

Land and Sovereignty:
Relationships with Land, Indigenous Sovereignty,
and Hydropower Production in Northern Manitoba

by

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Abstract:

Relationships between Indigenous peoples, government, and corporations have long been points of contention and challenge. In northern Manitoba, the construction and operation of hydroelectric generating stations and control structures have long caused destruction to land and water and social and cultural challenges for Indigenous communities impacted by these projects. This dissertation looks at the relationships between Manitoba Hydro, a Crown hydroelectric corporation in Manitoba, and *Inniniwak* (Cree) communities in northern Manitoba historically and currently in order to review the implications of natural resource extraction on Indigenous sovereignty. Through a review of historical relationships, contemporary partnership agreements, apologies made by the government of Manitoba, and the continued importance of relationships with the land for *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba, I argue that relationships with land are a fundamental basis of Indigenous (*Inniniwak*) sovereignty and that the ways in which hydropower production in Manitoba is implemented creates challenges for Indigenous sovereignty. Despite these challenges, I review some ways in which *Inniniwak* people are continuing their relationships with the land, and thus acting out their sovereignty and (re)creating and maintaining it, despite destruction caused by hydropower production. Additionally, I review the ways in which *Inniniwak* communities are continuing to assert their sovereignty through direct action against destructive decisions made by the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro.

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Dedication:

To Hillary and Graeme
Those who have gone
And those who are yet to arrive

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Introduction

Fundamentally, this work is about the importance of relationships with the land to conceptions of Indigenous sovereignty, with particular emphasis upon northern Manitoba *Inniniwak* (Cree) conceptions of sovereignty. This discussion is predicated on the understanding that relationships with land are one foundation of a multi-foundational understanding of Indigenous sovereignty. Through the discussion of the importance of land and relationships with land, this work argues that attempts by state and industry to dispossess and expropriate land from Indigenous communities has a fundamental impact on the sovereignty of the communities and First Nations throughout the north. In particular, this work looks at and attempts to challenge decisions of and actions taken by Manitoba Hydro in relation to *Inniniwak* communities of northern Manitoba. Decisions that position hydroelectric power production as green and renewable, as the future of northern *Inniniwak* communities, and as a future of partnership between Manitoba Hydro and affected communities effectively remove discussion of dispossession and expropriation of Indigenous lands and the destruction of one foundation of Indigenous sovereignty.

This research focuses on concepts of Indigenous sovereignty and the implications of Manitoba Hydro's past, present, and future actions upon it in northern Manitoba. It will address the impacts destruction has had on relationships with land, challenges faced by communities and the situation of current partnership agreements.

Through conversations with community members from three separate communities across the north as well as participation in the Wa Ni Ska Tan Alliance and review of several public hearing processes, I have attempted to understand some concepts of Indigenous sovereignty as well as the different instances of relationships with Manitoba Hydro and how that relates to *Inniniwak* sovereignty in northern Manitoba. This work hopes to provide a critical analysis of Manitoba Hydro's impacts on Indigenous sovereignty while also emphasizing the strength and fortitude put forward by communities across the north. This strength has supported relationships with land and grounded a future generation of Indigenous peoples in a way that supports Indigenous sovereignty.

Methodology

Methodology in Native Studies research is a varying and difficult process that requires serious consideration in order to truly and effectively ground strong research. Depending on the type of research, methodology can vary greatly, as can the usage of different technologies. For the purposes of this work, the research included interviews and discussions to present a nuanced understanding of topics of sovereignty, hydropower production, relationships with the land, and dispossession. Additionally, in order to gain the most thorough understanding of relationships with the land and the impact of hydropower production, I used participant-observation methods while on the land with Elders, land-users, and knowledge holders. In order to provide an accurate representation of bureaucratic processes, I also participated in document review and policy analysis throughout this project.

It is important to note that a major goal of this work was to be grounded in land-based realities in northern Manitoba and in *Inniniwak* communities. This research came from a position of learning from the *Inniniwak* people on the ground in northern Manitoba. The discussions of relationships with the land resulted in spending time on the land and learning about and from relationships with the land. My experiences with *Inniniwak* community members guided me to study the importance of concepts like sovereignty, which helped to place their struggles in relation to academic literature on the subject within Indigenous Studies. Finally, this led to reviewing the ways in which natural resource projects, in particular the generating stations constructed by Manitoba Hydro, impact sovereignty. As such, the knowledge and information shared throughout this work starts from my experiences in northern Manitoba and on the land with *Inniniwak* experts, land-users, and Elders. Throughout the work, I attempt to prioritize this knowledge and connect it back to previous academic literature within the field of Indigenous Studies. With the goal of prioritizing grounded knowledge from northern Manitoba, I have chosen to integrate the review of academic literature with the land-based knowledge in order to show clear connections and to connect the ways in which scholars, with particular emphasis on and preference towards Indigenous scholars, are engaging with land-based knowledges. Similarly, when focusing on academic scholarship, I focus on Indigenous scholars based in grounded theories who are also within the field of study from which this research comes, Indigenous Studies. Following this methodology, my review of the literature is in direct conversation land-based Indigenous knowledge and theory. Additionally, throughout

this work I have attempted to engage with Coulthard and Leanne Simpson's discussions of grounded normativity. In particular, I have focused on attempting to learn from land-based and experiential knowledge. This decision is a result of my previous experience working on this topic during my M.A. program and follows an approach deployed by my advisor, Peter Kulchyski (see *Like the Sound of a Drum*).

Throughout the research for my M.A. thesis, I noticed a happiness and strength that arose within people when sharing stories and narratives with me, particularly those surrounding the history of the community and stories related to relationships with the land. Throughout my follow-up visit to the north, my discussions, particularly with Robert Spence, moved towards narrative and stories. Many of these stories were based on Robert's time on the land and his experiences hunting, gathering, fishing, and living in relationship with the land. There was a clear sense of strength and happiness that was brought out as a result of sharing these immensely positive stories. Through this experience, I realized the necessity of recognizing the strength of relationships with the land rather than focusing on the destruction of Manitoba Hydro's operations.

These experiences also pushed me away from the traditional academic approach of video or audio recorded formalized interviews. Instead, this research benefited greatly from informal conversations without any form of recording technology present in preference for a method of understanding that is more in line with the conceptions of oral culture. The use of narrative is a prominent aspect of Native Studies (Kulchyski "Native Studies" 23). This use of narrative in Native Studies research connects to its prominent position in Indigenous epistemologies and the act of recognizing its worth as "true" knowledge supports Indigenous epistemologies (King; Hulan & Eigenbrod). Without an audio or video recorder, I was placed in the position of needing to fully engross myself in the stories that were told to me and to experience the stories in a way that would allow me to effectively reproduce these stories in my dissertation. This forced me to not only listen to the stories multiple times from their sources but to also recount the stories to myself and deeply think about the different layers of the stories and the meaning behind each story, as has also been described by Cruikshank (Cruikshank et al.). As a non-Indigenous academic coming from an academic familial background, this required an extreme re-analysis of my own thought processes and means of understanding and knowing that would allow me to

learn from stories and narratives. By no means am I now an expert in this way of knowing nor am I capable of the most nuanced understandings of these stories, however this research is both based on my own experiences and understandings of the knowledge shared as well as the explanations provided by the true experts in the communities and on the land. It is important to note that while I attempt to stay as close to oral culture through my participation in stories, I also recognize that I cannot convey the voice and nuance present in the original stories as they were told to me. However, I would argue that audio recordings also fail to include this nuance and voice while also having the potential to pull the person completing the recording out of the stories and experiences of oral knowledge transfer. As I participate in the stories and write them in this work I am using my voice to discuss them. As a result, I returned to the people who shared the stories with me and attempted to clarify and validate as much as possible.

In addition to working in narrative and emphasizing oral culture with the lack of recording equipment, much of this research was done focusing on the knowledge and expertise of harvesters, land-users, and Elders. Learning from these experts was based on a combination of discussions and informal interviews as well as on-the-land learning. Much of the information that was shared required experiences on the land upon which the narratives were based in order to more fully understand them. In order to immerse myself in this context, I was able to travel on and spend time in four different and distinct territories in northern Manitoba: the Spence family traditional territory on the Churchill River, Recluse Lake north of the community of Split Lake, at the former community sites near South Indian Lake, and on the trapline of Elder Noah Massan and territories near Gillam. As I heard stories and had information shared with me, I was able to look out upon the land and the different locations to attempt to envision the events.

Learning while on the land provided me with a deeper understanding of the narratives that were shared with me and the knowledge that was taught to me. Not only did the very basic relationship with the land that I gained from these experiences help me to understand stories that had been told to me, but new locations allowed for new stories to be recounted and new teachings to be provided. Through a combination of ease of description based on being in the location of the narrative as well as the reminder of these locations, being on the land allowed me to learn more than had I stuck strictly to interviews and conversations in communities or in the south. Additionally, being on the land allowed me to ask questions that were more connected to

the land that allowed for more information to be provided that may not have come up otherwise. My near complete inexperience being on the land, living in the bush, and in relationship with the land in northern Manitoba placed me in a very limited position of knowledge. Thus, my questions may have seemed very basic by some of the experts' standards but provided me with an opportunity to ask questions that they may not have considered otherwise. Additionally, it taught me something about the educational system present in the bush. This was most effectively presented in my learning to tie a knot in order to tie up sturgeon that had been caught during the day. When the boat returned with a number of sturgeon, we all came together to tie them to stakes in the shoreline in order to keep the fish fresh for longer by keeping them in the river. In order to tie them up, one of the harvesters tied a rope to the fish and handed them to us from the boat. After we were handed the fish, we had to tie a knot in the other end of the line, cinch it around a stake in the shoreline, and 'torpedo' the fish back into the river. I have no knowledge of knots beyond my ability to tie my shoes and as a result Robert had to explain to me multiple times how to tie the knot he wanted me to use. After teaching me over and over again, I continued to ask for clarification to make sure I was not making any mistakes. It seemed quite clear that normally, this much explanation would be unnecessary but Robert patiently watched as I slowly tied a number of the fish up. For the rest of the trip and a number of weeks after returning from the trip, I continued to practice the knot and to take pride in learning it. At present, I am not sure if I would be able to tie the knot again but the education that was provided to me, although very basic and seemingly innocuous, helped me to understand the benefits of a bush education. Through the cleaning of moose and fish, building of cabins, tying of knots, and the constant teaching of listening for game, the education that was given to me during the number of different trips I have taken on the land have deeply influenced both my own general knowledge and also my theoretical and methodological thought. Finally, as I reflect upon my trips on the land throughout this process, I find myself thinking about the ways the land taught me through the relationship I attempted to form with it. Much of this knowledge is limited and may not be long lasting compared to what the land has taught others, but the relationship I did form has fundamentally altered my understanding of the world and how we can relate to it. This reshaped understanding is conveyed throughout the thesis.

As discussed above, a large portion of this research project has been based on participatory research. In particular, trips on the land and participating in cultural activities on the land have influenced the theoretical and practical aspects of this project and dissertation. An important aspect of this approach to research and learning is the constant teaching through explanation and practice while on the land. This participation went beyond merely learning to tie knots or how to keep sturgeon fresh for a longer period of time. Through help around the camp at Robert Spence's traditional family territory, I was able to learn some of the aspects of cabin building, moose harvesting, fishing with a net, and other activities that I would otherwise only hear about or learn from reading. These experiences, and my participation in the actual activity, provided a deeper understanding while also allowing for informal interviews during the action. These activities move beyond not only Robert Spence's traditional family territory and include my participation in events at the *Kewekapawetan* gathering, which I have attended every year of my Ph.D program, with the exception of the gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, learning to smoke fish and other meats, harvest wood, build fires, and bake bannock allowed for a more nuanced and deeper informal interview structure.

Participation in 'bush activities' allows the experts with whom I work to teach me what they think is appropriate at a time that is appropriate for them. My participation may lift a burden from them, though in many cases it also adds the additional burden of having to look over my shoulder to be certain I have not made a fundamental mistake, and as such it provides us with a deeper bond that can allow for more trust and understanding. Although I will discuss this further in my discussion of framework, my position as an outsider both to Indigenous communities and also to the bush and northern Manitoba makes this participation all the more beneficial to me in understanding the concepts and underlying relationships with the land that I would otherwise completely miss. I recognize that I will never truly understand the relationship with the land that is present in the north, however this participation has expanded my understanding to a point I never thought possible.

Leanne Simpson discusses the importance of considering who is centred and who is marginalized in studies related to Indigenous knowledges while also questioning what knowledge is accepted within the academy (*Anticolonial Strategies*). My methodology focuses on these two topics in particular. I hope to challenge Western hegemony and the traditions of the

academy by prioritizing Indigenous knowledges. This is a serious challenge for me as a non-Indigenous academic raised in a non-Indigenous academic family. However, in an attempt to support the Indigenous resurgence movement, I prioritize Indigenous academics in citations that are necessary while also challenging the academy through a preference for narrative knowledge and the knowledge presented to and shared with me by harvesters and Elders. These knowledge holders are the true experts and are recognized as such by not requiring 'supporting' knowledge produced by academics. Despite these attempts, my theoretical background is based in that of critical theory which has a long history of white, male academics providing a large basis of information. When necessary, I will be prioritizing non-Indigenous academics who research and write in ways that challenge colonialism and capitalism and prioritize Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous experts in their works. Most prominently, I cite the work of Peter Kulchyski, who not only provides a strong critical examination of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy while prioritizing Indigenous knowledges and experts, but also provided the basis of this approach for my own work. Additionally, while I recognize there are clear distinctions between colonialism and capitalism, numerous scholars have directly addressed the interaction and interconnections between these two concepts and how they are deployed (see the work of Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks* and Simpson *As We Have Always Done* as examples). The depth of research on the relationships between colonialism and capitalism is vast and beyond the scope of this research, so I will not be providing a significant discussion of it here. As such, I use colonialism and capitalism as reflections of each other throughout this work to discuss the processes by which states and corporations undermine, ignore, and challenge Indigenous peoples in Canada.

An important side-note that should be discussed at this point is the word 'development' and its use in contemporary society. 'Development' is regularly deployed in relation to energy production projects or economic change. This concept inherently includes the perspective that it is either bringing the economy of an area 'up' to contemporary standards or is of benefit to those who live in the area. Robert Spence very effectively provides a counter narrative to this concept when he states, "to me, development is a dirty word" (Personal Interview). With this perspective in mind, the continual use throughout Manitoba of hydroelectric 'development' inherently assumes that Manitoba Hydro's operations are beneficial and evolutionary while failing to

consider the perspectives of those like Robert Spence who see this approach as dirty, destructive, and unjust. As a result of this position, throughout this work I attempt to use alternatives to “development” whenever possible to acknowledge the position held by Robert Spence and others who do not see hydropower production as a positive experience.

Additionally, I feel it is important to discuss some of my understandings of the word “destruction” and how I deploy this word throughout this dissertation. Based upon my own experiences in northern Manitoba, I use the word destruction regularly and widely to discuss not only the environmental damage that is affiliated with hydropower production and transmission. Throughout this work, “destruction” is also used in relation to the ways in which hydropower production has created challenges for Indigenous communities as well as the ways in which it has directly impacted Indigenous peoples. This does not mean the term is used only for complete and utter decimation, but instead considers the many ways different impacts interact with one another and create cumulative impacts on the lands, waters, Indigenous communities, and other-than-human beings of northern Manitoba.

Positionality & Framework

In order to explain my understanding of the knowledge that was shared with me, it is necessary for me to explain my positionality and framework for this work. One aspect of my positionality that played very prominently in my understanding is my position as an outsider. Both as a non-Indigenous academic and a southern Euro-Canadian man, I have very little understanding of the north, perspectives of people from the north, and Indigenous culture in general. Some of this lack of knowledge has been curtailed through the now six years I have spent in Native Studies and working with Indigenous peoples from the north or visiting the north, but this six years is far from enough to give me a truly deep understanding of Indigenous cultures, relationships with the land, or the northern environment.

This outsider position has some benefits despite the aforementioned challenges. As an outsider, I am less affiliated with particular positions or families and this removes some of the challenges of small community politics. Additionally, the outsider perspective gives me a unique understanding of the community perspectives that may not necessarily be present within the community. Some of these benefits are less present at this point in my research as I have made strong relationships with some people in each of the communities with which I have worked.

My relationships in Split Lake, South Indian Lake, and Fox Lake position me as a supporter of the ‘dissident’ voices within the community. In South Indian Lake in particular, I have been clearly aligned with the Dysart family and the portion of the community that supports and participates in *Kewekapawetan*. This relationship, along with the relationships I have formed in other communities, not only positions me as a supporter of the ‘dissident’ portion of the community but also as someone who questions the validity of Manitoba Hydro and its operations in the north. This position allows those who are opposed to Manitoba Hydro to speak freely with me but also has the potential to prevent those who support Manitoba Hydro from feeling they can freely express their opinions.

In recognition of this positionality, I have worked to address some of the challenges that this research faces and I have also participated in a constant questioning of my perspective of the research in order to provide more validity to the work. As a result, the framework for this research is very much based in the voice of a subsection of the communities with which I worked. As stated earlier, the work is based in the knowledge and perspectives of harvesters, land-users, and Elders in the communities who actively resist the dispossession and destruction of their lands at the hands of Manitoba Hydro. As a result of my outsider position, I attempt to not speak on behalf of this section of the communities but to instead let their words and stories express their perspectives. It is important to recognize that Indigenous communities are just like all other communities in that there is not one perspective the entire community has but instead a collage of differing opinions and thoughts. The construction of different generating stations and relationships with Manitoba Hydro are very divisive issues within many of the Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba and as such the differing perspectives outlined in this dissertation are only that of one subsection of each community. However, it is important to recognize that this subsection of the communities, being harvesters, Elders, and knowledge holders, is a key part of each community and provides important perspectives that must be considered.

Another important aspect of my positionality, and as a result the framework of this dissertation, is my position as a heterosexual, cis-gendered male. Given my position, I have a very limited understanding of gendered perspectives, perspectives of women, and LGBTQ2S perspectives. Additionally, being male also impacted with whom I was able to form

relationships, the nature of those relationships, and the knowledge I learned through those relationships. Throughout the work, I attempted to include these perspectives whenever possible, however my positionality prevented me from noticing or understanding these perspectives if and when they were presented to me. In order to address at least some of these challenges, I actively sought out knowledge from both men and women in these communities in order to accurately represent the differing, yet sometimes similar, relationships different genders have with the land and with Manitoba Hydro. This is an area of study that needs to be further addressed by someone with a more nuanced understanding than myself.

The Communities

Throughout the research for this dissertation, I spent time in different communities throughout northern Manitoba while also having the opportunity for shorter, less research-oriented visits to other communities. The primary communities within which I worked were Tataskweyak Cree Nation at Split Lake, Manitoba, Fox Lake Cree Nation in Gillam, Manitoba, and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation in South Indian Lake, Manitoba. Although all three communities are *Inniniwak* with recognized First Nations, all three have vastly different past and present experiences with Manitoba Hydro and the destruction of their lands, waters, and environment.

Split Lake, MB is a small *Inniniwak* community east of Thompson, MB. The 2016 census indicates that Split Lake has a population of 2,044 people on reserve (“Census Profile – Split Lake”). Additionally, Split Lake is the home of the Tataskweyak Cree Nation and is situated within the Tataskweyak Resource Management Area (Tataskweyak Cree Nation, “About Us”). Tataskweyak Cree Nation has a total registered population of 4,025 band members (“Registered Population: Tataskweyak Cree Nation”).

Fox Lake Cree Nation is a First Nation that has reserve lands both at the Bird reserve as well as in the town of Gillam, MB (“About Fox Lake Cree Nation”). Many of the First Nation members are split between the two communities and the First Nation has a long history in the town of Gillam. Altogether, Fox Lake Cree Nation has a total registered population of 1,291 (“Registered Population: Fox Lake”).

Although not reserve land, many members of Fox Lake Cree Nation live in Gillam, MB. Gillam is a unique town because it is traditional territory of the Fox Lake Cree Nation but has

also served both as a town for CN Rail employees in the past and Manitoba Hydro employees now (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 67). There is a clear divide within the community between the *Inniniwak* people and the Manitoba Hydro employees (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 67). This divide is extremely clear when driving throughout the town, with large portions of the town looking similar to a suburb of Winnipeg with two Hydro meters on the side of the house while the other side of the town is predominantly double-wide houses with poor insulation and only one Hydro meter (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 68-69; Kulchyski *Aboriginal Rights*, 130). The number of Hydro meters is important to understand because Manitoba Hydro employees who live in the nice houses in town also do not pay for the electricity costs of heating their homes (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 68-69; Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5747). As a result, many of these employees see very low hydroelectricity bills while the Indigenous people who live in the territory and recognize it as their homeland pay hydroelectric bills exceeding \$500 per month (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 68). It is important to note that Gillam is located near both the newest and the largest generating stations (Kettle, Long Spruce, Limestone, and the currently under construction Keeyask Project) and Split Lake/Tataskweyak Cree Nation is located on *Kichi Sipi* (the Nelson River) near the under construction Keeyask Project (“Fox Lake Cree Nation”; “Generating Stations”; Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 36).

The community of South Indian Lake is a relatively small *Inniniwak* and Metis community of approximately 981 people (“Census Profile – South Indian Lake”; Waldram, *River Runs* 116). South Indian Lake is located on the southeastern shores of Southern Indian Lake, one of the largest lakes in Manitoba (Waldram, *River Runs* 115-116). Additionally, the community of South Indian Lake is also the homeland of the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, a relatively newly recognized First Nation in northern Manitoba (Kamal et al. “Learning the Language” 2, 4). In 2005, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation was formed as a distinct First Nation (Kamal et al. “Learning the Language” 5). O-Pipon-Na-Piwin consists of people from the community of South Indian Lake who were originally registered as a sub-band of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (formerly Nelson House Cree Nation)(Kamal et al., “Learning the Language,” 3). According to community history, the community of South Indian Lake intended and was expected to sign

treaty, however these plans did not happen and instead the community was registered in the nearby Nelson House Cree Nation, now known as Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Kamal et al. “Learning the Language” 3). O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation has a total registered population of 1,713 band members (“Registered Population: O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation”).

All three of these communities have suffered the environmental, social, and cultural impacts of hydroelectricity in their territories. However, their experiences of hydroelectricity are also distinct and unique. Tataskweyak Cree Nation is situated on Split Lake, a widening of the Nelson River, and the Split Lake Resource Management Area contains generating stations that produce 75% of the energy produced in Manitoba (“Cree Nation Partners”). As a result of being impacted by initial generating station construction in the 1960s and 1970s, Tataskweyak Cree Nation, at that point known as Split Lake First Nation, joined the Northern Flood Committee (NFC) and were signatories to the Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) (Waldram, *River Runs* 147, 162). The NFC and NFA will be discussed further in later chapters, however it is important for a brief description to be given now. The Northern Flood Committee was a collection of five Indigenous communities that formed after initial construction of generating stations and control structures began in northern Manitoba in the 1960s and 1970s (Waldram *River Runs*, 147). Together, these communities attempted to challenge the hydroelectric plans of the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro and force consultation and consideration of their perspective (Waldram, *River Runs* 147-156). As a result of this hard work, the NFA was created and signed by the five communities as well as the federal and provincial governments and Manitoba Hydro (Newman, 43). Ultimately, Tataskweyak Cree Nation signed a Comprehensive Implementation Agreement and are currently partners on the Keeyask Generating Station (Newman, 49; “Keeyask Generating Station”).

Fox Lake Cree Nation has a slightly different history with Manitoba Hydro. During the early years of construction, Fox Lake Cree Nation was not a member of the NFC nor are they signatories of the NFA. Although the Bird Reserve is located outside of Gillam, MB, many of the Fox Lake members live in Gillam. As mentioned earlier, Gillam is largely a Manitoba Hydro town now and is also located very near many of the generating stations in northern Manitoba (“About Fox Lake Cree Nation”). They have signed a settlement agreement with Manitoba

Hydro and are now partners on the Keeyask Generating Station (“Fox Lake Cree Nation”; “Keeyask Generating Station”).

Finally, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation and the community of South Indian Lake have a vastly different experience with Manitoba Hydro and hydroelectricity than the other two communities previously mentioned. Southern Indian Lake, the lake upon which the community of South Indian Lake is situated, is one of the largest lakes in Manitoba and is a widening of the Churchill River as it flows north and east to Hudson’s Bay (Waldram, *River Runs* 116). One of the major projects in Manitoba Hydro’s history is the Churchill River Diversion project. This project was completed in 1976 and uses control structures and diversion channels to divert the waters of the Churchill River south and east through Southern Indian Lake and into the Rat and Burntwood River systems to ultimately flow through the Nelson River (“Churchill River Diversion”). As a result, the water levels of Southern Indian Lake were raised by approximately 3 meters and the lake is now essentially a massive reservoir for the generating stations along the Nelson River (Waldram, *River Runs* 119). The community of South Indian Lake were not technically members of the NFC or NFA as they were considered members of Nelson House First Nation, now *Nisichawayasihk* Cree Nation (Waldram, *River Runs* 162). They signed a compensation agreement in 1992 (Waldram, “Falling Through the Cracks” 71). The community does not have a partnership agreement with Manitoba Hydro.

Despite these disparate relationships with Manitoba Hydro, all three communities see some very similar environmental impacts of hydroelectricity production in northern Manitoba. Environmental impacts, along with social and cultural impacts, will be discussed further in later chapters. However, it is important to acknowledge that hydroelectricity production in northern Manitoba is connected to erosion of the land, introduction of methyl-mercury into waterways, dangerous travel on land and waterways, loss of habitat for wildlife, and loss of important cultural/archaeological sites (Dipple, *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*). The environmental, cultural, and social impacts of hydroelectricity are vast and will be covered in great detail throughout this work.

Manitoba Hydro and the Clean Environment Commission

Hydroelectricity in Manitoba has a long and difficult past in relation to Indigenous peoples in the province. First coming into creation in the early 1900s, hydroelectricity in

Manitoba consistently included construction and operation of generating stations that failed to consider or consult Indigenous peoples (Kulchyski, *Aboriginal Rights* 131). Throughout the early 1900s, much of the hydroelectricity produced in Manitoba was based upon generating stations constructed along the Winnipeg River in southern Manitoba (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 8-21). In the 1950s, interest transitioned from rivers in southern Manitoba, some of which had been fully ‘developed,’ to lakes and rivers in northern Manitoba (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 26).

Beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, generating station construction in northern Manitoba became much more common with some generating stations, like the Laurie structures as well as the Kelsey Generating Station, being constructed to power mines (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 29, 34). The first northern generating station constructed for the provincial power grid was the Grand Rapids Generating Station in 1968 (“Generating Stations”). Following the construction of the Grand Rapids and Kelsey Generating Stations, further projects were proposed including the Churchill River Diversion and the Lake Winnipeg Regulation Projects (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba*, 41). These projects were meant to control the outflow of the Churchill River and Lake Winnipeg respectively through the Nelson River for the purpose of maximizing power production along the Nelson River (“Churchill River Diversion”; “Lake Winnipeg Regulation”). Following these projects, Manitoba Hydro began the process of ‘developing’ the Nelson River (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 29-42). At present, there are 15 generating stations in Manitoba, 9 of which are located in northern Manitoba (“Facilities & Operations”; “Generating Stations”). Currently, Manitoba Hydro is constructing its 10th generating station in northern Manitoba in the Keeyask Project (“Keeyask Generating Station”).

When Manitoba Hydro proposes a new project, whether that be a generating station or transmission corridor, they must undergo an environmental review process (Manitoba Legislative Assembly, *The Environment Act* 8, 11). One portion of this environmental review, under the *Environment Act*, is the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission (CEC) (“What We Do”). According to the CEC, their “principal role is to provide the opportunity for the Manitoba public to play a part in ensuring the protection of our environment. This is done by providing a forum at which the public can participate in environmental assessment and decision-making, and in offering advice to the government” (Scarfield). CEC reviews are initiated after a request from

the Minister responsible for The Environment Act is sent to the CEC. This request includes Terms of Reference that indicate whether the CEC is requested to complete public hearings or an investigation (“Understanding the Process”). Following the completion of their review, the CEC provides recommendations to the Minister regarding the project (“Understanding the Process”). Recent hydroelectric projects, including the Wuskwatim Project, Bipole III project, and Keeyask Project, have undergone public hearings through the CEC (“Reports”).

Chapter Overview

Throughout this dissertation, I will argue that one of the foundations of Indigenous sovereignty is the relationship with the land that Indigenous communities across Canada have established throughout their histories. This foundation reinforces Indigenous sovereignty and provides a counter-argument to Western, statist conceptions of sovereignty. However, I also argue that, through destruction of the land for the construction and operation of generating stations, Manitoba Hydro’s operations are having serious and wide-ranging impacts on relationships with the land of the *Inniniwak* people of northern Manitoba. As a result of this destruction, Manitoba Hydro’s operations are undermining and limiting the abilities of *Inniniwak* communities to maintain their sovereignty and act upon it. Despite this detriment to Indigenous sovereignty in northern Manitoba, I also discuss the methods through which *Inniniwak* communities continue to work towards (re)creating and maintaining their relationships with the land and view these actions as both acts of sovereignty and acts of resistance against both colonial actions of government entities as well as of Manitoba Hydro.

In the first chapter of this work, I will review the theoretical underpinnings of this discussion, including discussions of the concepts of sovereignty and Indigenous sovereignty and its purpose in this discussion, the importance of relationships with the land to concepts of Indigenous sovereignty, and the myriad of ways in which the actions of Manitoba Hydro are undermining or preventing relationships with the land and Indigenous sovereignty.

Following this discussion of theory, I will discuss the importance of the land to *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba based upon interviews I have done with land-users, Elders, and knowledge-holders. This chapter will further discuss the importance of relationships with the land both to the culture of *Inniniwak* people and to their Indigenous sovereignty. This chapter includes my recollection of stories and events that were described to me that provide a deeper

understanding of the importance of relationships with the land and time spent on the land re-creating and maintaining these relationships.

Chapter three will review some of the destruction caused by Manitoba Hydro in the communities with whom I worked throughout the past six years. This discussion will include not only the destruction to the land but also the implications of the loss of ability to travel on the land and (re)create and maintain relationships with the land. Additionally, this chapter will review many of the past and present decisions made by Manitoba Hydro and some of the implications those decisions have had and continue to have on the communities in the north.

In chapter four, I will review some of the recent actions of Manitoba Hydro as well as the actions of the former NDP government of Manitoba through the lens of Glen Coulthard's critique of recognition politics. This chapter will discuss the many ways and instances in which Manitoba Hydro deploys recognition politics to maintain support in southern Manitoba for their operations in the north while simultaneously failing to alter the colonial relationship between Manitoba Hydro and Indigenous communities in the north. Combined with this discussion, I review the apology presented on behalf of the NDP government of Manitoba by then-Premier Greg Selinger to the Pimicikamak people in regards to the history of Manitoba Hydro's operation in the north. Through reviewing the transcript of this apology, I argue that the deployment of recognition politics by Greg Selinger works to undermine contemporary resistance against Manitoba Hydro by placing the poor decisions and destruction of the land in the past with little recognition of current issues surrounding Manitoba Hydro.

Connected to the destruction of the large part of the north by Manitoba Hydro is the environmental decision-making process that generally happens in Winnipeg. Chapter five discusses the processes of environmental decision-making and the challenges facing Indigenous people who wish to participate in these discussions. Additionally, this chapter reviews the importance of recognizing Indigenous knowledge-holders and Elders as experts while also promoting ways in which Indigenous knowledge-holders and Elders can successfully contribute to the environmental decision-making process that at present is so far removed from the locations that will be most seriously impacted by the decisions.

Finally, this dissertation will end on a discussion of the ways in which Indigenous communities are both directly and indirectly acting in resistance against the operations of

Manitoba Hydro in northern Manitoba. I argue that through the continued (re)creation and maintenance of relationships with the land, Indigenous land-users and Elders are acting in resistance against the ultimate outcomes of Manitoba Hydro's operations. Connections that are formed with the land tend to provide a strong basis upon which community members resist Manitoba Hydro's destruction of their communities. The act of maintaining relationships with the land reinforces the Indigenous sovereignty that Manitoba Hydro is undermining through its continued destruction of the land.

Chapter 1: Indigenous Sovereignty: Theory and Praxis

In discussions of Manitoba Hydro's interactions with Indigenous peoples in northern Manitoba, it is important to first review the concept of sovereignty as it has been deployed historically and how it is understood today. Additionally, it is necessary to discuss one particular challenge to sovereignty put forward by Paul Nadasdy in his book *Sovereignty's Entailments* about the validity of sovereignty as a concept used in at least some Indigenous communities. Following this, I will review some other interactions between Manitoba Hydro and Indigenous communities in the north that directly relate to critical theory and Indigenous sovereignty. These discussions lay the groundwork for my arguments later in this work about the connections between relationships with the land, Indigenous sovereignty, and Manitoba Hydro's impacts on sovereignty through their operations in the north.

Challenges of Sovereignty

Sovereignty is a concept that is socially constructed and has changed throughout history (Lightfoot, 205; Nadasdy, *Sovereignty's Entailments* 11). Indigenous scholars and communities have been deploying this term for decades and there are a variety of views as to the use of the term, Indigenization of the concept, and recognition of the inherent sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. As wide and deep as this topic is, I will attempt to express my understanding not only of the term as it is used and debated in contemporary society, but also how it may be used as a means of empowerment for Indigenous communities and First Nations in Canada.

Paul Nadasdy's recent book, *Sovereignty's Entailments*, effectively argues that sovereignty is inherently Western and state-oriented and as a result is not compatible with nor supportive of Indigenous communities and their attempts at empowerment and challenging of Western hegemony (Nadasdy, *Sovereignty's Entailments*). Nadasdy argues, "Having a concept of *sovereignty* necessarily entails also having a concept of *territory*, of *citizenship*, of *nation*, of *history*, and so on" (*Sovereignty's Entailments* 11; emphasis original). Further, Nadasdy argues, "if state formation really does entail a cultural revolution, then the concept of *sovereignty* must express – and so help legitimize – the historical and culturally specific assumptions upon which the modern territorial state is built – and, by extension, also the state-like First Nations modelled upon them" (*Sovereignty's Entailments* 11; emphasis original). Connected with these discussions

of sovereignty, McCreary and Turner argue that settler-colonial claims to authority, which I would argue is intricately tied to sovereignty, are based in the rejection of Indigenous sovereignty (228). Through this discussion of some of the “cultural entailments” of sovereignty, he addresses the ways in which the deployment of sovereignty, particularly in relationship to states, inherently requires Indigenous communities to take a statist approach to self-government (Nadasdy *Sovereignty’s Entailments*, 11). In many ways, this argument is built upon his earlier discussion of the fundamental challenges of co-management boards in the Yukon as a result of their inability to recognize and respond to Indigenous knowledge and the serious challenges of translation of Indigenous knowledges both from Indigenous languages to Euro-Canadian languages, but also through their translation from Indigenous knowledges based in Indigenous cultures to Western, science-oriented knowledge (Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 2). He argues that the transition and translation of Indigenous, particularly Yukon First Nations, governance and concepts of relationship to Western and statist-oriented understandings of sovereignty undermine Indigenous understandings of the world and self-government (Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 2). This position is supported by Alfred in his discussions of the challenges facing Indigenous communities and their consideration of sovereignty (78).

Nadasdy’s discussion of the challenges facing Indigenous communities in their connection to and use of statist-oriented sovereignty directly connects to Kulchyski’s discussion of totalization. Totalization is the removal of difference within a totality (Kulchyski, *Like the Sound of a Drum*, 23). Adorno argues that through the perception that all people are the same, society (a totality) can view any difference as only a result of the failure of the society to fully incorporate or adopt the individual or group that is different into the totality (as cited in Kulchyski, *Like the Sound of a Drum*, 24). Kulchyski considers this term in relation to the political projects taking place in Canada in relation to Indigenous peoples. He states, “Totalization has been experienced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada as a State policy, characterized by many scholars as “assimilation,” which has worked to absorb them into the established order” (*Like the Sound of a Drum*, 23-24). Based upon Nadasdy’s discussion of the challenges of sovereignty, I argue that its removal of difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples supports its position as a totalizing concept. However, Kulchyski provides

another concept that allows for the use of totalizing concepts or structures to the benefit of those being totalized.

Kulchyski's discussion of totalization is balanced with his discussion of the concept of subversion. Subversion is "a strategy of reading and a practice of redeployment where a sign or structure or object that has been fashioned as a tool of totalization is reconfigured as a mechanism expressing cultural resistance" (Kulchyski, *Like the Sound of a Drum* 25). A basic example of subversion that Kulchyski and others have used is the use of Western materials to make living on the land easier while keeping cultural items closer to the individual. One strong example of subversion is the use of Manitoba Hydro's spring and fall access program by some Indigenous land-users. This program provides funding for harvesters to travel on the land, particularly in places where they are unable to harvest from their traditional family territories or traplines as a result of Manitoba Hydro's operations (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Land-users like Robert Spence use the funding from this program to travel on the land and re-establish their relationships with the land. As I will argue later, these relationships with the land are a strong basis upon which grassroots leadership place their resistance against Manitoba Hydro's operations. As a result, the use of the access program helps leadership re-establish relationships that will give them the strength and knowledge they need to resist Manitoba Hydro's actions and protect the land. The use of this funding is an act of subversion by grassroots leadership.

From my experiences and understandings, this is how the concept of sovereignty is used by leaders in the north. When leaders like Robert Spence invoke the idea of sovereignty or self-determination, they are not doing so based strictly upon Western or state-oriented understandings of sovereignty, but are instead invoking a term, in a foreign language, that makes sense to those with whom they are speaking. As with the boots, snowmobiles, or the access program, underneath the visage of sovereignty are the relationships with the land, culture, language, and many other aspects of identity related to *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba. This subversion allows those strong, grassroots leaders in the community to effectively articulate their position while still basing that position in their own worldview and knowledge systems. When leaders invoke concepts of sovereignty in opposition to the Crown and actors of the Crown, they are not directly accepting the state-oriented concepts of sovereignty but are instead deploying a term that has been used historically to undermine Indigenous peoples to instead overcome the

challenges put in place by the state. McCreary and Turner discuss the challenges of settler sovereignty and its relationships with Indigenous peoples when they state, “while the project of settler sovereignty sought to enact a regime of complete territorial control, it has been continually ruptured and forced into reformulations by encounters with Indigenous legal orders” (238). Pasternak supports this statement when discussing the legal status of Indigenous legal systems as they “became threatening to a settler sovereignty increasingly marked by territorial rights” (151). Additionally, Pasternak argues that settler claims to sovereignty did not destroy Indigenous governance, jurisdiction, and sovereignty and that this shows the “unfinished project of perfecting settler colonial sovereignty claims” (147).

Fundamental to my argument that Indigenous sovereignty is used as an act of subversion against state and Crown actors is the requirement that this form of sovereignty both refuse recognition politics through its recognition by other Indigenous organizations and entities rather than the state and its basis being placed upon Coulthard’s concept of grounded normativity (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 13). If these two aspects are the basis of Indigenous sovereignty, as opposed to Nadasdy’s argument that Indigenous peoples should practice “a kind of radical ‘anti-sovereignty’” (*Sovereignty’s Entailments*, 303), it can effectively subvert colonial entities and challenge actions taken by the state/Crown and its actors.

Indigenous Sovereignty

Sovereignty, as it is used today, is a statist concept that attempts to establish power in relation to territory, citizenry, and resources (Nadasdy *Sovereignty’s Entailments*, 11). However, “sovereignty is a social construct and thus in a continual process of negotiation and renegotiation” (Lightfoot, 205). Another challenge to settler sovereignty is the perspective that “it must be matched with a conviction that the exercise of sovereignty is legitimate” (Pasternak 150). Indigenous sovereignty provides a way for Indigenous communities to effectively convey their understandings of their inherent rights in a language that is understandable to different levels of government and actors of the government. Given this perspective, sovereignty must be defined in such a way as to recognize the power of Indigenous cultures (Alfred 1999, 54 in Wood and Rossiter). As mentioned earlier, there are varying views as to whether sovereignty is an appropriate term for Indigenous peoples to use and there are questions about whether the concept can truly be Indigenous.

Alfred argues that Indigenous peoples should deploy the concept of sovereignty rather than self-determination because self-determination is delegated from a sovereign entity (78). He argues,

“Sovereignty” as it is currently understood and applied in indigenous-state relations cannot be seen as an appropriate goal or framework, because it has no relevance to indigenous values. The challenge before us is to detach the notion of sovereignty from its current legal meaning and use in the context of the Western understanding of power and relationships. We need to create a meaning for sovereignty that respects the understanding of power in indigenous cultures, one that reflects more of the sense embodied in such Western notions as “personal sovereignty” and “popular sovereignty.” Until then, sovereignty can never be part of the language of liberation. (Alfred, 78)

Alfred also argues that the pan-Indigenous concept is “a commitment to a profoundly respectful way of governing based on a world view that values autonomy but also recognizes a universal interdependence and promotes peaceful coexistence among all the elements of creation” (14). From Alfred’s perspective, sovereignty is a representation of consensus that has been turned into a political and legal concept. Finally, Alfred argues that there needs to be efforts to “de-think” sovereignty and “replace it with a notion of power that is based on more appropriate premises” (87).

In her discussion of the transformational power of the global Indigenous rights movement and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Lightfoot discusses the potential implications of the global Indigenous rights movement on sovereignty and its presence in settler states (33-34). Of particular interest for my discussions of sovereignty, Lightfoot emphasizes the possibility of multiple sovereignties, or plural sovereignty, within a particular state (33-34). Lightfoot states,

The Indigenous rights regime that has been emerging on the global stage, as articulated in the UN Declaration, has added new Indigenous rights to the international human rights consensus. In addition, it also challenges fundamentals of the human rights system and the Westphalian system of sovereign states in two important dimensions. First, the Indigenous rights regime essentially calls on states to recognize and protect not only the rights of Indigenous peoples as individual citizens of states but also as peoples with a broad set of collective rights. Second, implementing these rights ultimately also forces a reinterpretation of the twin concepts of

decolonization and self-determination. Indigenous rights shift the meaning of both of these ideas away from an exclusive state-centric construction. Rather than meaning only the right of peoples to independent, territorial, and sovereign statehood as had previously been the case under the UN's twentieth century decolonization project, a new understanding of decolonizing self-determination is emerging. States are now expected to protect the land, self-determination, and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, by imagining, negotiating, and recognizing various possible modes of plural sovereignty and power sharing. (Lightfoot, 33-34)

Further, Lightfoot states,

Therefore, with transformative elements that include collective rights alongside individual rights, equal accommodation of difference, non-hierarchical power relations, and respect for the self-determination of Indigenous peoples without disrupting existing states, Global Indigenous politics necessarily forces an important global question to the surface: how to negotiate and redesign new plural, overlapping, and multiple types of sovereignties – state and Indigenous – within and across state borders, including sovereignties that may or may not be tied to exclusive authority over territories. (205)

These discussions of plural sovereignty and “sovereignties that may or may not be tied to exclusive authority over territories” (Lightfoot, 205) inherently describe an alteration to the concept of sovereignty that moves away from the colonial baggage that creates a barrier for Indigenous peoples and instead allows for the Indigenization of sovereignty. Alcantara and Nelles discuss the interdependencies between Indigenous peoples and the state in settler colonial societies and emphasize the importance of non-hierarchical relationships in these connections, particularly surrounding governance and decision-making processes (191). This discussion shows important connections that could be a basis for relationships situated in territories of plural sovereignty. Through a consideration of Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty and the attribution of sovereignty to other-than-human entities, this recognition of plural sovereignty could allow for not only a means by which Indigenous communities would be able to continue to deploy the idea of sovereignty to gain self-determination and a means by which to counter colonial attempts at dispossession but would also allow for a more Indigenous understanding of sovereignty on its own. The recognition of multiple different entities having sovereignty in a

particular territory is more in line with Indigenous perspectives of other-than-human beings as being political actors.

Through the recognition and acceptance of plural sovereignty within a state, the social construction of sovereignty will be fundamentally altered from that based upon Westphalian sovereignty to one that is more oriented towards Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems. This is not to argue that there is one, universal Indigenous worldview, set of knowledge systems, or form of Indigenous sovereignty, but rather that any state that recognizes plural sovereignty and interacts with Indigenous sovereignty as it is present in that territory will inherently have to move away from a Westphalian understanding of sovereignty. Plural sovereignty allows for a transformation in national and international understandings of sovereignty that undermines colonial understandings and allows for a place in which Indigenous sovereignty is transforming Western, state-oriented culture rather than the other way around. In particular, Audra Simpson argues that Indigenous political orders are an “alternative form of legitimacy and sovereignties to that of the settler state” (“The State is a Man”).

As I understand and define it for this work, Indigenous sovereignty is a multi-foundational concept. I do not know, nor do I intend to discuss, all of the foundations upon which this inherent right to self-determination is based. However, I argue that one strong foundation of Indigenous sovereignty is relationships with land. For clarification’s sake, I consider land to not be limited by the Western conception of the term, that is, soil or an area with distinct boundaries. Rather, my understanding and use of the term land is informed by the perspective described to me by the *Inniniwak* experts with whom I have worked and the Indigenous scholars whom I have read. Fox Lake Cree Nation, in their Environment Evaluation Report, discusses the concept of *Aski*, or land, as “lands, waters, animals, plants, people and all of their interrelations” (Fox Lake Cree Nation ii). Connected to this concept of *Aski*, Fox Lake Cree Nation also discusses *mino pimatisowin*, or “living a good life,” as inherently tied to “understanding the world in terms of the relationships among all things” (Fox Lake Cree Nation ii). Land, as described by Coulthard in his discussion of the Dene concept of *de*, is “in relational terms as that which encompasses not only the land (understood here as material), but also people and animals, rocks and trees, lakes and rivers, and so on” (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 61). Relationships with the land are widespread and differ for many people; however, relationships

with land seem to be a constant across Indigenous peoples and nations. I also choose to use the word ‘with’ in “relationships with land” to emphasize what I understand to be a mutual and reciprocal relationship that involves many entities that are generally not considered in Western understandings of land.

There are multiple important reasons for which I argue relationships with land are a foundational aspect of Indigenous sovereignty. Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson discuss the importance of grounded normativity to Indigenous political movements in contemporary Canadian society (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 13; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 24). Coulthard defines grounded normativity as, “the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 13). Leanne Simpson states,

Our ethical intelligence is ongoing, it is not a series of teachings or laws or protocols; it is a series of practices that are adaptable and to some degree fluid. I don’t know it so much as an “ethical framework” but as a series of complex, interconnected cycling processes that make up a nonlinear, overlapping emergent and responsive network of relationships of deep reciprocity, intimate and global interconnection and interdependence, that spirals across time and space. (*As We Have Always Done*, 24)

Coulthard discusses land as relational and relationship building in itself. Through the relationships created with land, relationships are also created with other human and “other-than-human” communities (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 60-61). These relationships are generally formed as a result of a perception of relationships with land not being exclusionary. Pasternak supports this argument in discussions of jurisdiction, stating, “the source of jurisdiction within Indigenous legal orders is always rooted in place and in the ontologies of care (or, as Leanne Simpson calls the basis of Indigenous nationhood, “ecologies of intimacy”) that renew this legal responsibility for place from one generation to the next” (160). Coulthard states,

[W]e are as much a part of the land as any other element. Furthermore, within this system of relations human beings are not the only constituents believed to embody spirit or agency. Ethically, this meant that humans held certain obligations to the land, animals, plants, and lakes in much the same way that we hold obligations to other people. And if these

obligations were met, then the land, animals, plants, and lakes would reciprocate and meet their obligations to humans, thus ensuring the survival and well-being of all over time. (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 61)

As relationships with and conceptions of land are not exclusionary the concept of Indigenous sovereignty is somewhat of a misnomer. Sovereignty is a colonial concept that inherently requires hierarchy and power relationships that may not be accurate/appropriate for Indigenous communities and nations (Alfred, 78). Coulthard's assertion that claims to land are not exclusionary necessarily indicates that sovereignty in relation to land must be redefined to recognize more Indigenous conceptions of nationhood, rights, and relationships. This Indigenous sovereignty must recognize the inherent right of people to self-determination over themselves, not other peoples. However, as Coulthard has argued,

I would suggest that one of the negative effects of this power-laden process of discursive translation has been a reorientation of the meaning of self-determination of many (but not all) indigenous people in the north; a reorientation of indigenous struggle from one that was once deeply informed by the land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations (grounded normativity), which in turn informed our critique of capitalism in the period examined above, to a struggle that is now increasingly for land, understood now as material resource to be exploited in the capital accumulation process. (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 78)

The concept of sovereignty must also recognize the right to self-determination in relation to one's people and their actions cannot immensely negatively affect the land and relationships with the land that fundamentally affect the ability for other human and other-than-human sovereignty. Craft discusses Anishinaabe relationships with land as mother, *Nimaamaa Aki*, and the importance of recognizing that kinship relationship during treaty negotiations (*Breathing Life* 95). Further, Craft states, "there was an obligation to share in the bounty of the land with those in need, but there was also a corresponding obligation to acknowledge the primary attachment of those who had been placed on the land" (*Breathing Life* 96). Borrows supports this statement through a discussion of land as kin and not a resource to be exploited (as cited in McCreary and Turner, 227). As a result, I also consider the possibility of plural sovereignty, as discussed above.

In addition to the political and legal importance of relationships with land, identity, and culture are also inherently influenced by relationships with land (McLeod, 6). Land informs language and McLeod argues,

The connection Indigenous people have to the land is housed in language. Through stories and words, we hold the echo of generational experience, and the engagement with land and territory. *nehiyawewin*, Cree language – perhaps more poetically rendered as “the process of making Cree sound” – grounds us, and binds us with other living beings and marks these relationships (6).

These interactions are not listed as a means of claiming land and relationships with it are the only foundation of Indigenous sovereignty but rather to show the interconnections of many possible foundations in order to emphasize the importance of each and the strength of this foundation.

As I have discussed elsewhere, I visualize Indigenous sovereignty as being a structure built upon multiple foundations. One of these foundations, and the one upon which I will focus the most, is relationship with land. McCreary and Turner argue that ‘authority over the land’ is tied to relationships with the land and the connections between land and lineage (228). I will discuss elsewhere the importance of the land, the implications of relationship with land, and the challenges facing Indigenous peoples as a result of the destruction of land, but here I want to consider a statement made by Coulthard. In *Red Skin, White Masks* he states,

Consider, for example, an approach to resurgence that would see Indigenous people begin to reconnect with their lands and land-based practices on either an individual or small-scale collective basis. This could take the form of “walking the land” in an effort to refamiliarize ourselves with the landscape and places that give our histories, languages, and cultures shape and content; to revitalizing and engaging in land-based harvesting practices like hunting, fishing, and gathering, and/or cultural production activities like hide-tanning and carving, all of which also serve to assert our sovereign presence on our territories in ways that can be profoundly educational and empowering; to the reoccupation of sacred places for the purposes of relearning and practicing our ceremonial activities (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 171).

This quote provides strong support for my argument that relationship with land is a strong foundation upon which Indigenous peoples can, and arguably have, placed their assertions to sovereignty, including in the face of encroachment and assertions of rights by state and corporate

actors. Additionally, it places relationship with land not only as a strong basis for the deployment of sovereignty but also as a way forward for Indigenous peoples in their attempts to provide support for future generations.

Indigenous sovereignty can also be deployed in a slightly different way that works in opposition and as resistance against colonial attempts at asserting sovereignty. While sovereignty is clearly rooted in a colonial understanding of politics and political agency, Indigenous communities regularly deploy this word and concept as a means of challenging Western, Eurocentric assumptions about power and state control. Nadasdy argues, “Rather than Yukon Indian people embracing their “indigenous sovereignty,” it seems to me, such a goal requires the practice of a kind of radical ‘anti-sovereignty’; that is, a total rejection of the state form and all the cultural baggage that goes with it” (*Sovereignty’s Entailments*, 303). In my experience, when this concept is deployed by Indigenous communities, the colonial baggage that is connected to this idea is not necessarily recognized nor employed in its use. Instead, an Indigenous understanding of sovereignty, or a similar concept in that particular community’s culture and language, is being presented as a counter-argument to the colonial position put forward by the Crown or the actors of the Crown. As such, this inherently Indigenized version of sovereignty is not sovereignty in the Western sense and includes a different set of assumptions that allows it to be a revolutionary and transformational approach to sovereignty. Wood and Rossiter discuss a similar expression in the participation of Indigenous Elders and experts in Joint Review Processes in British Columbia. They state, “we argue that what was presented at the JRP is a conscious and reflexive politics of refusal that takes Aboriginal geography and governance as its starting point, rather than a reactionary politics that starts with settler norms and institutions” (166). Lightfoot discusses sovereignty as a social construct that, while having roots in colonial and Eurocentric understandings of the world, is subject to change over time and changing social and power relationships (205). Therefore, Indigenous deployments of sovereignty, or Indigenous sovereignty, are a culturally and socially determined means of expressing a position of inherent rights to interact with lands, waters, and communities.

Resulting from the vastly different social construction of sovereignty that is involved in Indigenous deployments of the concept of sovereignty, I would argue this form of sovereignty can be deployed as what I call oppositional sovereignty. Oppositional sovereignty, as deployed

by Indigenous communities in their attempts to counter colonial actions, is a sovereignty that is based on Indigenous understandings of inherent rights and sovereignty while simultaneously undermining the cultural assumptions of traditional Westphalian sovereignty. This use results in a concept that deploys the same name but in a way that is cognizant of Indigenous understandings of sovereignty and the possibility of plural sovereignty. This concept, as I have considered it, connects with Coulthard's discussion of oppositional politics in his consideration of Prashad's Third World and Manuel and Posluns' Fourth World (Coulthard Introduction, xii). Coulthard discusses this concept of the Fourth World as a verb by stating, "it describes an oppositional politics, positioned against the violence of colonialism and imperialism that evades cultural essentialism while remaining attentive to and informed by diverse cultural and material context" (Coulthard Introduction, xii).

Through the deployment of the concept "sovereignty" in opposition to colonial actions of the Crown or actors of the Crown, this Indigenized sovereignty is clearly being used as a place of opposition against the attempts of colonial entities to claim sovereignty and sole decision-making power. This concept of Oppositional Sovereignty recognizes the political act of deploying sovereignty not merely as a term to claim power over a territory or an inherent right to self-determination, but is also an act of opposition against colonial attempts at dispossession, sole rights to power, and reliance on a history that attempts to erase Indigenous peoples and their inherent rights. As sovereignty is used in this way, it is simultaneously an act of resistance and an attempt at decolonization.

Patience

Nadasdy discusses the importance of respect and self-autonomy among the *Kluane* peoples of the Yukon. He argues that an inherent, underlying quality of these two concepts is the patience that is required for respect and recognition of self-autonomy (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 104). He states, "allowing others complete personal autonomy and the right to experience the world in their own ways requires an extraordinary amount of patience" (*Hunters and Bureaucrats* 104). I have argued consistently that respect is an important aspect of relationships with the land among the *Inniniwak* as well and Nadasdy's emphasis upon patience is also clearly apparent in *Inniniwak* relationships with land. Patience is expressed consistently throughout every aspect of relationships with the land, from waiting for moose to react to calls to the

patience necessary to effectively and successfully fish or trap. He states, “You simply cannot treat other people respectfully if you are attempting to impose on them your own personal agenda, **timetable**, beliefs, values, or goals.” (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 104, emphasis added). The requirement of strict timetables and the pressure or ability of state powers to enforce their will upon Indigenous peoples is fundamentally challenging to not only the respect and self-autonomy that is held so close by both the *Kluane* and *Inniniwak* people but also shows either an inability or a lack of respect for the patience that underlies these concepts.

Manitoba Hydro, both as an actor of state power and as a corporation, has consistently and effectively undermined both the inherent respect of *Inniniwak* relationships with land and the self-autonomy that is supposedly supported and enhanced by the creation of partnership agreements. With the understanding that both respect and self-autonomy share an underlying principle of patience, and patience is effectively displayed through the recognition of the will of another and the failure to enforce timetables on others, Manitoba Hydro seems to lack patience. Loo supports this discussion through the argument that challenging scales of inequality requires a recognition of both time and space (898). Throughout most of the conversations I have had with individuals from the north as well as my reading of the transcript of the Clean Environment Commission hearings from the Keeyask Project, it is clear that *Inniniwak* communities consistently requested and required additional time to consider the true implications of the project (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 96-97; Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Conway Arthurson stated to the CEC, “No long[er] will I remain quiet. No longer will I regret being silent. No longer will I allow Hydro’s timeline to go ahead without us being ready. Starting today. Manitoba Hydro you need to consider our timeline. Which means slow down...And, all we have been doing is rushing because of Hydro’s timeline. We need to put a stop to that” (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 96-97). The timetables put in place by Manitoba Hydro had detrimental effects on the communities’ ability to consent.

One example of construction timetables impacting the livelihood of *Inniniwak* people in the north is clear when discussing Elder Noah Massan’s trapline. Elder Noah Massan was informed that the Keeyask Project would require the construction of both a power corridor and a road through the centre of his trapline (Manitoba CEC, “31 Oct. 2013” 1715-1718). Obviously, this demand is a clear enforcement of another entity’s will upon the self-autonomy of an

Inniniwak Elder. The project to construct the road and power corridor, the project that would ultimately destroy Elder Massan's trapline, was slated to be completed and in use when the generating station was completed (Manitoba CEC, "31 Oct. 2013" 1716-1718). Manitoba Hydro later informed 'partner' communities as well as Elder Massan that instead they wanted to begin the process of destroying his trapline earlier, in 2014, only 1 year after the completion of the CEC hearings and approximately 5 years earlier than the initial in-service date of the generating station (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 86-87). Elder Massan, during the CEC hearings, questioned Manitoba Hydro on this, as he was never provided any forewarning that the south access road would be constructed early (Manitoba CEC, "31 Oct. 2013" 1716-1718). This not only represents the changing of a timeline that was already placing pressure upon the community and Elder Massan but also represents an even more overt example of lack of patience. Manitoba Hydro enforced what could be considered an extreme timeline on Elder Massan but also shortened the time after discussing their plans and timetable with him (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 86-87; Manitoba CEC, "31 Oct. 2013" 1716-1718). This is not the only example of short deadlines being placed upon communities, but it is a very clear and direct expression of the lack of patience, and as a result respect and recognition of self-autonomy, that Manitoba Hydro has shown their 'partner' communities in northern Manitoba.

Destruction of Identity

In his discussion of the importance of the land to the *Kluane* people, Nadasdy discusses the importance of wild meat to the identity of the *Kluane* (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 75-79). This is true for the *Inniniwak* of northern Manitoba as well, and Manitoba Hydro's destruction of the land prevents this aspect of the *Inniniwak* identity through its continual impact on wildlife that provides this wild meat (Kamal et al., "A Recipe for Change" 570). However, hydroelectric power production does not only affect the wild meat aspect of *Inniniwak* identity. A consistent point put forward by *Inniniwak* participants in hearings and Wa Ni Ska Tan events has been the identity of the *Inniniwak* as "river people." Throughout the history of the *Inniniwak*, rivers in northern Manitoba, particularly *Kichi Sipi* or the Nelson River, have provided a fundamental basis to the livelihood and identity of the *Inniniwak*. Rivers connect communities throughout the north and were a fundamental means of transportation in both the past and present. Elder Noah Massan discusses the importance of the rivers when mentioning what his Elders said when they

first heard about the construction of the Kelsey Generating Station. These Elders, speaking in *Inniniowin*, described their fears that Manitoba Hydro was going to “block the road” or “close the road” (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 60). In these instances, the highway is meant to describe *Kichi Sipi* and the importance of the river to the people of Fox Lake Cree Nation. In addition, their immense concern about the closing of the river and the inability to use it as a means of transportation both to the bush and to other communities effectively shows the importance of rivers to the people of northern Manitoba. Manitoba Hydro’s continual destruction of and closing off of rivers in the north has an immensely negative impact on the identity and culture of the *Inniniwak* that cannot be understated, and will be discussed further in later chapters.

Rivers are not only important for the harvesting of wild food and transportation between communities. Throughout the north, there are stories of the immensely positive relationship youth had with lakes and rivers in the north prior to presence of Manitoba Hydro. Elders have discussed the great joy they took as children playing on the sandy beaches surrounding their communities, swimming in the clear waters, and, as Charlotte Wastesicoot states, accessing this “playground in the summertime” of the community (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 48-49). The experience of being able to go out on the land and have fun as a child has largely been lost in many communities affected by Manitoba Hydro’s operations. As a result of the flooding, waters are unpredictable (Fox Lake Cree Nation, 81-82). The shoreline has disappeared and been replaced with barricades of floating trees and debris so water access is limited (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 48, 60). Another challenge facing people who wish to go out on the land is hanging ice. This phenomenon happens when ice forms but drawdown from the power stations leaves it “hanging” above the water (Fox Lake Cree Nation, 79, 82). This can cause people to fall through the ice and be unable to escape the freezing water. As a result of the inability to play along the shores and in the waters of their communities, many youth will never experience the joy that their parents and Elders had as children.

Many people discussed being told as children to not forget their “cup” when they would travel with their families or on their own in the bush (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). The basis for this statement was the cleanliness of the water and the ability to drink directly from the

lakes and rivers of the north. Whenever people were on the land, they could simply dip their cups into the waters of whatever body they were travelling along and consume clean, tasty water. During my time on the land with Robert Spence, he showed me the taste and cleanliness of this water through using only the water from Recluse Lake for consumption. Whenever we needed water to drink or make coffee or tea, we would go out to the lake to a hole he had drilled into the ice and pull out fresh, clean water from the lake. The location of Recluse Lake far inland from *Kichi Sipi* and its relative safety from the operations of Manitoba Hydro makes the waters of this lake much more pristine than elsewhere in the north. Perhaps it was a result of the significantly harder physical labour than I am used to or the constant work in cold winter temperatures, but that was by far the best water I have ever tasted in my life.

The immense importance of relationships with lakes and rivers directly relates to the identity of the *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba. Through the closing of the “highways,” the tainting of local, fresh, clean waters through the augmentation of the water flow, and the destruction of areas that provided play and enjoyment for youth, the destruction of the lakes and rivers in northern Manitoba has directly resulted in the damaging of *Inniniwak* identity.

However, this is not to place *Inniniwak* people in a position of victim. The connection to lakes and rivers also supports many of the grassroots resistance actions taken by community members to protect not only Mother Earth and the lands of the north, but also to protect the “veins” of the planet through protecting the waters of the lakes and rivers under “development” by Manitoba Hydro.

Unskilled Labour

Nadasdy, among many others, discusses the process through which residential schools removed the knowledge that was necessary and the skills that were required for survival in the bush and continuation of the bush mode of production (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 44-45). In place of these skills and knowledges, residential schools turned Indigenous youth into what would be considered “unskilled labour,” ultimately undermining both the bush mode of production as well as the prospects of these youth for careers that would support them and provide benefits to their communities (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 45). As a result of the residential school experiences, as well as the 60’s Scoop and contemporary child welfare, and the removal of essentially an entire generation of Indigenous peoples from the land, Indigenous

communities were placed in a situation where their knowledge and relationship with the land was prevented from being passed on and the youth that were prevented from gaining this knowledge were provided with knowledge that would not effectively support them in a transition to a different way of life (Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats* 44-46).

Many community members in northern Manitoba discuss what they see as the similarities between the residential school era and Manitoba Hydro's operations in the north. From the intergenerational trauma of community experiences of construction in the past to the effective removal of knowledge and prevention of its passing to future generations, Manitoba Hydro has both continued some of the traumas that were created during the residential school era and also has created and maintained new forms of trauma that have supported the continued destruction of the bush mode of production and *Inniniwak* relationships with the land.

Despite the many similarities between the traumatic results of the residential school experience and Manitoba Hydro's operations in the north, Manitoba Hydro has situated itself in a position in which it can claim that it is supporting and strengthening northern communities in a way that residential schools did not. As Nadasdy discussed, residential schools both removed and prevented the knowledge of the community from being passed on while also creating "unskilled labourers" of the youth who were institutionally trained, through severe punishment, to not show "any expression of independent thought or initiative" which made them both unable to live off the land or to gain any employment beyond unskilled labour (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 45). Destruction of the north as a result of hydropower production and its creation of difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships with the land perpetuate the removal of Indigenous and community-based knowledge. However, Manitoba Hydro and proponents of the project consistently stress the importance of training programs Manitoba Hydro has established in these communities as a means of supporting and empowering the community (Manitoba CEC, "6 Nov. 2013" 2212-2213). These training programs are described as a way to give youth a means of obtaining wages through the construction and operation of generating stations in their homeland while also allowing those who are willing to become "skilled labourers" who can travel to different areas to work in their chosen profession (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 81-82; Manitoba CEC, "6 Nov. 2013" 2212-2213). As a result, Manitoba Hydro could argue that it is 'replacing' the bush mode of production with options to become "skilled labourers" and thus

obtain a wage that will replace the sustenance and prosperity that the land provided in the past. In addition, the promises laid out in partnership agreements supposedly offer financial benefits that can support the community in place of the strength and sustenance the land provided in the past. In essence, Manitoba Hydro, as well as some community proponents of these agreements, are arguing that generating station partnerships are an effective means to gain prosperity from the land after Manitoba Hydro removed this prosperity in the past. This “modernization” discourse situates Manitoba Hydro in a position of bringing prosperity to a community that has never experienced it while undermining any arguments that claim prosperity as a prominent aspect of life prior to Manitoba Hydro’s presence in the north.

These arguments remain in the same theoretical position that was present in the residential school system, namely that the only way ‘forward’ for Indigenous peoples is through their removal from the land, inclusion into the capitalist market and system, and transition from those living and prospering from the bush mode of production into the proletariat. This understanding is largely based upon the Eurocentric and capitalist-oriented belief in an evolution of societies that necessarily requires people ‘evolve’ through the multiple different ‘stages’ of human society until they reach the ultimate goal of a large, bureaucratic, capitalist state. Through the forced transition of these communities from the bush mode of production to the position of unskilled labour, in the case of the residential schools, or skilled labour, as in the case of Manitoba Hydro and the partnerships, colonial forces are continuing primitive accumulation and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the proletariat. Based upon this process, colonial actors are able to remove one of the strongest counter-arguments to some of the most fundamental assumptions of capitalism.

Audra Simpson, citing Patrick Wolfe, states “*settler colonialism* is defined by a territorial project – the accumulation of land – whose seemingly singular focus differentiates it from other forms of colonialism. Although the settler variety is acquisitive, unlike other colonialisms, it is not labour but territory that it seeks. Because “Indigenous” peoples are tied to the desired territories, they must be “eliminated”” (Simpson *Mohawk Interruptus*, 19). Through Manitoba Hydro’s failure to consult Indigenous peoples, their seeming support of transitioning Indigenous peoples off the land and into skilled or unskilled labour employment, and attempts to gain control of the hydroelectric resources of the north, the corporation is perpetuating settler

colonialism that has been a fundamental part of Canadian history. As Audra Simpson argues, it is possible to consider the failure to implement treaty promises, especially those surrounding poverty and health, as an attempt to “eliminate” Indigenous peoples in the north. Additionally, the previous discussion of environmental destruction combined with the recognition of Indigenous cultures as being connected to the land supports the claim that Manitoba Hydro’s production of energy in the north is an attempt to remove or “eliminate” Indigenous peoples. While Manitoba Hydro is not trying to kill Indigenous peoples in northern Manitoba, destruction of the land can play a part in the elimination of Indigenous identities. Through Manitoba Hydro’s continued attempts to ‘develop’ the north and ‘provide’ Indigenous people employment and partnerships related to these projects, Manitoba Hydro is perpetuating settler colonialism as discussed by Audra Simpson.

Where the Federal Government and Churches Failed

Steve Ducharme, the head of the South Indian Lake Fishermen’s Association, eloquently described Manitoba Hydro’s actions in the north through the statement “The Government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro have succeeded to what the Federal government and the Churches have failed to do in the last 500 years and that is the total and complete social, cultural and economic genocide of a very proud and independent group of people” (Kamal, 130). Manitoba Hydro’s actions in the north directly undermine Inniniwak relationships with the land and fundamentally alter the land upon which Inniniwak society has been based since time immemorial.

Colonization creates a “hidden history” of Indigenous peoples that must be “re-storied” in order to work towards decolonization (Regan, 5-6). Residential schools had massive and extremely detrimental impacts on Indigenous society across Canada and the United States. Milloy reminds us that Residential Schools were promoted by the churches and governments as beneficial for Indigenous children and convinced many Canadians of that point (xii). Residential schools were a prominent part of the Canadian government’s attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples and directly challenged the centrality of family in Indigenous communities (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples *Highlights from the Report*). Of course, many of the survivors of the residential schools returned to their communities and attempted to learn what they had missed and lost through their residential school experiences. However, Nadasdy quotes

some survivors as saying they are not nearly as knowledgeable about the land as their Elders were but they are now in the position of Elder and expert knowledge holder (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 46).

All of this connects to Manitoba Hydro in a unique way. Intergenerational trauma from residential schools has caused widespread challenges within Indigenous communities, including the loss of languages, loss of knowledge, and loss of identity (Regan, 3, 36). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated in its executive summary that Indigenous peoples need control over their education systems as the current systems result in cultural loss (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples *Highlights from the Report*). The residential school legacy has created entire generations of ‘unskilled labourers’ in the place of Indigenous Elders and experts. Adding challenge to an already near impossible situation, the destruction of the land at the hands of mining, hydroelectric, and other natural resource exploitation corporations has created an additional burden of hurdles for those who still have the knowledge, willpower, and ability to be on the land. These combined realities between the residential schools, federal and provincial governments, and natural resource exploitation corporations of both the past and present, have created a near apocalypse for Indigenous knowledge and relationships with the land. Elders and land-users are not merely rolling over and accepting the assault on their knowledge and way of life, and many actively resist any and all attempts to undermine their positions as self-sustaining and self-determining.

As a result of the inter-generational trauma and environmental destruction, organizations and corporations like Manitoba Hydro are able to enter communities and claim a positive position through promises of training programs and employment opportunities. As more people within Indigenous communities are ‘transitioned’ from expert land-users, knowledge holders, and self-sustaining communities to ‘unskilled labourers,’ Manitoba Hydro is able to enter communities with the promise of training programs, employment opportunities, mentorships, and programs to support educational advancement. However, these promises are predicated upon the continued construction of generating stations, as the operation and maintenance of generating stations does not require a large work force, and the continued removal of people from the land to work wage or salaried labour positions. In no way does the transition from unskilled to skilled

labour inherently lead to closer connections to the land or more availability of time on the land and time with Elders and experts to learn the ways of surviving and thriving on the land.

One challenge to Manitoba Hydro's position of support for people transitioning to 'skilled labourers' is the development of what Kulchyski has termed a "racially stratified work force" within Manitoba Hydro's ranks (Manitoba CEC, "10 Dec. 2013" 5745-5746). Although there are promises of jobs and training surrounding generating station construction and operation, past and present construction projects show a racial stratification that places Indigenous people in lower paying construction-oriented jobs (Buckland and O'Gorman, 302, 308). Buckland and O'Gorman discuss the training surrounding the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement as a prominent step forward but also acknowledge that training only in construction and skills related to building hydroelectric dams will result in a "boom-bust" economy in the communities. This "boom-bust" economic approach is problematic both for individuals and communities (Buckland and O'Gorman, 308). Connected with the challenges of short-term employment, labour relations on the Keeyask Project are laid out under an agreement that prevents collective action, ultimately undermining any attempts to challenge poor labour practices (Buckland and O'Gorman, 308-309). To go further, there is very limited Indigenous representation on the current Manitoba Hydro Electric Board (as of 2020) and the Executive Team for Manitoba Hydro ("Our Leadership"). As a result, Manitoba Hydro's 'positive' approach only considers the 'provision' of jobs and not the type or position of those jobs. It includes the Indigenous peoples of Manitoba being pushed to join the proletariat without consideration of the bush mode of production or loss of land and water as a result of this transition.

Manitoba Hydro's 'positive' approach is solely based on the continued pressure placed upon Indigenous peoples to give up their rights to and relationship with land in place of becoming members of the proletariat. This continuation of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation does not inherently make Manitoba Hydro's approach a benefit for Indigenous communities but yet again lends supports Steve Ducharme's argument that they are instead succeeding where the churches and governments have failed in the past (Kamal, 130).

Extensive Knowledge of Behaviour

Nadasdy mentions in his book the extensive knowledge many of the *Kluane* harvesters with whom he worked had of their many different relations on the land. Their knowledge of moose, caribou, and sheep behaviour was a force with which to be reckoned and the knowledge held by the Elders allowed for interactions with the land that are extensive. Consistently, he argues that this knowledge is both based on cultural understandings of relationships with the land as well as the consistent interactions harvesters have with the land through their regular interactions with and relationships with the land (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 96). Experiential knowledge is an important aspect of *Kluane* culture and preference is placed upon learning from the land through interacting with it rather than attempting to learn from reading books or learning from others (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 96-97). As such, many knowledge holders and Elders question the ability of scientists to claim they “know” animals based upon their readings and research (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 111). Through gaining knowledge from experiential learning, Indigenous experts, including Elders, have a wealth of knowledge that biologists do not gain through Western approaches to learning.

Although I have not experienced anything in relation to co-management of the environment or environmental resources in the north of Manitoba, my interactions with Robert Spence during one of his family moose hunting trips shows a similar expert knowledge of behaviour. One time, we were out hunting moose together with an Elder driving the boat. As we waited, we heard some bull moose in the bush. The moose were close but clearly concerned about the possibility of being hunted. As we waited, Robert, I now realize with his expert knowledge of the moose, decided we should get in the boat and push off into the river with the paddles. We did this and floated for a few minutes waiting to hear the moose yet again. As we heard the moose come closer to the boat, it stepped out of the reeds. Robert began to take shots at the large bull that had appeared. Although he clearly hit the moose multiple times, it got away into the bush. We attempted to find it but failed as night pressed in. Robert decided we would go back the next day to find the moose.

The next day, we returned to the spot we had seen the moose with the goal of finding it. To my surprise, and I think the surprise of both the Elder and Robert, I found the blood trail of the moose and was partially successful in following the trail. After a period of time spent attempting to follow the trail, very slowly I might add, Robert decided to head out to do some

other searching. The Elder stayed with me as we searched. I realize now that the Elder may have been there to “babysit” me given my lack of knowledge of the bush. After about an hour of looking, we returned to the boat, arriving at the same time as Robert. He then pointed up to a large hill near us and said he had walked up there and looked in the area for any signs of the moose. He quickly found a moose trail and located a spot that the moose he had shot the day before had clearly laid down in wait for us. He told me he had followed the trail and seen that the moose had clearly zig-zagged in an attempt to lose us and also had laid down facing the direction we would have followed it from. However, Robert also informed me that the blood trail had stopped at the spot in which the moose had laid down and that the trail had continued up and over the hills. Despite our best efforts, and my slightly prideful moment of finding the blood trail, the moose had survived. In the following days, another man came out to help Robert with his camp construction and also went hunting. During one of his trips, I stayed behind at camp with some other people. While the other group was gone hunting, we heard a single shot from a ways off then nothing for a few hours. When the group returned, they told us this new man had shot and killed a moose with one shot. Robert informed me it was the moose he had shot a few nights prior that had returned to the spot.

At the time, I thought nothing of the explanation Robert gave. I knew he was an expert and chalked it all up to him knowing what he was doing. I failed to realize that Robert’s ability to find the location where the moose had laid down was not just a matter of luck or a good guess, but it was rather a very informed decision based upon his expert knowledge in the behaviour of moose.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Environmental Decision-Making

Prior to our discussion of the interactions between Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the Clean Environment Commission of Manitoba, we must first review some of the more general challenges facing Indigenous peoples who hold traditional knowledges in their interactions with Western knowledge, in particular Western Scientific Knowledge, as a result of Western hegemony in Canada. As Said has argued, “the general liberal consensus that “true” knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not “true” knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced” (Said, 10). Knowledge production in the Western world is inherently

based within Western cultural norms and biases that can prevent knowledge produced from other cultural norms to be dismissed as not “true” knowledge. As a result, it is important that we question the validity of “objectivity” and concepts of “value-neutral facts” (Brown & Strega 207-208). Based upon this understanding, I put forward discussions of the interaction between the Clean Environment Commission of Manitoba and Traditional Ecological/Environmental Knowledge from the perspective that Western Scientific Knowledge is not inherently “objective” nor that it is initiated in a non-political way.

Clean Environment Commission hearings in Manitoba are meant as fora upon which environmental and ecological impacts of projects are considered (Scarfield). The commission is responsible for making recommendations about the costs and benefits of a project based upon expert and stakeholder evidence related to the environmental and ecological expectations (“Understanding the Process”). Public hearings like those held for the Keeyask Project include evidence from expert witnesses hired by the proponent of the project, evidence provided by the proponents themselves, and evidence from interveners in the process who either support or reject the positions of the proponents. These hearings provide a massive amount of evidence to the commission who must then sort through all of it and provide a recommendation to the Minister of the Environment about whether or not the project should receive the licensing it requires, with or without a variety of guidelines, restrictions, and recommendations (“Understanding the Process”).

Hearings and reports of the Clean Environment Commission can be a great opportunity for proponents and interveners to put forward both the potential environmental benefits and costs of a project based upon scientific evidence. During the hearings on the Keeyask Project, the CEC attempted to give equal consideration to “Traditional Ecological Knowledge” by listening to expert testimony from Elders, land-users, and other knowledge holders from Indigenous communities who wished to voice their opinion about the project, both in support and opposition to the proposed project. This ranged from testimony from Chiefs and Councillors about the perceived benefit of the projects as well as voices in opposition to the project from land-users, Elders, and others who expected the same negative impacts from the Keeyask Project that they had seen from previous Manitoba Hydro projects.

However, despite the CEC's best efforts to listen to, respect, and give equal validity to the voices of Indigenous experts based upon "Traditional Ecological Knowledge," they were unable to effectively do so as a result of the bias that is inherent to environmental and ecological reviews. Western thought creates a dualism between environmental/ecological thought and "non-environmental/ecological" thought and knowledge. When licensing projects like generating stations, hearings by organizations as specialized as the CEC are meant to allow and include environmental/ecological knowledge for consideration but does not include "non-environmental/ecological" knowledge and thought. As such, this introduces bias into the hearings and reports towards a Euro-Canadian context because it fails to consider those things that are viewed as "non-environmental/ecological" from a Western perspective. As a result, those ideas and thoughts put forward by Indigenous experts that may relate to the review at hand are pushed to the side or outright rejected during the hearings because they do not directly connect to Western concepts of environment or ecology. One prominent example of this challenge is the use of Valued Ecological/Environmental Components in the review of the Keeyask Project. Scientists hired by Manitoba Hydro to review the Keeyask Project set out species they viewed as being Valued Environmental Components (Manitoba CEC, "31 Oct. 2013" 1685). Upon review, it was clear the species chosen for this review were either of importance from only a scientific perspective or important both to Indigenous experts and scientists (Manitoba CEC, "10 Dec. 2013" 5632-5633). No species argued to be of value only to Indigenous experts were studied (Manitoba CEC, "10 Dec. 2013" 5632-5633). Most prominently, Noah Massan, an Elder and expert from Fox Lake Cree Nation stated, "Everything is important to us" (Manitoba CEC, "31 Oct. 2013" 1696). Elder Massan regularly brought forward questions and discussions during the Clean Environment Commission hearings that were of importance to him and related to the environment but were dismissed outright because of the perception that they were not connected with the review at hand (Kulchyski, "Bush/Animals" 328).

Additionally, the separation of humans from the environment creates another dualism that biases these hearings towards Western thought. As the CEC hears the evidence related to projects that are put forward by proponents and interveners, they must consider whether the costs of the projects outweigh the benefits and whether or not the proponents are adequately

compensating for and mitigating potentially adverse effects. Inherent to this consideration is the perception that humanity is separate from the environment and that humanity is in a position of superiority to the environment such that we can create and build projects that will adversely effect the environment as long as they in turn benefit humanity enough to justify such destruction. These decisions and considerations in general go against many Indigenous, in this consideration *Inniniwak*, knowledges and create a circumstance in which Indigenous experts are battling against barriers created by Western bias before they are able to effectively express their worldview to the CEC.

It is important to recognize the Manitoba CEC hearings on the Keeyask Project were established in a way that was meant to support the participation of Indigenous peoples and organizations in the hearings, including attempts to hold hearings in the communities and the recognition of the importance of oral testimony put forward by Elder and Indigenous experts. In some ways, these hearings, as well as those put forward for the Wuskwatim Project, contain many strengths in their goals of allowing for Indigenous participation (Foth 136-137). However, the hearings in and of themselves were inherently problematic for the participation of Indigenous people and organizations. Foth cites a total of approximately 9 barriers to Indigenous participation in the Wuskwatim CEC hearings (Foth 136). I will provide some barriers that I noticed during the Keeyask Project CEC hearings. Most particularly, the form of the hearings, with the prevalence of legal counsel, presentation of information in public hearings that on occasion included relatively large rooms full of people, and the ability of other organizations as well as Manitoba Hydro and the leadership of the “Keeyask Cree Nations” to cross-examine presenters creates for an intimidating, confusing, and problematic approach for community involvement. Overall, the hearings took approximately 5 months with full day meetings nearly every weekday (“The Hearings”). Despite providing hearings in each of the partner communities as well as Cross Lake and Thompson, many of the hearings took place at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, MB (“The Hearings”). For Indigenous people from northern Manitoba, this required travelling to Winnipeg on a regular schedule for many days at a time. Combined, these barriers, along with many others, created a scenario in which the expert knowledge of the Indigenous participants in the hearings, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, was disadvantaged in relation to Western-oriented knowledge.

Two or Three Tracks?

During the Clean Environment Commission hearings, Manitoba Hydro put forward what they argued was a respectful and important approach to reviewing environmental impacts on the land based upon the Keeyask Project. This approach included a “Two Track Approach” in which Indigenous Traditional Ecological/Environmental Knowledge and Western Scientific Knowledge were claimed to be given equal weight; however, in practice they were not given equal weight (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 26-27 ; Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5632-5633). This approach, in theory, allowed for TEK and WSK to provide their own independent understandings of the expected impacts of the Keeyask Project and could give a more well rounded view of necessary mitigation efforts or project changes. However, as I have stated multiple times in other locations throughout this work, this supposedly equal approach for this review failed to be truly equal.

During these same hearing, Dr. Stephane McLachlan, speaking for the Concerned Fox Lake Grassroots Citizens, questioned the validity of this approach and put forward an even stronger approach to the review of the implications of the Keeyask Project. He argued that rather than having two tracks of knowledge for the environmental evaluation there should instead be three tracks (Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5619). This approach would include the original approach taken by Manitoba Hydro but with the inclusion of a third track that would be a point in which “you actually foster and facilitate the engagement between these two knowledge systems” (Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5619). This approach would help to prevent problems like the aforementioned Valued Ecological/Environmental Components issue and would potentially provide answers to some questions that scientists may not have thought to ask but that Indigenous experts wanted reviewed. Done correctly, this approach would provide one of the most well considered environmental evaluations possible and would provide the governmental decision-makers the information they would need to make a truly informed decision (Craft, “Two-Track Approach” 338-339).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the concept of sovereignty both as it has been deployed in the past and how it is presently being discussed in relation to Indigenous communities. Westphalian sovereignty and past perceptions of sovereignty have been

immensely colonial and potentially problematic for Indigenous communities to deploy (Alfred, 78). While based in colonial concepts of jurisdiction and interactions with territory, sovereignty is a flexible and socially constructed concept (Lightfoot, 205) that can be deployed by Indigenous peoples in a subversive way to challenge colonial assertions of sovereignty. As I have mentioned previously, my understanding of Indigenous sovereignty is that it is a multi-foundational concept that rests, at least in part, on relationships with the land. These relationships are critically important to Indigenous sovereignty as well as many aspects of *Inniniwak* knowledge and identity. In the next chapter, I will more fully discuss the importance of relationships with the land to *Inniniwak* culture, knowledge, identity, and politics.

Chapter 2: Importance of the land to Indigenous sovereignty

One of the main arguments of this work is that the concept of Indigenous sovereignty, particularly *Inniniwak* sovereignty in northern Manitoba, is solidly placed upon a multifaceted foundation. Throughout this work, including this section, I argue that one base of this foundation is relationship with the land. Manuel and Posluns puts forward the idea of land as relationship (6). This is true in many Indigenous communities but my knowledge of these relationships and their implications of Indigenous sovereignty is centred on *Inniniwak* communities in northern Manitoba. Robert Flett states, “As a people we are inseparable from our relationships with mother earth, relationships that are developed over thousands of years. Our relationship with mother earth on the basis of our language, history, spirituality and our culture. This is the foundation of our worldview and it is key to our survival” (Manitoba CEC, “6 Nov. 2013” 2406). As Flett clearly indicates, relationships with the land are integrated into many aspects of *Inniniwak* life and culture and transcend many of the perceptions of relationships with the environment that are held by Western, capitalist society. Relationships with the land directly interact with and are integrated into *Inniniwak* language, politics, culture, food sovereignty, treaties, and nearly every other aspect of *Inniniwak* lives. Throughout this chapter, I will discuss the many ways in which relationships with the land are fundamentally connected to Indigenous sovereignty and the importance of relationships with land to many facets of *Inniniwak* society and culture.

Misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples

As non-Indigenous peoples recognized the importance of relationship with land to Indigenous peoples, there were attempts made to misrepresent Indigenous peoples in order to undermine that relationship and prevent it from opposing colonization. Through a combination of representing Indigenous peoples as either “merely wandering” over the land as nomads or gaining “mere subsistence” from the land, colonial forces work to remove relationship with land from discourse about Indigenous peoples and undermine a basis of their sovereignty and positions of resistance (Feit, “Territories” 112). In many ways, this connects with Pasternak’s discussion of settler colonialism when stating, “replacement is embedded in the institutional logic of settler colonialism and in the structure of jurisdiction” (147).

Arguably one of the most challenging misrepresentations that are forced upon Indigenous peoples is that of the term “nomadism.” A consistent representation of Indigenous peoples in history is one of nomadism in which Indigenous peoples are perceived as “merely wandering” over the land without ‘settling’ or using the land in a way that is recognizable to Western society (Feit, “Territories” 112). This misrepresentation of nomadism is directly related to the misunderstanding held by Western society about the gathering and hunting way of life. As a result of this representation, Indigenous peoples are perceived as not having a long term, in depth relationship with specific areas or territories of land. This perception places Indigenous peoples in positions of disadvantage in relation to the Canadian government in regards to governance and control over territory (Feit, “Territories” 112).

Representing nomadism as purely “wandering” over the land without a connection to it leads to perceptions that Indigenous peoples have no concepts of ‘ownership’ or ‘title’ to lands. Although concepts of ownership may be different and individual ownership may be replaced with concepts of communal ownership, the perception of lack of ownership also provides reasoning for the government not including Indigenous peoples and knowledges into decision-making processes. With the combination of Western beliefs that treaties provided ownership of the land to the Crown and the mentality that Indigenous peoples have no ownership of land in the first place, the government is able to justify neglecting Indigenous peoples in their decision-making processes. Yet again, this is a misrepresentation of Indigenous societies that is both created by and supports the expropriation of Indigenous lands and prevention of Indigenous involvement in environmental decision-making. Niezen challenges this representation through discussing the land tenure approaches deployed in James Bay Cree society. He states, “control of areas of land and its resources is a conditional form of authority derived from social recognition of skill and responsibilities rather than an exchange or purchase that confers exclusive, binding rights of possession” (*Defending the Land*, 16). He goes on to discuss ‘ownership’ as connected to “social responsibilities that emphasize hunting expertise, leadership ability, and sharing” (*Defending the Land*, 17). Although there is recognition of ownership in these studies, Niezen and others recognize the concept of ownership is vastly different than that considered in Western society. However, they still argue for recognition of Indigenous connection to land and the relationships formed that include social responsibilities.

Connected to the representation of Indigenous peoples as “merely wandering” over land is the idea that the harvesting way of life is “mere subsistence” rather than a position of affluence. I will further discuss the affluence of Indigenous communities, particularly those that participate in the bush mode of production later; however, it is important to consider the implications of the “mere subsistence” discourse. “Elimination” of Indigenous peoples in settler colonialism is not only related to acquiring land and removing them from it (Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus* 19). Through the description of the gathering and hunting way of life as ‘merely subsistence’ without the ability to provide for a meaningful life for the people living that way of life, Indigenous societies have been relegated to positions of inferiority compared to Western societies (Sahlins 1; Berger 146). This tendency is in line with the history of colonization around the world and in North America in particular (Sahlins 1; Berger 146). Through the relegating of Indigenous ways of life to the past, natural resource extraction entities follow in the footsteps of historical colonial processes.

Finally, colonial efforts that seem to “eliminate” Indigenous peoples use the argument of a “vanishing race” to support moves towards absorbing Indigenous peoples into the mainstream mode of production while simultaneously removing them from their lands and destroying their relationship with land. Representations of Indigenous peoples as a “vanishing race” also create challenges for contemporary Indigenous peoples to be considered ‘authentically’ Indigenous when they do not fit the stereotypes that have been created through both present and past representations of them in literature, art, and theatre. LaRocque effectively captures this sentiment when stating, “we were wrapped in stereotypes and yet are generally expected to exude ‘uncontaminated’ indigeneity” (135). As Indigenous people in northern Manitoba continue to attempt to maintain relationship with land, they are undermined by colonial attempts to claim lack of “authenticity” based upon their use of “contemporary” tools in their continuation of the bush mode of production.

Bush Mode of Production

Indigenous communities in northern parts of what is now called Canada have and continue to participate in a bush mode of production. In order to understand this mode of production, I will first provide some background on the Marxist concept of “mode of production,” then review what Coulthard has termed the “bush mode of production.”

Marx states,

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life (Marx 11).

If we follow Marx's argument, the mode of production of a society has vast, if not fundamental, impact on the societies which deploy them and can have great implications for the processes of colonization. As I discussed earlier, a challenge facing Indigenous sovereignty in northern Manitoba is the continual efforts by Manitoba Hydro and government entities to replace relationships with the land and production based upon those relationships with skilled and unskilled labour work. This approach inherently attempts to remove Indigenous peoples from their own mode of production, what Coulthard has called the "bush mode of production" into the capitalist, bourgeois mode of production.

Coulthard deploys the concept of mode of production in his discussions of Indigenous alternatives to capitalism and the capitalist mode of production. He states,

In the 1970s the Dene Nation sought to curtail the negative environmental and cultural impacts of capitalist extractivism by proposing to establish an economy that would apply traditional concepts of Dene governance – decentralized, regional political structures based on participatory, consensus decision-making – to the realm of economy. At the time, this would have seen a revitalization of a bush mode of production, with emphasis placed on the harvesting and manufacturing of local renewable resources through traditional activities like hunting, fishing, and trapping, potentially combined with and partially subsidized by other economic activities on lands communally held and managed by the Dene Nation (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 171-172).

Coulthard's bush mode of production informs not only my own understanding of this concept but also my understanding of Indigenous sovereignty. As stated multiple times earlier in this work, I understand one foundation of Indigenous sovereignty as being relationship with land. The bush mode of production is a prominent aspect of this foundation of Indigenous sovereignty and is a

fundamental aspect of creating and maintaining relationship with land, as it is a prominent point of contact and interaction between Indigenous experts and the bush.

Relationships with land are expressed in a multitude of ways. Based on the work of Karl Marx, Peter Kulchyski and Glen Coulthard have both discussed and emphasized the bush mode of production as an important contribution of northern Indigenous peoples to discussions of resistance to capitalism (“Bush Sites/Bush Stories”; Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 171-172). Through participation in the bush mode of production, northern Indigenous peoples have important understandings of ethics and responsibilities that are not held in capitalist societies and states (Kulchyski, “Bush/Animals” 321-323). As a result, the bush mode of production is an immensely important social form in the countering of capitalism and the promotion of a more beneficial society for all peoples, lands, and societies.

As the argument set forward in this work bases relationships with the land as a foundation of Indigenous sovereignty as well as an important aspect of *Inniniwak* culture, society, and political power, the bush mode of production is also an immensely important aspect of *Inniniwak* society. The bush mode of production plays a prominent role in creating and allowing relationships with the land. Through participation in the bush mode of production, *Inniniwak* community members have the ability to not only create and maintain these relationships, but also support their survival in the capitalist mode of production through the reduction of grocery costs, increased health benefits that can overcome health concerns that are brought about by industrial food production and consumption associated with capitalism, and potentially provide additional income through the sale of different products that are created through participation in the bush mode of production (Berkes 204; Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 58-59; Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 563, 565-566). As a result, the bush mode of production has been able to perpetuate itself despite the constant both conscious and unconscious attempts of capitalism to overcome and remove the bush mode of production. Additionally, through actions like selling some products of the bush mode of production, *Inniniwak* have been able to subvert the capitalist mode of production in order to continue, support, and perpetuate the bush mode of production while also using it to support the creation and maintenance of relationships with the land for the youth of the communities. Through this participation in the capitalist mode of production in order to maintain the bush mode of production, *Inniniwak* community members

have been able to show youth that there are ways in which the bush mode of production is able to maintain its position as a potential means of sustenance. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this work, the formerly successful whitefish fishery in the community of South Indian Lake is a perfect example of the ways in which *Inniniwak* people have been able to participate in the capitalist mode of production as a means of maintaining and supporting the bush mode of production.

Resulting from participation in the bush mode of production, many northern *Inniniwak* communities gain major benefits from their interactions with the land. Being on the land is a necessary aspect of the bush mode of production and this way of life involves great activity and the consumption of healthy food (Kamal et al. “A Recipe for Change” 563). As nets are set and animals are harvested from the land, individuals participating in the bush mode of production regularly participate in intense activity that helps to keep them healthy and in good shape. Activities like hauling quartered moose or pulling nets requires strength and endurance that creates a healthier life through participation in it. Additionally, actions like trapping or fishing in the winter require travel through deep snow that can be done through the use of snow machines in many instances but also requires foot travel through snow. Robert Spence has mentioned the immensely positive health experiences he has had on his traditional family territory during the winter trapping season (Personal Interview). During his trapping time, he travels by foot from dawn until dusk checking traps and returning harvested animals back to his camp (Robert Spence, personal interview).

Physical activity inherent to bush life is supported by the healthy food that is produced from the land. There are multiple different foods and medicines that are consistently harvested from the land through the bush mode of production which can contribute to good health (Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 563). Meats from the land, like those obtained from moose and caribou, contribute to health as they “can be both a source of protein and minerals and contain less fat and cholesterol than commercial meats” (Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 563). Different plants provide sustenance and medicine to help keep those participating in the bush mode of production healthy enough to continue their activities (Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 563). Although these foods are objectively healthier than many of the profit-oriented foods produced in the southern-capitalist areas of the country, they are also culturally appropriate

and support Indigenous understandings of their relationships with the land and beings that give themselves to the people. These relationships are immensely important to the bush life and *Inniniwak* culture. One prominent example of the importance of relationships with the land and the cultural importance of food harvesting and production is the concept of *oochinehwin*. *Oochinehwin* is a concept that addresses the importance of relationships with beings that give themselves to harvesters and the success of future harvests (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 63-64). This concept establishes that mistreatment of animals or other beings that are harvested for the people will lead to the same mistreatment coming back upon the people (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). In the case of animals that give themselves for sustenance, mistreatment of the animal or its remains can result in the animal not presenting itself or giving itself up again in the future (Robert Spence, personal interview). As a result, food that is produced in the capitalist mode of production is not culturally appropriate and challenges the food that is produced in the bush mode of production.

Through its existence and foundation, the bush mode of production acts as a direct contradiction to some of the underlying perceptions of the capitalist mode of production. A combination of the ethics underpinning the bush mode of production and the differing conceptions of human motivation and affluence, the bush mode of production provides an alternative means of creating and producing the necessary aspects of society to those of capitalism and counters the perception that dispossession and expropriation of lands has been completed. Indigenous peoples throughout Canada and their use of the bush mode of production in particular provide a constant reminder that the land has not been expropriated, that it is still capable of providing for the people, and that relationships with the land are far more important and deeply embedded than just the mere sale or equitable transition of ownership of the land.

First and foremost, the bush mode of production provides an alternate definition of affluence that has been described by scholars like Marshall Sahlins. Peoples that participate in gathering and hunting as their primary mode of production and means of sustenance have been consistently defined as merely reaching subsistence, a term that necessarily positions this mode of production as only capable of providing the minimum amount of sustenance possible and unable to provide a satisfying standard of living. Additionally, this description allows for the establishment of an idea of societal evolution from 'subsistence' modes of production through

multiple stages until finally reaching capitalism. However, Sahlins shows that gathering and hunting societies (in the case of northern Manitoba this is what I have been calling the bush mode of production) are actually affluent and in reality spend less time working to meet their primary needs than those working in a capitalist mode of production (Sahlins, 14-32). Given this information, it is clear the gathering and hunting lifestyle is not one of mere subsistence and difficulty obtaining food (Sahlins 32-33). As a result, this establishes capitalism as more inefficient in providing the necessities for survival than the bush mode of production and counters the arguments that gathering and hunting provides only subsistence, not sustenance.

Integral to the discussion of the affluence the bush mode of production provides are also differing conceptions of affluence and meeting needs. Sahlins argues, “to assert that the hunters are affluent is to deny then that the human condition is an ordained tragedy, with man the prisoner at hard labor of a perpetual disparity between his unlimited wants and his insufficient means” (1). Understanding this perception of affluence and means of meeting needs provides us with a different way of viewing the bush mode of production. If affluence does not require “unlimited wants” and “insufficient means,” the bush mode of production offers us other ways of viewing and satisfying wants and needs that simultaneously provides counter arguments to the capitalist mode of production.

One of the fundamental aspects of the bush mode of production is the concept of responsibility for the land and to the land. As stated earlier, the bush mode of production counters capitalism through its support for and preference towards sustainability and future sustenance over profit and short-term gains. Responsibility for the land is one of the many ways in which this approach is acted upon and a concept through which future generations are taught to perpetuate this mode of production. Responsibility to and for the land does not strictly pertain to protection of the land or ecosystems but is expanded to all animals that inhabit the area and places equal importance to all that would otherwise be ignored by Western entities, like Western science (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). This responsibility positions many who work and live within the bush mode of production against any form of project or proposal that would place the scales of responsibility between the people and the land in an unbalanced position. In the case of this work, this responsibility is a strong basis upon which *Inniniwak* community members who oppose the construction of hydroelectric generating stations situate themselves.

Capitalism's consistent need to clear land and dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands in order to perpetuate the consumptive nature of capitalism fundamentally undermines and reduces the ability of Indigenous peoples to continue not only their relationships with their land but also the healthy benefits that are brought forward by participation in the bush mode of production. Consistent failure to obtain healthy food from the land and fears surrounding the pollution of food sources create a requirement for store-bought foods (Niezen *Defending the Land*, 87-88). These foods are immensely expensive and significantly less healthy than the food that was harvested from the land in the past (Niezen, *Defending the Land*, 87-88). Combined, these impacts create both financial and health challenges for communities in the north. Those who are able to afford food from the store are still faced with the challenges of nutrient deficient food. This food can lead to astonishingly high rates of diabetes and other diet related health challenges (Waldram, "Falling Through the Cracks" 69).

Traditional knowledge and the gathering and hunting way of life are immensely important to not only the success of the community in defending the land and obtaining sustenance from it, but it also provides a sense of identity for communities and allows for healthier lives (Carlson, 257). Loss of traditional knowledge prevents Indigenous communities from being able to obtain medicines from that land that their ancestors used while flooding of lands and augmented water flow regimes destroy many of the plants that provide medicine for communities (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 59). Finally, Indigenous languages are connected to the lands and territories upon which they formed (McLeod, 19). As *Inniniwak* are forced off of the land and into wage labour economies they face the challenge of language loss.

Cree

Throughout my time travelling in the north, I have had the pleasure of meeting a good number of *Inniniwak* people with different experiences, knowledges, and ways of making a living. In many instances, these people speak or understand at least some Cree, or *Inninimowin*. In some of these cases, the people are very much fluent in the language and, although they tend to speak English to and around me, they converse with others in their language. Within the communities, people like William and Hilda Dysart or Robert Spence will have short conversations or give quick commands in *Inninimowin* to whomever they know will understand

it. I have mentioned to many of them that I have taken some *Inninimowin* classes at the University of Manitoba and am trying to learn the language and in many instances they immediately try to teach me some basic phrases. It never fails that my first steps into Hilda's house are met with a big hug followed by an exclamation of "*api!*" In *Inninimowin*, "*api*" is a command that means "sit down." Hilda always reminds me of this after she says the word and points to a chair at her kitchen table as she goes about making tea and coffee for whoever else is present with me or in the house at the time.

Although I haven't done any real 'research' into the varying uses of *Inninimowin* in different circumstances during my time in the north, it seems to me as though being on the land brings out the use of *Inninimowin* more. Hilda always mentions quick, short commands to me when we're in South Indian Lake, but the minute we make it out onto the island for *Kewekapawetan*, it seems like the *Inninimowin* becomes even more common. This may be a result of the regular visits of Hilda to the camps of others and vice versa, but regardless of the reasoning, *Inninimowin* is very present during *Kewekapawetan*. One of the main and most prominent aspects of *Kewekapawetan* is teaching the youth of the community about their heritage, the community's history, and the importance of the land and how Hydro has impacted it. Constant discussions in *Inninimowin*, although not necessarily used in a traditional teaching method, can be helpful to the youth not only through immersion in the language but also in connecting the language to camp first, then *Kewekapawetan* second, and finally the land third. These connections are very much based in the inherent connection of *Inninimowin* to place and to the land of the *Inniniwak* as a whole.

These connections are recognized not only by scholars like Neal McLeod (19) but are also very present when discussing the language and the land with fluent speakers like Robert Spence. While out at camp, Robert was surrounded by a number of people who are fluent in the language or know enough to be able to understand what he is saying if he speaks to them using it. As a result, Robert spoke with many of the older men at our camp or neighbouring camps in *Inninimowin*, even if they chose to respond to him in English. Nearly every day that I was with him, Robert would pull his boat up alongside his uncles who were using a camp nearby but would travel past our camp to hunt, fish, or collect medicines and teas. Every time we would pull up next to them, Robert would switch almost exclusively to *Inninimowin* with one of his

uncles responding in kind and the other switching between *Inninimowin* and English. Using *Inninimowin* wasn't solely for discussing the land while in a boat during that trip, however. In many instances while we were building the new cabin, Robert and the Elder who travelled with him would converse in *Inninimowin* to plan out what to do next and how the build was coming along. They would occasionally give commands to others in the camp or joke with the children in camp in the language and taught me a few things by saying them in *Inninimowin* then reciting the command in English.

Robert told me a story of one interaction with a high level Hydro employee that I think very effectively summarizes the connection of the language to the land, and as a result, the implications of Hydro's destruction of the land on the *Inninimowin* language. This story takes place during a trip north with Hydro employees to review damages along the Churchill River, I believe following the flooding of spring and summer, 2017. During this trip, one of the high level employees was sitting next to Robert in the helicopter. As they flew over the Churchill River she began to ask him the *Inninimowin* place-names for different areas. Robert told her the names of different rivers and lakes, islands and peninsulas, all the while remembering the land and the language. At one point during the trip, she looked over to Robert and asked him the name of a set of islands. He looked over at her and calmly said, "I don't know the name of those islands. You guys made me forget them." Robert's response recognizes the connection of the language to the land and challenges Hydro directly by stating that its actions have removed a source of knowledge from him that he has a right to know. Knowledge that was passed down for generations and centuries was withheld from him as a result of Hydro's actions. Through a combination of flooding, challenges of travelling on the land, and the inability to access certain areas with Elders has resulted in a loss of knowledge that prevents Robert from being able to remember the names and stories of some locations in the north. As Hydro continues the destruction of the north with its use of the Augmented Flow Program as well as its continued construction of generating stations, power corridors, roads and gravel pits, and converter stations, Hydro continues to remove and destroy knowledge that has its roots in centuries of experience and knowledge construction. As the place-names of different locations throughout the north are lost, so is knowledge that could be fundamental to the survival of the *Inniniwak* people, the citizens of Manitoba, and very possibly the inhabitants of Mother Earth. If Hydro is planning on

continuing its destructive march towards further generating stations, it needs to effectively address the permanent loss of knowledge of the *Inniniwak*.

Connection to the land

Leanne Simpson, discussing the documentation of Indigenous knowledges, effectively argues the importance of connections with the land to Indigenous education and the future of Indigenous children. She states, “Rather than documenting knowledge we should be protecting the land and the Indigenous processes for the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge to younger generations. In other words, we must strengthen the oral tradition, teach children how to learn from the land and how to understand the knowledge of the land” (Simpson “Anticolonial Strategies” 380). She also argues “the land must once again *become* the pedagogy” (Simpson *We Have Always Done* 160). Importance of and connection with the land have been extremely common themes throughout my research in northern Manitoba.

A prominent theme of everything I’ve mentioned to this point in this work is the connection to land that harvesters in northern Manitoba have and the strength of that connection in confrontations with Manitoba Hydro and resistance to its continued actions. These connections not only provide a basis from which to resist and a knowledge system that directly contradicts much of what that capitalism and Hydro promote, but they also support resurgence within the individual communities in the north as well as the connections and relationships across northern Manitoba between communities. Although I have spent very little time with Les Dysart from South Indian Lake and Robert Spence from Split Lake at the same time, they have a clear relationship as a result of their connections to the Churchill River. Robert jokingly mentioned at a lunch once that included myself, Les Dysart, and Will Braun, that he knows he’s gone too far upstream along the Churchill River when he sees the barrels of guns sticking out of the treeline, indicating he has entered South Indian Lake territory. Of course, Robert does not mean to suggest that there is animosity with South Indian Lake or that he fears for his life around people from South Indian Lake, but instead is indicating his recognition of their rights to their territory as well as his lack of rights in their territory. After making this joke, Robert was of course met with laughter but was also invited by Les to visit South Indian Lake and his territory. Fundamental to the relationship between harvesters from these two communities, as well as those from other communities, is relationships with different parts of the land. In this particular

instance, the relationship between Les and Robert is very much based on their individual and familial relationships with the Churchill River. However, the lunch that brought us all together was actually meant to be addressing the massive flooding that exceeded regulations stipulating the water levels of Southern Indian Lake in the spring of 2017. That year, Manitoba Hydro, as usual, was holding back as much water as possible on Southern Indian Lake in order to have it available for high demand times. However, they seem to have failed to account for the thawing of snow and ice from a major snow storm in late March and early April. This failure resulted in immense flooding throughout the region and the complete flushing of the Churchill River with much of the water they had failed to release from Southern Indian Lake prior to the thaw (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1110). Yet again, the lunch returns to relationships between individuals and communities as a result of their relationship with the Churchill River and all that call it home. I had visited South Indian Lake after the snow storm but prior to flooding and saw the massive amount of snow present in the community. During the extremely short time I was in South Indian Lake, the snow began to melt and it was clear that the lake would flood if Hydro did not release the water. As the snow melted, deep trenches formed in the gravel roads in South Indian Lake. The true power and strength of the water was on clear display. Hydro’s approach to management devastated the community and many harvesters that continue their relationships with the land along the shores of Southern Indian Lake and the Churchill River (Les Dysart, Personal Interview; Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

Following this trip to South Indian Lake and the subsequent lunch meeting in Winnipeg, I was able to make a trip to Robert’s traditional family territory. I’ve mentioned this trip multiple times so far but I think it is important that I clearly indicate the timing of my trip. I visited the Churchill River in the fall following the immensely destructive flooding. In my eyes, the land and water was beautiful. I have some understanding of the destruction of hydropower production from my visits to communities along the Nelson River and was able to recognize some of these same damages to the Churchill, but the land as a whole was so much ‘cleaner,’ for lack of a better word. Obviously, based on the amount of time I have spent discussing the trip in this work, it was immensely powerful and humbling for me. Everything I believed I knew prior to the trip was dwarfed by the immensity of the knowledge and experience that was shown to me by Robert, the Elder at camp, and others who were participating in the camp. In many ways, the

entirety of Robert's family shared their knowledge with me without even being present at camp. All along the doors of the main building as well as on the walls in the form of maps, their knowledge was presented to me in writings, drawings, and signatures. Most prominently, there is a map set up on the wall of the building that displays, in great detail, the area surrounding the camp. All throughout the map are little markings indicating who shot a moose, how big it was, and what year the harvesting took place. As I looked over the map, I could, to some minor extent, trace the history of Robert's family on the land for the past 10-20 years. The knowledge this map carries doesn't end with the mere recognition of a successful harvest, but also shows the success of harvests over different years, the sightings of moose that were not shot, and the size of moose that were harvested. In many ways, this document is more beneficial to the successful conservation of the moose population in northern Manitoba than any government document. Combined with the information of past trips written on the door of the cabin (both front and back sides of the door were filled) the family is able to continue their relationship with this land in a way that benefits them while also acknowledging the animals that were harvested and working towards keeping their population strong for the future generations that will hopefully return to this stretch of the Churchill River and continue harvesting as their ancestors have done.

Spence family knowledge is not limited to these markings on the map or knowledge of the population of moose in the territory. Robert has spent a vast amount of time in this territory, particularly over the past 18 years during which he has had a permanent camp, and knows it better than many can imagine. He chose to set up camp in this area as a result of the stories he was told by his late grandfather and the richness and history of the territory that had been passed down to him from his Elders (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). During my first night at camp, Robert took me out to experience the land and gain some minor understanding of what relationships with the land entail. While we were on the river, I had the opportunity to look around during dusk and see what the environment is like with sunlight still available. However, as our trip continued the dusk rapidly turned to darkness. We had spotlights with us and I trusted Robert's ability to get us back to camp however he saw fit. As we sat on the water with the engine off and the darkness creeping ever closer I experienced one of the most true feelings of calmness and meditation I have experienced in my life. After some time of sitting and experiencing the peace that the land can provide, Robert decided it was time to head back to

camp. Despite the light given off by the moon and stars, I could not see a single thing beyond a few feet in front of me. As a result of my near complete blindness in the dark, I expected we would travel at a lower speed with the spotlights on at all times, scanning for the shoreline and reefs. Instead, Robert pushed the motor to the same speed we had used at the beginning of our trip with full sunlight. As if that was not impressive enough for the immensely unaware southerner that I am, Robert only sporadically turned on his spotlight, seemingly to ‘double-check’ that he was in the middle of the river as he suspected. We would seemingly randomly turn left and right throughout our trip back to camp and with each turn I had the unsettling feeling we were moving rapidly towards the shoreline and would crash. Despite my fears, Robert continued forward at full speed and before I knew it we were back at camp. Throughout the trip we never hit a rock, reef, or the shoreline. As far as I can tell, Robert knows the river well enough to almost literally travel it blindfolded or in complete darkness. Although I have not asked him for clarification at this point, there is a part of me that wonders if his use of the spotlight was to check for moose rather than to check his location in the river.

Connections with the land go beyond knowledge of animal behaviour or the layout of a river system. As Robert Spence says, “we share the same fate as the endangered Churchill River sturgeon” (Personal Interview). The sturgeon from this quote are a population of sturgeon that traditionally lived along the Churchill River. Robert speaks about these sturgeon as sharing the story of the people of Tataskweyak Cree Nation and that the people must, and are, fighting for the sturgeon. Tataskweyak Cree Nation, in collaboration with scientific consultants they have hired, have been tracking the migration paths of this population of sturgeon (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). They have found significant migrations, including into the Little Churchill River, on years when the water levels are high along the Churchill River (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Despite serious challenges to these migrations, the sturgeon remember the path and continue to make the trip whenever they are able.

Animal Helpers

Animals provide more help to harvesters in northern Manitoba than by just giving themselves up as game. A prominent animal in this regard is the whiskey jack, also known as the grey jay. Both Elder Noah Massan and Robert Spence have shared the importance of the whiskey jack through story and explanation of their mutual bond with these birds.

During our time on the land at Robert's camp, the whiskey jacks were constantly present, particularly after we got the moose on my first day. Although the whiskey jacks would fly away whenever we got close to them, they spent a large amount of time flying into camp to pick up scraps that were lying around. When I asked Robert about what they were and what they were doing, he told me about the mutually beneficial relationship he had with the whiskey jack. They benefit greatly from the meat and other food that he leaves outside and he benefits from them 'cleaning up' his camp for him.

Elder Noah Massan has a very different yet equally positive relationship with whiskey jack. When Noah was younger, he went out on a hunting trip to get some caribou. He didn't know it at the time, but his dad would later tell him to never follow caribou that eat while they move. However, at the time, Noah did not understand the serious implications of attempting to track and hunt caribou that eat while they move. Noah started his day by snow-shoeing after a herd of caribou. As he travelled, Noah began to realize these caribou were not stopping for their food. He decided to continue following them in the hopes of getting one to take home. Noah travelled a great distance that day and began to get tired from all of his walking and tracking.

As the day grew towards a close, Noah became tired from the travel and decided to sit down to recover before continuing on. Noah got comfortable, sat, and rested. Suddenly, Noah was startled by what felt like someone shaking him. He had fallen asleep in the snow while resting. He looked over to see what had awoken him and noticed a whiskey jack sitting on his shoulder. Through the work of the whiskey jack, Noah woke up and realized he was in danger of falling asleep in the snow and freezing cold temperatures. He immediately got up and decided to walk back to Gillam. If it were not for the whiskey jack, Noah may have frozen in the snow following a herd of caribou.

One final example of animals as helpers to harvesters is crows and their relationship to location. As Robert Spence has told me, harvesters do not always accomplish an immediate kill shot on large animals like moose. As a result, they have to move through the bush to find the game they shot. Additionally, many harvesters in the north will gut the animal the day they get it and leave it over night before quartering the animal as a means of making the meat more tender. In both cases, it can be somewhat difficult to find the game when it comes time to quarter it. Crows will regularly circle over the top of dead animals, which can help harvesters find their

game. Yet again the relationship that has formed is mutually beneficial, as the success of hunters provides food for the crow while the crow marking the location for the harvester helps the harvester obtain the meat they need from the animal they killed. This relationship is not unique to northern Manitoba or just crows. Kulchyski recounts a similar relationship in his work “Bush/Animals” in which both the Inuit and Dene pay close attention to ravens who guide them to prey animals. As a result of these interactions, the harvesters are able to obtain some meat and ravens benefit from some of the remains that are left behind (Kulchyski “Bush/Animals”, 323).

Beaver Helps Clear Camp

During the annual *Kewekapawetan* gathering in South Indian Lake in 2018, I spoke with Hilda Dysart about the first few years of the gathering. Some of the Elders in the community made it clear they wanted to return to the island and celebrate the community’s history and what life was like before the destruction of the land and the collapse of the fishery. Many people from the community, including the Dysart family, decided to set up camp sites on the island in locations that were historically occupied by their ancestors. For the Dysarts, this meant the point of the island that can be easily seen from the “Black Dock” in South Indian. As we were standing in this wide-open clearing that at that point was filled with tents and a kitchen, Hilda informed me that where we were standing had been full of trees when they first came to the island to prepare for the gatherings. Much of the island had been “reclaimed” by nature after the community was forced to relocate (Hilda Dysart, Personal Interview). When the Dysarts decided where they wanted to set up camp, they started the process of clearing the area and making room for people to set up tents and other living arrangements for the gathering. After doing some preliminary work, they left the camp alone for a while. When they came back, they realized that a beaver had taken up residence in the area while they were gone and had cleared the entire point of trees. As a result, the Dysarts only had to clear some of the stumps that had been left behind (Hilda Dysart, Personal Interview). The beaver had helped clear the area for the return of the Dysart family and to this day the camp is full to the brim with people from the Dysart family coming to visit or stay for the *Kewekapawetan* gathering.

Place Names, the Land, and Sovereignty at Recluse Lake

Place names in some Indigenous languages provide information beyond just a marker of the location that allows for easy reference. Basso discusses the importance of understanding

place names and the knowledge that ‘sits’ within them. Stories related to the land carry important messages to Indigenous peoples aware of the stories and the underlying cultural contexts (Basso). Learning stories about certain locations can provide a more nuanced understanding of deeper cultural systems that support cultural compliance and provide education including the teaching of community history (Basso 6-8).

Connected with place names and stories of different locations is the importance of recognizing other-than-human beings. McGregor argues that an important aspect of being on the land and forming relationships with the land is recognizing that relationships must go beyond solely considering “humanity” but instead recognizing “all our relations” (McGregor 494-495). As stated earlier, being on the land also provides support for Indigenous languages that are intricately connected to it (McLeod 19), provide health benefits (Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 563), and provide education and knowledge that could otherwise disappear despite efforts to document it (Simpson, “Anticolonial Strategies” 380-381).

In the late winter/early spring of 2019, I, along with a photographer, travelled to Recluse Lake with Robert Spence. Recluse Lake is approximately 50 kilometres north of Split Lake. However, the trip requires about 100 kilometres of travel along a snowmobile trail that is usually broken and maintained by Robert (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). These trails included important locations for the people of Tataskweyak Cree Nation and Robert is one of the few people who still has a strong understanding of and connection to the trails. Throughout this experience, which I will discuss in greater detail later, we had the opportunity to learn both from Robert and the land through the stories that Robert shared and the experiences of being on the land.

Before making this trip, Robert warned us in advance that the trip would take approximately 5 hours of travel on the snowmobile with limited stops for a quick coffee or smoke break. At this point, I had never ridden, nor driven, a snowmobile in my life. As such, I suspected it would take longer than the scheduled 5 hours but also trusted in Robert’s abilities to make sure I would not get lost.

We left around 1 pm from Split Lake after a morning of preparing and planning the trip. Everyone was aware of my inexperience with the machines and multiple people warned me about sticking directly in Robert’s trail to avoid sinking, flipping, or falling off the snowmobile.

As I prepared myself for the trip I thought about the time the sun would set and became increasingly worried that it would result in us arriving late to the lake and that my first trip on a snowmobile would take place at least partially in the dark.

The first hour of the trip was a harrowing experience for me. Robert took off like a shot knowing all of the trails and the speed at which he could take the turns in the bush. I was completely unable to keep up and in at least 3 separate spots either went off the trail and sunk the snowmobile in deep snow or hit a bunch of willows and rolled the snowmobile on its side. Luckily, the photographer who was with us was following me to make sure I would not be left behind, stranded in the bush as a result of my own incompetence. With every stop, I was reminded I needed to keep up if we were going to make it to the lake before sundown.

After almost exactly five hours, we arrived at the lake. The sun was setting over the serene view of a vast frozen lake with stands of trees surrounding us on every side. We unloaded the snowmobiles, brought some wood inside to start a fire, and began the process of cooking some food. Although the trip seemed to take exactly as long as Robert had stated it would, it was clear I had slowed us down enough that we would not be able to do much on the lake that day. I went to sleep that night exhausted and certain I was not prepared for this trip.

The next day we woke up and started the process of eating and preparing for a day out on the lakes and rivers in the area. We spoke and discussed some of the challenges facing Split Lake, the difficulty of getting youth out on the land, and the immense knowledge of the “old-timers” who lived in and used this area all throughout Robert’s life. Throughout that day we travelled around the area, did some ice fishing, of which the only success came from the willow branches with line tied to them rather than the actually designed ice fishing rods, and learned about the vast network of trails, rivers, and lakes that the ‘old-timers’ used so effectively. The day was cold but we learned a great deal from the conversations we had with Robert.

While we were at Recluse Lake, Robert discussed some of the pressing issues in the community. One of the most prominent issues, an issue that has been facing the community since I first began working with Robert in 2014, was the Keeyask Project. During these discussions, Robert talked about the increasing feeling of anger growing within the community about the projects. With the project being delayed and the budget ballooning at a seemingly astronomical rate, the community was truly feeling the dismay and disgust that comes from a

feeling of being lied to or having the proverbial wool pulled over your eyes. Obviously, some of the financial hopes and dreams of proponents the partnership are becoming increasingly unlikely with the constant increase in the budget of the project, which seems to inherently requires the community to spend more of its own money to purchase a portion of the generating station.

However, Robert also eloquently described the feelings of many others within the community during the vote. He described the vote as being completed with the feeling of “having a gun to our heads” (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). During these votes, many within the community were acutely aware that Manitoba Hydro would want, and they believed would indeed get, the generating station regardless of what the community decided (Dipple, “Social Licence” 282). With the knowledge of what previous generating stations did, and still do, to the land and the communities, many within the community saw the vote as choosing between getting some benefits from something that would destroy the land or being completely left out of yet another project on their territory. This perceived “gun to the head” pushed many into a position of only one option, “support” the project in the hopes that maybe there could be some minor benefit for the community and the people. As Robert pointed out, that is not a true partnership.

It was during these same conversations that Robert put forward an idea that was rather surprising to me. Out of the blue, Robert looked to us and said, “you two are probably the first ‘boat people’ to travel that trail in the winter time by snowmobile since the fur trade.” The more he thought about it the more certain he was that no non-Indigenous people had travelled that trail in the winter in over 100 years. As one of the last people to know the trails throughout the north, Robert would be the most likely person to know this information, as hard as it may be to believe.

This idea that the photographer and I were the first non-Indigenous people to travel the trail to Recluse Lake since the fur trade directly relates to the sovereignty of Indigenous nations and communities as a result of their relationships with the land. Indigenous communities had strong and mutually beneficial relationships with the land prior to European claims of sovereignty in the hemisphere and these relationships remain intact. Despite the best efforts of colonization, there are those within Indigenous communities who remember these relationships and attempt to maintain them within their communities. Throughout our trip to Recluse Lake, Robert clearly expressed his relationships with the land through harvesting from the land,

remembering the trails on the land, telling stories about his and the ‘old-timers’ relationships with the land, and through his planning of ways to pass these relationships on to future generations. As Robert was telling these stories, planning these events and camps, and engaging with the land, he was enacting his sovereignty as *Innnew* in that territory. As he strengthened the ties with the land that are constantly strained by his responsibilities as councillor of Tataskweyak Cree Nation, Robert was enacting his sovereignty and reinvigorating it. In many ways, Robert’s strength comes from that land and he uses that strength to protect and support it while also attempting to support future generations and others in his community to experience that strength giving power of the land.

In conversations with a few people from Split Lake and others who know Robert, there is a clear understanding that the experiences he has had in his life have all been leading to the point he is at now. Learning from the ‘old-timers’ and living on the land as a guide, fisherman, trapper, and harvester have all been leading to the point of supporting and strengthening his community as a councillor. Robert has a plethora of knowledge that would make the most expert of witnesses question their validity. This knowledge has been entrusted to Robert with the goal of him using it to support and protect the land from which it came and the community that struggles to maintain it in the face of opposition from the state and its actors. This trip to Recluse Lake was not only a means of Robert sharing the land with us to learn, but also a chance for him to recharge the strength he would need in order to face upcoming battles. Before we returned to Split Lake, Robert made it clear that just four days later he would make the 100 kilometre trip again for another day or two on the lake. Despite the cost of gas and the challenges of travel, Robert would make that trip yet again to maintain his relationships with the land.

During our trip on and around Recluse Lake, Robert told us the names and meanings of many of the locations in Cree. As I’ve mentioned elsewhere, being on the land seems to result in much more Cree being spoken, regardless of whether or not the people listening understand the language. Many of Robert’s stories, particularly while out on the land, consist of him reciting what someone had said to him as they said it, in Cree, then translating that same portion of the conversation into English for those of us who do not speak the language.

Throughout the trip, Robert would tell us the name of a location and, whenever possible, a story about that location. He told us all locations have stories and meaning behind and

affiliated with their names and attempted to tell us the meanings of all of the names he used (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). However, there were some names for different locations that he knew but he, himself a fluent speaker of the language, was unable to tell us the meaning of the name. These place names were “high Cree.” “High Cree” is a version of Cree that was spoken by the Elders of the past that was effectively cut off from current Elders and language speakers by a combination of residential schools and other forms of colonization (Fox Lake Cree Nation, 12). Many Elders have stories of their parents and Elders using the language when they were discussing issues they did not want their children and grandchildren to understand.

As a result of the loss of this form of Cree, some of the meanings behind the place names around Recluse Lake are lost to history. However, Robert still knows these names and other stories related to those locations. He teaches people these place names and the stories he does know for different areas as a way of maintaining his relationships with this land and with those late Elders who taught him.

Related to the “re-placing” of themselves on the land, Robert and others in the community are in the process of marking and recognizing locations in the bush that relate to their ancestral, and current, use of the land. During our trip to Recluse Lake, Robert made a few stops that were not solely for the purpose of allowing me to rest and recover from a journey for which I was most certainly not prepared. At a seemingly normal part of the trail through the bush, Robert stopped and shut off the engine of his snowmobile. He pulled out a roll of red marking tape and began to rip long strips off of it. As he did so, he pointed into the bush a ways and said there was a grave site. He showed us where the graves were, at least 30 feet from the trail in the bush, and continued to mark it so others, who would follow the next week, could do a more permanent job of marking the location. Following that stop, Robert continued forward through more bush only to stop again at a rather large clearing. The location was beautiful and bathed in light from a clearing in the canopy. Yet again he pulled off some of the tape and motioned to the clearing telling us that it was the location of an old church. He also pointed to a rusted out enamel pot hanging from the tree. Those pots were placed throughout the bush as an indicator of where people would stop along their trips to camp or for a food and tea break (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Robert told us people used to live all along the lake next to this spot in the bush and they were the ones who would use this church. He also informed us that after the

church was built, people who wished to practice sweat lodges and other religious practices not affiliated with Christianity had to do it in the surrounding hills as a way to hide it from the government which outlawed it (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). It was easy to understand why those who wished to practice a religion and get closer to their god or gods would choose this location. The clearing was beautiful and the sun shining through the tree tops provided an ethereal experience. On our return trip, the location was even more amazing than it had been only a few days prior. Maybe it was because I had finally learned how to effectively ride the snowmobile or maybe it was the lack of exhaustion in my body from the trip but the space, though I didn't stop, was filled with globules of snow attached to the junctures of tree limbs and trunk. As the sun shone through, I was amazed at the reflections off the snow.

Part of the reason for Robert's consistent stops along the trail to make preliminary markers on the land was a result of his knowledge. As an acolyte of sorts of the "old-timers," Robert learned much about the territory in his younger years and his continued maintenance of his relationships with the land positions him as one of the last to know the history and importance of some locations. As one of the last remaining people to know the trails throughout the Recluse Lake and greater Split Lake Resource Management Area, Robert is responsible for making sure important locations, like the grave site and church, are not forgotten and that the history and relationships between the people of TCN and this land remains. Robert's ability to look at a seemingly uniform shoreline of bush and spot a trail and know exactly where that trail leads is a testament to his knowledge and is a result of his relationships with the "old-timers." Resulting from these relationships and this knowledge, Robert explains an obligation to use that knowledge in a way that maintains it and extends its life in future generations. One of the best ways he can do that is through marking locations in the bush and helping youth and others within the community travel back on the land and "re-create" their relationships with the land. Through these processes, and the work of the TCN Chief and Council to remove barriers to being on the land, Robert and those in the community supporting these measures are asserting their sovereignty as the Tataskweyak Cree Nation.

It is important to note, as Robert and others from Split Lake continue to mark the land in remembrance of their ancestors and the relationships they had with the territory, they do so in a way that recognizes and affirms that relationship. These markings are done as an act of

sovereignty, relationship, and recognition. This is vastly different from the “marking of the land” that Manitoba Hydro does through its construction of generating stations, converter stations, and transmission corridors. It is important not only to recognize the difference in this marking of the land, but also the relationships that are established and maintained through the different approaches to and results of these vastly different markings of the land. Manitoba Hydro’s marking of the land is based in a relationship of domination and exploitation. Meanwhile, the marking of the land by land-users, Elders, and *Inniniwak* experts are a representation of a relationship that is based in respect, care, understanding of history, and acknowledgement of the specificity of the land.

Another means by which the current Chief and Council of Tataskweyak Cree Nation is asserting their sovereignty, and in many ways challenging the actions of Manitoba Hydro and the governments it represents, is through the creation and maintenance of community campsites and cabins (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Recluse Lake is one such example of community owned and operated campsites. The cabins built at Recluse Lake are open to all members of Tataskweyak Cree Nation and the community even owns some snowmobiles, sleds, and boats that people can use to access this campsite (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). The cabins are very well built and insulated to allow for year-round use and there are also maintenance cabins that contain nets and other essentials for while out on the land.

Tataskweyak Cree Nation has plans for many more of these camps. As Robert describes these plans, they seem to be an attempt by the community to “re-place” itself on the land. As more camps are built, transportation vehicles are purchased, and trails are maintained, more people in the community will be able to access the land as a result of the community removing some of the costly barriers to accessing the land. As Neal McLeod discusses, the Cree language, *Inniniwak* in this circumstance, is integrally tied to stories and the land (19). My own experiences with Robert, as discussed above, support this assertion and have shown me that when language speakers are on the land there is a higher likelihood that they will speak their language, usually with translation afterwards for the non-speakers. As access to the land is more available, those in the community who have been unable to access the land will do so and if they are speakers of the language they may use it more on the land. Additionally, anybody on the land with speakers may have a better chance of experiencing, hearing, and learning the language as

they spend more time on the land. Obviously, this has a great, positive impact on any youth that get out on the land and can help them learn important information about their homeland from Elders and knowledge-holders.

During the latter half of March, 2019 I had the chance to speak with Robert about some of the plans the community has for the land. This was shortly after the federal government had released their budget for 2019, which included some funding for Indigenous communities. During our conversation, Robert mentioned that he, as a representative, would be applying for “Indigenous Guardians” funding (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). This was a portion of the federal budget that would include funding for Indigenous peoples to monitor their environments (Skene). When I asked, Robert clarified that they were applying for funding to help get more people from the community out on the land and to maintain TCN’s position as guardians of their territory. Although unsaid, it was clear to me that Robert saw this funding as a means of helping to reinforce and maintain TCN’s position as guardians of the land in the face of the impacts of Manitoba Hydro’s operations. Following the flooding of 2017, which caused mass destruction and turmoil along the Churchill River and many argue resulted in the destruction of the rail line to Churchill, Manitoba, TCN has taken a strong and firm position in opposition to Manitoba Hydro, who claims they could not have seen the flooding coming and that they were not at fault in the flood (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). This position as guardian has been increasingly prevalent since the election of the Chief and Council in 2016 and the re-election of many of the same Councillors as well as Chief in 2018.

Tataskweyak Cree Nation was successful in their application for the “Indigenous Guardians” funding and has since set up a program to help get youth onto the land (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Through this program, the community has employed some youth from the community as “guardians” and have sent them out on the land with Elders and knowledge-holders to learn about the lakes and rivers (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Once trained, these young guardians will then take others out on the lake to share knowledge with them and help to further pass knowledge along to others and to future generations (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

Through these programs, TCN is in the process of “re-placing” themselves on the land through the “re-creation” of their relationships with the land. This is not to argue that those

relationships have disappeared or that the people do not have any relationships with their territory at all. Instead, this is meant to recognize that the relationships with the land that the ancestors of current TCN members had was different than the relationships many current TCN members have. This change is largely a result of destruction of the land as well as the results of the residential school experience, the construction of roads and railways through the territory, and the forced centralization of the community for bureaucratic purposes. These processes, combined with the required transition from living off the land to living in a wage-based economy, have removed many people from the land and created a disruption in the transfer of knowledge from Elders and “old-timers” to youth. Through creating and maintaining campsites and procuring the equipment necessary to get people out on the land, TCN is supporting the “re-creation” of some of these relationships between people who were removed from the land and the territory they call home.

Conclusion:

Relationships with the land are one foundation for Indigenous sovereignty in *Inniniwak* communities. Through the interconnections between relationships with the land, language, knowledges, and identity, Indigenous sovereignty is placed upon a strong and well-supported foundation. However, for this foundation to stay strong and support Indigenous sovereignty, relationships with the land must be maintained and supported into the future. As will be discussed later in this work, a primary approach to supporting Indigenous sovereignty is through supporting youth forming and maintaining their own relationships with the land. There are many challenges placed in front of *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba that hampers their ability to create and maintain these relationships. One primary hurdle is the destruction that has arisen out of the production of hydroelectricity along northern lakes and rivers. In the next chapter, I will discuss the many and intricate ways in which Manitoba Hydro’s operations in northern Manitoba have damaged or destroyed the land and made relationship with the land for *Inniniwak* Elders, land-users, knowledge-holders, and experts difficult to (re)create and maintain. Ultimately, this destruction, combined with previous impacts in the north, has major implications for *Inniniwak* sovereignty in northern Manitoba. Cumulative impacts from both hydropower production in northern Manitoba along with other environmentally damaging industries, like mining, erode relationships with the land as a foundation of Indigenous sovereignty.

Chapter 3: A History of Environmental and Social/Cultural Destruction in Northern Manitoba

Throughout the history of northern Manitoba since colonization, there have been a variety of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that have had a wide range of environmental and social impacts upon the communities of the north. Although these relationships ranged in their positive and negative impacts, the ultimate perpetuation and expansion of colonial control of the north and environmental destruction has brought immensely negative impacts upon *Inniniwak* sovereignty in the region.

Northern Canada has had a long history of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The historic fur trade placed Indigenous harvesters in positions in which they not only provided furs to the Hudson's Bay Company or Northwest Company, but in many instances also provided the food that was necessary for the survival of the traders at the posts (Carlson 71). Through the provision of food and furs to traders, a variety of relationships were created between Indigenous communities and fur trade posts. In some instances, the traders and Indigenous peoples created mutually beneficial relationships that included the provision of food for the other whenever one was struggling to gain sustenance (Carlson 71-85). However, the overall relationship between Indigenous communities and fur trade companies was unequal and positioned the traders in a position of power over Indigenous peoples (Tough 9). This does not negate the ability of Indigenous harvesters to attempt to gain the most out of their interactions with traders, including travelling to different posts to gain the most possible compensation for their furs or to make clear their protests against actions taken by traders at their nearest post (Carlson 87-88). Although some of the relationships established under the fur trade were paternalistic, they supported the continuation of harvesting from the land and living off of the land for many Indigenous communities throughout the north (Tough 9). These relationships established a means by which Indigenous communities were able to gain financial benefits, including the purchase of firearms and other supplies that were useful for living off of the land, through their relationships with the land and their abilities to harvest from it (Tough 9). However, Tough clearly argues that "the concept of paternalism, and not partnership, seems to capture the historic relationship between the HBC and Natives" (9). Relationships of inequality

and power over Indigenous peoples have clearly been perpetuated into contemporary environmental decision-making.

It is also important to consider that histories of the fur trade have been consistently researched in ways that create the perception that it was male dominated and fundamentally based on economics (Van Kirk 3). Scholars such as Jennifer Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk have challenged this history through their work attempting to recognize Indigenous women's experiences during the fur trade. Brown reviews the difference in relationship between Hudson's Bay and Northwest Company men and Indigenous women during the fur trade. Van Kirk addresses the foundation upon which the fur trade is based, which she argues is the social relationship between non-Indigenous "company" men and Indigenous women. She argues that the social history of the fur trade has been ignored but that it is necessary to consider this aspect of the fur trade "because it was not simply an economic activity, but a social and cultural complex that was to survive nearly two centuries" (Van Kirk, 2). The work of these scholars, among many others, has challenged Western conceptions of history through providing a different perspective on events that counters its normative patriarchal perspective. When considering both the history of environmental destruction in the north as well as the interactions between industry and Indigenous communities, it is important to consider not solely the male or economic aspects of these relationships but to recognize and prioritize the important positions of women and the ways in which these interactions go beyond solely economic relationships.

Following the period of the fur trade, northern Manitoba transitioned from the sale of furs to the sale of nickel and other minerals and metals through the establishment of the Inco nickel mine and the town of Thompson, MB. Thompson was established in 1957 after a successful exploration for nickel in the region ("History of Mining in Thompson & Area"). The nickel mine in Thompson resulted in massive environmental destruction (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 50). Charlotte Wastesicoot stated, "One of the biggest polluters, dangerous emissions come from this mine. And nobody, nobody has, I haven't heard anybody talk about that. The emissions from that mine from Thompson. We did just study, a little study on it. And according to our research, it is one of the biggest polluters of our environment" (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 50). In order to power the newly established nickel mine, the Kelsey Generating Station completed construction in 1961 along the Nelson River to provide the needed electricity to the mine

(“Generating Stations”). The combination of the establishment of Thompson and the creation of the nickel mine resulted in increased “development” in the region that would result in decades of destruction in the region, continuing until today.

Following the creation of the mine, the town of Thompson, and the construction of the Kelsey Generating Station, additional “development” was planned for the north that would ultimately result in the Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg Regulation projects (McCullum & McCullum, 103). I will discuss these projects later in this chapter, but as a result of their construction, Manitoba Hydro was able to continue with plans to “fully develop” the Nelson River. Elder Noah Massan worked on some of the generating stations in northern Manitoba and stated, “because I worked and I put a lot of dirt in the river, I’m sorry to say, I held my land or whatever, my community, I destroyed, I destroyed my community. I’m ashamed of it to say that. Because I worked in those dams, I got to see what really happened. What I see, the bush we destroyed, the creeks, everything, you know. I helped them doing that” (Manitoba CEC, “7 Jan. 2014” 6606-07).

Since the early 1900s, hydroelectric power has been used in different forms to help power and electrify the province. Initially, a small set of projects were used to power different municipalities (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 8, 9). For example, the Minnedosa plant was constructed to help power Brandon (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 8). These projects were relatively small scale compared to contemporary projects (“Generating Stations”). A number of generating stations were constructed along the Winnipeg River, starting with the Pinawa generating station in 1906 (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 9). This generating station was followed by the Pointe du Bois Generating Station, Great Falls Generating Station, Seven Sisters Generating Station, and Slave Falls Generating Station (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 9-15). During this same time frame, Manitoba began rural electrification projects (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 13). During and immediately following World War II, electricity in the province was produced by the Winnipeg Electric Company, City Hydro, and the Manitoba Power Commission (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 20-21). However in the post-war era the Manitoba Hydro Electric Board was formed to replace these entities (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 21, 24-25). In the 1960s, technology was created that allowed for long distance transmission of electricity, ultimately resulting in the transition from electricity

being produced in southern Manitoba to the construction of large-scale hydroelectric projects in the north (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 41).

However, as the province grew and more rural areas were being electrified, the requirement for more power turned eyes towards the north of the province. This resulted in the Grand Rapids and Kelsey Generating Stations in the north. The Grand Rapids Generating Station was the first station constructed in the north for the purposes of providing electricity to the provincial electricity grid (“Generating Stations”). The Kelsey Generating Station was constructed for the purposes of producing power for the Inco mining and smelting operations in the north but was later also connected to the provincial grid (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 29, 32).

The Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg Regulation Projects

The Churchill River Diversion is an interesting case study not only in the ability of northern communities, with southern allies, to create political change within Manitoba but also the ability of politicians to co-opt a movement for their own gain only to return to the status quo as soon as they are in office (McCullum & McCullum 106-107). Around the time of the Grand Rapids Generating Station and the Kelsey Generating Station, Manitoba started the process of reviewing northern river systems to ascertain the hydroelectric “potential” of the north (McCullum & McCullum 103). As a result of this process, the newly formed Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government received reports that the Churchill River’s slope to Hudson’s Bay was too gradual, however the Nelson River had great hydroelectric “potential” (Waldram, *River Runs* 118-119). However, “the waters of the Churchill River would not be wasted altogether. Roblin’s dream, and no doubt that of many innovative engineers, was to divert the water from the Churchill into the Nelson” (Waldram, *River Runs* 119).

The Progressive Conservative government of the time, under Premier Roblin, planned a high level diversion of the Churchill River that would result in up to a 10 metre increase in the water levels of Southern Indian Lake (Waldram, *River Runs* 119). Flooding of this level would have required the forced relocation of the entire community of South Indian Lake (McCullum & McCullum, 106). Despite this immensely negative impact, along with the destruction of a successful fishery and the livelihoods of the Indigenous community, the province did not consult with the Indigenous community at South Indian Lake, as they were perceived as “anachronisms

in the present age of technology” (Waldram, *River Runs* 121). The community only became aware of the plans to flood the lake after the plans were made public in the south (McCullum & McCullum, 106). After learning of the plans to destroy the lake and move the community, many from South Indian Lake began actively opposing the project.

As a result of the resistance from South Indian Lake, as well as attempts by academics and activists in the south to raise awareness about the immensely destructive plan and the legislation put in place to reduce effective resistance against it, the Progressive Conservative party lost power and was replaced by the New Democratic Party under Premier Ed Schreyer (McCullum & McCullum 106-107). Part of then-Premier Schreyer’s platform was in opposition to the Churchill River Diversion (McCullum & McCullum 106-107). However, shortly after gaining power the NDP promoted and pushed forward a “low-level” diversion that would “only” raise the water levels of Southern Indian Lake approximately 3 meters (Waldram, *River Runs* 119).

Prior to the construction of the Churchill River Diversion, the community of South Indian Lake was semi-decentralized. As with many communities in the north, the main community was a meeting place where children would live while they attended school, women would live during the winter, and where men would return between the trapping season and fishing season (Hilda Dysart, Personal Interviews). It was a location that contained a HBC store, a church or multiple churches, and in South Indian Lake there was also a school (Hilda Dysart, Personal Interviews). In South Indian Lake’s particular circumstance, the community was split along the east and west sides of a narrows (Hilda Dysart, Personal Interviews). The west side of the narrows contained many of the “amenities” that I mentioned earlier. As Manitoba Hydro began the process of constructing the Churchill River Diversion with its new “low level” flooding plan, there was a realization that part of the community would need to be relocated. The east side of the community would become an island as a result of the flooding and channels that would be cut to make water flow more freely into the connecting rivers. Les Dysart stated to the NEB,

It was convenient for the government of the day to allow this as they could now force relocation, burn our homes down, burn our fish camps down, move the community to the west side of the lake, and ultimately proceed [with] the project on their terms. That's the CRD Project, Churchill River Diversion Project. Only a small band of Indians, as was

the thinking of the time. That's not ancient history. This has happened recently [sic]. It seems like yesterday to me. This all happened within my lifetime (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1079).

These interactions continued throughout much of the construction of hydroelectric infrastructure in the north. The Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) project was very similar to the Churchill River Diversion in that it was predominantly meant to control the flow of water through the Nelson River ("Lake Winnipeg Regulation"). Lake Winnipeg flows into the Nelson River through multiple lakes in northern Manitoba, including lakes in the territory of Pimicikamak (formerly Cross Lake) and Norway House Cree Nation. Manitoba Hydro, through the construction of dikes, diversions, and the Jenpeg control structure and generating station, created a system in which they are able to control the flow of water from Lake Winnipeg into the Nelson River ("Lake Winnipeg Regulation").

Throughout the decades following the construction of the Kelsey Generating Station, Manitoba Hydro constructed the Kettle Generating Station (1974), Jenpeg Generating Station (1979), Long Spruce Generating Station (1979), and the Limestone Generating Station (1992) ("Generating Stations"). All of these generating stations were built along the Nelson River, with Long Spruce and Limestone being built near the town of Gillam and Fox Lake Cree Nation ("About Fox Lake Cree Nation"). In recent years, Manitoba Hydro constructed the Wuskwatim Generating Station on the Burntwood River near Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and is currently constructing the Keeyask Generating Station on the Nelson River near Tataskweyak Cree Nation ("Generating Stations"; "Keeyask Generating Station"). Throughout the past few years of the Keeyask project, there have been clear indications that Manitoba Hydro is still using veiled threats and pressure upon Indigenous communities to accomplish what they hope to complete (see Froese as example).

During the initial aftermath of the construction of the Churchill River Diversion, Manitoba Hydro operated the water levels of Southern Indian Lake according to the Water Power Act licensing that was provided by the province ("Churchill River Diversion"). This stipulated the water fluctuations of Southern Indian Lake. Although far from ideal, the Water Powers Act created a strict outline as to how the waters of Southern Indian Lake were to be operated, most notably a requirement that Manitoba Hydro not drawdown the waters over 2 feet per 12 month

period (Kamal et al. “The Augmented Flow Program” 78). Some in South Indian Lake believe that Southern Indian Lake may have recovered somewhat from the damage of the flood had Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government followed the rules laid out in the Water Powers Act (Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

It is important to note that beyond the fur trade there were other lucrative ways in which Indigenous peoples could maintain their relationships with land while simultaneously making money. Most prominently, commercial fishing provided Indigenous communities with the opportunity to obtain money from harvesting fish from the lakes and rivers in the north. One of the most successful Whitefish fisheries in Canada, and the second largest in North America, the fishery at Southern Indian Lake was a successful industry that resulted in a relatively low poverty rate of approximately 28% (Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 561). According to Chief Shirley Ducharme, based upon a report written by the Manitoba Development Authority in 1967, “per-capita annual income in our community of South Indian Lake was \$3,500 to \$4,000 compared with about \$500 in other northern communities. This was partly because Indian agents mostly left us alone (because we had no reserve land), and partly because we had the third-largest commercial whitefish fishery in North America. As the development authority stated, we were ‘self-supporting’” (Shirley Ducharme). Despite the immense success of this fishery, and its ability to provide incomes that mostly prevented the need for social assistance in the community, the flooding created by the Churchill River Diversion, combined with the altered licensing under the Augmented Flow Program, completely decimated the fish population and fundamentally altered the economy of the community (Steve Ducharme). Manitoba Hydro’s reversal of the flow of the Churchill River through Southern Indian Lake and into the hydroelectric infrastructure of the Nelson River decimated the fishery and forced the community into a similar position to that of many of the other *Inniniwak* communities of the north, a change from relative affluence and self-sufficiency to poverty (Waldram “Falling Through the Cracks” 68-69).

In the 1980s, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government agreed to “temporary” changes to the Water Powers Act, called the Augmented Flow Program (“Churchill River Diversion”). This program “allowed Hydro to flood the lake by another half foot, and instead of a maximum two-foot drawdown of the lake in any 12-month period, the new maximum was 4.5

feet” (Steve Ducharme). Les Dysart effectively describes the Augmented Flow Program when he states,

The Augmented Flow Program is described as a deviation from the interim license. An annual permitted deviation that is granted by simple letter. The AFP has not undergone any review, be it environmental, scientific, public or legal review. The AFP has been operated in some form since 1979, yet only granted approval since 1986. They have long since disregarded the operation of the interim license of the CRD. The AFP deviation is destruction at its purest as a hydraulic operation. (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1086)

Prior to the Churchill River Diversion, the white fish fishery in South Indian Lake was “producing a million pounds of Grade A whitefish annually. In the years after the water went up, the numbers dropped to 600,000 pounds. The decline has continued. Last season [2012] we got less than 100,000 pounds of all types of fish combined” (Steve Ducharme). Les Dysart provides a powerful story about the impacts of the destruction of the fishing industry on youth.

I got a personal story I'd like to share in regard to youth. One of my sons, he wanted to learn fishing. When he was 16, 4 years ago, you know, both his grandfathers were fisherman, I'm a fisherman. He's heard us talk about it, he sees us prepare and sees us go out. Anyway, he wanted to learn. I mean, it was his initiative. I said, yeah, and I was really proud of that.

So I took him out after me and my father had finished our commercial fishery for the fall. So we got geared up, I took him out. We only set six nets, which is not much for a day's activities, but you know, just to learn the skills. It was a good day.

The following day, we went to the check the nets, we went to lift the nets, and there was nothing. I mean, I know South Indian Lake, I live and breathe it daily. My expectations weren't high, but there was just nothing. I mean, six nets, we produced six whitefish and three pickerel, and maybe a dozen suckers, you know, by-catch fish, not -- no value. It was very disappointing. I mean, as a father, you try and teach your -- be upbeat and teach your children positive things.

So you know, I lied to my child. I lied to my son that day, you know, just to bring some positive, you know, saying this will get better, it's just a bad day. I think he knew; he had a sense that I wasn't being truthful, but we pulled our nets that day and we didn't go back.

You know, the current situation in South Indian Lake has forced, at least me, to lie to my children to just -- just to protect them. You know, enough is enough. When will it be enough that Aboriginal people and their children, both north and south, have to sacrifice everything for Manitoba Hydro and their projects?

You know, water is life; that's certainly true, but under the manipulation of Manitoba Hydro, and oversight of Manitoba, water has become something twisted and ugly that only brings despair and death to South Indian Lake. Death of an environment, death of a fish population, death of a once thriving economy and death of a healthy community at a huge human and social cost. (NEB "8 June 2018" 1072-1077)

Augmented Flow: A Symptom of Poor Decision-Making

In the spring of 2017, I had the opportunity to visit South Indian Lake to celebrate the 50 year anniversary of Elders Hilda and William Dysart. The event was an amazing opportunity to see the strength and love the community has for these two Elders as well as their important position in the community as leaders and caregivers. Overall, the extremely short trip was filled with love, compassion, and happiness. However, as is usually the case in beautiful scenarios and scenery of the north, Hydro was ever-present.

Although there was little to no mention of Manitoba Hydro during the celebration of the anniversary, only a short distance from the school gymnasium where the event was held, Southern Indian Lake was beginning to swell. Only a week or two prior to the celebration, South Indian Lake had been hit by an extreme snow storm. Over a three day period, the community experienced extreme snowfall and blizzard conditions (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). Being late April, the snow was heavy and the temperature after the storm quickly increased. During our trip, the gravel roads were riddled with divots and crevices. Mud was everywhere throughout the community but it did not dampen the celebration. At this point, the lake was still covered in ice with the exception of near the ferry where it no longer freezes in the winter (William Dysart, Personal Interview).

About one month after the celebration, the real damage of the snow storm was revealed, though not as a result of the storm itself but instead at the hands of Manitoba Hydro and its decisions. Between the controlling of the flow of water by Manitoba Hydro under the Augmented Flow Program and the building of snow and ice over the winter, spring brought the

possibility of disaster. Come thaw, the lake was inundated with an enormous volume of melt-off. The community was flooded, the fish dock was submerged, and the water rapidly flowed over its banks and into the bush (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). Les Dysart states, “2017 was the worst calendar year in recorded history of unprecedented discharges out of Missi Falls control structure, 120,000 cubic feet per second. This is hard to describe, but think of earth-moving tsunamis, tidal waves and destruction, water moving over land and destroying and drowning everything in its path. All avoidable” (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1110). To underscore the clear inability of Manitoba Hydro to consider the consequences of its decisions that will negatively impact First Nations, some of its monitoring stations, particularly on Northern Indian Lake which is directly connected to Southern Indian Lake and the Churchill River Diversion, stopped reporting water levels on June 6th, which leads some to believe they were washed out by the flooding (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). As the flood waters increased, Hydro was forced to open the gates at Missi Falls. Missi Falls is a fundamental aspect of the Churchill River Diversion as it controls the flow of water from Southern Indian Lake into the Churchill River and contributes to the redirection of water towards the Nelson River through the Notigi Control Structure and the Rat and Burntwood River systems (“Churchill River Diversion”). As they opened the gates to flush the extreme water levels down the Churchill River, they doomed much of the wildlife and campsites of Indigenous people along the Churchill River. Boats were destroyed and camp sites were flooded solely as a result of Manitoba Hydro attempting to hold back as much water as possible so as to not lose money through ‘flushing’ it down the Churchill (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

Without the Augmented Flow Program, it is very possible situations like this would not happen. Augmented Flow has changed the water level parameters, including fluctuations and flooding and draw-down, laid out in the Water Powers Act so much that Southern Indian Lake has no chance to recover from a water fluctuation before the next fluctuation begins. Les Dysart strongly believes the lake would be significantly healthier if the original parameters of the licence were followed and the provincial government refused to allow the usage of Augmented Flow (Personal Interview). He has consistently stated that he does not believe there is any way the lake could go back to the way it was when he was a child, before the construction of the Churchill River Diversion, but he firmly believes that the lake and the community would have a

chance to recover if the original parameters of the Water Powers Act were respected (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). There are clear indications that ecosystems can recover at an astonishing rate when given the opportunity, but Manitoba Hydro's decisions and use of Augmented Flow prevents this opportunity from being given.

Environmental Destruction by Manitoba Hydro

As I have discussed throughout this work, not only in regard to the operation of hydroelectric generating stations but also in relation to mining operations and other forms of 'development,' there has been immense environmental destruction in northern Manitoba. Over the past few decades, Manitoba Hydro has been one of the main natural resource exploitation corporations in northern Manitoba. The operation of their generating stations has contributed greatly to the destruction of the environment in northern Manitoba. Sentiments towards Manitoba Hydro's impacts in the north can be best summarized by Robert Spence as, "Hydro, since day one, has done nothing but harm to the environment" (Manitoba CEC, "14 Nov. 2013" 3359). While this conversation will focus specifically on the reality in northern Manitoba, similar experiences have been discussed by Loo in relation to northern British Columbia as well (Loo).

As a result of flooding, erosion contributes to water quality problems and the introduction of trees into waterways (Steve Ducharme). Through a combination of augmented water flow regimes and wind effects on larger bodies of water, shorelines in northern Manitoba continually erode (Steve Ducharme). Erosion introduces new vegetation to water ways and prevents the creation of healthy shorelines (Steve Ducharme). Continued erosion perpetuates the creation and introduction of methyl mercury into the waterways (Fox Lake Cree Nation 43). Additionally, erosion results in the introduction of the dangers of floating and water logged trees, known as "deadheads" (Fox Lake Cree Nation 44). As a result, some Indigenous peoples are in a position in which they fear the water that has sustained their nations since time immemorial as a result of pollution and governmental decisions that poison their waters and lands (McGregor 496). Floating trees destroy fishing nets that are set by Indigenous peoples and commercial fishers while also making waterways dangerous to travel as they can be hidden under the surface of the water and be hit by people in boats, capsizing the boats and sending the people into the water (Fox Lake Cree Nation 41, 44).

Pollution of wild food and the water in lakes and rivers makes harvesting from the land dangerous and requires that people transition to purchasing food from grocery stores at immense prices (Niezen *Defending the Land* 87-88). In James Bay, studies indicate that a prominent portion of the Cree diet was contributed through upwards of four months spent on the land, a portion that now must be obtained through other means as a result of destruction of the land (Berkes 204). As people are pushed off the land as a result of the food being dangerous they are forced to take wage jobs to obtain enough money to procure food. Additionally, wildlife that may be safe to consume is being either scared away or dying as a result of the projects. In one instance, approximately 10,000 caribou died as a result of falling through thin ice in northern Quebec (Berkes 208-209). Hydro Quebec claimed this instance was not a result of hydroelectric dams in the region, however the Cree argue the dams are directly to blame for the death of these animals (Berkes 208-209). Thin ice is not the only challenge faced by northern Indigenous peoples attempting to travel upon lakes and rivers impacted by hydroelectricity (Fox Lake Cree Nation 82). After freeze-up, water levels can be drawn down as a result of power production at hydroelectric generating stations. These drawn down events can result in what is called “hanging ice,” or ice that hangs above the water level beneath it (Fox Lake Cree Nation, 79, 82). When travelling on lakes and rivers, if there is a gap between the ice and the water beneath it anyone who falls through the ice will have nearly no ability to get out of the freezing water (Fox Lake Cree Nation 82).

Living on the land and obtaining sustenance from the land are two prominent aspects of *Inniniwak* society (Carlson 7-8). As flooding and erosion damages the land and makes the waters difficult to traverse, harvesting from the land becomes immensely difficult and dangerous (Waldram “Falling Through the Cracks” 69). Through the destruction of the land, hydropower production directly challenges and prevents the future of the gathering and hunting way of life. Robert Spence recounts a story of discussing his future in commercial fishing with his grandfather. He states,

My late grandfather John George Garson, I was out with him on the lake when he was commercial fishing in a chestnut canoe. I was just a young guy. Boy I was proud to be out there out in the lake with my grandfather. I thought I was doing something worthwhile and meaningful. That means a lot to a lot of us people who work hard. We are hard working

people. But to us, it's not work. That's a white man word. To us, it's just living. We are out on the lake and I went with them to check his net. We drove up to his net. Well, I looked down into the water and I saw the bellies of the fish under the water. About a foot and a half to two feet down I saw them. Boy we've got a lot of fish in the net. Honestly, that's how far I was able to see down into the water. You won't see nothing.

This is the water today, this is a fish today you try to look at a fish underwater. It's like you can't see it. But back in the day, you could see it that far. We can't see that today. A lot of the weeds, the vegetation are gone that I grew up with seeing. I said to my grandpa, boy. One of these days, my grandpa, I said, I'm going to do that too when I become a fisherman I said. I'm going to be able to see all those fish in my net when I get old enough to fish.

Now, not even this close, can't see anything under the water.

I have seen the damages. I said to my grandfather. I'm going to get lots in my net. What he said next dumbfounded me because I never thought in my wildest dreams that anybody can be so capable of so much destruction. He said to me when you get older, you're not going to have the same shorelines, they are going to be gone, the trees will be gone, they will be floating by.

I see it today... And he said to me, my grandson, they act like God. They have the power to destroy the land. And I say you are crazy in Cree. And he chuckled at me. Now I see it. (Manitoba CEC, "14 Nov. 2013" 3359-3362).

Through bio-accumulation, fish and other wild foods in the north become laden with mercury to a point of concern for those hoping to sustain themselves off these sources of sustenance (Niezen *Defending the Land* 87). Fear of pollution in the water and mercury in the food sources creates a situation in which those who are able to go out on the land are fearful of obtaining sustenance through this process (Fox Lake Cree Nation 46). Ultimately, this creates a position in which people are unable to continually be on the land as they are required to obtain food from the community. Studies indicated that prior to challenges of obtaining food from the bush, wild food provided upwards of 80% of food consumed in Cree communities in James Bay (Carlson 221-222). As a result of contaminated food, a significant portion of the diet must be replaced by store bought food that costs money and requires wage labour to obtain. Combining

these two forces creates a situation in which communities are forced into positions of reliance upon social assistance. Limited work in northern regions along with the transition to wage labour and inability to obtain sustenance from the land places these communities in positions of immense poverty and reliance upon government assistance (Miller 142-143).

Additionally, the flooding destroys houses and other dwellings of both human and non-human beings in the area (Fox Lake Cree Nation 41). Beaver and muskrat are also greatly affected by flooding and Manitoba Hydro removes beaver lodges that could affect construction sites and roads (Fox Lake Cree Nation 81). Fish spawning locations are also impacted by flooding as a result of generating station construction. Sturgeon spawn in rapids along rivers in the north. Generating stations flood the rapids and remove them as possible spawning sites for these and other fish (Fox Lake Cree Nation 75). Dams also prevent the movement of fish upstream as they create massive barriers along the pathway of the river (Fox Lake Cree Nation 39). While discussing the importance of the land to *Inniniwak* identity, Robert Spence stated, “To live the life we live as First Nations people being as connected to the water and land as we are. You killed the land. You killed the water. You killed the fish. You killed the Indian. Ininiw.” (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3358)

Connected with the construction and operation of generating stations is the need for transmission corridors to transfer the energy from northern Manitoba to consumers in the south. These corridors can create barriers to migration for different species of migratory birds and mammals (Fox Lake Cree Nation 79). Power corridors create noise, along with construction projects, that contribute to the increased scarcity of caribou and other staple food sources in the area (Fox Lake Cree Nation 48). Additionally, the power lines require the removal of boreal forest habitat and increase access to caribou for predators (Fox Lake Cree Nation 79). In order to maintain the removal of the bush underneath power corridors, Manitoba Hydro uses herbicides to keep undergrowth from returning (Manitoba *Report on Public Hearing: Bipole III Transmission Project* 88). Ultimately, “many Aboriginal resource users are particularly concerned about the potential for herbicides used in vegetation management to wash into neighbouring waterways and thereby affect water quality and fishing” (Manitoba *Report on Public Hearing: Bipole III Transmission Project* 46). Combined with the destruction of land for raw materials necessary in the construction of generating stations and dikes, the construction and maintenance of

hydroelectric dams in the north is immensely detrimental to the environment (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 51). Hydroelectric projects in the north are far more than merely generating stations that fluctuate water levels. Each project requires quarries for raw materials, transmission lines, access roads, work camps, and the dikes that help create the reservoirs and control the water behind the generating station (Manitoba\ CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 32-33). A key aspect of the destruction caused by hydroelectricity production in northern Manitoba is the destruction of the riparian wetlands, particularly the shallow, reed-filled shorelines along rivers and lakes that provide important locations for fish, plant growth, and other animal usage (Manitoba *Report on the Public Hearing: Keeyask Generation Project* 62, 80-82; Fox Lake Cree Nation 81).

Manitoba Hydro’s impact on Indigenous Women

Despite the clearly negative impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples in the past, it continues to assault Indigenous peoples in contemporary society. One of the most prominent forms in which this is present is in representation (or more accurately misrepresentation) of Indigenous peoples. Memmi argues that the “mythical portrait of the colonized” is not only economically useful to the colonizer, but it also simultaneously denies the colonized liberty and dehumanizes them (Memmi 79-89). Audra Simpson argues “Canada requires the death and so-called “disappearance” of Indigenous women in order to secure its sovereignty” (“The State is a Man”). Indigenous women are consistently sexualized and represented in racist ways that create, and are created by, a colonial mentality that promotes violence against Indigenous women (Acoose 55). As Alfred states, “the Indigenous tradition is profoundly egalitarian; it does not put any substantial distance between leaders and other people, let alone allow for the exercise of coercive authority” (51). Integral to this egalitarianism was a respect for and recognition of Indigenous women (Monture-Angus 4-5). However, Indigenous women have been directly targeted in the past and present by colonial legislation that takes away their rights (Palmater 102). Most prominently, Indigenous women have suffered through the removal of their status as a result of marrying non-status men (Palmater 102-103). Although this colonial legislation has been altered to be more neutral, Indigenous women are still at a disadvantage when marrying a non-status individual (Palmater 53). Additionally, Audra Simpson argues that Indigenous women are seen as like land and thus are treated as “already violated and violatable in a great march to

accumulate surplus, to so-called ‘production’”(“The State is a Man”). Colonial attitudes towards Indigenous women continue and recent news coverage related to Manitoba Hydro’s operations in northern Manitoba directly brings forward questions about Manitoba Hydro’s own relationships with Indigenous women in the north.

In 2018, there was a tsunami of stories about the extremely detrimental and reprehensible impacts hydroelectric ‘development’ projects have had on Indigenous women and girls, both in the past and present. Physical and sexual abuse at the hands of construction workers have been front and centre but other stories have also surfaced of Indigenous women being bullied and ignored in board rooms and meetings with Manitoba Hydro executives and lawyers (Froese). These stories combined show a consistent and endemic problem within the corporation. However, these stories are not new nor are they the only examples of women being abused or left behind.

Following the construction of the Churchill River Diversion and Kelsey Generating Station, a coalition of Indigenous communities confronted Manitoba Hydro and, through multiple years of negotiation and litigation, pushed for the signing of the Northern Flood Agreement (Kulchyski *Aboriginal Rights*, 129). This agreement, now considered a modern day treaty, included many promises to help with the challenges Manitoba Hydro had created for the communities (Kulchyski “A Step Back,” 134). Based upon my readings of these agreements and payments, they were directed towards the “breadwinners” of the family and failed to consider the immense contribution of women to trapping and fishing. Many of the promises seem to support a change from producing sustenance and money from the bush mode of production to employment in capitalist endeavours. These understandings fail to consider the hunting, trapping, and fishing done by women as a means of sustenance while men were on the trapline (Hilda Dysart, Personal Interview). Further to this, there is little recognition of the many other products and labours that were produced by Indigenous women including, but not limited to, the tanning of hides and the preparation of meats and clothing. Additionally, these agreements seem to have no recognition of Indigenous women’s relationships with land that includes knowledge and relationships with berry patches, medicinal plants, and water. Hilda Dysart states, “Women used to go out for berry picking with their families and children, make tea and socialize all day long sharing their harvest” (in Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 569). These relationships are

arguably some of the most negatively impacted by the flooding caused by generating station construction and operation as many medicinal plants were flooded out, erosion prevented shoreline plants from forming, and many berry patches were washed away or made inaccessible by erosion and floating debris (Hilda Dysart, Personal Interview). Yet these activities fundamental to the bush mode of production do not seem receive the same compensation or respect that hunting, trapping, and fishing receive. This failure to truly consider relationships with land of Indigenous women increases the levels at which Manitoba Hydro is destroying relationships with land. As a result, Indigenous women are continuously pushed off and away from the land. However, as these recent stories have shown, being pushed into the board room has forced them into a location of bullying and ignorance that neither gives them a voice through which they can fight for their community nor does it provide a safe space in which they can discuss their own experiences and hopes for the future of their communities (Froese; “MKO blasts province”). This is not to say Indigenous women are accepting this outcome, only that they have extreme hurdles to overcome. And they are overcoming them.

Divide and Conquer Tactics

Manitoba Hydro has a relatively long history of divide and conquer tactics in their relationships with Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba. From the first generating station built in the north all the way through the formation of partnership agreements, hydroelectric entities in the province have made decisions that can create serious divisions both within and between communities across the north. The terminology used throughout this history changes to suggest that the approaches and tactics of Manitoba Hydro have become more progressive throughout time; however, I argue divide and conquer is still a prominent means by which Manitoba Hydro supports future generating station construction.

During the first stages of northern hydropower production, the provincial government and early years of Manitoba Hydro (then Winnipeg Electric Company) were exemplified by a lack of consultation and consideration for communities that would be affected by the projects (Kulchyski, *Aboriginal Rights* 131). Following the announcement of the Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg Regulation projects, a coalition of 5 northern Indigenous communities formed the Northern Flood Committee. The communities represented were Nelson House, Norway House, Cross Lake, Split Lake, and York Factory (Waldram *River Runs* 147).

Most prominently missing from this list were the communities of South Indian Lake (Waldram *River Runs* 148) and Fox Lake Cree Nation. Although one of the founding members and one of the communities most directly affected at this point in time, South Indian Lake was not mentioned in the Northern Flood Agreement; however, many community members were included under the agreement as a result of being Nelson House band members (Waldram, *River Runs* 162).

Throughout the existence of the Northern Flood Committee and the negotiations surrounding the Northern Flood Agreement, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government of Manitoba consistently attempted to undermine the position of community representatives in the Northern Flood Committee. At its peak, the provincial government sent a letter addressed “To Residents of Northern Manitoba” in an attempt to convince them their leaders were not representing them and were preventing them from receiving the true benefits of the hydroelectric projects (Waldram, *River Runs* 155-156). Obviously, this approach was not seen too kindly by the leadership of the communities nor the community members themselves. As a result of the strength of the Northern Flood Committee in its inter-community connections, the federal and provincial governments and Manitoba Hydro agreed to sign the Northern Flood Agreement. (Waldram, *River Runs* 158-162). Discussing the Northern Flood Agreement, Kulchyski states,

I agree with the Honourable Eric Robinson, who said to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly that the *Northern Flood Agreement* is a treaty signed by Manitoba Hydro, the governments of Manitoba and Canada, and five of the Cree Nations in the north. Indeed, given the standards of assessment established by the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Sioui* case on this issue, it is difficult to sustain an argument to the contrary. That means the NFA is a constitutionally protected document (“A Step Back” 134).

Many of the promises in the Northern Flood Agreement laid out plans that would support communities in positive ways, including Schedule E that serves “as a policy co-ordinating instrument, setting forth the best-case community development scenario and joint action program for the eradication of mass poverty and mass unemployment and the improvement of the physical, social and economic conditions and transportation” (“Schedule E”). However, as a result of the arbitration process set out in the Northern Flood Agreement, there was very little implementation of the agreement for over a decade following its signing (Newman 47).

According to a government official, the Northern Flood Agreement failed to meet many of the needs of the communities as a result of the arbitration process. This process made final decisions on disputes through a case-by-case basis that undermined community decision-making and required the inclusion of “lawyers and expert witnesses...greatly increas[ing] the costs of administering the agreement” (Newman, 47). Further, Newman argues, “in the place of co-operation and partnership, the agreement as interpreted and implemented promoted adversarial attitudes and processes” (Newman, 47).

Following almost two decades of unfulfilled promises, Manitoba Hydro and some of the communities negotiated Comprehensive Implementation Agreements. These agreements were established in 4 of the 5 Northern Flood Committee communities and provided monetary settlements to undermine the rights and promises made in the Northern Flood Agreement (Newman 49; Kulchyski, “A Step Back” 134). Ultimately, the method through which the comprehensive implementation agreements were completed is arguably one of the most explicit examples of dividing the communities of the north in order to conquer them. After the Northern Flood Committee rejected the Proposed Basis of Settlement, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government negotiated and signed agreements with each individual community that was willing to join in the Comprehensive Implementation Agreement approach (Newman, 49). Although somewhat confusing, the first financial agreement made during this period is either with South Indian Lake or Split Lake. South Indian Lake technically signed the first agreement for approximately \$18 million in 1992 (Waldram, “Falling through the Cracks” 71). However, as the community was not technically part of the Northern Flood Agreement, this was a compensation agreement for the economic loss as a result of the Churchill River diversion (Waldram, “Falling through the Cracks” 71). It should be acknowledged that although this was not an Implementation Agreement to undermine the rights of the Northern Flood Agreement, it was a financial agreement that may have provided some relief, though probably minimal, to South Indian Lake at a time Comprehensive Implementation Agreements were being promoted to other First Nations. In 1992, Split Lake was the first Northern Flood Committee community to sign a Comprehensive Implementation Agreement and effectively lose their rights under the Northern Flood Agreement (Newman, 49; Kulchyski “A Step Back” 134). Three other Northern Flood Committee communities followed suit throughout the 1990s with only Cross Lake, now

Pimicikamak Okimawin, refusing Comprehensive Implementation Agreements and seeking true implementation of the Northern Flood Agreement (Newman, 49; Kulchyski *Aboriginal Rights* 134).

The validity of these agreements can be called into question as they not only remove the rights established in a treaty but also do such under what I would argue is community-wide duress. After well over a decade of failed implementation and mass environmental and community destruction at the hands of Manitoba Hydro, the communities were suffering significantly. Jason Miller of Pimicikamak best summarized the situation in his community at the time when he addressed David Newman, a representative of the then-government of Manitoba, stating,

Mr. Newman, are you proud of the conditions in Cross Lake? Are you proud of the under-staffed clinic, the poor water quality, and the unpaved roads? Do you put your seal of approval on the recreational facilities and the juvenile crime rate? Do the nutritional standards of the children in the school meet with your approval? Is the poverty and hopelessness my people experience day after day and year after year something that makes your heart swell with pride? Because that, Sir, is the real measure of the government's implementation of the NFA. That is part of your record. Why are you expressing pride in my people's poverty? By defending these conditions you are making them your legacy. What I am here to say is that the people of Cross Lake deserve better. We deserve nothing less than the NFA. We do not deserve to be forced to accept its termination. (Miller, 145-146)

As a result, the Implementation Agreements seemed like the only option for the communities to hopefully find a way to survive and attempt to recover from the assault they had been experiencing for over a decade. If we recognize the history of destruction and the implications of failed implementation of the NFA, there is nearly no way in which Implementation Agreements can be seen as a valid agreement nor that it can be respected as a means of removing the rights that had been established in the modern-day treaty of the Northern Flood Agreement. Pimicikamak has maintained its Northern Flood Agreement rights and continues to fight the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro for implementation of the agreement (Kulchyski, *Aboriginal Rights* 134). Although the community continually puts pressure on these entities, they constantly meet serious challenge when even attempting to fulfill minor, relatively

inexpensive challenges. During the NEB hearings on the Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project, Tommy Monias mentioned the story of an Elder and land-user who challenged Manitoba Hydro because of damage to his snowmobile while travelling on the land which was covered under the NFA (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1252-1259). Instead of accepting his claim and providing him with the \$98 part for his snowmobile, they challenged the claim, he took them to court, and after 4 years of legal fees they lost their challenge and paid him \$5,000 (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1252-1259). Ultimately, that Elder refused the cheque because it took over 4 years for it to be paid out (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1259). These types of challenges seem to show a refusal to implement the Northern Flood Agreement by Manitoba Hydro that could, on a larger scale, result in duress under which communities were forced to negotiate and sign Comprehensive Implementation Agreements.

As I have stated a number of times in this work, Manitoba Hydro likes to promote its new era of relationships with Indigenous communities through its current approach of forming ‘partnerships’ with communities that will be directly affected by future projects. These partnerships are described by proponents as “true collaboration[s]” that are “strong and fair” between the corporation and First Nations leadership of communities that agree to partner (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 24, 26). Chief Garson of Tataskweyak Cree Nation, a proponent of the project, equated this partnership agreement to a “marriage” between Manitoba Hydro and the four First Nations (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 11). However, these partnerships are prominent examples of contemporary divide and conquer tactics both within the communities and between communities (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 42, 66). First, I will discuss the division that forms between communities that sign on to partnerships or those that are ignored in the partnership process and then I will consider the intra-community divisions.

Divisions between neighbouring communities that join partnership agreements seems to be somewhat counter-intuitive. In fact, Manitoba Hydro can effectively counter argue the position that their partnership agreements cause division by pointing to the Keeyask Project partnership which includes Fox Lake Cree Nation, York Factory First Nation, War Lake First Nation, and Tataskweyak Cree Nation (“Keeyask Generating Station”). This partnership includes what Manitoba Hydro terms the “Keeyask Cree Nations” and Manitoba Hydro in a

partnership that ‘allows’ the communities to purchase 2.0% or 25% of the Keeyask Generating Station when the project is complete (Braun). It is important to note here that some community members argue there are no such things as “Keeyask Cree Nations,” and that Manitoba Hydro has misnamed them by using that term (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). However, there is some animosity between communities, particularly when considering the intra-community divisions that are already present. Divisions between those who support the partnership and those who oppose it creates division within communities but also creates division between communities when there is a perceived difference in the quantity and quality of impacts that are expected for different communities (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 66-67). These divisions are not only between partner communities but also within communities. Divisions within communities between those who support projects and partnerships on projects and those who are opposed can cause serious rifts in small, remote communities (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 42). Those who support the projects do so in the hopes of gaining employment and community financial support as part owners of the projects (Loxley 145). Those opposed to the projects recognize the history of hydroelectricity in the north and the environmental destruction that has been brought about by past projects (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 42). Through this process, Manitoba Hydro’s ‘partnership’ actually creates and supports further division between communities that have already been divided.

In addition to divisions between communities that are technically partners in a hydroelectric project, there are also divisions between communities that are in partnerships and the neighbouring communities that were left out of partnerships. This argument does not assume that neighbouring communities necessarily want to be a part of the partnerships that have been established, but rather that they receive little or no consultation for a project that they will be impacted by as well as their inability to suggest changes to the project at the level of partner communities or their ability to attempt to veto the project that has been opposed (Manitoba CEC, “9 Oct. 2013” 30-31). In many ways, this is the situation that was present during the negotiation of, licensing for, and ultimate decision regarding the Wuskwatim Project. Situated near Wuskwatim Lake, the Wuskwatim Generating Station is a project for which Manitoba Hydro and the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation partnered in order to construct the project and divide the

profits (“Generating Stations”). Although downstream of South Indian Lake and the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, the project, as well as all others along the Nelson River, would directly affect the community of South Indian Lake (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). The decision by Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation to partner with Manitoba Hydro on the Wuskwatim Generating Station was controversial both within the community and between the community and South Indian Lake. As a result, the intra and inter-community divisions were strongly felt and had great impacts on relationships between communities that have both a close physical and familial relationship (Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

As a result of the partnership, there was a need for the leadership of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation support the project in public spaces, including in the CEC hearings (Kulchyski “A Step Back,” 136). This need for political capital created animosity between the elected leadership and the grassroots leadership in the community as well as varying types and levels of leadership in South Indian Lake. As a result, leaders like Les Dysart participated as interveners in the CEC hearings as a means of getting his community’s perspective recognized and in an attempt to raise awareness as well as support an informed decision (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). Assuming all would go as promised by Manitoba Hydro’s projections, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation would be looking at financial prosperity as a result of the project and would not suffer from long term debt as a result of their purchase of 33% of the project (“Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership”). During the process of creating the partnership agreement for the Wuskwatim Generating Station, the community of South Indian Lake was removed from membership rolls of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and established as O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (Kulchyski “A Step Back” 143). Although the community had a strong claim for independence from Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and had been struggling to achieve separate status for decades, the creation of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation was strategically accomplished only shortly before the vote on supporting the partnership (Kulchyski “A Step Back” 143; Kamal et al. “Learning the Language,” 5). Through creating a new band, the government was able to effectively remove an entire community of “no” votes on the partnership (Kamal et al., “A Recipe for Change” 562). As a result, South Indian Lake would receive none of that projected profit as a result of not being a partner community despite much of the water

flowing through the Wuskwatim Generating Station being a result of the Churchill River Diversion and coming directly from Southern Indian Lake.

Despite the promises made by Manitoba Hydro, in 2014 NCN's projected losses for the previous fiscal year were \$24 million dollars "and a combined \$134 million over the first decade of the dam's operation" (Braun). Predicable cost overruns, economic downturns including the 2008 financial crisis, and "the spike in shale-gas production", has had an immense impact on the success of the Wuskwatim Project as a result of the decrease in the export market for hydroelectricity (Braun). There are concerns that these same factors could impact the Keeyask Project (Braun). Les Dysart discusses the changes that have been made to the Wuskwatim Agreement by stating,

In recent times Manitoba Hydro has distributed some of their wealth, but mainly to those who support them. The Wuskwatim project, while not doing well financially, has resulted in benefits. The First Nation partners have received a \$50 million gift not tied to the Wuskwatim Performance.

Subsequently, in their latest round of negotiations that we're aware of, redrafting yet again the power development agreement, the perfect agreement, as they like to say, that they will now be paying their First Nation partners for water flowing out of Missi Falls, water that does not go through Wuskwatim, water that generates no revenue and is proven to destroy us. Why are we not receiving benefits that can address our environment? (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1112-1113)

Missi Falls is the control structure at the northern end of Southern Indian Lake that prevents water from flowing its natural course down the Churchill River ("Churchill River Diversion"). If Manitoba Hydro holds back too much water on Southern Indian Lake, they must release it from Missi Falls in order to stay within their water license parameters. As the water is released through Missi Falls, it is unable to pass through the turbines at Wuskwatim and thus provides no electricity and technically prevents Nisichawayasihk from gaining money from the production of energy at Wuskwatim. Therefore, Manitoba Hydro pays Nisichawayasihk for their failure to produce energy by sending water out Missi Falls (NEB "8 June 2018" 1113). On the surface, this seems like a somewhat positive means of supporting the community that Manitoba Hydro promised profit to through the Wuskwatim Project. However, the fluctuation of water levels on Southern Indian Lake directly affect South Indian Lake and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation.

Yet, despite the enormous impacts South Indian Lake sees as a result of Manitoba Hydro's water fluctuations they do not receive the same payments whenever the floodgates at Missi Falls are opened (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1113). This releasing of water can flush out fish from the lake, impacting the fishery, can erode the shorelines of the lake, affecting the harvesting way of life, and can greatly impact many other aspects of community health and well-being. Despite all of these implications of opening the gates at Missi Falls, Manitoba Hydro has effectively cut ties with the Community Association of South Indian Lake since 2013 (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). Decisions such as these directly contribute to the distance and division between communities and they will continue to support Manitoba Hydro's divide and conquer tactics.

The National Energy Board, Northern Indigenous Representation, and an "Integrated System"

As stated multiple times throughout this work, South Indian Lake is a prime example of the immensely destructive implications of capitalist resource exploitation in northern Manitoba, particularly in regards to the production of hydroelectric power. Prior to the creation of Manitoba Hydro and the production of hydroelectric energy in Manitoba, the Indigenous community of South Indian Lake was fully self-sufficient and capable of providing for not only the community but also commercial activities (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1068-1069). Throughout the mid and late 20th Century, South Indian Lake was consistently one of the most financially self-sufficient and wealthy communities across northern Manitoba (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1068-1069). Even after the initial flooding of Southern Indian Lake following the construction of the Churchill River Diversion project, the community was still successfully fishing the lake. According to Les Dysart, "when Manitoba operates the lake responsibly the fishing catches and the community do okay. When Manitoba Hydro operates irresponsibly to extremes, while not generating extra revenue, our fishery declines dramatically. In the eighties they only did this twice. In the recent past decades, they have done this 12 times. We suffer" (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1109). However, South Indian Lake was not consulted on the Churchill River Diversion (Waldram, *River Runs* 121). To this very day, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government regularly fail to consider the implications of current and future generating stations on the community unless individuals within the community are able to directly prove they will be directly impacted by the footprint of the generating station (Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

With generating stations being constructed along the Nelson River and the large quantity of water that flows from the diversion at Southern Indian Lake through these generating stations it only makes sense that the community would not only be consulted about new generating stations but would also be compensated at the very least for the highly likely increase in fluctuations of the water levels on the lake. However, Manitoba Hydro has taken the approach of nearly completely disregarding the community (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1107-1108). In many ways, Manitoba Hydro has disempowered an Indigenous community in the north and has forced a once self-sufficient and financially successful community to a position of extreme poverty and unemployment.

To add insult to injury, during the Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project hearings of the National Energy Board in Winnipeg, community members from multiple different communities in the north attempted to provide a panel presentation to the board in order to explain to the board the implications of the continued and expanding sale of energy to the United States (NEB, “8 June 2018”). These community members travelled from the north to provide their knowledge and insight to the panel and to relive the trauma that they experience regularly. At the beginning of the hearings, Manitoba Hydro officially objected to the inclusion of this panel and their right to speak to the board as they were not in the “footprint” of the Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project (NEB, “8 June 2018” 985-988). Through significant arguments by both the lawyers for Manitoba Hydro and the lawyers working with Wa Ni Ska Tan and the northern experts, the board heard arguments that their knowledge was not important for this discussion by the Manitoba Hydro lawyer but also the community members argued that their knowledge directly fed into Manitoba Hydro’s “integrated system” that would provide energy that would flow through these power lines (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1002; 1021). Ultimately, the board decided to hear the evidence and decide on its “weight” later (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1046). The experts provided their knowledge and shared heart-felt and important messages of the implications of hydroelectric projects in the north. Les Dysart stated, “Manitoba Hydro is addicted to dams and drunk on water. They need an intervention. They need to start living with reality” (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1081). Additionally, he stated, “South Indian Lake cannot continue to be sacrificed. We have sacrificed too much already. We will not survive as a community or even a culture if there is not positive change” (NEB “8 June 2018” 1090). Carol

Kobliski added, “Being a part of the Wuskwatim project and seeing the impacts over the years growing up as a child until now it really hurts me, because our children nowadays have not been a part of what I was a part of growing up with clean water and beaches, good food, wild food, where we could live off the land, go fishing, hunting, trapping. That’s all gone” (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1157). In this instance, Manitoba Hydro lost their ability to disempower Indigenous communities that wished to have their voices heard, but they tried their best nonetheless.

COVID-19 and Manitoba Hydro

At the beginning of 2020, the world was struck by the outbreak of COVID-19 across the planet. As schools were closed, businesses were shuttered, and capitalism was forced to a grinding halt, some services and businesses were deemed essential service and remained open to help people through the difficult times. During this time, Manitoba Hydro and the construction crews working on the Keeyask Project were given governmental permission to bypass a non-essential travel ban for northern Manitoba (Samson). At that point, Keeyask was providing no power to the province. In May, 2020, Manitoba Hydro initiated a plan to complete a scheduled shift change, replacing 600 employees with 1,000 new employees from other localities in Canada and the United States (Frew). In response to this announcement, Tataskweyak Cree Nation established a blockade on Provincial Road 280 to prevent the arrival of new workers. This blockade was established out of concerns that new workers could result in COVID-19 entering the small, isolated communities of the north (Frew; Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

Quickly, these blockades expanded, including a teepee being set up, meetings taking place, and Elders and religious leaders blessing the blockade (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). The blockade quickly gained the support of surrounding First Nations, including all member communities of what Manitoba Hydro calls the “Keeyask Cree Nations,” as well as the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakinak (Frew). The message was clear, the communities wanted to be considered and their fears of the potential spread of a devastating disease within their communities to trump the construction of a generating station.

Within days, a court injunction was placed upon the blockade demanding its removal and providing the RCMP with the power to arrest anyone who chose to remain (Frew). When the injunction was served, a massive portion of Tataskweyak Cree Nation came to the blockade to show support for those blocking the road (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Around the same

time, Fox Lake Cree Nation established a blockade at the south access road to the Keeyask Project, ultimately preventing access to the project site from both Gillam, MB and Thompson, MB (Frew).

The most striking aspect of this scenario is that all four communities supposedly in partnership with Manitoba Hydro on this project felt a need to block access to the site to protect their communities from what was at the time an international pandemic (Frew). When faced with a court injunction placed against them by their partner, they responded with increased presence at the blockade and further blockade construction (Robert Spence, Personal Interview; Frew). Despite Manitoba Hydro's claims that they are taking all necessary steps to protect the communities, they fail to consider the perspectives of their partners about a topic that could very directly result in the death of a large number of people. The communities expressed concern and were met with a court ordered removal from their own lands.

Gull Rapids

One interesting topic to discuss in relation to Manitoba Hydro's relationship with the land in the north is their approach to Gull Rapids. This rapids are named after the birds, gulls in particular, that nest on and inhabit this area. During the initial planning sequences of the project, biologists and other decision-makers in the process put forward a plan to create new nesting areas in the region (*Manitoba Report on the Public Hearing: Keeyask Generation Project*, 85). The construction of the Keeyask Generating Station would completely flood and destroy the rapids so the new nesting area was meant as a means of relocating the birds to a new habitat that would not be destroyed by the generating station (*Manitoba Report on the Public Hearing: Keeyask Generation Project*, 85). If the plan is not altered, the birds for which the rapids, and now generating station, are named will be forced to leave at the behest of Manitoba Hydro.

Noah has concerns about Gull Rapids and the related efforts by Manitoba Hydro to relocate birds and other populations from the area around the Keeyask site. Noah talked about Manitoba Hydro attempting to force gulls to move "who do not want to move" (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Manitoba Hydro's attempts and beliefs that they can easily create new habitats for other-than-human beings and expect them to move creates a challenge for many Elders and land-users who do not believe Hydro, or anyone, has a right to force other-than-human beings from their homes. Noah's concern for the gulls of Gull Rapids and their ability to

stay in their home is an assertion of his knowledge of the land as well as his attempt to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves and to represent the interests of the gull in face of Manitoba Hydro's attempt to make decisions for all in the territory, human and other-than-human.

Other-than-human Sovereignty

The above story relates to an important point that will be discussed in more depth later in this work. When we discuss sovereignty in a Western perspective, we think of the rights of people to make decisions about themselves and their property. This idea is usually presented as a governmental right that covers particular, bounded territories over particular, bounded people and provide the ability to do particular, bounded actions to those places and people (Nadasdy, *Sovereignty's Entailments* 92). The sovereignty I have been discussing is not one based in property or boundaries, but relationships. Throughout this work, I have seen Indigenous peoples directly or indirectly use the concept of sovereignty as a means of undermining and challenging Western concepts of sovereignty. One of these ways is through the recognition of the sovereignty of other-than-human beings.

Noah's discussion of the rights of the birds to live in their homes, to decide where they will live, and to not be forcibly removed and relocated is, in a way, his expression of his recognition of their sovereignty. They have inherent sovereignty to their territory, their bodies, their relationships, and their decisions. Western sovereignty does not recognize the rights or sovereignties of any being, "animate" or "inanimate," that is not explicitly human. Arguably, Western sovereignty does not recognize the sovereignty of any being, organization, or group that does not follow specific, Western, statist ways of thinking and acting. From my understanding of *Inniniwak* culture it recognizes the sovereignty of all living beings as important and something to be respected. In some ways, this creates a basis for the great importance placed upon relationships with the land. As with nation-states, relationships with the land are a process of navigating and maintaining strong, respectful, and supportive relationships with other sovereign beings.

I think it is important here to also recognize harvesting from the land. For many people, the concept of hunting, fishing, trapping, and harvesting from the land would seem to indicate there is not a respect for the sovereignty of other-than-human beings by Indigenous peoples.

However, in the situations in which I have seen *Inniniwak* harvesting in the north, killing an animal is not the same as killing of animals in non-*Inniniwak* society in the south. When we would get a moose along the Churchill River or pull fish from the lakes of the north, there was a recognition of a gift being given to us by the other-than-human being that we were harvesting. The moose would not flee immediately or would give us extra time to reload if we missed. The fish would go in the net and allow us to pull it through or would not fight hard enough to break the line. These concepts of the being giving itself to us is not an act of overwhelming its sovereignty but rather a recognition of it and accepting the gift that is given by another sovereign entity.

Manitoba Hydro does not receive these types of gifts from other-than-human beings. What seems to be their attempt to trick them into moving, force them to relocate, push their islands through spillways, and make decisions for the other-than-human beings rather than speaking for them and considering their sovereignty. Manitoba Hydro does not seem to consider the ethics of the bush when they make their decision, they seem to see Manitoba and Canada as the sovereign entities that make the decisions for the entire territory for which they believe they are sovereign and assume those decisions are acceptable for all within. They base their decisions on displays of power, not on respect for relationships. And what is a bigger display of power than diverting a river, pouring concrete on its bed, and ‘harnessing’ its strength to create power for profit.

Conclusion:

The history of hydroelectric power in northern Manitoba is long and has had drastic and long-lasting impacts on the peoples and environments of the north. This destruction has caused a drastic change to the way of life of the *Inniniwak* people in the north. However, this destruction is not firmly planted in the past; hydroelectricity continues to damage the lands and waters of the north and the *Inniniwak* people continue to be impacted by present generating station construction in their territories. Despite these challenges, Elders, experts, and knowledge-holders continue to support the bush mode of production and maintain their relationships with the land. In the face of this resistance by Elders, experts, knowledge-holders, and land-users, Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba have made changes they claim support reconciliation and a new relationship (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 24-26). As I will discuss

in the next chapter, these new relationships do not fundamentally alter the colonial relationship that was established in the past. The next chapter will review partnership agreements, training and work programs, and former Premier Greg Selinger's apology to Hydro affected communities and will discuss their implications for relationships between *Inniniwak* communities and Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba while also basing my critique in the work of Glenn Coulthard and his challenging of recognition politics.

Chapter 4: Recognition Politics

Settler-colonialism and colonial relationships can best be described as “characterized by a particular form of *domination*; that is, it is a relationship where power – in this case, interrelated discursive and nondiscursive facets of economic, gendered, racial, and state power – has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the *dispossession* of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority” (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 6-7). As Coulthard has argued, these relationships are not fundamentally altered by recognition politics (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 6). When discussing politics of recognition, I follow the description set out by Coulthard, who is in turn following the work of Richard J.F. Day, in considering it as the “now expansive range of recognition-based models of liberal pluralism that seek to “reconcile” Indigenous assertions of nationhood with settler-state sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identity claims in some form of renewed legal and political relationship with the Canadian state” (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 3).

In his prominent work, *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard articulates some challenges of recognition politics for Indigenous communities when he states, “the logic informing this dimension – where “recognition” is conceived as something that is ultimately “granted” or “accorded” a subaltern group or entity by a dominant group or entity – prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships” (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 30-31). In this work, he says,

I argue that the expression of Indigenous anticolonial nationalism that emerged during this period forced colonial power to modify itself from a structure that was once primarily reinforced by policies, techniques, and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation double, to one that is now reproduced through a seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices that emphasize our *recognition* and *accommodation*. Regardless of this modification, however, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state has remained *colonial* to its foundation. (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 6)

The failure of recognition politics to alter the colonial basis of relations between Indigenous peoples and the state creates challenges for Indigenous movements that seek to create real

change. These challenges not only undermine the position of Indigenous resistance movements against industry and settler colonialism, but also challenge and potentially overcome non-Indigenous support for movements both as a result of the aforementioned perception of the movement as being addressed as well as the challenges against non-Indigenous 'allies' as attempting to guide Indigenous communities, co-opting movements, or perpetuating the 'noble savage' myth in regards to movements attempting to address environmental destruction. As a result, Coulthard argues

It also demands that we begin to shift our attention away from the largely rights-based/recognition orientation that has emerged as hegemonic over the last four decades, to a resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically nonexploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority grounded on a critical refashioning of the best of Indigenous legal and political traditions. It is only by privileging and grounding ourselves in these normative lifeways and resurgent practices that we have a hope of surviving our strategic engagements with the colonial state with integrity and as Indigenous peoples' (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 179).

In many ways, he is promoting a 'return to the land' for communities where that is possible (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 176). Through this process of 'returning to the land' that rejects rights-based and recognition-oriented discourse, Indigenous peoples are able to effectively challenge colonial relationships that are present in both past and present relationships with the state while also putting forward and promoting alternatives in the form of law and sovereignty that undermine colonization. In relation to Indigenous sovereignty, this challenges the colonial aspects of the concept of sovereignty by instead placing it within a set of knowledges that are "decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically nonexploitative" (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 179). This directly connects with Coulthard's discussion of Indigenous resurgence. He "calls on Indigenous people and communities to 'turn away' from the assimilative reformism of the liberal recognition approach and to instead build [...] national liberation efforts on the revitalization of 'traditional' political values and practices" (Coulthard *Red Skin, White Masks*, 154). This approach to resurgence directly relates to the transition of sovereignty away from a colonial-based understanding of sovereignty to one that is Indigenized and decolonial. Through resurgence efforts that "turn away" from colonial relationships and

provide “traditional” alternatives, Indigenous sovereignty based upon relationships with the land can fundamentally alter the discourse surrounding sovereignty.

Coulthard's work has had a great impact on my perceptions of both *Inniniwak* sovereignty in resistance to Manitoba Hydro as well as the importance of *Inniniwak* relationships to and with the land as a means of resurgence in opposition to the capitalist resource extraction perpetuated by Manitoba Hydro. Before we dive into the resurgence and resistance I have experienced in my relatively short time with land-users in northern Manitoba, I must first discuss the recognition politics of Manitoba Hydro as I understand it.

Manitoba Hydro's Recognition Politics

Manitoba Hydro's narratives throughout the province create a clear belief that the corporation is providing benefits to people while also protecting the environment, as can be effectively seen in Premier Selinger's apology for destruction past hydroelectricity projects (“Greg Selinger's Apology”). Manitoba Hydro's own websites states, “We create value for Manitobans by meeting our customers' expectations for the delivery of safe, reliable energy services at a fair price” (Manitoba Hydro, “About Us”). Further, they claim to “serve 586,795 electric customers in Manitoba and 284,996 natural gas customers in southern Manitoba” and to be “one of the lowest cost providers of electricity in Canada” (Manitoba Hydro, “About Us”). These narratives include recognition of concerns brought forward by Indigenous peoples, support of Indigenous events, and seeming inclusion of Indigenous knowledge including words and concepts into planning and decision-making (“Relationships & Partnerships”; “Indigenous Relations”; Manitoba CEC, “25 Nov. 2013” 3492-3493; Loxley 145). For example, they state, “We continue to strengthen our relationships with Indigenous peoples, develop employment and business opportunities, and consult and negotiate with communities for future development” (“In the community”). However, these narratives and actions can also be reviewed from the perspective Coulthard describes in his challenge of recognition politics.

First and foremost, the partnership agreements that Manitoba Hydro has established and supported with Indigenous communities in the 'footprint' of their newest generating stations are a prominent form of recognition politics. In essence, these ‘allow’ the First Nations in the footprint of the generating stations the ‘opportunity’ to purchase a potentially significant minority share in the generating stations (“The Partnership”). The communities must invest

funds that they currently hold while also borrowing additional funds from Manitoba Hydro (Braun). In theory, the communities then receive a portion of the profits that the generating station produces, once it begins to produce profits (Braun). These agreements position Manitoba Hydro as having 'social licence' from the communities for the projects they are promoting (Braun). Despite the drastic and irreplaceable damage done by hydropower production, Manitoba Hydro can argue they help to 'modernize' and support 'self-sufficiency' within Indigenous communities through their support of partnership agreements on two current and one proposed generating station. In relation to similar approaches in British Columbia, McCreary and Turner argue this creates a "neoliberal model of governance through the market rather than a commitment to uphold public obligations to Indigenous peoples" (235-236). Some leadership within partner communities support this assertion based on the belief that profits produced by these projects could ultimately remove the need for federal funding and free the communities of restraints placed on them by the federal government (Manitoba CEC, "26 Sept. 2013" 51-52). The argument for this claim is based on agreements that have communities purchase portions of multi-billion dollar projects, in many cases taking loans from Manitoba Hydro to fulfill their portion (Braun). Ultimately, the goal and understanding is that the loans will be paid off quickly from the windfall profits the generating stations provide for the communities (Braun). Following that, the future profits go directly to the communities and that money can be used however the community sees fit to support themselves (Manitoba CEC, "26 Sept. 2013" 53-55). This financial benefit should, in theory, remove the need to request funding from the federal government and give the community control to make change for itself.

On the surface, these promises sound positive. Freedom and prosperity for the communities from projects that will be in their territory sounds like a positive step forward in the relationships between Indigenous communities and Manitoba Hydro. However, there are a multitude of reasons these partnerships actually hinder sovereignty rather than supporting it. They require public support from the communities, significant financial backing including debt, create minority partnerships that limit decision-making abilities, were established with the understanding the projects would go ahead regardless of their participation, were based on inaccurate estimates of total costs, profits, and length to repayment, were an effective method of creating divisions within and between communities, and undermined any resistance the

community may put forward (Braun; Kulchyski “A Step Back” 136; Robert Spence, Personal Interview; “1st female Manitoba Hydro president”; Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*). When compared to an alternative in the form of the “Peace of the Braves,” these partnerships do not compare favourably as the “Peace of the Braves” did not require debt and immediately provided financial returns to the communities (Martin 32; Kulchyski “A Step Back” 137; Wera & Martin 71). As will be discussed further later, the “Peace of the Braves” is an agreement between the James Bay Cree and the province of Quebec that is meant to create a nation-to-nation partnership that allows for profitable relationships and ends outstanding legal pursuits held by the James Bay Cree (Martin 32). The “Peace of the Braves,” although not perfect, established nation-to-nation relationships, and includes a promise of \$3.5 billion over the course of 50 years with no economic or financial risk to the communities (Martin 32). As a result, partnership agreements as they have been established by Manitoba Hydro undermine Indigenous sovereignty rather than supporting it. Relationships like those established in the “Peace of the Braves” provides a different model for partnerships that are more supportive of Indigenous sovereignty.

Partnership agreements require communities to pay back their loans/advances and ultimately prosper based on profits from the generating stations. These profits are based on a few possible options for energy sales that Manitoba Hydro can follow. The sale of energy by Manitoba Hydro is accomplished both locally and through export to neighbouring provinces and states (“Electricity Exports”). In order to sell energy through export, both government entities and power corporations outside of Manitoba must want to buy the hydroelectric energy they are selling, must believe it will not face stoppage as a result of resistance or legal battles, and must hope that the corporations will not face public backlash for purchasing and reselling this energy in their own territory. On top of all of these sales tactics, Manitoba Hydro has to sell the energy at a rate that will justify the external corporations not creating their own energy production infrastructure, particularly when considering alternative energy sources like solar and wind.

Partnership agreements also challenge Indigenous resistance and resurgence through the supposed recognition of Indigenous concerns in the design and construction of generating stations. Arguments are put forward that claim community concerns are recognized and addressed with examples including the alteration of design of the Wuskwatim Generating Station

to be less detrimental to the environment of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. This argument, no doubt consistently supported and used by Manitoba Hydro, suggests that the alteration of a generating station design necessarily addresses the concerns of environmental destruction of communities near the dams (“Generating Stations”). A similar argument was put forward by Manitoba Hydro in regards to the Keeyask Project, claiming the communities wished to go with a “low overhead” approach to the generating station that effectively cut the power production of Keeyask nearly in half but would also cause less flooding (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 92). What they failed to address was the consistent and unending call for the end of generating station construction in northern Manitoba by land-users and Elders. ‘Allowing’ the alteration of generating station design to have a decreased negative impact on the environment does not negate the real and grounded requests by Indigenous harvesters to have a moratorium on generating station construction and a review of the cumulative effects of Manitoba Hydro's arsenal of generating stations and dams in the north. Additionally, requests by communities and leaders to have hydroelectric projects, including the Churchill River Diversion, operated in a less destructive way go unheeded (Kamal et al. “The Augmented Flow Program” 78-79). The Augmented Flow Program is a perfect example of hydroelectricity production being completed in a significantly more destructive way when a potentially less destructive option is possible. Many *Inniniwak* people in South Indian Lake believe Southern Indian Lake and the fishery could recover to some extent if the lake/reservoir was operated under the original Water Powers Act licence rather than the Augmented Flow Program (Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

An interesting point of note on the export of hydroelectricity from Manitoba: during hearings of the National Energy Board in Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro discussed the generating stations in the north as an integrated system (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1021). However, Manitoba Hydro claims to have promised not to export energy from Keeyask if the communities did not wish to export (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 126). If the hydroelectricity generating projects in northern Manitoba are an integrated system, it follows that it would be difficult or impossible to determine from which generating station energy was being exported, resulting in the aforementioned promise being a fallacy. These contradictory claims bring into question if the “decision-making abilities” of the communities actually exist. Contradictions such as these seem to indicate Manitoba Hydro provides false choices for which communities have no ability to

enforce their decisions beyond placing trust in a corporation that some within the communities argue cannot be trusted (Manitoba CEC, “26 Sept. 2013” 83-84; Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 93; Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3350).

Related to these requirements to publicly support these generating stations, communities are in a position of needing to contribute financially to the proposed projects. The first such partnership agreement was entered into by *Nisichawayasihk* Cree Nation (NCN) for the Wuskwatim project in 2006 (Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement). This partnership included a 33% contribution by NCN (Braun). As such, the community, using some of their own money as well as loans from Manitoba Hydro, purchased 33% of a multi-billion dollar generating station (Braun). For any government, that level of expense is high, much more so for impoverished First Nations in northern Manitoba. Financial forecasts from proponents showed major windfalls (Braun). However, financial reports for the years following the in-service date of Wuskwatim have shown consistent losses rather than profits (*Year in Review 2020*, 5; *Year in Review 2019*, 5). Based upon these reports, the first year “resulting in break even” was the 2019-2020 fiscal year, a total of 6 fiscal years after the in-service year (*Year in Review 2020*, 5; *Year in Review 2014*, 6). This is largely a result of Manitoba Hydro not anticipating the financial crisis of 2008, high upfront costs of generating station construction, and the increase in fracking in the United States energy market (Braun; *Year in Review 2014*, 6).

Shortly after the Wuskwatim partnership, the Keeyask partnership was created between Manitoba Hydro and four First Nations. This project is a much larger generating station that was originally estimated to cost over \$6.5 billion (Braun). Seemingly as a result of some of Wuskwatim’s challenges and the estimated cost of Keeyask, the four communities negotiated another purchasing option from which to choose (Braun). The communities, together, could purchase up to 25% of the generating station requiring the repayment of loans before profits would be received by the communities (Braun). If they choose to take a less extreme financial burden and theoretically lower profits, the communities could opt for 2% of the generating station and would see immediate pay-out from the profits of the generating station (Braun). At present, the project is billions of dollars over budget (“1st female Manitoba Hydro president”), which means the First Nations will need to pay significantly more money, or take larger loans, in order to purchase their portion of the generating station. Additionally, there has been a recent

serious economic downturn as a result of the international coronavirus pandemic (Jones, Palumbo, & Brown). It seems very possible this economic downturn can and will impact the economic outcomes of this project.

Financially, these partnerships seem like terrible options for communities. However, as a result of Western-oriented 'democratic' votes on the partnership agreements created by Manitoba Hydro and the First Nations governments of each community, Manitoba Hydro is able to effectively argue they have community support based on the majority votes within the communities. Agreements that former Premier Selinger promoted as providing “phenomenal social licence” (Braun) now seem to instead be indebting communities to an entity that destroyed their former ways of living and took away the former affluence that was provided by strong relationships with the land. The concept of social licence was addressed in my MA thesis where I argued that Manitoba Hydro has failed at obtaining social licence based on a definition of “free, prior, and informed consent” for the projects (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*). Instead, these partnerships are merely a means for communities attempting to make the best possible situation of a project they do not perceive themselves as capable of stopping based on the historical 'successes' of Manitoba Hydro. This perception is supported by the aforementioned feeling of having “a gun to the head” as described by Robert Spence (Personal Interview). These results beg the question, if Manitoba Hydro wanted to move forward, establish partnerships, gain social licence, and create new relationships of prosperity with Indigenous communities why not consider options like resource revenue sharing that would remove financial barriers to entry for communities and would not require them to use some of their own existing, precious financial resources. Other models exist in Canada, including the Peace of the Braves agreement in Quebec.

Despite the debt and financial challenge that the project and partnership creates initially, Manitoba Hydro promotes these agreements as a step forward in their relationships with communities that are in direct proximity to the projects. For both Wuskwatim and Keeyask, Manitoba Hydro consistently promotes the strength and importance of the partnership through their “recognition” of Indigenous knowledge and community concerns (“Generating Stations”). For the environmental assessments of Keeyask, Manitoba Hydro submitted their own Western scientifically-based assessments that they claimed were equal to Indigenous knowledge and

community-based Environment Impact Statements from the communities which they promoted as their “two track approach” (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 26-27). However, when it came time to discuss what the consultants called 'valued environmental components,' or VECs, they laid out information about all plants, animals, and fish that are considered important from a scientific and 'traditional' position (Manitoba CEC, “31 Oct. 2013” 1685). When discussing this information, it became immediately clear that the scientific evaluation of the impacts of the Keeyask Generating Station focused almost strictly on the organisms that were either of only scientific importance or of both scientific and 'traditional' importance (Manitoba CEC, “31 Oct. 2013” 1686-1688; Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5632-5633). Any organism that was considered to be of no scientific importance but was important to the Elders and land-users of the Indigenous communities were not studied at the same level as the VECs (Manitoba CEC, “31 Oct. 2013” 1693-1696; Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5632-5633). This is exemplified by the experience of Elder Noah Massan, who

would say: ‘what about these rabbits? These squirrels? Where are they going to go? What is going to happen to them?’ No one ever bothered to answer: no one else in the process was concerned about squirrels or rabbits: no one took responsibility for them. In Noah Massan’s world, the wanton destruction of any members of any animal species, any, is a deep violation of an ethical tie to bush animals (Kulchyski, “Bush/Animals” 328)

As a result, it seems quite clear that the 'two-track approach' is an attempt to claim recognition of Indigenous concerns while continuing forward with the project and gaining regulatory approval. Additionally, supporting the perspective that the ‘two-track approach’ truly considers Indigenous perspectives provides the perspective to progressive, non-Indigenous people in southern Manitoba that Indigenous peoples impacted by generating stations are truly being heard. Through the promotion of partnership agreements in the south, Manitoba Hydro is able to not only make the claim they have social licence from the communities, and as such should receive it from progressive non-Indigenous people in the south, but also that Indigenous partners in the north are helping to create an even more environmentally-friendly generating station. This ties directly to Nadasdy’s discussion of the challenges of joint management (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*). Nadasdy argues that joint management inherently requires multiple levels of

translation by Indigenous experts and knowledge-holders as, in many instances, they have to translate their knowledge from their own language to an official language, usually English, while also translating their knowledge into a more acceptable form of knowledge for scientists and Western-oriented thought (*Hunters and Bureaucrats* 2). These layers of translation ultimately undermine much of the knowledge shared by Indigenous experts. Considering this argument, it is immensely difficult to create a system that allows for Indigenous knowledge to interact with Western science in a way that acknowledges the distinct aspects of Indigenous knowledge and does not strip it of what makes it so strong. As discussed later, this connects to the three track approach promoted by McLachlan that would see science guided by Indigenous knowledge, as a supplement to the knowledge rather than a joint partner that claims equality but in reality takes supremacy (Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5619). Along with this assessment, the partner communities submitted their own assessments that were based upon community knowledge, in most cases (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 89). These assessments were presented to the Clean Environment Commission together and Manitoba Hydro gave the impression that the communities’ knowledge was integral to the environmental decision-making for the project. They promote claims that Keeyask was altered from its original plans to account for community concerns about areas being flooded (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 92). They also emphasized the claim mentioned earlier that Keeyask’s energy would not be exported if the communities wished for it not to be (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 126).

These statements are put forward by Manitoba Hydro to perpetuate the claim that the communities are consistently heard and their concerns are addressed. Just as they promote the perspective that they “made a business decision, in response to First Nations proposals, to negotiate partnership arrangements with these First Nations” (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 31-32), which may very well be true, they emphasize these statements to establish themselves as supporting a partnership that provides communities with sovereignty through their ability to make decisions regarding the project. These arguments seem to be fallacies.

In the creation of the partnerships, Manitoba Hydro “allowed” the communities to purchase upwards of 33% of Wuskwatim and 25% of Keeyask (Braun). These numbers, as well as Manitoba Hydro’s own documentation creates a “limited partnership” that leaves the “administrative and management services for the KHLP” in the hands of Manitoba Hydro, as

well as the majority of seats on the Board of Directors (“The Partnership”; “Board of Directors”). As a result, the decisions the communities helped establish seem to be essentially requests that Manitoba Hydro accepted. This is also assuming Manitoba Hydro did not propose a higher water level than they actually needed so they could create the perspective communities were being listened to and their concerns acted upon. Going further back, the claim that communities approached Manitoba Hydro for the Keeyask partnership is also a point of concern. Communities near the now-under-construction Keeyask project may very well have requested the partnership but their motives may have been more pragmatic than Manitoba Hydro promotes or understands. They very possibly saw the proverbial writing on the wall and requested the partnership not because they foresaw great profits, a possibility for a new relationship of prosperity with Manitoba Hydro, and increased Indigenous sovereignty but rather because they looked to their history and saw no benefit, only destruction, if they did not directly put forward an option that could possibly see some semblance of benefit. The entrance into the partnership may not have been based on the belief in gaining sovereignty or financial benefit but rather an attempt to address a project they knew would happen no matter their concerns or opposition.

During our conversations at Recluse Lake, Robert Spence described the community feeling towards the vote on the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement as feeling like “having a gun to our heads” (Personal Interview). The vote was made with the common belief that the generating station would be constructed regardless of whether the community decided to partner on it or not, resulting in the feeling that partnership was the only means to gain some voice and benefit from the project. After the creation of some of the co-management boards set out in the partnership on Keeyask, communities saw the pressure placed upon their leaders even more. York Factory First Nation called for the resignation of one Manitoba Hydro executive from the Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership board as a result of accusations of “belittling a female board member from York Factory for a statement the community gave to the media” (Froese). These actions of veiled and direct threats show a continuation of Manitoba Hydro’s attempts to undermine community strength and prevent communities from continuing their efforts to protect their land and maintain strong, positive relationships with it.

These partnerships were also established under what have effectively been revealed as completely incorrect, and arguably overly optimistic, projections. During the negotiations and

establishment of the partnership agreements, Manitoba Hydro was estimating the cost of the Keeyask project to be approximately \$6.5 billion (Braun). This would place the 25% partnership option at over \$1.6 billion. Obviously, this is no minor sum for impoverished northern First Nations that have suffered over four decades of poverty and destruction in part as a result of Manitoba Hydro's past generating station and diversion projects. Additionally, there were smaller percentage, and thus cheaper, options. After the project was initiated and approved, Manitoba Hydro consistently reported cost over-runs ("1st female Manitoba Hydro president"). As a result, the partnership communities are now forced to either contribute a significantly larger sum of money, at the time of writing Keeyask's total cost is estimated at \$8.7 billion or \$2.2 billion over budget ("1st female Manitoba Hydro president"), or spend less and reduce their share proportion, ultimately meaning fewer loans and debt but also less financial gain from future energy sales. This, combined with a possibly reduced sale price of energy as Manitoba Hydro is competing with solar and wind, means communities could, and very likely will, be in debt longer and receive less financial benefit from the project as a result of Manitoba Hydro's continued inability to effectively estimate and forecast construction costs and sales prices.

These partnership options have not only created concern about community debt but have also created division within and between communities. Many within the communities do not support the partnership, partner communities are divided based on the perceived impact of the dam on the communities as well as on level of control situated on relative contribution, and partner and non-partner communities are divided by expected impacts and the lack of consideration on non-partner communities (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 66; Robert Spence, Personal Interview; Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

Manitoba Hydro has had vast negative impacts on communities in the north for decades. When the decision was made to form a partnership with the Crown corporation, there was sharp division within communities. Many who supported the proposed project did so because the partnership could provide some community employment, particularly for young people, and much of the natural world had been destroyed beyond repair (Manitoba CEC, "26 Sept. 2013" 53-54; Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 81-82). Those opposed looked to the past and questioned Manitoba Hydro's motives and honesty (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 93; Manitoba CEC, "14 Nov. 2013" 3350; Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 80-81). This lack of trust,

along with the concerns about partnering with an entity that had caused, and was proposing to continue causing, so much damage to the land, waters, culture, way of life, and physical and mental health of the communities, resulted in serious concern about the partnership. In some ways, the creation of these divisions can provide support for Manitoba Hydro as they could claim Chief and Council supported them and the community members challenging them were a small minority of dissidents.

Finally, Manitoba Hydro's piecemeal approach to generating station construction, evaluation, and partnership creation has fragmented not only the river systems of northern Manitoba but also the communities that live along and with it. The decision to include Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) in Wuskwatim and not O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN) as well as only including 4 neighbouring First Nations and not others along the Nelson River in the Keeyask Project creates divisions between partner and non-partner communities. The most glaring example of divisions created was the division between NCN and OPCN, which at that time was known as South Indian Lake (SIL). Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have lived at Southern Indian Lake (Kamal et al., "A Recipe for Change" 560-561). However, through a confluence of events the community was listed under the neighbouring Nelson House Cree Nation, now NCN. As a result, some members of South Indian Lake were registered as NCN band members (Kamal et al., "A Recipe for Change" 560-561; Waldram, "Falling Through the Cracks" 71). However, regardless of recognition as Indigenous or not, all people living in South Indian Lake were treated as "squatters on Crown lands" (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). These challenges created some division, particularly during the early days of Manitoba Hydro's influence. South Indian Lake was not officially a member of the Northern Flood Committee, as they were meant to be represented by Nelson House Cree Nation, and as a result received limited financial repayment in the form of compensation agreements (Waldram *River Runs*, 162; Waldram, "Falling through the Cracks" 71).

When the Wuskwatim process started, SIL had already applied, over the course of approximately 100 years, for distinct 'band' recognition. There was seemingly no end in sight to the community would be recognized as a distinct First Nation (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). However, as the NCN vote on the partnership agreement approached, SIL was told they could form the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation and become a distinct First Nation, but they had a short

window during which band members would need to transfer their membership (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). This corresponded surprisingly well with the vote and, as SIL was expected to be over 400 “no” votes, they effectively removed the community’s impact and helped to guarantee a “yes” on the partnership (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). This result seems too extreme to be a coincidence and some in the community see it as Manitoba Hydro’s doing (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). This perception is based upon the seemingly constant support for ‘development,’ particularly in northern areas, by federal and provincial governments (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). As a result, SIL became OPCN, lost its vote on Wuskwatim, gained no partnership “benefits,” and must live with the impacts of Wuskwatim on the water levels of Southern Indian Lake.

Keeyask seems to somewhat address this problem by including four communities, the communities that Manitoba Hydro has misnamed the “Keeyask Cree Nations” (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). However, communities like OPCN and Pimicikamak Okimawin see water flow changes on their lakes and portions of rivers as a result of the Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg Regulation projects. The system is one integrated whole and Keeyask is expected to affect it all. As such, people in SIL are concerned about the implications of Keeyask on their community yet they see no benefits or compensation (Kamal et al. “The Augmented Flow Program” 77-78). This creates divisions between communities that seemingly have some impact and those that are outright ignored by Manitoba Hydro.

In both the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement and the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement, Manitoba Hydro set aside construction work as well as employment opportunities and training programs for Indigenous community members in partnership with or relation to the project (Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement 55-63; Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 36-39; Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 133-140). Supposedly, these promises in the partnership are meant to provide increased financial benefits to the communities and to provide other ways of living in the community that can replace the extremely difficult and near impossible way of living that was based on harvesting from the land. In theory, the training of youth and employment of community members would allow for more people to stay in the community with gainful employment to allow them to take care of their families. Although this is far from the promise of removing the “mass poverty and mass unemployment” that was

promised in the Northern Flood Agreement (“Schedule E”), Manitoba Hydro as well as leadership from the partner communities who signed the agreements argue these promises are a step towards positive and mutually beneficial relationships between the communities and Manitoba Hydro (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 36-39; Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 162-165).

Although seemingly very positive for both the communities and the progressive perception of Manitoba Hydro, there are some serious flaws with this approach to partnership that firmly plants it in the realm of recognition politics. First and foremost, these employment opportunities are based on the position of Western, Capitalist approaches to society and ‘development.’ Although it is true that all people in Canada live in a capitalist society at this point in time, Leanne Simpson directly challenges the perception that this is inherent and unchangeable when she states, “the Nishnaabeg brilliance those Elders pulled me into was profound. Their world – a cognitive, spiritual, emotional, land-based space – didn’t recognize or endlessly accommodate whiteness, it didn’t accept the inevitability of capitalism, and it was a disruption to the hierarchy of heteropatriarchy” (Simpson *As We Have Always Done*, 17). Further, she states, “I see the dismantling of global capitalism as inseparable from the struggle of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and nationhood because capitalism at its core is not just incompatible with core Indigenous values but has to violently shred the bodies who house those values in order to sustain itself” (Simpson *As We Have Always Done*, 67). Employment and training that perpetuates capitalism and supports destructive ‘development’ fundamentally undermines *Inniniwak* ways of living. Additionally, there have been challenges to the promises and implementation of these promises in the employment and training of Indigenous youth from the communities. Many *Inniniwak* people have come forward about the racism and harassment they face on work sites for Manitoba Hydro generating stations (“Keeyask-atraz”; Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*). As if this were not enough to cause serious questions about the partnership, there are also indications that contractors will fire or fail to rehire Indigenous people at the end of their contracts and instead hire from the south or other provinces (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Although the negotiating team for the JKDA was unlikely to have this information, the employment records for the Wuskwatim Generating Station indicate that the vast majority of Indigenous people employed as a result of the Wuskwatim

Generating Station were in menial labour positions, catering positions, or other forms of employment that disappeared after the completion of the project, creating what Kulchyski has termed a “racially stratified work force” (Manitoba CEC, “10 Dec. 2013” 5745-5746). As a result, the employment that is promised by Manitoba Hydro as well as the training that is seen as the ‘future’ for Indigenous youth in these communities actually will very likely fail to ever be used unless those who are trained graduate early enough to help with the final stages of construction or they decide to move for employment purposes.

However, these training programs can be leveraged by Manitoba Hydro if they choose to construct more generating stations in the area, as in the case with the proposed Conawapa Generating Station near Gillam, MB. Those who were trained during the Keeyask Project may be more inclined to vote in favour of partnership on the Conawapa Generating Station purely because they may gain some form of short-term employment based on their training.

Employment with Manitoba Hydro is not limited to strictly generating station construction or operation. In many communities across the north, Manitoba Hydro hires a few First Nations individuals to work on what are called ‘shoreline cleanup’ projects (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). These projects include removing vegetation along shorelines to prevent it from falling into waterways and cleaning any shorelines of debris that is a result of hydropower production (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). Just as in the case of the construction contracts and employment and training promises of the JKDA, shoreline cleanup allows Hydro to claim they are employing community members. Additionally, they can argue this employment places community members on the land rather than in construction sites or generating stations. However, the most important reason for these projects for Manitoba Hydro’s recognition politics project is the ability to claim they are preventing vegetation from entering the waterways and are making the projects ever more clean through shoreline cleanup. Even the title of “shoreline cleanup” indicates that the project is meant to “clean” the area and make it better than it was before. “Cleanup” would be unnecessary if the generating stations were not causing serious destruction. Additionally, the removal of vegetation does not inherently include “cleanup.” From many perspectives, the idea of removal of vegetation in the north should be considered anything but “cleanup.” Shoreline cleanup and stabilization projects are also near impossible to complete as the shorelines affected by Manitoba Hydro are numerous and extremely long (Les Dysart,

Personal Interview). Les Dysart argues that shoreline cleanup projects are “band-aid solutions” to major problems (Personal Interview). In reality, these projects seem to be more cosmetic than effective in most circumstance. Elder Noah Massan has also directly questioned the long-term effectiveness of shoreline stabilization projects, including dikes built for impoundment, as he sees the way water has been able to damage and destroy shoreline (Personal Interview). However, Manitoba Hydro is able to leverage these programs as employment and beneficial for the environment. Both of these arguments seem to indicate a recognition of the concerns of Indigenous communities while simultaneously failing to directly address or challenge the colonial relationships still in place between Manitoba Hydro and the communities whose concerns they claim to be recognizing. Additionally, they are purely necessitated by Manitoba Hydro’s continued destruction of northern Manitoba for the profit of energy sales to southern Manitoba, other provinces, and northern states in the United States.

Finally, partnership agreements, as discussed elsewhere in this work, support recognition politics and, as such, effectively undermine, challenge, and prevent attempts by communities or community members to effectively resist or protest the projects for which they have partnered. As stated earlier, leadership is prevented from speaking poorly of the partnership or generating station as a result of the need for good publicity, or “political capital,” to support energy sales, particularly to other provinces and the United States (Kulchyski “A Step Back,” 136). However, some leaders have spoken openly about bullying by Manitoba Hydro lawyers and executives as well as attempts by both Manitoba Hydro and partnership lawyers to silence leaders, prevent them from speaking to commissioners of the Clean Environment Commission, and require approval of speeches leaders plan to make (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 79, 90-92; Froese).

A board representative for York Factory First Nation publicly discussed the bullying she experienced in partnership board meetings by Manitoba Hydro lawyers and executives (Froese). These actions consistently prevent any attempts by First Nations leadership to raise concerns or challenge Manitoba Hydro. Conway Arthurson, a then councillor for Fox Lake Cree Nation, discussed during the Clean Environment Commission hearings on the Keeyask Project in Split Lake the consistent attempts by his lawyer to prevent him from speaking directly with commissioners of the Clean Environment Commission as well as their attempts to prevent him from speaking at that hearing and their requirement that leaders have their speeches to the CEC

approved by the lawyers (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 79, 90-92). These actions taken by Manitoba Hydro and lawyers for the partnership seem to create barriers for leadership if they wish to raise concerns or publicly challenge Manitoba Hydro. Concerns have also been raised about the inclusion of confidentiality agreements with leadership of ‘partner’ communities. Throughout my MA research, community members stated they had serious concerns about what was happening in meetings with Manitoba Hydro because leadership had to sign confidentiality agreements that prevented them from sharing information with the community (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 88).

Community members and “non-traditional” leaders are not hampered in the same way by partnerships. Those who wish to challenge the corporation can and have taken a variety of actions to challenge Manitoba Hydro’s narrative surrounding hydroelectricity in general and Keeyask in particular. There have been effective, and very strongly supported, news articles, participation as interveners in provincial and national review processes, and direct action (as examples see Braun; Manitoba CEC, “9 Dec. 2013”; Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3345-3365; NEB, “8 June 2018”; Keeper & Spence; Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*). These discussions challenge Manitoba Hydro’s domination of the narrative surrounding hydropower in the south and make the atrocities it has caused a part of the public record. They question Manitoba Hydro’s claims of “good for all Manitobans” and “love of the environment” and in some cases even bring construction to a grinding halt through direct action. However, Manitoba Hydro’s partnerships create a major hurdle.

In the past when direct action was taken and Manitoba Hydro construction was halted, the corporation applied for injunctions to prevent the direct action from continuing (Bergen). These approaches, combined with Manitoba Hydro’s discussion of partnerships, arguably places the direct action in a position of insignificance or unwarranted demands that could undermine support in the south. Communities have found unique and ingenious ways to overcome these challenges, but they are still very present and yet again situate the partnerships as a challenge to Indigenous sovereignty rather than a support for it. Additionally, these approaches clearly show that Manitoba Hydro’s ‘recognition’ of concerns held by the Indigenous communities with whom they form partnerships do not fundamentally alter the colonial relationship between Manitoba Hydro and Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba.

Good Intentions, Poor Implementation

Among the most challenging adversaries for Manitoba Hydro are the Elders and land-users of affected communities. These people have direct knowledge of the many ways the land is being destroyed and can effectively and passionately express this destruction to audiences, including both the general public and governmental decision-makers. Additionally, these people tend to be at the forefront in blockades and protests. Manitoba Hydro claims to have some programs that support harvesting from the land, however these programs do not provide nearly enough resources to address the mass destruction they have caused and the barriers to interacting with the land that they have created. The spring and fall access program provides funding and other resources to help those who wish to harvest from the land to get out on the land in places where harvesting is possible (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). This program is meant to help compensate harvesters for the difficulty of harvesting near communities by providing travel funding for them to travel further from their home community and territory in order to harvest (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). As an example, this program can cover the cost of a float plane to travel further from the Nelson River to harvest animals and fish. Being on the land is extremely important for the health, language, culture, and identity of *Inniniwak* people and these relationships are hard to establish today because of the destruction Manitoba Hydro has created (McLeod, 6; Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3358). On the surface, this program is immensely positive and important as a means of rectifying the past and present destruction Hydro projects have created for the communities. However, there are some serious challenges to this approach to ‘supporting’ *Inniniwak* ways of living. Two of these challenges are most effectively described by the Kitchikeesik family, the ‘owners’ of ‘Trapline #15’ at Gull Lake, the site for the Keeyask Project (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013”).

During the CEC hearings, they discussed the then future destruction of their traditional family territory at Gull Lake as a result of the Keeyask Project. Janet McIvor stated, “Our ancestral land has already been disrupted by the worst kind. From what we have seen, when KGS is built, our lives, our heritage, our ancestral lands will be altered and destroyed forever” (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3347). Further, Norma McIvor stated, “All the money in the world is not going to replace the lost ways of our ancestral connection to the Gull Lake Trapline 15 that will forever change our relationship with the land runs deep. Our way of life on Gull

Lake, as we have come to live, it will be wiped out when the Keeyask Generating Station is completed” (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3347). This territory had been in their family for generations and was the last location at which they saw their late brother before he went missing as a child (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3350). Ila Disbrowe explained this history when she stated, “this is the last place we seen our brother, Leon, alive. He couldn’t speak but we understood him. His remains were never found. To this day, we still search and scour the shorelines when the water level is low. After the Keeyask dam is built, this will be gone. It will be a reservoir, gone forever. Our trust has been compromised. How can we trust Manitoba Hydro to do the right thing?” (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3350). Along with the many other stories they have of this territory, their homeland was slated to be flooded by the generating station (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3349). Hydro had promised to provide them with an ‘acceptable’ replacement trapline (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3355). The family stated two clear problems with this approach.

First, their territory is a traditional family territory, not a trapline, and as such they could not rightfully take or encroach on someone else’s traditional family territory because their territory had been flooded (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3355). Janet McIvor directly addresses this when she states, “Each family has their own territory. And to impose this on them will create conflict between families. That’s what Hydro is trying to do to us, is to find another trapline for us. But every family member in our community has their own traditional land use. We can’t go and impose on them. Because every time we have a meeting with Hydro, that’s what they put on the table” (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3355).

Second, their traditional family territory is their homeland, where many of them were raised, and that connection could not be easily transferred to a new ‘trapline’ (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3349, 3351). Marilyn Mazurat expressed this concern when stating, “We think it goes against our Cree world view to allow such permanent and widespread damage and harm, especially when so little is being offer[ed] in return. This is what the damage will be to our family and homeland alone, displacing our way of life, flooding us out, disconnecting the integrity of our connection of our past, ruining our relationship to our land” (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3349). Ila Disbrowe adds to this by saying, “There is no amount of money that would replace what we will lose” (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3351). Their relationship to

the land, through their connection to Leon's Island and Lillian's Island, among other places, could not easily be moved or replaced by an 'equivalent' territory. Janet McIvor states, "First of all, we find another – if we find another suitable trapline area, it will never substitute for our homeland, where we have always been. It will be like forestry location. Anyone who understand Cree culture would never say to a Cree person, just pack up and move on. That would degrade who we are because we are about the relation to our land. The land of the creator gave to us to live on and take care of it" (Manitoba CEC, "14 Nov. 2013" 3355). The construction of the Keeyask Project directly positioned their relationships to and with the land as inferior to Hydro's greedy, destructive, and parasitic 'relationship' to the land.

It is also important to note the prevalence of discussions of licensed traplines rather than traditional family territories. Janet McIvor discusses this challenge when she states,

We have been forced to negotiate for some sort of accommodations under Article 10 of Adverse Effects Agreement. That says Hydro will remain liable to compensate any member who is a licensed trapper, not traditional land user, for any loss of revenue from commercial trapping and any direct loss or damage to any buildings, structure or other infrastructure located on the registered trapline used by a member which resulted from a construction and operation of the KGS project.

And when we did our Cree Nation partner Keeyask environmental evaluation on page 123, registered trapline system, it also states that their traditional family territories. We had family, traditional territories before licence, trapline licence. Traditional land uses has been passed on from generation to generation in our culture. (Manitoba CEC, "14 Nov. 2013" 3354)

These Adverse Effects Agreements and other means of compensating Indigenous peoples impacted by hydroelectric projects seem to undermine *Inniniwak* culture rather than supporting it through the disregard of traditional family territories and traditional land users. These approaches to compensation distill an extremely important aspect of *Inniniwak* culture, which has been discussed earlier in this work, to merely commercial trapping of the land. This failure, or unwillingness, to understand *Inniniwak* culture results in multiple physical relationships with the land going unconsidered by Manitoba Hydro. When these compensation agreements only consider trappers and commercial losses, they tend to compensate Indigenous men who lose revenue from trapping, disregarding many of the relationships with the land that Indigenous

women have. These relationships and interactions are equally impacted to those of trappers, however they go uncompensated and unrecognized.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges related to the spring and fall access program, Robert Spence also discusses an immensely problematic aspect of this program. As it is currently established, the access program provides supports in the spring and fall to help harvesters and land-users access the land (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). In *Inniniwak* culture, there are six recognized seasons (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). While the access program provides some support to access the land, it fails to truly account for the other four seasons that the *Inniniwak* people may also wish to access their lands and form relationships (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

These programs seem to position Manitoba Hydro in a more positive light as they attempt to compensate Indigenous people for the loss of their territories and by providing funding to allow people access to the land further from their communities. However, as has been discussed throughout this section, these relationships are not without their problems. Many of these programs fail to effectively consider *Inniniwak* culture in their implementation and seem to consider compensation as merely replacing a physical object rather than understanding the many layers of relationships that are lost through the destruction and inability to maintain relationships with different territories. As with many of the programs and relationships discussed in this chapter, these programs, despite the good they can provide, continue to perpetuate the colonial relationship between Manitoba Hydro and Indigenous communities in the north. The attempts made by Manitoba Hydro through these programs to recognize the concerns of the communities still fails to move their relationship out of a colonial sphere.

Wuskwatim and Nisichawayasihk's Customary Laws

During the Clean Environment Commission hearings on the Keeyask Project, Elder D'Arcy Linklater discussed the methods through which Nisichawayasihk worked to include their laws into the Wuskwatim Project (Manitoba CEC, "12 Dec. 2013"). During his testimony, Elder Linklater discusses Nisichawayasihk's great binding law, the *Kihche'othawowewin* (Manitoba CEC, "12 Dec. 2013" 6231). He states that this law is "underpinned by our spiritual and philosophical beliefs, values, principles and goals" (Manitoba CEC, "12 Dec. 2013" 6231-6232). Later in the discussion of treaties and the great binding law, Elder Linklater states,

Stated plainly it is contrary to our customary law to intentionally obstruct the flow of a river and knowingly alter water, fish, animals and habitat, and to knowingly create hardships for human beings that make a living from that land and that water. In accordance with our customary law, we must acknowledge the obligation we all hold to carefully identify and to reconcile the irreversible adverse effects of the diversion and control and damming of our rivers and lakes to produce hydropower. (Manitoba CEC, “12 Dec. 2013” 6247)

These statements seem to indicate that projects, like the Wuskwatim Project in his territory, are antithetical to the *Kihche’othawowewin*. However, he also talks about the strength that they gain from being included in every aspect of the Wuskwatim Project (Manitoba CEC, “12 Dec. 2013” 6248-6252). Manitoba Hydro’s inclusion of these customary laws and the Great Binding Law creates the perception that they are attempting to support Indigenous sovereignty in their partnership-oriented projects, however they were still able to get acceptance for their project. Additionally, Elder Linklater discussed the lack of recognition for the Elders who participated and created a process through which these laws would be included in the Wuskwatim Project (Manitoba CEC, “12 Dec. 2013” 6251). Instead, Manitoba Hydro received a reward for their inclusion of this information (Manitoba CEC, “12 Dec. 2013” 6250-6251). Their approach to recognition politics is deployed in such a way that they are actually the recipients of praise that this approach receives with little to no acknowledgement for the Elders and community members who provided the information upon which this program is supposedly based. Based upon their reception of innovation awards without recognition of the community alone I would argue that Manitoba Hydro’s use of recognition politics is undermining Indigenous sovereignty, but the additional information of the project going forward despite being antithetical to these laws also supports the claim that the project does not strengthen Indigenous sovereignty but instead undermines it. This approach directly ties to the work of Paul Nadasdy (*Hunters and Bureaucrats*), who discusses the ways in which inclusion of Indigenous knowledges, when translated from Indigenous languages and worldviews into English and Western worldviews, undermine Indigenous communities rather than supporting them. The shallow level inclusion of *Inniniwak* law does not support the community but in fact undermines it and forces it to think in a way that is also antithetical to the meaningful culture and laws of those Indigenous peoples it proclaims to support. Yet again, this shows the ways in which Manitoba Hydro ‘recognizes’

Indigenous communities with whom they partner, in this case through the supposed inclusion of their laws into project design, while still failing to fundamentally alter the colonial relationship that has been established over the decades of Manitoba Hydro's work in northern Manitoba. Elder Linklater includes discussion of the ownership of archaeological findings including human remains and places 'ownership' of these human remains in the community rather than in the province (Manitoba CEC, "12 Dec. 2013" 6257). This places *Inniniwak* understanding in a position of ancestor's remains as property and under property law before they can be returned to community laws.

Apology

When discussing recognition politics, it is important to acknowledge both the ways in which this form of engagement is deployed to undermine Indigenous movements while simultaneously recognizing the impacts certain actions can have on those who have suffered and continue to suffer. Coulthard states, "Over the last three decades, a global industry has emerged promoting the issuing of official apologies advocating "forgiveness" and "reconciliation" as an important precondition for resolving the deleterious social impacts of intra-state violence, mass atrocity, and historical injustice" (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 106). Audra Simpson further discusses the approach to apologies when stating, "the settler state is asking for forgiveness and to forget, with no land back, no justice, and no peace" ("The State is a Man"). Connected with this discussion, Simpson argues that, to rectify the wrongs of the past and present, there needs to be a true understanding of the depth of the wrongs ("The State is a Man"). Pasternak argues, "a reconciliation of relations between Indigenous and settler societies requires the radical deconstruction of the authority by which Canada invokes its sovereignty and a re-examination of the jurisdictional orders that underpin Indigenous forms of entitles to their lands" (160). While I am about to argue that the apology put forward by Manitoba Hydro employees and the former Premier of Manitoba are extremely problematic, I do want to acknowledge that apologies can be healing for those who have been ignored and who have and continue to suffer. This discussion is not meant to challenge the importance of apologies but instead to argue that the way apologies have been expressed by Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba do not indicate a meaningful change in future relationships beyond what was present in the past.

During the winter of 2014 and the summer of 2015, Manitoba saw serious discussion of the impacts of hydroelectric generating stations in northern Manitoba. In the winter of 2014, many members of Pimicikamak evicted the Hydro employees at the Jenpeg generating station and control structure and re-occupied the territory as a sign of resistance against the corporation and provincial government's failure to recognize and enact the promises laid out in the Northern Flood Agreement ("Manitoba Hydro Evicted"). Over the course of six weeks, Pimicikamak citizens re-occupied the generating station and expressed their concerns to the province and Manitoba Hydro. There were marches on the Manitoba Hydro building and conversations between the leadership of the community, Manitoba Hydro, and the provincial government (Puxley). In the end, one major promise made by the province was an 'apology tour' by then Premier Greg Selinger to Cross Lake as well as other Hydro affected communities in the north ("Manitoba First Nation to get Apology"). The following summer, then-Premier Selinger fulfilled his promise by travelling to the communities to apologize on behalf of the province for the negative impacts these communities faced as a result of Manitoba Hydro's operations in the north.

This apology could act as a step towards reconciliation between the provincial government of Manitoba, the Crown corporation, and Indigenous communities so negatively affected in the north. However, there were some challenges. Premier Selinger fulfilled the requirement of apologizing for the faults in Hydro's operations in the past. However, as so many politicians before him have done, he placed these challenges and abuses in the past without consideration of the contemporary or future impacts Hydro has and will have on Indigenous communities ("Greg Selinger's Apology"). He did not guarantee serious changes to the colonial mentality that drives the construction of generating stations in the north. Further, he does not mention the recently constructed Wuskwatim Generating Station nor the then-under-construction Keeyask Generating Station. As such, this failure to consider the recent projects seems to indicate that they, as well as the partnership approach affiliated with them, are an important new step in reconciliation.

Former Premier Selinger starts out the apology by stating, "Today I'm pleased to be here with members of the government to talk about the specific apology that we have agreed to read onto the record with great sincerity today with respect to the harms that have been done in the

past through hydro development in Manitoba” (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”). First and foremost, this apology situates the challenges Indigenous communities in the north face in the past. Additionally, the speech starts out by stating the apology is to be put on the record. This stipulation both supports the community request for a public apology while also establishing a record towards which the government or Manitoba Hydro can point in the situation of another protest or act of resistance. Also, the phrasing of this opening seems to indicate the apology is meant to be part of an environmental justice movement, which Loo argues is more than “rectifying the distribution of environmental harms and benefits” (895). However, Loo goes on to argue “doing environmental justice was very much a matter of grappling with the different scales at which environmental change was thought about, lived, and addressed. Solutions framed at one scale could not resolve the problems experienced at another” (898). This is an important point to consider as we move further through the apology put forward by the former Premier and the ways in which Manitoba Hydro interacts with Indigenous peoples through partnerships and agreements. He follows this up by stating “the process of reconciliation is intended to foster relationships based on respect and mutual understanding of all peoples involved in an ongoing relationship in our province of Manitoba and in our country of Canada” (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”). Situating the apology in terms of reconciliation allows the government to claim it is making efforts towards reconciling ‘past’ claims to challenges and establish the present and future as a ‘shiny, positive’ time in which the racist and colonial actions of the past are no longer acceptable. Inherent to this discussion of reconciliation is the understanding that the ‘grievances’ of the past are no longer happening and the “ongoing relationship” is better than it was in the past.

The apology takes a turn away from a tone of apology towards a supportive tone for hydroelectricity when the former premier states,

Hydroelectricity is a reliable, sustainable, and secure source of energy for Manitoba. But as with all sources of energy there are environmental effects of hydroelectric development. These effects include changes in water levels and flows on water bodies, particularly in Manitoba’s north and in areas where Aboriginal peoples have lived for generations before European settlement and industrial development. The reliable supply of renewable hydroelectric power with a low carbon footprint for Manitoba Hydro projects on the Winnipeg River, the Grand Rapids Project, and the

Lake Winnipeg Regulation and Churchill River Diversion Projects have been a great benefit to Manitobans, but we have discovered that the environmental effects of such projects were not considered fully and the nature and extent of the effects were uncertain and unknown at the time the projects were developed. (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”)

As the former premier continues to promote the supposedly positive nature of hydropower and the necessity of its production in Manitoba, he effectively situates any resistance against past, present, or future generating stations as a protest against the prosperity, and potentially even survival, of Manitoba as a province. This passage places any resistance against Manitoba Hydro’s “renewable hydroelectric power with a low carbon footprint” as resistance against attempts to combat climate change. Although outright ridiculous, statements like these situate those who would protest the destruction of the land for the purpose of producing hydroelectric power as protesting against the protection of the global environment and the protection of the planet. Effectively, this situates those who re-occupied their territory at Jenpeg as protesting against Manitoba’s supposed steps to fighting climate change. These statements also situate Manitoba Hydro as a public interest and public benefit. Through establishing Manitoba Hydro and its operations as inherently based in public interest, former Premier Selinger also creates a situation in which anyone who wishes to oppose Manitoba Hydro projects in the future as fighting against the public interest of all of Manitoba.

Former Premier Selinger argues the “environmental effects...were not considered fully and the nature and extent of these effects were uncertain and unknown at the time the projects were developed” (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”). These words attempt to establish that the past projects were not fully considered but that present projects undergo such stringent consideration that the environmental effects are fully understood prior to construction. Both the claim of failure of consideration in the past and the full understanding of the present are factually incorrect, as can be proven by the challenges put forward by a group of University of Manitoba faculty in relation to the Churchill River Diversion, particularly through the completion and public release of the Duckworth Report, and the current complete failure to establish an accurate budgetary cost for the Keeyask Project (Waldram, *River Runs* 120-121; “1st female Manitoba Hydro president”). Additionally, there are clear indications, which I cite throughout this work, that indicate Manitoba Hydro is still unable to accurately predict environmental impacts,

including the massive flooding along the Churchill River from the annual thaw of 2017 (Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

As the apology continues, the former premier argues there is “a growing appreciation of how important lands and waters are to the economies and cultures of Manitoba’s Aboriginal peoples” (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”). He goes further by stating:

The effects of hydro projects include effects on transportation in summer and winter, effects on hunting and trapping, effects on fishing, effects on water quality, and in some cases including significant flooding of First Nation reserve land and other lands traditionally used by Aboriginal people. The effects are more than those just on land and water and on plants and animals. We recognize that hydro development can effect the cultural identities of Aboriginal peoples because of the close relationship of Aboriginal peoples to the land and resources. (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”)

These approaches to recognition do seem to be a reflection of a more compassionate understanding of the implications of hydropower production on Indigenous communities. However, the continued promotion of further projects at a time when energy conservation and alternative energy sources are on the rise seems to indicate the understanding is only surface level. He goes on to state, “although some studies were conducted before these hydroelectric projects...[they] were developed and measures were taken, these projects were developed at a time where the effects on Aboriginal peoples were not fully understood” (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”). The claims of impacts being “not fully understood” seems to indicate the former premier believes contemporary projects fully understand the implications of these projects on Indigenous communities, however my discussions with harvesters and land-users from affected communities indicates quite the opposite, as well as Manitoba Hydro’s assessment of the Keeyask Project. The failure to truly include Indigenous knowledges and Traditional Ecological Knowledge at an equal or greater level than science seems to truly question the ‘full understanding’ Manitoba Hydro supposedly has of effects on Indigenous communities for the Keeyask Project.

Now, for the meat of the apology, former Premier Selinger states,

Further, these projects were developed before the recognition of the Crown’s duty of consultation with Aboriginal peoples and before principles of environmental assessment and licensing were established in

law. As a result, First Nations, Metis communities, and other Aboriginal communities were not fully consulted about these projects before they were developed. Canada, Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro did not have the benefit of a comprehensive understanding of the issues and concerns of Aboriginal peoples and of potential ways to address these concerns from the people themselves. Looking back on what has happened, and on the effects on Aboriginal communities in Manitoba, I wish now on behalf of the government of Manitoba to express my sincere apology to Aboriginal peoples effected by hydro development. (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”)

In many ways, this part of the apology seems to recognize a few key aspects of Indigenous resistance to Manitoba Hydro’s actions of the past, and I would argue present. However, he clarifies his statements and provides a “get out of jail free card” for the two levels of government and Crown corporation with his claim they “did not have the benefit of a comprehensive understanding of the issues and concerns of Aboriginal peoples and of the potential ways to address these concerns from the people themselves” (“Greg Selinger’s Apology”). The “comprehensive understanding” was not withheld from the government nor was it a failure in communication or translation that prevented their understanding. The “comprehensive understanding” was missing because of the colonial actions of these three entities and their refusal to consult the communities, make alterations based on their concerns, or take additional time to allow for a true dialogue about the implications and means of addressing concerns. The powers that be chose not to listen to the voices of Indigenous people in northern Manitoba who were sharing their knowledge and concerns; the information was available but the governments and Manitoba Hydro chose to ignore it (as an example, see Waldram *River Runs*, 136). As a result, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government have been forced into a position in which they must apologize to communities they have assaulted through their past, and arguably present, actions in order to prevent the re-occupation of traditional lands and the protest and resistance to their presence in the north. The government has taken the approach of “it is better to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission” in the past. Now, they have taken the approach of apologizing for the past and pretending the present is not a problem. I think it is very clear that, assuming reconciliation in Canada is truly supported by governmental entities, 40 years from now we will see yet another apology, this time for the actions taken by the

government and Manitoba Hydro in regards to their partnership agreements and construction of the Keeyask Project and Wuskwatim Project, as well as the Conawapa project if it is ever constructed.

Much of the recent concern regarding Manitoba Hydro's actions, including the licensing and construction of the Keeyask Project, took place under the government of former Premier Greg Selinger and the NDP. The Keeyask Project is meant to usher in a new area of hydropower production that is based on partnership with Indigenous communities and relationships of mutual benefit (Manitoba CEC, "24 Sept. 2013" 39). However, these partnerships have been challenged many times over for their myriad of problems that question whether or not they represent a new relationship or the "zenith" of colonization (Hoffman, 128).

Premier Selinger's apology is not the only example of recognition politics being used in public hearings or conversations in order to undermine resistance against Hydro's partnership approach and continued construction of generating stations. Throughout the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, Manitoba Hydro was required to go through the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission hearings on the Keeyask Project ("Terms of Reference"). These hearings were public processes through which Manitoba Hydro was expected to present information about the environmental impacts of the project and interveners were able to question experts, provide testimony, and make information public about the project. As a result of the wide scope and public interest in the hearings, the CEC decided to travel to the partner communities in the north as well as Cross Lake, Manitoba, for hearings. During the community hearings, the meetings usually started with the commission discussing the purpose of the meetings and their roles in the environmental decision-making process followed the formal leadership of the partner community discussing their perspective, however some meetings started with the formal leadership and was followed by the commissioners (Manitoba CEC, "24 Sept. 2013"; Manitoba CEC, "25 Sept. 2013"; Manitoba CEC, "26 Sept. 2013"; Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013"). In some communities, most notably in Gillam, a representative for Manitoba Hydro also provided presentations (Manitoba CEC, "24 Sept. 2013"). The Hydro representative's presentation was almost always the exact same and provided information on the goals of the partnership, their understanding of the relationship set forward in the partnership, and other related information that the community members present may have wanted to know. In each

presentation, the Hydro employee would recognize that past hydroelectric projects have been “difficult and hurtful to the Cree people” (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 22). In each instance, the representative would then jump into an explanation of all the ways in which the partnership agreement that had been signed with the leadership would overcome these problems and that the pain and difficulty past projects had created would be only situated in the past as a result of the partnership (Manitoba CEC, “24 Sept. 2013” 23-32). The recognition these Hydro employees showed allowed them to make the argument that the destructive operations of Manitoba Hydro were in the past and that the partnerships would provide for a strong, mutually beneficial relationship into the future. This type of recognition, particularly in public hearings like those of the Clean Environment Commission, places Manitoba Hydro in the public position of recognizing past wrongs while undermining resistance to current and future projects through their promises of not repeating the past, despite continually perpetuating the pattern of destruction from the past into the present and the future.

As Hydro continues to push forward with more generating stations, more converter stations, and longer and more convoluted power corridors as a means of producing electricity in Manitoba, they are continuing to perpetuate the colonial relationship with *Inniniwak* communities in the north. Through the apology and representation of the partnership in the CEC hearings, the province and Manitoba Hydro seem to be attempting to situate all pain and difficulty in the past while painting the future as a mutually beneficial relationship. Proponents of the project go as far as to indicate that the future relationships between partner communities and Manitoba Hydro will be akin to a marriage (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 11). These attempts promote recognition politics and situates actions like Pimicikamak’s re-occupation of the Jenpeg territory or Tataskweyak Cree Nation’s blockading of Provincial Road 280 as minor challenges in these relationships rather than major conflicts between different entities. In many ways, this echoes some of the previous approaches taken in Quebec in which the provincial government asserted that the James Bay Cree were resisting projects not to protect the environment and their ways of life, but instead to gain control so they can continue with projects as the sole beneficiaries (Niezen *Defending the Land*, 10) or for purely monetary gain. In reality, these methods of resistance are justified attempts to raise awareness of the colonial struggle in the north, to challenge the continued dispossession of the land from the people and of people

from the land, and an attempt to re-ignite the powerful relationship between the people and the land through fighting to defend and protect it. Through recognition politics, Manitoba Hydro and the province may be undermining the power of *Inniniwak* communities in the north and Indigenous sovereignty in relation to land and water. Despite their actions, community members continue to act out their sovereignty, re-establish their relationships with the land, and actively challenge all colonial attempts at dispossessing the land from the people and the people from the land.

Youth Muskrat Camp Programs (South Indian Lake)

As stated with all of the aforementioned programs supported or sponsored by Manitoba Hydro, there are some attempts, whether self-serving or not, that create a benefit for the communities for which they are intended. South Indian Lake had one of these programs and asserted their sovereignty and self-determination over this program in such a way as to guarantee its benefit for the people, and youth in particular, of the community. During the early 2000s, Manitoba Hydro provided funding for a Muskrat camp outside of the community. As a combined effort, the muskrat camp worked with the school to help youth get out of the classroom and onto the land (Steve Ducharme, Personal Interview). These connections are extremely important for the youth in many aspects of their lives and can directly help them in the process of identity formation (McLeod, 6; Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3358). In many instances, the school would send out youth who were having trouble in school or who were creating trouble in the classroom in the hopes that it would help them overcome the challenges that were preventing them from benefiting from their education. Through their time on the land, the students would rapidly change their behaviour to more positive, respectful, and beneficial actions that showed the positive implications of time on the land for youth (Steve Ducharme, Personal Interview).

The success this muskrat camp showed both for educating the youth and creating and maintaining relationships with the land was firmly in the hands of the community members that ran this program. Although Manitoba Hydro helped sponsor the camp financially, the camp itself was completely autonomous from Manitoba Hydro and was operated in such a way that it respected the community and *Inniniwak* culture and was not hampered by intrusions by Manitoba Hydro (Steve Ducharme, Personal Interview). Through the years of its operation, the

camp was helpful to the community and the youth of South Indian Lake. However, this positive relationship with Manitoba Hydro would not last.

In 2013, Manitoba Hydro completely cut ties with many of the organizations in South Indian Lake with which it had started to create positive relationships. The Community Association of South Indian Lake (CASIL) was told by Manitoba Hydro that it had fulfilled its responsibilities and that it would no longer be funding many of the programs for which it had provided financial aid (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). One such program was the muskrat camp. This camp was a costly enough endeavour that it was impossible for the community to continue using it and supporting the program on its own and as such the muskrat camp and school program affiliated with it were shut down (Steve Ducharme, Personal Interview). The community lost an immensely helpful program that provided support for ‘troubled’ youth and a culturally appropriate camp that allowed Elders to share their knowledge and youth to gain the benefits of a ‘bush education.’ Meanwhile, Manitoba Hydro is continuing to operate Southern Indian Lake as a massive reservoir that provides vast amounts of water for the generating stations Manitoba Hydro operates along the Nelson River. To this day, Manitoba Hydro operates as though it has fulfilled its requirements to CASIL and the only real interaction that the community has with Manitoba Hydro is the aforementioned Shoreline Cleanup and similar projects (Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba have been using recognition politics as a means of conveying a narrative in the south that positions any negative outcomes of hydroelectricity in the past and situates partnership agreements as beautiful means of creating mutually beneficial relationships. Instead, the partnership agreements place *Inniniwak* communities in northern Manitoba in debt while simultaneously creating many of the same challenges present in past projects. Through Manitoba Hydro’s recent decisions to open construction sites during the international coronavirus pandemic without consulting their ‘partner’ communities (Samson), I argue Manitoba Hydro is continuing to perpetuate a colonial relationship that does not truly consider the perspectives of *Inniniwak* communities in the north.

While communities face the challenges of partnerships and new generating station projects, they are simultaneously faced with their role in the environmental decision-making process both in Canada as a whole and within the province of Manitoba. The next chapter will discuss the ways in which *Inniniwak* communities are and are not able to effectively participate in environmental decision-making processes while also reviewing the ways in which treaties necessitate Indigenous knowledges and legal systems be included in the process of making decisions about the environment.

Chapter 5: Environmental Decision-Making

In discussions of the implications of Manitoba Hydro's operations in the north on Indigenous sovereignty, it is necessary to also discuss the interactions between Indigenous communities and environmental agencies of the provincial and federal governments as well as the real ways in which environmental bureaucracy interacts with Indigenous peoples on a daily basis. McCreary and Turner argue that resource policy assumes a foundation of settler sovereignty (230). Through a review of some of the environmental bureaucracy surrounding the Keeyask Project and the Bipole III/Manitoba Minnesota Transmission Project, I will emphasize the many hurdles that are placed in the way of Indigenous communities using their sovereignty and inherent rights to participate in environmental decision-making while simultaneously recounting stories harvesters, land-users, and Elders have shared with me about the many ways in which they have been directly impacted by interactions with agents of environmental bureaucracy. Many of these stories do not show people who sit to the side as agents of environmental bureaucracy attempt to tell them how they may interact with the land but instead show people who not only stand up for their rights to be on the land but also to protect the land and challenge Manitoba Hydro's 'licenses' provided by the environmental bureaucracy.

Treaty

When discussing the interactions between Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadian bureaucratic entities, it is important we review the documents and oral agreements that arguably underlie the very basis of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in a large portion of western Canada. With the Supreme Court of Canada dismissing the notion of *terra nullius* (Supreme Court of Canada, *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*) and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples arguing that the doctrine of discovery "is factually incorrect," "morally wrong," and "to the extent that court decisions have relied on these fallacies, they are in error" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples *Looking Forward, Looking Back*, 661). As Sakej Henderson has argued, the entire basis of non-Indigenous governance in western Canada is based upon the relationships that were formed during the treaty process (Henderson "Sui Generis", 426). Pasternak argues a similar position when stating "each time discovery is invoked by the Crown to defend the violation of Indigenous jurisdiction over their lands, the

racist foundations of Canadian sovereignty are reassembled within the structures of state power” (158). However, it is important to consider these relationships not based upon the documents that were signed or the legal positions held by the federal government, but instead to take a “liberal and generous” interpretation of the spirit and intent of oral agreements made at the time of the treaty process from the perspective of the Indigenous peoples that signed treaty (Craft, “Treaty Interpretation” 12).

Treaty implementation has been a contentious issue both within Canadian society and in the Canadian court system (Craft, “Treaty Interpretation” 4). The Supreme Court of Canada has stated that “general, liberal interpretation” is necessary when discussing Treaty and Aboriginal Rights (Craft, “Treaty Interpretation” 12). When reviewing the “spirit and intent” of the treaty-making parties, it is necessary that Indigenous perspectives be considered. Indigenous perspectives on treaty implementation are best summarized in the statement “the treaty in text fell short of the promises” (Huntinghawk 42). Although treaties were made based on positions of mutual respect, their implementation has resulted in domination and a disintegration of those initially positive relationships (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples *Highlights from the Report*). Pasternak states, “Indigenous peoples – much like firearms and motor vehicle registrations – have been gradually transformed into objects of jurisdiction rather than subjects in nation-to-nation relationships” (152). However, it must be recognized that not all Indigenous nations have the same perspectives on the relationships and responsibilities that were set forward in respect to treaty negotiations (e.g. Gus-Wen-Tah and adoption). Therefore, there must be a recognition of both the similarities between different national perspectives of treaties and the differences. In particular, this can be seen in the differing relationships that were set forward by the Haudenosaunee in the Gus-Wen-Tah as well as the Cree perspective of Treaty 6.

As put forward by the Haudenosaunee, the Gus-Wen-Tah is a wampum belt that represents two separate vessels travelling in a waterway together. These vessels are separate and are directed by their own people, however they co-habit and respect each other’s autonomy (Williams 4). This means of treaty sets forward a society in which two separate entities live in a region together yet are autonomous from each other and neither gives up their inherent right to govern their people and live in their own ways. Inherent to this relationship is the right for

Indigenous nations to self-govern and to have control over their lands and resources without interference by other entities.

Cree understandings of Treaty 6 are very similar to that of the Haudenosaunee Gus-Wen-Tah, however there are some prominent points of separation. As put forward by Johnson, the Cree understanding of Treaty 6 is that it established the adoption of non-Indigenous nations and peoples by the Cree and vice versa, which he represents through the use of the term *kiciwamanawak* (cousin) when addressing non-Indigenous peoples throughout the book *Two Families: Treaties and Government* (13). This adoption creates a relationship of responsibility to one's family members and requires support for each other in times of need (Johnson 30). Adoption ceremonies were not particular to only the Cree in Treaty 6 territory. Other nations took the same or similar approaches to treaty-making with non-Indigenous people (Craft *Breathing Life* 86). Creating familial relationships seems strikingly different from the approaches put forward by the Gus-Wen-Tah. However, Johnson goes further to point out that the familial relationship set out in Treaty 6 is not one of paternalism or control as is generally accepted by non-Indigenous governments. Instead, he argues that the familial relationship represents a responsibility to support when needed but without any relationship of power or ability to impose on the other (Johnson, 30). Like the Gus-Wen-Tah, this relationship requires self-government and non-interference from both parties and recognizes the necessity of sharing the land and resources without interfering in how their relatives wish to live or use the land.

When considering northern Manitoba, which is covered under Treaty 5 and its adhesions (Waldram *River Runs*, 30, 39), it is important to understand some of the primary reasoning behind the signing of treaty from the government's perspective. Although the written treaty describes the 'surrender' of land in northern Manitoba, the main purpose of the treaty was to gain control of the waterways of the north for transportation (Waldram *River Runs* 39-40). Historical numbered treaties from the governmental perspective were predominantly about the acquisition of lands from Indigenous peoples (Waldram *River Runs* 39-40). However, Coulthard has argued that this attempt to acquire Indigenous lands is not merely a goal of the past but is continued in present colonial-state processes (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 6-7). Based on this argument, the Northern Flood Agreement as a modern-day treaty is predominantly oriented towards the acquisition of land, and in this case water, and control of Indigenous territories. These

connections and similarities between historical and modern-day treaties directly connect the relationships between Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government with Indigenous communities as inherently colonial.

With these two perspectives in mind, we must look to the approaches taken by the Canadian government in regards to environmental decision-making. Based on the “spirit and intent” put forward by these two Indigenous nations, the government is required to make decisions that do not interfere with Indigenous use and occupation of the land. Co-habitation requires the sharing of the land and the making of decisions in ways that will include Indigenous nations while not interfering in their inherent right to decide for themselves and to control their land. As McGregor has stated, “elders have emphasized that relationships based on co-existence have already been considered and negotiated, and that approaches and principles necessary for their establishment have already been accepted by both parties in treaties and can be applied to water governance context” (498). In general, these approaches have not been taken by the Canadian government, even with the consideration and creation of co-management boards (discussed further later) (Nadasdy *Hunters and Bureaucrats*).

Treaties from Indigenous perspectives go far beyond the creation of mutually beneficial agreements. Fundamental to the treaty-making process were the sacred ceremonies Indigenous peoples included in the process as well as the creation of sacred bonds between the groups involved in the treaty-making process, including the Treaty commissioners and Indigenous representatives (Williams 40-61). These processes were so ingrained in the treaty-making process that Alexander Morris, Treaty Commissioner for many of the numbered treaties, was concerned when he was not offered the pipe during some of the Treaty 4 negotiations (Ray et al. 107). These sacred relationships not only tied Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations together, but they also connected the two entities to the land and the Creator (Craft, “Treaty Interpretation” 26). Therefore, these relationships should require Indigenous involvement and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into environmental decision-making in Canada.

Finally, it is important to note that Indigenous nations did not surrender their rights to self-government and sovereignty (Turner 4-5). Based on this understanding, Indigenous nations must be included in environmental decision-making and their position in this process must be one that is empowering to the people and provides true Indigenous self-government. Aboriginal

rights have been put forward by the government as a means of reconciling the positions of Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians in regards to Indigenous sovereignty and title (Turner 5). However, these rights must include Indigenous self-governments that organize Indigenous involvement, if not control, in environmental decision-making, especially as it relates to their lands. Treaties are based on the creation of relationships that allow for co-habitation through peace and friendship and therefore provide a strong basis upon which future relationships can be formed (Williams 4; Johnson 30).

JBNQA, “Peace of the Braves,” and the Berger Inquiry

Environmental decision-making without the consideration or inclusion of Indigenous peoples has a long history across Canada and has resulted in simultaneously very similar and vastly different outcomes. As has been discussed previously in this work, Manitoba Hydro has consistently ignored Indigenous peoples in their mission to create and expand the production of hydroelectricity in Manitoba. However, at each prominent point in Manitoba’s history of hydroelectricity, other provinces have faced similar situations and their decisions can be connected to the decisions made by Manitoba Hydro. Most prominently among these similar stories is this history of hydroelectricity in Quebec.

As in northern Manitoba, the government of Quebec became aware of the huge hydroelectric ‘potential’ of northern river systems as a means of producing electricity for domestic use as well as for export purposes (Wera & Martin, 61-63). In the same mentality as Manitoba, Quebec failed to consider the Indigenous perspectives of hydroelectricity and the impacts it would have on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples in the north (Berkes 213). Both provinces planned massive hydroelectric projects in the northern reaches of the territory without considering or consulting the Indigenous peoples who would be affected by the projects (McCullum & McCullum 104-106; Berkes 213). As a result, the Indigenous communities in both provinces formed coalitions to counter the projects and protect their territories and their rights (Borrows *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 62-63; Waldram *River Runs* 147). Although these entities were made up of different groups in the different provinces and were supported by different political entities within the provinces, they took similar approaches of appealing to the public and taking legal actions to prevent the construction of projects until they were truly consulted and allowed to consider the projects (Waldram *River*

Runs 147-149; Borrows *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, 63). Also, similar to Manitoba, the James Bay Cree negotiated a modern-day treaty as a result of their challenging of the projects (Martin 24). One important difference is that northern Manitoba was covered by Treaty 5 at this time while northern Quebec was not recognized under any treaty and, as such, the JBNQA was a land surrender agreement that represented a restart of the treaty process (Slowey, 48; Martin, 24). This history, as well as the struggles of the James Bay Cree to be included in the decision-making process for the construction of generating stations in their territory shows the requirement that Indigenous communities must initiate conflict to be acknowledged and have their knowledge considered in the process of environmental decision-making. In both instances, the treaties promised to consult with the Indigenous communities on all future ‘development’ in their territories to prevent further construction of generating stations without their inclusion (Wera & Martin 67; Waldram *River Runs* 160). Additionally, they provide some stipulations surrounding employment and poverty that were meant to help communities adjust to the changes resulting from the construction of these projects and the potential for future projects to be constructed (Craik 285-286).

Most prominently in regards to James Bay, the Cree were once again neglected in the planning of the Great Whale projects and the governmental bodies continually failed to implement promises made in their modern-day treaty (Craik 284). As a result, they took direct action and were both able to prevent the construction of the projects without consideration of their knowledge and force the creation of a new agreement between the provincial government and the James Bay Cree communities (Craik 284-287). Although not perfect, the creation of the “Peace of the Braves” has helped establish new nation-to-nation agreements between the Quebec and James Bay Cree governments (Martin 32).

Although vastly different in many ways, the proposal and approval process for the McKenzie Valley Pipeline provides a similar point of comparison to these two provinces and their approaches to hydroelectricity. Despite the immense similarities surrounding the concerns of the Indigenous communities that would have been affected by the construction of the pipeline, the process for approval was significantly different than that of the hydroelectric generating stations of Quebec and Manitoba. In order to complete the process for approval, Thomas Berger completed hearings and an inquiry into the potential impacts of the project as well as Indigenous

concerns about the projects and the potential impacts it would have on their way of life (Berger 257-264). Throughout his inquiry, which was republished as *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*, he recognizes the importance of Indigenous knowledges and concerns surrounding the project (Berger 3). Berger successfully considered Indigenous perspectives on the pipeline and challenged its construction in part on the grounds that it was opposed by many Indigenous communities that would be directly affected by it (3). Ultimately, this report had enough power to prevent the construction of the pipeline (Berger 6). Overall, Berger's report is supportive of Indigenous claims for self-government and Indigenous ways of life (257-264). However, there are some occasions in the text in which he seems to emphasize the importance of scientific knowledge over Indigenous knowledges, or at least fails to emphasize the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in directing scientific research (Berger 91-93). This challenge by no means undermines the accomplishments of the Berger report; it is emblematic of the requirements of government to make decisions based predominantly or even solely on Western-oriented and recognized science that reduces or removes Indigenous knowledges and inherently questions their validity. Ultimately, the inquiry successfully prevented the construction of the pipeline in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories (Berger 6). Although the outcome of the McKenzie Valley Pipeline was vastly different than those of hydroelectricity in Manitoba and Quebec, it provides an understanding of what can happen in these processes if Indigenous knowledges are respected and concerns about the projects are validated.

Indigenous sovereignty and Environmental Bureaucracy

In northern Manitoba, the history of hydropower production has long represented the unwillingness of government and industry to consider and include Indigenous knowledges in their decision-making processes. Many early projects were planned and designed without any consideration of the Indigenous nations that would be impacted by the construction (McCullum & McCullum 104-106). Affiliated with this lack of consideration of Indigenous nations, the entities involved with the project also did not include Indigenous knowledge in their environmental decision-making processes.

A major aspect of environmental decision-making in Canada is the process of environmental assessment through which many projects must go that requires a review of the project and recommendations that the project either receive or be denied the licence for which it

applied (“Basics of Environmental Assessment”). These processes and boards take many different forms based upon the level of government that is required to review the project and the type of review that is being done. In Manitoba, for environmental reviews and assessments, the Clean Environment Commission of Manitoba is the board that, upon request from the minister responsible for The Environment Act, is meant to review projects, hold public hearings, review documentation and submissions both by proponents and opponents to projects, and provide final recommendations on the acceptability of the projects to the Minister in charge (Scarfield).

I have some first-hand experience with the Clean Environment Commission both as an applicant for intervener status and as a support person for an intervener group. During the first year of my Master’s degree, I had the opportunity to work with the Concerned Fox Lake Grassroots Citizens group (CFLGC) during the hearings about the Keeyask Project. CFLGC was primarily made up of a group of Elders from Fox Lake Cree Nation, particularly in Gillam, with the support of some academics. Throughout the hearings, which took place in a few communities in the north but with the majority of the hearings in Winnipeg, some of the Elders as well as then PhD student Agnes Pawlowska-Mainville listened to presentations by Manitoba Hydro, the “partner” communities, and other opponents and interveners in the hearings. I attended some of these meetings as well as a few planning sessions for the hearings. Despite the best efforts of these Elders and the many other interveners, the CEC ultimately recommended that the project be granted the licence it requested, with some recommendations (Manitoba CEC, *Report on the Public Hearing: Keeyask Generation Project* 165-167).

Following the Bipole III CEC hearings, the CEC recommended Manitoba Hydro complete a “Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment” (“Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment”). The CEC was placed in charge of reviewing Manitoba Hydro’s submission for the RCEA and with gaining public feedback about the documents produced by Manitoba Hydro (“Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment”). I spoke with some of the Elders from CFLGC and they made it clear they wanted to participate in this process as well to try and provide true, lived experiences of the projects Manitoba Hydro had constructed and to put on the public record the atrocities that were perpetrated, and continue to be perpetrated, on the land and their communities. We put forward an application for funding with a plan to begin work on the project as quickly as possible. However, this process happened to correspond almost perfectly

with the provincial elections that saw the NDP ousted from power and the Progressive Conservatives gain control. After many months of waiting, we found out that the project would be altered and there would not be a long-term public hearing process as there had been for the Keeyask Project. Instead, the commission would travel to some northern communities for hearings and would accept written submission from those who could not be present or those from the south that wished to contribute. After relaying this information to the Elders, they decided this was not the way they wished to participate and we withdrew our submission for funding. The decision to remove the oral aspect of this review created a massive barrier for the Elders and ultimately removed their participation in this process.

The above description represents a small explanation of the process that is required to participate in the CEC hearings as well as the immense amount of work that is undertaken in the instance that funding is provided and public hearings are held. There are some clear barriers present in the process just through that quick summary of some aspects of the process but there are some more systemic problems with CEC hearings that prevents the true inclusion of oral culture, the bush mode of production, and successful Indigenous involvement in these processes.

Through decisions related to natural resource extraction and exploitation, as in the case of hydropower production in Manitoba and Quebec, Indigenous peoples have been forced to challenge environmental decisions from the outside in order to have their knowledges expressed (Craik 287-289). Although direct negotiations with governments can be beneficial for Indigenous peoples, Indigenous individuals and communities have also turned to the international community and international law for recognition of their rights and freedoms (Henderson *Indigenous Diplomacy*). Henderson's work on the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and Indigenous diplomacy directly supports community involvement in international law. He states "the Declaration clearly affirms that Indigenous peoples are peoples whom nation-states cannot arbitrarily deny the right of self-determination" (Henderson, *Indigenous Diplomacy* 75). In certain circumstances, government agencies or industry will create false representations of Indigenous peoples opposed to their projects as a means of undermining their claims to involvement in environmental decision-making. Perfectly encompassing this situation, Hydro Quebec and the Quebec government created false representations of the motivations of the James Bay Cree in their opposition to some

hydroelectric projects. In particular, during the attempts by the James Bay Cree to oppose the construction of hydroelectric projects without consideration of their position and knowledge, they were accused of attempting to prevent the construction of the projects and gaining control of the land for the purposes of exploiting the resources in ways that would be beneficial to only them (Niezen *Defending the Land* 10). Portraying the Cree as attempting to exploit the resources for their own national gains is clearly a projection of the Quebec sovereigntists' position onto Cree society (Niezen *Defending the Land* 10). Through claiming Indigenous peoples are attempting to gain control of the land so they can create projects that will only benefit them positions them as 'enemies' that should not have a position in environmental decision-making. As a result, if Indigenous peoples are involved in the environmental decision-making process and voice any concerns that would include the cancellation of a project, it could be argued that the purpose of this concern was actually based on preventing the project so that the community could do it on its own and reap all the rewards. However, this argument fails to take into account the conservation orientation of some Indigenous peoples and nations. In the example of the James Bay Cree, the argument they were opposed to the project for community gain fails to consider the conservation orientation of the land ownership system that was listed earlier (Feit, "Legitimation" 32-33). Land 'ownership' in James Bay Cree society requires relationships and responsibilities that would prevent destruction of the land for the sole gain of the community and instead requires any environmental decision be made with these responsibilities at the centre of the decision (Feit, "Legitimation" 34).

For Indigenous knowledges to be truly respected in environmental decision-making processes, they must be considered on equal footing with science and without the requirement of scientific data to support their claims. Indigenous societies have means of knowledge verification that supports it and situates it in a stronger position to review environmental impacts (Battiste & Henderson 44). As science continues to dominate environmental impact assessments and decision-making processes, it perpetuates colonial relationships that have been present for centuries. Indigenous involvement in environmental decision-making requires a respect of Indigenous epistemologies and peoples that recognizes relationships and supports responsibilities to the land.

No Export Deal and Lower Reservoir

During negotiations, Manitoba Hydro committed to not proceeding with the project for export purposes if the partner First Nation communities did not support the project (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 126). Additionally, Manitoba Hydro, throughout the CEC hearings, discussed the power partner communities were able to wield during the planning of the project through their agreement to reduce the overall water levels of the reservoir (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 92). These two points emphasize the power provided to, and acted upon, by the Cree partners in the planning of the Keeyask Project. However, there are some clear and glaring issues related to these claims of cooperative decision-making in the Keeyask Project.

When considering the claim by Manitoba Hydro to not export energy from the Keeyask Generating Station if the First Nation partners wish not to, it is important to remember the basis for this discussion is to emphasize the level at which partner communities and Manitoba Hydro reached agreements. The argument put forward by Manitoba Hydro is, “this meant that the partners and Hydro had to reach an agreement that was satisfactory to both parties if the project was going to be advanced for export.” (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 126). Through mentioning the “satisfactory” agreement between the parties indicates that First Nation partners were given a position of some power in these negotiations and were able to make fundamental decisions related to the nature of the project.

Manitoba Hydro’s emphasis upon the perception of equal power and First Nations perspectives impacting the design of the project goes further than merely their discussions of energy sales and exports. During the CEC hearings, Vicky Cole, for Manitoba Hydro, stated, “at the insistence of our Cree partners, the project offers the lowest reservoir level option among the technically and economically feasible options studied resulting in the least amount of flooding and will operate within a small one metre reservoir variation range” (Manitoba CEC, “23 Oct. 2013” 473). This statement, followed by assertions that the First Nation partners also made impacts on reservoir clearing, ice monitoring, navigation, and other prominent expected outcomes of the generating stations indicates First Nations were directly involved and made major impacts in the design of the project (Manitoba CEC, “23 Oct. 2013” 473). Hydro claims that the communities changed the project from 1150 to 695 watts prevented the flooding of huge area (Manitoba CEC, “21 Oct. 2013” 92). As quoted earlier, a Manitoba Hydro employee at the CEC hearings promoted the ability of their partners to choose the lowest “option” for flooding

(Manitoba CEC, “23 Oct. 2013” 473). This seems to indicate that Manitoba Hydro had multiple options from which the partner communities were able to choose and the communities chose the least destructive. Choosing the least destructive option of a limited selection of choices does not seem to support the perception that the communities are wielding equal power to Manitoba Hydro but instead they yet again seem to have to choose the best of a bad situation.

TEK as Expert Knowledge

One serious barrier to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in environmental decision making revolves around the inclusion and recognition of Indigenous knowledge, in this case Traditional Ecological Knowledge, as expert knowledge. Western epistemology favours Enlightenment-oriented knowledge based in science and the scientific method. This privileges knowledge produced by Western thinkers and academics and necessarily challenges or demeans knowledge produced through Indigenous or other epistemologies (Battiste & Henderson 117-125). As such, Indigenous knowledges, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge, face challenges to their legitimacy and are either purposely or unconsciously placed in an inferior position to that of Western-oriented scientific knowledge.

Throughout the history of colonization, the colonizer has successfully controlled education and defined knowledge as only information that is gained through scientific means (Battiste & Henderson 86). Epistemological control allows the West to remove Indigenous peoples from history, which requires a counter history supporting the past of Indigenous peoples and their civilizations. When discussing the history of Africa, Fanon states,

In a frenzy I excavated black antiquity. What I discovered left me speechless. In his book on the abolition of slavery Schoelcher presented us with some compelling arguments. Since then, Frobenius, Westermann, and Delafosse, all white men, have voiced their agreement: Segu, Djenné, cities with over 100,000 inhabitants; accounts of learned black men (doctors of theology who travelled to Mecca to discuss the Koran). Once this had been dug up, displayed, and exposed to the elements, it allowed me to regain a valid historic category. The white man was wrong, I was not a primitive or a subhuman; I belonged to a race that had already been working silver and gold 2,000 years ago (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 109).

Through the removal of Indigenous histories and control over the means through which knowledge is produced, the West is able to make statements about “true” knowledge and dismiss

all other forms of knowledge. Smith addresses the prevalence of Western epistemological hegemony over Indigenous peoples and about Indigenous peoples in stating “this collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the west, and then, through the eyes of the west, back to those who have been colonized” (1-2).

When considering Indigenous knowledge systems, it is important to acknowledge that they have been in existence for centuries. However, that is not to argue that they have remained stagnant or been frozen in time (Battiste & Henderson 45). At present, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) has been a prominent topic garnering serious academic and legislative consideration (Ellis). In addition to providing knowledge to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples about the interactions of the environment, TEK also provides knowledge of medicines or means of sustenance (Battiste & Henderson 46). Recognizing Indigenous knowledge systems as valid requires an approach that has been present in the field of Indigenous Studies for decades, the “creation, recognition, or legitimization of new knowledge and new forms of knowledge” (Kulchyski “Native Studies” 14). An important aspect of this approach is the attribution of the knowledge provided by Indigenous experts to said experts and recognizing their place as experts despite a possible lack of Western defined credentials of expertise (Kulchyski, “Native Studies” 19). These processes represent “not a desire to entirely dismiss the values and approaches of the dominant paradigm, but rather to carefully work through them, never satisfied to accept their underlying principles at face value” (Kulchyski, “Native Studies” 15-16). As LaRocque so effectively describes when discussing Plains Cree/Metis understandings of knowledge, “one’s own voice is never totally of one’s self, in isolation from community. At the same time, one’s self is not a communal replica of the collective” (29). This quotation not only shows the involvement of community in the work of Indigenous scholars but also challenges the Western view of “objectivity” and the attempts at removal of one’s community from one’s work (LaRocque 29). Involvement with communities reinforces the emphasis upon supporting and legitimizing Indigenous epistemologies while also providing a connection to experts (elders and knowledge holders) and means of political engagement. Connections to communities allow for discussions surrounding the relationships between researchers and communities (Mihesuah; Smith; Brown & Strega), directly address challenges the communities

are facing (Cardinal; Berger; Tester & Kulchyski), and supports and legitimizes the knowledges of the communities (Cruikshank et al; Basso; Ridington). Through these processes, Indigenous knowledges can be recognized as expert and can be given a prominent place in environmental decision-making that can, and I would argue will, greatly benefit the processes of environmental review and sustainability in a way that their rejection fundamentally prevents.

However, when recognizing and including Indigenous knowledges in environmental review processes, it is important to recognize the owners and providers of the knowledge that is being shared. Battiste and Henderson discuss the necessity of protecting Indigenous intellectual property to TEK and other forms of Indigenous Knowledge that can be used by corporations without the consent of Indigenous communities. Not only do Battiste and Henderson directly challenge the practices of biopiracy and bioprospecting used by corporations, they also directly address the commodification of Indigenous cultures through the use of their knowledge to produce pharmaceuticals for sale. “Production of culture was and is controlled (but not completely) by the sphere of corporate capitalism with its ideology of freedom and individualism, whereas material or everyday life has become a culture of consumption” (Battiste & Henderson 250).

As King so effectively states, “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (32). He goes further by quoting Gerald Vizenor stating “You can’t understand the world without telling a story” (King 32). This use and legitimization of narrative supports Indigenous epistemologies that understand “truths” as being personal and gained through experience (Nadasdy *Hunters and Bureaucrats* 95). Support of narratives and oral tradition, and therefore the understanding that there are no “universal truths” but rather personal truths, necessarily supports Indigenous epistemologies as authentic and counters the Enlightenment-oriented scientific means of thought that has dominated Western society and all those who have been colonized by it.

As Fanon argued for the colonized of Africa, there is no “one” Indigenous identity or culture in Canada (Fanon *Wretched of the Earth* 169). As a result, it would be a misunderstanding to assume that Indigenous people across Canada have one knowledge system that is universal to all the different cultures and nations. Battiste and Henderson state, “Indigenous knowledge is not a uniform concept across all Indigenous peoples; it is a diverse knowledge that is spread throughout different peoples in many layers” (35). Said challenges the

concept of objectivity when he states that no one “has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious of unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society” (9).

As with the Berger Inquiry, many scholars have called for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in the process of assessing environmental and cumulative impacts of natural resources projects (Fox Lake Cree Nation 10; Ellis). When considering the impacts of energy projects, some have argued that Indigenous knowledges are actually superior to Western science in assessing the impacts as a result of the connection to the land and the long-term relationship that has formed between the knowledge and the land (Battiste & Henderson 44). Others have argued that the scientific analysis of impacts should be directed by Indigenous knowledges (Fox Lake Cree Nation 10). Collaboration between Indigenous knowledges and science can contribute to better research and a more thorough analysis of the potential impacts of a project. Ultimately, the fact that inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in a prominent way is relegated to suggestions or recommendations indicates that impact assessments fail to consider Indigenous knowledges and ultimately contribute to only partial impact assessments that then contribute to a failure to avoid or remedy impacts in a timely manner. Arguably, Indigenous knowledges and perspectives on the impacts of projects on culture and land-use are far superior to that of Western-oriented science. The only challenge to Indigenous knowledges providing a superior review of environmental impacts is the challenges of gaining a true and clear understanding of the material nature of projects.

Conflicting Knowledges

Necessary for the true involvement of Indigenous peoples and knowledges in environmental decision-making processes is the recognition of the conflicts between Indigenous knowledges and Western knowledge. In particular, there must be a recognition of the validity of different knowledges and knowledge systems in order for the decision-making processes to accurately reflect the wealth of information that can be provided by Indigenous peoples in a way that respects the basis of these knowledges. This understanding – equally valid knowledge system – runs against the current of the “science equals truth” foundation of Western knowledge.

Inherent to the necessity of recognition of Indigenous knowledges as valid, there must also be a recognition of the differences in knowledges among different Indigenous nations and cultures (Battiste & Henderson 35). Through this process, it is possible to recognize both the similarities and differences across Indigenous nations and support these characteristics of knowledges in environmental decision-making. As environmental decision-making processes recognize the variety of Indigenous knowledges that are spread throughout Canada, inclusive measures can be instituted that allow for the involvement of different Indigenous peoples without questions of the ‘validity’ of their knowledge and the requirement of outside ‘experts’ to testify to the ‘authenticity’ of their claims.

As the process works towards including Indigenous knowledges in ways that go beyond mere consultation, there are certain differences that must be addressed to prevent the challenges of misunderstanding related to cultural confusion. Most prominently, the perception of resources differs greatly between Indigenous peoples and Western people. When discussing water governance, McGregor addresses the cultural difference in the perception of water between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (496). The most challenging conflict of perceptions is based on the Western view of water as a commodity that can be bought and sold through capitalism (McGregor, 496). Commodification is counter to the relationship Indigenous peoples have with water which emphasizes responsibilities to the water (McGregor, 496). These differences reiterate the conflict between Western capitalism and Indigenous understandings of relationships to land and natural resources. Partially, these conflicts can be traced back to settler-colonialism which emphasizes the acquisition of land. Audra Simpson argues that this characteristic of settler-colonialism ultimately leads to the “elimination” of Indigenous peoples as a result of their connection to the lands settlers wish to acquire (*Mohawk Interruptus*, 19). This argument provides some insight into the reasons for which Indigenous peoples are excluded from environmental decision-making, as the settler need to acquire land and eliminate Indigenous peoples requires they not include Indigenous peoples in the decision-making process.

Indigenous connections to land are both physical and spiritual, best summarized in the statement “I am the environment, for the land and me are the same” (Little Bear 15). Recognition of Indigenous understandings of sacredness and sacred sites is necessary for true inclusion in the environmental decision-making paradigm. Yet again there are challenges to the

recognition of Indigenous knowledges by Western society based on differing perceptions of what constitutes the sacred or sacred sites (Cummins & Whiteduck 3-4). One aspect of the conflict between definitions of what is sacred come about as a result of Western preoccupations with written records. In most instances, Western conceptions of what can be considered sacred are locations that have written records establishing them as such (Cummins & Whiteduck 7). Documentation of this nature is generally not present for Indigenous sacred sites based on the predominance of oral tradition in Indigenous societies. However, even in instances in which written records are available expressing the sacred nature of particular sites for Indigenous peoples there are possibilities that these sites will not be recognized as sacred (Cummins & Whiteduck 8-9). This failure to recognize sites as sacred represents yet another challenge for Indigenous involvement in environmental decision-making, the reliance upon government entities and settler society to have sites of importance to Indigenous societies recognized as important and protected as such (Cummins & Whiteduck 9).

Finally, sacred sites must be recognized not only as communally owned by Indigenous nations of the present. Indigenous knowledges recognize the communal ownership of sacred sites not only as within the community but also with their ancestors as well as those who are yet to be born (Cummins & Whiteduck 6). As Indigenous peoples hope to make decisions related to their land with the knowledge of their responsibility to the ownership of past and future generations, non-Indigenous governments are looking to the commodification of resources and the use of land as a means of profit (Cummins & Whiteduck 6; McGregor 496). This relationship requires the protection of sacred sites not as a goal for future generations but as a responsibility to not damage or destroy something that is partially “owned” by those who are not present. Ultimately, this understanding of sacred site ownership creates a responsibility to future generations for lands that they are meant to use, protect, and enjoy.

As stated earlier in this work, the experiences of the “Trapline 15 family” show the challenges of conflicting knowledges. As they have argued, their territory cannot be ‘replaced’ by another territory nor can it be quantified into a financial settlement (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3349, 3351). Their territory is a sacred site for them that will be demolished as a result of the Keeyask Generating Station (Manitoba CEC, “14 Nov. 2013” 3347). Despite sharing this information and providing their expert knowledge to the members of the Manitoba Clean

Environment Commission, the Keeyask Project was recommended to receive the licenses necessary to complete their project (Manitoba CEC, *Report on the Public Hearing: Keeyask Generation Project* 165-167). Decisions such as this show a clear lack of consideration or respect for *Inniniwak* knowledge in the environmental decision-making processes in Manitoba.

Failure of Impact Assessments and Collaboration with Indigenous Knowledges

Environmental assessments, both individual and cumulative, are important means of addressing the sustainability of a project (Foth 1). These impact assessments provide decision-making bodies with information that allows for informed decisions to be made. However, these assessments provide some challenges for the involvement of Indigenous peoples based on some fundamental characteristics of their creation. Relationships between environmental impact assessments, and environmental decision-making in general, and Indigenous peoples and knowledges must be reviewed at deeper levels that critically examine some of the different approaches to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges.

One of the major challenges to Indigenous involvement in impact assessments is the relative success of these projects in general. When reviewing cumulative effects assessments, Noble argues “recent reviews of the state of CEA in Canada suggest that CEA is simply not working; it remains limited in spatial and temporal scale, and reactive and divorced from the broader planning and decision-making context” (3). This failure of cumulative effects assessments both challenges the usefulness of Indigenous involvement in the process as well as whether true inclusion of Indigenous knowledge will have any impact on environmental decision-making processes. Further to this argument, Berkes has challenged the ability of environmental impact assessments to foresee future impacts (217-218). Throughout this study, Berkes reviews the multiple instances in which James Bay Cree society was concerned with or experienced impacts that were not foreseen by environmental impact assessments. However, these impact assessments are involved in the process of environmental decision-making, yet Indigenous knowledges are not as privileged in the process. Some have argued the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is significantly more capable of assessing the future impacts of environmental disturbance based on the long history of direct relationships between Indigenous peoples and their territories (Battiste & Henderson 44). Inclusion of TEK and recognition of its

position as expert knowledge could potentially prevent immense, unexpected environmental impacts as a result of natural resource projects.

Throughout the Keeyask Project Clean Environment Commission hearings, the panel heard significant testimony surrounding TEK. While testimony from experts working for Hydro can be useful for reviewing the claims of inclusion, it is arguably more important to hear the perspectives of leaders and experts from the communities on their perspectives of the inclusion of TEK. Charlotte Wastesicoot, an Elder and leader from Tataskweyak Cree Nation, told the CEC, “The keepers of this mother earth were never consulted, even if some were, their concerns, our ancestors, our elders, their concerns have never been adhered to. Even documents say that they did, but they never, they weren’t consulted” (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 52). Janet McIvor supports this argument by saying “there should be constant assessments, evaluations, and traditional knowledge should always be honoured by our visitors. Manitoba Hydro only wants to develop and profit from the land. Our spiritual connection with the land will be lost, yet we sit in front of the Clean Environment Commission determine [sic] the fate of our land, water, animals, and environment” (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 20). Through this testimony, Janet McIvor seems to be arguing that their knowledge is not being recognized and at the same time their only means of sharing that knowledge is by speaking to an entity that will ultimately make a decision. This perception of the approach to environmental decision-making clearly places Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledges in a position of oppression compared to Western-oriented science.

In addition to the failure of cumulative and environmental impact assessments, many barriers are also present to the participation of Indigenous peoples in impact assessments and environmental decision-making processes. Through a review of the Wuskwatim Generating Station’s Clean Environment Commission Hearings, Foth recognized a host of barriers to Indigenous participation in environmental decision-making in Manitoba’s hydroelectric ‘development’ process. This review recognized 9 barriers that prevent Indigenous involvement or provide extreme challenges to involvement that ultimately reduce the availability of Indigenous knowledges, including TEK (Foth 67). Additionally, the environmental evaluation created by the Fox Lake Cree Nation in relation to the Keeyask Generating Station environmental impact assessment recognizes some of the challenges in their attempts to integrate

Aski Keskentamowin (TEK or Land Knowledge) with Western science in these processes (Fox Lake Cree Nation 10). Although there were clear attempts to integrate *Aski Keskentamowin* into the environmental impact assessment at equal weight with Western science, the authors of the Fox Lake Cree Nation report state that their knowledge should not only be recognized but should also be used to guide the work scientists are doing in their environmental impact assessment studies (Fox Lake Cree Nation 10). These arguments support a relationship between the integration of environmental impact assessments and Indigenous knowledges through overcoming the barriers that are in place at present.

Through the process of reviewing the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in environmental decision-making there has been some question as to whether this can be successful and, if it is, how it can do so in a way that is supportive of Indigenous peoples. There are many instances of the exploitation of Indigenous knowledges for the benefit of multinational corporations and questions begin to arise about whether inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in environmental decision-making can be accomplished in such a way that these knowledges are not merely extracted from communities (Battiste & Henderson 61). Those who support the integration and inclusion of Indigenous knowledges into environmental impact assessments recognize the necessity of these processes empowering Indigenous peoples and nations that are involved (Ellis). In particular, these scholars question the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches of Indigenous involvement in environmental assessment and decision-making processes. As environmental bodies review information, they either take a ‘top-down’ approach in which Indigenous involvement is “allowed” but not sought out or a ‘bottom-up’ approach in which they seek Indigenous involvement from the beginning of the process (Ellis). For Indigenous involvement to truly be beneficial and empowering for Indigenous peoples and nations it is necessary for their knowledges to be sought out at the beginning of the process, their knowledges be given equal weight, and scientists must reconsider their methods and approaches, as was made clear in the FLCN report mentioned above (Ellis; Fox Lake Cree Nation 9-10). As McGregor has stated, “an important part of implement TK involves the decolonization of broader, external governance frameworks in Canada by asserting First Nations’ own authority and jurisdiction.” (497-498).

In addition to the involvement of Indigenous peoples and knowledges in the process of environmental assessments, it is necessary for the process and conceptions of TEK to be positioned in a collaborative context (Whyte). Whyte argues, “the concept of TEK should be understood as a collaborative concept. It serves to invite diverse populations to continually learn from one another about how each approaches the very question of ‘knowledge’ in the first place, and how the different approaches can work together to better steward and manage the environment and natural resources” (2). However, for this collaborative concept to be well implemented, Whyte recognizes three characteristics of controversy surrounding TEK. As a knowledge system, TEK has been consistently undervalued by colonization, definitions of TEK have been created by outside academics who are attempting to promote their own agendas through the use of TEK, and it is perceived as a “competing authority” with science (Whyte, 2). In order for TEK to be a collaborative concept, these challenges must be overcome to allow for the work of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the processes of environmental decision-making.

Despite these seemingly positive perspectives on the opportunities of inclusion of Indigenous knowledges into environmental decision-making, there are some major challenges that throw the entire concept of integration into a negative position. In particular, the work of Nadasdy questions the validity of co-management and other means of combining Indigenous knowledges and Western science. This work focuses on the power relationship that is present in co-management, and knowledge production more generally, that not only places Indigenous knowledges in an inferior position to Western science but also places Indigenous peoples in the disempowering position of having to “learn a new language” in their process of working within Western bureaucracy (Nadasdy *Hunters and Bureaucrats* 2). Additionally, Indigenous peoples are required to “translate” their knowledge not only from their Indigenous worldview into a Western worldview but also into a bureaucratic worldview (Nadasdy *Hunters and Bureaucrats* 2). These challenges remove the spiritual and cultural aspects of Indigenous knowledges through the ‘forced bureaucratization’ of the peoples and knowledges (Nadasdy *Hunters and Bureaucrats* 2). Removal of the spiritual and cultural aspects of Indigenous knowledges challenges the connection of Indigenous peoples to their lands and fundamentally challenges the validity of Indigenous epistemologies. As a result of this cancellation of Indigenous relationships to the

land in the process of integration into environmental decision-making, multiple facets of Indigenous cultures are directly challenged and invalidated, including the importance of the land to communal history, the connection of language to the land, and the basis of relationships being not focused on humanity but instead on “all our relations” (Basso 6-8; McLeod 19; McGregor 494-495).

CEC Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment

In the fall of 2018, Manitoba Hydro was under consistent fire for their impacts on Indigenous communities both historically and currently. To start off this firestorm, the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission released their report on the Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment of Manitoba Hydro’s operations in northern Manitoba. Before I discuss the findings of the report it is important to first emphasize some of the flaws in the process. The RCEA review started with Manitoba Hydro creating a cumulative effects report for submission to the CEC. Interveners were given the opportunity to apply to participate and request funding.

As I have mentioned earlier, I applied on behalf of Elder Noah Massan and the Concerned Grassroots Fox Lake Citizens as interveners in the process with the understanding initially that it would be a process similar to that of the review of the Keeyask Project in 2013-2014. This process, if like the Keeyask Process, would include written submissions, interviews, and a hearing format in which interveners would be able to directly question the experts hired by Manitoba Hydro to review the project. This hearing process would give Elders and knowledge holders like Noah Massan the opportunity to directly question Manitoba Hydro’s experts and provide his own expert knowledge in direct relation to the knowledge of the experts. Though this process is far from Indigenized and in many ways fails to truly engage with the bush mode of production and oral culture, it would provide Elders and knowledge holders the opportunity to participate in the process in a meaningful way that is also based in orality. Additionally, it would give these experts a chance to have their knowledge placed on the public record. However, it is worth noting, as Wood and Rossiter have stated, that participation in these public hearings are not an acceptance of the panel’s authority (176).

During our application process for the Concerned Fox Lake Grassroots Citizens, I spoke with Les Dysart from South Indian Lake/O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation about his participation in the process. He stated that he would participate independently as the CEO for the Community

Association of South Indian Lake. The Community Association of South Indian Lake completed a written submission to the CEC, however they refused the funding that was provided by the CEC as a sign of refusal of the process that had been chosen and the way in which the RCEA was being completed (Les Dysart, Personal Interview).

When Manitoba Hydro was researching and writing their report for the CEC they requested permission to use dated reports from the Community Association of South Indian Lake. Les Dysart asked if they planned to visit the community to do interviews with Elders and knowledge holders for their report. They indicated they had no plans to visit the community nor do interviews for their Regional Cumulative Effects Assessment. All they wanted from South Indian Lake/O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation and the Community Association of South Indian Lake was permission to use the dated reports about fish catches and water levels. As a result, Les Dysart refused the requested permission with the stipulation they could have permission if they agreed to truly consult the community and interview those affected by Manitoba Hydro's projects (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). At this point, Manitoba Hydro terminated communications with the Community Association of South Indian Lake (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). As far as I am aware, they also never received permission to use the reports from the Community Association of South Indian Lake.

Divide & Conquer at the NEB hearings

In June 2018, I was able to attend a day of the National Energy Board's (NEB) hearings on the Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project. This project, unlike most other Manitoba Hydro projects, crosses an international border and thus requires review by a federal entity, in this circumstance that entity is the NEB ("Manitoba Minnesota Transmission Project"). In most cases, Manitoba Hydro's projects are solely reviewed by provincial government boards and commissions based upon provincial jurisdiction ("Jurisdiction, duties and authorities"). As Manitoba Hydro is a Crown corporation, many of these reviews are in effect a provincial government entity reviewing another provincial government entity. For many northern Indigenous peoples in Manitoba, this creates a clear perception of review processes as merely 'rubber stamps' at which Manitoba Hydro is guaranteed to succeed (Dipple, "Social Licence" 282; Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Given the unique nature of the Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project and the review process being completed by a federal entity rather than a

provincial one created a slight glimmer of hope that Manitoba Hydro would be placed in an uncommon position of pressure and challenge. No one I spoke with about the hearings had any overly optimistic expectations that the NEB would prevent the license or that the process would be any better than the ones that happen in Manitoba for other projects, however there was a very different feeling surrounding these hearings than there are for Manitoba Clean Environment Commission hearings for example.

Wa Ni Ska Tan applied to the NEB to participate in the hearings as an intervener and took this opportunity to put forward expert, community-based knowledge through an oral tradition panel of harvesters, land-users, elders, and knowledge holders that included both communities from the south and north of Manitoba (see NEB, “7 June 2018”; NEB, “8 June 2018”). I was unable to attend the presentation of southern Manitoba Indigenous communities; however, I was able to see the presentations put forward by community members representing O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (South Indian Lake), Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House), Pimicikamak Cree Nation (Cross Lake), and Misipawistik Cree Nation (Grand Rapids). This panel created somewhat of a challenge for the NEB as their mandate explicitly stated it would not include past, present, or future hydroelectric dams in northern Manitoba nor would it consider environmental or socio-economic impacts in northern Manitoba (NEB, “8 June 2018” 990). These are fundamental aspects of current life in these communities and the experts that were present hoped to provide this information to the board so they could make an informed decision about the MMTP based on Manitoba Hydro “integrated system.”

The hearing began with the chair of the board greeting everyone, acknowledging the land and the people to whom this land is home, and followed with a quick description of what their job would be in regards to the MMTP. This introduction was almost immediately followed by a lawyer from Manitoba Hydro greeting the panel and officially objecting to the presentations that were scheduled to begin the day (NEB, “8 June 2018” 985). Manitoba Hydro’s argument was that the panel would be focusing almost exclusively on northern Manitoba and the presentations would be out of scope for the board (NEB, “8 June 2018” 987-995). Following the in-depth reasoning as to why the expert panel should not be able to present their knowledge to the board, the lawyer representing Wa Ni Ska Tan provided an eloquent rebuttal in which he challenged these notions and used Manitoba Hydro’s own description of its “integrated system” as a means

of establishing the importance of having the knowledge of this panel presented (NEB, “8 June 2018” 1002, 1021, 1026). Herein lies one of the most clear and present examples of Manitoba Hydro’s continued use of ‘divide and conquer’ tactics against Indigenous communities throughout Manitoba.

First, this objection immediately divides all of the different aspects of Manitoba Hydro’s operations into different segments that are much easier to ‘conquer’ in review hearing, courts, and other necessary steps to obtain their ultimate goal of licensing and completing hydroelectric projects. This action of dividing the immense hydroelectric system of Manitoba into small segments that are easily digested prevents both Manitoba Hydro and whatever entity is providing licensing or review from obtaining a true understanding of the immense impacts that these projects have all throughout the province. It prevents these groups from truly understanding what is at stake with each and every step Manitoba Hydro takes to expand its operations. Segmenting the system rejects the experiences of certain Indigenous communities and prioritizes only those that fit into a very narrowly defined area of ‘impacted lands’ and continues the colonial process of erasing and dismissing Indigenous experiences of trauma and destruction. Through this process, Manitoba Hydro, whether consciously or not, continues its age-old process of removing Indigenous peoples from their lands for the sake of profit and expansion.

Wa Ni Ska Tan is an organization that consists of a multitude of different groups but it most prominently consists of many different Indigenous communities and groups that have decided to come together as a means of strength in the face of continued colonial destruction at the hands of Manitoba Hydro (“Wa Ni Ska Tan”). In the early stages of the organization, the group was asked what it would like to do in the instance that the SSHRC funding grant failed and there was no money for operation. A decision was made at that meeting that the communities wanted to continue to work together by whatever means possible to counter the divide and conquer tactics that Manitoba Hydro had deployed so effectively in the past. The connection between the communities is clear in Wa Ni Ska Tan’s participation in the NEB hearings with representation from Swan Lake First Nation, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, Pimicikamak Cree Nation, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, and Misipawistik Cree Nation (NEB, “8 June 2018” i, 1048-1052). Despite these clear connections, Manitoba Hydro still attempted to undermine Wa

Ni Ska Tan's participation through its objection to the northern participation (NEB, "8 June 2018" 985-995).

Despite Manitoba Hydro's best efforts, the board discussed the objection and decided to reject it and allow the panel to speak (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1046). This decision is a first step in the process towards countering divide and conquer tactics and created space for northern Indigenous voices in the face of Manitoba Hydro's attempts to yet again push those voices out of the spotlight. While the board decided to approve the application put forward by Manitoba Hydro (NEB, *Reasons for Decision* 1), their recognition of the validity of this panel is one small step in the right direction.

Manitoba Hydro made a decision to object to the panel's participation. This objection was refused and the panel was able to present their expert knowledge. As was fitting, multiple presenters directly called out Manitoba Hydro for this action and clearly stated that this is merely one example in a long history of Manitoba Hydro's divide and conquer tactics as well as their clear preference for "bullying" communities into making decisions (NEB, "8 June 2018" 1239-1249). Had they succeeded, I have no doubt that the NEB would, to at least some extent, have come away from that morning session with a much less clear understanding of the true implications of the MMTP. Had they decided that the northern representation was not 'valid' in those hearings, it would have been a good day for Manitoba Hydro. But the NEB decided against that objection and thus opened the door for community voices. The expert panel saw through this attempt to silence their voice and took their opportunity to clearly state to the face of Manitoba Hydro and the NEB that they refuse to be silenced. Although this expert panel was able to effectively present their information and show the vast implications of Manitoba Hydro's interconnected system, the NEB still decided to approve Manitoba Hydro's application (NEB, *Reasons for Decision* 1). Regardless of the NEB's decision, the expert panel's voices are now on the public record and they have actively attempted to share the truth with others who otherwise would not have received this information. While the NEB's decision arguably minimizes the knowledge that was shared with them, Manitoba Hydro's attempts to silence their voices failed.

Permit to Build:

As the story was told to me by Robert Spence, approximately 18 years ago Robert Spence and some of his family members decided to build a camp on their territory for their annual

harvesting trips as well as Robert's trapping trips during the winter. This territory is within the Split Lake Resource Management Area. During their trip, a group of people arrived unannounced to speak with Robert. As they approached, they asked to speak with Mr. Spence. Robert was able to tell that at least one of them was a conservation officer and one was an RCMP officer. As they spoke, the conservation officer asked for information on their moose and fish harvesting activities. Clearly, these individuals were interested in controlling what Robert and his family members harvested from their traditional territory and what they did on this territory.

Robert's response to their attempt at colonial control of him, his family, and his relationships with the land was direct. As these men continued to question him, he responded with questions of his own in an attempt to show them what their questions represented to him in his understanding of relationships with land. He asked, "how would you feel if I walked into your house and started going through your pantry?" At this point, the conservation officer stated that others had told him Robert would be "difficult." As the conversation continued one of the prominent reasons the officer was sent to speak with Robert came out. The conservation officer stated that he had heard Robert was planning on constructing a campsite on his territory and informed him that he required a permit to build any structure on that land. Obviously, this statement directly created a conflict between Robert's use and control of his territory as well as his Indigenous sovereignty and Section 35 ancillary rights on his territory. The conversation became increasingly heated as Robert expressed his understanding of his rights to use the land and build as he wished. As the conversation came to a close, Robert made it clear he would not be obtaining a permit and that the group of men, as well as other conservation and RCMP officers, were not welcome in his territory if they were planning on attempting to colonize him and his relationship to the land. As of writing this, Robert states he has not met another conservation officer on his territory.

Blocking the River:

As agents of the state, conservation officers continually challenge Indigenous sovereignty and have the ability to challenge and intervene in relationships with the land. Robert Spence is not the only harvester who has had negative interactions with conservation officers. Noah Massan tells the story of a time in his past when he had an interaction with a conservation officer.

As I was told the story by Noah Massan, one day Noah decided to set a net on a smaller river that leads into the Nelson River. He set this net as a means of harvesting some fish for Elders in the community who wanted to eat some healthy food from the land. In order to get these fish, Noah set the net across the opening of the small river and left it for the day. When he went back, he pulled the net and gathered the fish. Upon arriving on the shore, Noah was confronted by a conservation officer. The officer addressed Noah and ‘informed’ him that the blocking of a river with a net is illegal and that Noah would be fined for setting his net in this way. The conversation got heated but after a short while Noah and the conservation officer were able to talk in relative peace. Noah asked the officer to travel with him a short distance from the location of his net. Although hesitant, the officer agreed and climbed into Noah’s truck with him.

Together, they drove a short distance from the mouth of the river to the nearby dam on the Nelson River. Noah parked the truck and asked the conservation officer “what do you see?” After a few moments, the conservation officer began to describe the trees, water, plants, and so on. Noah waited until he was done then looked at him and asked about the dam. The officer stated that he saw the dam as well. After a moment Noah asked, “why are they allowed to block the river?” This took the conservation officer by surprise and he stopped to think for a moment. After thinking, the officer agreed that it was unfair for Noah to be charged for setting a net across the opening of a small river for 24 hours when Manitoba Hydro was effectively blocking the entire Nelson River at multiple points, 24/7 for many years and with no end in sight. After this conversation and discussion, the officer decided not to charge Noah for his fishing net.

I mention these two stories of interactions with Conservation Officers not to indicate that they are connected to Manitoba Hydro nor that Manitoba Hydro is responsible for these experiences but rather to acknowledge and recognize a history of relationships with government-oriented entities that seem to follow the perspective they have a right to control Indigenous peoples’ interactions with the land. As has been mentioned elsewhere, Indigenous peoples throughout northern Manitoba have had long, difficult relationships with different entities affiliated with colonial governments and continue to experience attempts at policing their relationships with land. Failure to consider the variety of ways in which the state attempts to control Indigenous peoples ultimately fails to also recognize the multifaceted ways in which

Indigenous peoples have countered colonial control. These attempts at control of Indigenous peoples' relationships with the land go against the spirit and intent set out in the treaties.

Rights to be on the Land:

Hydro and its employees have a long history of assuming rights to the land that they do not have and priority to the land that is based on a colonial history of failing to recognize or outright denying Indigenous rights to land, Indigenous governance, and Indigenous sovereignty. Elder Noah Massan has been present for at least two separate interactions with Manitoba Hydro employees in which his or his father's rights to their land, in this case their trapline, was questioned and in which the colonial mentality of Hydro is clearly expressed. Although these stories are decades apart, they provide one small piece of the mosaic of reasons I argue Manitoba Hydro's 'new approach' to relationships with Indigenous peoples in the proximity of generating stations and infrastructure projects has not changed and remains equally, if not more, colonial than their past relationships.

Manitoba Hydro has a long history of building infrastructure in northern Manitoba in order to benefit the construction and operation of their generating stations. Some have argued these projects are directly beneficial to the communities near the project (Loxley 145; Manitoba CEC, "26 Sept. 2013" 53-54; Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 81-82). Road construction, creation of boat docks, and maintenance of infrastructure projects supposedly help and support the communities. However, all of these projects create challenges for the communities just as much as they create benefits, and in many cases the problems and destruction brought by these projects far outweigh the benefits the community experiences. I will further outline the costs and benefits of these projects at a later point in time, but a quick example of the challenges of these projects is the south access road being built to the Keeyask Project directly through Elder Noah Massan's trapline. This road and the corresponding power corridor that travels through Noah's trapline has caused the clear cutting of the area, increased traffic through the trapline, and the scaring away of animals that Noah harvested from this trapline. However, this road is promoted as a benefit for the community because it is expected to significantly reduce the travel time from Gillam to Thompson. This discourse inherently places Elder Noah Massan's relationship with the land into a 'cost-benefit' analysis in relation to the shortened travel time, one which seems to place higher priority on the shortened trip.

In order to truly understand the perceptions Manitoba Hydro and its employees have towards their rights to the land and the rights of Indigenous peoples to the land are more effectively argued through the stories of Elder Noah Massan and his father in relationship to these infrastructure projects. A few decades ago, Noah and his father left the community to travel on the land and harvest from it. They pushed their boat off from a location on their trapline in the morning hours of the day to start their harvesting trip. After a long day's work, they returned to the same location from which they had pushed off only that morning. At that location, Hydro employees had built a dock for their boats to use and to which they could tie off. They labelled the area a marina and established rules as to who could use the facility. Noah's father pulled his boat up to the shore and was met by an employee for Manitoba Hydro. The man confronted Noah's father and attempted to inform him that he was not allowed to use the dock or marina as it was for Hydro use only. As would be expected, Noah's father had some choice words for this employee and a tense confrontation started. Very quickly, another Hydro employee who knew Noah and his father came running forward and informed the first employee who Noah's father was and that he was the one with rights to the area. Noah and his father left in anger and distrust. Later that day, the two employees came to Noah's house to provide a formal apology. Although the confrontation ended with an apology and a seeming acceptance of Noah's father's right to the land, the entire interaction combined with the decision by Manitoba Hydro to construct a dock and marina in someone else's territory without consultation or consideration directly shows the perception of the corporation that they have the right to the land and Indigenous rights to land and governance of that land is only to be accepted when proof has been provided of 'ownership.'

Upon his passing, Noah's father's trapline was passed on to Noah. As a result, Noah is now the 'owner' of the trapline both in Western law and in the laws and governance practices of *Inniniwak* society. All consultation related to the area goes through Noah and he holds the rights to the trapline that are recognized by Western society. Noah makes decisions about who is allowed to use his territory for trapping and has accepted a few family members as 'helpers' on his trapline. Hydro seems to recognize some of these rights in their negotiations and consultations with him in regards to the Keeyask Project. Although it seems he has no choice in whether or not Hydro builds a road or power corridor through his territory, he manages to

challenge them every step along the way. He has participated in Clean Environment Commission of Manitoba hearings about the project in order to provide his expert knowledge about his trapline. Through a group of Elders and land-users, Noah promoted his thoughts and concerns to the Public Utilities Boards during their Needs For and Alternatives To hearings. However, probably the most direct and powerful challenge Noah provides to Hydro does not take place in board rooms or hearings in Winnipeg. Whenever he is physically able, Noah travels on his clear-cut and construction laden trapline to continue his practices of trapping, hunting, and fishing. Although he has the rights to this territory, he has been forced to go through security checkpoints, affix flags to his vehicle for 'safety' concerns based on the construction vehicles, and has had to face Hydro employees challenging his rights to be on his territory. Despite all of the challenges and confrontations he must endure, Noah gets in his pickup and drives onto the trapline, interacting with the land as his father and ancestors did before him and as he has done for all of his life. Noah's decision to trap despite Hydro's continued imposition on his land shows a direct resistance towards Hydro's claims of ownership or rights to the land.

During the summer of 2017, Noah took a group of southerners, led by Dr. Peter Kulchyski, onto his trapline. Along the way, Noah described his history with Manitoba Hydro, what has changed on his trapline, and what he expects to happen in the future. While on this trip, they were met by a vehicle and employee working at the site. Noah was challenged by the employee and told he was not allowed on the territory and was not allowed to bring 'visitors' into the area. As is now usual for Noah, he directly challenged the employee and explained that he was allowed to bring whomever he wanted to on his territory and that, in fact, it was the employee that was not welcome on that land. As if this was not enough, almost the exact same event happened only a few months later. This time, Noah was alone in his vehicle while travelling on his territory and again a young employee told him he was not allowed on the territory. Noah told this employee, just like the last one, that he is allowed to travel wherever he would like on his land and that it was that employee and all other employees that were trespassing and did not have a right to be there.

Although it would be easy to argue these interactions are solely the result of ill-informed, or at worst racist, employees challenging an Elder they do not recognize, the decisions that Hydro has and continues to make directly support the perception that they assume they have all

rights to the territory and that Indigenous communities and peoples have no rights to the territory. The destruction of Noah's trapline is just one of many clear examples of this perception. Throughout the entire process, Noah has had the impression he could in no way stop the construction of the south access road through his territory nor could he prevent the construction of a power corridor next to that highway (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). In the past, Noah was invited to consultations between himself and what was promised to be one 'higher up' for Manitoba Hydro but when he arrived at the meeting he was faced by that same man and a multi-person legal team (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Recently, Noah has discovered that Hydro has created a gravel pit and is constructing a converter station on his trapline. Throughout his negotiations with Manitoba Hydro and the consultation on the project, he did not hear nor expect that a converter station would be constructed on his trapline (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Hydro consistently makes decisions and takes action in ways that assumes no one else has rights to the land that challenge its own and no one else can question the validity of their rights to the land. I put forward the argument, here and now, that Noah Massan not only holds rights that are far superior to the rights Manitoba Hydro claims to have and that Noah Massan is acting out his rights to his territory, to his relationships with the land, and to his community and family in his active decision to harvest from a territory that has been clear-cut, dug up, and paved over with gravel by Hydro. His resistance to Hydro's perceptions of their rights directly confronts and overcomes the claims of Manitoba Hydro and his actions show the strength of the communities in the north. His actions challenge the 'recognition politics' Manitoba Hydro shows to the general public and overwhelms their claims of social license through the seemingly simple act of continuing his relationships with the land with no recognition of Manitoba Hydro's right to continue their destruction.

Continuing the Fight

I've mentioned a few times so far that Noah Massan has been consistently fighting Hydro for years and that he takes a number of different tactics. Through his work in the Clean Environment Commission hearings, Public Utility Board hearings, and his continuous, on the ground resistance against Hydro through his continued use of his trapline all position him as an expert and as a strong leader for his community and those throughout the province. Throughout this work I have regularly spoken with Noah over the phone about his ability to use his trapline

and Hydro's continued destruction and altering of his territory for their Keeyask Project. Despite gaining some concessions from Hydro, like his ability to carry his hatchet and rifle while trapping, he still faces challenges from Hydro employees and sub-contractors when trying to enter his territory or bring others onto his territory (Noah Massan, Personal Interview).

As the holder of the trapline and traditional family territory, Noah has the right from both the position of Western law and *Inniniwak* law to decide who has access to his territory. Despite Noah's clear rights to the territory, Manitoba Hydro continues to gain access to the territory without Noah's permission, place signs that state "authorized personnel only," and attempt to prevent him from bringing others onto his territory. Noah has consistently brought southern activists, academics, and artists onto his territory to show them the real cost of the 'green' energy the Manitoba Hydro is producing. As a result, sub-contractors and employees working on the territory regularly attempt to prevent or question Noah's right to do so. As I have mentioned earlier, Noah has a myriad of approaches to addressing this action, through questioning their authorization to enter his territory, establishing his right to be there, and talking to superiors and high level Hydro employees directly address these assaults on his sovereignty. However, Noah recently informed me of one of his new approaches to challenging these questions of his rights and sovereignty. As has been a consistent problem, sub-contractors and employees are yet again questioning his position as an 'authorized' person to enter the territory, especially with guests. In response, Noah has started informing these employees that he could very easily and rapidly deploy a blockade to prevent their work if they are going to prevent his. Noah has participated in blockades against Hydro in the past and continues to support them today in any way that he can (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). As a leader, Noah has the ability to contact a number of people from the community to support a blockade on his trapline to stop work and demand recognition of his sovereignty and right to govern his territory.

A blockade is a direct reflection of Noah's sovereignty on his territory. Through a blockade, Noah would not only be challenging the right of Hydro to be on his territory, and in some ways removing Hydro from his territory through their inability to access it, but would also show his right to invite others onto his territory to support him in his activities. Noah has historically invited his family members to work his trapline as his helpers and this possible decision to invite people to help block Hydro from access to the territory could be seen as a very

similar invitation. Blockades are a concerted effort to challenge dispossession, colonization, and continuous assaults on Indigenous peoples and lands. If Noah decides to blockade the road to his territory, he is effectively acting out his sovereignty and questioning the sovereignty of Hydro and, by extension, the government.

Bush Governance

A final challenge for Indigenous peoples when attempting to participate in environmental decision-making is the consistent failure of Western society to recognize the affluence of Indigenous societies and the land-based lifestyle of Indigenous peoples. Consistently throughout the history of colonization in Canada, as throughout the world, the gathering and hunting lifestyle has been treated as a difficult way of life that is barely capable, and sometimes completely incapable, of providing for the needs of the people (Sahlins 1; Berger 146). As this perception is perpetuated, there is the possibility Indigenous peoples will be perceived as ‘gaining’ from the ‘development’ of their lands through the introduction of wage labour and capitalism, regardless of if they are included in the process or not. These perceptions are directly countered by the work of Sahlins and Berger. Both authors have argued for the recognition of the affluence of Indigenous societies and the gathering and hunting lifestyle (Sahlins 9-10; Berger 145-156). Sahlins described the relative ease with which hunters are able to obtain the game necessary to provide food for a community at a relatively small amount of time spent working (14-32). The basis for this argument directly challenges some of the basic assumptions about humanity that are put forward by capitalism. Arguably, this is the reason the gathering and hunting lifestyle is consistently challenged by Western society, as it directly challenges some of the fundamental beliefs of capitalism. Berger goes on to discuss the necessity of recognizing the affluence of Indigenous societies in Canada and the impacts environmental decisions can have on the success of these societies in obtaining what they need from the land (145-156).

Throughout my time working with Robert Spence, I have heard him discuss the importance of stewardship of the land and protection of the animals and resources on the land. These discussions usually manifest themselves in his explanation of sustainable harvesting on his trapline. He has mentioned many times the quota he places on visitors to his trapline. Whenever someone comes with him on his harvesting trip in September, he makes it clear they are not allowed to shoot or kill any female moose, known as cows. When I asked him about the

reasoning for this rule simply stated, “it’s just smart conservation” (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). However, his conservation-oriented rules do not end with a moratorium on the killing of cows. He also insists on maximum number of moose harvested from his land at 5 total. He establishes these quotas to guarantee there are “more [moose] for the future generations” (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

These rules may seem to be merely conservation oriented harvesting rules set out to curtail over-harvesting on his land both when he is present as well as when he is not. However, these rules are supplemented by other rules that require both respect for the land and for the camp that Robert and his family have created to allow them to continue harvesting from the land on an annual basis. In order for Robert to express these rules to guests on his land, he has written them out and hung them on a wall in his main cabin. They stipulate what should and should not be done at camp and on his territory while also warning against trespassing on neighbouring traplines.

Rules established on the ‘rule board’ in his main cabin as well as those that are expressed verbally to guests visiting with him carry serious repercussion if they are not followed. On multiple occasions, Robert has had to expel people from his territory for shooting cows or failing to follow other rules established for the area (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). His position as holder of the trapline and primary harvester of the area grants him the right to expel people who fail to follow the rules that create and maintain positive relationships with the land.

Foundational to the rules Robert has established on his territory is that of respect both for him as well as for the territory and the non-human beings that live on that territory. Respect for moose is the basis of rules surrounding killing cows, as cows are the basis of continuing the moose population. Just as Robert expects respect from visitors to his territory, he also demands respect for neighbouring trappers and trapline holders. This respect manifests itself through requests that people do not enter the territory of neighbouring trappers without their permission while also demanding no animals be harvested from neighbouring traplines.

Respect for the environment and non-human beings on the trapline were directly explained to me during my visit to Robert’s territory. On my first night during the trip, Robert and I went out for a boat ride and to look for moose. During the trip, we heard moose and Robert explained how to differentiate between a male and female moose call. We listened for

quite a while before making our return trip to camp. Once we came within a close distance to the camp, others from the camp motioned for us to go across the river as they had called in a moose. We took a sharp left and managed to catch the moose on the shore of the river. In the end, we managed to get the moose and returned to camp to bring everyone else with us to clean the moose. After gutting the moose but leaving it whole, we returned to camp for the night.

The next day we travelled back to the site of the kill so Robert and the Elder at camp could quarter the moose. Another person from Tataskweyak and I carried the different parts of the moose back to the boat. After the quartering was complete Robert called me over and pulled out a cigarette. He motioned towards the moose and said, “sprinkle this tobacco on the hide to thank the moose for giving itself to you.” As I sprinkled tobacco over the hide and silently thanked the moose for giving itself to us the night before, I experienced what many before me had known and what Robert was expressly teaching me. I felt immense respect for the moose and a strong connection and feeling of gratitude towards it for giving its life for our consumption and my personal learning experience.

Sprinkling tobacco on the hide of the moose was not the only sign of respect and means of maintaining a strong and long-lasting relationship that Robert perpetuated that day. After gutting the moose the night before, Robert purposely put the entrails aside to feed the wolves. Additionally, while quartering the moose he purposely leaves some meat behind instead of taking every piece of moose. Yet again, this is a means of feeding the wolves and creating and maintaining a bond with wolves.

Beaver

It has been said that only beavers should build dams (Neckoway). Unsurprisingly, Hydro has had its fair share of ‘run-ins’ with the furry critters that have effectively done their job throughout history with far less destruction to the land. Beavers, like many other animals in the north, have also experienced the history of colonization in a distinct and negative way.

In northern Manitoba, contact and the fur trade are very much intertwined and, in some cases, happened simultaneously (Carlson, 71). Much of the fur trade revolved around the beaver and beaver pelts (Dickason & Newbigging 55). As time moved forward and the fur trade waxed and waned, the beaver was present and involved throughout. As colonization moved forward, the transition from the fur trade to industrial ‘development,’ yet again the beaver was present and

impacted. The creation of the Inco mine in Thompson had, and continues to have, massive destructive impacts on the land (Manitoba CEC, “25 Sept. 2013” 16). With Inco came Manitoba Hydro and the first dam on the Nelson River, the Kelsey Generating Station constructed to power the mine (*History of Electric Power in Manitoba* 29). Yet again, the beaver was there and impacted.

As Hydro pushed forward with ever increasing generating stations and energy production in the north, the beavers, like most other living organisms in the area, were seen as challenges to be overcome. All throughout this time, the *Inniniwak* continued their relationships with the beaver, the moose, the caribou, the fish, and all other aspects of the land as they had in the past.

During the recent construction of infrastructure for the Keeyask Project, Manitoba Hydro employees contacted Noah a number of times about beaver. In one instance, Hydro employees contacted Noah to trap a beaver on his trapline. Apparently, the beaver had constructed a dam in a culvert under a road and the water was beginning to degrade and destroy the road that Hydro had constructed. It was clear to these employees that the beaver had to go because it was destroying what they needed and what made their livelihood possible. When they approached Noah they stated the beaver was ‘causing us problems’ Noah’s immediate response was ‘what do you mean us?’ As he continued he made it clear to these employees that the beaver was not his problem, it is the problem of Manitoba Hydro. In actuality, he emphasized to the employees, he supported the beaver making problems for Manitoba Hydro and destroying the roads that they had constructed through his territory. He recognized the right of the beaver to construct its dam while simultaneously rejecting Hydro’s claimed right to be on the land (Noah Massan, Personal Interview).

More recently, Hydro yet again mentioned to Noah the presence and potential problem of a beaver in his trapline territory. However, this time the conversation took place during the winter more as a suggestion that the beaver should be dealt with before it can cause problems. Hydro employees spoke with Noah and asked him to trap a beaver that they were certain was living inside of a beaver house in the area. Noah went to look at the beaver house to check whether or not the employees were correct in their claims that there was a beaver there and whether or not the beaver would be a problem. As Noah looked at the beaver house, he became certain there was no beaver inside the house. He mentioned this to the employees and they

challenged him saying they were certain there was a beaver inside. Noah explained to me that the way he knew there was no beaver inside was because there is usually a breathing spot at the top of the house, a kind of chimney that allows the beaver to breathe while it is inside the house during the winter. This house did not have a visible chimney, which supports Noah's claim that the house is unoccupied and the employees are incorrect in their concerns of there being a beaver inside (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). This refusal to accept Noah as an expert and his knowledge as valid continues to perpetuate the claim of Indigenous land use as inferior to Western land use and Indigenous knowledges as less valid than 'scientific' knowledge and ways of knowing.

Despite Noah's expert knowledge and certainty that there is no beaver inside the house, he has told me he will continue to watch the house for signs of life inside. Yet again, he will use his expert knowledge of the land and ecosystem of his territory to confirm or deny the information Hydro employees are claiming. This is a process he has done many times in the past, both publicly and privately in conversations with me and others as well as through public hearings like the Clean Environment Commission and Public Utilities Board hearings on the Keeyask Project. Come spring time, Noah will watch the house for signs of movement through beaver tracks, he will look for signs of beavers obtaining and consuming different parts of trees that they prefer, and he will continue his relationships with the land through observing the beaver's behaviours, or lack thereof, to determine whether there are beavers occupying the house others assert is in use and a potential challenge to their continued destruction of the land. As Noah continues to support the relationships he has with this territory, he will continue to challenge Hydro's attempts at colonial control of the territory and hegemonic domination as 'experts.'

Leadership Transitions

As Manitoba Hydro continues to construct generating stations and plan infrastructure that fundamentally alters the environment and the lives of Indigenous peoples in northern Manitoba, the leadership positions that many harvesters hold are forced to transition and become increasingly political. As mentioned earlier, the leadership positions harvesters, particularly the lead harvesters of different territories, have are based on protecting the land and non-human beings that live on that land as well as making sure mutual respect is shown and relationships are

perpetuated (Feit, “Legitimation” 33-34). The position of a leader on a trapline determines the sustainability of that territory. With the decisions of Manitoba Hydro impacting these territories, it has become necessary for these leaders from the land to take political positions in opposition to the actions of colonialism and Manitoba Hydro. As a result, these harvesters are forced to give up different aspects of their lives and their relationship with the land in order to challenge Manitoba Hydro.

In order to challenge Manitoba Hydro, many of these harvesters must attend meetings with different members of the Crown corporation. Many of these meetings take place in Winnipeg, require extensive travel, and remove these community members from their homeland for varying lengths of time. In addition, whenever a ‘recognized’ band government position is held by a harvester, other meetings are necessary beyond just those with Manitoba Hydro. As a result of an increasing number of meetings and a necessity to be available in the community to work with other community members and other entities in the area, many of these harvesters are forced to give up different aspects of their lives in order to fulfill their position as leaders. These sacrifices range in their intensity, but also impact all those who travel on the land of and learn from these harvesters.

Conclusion:

With Canadian courts now recognizing that *terra nullius* cannot apply to the territory of Canada (Supreme Court of Canada, *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*), treaties are increasingly important to our understanding of how the Canadian government can claim power. Additionally, the courts have ruled that treaties should be interpreted from a “liberal and generous” position based upon the spirit and intent of the oral agreements (Craft, “Treaty Interpretation” 12). While there is much disagreement about the implications of treaty and the Royal Proclamation of 1763 in relation to Indigenous sovereignty, I argue that the relationships set out in Treaty 5, when considered in a “liberal and generous” way, must recognize Indigenous sovereignty and consider *Inniniwak* understandings of territory. This does not inherently mean that the *Inniniwak* have complete and total control over the territories of the north, as that goes against the concept of plural sovereignties for both human and other-than human beings and the sharing, kinship-oriented relationships set out in Treaty 5. Instead, this “liberal and generous” interpretation requires not only must environment decision-making recognize the concerns of the

Inniniwak but also a requires a collaborative approach to environmental decision-making as a whole that does not allow for the provincial government or Manitoba Hydro to make decisions that will fundamentally alter the relationships of the *Inniniwak* with the land. As such, I would argue that environmental decision-making in Canada necessitates, at the bare minimum, an equal position for Indigenous organizations and nations. Throughout this chapter, I have argued that this is not the case and that the barriers present to Indigenous participation in environmental decision-making combined with the seeming lack of true equal treatment of Indigenous knowledges results in a process that fails to respect the spirit and intent of treaties. Despite these challenges, Elders, experts, and knowledge-holders are continuing their relationships with land in such a way as to support and perpetuate Indigenous forms of environmental decision-making, bush governance, and resistance against colonial decisions.

In the next chapter, I will further explore the ways in which Elders, knowledge-holders, and experts continue to support relationships with the land while simultaneously challenging Manitoba Hydro's narratives in the south about the "clean" and "green" energy of hydroelectricity that continues to perpetuate their approach to production. Based in relationships with the land, I will discuss acts of resistance and resurgence in northern Manitoba that work to continue *Inniniwak* sovereignty through supporting youth and continuing to (re)create and maintain relationships with the land.

Chapter 6: Indigenous Sovereignty and Acts of Resistance and Resurgence in Northern Manitoba

To this point, I have argued that Indigenous sovereignty, at least in *Inniniwak* communities in northern Manitoba, is partially based upon relationship with land. Based upon this argument, I have asserted that Manitoba Hydro's destruction of the land and its failure to recognize the importance of the land has undermined Indigenous sovereignty in northern Manitoba. However, many in northern Manitoba both directly and indirectly challenge the perpetual destruction of the land and undermining of Indigenous sovereignty. McCreary and Turner argue a similar point when they state, "while Canada has long relied upon the extraction of staple resources as a national development strategy, Indigenous jurisdictional assertions serve to question, modify, and even offset the extractivist imperative conventionally undergirding Canadian political economy" (224). In particular, through the continuation of relationship with land and the attempts to provide opportunities for youth to create and maintain their own relationship with land, *Inniniwak* leaders are continuing to rebuild or strengthen Indigenous sovereignty and connections to land.

Fanon puts forward a claim for the future of Indigenous resistance and governance that recognizes Indigenous traditions and histories but states that to make them stagnant and stick to unchanged traditions is detrimental to the movement towards decolonization. He states, "culture eminently eludes any form of simplification" (*Wretched of the Earth* 160). Rather, he argues that culture is dynamic and will change through the process of decolonization (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* 160). LaRocque effectively argues the importance of "dialogics of the oppressed" and "talking back" to colonization. This "talking back" and supporting claims of the humanity of Indigenous people in writing is a means of resistance against colonization as it counters the colonial attempts at dehumanizing Indigenous peoples (LaRocque, 23). Borrows contributes to this discussion by stating "any compromise with colonialism causes us to be compromised by colonialism" ("Canada's Colonial Constitution," 20).

As Fanon and LaRocque have argued, this discussion of relationship with land is not based upon the belief that Indigenous peoples must perpetuate a "traditional" relationship with land that sees them hunting from hide canoes. Rather, these relations can take a variety of forms

but inherently require that they are respectful of the mutual relationship between people and land. Through these forms of relationship and work to support the bush mode of production, *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba are supporting a counter-argument not only to Manitoba Hydro's narratives in the south but also to some of the core arguments of the capitalist mode of production.

Based upon these discussions, it is important to consider Leanne Simpson's statement that "I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master's house, that is, which sets of theories we use to critique colonialism; but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses" (*Dancing*, 32). If relationship with land is one of the multitude of fundamental foundations of Indigenous sovereignty, particularly in northern Manitoba, then it is important to consider how it will connect with efforts in the north to "(re)build" the house of Indigenous sovereignty.

Traditional Family Territories & Learning from the Land

Robert Spence has discussed extensively what being on the land means for him. He has mentioned the health benefits he receives from spending time on the land and renewing his relationships with the land, including physical and mental health benefits. However, these trips onto the land have other levels of importance both for him and for his relatives and friends who travel on the land with him. Most years, an Elder from Split Lake travels with Robert on the land. He provides expert knowledge, gets many of the health benefits Robert has mentioned receiving himself, and helps with many of the tasks that are necessary to survive on the land. Along with the Elder who travels with Robert on the land, he also brings younger people and youth who benefit greatly from the knowledge they gain on the land and the chance to experience some of what their ancestors knew about the land. Young parents with their children get the opportunity to hunt, learn the steps of finding and tracking animals, and learn the steps to cleaning game after it has been caught. Everyone involved has an opportunity to learn both about hunting and fishing, cleaning and cooking food, and they get to not only hear and learn about relationships with the land but also to experience the stories in the places in which they took place. These benefits are widespread and can help the youth who spend time on the land with Robert and his family overcome some physical and mental health challenges they are facing themselves.

Everything that I have just mentioned is a direct challenge the Manitoba Hydro's undermining of the bush mode of production and the destruction of relationships with the land. As a result, these annual trips, as well as all other harvesting trips Indigenous peoples of northern Manitoba take on the land, are an act of resistance against Manitoba Hydro's seeming attempts at domination. Through the process of travelling on the land, creating and maintaining relationships with the land, harvesting from the land with a recognition of the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship, and extending this knowledge and experience with youth creates a movement of resistance against the capitalist mode of production in general and the Crown corporation specifically while also re-establishing the foundation upon which direct acts of resistance are generally situated. As Elders and harvesters take youth out on the land, they are supporting a future in which Manitoba Hydro is unable to merely promise jobs and financial benefit from generating stations to guarantee community support. These actions create a new generation that critically engages with concepts of 'development' from organizations that historically have made hollow promises. This future includes the continuation of a form of ethics that is inherent to interactions with the land and animals that live within it and places the counter-argument to the capitalist, profit-oriented narrative of corporations like Manitoba Hydro on the land and the relationships that the land creates (Kulchyski, "Bush/Animals" 328-329). As a result of all of these strengths, the Spence family's annual trip to their traditional family territory is an act of resistance in and of itself while also informing other acts of resistance.

Participation in public hearings, particularly surrounding environmental decision-making, is an important means of resistance employed by *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba. Wood and Rossiter discuss these forms of participation as politics of refusal and argue that Indigenous politics of refusal are not reactionary nor do they provide alternatives to Western concepts of sovereignty but instead are ignoring that concept altogether (167-168). A prominent theme in many interventions in public commission hearings and governmental processes by Indigenous peoples in the north is the idea of "speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves." In the vast majority of cases, this idea is not one of speaking for other humans who have been silenced by positions of partnership or inability to participate in hearings, although these actions are taken in many cases, but rather are in respect to the environment, wildlife, plant life, and all other non-human communities that will be impacted by power production projects.

As Darwin Paupanakis mentioned during the Keeyask Clean Environment Commission Hearings, Elders laugh at the idea that Manitoba Hydro's construction of the Keeyask Project will build a new habitat for lake sturgeon by saying "who is the scientist that spoke to a sturgeon" (Manitoba CEC, "9 Oct. 2013" p 72).

In order to effectively speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves, interveners in these regulatory hearings must have a strong basis and connection to their lands. In many instances, those who take this position are Elders, land-users and harvesters, or people who were raised upon the land and have had difficulty returning to it as a result of the destruction Manitoba Hydro has caused. As a result, community programs and family trips create a basis upon which people are able to reconnect to the land and gain the knowledge they need to effectively use their voice as a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. The Spence family trip to their traditional family territory helps to create and maintain these relationships and creates within younger generations not only the basis and strength they need to fight for their land but also gives them an understanding of for whom they wish to speak and how they can speak to most effectively present their point. They learn from their Elders and parents how to interact with their traditional family territory in such a way that they gain the bush ethics, which I will discuss more fully later, that they can then use to continue the fight against Manitoba Hydro and continue to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves.

As with the Spence family's trips on the land that support and strengthen their relationships with the land, Elder Noah Massan also maintains his relationships with his trapline despite the rampant destruction that Manitoba Hydro has caused to it. Noah's relationships with this land places him in a constant position of speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves because he is directly watching the damage caused by Manitoba Hydro in a location in which he has strong and extremely long lasting relationships. This trapline was held by Noah's father before he passed and was passed along to Noah at that point. As an Elder, Noah has spent much of his life on this trapline creating and maintaining relationships with the land that positions him as a strong and vocal defendant of those who cannot speak for themselves in the footprint of the Keeyask Project. Noah has been a tireless defender of the rights of those beings who cannot speak for themselves and continues to challenge Manitoba Hydro.

Going beyond the attempts to speak on behalf of the environment, wildlife, and plant life, many who decide to intervene or present in opposition to Manitoba Hydro also do so to speak on behalf of those who do not have a voice yet or who have been oppressed to such a degree they are not willing or able to participate in this way. One of the most prominent groups that is spoken for in this category are future generations. Both proponents and opponents to Manitoba Hydro's proposed projects do so not for their own benefit but rather to do what they think could most beneficially support the future generations (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 81-82). Some see jobs and financial gain as the only way forward for their communities while others believe the loss of relationships with the land and connections to their ancestors will result in the loss of Indigenous identity in the communities (Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 81-82, 27). Many who oppose partnerships like the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement do so because they see these agreements as taking the environment and experiences of relationships with the land from future generations to support current generations or to take chances that may not pay off for those future generations (see Manitoba CEC, "8 Oct. 2013" 27 as example). As such, this perception of theft from future generations puts many in the community in an uneasy position.

Throughout my trips on the land with Robert Spence and Noah Massan, I learned a great deal about the environment and relationships the land has with the people as well as the vast volume of history and stories related to different locations. As I have not spent much time on the land relative to nearly everyone in the north, I by no means know all of the stories or information that there is to share, but I have learned the immense benefits and strengths of learning from the land. Through interactions with the lands and waters of the north, harvesters and Elders have learned a great deal that they wish to share with youth. As youth spend more time on the land with these experts, they also begin to rapidly learn the information the land has to offer. This knowledge in turn creates more experts that can speak to the current conditions of the land, water, and animals of the north.

As youth continue to learn from the land and their Elders, they create a critical consciousness that allows them to speak and make decisions based upon the bush ethics that I will discuss in more depth later. An important aspect of bush-based ethics is a set of relationships with the land that allows for learning from the land and learning to be able to speak on behalf of it to those who are unable or unwilling to learn from it. As youth from different

communities are taken out on the land by harvesters and Elders for harvesting and educational trips, they are given the opportunity to learn from the land in a more holistic and culturally appropriate way, and ideally in a way the future generations will be able to as well. Through the combination of instruction from Elders and land-users and their experiential learning through interacting with, experiencing, observing, and relating to and with the land, youth are able to create and maintain the relationships with the land that will foster further learning and the ability to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Resistance & Revolution

Throughout this work, I have argued that relationships with the land are one of the foundations of Indigenous sovereignty and that Manitoba Hydro's destruction of the land has undermined Indigenous sovereignty rather than strengthening it. Earlier, I argued that the annual Spence family trip to their traditional family territory is an act of resistance in and of itself. However, I failed to discuss the importance of the relationships formed by these trips to acts of resistance within the community.

Many acts of resistance that have happened throughout northern Manitoba are enacted and supported by Elders and land-users. These individuals have strong connections to the land and understand with great empathy the implications of different actions by Manitoba Hydro and other industries and governments on the land and ecosystems across the north. Destruction of the land not only impacts their way of life, sustenance, and ability to pass along beneficial information to their future generations but also directly impacts the relationships that they have formed with the land. Relationships with the land go beyond the capitalist perspective of financial gain and accumulation and are based upon mutual respect and benefit.

A challenge facing those who resist Manitoba Hydro as a result of their relationships with the land is that they not only have reduced opportunities to interact with the land because of their direct actions against Manitoba Hydro, but also that the destruction of the land undermines their abilities to re-engage with it and be re-invigorated through those relationships. Resisting Manitoba Hydro and other colonial entities on a constant basis from their communities can weigh down those who attempt to speak on behalf of those who can not speak for themselves. For the Spence family, and Robert Spence in particular, the annual trip to their traditional family territory is that chance to re-invigorate himself and be strengthened in his resistance (Robert

Spence, Personal Interview). Travelling on the land is a therapeutic experience for Robert and he has discussed the feeling of stress and difficulty 'melting away' the further he gets from the community, the hydro lines, and the artificial lights and sounds of the south and the town site (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). The land provides him solace in times of difficulty and gives him a reason to fight when he is in the community or facing Manitoba Hydro executives and representatives. Many across the north who have relationships with the land mention a similar feeling and experience from being out on the land. Schools are beginning to recognize the importance of the land and children are being granted time out of the classroom to spend time on the land and create relationships with it (Robert Spence, Personal Interview; Hilda Dysart, Personal Interview). Youth spend time on the Spence traditional family territory and experience the strength that comes from relationships with the land. These opportunities, though not as common as they once were, allow for a strength and experience within youth that helps to create a new generation of warriors who will fight corporations and governments that attempt to reduce their abilities to have relationships with their traditional family territories. They gain knowledge from their Elders and the land-users with whom they travel that will further support them in their own fights against Manitoba Hydro, government entities, and capitalism and supports them in seeing strength and power in their identity and their culture.

Resistance based in connection with the land is strongly connected to and supported by criticism of dispossession and totalization. Kulchyski states,

Any victories against dispossession have been temporary because of the fact that totalization is unrelenting; it is a structural feature of contemporary society and will not stop until it is forced to stop by a fundamental social transformation: a revolution that takes the well-being and dignity of people as greater in importance than the well-being of capital, a revolution not premised on the brilliance of this or that leader but rather on the social genius of communities and of community itself, a revolution in the streets the households the dance clubs the galleries the bedrooms and the back roads, the mountains the thresholds the jails, a revolution in solidity of personal identities, a revolution in the structure of language allowing for the speaking of impossible ideals, a revolution capable of qualitative ethical distinctions, a revolution that treats ecology as part of the self, a revolution that recognizes the fact that important decisions about the environment about people will take a long time and much discussion, a revolution that will allow distinctiveness and be decentred and unhomogenizing in its orientation, a revolution that knows

itself knows what it is. Such an event will look to hunting peoples in the world as one source of inspiration. (*Report* 130-131)

He discusses this argument in relation to the resistance of the Begade Shutigot'ine to the Sahtu Treaty in the Northwest Territories. Elders and leaders in the community simply desired to maintain their rights and relationships with their land so they could be passed on to their children, grandchildren, and future generations beyond that. They did not wish to “surrender,” “extinguish,” or “exhaust” their rights to their lands and waters through treaty with the Crown. As a result, this simple desire became a resistant and revolutionary process that led not only the Elders and leaders but the larger community to refuse the benefits of the treaty, as they did not vote for it and refused to participate in it (Kulchyski, *Report* 131). Similarly, Pasternak states that the resistance actions taken by the community of Barriere Lake reject the idea of the state as having “non-overlapping, absolute domains of space” (154). Additionally, Pasternak states, “the so-called Westphalian state system may have created new jurisdictional and administrative arrangements in which modern forms of authority could be rendered meaningful, but it did not necessarily create a new world order from its imperial antecedents, nor did it destroy the Indigenous legal and political orders that were in place on these lands (154-155).

Much of what Kulchyski is discussing directly relates to the impressive and powerful strength of relationships with the land. These relationships come with a way of thinking or an ethics that has become revolutionary in response to capitalism and the approaches it takes in contemporary society. In particular, *Inniniwak* relationships with the land are revolutionary, although not new, in their positioning of humanity as equal to, not above, other-than-human beings. *Inniniwak* relationships with the land are revolutionary in their preference, nay requirement, for mutually beneficial relationships between all entities of the land, including humans, over the capitalist requirement of selfish profit at any means necessary. These relationships are revolutionary in their support and perpetuation of Indigenous sovereignty both in the eyes of the Canadian state and within Indigenous communities. Relationships with the land are revolutionary in their work at preventing primitive accumulation and their thrust of Elders, knowledge holders, youth, and even non-Indigenous people into a position of opposition against the established order that seeks to destroy them.

From my understanding, relationships with the land, in this instance *Inniniwak* relationships with the land, are revolutionary in and of themselves while also creating revolutionaries who must resist capitalism and capitalist ventures in order to protect those relationships with that land that would be destroyed by capitalist projects. However, it is important to note that the revolutions that relationships with the land support are not that of destruction and egomaniacal leadership but rather revolutions that recognize respect for human life and decency, the importance of the environment and the knowledge that environmental decision-making must be a long and thoroughly thought out process. These revolutions and revolutionaries reject primitive accumulation and capitalism's persistent push for the accumulation of wealth through dispossession of land from people and people from land.

It is also important to go beyond Marx's original conception of primitive accumulation and consider the dispossession of other-than-human beings of their land, habitats, homes, and relationships through projects like hydroelectricity generation. Other-than-human beings have important relationships with the land and with the other beings of that land, including humans (Craft, "An Agreement to Share" 27). These relationships are also fundamentally altered by primitive accumulation as land is changed and destroyed. Capitalism, and Enlightenment Western thought in general, allows for the dismissal of any rights of other-than-human beings to land or relationships and prevents their inclusion in the process of primitive accumulation (Kulchyski, "Bush/Animals" 321-323). However, it is important to consider not only the implications of primitive accumulation on these other-than-human beings but also to consider the actions that they, as well as the land, are taking that seems to place them in opposition to the project of corporations like Manitoba Hydro as well.

History of Elder Noah Massan's trapline

A short way out of the town of Gillam is Elder Noah Massan's trapline. Traplines, also known by some as traditional family territories, are a true form of 'sustainable development' in northern Manitoba. As in many cases, Noah's trapline was his father's trapline; he inherited it after his father passed away (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Throughout the history of Noah's family, this trapline has been a sustainable means of obtaining food, harvesting and selling furs, and providing a location for the creation, maintenance, and experience of

relationships with the land. As would be expected, no one knows this land better than Noah after his years tending to it with his late father and now working it with his helpers.

When I first travelled to Gillam to do research for my Master's Thesis, Noah took me for a day-long tour of Gillam, his trapline, and the 'development' surrounding Gillam. In his past, Noah worked on many, if not all, of the generating stations in the area surrounding Gillam and Split Lake (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Through these projects, Noah gained the knowledge and experience to become a heavy equipment operator, an accomplishment in which he takes great pride. As a result, he knows not only his trapline and the territory surrounding Gillam, but also knows the entirety of PR 280, a road he helped to build, as well as the generating stations and locations surrounding it. During this first trip, Noah showed me the vastness of his knowledge during a quick trip to Split Lake. All along the highway, Noah pointed out all of the different camps and explained in each case whose territory it was. He explained to me this knowledge was necessary so that in the instance of a vehicle breakdown in the winter, he can travel to the closest camp, build a fire, and wait in warmth for someone to help him.

Throughout the relatively few years that I have been working with Noah Massan in Fox Lake and Gillam, I have had a chance to see snapshots of the vast changes that are happening to his trapline. During my first trip in 2014, we travelled along a rather short, narrow road carved through the bush with trees encroaching on each side. The road led to a marina and multiple dike access roads all while traversing through Noah's trapline. There were multiple times I could hear the screech of tree branches scratching along the side of the pickup as we drove down the road. It was clear anyone driving down the road would need a pickup and a slow speed to prevent hitting another vehicle on the blind curves. Noah has many stories, some of which I've discussed elsewhere, about some of the many challenges he has faced as a result of this road, as well as the marina, dikes, and other destructive actions that have happened on his trapline. However, there always seemed to be an appreciation for the road from Noah. As mobility issues reduced his ability to be on the land, the road gave him access to his trapline from the relative ease of his truck, snowmobile, or other means of transportation.

Throughout the trip, Noah pointed to different locations off the side of the road where he had traps set. Although not ideal, Noah described the benefit of the road because he could drive

within a few metres of his traps in his pickup, get out and walk the few metres into the bush and be able to set or check a trap. Obviously, traffic on the road made trapping less successful and Noah does have a story of at least one instance in which someone placed a stuffed toy animal into a trap, tripping the trap and preventing Noah from harvesting any actual animals from that trap (Noah Massan, Personal Interview).

Despite the challenges of the road and easy access of outsiders to Noah's trapline, the road was a relatively minor challenge compared to what would follow. My follow-up visit during my Master's degree, which took place approximately 9 months later, corresponded with the first round of massive destruction to Noah's trapline. As we drove down the familiar road in April, 2015, the once encroaching boreal forest was a clear sea of dirt and twigs, sporadically separated by the islands of destroyed and mangled trees heaped in the middle of the fields. Manitoba Hydro's operations required the clear cutting of a vast swath of Noah's trapline. Just prior to my visit, bulldozers and other heavy equipment had plowed through the beautiful forest landscape of Noah's trapline, and the homes of many animals and plants, to create an area perfect for a larger road and transmission towers. Although I could not envision it at the time, this was only the first stage in even more extreme changes that would happen to Noah's trapline.

On one of my subsequent trips with a collection of artists and my advisor, Peter Kulchyski, from the south, we yet again travelled down the same road through Noah's trapline. More work had been completed on Noah's trapline but construction was still in full swing. As we drove down the dusty summer roads of northern Manitoba, we passed semis and other heavy equipment that would white out our visibility as a result of the billowing smoke that followed their large vehicles. What had once been a peaceful, narrow gravel road through a beautiful trapline was now a dusty, whiteout condition construction road through a decimated trapline. Although I do not have a close relationship to Noah's trapline beyond my close relationship with Noah, I was saddened and angered by the destruction Hydro had brought upon the land and upon Noah's livelihood. Peter also discussed with us later how devastating it was for him to see the trapline in this condition. It is unimaginable what Noah must have felt. True to fashion, however, Noah told us he continued to trap on the land despite it being destroyed and him being told he could not trap on the land. He told us it was his land and he would trap on it no matter what Hydro was doing. That was my last trip to Gillam for many years.

Highway to Hell

Despite being unable to visit Noah in Gillam for a few years straight, I was able to speak with him semi-regularly over the phone. Against injury and mobility challenges, he continued to travel throughout his trapline to keep his relationship with the land strong and to discuss with his helpers what needed to be done. Through our conversations on the phone, he told me of a number of run-ins he had with Hydro employees. When I saw the clear cutting that Hydro had forced upon Noah I was only seeing the beginning stages. Hydro has pushed further into Noah's territory both through the trees as well as through the soil. There is now a gravel quarry in Noah's trapline that is directly affecting his ability to trap as well as the construction of towers for the 3 power lines that will travel along the road and through his trapline. Additionally, Hydro is now planning and constructing a converter station in Noah's trapline, an addition that Noah did not expect based on his understanding of the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement and the agreements he has with Hydro about his trapline (Noah Massan, Personal Interview).

The South Access Road that traverses Noah's trapline is one of the main sources of destruction at present as it provides Hydro employees easy access from Gillam to the Keeyask Site, access to gravel pits that have been constructed on his trapline, and easy transportation for equipment necessary for construction. As a result, the road not only damaged the trapline through its construction and expansion but also causes destruction through the dust that is produced by consistent travel on the road, particularly by large transportation trucks.

Noah has dubbed the South Access Road as the Highway to Hell (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). This name carries multiple implications for Noah. First and foremost, the Highway to Hell represents the destruction the road has caused on his territory and the challenges he faces attempting to trap in his territory. It also represents the immense challenge he must face when interacting with Hydro employees or subcontractors who attempt to prevent him from using his territory or carrying tools that are necessary for him to continue his way of living. In the past, he has been told by security he is not allowed to carry even a hatchet with him as it can be used as a weapon (Noah Massan, Personal Interview). Inability to carry tools necessary for his work makes it increasingly difficult for him to trap. Hell, in the name Highway to Hell, can also represent the Keeyask project. As the project moves forward and increasingly damages the lands and waters of the north, Noah recognizes it as a hellish ordeal he and his people are enduring and

recognizes the impacts he expects to see, regardless of what Manitoba Hydro says he will experience. If Keeyask and the construction surrounding it is considered to be Hell, it is very easy to understand what entity may be considered to be the Devil in charge of such a terribly destructive project.

In April 2019 I had a chance yet again to visit Noah and his territory. We spent two full days driving around Gillam, Fox Lake, the territory, and Noah's trapline. The towers are up now, though they do not seem to have live wires travelling between them. A new road has been constructed and the old one is no longer maintained, only a deteriorating vestige of what used to be a thick, wooded land. We drove along the road for a great distance, seeing the Manitoba Hydro road signs for the different dikes, a turn off for the marina that used to be the end of the road. We continued on for many minutes. A massive quarry stands off to the south where Noah once trapped. There are clearings where construction camps used to sit and collections of trailers where camps remain. Near the end of the road is a security station that prevents people from entering the actual construction site of the Keeyask Generating Station. Once the project is done and the generating station is in operation the road will continue across its cement shoulders, over the river, and on towards Thompson. They say the new road will reduce the time from Gillam to Thompson. For some this is a blessing, as the road is difficult and the 4 hour trip is exhausting. However, it is hard to believe that shaving time off that trip, or the production of vast amounts of energy that are largely for sale to other jurisdictions, is worth the destruction and devastation of the land, the decimation of Noah's trapline and his ability to maintain his relationship with that territory through trapping, or the complete eradication of the homes and livelihoods of those other-than-human entities that lived in this land. The road is wide, the towers are up, the trees are gone, and yet Manitoba Hydro continues on.

Kewekapawetan

During the August long weekend every year, community members in South Indian Lake come together for a weekend of camping on an island across from the community. This island was the site of a portion of the community prior to "the flood." "The flood" is the term used in South Indian Lake for the construction of the Churchill River Diversion when the lake was flooded by approximately 3 metres. Many years after the flood, Elders and community members who remembered the way the community was before "the flood" decided they wanted to spend

the August long weekend every year at the old community site as a celebration of the heritage of the community and the way life was in the past. Although a relatively short gathering, the camp blooms in population over the weekend and the youth, adults, parents, and Elders all celebrate the community while also experiencing the land and maintaining relationships with the location that was their home in the past. The event draws many from the community while also including people who have moved to the neighbouring town of Leaf Rapids and those from the community who have, by their own choice or by force, moved further afield. Familial relationships and a love for the land draws people from as far as Fort McMurray and Toronto.

At the time of creation of the *Kewekapawetan* gathering, the Elders and community members who decided to travel across to the island required a name. They decided to use the *Inniniwak* word that generally means “returning home together” or “let’s return home.” This title is a recognition of the history and heritage of the community, the implications of Manitoba Hydro’s creation of the Churchill River Diversion, and the forced relocation of many within the community from their former home to the current town site. Unsurprisingly, the return to the island was met with memories for those who lived there before and a return of connections that had long laid dormant as a result of the relocation. Walking throughout the island, the former residents were able to find the footprints of their former houses, bombardiers that had been left behind, and other remnants of past lives that have been forever altered by their relocation to the current community site. These connections and the reminder of a more positive past that included community cohesion and a freedom from many of the challenges that currently face the community creates a feeling of home. As a result, those involved decided to use the word or phrase of *Kewekapawetan* as the name of the gathering.

Connected to this idea of *Kewekapawetan* was the feeling of returning home in a way that is reminiscent of the past while hoping to create a future on the island that was free of many of the challenges facing the current community. As such, many camps choose to attempt living in a way that was more in connection with the land and the way the community lived before the relocation and flood. Much of the construction on the island is temporary or somewhat temporary, creating a closer connection to the land and less of the contemporary ‘comfort’ that is present in the community. Walking throughout the island, the camps create a feeling of community as they are separated yet are welcoming of whoever wishes to visit. Tea, coffee, and

food are offered to all who visit. Many camps also strictly enforce a no alcohol and drugs as well as a no dogs rule that helps to overcome some of the challenges the community itself faces.

Whenever travelling or visiting with an Elder on the island, stories flow freely. The main stage for the events that are held throughout the weekend is located at the former site of the HBC store. The foundation of the store is still visible with a large stage constructed near it. The stage is situated centrally on the island and events bring people from every direction together at a central point on the island. During my visit in 2018, Hilda Dysart and I stood near the stage during one of the communal meals. We were chatting and she told me she worked at the HBC store when she was younger. As we stood near the footprint of the store she used to work at, we looked out over the water nearby. She told me that, before the flooding, this location was at the top of a big hill. At the bottom of the hill was a dock at which the float planes would land and unload the supplies and load up any supplies that needed to be returned. Now, the footprint of the store is situated only a few feet above the water level and every year the shoreline erodes ever so slightly closer to the location of one of Hilda's first jobs.

Hilda's family campsite is located at the point of the island that has a clear view of the current community site. The camp has a kitchen area that is framed in, a nice wood stove, an outhouse out in the bush, and a huge cleared area that every year fills by the day with more and more members of the family. Throughout the camp, there is a real feeling of community, connection, and sharing. Hilda and William share many great stories of their past on this island and the lives they lived prior to relocation. They have a strong connection to this area. The location of the camp is next to the footprint of William's father's home. There are clear indications of that life throughout the camp. One of the most prominent signs of the past use of this area is a long metal spike near one of the canvas tents. For multiple years of attending the gathering, I saw the spike and the large orange warning marker that indicated its presence. However, I never understood why it was there. In 2018, William explained it to me. The spike was a part of William's father's home. As I'm not a carpenter, I have no clue what its purpose was in the construction of the house but it was a necessary piece nonetheless. From my understanding, when they set up their camp, they attempted to remove the spike to avoid the tripping hazard it created, particularly for the children who regularly attend. However, despite their best efforts, they were unable to remove the spike. William seems to still be somewhat

astonished by just how firmly it is placed in the ground, particularly considering the lack of contemporary tools that were available for his father when he built the home. In many ways, from my perspective, this acts as a metaphor for the relationship the Dysarts have with this land. Their relationships with the land are firmly connected to their history and the history of the community with the land. Additionally, this pin in many ways represents the foundation I have mentioned significantly throughout this work in the form of relationships with the land. It is solidly affixed and will continue to be so into the future.

The stories that are shared with youth at *Kewekapawetan* include discussing the history of the community and the implications of hydroelectricity production. As can be expected, the destruction that is brought upon the community by the Churchill River Diversion, as well as the annually renewed Augmented Flow Program that allows for increased water fluctuations, has resulted in the destruction of the highly successful commercial fishery, the loss of game and medicines, and the continued assault on the “bush mode of production” (Steve Ducharme; Les Dysart, Personal Interview). These challenges make it extremely difficult for youth in the community to travel on the land and experience the relationships that their parents, grandparents, and ancestors had with the land. Those few youth that make concerted efforts to get out on the land, and the community members that support them, are continually faced with disruption and disappointment at the lack of fish and wildlife in the region. However, the community has not given up on supporting the youth creating, maintaining, and perpetuating positive relationships with the land.

Through the school, youth gain opportunities to travel on the land and learn how to live on the land and create relationships with it through land-based educational opportunities with Elders and resource-users. These courses take youth outside of the community to different camp sites surrounding Southern Indian Lake that are used by community members and they are taught some of the important knowledge their Elders and ancestors have that maintained their relationships with the land. Additionally, some families are still able to take youth from the community to their traditional family territories or traplines in order for the youth to spend ‘extended’ periods of time on the land and to participate in projects that are not feasible in shorter periods. For example, Elder William Dysart and his family have spent extended periods of time building and maintaining a log cabin on his trapline (William Dysart, Personal Interview).

Sharing the history of the community with the youth, as well as having them participate directly in many of the activities and games that were a part of the community in the past, helps to support youth learning about their culture, relationships with the land, and orality. Throughout the event, Elders and knowledge holders spend great amounts of time travelling from camp to camp, sitting around fires, drink tea, and discuss the way the community was when people lived on the island. The gathering is a chance to remember old stories, talk about the old objects that are still being unearthed on the island, and commiserate over what was lost and the challenges currently facing the community. Additionally, there is a consistent use of Cree words during the gathering. Although youth may not directly participate in all of these conversations, they are immersed in an event that is supporting and respecting the importance of orality and perpetuates its use among the community.

All throughout the weekend children are heard and seen playing amongst the trees, swimming and boating, and learning to clean and cook “bush food.” At the end of each gathering, the entire island comes together for a feast for which many provide food. Around this feast is also the closing ceremony. The closing provides an opportunity to honour those who made the event and community what it is which mostly includes the Elders and volunteers. However, one of the main “groups” honoured at the closing every year are the parents and grandparents of the children of the event. Honouring the parents and grandparents shows a recognition of the importance of the event for future generations and the appreciation for parents and grandparents taking time out of their schedules to give their children this experience and knowledge. As children continue to be brought to the event they not only get the fun and enjoyment of being outside but also gain knowledge not only about their ancestors and the strength of their relationships with land but also the reasoning behind the struggles the community faces now. Deep theoretical discussions of colonization are unnecessary at *Kewekapawetan* because everyone can see the juxtaposition between life in the community and life at camp. *Kewekapawetan* strengthens everyone who attends by creating and maintaining relationships with the land.

Formation and History of Wa Ni Ska Tan

Recently, in conversations with Elder Noah Massan, we have discussed the recent rise in conversations about the implications of hydropower production. Following the release of the

CEC's report on the Regional Cumulative effects Assessment there has been consistent interest from media, academics, and politicians both from Indigenous and non-Indigenous bodies. As a result, leaders, particularly from Indigenous organizations, have been making trips to and appearances in Fox Lake Cree Nation territory. During some of these events, Noah has been approached by these leaders because they have recognized him from his appearances in news coverage like that done by APTN. These leaders speak with him in recognition of his position as an Elder, knowledge holder, and expert with deep knowledge of the history of Manitoba Hydro's operations in the north. Noah told me of one particular interaction during which a prominent leader for northern Manitoba First Nations came to speak with him. The leader was discussing Hydro and the impacts and Noah told him "*waniskatan*." Roughly translated, this means "wake up" or "let's wake up." He told this leader these impacts have been happening for decades and continue to happen every day. People like Noah have been challenging it all along but they need others to wake up, *waniskatan* (Noah Massan, Personal Interview).

The extreme and devastating "discoveries" from the CEC have helped to wake those outside of the communities to the reality of energy production in the province. Noah's call to "*waniskatan*" requires that those outside the communities and those making decisions must wake up to reality. His call also demands a rising up against the injustice of Hydro through direct action when necessary. It is fitting, then, that an alliance of impacted communities, other Indigenous communities, NGOs, and academics would use this word to lead the charge in their efforts to counter Hydro's narratives and support community-based and community-oriented projects and research.

Wa Ni Ska Tan is a collective of communities impacted by Hydro from both northern and southern Manitoba, non-governmental organizations, and academics who came together in 2013 to discuss the impacts of Hydro, how to counter them, and how to support community efforts to survive and resist the effects ("Wa Ni Ska Tan"). During the first annual meeting, a decision was made by the impacted communities involved to go forward with a recommendation by the academics to apply for a SSHRC Partnership Grant in order to fund the organization, allow for independent community-based research, and fund community projects. However, possibly more important was the decision made following the discussion of the SSHRC Partnership Grant. One of the community members recommended that the organization move forward regardless of the

funding. Many discussed the strength and power the communities had in the 1970s when they worked together as one entity under the Northern Flood Committee banner. The community members discussed the success Manitoba Hydro has had with dividing and conquering the communities and pitting the communities against one another. A decision was made during that meeting that no matter the funding decision, the organization would move forward and Hydro would no longer divide and conquer the *Inniniwak* of northern Manitoba. This decision, an act of sovereignty on its own, established the beginnings of an inter-community awakening.

Wa Ni Ska Tan is an act of Indigenous sovereignty for a multitude of reasons and has contributed to the strength of Indigenous sovereignty in northern Manitoba in the face of Hydro's destruction. Through a combination of deciding to form an inter-community organization to challenge Hydro, supporting research and community projects that support getting people out on the land, and the support of youth camps every summer in different communities, Wa Ni Ska Tan is strengthening relationships with land and supporting Indigenous sovereignty.

As stated earlier, all involved in the first meeting of Wa Ni Ska Tan decided to continue the organization as a means of combating Hydro and preventing the divide and conquer tactics that had worked so well for colonial entities over the past few decades. The decision by community members and leaders to continue participation, form alliances, and support of direct action and other community decisions of resistance was an action of self-determination and Indigenous sovereignty. Although many participants did not represent the "leadership" of their communities or the government of their First Nations, they were acting as leaders and representatives of grassroots entities within their respective communities. For other communities, like Norway House Cree Nation and Pimicikamak, direct involvement was supported by more formalized leaderships ("Government Partners"). These decisions all take a position of Indigenous sovereignty and act upon it.

Support of research and community projects provides both direct means of challenging Hydro in the south as well as providing means by which communities can support people getting out on the land and supporting future generations having experiences on the land and forming relationships with the land. Community projects funding allows communities to decide where they can most effectively support themselves and what projects will most efficiently counter Hydro's destructive impacts on the communities. At a recent annual gathering of Wa Ni Ska Tan,

I was able to participate in a small group discussion of the implications of Hydro on relationships with land, health, and the strength provided by the land. During this conversation, we had some discussions of how Wa Ni Ska Tan and the funding available through the SSHRC Partnership Grant can effectively support community efforts to continue relationships with the land. Many ideas came forward, but a very common theme was the importance of youth camps. This emphasis establishes the importance of including youth and the next generations in any plans or projects to support relationships with the land. This is a theme that has been recognized by the entirety of Wa Ni Ska Tan (“Our Partners”).

Beyond research and community project funding, Wa Ni Ska Tan sponsors two annual events. First and longest running is the annual gathering. This event is meant to bring as many participating groups together as possible for a multi-day set of meeting including updates, future plans, and general greetings and interactions that are difficult to maintain all year (“Annual Gatherings”). The second annual event sponsored by Wa Ni Ska Tan is an annual youth camping trip (“Mission & Goals”). This trip is meant for Indigenous youth from across Manitoba and is held in different communities each year. Through this event, youth from a variety of different communities come together to learn about the land, relationships with land, and the impacts of Hydro. This event helps to make connections between youth from different communities and directly supports relationships with land and Indigenous sovereignty.

Beginning with the establishment of Wa Ni Ska Tan through the decisions on how to use the SSHRC Partnership Grant funding to the continual meeting and dispersal of funds, Wa Ni Ska Tan has been an effective outlet and means of support of Indigenous sovereignty. Through its actions and support of relationships with land, the organization not only acts as a beacon of Indigenous sovereignty but also promotes a future in Manitoba that contains a strong basis of Indigenous sovereignty among today’s youth who are gaining an opportunity to create, maintain, and strengthen their relationships with land. As the organization moves forward, there will be an eventual date at which the SSHRC Partnership Grant ends and the organization will need to decide upon what next steps it hopes to take and how it hopes to move forward in a world that will still involve hydropower production in northern Manitoba. Based upon the decisions made at that very first meeting, I am extremely confident that the organization will continue on indefinitely with the ultimate goal of supporting energy justice in northern Manitoba.

In the spring of 2018 I had the pleasure of attending the annual Wa Ni Ska Tan gathering in Thompson, MB. One of the most powerful aspect of the discussion for me personally was a project put forward in South Indian Lake. In the past, South Indian Lake would have a muskrat camp set up outside of the community. Youth from the school in South Indian Lake would go out to these camps with Elders and land users as a means to learn from them and form their own relationships with the land. Many of the youth that participated were those that struggled in school and were generally considered to be more troubled or facing more challenges than their peers. When discussing this project, Steve Ducharme mentioned that not only did these youth take to the land quickly and greatly enjoy their time on the land, but they also very quickly transitioned from the trouble they expressed in school and within the community to very strong, empowered youth. Camps such as these seem to greatly support youth in the community to form a strong and compassionate identity that can benefit them in other aspects of their lives.

Interestingly, Steve brought this idea forward because the camp project has since stopped running. During its operation, the youth trips to the muskrat camp were financially supported by Manitoba Hydro. In 2013, Manitoba Hydro effectively abandoned most of the projects they had supported in the community. As a result, the muskrat youth camps were not financially possible anymore and the program has not been running since then. As a program, these youth camps provided a strong basis from which Manitoba Hydro and South Indian Lake could work together in an attempt to support future generations despite the destruction of Southern Indian Lake at the hands of Manitoba Hydro (Steve Ducharme, Personal Interview). However, Manitoba Hydro decided to cut funding to the Fisherman's Association, Trappers Association, and Community Association of South Indian Lake (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). Manitoba Hydro's decision to remove funding directly affects the health and well-being of youth in the community and places yet another barrier in their way to creating and maintaining strong relationships with their homeland while also removing an important opportunity for troubled youth to find a foundation upon which to base their identity.

Suicide among status Indigenous peoples, in general, is significantly higher than that of the general Canadian population, however these statistics are a result of some communities having extremely high rates of suicide while others have rates more consistent with the general population (Niezen *Rediscovered* 131-132). As a result, the suicide crisis in Pimicikamak Cree

Nation may be a result of the perception of hopelessness among Pimicikamak youth based on the community's relationship to government and Manitoba Hydro (Niezen *Rediscovered* 137-141). Additionally, Niezen argues, "where the repertoire of life choices is sharply reduced and hope of change is diminished, suffering and suicide can become primary reference points of group belonging" (*Rediscovered* 184). Through the removal of the gathering and hunting way of life as an option and the limited availability of wage labour positions, youth in northern communities are faced with the prospect of having to leave the community or continue in a life with little choice or hope of change. While camps and the ability to interact with the land can help youth overcome challenges they face in their daily lives, decisions that result in their removal as a result of the perception that obligations had been completed can have devastating impacts on the youth.

Protests and Direct Action

Communities have taken direct action at times when change was absolutely necessary and the entities in charge were unwilling to address the problems. These decisions are both acts of resistance against Manitoba Hydro as a result of the many problems it has created within the communities as well as attempts to control the challenges the communities face. McCreary and Turner argue that blockades, which they discuss as use and occupation, are a common approach to the deployment of Indigenous jurisdiction (230-231). They state, "it demonstrates a will to enact a form of Indigenous sovereignty, determining the course of development, deciding which land uses will be permitted and which will not" (231).

One such blockade that included many within the community of Tataskweyak Cree Nation coming together to directly address a problem facing the community was the blockade of PR 280. Provincial Road 280 is the highway that leads from Thompson, MB to Gillam, MB passing near the reserves of Split Lake and Bird. This highway has consistently been one of the worst roads in all of Manitoba ("CAA Manitoba's worst roads list"). After the beginning of construction on the Keeyask Project, PR 280 became even more treacherous to travel upon as not only was the road increasingly deteriorating from the constant heavy equipment transportation that traversed the highway but also the extreme dust clouds present during the summer as a result of these same transportation vehicles. Given the remote nature of Split Lake, many in the community who required special medical attention as well as the Elders who required dialysis

and other medical procedures were forced to travel on this dangerous road to Thompson on a regular basis (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). As such, the community feared for the safety of their Elders and sick relatives who were forced to take their life into their own hands on each trip to Thompson for medical procedures (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Additionally, many people within the community had to travel along this road to do shopping trips to Thompson or Winnipeg to purchase food and other supplies at a more reasonable price. Needless to say, the destruction of this road and the failed maintenance of it was of great importance to the community of Split Lake and the grassroots community members who wished to protect their people.

Based upon these concerns and the understanding that the safety concerns related to the highway were a direct result of the construction of the Keeyask Generating Station, some community members erected a ceremonial tent next to the highway and began the process of blockading the highway (“Protesters Install Blockade”). This blockade was supported by grassroots leaders within the community, youth, and Elders who all demanded the repair of this highway and measures to keep the road in optimal condition to allow for safe travel for all from not only Split Lake but also the Bird reserve as well as Gillam, MB. These safety measures included weight requirements being placed, and consistently checked, upon the heavy equipment transportation of Manitoba Hydro’s construction crews (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). This blockade demanded the respect of government entities that refused to recognize the importance of this highway to the communities as well as Manitoba Hydro to prevent even further needless destruction. Pamphlets and brochures were created for the blockade that discussed the concerns of the community and the demands of the blockade organizers. These brochures included information about the fact that Tataskweyak Cree Nation was given the wrong treaty document at the time of treaty negotiations and that their Elders and experts know that the leaders at the treaty negotiations never ceded their rights to land or their sovereignty (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

It is important to note the nuances of this blockade. Many outside of Indigenous communities and in southern parts of Canada hear about road blockades and misunderstand these actions as an indiscriminate prevention of traffic from travelling along a road or highway. The blockade of PR 280 was not indiscriminate. Instead, the blockade organizers and participants

allowed all personal vehicles through the blockade (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). They did not wish to prevent members of the Fox Lake Cree Nation or residents of Gillam, MB from returning home or travelling to Thompson for their own needs. The blockade was meant to impact commercial activities and focus the attention of the governments whose responsibility it was to maintain this road as well as Manitoba Hydro to the state of the highway and the serious health and safety concerns that its destruction caused. As such, the only vehicles that were truly prevented from passing the blockade at the Split Lake junction were Manitoba Hydro vehicles, transportation vehicles, and any vehicle that was clearly attempting to enter the area to continue construction on the Keeyask Project that would continue the decimation of the highway (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

Ultimately, an agreement was made that placed stipulations on the weight of transportation vehicles that would travel along this highway as well as weighing stations that would enforce this restriction. Additionally, there were promises from both levels of government to invest money and resources into maintaining the road at a higher level to prevent the continued destruction of this vital route (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). Through this direct action and the assertion of rights and sovereignty by grassroots Indigenous leaders within Split Lake and the Tataskweyak Cree Nation, agreements and promises were made that were meant to support the community and prevent unnecessary health and safety challenges for the community. At present, PR 280 is still not an ideal road upon which to travel; however, it is much safer than it was at the beginning of the Keeyask construction process.

There have been other instances within Tataskweyak Cree Nation that have resulted in protests and blockades based upon the failure of Manitoba Hydro and the province of Manitoba sharing in the wealth that is produced by the destruction of the homeland of Tataskweyak Cree Nation. One of the more prominent protests prevented the use of the Band Office and the Keeyask Development Office in Split Lake as a result of the horrible living conditions of some Elders and community members within Split Lake (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

Following the decision to partner with Manitoba Hydro and the other 3 First Nations for the Keeyask Project, the community was deeply embroiled in divisions that resulted from this decision. Manitoba Hydro's supposedly beneficial partnership was creating division both within and between these communities, and Tataskweyak, being the largest of the partner First Nations,

was rife with ‘dissent’ and division (Dipple *Implications of Hydroelectric Partnerships*, 42). One of the prominent reasons the ‘formal’ leadership of Tataskweyak Cree Nation provided for the partnership was that it would provide prosperity and financial benefit for the community to overcome the forced poverty produced by Manitoba Hydro’s previous actions (Manitoba CEC, “8 Oct. 2013” 10-11). Many across northern Manitoba are aware of Manitoba Hydro’s multi-billion dollar revenue from the sale of energy (“Annual Report 2018-2019”). This partnership was meant to see some of the profits gained by Manitoba Hydro and produced in northern Manitoba be returned to the communities that have been sacrificed for this profit. However, as the partnership was beginning and promises of benefit were being discussed, the reality for many within the community was ‘business as usual’ and no beneficial change within the community.

At this same time, it became public knowledge within the community that some Elders in the community were living in houses that should be condemned. The houses were infested with insects, contaminated with e. coli, and were extreme health hazards (Robert Spence, Personal Interview; “Split Lake Protest”). Grassroots leadership within the community took steps to help these Elders and community members and attempted to also support others within the community who were living in overcrowded housing. However, there was a perception throughout the community that the ‘formal’ leadership was not doing anything to support these people and that many in those positions were not spending enough time in the community to be aware of challenges through which their people were suffering (“Split Lake Protest”). Ultimately, these realities within the community resulted in a barricading of the band office and the Keeyask Development Office. These protests not only attempted to support community members living in difficult and hazardous situations but also demanded some level of support for the community from their new ‘partners.’

Following the creation of the partnership and the beginning of the construction project, two prominent grassroots leaders within Tataskweyak Cree Nation released a powerful article. Robert Spence and Ivan Keeper challenged Manitoba Hydro’s claim to having “all necessary licensing” for the construction of the Bipole 3 transmission line (Keeper & Spence). They effectively argued that they did not have the necessary ‘licensing’ or permission from the Tataskweyak Cree Nation and those who defend and protect the land (Keeper & Spence). This article came on the heels of resistance from a few within the community to the construction of

the Bipole 3 transmission corridor, a group of individuals including the two who wrote this article.

Bipole 3 has been a consistently contentious project throughout the province. The provincial government and Manitoba Hydro board that supported the Keeyask and Bipole 3 projects created a plan that would include diverting the Bipole 3 transmission line across northern Manitoba and down the western edge of the province to then wrap around and end near Winnipeg (“Bipole III Route”). There are varying arguments as to why this decision was made but one prominent possible reason was the application for the Pimachiowin Aki area to be considered a UNESCO World Heritage site, an application that the NDP government of the time eventually supported (Lambert). This acknowledgement of the boreal forest in Manitoba and Ontario as a UNESCO world heritage site is immensely important for the people of Poplar River First Nation and was a result of many years of hard work from the community (Pawlowska-Mainville). Pawlowska-Mainville discusses the unique approach taken to this process when she states, “by using an international organization for local purposes, Poplar River First Nation is being innovative in safeguarding their land so that future generations of their people can continue to live the land-based life they do. Their initiative is precedent-setting and other communities and First Nations already refer to this as a form of Anishinaabeg self-determination” (1). Further, Pawlowska-Mainville discusses the connections to and cultural importance of the land when she states,

undoubtedly, this is not a ‘pristine’ wilderness in the sense that it is unoccupied: every nook and cranny has been named, has a narrative or cultural significance; the ‘bush’ is overlain with cabins, trap lines, ancient burial sites, trails, hunting grounds, fishing camps, berry picking fields, sacred sites: places of prayer and of play. The terrain is also symbolically covered in individual memories-like Byron’s above, in collective histories and in names. Numerous culturally significant locations exist, most notably for Poplar River, the nearby Weaver Lake, where healing and culture camps are held every year. This special site, while also used to revive and teach the youth traditions and practices, is also a site of sharing the pain from residential schools and a meeting spot. (34)

The decision to support this application and not destroy the forest is important and should be commended; however, it is also important to acknowledge that Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba decided to instead destroy a different tract of land. In many ways, this

shows the “two-faced” approach the Manitoba government has taken in relation to concerns by Indigenous peoples throughout the province, publicly supporting an important UNESCO World Heritage application in one area and perpetuating arguably unnecessary destruction in another. Ultimately, this decision raised the ire of many different sections of Manitoba society and placed Manitoba Hydro on the defensive.

Bipole 3 is also contentious within Tataskweyak Cree Nation. Bipole 3 is not part of the partnership agreement for Keeyask and when the community rejected the proposed Agreement in Principle for the Bipole 3 project Manitoba Hydro pulled any work contracts that had been promised to Tataskweyak Cree Nation (Keeper & Spence). The transmission corridor would cut through large swaths of forest throughout the Split Lake Resource Management Area and was seen as an unnecessary project in the eyes of many within the community (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

Based upon these multiple reasons for distrust within the community, a few grassroots members decided to prevent the construction of the Bipole 3 project until further discussions could be had with Manitoba Hydro (Keeper & Spence). As construction crews built roads into the bush, these few community members began the process of actively opposing the construction. Throughout the day, these individuals would travel from one in-road to the next, blockading the road and preventing the construction crews from completing their work on a project that was not supported by nor beneficial to the community (Robert Spence, Personal Interview).

This discussion shows the continued relevance of the Bipole 3 line and the continued dislike and distrust of this project and Manitoba Hydro as an entity. The community does not want Bipole 3, so much so that the grassroots leadership, some of whom are now recognized as ‘formal’ leadership, were willing to place themselves in the way of construction. Despite the project being completed, many are still concerned about it. Opposition is still present, even if there is no ongoing construction which people can blockade.

Indigenous communities across northern Manitoba have consistently attempted to protect the land and defend their rights in opposition to both governmental entities and industrial organizations. One community that has regularly led by example in their opposition in the north has been Pimicikamak. As one of the larger communities in the north, Pimicikamak was one of

the original signatories to Treaty 5 in 1875, was a major member of the Northern Flood Committee, and a signatory to the Northern Flood Agreement (“Pimicikamak”; Waldram, *River Runs* 147). Throughout the decades since the creation of the Northern Flood Agreement, Pimicikamak has pressured both levels of government as well as Manitoba Hydro to implement the promises laid out in the Northern Flood Agreement (Kulchyski, *Aboriginal Rights* 134). Additionally, in an act of Indigenous sovereignty, the community of Cross Lake re-created their traditional government structures in order to follow more traditional laws and to act out their sovereignty in opposition to the attempts of the federal government to determine how they would govern themselves (“Nature & Legal Capacity”). Their four council system creates a culturally appropriate form of leadership that includes an Elders’ Council, Youth Council, Women’s Council, and Executive Council (“Governance Structure”). These steps have allowed Pimicikamak not only to act out their sovereignty in a culturally appropriate and empowering way, but also creates balance that can prevent the possibility of outside governments or entities from gaining power in the community through attempts at control over leadership. These actions are taken, in some instances, in direct opposition to the federal government. There is a story prominent in Pimicikamak territory of an interaction between one of the community leaders and the federal government. During a phone meeting, the federal government made a recommendation. The leader stated he would have to take it back to his four councils for approval before he could sign off of the agreement. The federal government official said something along the lines of, “you know, we don’t recognize your four council government.” Without missing a beat, the leader responded with, “That’s ok, we don’t recognize your government either” (Peter Kulchyski, Personal Interview). The sovereignty and power shown by Pimicikamak in the face of colonial authorities attempting to undermine and control them is empowering. The leadership and community as a whole have stood in opposition to colonial attempts at control for decades and they seem to be poised to continue this position.

Through the strength shown by their acts of sovereignty in the face of oppression, Pimicikamak has been able to effectively counter Manitoba Hydro through multiple actions over the past few decades. Pimicikamak has challenged Manitoba Hydro in order to gain the promises that were made to them in the Northern Flood Agreement, which is now recognized as a modern day treaty (Kulchyski, “A Step Back” 134). One of the most prominent forms of

resistance Pimicikamak has accomplished is their refusal to sign a Comprehensive Implementation Agreement. Following decades of unfulfilled promises, some of the signatory communities of the Northern Flood Agreement agreed to Implementation Agreements (Newman 47). These agreements were effectively one-time buyouts of all of the promises made in the Northern Flood Agreement (Kulchyski, “A Step Back” 134). Despite 4 of the 5 signatory communities signing on to these agreements in the 1990s, Pimicikamak has been able to resist these attempts and has continued to demand the fulfillment of promises that were made in the Northern Flood Agreement (Kulchyski, *Aboriginal Rights* 134).

In 2014, Rita Monias, a grassroots leader from Pimicikamak, decided to “make tea on her territory” and built a fire and camp on the Jenpeg golf course (Peter Kulchyski, Personal Interview). The people of Pimicikamak decided that their decades of attempts at agreements had failed. Many within the community believed it was time to make their demands heard by Manitoba Hydro. In a combined effort by many within Pimicikamak, the community made a march upon the Jenpeg Generating Station and Control Structure to ‘re-occupy’ their territory (“Manitoba Hydro Evicted”). Hundreds of people from the community marched on the dam and evicted the Hydro workers who were present at the generating station. Through months of protests both in northern Manitoba surrounding Jenpeg as well as in the south with solidarity movements the people of Pimicikamak were able to be recognized for the suffering they had endured at the hands of both levels of government and Manitoba Hydro (“Manitoba First Nation to get Apology”). One of the larger events in the south included a march on the Manitoba Hydro building in downtown Winnipeg that included bus-loads of people who travelled all the way from Cross Lake, a trip of approximately 770 km, to participate in the march. The community requested a formal apology from the Premier of the province as well as new negotiations to begin the implementation of the Northern Flood Agreement. Through strength and perseverance, the community was able to obtain these promises, with former Premier Greg Selinger providing a formal apology to the people of Pimicikamak as well as doing an ‘apology tour’ to multiple other communities in the north in an attempt to make amends for the history of Manitoba Hydro’s operations in the north (“Manitoba First Nation to get Apology”).

On World Water Day in 2018, a large gathering took place in Winnipeg to “Dispel the myths of Hydro in Manitoba” (“2018 World Water Day”). This event included Indigenous

peoples both from the north and south, non-governmental organizations, the Wa Ni Ska Tan Alliance that has been mentioned multiple times in this work, and grassroots organizations from both Winnipeg and other areas in the province. This act was taken as a sign of solidarity with hydro-impacted communities with particular recognition being placed upon communities in the north of the province (“2018 World Water Day”). Over 150 people gathered at/outside the Manitoba Hydro Building in downtown Winnipeg to meet and discuss the implications of hydropower production in Manitoba. Together, the group marched from there to the Circle of Life Thunderbird House for a speaking event that included five Indigenous voices, the majority of whom were from northern Manitoba (“2018 World Water Day”). Leslie Dysart from South Indian Lake, Carol Kobliski from Nelson House, Rita Monias from Cross Lake, the late Elmer Courchene from Sagkeeng, and Gerald McKay from Grand Rapids discussed the experiences they have had with Manitoba Hydro’s operations (“2018 World Water Day”). They gave in-depth information about the operation of Manitoba Hydro’s generating stations and diversion, the social and environmental impacts of Manitoba Hydro’s decisions, and the trauma they have experienced at the hands of the Crown corporation.

This event was organized and supported by multiple organizations but the most prominent organizing groups were the Manitoba Energy Justice Coalition and the Wa Ni Ska Tan Alliance (“2018 World Water Day”). The event included a wide range of people, many of whom have had vastly different experiences with Manitoba Hydro and energy in general. The walk helped to raise attention in the south to the implications of ‘flipping the light switch’ in their houses and the importance of recognizing and attempting to rectify the relationship our energy has with Indigenous communities of the north. As a march and awareness raising event in and of itself, this gathering and walk was a means of resistance.

Very shortly before the gathering and walk was set to take place, an announcement was made by the Manitoba Hydro Electric Board. The entire board, with the exception of the one Progressive Conservative MLA on the board, resigned as a result of inability to work with the provincial government and the impossibility they experienced in getting meetings with Premier Brian Pallister (Geary). Obviously, this change was emphasized at the water walk as it brought up questions about what the next steps would be for Manitoba Hydro, would there be any

northern Indigenous representation on the board, and how would the new board interact with Indigenous communities that are continually impacted by their operation.

Practising Culture and Political Confrontation

Throughout this chapter, I've discussed both land-based, mutually beneficial acts of resistance and resurgence through the continual creation and maintenance of relationships with the land in northern Manitoba as well as the direct action approaches to making the voices of the north, both those who can and cannot speak for themselves, heard in the south. As Arthur Manuel and Ronald Derrickson so eloquently state, "in the struggle to protect the land, Indigenous peoples are the first and last line of defence" (180). Direct action has been an effective means of forcing Manitoba Hydro and state agents in the south to address the results of their colonial actions in the north, as shown in the cases of the (Re)Occupation of the Jenpeg Generating Station, the multitude of blockades on PR 280, and the presence of and actions taken by Wa Ni Ska Tan. Again, Arthur Manuel and Ronald Derrickson provide strong support for these direct actions when they state,

After decades of waiting, of engaging in process, of losing rather than gaining ground, it is clear that to kick-start true negotiations, we will have to signal our seriousness. This signal of peacefully exercising our rights, of refusing to sit at the back of the economic bus, of ceasing to stand by while our Aboriginal title lands are wantonly destroyed by unsustainable development will send a powerful message to the Crown, to the people of Canada, and to international investors" (220).

While direct action has and continues to be an effective means of addressing the past, present, and future colonial actions of corporations like Manitoba Hydro and government entities like the government of Manitoba, practising culture provides a fundamentally important point from which these movements are based. When discussing self-determination, Coulthard argues,

I would suggest that one of the negative effects of this power-laden process of discursive translation has been a reorientation of the meaning of self-determination of many (but not all) Indigenous people in the North; a reorientation of Indigenous struggle from one that was once deeply *informed* by the land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations (grounded normativity), which in turn informed our critique of capitalism in the period examined above, to a struggle that is now increasingly *for* land, understood now as material resource to be

exploited in the capital accumulation process (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 78).

Relationships with land and grounded normativity as Coulthard discusses it fundamentally inform a decolonizing process that is completed in a meaningful way. As part of his theses on decolonization and Indigenous resurgence, Coulthard discusses the importance of emphasizing Indigenous alternatives to capitalism (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 170-173). I would argue communities like South Indian Lake and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation are providing this exact approach to decolonization through the formation and maintenance of events like *Kewekapawetan*, programs like the *Ithinto Mechisowin* Program, and community-based support like the purchasing of travel equipment in Tataskweyak Cree Nation. These events and programs contribute not only to the relationships necessary for grounded normativity but also provide alternatives to capitalism.

Grounding decolonization and direct actions against colonial entities in relationships with land has a long history in northern Manitoba that continues to this day. Direct action and practicing culture in northern Manitoba are integrally connected through the destruction created by Manitoba Hydro. As many in northern Manitoba have indicated, it is important to provide youth the opportunity to create and maintain relationships with the land (Robert Spence, Personal Interview; Steve Ducharme, Personal Interview; Hilda Dysart, Personal Interview). As Ronald Derrickson argues, “the value of our land is not only what we use it for today but also the uses that our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will put it to” (231). As colonial organizations continue to see the value of land as only that which can be produced from the exploitation of natural resources, knowledge-holders, Elders, resource-users, and many other Indigenous peoples in northern Manitoba, and across Canada, will continue to counter this exploitation from positions grounded in relationships with land.

Conclusion:

Despite the challenges facing relationships with the land in northern Manitoba, Elders, experts, land-users, and knowledge-holders are supporting Indigenous sovereignty not only through direct action against colonial and destructive decisions made by Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba but are also strengthening it through their continued relationships with the land. Supporting youth creating and maintaining their own relationships with the land further

bolsters Indigenous sovereignty and helps to establish a future generation that may work to defend the land and ‘speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.’ As Pasternak argues, “identifying and respecting” Indigenous jurisdiction is decolonizing as it challenges state claims to being the sole legal order over this territory and country (147). Through the continuation of these relationships, a refusal to accept this idea of the state as sole legal order, and direct action *Inniniwak* communities in northern Manitoba are continuing decolonization and strengthening Indigenous sovereignty.

Throughout this work, I have argued that relationships with the land are a fundamental aspect of Indigenous (in this case *Inniniwak*) sovereignty and that the destruction of the land by entities like Manitoba Hydro fundamentally challenges these relationships and, ultimately, undermines Indigenous sovereignty. I will further discuss these arguments in the conclusion while also providing recommendations based upon the research and work I have completed for this thesis. I cannot, nor would I want to, provide recommendations to the *Inniniwak* people with whom I have worked throughout these years as they have shown great resilience against the vast and powerful forces of colonization that have faced them. Instead, my recommendations are directed towards Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba to provide some suggestions as to how they can work towards new relationships in an era of reconciliation that goes beyond what they are currently doing. I am by no means an expert that can definitively state the best approach to reconciliation, but these recommendations are based upon what has been shared with me by *Inniniwak* Elders and experts who seem to be regularly discounted by large organizations despite having an immensity of knowledge that could greatly influence the relationships between Manitoba Hydro and *Inniniwak* communities in the north as well as between Manitoba Hydro and the other-than-human entities and the land in the north.

Conclusion

It is important to note that when we speak of rebuilding Indigenous societies and Indigenous economies, we are not seeking to join the multinationals on Wall Street or Bay Street as junior partners, but to win back the tools to build our own societies that are consistent with our culture and values. Our goal is not simply to replace Settler Resource Inc. with Indigenous Resource Inc. Instead we are interested in building true Indigenous economies that begin and end with our unique relationship to the land. (Manuel & Derrickson 10-11)

Throughout this work, I argued that Indigenous sovereignty is, at least in part, based upon and intricately connected with relationship with the land. The structure of Indigenous sovereignty is firmly placed upon multiple foundations, with relationship with the land being a prominent and solid foundation. However, the destruction of the land and attempts by Manitoba Hydro, among other colonial actors, to replace the bush mode of production and way of life with capitalist, wage-labour-based ways of living is eroding and undermining this foundation of Indigenous sovereignty. Despite these attempts, land-users, Elders, and knowledge-holders are resisting colonial assaults on Indigenous sovereignty through their continued connections to the land and the creation, maintenance, and re-creation of relationships with the land. Through their efforts to support youth creating and maintaining these relationships as well, they are establishing a future for Indigenous sovereignty that is supported by a solid, grounded foundation of relationship with the land.

At the beginning of this work, I reviewed and addressed the varying discussions surrounding the concept of sovereignty. Through a review of the works of Nadasdy, Coulthard, Leanne Simpson, Alfred, Lightfoot, and others, I argued that sovereignty as a concept can be indigenized and that a prominent basis upon which Indigenous sovereignty is founded is relationship with land. In this chapter I acknowledged the clear and present challenges to state-oriented understandings of sovereignty and instead promoted the perspective that sovereignty, as a socially constructed concept, can be redefined in a way that recognizes and supports Indigenous perspectives. Further, I argued that relationship with land is intricately connected to Indigenous sovereignty through discussions of the importance of patience as an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of others, the connection between land and identity in

Inniniwak culture, and the importance of Indigenous knowledge being considered expert. These connections ultimately show that Indigenous sovereignty is inherently grounded in relationship with land and requires a fundamentally different understanding of the concept of sovereignty than what is put forward by Western, state-oriented concepts. While I have discussed some Indigenous concepts, including *oochinehwin* in relation to my discussions of sovereignty, I am not a fluent *Inniniwak* speaker and as such do not know what terms may relate to *Inniniwak* concepts of sovereignty.

Following this, I delved into what I understand, based upon my time in northern Manitoba and working with *Inniniwak* people, to be the importance of the land to *Inniniwak* culture as well as Indigenous sovereignty as a concept. Through discussions of misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples, the bush mode of production, my experiences on the land with *Inniniwak* Elders and experts, and stories told to me by these experts I emphasized the immense importance that relationship with land has on *Inniniwak* culture and the ways in which it not only provides a strong basis of identity and strength but also provides a description of community acts of sovereignty that counter colonial acts. Additionally, I put forward what I have termed “oppositional sovereignty” which I consider to be the deployment of sovereignty by Indigenous leaders not based in colonial understandings of sovereignty but instead based in an Indigenous understanding of sovereignty and as a form of opposition against the deployment of sovereignty by colonial entities. While this term is beneficial in discussing how sovereignty has been and is deployed by some leadership, important future research should look to the specific terms that relate to or equate to sovereignty within different Indigenous languages. While I argue that relationships with the land are one strong and fundamental foundation of Indigenous sovereignty, I also believe there are other important foundations integrally connected with relationships with the land to support Indigenous sovereignty. Despite my experiences in the north, I am not an expert on *Inniniwak* sovereignty and cannot claim to know what all of these foundations are. However, through the discussion of the interconnected nature of language, identity, knowledge systems, and land, I argue the foundations of Indigenous sovereignty are connected to each other which provides increased strength to the concept of Indigenous sovereignty. Further study should be done on what other concepts are fundamental to *Inniniwak* sovereignty.

When reviewing Indigenous sovereignty in northern Manitoba, it is necessary to also review the history of Manitoba Hydro and its operations in the north. I followed my discussions of the importance of the land in northern Manitoba to *Inniniwak* people by discussing the relationship of Manitoba Hydro with the land and with *Inniniwak* people as a result of its relationship with land. Throughout this chapter, I discussed the environmental destruction that has taken place in northern Manitoba, both by Manitoba Hydro and other entities, as well as the ways in which different projects, including the Churchill River Diversion and Lake Winnipeg Regulation projects, have impacted different *Inniniwak* communities in different ways. Beyond environmental destruction, I also reviewed the ways in which Manitoba Hydro has impacted *Inniniwak* people both directly and indirectly, with particular emphasis being placed upon the ways in which Manitoba Hydro's construction and operation of generating stations in northern Manitoba have impacted *Inniniwak* women. As I mentioned early in this work, my experience as a cis-gendered heterosexual male has impacted my understanding of these interactions and limited not only my ability to understand by also my access to information. As such, this is an immensely important area that requires significant further study. Finally, I connected the approaches taken by Manitoba Hydro in relation to Indigenous peoples of the past with their interactions with Indigenous peoples today. I reviewed the divide and conquer tactics that were explicitly employed in the past and argue that those same tactics, though altered to be more acceptable by contemporary standards, are still the basis of their relationships with Indigenous communities. This discussion begs that question of how Manitoba Hydro can continue to produce energy for the province of Manitoba, as well as for export, without destroying the north and fundamentally undermining the *Inniniwak* way of life and bush mode of production. When discussing this topic with others, there is nearly always an individual who points out that energy needs to be produced somehow as electricity is necessary for contemporary society. Through reviewing the destruction that has happened in the north, I hope to have shown that the way energy has been and continues to be produced in Manitoba has caused a "sacrifice" of *Inniniwak* people in northern Manitoba for the benefit of southern Manitoba and the profits of Manitoba Hydro. When considering the future of energy production in the province, it is necessary that we must consider not only how much the production will cost financially or what the challenges are

of one approach over another but also what the real, human, ecological, and cultural costs of energy production truly are.

Based upon my discussion of Manitoba Hydro's destruction of the environment combined with their relationships with Indigenous peoples, I provided a review of some of the ways in which Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba have deployed a recognition politics based discourse to convey the understanding that they are attempting to follow a path of reconciliation. Through the deployment of arguments made by Glen Coulthard, I argued that Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba fail to truly support Indigenous communities as a result of their failure to provide serious and large-scale changes that support *Inniniwak* communities affected by hydroelectricity. Further, I dissected the formal apology made by former Premier Greg Selinger to Pimicikamak, as well as other *Inniniwak* communities in northern Manitoba, and argued that the wording put forward in the apology firmly plants the atrocities perpetuated by Manitoba in the past while painting a beautiful picture of future partnerships between Manitoba Hydro and Indigenous peoples. Considering the use of recognition politics, particularly in relation to the production of energy, we are able to recognize the ways in which colonial entities are attempting to convey the idea to progress, non-Indigenous people that projects are supportive and helpful to Indigenous peoples rather than destroying their ways of life. We must acknowledge that apologies made by politicians that firmly plant pain, suffering, and destruction of Indigenous ways of life in the past do not support a progressive understanding of reconciliation. We must challenge all such apologies and push for more progressive approaches to relationships with Indigenous peoples that consider contemporary harm rather than solely historical trauma.

Based upon the challenges I laid out in my discussion of recognition politics as it is deployed in Manitoba, I reviewed the processes and stipulations of environmental decision-making within the province and the ways in which it superficially acknowledges Indigenous knowledge while simultaneously suffering from serious issues that prevent true participation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples. Through both first-hand experience and a review of hearing transcripts, I provided a review the ways in which Indigenous peoples have and continue to participate in Clean Environment Commission, Public Utilities Board, and National Energy Board hearings while I simultaneously showed the immense hurdles they are forced to overcome

and the seemingly little impact their expert knowledge has on the processes. This discussion is based in an understanding that treaties require collaborative and equal power relations that are unseen in this province. In order for Indigenous and Western knowledges to effectively work together to provide thorough environmental review processes, it is necessary that the strengths of each set of systems are recognized and work together, in a collaborative and truly equal way, to more fully understand the implications of any proposed project. Inclusion that does not seem to truly treat Indigenous knowledges as equal, like that present in the two-track approach, is doomed to fail as a result of the privileged position of Western science. Equal treatment of Indigenous knowledges with Western knowledges is required by the Supreme Court in relation to Aboriginal and Treaty rights (Supreme Court of Canada, *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*). Alternative systems that recognize the long-term, deeply-connected knowledge held by Indigenous experts as equal to, if not greater than, that held by scientists can guide research in a way that show more accurate short and long-term impacts. Additionally, Western scientific research that is guided by Indigenous experts can allow for a more robust study that may find unexpected impacts and result in a more thorough and nuanced mitigation system.

Finally, I ended this discussion on a review of the many ways in which *Inniniwak* Elders, knowledge-holders, and experts continue to challenge the narratives and actions of Manitoba Hydro in order to support and strengthen their communities. I argued that the very action of forming and maintaining relationship with land is an act of resistance as it strengthens Indigenous sovereignty and supports grounded normativity. Through these relationships and the processes of supporting youth in their forming and maintaining of relationships, *Inniniwak* people are empowering their own sovereignty and creating a new generation of people who will be able to fight for their communities and land against the colonial actions of entities like Manitoba Hydro. Direct action, creation and maintenance of relationships with the land, and supporting youth forming their own relationships with the land follow the description put forward by Coulthard of Indigenous resurgence (*Red Skin, White Masks*, 154). As communities come together to ‘speak for those who cannot speak for themselves’ and continue to challenge the narratives put forward by Manitoba Hydro surrounding clean, renewable energy, Indigenous sovereignty is strengthened and future generations have opportunities to carry that sovereignty into the future.

Continual efforts by Indigenous leadership, both formally recognized and grassroots, to support relationships with the land and simultaneously counter Manitoba Hydro's narratives in the south and efforts to construct more generating stations in the north shows the strength that is gained from relationship with the land. A powerful way forward for communities impacted by Manitoba Hydro's operations is exemplified by Tataskweyak Cree Nation's efforts. During my visits with Robert Spence, he emphasized the importance of new efforts by the band council to purchase more snowmobiles, trapping equipment, a floatplane, and construction equipment for the creation of more community 'owned' and operated campsites (Personal Interview). These projects use community funding to remove barriers for band members to get out on the land and maintain their relationships. Efforts such as these, although perhaps not consciously, are acts of resistance against Manitoba Hydro, as they remove barriers that were not present in the past but have been created as a result of Manitoba Hydro's operations in the territory.

Indigenous communities are providing some recommendations for Manitoba Hydro, the government of Manitoba, and regulatory bodies in the south that make decisions about and for Indigenous communities in the north. Through a combined effort of truly and effectively gaining free, prior, and informed consent, making increased efforts to acknowledge and give weight to the expert knowledge of Indigenous peoples, and through decisions to implement high standards of Indigenous rights, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, there is a chance Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba can actually enter into a new era of relationships with Indigenous peoples in the north. However, there will need to be some fundamental changes to the way the Crown and its actors operate to meet these requirements.

First and foremost, it is important for Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government to truly and effectively implement high-level standards in their interactions with Indigenous communities including, but not limited to, implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The province of Manitoba has created the Path to Reconciliation Act which asserts that the government will be "committed to reconciliation and will be guided by the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (Manitoba Legislative Assembly, "The Path to Reconciliation Act"). This legislation is a strong

step forward, however its use of the phrase “guided by” does not necessarily meet the recommendation of fully implementing the UNDRIP. Although there is some language in the UNDRIP that undermines some of its higher goals, it is nonetheless an important document to consider as a minimum standard for interactions with Indigenous peoples (Lightfoot 35-37). Including concepts of free, prior, and informed consent, UNDRIP implementation as a minimum with goals to stride for better inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and voices in discussions surrounding hydropower production as well as decision-making power being positioned within impacted communities creates a situation in which Manitoba Hydro may be able to effectively argue they have established a “new era” of relationships with impacted communities.

Connected to the implementation of the UNDRIP, Manitoba Hydro and the Crown need to adopt free, prior, and informed consent and work towards this goal in a way that does not undermine Indigenous sovereignty. During discussions with other scholars and some representatives of Manitoba Hydro, I was told Manitoba Hydro cannot “negotiate with dissidents.” While this may technically be true, as it may be considered undermining the position of formal leadership in the community, the goal should be to gain the consent of those who are most resistant to the project. In an era of reconciliation and supposed nation-to-nation agreements with Indigenous peoples, it is important to obtain consent from those who are most critical as it will guarantee the best possible outcomes for the communities with whom the Crown and its actors wish to work. Additionally, consent and consultation cannot be pursued using colonial definitions of these terms. Instead, consent and consultation must be accomplished through a view that recognizes Indigenous perspectives of these concepts.

In addition to gaining free, prior, and informed consent from those most against these projects, it is also important to gain this form of consent with the most progressive definition possible. In order to accomplish this, it is important to not only consider consent in regards to current projects with current impacts and mitigation. Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government must consider the past implications of their operations in the north when considering free, prior, and informed consent for ongoing operations and all future projects. As I have mentioned earlier, there were feelings in Tataskweyak Cree Nation, as well as other communities, of having a “gun to our heads” during the vote on the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (Robert Spence, Personal Interview). This feeling, while possibly not explicitly

created by Manitoba Hydro in regards to Keeyask, was present at least in part as a result of the history of hydropower production in northern Manitoba. This creates a serious barrier for Manitoba Hydro if they wish to gain free, prior, and informed consent because they must overcome the history of distrust and hatred they have established.

Connected with gaining free, prior, and informed consent is the necessity of recognizing Elders and knowledge-holders as qualified experts. Manitoba Hydro's two-track approach, and for that matter the entire environmental review process, claims to give weight to Indigenous knowledges (Manitoba CEC, "23 Oct. 2013" 459). However, the barriers established to participating in the environmental reviews (Foth) and the failure to truly recognize Elders and knowledge-holders as experts prevents Indigenous knowledge from being considered in environmental reviews. Elders throughout the north have told me stories about the destruction caused by past generating stations and promises made by Manitoba Hydro. Many of the discussions with experts from Manitoba Hydro have proven to be incorrect and promises remain unfulfilled. Failures like that shown in the spring of 2017 when Manitoba Hydro experts failed to account for snow and ice melt resulting in the flooding of not only Southern Indian Lake but the entirety of the Churchill River shows the extremity of disaster caused by mistakes of Manitoba Hydro's experts (Les Dysart, Personal Interview). Knowledge held by expert Indigenous knowledge-holders, when given equal or greater consideration than outside experts, can provide a much higher standard of environmental consideration and mitigation and can prevent serious catastrophes as a result of outside experts making decisions that impact the north (Craft, "Two-Track Approach" 338-341). As a side note, Indigenous experts should not only be recognized as experts but should also be compensated as experts. The amount of money that is spent on southern experts could be put to far better use by being paid to Indigenous experts to provide their information. This would be one very prominent way of showing true respect and consideration for Indigenous experts.

In addition to these recommendations, I also argue Manitoba Hydro needs to expand its scope for all past, present, and future generating stations to the entire watershed within which it is attempting to work, rather than merely the "footprint" of the generating station. Communities like South Indian Lake expect serious impacts from downstream projects like the Keeyask Project, yet they are not included in any of the decision-making or so-called partnership

agreements (Kamal et al. “The Augmented Flow Program” 77-79). Mitigation efforts for Southern Indian Lake are minimal and Manitoba Hydro’s failure to consider upstream communities perpetuates the “divide and conquer” tactics of colonization. This recommendation is not merely for Manitoba Hydro, but instead is directed also at the Clean Environment Commission of Manitoba as well as the provincial and federal governments in their considerations of hydropower production both within Manitoba and in other provinces. The veins and arteries of Mother Earth are very much interconnected and the decision to dam one river or lake has wide ranging implications for all of the other lakes and rivers that are connected to it both immediately and more distantly.

Through the continued efforts of grassroots Indigenous leadership, Elders, and knowledge-holders, Manitoba Hydro will continue to be held accountable for the decisions they make and the destruction they cause. Despite the vast and wide-ranging challenges facing these leaders, they will continue to form relationships with the land and support youth in their efforts to create relationships that will survive into the future. As this happens, Indigenous sovereignty in northern Manitoba will continue and be strengthened through these relationships and through direct and indirect acts of resistance.

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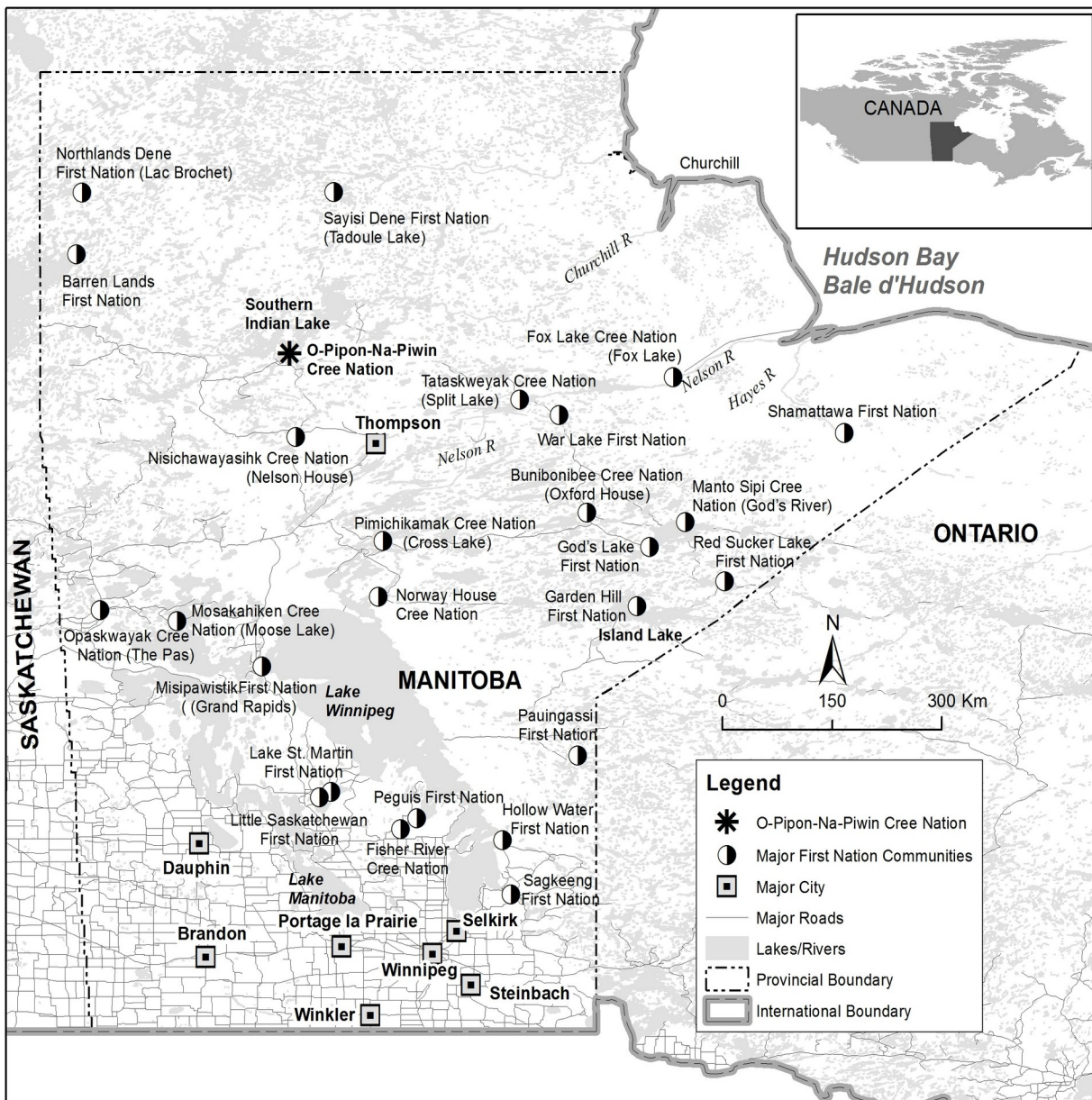
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Appendix A:



Kamal, Asfia Gulrukh and Ithinto Mechisowin Program Committee, “Cultivating Resurgence from the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Lens: A Case Study from Northern Manitoba.” *Indigenous Food Systems: Concepts, Cases, and Conversations*, edited by Priscilla Settee and Shailesh Shukla, Canadian Scholars, 2020, pp. 119-134.

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Appendix B:



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Department of Native Studies

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Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-9266
Fax (204) 474-7657

Information and Consent Form

Study Name:

Principal Investigator: Joseph Dipple, Native Studies, Ph.D Graduate Student

Research Supervisor: Dr. Peter Kulchyski, Professor, Native Studies

Description of Project:

This research will examine the implications of hydroelectric power production on the sovereignty of Cree communities in Northern Manitoba. We are interested in the Cree experience of changes caused by construction of generating stations and this is why we wish to speak with you. This data will be used for the Principal Investigator's Ph.D dissertation. Interviews will take approximately one hour, however if you wish to speak longer, the Principal Investigator will be happy to continue the interview. You may withdraw from this study at any point in time, with no repercussions, by corresponding with the Principal Investigator or Research Supervisor using the contact information above. If you wish to receive a summary of the findings, your interview recording and transcript, or the completed Ph.D dissertation, please contact the Principal Investigator using the contact information above. You may use the recorded interviews you receive in any way you see fit. The withdrawal date for any interviews in this study is April, 2019.

☐ Full Anonymity (No name in dissertation) ☐ Partial Attribution (First name in dissertation)
☐ Full Attribution (First and last name in dissertation)

If you have any questions regarding the ethical approval of this project, you may contact the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Review Board at:

Margret (Maggie) Bowman
Human Ethics Coordinator

Statement of Informant Rights:

I have been fully informed of the objectives of the project being conducted. I understand these objectives and consent to being interviewed for the project. I understand that steps will be taken to ensure that this interview will remain confidential unless I consent to being identified. I also understand that if I wish to withdraw from the study, I may do so without any repercussions. All data that I provide will be withdrawn at my request.

This interview will be conducted face to face and will be audio recorded, with consent. The interview will be confidential unless you agree that what you say can be quoted and identified with your name in anything the researchers may write. You may change your mind at any time before April of 2019 by notifying the researchers.

- 1) I agree to participate in this project having my response/s *and full name* published in Joseph Dipple's dissertation.**

Print name:

Signature:

- 2) I agree to participate in this project having my response/s published in Joseph Dipple's dissertation, but *my full name is to remain anonymous*.**

Print name:

Signature:

- 3) I agree to participate in this project having my response/s published in Joseph Dipple's dissertation using *only my first name*.**

Print Name:

Signature:

4) I agree to be video recorded for the purpose of recording information in my own words. I understand that, at my request, these video interviews may be used in any ways I see fit.

Print name:

Signature:

***NOTE:** Age, background and occupation of participants may be published with their response/s to provide some evidence of research but this information will only consist of a general occupational term, how long the participant has lived in the community, and other basic information; information obtained and published will not make those participants requesting anonymity identifiable.