

Failed Partnership to Future Partnership: An Examination of Social Impacts
Moving from Institutional Failure to Partner with Indigenous Communities to a
New Model of Partnership

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Acknowledgement of Treaty Territory and Positionality

I acknowledge that I reside and work on treaty 1 and treaty 5 territory, the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg (Ojibway), Muskeko-ininiwak (Cree), Dakota and Nakota peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation. As a settler descendant I acknowledge the continuation of modern colonial barriers First Nations continue to face, and am consciously aware of the white privilege I carry. I commit myself to building reciprocal partnerships and alliances to further the growth of the Indigenous perspective in historical source. I come to this research and work with anticolonial, anti-racist world views and commit myself to furthering my own personal growth and understanding of Indigenous methodology and world views through continual alliance with each Nation I am fortunate to partner with.

My early upbringing through inner city volunteer positions and further work in areas of social justice facilitated the growth of my passion for social justice-based research and work in partnership with other cultural groups. Past work in partnership with the Japanese Canadian based project Landscapes of Injustice helped foster my understanding of large social justice-based research projects. Work in partnership with the Japanese Manitoban and Japanese Saskatchewan communities furthered my understanding of colonization in Canada and the trauma caused by western society. This work grew my understanding of colonization and fostered my view of education as an activist tool for change when used in a collaborative manner with colonized groups. My goal for this research was to facilitate the voices of Elders and knowledge holders through proper partnership to assist each community in telling its history. While facilitating the historical knowledge I also wanted to assist communities in creating a locally sustainable space where community members could preserve historical items for use by future generations.

Abstract

This thesis examines the deep systematic connections between First Nations people and the destruction of land and water in northern Manitoba. Using life story interviews as its main sources, it brings voice to those affected, allowing those who directly experienced these historical events to tell their side of the story in their own words and their own way. The thesis argues that Manitoba Hydro and the Provincial government of Manitoba used colonial strategy in forcing the people of Chemawawin Nation and South Indian Lake off their original land to produce hydroelectric development along bordering water systems. Both Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba failed to create proper resource management-based partnership with the people of South Indian Lake and the Chemawawin Nation. Social impacts directly related to the physical destruction of the original land and water systems developed over time to affect both the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake. These social impacts include: Loss of sustainable employment, water transportation safety issues, loss of community connection and safety, increase in physical and mental health problems, and higher levels of alcohol and drug abuse.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment of Treaty Territory and Positionality	1
Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	4
Introduction.....	7
Historical Background.....	20
Chemawawin First Nation: A History of Social Impacts through Colonial Displacement.....	26
South Indian Lake: Social Impacts Stemming from Continual Colonial Struggle.....	55
Partnership Projects: The Northern Community Archives Project.....	93
Conclusion.....	106
Interviewed Elders and Knowledge Holders.....	114
Glossary	116
Bibliography.....	117

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Introduction

Government institutions and large corporations in Canada historically follow western-based governing and business practices. These practices originated through Eurocentric ideology and continue to rule the colonial mindset of governing institutions. This colonial mindset focused on the colonization of land for profit, a process now known as resource exploitation. For decades First Nations peoples in Canada were forced off their land by settler society hungry for resource-rich land to exploit. During the twentieth century proper partnership among First Nations and the Canadian government or large corporations was non-existent. In mid-twentieth century Manitoba, the provincial government and large corporations like Manitoba Hydro forced First Nations people off their original land to create benefit for settler society dwelling in the southern region of Manitoba. Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government of Manitoba failed to create proper partnership with First Nations affected by hydroelectric development from 1950 until the 1990s.

Colonialist strategy including bribery, misdirection, coercion, and miscommunication were used to force two communities off their original land first in 1964 (Chemawawin First Nation) then again in 1975 (South Indian Lake). In Canada, colonization itself is historically defined by the European establishment of colonies on First People's land, alongside the establishment of control over First People's way of life and culture. Colonization did not end with the creation of settlements and the creation of First Nation reserves though, governments continued use of the underlying strategies into the mid- to late twentieth century. A.P. Thornton puts this simply in his early work titled "Colonialism", stating: "For, throughout history, the essence of empire is control. In all empires there have been the controllers and the controlled,

instantly definable.”¹ The Canadian government continued their colonial approach well into the nineteenth century through use of colonial strategies led by capitalist ideology. Paul Rynard examines modern colonial strategy surrounding natural resource obtainment briefly in his article “Ally or Colonizer?: The Federal State, the Cree Nation and the James Bay Agreement”. His work complements Thornton’s definition as he states the federal government historically continually failed to abide by Aboriginal Rights due to its capitalist control over land and resource management.

Rynard’s work points to colonial strategies originating through capitalist behaviors of coercion. Bribery, misdirection, coercion and miscommunication should be viewed as underlying strategies of colonial rule.² These four strategies were used by Manitoba Hydro in forcibly relocating the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake. Bribery and misdirection were purposefully used by Manitoba Hydro and the government to divide the people of both communities politically. Coercion occurred through the forced relocation process as both communities were told to move, not asked, but forcibly told. Quotes throughout the first two chapters identify lived experience of these occurrences. Miscommunication occurred throughout continual failure on the part of the government to keep the people of both Chemawawin and South Indian Lake properly informed on the project’s stages.

Public opinion aside, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government chose financial savings that in turn caused the destruction of the thriving economies of the people of Chemawawin Nation and the people of South Indian Lake (O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation). The destruction of land, water, and social and financial economies of both communities caused a

¹ A. P. Thornton, "Colonialism," *International Journal* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1962): 335-357. 338.

² Paul Rynard, “Ally or Colonizer?: The Federal State, The Cree Nation and The James Bay Agreement”, *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 2, (2001): 25.

systematic cycle of negative social impacts for both communities. My thesis will examine a history of failed partnership between first the Chemawawin people, the provincial government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro, and then the people of South Indian Lake, the provincial government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. This thesis is guided, especially through the first two chapters, by the voices of many who lived through the relocation period in each community. The chapters on Easterville/ Chemawawin and South Indian Lake/ O-Pipon-Na-Piwin each examine first the pre-relocation period, then the relocation itself, and finally the post-relocation period. Both chapters closely show the deep systemic connection between the people of each community and their land and water, and how each one closely connects the other.

The final chapter of my thesis brings light to a new form of partnership, one based around the knowledge and needs of each community partner. Partnership can and should benefit all parties involved. This can be viewed through the final chapter of my thesis that explores and brings light to the digitization and preservation partnership project my partnered communities (Chemawawin Chief and Council and Community Association of South Indian Lake) and I created during my research year. The exact partnership project idea was created through a brainstorming session with a group from northern Manitoba and myself during the Wa Ni Ska Tan: Alliance of Hydro Impacted Communities gathering in Norway House, June 2017. During this session I asked how I could assist communities during my research period, using my skill sets and background education. Community members voiced their concern over absence of information their communities held from past research teams, as these groups continually failed to leave copies of their documents behind for community use. This prompted the creation of a digital repatriation movement for both communities alongside the creation of a community archive type organizational structure. We also focused on the preservation of community closet

archive material and the creation of oral history interviews in partnership with elders. Communities voiced their needs for accessibility to documents pertaining to their community's history, since distance made it hard to access these documents for regular use. There is potential for an array of projects to come from the community-based archive collections, including: the creation of community-based curriculum, localized natural resource research, historical land mapping, local and traditional knowledge preservation through the creation of oral histories and more. Both First Nations communities I am thankful to have partnered with on my research hold an unending abundance of knowledge of their land and water. This is something Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government of Manitoba failed to understand.

Previous Work

Historical works in published form on both communities are few and far between, but that which exists is primarily in the fields of Anthropology, Science and Native Studies. The largest volume of information surrounding both communities was created through the work of Dr. James Waldram, whose research is based in the field of Anthropology. In the 1980s, Dr. James Waldram studied the effects of hydroelectric development on both the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake during his Master's and doctoral studies. He later published this work in book form titled *As Long as the River Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada*. This captivating work discusses in great detail the challenges several northern First Nations communities (including the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake) faced in pursuit of saving their land and water from hydroelectric development. In this work he focuses more closely on the legal and economic challenges faced by all communities involved, giving close attention to the political and legal battles communities faced

at the hand of the government and Manitoba Hydro. He includes some historical context to each chapter but fails to cover both communities' deep connection to land and water in detail. In his unpublished Master's thesis, titled "Relocation and Social Change among the Swampy Cree and Metis of Easterville, Manitoba," Waldram documents the changing economy and legal struggles faced by the Chemawawin people during the 1980s in wonderful detail through his observational and archival research. His Master's thesis again fails to include a true dual perspective of knowledge through consistent use of local knowledge. My research builds and expands on Waldram's work through use of oral history conducted with locals from both the Chemawawin Nation and South Indian Lake, so as to bring a true dual perspective and local voice into this historical period.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Dr. Martin Loney conducted research similar to Waldram through his most notable articles "Social Problems, Community Trauma and Hydro Project Impacts" and "The Construction of Dependency: The Case of the Grand Rapids Hydro Project". Trained in Native Studies, Loney's focus was directed more closely to growth of trauma in hydroelectric-development-affected communities in northern Manitoba. He believes growth in social trauma is directly linked to the destruction of resource-rich land and water. Like Waldram, Loney's focus was directed more closely to economic change and the social effects of drugs and alcohol through this change. Through use of Michael Landa's statistics he viewed the changes of alcohol and drug use through examining the changes in the local economies.

Michael Landa conducted his case study on Easterville in the late 1960s as part of his Master's research. His work analyzed the Chemawawin people during the early years of their relocation to the town of Easterville. Landa's work examined the major changes in health and community social connection among the people of Chemawawin in their new home, Easterville.

Landa's work gives structure to the Chemawawin people's health post relocation through observational research. Loney's and Landa's works greatly contribute to the realm of research surrounding the social impacts of hydroelectric development in northern Manitoba. Although both works favour the side of the affected communities, Loney and Landa failed to properly incorporate consistent locally sourced knowledge through proper partnership with the people of Chemawawin. My research expands the history of the Chemawawin people through also examining and expanding the knowledge of the social impacts faced by the Chemawawin people.

Edited by Thibault Martin and Steven M. Hoffman, *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec* is a compilation of articles all surrounding the topic of hydroelectrical development in Manitoba and Quebec. Split into two sections, the book covers an array of subtopics that bring light to hydro development in the two provinces and the complications that have arisen between the hydro corporations and northern Aboriginal people. In the case of Manitoba, all articles in the first section focus on the devastation of First Nations communities due to Hydro development and Hydro's wrongful practices in working against Indigenous communities and legal treaties. The early relationship between Manitoba Hydro and the Indigenous communities of northern Manitoba is prevalent within several of the articles but is examined through political and legal lenses. Through use of life story interviews my research will work to document this broken relationship from the perspective of the communities involved, through use of their stories and memories of the events and period.

Published in 1999, *First Nations and Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba: The Northern Flood Agreement: Issues and Implications* is a conference compilation book edited by Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz and Jennifer S.H. Brown. Speeches and papers delivered at the

conference in February 1999 addressed the 1977 Northern Flood Agreement and northern hydroelectric generating station development in Manitoba. Many of the papers focused on the continual negative effects to indigenous land and how this continued to affect the overall health of the communities. Manitoba Hydro's continued neglect towards the implementation of the Northern Flood Agreement has allowed for the ongoing devastation of these northern communities and they have received minimal assistance from the Crown corporation in moving their communities forward. The conference was held as a gathering for academics, government officials and affected Indigenous community members, and allowed opportunity for collaborative research. The conference collection did successfully touch on an array of subtopics surrounding the Northern Flood Agreement but fails to bring expansive and specific focus to the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake.

In his work *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* Tough expands our knowledge of First Nations' diverse economic history in northern Manitoba. Through use of local provincial archival sources Tough brilliantly covers an array of economic pursuits made by various First Nations groups. He also brings light to the continual struggle these groups faced through back-breaking work throughout the fur trade period to the fight for ownership of commercial fisheries. Tough's work excels through use of archival source but fails to be inclusive of Indigenous voice or a dual perspective through local knowledge. Aside from the foreword, written more as a promotional review, Tough fails to include Indigenous perspective alongside his use of primary source. My research expands past Tough's timeline to continue the expansion of historical works covering Indigenous economic battle and success through a more inclusive historical approach.

Shawn Wilson reveals his knowledge surrounding Indigenous research methodology in his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Based on his comparative research on Australian and Canadian Indigenous research methods, Wilson's book aims to merge a form of Indigenous traditional knowledge with western research methods. The system of relationships is maintained throughout his work and shown as his main lens in which he views Indigenous research. Wilson's book is influential for my research as it speaks to relational effects in systems. This is key when viewing hydroelectric development and its effects on Indigenous communities. Wilson's work also shows that we must look to the whole life of an individual to properly view changes over time. I chose to use the life story interview technique to document the full life story of individuals. Through this technique I was able to collect a more whole life story from each individual that brought out similar themes in each interview.

In October of 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) submitted its final report to the Government of Canada. The RCAP report contains five volumes that examine government policy surrounding the original nations of what is now Canada. Chapter 11 of the report focused on the Relocation of First Nations as the title acknowledges: "Relocation of Aboriginal Communities". The chapter examines several accounts of forced displacement of First Nations throughout Canada, noting they were regular occurrences in Canada's history. The chapter briefly covers the experience of the Chemawawin people as an example of northern relocation. This very well-written section includes a very detailed historical overview of the Chemawawin people's experience, then continues to explore common themes within historic relocations. The chapter assists in identifying and comparing historic First Nation relocation through use of primary and secondary sources but fails to include a proper dual perspective through the inclusion of first-person accounts.

In her article “Flooding of First Nations and Environmental Justice in Manitoba: Case Studies of the Impacts of the 2011 Flood and Hydro Development in Manitoba” Shirley Thompson examines impacts faced by First Nations communities residing along major water bodies. Her focus specifically examines social impacts faced by those residing downstream from water control stations and dams in Manitoba. In great detail, she explores the higher health risks associated with the location of a community to the direction of the control stations and dams, with further examination of Manitoba’s 2011 flood. Thompson gives us a detailed examination of the direct relationship between national law, hydroelectric development and environmentally based health impacts.

Methodology

Decolonizing research methodology advocated by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Shawn Wilson and Margaret Kovach created the core for my research methodology. Indigenous people across not only Canada but the world continue to be excluded from research created around their people’s history. Both Smith and Kovach have created guidelines to decolonize research and I followed these guidelines throughout my research path. They speak to the colonial continuation of western knowledge-based research methodology in the creation of research and historical source, for western based knowledge for centuries has forced its rule into a hierarchical space. To decolonize research we must force ourselves as researchers to set aside our western based views of methodology to allow for an understanding of other cultural groups methodologies and world views in order to properly partner on projects and research. Indigenous Methodology for all nations will be different, but through the similarities brought forth by Kovach and Smith there is room to begin decolonizing the mind prior to embarking on the partnerships we seek. Proper

mental and physical partnership through all areas of research is key, for we must open our minds to educate ourselves on methodologies of the groups we wish to partner with. Both Kovach and Smith speak to decolonizing research through the creation of a mutually beneficial partnership model whereas the researcher is not the only individual to benefit from the research. Through partnership throughout every area of research we allow for the creation of a dual perspective in our research. The dual perspective allows for us to properly facilitate the knowledge of our partners in our research. For our view of a historical time will be different than someone who has faced trauma directly related to the topic or exact event due to their direct experience and culturally grown identity. Indigenous methodology of specific groups plays on their specific tribal knowledge, experiences, and the overall collective belief system. We as researchers must take the time to understand and educate ourselves in these areas through proper partnership with the communities we wish to work with.

Proper partnership includes the creation of a system of relationships whereas we work towards understanding the world views, methodology and knowledge of those we wish to work alongside. We must take time to learn from those we are partnered with prior to moving forward in research based in their communities'. Ongoing reciprocal consultation and communication are key to proper partnership, so any community-based concerns, ideas or views are continually discussed during the research stage. Research and projects created in partnership must be mutually beneficial to ensure communities involved benefit from the research done. These principals were key to my partnership with both the Chemawawin Nation and members of South Indian Lake. The OCAP principles were followed all throughout this research and the archival project that was created in partnership with both communities. The OCAP principals call for Ownership, Control, Access and Possession of Indigenous knowledge and historical source by

First Nations who research is being done on, by or with. OCAP principals were followed and used as example towards the creation of an archival project that assisted in the growth of a community-based archive for each community. The archive allowed for the researcher to collect digital copies of all documents used towards the research from city-based archives and community members so the partnered groups could re-establish ownership, control and possession over the information within the documents while creating open access to the documents in a community archive space. All throughout the research control of community based cultural, historical and land-based knowledge was controlled by the Elders partnered with the research and project through creation of oral history interviews and regular communication with the researcher.

Community partnerships were created with both knowledge keepers and elders in South Indian Lake and the Chemawawin Nation. Through the creation of community partnerships, I was able to incorporate the use of a dual perspective on all research items I gathered and created. Copies of sources I found and used for my research have now been added to a digital collection, which will be given to each community in the form of a community archive.

The idea of the community archive itself came from collaborative community discussion, where I asked community members what was needed in the information sector. The discussion brought forth key words that opened our eyes to the need for researchers to have a space where they can gift communities with documents they uncover during their own research periods. Oral history interviews were created in alliance with knowledge keepers and elders in both communities to create inclusive research with the goal of giving voice to the individuals affected by the traumatic hydro relocation history. The history of each community is not mine to tell, but

to facilitate. I did this to the best of my ability through basing each article around the common themes brought forth through the knowledge keepers' and elders' interviews.

In my research I used a qualitative approach that allowed for the collection of intensive detailed knowledge through individual interviews as well as several small study groups. Through the qualitative approach I was able to collect in-depth life story narrative from each of the individuals involved in my research groups. Life-story narrative was primarily collected instead of question and answer based narrative due to life-story narratives' power in the production of a full life story narrative that within it carries previously unknown detailed information. In society (and research) today we focus too closely on piecemeal problem-solving, which often leads to failure to find the root of the original cause and the solution to fix the larger issue at hand. This is a western knowledge-based perspective that continues to plague all of society.

As noted, my research focused heavily on the use of an oral history approach. Oral history is the original form of historical analysis, predating the written word. Indigenous nations are recognized for their early use of oral narratives to create and transmit knowledge. The field is recognized for its collection of individual and community narrative, with memory recall primarily guided by the individual being interviewed. Minimal guidance is given on the part of the researcher for most of the interview process. Oral history research focuses on the collection of story-driven narrative through use of a life-story interview method.

The life-story interview is used to allow interviewees authority in how they structure the interview through which their story is told. There are individuals who prefer to be assisted through the guidance of questions throughout the interview, therefore questions were created to give guidance to the interviewees during such circumstances. The aim of the life-story interview process is to collect a full life story of the individual being interviewed. If a topic the researcher

was interested in was not covered within the interview prior to the end, the researcher then prompted for a conversational interview approach. This approach was used for part of several interviews in both communities. The conversational interview approach allowed the researcher to gather loose ends of information not previously covered through the life-story account of the individual being interviewed.

Historical Background

Manitoba has relied on hydroelectric energy for decades as its primary source of electricity. From 1950 to 1980 Manitoba Hydro constructed five major hydroelectric generating stations along the Nelson and Churchill River systems. The Nelson and Churchill River systems flow northeast, carrying water north from north-flowing river systems further south (this includes the Saskatchewan River and Winnipeg's historic Red River).³ The Nelson River system flows northeast from Lake Winnipeg into its drainage site, Hudson's Bay.⁴ Northern generating stations on average were completed in three to four years of daytime construction. Kelsey Generating Station was the first northern generating station to be completed along the Nelson River in 1961. The second northern generating station was completed in 1965 along the Saskatchewan River and was named after its bordering indigenous community, Grand Rapids.⁵ The project completely bulldozed hundreds of acres of land and manipulated the waterscape of Misipawistik First Nation. The manipulated waterscape greatly disrupted the flow of the Saskatchewan River, which caused cascading effects and flooding that affected several First Nations living along the Saskatchewan River. It also destroyed the Grand Rapids themselves, diverting the water out of the channel where the ancient rapids flowed.

By 1965, Chemawawin First Nation's homeland was flooded with the completion of the Grand Rapids Generating Station. The people of Chemawawin were given two options, move or be flooded. Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba forcibly relocated the

³Robert Newbury, "Northern Waters: The Discovery and Development of the Rivers of Northern Manitoba", in *People & Land in Northern Manitoba: 1990 Conference at the University of Manitoba*, ed. Lithman, Y.G., R.R. Riewe, R.E. Wiest, and R.E. Wrigley, 81-96 (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers 32, 1992), 81.

⁴Robert Newbury, "Northern Waters: The Discovery and Development of the Rivers of Northern Manitoba", 82-83. (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers 32, 1992)

⁵ Peter Kulchyski et al., "The town that lost its name: The impact of hydroelectric development on Grand Rapids, Manitoba", Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, ISBN -0-88627-504-0, August 2006, 4.

Chemawawin people by August 1964 through use of colonialist tactics, which included the use of a letter of intent in placement of a legal agreement. The people of Chemawawin were relocated from their original resource-rich homeland to a barren, rocky land plot along a different part of Cedar Lake. Less than a decade later Manitoba Hydro proposed massive flooding of South Indian Lake by way of diverting the Nelson River into the Churchill River. Manitoba Hydro created a second mass river system manipulation project through the creation of the Churchill River Diversion. The exact Churchill River Diversion path chosen was set to help the government financially but came at grave cost to the people of South Indian Lake. By 1975 the people of South Indian Lake were forcibly relocated. Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba continued their use of colonial tactics in order to remove the people of South Indian Lake from their project's destructive path. The destruction to the water systems, land, and animal populations were only the beginning of what became a systematic chain of events for both communities.

A modern treaty, the Northern Flood Agreement, was created in 1977 between the provincial government of Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro and five flood-affected northern First Nations. Five nations were recognized under law as Treaty Five Indigenous communities.⁶ The five recognized communities included Nelson House First Nation (Nisichiwayasihk Cree Nation), Split Lake First Nation (Tataskweyak Cree Nation), Cross Lake First Nation (Pimicikamak Cree Nation), Norway House First Nation, and York Landing First Nation.⁷ The provincial government failed to acknowledge South Indian Lake and the Chemawawin Nation as

⁶Government of Canada, "Treaty 5 between Her Majesty the Queen and the Saulteaux and Swampy Cree Tribes of Indians at Beren's River and Norway House with Adhesions", Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028699/1100100028700>, Accessed February 5, 2017.

⁷ Manitoba Hydro, "Indigenous Agreements", About, Hydro.mb.ca, Accessed February 9, 2017.

current Treaty Five members. This caused the exclusion of both communities from the Northern Flood Agreement. The provincial government viewed South Indian Lake as part of Nelson House due to the community's historical connection to the First Nation. The people of South Indian Lake were unrecognized by Treaty 5, therefore the provincial government and federal government viewed their land as Crown land which legally allotted them the title "squatters".⁸ The people of South Indian Lake were signed for by Nelson House First Nation, receiving no proper long-term compensation for their own people, land and water.⁹ The Chemawawin people were granted reserve status in 1930¹⁰, but remained under Treaty 5 as part of the Moose Lake Band.

Throughout both projects and forced relocations, Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba viewed both communities through a colonialist Eurocentric lens. They believed they were in the right to destroy resource-rich land and water to create hydroelectric energy primarily for southern populations. Hydroelectricity was the future in the eyes of both parties, and electricity was an essential tool in what they viewed to be modernization. In his book *Formidable Heritage: Manitoba's North and the Cost of Development, 1870-1930* Jim Mochoruk notes the growth of hydroelectric development in the early 20th century: "Given this economic activity [growth of hydroelectric development through the power of northern water systems] and the sustained northern boosterism of 1912-13, few could see a downside to northern development. And why should they? Employment opportunities, the bellwether of any

⁸ James B. Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada* (University of Manitoba Press: Winnipeg, MB, 1993), 118.

⁹ James Waldram, "Falling Through the Cracks (in the dam): South Indian Lake and the Churchill River Diversion Project", 72-73 in *First Nations and Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba: The Northern Flood Agreement, Issues and Implications*, ed. Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz and Jennifer Brown (Winnipeg, MB: University of Winnipeg, 1999).

¹⁰ Canada, "Relocation of Aboriginal Communities", Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, Vol 1, Part 2 (August 26, 1991): 395-522, Accessed July 20, 2018. <http://data2.archives.ca/e/e448/e011188230-01.pdf>, 460.

economic boom, abounded in the north and seemed destined to rise even further”¹¹. The colonialist capitalistic view of ‘modernization’ called for more: more electricity, more money, more accumulation. The financial gain predicted from both projects became more important than the lives, economies and land of both the people of the Chemawawin Nation and South Indian Lake. The future of the people was sacrificed for the financial ‘modern’ gain of Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government. Both communities were modernizing in the western sense through use of technology of the time towards their commercial fishing and trapping economies. Yet the government used its western view of modernization in part as a selling point and justification to relocate both communities, promising modern technology in exchange for a sustainable future off the land and water.

The physical impacts of hydroelectric development are entwined with the social impacts for the people of both Chemawawin and South Indian Lake. The direct destruction of their original homeland, water systems and animal populations caused a system of social impacts to develop following each original flood. The destruction of the land and water in time dismantled both communities’ once-sustainable economies, forcing families to turn to government-based unemployment assistance. Change to physical community structure in turn became affected through higher stress in the communities due to high levels of unemployment, dangerously low levels of once-sustainable food sources, and safety issues that arose around travel. Substance abuse arose from continual trauma from declining economies and the loss of what was once generationally sustainable land.

¹¹ Jim Mochoruk, *Formidable Heritage: Manitoba’s North and the Cost of Development, 1870-1930*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004), 202.

Hydroelectric development in Manitoba from 1950 to 1990 was a form of contemporary colonization due to purposeful use of colonialist tactics and lack of communication between Manitoba Hydro, the government of Manitoba and northern First Nations communities. Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba failed to consider the long term effects the destruction of land and water would have on the people of Chemawawin First Nation and South Indian Lake. Their colonialist western-based view of societal norms and needs of a population blinded them to the reality that living sustainably off the land in the north was reality for both Indigenous communities. This reality sustained the people for generations, but they were also modernizing at a sustainable rate that allowed for the growth and redevelopment of both community economies. Both Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba failed to properly partner on the hydroelectric projects with both communities and in turn caused the system of social impacts that continue to plague both communities today.

First Nations people and their land and waterways in Manitoba have been researched and studied continuously for decades throughout different disciplines. Much of this research done and documents created are inaccessible to rural First Nations interested in using them in various ways. Research methods and project development in northern Manitoba need to change. Academics, businesses, the government and organizations need to reshape how they conduct research and projects on First Nations and their water or land. First Nations need to be a part of every study completed on their land and water through proper partnership. Whether this is through use of a dual perspective in research or as a project partner, First Nations people need to be included in research of all areas. This is especially true for government-based research and the humanities; these areas continuously fail to properly involve First Nations people in projects whether small or large. The Northern Community Archives Project came from this realization

and a collaborative brainstorming meeting among several members of northern First Nations and myself. The project focuses on three main areas: Accessibility, Reconciliation and repatriation of information. First Nations communities know what they need. It is our duty as academics and organizations to facilitate and assist in ways we can to further or help create projects that assist communities in ways they need. I will discuss this partnership project in the last chapter of my thesis.

Chemawawin First Nation:

A History of Social Impacts through Colonial Displacement

The manipulation of northern water systems began in the 1960s as Manitoba Hydro looked north to create more hydroelectric energy for the province of Manitoba and for export. The Saskatchewan River became a critical water system in the creation of the Grand Rapids Generating Station and dam system. Construction began along the Saskatchewan River in 1960. The project created work for thousands of tradesmen who travelled north from southern Manitoba to construct the planned 3500 square kilometer¹² dike for the generating station and dam. The project caused mass destruction to surrounding land and water systems from 1960 to 1965 due to mass clear-cutting, mass transfer of earth, and, once the dam opened in 1965, massive flooding. The project caused the Saskatchewan River to flood a large region around Cedar Lake, including the original land of the Chemawawin First Nation. In 1964 Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba forcibly relocated the people of Chemawawin First Nation from their original homeland to what is now the townsite of Easterville.

Construction of the Grand Rapids generating system and dam proceeded without proper consultation or partnership with the First Nations communities affected by them.¹³ Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government, working through the Grand Rapids Forebay Administration Committee they had established to oversee the project, used misleading

¹² "Grand Rapids Generating Station", *Government of Manitoba*, Accessed on April 19, 2018, http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/licensing/grand_rapids.

¹³ Frank Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 84.

statements, bribery and the divide and conquer strategy to forcibly relocate Chemawawin First Nation. They forcibly relocated the Chemawawin people to poor, rocky land without the hunting, fishing, and recreational resources of their original home on Cedar Lake. In this chapter I will discuss the history of Chemawawin First Nation through representation of elders who experienced the relocation period. I will also discuss the social impacts directly interwoven with the destruction of sustainable land, water and community connection. This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section will describe the original homeland of the Chemawawin people, land they regularly refer to as ‘the old post’¹⁴. This section will paint an image of the land, water, economy, community and people pre-relocation, prior to 1964. In the second section I will discuss the forced relocation period, from 1960 to 1964. In this section I will introduce the reader to the Forebay Committee and further discuss its failed role in the forced relocation of the Chemawawin people through elders’ relocation stories. The third section will introduce the reader to Easterville, the relocation area given to the Chemawawin First Nation in 1962. In discussing Easterville I will examine the continual, systemic environmental and social impacts the relocation has had on the people of the Chemawawin Nation.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the individuals who made this chapter possible through gifting me the opportunity to record their life stories. This chapter is based on their memories of the ‘old post’, the relocation period and the transition into Easterville. The elders of Chemawawin First Nation who gifted me their life stories are Nancy Mink, Philip Chartier, Sally Bourassa, Malcolm Thomas, Emma Ballantyne and Sylvia Chartier. Their stories and continual

¹⁴ Sylvia Chartier, “Life story interview”, Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, March 12, 2018.

advice have created the basis for this research and chapter. I would also like to thank Cree teacher Doris George. Many of the Cree interviews would not have been possible without her translation work.

The Chemawawin people descend from Moose Lake First Nation. Although their exact separation date and the reasons are unknown, it is known that the Chemawawin people created their own separate social body. The Chemawawin people moved from the original Moose Lake Band territory to live along the Saskatchewan river delta on the northwest side of Cedar Lake. This separation was not uncommon among Indigenous groups, but caused complications surrounding individual band treaty signing with government officials. Dr. James Waldram notes that in 1876 treaty commissioner Thomas Howard crossed paths with the Chemawawin people on his way north to The Pas, Manitoba. The Chemawawin people spoke of their relation to the Moose Lake band but wished to sign Treaty 5 as a separate people on the Cedar Lake location they inhabited. They agreed with Howard in signing Treaty Five and did so in The Pas. Soon after signing they returned to their Chemawawin land plot. Howard's attempt to forcibly re-merge them with the Moose Lake Band failed.¹⁵ The Chemawawin land was surveyed six years later in 1882. The Chemawawin people were finally granted reserve status in 1930 for their section of land along Cedar Lake.¹⁶

The original Chemawawin First Nation location is an estimated 88 kilometers southeast of The Pas, Manitoba. The community's land stood at the mouth of the Saskatchewan River on the northwest end of Cedar Lake. Prior to the creation of the Grand Rapids Dam located on the Saskatchewan River, the section of land housed three communities: the Chemawawin Cree, a

¹⁵ Canada, "Relocation of Aboriginal Communities", *Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* 1, no. 2 (August 26, 1991): 395-522, Accessed July 20, 2018. <http://data2.archives.ca/e/e448/e011188230-01.pdf>, 460.

¹⁶ James B. Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 83.

Metis community and a Euro-Canadian community. The Chemawawin Cree and Metis had a combined estimated population of 400. The Euro-Canadian community contained a small population with an estimated 8 people.¹⁷ The Euro-Canadian population included the Pouliot family, which operated a small trades shop and sawmill near the Chemawawin First Nation. Armand Pouliot was the main trader in the area.

The land the communities inhabited resembled a large island along the Saskatchewan River and Cedar Lake. The Chemawawin people were deeply connected to their land and water. The land and water provided them with sustainable food, clean drinking water and more.. The land was pristine, sustainably managed by those who inhabited it. The island had a variety of trees and bush surrounding it. The Chemawawin and Metis community homes and buildings were located on plots cleared of trees. There were two schools, a trade store, sawmill and one Anglican church among the three communities.¹⁸ Community members remember families clearing small wooded areas to allow for the creation of homes and buildings on flat, clear land.¹⁹ Malcolm Thomas remembers the different community locations, as he states:

Our family lived a little way from the Chemawawin community location. There were different areas where people lived. We used canoes to get from place to place. There was green grass, with soil, it was beautiful at the old post. Where the people lived there was not a lot of trees because they cut them down, but it was just grass. There wasn't a lot of

¹⁷ James Waldram, "Relocation and Social Change Among the Swampy Cree and Metis of Easterville, Manitoba", Department of Anthropology (Manitoba Heritage Theses - University of Manitoba: Winnipeg, MB, 1980), 111.

¹⁸ Waldram, "Relocation and Social Change," 40.

¹⁹ Philip Chartier, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, December 10, 2017.

trees on the community plot around houses. There was trees, just not right where the people lived.²⁰

Community homes were built from logs and lumber gathered from the nearby wooded areas. Homes were either single room homes or divided room homes. The divided homes allowed for separation from the kitchen and sleeping areas. Families utilized everything in nature to create their homes, furniture and clothing. Sally remembers her father making furniture using wood from the nearby forest. He cut bedframes from logs to make the children's beds.²¹ Every home had oil lamps to keep homes well-lit and a wood stove to keep families warm throughout colder months. Water was collected from the nearby river and lake, as there was no running water within the community. Large holes were dug into the ground to make cellars for every family. Cellars were built inside the home²² and outside the home,²³ depending on the family. Families built cellars to keep food preserved for months on end. Several of the elders remember their families practicing different forms of food preservation. Emma Ballantyne distinctly remembers the cellars, as she states: "We used to dig a big hole and that's where we would store our potatoes and meat, and then whatever was smoked would last longer. And berries. Because we didn't used to have fridges and freezers."²⁴ Meats were dried through a smoking process to preserve them for longer periods of time. They were then placed in the cellar like berries and vegetables for later use. Many remember vegetables being covered with hay to further preserve²⁵

²⁰ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, March 12, 2018.

²¹ Sally Bourassa, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, March 12, 2018.

²² Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

²³ Nancy Mink, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, December 10, 2017.

²⁴ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, March 12, 2018.

²⁵ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

them throughout the long winter months. Nancy Mink remembers the storage of food and the process in smoking meat, as she states:

We didn't have any fridges... they kept their food or they put like holes or wells in the ground and put their potatoes there, anything they could keep. And smoking things like smoked fish, meat. They used wood to make them, you know what a tepee looks like, they put sticks around there and then they made a little like the foundation and that then there's sticks that go twice then they hung that meat there and they covered it with canvas or whatever to keep the smoke in there. Outside the house the wells for meat. Homes had full floors.

Families were well fed all throughout the year due to the knowledge of food preservation techniques. They were aware of the land which allowed them to prepare proper cellars dug past the frost line, to ensure their food stayed cold. Knowledge of the land and food preservation was passed generationally through families in the Chemawawin Nation.

The land the community inhabited was primarily comprised of grass, brush, bush and a wooded area along the edges of the water. The soil was rich with nutrients and allowed for the growth of gardens. River delta soil was known for its rich mineral concentration and Indigenous groups and settler groups were known to settle near these deltas for access to rich soil.²⁶ Almost all families had personal family gardens. Family gardens were primarily used to grow vegetables and fruit, including: carrots, turnip, potatoes, onions, rhubarb, strawberries²⁷ and more. Several families utilized nearby bush, brush and shoreline for the collection of berries and medicinal

²⁶ Armstrong, Christopher, H. V Nelles, and Matthew Dominic Evenden. *The River Returns: An Environmental History of the Bow* (Montreal, QB: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 8.

²⁷ Sally Bourassa, "Life story interview".

plants. Families gathered blueberries and cranberries from the bush and would transplant rhubarb and strawberry plants into their gardens. Jams and jellies were made from an assortment of berries to preserve them over the winter. Emma Ballantyne remembers transplanting plants at the 'old post':

Rhubarb...A lot of that grew by the graveyard and a lot of it grew wild. Once you plant them and then it keeps growing. Cranberries, blueberries, strawberries. There were big berries and they were purple, but it's hard to remember the name in English. The name in Cree is Mistimina. They were big on the ground. It wasn't raspberries. We made jam from berries and kept jam in the center [storage area].²⁸

Berry bushes and rhubarb grew throughout the wooded areas along the Chemawawin land. Several of the elders remember their parents teaching them about medicinal plants including Seneca²⁹, Weegis, Napaowin and red clover. Sally Bourassa remembers picking these plants with her Kookum, as she states:

We used to make a muskeg tea from the bark of a red leaved tree, it was very common in the area. We used to use Weegis when we had colds, then we would shred it and take lard and mix it then rub it on our chests. Then it helped to heal our lungs. There used to be a plant that we dug up, in Cree we call it Napaowin. We dug it up and it looked like a string, it was really thin like the hair strings. We used it for any kind of sickness.³⁰

Once gathered, herbs were crushed, grated or sliced then made into teas and rubs to cure various ailments from lung infections to stomach problems. Many medicinal herbs were readily available

²⁸ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

²⁹ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

³⁰ Sally Bourassa, "Life story interview".

throughout the land in spring, summer and fall. Elders remember very few health problems among families at the 'old post'. Health problems that occurred were more often from individuals traveling into the community from outside towns. Sylvia Chartier remembers her mother's battle with tuberculosis. Her mother was sent to The Pas for long-term treatment of the infectious disease.³¹ Tuberculosis did not affect many in the community but families it did affect remember strong family support, especially from grandparents. The use of healthy locally sourced food, medicinal herbs and clean drinking water kept the people of Chemawawin First Nation healthy.

The elders remember learning to trap and hunt early in life. Parents and grandparents taught children these skills early, which allowed them the opportunity to develop these skills as they aged. The land itself was home to a variety of animals including moose, deer, muskrat, beaver, fox, coyote, marten, mink, rabbit, chicken, otter, ducks and more. The men in each family did most of the hunting and trapping, but children, mothers and elders helped with the preparation of the animal and hide. Once a smaller animal such as muskrat, beaver or marten was caught through trapping the skin and organs were removed. Then the animal was skinned, removing the skin with fur still on. These hides were then placed on a stretch frame. The stretch frame was made from wood and sometimes sinew that would allow for the hide to be tied on.³² Once on the stretch frame the skin was left to dry for several days. Malcolm Thomas remembers trapping and preparing animals with his parents:

My parents taught us how to set snares, then we learned how to skin the animals. We stretched the skins. There were fox, coyotes, mink, muskrat, I didn't hunt beaver but

³¹ Sylvia Chartier, "Life story interview".

³² Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

muskrat, mink, coyotes. We hunted moose, there were no caribou near the old post. We hunted deer and moose. There were lots of animals in the area. Everything there was plentiful. Moose, geese, ducks... We used to catch rabbits and muskrat to eat, and chickens.³³

Animals were caught both for food and local pelt trade. A variety of animals were caught through traplines and snares, including: mink, otter, squirrel, rabbit, prairie chicken, muskrat, beaver, mink, coyote, fox, and wolf.³⁴ Families trapped and snared rabbit and chicken most often as part of their diets. Larger animals were caught through hunting, including: moose, deer, wolf, bear, geese and ducks. Men hunted moose and deer regularly to stock the families' meat supply. When moose was caught it was shared among families in the community. Martin Loney quotes Eugene Bossenmaier's (unpublished) 1959 statistics from hunting and trapping along the Saskatchewan River delta, to show that pre-flood the area produced an estimated \$2,300,000 of muskrat pelts and over \$400,000 worth of other assorted furs. Water fowl were plentiful and aided in family income and diet aside from furs. There was also a large moose population, upwards of 400 moose.³⁵ Most moose caught supplied families with more than enough moose to share with the community. Emma Ballantyne remembers moose being shared among the community: "The community worked together even when somebody killed a moose, and then everyone would get a share of the moose, not only certain people. Everybody would get a portion of the moose."³⁶ Everyone helped in preparing moose meat and bones. The leg bones were often used to make tools and the hide was prepared for use as blankets and clothing items including

³³ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

³⁴ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

³⁵ Martin Loney, "The Construction of Dependency: The Case of the Grand Rapids Hydro Project", *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 7, no. 1, (1987): 59.

³⁶ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

jackets. Pelts from smaller animals were also used towards the creation of moccasins, mitts and clothing.

Families fished for personal use and commercial use. Fishing was plentiful along the Saskatchewan River and on Cedar Lake. The elders remember regularly catching tullibee, pickerel, whitefish, sturgeon and pike.³⁷ Local families caught tullibee, pickerel and sturgeon as a food source. Fish not prepared for meals that day were smoked to allow for the long-term preservation of the meat. Commercial fishing provided work throughout the year for a large percentage of the community. Fish buyers came to Cedar Lake to buy from local fishermen throughout the summer. Booth Fisheries was the main commercial fish buyer that purchased from local commercial fishermen on Cedar Lake during the summer months.³⁸ In the winter months fish was bought by local store owner Armand Pouliot. Philip Chartier grew up fishing alongside his father and brothers, and he remember commercial fishing:

Like I said we smoked the fish and they used to hunt for moose. And smoke the meat and make what you call that skin anyway, moose skin. They used to make moccasins out of there, jackets... and they used to use those what you call them beads? Nice beads, nice jackets too! They sold pelts and hides, Pouliot was the only one buying fur and the fish but in the summertime boat fishers came over and would buy fish. They took the fish by boat to The Pas.³⁹

Fish buyers travelled north and east from western and southern towns and cities. Many fish buyers came from The Pas, Manitoba, where there were fish packing companies and co-ops.

³⁷ Sylvia Chartier, "Life story interview".

³⁸ Loney, *The Construction of Dependency*, 61.

³⁹ Philip Chartier, "Life story interview".

Local trade of fish occurred through Armand Pouliot's general store. Pouliot then sold fish traded through him to fish buyers in The Pas.⁴⁰ He did the same for small pelt trade all throughout the year. Pouliot and his store assisted the economy of the area but did not control it. The people of Chemawawin First Nation were employed in sustainable work through commercial fishing all throughout the year alongside trapping.

At the 'old post' families worked together to keep the community healthy, safe and sound. Families were there for each other to assist in all areas, whether it was sharing food or taking care of children.⁴¹ Sally Bourassa remembers all families coming together to plan weddings for couples. Families from throughout the community helped supply the family with food for the feast, and during these large events the community came together to feast in celebration.⁴² Families looked out for one another, especially when it came to children and elder care. Children played throughout the community without need of their parents' supervision due to the continual support families gave each other. All families kept watch over all children. Emma Ballantyne remembers how parents communicated with their children when it was time for them to come home, as she states:

A long time ago when they used to want their kids home at a certain time like eight o'clock or nine o'clock everybody would be home already. So they used to yell, not like today where we have a phone or Facebook 'anybody seen my kids, send them home'. Like they used to yell, this person was yelling for their kids to come home and then another person over there would hear it and then they would yell that way and then it

⁴⁰ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 84.

⁴¹ Doris Young, "Northern Manitoba Hydro Electric Projects and Their Impact on Cree Culture", in *People and Land in Northern Manitoba: 1990 Conference at the University of Manitoba*, ed. Lithman, Y.G., R.R. Riewe, R.E., Wiest, and R.E. Wrigley (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers 32, 1992), 15.

⁴² Sally Bourassa, "Life story interview".

would keep going like a chain and then pretty soon wherever these kids were, knew that their mom was calling and they would go home. That's how they used to communicate for their kids to come home.⁴³

There was no end of community support within the Chemawawin First Nation prior to 1964. Children were raised by the whole community as families worked to keep the community healthy and safe. Families lived sustainable lives through use of sustainable hunting, fishing and gathering practices. Everyone within the community worked in some way whether paid or not. Elders agree it was hard work to keep families fed and houses heated⁴⁴, but it was what kept everyone healthy and happy. Through working together on resource-rich land that consistently provided for them, the people of Chemawawin led a healthy lifestyle physically and mentally.

Families learned from one another, and generational lessons were continuously passed. Stories were a part of regular teachings within the community. Parents and elders told children and youth stories that contained vital life lessons hidden through the characters' events. Elders' stories included the Swampy Cree spirits Wesakaychak and Tisa⁴⁵. One story retold by several of the elders included both spirits. Malcolm Thomas remembers his parents telling him one particular story:

Wesakaychak and Tisa came up to a house when... this person was a wealthy person and they went in there and they spent the night there but Wesakaychak told... because Tisa liked to eat and told him not to eat lots, but he liked to eat lots. So when they were eating a dog came up to his leg and he didn't want to eat anymore because Wesakaychak told

⁴³ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

⁴⁴ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

⁴⁵ Sally Bourassa, "Life story interview".

him he shouldn't be eating lots and so Tisa refused to eat some more. So later on when they went to bed he woke up hungry so he snuck down and looked for food to eat. There were jars. he found jars. And he was putting his hands in jars and he got his hand stuck and he couldn't get it out. So he went to Wesakaychak and he said they had to leave because he didn't want other people knowing what happened and then so he broke the jar on a rock so they went and came to a river... like a creek and then they had to jump across. And then he couldn't, he counted one, two, three but he couldn't... couldn't really get far and I guess there was a chicken that had a nest there so next time he couldn't, and he was about to jump the chicken flew up and startled him and he just jumped half way across the creek.⁴⁶

This is only part of a story retold by several elders in the community. Every elder remembered a different section better than the other which in turn helped to bridge the gaps in the overall story. Every story told contained lessons to be learned, by young children especially.⁴⁷ Many stories told of unfortunate events or questionable actions lived out by the spirits and how karma would always come back with consequences.

Families were modernizing at their own pace through use of new technologies whether in their homes or through their paid work. Fishermen from the community used canoes and motor boats when fishing.⁴⁸ They were smaller motor boats, but they still utilized the technology to further their commercial fishing industry on Cedar Lake. Families used items they considered necessary as part of their social and sustainable lifestyle. It was modernization on their own

⁴⁶ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

⁴⁷ Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing, 2007), 12.

⁴⁸ Philip Chartier, "Life story interview".

terms, a more natural form. The provincial government of Manitoba began studies pertaining to the short-term effects of northern hydro development in the early 1950s. Early results from these studies showed sustainable First Nations economies would be greatly affected by flooding of their land and the forced relocation from their original locations.⁴⁹ The government first approached the Chemawawin First Nation in the late 1950s with a goal to forcibly relocate and ‘modernize’ the people of Chemawawin. Construction of the Grand Rapids dam was set to begin in 1960; at this time Manitoba Hydro and its workers began the manipulation of the Saskatchewan River’s flow.

Manitoba Hydro’s plan was to flood the Saskatchewan River and Cedar Lake to control water flow through the Grand Rapids generating station. The Saskatchewan River and Cedar Lake were scheduled to flood in 1965. The raised water levels would cause overland flooding of large sections of the original Chemawawin Nation land. Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government of Manitoba preliminarily scheduled the relocation of Chemawawin First Nation, the Metis community and the Euro-Canadian community for the summer of 1964. The three communities were merely viewed as being in the way of the resource extraction flood path, and therefore the government chose to simply plan relocation.

Members from the provincial government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro first visited Chemawawin First Nation in 1962 to inform the community of the planned flooding for their land. The people of Chemawawin were never given a voice in their proposed relocation plan, they were simply told it would occur.⁵⁰ At this time government officials met with then chief and

⁴⁹ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 85.

⁵⁰ Gabrielle A. Slowey, “The State, The Marketplace, and First Nations: Theorizing First Nations Self Determination in an Era of Globalization”, in *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec*, ed. Thibault Martin and Steven M. Hoffman (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 45.

council to inform them of Manitoba Hydro's flood timeline and the proposed relocation plots the community could choose from. The government sang its song of western modernization and the joyous new technology it would bring the people of Chemawawin. Malcolm Thomas remembers the first visits from members of the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro:

There was someone who came to the community to tell us we were going to get flooded. We didn't believe them at first, then one of them brought something to show us. They brought us a model-like thing and then put water on whose houses would be all flooded. We weren't asked about how we felt about the relocation, we were told. The chief and the councilors at the time kind of followed with what they were told as well. One of the councilors was just in agreement with moving because all he thought about was that he was going to have hydro and so he said 'he would just have to flip the switch and you would have lights. I don't really know if we were promised free hydro but the councilor was really excited about hydro.⁵¹

Visiting members of the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro offered verbal promises of western modern technologies not previously in use by the Chemawawin people.⁵² The item verbally sold most prominently by government officials and hydro representatives was hydroelectric powered electricity that would release the Chemawawin people from use of oil powered lamps. Many of the elders interviewed remember verbal promises made to their parents

⁵¹ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

⁵² Steven M. Hoffman, "Engineering Poverty: Colonialism and Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba", in *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec*, ed. Thibault Martin and Steven M. Hoffman (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 123.

and grandparents⁵³, yet many of these verbal promises were never properly explained or executed post-relocation.

The government decided a committee was needed to assist the people of Chemawawin Nation in their forced relocation process throughout the 1960s. A committee was assembled in 1959 and titled the Grand Rapids Forebay Administration Committee. The committee consisted of provincial and federal government officials.⁵⁴ All assigned officials took part in the Forebay Committee part-time while they continued to work full-time on their main federal and provincial ministerial duties. Members of the Forebay Committee were tasked with duties pertaining to bringing ease to the relocation process for the people of Chemawawin. The committee was viewed as a mediating non-governmental body between the First Nation, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government.⁵⁵ The committee held no legal power, but they were appointed the duty of organizing and educating the people of Chemawawin towards a new land location. No committee positions were appointed or offered to the Chemawawin Nation and all meetings were held in Winnipeg, purposefully excluding the Chemawawin people.⁵⁶ Although the committee was created as an unbiased assistance to the Chemawawin First Nation, it should have automatically been viewed in conflict of interest⁵⁷ through the obvious connection to both levels of government.

The Forebay Committee's most important task in 1962 was to assist the Chemawawin chief and council in the creation of an agreement. A letter of intent between the Chemawawin First Nation and the Forebay Committee (in representation of the government) was created to

⁵³ Nancy Mink, "Life story interview".

⁵⁴ Order of Council, "Relocation of Aboriginal Communities", 461.

⁵⁵ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 7.

⁵⁶ Order of Council, "Relocation of Aboriginal Communities", 462.

⁵⁷ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 9.

ensure the overall wellbeing of the people of Chemawawin once forcibly relocated from their original sustainable land. Hearings were held in Chemawawin among the people of Chemawawin and Forebay committee members. Nancy Mink remembers attending these hearings, as she states:

There were meetings held here in the community. I used to go. The chief and council went and sometimes I used to go with them, hear what was going on with support from the elders. A few government officials used to come, they'd go to those meetings and meet with the people. We attended. They said what was going to be going on, but it was mostly the chief and council.⁵⁸

Like Malcolm, Nancy remembers government officials speaking to the community but never listening to the people and their views of the relocation. All interviewed elders remember many families being against the move⁵⁹, and several even resisted the relocation once it began.⁶⁰ Miscommunication plagued the hearings in Chemawawin, as members of the Forebay Committee failed to properly communicate with the overall community of Chemawawin to create an agreement that represented the community's interests and wishes.

The letter of intent drafted in 1962 was to outline the needs of the community in moving from their original sustainable economy and resource-rich land towards a new location of their choosing. Potential land plots were viewed by chief and council during the winter months of 1962. Chief and council were shown their land options during the winter. It was nearly impossible to view the resources each land plot would provide due to thick snow cover, therefore

⁵⁸ Nancy Mink, "Life story interview".

⁵⁹ Philip Chartier, "Life story interview".

⁶⁰ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

chief and council chose land based solely on location (near the Cedar Lake shoreline).⁶¹ Without knowledge of what lay beneath the snow, the letter of intent was created around the land plot chosen. This letter of intent promised new housing, town buildings, schools, electricity, timber, a harbor and dock locations, assistance in community development, public utilities, supply facilities, recreation, cemeteries, hay and pastures, close hunting and trapping land, industries, healthcare and economic development.⁶²

Miscommunication continued to plague the relocation process as the creation of the final letter of intent between the Chemawawin First Nation, the government and Manitoba Hydro moved forward without proper legal representation on behalf of the Chemawawin people. Language is viewed as a direct barrier between the community and government representatives during that period.⁶³ Philip Chartier remembers communication being nearly impossible with outside visitors as most of the community spoke Cree and he only remembers a handful of individuals who could understand English. Philip states:

Cree, straight Cree in the community. Everybody was talking Cree. That's why we had a hard time when we moved and white men started to show up. Sometimes a white man would show up to the old post, we couldn't talk to them. And when they asked us something we'd say yes or no, something like that, because we couldn't talk English, we were straight Cree.⁶⁴

The Forebay Committee failed to properly educate the chief and council on their rights surrounding the relocation process. Chief and council were not properly prepared to create a

⁶¹ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 90.

⁶² Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 195-198.

⁶³ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 94.

⁶⁴ Philip Chartier, "Life story interview".

long-term agreement that would go on to affect the lives of their people.⁶⁵ This was ultimately the job of the Forebay Committee who should have ensured the long-term healthy transition and wellbeing of the people of Chemawawin.⁶⁶ The letter of intent failed to include several items verbally promised to the Chemawawin Nation during community hearings throughout 1962. Community members remember items being promised that were never recorded, including free hydroelectricity.⁶⁷ Elders interviewed now view this period as full of miscommunication and persuasion between the chief, council, people of Chemawawin and the Forebay Committee. Whether this miscommunication was deliberate on the part of both levels of government is unclear.

By 1963 the Chemawawin people's new town site on the southeast end of Cedar Lake was being organized and prepared. Very few locals were hired to help construct buildings needed for the new town site. Philip Chartier remembers his work as a laborer and carpenter on several of the homes built for the people of Chemawawin: "I did labor like the cutting round the shore too. Then sometimes I used to work as a carpenter when they started building houses, and there were not that many like today, there weren't that many. I wanna say about 50 houses, no maybe not even but I'll say 50. I was 17."⁶⁸ There was some work for a handful of men during the construction period of the new townsite, but this was merely temporary work leading up to the relocation period. A small number of houses and two schools were built in preparation for the arrival of families in August of 1964. In preparation for the relocation most families were told to pack what they could carry and then burn their homes. A few homes were relocated to the new

⁶⁵ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 55.

⁶⁶ Stanley Warner, "The Cree People of James Bay: Assessing the Social Impact of Hydroelectric Dams and Reservoirs", *Social and environmental Impacts of the James Bay Hydroelectric Project*, ed. James F. Horning (Montreal, QB: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 96.

⁶⁷ Nancy Mink, "Life story interview".

⁶⁸ Philip Chartier, "Life story interview".

townsite due to their 'newer' construction. Construction was scheduled to continue into the post relocation period.

In August of 1964 the people of Chemawawin were forcibly relocated from their original land at the mouth of the Saskatchewan River to the southeast end of Cedar Lake. The relocation period was an extremely emotional time for the people of Chemawawin. Most didn't want to relocate, especially the elders who lived the majority of their lives along the mouth of the Saskatchewan River with their families.⁶⁹ Like all elders interviewed, Emma Ballantyne remembers the people's view of the relocation, as she states:

They didn't like the move, they didn't want to move. But they had to move because they were flooding the land. No one was given a choice. You had to move. It was more like a demand. There were some that were brought by bombardier in the winter, people were brought in the summer by barge and then some were brought by plane and the ones brought by plane all they were able to bring was their clothes and what they could carry. There were quite a few who protested but they had no choice.⁷⁰

Three modes of transportation were used to transport people, belongings and several homes from the 'old post' to what is now the town of Easterville (named after then-Chief Donald Easter⁷¹). During August of 1964 people and belongings were primarily brought by boat and plane across Cedar Lake. Several of the houses transported for continued use in Easterville were transported by large barge-like boats, Nancy Mink remembers the relocation transportation as she states:

⁶⁹ Elsie Fiddler, "From Cedar Lake to Easterville: Mourning for What my People Lost", *Nation to Nation: Aboriginal sovereignty and the Future of Canada*, ed. John Bird, Lorraine Land and Murry MacAdam (Irwin Higher Education, 2001), 149.

⁷⁰ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

⁷¹ Waldram. *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 90.

When they relocated some of them were relocated by plane to and from the community. And then I remember there was a boat that... one of those big boats and it was to transfer at least three or four houses from the community to here for Easterville. And then one of them they lost in the water. They lost my husband's brother's house. Not all houses were brought over, just some of them. And then they started building more houses and took I don't know how many... three years till people moved to their new houses. We didn't have that power till after.⁷²

The town site of Easterville was not completed by the time the people of Chemawawin were relocated. Some houses were built and some were properly relocated, but not all. Many families were forced to share homes until all homes were built. The provincial government and Manitoba Hydro's construction teams failed to finish homes and town buildings with the proper electrical work and sewage arrangements in 1964. The town of Easterville officially opened August 22, 1964 but construction continued for years after the relocation. Smooth gravel roads were completed years after the relocation to allow for access around the town site.

Aesthetically, Easterville was not what the people of Chemawawin expected. The land the people received was the opposite of their 'old post' land they inhabited for generations. Easterville was nearly resource-less and lacked the physical beauty of their old land. Easterville's landscape was comprised of bedrock and stone with dispersed wooded areas and hills of sand. Grass was nonexistent, nor was there the healthy soil the Chemawawin people were used to for their gardens. The pastures promised in their agreement did not exist, nor were they being constructed with hope of growing luscious grass for the following years. All elders expressed

⁷² Nancy Mink, "Life story interview".

their memories surrounding their first year in Easterville, all compared Easterville to their beloved birthland.⁷³ Malcolm speaks to the lack of natural resources in the area:

A long time ago at the old post to hunt was really plentiful and you didn't have to go far. Here you have to go far and spend a lot of money on gas before you're able to find a moose to kill, not like in the old post. Even trapping there's not that much now, before it used to be plentiful and there was a lot of areas where we used to trap but then when Hydro flooded the land they flooded the areas where they used to do their hunting and trapping, and berry picking.⁷⁴

Trapping and hunting proved difficult in and around Easterville, as the land seemed barren of animals small and large. The section of the lake nearest Easterville proved fishable but did not produce nearly the amount of fish commercial fishermen were used to from their old fishing locations. The new town brought few new amenities to the people of Chemawawin as the townsite slowly came together through continued construction after the relocation. Families were placed in homes on small properties, aligned like a small cramped town. At the 'old post' families lived with larger sections of land between homes, land that allowed for storage of fishing equipment, gardening, and grazing area for their horses. Easterville resembled a Eurocentrically planned town with very small personal properties and western buildings. The 'downtown' section of the town included a church building, a school, a nursing station, office for chief and council and a grocery store. A sawmill was also built to assist in Chemawawin's economy but was located an estimated 30 kilometers from Easterville at Denbeigh Point.⁷⁵

⁷³ Sally Bourassa, "Life story interview".

⁷⁴ Malcolm Thomas, "Life story interview".

⁷⁵ "Sawmill lies unused after \$138,000 plan", *Winnipeg Tribune*, February 25, 1970.

From 1964 to 1967 the people of Chemawawin settled into their new homes amidst the continual construction of the townsite and social trauma caused from the relocation. Oral promises made pre-relocation by government representatives and Hydro workers remained unfulfilled for years. Hydroelectricity was installed in homes years after the relocation, one of the few items from the long list in the agreement that was implemented before 1970. The people of Chemawawin worked to adapt to their new environment but quickly found their new land was not economically productive. The land continued to fail to produce hunting and trapping opportunities comparable to what they were able to produce at the ‘old post’.⁷⁶ This forced several families back to the old land plot during trapping season.

Travel to the ‘old post’ was not cheap and families quickly noticed the destruction caused by flooding, not only to the land and water but also to the animal population. Several elders remember the loss of animals due to flooding.⁷⁷ Malcolm Thomas remembers boating to the old land plot after the flood in 1964: “After we relocated I went back and I went driving around the rivers and stuff. I saw a lot of moose that drowned. In one area I would see three or four moose that had drowned. It killed a lot of animals when they flooded the area.”⁷⁸ Post-flood animal populations all throughout the flood area of Cedar Lake and the mouth of the Saskatchewan River were viewed as low by local hunters and trappers.⁷⁹ Trapping and hunting became a hard task, no longer sustainable due to forced flooding of the land and water.⁸⁰ Fishing proved just as difficult for the once-successful commercial fishermen of Chemawawin. The fishing location along the townsite was not productive like the old fishing locations near the old land plot. This

⁷⁶ Larry Kusch and Wayne Glowacki, “Paradise Lost”, *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 31, 2010.

⁷⁷ Sylvia Chartier, “Life story interview”.

⁷⁸ Malcolm Thomas, “Life story interview”.

⁷⁹ Canada, “Relocation of Aboriginal Communities”, 466.

⁸⁰ Mary Agnes Welch, “Trapper Suing for \$64 Million”, *Winnipeg Free Press Newspaper*, February 2010.

forced fishermen to travel further to fish, which became costly due to higher fuel consumption. Fish populations weren't initially affected by the flood but fishermen themselves were. The waters of Cedar Lake became dangerous to travel due to crumbling shorelines and floating debris which included: full-length adult trees, logs, branches, old reef, chunks of shoreline and pieces of old infrastructure. Debris tore expensive nets and damaged boats.⁸¹ Commercial fishermen were unable to keep up with the costs associated with the continuation of fishing on Cedar Lake.

By 1968 the continuation of unfulfilled promises and grave effects on the Chemawawin economy prompted Chief and council to act. Former Chief Walter Mink and council sought legal help. They hired Winnipeg-based lawyer Harry Pollock, who explored their Letter of Intent with the Forebay Committee. The Chemawawin Chief, council and people had previously viewed the Letter of Intent as an agreement between them and the government. During the time of its original creation they were uneducated in western legal and governmental practices and therefore trusted the Forebay Committee would create a document to ensure the long-term wellbeing of their people. This was not the case. The Forebay Committee failed to create a proper legal agreement between both levels of government and the Chemawawin Nation, so the letter of intent became just that in the eyes of the government: a letter of intent as opposed to a binding agreement.⁸² The Forebay Committee could not be sued due to its non-legal form, so the Chemawawin Nation alongside Harry Pollock took legal action against the provincial government of Manitoba.⁸³

⁸¹ Michael McGarry, "Indians Face Major Problems in Relocating", *Winnipeg Tribune*, February 22, 1969.

⁸² Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 6.

⁸³ Gary Scherbain, "Indians Suing Provincial Gov't", *Winnipeg Tribune*, September 1, 1970.

Legal battle continued for well over a decade while Chemawawin Chief and council continued to fight for what their people were owed: their full land exchange⁸⁴, reserve status, gardens, pastures and more.⁸⁵ The people view the physical destruction of their land and water and the forced relocation to barren land as directly linked to the social changes that occurred to the people of Chemawawin. During this time the people of Chemawawin became restless as the forced relocation and removal from their homeland caused their community connection to change in negative ways. Nancy Mink and Malcolm Thomas believe the loss of connection to the resource-rich, healthy, sustainable homeland greatly affected the social economy of the Chemawawin. Community connection and health drastically changed by the 1980s. The barren lands of Easterville, alongside trauma faced through the forced relocation, caused social ills in the community. Nancy Mink states:

The old post was very good and it was very comforting to be there, people were so good to each other. It's not like here in the community, it's very different from what it was back then. People used to leave their doors open and no one would go and ransack, here you can't even go anywhere even in the day time. It was very different, it was good over there. We didn't have very much but people... they were happy with what they had. They had a good life over there.⁸⁶

Community connection faded over the first decade in Easterville.⁸⁷ Families were stressed while forced to work much harder to provide the basics for their families. Social assistance didn't exist in the community prior to the relocation, but after the relocation many were forced into it to keep

⁸⁴ "Indians Picket", *Winnipeg Tribune*, October 5, 1970.

⁸⁵ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 108.

⁸⁶ Nancy Mink, "Life story interview".

⁸⁷ Ronald Niezan, "Power and Dignity: The Social Consequence of Hydro-electric Development for the James Bay Cree", *Canadian Review of Sociology* 30, no. 4, (1992): 8.

their families fed through use of the store. The store brought more western food options but did not provide the healthy options the community was used to from their old resource-rich sustainable land, lake, and river. With the introduction of roads and connection to highway 6 in the 1980s, higher amounts of alcohol and hard drugs entered the community.

Prior to 1964, substance abuse wasn't viewed as a problem or present thing among the Chemawawin people. All of the elders remember the introduction of alcohol and drugs into the community⁸⁸. Emma Ballantyne speaks to the interaction of drugs and trauma caused by the forced relocation: "It has affected the community, it had a negative impact. In the old community there were no alcohol and drugs and when we moved there was a lot of that here. The kids nowadays are into that and it seems like they're getting worse."⁸⁹ Sally Bourassa remembers alcohol and tobacco use at the 'old post' as she states "Before no one used to drink or if it was anyone smoking it was the old men that used to have the pipes. Today there's a lot of alcohol and drugs. There was once in a while at Christmas or New Year's we would make a home brew, but only once in a while. We used to call it Mok. We would put in yeast and raisins and such."⁹⁰ Alcohol was not new to the people of Chemawawin -- they created home brews prior to the relocation period and drank only during celebratory events. The introduction of drugs and alcohol during a time of continual trauma caused a systematic effect to occur for many in the community and led to the growth in substance abuse in Easterville.⁹¹ Michael Landa examined the growth in use of alcohol in Easterville during the post-flood, late 1960s period. In his case study on the people of Chemawawin he examined a major increase in consumption of alcohol in

⁸⁸ Sylvia Chartier, "Life story interview".

⁸⁹ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview".

⁹⁰ Sally Bourassa, "Life story interview".

⁹¹ Martin Loney, "Social Problems, Community Trauma and Hydro Project Impacts", 242.

the community. He considered the cause to be the trauma the people of Chemawawin faced through the relocation (and continued to face in Easterville), not simply the accessibility of alcohol.⁹²

Violence seemed non-existent to the people of Chemawawin prior to the forced relocation. Families worked together and helped one another through all forms of natural obstacles. The introduction to Easterville, its resource-less land, and the introduction of dangerous substances caused a chain reaction that led violence to grow among the people of Chemawawin.⁹³ Violence grew throughout the decades as Chief and council continued legal battle with the government to obtain what their people were in need of and owed. Landa believed violence stemmed from the increase in alcohol use due to the traumatic relocation. In Easterville he viewed abuse cases, a loss of family connection and an overall breakdown in social structure among the Chemawawin people. His informants (local Chemawawin people) stated this all began to occur with the move to the Easterville townsite.⁹⁴ Emma Ballantyne views safety as a major issue in Easterville. She believes it has been for decades now, as she states:

At the old post there wasn't really anything to worry about... like you had peace of mind and stuff. But here now, like my house, somebody shot at my house but it shot through four walls right through and I'm always worried and constantly concerned about what's going to happen especially with all the drugs that's been coming near the community.

⁹² Michael J. Landa, "Easterville: A Case Study in the Relocation of a Manitoba Native Community" (Manitoba Heritage Theses – University of Manitoba, 1969): 67-68.

⁹³ Martin Loney, "The Construction of Dependency: The Case of the Grand Rapids Hydro Project", Page 71.

⁹⁴ Michael J. Landa, "Easterville: A Case Study in the Relocation of a Manitoba Native Community" (Manitoba Heritage Thesis – University of Manitoba, 1969): 68-69.

There's so much worry for the safety of the community and my family. Because you never know when somebody's going to drive by and shoot at your house or whatever.⁹⁵

All the elders spoke of how the drastic social and economic changes that occurred with the move to Easterville brought violence, substance abuse and a loss of community connection to the Chemawawin people. The social impacts continued to worsen throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. Chemawawin Chief and council continued their legal battle against the provincial government well into the 1990s in a continual attempt to gain all the items they were promised verbally and in writing. This battle continues today through the work of the current chief and council.⁹⁶ A battle the Nation has fought for well over forty years and will continue to until all demands have been met for the continued overall health and wellbeing of their community.

The people of Chemawawin were generationally connected to their environment at the 'old post' economically, socially, physically and mentally. After 1964, social impacts were entwined with drastic physical environmental and economic change for the people of the Chemawawin Nation. Their forced relocation not only caused physical change in place but also drastic economic change, which later affected community emotional connection due to higher stress and continued trauma.⁹⁷ The provincial government failed to properly partner with the Chemawawin Nation on Manitoba Hydro's resource manipulation plans, instead resorting to the use of classic colonial tactics. These colonial tactics included the creation of the "middle-man" group, the Forebay Committee, an all-white group of officials who were supposed to protect the

⁹⁵ Emma Ballantyne, "Life story interview" ..

⁹⁶ Larry Kucsch, "Political Persuasion", *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 28, 2010.

⁹⁷ Ronald Niezan, "Aboriginal Self-Determination and the Cree Pursuit of Northern Flood Agreement Implementation" in *First Nations and Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba: The Northern Flood Agreement: Issues and Implications*, ed. Chodkiewicz, Jean-Luc and Jennifer Brown (Winnipeg, MB: Rupert's Land Publication Series, 1999), 84.

interests of the people of Chemawawin while they continued to work directly for government. This group failed to arrange a proper, legal document to ensure the long-term wellbeing of the Chemawawin people after their forced relocation to Easterville.

The people of Chemawawin still have a broken relationship with Manitoba Hydro. To this day Manitoba Hydro has not attempted to reconcile with the community or create a proper partnership. The original letter of intent prepared by the Forebay Committee remains partially unfulfilled. Current Chief Clarence Easter and the Chemawawin council continue to plead and battle Manitoba Hydro into fulfilling its original agreement. Thus trauma derived from the forced relocation was intensified through poor government approach, which included an inadequate townsite selection, failure to ensure and protect the interests of the Chemawawin people, and the failure to implement promises written to ensure the overall wellbeing of the Chemawawin people post-relocation.

South Indian Lake:

Social Impacts Stemming from Continual Colonial Struggle

South Indian Lake is one of Manitoba Hydro's best-kept secrets. The lake itself, formally known as Southern Indian Lake, once spanned over 2000 kilometers of beautiful shoreline that included hundreds of kilometers of sandy beach and healthy reef visible from the shore through pristine, clear water. This image of the lake is hard to believe today. In 1968 Manitoba Hydro proposed several water diversion options with the Government of Manitoba, including the Churchill River Diversion. This massive project involved the construction of a series of dams, dykes, channels, and control structures to divert water from the Churchill River south into the Nelson River in order to increase water flow through existing and planned hydroelectric generating stations. Although the Churchill River Diversion was approved by the Government of Manitoba in 1973, Manitoba Hydro chose to move forward with construction of the diversion path prior to obtaining provincial approval of a water license. The original water license Manitoba Hydro asked for would have given them the right to unnaturally raise the water level on Southern Indian Lake by thirty-five feet (ten meters). After continual protest and legal action by the people of South Indian Lake, alongside allies and a broader public outcry, Manitoba Hydro was forced to accept a license to raise the lake no more than an estimated ten feet (three meters). Manitoba Hydro raised the lake's water level for the first time in 1976, flooding 1500 square kilometers of land surrounding the lake.⁹⁸ Not only was most of the community forcibly relocated from their original land, but the people also witnessed the loss of harvestable crop and

⁹⁸ James B. Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run: Hydroelectric Development and Native Communities in Western Canada* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1993) Page 119.

medicinal land, incredible loss of animals due to drowning and forced relocation, destruction to fish populations due to death and relocation, and serious pollution of the water. Sadly, this was only the beginning of their troubles with Manitoba Hydro.

The Government of Manitoba failed to protect the land, water, ecosystem and people of South Indian Lake from a diversion that has reshaped and destroyed the lake, land, overall ecosystem and economy of their people. Prior to the diversion and flooding of Southern Indian Lake the people of South Indian Lake lived a sustainable, productive livelihood through their thriving commercial fishing industry. Men, women and children all sustained continual work whether through commercial fishing, trapping, hunting or through work in the community.⁹⁹ The community was close and everyone worked in some way to ensure the wellbeing of all families within the community. Today the lake is exactly what community members predicted it would become. The lake continues to lose shoreline as it continues to collapse into the water, trees, clay, rock and all. Islands that stood in place for centuries move from place to place and then become consumed by the unnaturally fluctuating water levels. A lake that once produced the second highest amount of whitefish in North America now barely produces enough to feed a community. South Indian Lake, a community that once thrived from the sustainable personal and commercial use of the land, water and social economy, now turns to social assistance to survive.

The destruction of land and water was fought by members of the community in the early 1970s as Hydro attempted to push forward the Churchill River Diversion. From 1965 to 1995 Manitoba Hydro used colonizing tactics to overpower community resistance and ensure that it was able to build the Churchill River Diversion. The diversion raised the lake level an estimated

⁹⁹ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 118.

three meters, flooded large areas, and led to the destruction of land, water, and the social and financial economy of South Indian Lake and its people. In this chapter I will discuss the history of social impacts greatly intertwined with the destruction of sacred land and water in South Indian Lake, Manitoba.

Three overarching themes will be discussed in this chapter: ‘modernization’, colonization and government relations. For the first theme, ‘modernization,’ I have chosen to place the word in quotation marks to note that one culture’s view of modern advances should not overrule another culture’s view and understanding of modern advances (this will be explained further in this section). Under this theme I also provide a historical overview of the physical, social, and economic reality of South Indian Lake from the 1940s to the 1970s. The second theme will encompass the second section, colonization. In this section I give a historical overview of South Indian Lake from 1976 to the 1990s. This section will bring light to the mass destruction the lake, land and community have undergone because of Manitoba Hydro’s Churchill River Diversion and the drastically altered levels of Southern Indian Lake. In discussing this I will also address the social impacts that stem from Manitoba Hydro’s past colonial approach to resource management relations and its image in the community of South Indian Lake. I use the term “colonial approach” to encompass practices of divide and conquer, Eurocentric hierarchal behavior, and threatening acts. The use of the term “divide and rule” alone fails to include the continual Eurocentric hierarchal behavior and intimidation the people of South Indian Lake faced from the late 1960s into the 1990s. The third section is themed government relations and here I will discuss more closely the divide and rule techniques Manitoba Hydro used throughout the creation period of the Churchill River Diversion in the community of South Indian Lake.

I would like to again acknowledge and thank the individuals whose quotes are in this article, for their words were the guide on which I based this chapter. The members of South Indian Lake whose memories complete and inform this chapter include Hilda and William Dysart, Oscar Anderson, Rick Dumas, Flora Thomas, Robert and Calvin Baker, Steve Ducharme and Ross Moose. I cannot bring full justice to the history of South Indian Lake for it would encompass a whole book. My hope is for this chapter to be the start of a larger project in the community to fully capture the history of a once sustainably thriving community and pristine lake.

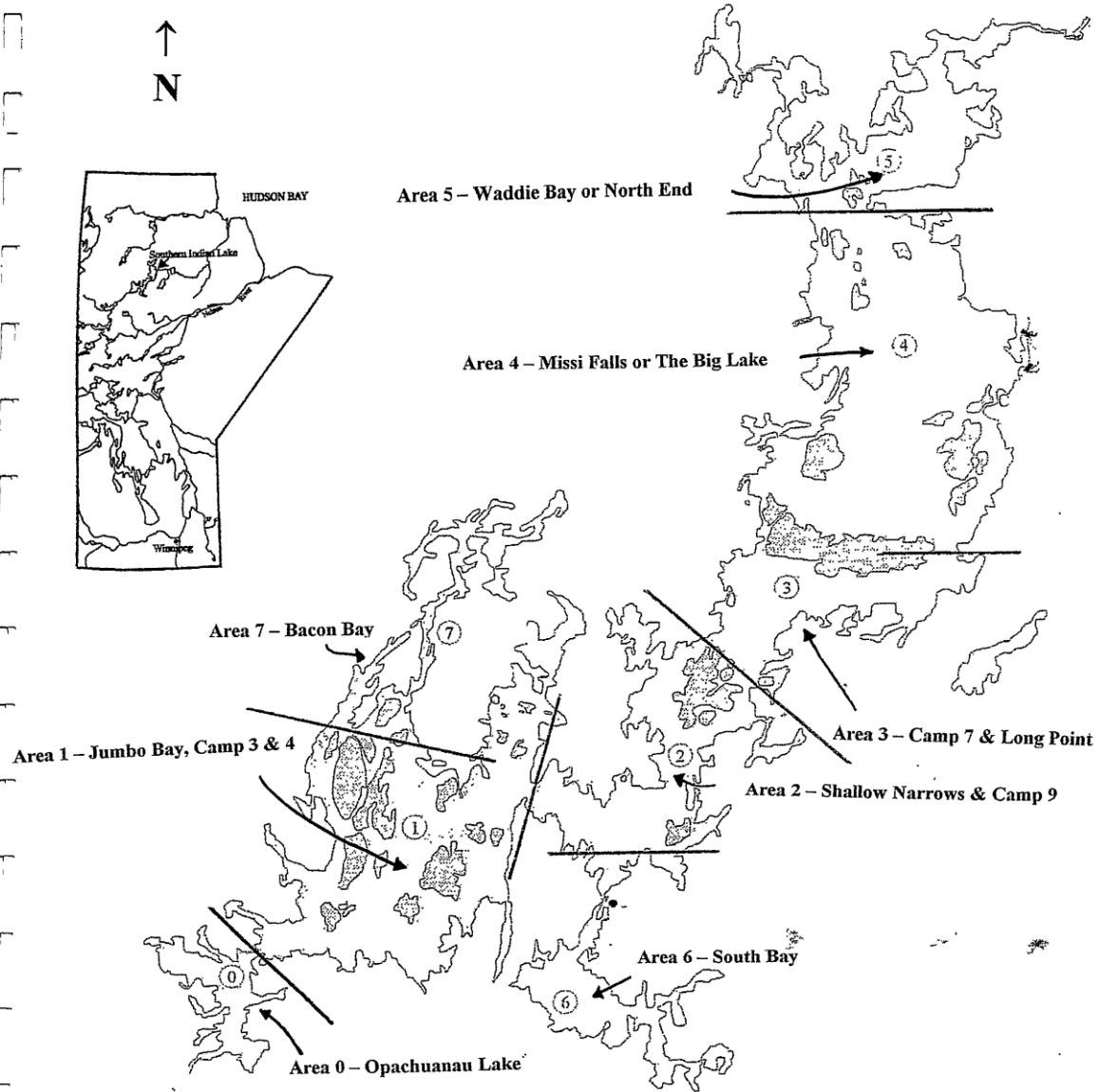


Figure 1. Southern Indian Lake showing scientific areas and traditional names.

The exact origin date of the current South Indian Lake settlement is unknown but its estimated creation lies within the 1800s. The current community is said to have been created through the fur trade's entrance into the region. The ancestors of many who continue to reside in South Indian Lake today were heavily involved in the northern fur trade. Dr. James Waldram notes the Hudson's Bay opened a trade post on Southern Indian Lake in 1803. This post only lasted an estimated 20 years but brought further attention to the flourishing economic potential of the northern region.¹⁰¹ Groups of non-native trappers cycled through the area throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These non-Indigenous trappers (presumably primarily male) found comfort in the nearby native community of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House First Nation). There is a deeply rooted historic relationship between the people of South Indian Lake and Nelson House First Nation. Many from South Indian Lake are descendants of Nelson House due to the intermarriage of non-Indigenous trappers and Nelson-House-based Indigenous women during the fur trade period.¹⁰² These married men brought their wives to the traplines surrounding South Indian Lake and later settled due to the resource-rich potential of Southern Indian Lake and its surrounding ecosystem.

The population grew throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries so successfully the Hudson's Bay Company reopened on the banks of Southern Indian Lake to accommodate the trade within the region by 1919. Local trade through trapping and fishing drove the early economy of South Indian Lake until the opening of the commercial fishery of South Indian Lake in 1942 through Tom Lamb (a local entrepreneur and pilot). A fishing co-op

¹⁰¹ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 117.

¹⁰² Hilda Dysart, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, November 20, 2017.

owned by the people of South Indian Lake replaced Tom Lamb's commercial fishery in the 1960s. No matter their success, legally and politically the people of South Indian Lake were viewed as a town site, not a reserve. They were not appointed reserve status, nor given the opportunity to have their land surveyed. This reduced the people of South Indian Lake to the title of "squatters"¹⁰³ in the eyes of the provincial government of Manitoba. Though their ancestors inhabited the land prior to the beginning of the Nelson House band treaty negotiations in 1908,¹⁰⁴ the people of South Indian Lake were left unrecognized legally and politically. The provincial and national governments continued use of their colonial divide and rule approach in denying the people of South Indian Lake reserve status through treaty regulation claims. The government based its position on the people's descent from Nelson House as well as the high mixed-race population, which forced the people of South Indian Lake to sign with Nelson House. This left many within South Indian Lake only covered by their treaty status under the Indian Act,¹⁰⁵ while the metis population remained unrecognized under the metis title.

Southern Indian Lake is an estimated 80 miles long with a fluctuating width due to the long and winding shape of the lake. Prior to the creation of the Churchill River Diversion Southern Indian Lake's south basin shoreline was comprised of large rock faces, high bedrock and boulder beaches. The North Sandhill Bay (north end of lake) region was known for long stretches of wide sandy beach shoreline that community members remember walking along and playing on as children. What is now known as the South Channel of the lake was an estimated six feet wide and was one of the locations where families went to focus on hunting and trapping.

¹⁰³ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 118.

¹⁰⁴ "Treaty Five", Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Accessed March 20, 2018.
<http://www.ncncree.com/ncn/treatyfive.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 137.

All the knowledge keepers interviewed remember the lake prior to the flood period. Hilda Dysart specifically remembers the channel and how narrow it once was, as she states:

What they call the South Bay Channel now used to be a just small -- I wouldn't even call it a river, it was a creek. It was probably five or six feet wide and maybe six to ten inches of water on there because when we used to come through there my brother-in-law and the other gentlemen, whoever he was with at the time, we would all have to get out of the canoe and walk along the shore while they pulled the canoe with whatever we were bringing back from the trapline, all the equipment they needed. So and it was such a beautiful site, you walked along the shore, there were tall willows there and the blackbirds, you could just see black on the willows because there were so many blackbirds, and red wing blackbirds.¹⁰⁶

The land surrounding the lake at one time held a variety of land types and vegetation. Vegetation was plentiful around the lake and in the bordering wooded regions. The lake was lined with boreal forest black spruce, white spruce, trembling aspen and willow vegetation that was home to a variety of birds, including water fowl. A variety of berry bushes, moss breeds and grass lined sections of the higher shoreline that produced mineral rich soil ideal for further planting¹⁰⁷. The lake was filled with islands, some attached to the shoreline through sand beach drifts, others located in the mid-section of the lake. Vegetation on the islands was consistent with boreal forest spruce and varieties of bush. Many islands were especially known for their pristine soil and were used for planting further vegetation through use of garden plots. Families created gardens and transplanted items they viewed useful for either medicinal purposes or as a food source.

¹⁰⁶ Hilda Dysart, "Life story interview".

¹⁰⁷ D. Moffatt, W. Schick and J. Lamb, "Recreation Assessment: South Indian Lake", *Manitoba Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs* (1973): 25.

The wooded areas and shoreline were home to a variety of animals including moose, caribou, wolves, bears, muskrat, beaver, otter, porcupine, mink and water fowl that included a variety of geese and ducks. Tree-dwelling birds were diverse and lined the tree line in several areas around the lake and in the wooded areas, including black crows, red winged blackbird eagles, seagulls and more. The shoreline of the lake, swampy bays, and reefs provided food for the water fowl and shoreline dependent animals such as the muskrat and beaver. The majority of the families living along South Indian Lake trapped both to feed their families and to support their household income.¹⁰⁸ Animals were plentiful for trapping along the shoreline of South Indian Lake. Steve Ducharme remembers muskrat living in the bays of the lake, as he states:

The muskrat have been almost completely wiped out on this lake. You see one or two pushups, they call them, in the bays, but before this little bay right where the fish plant is used to be just full. We used to spend a lot of time there in the springtime catching muskrats. And across in these bays here, lots of muskrats. They were easy to catch, and in walking distance, good eating. It depended on the season, there were different seasons [for trapping]. In winter time it was mostly mink they were after. Yeah and then in the springtime muskrat, beaver, otter, but mink used to be pretty good price.

Men and their families were able to bring in more than enough animals for use for food and trade through use of very basic equipment. Young men partnered with their fathers on registered traplines until they were old enough to register for their own. Children and youth were able to trap locally but were unable to trap deep in the bush. At the age of 21 youth could apply for registered traplines that allowed them to trap deeper in the bush. William Dysart remembers

¹⁰⁸ John Bonner, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, February 9, 2018.

trappers using minimal equipment, but still producing hundreds to thousands of animals through use of the basic traps.¹⁰⁹ Trappers involved in the fur market traded locally with the Hudson's Bay community store and provincially at the auctions held in nearby townsites. The majority of trappers in the community trapped to supplement their income from fishing.

Hunting was primarily used by families to acquire meat. Animals such as moose and caribou were hunted in the bays and along the bush line. Hunting only occurred on an "as-needed" basis, founded on a sustainable hunting ethic that ensured the continuity of the larger animal populations in the region. Moose could be found in bays along the lake and in shallow swamps. They fed off the shoreline and tall grasses and plants in swamps. John Bonner, Robert Baker and William Dysart remember animals being plentiful for the hunt in and around the lake prior to the 1980s, as John states:

Almost every shore you looked at there were sand beaches, miles and miles of sand beaches, and bays and such. A lot of willow, willow vegetation. Mostly fish and seagulls and stuff like that, crows and eagles, moose. Any time you could go out in your canoe and get yourself a moose. Like every year my dad would just get in his canoe and go out for the day and he'd come back in the evening with a moose.¹¹⁰

Specific animals were hunted as part of trade by some members of the community, but hunting was not as intensively pursued as trapping and fishing.¹¹¹ Animals hunted for the hide trade included wolves, mink, lynx, moose, caribou and bear. Hunting during the 1960s to 1980s was done mainly by use of guns.

¹⁰⁹ William Dysart, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, November 20, 2017.

¹¹⁰ John Bonner, "Life story interview".

¹¹¹ William Dysart, "Life story interview".

As is clear from the above, community members relied heavily on Southern Indian Lake for both personal and commercial use. Indeed, the whole life of the community centered on the lake – its economy, social life, recreation, and wellbeing were all founded on the beautiful and bountiful waters that gave the community its name. Families fished the shorelines and larger sections of the lake for generations to feed their families. The majority of fishing production on larger sections of the lake was for commercial use. Fishing employed over 80 percent of community members in South Indian Lake. An estimated 130-150 community members from South Indian Lake were licensed fishermen in the 1960s. During this same time an estimated 700 people resided in the community. Each licensed fisherman employed a crew of two to five people; crew size was dependent on the size of boat and the average load of fish. Fish camps were set along Long Point, Jumbo Bay and Lou Narrows.¹¹² Lou Narrows was the main fish camp throughout the main spring and summer fishing season. Shacks made of logs and lumber were set up as temporary homes along the fish camp sites. Fish shacks contained beds and a stove to keep crews warm throughout each season. These shacks often became home to families during the main fishing season as families joined to help keep the production moving and the fish camps in order. Steve Ducharme remembers Lou Narrows resembling a town during high season, as he states:

Yeah, the old fishing camp used to be up at Lou Narrows, used to be like a little town with a generator and everything. We'd go there at night, you used to see lights. It had everything, was like a little town. Cabins all along, all over the place. They had garages there and bunk houses. And in the summer time we had two big boats, you probably seen

¹¹² Ketaskinow Technical Fieldworks, "South Indian Lake Fishermen's Association: South Indian Lake Shoreline Catalogue Report", (September 15, 2000).

one of them parked up on the hill there. There was two of them that hauled fish from Lou Narrows to Leaf Rapids fish plant. And they had a hard time keeping up, too. They hauled 500 boxes at that time.¹¹³

The commercial fishing industry on South Indian Lake supplied jobs to members of the community through the various steps fish production required. Licensed fishermen went out on the water in large canoes or boats. They then prepared and set their nets in various locations in the lake. Then they checked their nets and brought their fish in by the bucket load. It was ideal to have at least two men be a part of this process. One crew member brought the fish in from the net, while another packed the fish in the buckets to be transported to shore. Once on shore other crew members prepared the fish on ice and then properly packaged it into ice boxes.

There were four main fish buyers on South Indian Lake throughout the year. The main commercial buyer remembered by community members was Chupka Industries. The number of buyers would increase occasionally throughout the year to six or seven as other buyers passed through the lake. Commercial buyers used boats in summer and bombardiers, dog sleds and snowmobiles in winter and spring to transport fish once purchased from licensed fishermen. Once fish was packaged on ice in boxes, fish buyers would inspect the fish prior to buying. Once inspected and priced, the process repeated and fish was then repackaged on ice and transported.¹¹⁴ The preferred type and size of fish purchased was Grade A medium. Ninety per cent of the catch was medium light or dark whitefish and walleye. William Dysart and Steve Ducharme remember the grading process used by the commercial buyers, as William states:

¹¹³ Steve Ducharme and William Dysart, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, February 13, 2018.

¹¹⁴ Steve Ducharme and William Dysart, "Life story interview".

Just below four pounds, that was the large. After four pounds it was called jumbo. Some jumbos were 15 pounds. If the lake limits were caught before the end of March, their winter limit, buyers would establish a camp inland for different lakes away from South Indian as long as it was feasible for pickup. During that spring thaw they used to fish [in] April. The old transportation was towards Lynn Lake, by air or by bombardier. What we call the bombardier is the one that would take over 2000 pounds of fresh fish. They used to travel night and day. The production used to be so high the whole lake used to have eight bombardiers or so with different teams, people used to use dog teams or snowmobiles too.¹¹⁵

Commercial fishing provided almost year-round employment for most fishermen and crew on South Indian Lake. The lake was fished in the winter and spring months, then into the summer and late fall. The early freeze came over the lake in late October, which halted fishing until January, when the ice fishing season began. Men often took leave from fishing once late October arrived. At this time they returned home to help their families prepare for winter, which included cutting wood. They then entered the bush to trap throughout the early winter, often trapping up until the Christmas holiday period.¹¹⁶

Commercial fishing on South Indian Lake provided families sustainable employment year-round. An economic report was created for the Manitoba Economic Authority in 1967 by Van Ginkel Associates Architects Planning Association and Economic Consultants Hedlin, Menzies and Associates LTD. The report showed the annual income of an employed fishermen

¹¹⁵ William Dysart, "Life story interview".

¹¹⁶ Steve Ducharme and William Dysart, "Life story interview".

in South Indian Lake was \$4000.00¹¹⁷ (today equal to over \$30,000). The report compared this to the average annual income of an Indigenous person living in the North, which was verified as \$500.00 (today equal to under \$4000.00¹¹⁸). Commercial fishing on South Indian Lake allowed for the sustainable growth of the community economy.

The lake water was pristine and held a variety of fish that were plentiful all throughout the lake prior to the 1980s. Community members remember the clarity of the lake water, both around the community town site and in the larger section of the lake where they fished commercially.¹¹⁹ It was so clear they could view fish swimming from standing along the shoreline or through looking through ice fishing holes in winter. The main commercial fish camp region was in an area locally known as Lou Narrows. William Dysart remembers the water at Lou Narrows, along one of the fish camp areas:

At Lou Narrows, they call it here, I think I was about nine years old. We lived in some shack up here, my family. And my dad says ‘I’m going out to set a couple nets, chop some holes, to set nets for tomorrow, come with me’. He chopped the first hole and said ‘Okay I’m going to go walk up and chop another hole. You look in there and tell me what you see after’ he says hey. And it was just like looking at an aquarium, 20 feet of water maybe 25. Fish swimming around, you know. Clear as a whistle that water.¹²⁰

The lake was filled with a variety of freshwater fish that the community used for both food and commercial use. The fish most prominently available in the lake were two types of whitefish

¹¹⁷ Van Ginkel Associates Architects Planning Association and Economic Consultants Hedlin, Menzies and Associates LTD, “Transition in the North: The Churchill River Diversion and the People of South Indian Lake”, vol 2, Winnipeg, (1967): 31.

¹¹⁸ The Inflation calculator, Accessed on March 27, 2018, <https://westegg.com/inflation/>.

¹¹⁹ Robert Baker and Calvin Baker, “Life story interview”, Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, February 13, 2018.

¹²⁰William Dysart, “Life story interview”.

(light and dark), walleye, northern pike and tullibee. Other fish existed in the lake but were not used regularly for personal or commercial use by community members.¹²¹

The community town site was in the south bay of the lake. Community members lived on both sides of the bay and along the islands in homes their families built. The community only became politically recognized by the provincial government in 1971 when it was approved as a municipality. Prior to 1971 the community ran soundly without use of a formal governance structure; families worked together to ensure the wellbeing of the community overall. Prior to 1971 the people of South Indian Lake were viewed by the provincial government as ““squatters” on provincial land”¹²².

Most of the homes were made of logs and bush material and housed families throughout all seasons. Families built garages alongside their homes where they housed their fishing and trapping equipment. The insides of homes were either left as one large room or separated into several rooms, depending on the family. All homes had wood stoves that heated the homes throughout the fall and winter months. Several of the knowledge keepers interviewed remember the cellar-like areas in their childhood homes.¹²³ Cellars allowed for the preservation of food for longer periods of time. Hilda Dysart remembers her family home and its layout, as she states:

Most houses like I know in those days were one room, but like I said I was born on the island and the one I grew up in, I remember it was one of the bigger houses in the community because it was built with lumber but it wasn't even big enough for our family

¹²¹ M.W. Wagner, “Post-impoundment Change in Financial Performance of the South Indian Lake Commercial Fishery”, *Canadian Fish Aquatics Science*, Vol 41 (1984): 718.

¹²² Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 118.

¹²³ Flora Thomas, “Life story interview”, Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, November 20, 2017.

and there was a build-on kitchen with logs after that. But the bigger part of the house, it was closed off about half way and like that would be like a bedroom for my mom and dad but there was another bed on the other side. And on one side this main room had a big stove but it also had homemade beds like for my other siblings that I dunno there was beds on this side, beds on this side and then the big stove and then the door going to the kitchen.¹²⁴

Families worked together to keep the wood stove burning throughout the cold season and to keep the household warm and supplied. The oldest children were most often in charge of collecting wood and did this often, if not daily, to keep the fire burning consistently and keep the home well heated. Mothers and their children preserved fruit, vegetables, meat and fish that allowed for a consistent supply of food throughout the winter months. Little ones helped with similar chores, including bringing the water from the lake. Prior to the 1980s the water was never filtered, since it was clear and consumable and used as part of various chores outside of simply hydrating the community.

Families worked together to ensure the wellbeing of not only their own family, but also of the whole community. This was especially true for elder care. Many community members remember their parents teaching them to respect and care for elders in the community through checking in on elders or taking elders food. Rick Dumas remembers his parents teaching him and his siblings this, as he states about family roles: “Everyone had a role, even the kids. My parents would go around and deliver food like rabbits or fish to elders and they were not that much older than them my parents, hey, so I got to know the elders very well and they got to know me.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴Hilda Dysart, “Life story interview”.

¹²⁵ Rick Dumas, “Life story interview”, Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, November 21, 2017.

The notion of community was strong prior to the 1980s. Families could rely on each other to help, most times without even asking for assistance. ‘Community’ meant being there for one another to keep the community healthy and safe.

Many families kept gardens or planted seeds on nearby islands to harvest and grow various root vegetables. The most commonly grown fruits and vegetables were potatoes, carrots, onions, turnips, rhubarb, squash and strawberries. Robert Baker remembers Hilda Dysart’s father and others using an island that was between the communities for growing potatoes and strawberries. The island was nicknamed Potato Island by members of the community.¹²⁶

The Cree and Metis people whose families lived off the land and water of Southern Indian Lake for generations were aware of their direct emotional and physical connection to the land and water. Their culture revolved around sustainability and longevity of the lake and land they believed they would inhabit for generations to come. Being raised on the banks of Southern Indian Lake brought forth a special connection to the lake for community members. The community held a social and financial economy that sustained their people through strong social and kin ties and sustainable year-round employment based on community jobs, commercial fishing and trapping. Technology of the time was used to assist work processes on the trapline and out on the lake. A form of modernization was occurring in and around the community of South Indian Lake. Community members used modernization on their own terms, a sustainable form that allowed for the continuation of life as they knew it. From the 1940s to the 1980s the people of South Indian Lake led a healthy and sustainable life through use of traditional

¹²⁶ Calvin and Robert Baker, “Life story interview”.

conservation methods over their land and water. They continued use of traditional knowledge sources while incorporating modern technologies that aided their work and day to day lives.

From the 1960s to the 1980s ‘modernization,’ as understood by southern dwelling western settler society, grew through the continued development of new technology and goods. These technologies and goods were created to assist individuals and families in completing day to day tasks of family and work life. At this same time the need for luxuries such as electricity grew rapidly alongside the production of gas-powered vehicles. Western society and governments believed they knew what all individuals needed, and they viewed their form of modernization as the only form acceptable for growth of the province.¹²⁷ Harmonious coexistence was not an option for most rural First Nation and Metis people living in northern Manitoba during this time. By the 1960s government and local corporations invested further in resource development and the ultimate reshaping of the northern landscape of Manitoba for the benefit of southern society.¹²⁸

The 1950s and 1960s produced grave reality for land, water and people in northern Manitoba as crown corporation Manitoba Hydro organized massive growth of hydroelectric development for several large water systems. Planning of the Churchill River Diversion began in the 1960s under the management, research and direction of Manitoba Hydro. Research done during the 1960s focused on creating the most cost-efficient diversion possible so to save the province and taxpayers money in the long term. Dr. James Waldram notes that “it was widely

¹²⁷ Stanley Warner, “The Cree People of James Bay: Assessing the Social Impact of Hydroelectric Dams and Reservoirs”, in *Social and environmental Impacts of the James Bay Hydroelectric Project*, ed. James Horning (Montreal, QB: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 94.

¹²⁸ Doris Young, “Northern Manitoba Hydro Electric Projects and Their Impact on Cree Culture”, in *People and Land in Northern Manitoba: 1990 Conference at the University of Manitoba*, ed. Lithman, Y.G., R.R. Riewe, R.E., Wiest, and R.E. Wrigley (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers 32, 1992), 19.

believed that the product of the development would be cheaper electricity for all Manitobans. Industry and consumers alike would benefit.”¹²⁹ Early diversion plans failed to properly determine the long-term effects the manipulated water levels would have on water bodies, land and people involved. Manitoba Hydro and its research and project staff failed to view the reality behind cost-efficient project savings that had the potential to increase the ultimate destruction of land, water and the lives of several communities. In 1963 Manitoba Hydro approached the government of Manitoba and an agreement was signed later that year that approved a funding partnership for the diversion project between the utility and the province.

From 1965 to 1975 Manitoba Hydro conducted several physical surveys of land and water along the Churchill and Nelson Rivers. These surveys merely focused on the basic shoreline structure and water pressures needed for sustaining hydroelectric development.¹³⁰ Surveys failed to research the long-term effects the altered water flows would have on the water system itself, the surrounding land’s ecology, and the people inhabiting the surrounding area. Research done by Manitoba Hydro and its contracted companies allowed for several options to be considered for the Diversion path. Several less invasive options were found out of the original 10 diversion routes. These non-invasive options would have allowed for the creation of electricity without causing severe damage to the water system, surrounding land, and communities inhabiting the region.¹³¹ Most of the less invasive options included use of the north section of Lake Winnipeg, where a dam and control station would have allowed for Lake Winnipeg to spread the raised water levels proposed for Southern Indian Lake.¹³²

¹²⁹ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 119.

¹³⁰ Manitoba Hydro, “Churchill River Diversion: Environmental Studies”, Accessed March 28, 2018, https://www.hydro.mb.ca/corporate/water_regimes/churchill_openhouse_09/environment.pdf.

¹³¹ “Gov’t Picks Low Level Power Scheme”, *Winnipeg Free Press* (Winnipeg, MB), May 26, 1972.

¹³² “Diversion Plans Worry Craik”, *Winnipeg Free Press* (Winnipeg, MB), May 11, 1972.

From 1968 to 1972 provincial caucus members clashed over different aspects of the Churchill River Diversion. The New Democratic (NDP) provincial government continued to brush off the under-researched long-term effects the project would bring. Premier Edward Schreyer was at the forefront of the partnership between Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government throughout his career as premier, from 1969 to 1977.¹³³ He and his caucus members played a direct role in approving the project amidst continual scrutiny from opposition parties, the public, local academics, and the community members of South Indian Lake. The Schreyer government failed to inform the public of the five diversion project options brought forth from 1967 to 1969. Many of these options were less invasive, but cost was estimated to be slightly higher than the diversion path chosen.¹³⁴

Community members remember Premier Schreyer, his provincial travel team and Manitoba Hydro representatives visiting the community beginning in 1969. Community members remember promises Schreyer made during presentations to the community, promises of modern ‘advances’ that the government believed would help the community. Oscar Anderson recalls,

They [Hydro and government representatives] flew in here just about every day. Schreyer was on saying ‘the greatest thing is going to happen to you, you’re going to walk into your house, you don’t have to go into the bush, cut wood or anything, just turn the heat

¹³³ “Ed Schreyer”, Canadian Encyclopedia, Accessed March 14, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/edward-richard-schreyer/> January 15, 2008.

¹³⁴ “Gov’t picks low-level power scheme”, *Winnipeg Tribune* (Winnipeg, MB), May 26, 1972.

on, electric, man you've got it made!' That's the blush show, that's the front. Didn't tell us you need to have a bank account to keep this running.¹³⁵

Oscar believes the 'modern-day advances' government officials and hydro workers promised worked to win several community members over to the proposed Diversion deal. The promises made did not include an explanation on how to keep these new modern amenities running for use by future generations, though. Nor did it include an explanation of the long-term destructive effects the diversion would have on the overall lake health and community economy.¹³⁶ No legitimate plan was created to ensure the healthy future of the community of South Indian Lake. Reports created merely suggested studies be done post-diversion creation to determine an economic plan for the community.¹³⁷ Modern 'advances' are now viewed in a negative light by community members like Robert Baker, as he states:

Electricity is important, but is it, when we have to destroy nature, and so much of nature? Hydro doesn't care about anything but the finances. I dunno how lucky we were, when the Hydro guy came he said, 'You'll be lucky, all you gotta do is reach, flip the toggle switch there and the light will be on. No more greasy oil to fight.' It's not that, though, we don't care about that. We'd rather light up our little candle and have our hot tea right there.¹³⁸

Hydro and government representatives visited the community from 1969 to 1975 to conduct studies and inform the community on project updates. Half of the community was set to be

¹³⁵ Oscar Anderson, "Life story interview", Interviewed by: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, November 20, 2017.

¹³⁶ "Gov't Plans for South Indian Lake 'dark blot in history': Liberal", *Winnipeg Tribune* (Winnipeg, MB), May 9, 1969.

¹³⁷ Moffat, D., W. Schick, and J. Lamb, "Recreation Assessment: South Indian Lake", Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (November 1973): 3.

¹³⁸ Robert and Calvin Baker, "Life story interview".

forcibly relocated due to the level to which Hydro planned to flood the lake once the diversion regulating dams were completed. The majority of visits made by Hydro representatives to the community were about the forced relocation and transportation of new infrastructure.¹³⁹

Opposition party leader Gil Molgat (PC) and opposition members Don Craik and David Cass-Beggs were among several Progressive Conservatives against the diversion project's license agreement and path. They believed the government failed to properly research the exact plan chosen, knowing this could allow for unacknowledged grave results for the land, water and people of the area. Several members of the opposition spoke against the project through several forms of press, including the *Winnipeg Tribune*. On May 26th, 1972 the *Winnipeg Tribune* quoted David Cass-Beggs on how and why the Schreyer government chose the exact diversion plan for the Churchill River system. Cass-Beggs stated, "Because the 10-foot diversion appeared to be the cheapest alternative, he said, it was accepted".¹⁴⁰ It was clear to the opposition party, academics, the greater public and the community members of South Indian Lake that the number one focus of the then NDP provincial government and Manitoba Hydro lay in keeping costs low. Reducing the cost of the project was viewed as more important than protecting the livelihood of the people of South Indian Lake, the land in the region and the lake's health. The capitalist mindset that guided the government during this time failed to understand the larger system at risk, placing the importance of resource development ahead of everything else.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Hilda Dysart, "Life story interview".

¹⁴⁰ "Gov't Picks Low Level Power Scheme", *Winnipeg Tribune Newspaper* (Winnipeg, MB), May 26, 1972.

¹⁴¹ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, 2014), 55.

In 1972 the Water Resources Branch of the provincial government of Manitoba granted Manitoba Hydro the procedural license for the Churchill River Diversion project.¹⁴² The final decision marking the exact route of the Churchill River Diversion was made in 1973 by Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba.¹⁴³ By 1973 Manitoba Hydro was able to acquire an Interim Water Power Act License, a Water Rights Act License and a Navigable Water Protection License. These licenses allowed Hydro access to begin development of the Churchill River Diversion. Construction began in various spots along the diversion path in 1973.

Construction of the Churchill River Diversion occurred from 1973 to 1976. During this time the community faced continual resistance from Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government of Manitoba as they fought to keep their lake and sustainable local economy from being destroyed. Located on the north end of South Indian Lake, Missi Falls was the site of a dam that would allow for the regulation of water levels on the rest of the lake. Hydro claimed “that it is much more economic to divert some of the Churchill flows into the Nelson than to build generating stations on the Churchill River.”¹⁴⁴ The diversion path was based solely on the economic benefit the project brought to the rest of the province, instead of following a diversion path that cost the province more but could save the province from land, water and overall community destruction. The Fishermen’s Association (now the Community Association of South Indian Lake) fought Manitoba Hydro in legal battles throughout the 1970s in attempt to enforce environmentally safe water level regulations for South Indian Lake. The fishermen and community members knew what destruction would occur if water levels were not properly

¹⁴² Manitoba Hydro, “Churchill River Diversion”, Accessed March 28, 2018.

https://www.hydro.mb.ca/corporate/water_regimes/churchill_river_diversion.shtml.

¹⁴³ “Session Won’t be Lightning Fast, Thanks to Hydro”, *Winnipeg Tribune* (Winnipeg, MB), March 3, 1973.

¹⁴⁴ Manitoba Hydro, “South Indian Lake: Information Bulletin” (1975): 2.

regulated and then maintained at specific levels. They were aware of the destruction that could occur from attempting to manipulate nature. Hydro representatives openly told the community that their livelihood, land and water were being sacrificed for the benefit of the rest of the province.¹⁴⁵

Hearings involving the community of South Indian Lake and interested public were held from 1968 to 1980. Community members continued to express their concerns, while urban-based academics, activist groups and church groups supported them in hearings held at Nelson House First Nation and in Winnipeg.¹⁴⁶ The public outcry and concern were ignored by Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government as they moved forward in their plans to flood the lake. Hearings held by Manitoba Hydro or the Government of Manitoba are viewed by community members as tactics to cover future allegations due to unforeseen destruction or problems stemming from the Diversion.¹⁴⁷

In 1975 the community was informed that they would be forcibly relocated. They were instructed to gather what they could carry, then burn their homes and garages.¹⁴⁸ Community members fought back in attempt to save their homes, garages, and the land their families inhabited for generations. Hilda Dysart remembers standing her ground when Hydro attempted to force her family out of their home:

Like I realized myself that this was wrong because they were coming in trying to tell us what to do, trying to tell us where to live and I knew that was wrong and that shouldn't be happening but some of our people didn't know that. They didn't like it but they went with

¹⁴⁵ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 126.

¹⁴⁶ Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 122.

¹⁴⁷ "Buchwald Says Weir Gov't Broke Faith", *Winnipeg Tribune* (Winnipeg, MB), May 22, 1969.

¹⁴⁸ Flora Thomas, "Life story interview".

it and some of that was with the dollar, you know, they were resisting it but at the same time they were pretty much being paid to move out. And I resisted quite a while, I did not... I think I was the last person to move across this lake and I had Hydro officials flying with a helicopter from this side of the lake to the other just to come and talk to me and tell me that I had to move and I know I didn't have to move. I had rights, I didn't need to do that. And you know with... I had four little kids then, yeah I had four and I think my oldest son was maybe seven at that time, I could be wrong, I'm figuring stuff out right now, but they were just so adamant in saying 'you have to move across the lake' and I would tell them 'no, I don't have to go anywhere, I don't want to go'.¹⁴⁹

Hilda remembers Hydro officials using her children against her in attempt to force her off her property. The officials informed Hilda that her children would not be able to attend school if they did not move to the other side of the community. In response Hilda told them this would be their fault due to their attempt to manipulate the water and in turn flood the land, therefore they should have come forth with alternative ideas. Hilda and William Dysart, along with several other families, were eventually forced off their properties with only the belongings they could carry in their arms. Hilda and William are the only family that continue to live in their original home due to Hilda's lengthy and consistent protest which secured the movement of their home from its original location to where it sits now. Hilda remembers her protest and her reasons behind its end:

So at the end I finally caved in, it was because of my children that I did that. But I made sure that ... because they were just plopping people all over the place -- 'this is your new

¹⁴⁹Hilda Dysart, "Life story interview".

house, this is where you live'. I said, 'No I don't want any of that, I'm not used to living like that'. So it ended up that I chose a spot for where my house was going to be and they had to clear the area out, make a road into here and actually move my house from across the lake and this is the same house I live in today.¹⁵⁰

Manitoba Hydro forcibly manipulated the community of South Indian Lake to relocate to its current location along the southeast shore of the lake. Community members' original land plots allowed them healthy space to grow gardens and have storage through use of garages and sheds. The new land plots forced the community to live in cramped space with little to no personal land or even room for a garden or garage. In 1975, after all community members were properly relocated to the town's new site, the Missi Falls dam opened, allowing for the water levels of Southern Indian Lake to reach unnatural heights.¹⁵¹ This prompted the beginning of what is now viewed as the complete destruction of the lake's ecosystem.

Public hearings were held by social organizations and public groups in alliance with northern First Nation communities to be affected by the Diversion project. On September 24th and 29th, 1975 public hearings were held by the Inter-Church Task Force in Winnipeg and Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House First Nation), allowing open public input on the project, its procedural process and its predetermined outcomes. These hearings were held by the Inter-Church Task Force to give all affected community members a space to voice their concerns. The provincial government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro failed to hold public hearings on the diversion, merely focusing on the South Indian Lake Ad Hoc Flood Committee to obtain the community's consent. The South Indian Lake Ad Hoc Committee assembled in

¹⁵⁰Hilda Dysart, "Life story interview".

¹⁵¹ William Dysart, "Life story interview".

1968 “to begin discussion amongst themselves”¹⁵² on the Diversion and the potential effects to their land and water. The September public hearings revealed mass concern over the proposed Churchill River Diversion path and the unannounced long-term effects on communities. Several members of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and South Indian Lake recognized the financial payoff the project would bring their communities but were also aware of the short lifespan this financial payout would have. It would not replace the stable, long-term incomes they achieved through fishing and trapping sustainably for generations. They expressed great concern over the potential long-term disastrous environmental effects the project could produce once operating.¹⁵³ The health of the land, water and animal population was at the heart of discussion and its irreplaceability in comparison to Hydro’s short-term compensation payout.

The 1975 relocation period was only the beginning of a lengthy broken relationship between the community of South Indian Lake, the Fishermen’s Association (Community Association of South Indian Lake) and Manitoba Hydro. The Fishermen’s Association continued its legal battle against Manitoba Hydro from 1970 well into the 1980s, as overall destruction of the surrounding land and lake ecosystem become more and more evident. Destruction of land and water occurred fast with the rapid elevation of the lake’s water levels. Environmental research conducted from 1965 to the opening of the Missi Falls Dam in 1975 failed to properly present long-term shoreline and water quality changes. Community members’ extensive local knowledge of the land and water allowed them to predict exactly what would occur once the water levels were unnaturally regulated. John Bonner and Rick Dumas were children during the Diversion hearings but still remember them happening. John states:

¹⁵² Waldram, *As Long as the Rivers Run*, 122.

¹⁵³ Inter-Church Task Force, “Report of the Panel of Public Inquiry into Northern Hydro Development: Transcripts of Hearings”, (1975): 22.

When I was younger [I] started hearing about the proposed Hydro development, I guess in about 1969, and there was protests happening at that time against the hydro development and in one article I read stated that they were surprised at the resistance we developed in those early years. ‘Cause they didn’t hear very much from the other communities until after we started to fight.¹⁵⁴

Residents of the community of South Indian Lake stood their ground against Hydro in a continual battle to obtain the compensation and infrastructure they were originally promised and owed.¹⁵⁵ They continued to push for the proper regulation of natural water levels on South Indian Lake from 1975 into the 1980s, as the unnaturally fluctuating lake levels caused destruction throughout the ecology of the water and neighboring land.

By 1980 the lake was unrecognizable to residents. The negative effects of unnaturally high-water levels on South Indian Lake produced exactly what residents feared and warned the government of. The raised water levels caused the lake to swell and spread. This swell consumed the beautiful beaches and hundreds of acres of land residents cherished and relied on as part of their economic foundation. The natural shoreline disappeared under high water levels as the water swelled up to the tree-bordered, peat-moss and dirt-based rim of the lake. The ecological makeup of the lake edge quickly became unstable, which caused continual death of shoreline trees and the ongoing collapse of the newly created mud and peat moss shoreline.¹⁵⁶ Treefall into fresh water is a natural environmentally friendly phenomenon when naturally occurring at the end of a tree’s life but when this occurs on an unnatural level en masse it is profoundly harmful

¹⁵⁴John Bonner, “Life story interview”.

¹⁵⁵ “Twenty-Five Protesters March to House, See Enns”, *Winnipeg Tribune Newspaper* (Winnipeg, MB), May 22, 1969.

¹⁵⁶ R.E. Hecky, R.W. Newbury, R.A. Bodaly, K. Patalas, and D.M. Rosenberg, “Environmental Impact Prediction and Assessment: The Southern Indian Lake Experience” *Canadian Journal of Aquatic Fish*, no. 41 (1984): 728.

to the overall ecological makeup of a freshwater system.¹⁵⁷ This can similarly be said for the collapse of the unnatural peat-moss and mud-based shoreline into the water.

Residents of South Indian Lake were aware of the long-term effects this would have not only on the water but on themselves. The once-pristine, clean water transformed into a chunky mud milkshake filled with floating trees and sunken islands. High water levels and changing water currents created shifts in the layout of the lake's islands, causing reefs to shift and islands to sink beneath the surface or gradually erode and slump into the lake. By the 1980s the lake had become unpredictable and unsafe for travel due to masses of underwater debris and shifting island bases. Sunken trees and islands posed a major risk to fishermen, trappers and those simply traveling in boats around the lake. Lives have been lost throughout the years to winter and summer travel due to unpredictable surface interference and floating debris. Winter travel became just as dangerous as summer travel, with the unnatural freeze and thaw pattern the lake developed due to unstable water levels leading to unpredictable thin ice. Residents travelling by snowmobiles or bombardiers were forced to risk their machines and lives to get to their fishing locations and traplines.¹⁵⁸ Growing up on the lake Rick Dumas was able to view the changes in travel safety as water levels continued to fluctuate. He states,

People used to be able to travel everywhere and it's so different compared to now. They have to mark out safe trails just to move safely through certain areas. Before it was, everywhere was safe to travel, but with the water, the flooding, everything like that it's just because of the spawning grounds washed away because of too much water but then

¹⁵⁷ Anne Mcilroy, "Mercury Levels Tied to Logging Practices", *Globe and Mail*, March 29, 2017, Accessed April 5, 2018. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/mercury-levels-tied-to-logging-practices/article4145393/>.

¹⁵⁸ Ross Moose, "Life story interview", Interviewed By: Erin Yaremko, Northern Community Archives Project, February 13, 2018.

sometimes it's too dry and stuff like that. So it's the water's the main issue, the big picture. Every time something comes up it's the water, Manitoba Hydro regardless. Even with the safety of our travels on the water. Islands that have sunk, washed away, eroded away.¹⁵⁹

The generational geographical, ecological, and biological knowledge of the landscape and water was lost due to the unnatural reshaping of the land and waterscape. The lake was completely transformed and in turn the lives of the people living around and off it. Travel safety issues were merely a part of the larger system of impacts created by the Diversion project and the flooding of Southern Indian Lake.

The destruction continued into the 1990s due to Manitoba Hydro's Augmented Flow Program. The interim water license awarded to Manitoba Hydro by the provincial government gave Manitoba Hydro authorization to fluctuate water levels through specific identified levels. Manitoba Hydro applied for fluctuation increases to the interim license throughout each decade, though, to push the limit of the lake.¹⁶⁰ These requests were continually approved by provincial ministers over time without regular proper exploration of long-term effects.¹⁶¹ The continually changing water levels continued to cause further massive erosion to shoreline and islands, which in turn affected water fowl and fish spawning sites. The ecology of Southern Indian Lake was completely changed over a short period of five years due to the manipulated water levels. Collapsing shoreline debris, reefs and sunken islands all impacted the lake's overall ecosystem. Shoreline-reliant animals disappeared due to mass drowning and lack of food, including the

¹⁵⁹ Rick Dumas, "Life story interview".

¹⁶⁰ Community Association of South Indian Lake to Manitoba Canadian Energy Commission, (January 12, 2018): 3.

¹⁶¹ Shawnigan Consultants Inc. and Intergroup Consultants Ltd., "Augmented Flows at Southern Indian Lake: An Analysis of the Water Regime and the Feasibility of an Environmental Impact Assessment", sec 1 (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Northern Affairs, April 1987): 1-2.

muskrat, beaver, otter, marten, and shoreline-reliant bird populations. Traplines set around the lake were greatly affected due to the sudden and tragic shortage of animals.¹⁶² The disappearance of water-bordering animals was only the beginning of ecological loss on and around the lake. The most devastating effects brought forth by the diversion were only beginning, as a cascading destructive systemic effect continued to grow throughout the late 1970s into the 1990s. The collapsing shorelines and overall changed biome of the lake forced fish populations into unnatural migration paths and killed off animal populations that attempted to continue to live off the lake.¹⁶³

Prior to the flooding, the fish used the natural shorelines and reefs of the lake as breeding grounds. The continually collapsing shorelines suffocated any breeding grounds available, in turn causing rapid fish population decline/collapse over a short period. Adult fish that remained in the lake during the flood period lost their feeding grounds to mass debris and shifted islands. Fish that survived consumed items unnatural to them and in turn became sick and unusable for commercial fishermen or even for local consumption. Like several local commercial fishermen¹⁶⁴, William Dysart learned the local knowledge surrounding fish spawning and feeding patterns through his work as a fisherman. He states:

Majority of the fish I think, normal levels, they spawn to a certain depth. But it's been known by us and Manitoba Hydro for years that whitefish spawn at a certain level, if the water drops down in the fall them spawned eggs won't get a chance to hatch or survive because either they freeze to the rocks or they're covered by silt. I think it was in the 80s [the Department of] Fisheries [and Oceans] used to tell me only one percent survived,

¹⁶² Shawnigan Consultants Inc. and Intergroup Consultants Ltd., "Augmented Flows," Sec 4, p. 6, Item 4.2.2.

¹⁶³ Shawnigan Consultants Inc. and Intergroup Consultants Ltd., "Augmented Flows," Sec 4, p. 4, Item 4.2.1.

¹⁶⁴ Ross Moose, "Life story interview".

spawned by fish. Shortly after the 80s they demolished that program [of] Fisheries and Oceans 'cause it was a disaster to the government, Manitoba Hydro.¹⁶⁵

Manitoba Hydro continued its studies surrounding the environmental impacts of the Diversion project throughout the flood period. They became aware of the grave effects the lake's unnatural level manipulations had on the fish population, which prompted a specific study of the fish spawning on the lake. The fish spawn study program showed exactly what the Fishermen's Association predicted, a drastic decline in fish production on the lake. Fishermen worked harder and longer hours to attempt to bring in the healthy harvests they had prior to the flooding but were unable to do so due to the collapse in fish stocks.

The near complete destruction of the lake's biome drastically impacted the fish population's health. The fish fishermen brought in from 1979 into the 1980s were much lower grade than what had primarily been caught prior to the flood period. Prior to the flood ninety-nine percent of licensed fishermen's catch was Grade A whitefish, but the high population of healthy Grade A whitefish was cut in half after only five years of the Diversion operating. Fishermen struggled to produce even close to the sustainably caught whitefish percentage they had previously continuously brought forth to buyers.¹⁶⁶ Dark whitefish populations became more common as lighter, healthier whitefish failed to reach their natural feeding and spawning grounds, which continued to cause healthy fish populations to decline. Each year the fish population declined further with the continual weakening of the lake's overall health. The Fishermen's Association continued to push Manitoba Hydro to see the reality of the grave systemic effects the project had on the fish population. Manitoba Hydro financially assisted the

¹⁶⁵William Dysart, "Life story interview".

¹⁶⁶Wagner, "Post impoundment Change in Financial Performance of the South Indian Lake Commercial Fishery", 715.

South Indian Lake fishery for a decade in hopes the fish population would come back within a few years. The fish population continued to decline throughout the 1980s into the 1990s.¹⁶⁷

William Dysart was president of the Fishermen's Association during this time and remembers the agreements made between the Fishermen's Association of South Indian Lake and Manitoba Hydro, as he states:

See they hung up this idea that the fishermen got compensated in full, hey, but that's not the case. We got compensated to a certain point but we had to use that money to keep our fishery going. There was a lot of talk that it would come back [the high fish population] but it went straight downhill, the fishery. So it depleted our fishing company program, yet Hydro says they compensated the whole thing. Yeah, you compensated to keep it going for a while, just for the time being.¹⁶⁸

The Fishermen's Association tried to keep fishermen employed and paid during the time of fish decline but faced continual hardships in attempting to bring in enough fish for buyers.

Commercial fishermen were unable to keep up with the continual cost of replacement equipment needed due to the massive amount of deadfall, sunken trees, debris, and unstable lake bottom that destroyed nets and boat motors.¹⁶⁹ The destruction of the lake's biome and in turn the fish population occurred so rapidly that commercial fishermen were unable to adapt to the rapid change in their social and financial economy.

¹⁶⁷ Steven M. Hoffman, "Engineering Poverty: Colonialism and Hydroelectric Development in Northern Manitoba", in *Power Struggles: Hydro Development and First Nations in Manitoba and Quebec*, ed. Thibault Martin and Steven M. Hoffman (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 116.

¹⁶⁸ William Dysart, "Life story interview".

¹⁶⁹ Robert and Calvin Baker, "Life story interview".

The rapid changes that occurred from 1975 into the 1990s caused health to decline in the community of South Indian Lake. Mental health problems grew in the community, especially among commercial fishermen and trappers. Fishermen endured new stress they hadn't endured before. These stresses were not only from the devastation of the land and water, but also from their inability to produce even close to the loads they had from the 1940s to the 1970s. The social stress to keep their businesses thriving and their families fed grew every year. John Bonner and others¹⁷⁰ believe community members who lived through the relocation and initial flood period continue to suffer through post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁷¹ A level of generational trauma continues to plague families as they live in a completely changed environment and community.¹⁷² John Bonner reflects on the changes in mental health among community members, as he states:

There's more mental health problems now than there were especially prior to the flooding. Lot of people with traumatic post-traumatic stress syndromes and I think that's especially people my age, the transition from a domestic lifestyle into a sedentary urban setting that's quite different from what we're used to. So to be forced into small cramped urban setting without the makings of any kind of economy, like work to keep us occupied and earning a living, not there. Like I said, only work available now is seasonal.¹⁷³

Manitoba Hydro failed to properly study the long-term effects the Diversion would have on Southern Indian Lake overall, which in turn greatly affected the financial and in turn social

¹⁷⁰ Rick Dumas, "Life story interview".

¹⁷¹ Inter-Church Task Force, *Let Justice Flow: Report of the Interchurch Inquiry into Northern Hydro Development* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Aboriginal Rights Coalition 2001), Accessed January 7, 2018, 35-36.

¹⁷² Doris Young, "Northern Manitoba Hydro Electric Projects and Their Impact on Cree Culture", in *People and Land in Northern Manitoba: 1990 Conference at the University of Manitoba*, ed. Lithman, Y.G., R.R. Riewe, R.E., Wiest, and R.E. Wrigley (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Anthropology Papers 32, 1992), 17.

¹⁷³ John Bonner, in discussion with the author, February 9, 2018.

economy of South Indian Lake. The loss of a once sustainably flourishing economy based off the land and water and hard work of generations of fishermen and trappers meant nothing to Manitoba Hydro as it continued to push back at local groups asking for assistance.

The assistance Manitoba Hydro gave the community was miniscule in comparison to the community's loss. Assistance came in the form of small programs and financial grants (assistance for commercial fishermen and the South Indian Lake fishery) that became mismanaged by Manitoba Hydro or was quickly spent by the Fishermen's Association in the attempt to keep some commercial fishing alive.¹⁷⁴ Several small community programs were implemented and offered work to a small handful of people. A debris program was implemented to employ community members to clean the lake debris with use of their own boats. The debris program offered an estimated 30 positions seasonally for community members looking for employment; 30 positions in a community of 1000 people. Hydro hired the people whose economy it had destroyed to clean up the mess it made.

By the 1990s the community's job economy almost completely collapsed. From 1975 to 1995 employment in the community drastically dropped from 85-90% of the community employed to 80% of the community relying on social assistance.¹⁷⁵ Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba failed to replace a once prosperous, sustainable economy. People were used to hard work, but most opportunity was gone with the destruction of the lake and surrounding land. Steve Ducharme¹⁷⁶, Ross Moose¹⁷⁷, Robert Baker¹⁷⁸ and William Dysart all

¹⁷⁴ Robert and Calvin Baker, "Life story interview".

¹⁷⁵ Steve Ducharme, "Association Announces Collapse of Once Lucrative South Indian Lake Fishery", Nickel Belt News (Thompson, MB), April 22, 2016.

¹⁷⁶ Steve Ducharme and William Dysart, in discussion with author, February 13, 2018.

¹⁷⁷ Ross Moose, "Life story interview".

¹⁷⁸ Robert and Calvin Baker, "Life story interview".

spoke of the shift from full-time work to social assistance. They all also spoke of the government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro's failure to properly assist the community through this harsh time, as William states:

Less and less revenue from fishing, it dropped a lot of people into the poor house, hey. You had to rely on welfare [in] a lot of cases after the diversion. We've been talking to the government and hydro about the... but they seem to have a deaf ear to the effects. They don't want to believe it, even the engineers that do studies. They don't believe it. Hydro rather pay the engineer than compensate for the loss, they don't understand the loss. Whether it's revenue or land.¹⁷⁹

All knowledge keepers interviewed strongly believe Hydro and the government never fully understood the loss of land and water, and its direct connection to the people mentally, physically and economically. The connection and generational knowledge of the land was lost with the flood and its destruction of the land and water. Mental trauma grew within the community surrounding the destruction of their once sustainable, rich land and water. Reliance on social assistance grew to be the norm for more than 80% of the community with few local jobs.¹⁸⁰ Younger generations who were able to afford to leave and find work outside the community left, but many were unable to afford to do this, making social assistance the last resort.

¹⁷⁹William Dysart, "Life story interview".

¹⁸⁰ Statistics Canada, "Census Profile, 2016: South Indian Lake, MB", Accessed March 23, 2018, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4623037&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&Data=Count&SearchText=Division%20No.%2023&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All>.

Before their forced relocation in 1975 the people of South Indian Lake lived more than a sustainable life socially and financially off the surrounding resource-rich land and waters of Southern Indian Lake. The people of South Indian Lake modernized at their own sustainable pace to grow their economy through use of their sustainably successful commercial fishing business. Trapping was a successful supplement to commercial fishing and only added to the community's stable and growing financial economy. Aside from commercial harvesting activities, families sustained health through hunting large game, harvesting plants, and gardening, and they preserved food for the winter. All elders interviewed described life not as easy but as bringing families and the community together through the regular work. Life was sustainable, and families had all they needed to live day to day. A form of modernization was occurring in the community, a form of modernization that was moving the people of South Indian Lake forward at a sustainable, healthy pace.

Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba failed to create an ethical hydroelectric plan and in turn ultimately chose cost savings over the lives and economy of the people of South Indian Lake. Both parties used colonial tactics to manipulate the people of South Indian Lake into believing the relocation would cause no destruction to their lake-based economy and overall community structure. In turn, the Churchill River Diversion path chosen flooded Southern Indian Lake, which caused not only the forced relocation of the people of South Indian Lake but also the overall destruction of the lake and surrounding land. The destruction of the lake and land has caused a system of effects to plague the community. The almost complete destruction of their once-flourishing fishing economy, community connection, overall health and more cascaded from the destruction of the lake and land. Today, Manitoba Hydro continues to manipulate the water levels of Southern Indian Lake without proper consultation of the overall community or

the Community Association of South Indian Lake through its Augmented Flow Program. The lake is still unsafe for travel and fish production continues to be dangerously low, only worsening every year due to continual erosion of the shorelines.

Partnership Research: The Northern Community Archive Project

Since the original publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Council's Calls to Action in 2015, efforts by the national and provincial governments to address and tackle the calls to action have moved at a snail pace.¹⁸¹ In Manitoba the calls to action are being addressed by grass roots organizations and civic education groups who work to recreate education to further include Indigenous history in Canada; as well as the implementation of culture and language programs.¹⁸² The federal and provincial governments of Canada claim to have progressed with the TRC recommendations, but show little to no improvements in their implementations.¹⁸³ Partnership programs and research are slowly growing among First Nations and both levels of government, but continue to use top-down paternalistic strategies.

In my paper I will discuss the Northern Community Archive Project, a project I created in partnership with members from the Chemawawin First Nation and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation (South Indian Lake) in northern Manitoba. The project focuses on the creation of community archive spaces within each community that makes previously inaccessible information available to them. Alongside the digitization of physical files is the creation of oral history life story interviews in alliance with community elders. Indigenous communities in the north know what they need and academic partnership and alliance can assist them in growing and organizing their ideas into projects.

¹⁸¹ Rosanna Deerchild, "Curious about How Many of the TRC's Call to Action Have Been Completed? Check Ian Mosby's Twitter", *CBC News*, October 22, 2017, Accessed February 10, 2018. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/how-are-you-putting-reconciliation-into-action-1.4362219/curious-about-how-many-of-the-trc-s-calls-to-actions-have-been-completed-check-ian-mosby-s-twitter-1.4364330>.

¹⁸² Council of Ministers of Education, "Overview", https://www.cmec.ca/53/Indigenous_Education.html

¹⁸³ Maura Forest, "It's been Two Years Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report. Are the Liberals Living Up to Their Promises?", *The National Post*, January 8, 2018, Accessed June 19, 2018, <http://nationalpost.com/news/politics/its-been-two-years-since-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commissions-final-report-are-the-liberals-living-up-to-their-promises>.

Projects and research in partnership with Indigenous groups have occurred for decades in the social sector. Much of this work has focused on social urban programming, health and education. The literature and research has taken the same route in documenting work in these areas. It is a harder task to find articles or books solely focused on humanities-based Indigenous partnership research outside of urban centers. There has also been more focus and importance placed on simply writing about Indigenous issues as opposed to working towards healing the system in its entirety through long-term collaborative work. Dr. Sonya Atalay is an anthropology professor at the University of Massachusetts dedicated to collaborative research with Indigenous groups through anthropology. Although her work is written for anthropologists, the knowledge contained within is easily transferable to other research fields. Dr. Atalay's book *Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by and for Indigenous and Local Communities* is an informative guide for creating meaningful, long-lasting partnership projects that can continue to assist communities in productive ways.¹⁸⁴ She believes community research partnerships are mutually beneficial when created and sustained on mutual terms. No matter the period or research topic, she believes partnership research can assist researchers to view materials through a dual perspective while assisting communities through various areas. She speaks to how her Anishinaabe background has brought her especially close to projects she has worked on within the northern United States. One notable project included the repatriation of Anishinaabe remains through the U.S. Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), to the

¹⁸⁴ Sonya Atalay, *Community-Based Archaeology : Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 33-34.

Ziibwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways. These repatriated items continue to be a part of cultural and spiritual programs through the Centre today.¹⁸⁵

The Northern Community Archives Project

I am not an academic and I have always viewed academia as coming short of its birthright. Popular fields within the humanities are stereotyped for producing research and documents but come short in the production of programs or projects that do long-term social good. How can humanities fields like History be used productively in programs that promote long-term social good? This is something I pondered near the end of my undergraduate degree as I questioned my next step through education. How can history be viewed or used as a productive tool? Especially when researching or working on projects surrounding Indigenous people or other cultural groups historically wronged by researchers for decades. My next question was: How as a graduate student in a Master's Thesis program can I use my research in a way that benefits the communities I work with? The answer was not simple but was merely the beginning of more questions. Collaborative research was key in researching and writing the historical chapters of my thesis, so whenever a question arose I knew who to ask. All community partners were key to the research and any potential partnership project. My goal was to work with the communities to make all materials I collected for the research available to them (if this was of interest to them).

¹⁸⁵ Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 154.

The Northern Community Archive Project arose in June 2017. I, along with dozens of other academics and northern community-based individuals from Manitoba attended a gathering held by the Wa Ni Ska Tan: Alliance of Hydro-Impacted Communities in Norway House Cree Nation. At the gathering I spoke with several individuals from different First Nations communities in Manitoba, all involved in natural resource-based projects across the province. I conveyed my wish to leave copies of all information I discovered during my graduate research with the communities but wasn't sure of the best way to accomplish this. The need for accessible community-based archives became apparent during this discussion. I went forth with the partnership project approach when approaching the Community Association of South Indian Lake (O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation) and Chemawawin First Nation. Members from each community were interested in community-based archives, as it would allow the community access and control over an organized catalogue of documents previously inaccessible to them. We also spoke of a future repatriation and reclamation plan to be accomplished later in the project's creation process.

Three key words continuously entered our conversation: Accessibility, Reclamation and Repatriation. Our urban centers allow for accessibility of various social resources, whether physical or digitally accessible through the internet and continual cell service. These resources are not as accessible for all rural First Nations in Manitoba due to distance and finances. Archives and government holdings have restrictions that limit access due to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). Many open-access files can only be accessed at the provincial or organization's physical archives (digital online collections remain small and are often comprised of photographs and newspaper collections). Many of these documents and folders are regularly accessed by legal researchers hired by communities, a

continual process that wastes finances and is repetitive. This cycle of duplication wastes not only resource finances but also the time of community councils in organizing continual research and legal fees. This time and money should be redirected to create research facilities and jobs in every community so research can be localized.

Localized research access can allow for a dual perspective to enter research, therefore not only using physical documents but local community knowledge sources.¹⁸⁶ The majority of early documents and photographs concerning First Nations people held in archives and government holdings were created by settlers or colonial fur traders, researchers or government groups. Many of these documents hold a single perspective of First Nations people and can be improperly read or used by researchers or government groups.¹⁸⁷ These same researchers or government groups often misuse these documents or fail to write inclusive reports or research with use of these documents.¹⁸⁸ This can be changed through the reclamation of these documents, into the control of First Nations communities. These documents need to be reclaimed by First Nations people so that these documents are used properly and in a respectful manner, whether for the creation of historical data, curriculum creation or in legal work. Through the reclamation of documents, communities regain control over what groups analyze documents written about them or by them.¹⁸⁹ Margaret Kovach speaks to the integration of cultural identity and its advantages in

¹⁸⁶ Laura Reinsborough and Deborah Barndt, "Decolonizing Art, Education, and Research in the VIVA Project", page 161 in *Alliances: Re/Envisioning Indigenous-non-Indigenous Relationships*, ed. Lynn Davis (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

¹⁸⁷ Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing, 2007), 17.

¹⁸⁸ Patricia A. McCormack, "The Many Faces of Thanadelthur: Documents, Stories and Images", page 360 in *Reading Beyond Words: Context for Native History*, Brown, Jennifer H., Vibert, Elizabeth (Toronto, ON: Broadview Press, 2003).

¹⁸⁹ Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, 133.

allowing for a true dual perspective understanding in her published work *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*:

The proposition of integrating spiritual knowledge and processes, like ceremonies, dreams, or synchronicities, which act as portals for gaining knowledge, makes mainstream academia uncomfortable, especially when brought into the discussion of research. This is because of the outward knowing versus inward knowing dichotomy. It also has much to do with Western science's uneasy relationship with the metaphysical. Yet all ways of knowing are needed, and the Cree ancestors knew this.¹⁹⁰

Holding a deeper understanding of one's surrounding land and community history can assist in the proper interpretation of historic documents on these topics.¹⁹¹ This is especially true for the interpretation of fields like science and history. Bringing this knowledge and the responsibility of research back into communities can allow for a deeper, more complete report.¹⁹² Rural First Nations communities should hold access to files created on or surrounding their history in some form, so these materials can be used in their communities in various ways.

Archives and libraries across Canada use the document control and assessment system known as macro appraisal, which poses a second obstacle for First Nations communities attempting file access. The appraisal system is used by archivists and government officials to decide what files are kept for long-term preservation and what files are destroyed. With use of the macro appraisal system archivists no longer scan through whole documents or even partial

¹⁹⁰ Kovach, Margaret, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto University Press, 2012), 67-68.

¹⁹¹ Cara Krmpotich, "Remembering and Repatriating: The Production of Kinship, Memory and Respect", *Journal of Material Culture* 15 (2010): 160.

¹⁹² Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2007), 108.

documents to appraise boxes of documents. Archivists now locate three specific items of information to fill three main categories: folder institution, topic and client citizen involvement.

The late archivist and archival theorist Terry Cook believed archivists are the gate keepers to historical knowledge, shaping society's view of the past through selectively choosing files to keep and to destroy. He viewed the appraisal method and archivist training as extremely important, as he states: "The major act of historical interpretation occurs not when historians open boxes but when archivists fill the boxes, by implication destroying the 98 percent of records that do not make it into those or any other archival boxes. This is the great silence between archivists and historians. It is called archival appraisal."¹⁹³ In short macro appraisal aims to identify what is important to most of society at a distinct time, and archivists then follow the method's basic guidelines to decide what files are kept or destroyed.¹⁹⁴ Macro appraisal was created in part with theorists to create and manage work flow more productively for archivists (most continue to work in regularly under-funded provincial or institutional archives¹⁹⁵). This method does assist work flow for archivists but allows for destruction of hundreds of thousands of files that could contain valuable information to other groups. First Nations people need to be a key part in this process, especially when files that could be of importance to them can so easily be destroyed. Reclaiming boxes of files from provincial holdings and archive backlog sections should be key for First Nations communities in moving forward in this process.

¹⁹³ Terry Cook, "Remembering the Future: Appraisal of Records and the Role of Archives in Constructing Social Memory", in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, eds. Blouin, Francis X, and William G Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007): 171.

¹⁹⁴ Terry Cook, "Macro-Appraisal and Functional Analysis: Documenting Governance Rather than the Government", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 25:1, 5-18. 2004): 6.

¹⁹⁵ "Archivists Protest in Ottawa Over Federal Cuts", *CBC News*, May 28, 2012.

Historically archive and government holdings were the main repositories for documents deemed important to societal memory. During earlier periods archives followed top-down Eurocentric approaches to appraise documents, with focus on preserving documents created by government and corporations (fur trade, and other). Today archives across Manitoba and Canada are backlogged¹⁹⁶, which in turn forced appraisal methods to tighten. Repatriation can occur through making documents accessible through reclamation processes. Today there is more than a single way to do this and full repatriation of documents is not always the answer. Documents already incorporated into Archive collections should be digitally repatriated to communities for use in various areas. This is possible for many documents and boxes held in provincial holdings due to the lack of provincial archive funding in Canada, and sadly this is especially true in Manitoba. Through repatriating documents into communities, they reclaim control over documents, but also relieve some of the pressure from overflowing and understaffed archives.

I began partnership with members of the Community Association of South Indian Lake and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation in June of 2017 through regular phone conversations. South Indian Lake and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation are in northwestern Manitoba, an estimated 1078 kilometers from Winnipeg. Intern assistant Maddie Soldier and I visited the community in July of 2017. We were generously accepted into the home of William and Hilda Dysart. To this day I view each of my stays with William and Hilda as an ongoing educational experience (William and Hilda are continual sources of knowledge). I visited the community again in September, November and February. Each visit brought more opportunity for discussion with

¹⁹⁶ Alex Boutilier, "Library and Archives Canada Struggling with Backlog of Material", *The Star*, November 25, 2014, Accessed April 20, 2018, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/11/25/federal_library_struggling_with_backlog_key_records_poorly_files_auditors_find.html.

community members which assisted the growth of my research and the community archive project. Sadly, I could only visit the community every second month due to financial and driving constraints on my end; otherwise I would have visited monthly.

Accessibility to documentation and historical pieces is a continual problem for the people of South Indian Lake. The community has a traumatic past of relocation and a present horror of continued devastation to their lake and land through Manitoba Hydro's continued use of their lake. Members of the Community Association of South Indian Lake are in continual battle with Manitoba Hydro to save their land and water for future generations. Important documentation has gone missing over the last few decades due to forced relocation and an ongoing political divide in the community. Only a handful of families within the community have kept important historical documents safe and preserved through use of closet archives in their homes. These same families are now our project partners within the community due to their drive to preserve and make documents accessible to the rest of their community.

I began digitizing and collecting documents from Winnipeg-based archives in July of 2017. Later that summer during bi-monthly visits to South Indian Lake I collected boxes of documents from community members, which I then brought back to the city to digitize and organize into our catalogue system. We continue to digitize documents found in the community in alliance with community members with 'closet archives. This will allow us to make these often one-of-a-kind documents accessible to all community members and in turn preserve the documents for future generations. At this point the community archive contains almost 500 digitized copies of documents including: photos, audio recorded interviews, correspondence letters, government-created documents, archeological studies, and so forth. . Due to current funding constraints the archive in South Indian Lake will remain in the form of a digital storage

device to be monitored in partnership by the current Chief and the CEO of CASIL. It will be used primarily for curriculum creation and the integration of family community projects to be led by school staff and community elders. At this time we are unable to make the community archive completely open access to all members of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation and South Indian Lake due to the archive's proposed location in the school library. We are still awaiting the final physical placement of the archive into the school due to the current condition of the school and plans for a new school . The current digital archive will be used by the band council in partnership with CASIL towards legal action and for curriculum creation in the school. We are working towards a long-term sustainable plan for the archive in the community so have delayed the final physical placement of a full archival set up. We are still navigating our way through the physical infrastructure needs of the archive, once these plans are made final we will be implementing the archive into its permanent physical space.

My partnership with Chemawawin First Nation began in August of 2017. The northern community archive project was welcomed by Chief Clarence Easter and councilor Bill Hengemuehl. Both drove to the city to further discuss the project's role in their community. Chief Easter and councilor Hengemuehl expressed the need for growth of an accessible digital collection surrounding the community's history for use in curriculum, community-based projects and more. In September I made my first visit to Chemawawin First Nation and met with Chief Easter and all of council. At the meeting we further discussed the partnership project and brainstormed the exact information accessibility needs of the community and how they could be incorporated into the community archive. This meeting also revealed Chief and council's goal for the project as a long-term digitization and preservation project. Chief Easter and the Chemawawin council members continued to voice and show their commitment to the project in

the following months. We continue to meet to discuss the progress of the project and my continual battles to obtain Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) protected files for them.

Like the people of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin, the Chemawawin people have a traumatic history of forced relocation and devastation to their original land and water. Their governing Chief and council continue legal battle against Manitoba Hydro to obtain what they were promised during their relocation period. Due to their forced relocation the community has struggled to keep and obtain files created prior to or during their relocation period. Several Elders in the community have small closet archives, but in the past had no proper preservation tools to make these documents accessible for community use. Through partnership with the community we are in contact with these Elders who are interested in continuing to track down documents and photographs scattered throughout the community.

In July of 2017 I commenced my search through local archives and catalogue systems in pursuit of files connected to Chemawawin First Nation and their community's traumatic and complicated history. The search proved more difficult than the Chief, council and I expected due to the high volume of restricted files that remain in Manitoba's provincial holdings. Often files are released to provincial archives pending the passing of a specific period (Example: a 50-year period due to specific individual names).¹⁹⁷ This has proven to be a more complex procedure for files pertaining to First Nations communities affected by hydroelectric development in northern Manitoba. Council and I have come to assume these files hold the answers to many of their

¹⁹⁷ Library and Archives Canada, "Appraisal Methodology: Macro Appraisal and Functional Analysis Part B: Guidelines for Performing an Archival Appraisal on Government Records", *Government of Canada*, October 17, 2001, Accessed April 20, 2018, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/services/government-information-resources/disposition/Documents/MacroappraisalPartB.pdf>, 10.

historic questions surrounding the creation of their current community location (that they received after being forcibly relocated due to hydroelectric development and the flooding of their previous historical land plot). After eight months waiting we finally received viewing rights to seven boxes of files containing more than 1000 pages of documents. We are now in the final process of obtaining our first FIPPA request! Our FIPPA officer has ensured us that we will receive copies of 80% of the files requested for the Chemawawin archive.

Aside from the continued attempt to access restricted files we have still achieved the creation of the beginning of a community collection. The current collection has over 500 digitized documents, including digital copies of photographs, newspaper articles, government-created documents, drawings, oral history interviews, historical pieces (example: inventory lists) and more. Oral history interviews in the current collection were created in alliance between community elders and myself. Community elders and I continue to grow the archive's oral history collection through the recording of elder's stories in both Cree and English. Our Oral History partnership has now grown to become a school Oral History program. I no longer interview the Elders, the youth do in partnership with our local hired translators. I continue to work with the school teachers to create Oral History based curriculum for the highschool ages youth. We continue to grow the community archive project in Chemawawin First Nation through the growth of our community partners, including: the school principal, school staff and interested community members. Through the growth of our partners in the community we will continue to grow the oral history collection and access community 'closet archives' so we can digitize and preserve all forms of historical source in the community. We are currently working on the implementation of the school archive into the Chemawawin public library for use primarily by school teachers, staff, Elders and students with their families. The school archive will be

monitored by the school librarians and sustained by myself over the next few years through our working partnership. Over the next year my work will include creating an archive preservation policy and handbook for the archive to assist in the continued growth and overall monitoring of the archive by school staff (who I will also continue to train). The Northern Community Archives Project was not created to be a personal business, but instead to be an Indigenous-controlled co-operative type program. My role in the project will remain as a directing source and researcher. Partnership research can produce more than a thesis when students and researchers open their mind to the possibilities that lie within their field of study. This relationship can not only assist community partners but also allows us as individuals to grow through different research methods and knowledge banks. No matter the size of partnership project or resource-sharing experience, there will always be an impact to follow. If research is conducted properly in partnership and ultimately alliance with a partnered community this impact can develop to bring positive change to communities and the overall research field. We need to reimagine and reshape how research is conducted with Indigenous communities so as to work in full partnership with the communities we wish to write about. Reimagine your academic field so to use it not only as a knowledge bank, but as a tool in alliance with local knowledge sources.

Conclusion

Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government's approach to resource management was driven by western colonialist ideology that promoted the use of colonial strategy in obtaining land and water from Indigenous Nations. Indigenous communities were treated inhumanely through a mix of constant persuasion and pressures set forth by the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro. To Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government, they were merely obstacles in the way of the creation of capitalist driven mega projects, to be solely owned and operated by Manitoba Hydro on what should be viewed as stolen land. The Indigenous communities were never requested as proper project partners, nor were they offered proper long-term benefit for the projects built on their land and water.

Their colonialist ideology viewed it as acceptable to destroy the land, water and economic wellbeing of Indigenous communities for the benefit of those dwelling within Southern Manitoba. Meanwhile, the Indigenous communities did not receive most of the benefits and improvements they were promised, nor did they profit from the resources taken from their territories. These previously thriving communities were stripped of their social and sustainable economies through the destruction of their land and water sources. Even the electricity they were promised frequently comes at a cost they cannot afford, especially after the destruction of their economies.

Manitoba Hydro and the Provincial government of Manitoba failed to create proper resource management-based partnership from 1955 to 1990 with the people of South Indian Lake and the Chemawawin Nation and in turn used colonial tactics to forcibly relocate both communities off their original economically thriving land. The colonial strategies used by the

government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to forcibly relocate the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake were similar in their purposeful bribery and misdirection. Both communities endured the divide and conquer strategy through misdirection surrounding the implementation of electricity in their communities, a new wonderful thing promised to lower their daily work load. An item the Chemawawin people were verbally promised for free, something both the government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro continue to deny today.

Bribery continued through written promise of green grass, pastures, equal work opportunity, gardens and more through the letter of intent the Chemawawin people viewed as an agreement, between their people, Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government. These items remained unfulfilled into the 1990s as the Chemawawin people continued to fight for items owed. The people of South Indian Lake share a similar story of bribery and misdirection surrounding items promised and owed. The people of South Indian Lake legally endured more pressure through continual battle through court against the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro. Misdirection and bribery occurred through similar promises made to the people of South Indian Lake that allowed for the divide and conquer strategy to ensue among the people. Again the majority of these promises were unfulfilled, especially surrounding the lake's health and re-growth of the lake's fish population. All three chapters were heavily guided by voices of individuals whose lives continue to be affected by the creation of hydroelectric generating stations in northern Manitoba. Through use of an oral historical approach, the collection of interviews created for this research contribute to expanding the history of northern hydro affected communities and the overall history of each individual community. Life story interviews collected allowed for the expansion of previous research created by academics from the late 1960s to the 1980s, but through use of local knowledge and direct lived experiences. The use of

the life story approach allowed all individuals interviewed the opportunity to tell their story how they wished to, through their memories of their childhoods and the relocation period they lived through. Information in all interviews show us the deep connection between lived experience and cultural and traditional identity. All individuals interviewed carried these cultural and traditional beliefs as a crucial part of their identities. This allowed them to better understand the long-term consequences of destruction to land and water that Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government failed to understand. Individuals interviewed in both the Chemawawin Nation and South Indian Lake viewed the health of the land and water as an important part of their life system. They connected themselves and their communities to the land and water socially and economically.

The third chapter in this thesis expands knowledge surrounding research method, most notably research practice when working directly with specific communities. The partnership research method is uniquely used to bring example to how researchers can assist their research communities. Through the partnership method a community-based project was established with both communities. The project allowed for digitized copies of all documents and material used or created during the research period to be given to each community for community use. A catalogue system with searchable meta data that allowed for the proper organization of all files digitized was created for both communities. All document copies given to each community were unrestricted files obtained during my research period.

The first two chapters expand research conducted by Dr. James Waldram and Michael Landa. Waldram conducted primary research with the people of both Chemawawin and South Indian Lake through use of primary source and observational research methods throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. Landa conducted case study research on the people of Chemawawin

during the late 1960s through observational methods. He did converse with what he titled “informants” but failed to properly document a dual perspective on the experiences of the people of Chemawawin. The first two chapters of this thesis contribute to the overall history of hydroelectric-development-affected communities in northern Manitoba through its expansion of the previously written anthropological works. Although not all communities affected by hydroelectric development have faced forced relocation, they have faced the destruction of their land and water sources through forced development on their land.

The first two chapters of this thesis examine the social impacts caused by northern hydroelectric development projects. The first chapter examines the relocation story of the Chemawawin people through guidance and voice of Chemawawin elders. Six Chemawawin Elders’ life stories and lived experiences were documented through oral historical audio interviews created in partnership with each individual elder. The six elders brought forth three main themes within their interviews that became the basis for the three sections of this article: Modernization, Colonization and government relations. These same themes formed the foundation for the main thesis. Alongside use of a theme, each section walks the reader through the pre-flood period, flood period and post flood period of the Chemawawin Nation, the surrounding land and people. Before the flood, the Chemawawin people lived a sustainable thriving life off the land and water of the Saskatchewan River delta and Cedar Lake in northern Manitoba. Commercial fishing, trapping and hunting sustained the community and social assistance was nearly unheard of. The opening of the Grand Rapids Dam in 1965 changed the lives of the Chemawawin people through the forced relocation of their community from natural-resource-rich land and water to their current location, Easterville, Manitoba. The rock-based town of Easterville was created for the Chemawawin people by the Forebay Administration

Committee, a group assigned to smoothly relocate the people of Chemawawin through their forced relocation period. This government-based group alongside Manitoba Hydro failed to properly partner with and relocate the people of Chemawawin. The relocation proved a failure by way of the government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro as social impacts quickly spiraled immediately after the relocation. A once-healthy, closely connected, prospering, economically sustainable community slowly fell into social ills. Community connection faded, health among the Chemawawin people worsened, work slowed and trauma ensued through the lack of a prospering economy and harvestable land. The government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro's colonial approach in forcibly relocating the people of Chemawawin failed to ensure the people could continue to thrive on an equally sustainable land plot. Both organizations put financial gain before the intergenerational well-being of the Chemawawin people.

The second chapter was written on the social impacts of hydroelectric development on the people of South Indian Lake from the 1970s to the 1990s. It is written through use of life story interviews created in partnership with eight members of South Indian Lake. Correlating information found in all 8 interviews forms the main themes for the article: Modernization, colonization and government relations. This article follows the same historical flow as the article on the Chemawawin people. In the pre-flood period the ecosystem of Southern Indian Lake was thriving and provided sustainable work for the people of South Indian Lake through commercial fishing and trapping. The people of South Indian Lake used traditional and local Indigenous knowledge of the land and water alongside emerging western technology to achieve and maintain a productive and growing work economy off the lake and land. Community connection was strong and people worked together to ensure the health and safety of all families in the community. Life was not easy, but the people of South Indian Lake lived a sustainable,

gratifying life where unemployment was nearly unheard of. The approval of Manitoba Hydro's Churchill River Diversion changed everything for the people of South Indian Lake. Mass overland flooding caused by the diversion not only physically destroyed the lake's ecosystem and swallowed hundreds of acres of land but also over time caused a system of social impacts to occur to the people.

The third chapter examines the northern community archives project, a project I created in partnership with both the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake. This project proceeded from my view as a researcher that academics need to use their research on indigenous communities to help indigenous communities in some way during their research period. My view of proper community partnership has grown through influence of Indigenous researchers and their work; most notably Linda T. Smith, Shawn Wilson and Margaret Kovach. Their work greatly influenced the ideology of my research and final article. Even the simplest task of repatriating information for a community can assist a community in ways not previously realized. The project focuses on the creation of community archive spaces within each community that assist each community in accessing information previously inaccessible to them. Information is made accessible through the digitization of files held in archives in Winnipeg and these files are then made available to each community in a physical archive space within each community. Many community residents have closet or basement archives that contain important physical documents pertaining to the community's history. Physical files that remain in the community by way of personal archives will also be digitized once approved by the original owner. Alongside the digitization of physical files is the creation of oral history life story interviews in alliance with community elders. Information in each archive can be used for community-created curriculum and other community-based projects.

My relationship with both the people of Chemawawin and South Indian Lake will continue through work on the northern community archives project. The digitization and cataloguing efforts have already assisted the community through use in other community-based projects. A film project under production of Kevin Lee Burton in partnership with the Community Association of South Indian Lake has saved research funds through use of the South Indian Lake digitized document and interview collection. Their documentary (currently in the works, 2018), “Floating Bones,” is set to document the community’s story in film format, making use of my interviews and further discussions with individuals I previously interviewed.

The project model, mission and aim of the Northern Community Archives Project caught interest of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs who are interested in extending the project to other First Nations throughout the province of Manitoba. I am more than fortunate to have ongoing meetings with Manitoba provincial Grand Chief Arlen Dumas who has approved the northern community archives project to move forward under direction of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. Moving forward in October (2018) we will be meeting with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to determine an exact outline for the project under the assembly’s direction. Grand Chief Dumas has assembled a team for the project that I will continue to work with, but under direction of the assembly. The goal is to approach every rural First Nations community in Manitoba to create an accessible archive/ living library in each community. We will also work on a connecting resource system that will allow the community archives/ libraries to become self-sustaining over time and grow to also hold research resources. Grand Chief Arlen Dumas has decided the project will move forward as a program, potentially under the name “Knowledge Capsule” (of his choosing).

To obtain more satisfactory arrangements for their land, water and people both the Chemawawin Nation and people of South Indian lake continue their campaigns against Manitoba Hydro. Through the Community Association of South Indian Lake the people of South Indian Lake continue to battle Manitoba Hydro to end the Augmented Flow Program that continues to considerably impact Southern Indian Lake's ecosystem. Manitoba Hydro has revised its community relation practices since and no longer bulldozes communities without proper consent and partial partnership. This is partially due to changes in the larger social and political environment surrounding resource development on First Nations land and climate change. Indigenous resistance surrounding natural resource development has only grown since the 20th century and continues to grow with hydroelectric development project on the rise across Canada and the creation of pipelines throughout North America.

Interviewed Elders and Knowledge Holders

Interview connections were made with members of South Indian Lake and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation first through assistance of the Wa Ni Ska Tan: Alliance of Hydro Impacted Communities. The Dysart and Ducharme families are members of the Alliance, I first met them at an Alliance Gathering in June of 2017 in Norway House Cree Nation. At the gathering we spoke of the research areas I was interested in and I asked for their advice in moving forward on it. I made my first visit to South Indian Lake and O-Pipin-Na-Piwin Cree Nation a month later in July of 2017. During this visit I took time to meet people throughout the community with partial assistance of the Dysart and Ducharme families. It was essential for me to find individuals from families throughout the communities to bring a range of perspectives on the history of the communities and their experiences with hydroelectric development.

Interview connections in Chemawawin Cree Nation were made through direct contact of the Chemawawin Band Council. Chief Clarence Easter and Councilor Bill Hengemuehl were supportive of the research and archival project from our very first conversation and offered support wherever was needed. They connected me to the school principal who later helped connect me to elders in the community.

Name	Community Involvement	Community or Nation
Hilda Dysart	School Councilor	South Indian Lake, Manitoba
William Dysart	Ferry Operator	South Indian Lake, Manitoba
Steve Ducharme	Fisherman an CASIL member	South Indian Lake, Manitoba
Oscar Blackburn	Elder	Nelson House First Nation
Flora Thomas	Big Sand Lake Lodge Worker	O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation
Ross Moose	Fisherman and Elder	South Indian Lake, Manitoba
Rick Dumas	Ferry Operator	O-Pipon-Na-Piwin First Nation
Robert Baker	Fisherman and Elder	South Indian Lake, Manitoba
Calvin Baker	Fishery Manager	South Indian Lake, Manitoba
Nancy Mink	Elder	Chemawawin Cree Nation
Malcolm Thomas	Elder	Chemawawin Cree Nation
Emma Ballantyne	Elder	Chemawawin Cree Nation
Phillip Chartier	Elder	Chemawawin Cree Nation
Sylvia Chartier	Elder	The Pas, Manitoba
Sally Bourassa	Elder	Chemawawin Cree Nation

Glossary

Life Story Narrative: Narrative spoken uninterrupted on the life story of an individual, where the individual has control over the information they choose to speak on in accordance to their past.

Life Story Interviewing: An interviewing style that allows interviewees to control their interview through telling their life story uninterrupted, giving them the ultimate control over the interview content during the interview. Questions are only used when prompted for.

Dual Perspective of Knowledge: Dual perspective knowledge refers to allowing for more than one perspective in viewing material, a topic, ect. By using a dual perspective of knowledge I used not only my own view point to conduct research and create interviews but the viewpoint of my participants.

Colonialist Tactics: Strategies or plans carried out by individuals or an individual who supports the use of colonial theory to promote political control over other groups and their land.

Modernizing in the Western Sense: Modernizing in the western sense means the western view of modernization. The socially created western norms of modernization during a specific time. Therefore other viewpoints such as Indigenous aren't viewed as "normal" due to not being a part of the western modernization norms.

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