronto,

the country's most populous and fastest-growing city-region. Highlights of a recent empirical study of settlement patterns, uses, experiences, and meanings associated with this second-home context, drawing on in-depth interviews among 'cottager' households that are simultaneously based in the Toronto metropolitan area. Evidence is given revealing how these users dwell through multiple places - to borrow Quinn's (2004) characterisation - and why they persistently do so in spite of considerable external stresses that would otherwise tend to force marked transformations of behaviour, notably the rising carrying costs of multiple residency (whether measured in dollars or otherwise). The concluding section draws comparisons with European secondhome studies, particularly noting parallels with Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. Rounding out the paper is a discussion of critical concepts of dwelling and attachment – which in this central Canadian case study seem to apply both to place and to the very social practice of multiple residency. Final comments are made suggesting that these second-home settings represent a curious twist on the Anglo-American 'countryside ideal' (Bunce 1994) and general ambivalence toward the city in North America.

#### Second Homes in Central Canada

Canada has a population of about 33 million people according to its most recent Census, and across the country, second homes now number in the hundreds

of thousands. They have been widespread since the early decades of the twentieth century;2 by 1991, they were thought to number 560,000 (Halseth 1998). Current data suggest that just over one million of Canada's 12.6 million households own second homes, in the form of cabins, chalets, summer cottages, or camps (terms that will be explained in a moment). It can be conservatively calculated that these second homes correspond to roughly 7.5 per cent of the country's housing stock, based on the Census count of 11.6 million occupied private dwellings in 2001. They are most prevalent in amenityrich areas of Canada's two most densely populated provinces, Québec and Ontario. Typically they line the countless lakes and rivers found in the woodlands covering most of the two provinces – primarily the pre-Cambrian bedrock of the Canadian Shield, including the Adirondack and Laurentian mountains, but also parts of the Northern Appalachians (Map 1, Ill. 1 and 2).3

While also called chalets, camps, and cabins, second homes in Canada are most commonly known as cottages. These terms denote the second-home structure while also strongly connoting a particular setting, and indeed, when introducing two Canadian discussions of second homes (Halseth 2004; Svenson 2004), Hall and Müller (2004) rightly stress that the Canadian term 'cottage' does not primarily describe the physical structure but rather the function of the second home: 'small houses that are mainly for recreational use' (p. 5). It is therefore important to draw a distinction between the terms 'cottage' and 'second home'. The latter can be defined as a structure (moveable or fixed-in-place) occupied and used by a household that makes its primary dwelling elsewhere (Hall & Müller 2004). In contrast, the most useful definition for 'cottage' - in principle, a type of second home - is nebulous. The Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language defines a 'cottage' as 'a recreational property with a house, especially

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Map 1: Sketch-map highlighting the main second-home territories of Ontario and Québec and showing the principal geophysical zones of central Canada, along with the four most populous urban centres. (By Nik Luka.)

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Ill. 1: A typical waterfront second-home scene in the Muskoka Lakes region of Ontario. The structures at the shoreline are boathouses, for each of which a cottage proper sits farther uphill. (Photo: Nik Luka.)

Ill. 2: An immodest yet typical example of a secondhome compound including a main cottage and boathouse, situated in the same region as the peninsula shown in ill. 1. (Photo: Nik Luka.)

for summer use' (1997: 314), noting that the term is used mainly in the Midwest provinces and Ontario. A facetious definition comes from a best-selling popular book, *At the Cottage*, claiming that cottaging is 'Canada's summer obsession' countrywide (Gordon 1989: 6–7):

Whether it is a cottage, cabin, shack, or lodge, or whether it is camp, it is probably near a body of water, usually a lake. It has fewer creature comforts than its urban, suburban, or even rural counterpart. It has more bugs, less lawn, at least one boat, at least one mouse, a smaller kitchen, a larger birdhouse. Neighbours are farther away. So are stores. There may be a road to it; it may be accessible only by water. Either way, it is harder to get to than the place people live in the rest of the year. That may be its charm. It is hard to get to. It is hard for other people to get to.

The Canadian version maps well onto other Anglo-American examples. The authoritative *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) asserts that the term 'cottage' is

used in North American English to represent 'a summer residence (often on a large and sumptuous scale) at a watering-place or a health or pleasure resort' with its first recognised use dating to 1882 in reference to resorts in Bar Harbor, a rugged seaside setting in Maine. Partridge's Concise Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (first published in Britain in the 1960s) defines 'cottaging' as 'going down to one's cottage - often quite a largish house - in the country for the week-end' (Beale 1989: 106). Linking these Anglo-American definitions is multiple residency: the ritualised process of recurrent mobility embodied in the cottage as a temporary dwelling. In other words, the cottage has purpose as a site of sojourn, connected to other parts of everyday life by meaningful travel. As elsewhere, multiple residency involves a supplementary dwelling of some sort, generally (but not exclusively) in non-urban areas and predominantly (but not only) on the part of households based in urban areas - that is, in towns or large cities.4

In Canada, the experience, societal significance, mythology, and folklore of cottaging both feed and are fed by expressions of culture in many different media. General readings published by popular presses are exceeded only in number by countless place-specific popular histories, many of which wax sentimental over cottage life in Canada. For instance, Charles Gordon (1989: 6) declares that 'everyone goes, at some point, to something called "Our Summer Place" ... [which] is probably a cottage'. Evidence of the pervasiveness of cottage life in cultural discourses is found in works of fiction and poetry, such as Margaret Atwood's (1991) short story Wilderness tips and Mordecai Richler's celebrated 1959 novel, The apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz. Canadian popular media also abounds with signs of cottage life. Children's books such as Cottage weekend by Pedersen et al. (1985) fill other niches in the world of popular publishing along with cottage country guidebooks and the ubiquitous 'coffee-table' book replete with evocative photographs of cottage landscapes.5 There are general-interest television programmes, notably the Ontario-based series Cottage Life Television, and documentaries, such as one by Chisholm and Floren (1997) on the 'golden era' of the luxurious resorts across the Muskoka Lakes, all of which vie for viewer attention with a sitcom called *Paradise Falls* – described by one reviewer as 'the dirty Canadian soap we've always wanted' and set in a fictitious Ontario second-home destination. In short, the second-home phenomenon in central Canada encompasses both social practices and cultural landscapes, making the 'cottage' an icon of collective social identity among historically powerful socio-cultural groups (if not among the country's multicultural population). To complement these generalised cultural narratives, the rest of this paper examines particular aspects of the uses and meanings of second homes in Canada.

### Form, Extent, Geographical Distribution, and General History

The 'typical' cottage in central Canada includes a wooden house at or very near the water's edge – in certain cases arranged in clusters or rows adjacent to a beachfront – but almost invariably in the wooded 'back country' found some distance from major metropolitan centres. In the east (Québec) it tends to be found in the rolling highlands of the Adiron-

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Ill. 3: An example of the 'single-tier' pattern of second-home growth predominant in central Canada, especially where the topography is more rugged. (Photo: Nik Luka.)

Ill. 4: A National Topographic Series map showing contours, roads, and the built form of a 'stacked' cottage setting typical of a flat, sandy beach context (NRCan 1993).

dacks and Laurentians, while in the west (Ontario) it is found on the much flatter albeit rugged central terrain of the Canadian Shield. Historically it was modestly constructed and used only in the summer months. In aggregate, the second-home settings of central Canada usually comprise waterbodies lined by a single tier of stand-alone structures on individual parcels of land. Slight variations in settlement patterns stem in part from the constraints imposed by topography; where the land is steeper and rockier, a single-tier 'necklace' of private properties is found almost without exception, whereas the relatively flat, sandy shores of the St Lawrence Lowlands historically gave rise to cottage clusters that are 'stacked' in rows two or more deep in places (Ill. 3 and 4).

The second-home areas of central Canada are generally situated on the periphery of settled agricultural areas, where the arable soils of the St Lawrence Lowlands give way to the rocky Canadian Shield (in the northwest) and the Laurentian and Appalachian Mountains (in the northeast and southeast, respectively). Early second-home activity emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century following a dark history of European conquest and colonisation of aboriginal lands from the sixteenth century onward. In many instances second homes began to appear where agricultural settlement attempts had failed and once the great old-growth forests covering most of Ontario and Québec had been logged out (cf. Epp 2000; Lower 1938). While many summer house colonies were built on the immediate fringes of major urban centres such as Montréal and Toronto, these came to be enveloped by urban growth in the early twentieth century while second-home areas much farther away from cities became especially popular. The first deliberate cottagers were hunters and sportsfolk from Toronto and other industrial hubs on the American side of the Great Lakes, notably Pittsburgh and Cleveland. By the 1920s, central Canada's rugged woodlands had become one of the most sought-after holiday regions in North America for the well-to-do, perceived as necessary summer antidotes to life in the smoggy, noisy, and swelteringly hot industrial urban centres. The nascent ritual of multiple residency involved extended stays at large and rather luxurious waterfront resorts that were accessed by railways and passenger steamers until mass production techniques brought private vehicles under the buying power of numbers of many more households following the First World War.7 Beginning in the mid-1930s, governments upgraded the main roads into these areas; this facilitated a massive boom of private second-home construction in the postwar years. As seen across the United States, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, second homes were 'democratised' as an affordable and enjoyable way to spend largely new-found leisure time. In Ontario and Québec, this postwar rise of multiple residency was fuelled by the extensive release of waterfront Crown land as part of aggressive government policies to encourage tourism and recreation.8 While definitions and data sources are inconsistent, it appears that Ontario's stock of cottage went from approximately 28,000 in 1941 (Wolfe 1951) to 164,000 in 1973 and 216,000 by 1991 (Halseth 1998). In Québec, the total number of households maintaining summer holiday 'cottages' or 'camps' across the province increased from 138,000 in 1971 – almost one in ten – to 200,000 in 2005, corresponding to 6.3 per cent of the estimated 3.2 million households across the province (Saint-Amour 1979; Statistics Canada 2006). Data from 2005 suggest that an estimated 415,000 Ontario households maintain a second home, corresponding to 8.9 per cent of the province's population, and that an average of five million visits (i.e. trips) are made each year. This suggests a yearly per-capita average of 2.5 cottage visits, based on the provincial population of 12,392,000 (Statistics Canada 2005, 2006).

These numbers provide a sense of the magnitude of the second-home phenomenon in central Canada but not the qualitative dimensions of this cultural practice. The examples cited above suggest ways in which the folklore of cottage life has become all-pervasive, to the point that summer holidays at waterfront second homes came to be seen as part and parcel of life in central Canada. To explore these ideas further, we now turn to a detailed case study of multiple residency in the Ontario context, highlighting how the second home is still just that: a corollary

to but by no means a full-blown substitute for the primary urban or suburban dwelling.

### Case Study: Toronto's 'Cottage Country'

The following case centres on the second-home territory stretching northward and eastward from Toronto metropolitan region (known as the Greater Toronto Area or GTA), with an estimated population of five million and a largely immigration-driven population increase of up to 100,000 annually. No discrete 'limits' were explicitly set, but Georgian Bay to the west and Algonquin Provincial Park to the northeast constrain the second-home territory of interest to a triangle with sides measuring perhaps 150 km, with an area of about 12,000 km² in total (Map 2). Of importance is how the historic prominence

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Map 2: Sketch-map of central Ontario showing waterbodies and urban centres, including the City of Toronto (white hatching). The heavy dotted line indicates where the rocky Canadian Shield emerges from beneath the arable till plains of the St Lawrence Lowlands. (By Nik Luka.) of the term 'cottage' has given rise to the somewhat ambiguous label of 'cottage country' in central Ontario. This term compellingly refers to settlement form and geography – where activity takes place in space – as well as describing aspects of cultural identity bound to the very lay of the land through images, meanings, and folklore that have developed over time.

The data presented here were collected in 2003 through interviews (n=71) and an online questionnaire (n=200). The two techniques were coupled so that themes arising in responses to the online instrument were probed and verified through the indepth semi-structured face-to-face interviews, for which the sample was generated using a snowball technique.10 The respondents are almost all owneroccupiers of two properties (an 'urban' dwelling and a 'cottage'). The sample is evenly split by gender; over half are between the ages of 41 and 60 - corresponding to Canada's postwar Baby Boom population cohorts - while another one in four is aged 61 to 80. Three in four respondents have children, typically only two (mean=2.4; median and mode=2). Respondents are very well-educated and have high earning power: over half have at least one university degree, and 43.0 per cent have a before-tax household income of C\$100,000 or more, as contrasted with only 18.0 per cent of households across the Greater Toronto Area, and where the Canada-wide average household income was C\$58,360 in 2001 (City of Toronto 2003; Statistics Canada 2003). Respondent occupations vary widely, but the sample is dominated by professional middle- and upper-class workers, in a modified Marxian sense (i.e. individuals who are able to command skills and knowledge to better their own socioeconomic position).11

Prevalence of Multiple Residency as Social Practice Multiple residency remains the fundamental characteristic of central Ontario second-home users despite the extensive conversion of cottages for year-round use through the 1970s and 1980s (as summarised by Halseth & Rosenberg 1990, 1995). Four-fifths of the study respondents identify the cottage dwelling as a second home; among these 163 users, 116 (or 71.2 per

cent) are based in the GTA.12 The pattern of metropolitan-dominated multiple residency was affirmed by considering workplace locations. Almost three in four of the 70 respondents active in the workforce are employed in the City of Toronto, in addition to another 22.9 per cent who work in the GTA suburbs. Similarly, almost three in four respondents (73.9 per cent) live in the GTA - 44.0 per cent in the City of Toronto proper, and 29.9 per cent in the outlying suburbs. Among these practitioners of multiple residency, two-thirds travel 100 to 300 km between their two dwellings; only one in 10 respondents travels less than 100 km. Simply put, the case-study data show that central Ontario cottage country functionally 'fits' within the Toronto-centred metropolitan region, affirming previous research, notably Wolfe's (1951) findings based on 1941 data. These data do not reveal the richness of the everyday experience of cottage users, however, for respondents find themselves longing for the cottage setting when away. For instance, one couple - having moved to Japan for work purposes - were so anxious to get 'back to the cottage' that they drove directly to their second home from the Toronto airport upon their first return trip to Canada, instead of going to their central Toronto dwelling, and despite having just traveled some 20 hours non-stop. Other respondents talked about how eagerly they await their next trip to the cottage property (albeit at different temporal scales), while asserting how much they appreciate it precisely because it is part of a multiple-residency strategy. For one respondent in his 50s who splits his time between his cottage property and a dwelling in a GTA suburb, one week is too long; he declared that 'I think the longest I've ever stayed away from here was when we went to North Carolina, and that was three weeks'. Fully half the sample (49.5 per cent) stated that they frequently spend time at their cottage country property, but only for relatively short periods. Another one in four spends relatively long stretches of time at certain periods through a typical year (usually the hot summer months).

Long histories of cottage life are common among respondents. Four in five individuals have frequented their current second-home property for at least five years, and two in five (39.5 per cent) have done so for upwards of 30 years. Three in four respondents (74.0 per cent) had grown up spending time in cottage country (p < 0.0005), and the parents of almost as many respondents (69.5 per cent) as well as the grandparents of almost half (48.5 per cent) had also done so (p < 0.0005). These findings tend to affirm the importance of cottaging as a family activity and a learned behaviour carried on from one generation to the next, as in this example:

I would prefer to give up everything else I own — my home in the city — before I would want to give up the cottage. My parents built it and I grew up from age four years, in this place, making friends with people I still see to this day, in the same place. I am now introducing grandchildren to the cottage. (Woman in her 50s now living permanently at her cottage)

To explore the importance of the second-home ritual to its practitioners, questions were asked about their plans for the future. Commitment to the place was firm and widespread. One cottager and resident of a GTA suburb in her 50s feels that 'This place is so entrenched in my psyche that I cannot conceive of not having it as part of my life'. Another in her 40s cannot ever imagine selling; as she explains, 'I feel most relaxed and "centred" when I am at the cottage; [it's] my favourite place to be.' The commitment to place was also apparent when respondents were asked if their intent was to pass the property down within the family; just over half (56.5 per cent) of owner-occupiers stated that this is very likely. Yet almost one-third (30.5 per cent) stated that no such arrangement was foreseeable. Factors mentioned by respondents included rising maintenance costs and increasing property tax burdens, especially as a function of marked non-inflation-related increases in the market value of waterfront second homes. Statistics Canada (2006) data indicate that the average annual expenditure to cover the carrying costs of a second home has more than doubled in the past ten years.

Much attention has been directed in Canada to the 'conversion' of second homes to permanent dwellings, as mentioned above, especially among users approaching retirement age. Among the 158 respondents who do not describe their cottage country property as their home address, a compelling split was seen when questions were asked about the possibility of settling permanently into their second-home setting. Only one in six (18.4 per cent) envisions making the cottage property the sole or primary dwelling; another 20.9 per cent are undecided, while over half (60.8 per cent) are quite certain that they will *not* make their cottage country dwelling their permanent residence in the future. Several respondents stressed that doing so would spoil what makes the cottage setting unique, for instance:

I have spent 54 years going to Deanlea Beach on a seasonal basis. A lot of our area is now occupied by year round people and many seasonal cottages are being bulldozed to allow the erection of 'houses'. ... I absolutely refuse to 'winterise' what is a summer getaway refuge for my family. Once you live at the cottage, it is no longer the cottage, and all the stresses of home move with you, defeating the intent. Certainly I will retire there spring through fall, but nothing else. (Woman in her 50s, GTA-based cottager)

Of the relatively few respondents indicating that they do plan to move into their cottage property permanently, about half (51.6 per cent) intend to do so within ten years, with the balance of responses spread evenly over five-year cohorts beyond the tenyear horizon.

#### *Motivations for Multiple Residency*

What motivates such persistent patterns of behaviour, even with dramatic rises seen over the past three decades in real-estate values, the time and hassle of long-distance commuting to and from the second home, and rising property taxes which altogether increase total costs? Ideas and images are linked with these settings to the point that second homes are widely considered a 'natural' part of everyday life in central Canada. Respondents resoundingly expressed long-term commitment to both the *place* and to the *social* 

*practice* of cottaging. These were couched in terms of reconnection with nature while affirming a sense of Canadian identity. For instance:

If we consider ourselves a land of lakes, and trees, and the farmland – well, you know, that's an American image of us, but if you look around us, that's what we are. We're staring at the lake, we're looking at an uninhabited island across the way, filled with trees; closer, ah, close to nature – but close to and inhabited by urban dwellers. (Woman in her 50s, GTA-based cottager)

[Wife] I think it's quintessentially Canadian. Well, maybe quintessentially Ontario – I understand that not all of Canada is real cottage country – I read an article a while ago about Ontario and what cottages mean to Ontarians, and I think it's quintessentially – ah, we're just on the edge of the Shield.

[Husband] The Great Lakes feel Canadian. ... There are areas in Michigan that have some kind of – this sort of topography and feeling, but ... these shoaley, rocky shores, all of this is quintessentially Canadian – all of this is quintessentially Ontario and therefore quintessentially Canadian. (Couple in their 50s, GTA-based cottagers)

Given the strong link between 'nature' and 'wilderness' that at least stereotypically characterises Canada, respondents had intriguing things to say when they were asked if they considered their cottage settings part of the 'wilderness'. Comments typically indicated that while they were closer in the second-home context than in the city, they did not think of themselves as being in the 'wilderness'. Many respondents explained that they considered their cottage settings to be adjacent to wilderness areas:

This is not, but then there's [all that] just behind us. Just go back 200 m and you're in wilderness, and the farther in that direction you go, the more wilderness it becomes ... some of the topography there and wildlife, including foliage, is very much wilderness ... Things there

are basically in natural state, and that is my definition of wilderness for this area. At about 200 km from a very large mega-urban development, that's as [much] 'wilderness' as you're going to get. (Man in his 60s, GTA-based cottager)

There's a lot of wilderness behind ... certainly on the side [of the lake] that we're on. Well, it's the same thing on the other side – there's nothing. How far do you want to go? You could walk back in the bush forever and you wouldn't come across a road at all. So that's wilderness. (Woman in her 60s, GTA-based cottager)

In effect, cottagers tend to describe their secondhome settings as narrow waterfront bands of settled landscape amidst an unsettled forested expanse beginning only a short distance from the water's edge.

Second-home settings are not only seen by their users as natural settings that can readily be identified as Canadian, but more importantly as *home landscapes* with significance as particular orderings of spatial elements, relationships, and processes that literally make them 'sacred' sites (which is remarkable in a country that has little interest in religion of any sort, having been highly secular since the early

postwar years). A respondent in her 70s sums up her feelings on the quasi-spiritual role that it plays in her life: 'I love this place; it is where my family all get together and keep together, enjoying holidays and special occasions. My children have been married here and my grandchildren baptised here. It is my most special place.' Indicators of how these cottage settings are so deeply cherished by their users are presented on Table 1, summarising responses toward statements based on findings reported in the literature on 'home' and 'home landscapes'.<sup>14</sup>

Responses summarised in Table 1 affirm that the second-home setting is a choice residential milieu, also indicating its importance as a 'home land-scape' (cf. Feldman 1996; Sopher 1979). Indeed, the cottage is considered by many respondents as an anchor while they move house in their 'urban' lives through time, such as this man who had spent most of his life in the Toronto area before retiring in the 1990s to what had until then been his second home:

I would say that so far as my family is concerned, although everyone from time to time has moved, this was always the place that they could rely on, and that this was the family place.

Table 1: Likert-scale scores given by respondents for affirmations on second-home settings as home landscapes (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

	All respondents (n=200)		Practitioners of multiple residency (n=116)		Permanent cottage residents (n=37)	
	mean	mode	mean	mode	mean	mode
This place is unique.	4.23	4	3.95	4	4.35	4
When I am here, I have all the privacy and tranquility I could desire.	4.19	5	3.95	5	3.81	4
When I am away from here for too long, I find that I miss it.	4.32	4	4.21	4	3.81	4
This place reflects the sort of person I am.	3.90	4	3.77	4	4.05	4
This place is where I can really be myself.	4.27	4	4.04	4	4.11	4

[Interviewer] Do you mean to say that this has been a fixed point for the family amidst all sorts of moves and changes?

Yes, yes.

[Interviewer] And has it been important because of that?

Ah, yes. (Man in his 80s now living permanently at his cottage)

Coupled with this anchoring effect is a folkloric Canadian image of the cottage as a gathering place for extended families. This is borne out in the case-study data. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.0 per cent) receive relatives, typically from one to five extended family members, over the course of a typical year, although only 28.0 per cent host 11 or more relatives each year. <sup>15</sup> Could it be that cottages are not as intensely used by large family groups as folklore would suggest? An important explanatory factor may be the proximity of extended family members at another second-home property; indeed, almost half of the respondents (49.5 per cent) have relatives with access to a nearby 'cottage' (by ownership or otherwise). <sup>16</sup>

#### Discussion

The selected findings presented here have suggested ways in which critical concepts of dwelling, community ideology, and attachment apply to secondhome settings both in terms of the places in question and the very social practice of multiple residency. In this Canadian study, respondents were found to be well-versed in the 'rituals' of cottaging, with which not only they but also their parents and grandparents have typically been involved for many decades. These findings correspond with more general work on continuity in the social practice of housing space, including the ideas of settlement-identity articulated by Feldman (1990, 1996) and the deeper significance of family ritual in domestic practice (Bertaux-Wiame 1990) and what Hummon (1990) expressed as 'community ideology'. They also affirm the work of other observers of multiple residency.<sup>17</sup> In particular, cottaging in central Canada seems to be both generated and perpetuated as an everyday social practice, and as has also been found in other contexts, it tends to be a learned behaviour, passed on from one generation to the next, normalised and ritualised as a leisure practice that helps give meaning to everyday life with its work regimens in the 'urban' or 'suburban' context.18 In this respect it is a sort of habitus as suggested by Bourdieu (1990 [1980]). Yet habitus can be a totalising concept, and it must be used with care. For present purposes, it can be understood as applying only to certain aspects of self-identity and social practice, namely the ways in which cottaging is important to its practitioners, many of whom profess strong attachment to and self-identity with generic visions of its variegated settings. It is but one part of a complex weave of values, beliefs, and ways of thinking for these individuals. Caveat stated, cottage-life-as-habitus is of interest here because it is categorically related to space and landscape in turn made meaningful through time by layers of mythology and folklore.

The findings presented here affirm a casual observation made by Cross (1992) in a popular publication on Ontario cottage life. Waxing somewhat sentimentally on the Canadian retreat to the summer house as a ritualised and metaphorical journey through which the distractions of mundane urban life are stripped away, her assessment of cottaging as a ritualised process resonates well with the work of Bourdieu and others on the logic of social practice in everyday life and the 'lifestyle spaces' thus generated. A vital motivation is clearly the interest in the second home as a leisure setting - that is, fun, free time, and social activities predicated on relaxing activities with familiar faces. Certainly the origins of cottage life in the Kawartha Lakes and Muskoka were not in camping or 'roughing it' but rather in comfortable or even luxurious hotels and lodges facilities designed in the main as 'spaces for play' (see e.g. Jasen 1995; Wolfe 1951). As if in deference to this history, many respondents in this study are averse to 'contaminating' the second-home setting by making it a permanent place of residence, and especially by bringing occupation-related work to do - even only temporarily - at the cottage. We thus see resonance with explanations of how leisure time provides a meaningful foil to structured work.19 Indeed, the second-home setting has achieved a quasisacred status in the eyes of many of its users. Even more intriguingly, the case study presented here suggests that perpetuating the vision and rituals of cottage life, at least in central Ontario, is an end unto itself rather than merely the means for individuals to gain access to pleasant residential settings. This 'cottage country ideal' plays out in specific places that are important to users because they correspond well with the generic vision of cottage country. This appears to be especially apparent among subsequent generations of cottagers, perhaps as they are literally bombarded not only with direct accounts of the pleasures of cottaging but also the generalised imagery in everything from beer commercials to art, poetry, and drama emerging from central Canada. An abstraction has become a central node for the creation and maintenance of meaning; cottage country is an imagined landscape that endures.

The second-home settings of central Canada represent an interesting twist on what Bunce (1994) has called the Anglo-American 'countryside ideal' and more general ambivalence toward city life in North American culture. While the English have come to worship a particular vision of the working countryside and Americans laud the small town as well as a Jeffersonian image of pastoral landscapes, the findings here affirm that Canadians seem to celebrate a different ideal combining abstract notions of 'nature', the 'bush', and the 'wilderness' - all ideas about land and landscape that have long held sway in Canadian cultural discourses.<sup>20</sup> It is in the second home that the participants in this study seem to find a useful manifestation of this Canadian ideal. Central in importance is the water's edge, both in 'objective' urban form terms and through more 'subjective' images and meanings shared by users; if an individual cottage dwelling is not directly on the water, it has convenient (deeded) access. In the rugged woodland settings of central Canada, a singletier 'necklace' seems the only viable settlement form, at least in the minds of users. The single-tier effect as observed and discussed by study participants tends to affirm the findings of Tress (2002) in Denmark, where seaside second homes are on principle built as near as possible to the water's edge, often on the windward side of protective dunes or hills, as if to literally make the most of the ocean experience.

The central Canadian examples discussed here are clearly comparable to second-home patterns of multiple residency elsewhere, from central Europe (such as the Swiss with their chalets and Ferienwohnungen), to Norway and Sweden (where people respectively go the hytte or the sommarstuga), to Russia (with its dachas), and even New Zealand (where many households maintain a bach). The clearest parallels can however be drawn with the observed patterns of multiple residency and place attachment seen in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. In these contexts, single-tier necklaces of modest wooden summer houses are set in the wooded lakelands of Finland and Sweden, or the rugged mountains of Norway. Patterns of mobility seem to be similar, involving many shorter trips combined with a single longer summer holiday period, the net result being that second-home territories are most prevalent within easy travel time of major urban centres (Müller 2004). A number of comparable studies suggest that similar sets of motivations drive the social practice of multiple residency, including a desire to 'reconnect' with nature and/or narratives of national identity, nostalgia for a simpler, more rustic past – perhaps even 'pioneer' living – as well as the desire to make the most of the relatively short summer.<sup>21</sup> In these respects, further comparative work would be well worth pursuing.

The fact that second homes in central Canada appear to be manifestations of socially-constructed ideas of 'nature' is of interest in another way. The Ontario cottage settings examined in the case study presented here are important to their users thanks to an array of carefully constructed representations of good places in which to spend time. Findings here suggest that cottage country is treated very much as an 'Other' to the city, and that part of what makes it meaningful to users is its role as a place to connect with nature (apparently considered difficulty or impossible in urban settings). In effect, cottage life in central Canada seems deeply predicated on the idea of sojourns amidst nature, which in turn

may help to exculpate people from enfolding natural process into their everyday (urban) lives. This adds a troubling dimension to the cultural landscapes of central Canada's waterfront second homes, for they embody widespread difficulties in reconciling 'nature' and 'culture' in Anglo-American society. This becomes especially important given the centrality of 'nature' and the 'wilderness' in collective notions of Canadian identity. A link can be made here with Cronon's (1996) case about the 'trouble with wilderness' in U.S. culture, given the ways it enables people to treat 'nature' as something 'out there' rather than 'in here'. This represents an important challenge for the future, as global warming, deteriorating local environmental quality, and other environmental problems become increasingly urgent.

A final and especially curious aspect – perhaps paralleled in other multicultural contexts such as Sweden – is the lack of ethnocultural diversity among practitioners of second-home multiple residency. Very few of the case-study respondents were of non-European origin; this contrasts markedly with contemporary Canadian realities, especially in the major urban centres of Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver. While most study participants had Canadian roots at least as far back as the early twentieth century, three in four City of Toronto residents in 2001 were only first- or second-generation Canadians (City of Toronto 2003). This raises important questions for future research concerning the ethno-cultural exclusivity of the second-home experience in central Canada. It is at the very least an unsettling dimension of the cottage phenomenon given the strong notions of second-home settings as both 'natural' and 'essentially Canadian'. Could it be that a retreat from the complexity, diversity, and uncertainty of urban life also involves withdrawal from multicultural realities of the contemporary Canadian metropolis? While Canadians are generally considered tolerant and progressive - and certainly prefer to see themselves that way - perhaps there is a curious parallel with Pred's (2000) study of the 'racialised' spaces of Sweden. While not discussed above, other results of this study suggested that some cottage users appreciate the ethnocultural homogeneity of second-home areas, although many others saw this as an unfortunate and undesirable situation. An in-depth report that ran in one of Canada's main newspapers, the Toronto Globe and Mail (Jiménez 2006), summed it up quite simply in its headline: 'Why they call cottage country the Great White North' - a double-entendre referring to an old joke about Canada's snowy weather. That visible minorities tend to feel excluded from the narratives of Canadian identity is increasingly evident (Philip et al. 1997), and the scholarly attention now being paid to this matter is long overdue. Importantly, this includes recent critical work on how Canada's aboriginal population has generally been omitted from narratives and representations of 'natural' landscapes (Bordo 1993; Freeman 2002; Grek-Martin 2007). Further work is merited examining the non-intersection of cultural identity, landscape, and the ethnic diversity of the Canadian population in this country's second-home settings.

#### Conclusion

The empirical evidence presented here reveals that the study respondents can be defined as committed practitioners of multiple residency, given the duality of their primary lifespace and their residential biographies and stated residential aspirations. It was revealed how the second-home setting is considered by its practitioners as a necessary part of contemporary urban life in which the ubiquitous 'next' generation can (re)connect with family history, community as well as meta-narratives of cultural identity and nature (or at least with social constructions thereof). Comments have been made on the remarkable persistence of social practices of mobility, sociability, and dwelling through time and in spite of considerable transformations. Among the implications of this study, the most obvious direction for future research is the comparative study of other second-home settings, including those within what Müller (2004) calls the 'weekend leisure space' of major metropolitan regions. Compelling parallels seem to exist in patterns of multiple residency in Norway, Denmark, Finland, and especially Sweden. The fact that second homes are so commonly found in countries with severe winters is also interesting, and while it may only be a coincidence of other factors, the pattern is intriguing; could it be that colder winters foster a stronger desire to have a second dwelling for warm weather? That cottage life is also seen as an important part of cultural identity in wintery contexts is amply evidenced by work on this theme by others.<sup>22</sup>

A further suggestion for future research involves examining the 'imagined landscapes' of central Ontario cottage country, asking what accounts for the apparent lack of ethnic diversity among users. Drawing on the concept of 'social legibility' articulated by Ramadier and Moser (1998) and the importance of the built environment as a system of distributed cognition (Hutchins 1995; Rapoport 1990; Wilson 2005), could it be that as imagined landscape and material reality, central Ontario cottage country is 'unintelligible' to those who have not been versed in its specialised practices? Is it merely some set of coincidences that the cultural landscapes of cottage country seem bereft of ethnic diversity, or is this a sign of something troubling in the way of systemic exclusion? This bespeaks a more profound question of cultural geography, in which 'landscape' is problematised as a social construction embodied in material reality. These second-home landscapes seem to reflect understandings that dominant social groups have of their own socially experienced world as 'the whole world' - raising further questions in terms of how both the cultural landscapes and concepts associated with cottage country seem to represent powerful hegemonic discourses of what is Canadian.23 How did second-home multiple residency come to be normalised? These questions merit detailed further study.

In sum, Canada's woodland second-home settings appear to be considered by their users as a necessary part of contemporary urban life in which to (re)connect with family history and also with meta-narratives of cultural identity, nature, and the wilderness (or at least with social constructions thereof). It has been suggested here that these second-home land-scapes represent ways in which 'urban' folk negotiate a problematic tension between city life and non-urban longings. This importance of 'cottage country' as a 'natural' foil to (sub)urban living is trouble-some, however, not least as an expression of a col-

lective difficulty in reconciling natural process with everyday life settings (i.e., the city or the suburb). This ultimately reinforces a perennial challenge for proactive planning and design: how can we capitalise on images and meanings to establish stronger links between the human-cultural and natural components and processes in metropolitan regions as the principal places of human settlement?<sup>24</sup>

#### **Notes**

- Cf. Aubin-Des Roches (2006), Campbell (2004), Dubé (1986), Gagnon (2003), Jasen (1995), Marsh & Griffiths (2006), McIlwraith (1997), Wolfe (1951, 1977).
- 2 See the works cited in Note 1 as well as Dagenais (2006), Jaakson (1986), Luka (2006), Mai (1971), and Saint-Amour (1979).
- 3 In 2001, the last year for which comprehensive data are available, it was estimated that second homes were owned by 861,990 households across Canada, corresponding to 7 per cent of the country's 12.4 million households. Almost two-thirds of these are in Ontario and Québec. All calculations are based on data from Statistics Canada (2005, 2006).
- 4 Useful regional overviews are found in Coppock (1977), Gallent et al. (2000, 2003, 2005), Hall & Müller (2004), Struyk & Angelici (1996), and Tress (2000, 2002).
- 5 Examples of popular publications include Fowler & Sinclair (1980), Lloyd Kyi (2001), MacGregor (2002), and Pryke (1987).
- 6 Review published in Flare magazine, June 2001.
- 7 Cf. Aubin-des Roches (2006), Campbell (2004), Jasen (1995), Luka (2006), Wall (1977), and Wolfe (1951, 1977).
- 8 See Halseth (1998), Halseth & Rosenberg (1995), Hodge (1974), and Wolfe (1965) on the Canadian experience as well as Rybczynski's (1991) general history and the collections edited by Coppock (1977) and Hall & Müller (2004) for international comparisons.
- 9 The case-study areas have historically been dominated by GTA-based second-home multiple residency (Hodge 1974; Mai 1971; Wolfe 1951). The total population of central Ontario is expected to increase by three million over the next 30 years and there has been widespread debate over 'sprawl' in this region; for a more general overview of the GTA, see Bourne et al. (2003).
- 10 Respondents for the online questionnaire were contacted indirectly, through diffusion on the website for the Federation of Ontario Cottager Associations (FOCA) as well as in major and minor newspapers; brochures and flyers were distributed across the study area at commercial establishments (restaurants, marinas, and grocery stores) and in a snowball-sample technique whereby interviewees were asked to pass along the

- URL to friends, family, and neighbours who had experience cottaging. Ultimately, while not all interviews were retained for detailed discourse analysis, the basic content of each was entered into the online questionnaire database. In consequence the in-depth interviews are 'nested' within the larger sample for a gross total of 282 complete responses, but elimination of incomplete, duplicate, or otherwise problematic responses yielded a total of exactly 200 responses.
- 11 Borrowing from Harris (1996), the distinction is made here between *owners* or *managers* and *workers*; the middle-class can thus be understood as comprising individuals who, through their education and monopoly of particular skills, are especially able to manoeuvre their position within society (i.e., in their professional roles as doctors, lawyers, teachers, managers, and so on).
- 12 Chi-square tests on the location of the 'other dwelling' produced a p-value of less than 0.0005 (c2=116.258 with 2df).
- 13 Cf. Dahms (1996), Halseth & Rosenberg (1990, 1995), Halseth (1998).
- 14 The statements were developed based on several concepts and studies including Cooper Marcus (1995), Cuba & Hummon (1993), Després (1991), Dovey (1985), Feldman (1990, 1996), Hummon (1990), Korosec-Serfaty (1984), Sopher (1979), and Winstanley, Thorns, & Perkins (1995).
- 15 Respondents were asked how many such family members (such as parents, children, nieces, nephews) currently use their cottage country property over the course of a typical year.
- 16 The definition of what constituted 'near' was left to the respondents' discretion.
- 17 Cf. Aronsson (2004), Dubost (1998), Kaltenborn (1997, 1998, 2002), Marshall & Foster (2002), Periäinen (2006), Quinn (2004), Rolshoven (2002, 2003, 2005, 2006), Tress (2000), and Urbain (2002).
- 18 A macro-social parallel can be drawn here between the rise of cottaging and that of the middle class, just as Bunce (1994) asserts how the countryside ideal was consolidated in Anglo-American culture in the nineteenth century.
- 19 Cf. Harrison (2003), Jakle (1985), Sheller & Urry (2004), and Urry (2002).
- 20 Cf. Bühler Roth (1998), Campbell (2004), Littlejohn (2002), and Smith (1990).
- 21 Cf. Aronsson (2004), Bjerke, Kaltenborn, & Vittersø (2006), Flognfeldt (2004), Kaltenborn (1997, 1998, 2002), Löfgren (1999), Periäinen (2006), and Tress (2000, 2002).
- 22 Among these are Nordin (1993), Periäinen (2004), Kaltenborn (1997, 1998, 2002), Struyk & Angelici (1996), and Tress (2000, 2002).
- 23 Similar comments have been made by Philip et al.

- (1997) on the exclusiveness of the Canadian 'wilderness' concept. Cf. Dear & Wolch (1989), Smith (1990), and Zukin (1991).
- 24 The research reported here was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The author also acknowledges the contributions made by Research Assistants Heather Coffey and Nathaniel R. Racine.

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